A Companion to
Jean-Luc Godard

Edited by
Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline

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Published

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Contents

Notes on Contributors

Grace An is Associate Professor of French and Cinema Studies at Oberlin College. Her articles on films by Olivier Assayas, Alain Resnais, and Chris Marker have appeared in *Contemporary French Civilization, Contemporary French and Francophone Studies (SITES)*, *The Moving Image*, and *Chinese Connections: Critical Perspectives of Film, Identity*, and *Diaspora* (2009). She is currently at work on stars and aging, with an article on Jane Fonda in *Transnational Stardom: International Celebrity in Film and Popular Culture* (2013).

Martine Beugnet is Professor in Visual Studies at the University of Paris 7 Diderot. She has written articles and essays on a wide range of film and media topics, and has published four books: *Sexualité, marginalité, contrôle: cinéma français contemporain* (2000), *Claire Denis* (2004), *Proust at the Movies* (2005), and *Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression* (2007, 2012). She also co-directs, together with Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, a book series in film studies at Edinburgh University Press.

Marc Cerisuelo is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Aix-Marseille (France). He previously taught at the universities of Paris 3, Paris 7, Chicago and Genève. He has published books on Godard – *Jean-Luc Godard* (1989), *JLG: au-delà de l'image* (ed.) (1993), *Le Mépris* (2006) – and on American cinema – *Hollywood à l'écran. Les métafilms américains* (2000), *Preston Sturges ou le génie de l'Amérique* (2002), and *Vienne et Berlin à Hollywood* (ed.) (2006). He also edited (with Sandra Laugier) the first collection of essays in French devoted to Stanley Cavell's work on film *Stanley Cavell. Cinéma et philosophie* (2001). His most recent book is *Fondus enchaînés. Essais de poétique du cinéma* (2012).

Tom Conley, Lowell Professor of Romance Languages and Visual & Environmental Studies at Harvard University, author of *Film Hieroglyphs* (1991/2006),

Cartographic Cinema (2007), *An Errant Eye* (2011) and other books, has translated works by Marc Augé, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Louis Schefer, and others. He is finishing *An Inventive Bent*, a study of literature and cartography in the aftermath of the Wars of Religion and a monograph titled *Auteur Raoul Walsh*.

Verena Andermatt Conley teaches in Comparative Literature and Romance Languages and Literature at Harvard University. She has written on feminism, ecology, and technology. Her books include *Rethinking Technologies*, (ed.) (1997), *Ecopolitics* (1997), *The War against the Beavers* (2005), and *Spatial Ecologies* (2012).

Ludovic Cortade is Assistant Professor of French at New York University and an Associate Faculty member in Cinema Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts (NYU). He is the author of *Antonin Artaud: La virtualité incarnée* (2000) and *Le Cinéma de l'immobilité: style, politique, réception* (2008). He co-edited with Margaret Flinn a special issue of *Contemporary French Civilization* on the French New Wave (2008). He has published book chapters and articles on film theory (Bazin, Epstein), French literature and film (Leiris), landscapes and geography in film and film theory (Bazin, Guédiguian, Dumont, Ford, Kurosawa).

Scott Durham is Associate Professor of French at Northwestern University, where he also teaches Comparative Literary Studies. He is the author of *Phantom Communities: The Simulacrum and the Limits of Postmodernism* (1998) and the editor of a Yale French Studies issue on Jean Genet. He is currently writing two books, with the working titles *Eurydice's Gaze: The Aesthetics and Politics of Untimeliness in Film* and *The Archive and the Monad: Deleuze and the Resistance to Postmodernism*.

Irmgard Emmelhainz has published articles and essays on cinema, culture, contemporary art, and geopolitics in Spanish, French, Arabic, English, and Hebrew and in journals like *October* and *Third Text*. In 2012, her book *Allotropies in the Evanescent Trench: Art and Politics in the Age of Total War* appeared in Spanish. She has a book of essays forthcoming based on her blog about contemporary art and Neoliberalism, the Jaltenco Invisible Committee.

Elizabeth Ezra is Professor of Cinema and Culture at the University of Stirling. She is the author of *The Colonial Unconscious* (2000), *Georges Méliès: The Birth of the Auteur* (2000), and *Jean-Pierre Jeunet* (2008); editor *of European Cinema* (2004); and coeditor (with Sue Harris) of *France in Focus* (2000), and (with Terry Rowden) of *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (2006). She is currently writing a book with Terry Rowden on cinema and supplementarity.

Daniel Fairfax is a PhD candidate in Film Studies and Comparative Literature at Yale University. A regular contributor to *Senses of Cinema*, his research focuses on French film theory in the post-1968 period.

Margaret C. Flinn is Assistant Professor in the Department of French and Italian and the Program in Film Studies at the Ohio State University. Her research focuses on film, art, and politics as intersecting cultural discourses. She is currently completing a book entitled *The Social Architecture of French Cinema, 1929–39*, which examines the construction, representation, and experience of cinematographic spaces and places. She has written articles on Jean-Louis Boissier, Chris Marker, the film theory of Elie Faure, René Clair's Realism, and women in North African cinema for journals such as *SubStance*, *Studies in French Cinema*, and *Yale French Studies* and is the co-editor of two special journal issues: "Ce que le cinema fait à la littérature (et réciproquement)," *Fabula: Littérature, Histoire, Théorie* and "The New Wave at 50," *Contemporary French Civilization*.

Jean-Michel Frodon is a journalist, film critic, writer, and professor. He's been senior editor on cinema for the weekly *Le Point* then the daily *Le Monde* and was Editorial Director of *Cahiers du cinéma* (2003–2009). He now writes slate.fr. He is Associated Professor at Sciences Po Paris, Professorial Fellow in Film Studies at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, and also teaches at the Film Factory, the cinema school created by Bela Tarr in Sarajevo. He is author or editor of many books, including *La Projection nationale* (1998), *Conversation avec Woody Allen* (2000), *Hou Hsiao-hsien* (2005), *Horizon cinéma* (2006), *Le Cinéma chinois* (2006), *Robert Bresson* (2008), *Gilles Deleuze et les images* (2008), *La Critique de cinéma* (2008), *Amos Gitai, Genèses* (2009), *Cinema and the Shoah* (2010), *Le Cinéma d'Edward Yang* (2010), *Le Cinéma français, de la Nouvelle Vague à nos jours* (2010).

Fabien S. Gérard teaches at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and is a specialist on the history and esthetics of the cinema. He has collaborated with Bernardo Bertolucci on virtually all of his films since the early 1970s. His publications include: *Pasolini ou le mythe de la barberie* (1981), *Ombres jaunes: Journal de tournage du "Dernier Empereur" de Bernardo Bertolucci* (1987), *Sognando "The Dreamers"* (2003), *Bernardo Bertolucci: la Certezza e il Dubbio* (2010), and he co-edited with T. Jefferson Kline *Bernardo Bertolucci Interveiws* (2000).

Elisabeth Hodges is Associate Professor of French and Film Studies at Miami University. She is the author of *Urban Poetics in the French Renaissance* (2008) and articles on urbanism, eccentricity, and feminism on Renaissance authors Gilles Corrozet, Hélisenne de Crenne, François Rabelais, and Barthélemy Aneau. More recently, she has published on the television series The Wire "Espace mémoire événement" (*Revue Labyrinthe*, 2011) and is currently working on a book manuscript on introspection in contemporary cinema.

John Hulsey is a PhD candidate in Film and Visual Studies and Critical Media Practice at Harvard University. He has been a fellow at the Film Study Center at Harvard University, the Sensory Ethnography Lab, the David Rockefeller Center

for Latin American Studies, and the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs. A previous version of this essay was published in *Cinéma*.

T. Jefferson Kline, Professor of French at Boston University, is the author of *Bertolucci's Dream Loom* (1987), *Screening the Text: Intertextuality and New Wave French Cinema* (1992), *Unraveling French Cinema* (2010), and a variety of essays on French and European literature and film. He edited, with Fabien Gerard, *Bernardo Bertolucci Interviews* (2000); and has just published *Agnes Varda Interviews* (2014). He is currently working on a study of the films of Benoît Jacquot, and is editing *Bertrand Tavernier Interviews* for the University of Mississippi Press.

Jacqueline Levitin is a filmmaker and a film historian-critic teaching at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. Recent film work has been in ethnographic documentary ["Building Bridge: a Housing Project for Women" (2003)], live video collaborations for dance and theatre, and an experimental documentary, Mahjong & Chicken Feet (2008), on China's relation with her Jewish "others." She is the co-editor of *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing* (2003), a dialogue between women filmmakers, critics, and theorists.

Trond Lundemo is Associate Professor of Film studies at the Department of Media Studies at Stockholm University. He has been a Visiting Professor at the Seijo University of Tokyo on numerous occasions and is a senior research fellow at the IKKM at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar in 2013–2014. He is member of the steering committee of the European Network of Cinema and Media Studies (NECS), co-directing the Stockholm University Graduate School of Aesthetics and the co-editor of the book series "Film Theory in Media History" at Amsterdam University Press. His research and publications engage in questions of technology, historiography, aesthetics, and the theory of the archive.

Emily Macaux is a writer, artist, and translator whose creative work incorporates still photography, experimental writing, and 16mm film. She did her undergraduate studies at the University of Rhode Island and earned a master's degree in French literature and language from Boston University.

Thomas Odde received a PhD from the University of Florida in Film Studies. He has published articles in *Angelaki*, *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, and *Politics and Culture*. He is currently working on a manuscript that explores the relationship between energy, economy, and visual culture.

Gerald Peary is a Professor of Communications and Journalism at Suffolk University, Boston, and a long-time film critic for the *Boston Phoenix*. He is the General Editor of the University Press of Mississippi "Conversations with Filmmakers" series, and a member of the National Society of Film Critics and has served on

film festival juries around the world. He is the author/editor of hundreds of articles and nine books on the cinema, including, his latest, *John Ford: Interviews* (2001) and *Samuel Fuller: Interviews* (2012). He is the writer-director of the 2008 feature documentary *For the Love of Movies: the Story of American Film Criticism*.

Murray Pomerance is Professor in the Department of Sociology at Ryerson University, and the author of *Alfred Hitchcock's America* (2013), *Michelangelo Red Antonioni Blue: Eight Reflections on Cinema* (2011), *The Horse Who Drank the Sky: Film Experience Beyond Narrative and Theory* (2008), *Johnny Depp Starts Here* (2005), and *An Eye for Hitchcock* (2004). His many edited volumes include *Shining in Shadows: Movie Stars of the 2000s* (2010) and (with R. Barton Palmer) *A Little Solitaire: John Frankenheimer and American Film* (2011). He edits the "Horizons of Cinema" series at SUNY Press and the "Techniques of the Moving Image" series at Rutgers; as well as co-editing, with Lester D. Friedman and Adrienne L. McLean respectively, the "Screen Decades" and "Star Decades" series at Rutgers.

Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli is an Associate Professor of Cinema and Technocultural Studies, University of California Davis. She is the author of *The Unmaking of Fascist Aesthetics* (1998), is finishing a book on cinema at the margins of Europe, and is currently working on the digital uncanny. She has published in *Camera Obscura*, *Representations*, *Screen*, *Third Text*, *Film Quarterly*, and a number of other journals and volumes.

Kareem Roustom is an Emmy nominated composer who has composed music for film, television, the concert hall, and album projects. An alumnus of the Sundance Institute, Roustom has composed scores for a number of critically acclaimed independent films and has collaborated with a wide variety of artists ranging from the Philadelphia Orchestra to Shakira. Since 2007, Roustom has been a visiting lecturer at Tufts University where he teaches film music composition and Arabic music.

Erin Schlumpf received her PhD in Comparative Literature from Harvard University in May of 2012. She is currently a lecturer in the Program in World Literature at Simon Fraser University. Her research focuses on transnational aesthetic responses to historical trauma.

Amie Siegel's work ranges from photographs, sound, video and film installations, and feature films for the cinema, and re-orientates the fictions within documentary practices. The American artist's work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Hayward Gallery, London; MoMA/PS1, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin and the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart. Siegel's films have been screened at the Cannes Film Festival, the Berlin International Film Festival, and the New York Film Festival. She has

been a fellow of the DAAD Berliner-Künstlerprogramm, the Guggenheim Foundation and a recipient of the ICA Boston's Foster Prize.

Douglas Smith is Head of French and Francophone Studies at University College Dublin where he teaches literature, cinema, and theory. Recent publications include edited special numbers on Roland Barthes (2008), Marc Augé (*Irish Journal of French Studies*, 2009) and "Empire and Culture Now" (*Modern and Contemporary France*, 2010, with Mary Gallagher). An edited special number of *Paragraph* devoted to André Bazin appeared in February, 2013.

David Sterritt, chair of the National Society of Film Critics and chief book critic of *Film Quarterly*, is a film professor at the Maryland Institute College of Art and at Columbia University, where he also co-chairs the University Seminar on Cinema and Interdisciplinary Interpretation. He is a contributing writer at *Cineaste* and *MovieMaker* and an editorial board member of *Cinema Journal*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Journal of Beat Studies*, and *Hitchcock Annual*. His writing has appeared in *Cahiers du cinéma*, *The New York Times*, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, *The Journal of American History*, and many other publications. He has written about Godard in the *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Senses of Cinema*, *Cinema Scope*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and various edited collections. His books include *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible* (1999) and *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews* (1998).

Maureen Turim is professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of English at the University of Florida. She has published over 90 essays in journals, anthologies, and museum catalogues. She is the author of *The Films of Oshima Nagisa: Images of a Japanese Iconoclast* (1998), *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (1989), *Abstraction in Avant-Garde Films* (1985). Her next book will be called *Desire and its Renewals in Cinema*.

Steven Ungar is Professor of Cinema and Comparative Literature at The University of Iowa. His recent books include *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture* (2005, with Dudley Andrew) and *Cléo de 5 à 7* (2008). His current research includes a book-length study of social documentary in France and a book chapter on the 1928–1940 illustrated French weekly, *Vu*.

Phillip John Usher is Assistant Professor of French at Barnard College, Columbia University. His work on film includes research on Godard's *Masculin, feminin* (*French Forum*, 2009) and on Pasolini's *Médée* (forthcoming in Yves Hersant and Irène Salas, *Renaissance et Cinéma*). He is also the author of several books: *Errance et cohérence: Essai sur la littérature transfrontalière à la Renaissance* (2010), *Ronsard's Franciad – an annotated translation* (2010), and of a forthcoming monograph titled *Epic Arts in the French Renaissance* (2013).

The late **Philip Watts** was a member of the French Department at Columbia University. His research and teaching focused on twentieth-century French literature and film and the relation between politics and aesthetics. His first book *Allegories of the Purge: How Literature Responded to the Postwar Trials of Writers and Intellectuals in France* (1999) was awarded the Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize. Subsequently he continued to study how literature and film participate in democratic formations, and he published numerous articles on Genet, Barthes, and the films of Jacques Rivette, Jean-Marie Straub, and Danièle Huillet. His most recent research focused on the persistence of archaic forms in post-war French literature and film. He was co-editor with Gabriel Rockhill of *Jacques Rancière: History, Politics, Aesthetics* (2009).

Michael Witt is Reader in Cinema Studies and Co-Director of the Centre for Research in Film and Audiovisual Cultures at the University of Roehampton, London. His writings on Godard have appeared in journals such as *Sight and Sound*, *Screen*, *Trafic*, and *New Left Review*. He is the co-editor of *For Ever Godard* (2004), *The French Cinema Book* (2004) and *Jean-Luc Godard: Documents* (2006), and the author of *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian* (2013).

Introduction

Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline

Cinephiles of the generation of the editors of this volume will no doubt agree that, together, we measure much of our lives through our relation with Jean-Luc Godard. Each and every one of his films stands to some degree as a point of reference in what we recall and no sooner regain of our lives past and present. Not one leaves us indifferent. The films dazzle. They engage and enrage. Some inspire, others leave us wondering why we're bored, fraught with anger and frustration, or ready to engage dialogue. Hence the difficult beauty of the greatest *auteur* of the last 50 years, the director of over 80 features whose names are so familiar that they can be said, each title in its own way, to belong to its viewers' psycho-geographies, in other words, to the mental maps that as spectators we draw to fashion a sense of the space and time of our lives. Godard's films are points of reference – markers, even beacons – from which we often survey ourselves and what we have done or how we have lived with cinema. Some time ago, in *Un ethnologue dans le métro* (1985) (in English, as *In the Metro*, (2003)) anthropologist Marc Augé remarked that the names of the subway stations dotting the intersecting lines on the map that Parisians know like the palms of their hand can be imagined as place-names on the imaginary cartography we draw when thinking of our destinies. Like Augé in his memoir, albeit in our lives in our relation with cinema, we may have had a "Saint-Placide" phase (near the Arlequin) that gave way to a memorable "Saint-Michel" moment (close to the Champollion), or even a relation with "Mabillon" (near the Studio-Christine) and, further away, with "Étoile" (the Mac-Mahon). Such the restive force of Godard's films in our memory: in one way or another each one can be said to mark a critical passage in the montages we unwind when thinking about where we were, what inspired us, what caused us to think afresh and anew, what drove us crazy,

and what continues to do so. The films leave an indelible imprint on us at the moment we see them, whether on the heels of their production or, no less, in retrospective.

We can wager that, when recalling *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) when we saw it for the first time, we, and no doubt every reader of this Companion, will smile in recall of the marvel that the way the liberation of the camera went with our heartfelt liberation *into* cinema. Its verve, its nonchalance, and its intensely reflective underside liberated us, when we were enthralled with classics, from a constricting "tradition of quality." And, those of us (say, of Anglo-Saxon ilk) who saw it in 1960 or 1961, cannot help but remember how it liberated us from the yoke of a repressively puritanical culture of the 1950s. Or, looking back, after viewing it for the umpteenth time, *À bout de souffle* forces us to think again about the nature of post-war cinema and the French Liberation; about France and the Algerian War; about globalization, the imposition of democracy and capitalism, and the *mondialisation* of the seventh art; about how its articulation engaged critical theory, be it deconstruction, gender theory, or philosophies of iteration.[1] The same can hold for any number of films all the way up to *Notre musique* (Our Music) and *Film socialisme* (Film Socialism). Godard's films belong to their moment but, because they are all essays, indeed critical objects, they traverse the time of their making and speak to us in a variety of ways, as cinema *qua* cinema, as an engagement with issues related to politics, and at the same time to different modes of thinking that we associate with writers, poets and philosophers alike, who have been part of the great intellectual upheavals that we associate with structuralism, deconstruction, neo-Freudian analysis, and even (although the term is a misnomer) post-modernism.

Most of the readers of the Companion are not of the generation born into film with *À bout de souffle* or *Bande à part* (Band of Outsiders). Many will have come to Godard at a later moment and will have lived with the films less chronologically than in the fashion of a mosaic, in flickers and flashes, in viewings of different facture – in theatres, on You Tube, by way of cassettes and DVDs – coming from every direction. This substantial and, we wager, extensive group of viewers will have returned to the early Godard to discover where the genius is rooted and how it develops; to ask why certain films continue to perturb or, in a justly psychoanalytical vein, why they *work on* our ways of thinking and doing; to see where the character of the medium and its history are summoned.

The articles gathered in this volume have been chosen to reflect the destiny of a collective appreciation of Godard over a half-century. From the assemblage we note three points of reference that mark a good deal of the work. First, and indelibly, it cannot be doubted that the early cinema, having lost nothing of its brash vigor, continues to inspire new reading. *À bout de souffle, Bande à part, Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live)*, Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier) and other features, all shot at the cusp and in the immediate wake of 1960, and perhaps finding a capstone in *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad), tell viewers what it means to rejuvenate a medium that

by then, it was collectively felt, had "become history." These films were not in dialogue with their forebears for the sake of finding an alcove for themselves in a future pantheon of film history, but more forcibly to use the medium differently, vivaciously, ephemerally, and with a fresh critical and technical idiolect. Many of the authors in this volume bring us back to a moment that, when we see what Godard was doing with the cinemas he inherited, we are inspired over and again to look backward and forward, in an intellectual swish-pan of sorts, in a glance both appreciative and interrogative. What he did in these films remains a model for what can and ought to be essayed now: especially now that, utterly transformed, under the impact of new technologies we witness cinema anchored more than ever, alas, in inherited modes of narration and representation. In their return to the early Godard, the Godard of the hand-held camera and 16 mm black-and-white film stock, some of our authors show that it is incumbent upon us – viewers, filmmakers, critics, amateurs alike – to turn the cinemas that seem to be at a light year's distance from the digital age into *critical objects* of aesthetic, political and philosophical import in our own.

In their chapters, the authors tell us that, seen today, *À bout de souffle* is an intellectual stratigraphy, a film of layered sensation whose ostensibly haphazard composition, on the fly, catching impressions at every turn, leads us into darker recesses of literature and history. Much like Patricia and Michel's descent into the basement of a movie theater, whose space in classical myth would belong to an infernal realm, ours happens to be a discovery of *noir* of times past when we hear Richard Conte's voice (in Preminger's *Whirlpool*) as if he were ventriloquizing the love story that ostensibly drives the narrative. Today the film becomes a maze or labyrinth of virtual places and spaces requiring archeological study. It can be wagered that the fabled race through the Louvre in *Bande à part* now tells us how, as the camera follows the youths running down the gallery, the paintings seen in passage in fact accelerate drastically what art historians had called the passage of a "Spirit of Forms" (Faure, 1930), the cavalcade of "Life of Forms" (Focillon, 1942), or a blazing "Metamorphosis of the Gods" (Malraux, 1960) under the high ceilings of the fabled edifice. The sequence would share something with the associative frenzy we later witness in *Histoire(s) du cinema* (History(ies) of the Cinema), where art, history, and cinema are in productive conflict. To be sure, if issues of gender and gaze have generated truculent re-readings of cinema, *Vivre sa vie*, *Une femme est une femme* (A Woman is a Woman) and *Masculin-féminin* (Masculine-Feminine) can be seen as works not only seminal to the development of a feminist consciousness in cinema but sites that we can set on the *Carte de Tendre* of our own moment, when we are mistakenly led to believe that the struggle for women's parity has been won. In a related sense, like the most seminal works in the classical tradition (*Intolerance, October, Sunrise, The Rules of the Game, Stagecoach, Citizen Kane . . .*) Godard's features of the early and middle 1960s change the lives of the younger generations of viewers who encounter them for the first time. Chantal Akerman avowed long ago that upon seeing what she once recalled as "Pierrot le

gangster" she knew then and there that she had to become a filmmaker. Like her, when we see them not so much in the surf and undertow of the "New Wave," but as films and nothing else – not as historical objects but as cinema – these features continue to show us how to look at the world differently.[2] A striking paradox of a feature such as *Pierrot* may be that, although it is deeply entrenched in a classical tradition of narrative cinema in its resemblance to *You Only Live Once* (a film which director Fritz Lang had first titled "Three Time Loser") and its anticipation of an American "new wave" (which might be an oxymoron) in *Bonnie and Clyde*, it remains, above all, a webbing of associations of contextual forms and images, like the hero himself, gone wild. Abundant quotations and allusions from literature (Céline, Rimbaud, Balzac, Robert Browning . . .) mix with art (Richard Chamberlain, George Siegel, Jasper Johns . . .), philosophy (Leibniz . . .) as well as cinema (the *Nickel Odéon*, Julien Duvivier, Sam Fuller, . . .), such that a classical form gives way to a moving collage.

Second, readers of this Companion will note that *Le Mépris* (Contempt), *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her) and even *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman), features that, although they now belong to an early Godard, draw a distance from the first films. Our contributors look to these films to sort through a number of issues. One concerns iteration and deixis (to whom or to what is addressed a remark, from where, and with what effect) that reveal hidden dialogue and define the spatialities of Godard's cinema. Others take up color, that for the director becomes a means for producing tensions that become visible when the placement of blocks of highly contrastive fields turn the screen into a flat surface or something resembling an unprimed canvas. In Godard's color films of that moment the hardedge style of Ellsworth Kelly and Pop Art come forward while they both entertain and reject symbolic meaning (colors of national flags) and even their "deconstructive effect" may or may not be aligned with psychological topics (passion, melancholy, etc.). When seen in the context of what critic Jacques Aumont famously called Godard's *profondeur de surface* (depth of surface), these films present variegated "landscapes" by which, with adjacent or overlaid shards of writing, in the mode of what one contributor calls the play of *collage* and *décollage*, the strident contrasts of color flatten their volume and, hence, engage critically what otherwise they would represent aesthetically and geographically: the rugged rock cliffs around Capri (in *Le Mépris*) refer both to the backdrop of the Aegean archipelago of Homer and recall the outcroppings below the Sierras in Southern California, the telluric world where thousands of American westerns had been staged from Griffith to Anthony Mann and Budd Boetticher and also, curiously, the literary source for *Bande à part* (!); a piece of green field in a Parisian suburb on which boxes of detergent, placed to mime the presence of miniature low-cost apartment buildings (in *2 ou 3 choses*), signal the effects of cleansers of capital that will sanitize the image; a play of black and white, obtained from words scribbled in chalk on blackboards (in *La Chinoise*), cue the strident reds, blues and yellows, as if confirming André Malraux's remark in *Saturn* (Malraux,

1957) that the great painters Rembrandt and Goya, to emphasize the force of their lines, insert blotches of saturation and absence of color in their paintings. The studies of these early color films allow us to reflect more generally on Godard's interrogation of the sublime or, in visual terms, the nature of an "event." As we recall from the same film, when Maria Vlady crosses a square in Paris, uttering in voice-off an impression of a sudden but ephemeral sense of being-in-the-world, the cityscape becomes part of that event, what philosopher Gilles Deleuze calls a "nexus of prehensions" where environment and sensation come together and then separate, but where also whoever experiences the event – it could be Vlady and ourselves as we watch the sequence over and again – feels how time and space are at once objectified and subjectified.[3] It would seem that *Le Mépris* would avail us of minuscule events in the world of things grandiose, notably the sword-and-sandal epic that *Le Mépris* cannot be. On the other hand, *2 ou 3 choses* would cast in question the nature of habitability and the "events" experienced (or in the film itself, *invented*) within the confines of a new apportioning of space designed to control subjectivity – the constrained time and space of a new Haussmanization.

Our memory of the vivid and strident colors of these films allows us to appreciate what acquires a deceptively mimetic quality in some of the later films. *Passion*, in part a collage of *tableaux vivants*, deals with the ways that refracted light can be seen as a material pigment, what the cinematic painter squeezes from tubes and puts on a wooden palette, with the exception here that the chromatic virtue of Kodacolor (we recall how Godard dedicated some of his cinema to Kodak) and its variants can be seen on the surface of a positive film stock the artist holds up to light or threads through an editing machine. And much more: moving from interiors carefully lit for maximum effect of chiaroscuro in a context of artifice, *Passion* eventually leads to a country setting where a "natural" world offsets the painterly aspect of the visual citations from Delacroix and other artists that we might have already glimpsed in Godard's early cinema. Contrastively, apart from its development of religious material that might be imagined to be alluding to the reduced palette favored among paintings of Reformed leanings,[4] *Je vous salue, Marie* (Hail Mary) moves between the registers of line and color in the breathtaking landscapes Godard draws from the Cantons of Geneva and Vaud. They are in the director's homeland, surely, yet their color fields cannot be removed from religious wars or from Godard's own distanciated idolatry of his homeland. Which comes forth in *Prénom Carmen* (First Name: Carmen), in the nighttime scenes of traffic moving about the Parisian periphery, that are intercut with the narrative, in order, it seems, to have color be exactly what comes "before the name," before the advent of language that would codify and drastically mitigate its sensory force. In *Pierrot le fou* Godard had made the point in his quotation from Rimbaud's color sonnet, "Voyelles," remembered when the destitute hero's voice is heard, as he runs to a promontory standing against the blue sea to explode himself from a condition of being the nexus of primary colors into pure light, seemingly

shrieking, amber sticks in his arms, to complement the blue paint on his cheeks and the red tips of the sticks he carries, as if to *yell Oh*. And later, *JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre* (JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December), the shorter "winter" film, plays on tonalities of grey in nature so fervidly that for more than one viewer the many shots of the cold waters of Lake Geneva swashing over a shore of pebbles of different hues recall the abstract paintings of Mark Tobey. The stark contrasts of sky in the background of sensuous close-ups of the speakers on board ship at the outset of *Film socialisme* cannot be discounted from this train of vision and reflection. All this to remark that indeed Godard's innovations in chromatics that come in the early and mid-1960s change utterly our sense of the colorings of the complex rhetoric of his cinema and, by extension, of our appreciation of film in general.

Third, readers of this Companion will note how more than one of our authors are drawn to the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The epic has become a decisively pivotal work, both in Godard's oeuvre and, more generally, in what we might call the "epistemological rupture" between analogue cinema and the age of video and digitization. The *Histoire(s),* neither rehearsing nor staging a quarrel between "ancients and moderns," the analogues and the digitals, in the mode of the Montagues and the Capulets (*King Lear* notwithstanding, Shakespearean references abounding in *Notre musique* . . .) anchor past cinemas in technologies that, ostensibly new and fresh in the 1980s, have since been refined in unforeseen ways. When we look at the innovations at work in *Histoire(s)*, Godard's office, the setting of the scene of creation belongs to a décor that is already history – if only because the electric or autonomously driven typewriter on which the guru hunts and pecks was already being supplanted by the televisual word-processor; or because the whir of 35 mm film stock winding through a Steenbeck or Moviola flatbed table seems quaint, even if, when the speed of the passage of the looping film stock accelerates or decelerates, we hear shrieks and growls that seem to be commenting on what we are witnessing. Surely, in the shots spliced between the multiple citations, the stench we smell of the fat cigar that Godard suckles as he hits the keys brings us back to the pre-code years of *tabagie*, of the smell of cafés when intellectual "labor" was a function of tobacco and coffee. Surely, too, when Godard seems to be miming Montaigne ("without difficulty and effortlessly, having a thousand volumes of books around me in this place where I write," he said in "De la physionomie" (Of physiognomy)), selecting offhand quotations from any number of books at his arm's reach, he indulges in an economy that in 1988 seems to be a manual search engine no less efficient than the web browsers we use to validate or substantiate our intuitions or memories. Different technologies, indeed contrasting modes of cataloguing and chronicling the world, are in conflict. The digital medium allows Godard to graft almost effortlessly images and texts from the archive of cinema for a design that renews and brings untold dynamism to the tradition of the living and changing legacies of form in the arts, reaching back to

the Malrucian imaginary museum and forward to the art of the installation (like that which was mounted at the Centre Pompidou), that he turns toward a sense of history that we can affirm to be far broader and much more subjectively accurate than what we obtain from textbooks and timelines. For starters, Godard shows us how any history of cinema can only be in the plural and how, as in French, *histoire* is a cliché in its received meaning of "his story" (in the feminine) and a "history," he insists over and again, as Lucian of Samosata had shown in his comic *True History*, both a chronicle and a fiction, the latter becoming more real when the former is grafted upon it. And here Godard intuits well the politics and aesthetics of the "historiographical operation."[5] The historiographer had traditionally crafted his fiction (the chronicler's gender generally being "masculine") to flatter the prince for whom it was destined: thus, in the middle of *Histoire(s)*, we see Godard negotiating with the editors and syndicates behind its programming, indicating that aesthetics, politics, and poetics are in constant commerce with each other.

The authors of articles on the *Histoire(s)* make the point saliently. They reach into the intricacies, indeed the secret spaces that might be located along the interstices of the many quotations. They show us that, when confronted with the vicissitudes of inhumanity for which, throughout the twentieth century cinema has been a terrible witness and often self-interested recorder, the director is afflicted with melancholy, the malady of genius. Godard shows to the world horrors that traumatize viewers in the manner of opening over and again a wound that a victim refuses to allow to heal while, concomitantly, he strives to fulfill the promise of cinema by delivering images *after* the Holocaust would have put an end to their creation or production.

In Godard's film the "just is" of a historical image, what would be at once its mix of fact and facticity, becomes its eventual "justice."[6] Beyond the ways the myriad manipulations show that historical veracity is of a substance of silly putty, the film, our authors note, figures in a typological scheme. The vision is one of a figural realism in which juxtaposition of images past and voices present yields a glimpse of an end of cinema, much like the end of time in a medieval or an early modern worldview, a world in depredation but a world, either including or bereft of humans, without end. Whatever film will have become, or into whatever new media it will have been transmogrified; or, no matter how much we mourn its passing: it will nonetheless be.[7] The authors show how *Histoire(s)* thus extracts fragments from films anchored in collective memory, however unsettling, from agendas for which they had been used. Belonging to an archeology or a stratigraphy of millions of given films, in the new and mixed format that Godard crafts from some of them, he enables us to invent myriad itineraries through the troubled fantasies that shape much of our cinematic archive. Montage, the images and the fragments the director obtains when he cracks them open and reconfigures them through digital means now figure in a political aesthetic tied to a practical

theology. A plural history with the sibilant silence of an *s* between parentheses, Godard's film will remain a point of urgent reference for film studies now and for years to come.

In this volume these three foci – the early cinema, the post-new wave work, the *Histoire(s)* – have as complements important studies of what some enthusiasts of Godard otherwise "would prefer not to" address, namely, the highly political cinema of the later 1960s and some of the off-beat films, some of which are of recent vintage, that seem highly circumstantial. The elder viewers of "a certain generation" mentioned above note invariably, as do the authors of specialized accounts of films including *Sympathy for the Devil*, *A Letter to Jane,* and *Tout va bien* (All's Well) – these and other titles having had highly mixed critical reception – that every film is indeed integral to the oeuvre. Frequently literary historians praise authors who, although they may be varying on a singular vision, create highly different works in different modes and genres. For the French canon such is Chrétien de Troyes, Rabelais, Corneille, Diderot, Hugo and Balzac; and in cinema, Godard. In two seconds a viewer discerns Godard's surface tensions of letters, words, figures, and forms, and in not many more, his treatment of landscape or portrayal of human figures. The art of rupture, breakage, or *brisure* quickly becomes a commanding trait of the signature. Thus the politics in the lesser films, for which the director had been taken to task, whether in the post-1968 period or in some of the unlikely sequences in *Notre musique* or *Film socialisme*, remain forcibly and creatively critical.

Film socialisme makes the point especially clear. What one of our contributors believes may be his last feature defies categorization and nearly description. Originally billed as a "holocaust" film, it appears to take the form of a travelogue for its first 30 minutes, but neither fits *that* category nor does it treat *any* particular subject, but ranges from shadow plots involving the disappearance of a huge treasure of gold during World War II to the distress of a French provincial family to a chaotic return to the setting of the luxury liner. The soundtrack includes at least seven different languages all of which are rendered into subtitles in "Navaho" – a technique that reduces long swaths of dialogue to three or four word summaries. If Godard is at his most provocative in this film, it is merely the latest version of a provocation that began in 1956, perhaps even with *Opération béton* (Operation Concrete) and has spiraled into a career that has produced some 70 full-length films (and another 30 short subjects) and spanned a period of some 65 years and an astonishing variety of subjects and approaches. Here, as "editors," we continue to ask ourselves and our readers, ending on the very point of interrogation that Godard puts in view in his takes of the lobby of the Sarajevo Airport in *Notre musique*: how could any single volume capture such an oeuvre? In response, in collaboration with our authors, we have tried to capture the *character* of Godard's quest as measured and sensed in some of the most startling of his many exorbitant and provocative activities. We thank our authors and editors for the occasion to do so. And we mourn the passing of Phil Watts, to whom we dedicate this volume.

Notes

1 James Tweedie takes up globalization and the work of *Cahiers du cinéma* in his *The Age of New Waves* (Tweedie, 2013); Hunter Vaughan studies how the movement with which Godard was affiliated produces a cinema that *becomes-philosophical* in *The New Wave Meets Philosophy* (Vaughan, 2012); time and again David Rodowick returns to the late Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier's pathfinding "Erratic Alphabet" (Ropars-Wuilleumier, 1981), a reading of the deconstructive process of letter and image in *À bout de souffle*, in his writings that extend from *Reading the Figural: Or, Philosophy after the New Media* (Rodowick, 2001) to later work on the putative end of cinema as "we have known it" in *The Virtual Life of Film* (Rodowick, 2007).

2 Two histories of the New Wave pertain. One, Neupert's *A History of the New Wave* (Neupert, 2007) and the other, Tweedie (2013) in which the innovations of the 1950s are set in the context of globalization by way of a deft comparison of the urban visions of Godard and company with later Asian cinemas.

3 Deleuze, 1988, 101–103.

4 For example Philippe de Champaigne's ex-voto, "La Mère d'Agnès Arnaud et Catherine Sainte-Suzanne de Champaigne" of 1662, a work inspiring some of Bresson's *Les Anges du péché* figuring in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, adjacent to the Catholic opulence of the Counter-Reform (Rubens' "Union of Earth and Water" of 1618).

5 The term belongs to Michel de Certeau in the second chapter of *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (de Certeau, 1975), revising a piece first appearing in Le Goff and Nora's collection *Faire de l'histoire* (Le Goff and Nora, 1974, 3–41).

6 To which, long after his 2001 careful study of the way the *Histoire(s)* makes clear the redemptive force of the image in *La Fable cinématographique*, Jacques Rancière returns in an essay, titled "Conversation autour d'un feu: Straub et quelques autres" (Rancière, 2011): beginning polemically, with "Il n'y a pas de politique du cinema" (There cannot be a politics of cinema), he notes how images are cued by "le rapport entre une affaire de justice et une pratique de justesse" (111) (the relation between a matter of justice and a practice of justness): *Notre musique* being a case in point where "the denunciation of the stereotypes of the image removes their power of speech," thus "giving sovereign voice to that which organizes the endless confrontation between the commonplaces of discourse and the brutality of images which interrupts them, between visual stereotypes and the poetic speech which hollows our their evidence" (124).

7 As elegantly shown by Casetti (2011, 53–68).

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1

From Pen to Camera

Another Critic[1]

Jean-Michel Frodon

At the end of 1962, just after he had directed his first four feature films, Jean-Luc Godard met four editors of *Cahiers du cinéma* for a lengthy interview. The event bore witness to the importance of the work he had accomplished, as well as to the seven short films and the episodes he had directed in as many collective films. The question of the interview concerns the shift from criticism to directing:

CAHIERS: Jean-Luc Godard, you have come to cinema through criticism. What exactly is it that you owe to it?

JEAN-LUC GODARD: At *Cahiers* we were considering ourselves, all of us, to be future directors. To frequent ciné-clubs and the Cinémathèque was already tantamount both to thinking cinema and to thinking about cinema. To write already meant to make cinema, simply because the difference between writing and shooting is one of quantity and not of quality. The only critic who had been completely of this mold was André Bazin. The others – Sadoul, Balazs or Pasinette – were historians or sociologists, not critics.

As a critic I already assumed myself to be a filmmaker. Today, I continue to consider myself a critic and, in a way, I am all the more now than I had been before. Instead of writing a piece of criticism I make a movie, even if it means introducing a critical dimension into it. I think of myself as an essayist, I write essays in the form of novels or novels in the form of essays: but I merely film them instead of writing them. Were cinema to disappear I'd accept the fact: I'd shift over to television, and were television to disappear, I'd go back to paper and pencil. I believe that a very great continuity exists among all forms of expression. Everything is united. The question is one of knowing how to take this unity from the angle that best fits you.[2]

We cannot fail to be struck by Godard's lucid premonitions in speaking then of his work in terms that are clearly justified in view of what he had already done – especially in signaling the coherence of a future trajectory that has generally been placed under the sign of successive ruptures.

In his response, Godard articulates several pertinent differences: in the midst of the editorial production of *Cahiers* he separates Bazin, a "pure critic," from the group of Young Turks who surrounded him, and with whom he took part – all of them practitioners of criticism as a way of making cinema at a moment when access to the professional practice of film making had been blocked by the corporate machinery and conservatism inherent to the milieu. In passing, he also distinguishes Bazin from other critics to whom he denies this title – if Bazin is surely not the sole critic, Godard's words are a way of affirming, at a time when it does not go without saying, that not all writing on cinema pertains to criticism. But above all Godard removes himself from his young contemporaries, the phalanx of the New Wave: the fact of continuing to be a critic, and still "even more than before," concerns only himself, in the sense that there will be an explicitly critical dimension in the films he directs. Even if evidence shows that in the films of Truffaut, Rohmer, Chabrol or Rivette the effects of what they elaborated at once individually and collectively during their years at *Cahiers* is already at this stage, Godard will become even more so the sole director to make clear in his own films a commentary on cinema, on staging, on the stakes of the relation between images, the real, the articulation of the sound track and the image track, etc. His forms are the only ones that in one shape or another will increasingly make explicit their interrogation of the ways by which they are made.[3] We can now mark 1967 and Godard's contribution to the collective film, *Far from Vietnam*, "Caméra-oeil" (Camera-Eye) as the moment when the staging of this reflection becomes central.

In passing, in his answer to the interviewers of *Cahiers*, Godard positions himself in a sort of symmetry with Bazin, the "pure critic." He implies that he too is just that, but with a far richer palette of means.[4] And this is what he began to do, and what he continued – and continues – to do (among other things) as a filmmaker. He brings criticism to another level of potential and effectiveness: he invents criticism of cinema *by way of* cinema. In other words, he invents an equivalent of literary criticism whereby the latter criticizes works whose raw materials are words mixed with words. Godard becomes practically the only filmmaker to criticize images and sounds *with* images and sounds.

In 1962, when Godard said that "I consider myself an essayist," the formula "essay-film" had not yet been invented. Only much later does it define a practice of cinema that has nonetheless become current among a few directors, most notably Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, two of Godard's contemporaries. Yet in themselves these two other great figures of the modern resurgence of French cinema in the 1950s and 1960s do not come from criticism per se. They "come," as it were, from both montage and politics. Together (*Les Statues meurent aussi* (Statues Also Die) and, no less, *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog) to which Marker

amply contributed), or in a complicit manner in their respective films, remarkably in *Lettre de Sibérie* (Letter from Siberia), in the fishy Iakoute sequence or, less directly, the recourse to visual archives and the leitmotif "tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima" (you saw nothing in Hiroshima) in Resnais's first feature, they take up in their films the very means of cinematographic language and their political effects. In this respect the resemblance between Godard's episode and that of Resnais, in *Claude Bitter*, or in *Loin de Vietnam* (Far from Vietnam), is quite significant.

In *What Cinema Is*, Dudley Andrew wonders what, had he been able to see them, Bazin might have thought of Godard's films.[5] This is a keen question that one of Godard's principal theoretical – and not critical – essays anticipates: in "Montage mon beau souci" (Goddard, 1956), published in *Cahiers du cinema*, Godard is overtly opposed to the defense and illustration of the sequence-shot that Bazin had promoted. Far from praise of the "the dress without the stitching of the real," at that time the young Godard reclaims the virtues of the quick shot – "a heartbeat" – in which it is not difficult to discern his interest in a writing of the *mise-en-scène* that is nearer to the constructions of verbal language than to resources belonging to cinematographic recording. Here he is thus clearly nearer to the "Left Bank Group" (Resnais, Marker, Agnès Varda) than the Bazinian ideas to which the other *Cahiers* editors refer. It is most notably in Marker that what is found in what the latter later calls "le commentaire dirigeant" (commentary directing), in which the primacy of the text is not to reduce the image to the status of an illustration (what no filmmaker worthy of the name ever does), but as a structuring principle that organizes images, including, as Godard will therein become a specialist, in making an image of the text through recourse to inscriptions – that is, to the composition of words seen directly on the screen.[6] When he directed *Puissance de la parole* (Power of Speech) in 1988, it is perfectly logical that the film can begin with images of an editing table.

"Today, I continue to consider myself a critic and, in a way, I am all the more now than I had been before." When, today, we read the critical articles Godard published in *Cahiers* and *Arts* during the 1950s, we can even defend the idea that he has become not only "moreover a critic" but also an *other* critic. Despite the lucidity and the pertinence of many statements in his printed writings, his critical *juvenilia* is especially marked by a will of self-affirmation, of his own tastes, of his subjectivity, of his capacity to convoke and to bring together (already in montage) as many allusions as possible, with a massive recourse to classical (literary, pictural, musical . . .) culture that sometimes acquires the aspect of a pedantic array. Nothing of the sort is to be found in these films, even including those where cultural references are mobilized. When Ferdinand reads Élie Faure on Velasquez in *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad), whatever smacks of pedantry is immediately swept away by the very strong feeling that he is in fact speaking of something else, that he is secretly murmuring the words of an inquiry into film and, moreover, into life itself. The pertinent issue is not at all that of knowing that Velasquez was a painter of the evening, even if Élie Faure said this, but that something else

is in play – in an arena at once of this very film, a disquieted reflection on cinema, and a poetic proposition to a way of being in and coping with the world. In extremely diverse and inventive fashion it is what Godard does both in 1960, in *À bout de soufflé* (Breathless), and in 1967, in *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) and *Loin de Vietnam*.

An enlightening typology would have to be made by comparing the critical relations that Truffaut, Rohmer, Rivette and Godard hold with writing. Truffaut, who was most certainly and completely a critic in the 1950s, then becomes most completely the one who stops being so. Rohmer is the person for whom the theoretical and scholarly dimension is the most sensitive: in his work thought always seems to pre-exist and to confer form upon action (whether there be in question strategies of writing, production, shooting, or the systematic stakes taken by the films themselves, which are all films about their own *mise-en-scène* or construction, but in a manner that is never made explicit). On cursory glance Rivette is the most political, even if it especially means an instinctive relation with politics, in the collective sense of aesthetic positions taken and their ethical horizon. Assuredly the most self-centered of the Young Turks, to the contrary, Godard becomes the one who, as a director, takes charge, in an explicitly and systematic manner, of the critical study of the relations of force, of domination, of possible alliances, of eventual subversion that are at stake in the ways of filming, cinema becoming *immediately* a kind of test tube in which the principles of the organization of the entire world are shown concentrated and thus more visible. Godard spoke of having been questioned about cinema, but for him to question cinema meant calling into question society, the contemporary world, technique, economy, desire, and the imaginary, among others.

Such is clearly also the case in the beginnings of Godard the filmmaker. What is not so simple, if we admit that this true beginning did not take place before his first feature *À bout de souffle*, a film that was immediately hailed by soothsayers as a decisive work, is this: the question is not that *À bout de souffle* is in all respects a sublime film that one can watch over and again with endless pleasure (and even more if we happen to get to a full-screen projection with a good copy), but that it is much more the last critical gesture of the *Cahiers* than the true beginning of its director. In this respect, the opening scene of his second film, *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier), could not be more explicit. In a crepuscular light he effectively shows the passage across a frontier, accompanied by this programmatic statement: "The time of action having ended, the time of reflection was beginning." This sentence could have become the slogan of the passage (across the frontier) from classical cinema – inside of which *À bout de souffle* was inscribed, if only to be put in place as much as to shake it up and to call it in question – to modern cinema. And that could have become the terminal boundary between Deleuze's movement-image and the time-image. In fact, for Godard, it became just that.

But what does Godard's labor of "reflection" have to do with criticism? How does it hold an essentially interrogative nature, finding its force in writing – in his

case, in cinematographic writing and *mise-en-scène*? This essential interrogative dimension is not forcibly and first of all one of the preferred strategies of this interrogation, especially in light of recourse to ready-made formulas that seem, to the contrary, to pertain to a series of peremptory assertions. It counts among Godard's numerous ruses that turn against him: the manner by which striking expressions, effective uniquely in their problematic character, are found ossified in slogans, in mantras, and sometimes even in dogma. This process began with *Le Petit Soldat*, especially with the formula, "the photograph is truth and cinema is truth twenty-four times per second." This affirmation, perfectly untenable if taken literally, will be repeated and printed an incalculable number of times – as if the members of a sect were infinitely repeating a magical litany.

Yet Godard's relation to cinema and to the world is entirely contrary to dogma. What makes Godard the filmmaker a critic – and a great critic at that – is that he does not know. He does not know how it works. That is also why he feels himself closer to researchers in the experimental sciences, with whom he collaborates on various occasions (usually without success) to create linkages. In French the expression "experimental cinema" has taken a too narrowly defined and overly fixed sense to merit its usage, but surely experimentation and experience are at stake: acquired knowledge, research, exploration into the means of cinema and their effects through their realization according to veritable protocols.

Brilliant as we know them, the use of shock-formulas acquires its true sense only when accompanied by Godard's other permanent process: repetition, which is one of the requirements for scientific experiment: in order to be validated, the latter must be reproducible. For Godard this process pertains even to a reiteration of identical things in order to stabilize a result, rather than making a proof by the process of doing the same thing over and over again. Godard's thinking is a ruminating thinking – Swiss, perhaps – a rumination that alters what it works on, that seems to repeat itself while seeking to test, displace, and reconfigure; this repetition relates to origins rather than to poetic intuitions, from entries into resonance where Godard perceives that he is playing with effects of meaning.

The "Dziga Vertov" period (1968–1975) must certainly be put aside for this argument to hold. Not that Godard's functioning in this period is basically different, but because of the fact that the Godardian practice of cinema seeks to be inscribed in a system of outer reference (designated at the time as Marxism-Leninism). Furthermore, in negating the subjectivity of practices put to work, a forceful shock and denial are cause for the radical, sometimes stimulating and sometimes terribly empty tension of *Pravda* (Pravda), *Vent d'Est* (The East Wind), *Luttes en Italie* (Struggle in Italy), *Vladimir et Rosa* (Vladimir and Rosa), and *Tout va bien* (All's Well).

In itself the formula "It is not a just image, it is just an image" (*Vent d'Est*) becomes the grist for great amounts of debate, discourse, and scholarly study. That this affirmation – whose fecundity has not lost an iota over the years – is in open contradiction both with the famous formula of *Le Petit Soldat*, and to the

theses that Godard later defends about the need for images to attest to the Holo-caust – is in no way limiting.[7] His rumination welcomes the contradiction without difficulty, is in fact nourished by it, logically referring to what Godard always defended with respect to montage: the necessity of bringing together not what resembles but what dissembles. In the Dziga Vertov period (cf. the stunningly brilliant interviews and writings of the moment), the virtuosity of formulation resonates especially in his attempt to stow away Marxist-Leninist doxa.

We must pause for an instant on this virtuosity, noticeable from the first pub-lished articles, continuing for over 60 years of public activity. We must pause here because this virtuosity is not evidently an ornament; rather, it plays a decisive role in the progress of thought and action. Godard is inhabited by a veritable genius of language that can easily be an evil genius. Whoever has spent time speaking with him knows the difficulty well because Godard endlessly catches the asso-nances and suggestions that practically every word conceals, and he is constantly tempted to follow a given poetico-theoretical statement into an infinite arbores-cence that can surge forth at any moment. Godard suffers from a kind of maledic-tion of king Midas transposed into vocabulary: everything he touches does not turn into gold, but everything he says is transformed, first of all for him, into a point of departure for possible associations of ideas, sounds, senses, possible puns and slippages that in the end become a sort of inextricable jungle that goes to the limit of its expression. At the same time, the latter suffers also from what he repeats of formulas he has already used, that he believes to be full of meaning, but for which he senses that his listeners do not share his intuition – including when these formulas are taken up by others, more like publicity slogans than incitements to think on one's own: indeed, a power and a powerlessness of speech, a sterility and an omnipotence of speech.

It is also in order to force this passage that Godard repeats (himself) in order to clear his way through the thickets that he creates (for himself) – even if it means hooking onto a mysterious idea whose meaning he cannot himself make clear, all the while being manifestly certain that "something is there." Thus, for example, his intuition on the techno-mythological stakes the projective mechanism pro-duces, from the effect of a luminous ray "coming from behind," a theme that runs through films of the 1980s; this is done by invoking, no less, Orpheus in Hades as much as lieutenant Poncelet in his Russian prison. Nowhere does there exist a Godardian theorem or thesis defining the role or the consequences of this relation to space, to light, and to invisibility that are the very nature of the movie theater. This, however, is of little consequence because whoever has entered into the uni-verse of his films will have intimately felt the suggestive power of this theme. Another, perhaps less probing instance: as of the 1990s Godard ruminated on the idea that a symbolic dimension would need to be extracted from the star of David that figures on the Israeli flag, the double triangle seemingly being a metaphor at once of the historical events concerning the Jews and Palestinians and of the stakes at the core of the cinematographic apparatus.

These propositions relate to critical labor and not to theory insofar as they are never taken as scientific proofs, such as the statement of a theorem that can be established or refuted. They function as the splitting of a hypothesis that can only be hypothetical, thus up to each and every spectator to see if they can make something of it for themselves.

From the 1970s, with the doubling of his practice that continues to pertain to the frame of the feature film and, moreover, given the manner with which Godard makes use of video equipment, a gap seems to widen between works of "art" (his films) and works of criticism (his videos). For the most part this gap is illusory, even if the place reserved for "discourse on . . ." is more obvious in the videos. Rather, it is as if Godard were exploring the resources inherent to the new apparatus so as to put them back into his films; *Passion* and the *Scenario of the Film 'Passion'* offer the basic example. The process is at its peak at the end of the 1980s with the scaffolding of an array of video essays– *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) being the cornerstone of a vast critical labor. The same labor also engenders both feature films (*Allemagne Neuf Zéro* (Germany Nine Zero), *Les Enfants jouent à la Russie* (The Children Play Russian), *JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre* (JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December), *Notre musique* (Our Music) and other developments in video (*The Old Place*, *Deux fois cinquante ans de cinema français* (2 × 50 Years of French Cinema), *Liberté et Patrie* (Liberty and Homeland), *Dans le noir du temps* (In the Black of Time . . .)) without forgetting this unique form, but surely the most telling of all, *Voyage(s) en utopie. À la recherché d'un théorème perdu: JLG 1945–2005* (Voyage(s) in Utopia. In Search of a Lost Theorem: JLG 1945–2005), Godard's show of 2006 in the gallery of the Centre Pompidou. When in 1962 he remarked, "For the continuity among all modes of expression is very great," no one could anticipate the future revolutions in modes of expression, the vertiginous convergence that digital technologies would make possible. The latter were to open infinitely greater perspectives on this "continuity." Godard has since held a strange and impassioned response to the arrival of these techniques and of what they make possible. He has refused and violently criticized the tools and the way others use them, all the while anticipating the effects, and the potentialities associated with these technologies in ways of circulating between texts, images, sounds and other givens. He has been mastering the hypertext with methods dating to before the inventions of digital technologies, and not without finding in his midst his eternal alter ego, Chris Marker, who himself had described the resources and the dangers of the new regime of representation since his *Sans soleil* (Sunless) of 1983. Having asked Marker to open its arcane for him, Godard ultimately took keen interest in these techniques. Most surprising and most stunning is that finally the CD-Rom *Immemory* and then the site *Gorgomancy.net* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, a package of videos and books in fact do the same work by exploring the same line of inquiry with comparable aims. Including what he says against his own declarations, it is not wrong to say that Godard has been thinking and producing within the modes of the digital regime and the Internet, and in a

certain way he has also anticipated them, even while remaining unaware of their essentials, and while detesting most of what they do. In Godard's long career of critical activity that cuts across all of his filmed work, to be sure, a special place must be reserved for the monument *Histoire(s) du cinema*, around which its satellites turn. It is a funereal monument that seeks at once to show by its example how cinema is given to think the century, and to question the idea of what cinema *is*, even before this century comes to an end. We do not know if cinema is already dead, if it is moribund, or if it lives only by continuing to traverse its successive demises. The only indubitable point is its intense relation with death, but with a death whose very status is uncertain – which thus becomes a critical proposition, a revival of interrogation even when it remains under an undeniable vigil of death.

Histoire(s) du cinéma is an extraordinary machine for thinking the events, the images, the works, the beliefs and the tragedies of the twentieth century, and it is again a critical machine in that it makes no demonstrative claims nor engenders any theses, but instead works in the mode of an *écriture*, a writing, a formal composition that posits new questions. Although nourished by mourning in order to bring the critical dimension of Godard's cinema to a paroxysm, it does not subsume it. Godard does not abjure, to the contrary of what his remarks might lead us to believe, the making of films that insist on holding to their critical vocation. *Eloge de l'amour* (In Praise of Love), *Notre musique*, *Film Socialisme* (Film Socialism) are feature films, indeed, films with actors, characters, ideas of *mise-en-scène* – and even more than what the discourses accompanying them might lead us to believe, especially when Godard, still obliged to play the game of promotional interviews, responds to the requirement that he formulate his political opinions and his points of view on the world. This, no doubt, remains the least interesting in what we expect from him today. At this moment the critical dimension is turning against the director (who is hardly innocent in the affair) in order to limit his films to a series of aphorisms. The result is that the cinematographic energy that runs through the work, and that over the years has also fueled his critical activism in the best of ways, disappears. Such is still the case with the short film he shot in 3D in 2012 for the city of Guimaes, the European capital of culture for 2013: inquiring of the effects and the context of the use of 3D with a somber rigor, *3 Désastres* (3 Disasters) nonetheless plays with them, along the way hailing with affection some of the other uses of this technique. And he surely does not close the door on what might come after it.

Notes

1   This chapter has been translated by Tom Conley.
2   Godard (1962).
3   Surely there is the unique instance of *Day for Night*, the only film directed by a member of the gang of *Cahiers*, with the exception of Godard, that explicitly deals with the

making of a movie. But as it has been often noted, *Je vous présente Pamela* (I Introduce You to Pamela), the film the characters of *Day for Night* are making, hardly resembles any of Truffaut's films, nor anything that would be realistic. Truffaut puts forward an "idea of cinema," and most of all his love of cinema rather than its real practice, and moreover it is the real cause for the violent reproach that Godard addressed to Truffaut at the opening of the film, which brought about an overt break between the two directors.

4   Later, in order to formulate the issue otherwise, Godard comes back to this parallel between Bazin and himself in view of criticism. In an interview with Alain Bergala in 1985 that opens *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard* he says that "Bazin was a film maker who didn't make films but who made films in speaking about them" (Godard, 1968, 10) – himself having become a critic who no longer writes criticism but makes criticism by filming.

5   Andrew (2010, 33).

6   Marker (1978, 7).

7   In particular in the interview published by the *Inrockuptibles* of October 21, 1998, that inspired a lively polemic with Claude Lanzmann and the review *Les Temps modernes*, in which Georges Did-Huberman also took part. Compare on this topic Frodon (2007, 24).

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2

À bout de souffle

Trials in New Coherences[1]

Phillip John Usher

An Inaugural Moment

À bout de souffle is Jean-Luc Godard's first feature-length film. The release date of 1960 means that Godard was one of the last members of the *Cahiers du cinéma* group to make the transition from critic to director of a long film, such that this film was, in Godard's own words, the culmination of "a decade's worth of making movies in my head" (Andrew, 1987, 4). Perhaps because he waited longer than most colleagues, the film was an immediate moment of rupture in cinema history. Much more than Roger Vadim's *Et dieu créa la femme* (And God Created Woman) (1956), or Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (Handsome Serge) (1958) or *Les Cousins* (The Cousins) (1959) or François Truffaut's *Les 400 coups* (The 400 Blows) (1959), *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) was inaugural. Henceforth, there would be classic French cinema – and there would be Godard. The film shattered cinema's pretension to offer an illusion of reality, instead offering new kinds of coherences that were brittle, fragile, and demanding in a way that audiences likely did not anticipate. Filmed on a budget of just 40 million francs, half the period's standard film budget (Marie, 1989, 54), *À bout de souffle* brought to French cinema not just another film, but a new understanding of film. It was film and film theory rolled into one. In the process, not surprisingly, it "[a mis] à mal le discours critique" (threw critical discourse into turmoil) (Esquenazi, 2004, 70) – seeing *anew* first means letting go of one's habits.[2] The film was, perhaps surprisingly, given our current cultural climate of re-runs and the general consensus (in the United States, at least) that a successful film simply replays accepted codes, a huge commercial success with over 250 thousand entries over the first seven weeks (Cerisuelo, 1989, 43). Indeed, it was "a hit with both the public and the critics and Godard's career

as a feature filmmaker was finally and definitely launched" (Dixon, 1997, 16). The film, of course, had its detractors: Louis Seguin, in the journal *Positif*, said it deployed a "mythology" that was "rightist" (Brody, 2008, 73).[3] Still, what Godard accomplished was, however, generally recognized and frequently repeated in both scholarly and popular venues: even the American talk-show host Dick Cavett introduced his guest Godard, in 1980, by saying that *À bout de souffle* had "changed the grammar of film" (*Dick Cavett Show*, 1980). Based on a script written by François Truffaut (which Godard reworked), with Claude Chabrol as technical director, and financed by Georges de Beauregard, the film carries traces of a New Wave collaboration[4] – but Godard is wholly its *auteur*.[5] There are many articles and book chapters about Godard's first feature, which deal with it from perspectives too numerous to list, from the historical, to the Derridean-esque (Ropars, 1981–82) and the Lacanian (Turner, 1983). The humble aim of the present pages is to interrogate how the film, via formal innovations, calls attention to its own rethinking of filmic hermeneutics. In other words, I shall be asking how *À bout de souffle* calls attention to itself as film and as filmic innovation.

It is useful to begin with the film's production. *À bout de souffle* was shot between August 17 and September 15, 1959 (Andrew, 1987, 31) and itself carries multiple traces of its moment of fabrication.[6] If we can judge by the clock-calendar in the travel agency (14:39), which gives the date as "Friday August, 21," then the film's action is seemingly set in the very present of filming – August 21 was indeed a Friday in 1959. The diegetic year is confirmed by the shot of a cinema showing Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima, mon amour* (Hiroshima, My Love) (1959) [26:06]. And the film even offers, in a cameo, a shot of Godard himself, as he would have looked at the moment he made the film [53:13]. Shots of President Eisenhower's visit to Paris (September 2–4, 1959) again confirm the present-ness of the film [1:07:49], as does another shot of a cinema where Randolph Scott and Budd Boetticher's *Westbound* (1959) is playing. The point, of course, is that the film does not hide the reality of its own production – rather, already in such obvious traces of the filming process, it forces the viewer to consider the procedures of mimesis as an open question, rather than as a formula than is here being applied to a pre-existing reality.

To remain momentarily with the moment of fabrication, let us recall that this was not, of course, Godard's first film, only his first feature-length film. Before *À bout de souffle*, Godard had made *Opération béton* (Operation Concrete) (1954), a documentary (shot on 35mm film) about the construction of a dam in Switzerland, as well as four fiction shorts: *Une femme coquette* (A Flirtatious Woman) (1955), *Charlotte et Véronique ou Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick* (All the Boys Are Called Patrick) (1957), *Une histoire d'eau* (A History of Water) (1958), *Charlotte et son Jules* (Charlotte and her Boyfriend) (1959). Certain aspects of these early films will be recast in *À bout de souffle* – although what *survives* in the latter is most often in the form of elements that do not, theoretically, force the viewer to redefine the filmic viewing experience. What echoes of these earlier films are in *À bout de souffle*? In

Charlotte et Véronique, there are the Picasso poster on the apartment wall and the filming of a character reading (Hegel's *Esthetics*, the journal *Arts* with its headline "Le cinéma français crève sous les fausses légendes" (French cinema is dying under false legends) etc.), the presence of newspapers (*France-Soir*), the fact that filming takes place in everyday Paris (an apartment, cafés, the Luxembourg gardens), the fascination with American film: a James Dean film poster reads "Ce film explique le drame et la fureur de vivre de l'inoubliable" (This film explains the drama and the furor of living off the unforgettable); in *Une histoire d'eau*, there are the mixture of daily life (Paris floods) and intellectual reflection (on Petrarch and the art of digression), the quotes from literature (Baudelaire); in *Charlotte et son Jules*, there is already a young, misogynistic, and very verbose Jean-Paul Belmondo (whose voice is supplied by Godard himself) who thinks of Alfa Romeos and is abandoned by his lover. Despite all that *À bout de souffle* inherits from the earlier films, nothing in these early shorts truly prepares the viewer for Godard's first feature film, in which the energy of a radically new set of techniques pushes the history of cinema in a completely new direction.

   Although Godard's cinema works more and more towards the obliteration of traditional linear narrative, *À bout de souffle* finds its point of departure in a story, namely in a news item concerning a person called (in real life) Michel Portail. Portail, a Frenchman, had lived in the United States, where he robbed a drugstore, for which he did prison time, before heading back to France; while on the boat, he met a female American journalist, Beverly Lumet, with whom he then went on to lead the high life in Paris. On November 24, 1952, he stole a Ford Mercury from outside the Greek embassy and headed to Le Havre. En route, a motorcycle policeman pulled him over because of a minor traffic violation (a problem with his headlights) and Portail ended up killing the policeman (Marie, 1989, 30; De Baecque, 2010, 115). Truffaut – not Godard – took up this story to write a scenario, changing Michel Portail into Lucien Poiccard and Beverly Lumet into Patricia Franchini; it was now a De Soto convertible that was stolen in Marseille, etc. Godard, in turn took up this script, turning Lucien back into Michel and making various other changes. A simple comparison of Truffaut's script and Godard's movie reveals that Godard made various changes: he extended the scene in Patricia's hotel room, originally only about ten lines in length in Truffaut's original script (Marie, 1989, 55) and, most importantly, he changed the film's ending: in Truffaut's version, Patricia watches as Lucien drives off (alive) in Berruti's car; in Godard's version, she stands over Michel who has been shot and is about to die. Truffaut explained the change by referencing Godard's own desperate state at the time he made the film: "Il a choisi une fin violente, parce qu'il était plus triste que moi. Il était vraiment désespéré quand il a fait ce film. Il avait besoin de filmer la mort, il avait besoin de cette fin-là" (He chose a violent ending because he was sadder than myself. He was truly desperate when he made that film. He needed to film death, he needed precisely that ending) (Collet, 1963, 172–173). Godard himself gave a different – impishly simple – explanation, saying that in gangster

films, the hero must die and that he "had no business in deliberately contradicting the genre" (Narboni and Milne, 1972, 174).

This, then, was the origin of the film about a man who ends up "à bout de souffle" or "breathless." Before advancing any further, it must be said immediately that the English-language title for the film – *Breathless* – is a translation that both fails and succeeds.[7] It fails in that to be "à bout de souffle" is to have no breath left, because of bodily exhaustion; it suggests that the person, like his or her breath, is used up. There is nothing left. That is exactly the state in which we find the film's main protagonist at the end of the film. There can be no doubt that Poiccard is out of breath once he falls, for the spectator sees Poiccard exhaling, for the last time, a cloud of cigarette smoke.

To be *breathless,* on the other hand, *suggests* something slightly different: it still means that someone has no breath, that they perhaps have difficulty breathing, but it evokes much more the panting and excitement of lovemaking than the exhaustion of a man at the end of his tether. Yet the translation also works, at least for the polyglot filmgoer, for taken together as an indissoluble pair, the titles *À bout de souffle* and *Breathless* emblematize the film's complicated relationship to American cinema, to which I shall return, because in a sense *À bout de souffle* is a purposefully failed translation of the American *film noir* genre.

Characters in Search of a Film

Just as the writing of Montaigne or Proust is fashioned by intertextuality to the point of being writing about writing, so *À bout de souffle* is constituted by its relationship to other films. Godard's film, indeed, is literary not just in its referencing of literature, but procedurally – as Luc Moullet put it: "[Godard] picore dans les livres un peu comme une poule dans les jardins" ([Godard] pecks around in books a bit like a hen in a garden) (Moullet, 2001, 1.44). And Godard indeed *pecks around* just as much in other films as in books. As to which films, we can remember Truffaut, who noted that the film's place in cinematic history was defined by its being the "heir" to Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (L'Atalante) (1934), with Belmondo seen as the child of Jean (Jean Dasté) and Juliette (Dita Parlo) (Andrew, 1987, 177). *À bout de souffle* itself, via on-screen references such as borrowed scenes or move posters, points to a whole abundance of films, such as Otto Preminger's *Whirpool* (1949), Bretaigne Windust and Raoul Walsh's *The Enforcer* (1951), Mark Robson's *The Harder They Fall* (1956), Samuel Fuller's *Forty Guns* (1957), Robert Aldrich's *Ten Seconds to Hell* (1959), Budd Boetticher's *Westbound* (1959), and many others (Cerisuelo, 1989, 48). Another initial hint at the film's embeddedness in film history is the fact that Poiccard also goes by the alias Laszlo Kovacs, a reference to the Hungarian cinematographer (1933–2007), perhaps most famous for his films *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), neither of which had been made, of course,

by the time Godard was making *À bout de souffle* (Dixon, 1997, 17). Kovac's early understanding of cinema was not dissimilar from that of Godard's in many ways – he saw it as a multimedia art informed by collage: "a blend of many different arts [:] architecture, the history of art, world literature, music, theatre" (Ettedgui, 1998, 84), a personal library of references that would then feed into one's film-making, a thought Godard also expressed: "Over the years you accumulate many things and then suddenly you use them in what you're doing" (Narboni and Milne, 1972, 172).[8] And then there is the presence of Jean-Pierre Melville. At one point, Patricia, who – like Jane Fonda's character in *Tout va bien* (All's Well) (1972) – works as a journalist, interviews the writer Parvulesco, played by fellow New Wave film-maker Jean-Pierre Melville, who here imitates Raoul Walsh (Kline, 1992, 186, 200). Recently, Kevin Hayes has suggested that "the respect Godard held for Melville's filmmaking demands [that] we treat [Parvulesco] with respect" (Hayes, 2001, 187) – but the situation is likely more complex.[9] It has been noted that "l'intervention de Melville a pour fonction essentielle le commentaire des relations amoureuses – voilà à quoi est réduit l'écrivain – et il rejoint, par là même, la problématique de la modernité" (the main function of Melville's intervention is to comment upon romantic relationships – such is what the writer's role has been reduced to – and the writer thus join, in this way, the problematics of modernity) (Cerisuelo, 1989, 50). For sure, Godard is here mocking the sheep-like crowd that seeks answers from the artist. But we must wonder further what the connection with Melville is. Melville, after all, was already *the* French director of gangster films – he had already imported, so to speak, *film noir* into France, a *translatio* that Godard here re-configures. *À bout de souffle* is self-consciously not *Bob le Flambeur* (Bob the Gambler) (1956), which Godard named the second best film of 1959 (Godard, 1989–91, 2. 173), and consciously not *Deux hommes dans Manhattan* (Two Men in Manhattan) (1959). In the latter, Melville himself played one of the key roles, so his face would have been familiar to viewers of *À bout de souffle*. As Dudley Andrew has underlined, "attribuer à Jean-Pierre Melville le rôle du célèbre écrivain Parvu-lesco est un geste d'un hommage douteux" (to give Jean-Pierre Melville the role of the famous writer Parvulesco is a doubtful gesture of homage), noting that *Parvulesco* is the Romanian word for "puny" (Andrew, 1986, 17). With Parvulesco-Melville, we approach the central question of the film's relationship to other films, that is, *how* it reworks the *film noir* genre. *À bout de souffle* is not, as is sometimes said in passing a "pastiche of the American crime thriller" (Powrie, 2003, 104). The word *pastiche* is perhaps a useful one when used, as by Powrie, to quickly sum-marize – but it is insufficient. The relationship is more complex. To begin with, the film is dedicated to Monogram Pictures, the producers of many "B" gangster movies in the 1940s and 1950s and both Truffaut and Godard had written articles for the *Cahiers* and for *Arts* celebrating the films that Monogram produced (Dixon, 1997, 17).

We must turn to the two main characters themselves: Michel is a self-conscious reworking of the screen presence of Humphrey Bogart;[10] and Patricia, according

to Godard, takes up the character she had played previously in an earlier film by Otto Preminger. Let us begin with Michel. If *À bout de souffle* replays those events concerning Michel Portail, with Michel Poiccard now taking the lead role, Poiccard's character is elsewhere than in the details of these events. As much as a car thief, Poiccard is a character in search of what it means to be a character. It has been said we find in *À bout de souffle* a cult of Humphrey Bogart (De Baecque, 2010, 115), but if it is a *culte*, then it is in the religious sense of praying for something that is not present in a verifiably material form. Mark Robson's *The Harder They Fall* (1956), featuring Humphrey Bogart, is perhaps the most important film referenced and reworked by *À bout de soufflé*. In a nutshell, Michel wants to be Bogey – but he is not and cannot be. And it is in his failure to fully become his model that his character resides, not in what he actually takes from him. As Alan Williams put it, Bogart represents an "unattainable ideal: Michel Poiccard can never become Humphrey Bogart" (Williams, 1992, 384). But how does Michel demonstrate his desire to be Bogart? And why can we talk of failure? Bogart's typical suit, fedora, and cigarette will be adopted by Michel. And throughout the film, Michel also imitates one of Bogart's defining gestures – the thumb-dragged-across-the-mouth gesture. The gesture occurs many times, including at particularly significant moments in the film: Michel does it right as the film begins; he performs it several times in front of a mirror as part of longer scenes in which Michel is trying out difference facial expressions, as if he is testing out who he is; he does it during the long scene in Patricia's apartment during a key conversation in which she says "je voudrais savoir ce qu'il y a derrière ton visage," (I'd love to know what's behind your face) only to conclude that, when she looks at his face, she learns "rien, rien, rien" (nothing, nothing, nothing) (42:58) – she does not see the desire behind the gesture. Moreover, the film ends with the same thumb-on-lips gesture – only this time performed by Patricia, either out of respect for the beaten Michel, a kind of eulogy, or as a sign that she somehow claims victory over him, and in any case prepared for by Patricia's earlier wearing of Michel's shirt, hat, and glasses.

À bout de souffle's connection to Bogart is also underscored in a key scene in which Michel stops before a poster of *The Harder They Fall* (in French *Plus dure sera la chute*). For no apparent reason, Michel exits the subway on the Champs Elysées not far from the Arc de Triomphe and he seemingly heads directly for a movie theater. He stops in front of the movie poster and utters a throaty "Bogey." There is an unusual shot-counter shot of Michel looking at Bogart; of Bogart (in a photo displayed in the cinema's window) looking back at Michel; and then of Michel performing Bogart's thumb-on-mouth gesture. It is a moment of intense sincerity as Michel looks on at the character he would like to be.

Critics have noted that Michel is not a convincing gangster (Cerisuelo, 1989, 49), and that is surely the point, whether it was intended or not. Godard himself once remarked that, as if in anticipation of Brian de Palma's remake starring Al Pacino, he set out to make his own version of Howard Hawks's *Scarface* (1932),

but ended up making *Alice in Wonderland* (Bergala, 1998, 219). He made a film about a film wanting to be, almost ontologizing the filmic process itself via Michel. It is that Godard did not kill off narrative or plot with this film; rather, he pushed the story to the film's margins, such that "l'art de la représentation ne se réduit pas à l'art du représenté" (the art of representation would not be reduced to the art of the represented" (Sainati, 2001, 37). Essential here is *À bout de souffle*'s connection to *film noir*.[11] The nature of this connection is, arguably, what the film is about. Just as *Une femme est une femme* (A Woman is a Woman) (1961) is not a musical but rather a film about the *idea* of a musical (Bergala, 1998, 219), so *À bout de souffle* is not itself a film noir, but a film that interrogates the very *idea* of film noir. The film does not imitate film noir, rather it "becomes instead a film *about* imitation" (Morrey, 2005, 9).[12]

The fact that Poiccard can never be Bogart is not really about filmic sources – it is in Poiccard's failure to be Bogart that Godard's film is exciting and meaningful. We can think here of how both films deal – in an instance of metamedial commentary – with the printed press. In *The Harder They Fall*, Eddie (Bogart) is a sportswriter down on his luck who, to make a buck, allows himself to be hired by the crooked Nick Benko, who is looking for someone to help publicize his new fighter Toro Moreno – despite being a giant, he is really not a very good fighter. The fights are rigged and Moreno's reputation depends solely on Eddie's skills at manipulating opinion via his writings in the press. And when Moreno loses a fight against a real heavyweight champ and Eddie, feeling bad about how Moreno has been treated, gives him his own earnings from the whole scheme, Eddie turns his press-manipulating talents from promoting a fake fighter to dismounting the very manipulative system of which he was a part – the film closes with a shot of Eddie's typewriter and on the sheet of paper therein, we read Eddie's statement: "The boxing business must rid itself of the evil influence of racketeers and crooked managers, even if it takes an Act of Congress to do it." Of course, Eddie does not mention the complicitous role of the media. Now, if we turn to *À bout de souffle*, we find Michel, who longs to be Bogart, more or less in the position *not* of Bogart, but of Moreno: Michel cannot manipulate the media; instead, he hides behind newspapers and asks Patricia to purchase *France-Soir* to see if the police are indeed close to finding him.[13] Unlike Bogart, the media manipulator, Michel is media's victim – in fact, he is twice media's victim. First, he is denounced by a character who sees his picture in *France-Soir*. Second, it turns out that that denouncer is no other that Jean-Luc Godard himself, who appears in a cameo. What kind of *film noir* would have its director hand over its hero to the police? The answer: a *film noir* that is not exactly a *film noir* but film that questions what a *film noir* is.

Let us now turn to Patricia. She, too, is not merely the reproduction of her counterpart, Beverly Lumet, in the Michel Portail affair. Like Michel, Patricia's origins are also partly cinematic, although in a very different manner. The actress who played her, Jean Seberg, had recently starred in two films by Otto Preminger: *Saint Joan* (1956), in which she played France's national heroine; and

Bonjour Tristesse (1958), based on François Sagan's best-seller of the same name, in which she played Cécile, an American teenager living on the French Riviera alongside her playboy father, a life at once rich and meaningless. It is in respect of this second film that Godard situated Patricia: "le personnage de Jean Seberg prend la suite de celui de *Bonjour Tristesse*" (Jean Seberg's character is the continuation of her role in *Bonjour Tristesse*). He even added: "J'aurais pu prendre le dernier plan du film et enchaîner sur un carton: Trois ans après . . ." (I could have taken the last shot of that film and just carried on, indicating 'Three years later . . .') (Bergala, 1998, 218).[14] For anyone who has seen *Bonjour Tristesse*, such a statement might come as a surprise. Of course, Seberg-Patricia shares certain things with Seberg-Cécile: both are Americans living in France, both are students (albeit not particularly dedicated ones), and both are caught between a spirit of independence and the situations in which they find themselves. But the end of *Bonjour Tristesse* hardly defines Patricia's character in *À bout de souffle:* the woman whom Cécile's father was to marry has driven off a cliff. It was probably suicide. The film closes with shots of Cécile crying, a sharp contrast the first shots of Patricia.

Whereas Cécile is often (literally) in the driving seat, that is rarely the case for Patricia – with the most notable exception being when Michel is almost caught and they must exist a parking garage. There is, of course, the usual accusation that Godard hates women. And, indeed, it is not hard to see that there is "une nette tendance misogyne chez Poiccard" (a clear misogynistic tendency in Poiccard) (De Baecque, 2010, 116). That much is obvious. Michel complains about women drivers: "Les femmes au volant, c'est la lâcheté personnifiée" (Women drivers – cowardice personified!) (40:05); he asserts his physical force over Patricia by saying that if she does not smile in eight seconds, he will strangle her – she smiles (31:37); he shows not the least sense of understanding or mutual responsibility when she announces that she is pregnant: "Tu aurais pu faire attention" (You could have been a bit careful) is his only comment (36:25); when Michel and Patricia compare how many people they have slept with, *he*, of course, has the bigger score (40:34); he lashes out with insults, calling Patricia "cruelle, idiote, lamentable, sans coeur, lâche, méprisable" (cruel, idiotic, heartless, cowardly, despicable) (43:15) and saying that she isn't even capable of putting on make-up: "Tu ne sais même pas mettre ton rouge à lèvres" (You don't even know how to put on your lipstick) (43:15). But despite this, Patricia is just as in control as Cécile – she may not drive literally, but she is the one who denounces Michel.[15]

Trials

À bout de souffle, unlike Godard's early shorts with which it certainly shares some characteristics, renews cinema by renewing the form of cinema. Three of the

most important ways in which the film changed how we view are: 1) the use of handheld equipment and low-budget filming solutions; 2) promotion of the cinema screen as something not just visible, but readable; 3) new or renewed editing techniques.

First, the name of Raoul Coutard (b. 1924) must be cited, for it was his eyes and hands that held the camera for *À bout de souffle* and countless other New Wave films. In Pierre Schoendoerffer's words, Coutard has "une marque à lui" (his own stamp) (Schoendoerffer, n.d., 0:40). His image apprenticeship, in the French army, at the *Institut Géographique National* (IGN), as well as in the production of *romans-photos*, prepared him for filming quickly, with light material, and with different genres in mind that could be lightly and playfully interwoven. Raoul Coutard filmed using a silent 35mm Ariflex camera and Godard promoted cheap solutions to problems other filmmakers found complex: instead of installing tracks for travelling shots, Couatrd carried the camera on his shoulder and simply walked around – or was pushed in a wheelchair by Godard or an assistant. Traces of such an approach can be seen in the film itself, not just in the nature of the images, which sometimes have a jerky effect, but also in the faces of unsuspecting passersby. As Coutard has explained recently, in order to be as anonymous as possible while filming in the streets of Paris, where unsuspecting Parisians became unpaid extras, use was made "des petites bagnoles que les gens des PTT [Postes, télégraphes et téléphones] avaient [..] on a fait un trou dans la coque pour tourner dans la rue sans que les gens nous voient" (of those small carts that postman have – we have a hole in the front, so that we could film without people noticing) (Schoendoerffer, n.d., 20:13; see also Sterritt 1999: 47). In many of the scenes where Michel and Patricia walk through the street, such Parisians can be seen peering at the invisible Coutard and his strange cart.

Second, then: Godard invites us to read the screen. When Michel is back in Paris, he pauses briefly at the scene of a car accident, which took place just outside a shop whose sign reads "Roneo," gesturing towards Roneotype technology, the kind of spirit duplicator for low volume printing that used to be a staple in schools. In another shot, Patricia walks down the street and passes by "Gaya Langues" (Gaya Languages) and then, once joined by Michel, past a "[magasin de la] Radio et du disque" (Radio and Record Shop). Patricia gets into Van Doude's car outside a cinema showing Alain Resnais' recent *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959). When Michel is hiding behind a newspaper (dated Saturday August 29, 1959), the viewer sees a cartoon strip titled "Juliette de mon coeur" (My Heart's Juliet), a sure echo of Patricia's desire, as she announced in her hotel room, that they be Romeo and Juliet (1:06:50) – a play that breaks down the barriers between references to high and low culture, between text and image, and which forges a connection between two separated filmic moments. These various incitements to read the screen culminate towards the end of the film, when an electronic sign in a drugstore window reads "Le filet se resserre autour de Michel" and "Arrestation imminente" (The net tightens around Michel / Arrest Imminent) (1:10:28).

Marie Claire Ropars has demonstrated the need to read the screen in this film, offering numerous examples, such as how the "chèque barré" (or "crossed" check) that Michel receives haunts the image of the movie poster for Jeff Chandler's *Vivre dangereusement jusqu'au bout* (Live Dangerously Through) which is equally "striped with figures" and whose *bout* in turn points to the title of Godard's film, etc. (Ropars 1987: 150). Another key example that Ropars foregrounds is how the *Pourquoi?* (Why?) on the wall of Michel's ex-girlfriend's apartment relates to Michel's surname: *Pourq(oui)* and *Poicc(ard)* (Ropars, 1981-82, 152). Ropars' four-part conclusion (Ropars, 1981–82, 158–159) can serve as a propaedeutic on the art of reading Godard's screens.[16]

Third, Godard made use of various editing techniques that made for a brand new experience of watching a movie that it is perhaps hard to appreciate now that such techniques are used with abandon in everything from indie films to pop-up Internet commercials. There is, to begin, the iris-in, through which it seems that the camera, its lens malfunctioning, squints in order to focus on a specific detail. The film's first *iris in* occurs after Michel's moment with the Bogey poster outside the cinema. The second shows Godard himself as he denounces Poiccard. These two privileged moments signal Poiccard's relationship to the cinematic history of which he is a pawn – he longs to be Bogey, but is really Godard's character sold by the filmmaker himself. The technique, which Godard said he wanted to use as if for the first time, can seem arbitrary, thus folds the story into the extra-diagetic realities of film history. Again, film itself, like Poiccard, is on trial.

More importantly, there are the jump cuts – again, a feature of the film that Dick Cavett mentioned in his 1980 introduction to Godard. Although George Méliès is recognized as the father of the jump cut and although examples of it can be seen in the films of Eisenstein, Godard is responsible for first showing the technique's radical potentialities. The first use of the term *jump cut* in English seems to date, indeed, from Variety's 1960 review of *À bout de souffle* (Bordwell, 1984, 10).[17] As commentators have noted, the jump cut seems to be a perfect fit for this film so concerned with speed and time: "les voitures sont faites pour rouler, pas pour s'arrêter" (cars are made to run not to stop) [4:27], says Michel on the highway; "Les Français disent toujours une seconde pour dire cinq minutes" (Frenchmen always say a second to say five minutes) [18:30], says Patricia while Michel heads off to make a phone call. "Godard est prêt à se tourner vers des stratégies de montage lorsque la frénésie sur le plateau ne réussit pas à traduire l'agitation de l'intrigue, les caractères ou le thème" (Godard is ready to turn to a frenzy of montage when a simple shot would fail to translate the excitement of the plot, character or theme) (Andrew, 1986, 13). The result: "a film of wild discontinuity" (Kline 2006: 73). There are many famous jump cut moments throughout the film. Most famous are the shots of Patricia in the car as Michel drives her around Paris, through the Place de la Concorde and onwards. Michel starts: "Hélas, hélas, hélas, j'aime une fille qui a . . ." (Alas, alas, alas I love a girl who

has . . .', following which he enumerates various features (the nape of her neck, her breasts, her voice, her wrists, her forehead, her knees). Between each feature, the camera jumps, while Michel's voice continues. Interpretations abound as to the possible meanings at this point: the viewer is forced to adopt Michel's obsessive enumeration of Patricia's features, Patricia is alienated from the film, and so forth. Perspective can be found by thinking forward to the opening of *Le Mépris* (Contempt) (1963), which begins with shots of a naked Brigitte Bardot, while Paul Javal (Michel Piccoli) talks of her body. While the scene in *Le Mépris* features no jump cuts, the use of colored filters placed over the camera lens, purposefully obscures the libidinous and voyeuristic desires. Godard, in an often repeated anecdote, added the filters for just this reason as a response to the producer's call to show more of Bardot's body in the film – so Godard did, but intentionally cutting the scene from the main part of the film *and* making Bardot's body difficult to see. The jump cuts that give rhythm to Michel's enumeration of Patricia's features have a similar disturbing effect.

In the apartment of Poiccard's ex-girlfriend, there is a jump cut during a banal conversation about what Michel and the woman have been up to in their respective lives: "Et au quartier, quoi de neuf?" (What's new in the neighborhood?) asks Michel, to which the young woman responds "Sais pas" (Dunno).[18] Between the question and the answer, a rapid jump cut moves Michel, all of a sudden, closer to the wardrobe. There is, seemingly, no particular reason for this cut – although one wonders if the presence of Godard's own voice on the diegetic radio, announcing "Il est sept heures, deux minutes" (It is two minutes past seven) (7:02), does not somehow provoke it. Still, the same scene includes several other jump cuts not connected with directorial intervention.

When Michel is first driving through the French countryside, singing to himself in happy tones, jump cuts add a sense not so much of speed but of levity. As Michel sings out "Pa, Pa, Pa, Patricia," a series of jump cuts occurs, each time showing Michel on the left hand side of the road, overtaking vehicles on the right. In these sequential shots, the primary subject stays the same (the hood of the car, the road outside, and also the subjective point of view of the camera located in Michel's car), but the secondary subject changes (a member of British Petroleum's fleet, several black cars, etc.). Meanwhile, Michel's singing of Patricia's name continues uninterrupted – he will, moreover, repeat the "Pa, pa, pa" sounds less than a minute later, imitating the sound of a gun he finds in the glove compartment, one example of how the film adds in unexpected continuities and coherences while removing more traditional ones. Another example of such compensation is when Michel pretends to fire a gun through the car window at the sun and the audience is given to hear a gunshot even though Michel is only pretending (4:03); however, the sound will be replayed when Michel shoots the policeman only a minute later (5:12). The jump cuts here are as if replayed when Michel and Patricia drive through Paris in a taxi (1:01:25), with Michel telling the

driver to overtake this car, then that car – here, too, a sense of speed and of 'being in control' is projected: "allez mon grand'père, reste pas derrière le 2CV" (Go grandfather, not stay behind the 2CV) (1:02:15).

A dense collection of jump cuts is to be found in the scene where Patricia talks with Van Doude about books, life, and a possible job – he assigns her to go interview Parvulesco at Orly airport. As Van Doude tells the story about a woman he has known for two years and with whom he now decides he should sleep – she, apparently, had the same idea at the same moment. As he talks, his face, as the continuity script notes, appears to "pulse" (Andrew, 1987, 64–65). When he has finished the story, the camera cuts to show a very perplexed Patricia. The jump cuts, although perhaps the solution to a concrete problem – the first cut of the film was too long – bring a coherence to the film, as if creating a crease in time and space that draws our attention to any given situation by forcing us to see the film *as film*, as a medium that is anything but transparent or automatic.

Spaces and Places

If various editing techniques make *À bout de souffle* a film *about* time, the sights selected for filming and the way in which signs about travel and movement cluster together on the screen and in dialogue also make it a film about space and place. *À bout de souffle* is a film set in Paris, but peopled with individuals born elsewhere. As David Sterritt has noted, the film conveys "not the psychology of its characters but the rhythm of their passage through a specific place at a specific moment" (Sterritt, 1999, 54). Michel – who is from Marseille, as he tells Patricia (9:45); we see his birth house (1:00:59) – plans to head to Italy. Although while driving along the highway, Michel says: "J'aime beaucoup la France. [. . .] Si vous n'aimez pas la mer, si vous n'aimez pas la montagne, si vous n'aimez pas la ville, allez vous faire foutre." (I love France. If you don't love the sea, if you don't love the mountain, if you don't love the town, go fuck yourself) (3.25); while walking through Paris with Patricia, he states rather "J'en ai marre de la France" (I'm sick of France) (12:00); Patricia is American and she lives, moreover, in a hotel seemingly destined for tourists as we see, at the front desk, a list of sightseeing excursions (27:22).

Despite, or perhaps because of the fact that both Michel and Patricia look on at Paris as outsiders, the film takes great pleasure in showing Paris' sights. One sees the Arc de Triomphe (9.09; 26:37). The Eiffel Tower can be glimpsed as Patricia and Michel drive through the Place de la Concorde (22:03) and again later on. And, typical of Coutard's work for the ING, there are even shots, taken from a plane, of both the Louvre and Notre Dame.

One particularly important scene in this respect, and which is made up of a single long shot, is when Michel visits a travel agency. Michel enters a travel agency, in an attempt to track down Tolmatchoff who owes him money. The shot

lasts approximately two and a half minutes. The camera follows Michel around the agency, for the most part keeping him center shot. There are no jump cuts – no editing whatsoever. In the center of Paris, this travel agency is a kind of heterotopia, full of signs of connection and disconnection, homeliness and foreignness. Tolmatchoff greets him as a friend – "Salut, amigo!" – and Poiccard answers with "Salut, fils!" Michel is supposedly in the right place. Yet, the man's name is not given on the counter-top, only the word "AVIATION" is given. And all around one sees the expected paraphernalia of travel agencies: a world map, a model plane, lots of little foreign flags, posters for various destinations – with New York being the only readable one, etc. When Michel and Tolmatchoff head off to find the money, the latter puts his arm around the former and the two engage in friendly conversation, using the informal *tu*: "Ça va [. . .] et toi?" (14:20). Still, this is a shady alliance and when Poiccard finds out that the check is no good, he looks for a loan, only to learn that Tolmatchoff recently bet all his money on Sunday's *tiercé*, the French trifecta system for betting on horses, run by the PMU (*Pari mutuel urbain*). We might even hear further locational pun here: the *amigo* lost his money to the PMU, of which the word *Pari* (bet or betting) is pronounced the same as *Paris* (the capital city), in French.[19] He bet on *Pari(s)* and he lost – and so does Michel, who now asks after other collaborators: Bob Montagné, whose name suggests both the ex-con gambler hero (played by Roger Duchesne) of Jean-Pierre Melville's *Bob le flambeur* (1956) *and* the mountains (*montagnes*), and hence perhaps the Alps that separate France and Switzerland; and Berutti, whose name is obviously Italian, pointing towards Michel's final destination. He decides to contact Antonio and is told that he can reach him at "Elysées quatre-vingt-neuf, quatre-vingt-quatre"; he then picks up the phone and asks for "Elysées nonante-neuf, huitante-quatre," translating hexagonal French into Swiss French (15:12), a translation he un-does later on in the film (37:00) when he tries again to reach Antonio, asking first for "nonante-neuf, huitante-quatre," then for "quatre-vingt-neuf, quatre-vingt-quatre," forming a chiasmic structure vis-à-vis the heterotopic agency – in Patricia's room, he is at home: on the final attempt (48:08), he asks only for "quatre-vingt-neuf, quatre-vingt-quatre." As for Tolmatchoff, he is keen to leave Paris; he explains "Je vais plaquer ici. Je suis en train de me rouiller," (I am rotting here. I am rusting away) to which Michel responds "Mieux vaut rouiller que dérouiller" (Better to rust up than get beaten up!), spoken as if Michel fears the latter. Tolmatchoff is ready to fly off because, like a car, he is rusting away. The scene ends as it began: "Au revoir fils!" and "Ciao amigo!". The scene shows a point in Paris that is wholly and directly connected to everywhere else: Italy, New York, Russia (if Tolmatchoff is, as we may probably assume, Russian), Switzerland, and the world. In the following shot, where the camera leaves Poiccard who has exited, to follow the detectives, again see Tolmatchoff, now caressing another plane, as if expressing his desire to leave. As he talks with the detective, he smiles and spins the plane's propellers with a flicked finger. It is as if these two long and uninterrupted shots provide a pause, in which the camera and the viewer are for a moment grounded

in a given place in Paris and in real time – but at the same time, signs of various types call for dispersal and flight and point towards the fact that alliances (notably that of Michel and Tolmatchoff) are soon to be broken.

The Soundtrack

In *À bout de souffle*, the sound is often as important – if in many ways less revolutionary – as the images. As Michel Marie has noted, the "parti pris visuel de discontinuité va de pair avec une large autonomie de la bande sonore, qui possède sa propre durée, indépendamment de la logique des raccords image" (the decision to privilege visual discontinuity goes hand in hand with the soundtrack's general independence – it has its own duration that is independent of the logic behind how images connect) (Marie, 1989, 59). Throughout the jump cuts, already discussed, actors' voices and other sounds continue as if there had been no interruption. Perhaps more memorable is the film's music. Films can include music in various ways: diegetic performances, quotation of recorded artifacts, and as a soundtrack – and Godard generally does all three, purposefully *not* harmonizing the different sources (Williams, 1985, 335). Godard's diegetic sounds, here as elsewhere, are frequently mechanical (car horns, etc.).

As for recorded artifacts, records, again here as elsewhere, are essential: Godard's films are fascinated with vinyl records – already in *Tous les garcons s'appellent Patrick*, Charlotte et Véronique sit around in their apartment playing records; Nana will sell them in *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live); and Madeleine is a recording artist in *Masculin, Féminin* (Masculine / Feminine). In *À bout de souffle*, records are present less as commodity, however, than as the vehicle for classical music. Patricia puts on a record during the long scene in her hotel room. More importantly, another record is played during the end of the film, announcing Michel's death. "Qu'est-ce que tu mets comme disque?" (Why did you play that record?) asks Michel; "Le concerto pour clarinette . . . De Mozart" (Mozart's Clarinet Concerto) (1:16:44). It turns out that Michel likes that particular piece – in fact "seulement ce disque" (only this recording) – his father was a clarinetist: "c'était le genie de la clarinette" (It was the sublime of the clarinet). That might be Michel's explanation, but the film associates the music with death: not only does the shot of the record player cut to a shot of the book *Abracadabra* which carries on it an extra wrap of paper with a quote from Lenin: "Nous sommes des morts en permission" (We are dead and on leave), but Patricia asks "On va dormir?" (Are we going to sleep?) before commenting that "C'est triste le sommeil. On est forcé de se sépare . . ." (Sleep is sad. It meant we have to leave each oth . . ." and Michel adds ". . .er" (. . . er). The music, in other words, leads into the final scene's falling apart of the couple's relationship. Shortly after, she will call Inspector Vital, whose name ironically points towards life, not death, a discontinuity that echoes Patricia's smile as she spoke of death.

As for the recorded soundtrack, it is the work of Martial Solal. As Solal recounts it in his autobiography, Godard gave very little indication about what kind of music was needed. It was Melville who put Godard and Solal in touch and Godard's request was, apparently, concise: "Sa seule suggestion m'avait beaucoup amusé [. . .]: 'Peut-être un seul instrument . . . un banjo . . .' " (His only suggestion greatly amused me: 'Perhaps just one instrument . . . a banjo . . .), instead of which Solal assembled a cast of some 30 musicians, an expensive choice which meant things had to happen quickly: "La mise en boîte de la musique n'a pris que quatre séances de trois heures" (Recording all the music only took four three-hour sessions) (Solal, 2008, 69, 70). As Solal explains, the central conceit was to give each of the two characters their own themes, almost identical in form except that one progressed from low to high tones, the other from high to low: Michel's theme was "tendu, presque angoissant" (tense, almost anguished) while Patricia's was "plutôt tendre, à la limite du sirupeux" (rather tender, not much short of syrupy) (Solal, 2008, 70).

The film begins with the two themes one after the other, first Patricia's, then Michel's [0:15]; this opens out into more Solal music, cut off by the sounding of a ship's siren and the muffled sound of life in Marseilles. Through the film, we hear Michel's theme at key points: when he finds a gun in the glove compartment (shot 28); when Patricia chases after him as he buys a second newspaper (shot 77); as he pauses during the car accident to look at the victim (shot 83); as Michel leaves the travel agency (shot 85); during the jump cuts as Michel and Patricia talk in the car – the camera is clearly focused on Patricia, but we hear Michel's theme (shot 100). His theme announces him even when he is wholly not there, such as when we hear Michel's theme once the travel agency receptionist denounces him to the police (shot 86). Many other examples could be given, but what becomes quickly clear is that Michel's theme is often heard when Michel is exiting a shot or completely absent from it – not just when he is there. In other words, it frequently serves to direct the viewer's attention to the fact that this is a film about locating Michel: the police are searching for him – and, especially in the way that Godard reworked Truffaut's script, he is looking for himself. Patricia's theme is also heard often, although less so. Its happier tone coincides with her character, more in control of herself. We hear it as she walks up the Champs Elysées with her back to the camera (shot 76) and at other moments (see Andrew, 1987, 39, 49, 58, 77, 83, 85, 93). Given how memorable the music has remained, it is remarkable that Godard never called on Solal again – "Je ne l'ai d'ailleurs jamais revu" ("Moreover, I've never seen him since [the film]"), notes Solal (2008, 70).

Conclusions

For those of us who witnessed the death of Orson Welles – five days before he died, he was on the set of the first *Transformers* movie, performing the voice of

the villainous Unicron (Swansburg, 2007) – it can be difficult to imagine just what it meant for a film like *À bout de souffle* to be not just allowed, but promoted in mainstream cinemas and for its director to remain experimental, in the public eye and yet never conforming to that killer of talent, public taste. The fact that Godard's most recent film, *Film Socialisme* (Film Socialism) (2010), is much more the descendant of *À bout de souffle* than *Transformers* is of *Citizen Kane*, is eloquent indeed: Godard changed cinema – and would never cease pushing for more change. *À bout de souffle* was the overture of what is often called Godard's first period of filmmaking, before his political turn, marked by association with the Dziga Vertov group.[20] In the years between his first full-length feature and *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) (1967) and *Le Week-end* (The Weekend) (1967), both of which announce, in their own ways, a turn to different stylistic and political preoccupations, Godard made more than ten feature-length films.[21] The first film after *À bout de souffle*, *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier) (1960), which took up the topic of torture in the Algerian War, surprised its viewers as a radical departure from *À bout de souffle* – in comparison, it might have seemed "flat and mundane" (Dixon, 1997, 25), although its brutal revelations might be thought quite the opposite. War would also be the topic of *Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) (1963). Other films would also bring together sociology and experiments in form: although *À bout de souffle* mentions only in passing Patricia's pregnancy and Michel's (misogynistic) lack of interest in the situation, films like *Une Femme est une femme* (A Woman is a Woman) (1961), *Vivre sa vie* (1962), *Une femme mariée* (A Married Woman) (1964), and *Masculin Féminin* (1966), would interrogate the place of women, men, and gender in French society in ways often more subtle than generally appreciated.[22] Throughout the first period, Godard would continue to dialogue with film's history: Anna Karina's character in *Le Petit Soldat* is called Veronica Dreyer in reference to Carl Thedor Dreyer, whose *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc) (1928) Anna will see in *Vivre sa vie*; Fritz Lang plays himself in *Le Mépris* (1963), etc.

But *À bout de souffle* is important beyond Godard's career. One need not be a Godard scholar or even a fan of his films to appreciate the impact of this film. After *À bout de souffle*, film would not be the same again. For sure, some (especially American) viewers have taken from it an adolescent *jouissance* and life philosophy – "Wear sunglasses. Smoke cigarettes [. . .] Learn French [. . .] Go to Paris. Go to the movies" (O'Brien, 2010, 32) – but its true impact was on the relationship, in film, between form and content, or rather in showing that form and content are the same thing. *À bout de souffle* was Godard's first step towards ever greater cinematic radicalism – montage here is *mostly* classical: shots follow shots to tell a linear story, but the ruptures with classical montage, the jump cuts, the specific relationship between sound and image, all mark a departure and the beginning of a trajectory that will, many times multiplied and intensified, lead up to later works, the four-and-a-half hour video essay called *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) (finished 1998)[23] or even *Film Socialisme* (2010). The latter's "patch-

work de saynètes brèves, elliptiques, relevant de l'essai poétique, du traité historique, de l'oraison mélancolique, de la réflexion philosophique" (patchwork of brief scenes, elliptical, partaking of the poetic essay [or trial], of the historical treatise, of the melancholy speech, of philosophical reflection)[24] and its "almost Protestant severity in sound mixing" (Bordwell, 2010) are, albeit many times removed, somehow foreshadowed in the break that *À bout de souffle* initiated. As has been noted by one of the *New Wave*'s most prominent scholars: "Without *Breathless* we would likely not commemorate the New Wave as anything more than a journalistic catchphrase to describe the unusually large influx of new film directors in France between 1958 and 1962" (Kline, 2006, 73). Godard's central practice, perhaps, is "connecting anything with everything" (Rancière, 2004, 224). Like Montaigne four centuries earlier, Godard weaves together quotes and ideas in a set of *essais* or trials, from which near coherences emerge (Deschamps, 2003). *À bout de souffle* was indeed the first of such *essais*.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 Perspective is provided by rereading Godard's articles about *Les 400 coups* in *Cahiers du cinéma* 92, February 1959, reprinted in Godard 1989–91: 1. 197–198; and *Arts* 719, April 22, 1959, reprinted in Godard 1989–91: 1. 237–239. Note, too, that while Godard gave *Les 400 coups* four stars (the highest rating) in the *Cahiers du Cinéma*'s "Council of Ten" ratings (Brody, 2008, 54), in his list of the ten best films of 1959, Godard lists *Les 400 coups* only in eighth place – beating it, among others, are Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* (first place), Jean-Pierre Melville's *Deux hommes dans Manhattan* (second place), Jean Renoir's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (The Lunch on the Grass) (sixth place), and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (seventh place) (*Cahiers du cinéma* 104, February 1960, reprinted in Godard 1989–91: 2. 173). Elsewhere, Godard wrote that Bresson's filmic experiments were leading cinema into "une impasse royale" (a royal impasse) (Godard, 1962: 59).

2 Of late, cognitive theory has been joined with cinema studies, in particular in the work of David Bordwell and Noel Carroll. For an introduction to such ideas, and on the way in which our habits of perception influence film viewing (and hence film criticism), see Dargis (2011).

3   For a rapid assessment of the film's contemporary reception, see the dossier in Andrew (1987).

4   As have other critics, Nourissier (1960) has underlined the importance of friendship in the success of the New Wave.

5   A certain amount of disagreement existed as to the length and significance of Truffaut's script: Roger Vadim has claimed that it was nothing more than a few notes scribbled on a matchbox, whereas film critic James Monaco claims there was a fifteen-page script, subsequently published in *Avant-Scène du cinéma 79* in 1968. An English translation is included in Andrew (1987, 153–160). For a summary of this debate, see Dixon (1997, 14–15).

6   A highly readable account of the making of the film, including its ups and downs (money issues, contracts, anecdotes about the daily reality of shooting, etc.), is provided by Brody (2008, 53–79).

7   Analysis of the title is also performed by Sterritt (1999, 39).

8   As a student, Kovacs had used – like Godard in *À bout de souffle* – an Ariflex camera to film daily life during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956: "They [next] smuggled thirty thousand feet of documentary footage out of the country, achieving freedom for themselves in the process" (Schaefer and Salvato, 1984, 175). Kovacs's career only really began in 1963, with *Mark of the Gun* and it only took off with *Easy Rider*, but one can easily imagine how the story alone of Kovacs' escape from Hungary with documentary footage would make his name an attractive pseudonym for Poiccard. Kovacs shared much with Godard – he was just as much a cinéphile: "in Budapest, where I was at boarding school, I learned by heart the programmes of each cinema in the city, and I'd skip classes, sometimes seeing four movies in a day" (Ettedgui, 1998, 84).

9   Hayes continues: "Placing the director in the role of novelist, Godard emphasized the association between auteur and novelist that was so important to the Nouvelle Vague. Though Parvulesco has a great reputation as a writer, some of his remarks and gestures during the interview recall those of Michel, and Melville was best known for his cinematic depiction of hoodlums. (Earlier, *À bout de souffle* had alluded to *Bob le flambeur*.) The character of Parvulesco, therefore, combines the hoodlum's world of the street with the novelist's world of library and garret. Parvulesco represents both, something to which Patricia aspires yet has not achieved." (Hayes, 2001, 187). It might be wondered if some of Godard's irony is not, here, overlooked.

10 The film's connection to Humphrey Bogart is mentioned in most studies of the film. See, for example, Smith (1993), Sterritt (1999, 57–58); Esquenazi (2004, 75).

11 Godard spent much time at the Cinéma MacMahon watching films featuring John Wayne, Charlton Heston, and Humphrey Bogart (Williams, 1992, 381). Before even the *Cahiers,* Godard attended Bazin's ciné-club *Objectif 49*, which showed films like Otto Preminger's *Fallen Angel* (1945) and Charles Vidor's *Gilda* (1946) (Andrew, 1986, 14).

12 Similar ideas have found expression under numerous pens. As Sainati notes: "il s'agit [. . .] de la *citation* d'une histoire, qui serait finalement la forme abstraite du film noir" (it is a question [. . .] of *citation* of a story which would be, after all, the abstract form of *film noir*) (Sainati, 2001, 36); "ce dont il est question ici est une sorte de méta-citation, de citation du cinéma en tant que moyen de fabrication d'histoires" (the point here is that it is a kind of meta-citation, of citation of cinema as a means of

making stories) (Sainati, 2001, 37). In Steve Smith's words: "borrowings do not add up to a film that is a mere imitation of *noir*. [Rather] *À bout de souffle* can be seen as explicitly foregrounding and problematizing the notion of imitation as such, especially as it relates to [Godard's] own cinematic practice and that of French cinema more generally" (Smith, 1993, 66).

13 Michel is indeed often seen with a newspaper – buying them, hiding behind them, and, very occasionally, reading them, clearly an ubiquity that has received various comment: Marie-Claire Ropars had suggested that Michel's newspaper functions as a mask (Ropars, 1987, 230); it has been noted that the newspaper is, for Michel, a "personal emblem" just as the novel is a personal emblem for Patricia (Hayes, 2001, 183, 185); and, in a more general sense, Tom Conley has noted how newspapers can function in film as a "celebration of death" and gestures in particular towards how "Godard films his characters reading papers" (Conley, 1987, 227), a point that Orwell also once made, in his essay "Decline of the English Murder" when asking "what is it that you want to read about?" when you open up the newspaper on a Sunday afternoon: "Naturally, about a murder" (Hitchens, 2011).

14 *Bonjour Tristesse* was not well received, neither in France, nor the United States: it was "widely derided for what was taken to be Preminger's glossy Hollywood treatment of a novel that should have been reserved for a French director" (Brody, 2008, 54), although Truffaut and Godard were indeed its defenders.

15 But the way the film asks questions about the status of women is much more complicated than that. In her work about the sexism of France's *Nouvelle Vague*, Geneviève Sellier made the useful observation that journalists writing at the time of the film's release generally espoused the film's misogyny, quoting Simone Dubreuilh (in *Libération*) who spoke about how the film was "un essai sur l'amour et la perfidie des femmes" (an essay on love and the perfidy of women) situating Patricia – as would some right-wing politician – within a cast of "jeunes filles enceintes qui livrent leur amant à la police" (pregnant girls who deliver their lover to the police) (Sellier, 2005, 51). But if we re-watch the film for instances where the gender lines are less clear, we are quickly rewarded with a film whose sexual politics are more complicated. The question of sexual politics is nuanced by the fact that the main female character is American. In his *Made in U.S.A.* (1966), inspired by Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep* (1946), Godard had Anna Karina (as Paula Nelson) translate Bogart's hardboiled detective into a female character – she investigates the death of her lover Richard Politzer. But it is arguably the case that, as an American – like Paula Nelson, Patricia is already, to some extent, the Bogart character that Michel fails to be. She controls the action, by denouncing Michel to the police.

16 Conley reminds us that "wherever graphic traits interceded in the film [. . .] the illusion of reality seen within the frame became subject to graphic treatment that might forcibly call cinematic illusion into question. Whatever was visible, became legible" (Conley, 2006, x).

17 Bordwell (1984) develops a history of the reception of jump cuts and underscores in particular the overlap of *auteur* theory and the popularization of the term.

18 The continuity script in Andrew (1987, 42) slightly misplaces the jump cut, stating it comes after Michel's line "You don't go out anymore?" whereas it actually occurs two lines earlier.

19   Jokes on the name of Paris are numerous. One thinks of Rabelais' joke, in Chapter 17 of *Gargantua*, where he says that his giant urinates on the population of Paris "par rys" (i.e., as a joke, but par/rys = Paris). See Rabelais (1994, 48).

20   On this later period, see *inter alia* Dixon (1997, 89–127).

21   For a reading of this first period in relation to seeing as a political act, see Pearce (1973).

22   Geneviève Sellier has suggested that the French New Wave, and Godard in particular, adopts a masculinist or even macho point of view (Sellier, 2005). For one minor attempt to point towards a more nuanced appreciation of the question of gender in Godard, see Usher (2009).

23   For a valuable reflection on the centrality of montage to Godard's filmic historiography in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, see Neer (2007).

24   Excerpt of Jean-Luc Douin's review for *Le Monde* (Douin, 2010).

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3

"Médicis 15-37"

Bernardo Bertolucci vs. Jean-Luc Godard

Fabien S. Gérard

In a 1971 article for *Sight & Sound*, the late Richard Roud, ex director of the London Film Festival and co-founder of the New York Film Festival, one of the best specialists on Godard's work and the Nouvelle Vague,[1] was the first critic to have discussesd the Oedipal issue and the conflict between fathers and sons in the films of Bernardo Bertolucci,[2] whose *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist* had just been released almost simultaneously in Europe.

These two films, scripted in a single creative burst, and shot only a couple of weeks from each other in the summer and fall of 1970, a very Godardian *tour de force*, dealt, each on its own way, with an intricate plot of betrayal set during the Mussolini era, and particularly rich in Freudian elements. Freely inspired by Borges' "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero," *The Spider's Stratagem* tells the dream-like story of Athos Magnani, who is called back to the small town of Tara to uncover the truth about the assassination of his father, also named Athos Magnani, a local hero of the Resistance supposedly gunned down by the Black Shirts in 1936, a father, by the way, whom Athos ressembles like two peas in a pod (both parts are interpreted by the same actor). On the other hand, *The Conformist* is a compelling adaptation of Alberto Moravia's novel of the same title, in which we follow the planning and execution of a deadly mission of a young fascist intellectual, Marcello Clerici, who takes advantage of his honeymoon in Paris to visit and eventually "eliminate" his former philosophy teacher, Professor Quadri, an exiled anti-fascist. Quadri is symbolically associated with Bertolucci's mentor, Jean-Luc Godard, and in the film, Godard's actual phone number and address are given as Quadri's.

The Conformist was soon considered one of the seminal classics of the decade among the New Hollywood "golden boys" – a true landmark in modern cinema

– and Bertolucci's daring joke, first revealed in Roud's article, has become nowa-days common knowledge among film buffs. But what did Bertolucci's private joke really mean for him at the time ? Where did the idea for it come from, and where did it lead subsequently? These are a few of the questions we will try to answer in the following pages. Before pursuing our discussion of this virtual dual between "BB" and "JLG," a few biographical details will be helpful in understanding how these two men reached this moment of real or playful contention.

Born in 1941 to well-known poet, art historian, editor, and occasional film critic, Attilio Bertolucci, Bernardo grew up in a wealthy family from Parma, quite open to foreign culture (his half-Irish mother was an avid reader of Virginia Woolf in the original; Attilio, at fourteen, was a precocious fan of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and later published his translations of Baudelaire, Balzac, Thomas Hardy, T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas and Ernest Hemingway). Just as the son of a carpenter may start playing with bits of wood lying about in his father's workshop, the son of a poet is somehow "condemned," Bertolucci explains, to begin writing poems as soon as he can string ten words together. (Clerc, 1976, 11) And thus Bernardo will try his hand at poetry in his early teens, not without some display of talent,[3] while simultaneously assimilating Attilio's love of cinema, a taste which led the father quickly to write weekly reviews of the films he'd seen,[4] first in Parma, then in Rome.

> My father was my first (and only) reader, and a generous and implacable critic. At about sixteen, my poetic production had pretty much dried up. "You're stuck in a rut," he'd say to spur me on, "you're spinning your wheels." The truth is that, during that summer I shot my first film *La teleferica* (The Cable) ten minutes long in 16mm. Just the right initiation for a sixteen-year-old. But also the first overwhelming realiza-tion that, after all, there might be an alternative to poetry (always a very slippery slope for a poet's son). (Bertollucci, 2010, 149.)

A close friend of Attilio Bertolucci, in Rome, Pier Paolo Pasolini had been greatly helped by the elder Bertolucci to get his first novel published, a best-seller known as *The Ragazzi* (The Boys). Sergio Citti, a long-time collaborator of Pasolini, once compared the "kindly" and "delicate" relationship between Attilio and Pier Paolo to "the kind you'd find between father and son or teacher and pupil,"[5] which explains why Pasolini and his mother were invited, in 1958, to move into the same building the Bertoluccis were living in. Such a situation allowed the teenager Bernardo to choose his charismatic neighbour as a new reference point, instinc-tively seeking some distance from his father's intellectual dominance.

> As soon as I had completed a new poem, I'd rush downstairs to get Pier Paolo's advice on it. Meeting him was for me the first opportunity to get some distance from my father, replacing him with a new paternal figure, though Pier Paolo per-ferrred to see me more as a younger brother than as an adopted son.[6] [. . .] In reality, for some time already, I think I had chosen him as a model, trying consciously to

write *à la* Pasolini. Being quite mimetic at that age, I managed to assimilate his way of seeing reality and perhaps a bit of his technique too. There are poems of mine that I never published, because they probably were too pasolinian [. . .]. In short, we very quickly established an informal relationship that I preferred to see as teacher to student but he wanted instead to be as friends. In other words, he really didn't like to play at being the master, fortunately. (Tedeschi, 1979, 273; Bartolomeo, 1985, 27)

So, Pasolini encouraged Attilio's elder son to send his poems to various literary magazines and publishing houses, and each occasionally took up their dialogue in public through their poetry,[7] until the day, in 1962, when Pasolini will personally hand his younger friend the prestigious Viareggio Prize for his first and only collection, *In cerca del mistero* (In Search of Mystery); an award Bernardo immediately considered "posthumous," for he had definitively made up his mind to abandon poetry to his father, in order to dedicate himself entirely to a medium which he could claim as his own. He had already tested the waters, by assisting Pasolini on the set of his striking directorial debut, *Accattone* (Tramp). What's more, a few months later, Pasolini suggested his name to producer Tonino Cervi to write the script of *The Grim Reaper*, from an old treatment he was no longer interested in. The result apparently sounded good enough to Cervi, who took the risk of proposing that the 20-year-old Bernardo direct *The Grim Reaper* himself. However, despite the fact that the script had been initially written to be shot by Pasolini, it is important to recognize the remarkable intuition that the neophyte brought to his subject through his own style and incredibly sensuous camera movements, turning a perfectly pasolinian subject into an impressionistic *etude* in a minor key on impermanence – a solution that was at the opposite end of the spectrum from the master's frontal and tragic viewpoint in *Accattone*.

The following summer, *The Grim Reaper* was labelled "servile pasolini-ism" by the critics at the Venice Biennale where Jean-Luc Godard was to win the Silver Lion for *My Life to Live.* However, history records that the first actual contact between the two will occur only weeks later in a men's room at the London Film Festival, when Bernardo, possibly overwrought by his nerves, managed, after Richard Roud had finally introduced them, to cover his new idol's spotless suit with the regurgitation of an overly rich dinner of *escargots à la provençale.*

It is worth noting that, by 1960, Bertolucci, then a student at Rome University, had managed to spend a whole month in Paris along with his cousin Giovanni Bertolucci, in order to be able to view a hundred or so films in their original version at Henri Langlois' legendary Cinémathèque Française;[8] the rest of his time was spent exploring the City of Light tracking down all of the locations Godard had used in what Bernardo considered the main cinematographic event of the year, namely *À bout de souffle* (Breathless).

In another act of homage to Godard, Bernardo had "forgotten" in Pasolini's car an issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* praising *Breathless*, in order to get his master to

see his favorite film. (Bertolucci, 1981, 29) Somewhat nettled by his protegé's unwelcome infatuation for another director, Pasolini let him know the next week that he had seen it in a cheap theatre where his dearest *ragazzi* had loudly mocked the so-called masterpiece of the Nouvelle Vague.[9]

> The day I discovered *Breathless*, I encountered something so different from anything I'd ever seen that I had the impression of having dreamed the film rather than seen it with my own eyes. Like Fellini with *La Dolce Vita* (another decisive shock for me) Godard had just invented a world that hadn't existed before him and that continued to exist after his film, because the reality itself wanted to resemble fiction . . . With this film, everything that had been considered unpardonable mistakes of grammer by professional filmmakers was suddenly seen at once as an extraordinarily poetic way to rethink filmic language. (Bertolucci, 2003, 150)

Even though Godard and Pasolini would eventually both join the pantheon of true poets of the Seventh Art for their radical refusal of artistic conventions as much as for their crusade against the empty values of consumer society, the point is that Bertolucci dropped Pasolini for Godard a little like the way he had dropped his father's literary vocation to embrace cinema.[10] Except that Godard's influence on him was going to turn out to be much more tenacious and hard to get rid of in the long run. In Bertolucci's *Before the Revolution* (1964) we find numerous references to Godard's formal experimentations in both image and sound. It was only because Godard's firebrand cameraman, Raoul Coutard, was unavailable at the time that Bertolucci chose (on the advice of Agnès Varda) Aldo Scavarda, Antonioni's smoother cinematographer on *L'Avventura* (The Adventure). Anyone who has seen *Before the Revolution* cannot forget the jump cuts that punctuate Agostino's bicycle ride or the repeated tracking shots of Fabrizio standing on the bank of the river where Agostino has drowned, or passing a pretty girl outside the Orfeo theatre where *A Woman Is a Woman* is showing, or his discussion about time with Gina and Cesare, as three portraits on the wall are framed instead of the actual interlocutors. There is also another ironic discussion involving Fabrizio with a neurotic cinephile in a very godardian bar during which the protagonist, who's in love with his aunt actually quotes a review of Nicholas Ray's *Hot Blood* (1956) written by no one else than *Cahiers'* most intellectual enfant terrible – Godard (Godard, 1957, 42).

> "Cinema is a matter of style and style is a moral fact. . . . You're not listening to me!"
> "I'm in love, that's all."
> "Well that's a problem of content, not of style."
> "I realize that this has never happened to me before and I don't know what it means."
> "You thought that love was a superstructure, whereas in fact . . . a woman is a woman! Things happen in life whose meaning isn't immediately apparent. But they're important, and they even change you. A tracking shot, for example, is a

> matter of style, but style is a moral fact. I remember a 360 degree tracking shot by
> Nicholas Ray which is, I assure you, one of the most highly moral – and therefore
> politically engaged – shots in the history of film: a 360 degree tracking shot equals
> 360 degrees of morality. Am I right or wrong?"

At a time when social structures were beginning to break down in numerous domains, during those years a handfull of directors, as erudite as they were inventive, began to turn the cinema into something really adult as it began to examine its own expressive possibilities in each new film. The *auteurs* that emerged in the 1960s felt that they belonged to a kind of international group that included not only France and Italy, the New York independents and the British Free Cinema, but also the young Germans of the Oberhausen Manifest, Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, Volker Schoendorff, etc., as well as Glauber Rocha and the *Cinema Nôvô* in Brazil, the *Nova Vlna* in Czeckoslovakia, Nagisa Oshima in Japan, Michel Brault and Claude Jutra in Canada, André Delvaux in Belgium, Alain Tanner in Switzerland and Ousmane Sembène in Senegal . . .

> What we all had in common was that we were not just shooting stories with characters, but that our films posed questions about the specificity of the Seventh Art in relation to literature, to the theater and to the other arts. After that, when a film premiered, you had two films for the price of one. On the one hand there was the plot and on the other hand a sort of philological essay hidden between the lines. (Godard, 1957, 42)

For Bertolucci, however despite being awarded the Prix de la Jeune Critique at Cannes in 1964, and the active support of *Cahiers du cinéma* and of the international intelligentsia, including Jonas Mekas, Pauline Kael and Susan Sontag, *Before the Revolution*'s initial flop in the Italian movie houses reduced its director effectively to unemployment for nearly four years.[11] This despite the fact that Bertolucci returned from the 1965 New York Film Festival where this "new talent of outstanding promise" (Archer, 1964) had met a representative from Columbia Pictures (the distributor of Godard's *Band of Outsiders* and *A Maried Woman* in the United States).

Among the various projects he announced but never completed, we find a modern adaptation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* which was supposed to feature once again his lover and Muse, actress Adriana Asti – in some way Bertolucci's own Anna Karina – , *Nature Against Nature* with Jean-Pierre Léaud, who was involved at the time in the shooting of *Masculine / Feminine* (Masculine / Feminine), and more significantly perhaps, *I Porci* (*The Pigs*), based on Anna Banti's short story set in Northern Italy during the barbarian invasions of the 5th century AD, to be shot in Technicolor and CinemaScope – like *Contempt* – and spoken "half in Latin, half in a reinvented barbaric dialect." Although Bertolucci recalls only he made that unusual directorial choice as he was still reading the original story, who knows if he had not unconsciouly assimilated Godard's "marching orders" issued in an

Italian interview of 1963, dictating that from now on any epic portraying Antiquity should logically be spoken in ancient Greek or in Latin (Apra, 1963 / 1977, 658 / 87). Whatever Bertolucci's specific inspiration, it is clear that the idea was clearly in the air; a couple of years later Fellini will announce that his *Satyricon* (1969) spoken in Latin (Fellini, 1969, 70, 47–49) before falling back on Italian, so that one has to wait until 1972 for Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane* to push the limits of cinematic language in this direction.

Although, shortly after, Bertolucci would complain that the only directorial work he could get was an industrial documentary intended for national television – the three-episode series *Oil Route* (1966–67), co-produced by ENI, the Italian petroleum company – it was again the example of Godard's *Opération Béton* (Operation Concrete) from 1955 that will convince him to accept even this offer, in order to continue to capture reality at 24 frames per second, whatever the subject. *Oil Route* ended up being quite a good decision since that experience gave him the opportunity to use sync-sound, a requisite preparation for his short film *Agony* (shot in 1967), featuring Julian Beck's Living Theater.[12] Moreover, by filming in Iran and in Egypt, this unusually creative *documentaire industriel* – "one of the best things seen on Italian tv that year" (Cipriani, 1967) – Bertolucci was able to discover the muslim culture and North African landscapes, revisited two decades later in *The Sheltering Sky*. Bertolucci also remembers that it was his Franco-Swiss fellow director who basically told him during a private lunch before he launched into this adventure in unknown territory, "Everything is grist for the mill."

Nevertheless, Bertolucci's focus remained fiction, now "a matter of life and death" to him (Ungari and Ranvaud, 1987, 9) So, perhaps we should see a touch of bitterness, if not jealousy towards Jean-Luc Godard's unceasing rythm of production in his unemployed Italian disciple's label "vulgarity" when reviewing *Made in USA* for *Cahiers*.

> Is everything permitted to a person in love? [. . .] As much as I love Godard, I'm fishing in troubled waters here and I discover, as only "reality" can produce it, Godard's "vulgarity." I'm talking about his two latest films that I saw recently in Paris (the mixing had just been completed) in the following order: *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*, then, after a five minute recess (these are the words he used, adding especially for me, "Fine del primo tempo);"[13] then *Made in USA*. I believe Godard is expecting me to react identically to both films. He completed the shooting of *Made in USA* on a Friday last summer and started *2 or 3 Things* the next Monday morning. The two of them were edited at the same time, probably in adjoining editing rooms, like two hotel rooms for adulterous couples. Another prosaic observation: the order in which Godard showed his two films suggests that he prefers *Made in USA* that was projected last (*dulcis in fundo*) (last but not least).

And further on he adds,

> And yet *Made in USA*, the one I like less, since it's too godardien to be a really good Godard, contains unexpected moments, violent shocks which make his whole

armature tremble. Later on his structure regains its composure, and becomes anti-Godardian at the end. (Bertolucci, 2003, 140, 142)

Finally, comforted by the successful release of *Before the Revolution* in Paris – thanks to the perseverence of Henri Langlois – right after Christmas 1967, and with the help of his cousin, Giovanni, now a producer, Bertolucci began shooting *Partner*, an explosive adaptation of Dostoyevsky's *The Double*. All of his frustrations of the previous four years as well as all of the ideas accumulated over that long period of inactivity are crammed through this funnel, producing an overabundance of references an excptional density of quotes both cinematic and literary, musical and painterly. *Mutatis mutandis*, Bernardo might have said, as Tarantino does today, that there wasn't a single visual detail or line of dialogue in the film that wasn't borrowed from works that had influenced him – beginning with the multiple allusions to German romanticism and expressionism in general and F.W. Murnau in particular.

But on May 4, the first riots with thousands students opposing the police occured on a boulevard of the French capital, and their radicalism, carnival-like spirit and slogans began to seep into Bertolucci's film where the most recent titles of the sempiternal Jean-Luc Godard begin to appear. So much so that Bertolucci's own brand of onirism and ambiguity apparently were lost from view under a surge of borrowings from *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) or *Two or Three Things I Know about Her.*

Le Nouvelle Obeservateur's opinion-maker, Jean-Louis Bory, who had been so enthusiastic about the references to Stendhal in *Before the Revolution* wrote:

> More than Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde* it's Samuel Beckett who comes to mind, and more than Renoir's *Testament of Dr. Cordelier* the film evokes Godard, the master of corrosive clowning. This is exactly what is disappointing about *Partner*. [. . .] It's not so much pastiches or quotes, it's pure plagiarism: an identical use of freshly colored panels, bizarre happenings, puppet theater denouncing advertising as fascism (as in *Made in USA*) or bookish culture (as in *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her*), an identical use of collages of textual quotations stolen here and there from recent readings. I love Godard but only when it's Godard who does Godard. Bertolucci's Godardism seems to me all the more regrettable in that *Partner* gets truly magnificent as soon as Bertolucci returns to the power of his own imagination and sensitivity [. . .] Through the debauchery of his little Italian Rimbaud and of his shadow, the only vital elements in this dead "thing," the flame of angry youth can be seen, the crashing and crazy heroism of this nihilist refusal, the desperate (perhaps desperately useless) bursts of his individual revolt. (Bory, 1974, 290–291)

Jean-Luc Godard, the master *quoter* sees himself *quoted* in turn; the Number One Iconoclast of the new cinema had already become an icon, a classic, a model, if only in the field of systematic transgression, and by "plagiarizing" him, Bertolucci had just taken a step too far in this pursuit since he was now accused publicly of

wanting so much to become his mentor that he could no longer see reality except through Godard's eyes. However, if we think of the theme of the "Doppelgänger" at the center of *Partner*, the most interesting point is that the two protagonists, clearly identified in the script as "Jacob Senior" and "Jacob Junior" (both played by Pierre Clémenti) may be seen as the expression of a father–son conflict that anticipates the complex that was about to be developped one year later, on a deeper basis, in *The Spider's Stratagem* . . . mostly written, this time, on the Freudian couch.

Meanwhile, Bertolucci himself had admitted he had made "a sick film about sickness", or more precisely "a shizophreniac one on schizophrenia."[14] Such an admission necessitated a proper cure, just as, a few months after May 1968, he had paradoxically decided to join the Communist Party, now weakened by the attacks of his most radical friends, Marco Bellocchio in Italy and Jean-Luc Godard in France, each of whom had decided to move to the left of the Party line towards extra-parlementary extremism.[15] It is thus no surprise that, after *Partner*, the oedipal issue should emerge as the director began what he will later term his 30-year-long "career" in psychoanalysis, in view of which *The Spider's Stratagem* seemed to constitute the first metaphorical steps into the labyrinth of the unconscious.

Certainly, Athos Magnani, Junior's enquiry conducted in Tara reveals the truth that his father, the heroic Athos Magnani Senior (and we must keep in mind that, just as in *Partner*, both parts were played by the same actor), had actually betrayed his companions in 1936 by exposing at the last minute the (entirely unrealistic) plot they had hatched under his direction to kill Mussolini.

Yet Athos, Junior eventually refuses to publicly divulge his discovery, since he cannot be sure of the real reasons for his father's behavior: Athos, Senior had *personally* ordered his fellow partisans (a major change from the Borges "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" from which the film was adapted) to disguise his execution as a fascist assassination in order to offer the local population a martyr whose memory will inspire in them an eternal flame of anti-fascist spirit. In his conviction that the legend be conserved as aiding the anti-fascist cause, the son remains caught in the net of the father's myth woven 30 years previously, devoured as he is by the father who continues to prevent him from having a life of his own. He ends up being a clone of the paternal image, condemned forever to wander the streets of Tara since, in the final scene at the station it becomes evident that no train will ever arrive to liberate him from this trap.

Athough it would appear that Athos Junior's double – the anonymous sailor – has succeeded in escaping the town on the last train, the film's author is left at the end of *The Spider's Stratagem* with an unacceptable situation: a defeated protagonist. Especially if we consider that, as in all of Bertolucci's films, the protagonist is an alter-ego of the director. (In fact, the audience is confronted here with a cinema "in the first person singular" as Truffaut would say.)

It is in this common origin of *The Spider's Stratagem* and *The Conformist*, and in the strong affinity existing between them that these two films take on their full

meaning. In fact, both films were written before the production of the first, and were edited at the same time, by completely different editors in adjoining rooms, only after the production of the second; which means that when Bertolucci shot the epilogue of *Spider*, he already knew that the son, Athos Junior, would soon exact his revenge on the *padre padrone* now reincarnated as Marcello Clerici. And even if "Athos" reminds us of "Attilio" the same way that the invention of Tara evokes the Bertolucci's traditional environment in the Po Valley, there is every indication that the Oedipus complex that Bertolucci had begun to confont in his analysis extended well beyond the sole relationship with his biological father. This is, in any case, suggested by the American Western show-down between Athos Junior and the statue of his father painted exactly like the statues of some ancient Greek Gods that Godard filmed in 1963 in his masterful technicolor production of *Le Mépris* (Contempt).

As for *The Conformist*, how could we not see in it, from the beginning, the *mise-en-scène* of the settling of accounts with the man who had "stolen" his old friend Alberto Moravia, by having authored a cinematic masterpiece, years previously from the Italian novelist's *Il disprezzo*, better known as *Contempt*? So, Moravia's *The Conformist* must have seemed to Bertolucci like the ideal battlefield on which to challenge Godard who had increasingly become an embarrassment ever since it was said that the younger man was imitating him too closely.

One might also note other links between their two adaptations, as for example the decision to use the music of Georges Delerue, usually working for other New Wave directors. From Bertolucci's opening scene, if not his very first shot, the stakes are established through a series of winks that are all too obvious: inserts of fragments of words on a lighted sign (as in *Pierrot le fou*), the flickering of these lights on the silhouette of a man awaiting on a bed inside a hotel room, (as in *A Woman Is a Woman*), or the naked thighs of a woman lying on her stomach in the middle of an unmade bed (like those of Brigitte Bardot in *Contempt*).

Despite such visual reminders, something tells us that we have entered an entirely different world. The mystery and suspense are immediately at work: as soon as he receives the phone call he was expecting, the man arises from the bed half-dressed, pulls on his winter coat, pulls out a gun hidden in a small valise, and, once outside the hotel, climbs into the back seat of a car that takes him along the banks of the Seine in the livid light of the dawning day.

We all know what comes next, delivered to the spectator through a dazzling pattern of flashbacks and flashforwards, until the famous phone call to "Médicis 15-37" and the visit to the apartment of "17 rue Saint Jacques," followed by the long drive through snowy landscapes to a pine forest where a bloody ambush awaits the Quadris – quite a difference from Godard's well-known "radical rejection of narrative."[16] In the meantime, Moravia's readers will have noticed that Quadri's first name has been changed from Eros to Luca (like Jean-Luc), and his wife has become Anna (like Anna Karina[17] or Anne Wiazemsky) instead of Lina and that the director has added a dialogue in which Marcello tells his driver the

dream he had just had in the car: He was blind and had been operated on in Switzerland by Quadri; the surgery was a success, he recoverd his sight, and was running away with Anna who had fallen in love with him . . .

Likewise, Godard's fans must have been surprised to hear the protagonist quoting his former teacher's last words before he escaped from Mussolini's Italy, ten years earlier: "For me the time for reflection has passed. I've aged. Now it's time for action." It is no accident that this line reverses the terms of the epigram introducing *The Little Soldier*: "For me, the time of action has passed. I've aged. Now it's time for reflection."

As for Quadri's assassination itself, the man being savagely killed by some thirty knife wounds in the presence of his own "Brutus", Marcello, and the specific choreography of the scene clearly refer to the assasination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March (already mentionned in *The Spider's Stratagem* as well as in Borges' "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero"). It is quite likely that in his school days, Bertolucci had been exposed to that historical event also immortalized by Shakespeare, whose date matches exactly his own birthday according to the Latin calendar (he was born on March 16), and this coincidence even provides the *incipit* of one of his youthful poems.[18] Morevoer, it is not without significance that Fabrizio's surrogate father, in *Prima della rivoluzione* (Before the Revolution), bears the name of "Cesare", although this choice could also be attributed to the fact that the role had first been offered to writer and friend *Cesare* Garboli, later replaced by film critic Morando Morandini.

Bertolucci has affirmed that Godard's phone number and address were added at the spur of the moment on the set, and indeed they are not mentioned at all in the shooting script. Perhaps the addition can be explained by the hypothesis that he only made up his mind at the last minute to be so explicit about the only spectator who really mattered, sensing confusedly the consquences for their friendship that might ensue from such a gesture. In any case if Godard could have been first bemused, during the premiere of *The Conformist* on hearing his personal coordinates in a phone conversation between Marcello and Quadri (after all, had he himself not discretely evoked his "young friend from Parma" in a recent film?)[19] we can surmise his reaction on witnessing, one hour later, the terrifying end reserved for the master at the climax of the film. Bertolucci remembers that Godard had suggested they meet after the screening.

> It was raining cats and dogs. I waited for Godard until 12:30 a.m. Finally he appeared at the entrance to the Drugstore Saint-Germain, walked over to me and handed me a note folded in fours and left without saying a word. On the back of the paper was a portrait of Mao and the words "We must continue our struggle against imperialism, egoism and individualism!" handwritten with a red marker. Instead of keeping this document, which could have found a place in the archives of a hypothetical Museum of the New Wave, I immediately tore it into a thousand pieces, which pretty much corresponded to the psychological state I was in that evening.[20]

The die was cast. Bertolucci had played with fire, while at the same time playing the unpleasant role that he'd ineluctably assumed the minute he explicitly associated Moravia's martyr to fascism with the man with the movie camera he'd chosen as his master and teacher.

And indeed Bernardo confesses that "like Quadri, Godard lives in Paris and has been fighting the system for years. And I, who was, like Marcello, his disciple, I arrive from Italy and betray him with a film which cost a lot of money and which, hopefully, will make a lot as well. So I am, to some extent, the character played by Trintignant, although for me, *The Conformist* is far from being such a conformist work!"[21] However that may be, through this petty sado-masochistic stratagem, doubtless as cruel for himself as it was for its target, the young director had found his own voice, presenting himself first and foremost as a storyteller desirous of emerging from the ghetto of monologue to privilege emotion and communication in the manner of one who had infiltrated the system. As such he was aligning himself against the more austere path taken by the cineast-philosopher who was as "pure and hard as a diamond" and about whom he had once said that "for a single shot of his I'd kill or have someone killed."[22]

Thanks to the success of *The Conformist*, this vision of a cinema capable of mixing the profundity of its content with formal experimentation, without sacrificing the ability to appeal to a wider audience, would immediately be adopted by the finest flowers of a whole generation, from Coppola to Scorsese and including De Palma, Schrader and Demme.

Symbolically, however, getting rid of Professor Godard's excessive influence was only part of Bertolucci's mission. He still had to defy – and eventually defeat – the original father on his own terrain, that is, the Po Valley. This will be performed in *1900*, scripted by both Attilio's sons, Bernardo and Giuseppe, and intended as a response to Pasolini's *Scritti corsari* (Pirate Writings)[23] as well as to Attilio Bertolucci's two-volume family auto-fiction written in verses, *La camera da letto* (The Bedroom), still unpublished at the time.[24] *1900*'s key scene, in this regard, shown twice in the film, presents the Donald Sutherland character being repeatedly skewered with pitchforks – a kind of rural version of Caesar's assassination in Shakespeare's tragedy – on April 25, 1945, by a bunch of farm women, in a very similar way to Quadri's demise in *The Conformist*. Bernardo's insistence on naming him "Attila" is clearly significant.[25] At long last, the director whom Pauline Kael once called "the new Orson Welles from Parma"[26] had now "killed" even his bioglogical father's *first name* and was free to continue his career liberated from the ghosts of Attilio, the Old Commander.

At the same time it is revealing to observe how, in the course of the three years that followed his filming of *1900,* quite a few of Bernardo Bertolucci's most beloved masters will actually pass away, from Pasolini, to his new co-writer/editor Franco "Kim" Arcalli, and including Jean Renoir, Luchino Visconti and Roberto Rossellini. From *Luna* on, a contrary movement will subtend his inspiration: the quest for the lost fathers. The character of Joe in *Luna* is the first to embody this quest, inspired

perhaps by a sense of guilt, and the will to ressucitate the various fathers he had assassinated in his previous films through a kind of magical thinking that seemed designed to tell them that he didn't really want them to die but only, desperately, to acquire his own voice. And, no less significantly, from *The Conformist* on, it is evident that all kinds of external influences – not only Godard's – seem to be increasigly diluted in the diegesis of the film to the point of becoming virtually invisible. Yet each new film seems to rely on some improvisation and mixing of genres just as they often keep offering the viewer very "moral" 360 degree pan shots.

Whether in the 1971 "Agit-Prop" documentary *The Healthcare System Is Sick*,[27] or in the films that followed: *Last Tango in Paris*,[28] *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man*,[29] and *The Last Emperor*,[30] but even in *Little Budhha*,[31] *Stealing Beauty*,[32] *Besieged*,[33] or *The Dreamers*,[34] Godard's lesson seems to perdure in a loving – although sometimes unpredictable – way.

For his part, the director Basil Wright once called "Picasso of the Seventh Art"[35] happily accepted the Goden Lion Bertolucci managed to obtain for *Hail Mary*, when he chaired the jury of the 1983 Venice Film Festival, but he also showed himself ready to reciporocate without bitterness. (We can detect, for example, in *First Name: Carmen*'s connections with *Last Tango*, or in Godard's affectionate fax to Bertolucci, when asked about the rights to use clips from *Breathless* and *Band of Outsiders* in *The Dreamers:* "Of course you may use everything you want from my films! And remember, there are no authors' rights, just authors' duties (*il n'y a pas de droits d'auteur, seulement des devoirs!*)."

Just as in other art forms, there is always something cannniblistic about cinema: every film is, to some extent, made of other films, and every filmmaker is nourished by his passion for the works of others in which he recognizes not only an image of himself, but a perfection he aspires to. There are not many directors who, rebelling against their bourgeois origins, spend their lives committed to opposing the values and privileges of the class they emerged from. The attraction exerted by the serious but lighthearted *auteur* of *Breathless* was manifestly too irresistible for many of his younger colleagues concerned with André Bazin's fundamental question, "What is cinema?" More than a "private joke" which entered the public domain of the history of the cinema, Godard's first feature film represents the deep and lasting assimilation of a creative drive that others end up wanting to absorb in their turn. Which is why BB's devo(ura)tion to/of JLG reminds us of the perduring formula from Pasolini's *Hawks and Sparrows*, quoting the literary critic Giorgio Pasquali: "Masters are made for being devoured with a spicy sauce." At least most of the time.

Notes

1   See, for example, Roud (1970).
2   See Roud (1971, 60–64).

3   Besides Bernardo Bertolucci's 1962 collection, *In cerca del mister*, an early poem of his, *L'ombra* (*The Shadow*), appears in the first interview he gave, at age 11, for *Giornale dell'Emilia* (1952); reprinted as "Flowers in the shadow of The Indian Hut," in Gérard, Kline, and Sklarew (2000, 5).

4   An anthology of Attilio Bertolucci's reviews has been published recently (Bertoluccci, 2009).

5   Grassi (1984, 56).

6   Tedeschi (1985, 27).

7   See Pasolini (1961, 61–68); Bertolucci (1962, 57).

8   All foreign films are released only in dubbed version in Italy, even today.

9   Nevertheless, after having got over this crisis of jealousy, Pasolini, as we know, will soon learn to appreciate his French-speaking rival's deep culture and uncommon intelligence. At the very moment he was on the point of publishing a collection of Godards's essays in the "Film e Discussioni" series he was heading to Garzanti (Pasolini, 1971), to hire his spouse, actress Anne Wiazemsky, twice: in *Theorem* (1968), then in *Pigsty* (1969), to play opposite Jean-Pierre Léaud, and, first of all, to dedicate to him one of his most celebrated poems, *A Desperate Vitality* (1962), which included this memorable line: "*Comme dans un film de Godard . . .*"(Like in a film of Godard's).

10   See Pasolini (1956–1957, 61–68); Bertolucci (1962, 57).

11   Badly received by the Italian critics, *Before the Revolution* was withdrawn from theaters after a few days. This explains why it wouldn't be properly released in France before December1967, where it will become, shortly after, a kind of manifesto of the May '68 movement.

12   Later realeased as a segment of the omnibus *Love and Anger* (1969), co-authored also by Carlo Lizzani, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Marco Bellocchio, and . . . Jean-Luc Godard!

13   Literally "End of Part One," is the inscription appearing on the screen berfore the traditional intermission prevue in the middle of every projection in a movie theater.

14   Ungari and Ranvaud (1987, 52).

15   Bertolucci (2003, 152).

16   See Kline (1987, 87).

17   In her book on Godard and Bertolucci, Yosefa Loshitzky even claims that Bertolucci's initial choice for the role of Anna was Anna Karina herself (Loshitzky, 1995, 215).

18   Bertolucci, "Questo sono le mie Ide di Marzo" (Theses re my Ides of March) [1958], in Bertolucci (1962, 56).

19   Most probably, *Un film comme les autres* (A Film Like the Others) (1968).

20   Bartolomeo (1986, 32).

21   Ibid.

22   Bertolucci, "Je me serais fait tuer pour un seul plan de Godard" (I'd kill myself for a single idea of Gaodard's), reprinted in Bertolucci (2010, 145–147).

23   Overbey (1979, 240).

24   The whole episode of the 1908 strike, in particular, is directly inspired by the chronicle of those historical events as dipicted in Bertolucci (1986).

25   See, for example, Chiaretti (1976) about Bertolucci's personal intervention at the annual congress of the Italian Psychoanalysis Society, centered on *1900* that year.

26   Kael (1965).

27 *La salute è malata o I poveri muoiono prima* (literally "Heathcare Is Ill or The Poor Die first") is a activist short anonymously filmed after *The Conformist*, by a collective of Bernardo Bertolucci, Giuseppe Bertolucci and Franco Arcalli that then formed, in a spirit quite close to Godard's work with the Dziga Vertov Group.

28 Besides the evident self-irony of the scenes focusing on the Jean-Pierre Léaud character and his *cinéma-vérité* methods, and the reassuring presence of sound engeneer Antoine Bonfanti on *Last Tango*'s set, note how much Brando's sweet foreign accent, every time he speaks French on the screen, recalls Jean Seberg's or Karina's performances in Godard. In addition, Paul and Jeanne's final run, shot with a hidden camera on the sidewalks of the Champs-Elysées echoes *Breathless*, before ending up on the rue Vavin, a few meters from la rue Campagne Première.

29 Specific visual references connect the underrated *Tragedy of a Ridiculous Man* to Godard & Gorin's *Tout va bien* (All Goes Well), including actor Vittorio Caprioli's participation in both films, but it's also important to note their ideological and political affinities, especially the objective of transforming by force a private factory into a cooperative. Bertolucci oneirically revisits Renoir's "grande illusion" of the Front Populaire (*The Crime of Monsieur Lange*, *La vie est à nous* (Life Belongs to Us) . . .) in a low key production highly appreciated by *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif*, which has many points in common with *1900* and *The Last Emperor*.

30 A bit like *1900*, this nine Academy-awarded European independently produced epic may be seen as the most Gramscian response ever to *La Chinoise*.

31 Perhaps another paradoxical use of Godard's personal note of 1971 to Bertolucci to keep fighting forever "imperialism" and "egoism."

32 See the in-depth Bertolucci interview by close friend, actress and writer Anne Wiazemsky, for the prestigious *Nouvelle Revue Française*, on the occasion of the release of *Stealing Beauty* (Wiazemsky, 1996, 22–39).

33 After the magnificent landscapes of the Oriental Trilogy, *Besieged* appears as a very small movie entirely inhabited by the the freedom of shooting that existed at the time and that was typical of the New Wave, for example with cameras hidden in the crowd of passers-by.

34 Parallel with the temptation of giving free rein to his nostalgia for a whole period, and among other Godardian effects, for example the wild game of quotes from films, *The Dreamers* is intended as a reflection on the connections between Mao's Cultural Revolution and May 68. Jean-Pierre Léaud as himself during the demonstration before the Cinémathèque of Chaillot, where they mention the presence of Godard. The controlled improvisation of the three young actors in the apartment recalls certain parts of *La Chinoise,* and of *Partner*!

35 Wright (1976, 513).

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4

Un Femme est infâme

Godard's Writing Lesson

Elizabeth Ezra

Godard's first feature film, *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) (1959), required audiences to relearn the language of cinema, to rethink how films said what they said. Godard's second feature, *Une femme est une femme* (A Woman is a Woman) (1961), extended this tutorial in film language to invite examination of the workings of language in a broad sense. The first of his films to feature Anna Karina, *Une femme* has often been described as a love letter to Godard's soon-to-be wife. The film is, arguably, preoccupied with love, but it is most certainly, and most literally, preoccupied with letters: letters written, voiced, and read; letters misdirected, redirected, and dead; French letters and letters in foreign tongues. Ostensibly about the biological and social repercussions of sexual relations, the film prompts reflection on intercursive, and discursive, relations of all kinds, and of the cultural codes that authorize them.

Angela is a stripper who lives with Emile, a newsagent, in a small apartment in Paris. When Angela decides she wants a baby, Emile, a keen cyclist, expresses reluctance, citing the need to conserve his energy for an impending bicycle race. Frustrated, Angela threatens to sleep with Emile's friend Alfred, partly in the hope of becoming pregnant, and partly in order to make Emile jealous. When Emile learns that she has carried out her threat, he agrees to have intercourse with Angela himself (and implicitly to father a child with her).

In the reproductive economy, as in the domestic economy, Angela makes eggs, which are repeatedly linked with childbearing in the film. When Angela asks Emile if he would like some soft-boiled eggs and he says he would, she replies, "à une condition. Je voudrais un enfant" (on one condition: I would like a child). Later, he asks her again to make him some eggs, and her response is to ask, "Tu me fais un enfant?" (Will you make a baby with me?). She is not happy when her eggs go

to waste: she drops one on the floor, and bursts into tears. She has no desire for an *hommelette*, which Lacan describes as:

> the libido, *qua* pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, or irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is sub- tracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. (Lacan, 1981, 198)

By refusing to participate in sexed reproduction, Emile is clinging to his *homme- lette*, for the sake of which he is perfectly willing to break some eggs. Angela, however, would prefer to keep them whole, desiring to make a new little man to replace the *hommelette* that Emile is so unwilling to relinquish. In this, Angela aspires to fulfill the destiny of the film's title, which, in its positing of a definition of womanhood, however tautological, evokes the definition of "femme" proposed by the *Robert* dictionary current at the time the film was made, as an "[ê]tre humain du sexe qui conçoit et met au monde les enfants" (human being of the sex that conceives and gives brth to children) (Robert, 1953–64), and by the 1959 edition of the *Petit Larousse Illustré*, which defines "femme" as an "être femelle," (to be female) and "femelle" as "prop à la fécondation" (proper for fertilization) (cited in Lehmann, 1980, 268).

Emile's reluctance to father a child may be read as an allegory of the New Wave's association with youth and its reluctance to engender disciples, to act as the 'cinéma de papa' (father's cinema) for subsequent generations who would be likely to rebel against it, as the New Wave had rejected the big-budget studio productions of the previous filmmaking generation. Referring to the affinities between *Une femme* and Philippe de Broca's 1960 *Jeux de l'amour* (Love games) in which a young woman frustrated by her partner's reluctance to start a family turns to his best friend, Geneviève Sellier notes, "Il est difficile – et inutile – de rechercher la paternité des scenarios 'nouvelle vague'" [It is difficult, and pointless, to seek to determine the paternity of "new wave" plots] (Sellier, 2005, 137). Although New Wave directors made no secret of their admiration for André Bazin and for figures such as Hitchcock, Vigo, Lubitsch, Bresson, and Hawks, they went to great lengths to distance themselves from their immediate predecessors. Dudley Andrew sets the scene for this rebellion with vivid illustrative detail in his account of the Oedipal overthrow of their elders by the young Turks:

> The guerilla warfare begun in 1954 by Truffaut, Godard, and Rohmer stands out today as a superb spectacle. The armies take their positions. Decked out in gaudy uniforms, the regnant force parade cumbersomely into the open. We know they will be picked off by the young critics who have posted themselves strategically about. (Andrew, 1997, 35)

A contemporary review of the film in *France-Obervateur* by Louis Marcorelles explicitly links its domestic politics with the New Wave's Oedipal rejection of its

forebears: "'*Une femme est une femme* est un des plus passionnants documents qui soient sur l'angoisse moderne et sur la genèse d'un art qui n'a plus rien à voir avec ceux qui l'ont préé'" (*Une femme est une femme* offers the most compelling insight into modern anxiety and the emergence of an art that no longer has any ties to those that have gone before it) (cited in Sellier, 2005, 139).

But Emile's ambivalence is not merely film-historical; it is also a sign of his disavowal. Emile avoids sex with Angela because, he says, he is training for a bicycle race. However, his relations with prostitutes give the lie to this claim. The strong implication is that he is not ready to become a father. Emile only seems interested in sex with partners who he can be fairly certain will not bear his children, such as the prostitutes he frequents. Quite simply, Emile would prefer to remain unencumbered; quite complicatedly, Emile prefers to misfire, taking delight in seeing his missives go astray. The truth of *Une femme* is that Angela *est une femme*; but the truth is precisely what Emile disavows. Not that Emile doesn't have the opportunity to discover the truth: he occasionally visits Angela's place of work, the Zodiac nightclub, where she sings and undresses before a small, mildly interested audience. Roland Barthes, writing just a few years before Godard made his film, noted that striptease in France was a bourgeois activity, stripped of all eroticism, "sanctioned by the alibi of a weekly sport," and made into a "household property" (Barthes, 1987, 87). Indeed, although it is her job, for all the complacency it elicits, stripping seems to be an extension of Angela's domestic duties (or perhaps her domestic duties are an extension of her stripping).

What is at stake in the striptease is the very idea of truth itself. For Derrida, "undressing, unveiling" is "the metaphor of truth" in Western metaphysics (Derrida, 1980, 443). It will perhaps come as little surprise to learn that the "truth" of feminine striptease is castration, or, as Derrida, glossing Lacan, writes, "woman as the unveiled site of the lack of a penis, as the truth of the phallus, that is of castration. (. . .) Veiling/unveiling here concerns a hole, a non-being: the truth of Being as non-being.[1] The truth is 'woman' as veiled/unveiled castration" (Derrida in Mullar and Richardson, 1988, 183). If castration is the truth, its absent presence poses an aporia for viewers (of the "right-now-I'm-lying" variety). Indeed, when Angela and Alfred meet in a café, they discuss the difficulty of telling the difference between truth and lies. "Je ne sais pas ce qui est vrai ou pas vrai" (I don't know what's true or not true] Angela says. "Je me trompe toujours" (I always get it wrong). "Il n'y a qu'à le savoir" (You just have to know)], offers Alfred helpfully. Like obscenity, you know the truth when you see it. But when you do see it, sometimes you have no choice but to poke out your own eyes, Oedipus-like. In his discussion of Hoffmann's Sandman story, Freud equates the fear of losing one's eyes with the fear of castration. In *Une femme*, a couple of "blind" men, acquaintances of Alfred's, turn out to be sighted. Their eyes are not really wounded; their sight has not really been removed: there has been no castration. What is lacking is lack itself.

Or put another way, we might ask, what if the truth is yet another lie? Just how "truthful" is Angela's act? Her striptease culminates in the revelation of a not-very-revealing bodysuit. We never do get to the bottom of Angela (although we do glimpse this anatomical feature of two of her colleagues). She remains cloaked in mystery, clothed in the sanctity of her pre-adolescent persona, singing "Je ne suis pas sage" (I'm not well-behaved) as she undresses. In speaking the language of love, Angela is somewhat duplicitous. On the one hand she wants a baby, but on the other hand she wants to remain a child herself. This sentiment is echoed in the Charles Aznavour song that opens the film, and which Angela plays on the jukebox during her rendezvous with Alfred in a café, overruling his suggestion of "Itsy Bitsy" ("Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini," 1960) a song lampooning the assault to modesty posed by the bikini, which had been invented by a French engineer in 1946 (and which is also evoked in the name of the Hotel Bikini, from which Alfred is accused of having run off without paying). In the Aznavour song, "Tu t'laisses aller," the speaker criticizes a lover for becoming less attractive as she ages, for no longer being the "petite fille" he fell in love with: "Redeviens la petite fille qui m'a donné tant de bonheur" (Become once again the little girl who gave me so much happiness), the lyrics beseech as we catch our first glimpse of Angela walking into a café in the beginning of the film. Angela wishes both to have a baby and to be a baby. She wants to have her cake and eat it too – as does, for that matter, Emile, who does not bother to inform Angela about his visits to prostitutes: if we are choosing sides here, at least Angela's conflicting desires are out in the open. But we are not choosing sides.

The dangers of duplicity are outlined in a story Alfred tells Angela about a woman who, after sending letters to two lovers on the same day, becomes convinced that she has put the letters in the wrong envelopes, thus revealing to each lover the existence of the other. In a panic, the woman confesses her infidelity to both men, hoping to mitigate the letters' damaging effect, but is horrified to learn that the letters were not misaddressed after all, and that her confession, rather than make things better, has ruined both relationships. This anecdote bears a strong affinity with Edgar Allen Poe's story "The Purloined Letter," in which a detective locates a missing missive in a hiding place so obvious as to be overlooked by everyone else. In both "The Purloined Letter" and Alfred's anecdote, a duplicitous woman fears her infidelity will be found out in a letter. In each case, the letter or its content is exposed, in the hope that this revelation will prevent further exposure. In Poe's story, the recipient of the letter's "honor," and thus her ability to carry on in her duplicity, is preserved, whereas in Alfred's anecdote, the duplicity is foiled by the mistaken conviction that a mistake has occurred. In coming clean, the woman in Alfred's anecdote sullies herself in the eyes of both her lovers, and ends up alone.

The romantic entanglement of one woman with two men is not only echoed in the anecdote Alfred tells about the woman who thinks she has misaddressed

letters to her two lovers; it also replicates the love triangle in *Jules et Jim*, the 1961 Truffaut film that was shot around the same time as Godard's film, and which is invoked explicitly when Alfred meets Jeanne Moreau in a bar and asks how *Jules et Jim* is going. (A love triangle also features in the 1933 Ernst Lubitsch film *Design for Living*, an association not discouraged by the fact that Alfred's surname is Lubitsch.) The threesome in *Une femme est une femme* is reduced to its purest sexual dimension when Angela allows herself to be inseminated by both men. After agreeing to have intercourse with Angela, Emile says that because he has had sex with her after she has slept with Alfred, he can now be certain that the baby will be his (Emile's). This unusual logic suggests that Emile is confusing human biology with that of dragonflies, males of which species can replace a rival's sperm with their own in a female who has previously mated (perhaps uncoincidentally, Jules is writing a book on dragonflies in *Jules et Jim*). Nonetheless, Angela does ultimately get what she wants, in Godard's sly subversion of the classical comedy-of-marriage ending, as Emile finally posts his letter.

Does a letter always reach its destination? For Lacan, it does: the underlying meaning can always be deciphered, no matter how much it has been waylaid en route, garbled by the dream work or other symbolic processes. For Derrida, however, a letter does not always reach its destination; in fact, it may never reach its destination, as meaning is scattered to the winds in an endless deferral, a blustery dissemination. Writing, or the letter (as in "a" in French, or "o" in English), may refer back to its missing voiced counterpart in the hope of attaining an originary plenitude, but the voice for Derrida turns out to be just as internally divided, just as subject to the play of ambiguity, as the letter. In deconstruction, as in Lacanian psychoanalysis, the voice, privileged site of metaphysical transcendence, is linked to the phallus. But lest we fear an assault on our modesty – like the woman in "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Polka Dot Bikini" who hesitates before venturing out in the eponymous garment – both Lacan and Derrida rush to reassure us that the phallus is not biological. Or, at least, it's not where you expect to find it: although the phallus is "located in the voice," it is to be found in "safely idealized" form (Johnson, 1988, 225). The phallus-voice is the "lack that makes the system work" (Johnson, 1988, 225), or logocentrism according to Derrida, the always-present-absent voice behind the letter, and the phallus that is always divided in itself, always lacking (*Un homme est une femme*) (A Man is a Woman).

The desire to reinstate the phallus is thus equated with the drive to give voice to the letter. Speaking of Lacan's reading of the Poe story, Derrida writes, "[For Lacan], the castration of the woman (of the mother) is the final sense, what 'The Purloined Letter' means. And truth means a readequation or reappropriation as the desire to stop up the hole" (Derrida in Mullar and Richardson, 1988, 188). If truth is the desire to stop up the hole, Angela and Emile are perfectly happy to maintain this *décalage* for a certain time not only in their love life, but also in their silent conversation based on book titles, which underscores the gap between speaking and writing. Kevin Hayes (2000) has traced the provenance of the various

book titles that appear in the film. The book titles are signifiers whose meaning is misdirected, sent on a detour. Their original meaning is veiled, as they are purloined (in the etymological sense of being sent far from their original destination). In this way, they are like the letter in Poe's story, which illustrates the fact that the course of the signifier is marked by displacement and that, ultimately, the detour is the destination. As Lacan wrote in his seminar on "The Purloined Letter," "If what Freud discovered and rediscovers with a perpetually increasing sense of shock has a meaning, it is that the displacement of the signifier determines the subjects in their acts, in their destiny, in their refusals, in their blindness, in their end, and in their fate . . . ." (Lacan in Muller and Richardson, 1988, 43–44).

Yet even when Angela and Emile do speak again, even when they have finally stopped up the hole, they find that the voice is not the be-all and end-all, the alpha and omega, of transparent communication. Infelicities can occur. Writing may mislead, it may attempt to hide an absence, but the voice can be accented, and can be misheard. Angela and Emile, sweetly, brush off their feet before climbing into their tiny bed, and yet something will always come between them. That something, the barrier that separates them, is language itself. (As Angela says after sleeping with Alfred, "C'est toujours quand on est ensemble qu'on n'est pas ensemble." (It's always when you're together that you're most apart).) The film ends with a misunderstanding, a discursive misfire that follows close on the heels of Emile and Angela's intercursive act. "Tu es infâme" (which might be rendered, "You're atrocious"), Emile scolds Angela, to which she replies, "Je ne suis pas *un* femme" (which might then be rendered as something like, "I'm not a trocious"). Then, looking straight to camera and winking, she clarifies: "Je suis *une* femme" (I'm a *woman*).

It is no accident that the word whose gender Angela thinks Emile gets wrong is "femme." But her mistake is in thinking that he is mistaken (as the woman with two lovers in Alfred's anecdote mistakenly thinks that she has made a mistake). Their exchange at the end of the film rehearses the disavowal of castration. Angela thinks Emile has divested a word of a letter, turning a dame (as Tom Lehrer would say) into a dam. But she is mistaken. He has not incised the letter from the word, because it was never there in the first place. He did not turn something feminine (une femme) into something masculine (un femme) because that is not what he was talking about ('Tu es infâme'). Or was he? Angela tries to give back something that was never taken: "Ce n'est pas 'un femme.' C'est 'une femme'". This reinstatement of the missing "e" is an instance of what we might call *disavowel*, or the linguistic reinstatement of something that was never missing.

Language not only echoes metaphorically the structure of sexual difference in *Une femme est une femme*, it also serves literally to spell out the film's sexual politics. When Emile goes to meet a prostitute, she is shown standing between a shop called "TOUT POUR L'ENFANT" (Eveything for the child) and a shop called "BENMAYOR ET FILS." These signs sum up the alternatives with which Emile seems to be confronted: reproductive sex resulting in an "enfant," (child) possibly

a "fils" (son); and nonreproductive sex, represented by the prostitute (whose stance outside the door of her building playfully enacts the etymology of the word: *pro-statuere*, to stand in front of). This quasi-subliminal use of the written word is an instance of what Tom Conley has called "film hieroglyphs," which he defines as:

> a writing that unites and divides word and image; that invokes memory to recall analogous forms of legibility and meaning, which serve and contradict what is before our eyes; that fashions rebuses or unforeseen combinations of pictures and writing that are controlled neither by the film nor by the viewer. (Conley, 2006, xxv)

Godard's film hieroglyphs take both diegetic and nondiegetic form. In the first use of non-diegetic titles to supply narrative explanation, Angela and Emile have just been arguing about her wish to have a baby when the following words appear on the screen one by one, gradually building into a sentence: "Emile prend Angela au mot parce qu'il l'aime" (Emile takes Angela at her word because he loves her). It is interesting to note that the idea of taking someone "at their word" is expressed in words, presenting a play on the word "word." When Emile then steps onto the balcony and shouts down to Alfred, the latter is shown standing in front of a jewelry shop, his head next to a big sign bearing the word "CREDIT" (from Latin *credere*, to trust or believe), reinforcing the idea that Emile does indeed take Angela at her word.

In another sequence, Emile becomes part of a rebus, his images equated with the written word. After Angela learns of Emile's visit to a prostitute, she storms off, and he searches for her. A montage of scenes of Emile is followed by a shot of Emile crossing the street, during which the word "EST" appears non-diegetically on the screen. It is only when the "est" is succeeded by the words "TELLEMENT MALHEUREUX" that we realize the "est" is not "East," but rather, "is." After the word "est" appears on the screen, we become aware that we must supply a missing subject, whose absence we only notice retrospectively – at the very moment we realize that it was never absent in the first place, but merely present in another form. It is the succession of the following words that endow the montage of shots of Emile with the status of a grammatical subject, and force us to read the "est" as "is": "tellement malheureux qu'il s'en fout: ("so unhappy that he doesn't give a damn"). It is interesting to note that the verb "foutre" used in this phrase is a familiar word for sexual intercourse, whose use with the reflexive pronoun "se" suggests that Emile is liable to engage in the kind of solitary sexual pursuit that Rousseau, author, perhaps not coincidentally, of *Emile*, called a "dangerous supplement" (Derrida, 1976, 141–164). It is precisely at the moment that the word 'fout' appears on the screen that we see Emile arriving to meet the prostitute between the shop signs bearing the words "fils" and "enfant." The fact that Emile "s'en fout" leads him to engage in the transitive form of the verb "foutre," but without the expectation that his action will result in a "fils" or, more generally, an "enfant."

The link between linguistic felicity and sexual difference is invoked throughout the film. When Angela's friend Suzanne asks if she might be able to get a temporary job as a stripper at the club where Angela works, Suzanne pronounces the word "stripe-tise." When Angela corrects her, Suzanne "corrects" her in turn, announcing that "stripe-tise" is the American pronunciation, like the woman in the anecdote about the billets doux who "corrected" a mistake that never occurred. It is no accident that these accidents of language refer to sexualized activities. Textual pleasure, however, is not without its consequences. When Angela asks Alfred if putting an adjective before a word in French changes its meaning, the example she gives is "Un heureux évènement" [a blessed event] which refers to the birth of a baby. The alternatives are starkly laid out in an earlier scene, when Angela and Emile meet at night after an argument, in front of a shop that sells televisions and radios. In the window a TV shows a reclining odalisque, viewed from behind, gazing at her reflection in a mirror, recalling classical paintings. Also, the prostitute Emile later visits is shown in such a way as to echo the televisual odalisque: she reclines in bed, on her stomach, revealing her bare back down to her hips, surrounded by a profusion of floral fabrics. She gazes at herself in a mirror, odalisque-like, as she speaks to Emile. The next time we are shown the TV screen, after a brief exchange between Angela and Emile, the image we see is of a pregnant woman. These seem to be the opposing versions of femininity available to Angela: mother or odalisque, madonna or prostitute. The madonna alternative, inasmuch as it implies immaculate conception, is not incompatible with Angela's depiction as a little girl, and with her declaration, when consulting a horoscope, that she is "vierge" (Virgo, but also virgin). The alternative of prostitution is implied by the presence of these images in a shop window displaying television sets, which suggests a link between the commodification of female sexuality and the consumption of visual pleasure. In prostitution (and striptease), the body is both producer and product: rather than making products that are then purchased by consumers, the body itself is that which is offered for consumption. That these images of femininity are displayed on a television screen and by one further remove, through reference to classical painting, hints at the role of representation in the codification of sexual difference. Such codification can become so entrenched as to result in tautology: *Une femme est une femme*.

Rather than a relation of identity, it would be more apt to characterize the relation established by tautology as one of repetition with change. In the title of Godard's film, although the second use of "une femme" appears identical to the first, it conveys a different meaning. (Similarly, when Angela asks Alfred in the café, "Qu'est-ce que c'est cette photo [*sic*]? [What's this photo?], he replies, "Une photo" [A photo], which in fact means, "I'm not going to tell you what's in it because I want you to feel the full force of its effect without prior knowledge of its content, and I want you to believe that Emile's infidelity is the conclusion that you have reached independently based upon the photo I have passively-aggressively

thrust before you.") The second occurrence of the phrase "une femme" in the film's title suggests capriciousness, maddening inconsistency, someone to whose irresistible charms you succumb against your better judgment. There is no explanation, because there is no need to explain: Women. Heh. We all know what *they're* like. The tautology suggests a lack of rationality, a boiling point at which all reason breaks down; it is a nod to pure innuendo. It's like the phallus: either you get it or you don't. As reductive as all this talk of phalluses may seem, it simply echoes the reduction of gender to the purely corporeal dimension that is merely implied in the film, if displayed in plain sight on the walls of Emile and Angela's apartment in the magazine covers and postcards that show either male athletes or female pinups such as Marilyn Monroe. (When, for example, Emile reassures Angela that "Je n'aime que toi" (I love only you), he specifies, "Tes yeux, ton cou, tes épaules, ta taille" (Your eyes, your neck, your shoulders, your waist), disassembling her like a sixteenth-century *blazon* (coat of arms). Later, Angela is shown standing outside at night as a large neon sign bearing the word "BEAUTÉ" points down at her, suggesting that she is the living incarnation of this abstract word.)

But let us return to the tautology of the film's title, or rather, the tautology that is not one, for in its repetition, "une femme" becomes something different. It becomes a generalization, a classifying term: "We all know what they (all) are like." The second occurrence of "une" in the title of Godard's film is not singular, and this "une" which is not one demands both to be seen and not to be seen, like the signified "East" in the word "est." By repeating itself, the "une" cancels itself out: "Une" femme becomes "la" femme, which Lacan barred from entering the title of his twentieth seminar, "Dieu et la jouissance de ['la' crossed out] femme," because, he argued, "There is no *La* femme, a definite article to designate the universal" (*Seminar XX*, 68; Lacan's italics; cited in Gallop, 1985, 138). Those who follow Alexandre Dumas's advice to *cherch[er] la femme*, then, are doomed to keep searching. Emile seems to know as much when, after correcting Angela's pronunciation of the "r" phoneme, he replies pedantically to her question of why it is always women who are made to suffer: "Car c'est elles qui font souffrir. Ou ce sont elles. Car l'un ou l'autre est, ou sont, français, il se dit ou se disent" (For it is they who cause suffering. Or they are the ones. For either one or both is, or are, French: one, like the other, is, or are, said). Here Emile draws attention to the capacity for confusion between the singular and the multiple not only in French grammar, but also in generalizations (e.g., "Women cause suffering").

Yet women are not the only objects of generalization in *Une femme* – the structure of generalization may itself be said to be generalizable. There is also an undercurrent of exoticism that runs through the film, or rather glimpses into the workings of exoticism, which allows us to detect similar underlying structures in both sexual and cultural stereotyping. It will be recalled that, in the rebus-sequence in which we read that Emile "est tellement malheureux qu'il s'en fout" we are invited to read the word "est" as "East" before we are compelled to read it as "is."

We see the East, or think we see it, but then must repress it, bury it beneath or within the "is": the East is an absent presence in the film. In exoticism, there is no "there" there; there is always elsewhere, endlessly deferred. You think you've reached the promised land, but then it recedes as in a mirage. The exotic is the *toujours-ailleurs* (always somewhere else), as the primitive in Derrida's "Writing Lesson" turns out to be not primary at all but secondary, always mediated. Derrida's seminal essay shows that the Nambikwara, the Brazilian tribe that Lévi-Strauss wrote about in *Tristes Tropiques* (Unhappy Tropics), were not the noble savages the anthropologist took them for, nor were they devoid of sophistication and the capacity for abstract thought. Derrida challenges Lévi-Strauss's idealized view of the Nambikwara as a prelapsarian people free of the hierarchies and divisions that characterize industrialized societies. He draws a parallel between the image of originary plenitude projected onto cultures deemed "primitive" and the (phal)logocentric qualities attributed to the voice in relation to writing, contending that the voice has always been marked by the same divisions that structure writing (Derrida, 1976, 101–140).

In the trailer for *Une femme*, Godard compares Indian music to Western music, priming audiences for the seemingly incongruous but deeply embedded motif of alterity, sexual and cultural, within the film. There are several fleeting allusions to non-French cultures in the film proper. In one scene, Angela places a metal pail on her head so that it resembles an Asian conical hat, and shuffles like a geisha to the shower: *Une Japonaise est une Japonaise* (A Japanese woman is a Japanese woman). There is also the recurring appearance of an Amazonian Indian costume worn by one of Angela's fellow strippers at the nightclub where she works: *Une Indienne est une Indienne* (An Indian is an Indian). Both of these images suggest that exoticism is something that can be put on – and taken off – as easily as a prop or costume (Angela removes the metal pail from her head as she steps in the shower, and Angela's fellow stripper is shown donning the Amazonian Indian costume instantaneously as she walks through an apparently magical threshold; when we see her wear the costume later in her striptease act, we assume that it will not stay on for long). Alfred and Emile each express the desire to flee to Mexico at various points. Angela's language difficulties are attributable to her Danish origins (she speaks of sending off to Copenhagen for her birth certificate when Emile mentions marriage).

These flashes of exoticism hint at the broader implications of the film's references to the interwoven nature of gender and language. A generation before the age of biotechnology and digitization, Godard revealed the insistence on the legibility of the human body inherent in discourses of sexism and exoticism, which turn the body into a rebus, making it mean something beyond itself. When the multiple layers of *Une femme est une femme* are stripped away, we are left with the naked truth: the structure of stereotype can be found in the structure of language itself.

Note

1   On veiling, gender, and knowledge, see Jordanova (1989, especially pp. 87–110).

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5

Michel Legrand Scores *Une femme est une femme*

Kareem Roustom

Une femme est une femme (A Woman is a Woman) (1961) marked the crystallization of Godard's idiosyncratic approach to the use of music in his films. Beyond encapsulating the formation of a personal style, Godard's approach to music and sound in *Une femme est une femme* contributed, in no small way, to the broader changes in cinema that the French New Wave helped to usher in. In the realm of film music, Mervyn Cooke argues, the French New Wave "did more to revolutionize the techniques and aesthetic perspectives of film music . . . than any other movement in the history of cinema" (Cooke, 2010, 319). Abrupt starting and stopping of music, juxtaposition of lush non-diegetic music with harsh diegetic sounds or music, purposefully mismatching what is seen on screen with what is heard on the sound-track, or the obscuring of dialogue with music, are some of the ways in which Godard broke away from the standard practices, vis-à-vis Hollywood, of film music. While much has been written about the use of songs in *Une femme est une femme* and Godard's novel use of music in film, Michel Legrand's truly brilliant score is often only referenced in passing. It was not only the sound mix, through which Godard upturned the paradigms of the Classical Hollywood film score, but it was also Legrand's multi-faceted score. Godard had a seasoned composer and brilliant melodist in Michel Legrand with whom to break new ground in film music. Both men were able to achieve this upturned "Hollywood musical" by having a passion for, and a deep knowledge of that tradition. By closely examining the standard practices of American film and comparing them to what Godard and Legrand created in *Une femme est une femme* this chapter seeks to explore the creative partnership that produced this unique score.

Legrand – Godard's Longest Musical Collaboration

The Godard–Legrand collaboration began in 1961, beginning with *Une femme est une femme* and ending in 1967 with *Le plus vieux métier du monde* (The Oldest Profession). While *Une femme est une femme* was Godard's third film, Michel Legrand (b. 1932) had already scored 11 feature films. Legrand was by then an accomplished composer, a well known song writer and a highly respected jazz pianist. He had also composed several scores for other New Wave directors, Agnès Varda, François Reichenbach and Jacques Demy, as well as several mainstream films. Educated at the Paris conservatory under such demanding instructors as Nadia Boulanger, Legrand had already amassed an impressive list of achievements by 1961 including touring as an accompanist and musical director for Maurice Chevalier and had, at the age of 22, released an instrumental LP, *I love Paris*, that topped the US album charts in 1954. Although Legrand had come in to his own as a complete and well-rounded musician, conductor, and composer, at heart he was a great writer of melodies. Legrand's conscious pursuit of the top line in the music was instilled in him early on when Nadia Boulanger had instructed him "put whatever you want above and below the melody but, whatever happens, it's the melody that counts" (Legrand, 2013). Indeed, Legrand notes that he "put a great deal of faith in melody" (Legrand, 2013). Legrand's statement is borne out in his prolific body of work that now spans over six decades. His faith in melody was by no means misplaced as he would go on to win numerous awards including three Academy Awards and ten Academy Award nominations. It is also worthy to note that the Godard–Legrand collaboration was the longest collaboration between the director and any composer. Godard would collaborate with Legrand on six projects. With most other composers Godard would work only once, the exceptions being Antoine Duhamel and Jean Schwarz, with whom he worked twice. After Legrand, Godard's most favored composer was Ludwig van Beethoven.

The Musical Language of Legrand's Score to *Une femme est une femme*

As stated in the opening credits *Une femme est une femme* is described as "COMÉDIE" "MUSICAL" "THÉATRÂL" "SENTIMENTAL" and "OPÉRA", among other things. The film attempts to be all of these things, and none of them at the same time. Adding depth and richness to the film's fabric, Legrand's score embraces all of these styles and sentiments. Legrand deftly combines elements of nineteenth-century opera, twentieth-century compositional devices, jazz, baroque musical borrowings and Hollywood and Broadway musical styles. The instrumentation is for full orchestra with auxiliary instruments such as jazz drum kit, saxophone and

an electric keyboard. From within the full orchestra, Legrand also writes for smaller ensembles such as jazz big band sections. As will be discussed, Legrand's score embraces all aspects of the Hollywood musical except for one vital element: composed songs that are performed by the actors. The only exception to this is the short song that Angela sings during her striptease routine.

The score for *Une femme est une femme* can be separated into two general categories: songs and underscore. While the use of the term "underscore," implying subordinate background music, might be problematic when it comes to the films of Godard, for the case of this chapter it will be used to refer to Legrand's original instrumental music. Within the song category, the most notable are songs by Charles Aznavour, namely *Tu t'laisses aller* and *Chanson d'Angela* by Legrand and Godard (the latter presumably contributing lyrics). As a good deal has been written on these songs and their use in the film, the second category of music, consisting of Legrand's music, will be the focus of this chapter. Legrand's theme-based underscore can further be separated into two categories: music that was meticulously timed to fit a very specific scene and music that was thematic in nature, and could, therefore, be heavily edited by Godard after the score was recorded. In a 1980 phone interview with Royal S. Brown, Legrand recounted the process of creating the score for *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live) and its end result,

> Godard said to me, "I want you to write me a theme and eleven variations, because that's the way the film is constructed: there's a theme and then there are eleven variations." And so I said, "O.K." I saw the film, and I wrote a theme and eleven variations. When Godard left the recording session, he had listened to the whole thing: "Great! Bravo" That's exactly what I want." But when he sat down to work and he put the music behind the pictures, he ended up keeping only the opening measures of the second or third variation, I think and he repeated it throughout the whole film. It's a great idea, and it works very, very well. (Brown, 1994, 189)

Legrand's score to *Une femme est une femme* most likely did not suffer the same level of attrition as did his music for *Vivre sa vie* was subjected to. This difference was due to the stylistic needs of the former, specifically a number of scenes that needed precisely timed musical underscore. Legrand draws on a number of influences in this score including cabaret, jazz, opera (as noted above), Hollywood musical comedies as well as classical era interpretations of his own themes. Similar to *Vivre sa vie* and likely at Godard's request, Legrand's score to *Une femme est une femme* is also theme-based. Legrand is known for being very prolific during the sketching stage and he describes this process as a reductive one.

> Well, I go for a theme: main themes or a theme for a character. So I'm not writing one theme, I'm writing 25, 30 themes and initially, I feel like all of them would work. It's time that helps me, because at the end of the day, I play the 35 again five or six die, so I get rid of them. And then the next day after that, five or six more, so I

proceed by elimination. So after a week or so I have four or five very possible, and I end up with two or three. (Jenkins, 2011)

Likewise Godard's musical process can also be said to be reductive. He seems to be attracted to strong melodic lines or bold musical gestures but he rarely allows them enough breathing space to give a sense of coherency. His interest in melody lies in setting up expectations in the viewer's ears only to dash them. Godard's reductive process is focused more on the immediate elements of a given theme or musical phrase and less on the flow of a melodic line, its beginning, middle and logical end and how that might complement a particular scene. It is as if he is saying "I don't care where the music began or where it is going, what I'm interested in is what is happening at this specific point and how it affects a particular scene." Describing his approach to music Godard said "I try to use music like another picture which isn't a picture, like another element. Like another sound, but in a different form" (Brown, 1994, 188).

This approach is in play during the first occurrence of Legrand's music in *Une femme est une femme* at 2:52 as Angela (Karina), walks along a busy Parisian street. This cue, as short musical segments are referred to in films, is a variation on a theme titled *Angela, Strasbourg Saint-Denis* (Legrand, 2006). Based on a simple four-note motif that is repeated three times, followed by a held note lasting four beats, and then repeated in the same manner but one step below the initial pitch, this theme's interest is generated by Legrand's lush and imaginative orchestration. The primary melodic elements in this cue are carried by the violins, and Legrand adds interest by his subtle use of suspensions: notes that are held over from the previous beat to the next thereby creating a slight dissonance. The harmonic accompaniment is simple but interesting and colorfully scored for horns and viola. The melody is further complemented by cascading woodwind runs. The laid-back pseudo jazz ride cymbal beat provides a languid sense of motion, and rolled timpani accents coupled with an unhurried pizzicato bass line hold down the lower register of the orchestra.

This cue, which is full of color and has a romantic dreaminess to it, is in clear contrast with the overwhelming grey of the drab Parisian urban scene. The meaningful glances exchanged in the shop between Angela and Emile are enhanced by Legrand's score and the amorous climax of the cue is reached when the melody is carried by the saxophone. Mervyn Cooke has noted that when used in film, jazz and the instruments most associated with it have suffered from "gratuitous quotational signposting and equation . . . with sex" (Cooke, 2010, 214). Godard and Legrand would undoubtedly have been aware of this association, and Legrand's use of the saxophone in this scene does initially suggest a certain voluptuousness. In a comic twist, however, instead of carnal sexuality we encounter a more clinical sexuality when Angela begins leafing through a book titled *J'attends un enfant* (I'm having a baby) which is full of gynecological illustrations. Sex is clearly the topic of this moment but hardly the *sexy* kind that is often associated with the

saxophone and jazz. This cue is just one example of the very fluid styles that define Legrand's score for *Une femme est une femme*. His music can change in character, content and style within a beat and it is Legrand's chameleon-like ability that imbues the film with much of its humor.

Legrand's Score in Context of the Classical Hollywood Film Score

In 1939 American composer Aaron Copland gave a series of lectures at Manhattan's New School for Social Research that were eventually published in a book titled *What to Listen for in Music* (Copland, 1939). Copland, who is widely recognized as a major figure in twentieth-century American concert music, also made his mark on film music. His credits as a composer for film include about a dozen films, one of which, William Wyler's "The Heiress" earned him an Academy Award and three others Oscar nominations and an Emmy nomination. Copland's observations in *What To Listen for In Music*, based as they were on his real world experiences, ended up being highly influential. In the chapter "Film Music" Copland offered a summary of the functions of film music based on his observations and experiences in Classical Hollywood film composition from 1930 to about 1960. According to Copland's Hollywood film scores served primarily to:

1   Create a more convincing atmosphere of time and place.
2   Underline psychological refinements – the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation.
3   Serve as a kind of neutral background filler.
4   Build a sense of continuity.
5   Underpin the theatrical build-up of a scene, and round it off with a sense of finality. (Copland, 1939, 205–206)

The list is a remarkably accurate summary of the uses and functions of film music in the classical Hollywood film era and is arguably still relevant today. Copland elaborates on each point and, at times, decries practices that run counter to his sense of the aesthetic and functional requirements of film music. He laments the homogeneity of scores written in the 1930s and 1940s where "a thirteenth-century Gothic drama and a hard-boiled modern battle of the sexes get similar [musical] treatment" (Copland, 1939). Or, considering the function of film music as "neutral background filler," Copland writes that "this is really the music one isn't supposed to hear, the sort that helps to fill the empty spots, such as pauses in a conversation . . . This is the hardest to do, as any film composer will attest, when the neutral filler type of music must weave its way underneath dialogue" (Copland, 1939).

Copland's list reflects the standardized film music style that was still "beloved" by Godard and Legrand while at the same time they considered it "outdated" (Wierzbicki, 2009, 199). The degree of Godard's and Legrand's acceptance and rejection of the standard practice is evident in the score to *Une femme est une femme*, which is an over-the-top "stylized homage" to the classical Hollywood film score (Wierzbicki, 2009). By creatively toying with and exaggerating some of the standard film music practices that audiences were conditioned to expect, Godard and Legrand ushered in a revolution in the uses of film music that still reverberates to this day.

Time and Place

Although the time line of *Une femme est une femme* is somewhat vague, perhaps 24 to 48 hours, the time and place are made very clear. The date is given to us as November 10, 1961 and there is no clear indication that the locale is anything other than Paris. On the surface of things Legrand's score does little to contradict these temporal and chronological facts. The instrumentation of his score is fairly traditional: a standard orchestra with the addition of jazz drums, saxophones and some electronic keyboard instruments are very much in keeping with the popular and film music of that time. Additionally Charles Aznavour's song *Tu t'laisses aller*, which gets a considerable amount of screen time in the film, made the French charts in 1960. In this sense, Legrand's score conforms very much to the standard practices of the Hollywood film score with some very significant exceptions. Indeed, upon closer inspection, Legrand uses a series of subtle devices to blur the contemporary language of the score, and thereby adds to the overall playfulness and comedy of the film. The most notable instance of Legrand's playful bending of time takes place at 20:50 during a scene where Angela instructs Emile with the following line: "Before acting out our little farce, we bow to the audience." Legrand's cue is scored for Oboe and strings in a pseudo baroque style. Far from composing a purist re-creation of that style, Legrand adds a comical sparkle with single accents on the triangle. A quickly descending woodwind run triggers an accented jab from the trombones that mimics, in a cartoon like way usually referred to as "Mickey mousing," and is timed with Angela and Emile's bow to the audience. The cue finally changes tone as the formerly gentle strings crescendo with a violent bowed tremolo into an accented dissonant chord that is scored in a manner not unlike nineteenth-century Italian opera. Here is a cue that lasts less than a minute yet, through Legrand's deft handling and intimate knowledge of musical styles, compresses hundreds of years of musical practice into a coherent musical work. By having Angela and Emile acknowledge and then bow to the audience during this scene, Godard is blurring the traditional sense of perspective between the audience and a film. This device as practiced by playwright Berthold

Brecht, whose work was an influence on Godard, is meant to lead the audience "to think *about* the drama instead of sinking *into* it" (Sterritt, 1999, 64). Legrand's cue contributes to this self-aware scene in two ways. First it is complementary to the *intent* of the scene in that, much like the actors, the music steps out of character. For a few seconds Legrand's cue introduces a musical style that has not been heard yet thus far in the score. Second, the actors are playful in their mannerisms and Legrand's cue mirrors that same tone in its use of style, melody and instrumental color.

Another similar device can be heard in the cue at 1:09:50 which begins shortly after Angela tells Alfred that if she leaves the awning in her apartment up then she's made up with Emil and "that I'm happy." This cue begins in nineteenth-century operatic style reminiscent of an interlude one might hear in the music of Berlioz or Gounod, and at 1:10:51 changes in tone to a more twentieth-century scoring style where, reflecting the confusing signals being sent from the rising and descending awnings in Angela's apartment, the tonal center melts away with aid of a chromatic figure in the woodwinds and the strings. This short chromatic phrase is then followed by the *Angela, Strasbourg Saint-Denis* theme played on a 1960's electric guitar very much reflecting a "contemporary" popular music sound of that era. The cue continues in Legrand's identifiable style of underscoring as the scene shifts to the interior where we find Angela and Emile engaged in an argument. Here again, Legrand's music jumps through three distinct musical styles within a short period of time. This music both complements and exaggerates the emotions of the scene which, from the perspective of Alfred, are anxiety, followed by confusion, as Angela's mixed messages come across in pseudo-semaphore coded messages from the rising and falling awnings. Both of these illustrate the way Legrand's blurs time and place by the use of a musical language that draws on a number of mutually anachronistic styles. In the second scene, as Alfred waits for Angela's sign, the music is used to mark the passing of time. The pulsing of the staccato violin phrasing is akin to a clock ticking. Even so, it is unclear how much time has passed since Alfred arrived and began waiting for Angela. Has he stood there merely for the time it took the cigarette, which he tries to smoke but is unable to, since so many passers-by ask for a light, to burn down to a smoldering butt? Or is the passage of time marked on a much grander time scale, that of the stylistic shifts in the music: from the nineteenth century into the 1960s?

Underlining Psychological Refinements

Expanding on the second function of film music as "the unspoken thoughts of a character or the unseen implications of a situation" Copland encapsulates the standard practice of the time when he notes that

music can play upon the emotions of the spectator, sometimes counterpointing the thing seen with an aural image that implies the contrary of the thing seen. This is not as subtle as it sounds. A well-placed dissonant chord can stop an audience cold in the middle of a sentimental scene, or a calculated woodwind passage can turn what appears to be a solemn moment into a belly laugh. (Copland, 1939, 205).

Legrand and Godard play with and against this "standard practice." However, the approach adopted by Legrand and Godard is less one of *underlining* than it is, for the most part, a technique of *overemphasizing*. This is often done with a sense of humor, and Legrand's handling of this approach is highly imaginative. One colorful example of this technique can be found in the scene where Emile insists that Angela is incapable of properly pronouncing a French "R." The scene begins at 26:51 when Angela's first attempt at pronouncing an "R" is complimented by a dissonant cluster in the horns and trumpets. Emile, who describes her effort as "pathetic," rolls a masculine "R" that is accompanied by a well-balanced D major triad score for strings scored in a Classical music style. Angela's second attempt, which is in the form of five Rs whose conviction is conveyed by her gesticulating hand, is mimicked with five trilled string chords in a D minor tonality, with widely spaced winds leading to an unstable resolution for her final "R." Emile also responds with multiple R's and the correctness of his enunciation is supported by a safe and very proper I, V, I cadence scored for loud and confident brass instruments with timpani hits added at the end of the phrase for further stability and finality. Angela's final attempt is accompanied by high tremolo on strings that seem to melt away into a descending chromatic line. The hesitancy of this passage is furthered by a cymbal roll and a final cadence into a weakly scored D major triad in the low brass. However, the arrival to a major triad is short lived as the trombone, which carries the major third, meekly slides from an F sharp to an F natural resulting into a defeated sounding D minor triad. Angela then asks "Why is it always women who suffer?" This scene is a confrontation between Angela and Emile. The music supports Emile's Rs with well voiced, consonant and stable musical passages that are rooted in the Classical music tradition. Angela, on the other hand, is incapable of pronouncing an R the way Emile can and her failed efforts are exaggerated through Legrand's use of a far less stable and dissonant twentieth-century musical language. Whether this passage would have the effect of stopping an audience "cold" or cause a "belly laugh," as Copland wrote, is difficult to say. Given that much of *Une femme est une femme* is scored in this manner, it seems that Godard and Legrand are trying to elicit both emotions simultaneously from the viewers, causing us repeatedly to ask, much like Emile and Alfred, "is this a tragedy or a comedy?" The psychological underpinning that Copland describes above is part of what Cozarinsky calls "the hard certainties of the traditional American film" (Cozarinsky, 1969, 29). Godard and Legrand achieved not only a softening of these "hard certainties," but in many instances also melted them into an opaque musical fabric.

Music as Neutral Background Filler

Of the occasional necessity of opacity in film music, Copland writes that "this is really the music one isn't supposed to hear, the sort that helps to fill the empty spots, such as pauses in conversation. It's the movie composer's most ungrateful task" (Copland, 1939, 205). Copland touches here upon the most common use of music in cinema and, again, examples of this practice abound in the Classical Hollywood film score. One of the many standard practices that Godard upends in *Une femme est une femme* is the balance between dialogue, sound effects and music. To begin with, Godard's mix of the music track within the overall sound mix is, simply put, very loud. The sound track of any given film most often consists of at least one of these three elements: dialogue, sound effects and music. More often than not, the priority given to each of these elements is as listed. It is the *sound mix*, or "sound balance" that defines this hierarchy where the typical intent is to have the viewer focus on the dialogue (Altman, 1992, 252). By overturning the balance of this hierarchy, Godard's sound mix constitutes both a homage and effrontery to the traditional Hollywood sound mix. Most prominent in the sound mix is Godard's predilection to mix the music a good deal louder than the dialogue through out most of the film with few exceptions. Yet his effort to be clever falls short, much like the Cyd Charisse and Gene Kelly inspired poses that Angela and Emile hold at approximately 15:20 in the film. As Edgardo Cozarinsky points out, Angela and Emile strike poses for which they have no physical agility or talent and "their quivering arms and legs indicate the effort" (Cozarinsky, 1969, 29). Likewise by turning the music up louder than the dialogue, Godard forces us to attempt to actively ignore the music in order to focus more on the dialogue. In this sense, as Chion describes him "Godard is like a little boy, who derives pleasure from doing the opposite of what others are doing. Yet by accomplishing the opposite, he succeeds only in reproducing and reinforcing the familiar dialogue-centered structure, but in an inverted fashion" (Chion, 1992, 110).

Legrand, through his unorthodox scoring of dialogue-heavy scenes, also contributes to the upending of standard practice much in the same way that Godard does. One of the most difficult tasks that any film composer faces is to achieve, through the musical underscore, an affecting opacity whereby the viewers *feel* the music but do not *notice* it. This task is especially difficult when it comes to dialogue-heavy scenes. Of such scenes Copland writes "this is hardest to do, as any film composer will attest, when the neutral filler type of music must weave its way underneath dialogue" (Copland, 1939, 205–206). Legrand's rejection of the standard subtle weaving of music underneath dialogue is one of the most striking aspects of his score. The most notable among these scenes in *Une femme est une femme* occur at approximately 12:42 where Alfred (Belmondo) and a debt collector hurl insults at each other, and then Emile and Angela's competitive rolling of the French "R" at approximately 26:10. Scenes such as these rely on an operatic

recitative-like musical commentary, where sharp musical interjections are made between lines of dialogue as if to heighten its drama and its narrative consequences. The handling of these interjections by Legrand, which are brilliant in their use of exaggerated instrumental color, are made all the more obtrusive by Godard's giving equal footing to the music and dialogue in the final sound mix.

On-screen action is another cinematic aspect where the expected neutrality of the score is thrown aside. Legrand's music and Godard's implementation of it often eschew the standard relation between music and visuals. There are several instances where Godard and Legrand use the music not as a comment on, or reaction to, the on-screen action but as a catalyst for it. The first example of this technique, albeit of the more subtle uses of it in the film, takes place at 2:52. In this scene Angela (Karina), having left the coffee shop is walking on a sidewalk along a busy Parisian street towards some destination or another. Shortly thereafter Angela's path is momentarily blocked by passers-by on the sidewalk. She stops and waits until there is an opening in the crowd, and then moves ahead a few steps only to hesitate slightly, then she turns around and returns towards and into a magazine shop. We soon discover that this is Emile's (Brialy) place of work. Legrand's cue is placed precisely at the moment where Angela's path is blocked, forcing her to stop in mid-step with a stutter, immediately in front of the magazine stand. Godard uses Angela's sudden stop in mid-gait as the trigger for the music, but Angela is drawn back into the magazine shop, it could be argued, because of the music. Yet the music is clearly non-diegetic in this instance. Given Godard's purposely confusing tinkering with the sound mix a few seconds before this scene, where the viewer is confronted with complete silence, or only the sound of Angela's footsteps to accompany the visuals of a busy urban scene, the entrance of the music seems to be equally nebulous. The music is both triggered by a physical action on-screen – Angela's abrupt stop – and seems to trigger Angela's decision to enter the magazine shop. Furthermore, this duality is further supported by the nature of Legrand's cue, which is lush, colorful and laden with signifiers that allude to the upcoming romantic interaction between Angela and Emile. Here Godard uses the music not only to foreshadow but also to create the illusion that the music acts as the catalyst that directs or changes the course of the narrative, thereby directing Angela to turn around and enter the shop.

The cue at 1:18:42 also uses music to catalyze on screen action. The scene takes place after Angela's infidelity with Alfred. She is seated on the landing in front the apartment she shares with Emile, pensively handling the key to the door. As she is seated there we hear the mewing of a kitten followed the sound of ascending footsteps. Angela then rises to enter her apartment. She does so, it seems, because her moment of solitude has been interrupted by a man climbing the stairs, presumably a "client" of the prostitute next door, and Angela realizes that she must face Emile. At the moment Angela rises, Legrand's cue begins. Commenting on the narrative and underlying emotions of this scene, where Angela's physical

motions are upward but her emotions are downward, descending into guilt as she is about to confront Emile with her infidelity, Legrand's cue consists of two melodic lines moving in stepwise contrary motion in D minor (ascending D, E, F, G, A, BA, C, D etc. and descending D, C, BA, A, G, F, E, D etc.). The opening measures for this cue are scored for vibraphone, and strings on the ascending line and strings and trombone on the descending line. Accents to each new note are added with light cymbal hits while muted trumpets and horns sustain each of the tones introduced in the ascending and descending line. A very thick and rich cluster of notes is created by these sustained brass notes, and further tension is added by a sustained roll on a second cymbal. The tension, it should be noted, is relatively mild, since all the notes that are sustained are diatonic (that is, all from the same scale).

This thick D minor sonic fabric, and the manner in which it is orchestrated, is in keeping with Legrand's overall approach in this score: it is much grander than it need be. His sense of humor is ever at play, sometimes mimicking, at other times seeming to influence Angela's actions. The third note in this ascending/ descending figure, accented with vibraphone and cymbal, precisely mirrors the quick turn of Angela's head as she looks over at the "client" knocking at the door of the apartment next door. Such literal musical interpretations continue to mirror Angela's motions as she enters the apartment and, as she confronts and then avoids Emile, the beauty and logic of the melodic contrary motion is brought into relief. The divergent qualities of the melodic lines mirror the widening gulf between the guilt-ridden Angela and Emile. As the ascending and melodic lines get further and further away from each other, the sonic gap in the middle is filled by an ever-growing harmonic tension sustained by the brass instruments. After Angela manages to avoid confronting Emile, the camera begins to follow her around the apartment and she turns abruptly as she seeks to avoid eye contact with the accusatory lens. All of these abrupt turns are accented by Legrand's music.

These accents are timed in a way that seems not only to comment on Angela's physical motion – the abrupt turning away from the camera – but also to push Angela away from the camera. Ultimately the camera and the music follow Angela all the way to a wall – or rather seem to push her there – where she turns her back on the audience. Angela does not turn until the after the cue ends with a less than subtle harp glissando into a strongly accented note on the vibraphone. Directly facing the camera Angela tells Emile, and the audience, "I don't know what to tell you." Legrand's cue for this scene is meticulously timed and very creatively scored. The music, through devices that are both subtle and obvious, is able both to comment on, and to seemingly influence the actors' physical motions. This style of scoring, redolent both in Legrand's score and in Godard's approach to the sound mix, overturn the paradigms of Classical Hollywood film music scores. The typical neutrality of film music is itself neutralized and the music takes a *front and center* role.

Building a Sense of Continuity

Continuity in editing and music, argues Aaron Copland, is necessary to avoid chaos. He writes that "the picture editor knows better than anyone how service-able music can be in tying together a visual medium which is, by its very nature, continually in danger of falling apart. One sees this most obviously in montage scenes where the use of a unifying musical idea may save the quick flashes of disconnected scenes from seeming merely chaotic" (Copland, 1939, 206). Since audiences have grown to expect certain ways of using music and editing to unify scenes, Godard often pushes against these expectations. Wheeler Winston Dixon argues that Godard does this because his intent is to show "not that which we wish or expect to see, but only those actions and results that [Godard] deems necessary to create the world as he sees it." Godard's "strain of resistance to audi-ence expectation" is rooted in his desire to make "his audiences work, and demands their full attention and participation at all times" (Dixon, 1997, 51). The interplay of audience expectation and Godard's resistance to it are at the heart of the score to *Une femme est une femme*. There are many instances where Legrand and Godard embrace audience expectations, but seemingly always, with some caveat or another, completely disregard them.

One way in which continuity, and thereby audience expectations, are preserved is through the use of recurring themes, musical gestures or textures. One of these is leitmotif, a standard practice in the Classical Hollywood film score and rooted in Wagnerian opera where specific characters are assigned unique themes. While Legrand does not rely on leitmotif, he does attach musical materials to the following:

1   Individual characters: Most prominently Angela, and less so Emile and Alfred.
2   Relationships between these characters: Angela and Emile, Angela and Alfred, Angela, Emile and Alfred.
3   Locations: The strip club where Angela works, or the café.
4   Situations: The music is used to comment on re-occurring situations.

As noted earlier, Legrand's main theme, *Angela, Strasbourg Saint-Denis*, is based on a short four-note motif that is varied in many imaginative ways throughout the film. The brevity of this theme allows for ease in the creation of variations. It also works in contrast to more drawn-out thematic melodies associated with Classical Hollywood film scores, such as Max Steiner's main theme from *Gone With The Wind*. Legrand's minimalist approach to melodic writing in film can be seen as part of a newer school of film music practices ushered in by Bernard Herrmann (1911–1975), arguably the most influential film composer of the twentieth century. In an interview with Royal S. Brown, Herrmann confirmed that film music should

be comprised of musical phrases that are "no longer than a second or two." Commenting on the difficulty of using long melodic phrases Herrmann said:

> I think a short phrase has got certain advantages. Because I don't like the leitmotif system. The short phrase is easier to follow for an audience, who listen with only half an ear. Don't forget that the best they do is half an ear. You know, the reason I don't like this tune business is that a tune has to have sixteen bars, which limits you as a composer. Once you start, you've got to finish – eight or sixteen bars. Otherwise, the audience doesn't know what the hell it's all about. It's putting handcuffs on yourself. (Brown, 1994, 292–293)

A short, easily identifiable theme is an important factor in building continuity in a film and the most prominent of Legrand's themes is the one that we associate with Angela. As discussed above, this theme is the first of Legrand's music that is heard in the film. In a sense it becomes not only a theme we attach to Angela, but also, because of its malleable brevity, takes on more meaning as the film's plot develops.

Its first use occurs when Angela turns to enter the magazine shop where Emile works. Its second use is at 12:13 when Angela leaves the strip club where she works to find Alfred outside. Here the theme is carried by the cellos as Angela tells Alfred that she doesn't have time for him. Another layer of meaning is attached to this theme when it is heard at 18:10 as Angela discovers, with the aid of the fertility indicator, that she is ovulating. Now the theme takes on a central role in the plot. It is attached to Angela's obsession with having a baby. After Emile disappoints her with his hesitation to achieving this end, the theme is used again at 25:40. Here the main melody is carried by the saxophone but quickly devolves into a pseudo cartoon musical farce as Emile rides his bicycle around the apartment.

As their argument over having a baby devolves, Emile reverts to childish parroting of Angela in the sequence at 29:43. The music turns into a farcical circus-music-like waltz, replete with brash and exaggerated interjections. The waltz continues until Angela turns the table on Emile's behavior by saying "I want a baby," a phrase that he cannot bring himself to repeat. Here the music returns to the main theme, again carried by the saxophone, but with a new harmonic treatment that is less tender than previously heard. The completion of the melody is interrupted by a knock at the door. At this point in the film, the main theme has been heard several times and, as Herrmann rightly suggested, a short phrase is far more effective because of its ease of identification. Even so, the melody itself, even its complete form, is one that always feels like the beginning of something that never quite develops. In a sense it is as if Legrand gave us an enticing "A" section of the melody without ever giving us a "B" section knowing full well that we are expecting the latter. This is what film critic Anthony Lane called "musical foreplay" when he referred to Legrand's score (Lane, 2003, 103). Paradoxically continuity is achieved in the overall score, and hence the film, through the use of

melodic material, that is, Angela's theme, that is inherently discontinuous and seems to be underdeveloped. Yet upon closer inspection Legrand brilliantly weaves numerous variations, and thereby development, from this purposefully truncated melodic material. As the relationships between Angela, Emile and Alfred grow more complex and interesting this theme takes on multiple meanings and representations.

Locations in the *Une femme est une femme* also provide a ready canvas for thematic material. Much has been written about the use of Aznavour's music in the café scenes as well as the use of music in the strip clubs. This later music, which manages to be both diegetic and non-diegetic, is rarely heard outside the club. The only exceptions to this pattern are several short but important uses of *Chanson d'Angela* that Angela sings during her striptease routine at 9:05. As Emile and Angela's relationship implodes over his reluctance to father a child with her, they leave the apartment and seek a solution in the streets of Paris. Here, Emile stops unsuspecting passersby and asks whether they'd sleep with Angela in order to get her pregnant. After two men turn down his request Emile, as seen from a long shot above the street, runs after Angela where they exchange slaps, kicks and punches. The cue that enters at 1:13:21 quotes the main theme with frenzied string runs providing an accompaniment. Shortly after this thematic quote a portion of the melody from *La Chanson d'Angela* is heard on the clarinet. The use of this motif outside of the strip club is a first in the score. Shortly after that, as Emile enters the club looking for Angela, both the main theme and the melody from *La Chanson d'Angela* can be heard as a duet between the flute and a solo violin above a light accompaniment from harp and strings. This duet occurs when a despondent Emile enters the strip club and inquires about Angela. Interestingly, this is one of the few times in the film when the traditional hierarchy of dialogue, sound effects and music is observed. This approach helps to lend credibility to Emile's feelings of frustration, anger and hurt at this point in the film.

Situational continuity is supported by the use of recurring musical material. One of the most prominent instances of this occurs at three points in the film when Angela, Emile and Alfred hint at the theatrical nature of cinema by either directly acknowledging the presence of the audience or by asking "is this a tragedy or a comedy?" At each occurrence of this situation, Legrand uses a short cue in a baroque style that is typically heard on the harpsichord or the piano. The overt use of eighteenth-century music is out of date, and therefore, out of place within the palette used by Legrand in the film. The divergent qualities of the score as a whole and these "baroque" cues help to set these scenes apart from the remainder of the film. When this cue is first heard, Karina and Brialy step out of their roles as Angela and Emile to bow to the audience. This moment causes us to question the cinematic nature of *Une femme est une femme*, or perhaps to question cinema itself. When this cue is heard again in the film, as it recurs the two times that Alfred and Emile ask "is this a tragedy or a comedy?," we are again pushed out

of the familiar passive role of the viewer, and urged to ask ourselves if it is the character (that is, Emile) asking that question or the actor (that is, Brialy).

Underpinning the Theatrical Build-Up of a Scene, and Rounding It Off with a Sense of Finality

Copland has little to say about this aspect of film music other than "the first instance that comes to mind is the music that blares out at the end of the film" (Copland, 1939 206). Nonetheless, we can safely surmise Copland's intent describing a well-planned musical *set up* that might be a prelude to a song or an important event in a given film. An example of such subtle musical build-ups can be found in *Singing in The Rain*, where Don (Gene Kelly) is kissing Kathy (Debbie Reynolds) goodnight. The underscore, by composer Lennie Hayton, is a typical score of that era: lush string scoring of saccharine harmonies. Gene Kelly finally says goodnight to Reynolds, then waves off the waiting cab driver and begins walking in the rain, whereupon a clear musical pulse begins, providing a foundation for the melodic motif the Kelly uses to begin his song. This is a typical set-up – the audience hears all the hints at a song and eventually gets one. Legrand and Godard were well aware of these stylistic techniques but their characters, with the exception of Angela's song in the strip club, never once sing a song. This is the "infuriating presence of musical foreplay" that Anthony Lane referred to. He notes that "Angela is forever on the move, sticking her bottom out and whistling at herself in the mirror, and the soundtrack keeps rousing itself for what appears to be – what surely must be – a song. No such luck!" (Lane, 2003, 103). Indeed, Legrand is a master of theatrical build-ups but is never allowed to pen a song for Godard's song-bereft musical. A prime example of this truncated musical approach occurs at 15:00, Immediately after Alfred asks Angela "Is this why you're sad?" a buoyant musical passage, scored for running strings, xylophone and exuberant brass, begins just before Angela runs out of sight to proclaim "Because I'd like to be in a musical comedy starring Cyd Charisse!" Legrand provides all the trimmings and icing that would normally accompany the typical Broadway-inspired Hollywood song. We hear loud brass accents, colorful runs and jazz inspired percussion, but we are never allowed to enjoy a specific song. In that sense there never is a "rounding off with a sense of finality," as Copland prescribed. Paradoxically, in the following scene beginning at 15:40 when Angela taunts Alfred by saying "I bet you can't do everything I can!" to which he responds "try me!" Here is a clear wink to the seminal song *Anything you can do (I can do better)* from *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950) yet again, we do not get a song. Godard doesn't even allow a build up. Instead we are given a series of trembling still poses by Angela and Alfred and fully scored musical peaks, replete with choirs singing loud "Ahs," that are pasted together into

a sort of sonic quilt. In some ways, it seems as if these fully scored chords for choir and orchestra are what keep Angela and Alfred from falling over while holding these poses. After all of this activity and brash underscoring, Angela runs up the stairs and leaves Alfred behind. A dejected Alfred waves her off as he descends the stairs, and then turns to look up towards Angela's apartment window, holding his hand to his mouth as if he is about to yell or, maybe even sing. For that instant it seems possible that we might get a song as a very audible inhale can be heard coming from Alfred. Alas, there is to be no song or even a yell from Alfred. Rather his inhale is interrupted by an abrupt cut to the interior of Angela's apartment where the song "Hello there Joe what do you know" accompanies her tidying up. Godard is very playful with this entire sequence that, at best, leaves one bemused yet charmed.

Conclusion

While it should be kept in mind that Copland's five points are a summary of typical practices, and also his personal and professional view on the most effective uses of film music, any of these rules can be broken. Referring to Copland's list Claudia Gorbman notes that "a given film score may violate any of [these] principles . . . providing the violation is at the service of other principles" (Gorbman, 1987, 73). This in no way diminishes the significance of Legrand's score to *Une femme est une femme*, or Godard's use of music throughout the film; rather it highlights how adventurous they both were in their collaboration. As Godard has often been described as man who "loves paradox" his homage to the Hollywood musical was achieved by throwing out virtually every rule that defined the genre. The reason that Godard's and Legrand's take on the Hollywood musical genre was so effective was because they had a deep understanding of that tradition and its practices. The old adage of "knowing the rules before you break them" applied to their efforts. Furthermore, Godard was developing a very idiosyncratic style of using music in film. As noted earlier Godard described his thinking about music as "another picture which isn't a picture, like another element. Like another sound, but in a different form" (Brown, 1994, 188). This duality where music and film co-existed, one being subservient to the other, had mixed results in *Une femme est une femme* and its critics often cited the confusion that was caused by Godard and Legrand's approach to music. Defending his vision Godard said:

> People didn't like *Une Femme est une femme* because they didn't know what it meant. But it didn't mean anything. If you see a bouquet of flowers on the table, does it mean something? It doesn't prove anything about anything. I simply hoped that the film would give pleasure. I meant it to be contradictory, juxtaposing things which didn't necessarily go together, a film which was gay and sad at the same time. One

can't do that, of course, one must be either one or the other, but I wanted to be both at once. (Milne, 1998, 6)

Legrand, who would go on to work with Godard on five more films, was able to find an outlet for his songs elsewhere, not least of which was his musical masterpiece "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964). Legrand would eventually move to Los Angeles in 1968 where he would begin a long and very successful career as a mainstream Hollywood composer. His success began early with an Oscar for his Noel Harrison driven song "The Windmills of Your Mind" from *The Thomas Crown Affair*. As a sign to his enduring legacy, Legrand's song was used again, re-recorded by Sting, for the 1999 remake of *The Thomas Crown Affair*. This is an indication of the divergent paths that Legrand and Godard took after their work together. Godard continued on in his creative milieu, gaining recognition but little public success, Legrand embraced and thrived in mainstream cinema and music achieving numerous box office and chart successes in his 45-year career. Yet the French New Wave is primarily associated with the names Bazin, Chabrol, Demy, Godard, Varda, Reichenbach, Rivette and Truffaut. Legrand's successes in the mainstream film and music worlds should not overshadow the richness and endurance of his contribution to the New Wave. On the contrary, Legrand is rightly deserving of a place in this list as an architect of the Nouvelle Vague.

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6

Three-Way Mirroring in *Vivre sa vie*

Maureen Turim

The Face – Sadness – Identification

Young, fragile, beautiful. The opening shots of the credit sequence of *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live) form a figurative three-way mirror reflecting on woman as image, and on actress as character. To be specific, the three shots, discontinuous with one another, frame Anna Karina as Nana in close-ups: 1) a right profile facing left, lit from behind and to the side, highlighting a luminous outline, 2) a highly symmetrical full face in soft shadow, and then 3) a left profile facing right, matching the first shot of the series. Music underscores the first half of each shot, while the second half is silent. This intermittence, presented in patterned repetition, makes this credit sequence like a short structural film; the alternation between music and silence that punctuates this triad of images accentuates its temporal unfolding. It is an ode to facial beauty, but also to the minute gestures of time passing: swallowing and licking lips, blinking, looking down, perhaps to be taken as indications of anxiety.

Nana, a young woman who has left her husband and son to pursue an acting career, will look sad throughout much of the film (Figure 6.1). Though few and far between, Nana will have notable moments of exuberance and joy, as when she smiles warmly upon the surprise meeting of an old girlfriend, Yvette, on the street in tableau six (the film is famously divided into twelve sections, which Godard calls tableaux and prefixes with three or four phrases hinting at the events to follow), or when, later in the same tableau, she passes Paul's test as a femme de monde (woman of the world), smiling with self-possession at his verbal provocation. Yet her dominant facial expressions are somber, sad, or uncertain. In tableau four, which concerns her police interrogation after being accused of robbery, her

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Figure 6.1   Screen capture from *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1962), produced by Les Films de la Pléiade and Pathé Consortium Cinéma.

face is reprised frontally as in the middle shot of the credit sequence, with each cut back to her a jump into a closer view along the camera's axis, so that by the third shot of her, she is in a tight close-up, the scale matching the credit sequence. The interrogation ends with a left profile facing right – a rhyme with the ending of the credit sequence. This formal matching underscores how Anna is, repeatedly, shown interrogated by the men she encounters with camerawork that not only reminds us of this, but performs its own scrutiny. As Harun Faruki notes, the credit sequence close-ups recall police identification photos, further linking the close-ups of Nana with interrogation, scrutiny, and capture.

Yet, does not the character Nana, or the actress Anna Karina, take possession of her image here? Do not her slightest gestures become an invitation to identify with what might be beneath and behind them? In tableau three, Nana watches a scene from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc) (Dreyer, 1928). A close-up of a tormented Joan (Maria Falconetti) being warned of her impending death by her captors, alternates with the images of Nana watching. A tear rolls down Joan's face; the film cuts to a close-up of Nana's face as a similar tear rolls down it. As Nana's identification with Joan of Arc plays out in these similar close-ups, the process of identification, of imagining an inside to a surface image, invites our identification in turn.

Anecdotally, a story circulates in which Godard was originally planning to film this scene not by intercutting clips from Dreyer's film, but instead ones from Robert Bresson's *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Trial of Joan of Arc), 1962, which was then playing in Paris theaters. The difference would have been remarkable, for Bresson disdains grimacing faces in cinema. His Joan (Florence Carrez) distin-

guishes herself from Dreyer's as she is framed impassively in medium to long shots; from her, Bresson gleans a facial as well as vocal monotone. Yet if Bresson's filmmaking remains antithetical to the expressive facial gesture, he creates a cinema that, like Dreyer's, resonates philosophically, indeed theologically. That Godard finally chose Dreyer, who engraves the soul and the trials of the spirit directly on the face in close-up, serves as his signal that while he grants Nana more emotional depth than his other female characters, while she bears the signs of her interiority on her face, the very act of framing emotion is at once self-consciously questioned, yet allowed to flourish by his formal and theoretical strategies. Godard's famous flatness, his images which are just an image, his characters who are abstractions, emblems, or concepts, are complicated in this film more than his others, by a poetically suggestive interiority associated with Nana, a contemplation of an interior beyond the interior: a soul. Indeed, he mobilizes a constant play of cultural references to this end: for those attuned to Falconetti's biography, her ambition in Paris doubles Nana's will to become an actress, which in turn doubles the young Anna Karina under Godard's tutelage as actress. Those who know that Falconetti's work with Dreyer was so arduous that she never made another film, returning instead to the stage, serves to fortify the film's reference to director–actress interaction as a reflexive aspect of its multi-layered enunciations.

The decision not to use Bresson's Joan as model entails other ironies, for many of the shots on objects of exchange in *Vivre sa vie* owe much to Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959), even prefiguring shots from *Au hazard, Balthazar* (Balthazar) (1966) and *L'Argent* (Money) (1983), in which Bresson frames the exchange of money and the male body so as to accentuate the lower torso. Bresson's blank faces, in close-ups and medium shots, can in their own way be highly suggestive icons, as in *A Man Escaped* or *Pickpocket*, as well as in *Le procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, but the icons in question have more in common with medieval and Byzantine art.

Let me suggest then, that *Vivre sa vie*'s portrayal of the face may here find explicit comparison to Dreyer's, but it learns something from Bresson's minimalism of expression. *Vivre sa vie* stands out as Godard's most intensive investigation of the face as landscape, to be explored in close-up, though often in structural games of hide-and-seek. The viewer will have to wait and to strain to see Nana's face, turned away from us as in the first café scene in tableau one, or masked intermittently by the back of her interlocutor's face in another café scene in tableau seven. The wait is rewarded with the actress' touching vulnerability and her astounding presence.

It is with poetic justice, then, that Jacques Aumont in the "Prelude" to his book *Du visage au cinéma* (The Face in Cinema) (Aumont, 1992, 9–12) discusses the coupling of the close-ups of Nana and Joan in *Vivre sa vie* as a paradigmatic example of how the face signifies in film. He cites the naming of Anna Karina's character Veronika Dreyer in Godard's *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier) to further underline the association Godard makes between his Danish actress wife with the

work on the close-up by the greatest Danish filmmaker of the silent period; with Karina, Godard aims for the intensity with which early film, as was noted theoretically by Béla Belázs, endowed the face.

Interiors and Exteriors – Structural Film

Never before, or since, has Godard focused a film so entirely on a female character's subjectivity, inviting so much emotional connection. *À bout de souffle* (Breathless), 1959, has its moments when Patricia Franchini (Jean Seberg) becomes as central as Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo), and it is in these scenes, often close shots in front of mirrors or next to posters that she most prefigures the framing Godard gives Karina in *Vivre sa vie*. Later, *2 ou 3 Choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her), which I will soon explain to be a remake of *Vivre sa vie*, gives Juliette Jeanson (Marina Vlady) some instances in which similar revelations and sparks of connection occur. Yet the invitation into the interiority of female subjectivity in other Godard films rarely flourishes. In *Alphaville*, Karina's Natacha von Braun can of course only emerge from somnambulence gradually, unveiling her interiority once she gains access to the words that had been excised in a dystopian technocratic future. Despite some visual splendor and spiritual evocation in Godard's framing of Myriem Roussel, *Je vous salue, Marie* (Hail Mary), 1985, for example, maintains its distance from what animates its icon.

   Yet even in *Vivre sa vie*, as I have been suggesting, subjectivity is ironically circumscribed as an element in a larger system of citation and theoretical inquiry. It is possible to read the Nana-watching-the-Passion sequence as meta-commentary on identification in the cinema, as an intellectual musing on Godard's part on what feeling and identification might be for a woman. One of Godard's remarks on the film speculates on the problem of interiority seen from the exterior, saying of his approach that "it corresponds to the external view of things which would best allow me to convey what was going on inside. How can one render the inside? Perhaps by staying prudently outside" (Godard, 1986, 187).

   Staying outside resonates ironically with the embedded story that Paul, Nana's estranged husband, tells of a child's essay: "A chicken has an outside and an inside. Remove the outside, there's the inside. Remove the inside, you see the soul." The story is told as both he and Nana are framed playing a pinball machine adorned with the image of a female bathing beauty centered between them. This found image inserts a 1950s icon of large, bountiful, athletic womanhood, free to enjoy leisure associated with Florida or the Côte d'Azur – a startling contrast to the fragility of Nana, especially if we see her in the narrative context as working-class. As the recounting of the parable progresses, a camera movement frames only Nana in profile, establishing the chicken as totem for her, as "poule" in French is slang for girlfriend or, if said by a pimp, a prostitute (as is the name, Nana). These

words offer her metaphysical dissection. Her body so examined poetically reveals the incorporeal, while the machine that eats money contrasts to this immateriality. The shot is rich with a desire to know something of the soul of Anna, even while we remain outside.

The tripartite structure of the parable inside/outside/soul echoes the tripartite structure of the opening credits, and another that occurs later, in tableau seven, when the pimp Raoul tells Nana that are "three types of women: women with one expression, women with two expressions, and women with three expressions." This latter division into threes seems to be one of Raoul's challenges to Nana, and her only follow up is to smile, thus to offer a different expression than she had a moment earlier, rather than to retort. Her reaction again indicates that she possesses a worldly wisdom. Raoul's tripartite characterization of women is one of the reminders of the film's structural insistence on "threes." Godard repeats tripartite structures to turn us back to the three-way mirror opening, to insist on the woman's face as expressive, and to offer sound, image, and montage as a three-way avenue to a complex filmic expression.

Thus, *Vivre sa vie* is as much a structural film as it is a narrative one, and this emphasis on structure motivates the seemingly arbitrary camerawork in the scenes where Nana speaks to men in bars. First, as I have already indicated, in tableau one the camera remains behind Nana and her estranged husband at the bistro, using the mirror and the servers to reflect on what is hidden from our view. A side-to-side tracking and panning shot frames Nana's similar bar-stool meeting with the photographer. Side-to-side back-and-forth panning of Nana and the Pimp, Raoul, portrays their conversation in the Champs-Élysées bar. Frontal shots on the axis of action link the police interrogator behind his typewriter and Nana in front of the window. These variations that substitute for a more customary continuity style using two shots and shot-reverse-shot montage embed a structural film inside the film, withholding the shot-reverse-shot pattern for Nana's conversation with the philosopher in tableau 11; even then, each shot holds on each character for a markedly long time, while omitting a two shot to establish them in the frame together, and prefacing their conversation with a remarkable shot that begins in a mirror to show Nana emerging from the café's downstairs toilets to cross the room before she reenters the shot in medium close-up. She eventually makes contact with an off-screen man who will turn out to be the philosopher, to whose table she will invite herself. V.F. Perkins noticed early on the formal elements of the variations on conversation scenes in bars:

> The film is constructed very largely as a series of dialogues on which Godard's camera plays a suite of variations, offering both an actual mise-en-scene and a string of suggestions as to how one might film a conversation. This impression is heightened by a substantial continuity of décor; five of the heroine's encounters take place in café bars and the similarities of setting and action serve to point up the differences in presentation. (Roud, 1970, 33)

Yet Perkins, writing in 1969, while having noted these highly formal variations so clearly, seems uneasy about them. We have the advantage of being able to compare them to structural films still to come, such as Michael Snow's *Wavelength*, 1967, and <_____> (*Back and Forth*), 1969 to see their purpose as itself musical and poetic, while resolutely spatial and temporal.

A detail from the scene between Nana and the photographer offers another factor for our consideration. As the camera sweeps to the left, past Nana in this series, it includes in the frame a curious shelf on which a display of Campbell's soup cans are aligned behind hot pots, beneath a sign touting this modern offering; both the labels and the signs are in English. Andy Warhol had his first solo exhibition at the Ferus Gallery of Los Angeles, California, where he exhibited for the first time his *Campbell's Soup Cans*, a series of painted lithographs that corresponds to the 32 varieties of soup the company then produced. Godard may have followed the press coverage, or this may be less a reference to Pop art than simply a critique of the absurdity of this American import as a small café struggles to modernize. After all, Nana, who is hungry, asks for a croissant, but is told they have none left. Clearly Godard chose his cafés for their mix of traditional "zincs" (counters) and their incorporation of modern furnishings, such as the ball-tipped coat hooks visible in the shot that ends this tableau, as the photographer and Nana exit together (similar ball-tipped hooks are highlighted in the hotel room in tableau 5). These are design derivatives of the "Ball Clock" (1948) by George Nelson, perhaps modeled after a sketch by Isamu Noguchi, and the Charles and Ray Eames coat rack "Hang-It-All," (1953). Thinking of visual modernism in its design manifestations, in its play on series and variations, and its integration into consumer culture may be seen as crucial to Godard's filmic modernism. This modernism extends beyond the striving for new forms consonant with his ideas; it sees structure as already an idea, already an argument, and as a support for a multiplicity of complex and paradoxical references and meanings.

Brechtian Verfremdungseffekt – Story-telling – Theatre Vérité – Performance

Godard was asked repeatedly about the film's Brechtian elements. One time, to Tom Milne, he replied, that his inspiration was theatrical, Pirandellian; he had hoped to make a film version of Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (Six Characters in Search of an Author), but "the rights were too expensive" (Narboni and Milne, 1972, 5). It might appear as if he is suggesting that he uses reflexivity to highlight theatricality per se, rather than other aspects of Brecht's theatrical project.

However, when asked the question "Why the division into twelve tableaux?" in a *Cahiers* interview he replies "Why twelve, I don't know; but in tableaux to

emphasize the theatrical, Brechtian side. I wanted to show the "Adventures of Nana So and so" side of it" (Narboni and Milne, 1972, 187). This answer seems more direct in its embrace of Brecht; it even contains a reference that disingenuously answers the twelve tableaux question to which Godard feigns not to know the answer. If we take the "Adventures of Nana So and so" to be a reference to one of Brecht's sources for *Mother Courage*, *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus* (The Adventures of Simplicissimus), a picaresque novel by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen published in 1668, which tells *Simplicissimus*'s adventures during the Thirty Years' War between Germany and Poland. Brecht's other source was Grimmelhausen's earlier short novel, *The Runagate Courage*, which introduces a character named Mother Courage who makes her way through that war. In his famous predilection for allusions, Godard avoids mentioning Brecht's *Mother Courage* directly, as a result leaving out the obvious explanation that Brecht's play consists of 12 scenes to chronicle 12 years (1624 to 1636), and that each of the scenes has its action announced ahead of time with a placard, therein providing an answer to the "why twelve" question.

In this response, one can also hear a prefiguring of *Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) as an absurdist rendition of Grimmelhausen's *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus*. However, *Vivre sa vie* refers little to political situations, therefore comparison to the Brecht parable may seem less apt, though we might compare his focus on prostitution with Brecht's in *The Rise and Fall of Mahagony* and *The Three Penny Opera*. Politics are foregrounded only once in *Vivre sa vie*: the insertion of the shooting that intrudes on the banlieue (outskirts) café scene in tableau 6, assumed by Nana to be a gangster shootout, but which Raoul later suggests is "political." This refers to the OAS campaign of assassinations and bombings after the March 1962 Evian agreements that granted independence to Algeria: Jean-Marie Bastien-Thiry tried to assassinate President Charles de Gaulle with a barrage of submachine-gun fire in the Paris suburb of Le Petit-Clamart. So, it is possible to read this intrusion of machine gun fire into the sound track, motivating a saccadic editing pattern, as an oblique reference to this political context.

Godard chooses to be indirect even as he acknowledges the Brechtian component to his film in the 1962 events so as to both conform to the trend towards Brecht, yet also to distinguish his film *from* it. Brecht was becoming increasingly important to Parisian theatre, stemming from the June 1954 performance of *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (Mother Courage and Her Children) by the Berliner Ensemble at the Théâtre Sarah-Bernhardt, which the two editors of *Théâtre populaire* Bernard Dort and Roland Barthes, attended. Dort would become a leading Brecht scholar in France and *Cahiers du Cinéma* would devote a special issue (number 110) to Brecht in 1960, including an article by Dort, and would again discuss Brecht in issue number 127 in January 1962. Yet Godard seems to be hedging his bets, perhaps because he wants to highlight other concerns. In the same interview that provided the Pirandellian response, he continues: "I should have liked to show the common ground between realism and theatricality." The

realism he has in mind is that of Roberto Rossellini whose *Fioretti di St Francis di Assisi* (Flowers of St Francis of Assisi) is constructed of nine chapters including – notable for its comparison to *Vivre sa vie* – "Chapter 8. How Brother Francis and Brother Leon experienced those things that are perfect happiness." This finds its echo in "tableau 10: The Streets – A Guy – Happiness is no fun." In the case of *Fioretti*, the fable of perfect happiness has as its moral to fulfill Christian sacrifice; in *Vivre sa vie* the role of forced voyeur that Nana is commissioned to play by her client epitomizes prostitution as "not fun," as an enslavement to the other's commands. While others might long for voyeuristic instances, Nana appears bored and disturbed: the happiness of the client comes at her expense. Actual prostitution may be seen as "not fun" for a variety of harsher occurrences, but Godard chooses this exclusion and submission as further commentary on spectatorship, a viewer stripped of will, forced to watch in a state of helplessness. This scene underscores how Nana's turn toward prostitution has not brought even the happiness that its material recompense might be thought to afford, as Nana finds herself seen as "less special" than ever.

The common ground between realism and theatricality might have another model, Agnes Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (Cleo, May–July) (1962). Varda follows her songstress heroine in episodes punctuated by titles that indicate the passing of time; much of the film tracks her through cafés. Thus, in both segmentation and settings, the film has much in common with *Vivre sa vie*. It also inserts theatricalized scenes, such as the one in which Cléo's musical collaborators arrive at her apartment for a rehearsal and try to cheer her with a practical joke, presented comically with high theatrics until the joke backfires. In another comic vignette in Varda's film, Godard and Karina play parts in a sequence which spoofs silent film; these scenes are echoed in *Vivre sa vie* by the comic "mime" act in the bar in tableau 9, whose self- produced sound effects of balloon blowing and then popping are a vital element of his "spontaneous" performance. Both films insert comic interludes that speak to the history of film and performance.

Godard introduces the term "theatre-vérité" to describe his film, a term that would also describe much of Varda's filmmaking. The cinéma verité movement's documentation of everyday realities by direct means and foregrounding the camera as a tool and as element of transformation of that reality mixes here with a reflexive theatricality, an appreciation of the comic, absurd, or ironic flourish to create this hybrid, "theatre-verité." That Nana, streetwalking, poses in front of a poster for "Variétés," the French boulevard theater in a tradition that has much in common with Vaudeville, comments both on her dashed ambitions as an actress, and what Varda's and Godard's films have in common: a reflexive attention to theatricality and performance.

Without doubt, Godard's distanciation effects were stronger for the original audience than those which remain today, but I would suggest that the instances usually put forward as the most Brechtian may also function as invitation to empathy. Returning to the first café sequence in which Nana and Paul speak with

their backs to us, we should note that Nana's face is quite visible in the mirror in front of her in soft focus. Her left hand holding her cigarette – at the high slanted angle she will use throughout the film – also becomes a focus of our attention. The movement of the two servers behind the bar, whose attention is drawn to the discussants, creates a relay similar to the mirror's, since they see what we mostly cannot. Nana's face, which critics have remarked upon as being unseen, is both partially seen and constantly being indicated by the gaze of others; these indications make us listen. She offers her version of a brief affair that caused the initial rupture of her marriage: her continued love of her husband whom she feels doesn't appreciate her, and her ambition to become an actress; all the while, she meditates on words and forms of expression, concepts that will become motifs throughout the film.

In *Bertolt Brecht: The Man and his Work*, Martin Esslin (1960) argues that distanciation plays out alongside identification in Brecht. Esselin also points to how steeped Brecht's theories are with Shlovsky's Russian formalist defamiliarization. The devices of self-conscious framing in *Vivre sa vie* might be seen as Brechtian in this enlarged sense, even if at this stage in his inscription of Brecht, Godard focuses more on defamiliarization and self-consciousness than on political intervention per se.

The theater–reality paradigm may be seen from another perspective, one offered by the nineteenth-century flowering of French naturalism – first in literature where it was associated with Emile Zola, then in theater by André Antoine, which began with his adaptations to the stage of Zola at his theater devoted to naturalism, then film, when Antoine extended his search for the realism of expression with a naturalist view of causality in such works as Zola's *La Terre* (Earth) (1921). If Antoine seeks the filmic equivalent of the naturalism of Emile Zola, Jean Renoir seeks to mine the poetic potential of naturalism, but by infusing an almost expressionist theatrical style into what remains a realist aesthetic. Adapting first Zola's *Nana* in 1926 and *La Bête humaine* (The Human Beast) in 1936, Renoir contributes to the development of French poetic realism by this amalgamation. In the high stylization of Renoir's *Nana*, Catherine Hessling, Renoir's wife, appears in exaggerated black and white make-up and costuming; this is Renoir enamored of the theatrical variétés as spectacle and artifice. Godard, in naming his heroine Nana, salutes Renoir as precedent: there are parallels between the director using his wife as his actress, a love affair with each woman's symmetrical face and petite build, though Hessling's is more cupie-doll like, especially given her dark lipstick accenting her full but small "beestung" lips. Karina's black wig has often been seen as a tribute to Louise Brooks, especially in her role in Pabst's *Pandora's Box*, but it may also be seen as an inscription of the dark lips and dark expressionist hair Hessling wears in *Nana*. Both *Nana* and *Vivre sa vie* have the same producer, whose backing Godard may have attracted by calling film a homage.

Filmic naturalism rests on the novel as form, and the intertitles announcing the tableaux have their parallels in nineteenth-century chapter divisions in novels,

especially common in British novels. If Truffaut would address the relationship between film and the novel in *Jules et Jim* (Jules and Jim) (shown as playing at a theater from the car that will lead Nana to her death in *Vivre sa vie*, just as Catherine drives her lover Jim to their mutual deaths in Truffaut's film), Godard not only plays with writing in his practice of filmmaking, as Ropars has shown, but with the novel as form. The novel can announce what will come next, with headings that evoke anticipation and irony, while when sound film does so today it seems Brechtian; yet silent films often had such premonitory intertitles preceding demonstration and the acting-out of what was already announced. So the film may be seen as Brechtian, while also having other tricks to play.

Female Shop Clerks – Exchanges – Prostitution – Feminism

Godard opens his original publicity statement for *Vivre sa vie* with the words (each accorded its own line in a poetic presentation) "Un film sur la prostitution qui raconte comment une jeune et jolie vendeuse Parisienne donne son corps mais garde son âme" (A film on prostitution that tells how a young and pretty Parisian salesgirl gives her body but keeps her soul). I will come back to the film's preoccupation with the soul, and the paradoxes between giving and keeping, as well as those between lending and giving, but for now, I want to focus on the aspect of this statement that highlights Nana as a Parisian salesgirl.

Nana clerks at the Pathé-Marconi record store, 25 avenue de Wagram, the presentation of which is stylistically linked to cinema vérité documentary, while its name evokes the history of European sound transmission and recording (the company founded by Italy's Guglielmo Marconi joined to France's Pathé of cinema and recording fame). Nana serves a customer as the scene begins, then camera movement follows the everyday action of retrieving a record on the other side of the store. The camera follows her with a tracking shot that takes her past lamps for sale, to cross in front of a row of black and white televisions sets. As she returns, she stops to ask another clerk for a loan. Then, after further conversation with her client, she escorts him to the cashier. The diegetically significant moment, the request for the loan, is ensconced in details of typical patterns of French commerce of the period. Despite the modern trappings of this store and its location near the Champs-Elysées, clerks serve each customer, handing handwritten bills to one central cashier in a manner typical of French commerce's clinging to the patterns of its nineteenth-century traditions. Hand-written labels on the record filing system seem quite arbitrary, and an odd collection of things being offered for sale in the store remind one of the appliance store that is the setting for the salesclerks in Claude Chabrol's *Les Bonne Femmes* (The Good Women) (1960). Both films chronicle the boredom of saleswomen, and capture a moment in French commerce that proudly displays consumer goods, but retains

the small scale of an earlier petit-bourgeois store ownership. If Chabrol mines this setting as a baroque introduction to his view of devious comportments, suspenseful encounters at once Hitchcock-inspired and yet submitted to a wry understatement, Godard takes a different approach that sets up a comparison between commerce and prostitution. For Nana, prostitution may seem a more highly remunerated alternative, but she finds herself responding to clients' requests in both instances, bored by their desires for a certain record, or a certain sex act.

The cheap hotels of Parisian prostitution, the "hotels de passe" in this film are located near the Porte Maillot, in an area that will later be torn down to make way for the construction of the Palais des Congrès (inaugurated in 1974). This location at a transfer point to middle and upper class enclaves, which explains why the clients seen in the film are clearly middle class, but the hotels of meager decoration, a fact noted by the first Nana's first client, and then later on by Nana herself. Godard frames such details as the crowded staircase entryway and the old phone in the hallway, chronicling the superannuated setting of Parisian prostitution in the early 1960s, some aspects of which persist today on Rue St. Denis.

It is perhaps these "outdated" elements of décor that draw comparison to the US salesgirl/office girl films of the early 1930s, whose young female protagonists looked to marry up, or simply to survive New York City on their own. Early in the decade these films were a prelude to prostitution as part of the fallen woman cycle, yet were forced into even greater euphemism of their hints at prostitution and extra-marital affairs by enforcement of the Hays Code in 1934. It is in this historical context that the European and Japanese art film took over the narration the life of the prostitute as exemplified by Frederico Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* (1957). Yet US films would return to prostitution, set in Italy as in Jules Dassin's *Never on Sunday* (1960), or played for melodrama as in *BUtterfied 8* (Daniel Mann, 1960). *Vivre sa vie's* marked reference to Elizabeth Taylor, who won an Academy Award for her staring role in *BUtterfied 8*, comes by way of the photo of Taylor next to which Nana's profile is framed comparatively in tableau 12. This establishes the comparison of Nana to other film prostitutes; yet Nana, unlike her namesake in Zola's novel and Gloria Wandrous in BUtterfield 8, never ascends to luxury. Like Giulietta Masina's Maria "Cabiria" Ceccarelli in *Nights of Cabiria* she remains essentially a lower level street prostitute, though the last hotel scene in *Vivre sa vie* does feature brothel-like interaction between the women that may be seen as a precursor to Luis Bunuel's *Belle de jour* (Lady of the Day) (1967).

Susan Sontag's famous short essay champions the extra-narrative philosophical proofs Godard offers in the film by two means: "He gives us a collection of images illustrating what he wants to prove and a series of 'texts' explaining it" (Sontag, 1990, 199). In opposing proof to analysis, and insisting that Godard strips Nana of interiority, Nana becomes for Sontag a demonstration of philosophical selfhood. She lauds what she takes to be the non-sociological and non-causal bent of the film, seeing it instead as conceptual, as demonstrating its own logic.

Let me suggest that there is also an unexplored proto-feminism at work in Sontag's essay that seems entirely unself-conscious on her part. Nana has left her family, an act discussed with her husband in the film's first tableau bar scene shot from behind. Nana offers two reasons: she wants to become an actress, which her husband does not support, and she wants to be seen as special, while he perceives of her as ordinary. Sontag interprets: "Nana is oppressed, desperate, and revolted by him" (Sontag, 1990, 202–203).

Sontag lauds as well that Nana decides to become a prostitute. "Freedom is being who, what one is," Sontag suggests, calling the film an "essay on responsibility and freedom" (Sontag, 1990, 205). The second wave of feminism that would emerge a few years after Sontag wrote this essay would take various stances on prostitution, ranging from its denunciation as the ultimate and perhaps prototypical violation of personhood to capital domination and male prerogative, to a nearly opposite view of the prostitute as heroic outlaw, who could be seen as defying cultural norms of propriety and marriage, undertaking to mine with enterprise her body and sexuality without shame. Sontag crafts a philosophical argument that has much in common with the latter of these views. She likes that Nana leaves her husband, then accepts her life as it is, including the embrace of the death drive. In so doing, she ignores Nana's desperation and her subservience to Raoul, her pimp. This anti-matrimonial strain of feminism might even embrace that Nana has left her child behind without regrets, refusing guilt upon seeing her son in photos shown to her by husband at a later meeting on the street. Sontag does not mention these instances in which Nana flouts maternal conventions; still, they would seem to be consonant with the anti-melodramatic appeal of Godard's formal strategies and his conceptual proof of an existential embrace of one's responsibility for one's choices for Sontag.

Kaja Silverman, for her part, takes a position similar to Sontag's when she posits that the comparison to Joan of Arc, as well as the chicken parable, combine with Raoul's praise of Anna's "goodness" to show that for Nana,

> The soul can emerge only after the "outside," or demands of the body, and the inside, or "me" have been removed. This double eradication implies death as inexorably as being burned at the stake. (Silverman and Farocki, 1998, 24)

Yet Nana doesn't entirely conform to Sontag's or Silverman's rendering of her. First, as I explored earlier, the film does hint at Nana's interiority through the very conceptual means that Sontag admires, and this interiority may be seen as structurally important to the film. Moreover, in tableau 9, Nana stages a scene of rebellion towards her pimp that takes the form of a performance of her sexuality, a display for a young man whose attention she has drawn. As she dances to the jukebox around the pool-table on the second floor of the café, shimmying in a ruffled blouse, like a male bird performing a mating display, she signals her dis-

content with Raoul and with the business of prostitution, inviting an alternative possibility to the trajectory she previously embraced.

Elliptical narration withholds the reuniting with this same young man until tableau 12, yet this tableau returns to this relationship in media res, as an ongoing intimate and romantic relationship. An affirmation of the very ordinary events of their everyday life, one morning, the tableau opens on shot of his reading the Baudelaire translation of Poe stories that alternates with shots of Nana at window. They discuss what they might do that day: the Tuilleries gardens or the Louvre are the choices, as they might be for any young Parisians. That this discussion is rendered only in subtitles aligns this sequence with the paradigm of silent film I have shown to be an element of *Vivre sa vie*, an element that ironically serves to highlight the film's extraordinary attention to its soundtrack. This focus on sound begins after a fade to black: the reciting of Poe's "The Oval Portrait," unannounced by activity in their dialogue, and voiced by Godard. Only after it begins does the image fade back in on the young man reading. Three shots of Nana are intercut, one with her back to a window, recalling the shots scene at the police interrogation, one against a blank wall where she turns her head – recalling again the opening sequence and the end of that station interview, and a third which positions her next to a small photo of Elizabeth Taylor, inviting comparison.

Dialogue interrupts the reading: "Is that your book?" "No, I found it here." Then comes a request for a cigarette, as these interruptions serve both to cement and interrogate the ruse that the Poe reading is diegetic. Then Godard's voice inserts a commentary that clearly exceeds the diegetic context, with the lines "C'est notre histoire. Un peintre qui fait la portrait de sa femme. Tu veux que je continue?" (This is our history. A painter who made the portrait of his wife. You want me to continue?). The ruse is broken, and we instead have the embedding of the meta-textual into the narrative. This shift in voices is more than Godard usurping the young man's character: the voice is clearly meant to be recognized as off-screen and outside the narrative. Sontag takes this moment of authorial self-consciousness to be the film's lone weakness. Silverman, on the other hand, defends it as consonant with the author–actress level of enunciation she traces throughout the film, a reiteration of the Dreyer and Renoir references.

The scene fades out on Poe's "she was dead." The multiple voices of Poe's short story include the visitor-observer, and the diary entry that he finds and reads that culminates his narration. If the Painter is encased by Poe inside the narration of two observers, Godard takes all voices to be his own, painter, diarist, observer.

Perhaps Sontag actually has difficulty with this scene not for Godard's self-conscious intrusion, but for the way it might necessitate a rethinking of her argument about the film. In granting Nana subjectivity, indeed suggesting a romantic alternative to prostitution, the film troubles the thesis of Nana as consistently an emblem of existential self-awareness through her choice of prostitution. Such a vision of romance was already inscribed in the Ferrat song played on the film's

first jukebox in tableau 6; with a Godardian flourish the "anonymous" extra who makes the selection is the singer-songwriter Jean Ferrat. The song plays out in its entirety, extolling the working class as a political, cultural stance, an identity, not a negativity; the song paints a portrait of a couple living in a furnished flat in Creteil, his head resting on her stomach, whose everyday exchanges are for him as beautiful as Verlaine, who watch the sunset, then make love, secretly. This "secretly" – en secret – that comes at the end of the last narrative stanza, before the reprise of the chorus, signals a discretion, a privacy, an intimacy that is theirs alone. Even though the song lyrically leads to this celebration, invites us to witness, it ultimately seeks to close the door, to guard their intimacy as private.

The first lines set up a contrast between the singer's young love, and the super-ficialities of the leisure class: "Ma môme ell' joue pas les starlettes/ Ell' met pas des lunettes/De soleil/Ell' pos' pas pour les magazines/Ell' travaille en usine/A Créteil" (My girl, she's not into posing as a starlette in sunglasses or for magazines, she works in a factory in Créteil).

Reflexive in its inscription here, this lyric evokes the fact that Anna Karina was just such a starlette, who had begun as a model, and prior to making films had been a covergirl for French women's magazines. If she was playing a shop girl, a daughter of the working class, Karina as actress was likely to go to Saint Paul de Vence, a tourist hill town above the Côte d'azur, as a later verse of the song con-trasts the newly emerging "jet-set" lifestyle to its heroine who lives in a furnished room in the overpopulated outskirts of Paris, with only one small window that overlooks a warehouse and the roofs: "Dans une banlieue surpeuplée/ On habite un meublé/ Elle et moi/La fenêtre n'a qu'un carreau/ Qui donn' sur l'entrepôt/ Et les toits" (In an overpopulated suburb, we live in a furnished room, she and I, with one minuscule window that looks out on a warehouse and the roofs), serving to prefigure the room Nana will share with the young man in tableau 12. Then the song offers a self-conscious iconographic reference that recalls the Joan of Arc comparison established in *Vivre sa vie*: "Et j'crois bien qu'la Saint' Vierge/ Des églises/ N'a pas plus d'amour dans les yeux/ Et ne sourit pas mieux/Quoi qu'on dise" (And I believe that the Church's holy Virgin does not have more love in her eyes, nor smiles with more goodness, no matter what they say). The song lauds the young couple's conversations "beau comm' du Verlaine," a line that recalls the Montaigne quote of the film's epigraph, which I will discuss at the close of this chapter, as well as the elegance of Nana's conversations with Yvette which refrain, "I am responsible," and her conversation with the philosopher Brice Parrain. Finally, the verses end on a scene of lovemaking: "On regarde tomber le jour/ Et puis on fait l'amour/ En secret" (We watch for nightfall, and then make love, in secret). The privacy, signaled by the lovemaking "in secret" continues the contrast with the world of glamour and fame, as well as a difference from the public exchange of money for sex that is prostitution. The lengthy filmic exposition of this song, its conclusion over an image of an anonymous amorous couple at the café bar, situates Nana in its context. If she chooses the entrance to prostitution

instead of this posited alternative, it is not a definitive choice, as Silverman suggests, for the return of the lyrics' imagery in the guise of her tableau 12 scene with the young man in her room offers Nana an exit from "the life." At the end of this scene: the lovers' embrace, the decision to live together, the decision of Nana to tell Raoul it's over. It is a future that her male "owners" deny her, leaving her lifeless body as they drive off after a botched sale of her to another pimp, ending in a shoot-out that serves as homage to the US gangster film.

That death comes to Nana from her past evokes rich filmic and philosophical references. This is one of the tropes of film noirs such as *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1946), often wrongly associated with B production in the US – the "Series B," in French nomenclature to which *Vivre sa vie* is dedicated. Theoretically, the film could be seen as yet another possible confirmation of the Freudian notion of the "death drive," so amplified by Lacanian theory to explain the fatalism of narrative, such as in Laura Mulvey's discussion of *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950). Indeed, while cars are mentioned, but kept off screen early in the film, Raoul's car finally shows up in final scenes to drive Nana to her death. Ending with the death of a protagonist recalls the heritage of fatalism in French poetic realism as well. The Japanese narrative traditions of sacrificial female deaths should also be considered: Kenji Mizoguchi's female sagas are mentioned by Jean Narboni as an influence, and the film does evoke in particular *Sisters of the Gion* and *Street of Shame*, and, though the prostitute heroine does not die but instead suffers a deathly aging, *Oharu*. Mizoguchi's films should also remind us that a feminist analysis might be evoked by these narratives of suffering and sacrificial female characters, if we keep in mind the evocation of the social context so often eschewed by critics as irrelevant to the film, as when it is described as "not sociological."

True, in comparison to *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*, this film does not directly cite sociological theorists, but why the rejection of a sociological reading of *Vivre sa vie* by certain critics, when the reaction in the popular press in France upon the film's first release was to praise its sociological critique? Godard encouraged this sociological reception by publicity, suggesting his film was based on the then popular Marcel Sacotte paperback that presents this magistrate's view of Parisian prostitution. The book, illustrated in a graphically modernist layout, is an odd collection of research, speculation, and personal observations on the judge's part, including his homophobic distaste for male prostitution, coupled with a voyeuristic fascination for female prostitutes and their pimps. The illustrations may have caught Godard's eye as particularly cinematic: there is one quote from a pimp on the necessity of taking his charges out for a good time that is illustrated with a woman in a fur coat alongside a man entering a movie theatre, which prominently features a poster for *Twilight for the Gods* (1958), starring Rock Hudson and Cyd Charisse (*La Crépuscle sur l'ocean* in French). As has been noted, Godard draws many details directly from Sacotte's book, including the "classic letter" of application to a brothel and the pimp's accounting chart, and inserts a montage under

Nana requesting instructions from her pimp Raoul: a montage sequence documenting Parisian prostitutions. It stages many shots to correspond to a French television documentary made from Sacotte's book which has been issued on the *Vivre sa vie* Criterion DVD.

Some readings that stress philosophy dismiss the sociological, as if the two realms were necessarily mutually exclusive, or perhaps because they are attempting to distinguish the film from the subgenre of socially critical melodrama. Yet the sociological and philosophical may be combined here to raise the larger feminist question of female depiction in Godard.

The terms of this investigation might be seen as the struggle for recognition by a woman confined both by an economic system and a gendered hierarchy of power to the status as object to be owned, controlled, and humiliated. The extraordinary beauty of Nana as object, then, addresses the illusory power of the physically beautiful self. Both the photo portfolio for which she poses nude and "the classic letter" she writes are Nana's attempts to sell herself and her sexuality, to market her beauty.

For Nana speech takes on such importance, precisely because it is in speech that she is able to ask for a different sort of recognition. This is why the meeting with Brice Parain becomes so significant: he is not beautiful, physically, but his words are valued. Nana temporarily becomes his pupil, listening to his parable, his facility drawing out from his reading investigations about the nature of language itself. Much of what Parain says to Nana in the café draws on his *Recherches sur la nature et la fonction du langage* (Research on the Nature and Function of Language) (1942) to be reiterated in his *Petite métaphysique de la parole* (Small Metaphysical Speech) (1969). He takes his parable from *Twenty Five Years Later*: as Porthos is trying to blow up a building, but as he starts to run away, he stops to think; "How is it possible to put one foot in front of another?" This thought paralyses him: thoughts, and the words they entail, stop action. Parain instructs Nana that the story's meaning is: "We are only able to speak well after we renounce living for a while. It's the price we pay." He later clarifies: "This thinking life involves the killing of life that is too mundane."

For Nana her thinking, speaking self might have halted and still could halt her propelling herself into a world of action, one of trading her physical self, her sexuality, for money. All the while she has concealed her fragile self, meeting her pimp's challenges of being "good" in his terms, of being beautiful as a woman of the world. Yet the film is simultaneously able to fully reveal her fragility, underneath the façade of her determined action.

Whereas Laura Mulvey in Colin MacCabe's *Godard* (MacCabe and Godard, 1980) makes the point that attention to nudity and lingerie in Godard's films serve his critique of consumer culture, yet also display women (and Nana resounds with this doubleness of critique and display), Julia Kristeva takes a different tack in her "Ces femmes au-delà de plaisir," (These Women Beyond Pleasure) as does Britt Nini in "Les Femmes de Godard,"(Godard's Women) both essays appearing in a

special issue of *Art Press*; for them, Godard becomes the filmmaker who has "the most sympathy for the modern woman" (Kristeva, 1984) and depicts "women in her present moment," (Nini, 1984, 32). Taking these commentaries together to address the search Nana undergoes in the brothel-like scene in tableau 10 for another woman to please the john who wants to engage two prostitutes at a time. As Nana opens each door, she finds the prostitutes engaged in their presentation of sex, but static, as if posing for still images. Godard has an uncanny ability in *Vivre sa vie* to present women as held still as an image, framed, defined by a world she does not control, yet at other instances to listen to her speaking, framing her speech as an act that overrides that confinement.

Biography – the Self and the World

Biographical readings of this film abound, most resting on the fact of the Godard–Karina marriage. Yet, taken together, the three biographies of Jean-Luc Godard all published since 1985 seem to suggest a reinterpretation of *Vivre sa vie*, even for those of us who don't usually pursue biographical film criticism, wary as we might be of its fallacies and its tendency to supplant the careful analysis of film with extraneous and superficial material. Godard's first biographer, Colin MacCabe, shies away from much discussion of *Vivre sa vie*, yet says that the film was made under the sign of "sorrow and death" as he tells of the miscarriage that ended Karina's pregnancy (MacCabe and Shafto, 2004, 141) and of her suicide attempt (MacCabe and Shafto, 2004, 142). A second biographer, Richard Brody, discusses the strife in Godard's marriage to Anna Karina having reached a nearly terminal crescendo before the film's production (Brody, 2008, 126) in November 1961, citing articles in *France-Soir* and *Paris Presse-Intransigant*, and casting its making as Godard's attempt to create a cautionary tale for Karina on the dangers she might face should she leave him (Brody, 2008, 139). Certainly the controversies surrounding Brody's book might cause us to question this narrative, but Antoine de Baecque's more recent biography includes many of the same elements in his account of what was occurring between the couple behind the scenes. Both Brody and de Baecque recount a failed suicide attempt by Karina that interrupted shooting. Both link this to Karina's miscarriage of her and Godard's baby some months earlier, and if anything, de Baecque's is the more detailed account of the effects of Godard's jealousy on the very young Karina (179–183). De Baecque ends his account by describing Godard's failure to please Karina (De Baecque, 2010, 212).

To my knowledge, the tempestuous and suicidal aspects of Karina's and Godard's relationship were not known in the US when the film was released. Americans tended to assume a happier collaboration this early in their marriage, instead placing the director showcasing his young wife as star in the perhaps less troubled collaborations of Renoir, Rossellini, and Fellini with their actress wives.

For those who saw the films only later, in the late 1960s and 1970s, and who knew that Godard and Karina would officially divorce in 1965, also knew that they would work together on four more films after *Vivre sa vie*, therefore delaying recognition of how early the marriage faced deep troubles: Godard's segment of *Les Quatre vérités* (Three Fables of Love, 1962), *Bande à part* (Band of Outsiders) (1964), *Alphaville* (1965), and *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad), (1965), and that Godard and Karina formed a production company together, Anouchka Films, in 1964.

To cast one's young wife as an aspiring film and theater actress who fails in her attempts to develop that career, but instead opts for prostitution over the lowly shop clerk wages, was at the very least a recognition on Godard's part that he could capture in this role Karina's youth and vulnerability in a way that would prove to be one of his most touching renditions of a woman's trials. Particularly striking in this regard is Godard's publicity reworking of the Montaigne quote "You must lend yourself to others, but give yourself to yourself," which he also uses as an epigraph for the film; in the reworking, it becomes how Nana "gives her body, but keeps her soul." This is from chapter 10, "De mesnager sa volonté" (To Manage One's Will) of Book Three of Montaigne's essays, which concerns the relationship between the self and others, and the reading of outside signs (actions) as indications of character or a person's soul. The category of "virtue" for Montaigne seems contingent, as he strips even heroic action of evidentiary value. Clearly Godard sets up a debate about Nana's goodness, her actions, her preservation of herself, her specialness, and even the meaning of her death in the film's last scene. As is well-known, a lingering on her lifeless corpse was trimmed for the original US release, as if the pausing for thought that emphasizing a dead body might provoke would be too much.

I am suggesting that the film's passion is Nana, but it is one filled with ambiguities: biographical, imagistic, sociological, and philosophical. Still, an overriding sympathy abides, connecting the elements, indeed the fragments, seeing this modern woman in all her tragic dimensions, refracted in many ways.

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7

Commerce and the War of the Sexes

Laetitia Masson and Jean-Luc Godard[1]

Martine Beugnet

It would serve little purpose here to compare the first full-length features of a young film director who arrived on the French film scene in the 1990s with the prolific work of one of the most internationally celebrated and studied directors to emerge from the New Wave. Instead, through a sort of shot-counter-shot approach, we shall simply identify certain themes and questions as a means to explore some of the more seductive and ambiguous aspects of Godard's cinema – a cinema that, as feminist criticism has shown, appears in its representation of the sexes, to be simultaneously progressive and reactionary.[2]

French cinema in the 1990s saw a return to small-budget films and the emergence of a group of previously unknown young directors whose films have been associated with a return to political and social issues. Ten years after Godard's *Tout va bien* (All's Well) (1972) the worker played by Isabelle Huppert in *Passion* remarks that in contempoary films we never see the interiors of factories. However, in Laetitia Masson's *En avoir (ou pas)* (To Have (or Have Not)) (1995) as in *Faut-il aimer Mathilde?* (Should We Love Mathilde?) (Edwin Baily, 1994), *La Vie revée des anges* (The Dreamlife of Angels) (Erick Zonca, 1998), *Ressources humaines* (Human Resources) (Philippe le Guay, 1999), or even *Nadia et les Hippopotames* (Nadia and the Hippos) (Dominique Cabréra, 1999), among other films released in the last decade of the twentieth century, the factory is every bit as much a part of the cinematic universe as fast food outlets or the projects. And if in the majority of these films, the eventual references to the work of Jean-Luc Godard are often relegated to the background or the margins of the film, his influence is quite

pronounced in the first two feature films of Laetitia Masson, where it can be discerned in references to his work as well as in obvious thematic, visual or narrative borrowings from his films. In *To Have (or Have Not)*, it could be seen in the use of intertitles which are written across the screen in vivid colors, or the title and wink at Howard Hawks and Bogart, the use of slow-motion or freeze-frame at the end of the film, as well as in certain fugitive moments where we see the male character walking backwards across a busy street which recalls the ending of *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (Every Man for Himself). In the room in her squalid little hotel in Paris, with her red hen as domestic animal and her pony-tail hitched up on her neck like the heroine of *A Vendre* (For Sale) (1997), France Robert (Sandrine Kiberlain) evokes in a tragi-comic vein, the definition of *"Poule"* (chicken) as recited by Nana's husband (André Labarthe) in *My Life to Live* (1962).[3] The way in which these two films adopt a documentary style, introduce interviews into the plot, and mix professional and non-professional actors all recall techniques that were dear to Godard.

To Have (or Have Not) opens with a series of fragments of conversations edited together. A remarkable illustration of language play and power in which the notion of choice is irremediably perverted, this serial montage of interchangeable scenes shows how ordinary capitalism promotes the fusion of language and representation with the obscene in its most everyday manifestation. Shot unremittingly by the lens of a stationary camera, a series of candidates are interviewed by a recruiter who, despite remaining off camera, constitutes an omnipotent and manipulative presence. Having applied for the job of the receptionist at this firm, these young women are brought, in order to "sell" themselves, to claim to an absurd degree that the position represents much more than a simple job, but is the answer to their deepest aspirations.

> "Is there something that leads you to apply for this particular position? Do you have a dream or is there anything else you imagine doing?
>   "No. It's always been my dream to be a secretary, a receptionist and to answer phones."

In *For Sale*, there is a brutal contrast between the interviews conducted by the recruiter (Sergio Castellito) in the village where France Robert was born – and in particular with the parents of the young woman – filmed in a *cinéma vérité* style – and the sequences fantasized by the recruiter. In the one as in the other case, however, the viewer is confronted, in addition to her confusion arising from the mix of subjective and objective points of view, with a violation (first verbal and then visual) of a private space.

At times, the hybrid nature of *To Have (or Have Not)* and of *For Sale*, evokes the way in which Godard's cinema tends, in the words of Claire Pajackowska, to dissolve the boundaries between public and private spheres:

> Whereas traditionally there was one set of codes for representing the world or universe of personal relations – melodrama – and another for representing the world

of social or external reality, – documentary – Godard creates new combinations of both sets of codes to represent "the fiction of reality" and "the reality of fiction." (Pajackowska, 1990, 242)

It is, in fact, in reflecting on this theme of the relation between personal reality and "external" reality – the question of socioeconomic determinism in relationships of a private nature and their extension through the metaphor of prostitution – that we see the clearest reference to Godard in Masson's work. Thus, echoing those films of Godard which use this metaphor the most directly – *Two or Three Things I Know about Her* (1966), *My Life to Live* (1962), and especially *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1980) – *To Have (or Have Not)* and *For Sale* suggest interrogations that also sub-tend the relationships between men and women in Godard's work. The resonances that this problematic of the representation of the sexes creates between Godard's modernist films and Masson's more recent features is the focus of this chapter. Certainly, the symbolic power and creative, narrative and intertextual anarchy of Godard's universe are not matched by Masson, but what she gives up in formal and conceptual audacity allows her to address certain of Godard's questions and preoccupations in a different way.

To what degree are relationships between men and women (pre)determined by the socioeconomic context – to what extent do the laws of consumer society govern private relationships involving affection and love as well as public relationships between individuals and individuals and institutions?

Taking into consideration the voyeuristic and exploitative nature of the camera (the extension of a masculine or reifying spectatorial gaze that was denounced, following Laura Mulvey's work, by Anglo-Saxon criticism of the 1970s) how should we address this question in film without including a visual consumption of "the other" which would merely repeat the criticized schemas? Ultimately, it's in the question of essentialism that Masson, when focusing on the constraining nature of the (masculine) fantasies that are imposed as a reductive norm, distances herself most evidently from the vision proposed by Godard.

Commerce

In the films of Godard and of Godard and Miéville, money and prostitution serve as metaphors for a general critique of consumer society where the exploitation and normalization that characterize the relations between an individual and his economic, social and cultural environment are replicated in all other aspects of human existence. Thus, just as in the sphere of professional and artistic activities, so-called private relations – family life, affective ties, love – are colonized, structured and governed by business: they are merely aspects of commerce.

In *Two or Three Things*, as in *My Life to Live*, not only does prostitution, which is the object of a documentary investigation as if it were just any professional activity, represent a source of revenue for the married woman, but also for the pimps who serve as baby-sitters and the other members of the prostitution ring. In *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, businessmen organize sex as if it were a factory production line, or employ prostitutes to parody the family circle. When the wife and daughter of the main character, Paul Godard (Jacques Dutronc) meet him, it's to request a check and a birthday gift, while the prostitute, Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert) introduces her sister into the prostitution business and serves as her "pimp." Moreover, the only moments of apparent "affection" take place within the context of prostitution – for example, when Paul Godard leaves Isabelle, after having hired her for the night, he asks if she has slept well, kisses her and leaves.

Beyond this "business" aspect of things, the relationships between individuals, and more particularly between men and women, are destined to fail. *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* is a remarkable variation (remarkable both in terms of film form and for the depth of its cruelty) on the theme of the incommunicability between men and women. The male character, Paul Godard, is confronted throughout the film with this impossibility and his relationships with women are characterized by alienation, exclusion and aggressivity. The sound track, images and movement (slow motion) are punctuated with motifs that illustrate this theme. When Paul tries to speak to Denise (Nathalie Baye), the dialogue is fragmented or entirely inaudible; phone calls remain equally inaccessible to the viewer; when the couple meets on the platform at the station, their conversation is lost in the noise of a passing train. Every contact, when it isn't simply a pure fantasy, is stained with passive aggressivity as the slow motion shots reveal.

What creates the symbolic force of Godard's pessimistic vision is the way that in mise-en-scene of the director-essayist and again in the presentation of Maria Vlady/Juliette Janson at the beginning of *Two or Three Things*, human beings are simultaneously fictional characters and elements of a discourse. They appear both as beings unsuited for the world they live in and as uncertain and passive presences caught up in the mechanics of a theoretical demonstration.

Masson's characters correspond to more "romantic" conventions. It is, in fact, in their confrontation with the determining factors of their environment that the characters come into being, and through the director's more optimistic and more traditionally humanistic approach, discover that economic power and emotional independence are not necessarily linked. Hence despite their position of power, the recruiters, employers, factory and night club owners have difficulty accepting having to remain as objects of hatred or indifference, and if emotions cannot be purchased, their power cannot be complete and exclusive. In *To Have (or Have Not)* and *For Sale*, economic relationships are omnipresent, discriminatory and sordid, but whereas the mise-en-scene of power- and money-relations indicate the preponderance of "business," Masson insists on their limitations and, through

situations that are pushed to the extreme, reveals their absurdity. When, following a failed job interview, Alice, the young unemployed woman in *To Have (or Have Not)*, runs into the recruiter who had humiliated her and spends the night with him, she announces, *"Now I'm going to fuck *you*, OK?"* In her determination to gain her economic and emotional independence, France Robert, the heroine of *For Sale*, pushes the logic of "business" to the limit of absurdity, and sells her professional *and* affective relationships. Avoiding any attachments, she has her lovers pay her, or, conversely, offers to pay them. Having calculated precisely her monthly living expenses up until her emancipation from her family, she sends each month to her parents, who had hoped to see their only and adored daughter take over the family farm, a check to reimburse them for her upbringing.

The Gaze and Reification

If a stylized vision of the economics of human relations that is portrayed through an evocation of pornography and prostitution cannot fail to be ambiguous when it appears to reproduce the very dynamics of exploitation and reification that it pretends to denounce, in Godard's films, the sources of this ambiguity are complex. Even in an early film like *My Life to Live*, the process of reification or fetishization of the female body appears to be counterbalanced by the acute awareness of questions of power and control linked to the gaze and the creation of images. Certainly the close-ups of Anna Karina's face, recurrent signs of the director's own personal fascination with his actress, can be described as elements of a representation both fetishist and reductive given the way in which they scrutinize and reify their subject, but also suggest (and we will return to this notion) the existence of an enigma as the essence of the feminine. However, the contextualization of certain frames also translates a consciousness of the imposition of a relationship of power: both in the evocation of artistic traditions that transform women into art objects, and in their correlate, the institutionalized gaze: when arrested and questioned at the police station, Nana is framed in the manner of a suspect, in profile, and undergoes both the indignity of an interrogation and of the gaze which reduces her to a social sub-species. At the same time, since Nana is shot, as Godard likes to do, with the window behind her, the chiaroscuro effect throws a protective shadow over her face. Indeed, after her first "trick," a scene of intense brutality, almost nothing is shown of her sexual rapport with her clients except her face, always impassive, seemingly distant and prefiguring the character of Isabelle, the prostitute in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*.

In one of the sex scenes in this film, Godard uses a close-up to subvert one of the misogynist clichés of cinema: the feminine orgasm. When the prostitute Isabelle appears on the screen as the pornographic icon par excellence – in close-up moaning with pleasure – not only is she visibly parodying this moment (her client

asks her not to overdo it), but the sound track reveals that she is in fact thinking about her day job. Constance Penley thus notes that:

> For all its pornographic "images", *Sauve Qui Peut (La Vie)* is rather about the refusal or failure of a controlling masculine gaze, a gaze designated *by this film* as a pornographic one. (Penley, 1988, 84)

Essence and Difference

For Penley, as for Pajackowska, the degradation of human relations colonized by a culture of exploitation and consumption is not sufficient alone, in these films, to explain the failure of the relationships between men and women. The impenetrable nature of the women's faces which, time after time, allow themselves to be examined by the camera or elude its gaze, the interior monologues, the music that only the women can hear, all signal not only their resistance to this predatory gaze, but their opposition to a patriarchal world thrown into crisis by the specifically mysterious feminine universe or essentially feminine one, from which men have been excluded, and which they cannot understand. In an interview with *Cahiers du cinéma*, Godard remarked that, "in slow motion, the images of women are richer, more interesting than those of men and seem to suggest the existence of a fascinating and essentially enigmatic universe" (Godard, 1980, 15). A film such as *Je vous salue, Marie* (Hail Mary) (1997) can appear, from the point of view of its subject, to be the antithesis of films about prostitution, yet it is fairly close to these given the conception of femininity it suggests. By focusing on the incompatibility between the way Myriam Roussel is shot in *Je vous salue Marie* and the pornographic gaze, Guy Austin describes a process by which inaccessible femininity placed "beyond" desire is presented as both immanent and immutable.

> Godard visually explores the contradiction that marks his narration and is embodied in the virginal yet sexualized Marie. Accompanied by the Marie's monologue in which she declares, "there will be no more sexuality in me," explicit images of her naked body are edited in with images of *the sun, plants and animals*. The divine yet human body of Marie no longer belongs to pornography, but to virginal imagery of natural *history*. (Austin, 1969, 49, my emphasis)

Through Godard's anti-eroticism, a problematic approach to the representation of woman and woman's desire is sketched. René Prédal notes:

> Situating his research on the body and the mind, Godard tries to derive wholly new images from woman, but if we go beyond the surface audacities, the author's real fascination with sex emerges and needs to be examined. Moreover, the anti-eroticism of Godard's films is not new. Already, *A Woman is a Woman*, dissected the woman

like a side of beef, and the height of this rejection of the flesh occurs no doubt in *Numéro Deux*, filmed in full "porno wave." (Predal, 1989, 182)

Constance Penley's conclusion about *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* offers a convincing interpretation of this ambivalence:

> Seizing on the pornographic as the problem of *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* makes it hard to discern a deeper and more problematic logic located not in individual images [. . .] or bits of dialogue [. . .] but in an idea about sexual difference that this film ceaselessly proposes. Although the fictional work of the film takes up sexual differ-ence as a theoretical problem (the possibility in narrative of a feminine origin of enunciation), and as a difficulty in people's lives (Paul's inability to feel himself as anything but excluded from the world of women, from femininity), it constructs this difference as essential, absolute, and irreconcilable to the point of violence. In contrast to classical film, the women are here linked to activity and the man to pas-sivity; in this reversal, femininity becomes the primary term of sexual difference and masculinity its other. Women then, in this scheme, acquire a certain superiority, but it is at the price of a difference defined as essential (in their nature) and as necessarily bound to extinguish its opposite. (Penley, 1988, 89)

However, in the films just cited, Godard produces, on the subject of the impos-sibility of any authentic connection between men and women, some of his most beautiful scenes. For example, in *My Life to Live*, the long sequence where Nana and Paul are filmed from behind, locked in their respective positions, coming to bleak and hurtful terms with their relationship and their lost illusions. At the end of *Two or Three Things*, Godard films Juliette and her husband Robert in bed, facing the camera this time, but submitting to its gaze as if they were subjects of an ethnographic study, and sketching via a few aphorisms, the uncompromising portrait of their existence as a couple and of their times. There is also the scene in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* in which Paul throws himself into the arms of/ on top of Denise, in a thoroughly ambiguous movement which expresses both his amorous longing and his aggressivity and the desire to hurt her. This scene is shot in slow motion in order to get beyond the controlled and conscious gestural expression to discover that invisible part of his movements that emerges from his uncon-scious, from the essence of his being. But even this momentary fusion is impos-sible: the two bodies reach for each other even as they push each other away.

To this scene, we could oppose the love scene in Masson's *To Have (or Have Not)*. Here the bodies are filmed in extreme close-up, transformed by the camera's lens and by the sound track into a kind of landscape. This harmony of bodies and movements lasts but a moment and in the next shots the characters have already separated: the young woman (Sandrine Kiberlain) in the foreground, in the bed, and her lover (Bruno Giovanetti) in the background, sleeping on the floor near the window. The conclusion of *To Have (or Have Not)* is thus a celebration of what

Godard's films, suggesting the essential irreducible duality between the sexes, exclude: the coexistence of this inseparable binome, similarity and difference. Here Masson communicates the acceptance of this contradiction inherent in human alterity and which, in fact, renders communication possible. Initially, Alice, rejects the young mans' advances: "You're too complicated for me. Too poor. A worker. Look at you: you're pathetic. No future. You're . . . like me!" . . . only to state a few seconds later: "We're not much alike, are we?"

The characters (she is tall, blond, lighthearted, he, small, dark and stubborn) are framed together in a medium close-up, with blocks of apartment buildings as a backdrop that, as in *Two or Three Things*, blocks our view. In the next shot, which ends the film, we see the two walking together in the street, hand in hand.

Normative Fantasies

The viewer is faced, in Masson's work as in Godard's, with the ambivalence of a visual strategy in which the critical exposure of a gaze that transforms the "other" (feminine) into an object, simultaneously reproduces for the spectator the process and effects of that gaze. On the one hand, in Masson's as in Godard's cinematography, shots of backs, necks, parting profiles and shadowy zones abound and seem to cultivate a modesty of the gaze which, by contrast, amplifies the general malaise generated by her images of degraded intimacy. But on the other hand, if incomprehension, fear and aggressivity undermine relations between men and women, it's not so much the possibility of the existence of essential differences that are the core of the problematics of her two films. Her focus is rather on the effects of a group of preconceptions which cinema normally communicates: a reductive (masculine) fantasy that reproduces all of the inequalities of the system and takes advantage, not surprisingly, of the idea of a feminine "nature" as a justification for its excesses. Godard's films seemingly postulate, without questioning it, a femininity whose mystery provokes masculine hostility and violence. In contrast, in *For Sale*, Masson picks up on certain themes adumbrated in *To Have (and Have Not)*, in order to explore the destructive effects of the masculine fantasy that overflows its own fictional universe to impose itself as a defining norm for representations of the feminine. In these films the feminine characters threaten their masculine counterparts when they emerge not merely as unfathomable, but as desiring and autonomous beings. As in *Sauve qui peu (la vie)*, *To Have (and Have Not)* includes a sex scene between the main masculine character and a prostitute but the order of things is reversed. It is the face of the young man, Bruno, who is at the center of the image, while the prostitute's face is hidden from the camera, in the same way that she escapes from his caresses; once her time limit has elapsed, the young woman decrees the meeting is over and leaves the frame.

Between the erotic gestures that the young man attempts and the mechanical professionalism of the prostitute, between the expression of his immature desire and the sordid reality of their connection emerges a profound split. It is precisely this chasm and the destructive nature (for men as for women) of a desire and a fantasy based on unequal relationships, as well as the lack of understanding and/or the control of the needs and desires of the "other" that her two films explore.

Thus the trajectory of France Robert in *For Sale* oscillates painfully between poles defined by this reductive fantasy according to which a feminine "Other" becomes, depending on the situation, idealized, feared or degraded. By trying both to conform to and resist the logic of a desire that renders relations of equality impossible, denies the legitimacy of feminine desire and confuses sexuality with the consumption of the "Other," the character is condemned to perpetual flight. From the point of view of the narration, *For Sale* re-engages with one of the topoi of feminist film criticism, since the film is structured around an investigation in which the feminine character is the object and during which the detective, charged with finding her for a friend, becomes obsessed by the "mysterious" behavior of the young woman. This narrative structure, familiar to viewers of classic film noir, and where the woman is firmly placed in the role of this incomprehensible "other" merely serves, in Masson's film as a means to expose the limitations of human relationships based on the reduction of the other to a fantasy. At the end of this search the two protagonists meet to better separate, for, ultimately, any possibility of a real exchange between the man and the woman is conceivable only when the feminine character retakes control of her own image. Having posed for a painter, France Robert exchanges her model's salary for the canvas: a portrait that she will then be free to offer to another.

Like her predecessor, the model in Edgar Allen Poe's *Oval Portrait*, Godard's heroine is forced to submit to a tragic ending and her hopeless attempt to flee is brutally cut short. The sequence where Luigi, doubled by the voice of Jean-Luc Godard, reads an excerpt from the *Portrait* is both a beautiful example of ventriloquism,[4] where the boundary between fiction and reality (the complex connection which links Godard with Karina) blurs and a reminder of the multiple deaths to which the figure of the woman-as-model, trapped in an array of discursive nets, is defined. As Mary Ann Caws has pointed out, while the heroine of *The Oval Portrait* dies when the painting is complete, her death is repeated in the very act of narration (the diegesis) and of writing (Poe's original text), then again in the translation (Baudelaire's French rendition of Poe) and, by extension, as in Godard's version, when it is transferred to the screen.[5]

In taking Poe's story of the portrait as a point of reference for *My Life to Live*, Godard seems to insist on the vampyric nature of representation, whether literary, painterly or cinematographic – a vampirism that reaches its logical conclusion in advertising and pornography. However, by postulating, as a resistance to the consuming gaze, the existence, in essence, of an indestructible as well as inaccessible nucleus of femininity, the director seems to forget this assertion which forms the

subject of *For Sale*: that the corollary of idealization is degradation. A visionary in so many ways, Godard thus arguably fails to recognize what is most subversive in "postmodern" thought: the possibility of fluid identities and notably of sexual identities, that a contemporary cinema, differently conscious of the relationships between power and representation might henceforth be capable of exploring.

Notes

1   This chapter has been translated by T. Jefferson Kline.
2   In French cinema studies, where, for too long a time gender studies and feminist film studies were blatantly ignored, such an approach as I am taking here, focusing as it does on Godard's modernism, was at best tolerated, but more often disdained. It was thus Anglo-Saxon criticism that first "dared" to consider Godard's work from this perspective.
3   "La poule est un animal qui se compose de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur. Quand on enlève l'extérieur, il reste l'intérieur, quand on enlève l'intérieur, alors on voit l'âme." (The chicken is an animal composed of an exterior and an interior. When you take away the exterior you have the interior. And when you take away the interior you see the soul.)
4   My thanks to Tom Conley for pointing this out.
5   Caws (1983, 679–687). In the twenty-first century, the reception and circulation of the kind of "screen portrait" that Godard's film, with its repeated close-ups of Karina's face, epitomises, may take a new form: in Atom Egoyan's contribution to the film anthology, *Chacun son cinéma* (Each His Own Cinema) (2007), entitled *Artaud Double Bill*, the object of fascination is the face of an actor. In Egoyan's short, a young woman sitting through a screening of *My Life to Live*, is struck by the beauty of Antonin Artaud, seen in close-up in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) which Nana watches in one of the classic sequences of Godard's film. So as to share her discovery with one of her friends, the young spectator uses her mobile phone to record and send images to one of her friends. See Beugnet (forthcoming 2014).

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8

Les Carabiniers

BB Guns at War and at the Movies

Gerald Peary

1

It's hard to fathom now that the cranky misanthrope residing in Switzerland, sequestered from the madding movie crowds, once had a passion, in heady Paris days, for going to the cinema. Consider the year, 1963, when his *Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) was shot, and also released in France. Perhaps Jean-Luc Godard wasn't the same driven cinephile as in the 1950s, spending days and nights bleary-eyed at the Cinémathèque Française. Still, for the Winter 1963, *Cahiers du Cinéma* special issue on American Cinema, he wrote approving entries for a "Dictionary of American Filmmakers" on Orson Welles, Charles Chaplin, Billy Wilder, and Adolfas Mekas. Also, as in earlier years, he submitted an authoritative Ten Best List of 1963 to *Cahiers*, something he would continue to do to 1965.

But certainly his attitude about film, and film going, was curdling. If Godard still championed in 1963 "auteurist" cinema from France and abroad, he also was plagued by how much of cinema was rot, and how the crowds embraced it anyway. "[C]inema is becoming more and more limited, because the audience is becoming more and more limited, as it is for theatre and painting," Godard said, in a 1963 interview (Collet, 1963, 86). This unholy alliance of bad film art and bad audience is dramatized by him for the first time in *Les Carabiniers*: the grotesque scene in a Mexican movie theatre, occurring during a military occupation by Michelangelo and Ulysses, the film's soldier-boy co-protagonists. Michelangelo – ironically named and culturally challenged – takes an evening break from killing and marauding to check out what he calls "my first movie." The baby-faced dimwit loses his celluloid virginity to a trio of short films-within-the-film, all made (uncredited) for his movie by Godard himself. What is Godard showing about

audiences? As these films become progressively cruder, Michelangelo responds with increasing exhilaration.

The first film is a slightly updated, rather neutral version of the Lumière Brothers's pioneering 1895 silent, "Arrival of a Train at a Station." Michelangelo blocks his eyes in fear of being run over. The second is the Lumières's sweet 1895 home movie, "Baby's Breakfast," recast as a crass talkie with off-color farcical jokes, and these make Michelangelo chortle. The featured short is a tired, soft-core porno tease of a woman removing her clothes and entering a bathtub. Michelangelo squirms with sexual excitement. He marches forward to the screen, runs his hand up and down it, trying to grope the filmed woman. Then he awkwardly attempts what Buster Keaton had done with smooth magic in *Sherlock, Jr.*: climbing into the movie.

I would suggest that Michelangelo was held up from entering the screen (he finally scrambles in for a second, tumbles out) by Godard, as a gatekeeper for the cinema. Unlike his mentor, Jean Renoir, Godard did not embrace all his characters: Michelangelo is no beloved Boudu. As *Les Carabiniers* is the most Brechtian of his films (more later), then it was proper for Godard to take a critical stance against a character acting improperly. For Godard, there is a direct link between Michelangelo's barbarous ignorance of movies and, throughout *Les Carabiniers*, his stupidity as a human killing machine.

Michelangelo's "bad faith" relation to cinema had equivalents in other early Godard. Most obviously, there is Jack Palance's Jerry, the philistine American producer in *Contempt*, pushing the immortal Fritz Lang about as a hired slave, also chuckling and panting with delight as a bare-breasted woman swims by on screen. In *Breathless*, Michelangelo is prefigured by Michel Poiccard, Jean-Paul Belmondo's arrested, amoral killer, who is smitten by a Humphrey Bogart poster, running his thumb across his lips, Bogart style, and muttering, "Bogey."

It seems of consequence to me that Godard, a lover of Bogart (especially when coupled with an auteur director: Raoul Walsh's *High Sierra*, Howard Hawks's *The Big Sleep*), never has Poiccard attend an actual Bogart movie. Tellingly, the image of Bogart is enough for him. *Breathless* is suffused with admiring filmic references, but all are in the consciousness of Godard, the filmmaker, all missed by the characters. Poiccard calls himself Laszlo Kovacs without awareness that there's a real Kovacs who is a maverick Hollywood cameraman. He murders a policeman without being cognizant that his cocked gun in close-up is in homage to a shot in Sam Fuller's western, *Forty Guns*. And Jean Seberg's equally clueless Patricia interviews a character played by filmmaker Jean-Pierre Melville, not aware that the great *Bob le flambeur* (Bob the Gambler) cineaste, adored by Godard, is in her presence. She runs into a movie theatre once, but only to elude gangsters who are chasing her. She doesn't even look up at the screen!

It's no surprise that Patricia is never seen in an actual Paris art museum. Why go to the Jeu de Paume? The tacky Pierre-Auguste Renoir poster on the wall above her bed will suffice.

The Renoir and Bogart posters featured in *Breathless*, fetishized commodities in lieu of the lived experience, pictures of the thing instead of the thing, come back a hundredfold in *Les Carabiniers*, starting with a barrage of posters scattered through the film, from the blow-up advertisement of a liquor bottle in the home of Cleopatra and Venus to a cardboard Rembrandt self-portrait, saluted by Michelangelo. Most significantly, there is the suitcase of booty from the war: postcards with ribbons, postcards, postcards! Hundreds of them. Michelangelo and Ulysses take turns showing off their ware. Among their proud acquisitions are pictures of art works (Manet's *Olympia*, probably because she's nude) and pictures of hot female movie stars (Ava Gardner, Brigitte Bardot). There are photos of the MGM Technicolor Building, and a Berlin art museum. The historic Cleopatra is blurred with the *Cleopatra* movie one, an image of Elizabeth Taylor in exotic costume.

What kind of yahoos would prefer fools-gold images to the concrete thing? French critic Jean Collet, a rare booster of *Les Carabiniers* during its original release, offers this eloquent appraisal:

> *Les Carabiniers* . . . is a film about the vanity of having. . . . Michelangelo and Ulysses are nothing, since they are entirely defined by their appetites. Their story is a tale of digestion, rather indigestion. Everything they take reveals itself as illusory. Not only material, physical goods, but . . . their collection of postcards . . . [Godard denounces] . . . the stupidity of a culture of consumers – hence of killers – a world of mouths and eyes, with neither minds nor hearts. Our civilization, to whom Godard addresses the central question: What good is it to accumulate in your memories the pictures of Brigitte Bardot, of Boeing 70s, rattlesnakes, the Parthenon, Niagara Falls, what good is it since you are not alive, since you are not? (Collet, 1963, 64)

2

I believe that, in 1963, Godard still subscribed (somewhat) to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* ethos by which morality and cinema are inextricably connected, where what kind of person you are can be tested by the quality of your film taste, and the intensity of your cinephilia.

In his movies before *Les Carabiniers*, and even several years after, many of the characters Godard favors share a devotion to motion pictures. Consider Anna Karina's Nana in *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live), she was worshipful at Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, dripping tears in the cinema over the tragic plight of actress Falconetti. Or, in *Masculine/Feminine*, Jean-Pierre Leaud 's Paul racing out of the theatre, climbing up a rear stairwell to the projection booth, railing at the projectionist because the picture is being shown in the wrong aspect ratio. And there's Jean-Paul Belmondo's Ferdinand in *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad) giving the maid

time off so that – how important! – she can view Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* on the big screen.

Is it too simplistic a reading of *Contempt* to regard Michel Piccoli's screenwriter, Paul, as a good guy in the first part of the movie, not only because he hasn't yet sold out but because he's an obsessive moviegoer with rarefied (Godardian) taste? He and his wife (Brigitte Bardot's Camille) get along in their simple bohemian life because it includes making space for first-rate cinema. Wearing a hat in the bathtub, he references Dean Martin in Vincente Minnelli's *Some Came Running*. She tells Fritz Lang of their shared admiration for his baroque western, *Rancho Notorious*.

Alas, there are no movies, thus no cinephiles, in the spy vs. spy suffocated universe of *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier), nor in dystopic fascistic *Alphaville*.

3

His affection for cinema was growing shaky, yet Godard still retained a sentiment for his moviegoer past when making *Les Carabiniers*. The proof is that, in keeping with his earlier films, he sprinkled his narrative with allusions to films by filmmakers whom he had adulated.

Ulysses and Michelangelo tool around the war front on a motorbike with a sidecar, recalling a famous comic interlude of Harpo and Groucho in Leo McCarey's *Duck Soup*. Ulysses, with his hat and cigar, is unmistakably channeling gangster Tony Camonte from Howard Hawks's *Scarface*, which Godard listed in the 1960s as "The Best American Sound Film." Camonte, like Ulysses, is not only a cold murderer but an acquirer – of clothes, women, a snazzy ring. Instead of attending a movie as Michelangelo does, the street-educated Camonte ventures to the legitimate theatre, where he struggles to comprehend Somerset Maugham's *Rain*. (He has to leave the theatre before the third act to do a killing!)

In the postcard montage, Godard slipped in two images which are more resonant for his film-educated sensibility than for Ulysses and Michelangelo: a golden coach, referencing Jean Renoir's *The Golden Coach*, and a photo of actress Martine Carol starring in Max Ophuls's *Lola Montès*. Both movies are key "auteurist" works, seminal inspirations for Godard and the New Wave filmmakers. Then there's the peculiar scene in the woods where a soldier in Ulysses's and Michelangelo's platoon finds a steel helmet, fills it with water, sets in on the ground near his fellow soldiers, finally cooks with it over an open fire. Presumably, that's all in homage to the Korean War cult classic, *The Steel Helmet*, directed by a Godard super-favorite, Sam Fuller, who appeared on screen as Himself in *Pierrot le fou*.

Did the anarchic, debased, insistently non-heroic military world of Fuller (*Fixed Bayonets*, *Merrill's Marauders*, etc.) have an impact on Godard when conceiving *Les Carabiniers*? It makes sense. Here, for instance, is a Fuller scholar, Lee Server,

describing *The Steel Helmet*'s protagonist, Sergeant Zack, in words which nail Ulysses and Michelangelo. He is "a callous, self-centered brute" who "is oblivious to the goals of the mission, of the war itself, responsive only to his own needs for survival, food, a box of cigars" (Server, 1994, 64–65). Server continues: "Fuller's military men are almost all deeply flawed, ambivalent, or outright crazy" (Server, 1994, 65).

As in *Attack*, Robert Aldrich's ironic war drama, the grunt soldiers in *Les Carabiniers* end up dead while the slippery officers march on. There is probable borrowing from Douglas Sirk's *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*. Scenes of rubble in *Les Carabiniers* seem inspired by Sirk's destroyed German city in World War II. Godard: "Even more than Aldrich in *Attack*, Sirk can make things seem so close we can touch them, we can smell them." Sirk's movie appears also the source for the odd scene in *Les Carabiniers* in which a young woman, arrested by the army, delivers a Marxist speech to her executioners before she is shot. In *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*, a female Communist partisan is captured by the Germans on the Russian front. She offers some fiery, self-righteous oratory before the Nazi firing squad guns her down.

The montage sequences in *Les Carabiniers*, in which documentary footage of World War II is wedded with Godard-orchestrated fictive battles, are showy evocations of Eisensteinian movie-making. And from non-Hollywood American shores: at the time of *Les Carabiniers*, Godard had seen only one example of Underground Film, but he liked it enormously. That was Adolfas Mekas's *Hallelujah, the Hills*. Godard might have appropriated the farcical tone, also a snippet of story, from Mekas's tongue-in-cheek romp about rural New England involving a mother living with her adult daughter (Cleopatra and Venus?), surrounded by two silly-acting males (Ulysses and Michelangelo?) who race through the countryside with loaded rifles.

Far more important than Mekas's skimpy tale was the "underground" manner of telling it, using non-actors in all the major roles and without a concern about their thespian proficiency. Their awkwardness and limited amateur talents are foregrounded instead of being covered up. And so it was with *Les Carabiniers*. Only Marine Masé (Ulysses) of the four major actors had any sort of performing career. For *Contempt*, made just a few months after *Les Carabiniers*, Godard turned willingly to international stars Brigitte Bardot, Jack Palance, Michel Piccoli. But for *Les Carabiniers*, a Gallic "underground" movie, he opted by choice for barely-actor unknowns: Albert Juross (Michelangelo), Geneviève Galéa (Venus), and Catherine Ribéro (Cleopatra).

4

In the December 1960 issue of *Cahiers du Cinèma*, Bernard Dort offered an important, far-reaching polemic, "Towards a Brechtian Criticism of Cinema," declaring,

"It can be seen that enthusiasm for Brecht has now reached cinema circles. . . . *Positif* has been thoroughly infected, and *Cahiers du Cinéma* will be shortly." Jean-Luc Godard was at the head of the *Cahiers* line affected by the great German playwright and theorist. Unfortunately, it's impossible to surmise which Brecht he had absorbed cover to cover, or whether, as skeptics contend, Godard opens up books arbitrarily, reads briefly, pulls out cryptic quotes to be injected into his cinema. However, references to Brecht abound in Godard interviews at the time, as when he explained why there are twelve tableaux in *Vivre sa vie*: "to emphasize the theatrical Brechtian side." About Brecht's poems: "They are optimistic when I am sad. They are written from a standpoint of not being certain, and it's a very good way to convince" (Gilliat, 1976).

The Brechtian influence on *Les Carabiniers* is signaled right away: with the muscular, chest-thumping overture from composer Philippe Arthuys, definitely meant to recall the "join-the-army" themes of Kurt Weill in *The Threepenny Opera* and other Brecht plays. As the narrative begins, the full orchestra is replaced on the soundtrack by *Threepenny*-sounding thrifty essentials: a hand organ, snare drums.

As Brecht and Weill openly lifted *The Threepenny Opera* from John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, so *Les Carabiniers* (though Godard never says so) manages a blatant plot swipe from Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*, starting with an endless, pointless war kept aflame by far-away kings with opaque reasons for fighting. *Les Carabiniers*'s Cleopatra has a daughter at home, and two sons – Ulysses, dumb and older, Michelangelo, dumber and younger – off to battle. Mother Courage likewise has a daughter in her wagon, and two sons, the oldest boy eager to fight, the younger and stupider wanting to join his brother on the front. In both works, there are sly recruiting officers who entice young men to put on uniforms for the king, and by offering the spoils of war. In both, the two lads end up tricked by the military and, also, stone dead.

It's a much-told story, how Brecht was frustrated by productions of *Mother Courage* because the audiences felt for his titular character, wept for her family deaths, even though the playwright saw her as a capitalist scavenger, feeding off the war. Godard must have known all this while conceiving his military tale and imagining, as negative examples, his murderous protagonists. He showed an allegiance to Brecht by employing a host of "alienation" strategies to keep an audience from empathizing with the characters, or getting swept up in the narrative.

Obvious estrangement effects include his shooting most of the war scenes in extreme long shot, so that the audience neither identifies with the soldiers in battle nor, even more essential, with the hapless civilian victims. Godard directed his war-victim actors to be utterly expressionless, going passively to their deaths, never pleading for their lives. Who can feel anything for them? Only in the case of the beautiful Marxist guerilla does Godard tease with a close-up. But he instantly fractures any empathy the audience has for this attractive young woman about to

die. She delivers a robot-like political lecture followed by a tedious, rhetorical recital of a Mayakovsky poem/fable. The soldiers, all Michelangelo-ignorant, are at first shaken by her femaleness, then mystified by her speechifying, then bored by it. Is it fair to say that the audience, too, is manipulated by Godard to be relieved (secretly) when she finally, finally stops talking, and is shot?

Robin Wood on *Les Carabiniers*: "This is, I think, the bitterest of Godard's films, and the most grotesque" (Wood, 1966, 185).

I suggested above that the acting in *Les Carabiniers* is purposefully amateurish, and that's another way that Godard keeps spectators estranged. It's difficult to empathize with a character if the actor plays his role poorly. But Godard goes farther. The editing ("underground" movie style) is also casually off-kilter and arrhythmic, making the acting worse instead of better. There are dead spots before actors say lines, or the camera lingers on a character for much too long after a line is said. Also, bad takes are honored, kept in the movie instead of cut out.

There's further distancing. The actress playing Cleopatra seems virtually the same age as the three actors playing her sons and daughter. This is a family you can't believe in. As for the costumes: they appear to be whatever performers, in either major parts or cameos, wore to the set. There can be no illusion of reality with the various and sundry garb, from the hippie clothes of Cleopatra and Venus to the white go-go boots of a firing-squad victim.

The aforementioned Soviet-style montages are also transformed into alienation devices. Every time World War II documentary footage is combined with footage shot for *Les Carabiniers*, Godard makes sure we notice a glaring mismatch, that the two shots are clearly unrelated. Unlike in Eisenstein, the cuts fool nobody. Kuleshov's "Creative geography" fails. At moments, Godard concocts a funny parody of matching action: for example, Michelangelo points to the sky, cut to obvious stock footage of bombs bursting, like something from a very cheap "B" movie.

Finally, there are the hand-written inserts which constantly interrupt the narrative. That is Brechtian enough, but Godard goes another arresting step. Except for an opening quotation from Borges, none of the inserts are credited, and Godard cooks up a dialectic of competing anonymous narratives, all in the same handwriting. One thread is a series of actual pacifist missives from World War II, pessimistic quotes about the hopelessness of the war, the bloodshed, the horror. The antithesis is the homicidal celebration of killing and mayhem, reports from the front by Ulysses and Michelangelo, sent on the back of postcards to Venus and Cleopatra.

Godard is being the best kind of Brechtian, forcing spectators to think like a jury weighing evidence at a trial. They must sift through the quotes, and decide which ones, describing the ungodly terrors of World War II, have gravitas and wisdom. And which ones, written for the entertainment of their blood-crazed mother and sister, reflect the bestial idiocy of Ulysses and Michelangelo.

5

From 1967 on, Godard raged openly against all traditional manifestations of cinema: the venomous *Weekend*; the hard-line works of the Marxist-Leninist Dziga Vertov Group; the video essays – insular, abstruse, melancholic, misanthropic – for decades after. But as early as 1965, with *Masculine/Feminine*, there was no going back, even before Godard's shift to ultra-left politics. The joyless scene in the movie theatre summarizes it all: where patrons are cruising in the bathroom instead of watching the movie, where the projectionist no longer cares about proper projection, and where there's utter crap on the screen. In lieu of Carl Dreyer or Nicholas Ray, there's a shrill, ugly, pseudo-Bergman exercise in masochism and self-loathing (another self-punishing film-within-a-film courtesy of Godard).

Jean-Pierre Leaud's Paul in *Masculine/Feminine* is perhaps the closest character in any Godard film to be a stand-in for the filmmaker's sensibilities. He ponders with the deepest sadness what's coming out of the projector: numero deux, 24 times a second. Paul's voice-over is synonymous with Godard's in his heartfelt elegy for the cinema: "We'd often go to the movies. We'd often be disappointed. Marilyn Monroe looked old. It was not the film we had dreamed, the film we carried in our hearts, the film we wanted to make – and secretly wanted to live."

Was there one moment when Godard's cinephilia completely deflated? The hostile reaction to *Les Carabiniers* could have been the tipping point. French critics despised the film, and audiences stayed clear. Ironically, Godard succeeded in his Brechtian quest to keep spectators from falling in love with *Les Carabiniers*, or its warmonger characters. The film didn't open in the USA until 1968, five years after, because of the dreadful French reception.

In January, 1964, Godard held nothing back in an astonishingly impolitic interview: "*Les Carabiniers* didn't do well in Paris because people are larvae," Godard charged. "When you show them larvae on screen, they rebel. What they like is a beautiful Zanuck-style war. For three hours they kill lots of Germans. Then they go home happy and heroic. They don't want any part in real war. It's not war that's disgusting, it's ourselves. People are cowards" (Collet, 1963, 95).

If it's any compensation, Godard included himself among the chicken-hearted. And the larvae, he would agree, are on both sides of the camera. In *Contempt*, he has Fritz Lang as his directorial mouthpiece quoting a Brecht ballad: "Every morning to earn my bread I go to the market where they buy lies." BB too! Ultimately, it's not just the audience that's at fault. The very act of filmmaking also is inevitably compromised, contaminated, a kind of whoredom. Few have noticed in *Les Carabiniers*: for that wretched little semi-porn movie in the fleabag Mexican theatre, "A Worldly Lady in a Bath," Godard has placed a title card, "Produced by Rome Paris Films." That's the same art-house company acknowledged at the top of the credits for producing *Les Carabiniers*.

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A Postmodern Consideration of Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris*

Emily Macaux

As a medium, film manifests a singular capacity for contradiction and paradox, for both emotional engagement and intellectual provocation. Indeed, through its variously seen and unseen mechanisms of illusion, evocation, and representation, it renders forth and frequently undermines the substance, the very nature, of human perception. Jean-Luc Godard, through his dense, diverse body of work, equally exploits and elucidates film's creative conventions; indeed, he evinces throughout his œuvre an exhaustive, decidedly irreverent appreciation of filmic history and technique, the results of which variously, even inadvertently, invoke, challenge, and slyly subvert any number of aesthetic theories. In retrospectively excavating the formal and narrative substance of Godard's work, and specifically the film-maker's *Le Mépris* (Contenpt), one finds that it determinedly if unintentionally prefigures, pre-empts, and problematizes much of postmodern thought. Permeated at both diegetic and extra-diegetic levels by a profound and ambivalent sense of historical and textual implication, *Le Mépris* projects a constant, distinctly "postmodern" awareness of its own filmic identity. Indeed, the film's mirrored, self-reflexive dynamics insist, ultimately, on nothing save the inexorable ambiguity of lived experience.

Linda Hutcheon writes that "postmodernist art offers a new model for mapping the borderland between art and the world, a model that works from a position within both and yet not totally within either, a model that is profoundly implicated in, yet still capable of criticizing, that which it seeks to describe" (Hutcheon, 1988, 23) The opening scene of *Le Mépris* enacts precisely this kind of self-reflexive positioning: a frame bearing the film's title in stark, red lettering, is followed by an image of a largely empty film lot. Immediately, one hears Godard's voice,

intoning the film's credits; in the distance Godard's cameraman, Raoul Coutard, shoots the very film (*Le Mépris*) that Godard is, simultaneously, introducing. Thus, Godard quickly situates himself, his cast and crew, and the viewer, both within and without the film's contrived world; indeed, in foregrounding the mechanisms of filmmaking, that is, the cinematic "apparatus," (Benjamin, 2008, 30) Godard deliberately violates conventional cinematic illusion. Certainly, he pre-empts any kind of voyeuristic complacency, as the audience necessarily registers the artifice of that which appears on screen (Uhde, 1974, 28–30, 44).[1] The subject of Coutard's diegetic camera, Georgia Moll, is framed initially as an actress, and her diegetic character ("Francesca") is manifest only later; similarly, the intrusion of Godard's extra-diegetic voice both underscores the contrived nature of the diegetic world and, by violating the illusive autonomy of the diegetic space, complicates his own directorial rapport with it. Consequently, the relationship "between art and the world" becomes, in this opening sequence, one of paradoxical interfusion, resulting in a kind of critique-from-within whereby the scene both witnesses and constitutes concentric rings of filmic illusion.

This inexorable ambiguity is further reinforced by the scene's temporal uncertainty: in reciting the film's credits, Godard initially employs the present tense ("It's based on a novel by Alberto Moravia"[2]) before shifting to the past ("produced by," "the cameraman was," etc.), then back to the present. Meanwhile, the presumably "finished" film to which these credits refer is, as previously noted, the very production one sees in-progress on the screen. As a result, the temporal framework within which the film has been realized is itself indeterminate, and it serves but to further interpose and obscure the real and the artificial, the past and the present. The "fiction" being created therefore describes and, equally, dissimulates the "real" mechanisms of which it is both a product and an illumination, perfectly illustrating Susan Sontag's contention that "Godard's work implies a quite different function for art: sensory and conceptual dislocation" (Sontag, 1966, 163).

Clearly, even as he foregrounds a pointedly meta-filmic awareness, Godard continues to work from within the very conventions he delineates.[3] Thus, the crew of *Le Mépris* is being filmed by an unseen cameraman while, simultaneously, the lush music that subsequently serves as the titular film's soundtrack reverberates and provides an overtly cinematic, aural ground for Godard's extra-diegetic, non-cinematic voice. In this manner, the scene positions the viewer at a knowing remove from the imaged action, even as that viewer is equally, surreptitiously, lured into a secondary sphere of filmic artifice; one effectively struggles in vain "to penetrate behind the final veil and experience cinema unmediated by cinema" (Sontag, 1966, 170). *Le Mépris* thus resembles, increasingly, an ever-expanding yet dense web of self-aware reflections and references, a web that, while reproducing the conditions of its own realization, simultaneously serves as an externalized meta-commentary on those conditions. Hutcheon describes this kind of self-aware creative process as a form parody, one that "paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (Hutcheon, 1988, 26). The result of Godard's

paradoxical, indeed "parodic" maneuverings is to situate the film viewers at once within and without a fictive cinematic world; the viewers retain a certain awareness of the artifice before them even as they collude in its creation. The final image of the opening scene of *Le Mépris* is, in this regard, especially suggestive: Coutard, on the film dolly, and the actress he is shooting (Moll) move into close-up within the extra-diegetic frame; yet as they approach nearer the extra-diegetic lens, Moll is effectively cut from the shot as Godard's camera closes in on Coutard and the diegetic camera. Coutard and the camera now occupy the frame, and the diegetic camera is rotated to face the extra-diegetic lens and, by implication, the audience. Once again, Godard draws the viewer into a vast network of self-referring reflections in which, finally, the viewer's own gaze affirms the film's reflexive self-critique.

Walter Benjamin has argued that "permitting the reproduction [of a work] to reach the recipient in his or her own situation" makes possible the "actualization" of "that which is reproduced" (Benjamin, 2008, 22). Here, however, the "reproduction" is not merely a commercially duplicable film-as-commodity; rather, it is an indeterminate, ineffable network of incestuous, filmic interpenetrations and infiltrations, a network that is, finally, an elusive, conceptual quantity rather than a discrete, material object of reproducibility. The film's self-referential internal dynamics, which implicitly acknowledge and critically enlist the spectatorial gaze, increasingly efface any point of creative origin, any definitive version of itself that would allow for wholesale reproduction. Thus, in *Le Mépris*, Godard extends and complicates Benjamin's notion of the "recipient" of the work; moving beyond the idea of the viewer as one who "actualizes" a "reproduction," Godard draws the audience into a far more active state of participation. Indeed, the "recipient," through a kind of dual consciousness of and conceptual collusion in the filmic (un)reality at hand, enters into what Hutcheon describes as a fundamentally dialogic rapport between "producer"/"product" and "recipient," (Hutcheon, 1988, 169) a rapport that, in turn, re-configures the terms of material as well as conceptual "reproducibility."

Sontag has posited that "[e]ach of Godard's films is a totality that undermines itself, a de-totalized totality (to borrow Sartre's phrase)" (Sontag, 1966, 163) In fact, one may go further and argue that Godard's films expose the manner in which film, as a medium, necessarily arises from and incarnates an inexorable state of fracture – that of disparate frames, of distinct scenes and shots – and that filmic "unity" is invariably born of an elemental disunity. Throughout *Le Mépris*, context, time, setting, and identity retain an endless capacity to shift, decompose, and change, and this capacity is manifest variously at levels of formal technique, narrative, and characterization. These dynamics are cogently illumined in an early scene between Camille (Brigitte Bardot) and Paul (Michel Piccoli): A cut from the film's opening shot reveals Camille lying naked on a bed with Paul. Bardot is seen from behind, centered within the frame, whereas Paul's face is just visible in the obscure, red-tinted light of the shot. Camille immediately utters the film's first

line of dialogue: "I don't know," she says with a sigh, her voice betraying a vague ennui. Notably, her character's latent, undefined ambivalence permeates the scene and effectively counteracts the erotic charge explicitly suggested by Camille's nudity and the red-tinted, intimate bedroom setting. Indeed, as the camera fixes its unmoving gaze upon the couple, Camille proceeds to a distinctly un-erotic, verbal dismemberment of her body; literally de-constructing her physical self, Camille paradoxically seeks Paul's approval of each constituent part as a means of affirming, finally, the totality of his love for her. "Then you love me totally," she concludes upon completing this corporeal inventory. Paul, in turn, replies: "I love you totally, tenderly, tragically," to which Camille rejoins, "Me too, Paul."

Camille here casts herself as an assemblage of discrete, disparate components, in effect a "de-totalized totality" that lends itself readily to deconstruction and fracture. Further, she cogently delineates the condition of Godard's "finished" film (*Le Mépris*), which increasingly reveals its own internal network of disjunctions and idiosyncrasies and suggests, finally, that indeterminacy is its only "final" state. Indeed, as Camille deliberately deconstructs her physical self, reducing it to a mélange of distinct parts, she describes a complex, decidedly ambiguous notion of subjectivity. Émile Benveniste argues that it "is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a *subject*, because language alone establishes the 'ego' in reality, in *its* reality" (Benveniste, 1971, 224). Camille, employing language, essentially submits herself to and participates in an objectifying, aesthetic self-evaluation, an evaluation that is pointedly reinforced by the camera's extra-diegetic gaze. Indeed, to consider Camille's self-initiated critique in light of Benveniste's assertion is to further apprehend the character's contradictory nature. Camille's words implicitly acknowledge, and in fact serve to establish, her status as image; simultaneously, they expose the voyeuristic gaze of both camera and viewer and, in so doing, undermine their respective capacities for exploitive self-gratification. Godard, therefore, uses the exchange between Camille and Paul to subvert the scene from within and, equally, to call into question the nature of subject/object and the dynamics that underlie both.

By employing visual and verbal elements to emphasize Camille's exposed bodily presence, Godard at once illuminates and exploits Bardot's own "real" identity as movie star and the inherently commodified, consumable status of that identity. As Paul remarks in yet another of the film's self-reflexive gestures, "Aren't movies great? [In life you] see women in dresses . . . in movies you see their ass." This comment immediately recalls the bedroom scene and its presentation of Bardot's "ass" as a "consumable" visual commodity: Midway through that scene, the camera awakens and proceeds to a perusal of Bardot's naked body, the camera's movement occurring in tandem with an unexpected, temporary shift to full, saturated color. Framing thus the voluptuous luminosity of Bardot's naked form, the camera, notably, neglects to shoot her face in close-up. Rather, this brief yet indulgent revelation of her body merely confirms Bardot's famed, "real" visual presence, a presence here refracted through and inextricable from the "fictional"

character of Camille. Contradictions thus persist: On one level, the character of Camille displays an awareness of self-as-image that mirrors the greater self-reflexive tendencies of the film. However, just as the meta-cinematic consciousness evinced in the film's opening scene is contained within yet another ring of filmic unreality, Camille's critical self-consciousness is equally subsumed within the spectator's own extra-diegetic awareness of Bardot-as-movie-star, the latter ever subject to the camera's searching, objectifying eye. The woman one sees on screen is, therefore, an ambiguous, indeterminate entity/identity, a shifting amalgam of object/subject and character/star.

In her discussion of Benveniste's notion of subjectivity, Hutcheon maintains that "in postmodern theory and practice it is language as *discourse* that is foregrounded"; therefore, she continues, "If the speaking subject is constituted in and by language, s/he cannot be totally autonomous and in control of her or his own subjectivity, for discourse is constrained by the rules of the language and open to multiple connotations of anonymous cultural codes" (Hutcheon, 1988, 168). Certainly, as the bedroom scene between Camille and Paul illustrates, intersecting vectors of language, gaze, and diegetic/extra-diegetic awareness underlie Camille's elusive incarnation of self. However, a subsequent exchange between Camille and Paul describes, still more cogently, Hutcheon's discussion of the "rules" and "multiple connotations" that obtain in any use of language. The sequence in question finds the couple in the midst of a conversation that has progressed intermittently from the beginning of the scene: Camille is seen re-entering the bathroom of the couple's apartment, where Paul is seated on the edge of the bathtub. She has just uttered a profanity, and Paul has responded with disapproval, declaring, "Vulgar language doesn't suit you." In response, Camille, turning her back on Paul, proceeds to enunciate a series of vulgarities; then, turning once more to face Paul, she asks rhetorically, "So, still think it doesn't suit me?" Clearly, by employing such "vulgar language," Camille has deliberately conjured up and defiantly embraced the negative connotations that Paul assigns to such language; as a result, she has necessarily undermined the presumably idealized conception that Paul has of her and rejected the social and sexual assumptions of which that conception is composed. In this respect, Camille's determined enunciation of obscenities constitutes a subversive declaration of autonomy, one through which she both claims and challenges the presupposed "vulgar" signification of the words. Equally significant, her utterance of these words in a tone devoid of feeling, of inflection, effectively neutralizes the words' potential positive/negative charge. They become, as a result, verbal articulations that lack inherent substance and in fact betray "the duplicity and banality" (Sontag, 1966, 188) that, Sontag asserts, characterizes language in Godard's films. Nevertheless, Paul's initial, chiding response, which notably fails to address the underlying emotional disquiet of which Camille's "vulgar" language is merely an outward sign, is born of and thus confirms the superficial, socially engendered connotations of the language itself. Paul's verbalized disapproval is, in its presumption of the inherent "vulgarity" of the language,

an implicit endorsement of the connotations it evokes, connotations to which he would necessarily, if unconsciously, confine Camille. Thus, the scene's dynamics subtly re-enact and recall those of the bedroom sequence, in which Camille appropriates with similar ambivalence the mechanisms of self-definition. Here, that appropriation is distinctly verbal; yet in both sequences Camille, as a character, manifests a distinct diegetic awareness of her own subjectivity and the means of its realization/suppression, while the spectator, vis-à-vis the extra-diegetic camera, paradoxically re-affirms her inexorable status as consumable image and contextualized commodity.

Hutcheon remarks that postmodernism "is both academic and popular, elitist and accessible. One of the ways in which it achieves this paradoxical popular–academic identity is through its technique of installing and then subverting familiar conventions of both kinds of art" (Hutcheon, 1988, 44). Godard's film certainly displays this kind of "popular–academic identity," and to an extent, Bardot/Camille represents a nexus of its conflicting, paradoxical threads, threads that incorporate not only a "popular–academic" dichotomy but also tensions between contemporary–historical and real–illusory. These diverse tensions, variously sublimated and viscerally if unconsciously communicated via the film's characters, clearly underlie an early scene at Jerry's country villa: Paul, having just arrived at Jerry's (Jack Palance) villa, finds the latter on the carefully landscaped grounds with Camille. Camille, notably withdrawn, questions Paul as to why he is so late in arriving; Paul responds by explaining, unconvincingly, that he encountered an accident on the way to the villa. From a close-up of Jerry, whose gaze is directed off-camera at Camille, the camera cuts to a semi-long shot of the latter, who has perched herself on a chair at some distance from the two men. "I don't give a damn," she says to Paul, adding: "I'm not interested in your story." Posed thus, and positioned within the center of the frame, Camille gazes briefly downward; then, looking up, she stares straight ahead, as if in acknowledgment of the camera's own gaze, before glancing off-camera as music swells in the background. The scene is clearly suggestive of a number of the film's recurrent preoccupations, foremost among them the gaze – that of the individual and, of particular significance here, that of the camera. Camille, the character most frequently and intimately seen through the camera's lens, reveals in her repeatedly imaged presence a notably conflicted, often contradictory rapport with this notion of the "look." As the bedroom scene suggests, Camille as a character is paradoxically, simultaneously, complicit in and defiant of the camera's invasive, constant scrutiny; accordingly, here, Camille directly yet ambivalently meets the camera's gaze with her own stare. The resulting sense of confrontation between – and indeed obfuscation of – the positions of "viewer" and "viewed" is reinforced by the immediate cut from Jerry's lascivious, consuming glance to Camille's vaguely defiant posture. Jerry, the film's flamboyant incarnation of Hollywood – particularly of a crude, unabashedly commercial element of Hollywood – is effectively conflated with the camera itself, a conflation that invests the latter's framing of Camille with a certain

exploitive, undefined illegitimacy. Benjamin writes that to perform successfully before the camera is to "preserve one's humanity in the face of the apparatus" and, further, to place the apparatus "in the service of [one's] human triumph" (Benjamin, 2008, 31). As Camille looks briefly, directly at the camera ("the apparatus"), her glance is both an acknowledgment of her status as image and a challenge to her potential vulnerability as such; it is a glance that signals not "triumph" but, more ambiguously, a compelling capacity for reciprocal manipulation.

The film's self-reflexive use of the camera is not only implicated in a complex elucidation of the gaze; it is also linked to the equally complicated dynamics witnessed between and among the film's characters. Indeed, whether explicitly visible as an element of diegetic *mise-en-scène* (as in the film's opening shot), or implicitly suggested as extra-diegetic gaze (the scene at Jerry's villa), the camera's presence insistently intrudes upon and even intervenes in the scenic action and the viewer's response to it. In fact, the audience is ever made to acknowledge the camera as a constant, inescapable entity, one that is both a passive witness to and an active mediator/manipulator of that which occurs on screen. The opening shot of the film's Capri sequence is particularly suggestive in this regard: Camille's face is shot, in close-up, from a slightly high angle. Her eyes hidden by dark sunglasses, she is framed against a backdrop of deep blue water, her expression unreadable as she gazes out to sea. Immediately, the image registers as one of "Bardot–as-movie-icon" rather than one of "Camille;" indeed, a cut soon reveals the diegetic presence of a movie camera and two attendant crew members, the lens of the former provocatively directed towards Camille. Confronted yet again with the film's overt, self-reflexive awareness of the film apparatus, viewers are reminded once more of the manner in which they can never "penetrate the final veil" of Godard's cinema but remain, instead, trapped in an endless network of filmic self-reference. Significantly, the diegetic camera here resembles a face: The camera's two spotlights suggest a pair of eyes, fixed and unblinking, above the gaping, mouth-like void of the camera's lens. This hungry mien, in its fixation on Camille, communicates an uninhibited eagerness to "consume" her. A return cut to Camille frames her as she looks briefly, directly, at the camera, her gaze heightening both the viewer's awareness of "Bardot-as-star-before-the-camera" and, at the narrative level, that of "Camille-as-woman," the latter's existence ever "screened" and mediated by an intrusive (that is, cinematic) gaze. This exclusive, fraught exchange between Bardot/Camille and the viewer/camera is soon interrupted by Paul's voice, intruding from off-camera: "What are you doing?" he asks, repeating the question as he enters the frame. The scene thus effects a subtle yet pointed shift, as the sense of the camera shooting "Bardot as Camille" is displaced by the filming of "the story of Paul and Camille." Paul seats himself beside Camille, and the two, together, gaze forward as they begin to talk; in so doing, they reinforce the viewer's awareness of the characters' relationship as "filmic" narrative material. A cameraman here enters the shot: "Please," he says, hastening Paul and Camille from the diegetic set, "You're in frame."

Godard underscores here the nature of Paul and Camille's exchange as a "produced" and "screened" event, a filmic illusion contained within a greater cinematic apparatus. Notably, via Camille's answer to Paul's query, "What are you doing?" ("Looking," she replies), the spectator is again confronted with the ambiguous, pervasive notion of the gaze. However, equally interesting is the manner in which Camille, she who is generally the object of others' regard, is also increasingly, actively engaged in looking. In fact, Camille's visual observation of that which occurs around her is concomitant with the film's imaging of her as ever surrounded by, yet perpetually disengaged from, the highly verbal, profoundly textualized dialogues that occur between the other characters. Hence the early scene at Jerry's villa: Upon announcing that she is going for a walk, Camille turns and takes several steps before stopping, motionless. Francesca has just entered the upper portion of the frame, riding in on a bicycle from off screen. Camille remains thus positioned, her back to the camera, the party gathered at the table behind her. Indeed, the camera's cut from Camille's centrally framed back to the three remaining characters, seen now talking about the film currently in production, underlines the sense of Camille's estrangement from the former group and, more specifically, from the dialogue in which its members are engaged. Yet this estrangement is represented as, to an ambiguous extent, a self-imposed condition, a conscious act on Camille's part of self-extrication from an ever-encroaching, potentially oppressive tangle of unrelenting intertextuality. Indeed, Camille seems unwilling to engage in this highly "textualized" network, by which she is pointedly marginalized yet in which she is also profoundly implicated.

Significantly, following immediately upon a discussion between Fritz Lang and Paul of Homer's *Odyssey*, Jerry's voice is heard off-screen, abruptly demanding of Camille, "Why don't you say something?" As the scene fades to darkness, the camera tracks left to Camille who, faintly illuminated amidst the sudden obscurity, responds simply, "Because I have nothing to say." Further, when Jerry cajoles her to accompany him back to his Capri villa, Paul readily gives his assent, adding that he will stay behind to discuss the *Odyssey* with Lang and thus, once more, without Camille. Yet Camille's apparent ambivalence toward and ostensible exclusion from such pervasive "texts" (that is, the *Odyssey*) does not preclude her own active engagement with them. Hence an earlier scene in the couple's modern apartment: Camille is in the bathtub; Paul enters the bathroom, attempting again to elicit from Camille an explanation of her changed behavior. In response Camille, holding before her face a book bearing, prominently, the name "Lang," begins to read from the text, which significantly addresses Greek antiquity and the question of adultery / vengeance. Explicitly, self-reflexively interweaving the filmic and the literary, the scene equally refracts the "real" (Lang) through the "artificial" (the fictive world of the film). Further, the contents of the text itself, which address matters of love, sex, and (in)fidelity, effectively elucidate and "narrate" the sublimated emotional dynamics of the diegetic couple's own, increasingly fraught, relationship. Significantly, Camille is, here, the "narrator" of those dynamics, the

"reader" of the text. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the text invokes an overtly masculine perspective, which Camille appropriates and, to a degree, neutralizes through her verbalization of it. Thus, Camille's frequent passivity in the midst of ensuing conversations and, furthermore, her apparently habitual deference to Paul, at once masks and enacts an assertion of agency, one through which she implicitly tests the internal dynamics of her relationship with Paul and, by extension, further complicates the nature of her own diegetic subjectivity.

Certainly, the above scene self-reflexively recalls prior events at Jerry's villa, where Camille, similarly withdrawn and deliberately disengaged, draws away from the parties present and announces her intention to "go for a walk." Yet Camille's refusal to participate in the diegetic world of the film also bears ambiguous, temporal implications. As Hutcheon writes:

> [Postmodernism] suggests no search for transcendent timeless meaning, but rather a re-evaluation of and a dialogue with the past in the light of the present. We could call this [. . .] "the presence of the past" or perhaps its "present-ification" [. . .] It does not deny the *existence* of the past; it does question whether we can ever *know* that past other than through its textualized remains. (Hutcheon, 1988, 20)

Camille displays a consistent, marked ambivalence toward the "past" of her relationship with Paul; indeed she frequently evinces a preference for the immediate, the "here and now" unadulterated by past "narratives" or "texts." Notable, then, is the couple's departure from the overtly classical environs of Jerry's villa and their return to the decidedly modern neighborhood of their own apartment. As the camera, in a low angle shot, frames the modernist structure in which the pair live, Camille says, "I prefer it here." Later, following the couple's heated exchange inside the apartment, Camille, pursued by Paul, flees to a taxi; seated in the back seat beside Paul, she seeks his collusion in erasing the immediate past: "Forget what I said, Paul. Act as though nothing happened." Yet these persistent attempts to elide past narratives and their attendant implications only confirm Camille's ineffaceable retention/memory of those narratives, and her ambivalence toward personal past events reflects both the incontrovertible salience of those events within her consciousness and her own inability to identify and apprehend their significance and substance. Thus, her very resistance to engaging with or explicating her changeable behavior affirms the profound force of whatever element/s compel/s it, which in turn underscores the insidious, irresistible penetration of the past into the present.

This "presence of the past" is further evoked in two distinct "flashback" sequences. The first occurs during the scene at Jerry's villa, when Camille, her back to the camera, pauses mid-frame just as the translator enters the shot on a bicycle. At this moment, a brief, rapid series of images interrupt the scene; immediately following this fleeting sequence is a semi-close-up of Camille's vaguely troubled face, and the direct cut from the montage to Camille implies that the

images are, in fact, externalizations of Camille's own thoughts. Filmic structure and technique – here, rapid intercutting and montage[4] – effectively invoke and indeed manifest the dynamics of human (un)consciousness. The sequence consequently underlines, in visual terms, the textualized nature of emotional experience and perception, and it implicitly filters Camille's present attitude – one of reserved distance – through an internally imaged past. Yet significantly, the montage contains no visual reference to the half-hour during which Camille found herself alone with Jerry at the villa, a half-hour that nevertheless imposes itself as an acutely felt presence in subsequent scenes and whose substance is integrally if indefinably linked to Camille's pointed, outward shift in attitude. Thus, the sequence additionally represents a kind of extra-diegetic intervention in, and mediation of, Camille's diegetic thoughts; certainly Camille would – absent such an intervention – reflect upon the events of that "lost" half-hour, events that register, henceforth, as a subliminal undercurrent throughout Camille and Paul's interactions. Here, one witnesses the manner in which Godard, by means of a "suppression of certain explicative connections," effectively "creates the impression of an action continually beginning anew" (Sontag, 1966, 180). Certainly, the diegetic invisibility of that half-hour, particularly within a supposed externalization of Camille's inner preoccupations, affirms the intrusion of the extra-diegetic apparatus and evokes, yet again, the film's self-reflexive awareness. Equally important, the montage serves at the narrative level to delineate, visually, Hutcheon's articulation of the "presence of the past" and the ever-textualized nature of lived human experience.

Benjamin has remarked that "[j]ust as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception. The way in which human perception is organized – the medium in which it occurs – is conditioned not only by nature but by history" (Benjamin, 2008, 22). This notion of history as an ineffaceable trace upon the present is validated, often ironically, throughout the film; most notably, history manifests itself through the enduring influence of what Hutcheon refers to as "texts" – texts both cinematic and literary. A scene involving Fritz Lang and Paul is particularly illuminating in this regard. Leaving a theatre, Fritz Lang ("playing" himself) recites a brief quote relating to the disingenuous nature of Hollywood; immediately, in a response that gestures explicitly toward Godard's own, meta-filmic frame of reference, Paul identifies the words as those of Bertolt Brecht (Uhde, 1974, 28–30, 44). As the two men, shot in mid-distance from behind, move slowly towards the theatre's exit, Lang proceeds to a discussion of Homer:

LANG: Homer's world is a real world. And the poet belonged to a civilization that grew in harmony, not in opposition, with nature. The beauty of *Odyssey* lies precisely in this belief in reality as it is.

PAUL: Thus in reality as it appears objectively.

LANG: Exactly. And in a form that cannot be broken down, and is what it is. Take it or leave it.

The preceding scene is certainly dense with intertextual reference; voicing a self-reflexive aside on the insidious nature of Hollywood (whose dramatic techniques Godard himself ironically, "parodically" employs), Lang (himself a living "text" of cinematic history) explicitly conjures the ever-latent presence of particular texts; here, specifically, Homer's *Odyssey*. In so doing, Lang (as character and "real" historical/textual figure) implicitly underscores what Roland Barthes describes as "the impossibility of living outside the infinite text" (Hutcheon, 1988, 128). However, the content of Lang's remarks are, here, of equal significance, for they illuminate preoccupations that, in *Le Mépris*, are realized as both form and content. Of particular note are Lang's comments on the "beauty" of the *Odyssey*, and his valorization of the text's "belief in reality as it appears objectively [. . . .] And in a form that cannot be broken down." Godard's film, in contrast, effectively undermines any belief that such a unified or "harmonious" reality is – or has ever been – possible. Indeed, *Le Mépris* represents a "reality" that is inherently fractious and indeterminate, one that can and is "broken down" and re-assembled in diverse ways and with diverse effects. In effect, the film is a disorienting, resolutely contradictory mélange, and its intertextual juxtapositions, narrative disjunctions, and self-reflexive ironies are, finally, its only constants. The implications of this fractured conception of reality, one that challenges the presumed "harmony" of Homer's world, are nevertheless complex; certainly, such a fractured reality renders any definitive interpretation of human events and/or experience – extra-diegetic or diegetic – impossible. Godard's film, through its very contradictions, thus enacts a provocative discourse with filmic intertextual implication and history.

Le Mépris thus implicitly endorses Benjamin's observation that one's perceptions, one's very consciousness, is imprinted with diverse texts, and that one's experiences are inevitably filtered through and understood in light of these same texts. Furthermore, as Hutcheon asserts, "[W]e can only 'know' (as opposed to 'experience') the world through our narratives (past and present) of it. The present, as well as the past, is always already irremediably textualized for us" (Hutcheon, 1988, 128).[5] The shifting dynamics of Camille and Paul's relationship are increasingly refracted through such a variety of texts as well as the characters' own "irremediably textualized" diegetic present. In particular, the film explicitly juxtaposes the story of Camille/Paul and Penelope/Odysseus (the latter serving as the subject of the film-within-the film), establishing a parallel that serves, both, to textualize the former pair's diegetic relationship and to deepen the film's broader, extra-diegetic discourse with its own textualized condition. Notable in this respect is the afore-described scene aboard the boat in Capri, during which Paul, seated beside Camille, suggestively voices his approval of Jerry's interpretation of the *Odyssey*. Seated side-by-side, the couple here appear as the visually-rendered counterparts to the troubled pair in Homer's epic. However, Paul's reference to the *Odyssey* elicits from Camille a significantly vague, unreadable response; again, she displays ambivalence toward any narrativizing or textualized reading of her relationship with Paul, a reading that Paul seems consciously to advance through his

reference to the *Odyssey*'s troubled pair. Indeed, whereas Paul apparently seeks to read and explain his relationship with Camille through that of Odysseus and Penelope, Camille seems to perceive that any such explanation is necessarily inadequate, for the cause of her changed feelings is not merely a discrete, explicable event. Thus, even as the past is inexorably present, its substance and significance is often impenetrable.

The film's *mise-en-scène* further underscores the pervasiveness of both history and text, lending a potent visual dimension to this system of textual interpenetration. One particularly noteworthy sequence begins with an aerial shot of Paul, who emerges from the Capri villa to seek out Camille; the latter has announced, moments before, that she is going for a walk. The camera, shooting Paul from this elevated, distant perspective, follows him as he mounts the broad stone staircase leading to the roof of the villa. In an implicit visual reference to antiquity, the stairs, leading skyward, suggest the steps of an ancient temple, and Paul's ascent thus evokes a mounting towards a mythological realm of the gods. Indeed the imposing, rocky grandeur of Capri and the hard, glittering blue of sky and ocean conjure the environs of Homer's text, again situating Paul and Camille's interactions within a distinctly textualized environment. In a cut away from Paul, the camera shifts to a long shot of the villa's roof, revealing Camille, who lies nude, face down, on a yellow robe. Framed in this manner, the naked curves of her body bathed in sunlight, Camille is imaged in purely aesthetic terms; lying at the "summit" of the villa, she is visually likened to a Greek goddess, one before whom Paul appears in vaguely defensive supplication. Indeed, Paul soon enters from the right of the frame and stops, gazing upon Camille. As the camera frames the two characters in a long shot, spatially distanced from one another, Paul attempts to attract Camille's attention. "It's me, Paul," he says, at which moment Camille looks up, putting on her sunglasses. "I've been watching you," Paul continues, "as if I were seeing you for the first time." The question of "looking" immediately resurfaces, and in a context that is visually loaded with textualized implication: Paul's self-proclaimed "watching" is and has been concomitant with his "reading" of Homer, a reading that has increasingly and suggestively, mirrored the narrative of Paul's own experiential "text." In this way, the scene further entwines the questions of image and language, of looking and reading/speaking, visually and verbally situating each within a broader, more complex context of textuality and history.

Certainly, Godard draws ironically on a variety of cinematic tropes and formal effects that are, in a general referential sense, instances of a broader, intertextual web. Hence the melodramatic music that recurs arbitrarily throughout the film: Lush and poignant, it incorporates a single, repeating motif. This very repetitiveness, underscored by a self-conscious aural intensity, signals an ironic awareness of the conventions of Hollywood melodrama, conventions that Lang, himself ambivalently associated with Hollywood, explicitly denigrates. Equally, Godard's use of intense, saturated color imbues the film with a self-consciously stylized,

anti-naturalistic quality. In particular, deep red and blue appear repeatedly and to significant, if frequently ambiguous, effect; thus, Godard films the bedroom scene first through a red filter, shifting next to full color, and finally to blue. This extra-diegetic manipulation of color is, subsequently, echoed in the film's *mise-en-scène*, most pointedly, perhaps, in two scenes involving Camille. The first, in which Camille and Paul are seen entering the apartment, frames Camille in profile; she is dressed in blue and demands to know when curtains will be hung. Referring to the curtains, and inadvertently recalling a moment from a *À Bout de souffle* (Breathless),[6] Camille emphatically declares: "It's red or nothing." Indeed, the apartment is already furnished with red sofa and chairs; equally significant is the film's application of these same colors in two of its final images: In the first, Camille and Jerry are seen in a red Alfa Romeo. Jerry, wearing a red sweater, pulls into a gas station, where the two characters emerge from the color; one immediately sees that Bardot is dressed in blue, the same color she wore in the film's first scene depicting Camille and Jerry's fateful encounter on the film set. Further, the red of both Jerry's clothing and his car recalls Camille's earlier insistence regarding the color of the apartment curtains: "It's red or nothing." This ambiguous association – between Camille's choice of red and Jerry's own apparent affinity for the color – is further complicated by the accident scene. Here, the film offers an image whose colors are deliberately, grotesquely vivid and produce a sense of violent collision, both metaphorical and literal: The viewer observes Jerry and Camille, thrown in opposing directions within the car; the red of the Alfa Romeo is contrasted against the blue of the trailer truck with which the former has collided; similarly, the blue of Camille's dress is morbidly accented by the red of her blood, which is streaked across her face. On one level, the careful, aesthetically-conscious use of color invests the scene with a pointedly stylized effect, one whose quality of self-conscious artifice announces the scene as "cinematic image" and consequently mitigates its emotive force. Yet the scene equally calls forth Camille's prior declaration, "It's red or nothing," suggesting that, in choosing red (vis-à-vis Jerry's red sweater and car), Camille has equally chosen "nothing" (here, death). The scene therefore serves as a further interrogation of Camille's emotional ambivalence and Godard's own meta-cinematic intentions.

The film's final images incorporate and illuminate the various paradoxical, contrasting threads that characterize the entire work, and they pointedly foreground the intertextual dynamics of the film's diegetic and extra-diegetic realms. From a lingering long-shot of Paul, napping on the rocky Capri shore, the camera cuts to the aforementioned image of Camille and Jerry seated in the latter's car. Camille's voice is heard in voice-over, reading the contents of a farewell letter she has presumably left for Paul – a letter in which she has "written" the conclusion to the pair's relationship. Indeed, through the reading of this letter, Camille (re) claims a measure of diegetic autonomy and narrative agency, producing, herself, a "text" that is, paradoxically, both informed by and defiant of the "master narratives" through which her relationship with Paul has been diegetically "read."

Significantly, then, while stopped at a gas station, Camille says to Jerry, "Get in your Alfa, Romeo," an obvious play on the name of Jerry's car but, more notably, a retrospectively ironic reference to Shakespeare's theatrical narrative. Indeed, the film's ending is a parodic yet somber re-enactment of the Shakespearean text's tragic conclusion: Jerry, the (ironically) designated "Romeo," and Camille, his presumed "Juliet," meet, together, an untimely death. Yet the melodramatic, stylized *mise-en-scène* of the accident scene (the aforementioned use of color, swelling music, a scrupulous composition of visual objects – actors, car, truck – that announces its own artifice) serves as both a morbid parody of the tropes of cinematic "tragedy" and an ironic textualizing of diegetic events (not only are the two characters' deaths senseless, but Camille, unlike Juliet, perishes alongside a character for whom she feels nothing). In fact, the reference to *Romeo and Juliet* again recalls *À Bout de Souffle*, in which Patricia (Jean Seberg) similarly cites this Shakespearean text, and *Bande à part* (Band of Outsiders), in which the English teacher's "random" reading of this play foreshadows the film's ending. Finally, in yet another moment of diegetic self-reflexivity, the car accident recalls and actualizes Paul's own prior, fictitious, "accident story," suggesting once more a kind of diegetic hall of mirrors through which the titular film's dynamics are ever refracted and recast.

The pointed self-awareness that distinguishes *Le Mépris*, as well as the film's invariably textualized, historically-situated maneuverings, ultimately elucidate essential strains of postmodern theory while simultaneously, paradoxically, challenging the legitimacy of any codified body of thought. Indeed, ever-elusive and decidedly ambiguous, the film's diegetic and extra-diegetic interactions and interventions conjure an endlessly mirrored realm of illusion/allusion, one in which character, spectator, and camera are equally, if indeterminately, implicated. In this way, the film evokes what is, ultimately, a fractious, porous world, a distinctly cinematic space that interrogates the real and persistently de-stabilizes the very conditions of human experience and understanding.

Notes

1   In his thoughtful consideration of Godard's work vis-à-vis Brecht's, Uhde (1974, 30) writes: "In order to dissociate the audience from the story, the filmmaker demonstratively points out the fictitious nature of the projected events, which tells the viewer, directly or indirectly, that he is watching a film."

2   For a discussion of the relationship between Godard's film and Moravia's novel, see Steven Ungar's chapter 7 in the present volume and Andrew Horton (1978, 205–212).

3   See Nicholas Paige who asserts: "Godard did not find forgetting the past an artistic option, but neither was adulatory repetition" (Paige, 2004, 4).

4   See Michael Rush (1998, 48–52). Rush argues that, in the context of Godard's work, "montage, instead of masking meaning, is revelatory" (1998, 49).

5   Hutcheon here makes reference to Catherine Belsey (1980)
6   Camille's utterance pointedly recalls an exchange between Patricia (Jean Seberg) and Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo), in which the former reads aloud from William Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*: "Between grief and nothing, I'd choose grief." Significantly, Michel responds by declaring that he would choose nothing.

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10

Totally, Tenderly, Tragically . . . and in Color

Another Look at Godard's *Le Mépris*

Steven Ungar

> Le Mépris, in other words, *could have been called* In Search of Homer, *but what a lot of time lost in order to flush out Proust's prose beneath Moravia's. And besides, that is not what the film is about.*
>
> (Godard, 1972, 200)

The density of images, ideas, and stories in the films Jean-Luc Godard completed between *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) (1959) and *Tout va bien* (All's Well) (1972) has long struck me as demanding to the point of intimidation. It is likely part of what has prompted Jonathan Rosenbaum and Peter Wollen to characterize him, respectively, as something of a minority taste and a filmmaker *sui generis* with his own very personal and even idiosyncratic agenda (Rosenbaum, 1992, 197; Wollen, 2002, 75). While this density persists in Godard's subsequent work, his films between 1959 and 1972 stand out because, as with those of roughly the same period by Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, and Agnès Varda, I sense that they disclose something essential about the histories of film within and outside France. *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, indeed! Within Godard's trajectory between 1959 and 1972, *Le Mépris* (Contempt) (1963) completes a first set of six feature-length releases starting with *À bout de souffle*, followed by a second break at *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her) in 1967, and a third associated with the releases of *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane* in 1972. These phases are not absolute, nor do they engage other films Godard made during the period. Instead, they are meant to suggest one possible way to account for the complexity of formats and modes associated with filmmaking in France, Brazil, and Czechoslovakia that openly opposed the false perfection exemplified by the Hollywood studio system.[1]

As a whole, the long decade between 1959 and 1972 is marked by Godard's shift toward leftist militancy that set him increasingly apart from erstwhile *Cahiers du cinéma* colleagues François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, and Claude Chabrol. When Jonathan Rosenbaum compared the dissolution of the *Cahiers* core group to the subsequent breakup of the Beatles – with Godard as John Lennon and Truffaut as Paul McCartney (Rosenbaum, 1992, 198) – he grasped a key feature of cultural upheaval during which popular music and film assumed new importance among intellectuals. In contrast to Theodor Adorno's mixed assessments of jazz within a culture industry he disdained, Godard's decision to feature the Rolling Stones in *One Plus One* (1968) suggested his openness to the full range of mass and elite ("high and low") practices among a youth culture turned on by and tuned in to rock and roll.

The remarks that follow explore adaptation and color in *Le Mépris* as a means of identifying the configuration and density of images, stories, and ideas it displays. A first section reviews models of adaptation relevant to Godard's cinematic treatment of his source text, Alberto Moravia's 1954 novel, *Il Disprezzo* (*A Ghost at Noon*, aka *Contempt*). A second considers the strategic use of color as an essential – rather than decorative – element of adaptation across formal media. In reply to the last sentence in my epigraph, I mean to reconsider what, as Godard puts it, *Le Mépris* is about. My choice of this film implies no ranking. In this sense, I agree with Philip Lopate's view that any elevation of *Le Mépris* above (or below) Godard's other movies is debatable and perhaps nothing more or other than perverse provocation (Lopate, 1998, 61).

Critical approaches to adaptation from literature to film typically compare and contrast details of setting, plot, and characterization. This approach holds most often for models based in fidelity to the source text. Readers of Marcel Proust's *Recherche* (Remembrance of Things Past) may find it difficult to suppress foreknowledge of the novel while watching cinematic adaptations by Joseph Losey, Volker Schlöndorff, Raúl Ruiz, and Chantal Akerman.[2] Spectator-based approaches contend instead with conditions of reception for which remakes provide suitable complexity. John Frankenheimer's *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) and Jonathan Demme's 2004 remake are cinematic adaptations of Richard Condon's 1959 novel of the same title. Yet the interval of more than 40 years between the two films likely affects the reception of Demme's remake among spectators who may or may not know the 1962 film and/or Condon's novel. Translation across languages further complicates matters. François Truffaut and Marcel Moussy based their 1960 feature, *Tirez sur le pianiste* (Shoot the Piano Player) on *Down There*, a 1956 detective novel by American writer, David Goodis. Bertrand Tavernier's *Coup de Torchon* (Clean Slate, 1981) was a loose adaptation of Jim Thompson's 1964 noirish crime novel, *Pop. 1280* inflected by Tavernier's desire to direct a film version of Louis-Ferdinand Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Journey to the End of Night).[3] Where Tavernier set his film in interwar French West Africa, Thompson's novel occurred in the US South or Southwest. Truffaut's 1965 feature film, *Fahrenheit*

451, was likewise based on the American author Ray Bradbury's 1953 dystopian novel of the same name. These cases illustrate some of the variables that complicate ("thicken") the dynamics of adaptation in conjunction with what I have referred to above as density.

Assumptions concerning the primacy of literary source texts over target text films echo efforts by Vachel Lindsay and D.W. Griffith nearly a century ago to contend with film's aesthetic – and presumed moral – inferiority. For Dudley Andrew, this inferiority marks:

> A clear-cut case of film trying to measure up to a literary work, or of an audience expecting to make such a comparison. Fidelity of adaptation is conventionally treated in relation to the "letter" and to the "spirit" of the text, as though adaptation were the rendering of an interpretation of a legal precedent. The letter would appear to be within the reach of cinema for it can be emulated in mechanical fashion. [. . .]
>
> More difficult is fidelity to the spirit, to the original's tone, values, imagery, and rhythm, since finding stylistic equivalents in film for these intangible aspects is the opposite of a mechanical process. The cinéaste presumably must intuit and reproduce the feeling of the original. (Andrew, 1984, 100)

The passage recapitulates debate surrounding expressive medium and narration opening onto concerns with interpretation and translation. Of particular note is Andrew's use of the term "fidelity" to place inquiry into sign systems by Christian Metz and others in line with what André Bazin had referred to in a 1947 article as "the equivalence in meaning of the forms" (Bazin, 1977, 42) Bazin avoided the pitfalls surrounding fidelity – Hugh Gray's translation uses a near-synonym, "faithfulness" – in favor of a more generous take on processes of creation and reception. Citing the incontestable examples of André Malraux's *Espoir* (Hope) (1939), Jean Renoir's *Une Partie de campagne* (A Country Party) (1936), and John's Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), Bazin concluded that all it took was for the filmmakers to have enough visual imagination to create the cinematic equivalent of the style of the original source novel, and for the critic to have the eyes to see it (Bazin, 1977, 42).

A second major claim in Bazin's 1947 article (reprinted in Bazin, 1977) was his sense of film as a digest that made a previous work adapted to film more accessible, "as if the aesthetic fat, differently emulsified, were better tolerated by the consumer's mind" (Bazin, 1977, 49). Rather than a condensed version or summary of a source text, this notion of film as digest anticipated the proliferation of multiple forms and modes of expression among novel, screenplay, and film. Bazin saw this proliferation as undermining the criterion of chronology and, by inference, that of fidelity. He concluded that while Malraux made his film of *Espoir* before he wrote the novel of the same title, he was carrying the work inside himself all along.

Godard's *Le Mépris* foregrounds issues of adaptation grounded in a reflection on modernity for which critical notions of fidelity and digest serve as points of access. Alberto Moravia's novel, *Il Disprezzo*, is the source text for the basic story Godard means to tell. *Il Disprezzo* recounts the disintegration of a marriage. The novel's first-person narrator, Riccardo Molteni, describes himself as having set aside his "more exalted literary ambitions" when he wrote his first screen play as a stopgap which was fated to become his profession. He seems resigned to a deep insecurity: "I was no longer the young and still unknown theatrical genius. I was the starving journalist, the contributor to cheap reviews and second-rate newspapers; or perhaps – even worse – the scraggy employee of some private company or government office."[4]

Seeing an opportunity to break with this mediocrity, Molteni agrees to work on a movie adaptation of *The Odyssey*. He does this ostensibly to retain the love and respect of his wife, Emilia. Instead, Emilia stops sleeping with him and distances herself emotionally for reasons he fails to understand. Work on the screenplay leads Riccardo to identify with the character of Ulysses and to compare Emilia to "the unfaithful" Penelope. He also finds himself at odds with the film's producer and the director. The motif of fidelity in *Il Disprezzo* is treated first as affective, through Riccardo's inability to understand Emilia's contempt for him. It also displays an aesthetic dimension, in conjunction with the story line of adaptation from literary source text to target film.

Le Mépris adds a twist to *Il Disprezzo* as a film based on a novel in which an adaptation from novel to film is a central story line. Godard inscribes the marital breakdown in Moravia's novel within a power struggle between a boorish American producer, Jeremiah Prokosch (Jack Palance) and director Fritz Lang (played by Fritz Lang himself), whom Prokosch has hired to adapt *The Odyssey* to film. When Prokosch realizes that the film Lang is making is too faithful to the mythic qualities of the source text and thus not in the commercial mode of the sword and sandal (*peplum*) spectacle he had been expecting, he hires detective-fiction and screenwriter Paul Javal (Michel Piccoli) to adapt Lang's adaptation by updating it in line with Prokosch's skewed sense of the global cinematic market. Godard's take on adaptation reverses what Moravia does in *Il Disprezzo*, in which Ricardo wants to retain the values of Homer's original against the preferences of the director, Rheingold, for a debased psychological interpretation.[5]

Prokosch is confident that Javal will accept his offer because he has learned that Javal needs money to buy a new apartment in order to please his wife. He invites Javal to accompany him to the Cinnecittà studios to watch a screening of daily rushes. As they enter the screening room, Prokosch asks Lang snidely what great stuff they will be seeing. Great stuff equated with box-office potential is what Lang has failed to deliver. It is exactly what Prokosch wants Javal to deliver in order to save what Prokosch's crude formulation casts as a commercial venture.

Godard's treatment of adaptation staged his ambivalence toward filmmaking in a global market, and thus at the very moment he was making his first big-budget

film. In this sense, *Le Mépris* was less of a direct ("faithful") adaptation of Moravia's source text than what Kaja Silverman and Haroun Farocki have called a cinematic translation in which processes of adaptation across medium and language were a central concern:

> *Contempt* could be said to offer a cinematic translation of *A Ghost at Noon*. In this respect, it mimics the story it tells, within which a book is also transformed into a film. But *Contempt* challenges our usual assumptions about translation. It shows that a translation is not the same text in another language, but rather something entirely new. (Silverman and Farocki, 1998, 32)

In *Le Mépris*, everyone is reduced to a commodity. Godard made the point clear when he cast himself as assistant to Lang, a secondary role in which he shouts out the film's final word, *silencio* (silence), as a way of invoking a lost moment of film history and the innocence presumably associated with it.

A third sense of adaptation in *Contempt* involves a laying bare of the cinematic process, as shown in the film's opening sequence during which cinematographer Raoul Coutard aims his movie camera directly at the spectator from atop a crane. The gesture openly conveys a sense that the story about to be told is, in Colin MacCabe's formulation, very much *une histoire du cinéma*, a "story of the cinema" (MacCabe, 2003, 156) Yet the translation of *histoire* as "story" only begins to address practices of inscription and reference that position *Le Mépris* as a prototype of postmodern pastiche based in a history of the cinema (*histoire* in its other major sense) such as the one Godard later undertook as an extended project. Godard reiterated his sense of the semantic density of the French word *histoire* when he stated that he titled his massive 1990s book and visual project *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in order to play "on the different meanings, the way *histoires* can mean tall stories or hassles. It was to point out that it's both History with a big H and *histoires* with a small one. French has these different usages for the word but other languages don't"[6] Is MacCabe's translation of *histoire* as "story" rather than "history" simply a mistake (*méprise*), a contemptible mistake (*méprise méprisable*)? Or is it merely *méprisable* in the sense of insignificant?

Much like practices of musical sampling associated with hip-hop, *Le Mépris* recycles artifacts as commodities whose material and symbolic ownership crosses languages and cultural traditions. Dialogues in French, Italian, German, and English lead to various kinds and degrees of misunderstanding. Translation in the broad sense Silverman and Farocki use it extended to post-production. When Joseph E. Levine had the Italian version of the film dubbed in one language, Godard tried to withdraw his name from the film (Kinder, 1981, 103). The geographic setting of *Le Mépris*'s story of cinematic adaptation in Italy rather than in Greece followed practices among B-grade faux-epics produced in Italy during the 1950s. Many of these "sword and sandal" films were very loosely based on historical or mythological figures. In the main, they were commercial products whose

gory violence and scanty costumes hardly made up for minimal story-lines and mediocre acting.[7]

Godard likely had these sword and sandal films in mind when he has Prokosch state that he hired a "German" director, Fritz Lang, because Heinrich Schliemann discovered the remains of Troy in the 1870s. Prokosch may have thought he was showing off his historical knowledge, but his assertion is only half accurate because Fritz Lang (1890–1976) was born in Vienna and lived in Germany between mainly 1918 and 1933. Received accounts maintain that Lang fled to France soon after Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels asked him to head the German Cinema Institute, but the matter may well be more complex. He later spent close to 30 years making films in Hollywood, returning to Germany to make a film released in 1960.

Lang's director means to adapt *The Odyssey* on the side of fidelity to the spirit of the original text. In the terms provided by Dudley Andrew above, the rushes screened at Cinecittà seem faithful to the spirit of the original's tone, values, imagery, and rhythm. By contrast, Javal approaches the story of Ulysses as that of a modern neurotic with whom he increasingly identifies (Aumont, 2000, 185). Godard's own practice of adaptation while filming *Le Mépris* split between the classicism embodied by Lang's character and a different kind of classicism engendered through critical reflection (Aumont, 2000, 182, 186). This is the sense in which the characters played by Lang and Piccoli personified the poles of Godard's ambivalence toward the process of adaptation staged in his film. *Le Mépris* illustrated a laying bare of the device, whose precedents in literature, painting and music were to be found in works by Mallarmé, Joyce, Picasso, Matisse, Stravinsky, and Webern (MacCabe, 2003, 158). At the same time, Godard overlaid his take on this modernist trope with practices of citation and pastiche that disclosed unresolved doubts concerning the global film industry and related image economies of the early 1960s (Paige, 2004, 2).

Yet another dimension of adaptation in *Le Mépris* concerned Godard's casting of characters within a star system fueled by media coverage. The casting of Brigitte Bardot was a means of attracting media attention, even if the actions of her character of Camille Javal were often at odds with the sex object Bardot had become for European audiences starting with her role in Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu créa la femme* (And God Created Woman) (1956). When Godard considered Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak for the lead roles, co-producer Carlo Ponti countered with Marcello Mastroianni and Sophia Loren.[8] Ponti's partner Joseph Levine explored Bardot's interest in working with Godard as a means of exploiting the hype and box-office her presence would generate. As Colin MacCabe notes with apt concision, "Bardot was nudity – that was what Levine had paid for and that was what he was going to get" (MacCabe, 2003, 153). Spectators expecting to see Bardot/Camille as sex object encountered instead a markedly *un*erotic figure, or at least a figure whose erotic appeal was undermined by diffidence toward the traditional marital role she refused to uphold. Even the opening sequence featuring Bardot's naked body seen though through colored filters was markedly less erotic than

Levine had hoped when insisted on including a sequence with an unclothed Bardot in return for the huge salary she had received. (More on this sequence later.)

A similar complexity is at work in Godard's casting of Jack Palance that exploited Palance's previous role as Attila in Douglas Sirk's 1954 *Sign of the Pagans*. As with Bardot, the casting of Palance confirmed that the character of the boorish producer drew on and worked against his previous roles in order to generate a dramatic tension unavailable to the novelist. (At the time, Palance had established his on-screen persona through roles in Elia Kazan's *Panic in the Streets*, George Stevens' *Shane*, and Robert Aldrich's *The Big Knife*). Richard Stam has amplified the point to its absurdist extreme when he asked what would have happened if Fritz Lang had played the Prokosch role in *Contempt* or if Marlon Brando – or Pee Wee Herman – had played Humbert Humbert in Stanley Kubrick's 1962 *Lolita*, adapted from Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel (Stam, 2000, 60–61). Stam also noted that Gustave Flaubert had described the eyes of his protagonist, Emma Bovary, as beautiful without ever specifying their exact color. By contrast, he argued that the adaptation to film overrode this call to imaginative reconstruction by confronting spectators with a specific actress – a Jennifer Jones or an Isabelle Huppert – encumbered by nationality and accent (Stam, 2000, 55).[9] Godard's mobilization of recognizable film stars in *Le Mépris* inscribed the star system within practices of adaptation that have made the film a key reference for its own making, the history of the French New Wave, and the history of film theory positioned between high European modernism and practices of citation. The resulting product, simultaneously a story and a history of cinema, continues to mark a signature moment in Godard's filmmaking.

Godard's assertion that *Il Disprezzo* was the kind of novel from which the best films could be made because one could buy it in a railroad station and read it on the train (Godard, 1972, 248) smacked of a dismissal. Yet what sounds like an undervaluation of Moravia's novel also suggests the creative potential for adaptation that a relatively unknown source text might allow a filmmaker to exploit. A possible antecedent here is Jean Vigo's expression of incredulity when he first received the screenplay for *L'Atalante* (1934).[10] Godard's choice of a train station novel (*roman de gare*) can also be seen as a critical rejection of the kind of notable literary source text favored among tradition of quality directors whose practices Godard and Truffaut strongly opposed. As with Vigo and *L'Atalante*, the low profile of the source text lowered expectations of fidelity that a higher profile novel might make into a constraint. In the case of *Le Mépris*, Moravia's novel allowed Godard to pursue adaptation with an emphasis on material dimensions of filmmaking associated with visual format and, specifically, with color.

Le Mépris was the second film Godard and Raoul Coutard shot in color. Two years earlier in *Une femme est une femme* (A Woman is a Woman) (1961), he had mobilized recurrent hues of red and blue in conjunction with primary themes of love triads (Sharits, 1966, 24). A sequence shot in a striptease club included close-ups of the face of Angela (Anna Karina) illuminated by a spotlight whose revolving

filters bathed her features in red before switching to blue. In the first shot, blue is not simply blue, but set against the red background. In the second, Angela's facial features and arms are bathed in a purplish mix of blue and red. As these visual tones play off against each other, they take on narrative functions whose fuller deployment in *Le Mépris* is tellingly staged in the opening sequence added at Joseph Levine's insistence.

Despite what Levine considered the practical rationale for its inclusion, the bedroom sequence extends the physicality of the filmmaking process that the opening title sequence brings close to the theater where, in the apt words of Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, spectators must confront real bodies (Bersani and Dutoit, 204, 34). Yes, and confront these bodies through the material medium of cinema whose deployment of color consistently and continually calls attention to itself. As in *Une femme est une femme*, the effect of colored filters suggests a coding based in color differences. In *Une femme*, the colors are red and blue; in *Le Mépris* they are red, yellow, and (yellowish) white. This visual coding supplements verbal exchanges between Camille and Paul that transform the *blazon*, the traditional poem that praised a presumably beloved woman by enumerating various parts of her body via analogy, into a ritual of intimacy and affection. Notably, Camille is the one who initiates this verbal activity in the form of questions requiring Paul to confirm his love of various parts of her body. While Camille seeks confirmation, she controls the conditions within which the exchanges occur. Word and image expose Bardot's nakedness as physical body and art object, the latter reminiscent of a reclining sculpture whose unnatural illumination de-eroticizes it by placing it within an aesthetic realm removed from daily life (Silverman and Farocki, 1998, 34). The effect Godard achieves is suitably ambivalent, stymieing Levine's intent in the very act of accommodating it.

The inclusion of a seemingly neutral (but somewhat yellowed) color tone among the red, yellow and blue filters suggests a possible reference to the French or American flag, as though to question whether the film was French or American. Yet the fact that *Le Mépris* was a co-production involving Rome-Paris Films along with Italian and American producers makes reference secondary to Godard's serious consideration of color starting with *Une femme est une femme*. This seriousness is borne out by the recurrence of primary colors as backdrop for shots from the early rushes Lang has screened for Prokosch and Javal early in the film. Edward Branigan argues for Godard's unparalleled rigor through that disclose, what he terms strategies that articulate color within a filmic system (Branigan, 2006, 170–182). Using *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* as his point of departure, Branigan explores the nature and consequences of these strategies for the psychophysics of color perception. The relevance of Branigan's remarks for Godard's use of color in *Le Mépris* includes the function of pigment or painter's primaries, in contrast to physical and psychological primaries. *Le Mépris* displays many qualities associated with the painter's primary colors, including high saturation and a strong contrast of hue without the subtler transitions among secondary and tertiary colors.

The combination and ordering of hues in each of the color wheels create degrees of tension whose effects or consequences take on perceptual and narrative value determined by context and relation understood as a product of connotation (Branigan, 2006, 174–175). The strip of shots taken from the rushes Lang shows to Prokosch, Javal, and others at Cinnecittà accommodates articulation of the red, yellow, and blue as the expression of clear differences in which identification is promoted by the "warmer" red in contrast to the "cooler blue," with yellow between the two. These colors are isolated, but they are neither passive nor static (Branigan, 2006, 174). This tension is in line with Godard's statements on how the sequences of Lang's *Odyssey* were to differ visually from those in the rest of the film:

> Their colors will be more brilliant, more violent, livelier, more contrasted, severer as well in their composition. Let's say that they will have the effect of a painting by Matisse or Braque at the center of a composition by Fragonard or a shot by Eisenstein in a film by Rouch. (Godard, 1998, 246)

The bedroom sequence exploits this tension between "warm" red and "cool" blue, with a yellow-tinged white replacing yellow. The circumstances surrounding this sequence's inclusion heighten the likelihood that the productive tension associated with the painter's primary system will generate a more specific function than might at first be apparent. The entire sequence lasts slightly more than three minutes. The opening duration of the red filter portion is the longest at about 2:15, followed by the yellow-white at 25 and the blue slightly under 30 seconds.

The sequencing of colors carries associations that are relative and culturally determined. In this sense, the duration "warmth" of the red footage supported by the exchange between Camille and Paul suggests a level of emotional and physical intimacy. The two-stage transition to yellow white and blue "cools" the intimacy as the verbal exchange turns to details of Paul's appointment to meet Prokosch at Cinecittà. Since the bedroom sequence occurs very early in the film, it is only later and in retrospect that Godard's treatment of warm red and cool blue can be understood as meaningful rather than merely decorative. The blue filter thus cools the eloquence of Paul's statement to Camille that he loves her totally, tenderly, and tragically. To which Camille replies with a barely audible "me, too" that ends the sequence. Another kind of productive tension in the sequence involves conventional associations of red, white, and blue with national flags of the United States and France. While this may well be the case, these associations are inscribed first within Godard's exploration of color coding during the 1960s – from *Une femme est une femme* and *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad) and *2 ou 3 choses* – and second, within a longer consideration of visual tone in general. For the record, the opening credits for *Une femme est une femme* appear in red, white, and blue hand lettering.

Richard Roud wrote in 1967 that despite the sense of menace and pain in Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live) (1962) and *Alphaville* (1965) set in a gray and

austere Paris, he and his cameraman, Raoul Coutard, had penetrated the paradoxical beauty of its squalid surroundings where they found an almost inexhaustible spectrum of color within its grayness. For this reason, Roud admitted his preference for Godard's films in black and white over the easier beauty of color in *Une femme est un femme*, *Le Mépris*, and *Pierrot le fou* (Roud, 2010, 18). Later in the same book, Roud cited a passage in which Godard revealed a method for location shooting in Le Mépris:

> I didn't paint a gray wall white because I preferred white; instead I looked for a white wall. Whereas for *Une Femme est une femme*, I tried to use paint dramatically. In *Le Mépris*, no. *Une Femme est une femme* was the first time for me; with such a wonderful toy as color, you play with it as much as you can. But in *Le Mépris*, the more natural, less fabricated Italian colors corresponded perfectly to what I wanted, so I didn't do any painting or arranging. (Roud, 2010, 66)

Godard may have referred to color as a wonderful toy, but the essays by Sharits and Branigan suggest instead that the strategic deployment of color as a narrative element in *Le Mépris*, *Pierrot le fou*, and *2 ou 3 choses* belies any attempt to dismiss its easy beauty in favor of a system of cinematic meaning for which models of adaptation based on fidelity to a source text remain inadequate.

I have argued that Godard's deployment of color strategy within a filmic text demonstrates the limitations of adaptation grounded in fidelity. But this is only a preliminary consideration whose next phase might well consider the 16:9 Cinemascope format Lang derides as good for filming snakes and funerals. In reply to the question raised at the end of the passage I have chosen for my epigraph, *Le Mépris* is about the aesthetical and personal stakes in an idea of film for which processes of adaptation are an apt measure. When Susan Sontag wrote as early as 1964 that Godard's films were about ideas in the best, purest, most sophisticated sense, in which a work of art can be "about" ideas, she understood something essential about the specific density of images, ideas, and stories in *Le Mépris* (see Sontag, 1969, 199). To which I add by echoing Edward Branigan's gloss on a statement by Sergei Eisenstein that *Le Mépris* is one of the few color films in color and not merely colored (Branigan, 2006, 180). Reducible to neither toy nor special effect as an end in its own right, color in *Le Mépris* is an integral measure of Godard's evolving ideas and practices of filmmaking in 1963, between 1959 and 1972, and thereafter.

Notes

1   See Nowell-Smith (2008, 3–5).
2   Losey collaborated with Harold Pinter and Barbara Bray on a screenplay that was never produced. See Pinter (1977). Schlöndorff directed *Swann in Love* (1984), Ruiz *Time Regained* (1999), and Akerman *The Captive* (2000). See Ifri (2005, 15–29.

3   See Higgins (2012, 166).

4   Moravia (1999, 20). The use of *Contempt* in place of A *Ghost at Noon* used in earlier editions of Davidson's translation is curious not only because it is closer to the title of Moravia's novel, but also because it suggests that Godard's film develops (as in the photographic process) aspects of the story that remain less visible in the original.

5   See Kinder (1981, 100). Kinder writes that Rheingold, whom Moravia describes in his novel as a German director of the pre-Nazi film who was certainly not in the same class as Pabst and Lang, is a caricature of stage and film director and actor Max Reinhardt.

6   Godard and Ishaghpour (2005, 59). Godard's assertion notwithstanding, the semantic density of the German *Geschicte* and Italian *storia* display a similar density.

7   Prime examples of this phenomenon include Carlo Ludovico Bragaglia and Edgar G. Ulmer's *Hannibal* (*Annibale*, 1959) with Victor Mature in the lead role and Pietro Francisci's *Hercules* (*Fatiche di Ercole*, 1958), starring Steve Reeves. See Lagny (1992, 163–180). Philip Lopate writes that mention of Paul's last screenplay for a junky-sounding *Toto Contra Hercules* (All Against Hercules)was a dig at Joseph E. Levine (Lopate, 1998, 57).

8   Brody (2008, 157). Two pages later, Brody cites Godard's statement that he chose Palance for the role of Prokosch because he had the face of an Asiatic bird of prey: "As with many producers, he [Prokosch] likes to humiliate and to offend his employ-ees and friends and always behaves with them, his entourage, like a little Roman emperor." On the same page, he notes Godard's explanation that Paul Javal's (Michel Piccoli) desire to look like Dean Martin in Vincente Minnelli's 1958 *Some Came Running* expressed his preference to experience life as a reflection of the cinema rather than first-hand and in the moment.

9   Stam is citing adaptations by directors Vincente Minnelli (1949) and Claude Chabrol (1991). Others adaptations include those of Jean Renoir (1933) and Manoel De Oliveira (1993).

10   Vigo's reputed response was "Mais qu'est-ce que tu veux que je foute avec ça, c'est un scénario pour patronage, enfin il n'y a rien" (What do you want me to do with this, it's a feeble screenplay, there's nothing to it), cited in Vigo (1985, 195).

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11

Le Mépris

Landscapes as Tragedy

Ludovic Cortade

In 1959, the final shot of *Les Quatre cent coups* (The Four Hundred Blows) shows the young Antoine Doinel standing facing the sea. Trapped by the watery deep, he turns away to face the camera. In the manner of his young hero, Truffaut himself turns away from the landscape and, in his subsequent films, prioritized closed spaces and cityscapes which seemed to offer his characters more secure settings By contrast, one year after the screening of *Les 400 coups* at Cannes, Godard has his protagonist in *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) invoke an encomium to nature which is diametrically opposed to Truffaut's treatment of it: "I really love France," Michel Poiccard exclaims turning to speak directly to the film's viewers: "If you don't like the seashore, if you don't like the mountains, if you don't like the city . . . go get stuffed!" If, for Truffaut, the countryside seems to serve as a foil, for Godard it crystallizes an apparent desire to ally with natural elements, whether forests, rivers, or the sea. Shot three years after *À bout de souffle, Le Mépris* (Contempt) is the first film of Godard to set forth the terms of his desire to rediscover a unity between body and landscape.[1]

The film, set in Italy, is remarkable for the scope of its shots, the beauty of its color and its slow camera movements accompanied by the music of Georges Delarue. The film is a homage to the Mediterranean landscapes whose static quality evokes the "noble simplicity of the serene grandeur of the Greek statues" described by Wincklemann (1755, 151). The character of Javal, the screen-writer hired to write an adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* to be filmed by Fritz Lang is open to several contradictions: trying to be sensitive to classical culture while working for an uncultured and prosaic American producer, in love with his wife but despised by her because of his many compromises, Javal searches for a sense of unity in his contemplation of the seascape in which he seems to be immersed (Figure 11.1): such is the complex of absorption of "landscape man."[2]
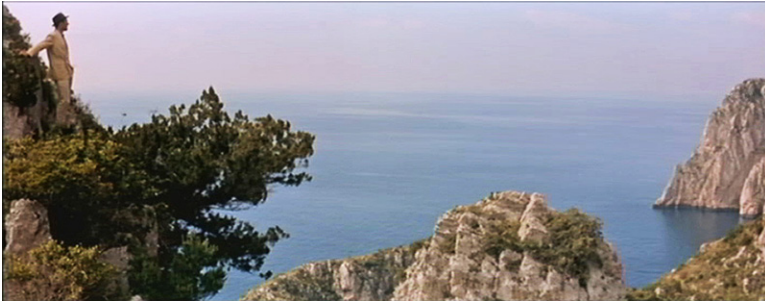
Figure 11.1   Screen capture from *Le Mépris* (Contempt) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1963), produced by Les Films Concordia, Rome Paris Films, and Compagnia Cinematografica Champion.

For Godard the choice of Capri as the site for the exterior shots in *Le Mépris* was obvious since this region symbolized for him "the ancient world, Nature before there was civilization and all its neuroses" (Godard, 1985e, 86). Through this location and the story of the couple who are tearing each other apart, the film inevitably recalls the plot of Roberto Rossellini's *Journey to Italy*. As the Italian director said of his film: "It was very important for me to show Italy, especially Naples, and the strange atmosphere of this place which is mingled with a very real, very immediate, very deep feeling of eternal life: this is something which has entirely vanished from our thinking" (Rossellini, 2006, 146). As Georg Lukàcs suggested in *Theory of the Novel*: "The (ancient) world is one and neither the separation between man and the world nor the opposition of I and You can destroy this oneness" (Lukàcs, 1963, 23). Such a world offers a harmonious connection with the gods and nature. For Godard, *Le Mépris* "might also have been entitled *In Search of Homer . . .*" (Godard, 1985e, 86) which is illustrated by the dialogue between the script writer Javal and the film's director, Fritz Lang:

LANG: Homer's world is a real world. The poet belonged to a civilization that developed in harmony with and not in opposition to nature. The beauty of the Odyssey resides precisely in this belief in reality as it is.

JAVAL: Hence a reality that is perceived objectively?

LANG: Exactly. And in a form that doesn't decompose and is what it is, take it or leave it.

If *Le Mépris* unquestionably bears the mark of antiquity, Godard's landscapes can also be situated in the lineage of the literature and painting of the eighteenth century which is opposed to the seventeenth-century's distinction between the subject and the object of his perception. One can also detect in Godard's film a holdover from Rousseau's notion of "the total fusion between consciousness and

the landscape" which, according to Michel Collot, characterizes the pre-romantic sensibility[3]: "the experience of the landscape, in his most intense moments, is a veritable ex-stasis. Everything happens as though the subject went outside of himself to commune with the surrounding space, in a sort of ubiquity which can be happy or even vertiginous" (Collot, 2005, 46). *Le Mépris* thus sets the stage for *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad), which Godard made two years later and which displayed the influence that romanticism had exercised on him: "I wanted . . . to film the story of the last Romantic couple, the last descendants of Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloise*, of Goethe's *Werther* and *Hermann und Dorothea*" (Godard, 1985g, 107) a statement that later earned him the epithet of "abusive romantic."[4] The desire for fusion of man with his landscape is established on the basis of a belief in "reality as it is" as Fritz Lang puts it, that is, on the suppression of the distinction between the subject who elaborates it and the mental object of his perception. Javal's body, absorbed by the Mediterranean he is contemplating is no longer merely an expression of desire for unity discovered in nature: it is also a profession of faith in this landscape rendered as pure presence.

In this respect, the absorption by the landscape bears the imprint of André Bazin's celebrated essay, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in which he elaborated the hypothesis of the objectivity of the photographic image as an index of the real. What is at play in the work of both Bazin and Godard is their fascination with the fantasy of an image whose origin and perception would be rigorously foreign to man (Bazin, 2002, 9–17). The impression of flatness in the shot celebrating Javal's unity with the sea (Figure 11.1) can also be read as Godard's homage to Bazin. If *Le Mépris* is a film about "nature before the civilization of neuroses", (Godard, 1985e, 86) it is because of the radical suppression of man that the very plasticity of the image brings out: the lens used by Godard here wipes out the impression of depth and perspective, as if the director were taking up a position exactly counter to that displayed in the origins of western landscape painting, which emerged with the discovery of perspective and the notion of the subject during the Renaissance. In this respect Godard is faithful to Bazin, who considered perspective to be the "sin of the West" and preferred to this concept the medieval paradigm of the Shroud: like the cloth placed on the face of Christ, the photographic image reveals the world seized in its pure presence. "Of this ascent into the hell of ice," Bazin writes elsewhere, "the modern Orpheus has not been able to save any of the camera's gaze. But once the long calvary of the descent begins, with Herzog and Lachenal, tied like mummies on the backs of their sherpas, the camera is there, Veronica's shroud covering the face of human suffering."

As always with Godard, esthetics are indistinguishable from politics which places him firmly in Bazin's lineage. In 1941 André Bazin left one of the temples of the Republic, *L'Ecole normale supérieure de Saint-Cloud*, an institution founded ten years after the beginning of the Third Republic, in order to provide instruction for those who were going to form a new cadre of teachers. In this program, geog-

raphy became an ideological tool in order to create a social network of citizens attached the new regime.[5] It is therefore not surprising that, in a text from 1944, Bazin regrets that the seventh art hasn't promoted the diversity of French landscapes.[6] For him the important thing is not to give landscapes a uniform value, but instead make them an accurate reflection of the diversity of the French countryside. Bazin takes up this theme again in 1949 in his article, "The Tour de France of the cinema," a text in which he condemns "the anonymous geography of many French films" which "fall way short of taking advantage of the natural beauty of the territory whose variety and harmony we learned to love with such fierce pride in primary school" (Bazin, 1949b, 27).

For Bazin, writing immediately after the Second World War, the cinema was supposed to offer a nationalized version of the landscape. When Godard claims that the landscapes in *Le Mépris* correspond to a desire to renew a connection with "nature before civilization and its discontents" he seems to echo this ideology of the landscape that had so enthused Bazin in the course of his studies, and that the republican art critic Catagnary, had already established in the nineteenth century. Catagnary termed French landscape painting a "vision of the origins of the world, of a France before France" (Cachin, 1986, 459) "in which we can see the source of our ongoing national identity" (Cachin, 1986, 439). For Catagnary, the rise of landscape painting during the nineteenth century was the expression of a quest for identity from which a notion of the permanence of the French state can be derived.

Certainly, during these post-war years Godard did not buy into the notion of the "Frenchness" of the landscape, he was nevertheless sensitive to the permanence of certain characteristics of French national cinema. In a review of the festival of short subjects at Tours in 1959 he noted:

> It was evident that the group of French shorts, excepting perhaps the animated ones, easily dominated and outclassed the foreign shorts. Why? Because even when they are badly framed, badly shot and badly edited, one senses that behind the French cameras there is an *artist* whereas behind the foreign ones there are only *artisans*. In this sense, the historians of cinema are absolutely right to celebrate the existence of a veritable school of short subjects in France, just as, in painting, we celebrate the famous School of Paris. (Godard, 1985a, 184)

If Godard undoubtedly subscribes to a "defense and illustration" of the French "school," we nevertheless need to situate his analysis in a particular context. In the aftermath of the Second World War, French film festivals were systematically presenting films under the banner of the countries they represented, sometimes sacrificing artistic interest on the altar of diplomatic imperatives. The example of the negotiations surrounding the official selections at Cannes indicates the influence of the various embassies and governments who considered the cinema as one of the pawns in the geopolitical chessboard. Godard's "defense of the School

of Paris," especially, is the expression of the battle waged by the group at *Cahiers du cinéma*: in elevating film to the status of the seventh Art, equal to the other six, notably in the artistic coherence they discovered in the new generation of young filmmakers who were distancing themselves from the famous "Tradition of Quality." The invidious comparison between French "artists" and foreign "artisans" is not so much a gesture of nationalist disdain as it is used to advance the "*Politique des auteurs*." It would be a mistake to see in Godard's work any hint of nationalism. In this respect he displays his debt to Bazin, who had, during the 1950s, profoundly revised his thinking on the ideological value of landscapes in favor of a position centered on humanism and universalism. Bazin and Godard both owe this evolution in their thinking to the decisive influence exercised by André Malraux and Jean Renoir.

Godard Beyond National Identity: Malraux, Renoir, Bazin

Malraux's political positions, his conception of cultural heritage and his thoughts on landscape all made a strong impression on Godard. In *L'Espoir* (Hope), the novel written to awaken international interest in the Spanish civil war, Malraux threw over any form of nationalist essentialism in favor of a notion of Man that transcended all differences. In the eponymous film that he adapted from his novel, Malraux's landscapes appear to be indifferent to armed struggles. Rather they become the sounding board for the absurdity of these conflicts: the film's aerial shots offer a cartographic view of the Spanish landscape, revealing the tragic dimensions of the war that opposes republicans and fascists. It is no longer the ravaged countryside of Spain but a greater geological and cosmic awareness that makes the war seem so senseless, as Malraux himself indicated in a letter to André Bazin: "What interests me in the cinema is the possibility of linking man and the world (as cosmos) through other means than language" (Marion, 1996, 142). This connection between microcosm and macrocosm is not only a metaphysical reflection, in the manner of Pascal's meditation on the "two infinities": it takes on an eminently political aspect by displaying the contrast between the senselessness of the nationalist agitations and the notion of fraternity that unites all men.

This was also the central theme of an important speech Malraux dedicated to "our cultural heritage" in 1936:

> Our first line of demarcation in establishing values . . . that will appeal to greater and greater numbers of people is the primacy of dialectical or humanist values over vested interests. Humanist because universal. Because, myth for myth, we don't choose German, Italian, or Roman avatars, but a vision of humanity itself. (Malraux, 2004, 1196)

Through the mediation of Bazin, Malraux, whom Godard considered "the most fascinating character in modern French literature" (Godard, 1985f, 133) established the basis for a politics of landscape that was opposed both to some vague essentialism and to a theory of "the spirit of place." The second agent in this re-evaluation of the idea of nationalism was Renoir. Already in 1949 Renoir had declared, "the researcher and the artist, are today both increasingly independent specialists of national geography . . . I do not mean that our best works are not intimately attached to our motherland, quite the contrary" (Bazin, 1949a, 18). However, Renoir goes on to argue, this attachment "is not incompatible with a conception and organization conceived internationally" (Bazin 1949a, 19).

Initially, Bazin paid no attention to this aspect of Renoir's films, which were indelibly anchored in a specifically French milieu. He revised his position in the early 1950s in his favorable reviews of Renoir's Hollywood period, no longer considered Renoir's lean years as an artist, but as a deepening of a work whose national characteristics are certainly undeniable, since "Renoir . . . had often insisted on his attachment to French cultural themes like the light of the Ile de France, Brie cheese and red wine." But Bazin reversed his position later, declaring that Renoir was certainly French but was, first and foremost, a Universalist: "We must believe the evidence: Renoir is the most French of the international directors" (Bazin, 1951b, 45) since his works are characterized by "a quest for a universally human essence."[7] He notes that Renoir's films are situated in "a zone of intellectual and material exchange in which national divisions have become secondary" (Bazin, 1951a, 3).

Renoir's landscapes do not incarnate any essence since they attempt a rereading of French history using as evidence its transnational dimension. In *Toni* (1934), Renoir composes a hymn to the Mediterranean's integrative function rather than to its so-called "essence": "The film takes place in the south of France, in a Latin country where nature, undoing the spirit of Babel, works at a fusion of the races" (de la Bretèque, 2002, 168). Likewise, in *La Marseillaise* (1938), the Provençal landscape avoids the clichés of southern France (de la Bretèque, 2002, 172).

Godard's landscapes share with Renoir's the trait of downplaying symbols of national identity transmitted as an immutable and essentialist heritage.[8] Renoir focuses on social codes, but creates a counterpoint by making his landscapes dissolve this anthropocentrism through a form of pantheism. In most of Renoir's films of the 1930s local color is never an end in itself: it dissolves in a fraternity than joins men together whatever their origins – a trait illustrated at the end of *La Grande Illusion* (The Grand Illusion) (1937), when the two figures disappear into the snow, united in their hope of freedom despite their religious differences.

In Renoir's wake, Godard doesn't consider that it is his job to present a succession of clichés meant to satisfy the spectator's desire to recognize familiar places. Godard refuses to use what André Gardies has called the "landscape backdrop" with its "witnessing function" which privileges "the sights expected" by the viewer

(Gardies, 2002, 145). Godard is conscious of the fact that space and history are a complex of interactions between countries, and not a juxtaposition of national entities. The landscapes of *Le Mépris* and not strictly speaking Italian: they are the point of encounter between a German director filming the remake of Homer's Odyssey based on an adaptation crafted by a French screenplay writer using American capital.

Godard was immediately very sensitive to the dynamic of tensions between these different perspectives: more than a search for identity, it is the geographic dimension of the dialogue, of the exchange of views and of the moment that captures Godard's attention – all captured with an anecdote drawn from his childhood spent on the banks of Lake Léman: "My father, in order to go from the Swiss bank to the French bank, sailed a boat named The Hyphen (*Le trait d'union*). That had a huge impact on me. I myself am only a hyphen and I bear a hyphenated first name" (Godard, 1985c, 19). For Godard, union is only possible because of the hyphen that joins two terms of a tragic tension. The absorption by the landscape conforms to this rule: it's only a sketch, an attempt at unity that is never totally realized. It is because absorption has no roots that *Le Mépris* offers a definition of the modern landscape.

Modernity of the Landscape

The conception of landscapes developed by Godard in *Le Mépris* is fundamentally ambivalent. In the tradition of Homer's world, and from the pre-romanticism of Bazin, Godard displays a desire for a state of indifferentiation between man and his environment: absorption by the landscape is the plastic expression of the belief in the transparence of the image. And yet, this desire for unity is illusory: "My characters are no longer in harmony with nature the way the ancients were, but I treated the landscape as a character, giving it a role equal to that of the actors" (Godard, 1985e, 146). The scenario of *Le Mépris* seems to establish an ironic distance from the cult of nature: "The entire film was shot – outside and inside – entirely in natural, real and true settings." Godard never tires of reminding his viewers that the so-called "presence" of the landscape is, in fact, an *arte fact*: in *Le Mépris*, the image of the landscape seems to "stick" to our perception of it, but humanity seems nevertheless to be imprinted on it in ways both inevitable and demanded by the film. When Fritz Lang reminds us that "it's not the gods who created men but men who created the gods," he is summing up the treatment of nature in Godard's film: it isn't landscapes that give birth to men, it's men who give birth to landscapes. The absorption by the landscape is only a fleeting impression, which turns around dialectically to end up as self-consciousness, in the image of the scenario writer Javal, holed up in the famous mansion in Malparte, perched on a rocky outcropping. Separated from the cliffs of Capri by

Figure 11.2   Screen capture from *Le Mépris* (Contempt) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1963), produced by Les Films Concordia, Rome Paris Films, and Compagnia Cinematografica Champion.

a bay window that frames the countryside, Javal is in mourning for absorption (Figure 11.2).

The glass wall becomes a mirror henceforth separating object and subject: the characters of *Le Mépris* are "lost in a foreign landscape" (Godard, 1985e, 86). Godard seems here to echo Paul Valéry, a close friend of his maternal grandfather, and whom the future director had known personally (De Baecque, 2010, 22–24). If an early version of *Le Mépris* included a quotation from Valéry's *Cimetière marin* (Marine Cemetery), a poetic meditation on the relation between time and the ideal, it is in fact the Valéry of *The Notebooks* that Godard seems to be thinking about here, and notably the writer's thoughts on signs and the credit they inspire:

> Any *fiducia* and especially the fundamental one, that is to say the *language* at our disposal, *sticks* to perception so closely that we believe (it is a *fiducia* in this sense) to be in the presence of the *fact* itself. But, even in the most favorable cases and with the greatest precaution taken to obtain *objectivity*, our *humanity* would nevertheless be imprinted in the perception itself, and it would be visible to an "angelic eye." One simply "can't take the man out of humanity."[9]

In this respect, the conception of language espoused by Valéry (who died the very year of the publication of "The Ontology of the Photographic Image,") is diametrically opposed to the conception of the image elaborated by Bazin: the presence of man in language produces a critical distance in his words whereas the absence of man from the image establishes the basis for belief in the photograph. *Le Mépris* is situated at the very center of the tension between Valéry's and Bazin's positions. This tragedy of the landscape undermines from within any eventual tendency toward a political mythology of the identitary essentialism of the landscape: Godard films the landscape as if he had simultaneously to reveal the presence of its beauty through belief and the secret of this beauty through distance.

This ambivalence is the culmination of a slow intellectual maturation that Godard's critical writings allow us to retrace. He remembers having been an editor of "travel films," a genre in vogue before the rise of television, and which was intended to allow the public to discover the distant recesses of the globe: "I was a film editor for Arthaud Editions as well, working on travel films that were shown at the Salle Pleyel. All of my talent went into trying to find in these documents a way to organize them into a classical *mise-en-scène*. As soon as I discovered the right elements I worked out a classical storyboard for each film" (Godard, 1985c, 19). We can thus understand why, after 1952, the 22-year-old Godard refused the esthetic position of representing landscape in natural space and time in order to take advantage of the unexpected, as in Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, which Bazin had previously celebrated:

> that a landscape communicates a feeling doesn't necessarily mean that poetry occurs by chance, but rather than the order of images should follow the heart and not the intellect. After all, Flaherty's genius is not so far from Hitchcock's, Nanook stalking his prey is like a murderer waiting for his victim; his genius is to identify in the passage of time the desire that consumes him, in his suffering the faults that plague him, in his pleasure the terror and remorse that eat at him and to transform his landscape into the palpable location of our own agitation. And so, to the question, *What is cinema?* I would answer: "the expression of beautiful feelings."[10]

In opposition to Bazin's *vera icona*, Godard proposes the spectacle of the *arte fact* magnified *by mise-en-scène*. Certainly, he celebrates the power of the cinema to evoke belief in the viewer by recording the spectacle of the unexpected in nature captured in the real time of cinematography. Writing on the volcanologue Haroun Tazieff's film *Rendez-vous with the Devil*, Godard noted: "We rediscover here one of the fundamental reflections of André Bazin from the first chapter of *What is Cinema?*, reflections consecrated to "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" which is constantly referenced in the analysis of every single shot of *Rendez-vous with the Devil*. Haroun Tazieff doesn't know it but he proves that Bazin knew very well that only the camera holds the Sesame of this universe whose supreme beauty is created by the confluence of nature and chance" (Godard, 1985d, 208). Yet Godard diverges from Bazin in a significant way, for cinema is, for the young director, not an elimination of man from the image, but, on the contrary, a spectacularization of the power of the director:

> If Haround Tazieff had only proved that nature is a great film director his work would never have surpassed that of Joris Ivens. Instead, what is prodigious in *Les Rendez-vous du Diable* is that by showing the underwater eruption of the volcano in the Azores, graced with such a terrifying richness of forms that only Tintoretto would have dared to paint it, and by showing us a river of lava twisting though a cauldron of purple and gold, colors that Eisenstein alone dared to use in the banquet

of *Ivan the Terrible*; by showing us all of the prodigies of his talents in mise-en-scene, Haroun Tazieff, *ipso facto*, proves how prodigious mise-en-scene can be." (Godard, 1985d, 208)

Godard is interested in the capacity of the cinema to offer the spectacle of its own power: that of art. The references to Eisenstein and to Tintoretto (a homage to Elie Faure's study of the mannerist painter) show that Godard enjoys a relationship to landscape that is based on "artialization," that is, on an appreciation of the landscape that is produced by the special techniques of the works of art in question. For Bazin, the cinema captures and embalms nature.

For Godard, it is, on the contrary, nature that imitates the cinema. For Bazin what is implied is the bracketing of man in favor of the natural world, whereas for Godard it is a meditation on the perception of the landscape. Whence Godard's preference for directors who film landscapes as pure presence and simultaneously produce a commentary on this presence: Roberto Rossellini, Anthony Mann and Jean Renoir.

> Each shot of *Man of the West* gives the impression that Anthony Mann is reinventing the western in the way, for example, Matisse reinvents the sketch or Piero della Francesca the line drawing. What's more, it's better than an impression. *He reinvents it*. I mean reinvents, in other words: shows at the same time he demonstrates, innovates at the same time he copies, critiques at the same time he creates; in short, *Man of the West* is a course at the same time it's a discourse, or the presentation of the beauty of the landscapes at the same time it explains this beauty, the mystery of fire arms at the same time it reveals the secret of this mystery, the art at the same time as the theory of art . . . of the western, that is, the most cinematic of all film genres, if I may express it this way; so that ultimately it happens that *Man of the West* is an admirable lesson on the cinema and on the modern cinema. (Godard, 1985h, 194)

Likewise in an imaginary interview with Roberto Rossellini in 1959, Godard moves away from Bazinian orthodoxy of "transparence" in reinterpreting the Italian filmmaker's work. Thanks to this reversal, he attributes to the Italian filmmaker a profession of very Godardian faith which presents the landscape at the same time it *re*-presents it:

> We have to get to the extreme position in which things speak of/for themselves. Which does not only mean that things speak of what they are in reality. When you show a tree, it must speak to you of its beauty as a tree, if a house, its beauty as a house, if a river its beauty as a river. (Godard, 1985i, 228)

Landscape, for Godard, is situated on a line separating two tangents: the evidence of its presence captured by the photographic image in movement and the feeling of distance produced by the realization that what we see is mere representation.

It's a matter of seeing the image as a complex structure in which it simultaneously hides and reveals its human origins, an ambivalence that Renoir had made his signature and which oscillates between a nearly documentary presentation of the world and its theatricaliation. On the one hand a reality "embalmed" by celluloid, and on the other an amused distancing by the little theater of everyday life. This is a vision of the world where belief and intelligence are locked in a fierce struggle, as Godard noted in a special issue of *Cahiers du cinema* in 1957: "Art along with the theory of art. Beauty along with the secret of beauty. Cinema along with an explanation of cinema" (Godard, 1985b, 118).

In Renoir's work, and in Godard's, absorption into the landscape is never definitive: Man is tempted by union and total harmony with nature, but his critical faculties deter him from this temptation. In this regard, *Boudu saved from drowning* and *La Marseillaise* offer two cinematic examples of the relationship of between landscape and civilization that will be featured in *Le Mépris*. The homeless Boudu and the mason Bomier, both children of Rousseau, can be compared to the couple Lestingois, the bookseller and the assistant Arnaud who favor Voltaire and the Age of Englightenment.[11] The Renoirian opposition anticipates the battle that will be waged between Poseidon and Athena in *Le Mépris*. The sea god tries his best to capsize Ulysses's vessel, but the goddess of ruses, intelligence and knowledge saves him from shipwreck. Caught between the battle between Poseidon who engulfs him and the safety offered by Athena, Ulysses becomes the plaything of the Gods: the temptation of letting himself be absorbed into the Mediterranean followed by the rescue of his body and mind by critical reason seals the last shot of *Le Mépris* in an aspiration toward the unity of opposites: Absorption in belief on the one hand and critical distance on the other. Between desire for and the illusion of transparency vs. the consciousness that the image is but an *arte fact*, between the presence of beauty and the commentary on this presence we can situate the Godardian landscape. The last shot of the film crystallizes in itself these two tropisms. The camera frames the Mediterranean and we hear single word: "Silence." It is the contemplative silence in which the wandering gaze of Ulysses, of Javal, of Godard and of his spectator (all men-landscapes) lose themselves and give themselves over to absorption. But the word "Silence" is also the term by which the director reminds his crew that he is making a film and thereby relegates us to a position of critical distance: first the temptation of absorption, then a return to distance. One simple word unites two conceptions of the image, one founded on a belief in the transparence of signs and the other on the spectacle that the hand of man has made into an *arte fact*. On the one hand, there is objective and continuous reality of beauty unfolding in space and time. On the other, we have the spectacle of the presence of man and the arbitrariness of the sign. The landscapes of *Le Mépris* establish the bases for a belief in the image all the while constraining us to go into mourning for this very image. Of absorption there remains only the temptation. Like Javal speaking to Camille, Godard might well whisper to his landscape: "I love you totally, tenderly, tragically."

Notes

1 For an analysis of the contemporary period of Godard's work, see Morgan (2009, 1–24).
2 See Tapié and Zwingenberger (2006) especially (pp. 52–75). On the question of absorption, see Fried (1990).
3 Collot (2005, 25). On Godard and Rousseau, see Ragel (2002, 180–195).
4 Dort (1965, 1118–1128). Almost three decades later, Godard laid claim to this influence: "I read German authors, Goethe, Musil, I read *Werther*, they're what taught me the most when I was younger. It's a country whose literature, especially during my adolescence and especially romanticism, formed me." Press conference (De Baecque, 2010, 697).
5 On Bazin and geography, see Cortade (2010, 13–31).
6 Bazin (1944a, 43–44; 1944b, 13; 1944c, 2–9).
7 Bazin (1952b). See also Bazin (1952a, 34–36; 1953, 7–8; 1956, 7–8).
8 See Conley (2007, especially pp. 40–64).
9 See Cerisuelo (2006, 32–34), Valéry (1973, 746, Valéry's emphasis).
10 Lucas (1952b, 66–67). See also Lucas (1952a, 58–65) (Hans Lucas was a pseudonym used by Godard.)
11 See de la Bretèque (2002, 173–174). On the "pastoralism" of Renoir see Braudy (1972, 48–49).

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12

Bande(s) à part

Godard's Contraband Poetry

T. Jefferson Kline

In the twenty-fifth minute of Jean-Luc Godard's *Band of Outsiders* we see a black Simca heading along a road parallel to the Marne near Joinville, Franz (Sammy Frey) at the wheel, and squeezed into the passenger seat next to him Odile (Anna Karina) and Arthur (Claude Brasseur) to her right. Arthur suddenly asks Odile, "What's the matter? Have you suddenly changed your mind?"[1] This question must strike the film's viewer as it does Odile, the character, as entirely incomprehensible. She responds (as we would), "Changed my mind about what?" There has been no previous scene of decision-making that would allow the character or the film's director to insert this question here. As is well known, Godard adapted *Band of Outsiders* from Dolores Hitchens's *Fool's Gold*, a dark tale of love and crime in which Eddie and Skip, two out-of-work ex-convicts, learn from Karen, a young woman they've met in a typing class, that there's a huge store of cash "hidden in plain sight" in her house on the outskirts of Reno.[2] We will discover, however, that this adaptation must be read in many ways *against* the novel rather than as what is commonly termed a *faithful* rendition of Hitchens's text.

From the outset, Hitchens rationally and chronologically constructs her plot line, recounting the meeting of the three friends, the discussion of Karen's discovery of Mr Stolz's money and the necessity of her involvement in the crime. Eddie (the film's Arthur) tells Karen (Odile) that the money has been stolen from the government by Mr Stolz, and that therefore "he deserves to be stolen from." (Hitchens, 1958, 31). Hitchens also carefully exposes Eddie's impoverished and dysfunctional home life, his relationship with his uncle and the uncle's connections with powerful gangland figures. For her part, Karen feels as though she's "not quite a person" in the eyes of her landlady, Mrs Haverman. In other words,

Hitchens's story is traditionally rendered, each step explained, and each move rationalized by recourse to discussions of the psychology of each of the characters. In her novel, events build with terrifying inevitability toward a tragic show-down between the amateur thieves and a gangland juggernaut out to wrench control of the robbery from them.

In Godard's adaptation, the events of the film almost never follow logically from one to the next, but seem rather an assemblage of moments, none of which adequately explains or prepares for the others. Although it is true that the three friends plan a heist, their robbery is never planned in any specific detail and fails for the flimsiest (or perhaps Godard might say "filmsiest") of reasons: a carelessness about procedure that is mind-boggling, coupled with the inability to cope with the most mundane of obstacles, for example, closed interior doors or locked windows that neither robber wants to break. Repeated readings of this film make it clear that stealing money is nothing more than a pretext for these characters. Godard's art in *Bande à part* will consist in adumbrating a very different "rationale" for the film's action. As for a psychological explanation of their behavior, Godard's only go at indicating the characters' feelings comes in voice-overs as laconic as they are useless:

> Here we could open a parenthesis and speak of the feelings of Odile, of Franz and of Arthur. But, after all, everything is already clear enough. Let's just let the images speak for themselves and close this parenthesis. (c. 24:00 of film)

And ultimately, if Arthur dies in the end without managing to get his hands on the money, it is merely because another character arrives for a shoot-out in broad daylight, a duel so unnecessary and so unreal that it could only be explained by the antagonists' desire to mimic the gun fights in American Westerns.[3]

We see, then, in these few idiosyncrasies of his adaptation many of the elements that were to become the signature elements of Godard's style in his subsequent development as a filmmaker. It is curious, therefore, that *Band of Outsiders* has received so little critical attention over the years. Although the film was, according to Jean-Luc Douin "one of his films Godard liked best" (Douin, 1989, 149) it received little or no notice from most of Godard's critics. One calls it "the coldest, most reductive film Godard has ever made" (Fruchter, 1964, 54), another labels it simply "a bogus film," (French, 1969, 72) and Luc Moullet condemns it simply as a film "where the artistic impasse is the most" (Moullet, 1990, 121). Other works on Godard tend to make glancing allusions to the film, dismiss the film as "not one of the director's major works" (Wheeler, 1969, 62), or ignore it altogether (Kreidle, 1980).

In the end, there are but three essays on this work that encourage us to take another look at how important this film may have been in Godard's development. Already in 1967 Pauline Kael commented on the poignant nostalgia of Godard's film, concluding:

> This nostalgia . . . may also derive from Godard's sense of the lost possibilities of movies. He has said, "As soon as you can make films, you can no longer make films like the ones that made you want to make them." . . . He thus aims at the poetry of reality and the reality of poetry. (Kael, 1970, 113–114)

Richard Roud concurred, finding in Godard's film a combination of "nostalgic moments of spontaneous gaiety or simplicity," enacted in "the paradoxical beauty of the squalid surroundings of the Paris suburbs looked at with a fresh and unprejudiced eye." This nostalgia and spontaneity become the very subject of Godard's film, Roud argues, and he goes on to claim that for Godard "the cinema is not just story-telling; in fact it is not even story-telling at all" (Roud, 1967, 24, 48). And although Robin Wood calls *Bande à part* a "half-way film," he discovers in it "a tension between traditional narrative and . . . collage, a tension between naturalism and stylization, both pushed to extremes" (Wood, 1969, 65).

A return to the scene of the three friends' arrival at the house in the suburbs will enable, nay encourage a rereading of the film that brings out the ways Godard's nostalgia, spontaneity, paradoxical aesthetics, and meta-cinematic "moves" all combine to make of this film one of the director's most original and compelling works.

We had left the three would-be thieves speeding along the road toward the house of Madame Victoria, set among some trees and other houses across the Marne from them on a piece of land rising at a very gentle slope from the Marne. Godard's voice-over, however, tells us:

> Just opposite them, there was an island that seemed deserted. To the right and to the left, stretching out like the ramparts of the world was a huge horribly black cliff that loomed over the scene. The vegetation seemed overwhelmed by the desolate inky panorama that recalled the Sea of Shadows. (26:00 of film)

It is abundantly clear from Godard's description that his words do *not* describe the scene before us. Instead, he appears to be paraphrasing several different passages from Hitchens's novel. In *Pigeon vole* we find the the landscape surrounding the Haverman house is variously described as:

> The steep abutment fell directly down almost to the sidewalk before the silhouette of the hills. (Hitchens, 1958, 16–17)

> Above them, the trees mounted an assault against the escarpment. (Hitchens, 1958, 30)

> The houses climbed up toward these heights, silhouetted against the sky. (Hitchens, 1958, 67)

In other words Godard has made a kind of collage of Hitchens's various descriptions of the Reno landscape and superimposed them on an image of an entirely

different topology. What can we possibly make of this disjunction between *"la bande sonore"* (the soundtrack) and *"la bande d'images"* (the image track), except to conclude that here Godard has effected a pun on *"bande à part"* that perfectly illustrates the inevitable slippage between words and images. Colin McCabe has noted that such puns are "central to Godard's whole work, [for they] hold the patterns of meaning in suspension and it is in such moments that new emphases become apparent in reality" (McCabe, 2004, 2).[4] This impossible dislocation of the sound track from the image track has several significant effects: First, it undermines the authority of the word since we know that what we see cannot be what is described. This subversion is particularly marked, in as much as the very technique of the voice-over – always assumed to be the acoustic "source of the film" – implies an authoritative, not to be questioned commentary on the film's events. In the present instance, this is doubly so since the voice-over is spoken by the film's image-maker, Godard himself. This abject failure of the authorial voice to render a verbal equivalent of what we see thoroughly undermines the very medium of spoken language, giving what we hear a very Saussurean arbitrariness (Saussure, 1966, 67–68). But whereas Saussure proposed the arbitrary nature of the individual sign, Godard here seems to have extended the domain of the arbitrary to *all* manifestations of written and spoken language. This generalized subversion of language thus signals the necessary primacy of the image (and by extension, the cinematic). Such subversion of the sound track will be a regular feature of this film. For example, when the three friends sit at a café table and awkwardly run out of conversation topics, Franz proposes that they have a minute of silence:

FRANZ: OK! Since no one has anything to say, we could maybe have a minute of
          silence.
ODILE: Sometimes you are just too stupid.
FRANZ: No. A minute of silence can last for a long time. A real minute of silence
          lasts an eternity.
ODILE: OK, one, two, three.

At this point the sound track goes silent for 45 seconds. We cannot but be struck by the blurring of the distinction between diegetic and extra-diegetic sound. Since it is not the characters but the film's *bande sonore* that falls silent, our attention is drawn to the meta-cinematic aspect of Godard's work here. The problem of how to evaluate the difference between what we see and hear *vs.* what the characters see and hear becomes a general interrogation about the nature of the medium. Our dismay is heightened by the sense that the filmmaker has not given us what his own character asked for. By muting the sound track for only 45 seconds, Godard scotches Franz's proposal of one minute of silence, yet seems attentive to the deeper question his character has raised. In the cinema, Godard seems to be telling us, the art of montage gives time itself the kind of elasticity that Franz is theorizing![5]

Exactly one minute later, Godard again plays with *la bande sonore* to create another conundrum and another pun. While the three friends are dancing the Madison in a room near their café table, the music to which they are dancing suddenly stops, yet all the ambient sounds continue. Since the dancers continue exactly in rhythm to a recording that we the spectators cannot hear (though we continue to hear normal café sounds), they seem to have access to a source of sound that we don't. Here Godard again makes us wonder about extra-diegetic sound (most often music *we* can hear but *they* cannot). Here, because they seem to respond to a musical cue that we can't hear, the three dancers may be said to have transmuted from a *bande à part* to *une bande sonore*. And again, to use Colin McCabe's terms, through this second pun on the same words, Godard effects a new cinematic emphasis by throwing our assumptions into suspension.

If we return to the first example of these "aberrations" of the sound-track, the substitution of a description of the Reno landscape of the novel for the image of the Paris suburb that we see, we can discover a second major effect of this "mistake."

What does it mean to "adapt" a book into a movie? Certainly Jean-Luc Godard had already tried his hand at a (thoroughly idiosyncratic) adaptation of Moravia's *Il Disprezzo* (Contempt) in *Le Mépris* (Contempt), but, despite many postmodern effects in that film, had not so specifically as in *Bande à part* raised the question of the relationship between novel and film in terms, specifically, of the sound-track. What changes, in this his next film after *Le Mépris* is precisely this *mise en question* of the very possibility of adaptation of the literary to the cinematic. Much of the rationale for choosing a novel such as Hitchens's would come from Godard's longstanding fascination with Hollywood, the Western and the "Série B" thrillers. But how can one capture the essence of the Western without the settings of those films? In 1959 Godard had taken Bogart's long *vertical* fall off the mountain after being hit by a policeman's bullet in *High Sierra* and "translated" it into Belmondo's equally long *horizontal* trajectory up a Paris street after being hit in the back by a policeman's bullet in *Breathless*, but however intense his nostalgia for the mythology of the west, Godard's *images* could not capture it. We see evidence of this nostalgia almost immediately in *Bande à part*. In the fifth minute of the film, as Franz and Arthur cross a street across the river from the house they are intending to rob, Arthur suddenly announces: "It's on July 13, 1891 that Billy the Kid was vilely shot in the back by the sheriff of Tombstone, Pat Garrett." The two friends immediately engage in a simulated gunfight. Both squat down to avoid the other's "bullets," Franz "fires" and Arthur falls to the street, rolls over and continues to lie there in agony while Franz gets into the car and starts the engine. When we hear the roar of the engine, Arthur pulls himself up on the car's rear fender, leaps to his feet and jumps in the car. Displaced from Tombstone to a suburban street in the bleak suburban French "wasteland" of Joinville, this recreation of the famous Western can get no closer to its original than can *Bande à part* to the settings, spirit, and ethos of *Fool's Gold*. The entire movie must remain a *bande*

d'images à part from the hot, arid, mountainous terrain of the American Southwest described so vividly in Hitchens's work, but which can "enter our field of vision" only through the mischievous voice-over that only ends up accentuating rather than hiding the gap that separates film from novel.

But it is hardly the only such gap. Hitchens's novel is not simply "transposed" (*ergo* betrayed) into a suburban Parisian landscape, it is (almost "systematically" – if such a word could ever be applied to this director) deconstructed by Godard. Although numerous pieces of Hitchens's dialogues are directly quoted in the film (for example Arthur's long conversation with Odile in the classroom building), a great deal of the American author's material is simply discarded. We learn almost nothing about Franz's or Arthur's past or present situation. The entire subplot of Stolz's connections to the gangland world of Las Vegas is omitted. Godard repeats little or nothing of the interior life of the three characters that is so carefully presented by Hitchens (for example, p. 24 etc.). The French director effectively does "jump cuts" over chapters three, four, five, six, nine and ten which introduce crucial characters, explain both Skip's and Eddie's situations, reveal Mrs Haverman's suspicions about the robbery, and prepare the reader for the final showdown at the Haverman house. Without them, the plot of the film seems to disappear into a confusion of missed connections, faulty reasoning and inexplicable events. More significantly even, Godard leaves out the entire last 30 pages of the novel in which Skip leaves town after killing Big Tom, and Eddie and Karen escape from the scene of the crime to pursue other adventures together. In the end, Skip is shot in a street in Reno by a policeman and the other two confess all and head to jail. With so much excised from the plot and characterizations of Hitchens's novel, we must ask what could be the pretext for choosing her work in the first place? Perhaps a clue might be found in the following passage in which Eddie worries about his friend, Skip.

> Either Skip was incapable of choosing a course of action and sticking to it, or else he didn't want to do it. He wanted to improvise, to decide things at the last minute; and even Eddie could see how dangerous this approach was. (Hitchens, 1958, 113)

What must strike us in the "conversion" of this passage to Godard's film is precisely its inversion. Hitchens, as her name implies, carefully ties together all of the elements of her novel – plot, characterization, chronology and style – into a coherent and easily understandable whole, where every new element is a direct result of the previous one and the cause of the following one. The character in question may like to improvise and make decisions at the last minute, but this is certainly not Hitchens's style as a writer. Inversely, the traits described in Skip, are precisely those of the director of *Bande à part*. Already of *Breathless* Godard had said,

> *Improvisation* flows from the will to express the instant. To direct a film is not to revitalize whatever was in the author's head when he wrote the screenplay, it is to

give life to something which is, and which is at this moment. What I would like to do is to use a conventional plot as a point of departure and then to remake but in a completely different way, all cinema that has already been made. (Cited in Collet, 1970, 46–47)

Visibly, more than any adherence to a plan or a plot, what interests Godard in *Bande à part* (as it did in *À bout de souffle*) (Breathless) is precisely the improvisational nature of his characters as a reflection of his own cinematic enterprise:

> For me the ideal is to obtain what I want on the first shot, without retakes or touch-ups . . . The "right now" is chance. At the same time, it is definitive, final. What I want is to capture the definitive by chance. (Collet, 1972, 36–37).

Hitchens's novel thus serves as mere *pretext* to a film that flows around and through the make-it-up-as–you-go nature of both characters and their creator. To put it another way, as early as 1964 Godard is announcing that he does not need to build toward a denouement by a series of *events* or *psychologically based motives*. He prefers to put his actors into a context and watch them evolve however they might. They proceed toward the film's conclusion not because they need money (although they might) but because they need something to do to fill up the 95 minutes of the film. The ending they improvise seems to derive only from Godard's and their nostalgia for films that neither he nor they could make: the film's final duel is so insistently play-acted that one cannot fail to see it as yet another dance, like the Madison in the café.

Godard's aesthetic here does not derive from "the classic Hollywood cinema" however much he my be nostalgic for the Westerns it produced; continuity, for example, has been jettisoned in favor of spontaneity, as witness the scene in which both Franz and Arthur start to run around the house wearing their stocking masks only to emerge only seconds later without their masks. That is to say that everywhere in his film, Godard seems to be whispering "Cinéma! Cinéma! Cinéma!"

His cinema seems entirely focused on what Pauline Kael terms "the poetry of reality and the reality of poetry" (Kael, 1970, 112–113). Divorced from its obeisance to Hitchens's novel, freed from any need to tell a story, separated from traditional cinematic grammar or Hollywooden characterization, Godard's film simply . . . represents. He watches as his three subjects evolve in the context of the Paris he loves, driving through the city's streets, strolling its boulevards at night, sitting or dancing in its cafés, running through its major cultural treasure, the Louvre. In every case, what Godard seems most interested in filming is the beauty of their movement in every context in which it happens. It doesn't matter that they have a crime to commit or a deadline to meet, they always proceed with the easy nonchalance of people who are just there to be. Godard would proclaim: In 1950 Godard wrote in *La Gazette du cinéma* (The Cinema Gazette):

> True cinema consists only in placing something before the camera. At the cinema, we do not think, we are thought. A poet calls this the takingness of things. That is, not man's taking of things but, rather, things taking, capturing man. (Cited in Collet, 1970, 6)

Fifty-six years later, in *L'Elégance du hérisson* (The Elegance of the Hedgehog) Muriel Barbery will evoke a notion of beauty that might well serve as an explanation of Godard's dream for the cinema. In her "Journal of the Movement of the World," Paloma, a 12-year-old who has decided to end her life at her next birthday, attempts to discover an esthetic theory

> devoted to the movement of people, bodies, or even – if there's really nothing to say, – things, and to finding whatever is beautiful enough to give life meaning. Grace, beauty, harmony, intensity. If I find something, then I may rethink my options: if I find a body with beautiful movement or, failing that, a beautiful idea for the mind, well then maybe I'll think that life is worth living after all. (Barbery, 2006, 38)

Suddenly while she sits with her father watching a rugby game she notices that:

> In the midst of the New Zealand rugby players there was one who moved with an odd sort of movement, very fluid but above all very focused within himself. Most people, when they move, they just move depending on whatever's around them. . . . When we move, we are in a way de-structured by our movement *toward* something: we are both here and at the same time not here because we're already in the process of going elsewhere . . . To stop de-structuring yourself, you have to stop moving altogether. Either you move and you're no longer whole, or you can't move. . . . but that player's gestures stayed inside him, stayed focused upon him, and that gave him an unbelievable presence and intensity . . . He became his own movement without having to fragment himself by heading *toward* . . . He'd find the right speed without thinking any more of about the goal, by concentrating on his own movement and running as if in a state of grace . . . but off from the rest of the world in order to find the perfect foot movement. (Barbery, 2006, 41–42)

There could be no better explanation of the power of the four and one-half minute take of the Madison (47:53 to 51:20) in which all movement *towards* is forgotten and Godard's characters so wholly concentrate on their own movements, cutting themselves off from the world without pretense, just finding the "infinite" in these minutes (hence the silence during the dance that recalls Franz's claim that one minute can hold an infinite amount of time).[6] Once we understand the centrality of this dance in the film's esthetic, we can easily appreciate that this same esthetic dominates the entire film. Whether driving in circles in the mud, running through the Louvre, reading Queneau's *Odile* while driving or pretending to study English, this *bande à part* sets itself apart precisely through its refusal to move *towards* but instead to move simply for the pure pleasure and intensity of movement itself.

Figure 12.1   Screen capture from *Bande à part* (Band of Outsiders) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1964), produced by Columbia Films, Anouchka Films, and Orsay Films.

But is not this the definition of cinema itself? To recapture the excitement of the invention of the moving picture, Godard returns to the same intensity of observation that preoccupied the Lumière brothers when they sought for the first time in the history of mankind to seize and preserve the movement of the reality before them. They were not the least interested in stories, in motivating their scenes, but of capturing the incredible intensity of movement itself on a face, a muddy car, a girl on a bike.

The cinematic image will, for Godard, always discover its own justification absent of any narrative logic. If one were to need additional proof of this assertion we need look no further than the shots of Odile on her bike. The first time we see her, she is peddling past a billboard on which we read "C'est SHELL que j'aime." (see Figure 12.1). Godard's love of puns finds expression once again in this quadruple pun: It's SHE I love / C'est ELLE que j'aime / C'est SHE-ELLE que j'aime / It's hell I love.[7] Of course this advertisement points to the triangular relationship developing among Franz, Arthur, and Odile, but it also contains precisely the English / French subtext alluded to in the imitations of Billy the Kid and American film culture or the recitations of Shakespeare and the Cours Louis's language school.

Like the English-language teacher in his film who becomes so caught up in the beauty of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* that she skips around the play reading disconnected moments of the play with such passion that she entirely forgets the pedagogical purpose of her activity, Godard lets himself loose in the pure movement of his characters. In that poetry of reality, to borrow Pauline Kael's phrase, he finds the reality of cinematic poetry. We do not need to follow the plot of

Shakespeare's play to appreciate the beauty of his language. And yet, sometimes this "haphazard," discontinuous quality hides another, deeper purpose.[8]

Given her obliviousness to her students and to the difficulties of language that beset both French and English speakers in the jumble of Shakespearean dialogue, we should not fail to notice that Godard has chosen a very specific set of texts for his audience both in the classroom and beyond.[9] The English teacher disappears in a kind of trance and reads with increasing passion a series of quotes that move from the end of the tragedy to several other significant moments earlier in Shakespeare's play. Specifically, she begins by citing *in French* Juliet's last words (from Act V, scene 3):

> Get the hence, for I will not away.
> What's here? a cup, closed in my true love's hand?
> Poison, I see hath been his timeless end;
> O churl! drunk all, and left no friendly drop
> To help me after? I will kiss thy lips;
> Haply some poison yet doth hang on them,
> To make me die with a restorative.
> Thy lips are warm.

She leaves out Juliet's suicide, and jumps to the first watchman's dismay at his discovery of the bodies:

> The ground is bloody; . . .
> We see the ground whereon these woes do lie
> But the true ground of all these piteous woes
> We cannot without some circumstance descry.

Suddenly, however, she makes the equivalent of a cinematic jump-cut to Romeo's lines in the balcony scene (II, ii) when, in taking leave of Juliet he sighs, "Love goes toward love, as schoolboys from their books, But love from love, toward school with heavy looks" – an entirely apt quotation given that Godard's camera has been busy in *this* schoolroom jumping from close-ups of Odile to shots of Arthur as they eye each other amorously. And indeed it is at this very mention of schoolboys that we *see* Arthur write:

TOU BI OR NOT TOU BI CONTRE VOTRE POITRINE IT IS ZE QUESTION.

In plainly *visible* terms, Arthur has inscribed on the *bande d'images* a rerouting away from the sweet (if tragic) moments of *Romeo and Juliet* rendered in the *bande sonore* to the somber tones of Hamlet's soliloquy rendered in the *bande d'images*. We understand why Arthur would create this redirection: his treatment of Odile will consistently rob her of any romantic notions and end (as Hamlet does with Ophelia) by cruelly punishing her before he rushes headlong to his own death in

a duel with Roger that merely parodies Hamlet's fatal encounter with Laertes. Once again, Godard has established a tension between what we hear on the *sound*-track and what we see on the *image* track.

This shift is so powerfully unsettling that the teacher ends up by displacing both of the final quotes from the end of the play to moments of dark foreshadowing, the first from the play's Prologue, where "A pair of star-crossed lovers . . . enter the fearful passage of their death-mark'd love" will occupy "the two hours traffic of our stage" (that is, of both Shakespeare's Veronese love story and Godard's visual superposition of the existential Hamlet over his adaptation of the lovers' story). And as she reads the next quote (misattributing Romeo's line to Juliet), it is as though Godard himself were speaking it from his authorial position of voice-off narration (I, iv):

> I fear, too early: for my mind misgives
> Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
> Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
> With this night's revels, and expire the term
> Of a despised life closed in my breast,
> By some forfeit of untimely death . . .

Here the overall sense of foreboding is ironically countered AND reinforced by the reference to "poitrine" – upstaged by Arthur's outrageous note to Odile. And, perhaps because Godard will begin to explore the relationship between filming and dreaming, she will also quote Mercutio (I, iv):

> . . . dreams
> Which are the children of an idle brain,
> Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,
> Which is as thin of substance as the air,
> And more inconstant that the wind, who wooes
> Even now the frozen bosom of the north,
> And being anger'd, puffs away from thence,
> Turning his face to the dew-dropping south.

This taste for quotation, which will gradually be intensified throughout Godard's career, is at its most playful and inventive already here in *Bande à part* precisely because Godard uses these allusions both to alert us to the darker side of his film and to remind us, as he is to do for the next 50 years of his cinematic enterprise, that the cinema is a dream infinitely richer in possibilities than had heretofore been attempted by the classical Hollywood tradition. This scene had begun with Godard's voice off reminding us that "For the spectator just arriving in the theater, what one can say are a few words gathered by chance . . ." Yet however "random" the teacher's quotes appear to be, their "chance" juxtaposition creates a new

pattern that goes beyond their original meanings. He is proclaiming that the sound track does *not* have to be the handmaiden of the image track.

The allusion to dream in the English teacher's last quote is further evidence of Godard's range and has the effect of extending the range of the film's allusions beyond Shakespeare. There are several moments in *Bande à part* at which dreams do seem to enter both the image track and the sound track of Godard's film. For example, in the thirty-fifth minute of the film, as Odile is returning home, she suddenly shouts, "Rajah!" and out of nowhere emerges a tiger on a leash. She throws a hunk of meat at the tiger as if feeding her domestic cat, and continues on her way. Approximately 15 minutes later, we hear Godard's voice-over as the three friends are dancing the Madison:

> Franz is thinking about everything and about nothing. He doesn't know whether it's the world that's becoming a dream or the dream the world.

It turns out that the narrator is quoting himself here! Six months before the release of *Bande à part*, Godard had written a short essay for *Cahiers du cinéma's* special issue on Cocteau in which he praised *Orphée* for its "contraband poetry . . . and how much more precious it is, since it is true, as the German Novalis has said, that if the world becomes dream, then dream in turn becomes the world" (Godard, 1985, 93). From this confrontation of film and dream, Godard has devised yet another pun for *Bande à part: contraband* poetry captures what has previously been unacceptable in the classical Hollywood cinema. Like its precursor, *À bout de souffle, Bande à part* puts into play outlaws, whose criminality stands as a reminder of Godard's own tendency to break the rules. Unlike *À bout de souffle*, however, *Bande à part* will bring together the two disparate tendencies of cinema: "To know how to make films," Godard writes of *Orphée*, "we have to know how to rediscover Méliès, and for that we need lot of years of Lumière" (Godard, 1985, 94).

And so, *Orphée* joins Odile and Ophelia as an intertext in this film. We remember that in Cocteau's film of 1950, the geography of Paris has been deliberately scrambled to create an oneiric topology. In that earlier film, Orpheus got out of his car at Grenelle, walked up the Buttes-Chaumont to reach the Place des Vosges. Six years later, Arthur takes Odile for a walk in the Place Clichy and then descends into the metro. But the "continuity" leads not to Metro Clichy but instead lands the two characters on the platform at Metro St. Michel. Lest the example seem unconvincing, we hear Godard's voice-off explain, "After which, they descended into the center of the earth."[10] That Godard is perfectly conscious of this allusion should be evident in his own discussion of *Orphée*: "Thanks to Cocteau we've been able to catch sight of Orphée . . . downing a glass of beer on the terrace of the Café Flore, and then rushing into the Metro station Place Monge to pursue the woman of his life. Or rather of his death . . ." (Godard, 1985, 93). As Arthur and Odile travel together through the depths of Paris, Godard's camera cuts to a warning on the window behind them: "ATTENTION . . . DANGER DE MORT."

And of course, the allusion to Orpheus would not be complete without some allusion to Orphée's fatal look backwards that signals his eternal separation from Eurydice. In *Bande à part* that allusion comes at the thirty-eighth minute of the film where Godard's voice-off reveals:

> An idea traversed Odile like a cloud floating by. The idea that Arthur would always look at her this way. A bit as if she were a shadow . . .

Certainly a reversal of the original myth, this Orpheus looks right through his Eurydice, consigning her to a kind of invisibility that feels like death to her and provokes her to sing:

> What we do to men and women
> With worn out tender stones
> *And your aspects broke apart*
> *To look at you rips out my heart*
> Things go along as they much
> From time to time the earth quakes
> And resembles unhappiness.[11]

Just as Cocteau makes it clear that it is not the woman Eurydice but death herself that attracts his eponymous character, Godard seems to pose Odile as merely a step on the path to Arthur's encounter with his own death. It is instead Franz who is able to *interpret* Odile's face rather than just look through her: Just before they are to have their final encounter together, Arthur thrusts Odile into a taxi after their night together and we hear Godard's voice off remarking, "If Franz had been there he might have interpreted the meaning of this bizarre glance from *the other side of the mirror . . . The mystery of her face only become evident to him later.*"

In his slippage from one quotation or allusion to another, Godard plays and replays with the disparity between sound and image. Although the sound track traditionally provides a supportive relation to the image track, in Godard's editing room it can produce a dystopic tension with the latter.[12] Throughout *Bande à part* Godard seems intent not only to produce a skein of allusions that alert us to the darker, star-crossed, Orphic side of this carefree trio, but also and simultaneously to teach us that cinema holds the power to reorganize familiar texts into entirely uncanny, oneiric, Méliès-like arrangements whose meanings we must attempt to decipher. Along the way, as the muddy Simca repeatedly winds itself among huge spools that look like nothing so much as huge reels of film, Godard also points insistently to the "band" of new wave directors' "beau souci" (beautiful concern)[13] – that film is, after all, a creation of hundreds of pieces of reality pasted together in combinations that, however much they may have begun as a representation of the reality in front of the camera or tape recorder, emerge as a creative reinterpretation of that reality.

Notes

1   All translations from the French in this essay are mine except where translators are indicated in the references.

2   The allusion to Edgar Allen Poe's *Purloined Letter* is unmistakable, especially as one of the characters in the story mentions it.

3   Another "model" for this duel will become apparent later in this chapter.

4   There are other notable puns in the film. Arthur jokes that Odile's name reminds him of "le même prix" (the same price). Uncomprehending she asks "Quel prix?" (What price?). His reponse "Monodprix" is a play on her last name "Monod" and "Monoprix," a well-know department store whose sign we glimpsed earlier when Odile was on her bike. At the end of the film, Franz will pun on "croc-odile" – literally an Odile sandwich . . .

5   This cinematic "trick" closely follows the thesis of Epstein (1947).

6   Cf Gilles Deleuze's assertion that "in Godard's cinema, characters are often unconcerned, even by what happens to them . . . It is because what happens to them does not belong to them and only half concerns them, because they know how to extract from the event the part that cannot be reduced to what happens: that part of inexhaustible possibility that constitutes the unbearable the intolerable" (Deleuze, 1995, 19).

7   The allusion to hell will emerge later in this chapter. It is worth noting that this single shot also points toward Godard's next three films, culminating in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'ELLE* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her) and Godard's nearly obsessive insistence on the commodification of women.

8   It is useful to recall here Frederic Jameson's argument that "the very refusal and repudiation of narrative calls up a kind of narrative return of the repressed and tends in spite of itself to justify it's anti-narrative position by way of yet another narrative the argument has every interest in decently concealing . . . a recommendation to search out the concealed ideological narratives at work in all seemingly non-narrative concepts, particularly when they are directed against narrative itself" (Jameson, 2002, 5–6).

9   The use of *Romeo and Juliet* here recalls a moment In *À bout de souffle*, in particular, when Patricia (Jean Seberg) complains to Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo), "Je voudrais qu'on soit Romeo et Juliette. Romeo ne pouvait pas se passer de Juliette mais toi tu peux . . ." (I want us to be Romeo and Juliet. Romeo will not happen, but Juliet . . .) (31:05–32:05). Elsewhere I have discussed some of Godard's other literary allusions and their significance for his films from *À bout de souffle* to *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad), see Kline (1992, 184–221).

10   We should also recall that in his earlier voice-over description of the house, Godard bathes it in a "Mer des Ténèbres" (Sea of Darkness) (26:00 of film).

11   Lyrics by L. Aragon.

12   Such distopic arrangements will continue in Godard's work until they become codified. Marc Cerisuelo notes (see Chapter 20 in this volume) that "we should not forget that we should be dealing with the cinema and hence with *images and sounds*. This first partition – the constitution of this first couple – is, of course, created by Godard as of *Le Gai savoir*. The avowed objective is to valorize the second term and thereby to work on a veritable liberation of sound."

13   A reference, of course, to Godard's famous essay, "Montage mon beau souci" that appeared in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in December of 1956 in which Godard argued that "Cutting on a look is almost the definition of montage, its supreme ambition as well as its submission to *mise en scène*. It is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favour of that of time" (Godard, 1972, 39–40).

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13

Pierrot le fou and a Legacy of *Forme*

Tom Conley

Historians of culture have noted that sea-changes in cultural practice are visible where sudden shifts in form, style and execution of writing take place.[1] Be they in manuscript or in print, the ways that letters and words are crafted and distributed on a receptive surface tell much about the style or manner of a cultural moment. In turn, a reader's discerning eye quickly realizes that the style and formatting of words and the form of their letters can signify more than what they are said to say. Of inventive force independent of their authors, even the particles of words – characters, surely, but also their component pieces – serifs, ligatures, accent marks, even the implied hills and valleys they draw where they jut above and below the imaginary line of a horizon they cut on the page – can lead the readers to inquire of issues of import other than what the writing conveys.

It is hardly surprising that the great poets of the early years of print-culture found themselves collaborating with designers of font, with engravers, woodcutters, copyists and graphic artists. No less surprising is that in the same moment reform in religion goes hand-in-hand with that of printed writing. It suffices to recall how, in *Pantagruel* (1532), François Rabelais's Gargantua sends a letter to his son, whose name figures in the title of the book, to praise the ways that writing born of new technologies will change the ways we can live and believe in the world.

> Treschier filz entre les dons, graces et prerogatives desquelles le souvrain plasmateur Dieu tout puissant a endouayré et aorné l'humaine nature à son commencement, celle me semble singuliere et excellente, par laquelle elle peut en estant mortel acquerir espace de immortalité, et de decours de vie transitoire perpetuer son nom et sa semence,[2]

(My very dear son, among the gifts, graces and prerogatives of which the sovereign maker of earthen images our omnipotent God endowed and embellished human nature at its beginnings, what seems to me singular and excellent, by which it can in being mortal acquire a space of immortality, and in the course of transitory life perpetuate its name and its seed,)

will be printed writing. Following benediction given to God, the father tells his son of the past he had known before the advent of moveable type. It had been a dark and shady time, rife with the "infelicity and calamity of the Goths, who had brought all good literature to destruction. But by divine goodness, in my age light and dignity had been brought back to letters, and I now see such change [*amendement*] that presently I couldn't rival with ruffians in first-grade when, in the force of my former age, I was (not wrongly) reputedly among the most knowledgeable persons of my century. (. . .) I now see brigands, butchers, foot-soldiers, and stable boys more learned than the doctors and preachers of my time" (Rabelais, 1994, 243–244). Innovations in printing, "elegant as they are correct in their usage, that had been invented in my age through divine inspiration" (Rabelais, 1994, 243), in contrast to the demonic inventions of new modes of warfare, Gargantua asserts, offer access to universal knowledge, to a sense of the world and cosmos. The beauty of the technology, the boy's father affirms time and again, owes to God to whom we must give ourselves for guidance and conduct in the sublunar realm in which we live our abbreviated lives.

Pantagruel is invoked to suggest, by analogy, that as a new typographer, Jean-Luc Godard continues to bring to cinema *correlatively aesthetic and religious revolutions*. Within a broader history of the technology of literature – an area where, for reason of specialization historians of cinema tend to study only the two centuries in which the medium developed – Godard's typographical innovations in the field of the image carry, as they had for the reformers of the world of Erasmus and Rabelais, strong aesthetic and theological valence. The point is not to argue that Godard, an inheritor of the Reform that had brought to Geneva legions of dissident humanists critical of Catholic traditions, deploys aesthetic means for the end of promoting religious ideology. Rather, as he admits ubiquitously, in a staunchly ecumenical sense Godard envisages a cinema belonging to an *esprit des formes* (spirit of forms) in which a force of reform inheres forever in form. His viewers who are adepts of *longue durée* cannot fail to see in the relational quality of the cinema constant – even if unconscious – dialogue with the technologies of belief or, inversely, with belief born of new technologies yoked to religious matter. The idiom in which the dialogue is held is typographic, and its typography is understood as it had been in the Reform – along an axis between Paris, Lyon and Geneva in the first third of the sixteenth century as a milieu of force.[3] The gentle giant's words tell us that the technology of writing, including the very shape of printed letters and their distribution on a page, shapes memory, intellect, perception and, if we consider a substantive synonymous with "worldview," *belief*

itself. "Evangelism and linguistic innovation go together," notes biographer and lexicographer Mireille Huchon (Rabelais, 1994, 180), arguing that even the advent of auxiliary signs – accents, apostrophe, dieresis, cedilla – adorning words carries religious innuendo.

Adepts of the *Nouvelle Vague* who appreciate the inspired folly that came with Godard's liberation of the camera and penchant for structured improvisation experience similar reaction.[4] In a different, albeit complementary vein Jacques Rancière argues that the frenzy of association and of analogy that marks all of Godard's cinema belongs to a Romantic view, reaching back to the aftermath of the French Revolution, in which forms of all times and spaces where ceaselessly interrelating with one another. What he remarks of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* would hold for *Pierrot*. Godard's cinema is the "most explosive contemporary manifestation of the Romantic poetics in which *everything speaks*" along with the "originary tension at its basis" where, first, words and images release themselves from the confines of the meaning they convey in order to "speak" on their own and, second, communicate "with all things, form, signs and ways of doing co-present with them.[5] Such were the traits of the religious aesthetic of the Reform, and it is not by chance that it was the Romantics – Hugo, Nerval, Nodier – who recovered what was rampant in the Renaissance. In this sense, developing from the impact of new technologies of print-culture and its recuperation in Romantic aesthetics, Godard's modern (and thus also, in the dialectics he establishes, postmodern) cinema would affiliate itself with a "spirit of forms" anchored in a legacy in which the deployment of the matter of media plays a compelling role.

Based by Godard's admission on the model of Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once*, *Pierrot* can be seen as a variation of the road movie where it invests theological inflection in what it implies to be a spiritual itinerary. It begins before it begins. From the front-credits *Pierrot* proposes a "reform" of cinema the disposition of graphic matter in the field of the images. Everywhere *writing* points to a problematic evangelism of cinema that carries little promise of redemption. Through the relation it establishes between writing and medium of cinema *Pierrot* everywhere begs us to think of the gap between the topographical world in which we live and that of the cosmos above and beyond us.

Innovative modes of writing and mapping inspire reflection on the nature of the sublunar world in which we live.[6] The front credits emerge into meaning as red letters in upper-case Geneva (a "modern" style, sans serif, whose name invokes Godard's homeland in the *Canton de Genève*) populate the black screen. The order of their appearance is alphabetical. Only seconds into the film (1:17) nine iterations of *A* are set on six lines that are filled quickly and respectively, by *B* (1x), *C* (1x), *D* (5x) before *E* (7x), introducing two instances in blue on the third line from the bottom, complicates the patterning where it otherwise appears in red. By the time *G* (1x) and *J* (1x) fill the bottom line the shape of a constellation in a starry sky comes forward. On the top will be Jean-Paul Belmondo; below his name, that of Anna Karina; below hers, in blue, the title; below that, "un film de" that will

be set over Jean-Luc Godard. Along the way, in the pre-symbolic field, what Godard will later call "that which comes before the name" (as in *Prénom: Carmen* (First Name: Carmen)), the viewer's attention that seeks meaning in the black cosmos risks . . . going mad. On the top line, early on, when the characters appear, "JEA" is "A BED." Something or someone abed? Or "A-B-(C)-D?" Soon, below, "A A KA I A" might be enough to have the spectator wonder if "A" is "AKA" (as known as) something initialed "I A." The "DA" just below evokes "DADA," marked as "DA D" on the bottom line before two blue vowels "E," just below, appear next to an "F" of the same color.

A cavalcade of associations is possible. At this instant, given the presence of fifteen vowels and only ten consonants, we might find ourselves reliving the alphabetical battles between vowels and consonants that primers and broadsheets staged to teach children how to distinguish the ones from the others.[7] When "A," the first letter appears, it seems to displace the "P" of Pierrot, the initial letter of the inaugural substantive of the title that would be anticipated if the name of the film were to emerge directly into the visual field. That the letter is a vowel and that it is an A make clear an association with Rimbaud's *Voyelles* (Vowels), a sonnet affiliated with the child's experience of writing.[8] And, too, Lacan's "Instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient" (instance of the letter in the unconscious) might be afoot insofar as the analyst had at that very time announced that when it "comes before [*anticipe sur*] the signified" the signifier gives rise to fantasies that are soon excised when meaning sets in place.[9] For "literary" viewers to whom the film seems aimed the credits appear to be seek allusion to Rimbaud, if only because the poet wrote, reflecting on "Voyelles," that he was the first to engage synaesthesia of letters and colors.[10] The association that the credits are tendering is held in creative suspension.

As soon as the title is set in place, when a blue "U" ends ". . . FOU" and begins "UN FILM DE . . ." on the line below a voice-off (which the cinephile of 1965 immediately identifies as Jean-Paul Belmondo's) begins a quotation. "Velasquez. . . ." Suddenly the red characters vanish, leaving only the title in blue: PIERROT LE FOU, (Pierrot the Mad) from which is subtracted LE, leaving a chasm in the line. The voice-off continues, ". . . après cinquante ans ne peignait plus jamais . . ." "(after the age of 50 no longer painted . . .) when, save two blue "Os" in retinal suspension, the characters disappear. For an instant two letters, like two celestial bodies, are isolated in the black surround. The "O" to the right disappears as the voice continues, "ne peignait plus une chose définie" (no longer painted anything definite) (1:53). The credits end at the slight pause of voice signaling that the sentence has reached a period. Suddenly a day shot, exterior, records a woman in a yellow sweater playing tennis in a court that is unmistakably (for the same cinephiles) in the area of the Jardin de Luxembourg not far from the rues de Fleurus and Guynemer in the sixth arrondissement. The voice-off continues: "Il errait autour des objets avec l'air et le crepuscule, il surprenait dans l'ombre et la transparence" (He wandered among objects in the air and the crepuscule, he

surprised in the shadow and transparency). Cut to an establishing shot of the court seen from behind the woman and across a gridded net: ". . . des fonds les palpitations colorées dont il fait le centre invisible de sa symphonie silencieuse" (from the depths the colored palpitations of its silent symphony). The voice-off drones on: "Il ne saisissait plus dans le monde que des échanges mystérieux" (In the world he could grasp only mysterious exchanges) when, on *mystérieux*, appears a medium-long shot in bright day of Belmondo, browsing about books displayed on circular racks under the awning of a store that carries the name (in the suggestive position of a supertitle, in red majuscule) "Le Meilleur des Mondes" (The Best of All Worlds) (under which is written the telephone number, "Médicis 27-43"). Belmondo continues to browse throughout the remainder of the citation: ". . . qui font pénétrer les uns dans les autres les formes et les tons, par un progrès secret et continu dont aucun heurt, aucun sursaut ne dénonce ou n'interrompt la marche. L'espace règne" (which make forms penetrate the ones into the others by way of a secret and continuous progress where not a jostle or a startling upsets or interrupts the movement).[11] On the last and very short sentence the film cuts to a shot of an urban riverscape in crepuscule after a sun has recently set on the horizon.

The credits and the opening shots move from a letter to the "world" and from a fragment, via the presence of Leibniz ("le meilleur des mondes") to a monadology. We are led to wonder if mysterious exchanges are taking place or else, errantly and almost crazily, if associations, "spirits of forms" skittering over the surface of the screen, make clear a political aesthetic in which, as Rancière notes Godard developing it in *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman), words and images criss-cross one another, where "words become image" to "make us see" (Rancière, 2001, 189) such that "the common labor of art and politics" becomes one of "interrupting the succession, the incessant substitution of words that bring vision [*font voir*] to create images that speak, that impose belief as the music of the world. The One must be divided into two from the magma of representation: separate words and images, make words audible in their alterity, make images visible in their stupidity" (Rancière, 2001, 190). The religious inflection of what Rancière sees as an inquiry into the nature of the world – including its current political condition is made clear through a consistent aesthetic that builds upon the paradox of an ever-fractured unity of things.

The suspended association of the credits with "Voyelles" carries through much of the coloration of the writing. Strident contrasts of primaries that recall Ellsworth Kelly, James Rosenquist and major Pop artists of the early 1960s mark the visual field, but with the difference that post-Romantic tradition of synesthesia bears on memory-images of tableaux foreign to the poetry that conveys sensation through letters and words both seen and heard. When, toward the end of the film, Rimbaud is cited (1:18.04–1.18.11) for an ostensibly long duration of seven seconds a portion of a facial portrait of the poet in black ink on a speckled grey and white surface is seen with an overlay of stenciled letters "I" (red), "u" (green) and a portion of "o" (pale blue) and a triangle (black), jutting onto the right side of Rimbaud's

forehead, that would seem to be the apex of an inverted "A." The coding could not be clearer:

<div align="center">

Voyelles
</div>

A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu: voyelles
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes.

<div align="center">

(Vowels
</div>

A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue: vowels
Some day I will tell of your hidden births)

I is red, U green, O blue and, presumably, A black. The shot follows a very brief (half-second) medium take of Pierrot against a red background on which the white majuscules S. O. S. are drawn. Marianne's voice-off has just stated that, having broken off with her, Ferdinand is in Toulon where, as a ship in distress, he spends afternoons sleeping in all-day movie houses and continues to write in his diary. Lighting a cigarette, he turns toward the camera as his voice-off utters, in the style of Elie Faure, whom he will immediately be seen reading distractedly while lounging in the theater: "Car les mots au milieu des ténèbres ont un étrange pouvoir d'éclairement" (words in the middle of shadows have a strange power to enlighten).[12] At the end of the phrase the shot cuts to the close-up of the drawing of Rimbaud (Figure 13.1) while, simultaneously, Marianne's voice-off intervenes, uttering, "de la chose qu'ils nomment, en effet" (of the thing they name, surely). The shot continues while Ferdinand's voice responds (or, in the synaesthesia, *corresponds* to Marianne's via the image of Rimbaud, "même s'ils sont compromis dans l'horizon de la vie quotidienne" (even if they are compromised on the horizon of everyday life), "le langage souvent ne retient que la pureté" (language

Figure 13.1   Screen capture from *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1965), produced by Films Georges de Beauregard, Rome Paris Films, Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie (SNC), and Dino de Laurentiis Cinematografica.

often retains only purity). The memory-image of Rimbaud interrupts the gran-
diloquent tone of the voices-off that philosophize over the nominative power of
words.

The object of copious gloss, Rimbaud's "Voyelles" is by all means a sort of
verbal palette of the kind the film is setting before the eyes. Insofar as it builds on
the paradox of absence and totality of color in black (A) and white (E) before
refracting red (I), green (U) and blue (O), the poem never makes mention of the
third primary, *yellow*, that would in most likelihood be in the place of green, which
otherwise seems well chosen for the play on infinite becoming in the suggestive
sound of "U vert" as "ouvert" or you-vert/y[ou] where.[13] Speculation as to why
engages what in 1964 might have been Godard's program to craft a cinematic
"esprit des formes." Unlike red or blue, yellow hardly dominates the film. It is the
color of the sweater the female tennis player wears at the beginning; a yellow
stripe is found on a scarf that Pierrot wears before he goes to the Espresso cocktail
party; indirect allusion is made to the color when mention is made of Van Gogh's
painting of a café in Arles. Yellow is suddenly salient at the end when Belmondo
prepares his own immolation in an orange send-off from a promontory looking
onto the sea.

Fans of Godard know the final sequence by heart. Having swathed his face with
blue paint, he runs out of a garage and onto the porch of a villa giving onto the
Mediterranean. Yelling, flailing two bands of sticks of dynamite, the one red and
the other yellow, he pirouettes and lifts his cargo as if each were the wing of an
icarian angel that he might wish to be (1:47:24–1:47:47). Suddenly a close-up of
his face, shot against what seems to be a surface of porous grey stone, frames his
parting words: "Ce que je voulais dire, oh . . . pourquoi" (What I wanted to say,
oh . . . why"), he mutters, wrapping the yellow, then the red band around his face.
The letters *ami* of the word 'nitr*ami*te' written on the yellow string of sticks stand
in view (*Pierrot le fou* having become, perhaps, Raymond Queneau's *Pierrot mon
ami*) are visible before he wraps the red band over the yellow, ties them together,
fumbles to light the fuse, ignites it, and suddenly changes his mind, realizing how
idiotic his folly has been: his change of heart comes too late. A long shot records
the explosion before the camera pans right to the record the vastness of the sea
under a great expanse of sky. The movement stops where the sun, high above
("Midi le juste . . . ," celebrating Pierrot's would-be burial in a "Cimetière marin,"
as Valéry had written and viewers are quick to recall), projects a swath of light
reflecting off the water, whitening the blue sea and lambent sky. At that moment,
when the camera seems drawn to the light of the sun, Pierrot and Marianne's
voices-off quote one of Rimbaud's last poems, "L'Éternité": Marianne: "elle est
retrouvée" (it's been discovered). Pierrot: "Quoi?" (What) Marianne: " – l'Éternité./
C'est la mer . . . allée/Avec le soleil" (Eternity./ It's the sea . . . gone/ With the
sun). After light overexposes the seascape, suddenly the end-credit appears as FIN,
in blue (in sans-serif lower-case majuscules) that caps the film.

Rimbaud, intuited in the front-credits and seen through frequent allusion to "Voyelles," remains resonant. When the final shot fades into total light the quotation suggests that anywhere out of the sublunar world the sea (feminine) goes – or goes off – with the sun (masculine). The reader of Rimbaud suddenly sees that the misguided hero dejectedly, finally, can only *yell oh*. His shriek, that in a narrative sense we take to be pathos before and beyond words – being all that he can utter about his condition – folds into a dialogue about form and coloration within and through words and their letters. Pierrot's *yellow* is related to the *voyelle* unmarked in Rimbaud's sonnet. Here and elsewhere the dialogue of voices-off before a vanishing horizon begs consideration of the relation of the letters to the "world," to *le monde*, whose immensity from the beginning has been the setting of the film. Rimbaud is one of many keys to the hermetic relation of words and letters in the areas of the film where sensation supersedes narrative. For Godard he too is the poet who brings typography in coincidence with the immensity of the cosmos. Here the "esprit des formes" drawn from Elie Faure reaches into a tradition of a cinematic theology of reform that the filmmaker from Rolle and Geneva inherits and reshapes. And today, the film is no less telling in what it does now with form than at the time it was made.

Notes

1   See Martin (1994), where the fourteenth century is noted to be one where silent reading favored recombination of letters independently of the words that contained them; Panofsky (1960), a propos Gothic script in its relation to the Carolingian letter; Saenger (1998), in which it is shown that in early Christian manuscripts letters are so pressed together that it becomes incumbent upon the reader to assign spatial divisions between words comprising a sermon.

2   Rabelais (1994, 241).

3   Milieu is understood here as a moving medium in the sense that Gilles Deleuze assigns to the term in *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (What is philosophy?) (Deleuze, 1991, 38–39).

4   It suffices to recall Rabelais's first printed piece of folly, the *Pantagrueline Prognostication certaine veritable & infallible pour l'an 1533*. Authored by *Alcofribas, architriclin dudict Pantagruel* [Alcofribas, maître d'hôtel of the said Pantagruel], its title-page features a woodcut from the 1530 Lyon (François Juste) edition of Sebastian Brant's *Nef des fous* (Ship of Fools) that displays a fool instructing a sage about the nature of the heavens. Where matters of divine guidance are at stake, and where its presence is manifest in the planets and stars – in the upper corners of this woodcut, the sun and the moon – above our eyes, who better that a fool, a *fou*, teach us how to contemplate the mystery of creation than invest our faith in learned doctors who embrace inherited "traditions de qualité?"

5   Rancière (2001, 226).

6   Sublunar because in *Pierrot* the protagonists, having driven the stolen Ford "Galaxie" into the sea, settle down upon a beach at sunset, nestling into the sand on a beach

(42:00–43:38). As they converse the shot shimmers with flickers of dying sunlight on a beach. Marianne looks skyward and remarks that the moon is clearly visible (which a cutaway shot confirms). Pierrot sees "nothing special" but notes that the moon is a site of the Russian and American rivalry to land a man on the moon. What is far and what is near, cosmos and current events, are in coincidence. The film reflects on where it is in the "world" at large.

7   Furet and Ozouf sketch the background of the "petite-école" where initiation to writing takes place in Furet and Ozouf (1977, 71–74). See especially the *Almanach des enfants pour l'année 1886* (Children's Almanac for 1886), in which the character of each vowel is allegorized, in Massin (1973, 127).

8   In his notes Antoine Adam reviews the literature on the sonnet and children's literature, in Rimbaud (1972, 899–900); as does Etiemble (1968).

9   Lacan (1966, 494).

10   In "L'Alchimie du verbe" (The Alchemy of the Word) (1874) he proclaims that he had "invented the color of vowels" and that as a result a poetics of sensation could be made accessible, by implication, to one and all, and not just to a lettered elite (Rimbaud, 1972, 901).

11   By this moment the cinephile recognizes the prose of surgeon, amateur art historian and precocious film theorist Elie Faure, in *Histoire de l'art: L'art modern* (History of Art: Modern Art), vol. 1 of *L'Esprit des forms* (The Spirit of Forms) (Faure, 1962), a work dedicated to "Renoir" and in a pocket edition published in small (octavo) format – of the kind that in the shot Belmondo seems to be seeking among the racks – of "Le Livre de poche" in 1964. The book itself appears in the fifth shot of the film where, in medium close-up, cigarette hanging from his mouth (or perhaps pointing at the text) Belmondo reads the book aloud. A detail of a young maiden, signaling the presence of Velasquez's "Las Meniñas" can be seen in a frame on the back cover of the book.

12   The voices-off destabilize the "subject-positions" or discernible "points of view" whence their speakers utter their words. Thus, the words we hear could be those of his own writing as Marianne has indicated. They might also be what Pierrot observes about the fantasmatic nature of the very cinema that causes letters to emerge from and evanesce into darkness.

13   Were it not for the fact that Rimbaud knew English and, during his tumultuous relation with Verlaine, took part in teaching and even writing in English, the translinguistic reading would seem far-fetched. But not so: Baudelaire had already conflated idioms in the eleventh line – "Doux comme les hautbois, vert comme les prairies" (Soft as the oboes; green as the meadows) – of his "Correspondances." See Conley (1992, 177–195).

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14

Godard's Wars

Philip Watts

One of the lasting myths about the films of the French New Wave is that they turned their backs on history. The young directors who emerged in the early 1960s, the story goes, were more interested in intimate tales of a new generation, in the history of cinema, and in what Robert Benayoun at *Positif* had called "a flight into formalism" than they were in making films about historical events or France's colonial wars. The accusation of formalism (and of course the valorization of formal innovation) continues to this day, in particular against Godard's early films, which are often seen as having traded memory for stylistic experimentation, the past for formal innovation and, in his earliest films, historicity for a vague and ahistorical right-wing anarchism. That Godard has turned explicitly to the question of history in more recent works such as *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) (1998) and *Éloge de l'amour* (In Praise of Love) (2001) is cited only as proof of the absence of historical thinking in his early works.[1]

As seductive as this hypothesis has been for scholars and journalists, it doesn't quite coincide with the complex relation between aesthetics, politics, and history in Godard's early works. To be sure, Godard rarely used documentary footage in his earlier films (*Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) is the one exception), and unlike Truffaut and Louis Malle, for instance, he never made a period drama. By the early 1970s Godard was probably as far removed from the *mode rétro* (retro fashion) as a filmmaker could be. Still, while Godard's subject in his films from the early 1960s remains the sights and sounds of postwar society in its headlong rush to modernize, the horrors of the Second World War, the complicity of the Vichy government, and the disaster of the Holocaust do indeed resurface at incongruent moments. Godard constantly draws on sounds, images, and stories from the past that, however brief, are meant to play a part in his interrogation of the present.

If critics have failed to notice these moments, it is because they are often fragmentary, indirect and digressive. And indeed, it may have been Godard's very abhorrence of the *mode retro* that allowed his films to engage in thinking about history as something other than a commodity, and the images and stories of the past as something other than a simulacrum. Until 1967, there is no discourse about the war in Godard's films, no overarching theory of the relation between cinema and history, but there are moments in which the past surges forth, moments of shock and disruption whose goal is to force a rethinking of the sights and sounds of the present. Several recent works have begun to point us in this direction. Nicholas D. Paige's (2004) article on *Le Mépris* (Contempt) offers possibilities for understanding Godard's early work as a reflection on its own position in history, in film history, and in particular on its conditions of production.[2] Antoine de Baecque (2008) traces the ways Godard had begun to put together in his films history and the history of art well before embarking on the project of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

My goal in this chapter is to examine the sporadic yet significant reflections on the Second World War and on the representation of the Holocaust in particular, in Godard's films. These films are historical not in the sense that they present costume dramas, but in their attempts to make a link – often through a form of montage – between the past and the present in which his characters and the spectator are situated. This link is often tenuous, fraught and inarticulate, more a matter of perception than of full-blown theorization, but it is active nonetheless. What is more, Godard's films encourage us to think about the relation between cinema and history not simply as the cinematic representation of a historical event, but as the way aesthetic practices participate in the perception of changing social conditions and in the development of modes of interpretation. If Godard's early films evoke Vichy and the Second World War, it is precisely because they are so totally engaged in their own present. This may explain why film historians have not systematically explored Godard's early films as "vectors of memory," to cite Henry Rousso's phrase. Godard's films don't pretend to be about the past. To the extent that they engage with memory it is always in its relation to the present. What Godard's early films tell us about the past is not always clear and can seem at times expeditious, self-serving, and impudent, but his films force us to reexamine and expand our understanding of the relation between cinema and history.

As it turns out, Godard's early films, far from turning their back on history, are littered with bits and pieces of the past. Thus, in *Breathless*, Michel Poiccard who seems to live in an eternal present, nonetheless knows the location of the Nazi torture chambers in Paris. *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier), Godard's second film made about and during the Algerian war, resonates with references to the Spanish Civil War and to the Second World War. In the very beginning of the film, Bruno, who works as a hired killer for an "anti-terrorist" network run, he tells us, by a former Vichy official, quotes, or rather misquotes, Aragon's poem "Les Lilas et les roses" (Lilacs and Roses) an elegy to France written in June 1940. Later in the film a slow pan reveals images pinned on the wall of his room: a picture of

German soldiers executed at the end of World War II, a Soviet tank in Berlin, a copy of Malraux's *La Condition humaine* (The Human Conditon), pictures of the Spanish Civil War, Budapest 1956, and Brigitte Bardot. All these juxtaposed images serve to show Bruno's ideological confusion, but also to draw explicit parallels between the French torturers in Algeria and the crimes of the Nazis. This same strategy of combining incongruent images is at work in *Les Carabiniers*, Godard's1963 anti-war film, which not only has recourse to documentary footage from previous wars – a rare instance of the use of documentary in Godard – but is loaded with signs that force us to read it as an allegory about the battles between French collaborators and the Resistance. Or again, in *Une femme mariée* (A Married Woman) from 1964, another intimate film anchored in contemporary France, one of the characters talks about the importance of memory and recalls having attended the Nuremberg trials. He was shocked, he claims, that the accused at the trials didn't remember their crimes. And in *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) (1967), Guillaume (Jean-Pierre Léaud) equates the vacation resorts of Club Med to concentration camps, a crass and politically motivated equivalence to say the least, but one that confirms the extent to which references to the war were important aspects of Godard's construction of the present. Contrary to the claims that the early Godard turned his back on history, we could conclude that there is hardly a film that doesn't include some reference to the armed conflicts of the twentieth century. Godard's films, as invested in recording and challenging the modernization of France as they seem to be, are nonetheless built upon the remnants of the past. They are made from a field of ruins: fragments of a cinematic, literary, and artistic past, but also the bits and pieces of stories of Europe's wars. The problem is not so much that the past has been repressed in Godard, the problem is how this past has been construed.

Let me take as an example a brief scene from Godard's *Masculin-féminin* (Masculine-Feminine), a film in which Godard develops one of his most sustained reflections on the modernization of France and the emerging youth culture of the 1960s. Shot during the presidential campaign in December 1965, and loosely based on Maupassant's story "La Femme de Paul," *Masculin-féminin* tells the story of Paul (Jean-Pierre Léaud) and Madeleine (Chantal Goya) who may be falling in love but who seem to be on different paths – Paul, recently released from the army, finds a job as a public opinion pollster, while Madeleine is a singer who has just released her first successful 45. Paul and Madeleine embody a youth culture caught between politics and consumerism, and what ties them together is their life in the present, in the ephemeral signs of the everyday. They seem almost totally disconnected from the past. The presidential election pitting François Mitterrand against De Gaulle, the *mode yéyé*, Vietnam, the pill, abortion, labor movements, this *film-enquête* (film survey) raises many of the points of contention in contemporary French society, and it does so through a particularly open form, a camera and a sound-track open to incidents, incongruities, and off-screen sounds and images. The film is part narrative, part pseudo-sociological inquiry in the mode

of *Chronique d'un été* (Chronicle of a Summer) (1961) or *Le Joli Mai* (The Lovely May) (1963), but it also draws extensively on Georges Perec's 1965 novel *Les Choses* (Things), a text that Perec subtitled *une histoire des années soixante* (A History of the Sixties). Paul, like Jérôme and Sylvie in *Les Choses*, works for a polling agency, and some of the questions he asks of his interviewees – *"Pourquoi les aspirateurs-traîneaux se vendent-ils si mal?"* (Why do canister vacuum cleaners sell so poorly?) *"Aimez-vous le fromage en tubes"* (Do you like cheese tubes?) – are directly lifted from Perec's novel. What is more, during the scene in a movie theatre, we hear Paul's voice-over as he registers his disappointment at the movies: "We often went to the cinema, the screen would light up and we would tremble, but also, increasingly often, Madeleine and I were disappointed. The images had dated, they jittered, and Marilyn Monroe had got terribly old. We were sad, this wasn't the film we had dreamed of." This passage, too, is lifted, more or less verbatim, from Perec's novel. But if Godard's characters seem cut off from the past, if they seem trapped in what Perec calls *"l'univers miroitant de la civilisation mercantile, les prisons de l'abondance"* (The glistening universe of mercantile society, prisons of abundance) things may be a little more complicated than they appear (Perec, 1965, 80).

Masculin-féminin is full of incongruous moments that are juxtaposed with the banality of everyday life – a woman killing her husband in the café ("find yourself another maid," she tells him), a lesson on racism in the metro, two men kissing in a bathroom, the beheading of a doll on a miniature guillotine, Brigitte Bardot rehearsing a play – and it is through moments such as these that the violence of the past surges into the film. In one such moment, Paul, Madeleine, and her friend Elisabeth are sitting in a café, eating mashed potatoes, when they overhear the conversation between a couple who may be a prostitute and her customer. The couple's conversation quickly turns to the war. We find out that the man is a German tourist, that the woman, as she says "isn't French," and that her parents were killed in a concentration camp. "Have you ever heard of concentration camps," she asks the man who turns defensive. "Why can't we forget the past?" he asks, and he stutters as he tries to distance himself from the crimes of the war. He was only ten at the time and she was a young girl, and he tries to end the conversation by stating, *"Je me désolidarise de mon père"* (I dissociate myself from my father), a phrase he can't quite pronounce without stammering. The scene lasts less than a minute, ends as quickly as it began, and as the camera returns to Madeleine, Paul, and Elisabeth we hear the woman ask: "So, who is responsible?" *"Alors, qui est responsable?"*

This phrase, of course, is the very question posed at the end of Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog) (1955). After retracing the history of the camps, Resnais' film cuts to scenes from postwar trials, and we see in succession a Kapo and a Nazi officer denying their responsibility in the face of mass murder. It is at this moment that the narrator of Jean Cayrol's text asks, *"Alors, qui est responsable?"* And it is precisely this question that initiates the transition from past to present in Resnais' film, when the film switches from black and white documentary images

to a slow tracking shot, in color, of Auschwitz filmed by Resnais in 1954, as the narrator evokes the presence of *"nouveaux bourreaux"* (new executioners) in contemporary Europe, these new perpetrators who may very well be the French in Algeria. The importance of Resnais' film for Godard cannot be overstated. Already in *Une femme mariée* the lovers meet in a movie theatre that is playing *Nuit et brouillard*. So, when a character in *Masculin-féminin* asks, *"Alors, qui est responsible,"* it is difficult to hear this as anything other than a quote from the earlier film which, however flawed and incomplete it may seem to some today, was nonetheless one of the first films about the Holocaust and one of the first films to think about the difficult but essential role that modern cinema plays in putting together the past and the present.

To be sure, evoking the massacres of the Second World War in a scene that lasts less than a minute means eliding massive amounts of history – the names of the dead, the history of the war, the answer to the question of guilt and responsibility. Could it be that Godard's film is complicit with the very forgetting he seems to denounce? Are these fragments Godard's way of working out questions of guilt associated with his own family history? Richard Brody, one of Godard's biographers, has recently shown the extent to which right-wing politics and anti-Semitism were present in Godard's childhood: Godard recalled that during the Occupation, his grandparents listened to Vichy-run radio, that he read Lucien Rebatet's violently anti-Semitic pamphlet *Les Décombres* (The Debris) with his grandfather, and that "the execution of Robert Brasillach [. . .] in 1945 [. . .] [was a] day of mourning in the Godard house" (Brody, 2008, 6). The historian Donald Reid has revealed the extent to which Brasillach's texts reappear, unattributed, in Godard's film about the fragile memory of the Resistance, the 2001 *Éloge de l'amour* (Reid, 2007, 188). It is in this film that Godard makes the demagogic claim that since Americans have no memory of their own, they must purchase the memory of others. One might be tempted to conclude that, in his early films, Godard's own memory about the war and about his family history is evasive at best, and that the scene from *Masculin-féminin* could thus be understood as giving form to Godard's own anxious memory about the war. Furthermore, as Jean-Luc Douin pointed out in a recent article in *Le Monde*, Godard's statements about Jews and the State of Israel have veered from polemical to openly anti-Semitic.[3] Given this, should we understand the scene in the café in *Masculin-féminin* as somehow obviating responsibility, as not answering the question "Alors, qui est responsible?," and as letting irresponsibility toward the war enter into a film about France in the 1960s? *Masculin-féminin* would thus be not only another instance of the Vichy syndrome. Could it be understood as a revisionist film, one intent upon silencing the ethical and political questions about historical guilt and the perpetuation of violence raised in *Nuit et brouillard*.

In order to begin to answer these questions, we need to examine the formal and aesthetic debates concerning cinema and history in the wake of the Second World War. It is common knowledge that Godard and the filmmakers of the New

Wave were formed by a reflection on the memory of the Second World War. We know that they had all seen the newsreels from the camps projected in the movie theatres of Paris beginning in September 1945.[4] We know that they were all aware of the link that André Bazin had established in 1948 between what he called an "ethic of realism" in the new Hollywood and the wartime experience of such directors as William Wyler, George Stevens, and Frank Capra (Bazin, 1997, 5). We know that the young directors of the New Wave had all seen Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* and *Hiroshima mon amour* (Hiroshima My Love) with its story of love and collaboration, and it might be worth mentioning that, during a roundtable discussion published in the *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1959, Godard had voiced his own hesitations about what he called the "ease" with which Resnais showed pictures of the horrors of the Second World War.[5] We now know that at the very beginning of his career, Truffaut had considered making a film with Elie Wiesel on the last convoy of Jews deported from France, but that he had ultimately renounced it because he couldn't get himself to recreate in a fictional film the horrors of the camps (De Baecque, 2008, 97–98) And we know that they had seen and reacted violently to Gillo Pontecorvo's 1959 film *Kapò* (Overseer), one of the first feature films to attempt to create a fictional representation of life inside the camps.

The reception of Kapò was mixed, at best. The film was well received at the Venice film festival but was ridiculed by a number of film critics, including Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* who criticized it for allowing the "harrowing illusion of a concentration camp" to turn into a "pretentious show."[6] But it was Jacques Rivette's famous article "De l'abjection" (Abjection) published in the *Cahiers du cinéma* in June 1961, that encapsulated the extent to which the directors of the New Wave tied a reflection on history to film aesthetics.

[P]our de multiples raisons, faciles à comprendre, le réalisme absolu, ou ce qui peut en tenir lieu au cinéma, est ici impossible; toute tentative dans cette direction est nécessairement *inachevée* ("donc immorale"), tout essai de reconstitution ou de maquillage dérisoire ou grotesque, toute approche traditionnelle du "spectacle" relève du voyeurisme [. . .] Voyez cependant, dans Kapò, le plan où [Emmanuelle] Riva se suicide, en se jetant sur des barbelés electrifiés; l'homme qui décide, à ce moment, de faire un travelling avant pour recadrer le cadavre en contre-plongée, en prenant soin d'inscrire exactement la main levée dans un angle de son cadrage final, cet homme [Pontecorvo] n'a droit qu'au plus profond mépris. (Rivette, 1961, 55)

(For many, easy to understand, reasons, absolute realism, or what can take its place in cinema, is here impossible; any tentative attempts in this direction are necessarily incomplete ("thus immoral"), any attempt at reconstruction is ridiculous or grotesque, all traditional methods of producing "spectacle" seem voyeuristic [. . .] See however in Kapo, the shot where [Emmanuelle] Riva commits suicide by throwing himself on the electrified barbed wire; the man who decides at this time to make a travelling shot to reframe the corpse in a low-angle shot, taking care to exactly place

a raised hand in the corner of the final frame, this man [Pontecorvo] is only entitled to the deepest contempt.)

Rivette's article, which is also a defense of Alain Resnais' own tracking shots in *Nuit et brouillard*, condemns Pontecorvo for bringing the assured technique of genre pictures and spectacle to a historical event that cannot be contained within the framework of melodrama and spectacular dramatization. As Sam Di Iorio has written, Rivette accused Pontecorvo of "replacing intolerable events with tolerable representations" (Di Iorio, 2008, 88). The tolerable is the recognizable, that which can be understood through the aid of narrative reconstitution and disguise. Certainly, Rivette does not suggest that the war cannot be represented. Rather, he is making an ethical and aesthetic argument that remained foundational to the New Wave filmmakers in the 1960s and that is familiar to us today: the history of the concentration camps cannot be represented in the tolerable form of commercial fictional films.

Rivette's critique of the dramatization of the concentration camps gives a sense of the extent to which the filmmakers associated with the New Wave understood the representation of the war as both a historical necessity and an aesthetic difficulty. The idea of a generalized repression of the reality of the collaboration and the camps during the 1950s may indeed be an accurate description of Gaullist cultural politics, but it does not adequately describe what is at work in films of the times. To be sure, the *mode rétro* films of the 1970s would make the Occupation and Vichy visible in a way they hadn't been before, but that may have been precisely because the filmmakers in the early 1960s were hesitant about the ethical, political, and historical implications of making visible and therefore tolerable an intolerable past. Perhaps instead of such terms as "silence" and "repression" favored by Henry Rousso when he spoke of the Vichy syndrome, terms that necessarily carry the idea that the present has overcome the ignorance of previous generations, we might favor such terms as "hesitation" and "questioning" to describe the relation of the filmmakers of the New Wave, and of Godard in particular, to the violent past. For a reflection, however constrained it might have been, on the representation of the Second World War, on the specter of fascism, and on the camps was a constitutive part of the New Wave's aesthetic education. If the filmmakers of the early 1960s did not make period dramas such as *Kapò*, it wasn't because they had repressed the past or had turned their backs on history; rather, it was because these filmmakers had doubts as to the adequate form for showing this past, because the questions they posed never allowed them to adopt melodrama, dramatization or the war film genre as adequate forms for thinking about the past. This does not mean that the filmmakers of the New Wave, including Godard, were able to work out all the historical, ethical, and aesthetic questions surrounding the war, the actions of the Vichy government, and the complicity of French citizens. It does mean, however, that the war remained a presence for

this generation of filmmakers, well before the years of the *mode rétro*, before Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1973) and Truffaut's *Le Dernier Métro* (The Last Train) (1980), both of which gave the war and France's role in the deportation of Jews a more traditional narrative form.

Part of the problem may lie in the fact that in their examination of what Henry Rousso called "vectors of memory," scholars have tended to rely solely upon feature films and have glossed over critical essays, debates in film journals, and more elliptical or indirect moments in films that evoke the war in a less straight-forward way than might a blockbuster. As film scholar Adam Lowenstein has recently shown, a film such as George Franju's 1949 *The Blood of the Beast*, a docu-mentary about French slaughterhouses, needs to be read as a traumatic working through of France's own culpability in the face of the horrors of the war and "forces a reckoning with the disturbing historical events that haunt it: the long shadows of World War II, specifically the German Occupation, and the Holo-caust" (Lowenstein, 2005, 21). At times, certain postwar films, while focusing on intimate dramas, contain visual or auditory traces of the war: the fascist character in Chabrol's *Les Cousins* (1959), for instance, or Louis Malle's adaptation of Drieu la Rochelle's *Le Feu follet* (The Fire Within) (1963), or Resnais' *Muriel* (1963) which makes the equivalence between the French in Algeria and the German occupation of France, or Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (The Jetty) (1962), which includes stills from the bombing of Dresden in its narration about a postapocalyptic future. My point is that in looking for "vectors of memory" one cannot stop at historical recreations or the war film genre, in particular because the latter, as Fredric Jameson has shown about 1970s "nostalgia films," often make apparent the incompatibility between their project of recreating the past and a reflection on their historicity, that is, their conditions of production in the present (Jameson, 1991, 19).

Returning to *Masculin-féminin*, then, what can we conclude about this short scene in the café? The scene may be a fragment but the least we can say about fragments in Godard's films is that they are particularly important. Indeed, the significance of this brief scene is emphasized as we see Madeleine listening to the conversation. At the end of the scene the camera turns to Madeleine, and we experience a moment of doubling as we watch her listening to the phrase "Alors, qui est responsable?" Madeleine seems to hesitate. She is in a contemplative moment, pausing between the conversation behind her and the conversation between Paul and Elisabeth. We see her lost in thought, and attempting to under-stand the relation between the couple behind her and her friends, between the past and her life in the present. Madeleine, in this moment, emblematizes the reception of memory, the perception of history that remains open to numerous interpretations that are not yet actualized. It is through this extra moment with Madeleine that we understand that the past is not available as an actual presence – as it would seem to be in documentaries and in the *mode rétro* – nor however can it be entirely cordoned off from the present. This moment of hesitation is emblematic of the film as a whole: Madeleine's last words in *Masculin-féminin* are

"j'hésite [. . .] j'hésite" (I hesitate [. . .] I hesitate). The context of that last line has to do with her pregnancy, but her hesitation can be extended to the film's relation with the past. The image of the characters in *Masculin-féminin* is "the image of thought" to speak with Deleuze, but it is also an image that replaces the moment of recognition central to spectacular dramatizations such as *Kapò* with a hesitation about understanding the atrocities of the war. The memory of the past is fragile, in large part because the young people of 1965, in Godard's film, do not know what to do with the intolerable injustices of their parents' generation.

If Madeleine, like the film itself, remains hesitant about the past, the scene confirms its historicity in two ways. First, this scene stages the fragility of the memory of the war. Unlike contemporary films such as Claude Autant-Lara's reactionary *La Traversée de Paris* (Crossing Paris) (1956) or *Kapò* or René Clément's international extravaganza *Is Paris Burning?* (1966), Godard's film gives a sensible form to the difficulty of remembering. The memory of the war is itself fragile and incongruous, and this may indeed be another link between Godard and Georges Perec whose own experimental writing after *Les Choses* exemplifies what Susan Suleiman has called a "crisis of memory" in the postwar years (Suleiman, 2008, 34). Hesitation, partial amnesia, violent recollection, a sense of the fragility and failure in relation to the past, these are the very traits that characterize the postwar crisis of memory and Godard's own relation to the past. Precisely because it goes by so quickly, this scene stages the dialectic of remembrance and forgetting that haunts postwar France.

Second, while the film does not produce a discourse about the relation between past and present, it leads us toward a possible conclusion that has to do with the incompatible relation between the horrors of the war and the smooth functioning of economic exchange in contemporary society. The references to the Holocaust in Godard's film interrupt moments of economic exchange. If the man in the scene from *Masculin-féminin* wants to forget the past, it is so that he can complete his sexual and commercial transaction with the woman. At one point he pulls out his pen to calculate what kind of sex he can buy from the woman while still having enough money left over to visit the castles of the Loire Valley. Since his earliest films Godard has figured prostitution as the embodiment of capitalist exchange, and it is not a coincidence that it is precisely at this moment of exchange between a man and a woman that the horrors of the past resurface. The memory of the Holocaust blocks the smooth functioning of capitalist exploitation.

It is in this sense that Godard's reflections on the past touch upon the question of politics. *Masculin-féminin* is a film on the cusp of Godard's engagement with leftist politics and with the *Gauche prolétarienne* (proletarian left), and Paul's tentative communism, reduced to writing slogans on the wall and ending with his suicide, parallels the film's own political hesitations. But in his film Godard is trying to give a sensible form to the relation between the memory of the war and a critique of what he will call in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her) (1967) the "cruelty of neo-capitalism." Indeed, it is around this

time that Godard's films begin drawing equivalences between Europe's fascist past and postwar capitalism and colonialism. In the concluding scene of *2 ou 3 choses . . .* to take just this one example, we hear Godard's whispered voice-over claim that consumer capitalism has led to a forgetting of the past: "J'écoute la publicité à ma radio. Grâce à ESSO [Godard pronounces it E-S-S-O, so that we hear 'SS,'] je conduis sur la rue des rêves et j'oublie le reste. J'oublie Hiroshima; j'oublie Auschwitz; j'oublie Budapest; j'oublie le Vietnam; j'oublie le SMIG; j'oublie la crise du logement; j'oublie la famine aux Indes" (I listen to the adverts on my radio. Thanks to ESSO I drive on the street of dreams and I forget the rest. I forget Hiroshima, I forget Auschwitz, I forget Budapest; I forget Vietnam, I forget the minimum wage, I forget the housing crisis, I forget the famine in India). This narration is accompanied by images of consumer goods: Hollywood chewing gum, Ajax detergent, a transistor radio. The very crisis of memory which Godard's earlier film tracked is here shown to have its source in what Perec called the glistening universe of mercantile society.

Upon seeing such sequences, it's hard not to be troubled by Godard's instrumentalization of the past. To be sure, Godard is not alone in making these analogies. As the historian Julian Bourg has recently pointed out, in the struggle against the state and capitalism, comparisons between economic and social structures in France at the time and fascist regimes were commonplace. "Everyone" on the far left "was fighting the repressed ghost of fascism" (Bourg, 2007, 64). Bourg quotes Benny Lévy, one of the leaders of the *Gauche prolétarienne*, who famously stated that "the situation in France in 1969 was comparable to the Nazi Occupation. Faced with 'the bosses' armed gangs' police repression and the [communist party] collaborators, a 'New Resistance' had to be launched" (Bourg, 2007, 56). This principle of juxtaposing the past with the present and the idyll of mass consumption with the violence of wars was characteristic of a number of artists working at the same time as Godard. In this sense, Godard's films of the period might figure alongside the works of the artist Martha Rosler who, in her series of photomontages *Bringing the War Home* (1967–1972), put together images of the Vietnam war and middle-class life in America. One could also turn to Thomas Pynchon's 1966 novel, *The Crying of Lot 49*, which weaves together consumer culture in 1960s California, a conspiracy involving the postal service, the psychoanalyst Dr Hilarius, who, we discover, had perpetrated atrocities on Jews at Buchenwald, and a story about the ground-up bones of American soldiers in Italy. Pynchon is never explicit in his denunciations, but his novel nonetheless attempts to think through possible ties between war, in particular the Second World War, and the mass marketing of consumer goods in contemporary society.

Godard's films from the late 1960s and 1970s are of a different order, however. The hesitations, questionings, and moments of contemplation in a film such as *Masculin-féminin* are transformed into a system of analogies in the politicized films: in "ESSO" Godard hears "SS," in the film industry he sees the "Gestapo of economic and aesthetic structures in modern France,"[7] in Club Med he finds the

concentration camps, and in *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere) (1974) Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir is placed side by side with Hitler, an association that some critics have rightly deemed "simplistic and monstrous."[8] I will leave the detailed examination of these films for another time and end with this too brief conclusion: contrary to what one still hears on occasion, the past is not absent from Godard's films. The sights and sounds of the past, and of the Second World War in particular, are always present in his films, but, as Godard's critique of contemporary society hardened, the hesitations in the face of this intolerable past are transformed into polemical analogies, and the history of the destruction of Europe's Jews becomes wholly absorbed in a critique of the present. In the end one is left with a sinking feeling that Godard might have misunderstood Resnais' conclusions in *Nuit et brouillard*, and that his search for the *"nouveaux bourreaux"* of postwar society leaves us with a false alternative in which the critique of the present necessarily means using and therefore misusing the voices and violence and suffering of the past.

Notes

1   Benyamou (1962, 23–35). See, more recently, Alain Bergala: "les cinéastes de la Nouvelle Vague ont fondé leur arrivée dans le cinéma sur une amnésie nécessaire. Il leur a fallu tourner résolument le dos au passé, c'est-à-dire à la guerre, pour pouvoir être les représentants de la première génération de 'l'après-après guerre,'" (The filmmakers of the New Wave based their arrival in the cinema on a necessary amnesia. They had resolutely turned their backs on the past, that is to say, the war, to be the representatives of the first "post-post-war" generation) (Bergala, 1999, 224). This position is reiterated by Antoine de Baecque in his biography of Godard: "Longtemps, le passé n'a pas existé dans les films de Godard" (For a long time the past did not exist in Godard's films). De Baecque quotes Truffaut to support his claim: "En douze films, Godard n'a jamais fait allusion au passé, même pas dans le dialogue. Réfléchissez à cela: pas une fois un personnage de Godard n'a parlé de ses parents ou de son enfance, c'est extraordinaire. Il ne filme que ce qui est moderne" (in 12 films, Godard has never alluded to the past, not even in the dialogue. Think about it: not once has a Godard character spoken of his parents or his childhood, it's amazing. He films only that which is modern) *Godard* (De Baecque, 2010, 673–674).
2   Paige (2004, 1–25).
3   Douin (2009). See also, Ivry (2010) and Bill Krohn's (2008) review of Brody's biography (*Everything is Cinema*) in which Krohn refutes Brody's charges of Godard's anti-Semitism.
4   For a history of the projection of these newsreels, see Lindeperg (2000). See also the account of Truffaut's reaction to these newsreels in De Baecque and Toubiana (1999, 27).
5   "Il y a une chose qui me gêne un peu dans *Hiroshima*, et qui m'avait également gêné dans *Nuit et brouillard*, c'est qu'il y a une certaine facilité à montrer des scènes d'horreur, car on est vite au-delà de l'esthétique. Je veux dire que bien ou mal filmées, peu

importe, de telles scènes font de toute façon une impression terrible sur le spectateur [. . .]. L'ennui donc, en montrant des scènes d'horreur, c'est que l'on est automatiquement dépassé par son propos [. . .]. Il y a quelque chose non pas d'immoral, mais d'amoral, à montrer ainsi l'amour ou l'horreur avec les mêmes gros plans. C'est peut-être par là que Resnais est véritablement moderne par rapport à, mettons, Rossellini. Mais je trouve alors que c'est une régression, car dans *Voyage en Italie*, quand George Sanders et Ingrid Bergman regardent le couple calciné de Pompéi, on avait le même sentiment d'angoisse et de beauté, mais avec quelque chose en plus" (There is one thing that bothers me a bit in *Hiroshima*, and had also bothered me in *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog), that while it is easy to show scenes of horror, it quickly goes beyond aesthetics. I mean regardless of whether it's a good or bad shot such scenes leave a terrible impression on the viewer [. . .]. The problem, therefore, in showing scenes of horror is that they are automatically not registered by the viewer [. . .]. There is something not immoral, but amoral, in showing love or hate within the same important scenes. It is perhaps here that Resnais is truly modern compared to, say, Rossellini. But then I think that this is a regression, because in *Voyage en Italie* (Travel in Italy), when George Sanders and Ingrid Bergman look at the calcined couple at Pompeii, we had the same anguish and beauty, but with something more) Domarchi et al. (1959).

6   Crowther (1964).
7   Bontemps et al (1968–69, 22).
8   Loshitzky (1995, 50). See also Gilles Deleuze's conclusions that these images must be understood as "not an operation of association, but of differentiation" (Deleuze, 1989, 179).

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(Dé)collage

Bazin, Godard, Aragon

Douglas Smith

The aim of this chapter is to explore the relationship between Bazin and Godard through a discussion of realism and the modern art practices of *collage* and *décollage*, literally gluing and ungluing respectively, a discussion that will inevitably involve Louis Aragon, the major French theorist of *collage*. It is a commonplace in Godard criticism to associate his approach to filmmaking with *collage*. In this context, *collage* is generally seen as a radicalization of cinematic montage, the creation of meaning through the juxtaposition of independent shots, and, so the argument runs, Godard as *collage*-artist is radically opposed to Bazin as a proponent of cinema's essential realism, embodied in the temporal and spatial continuity of the deep-focus long take. What I propose to argue, however, is first, that this definition of *collage* as pure juxtaposition ignores the source of the materials juxtaposed, namely their status as found elements of reality, and second, that Godard's films are in any case perhaps better understood in terms of *décollage* rather than *collage*. Essentially, Godard's relationship to *collage* and *décollage* foregrounds the relationship between film and reality. This move potentially returns Godard to the orbit of Bazin's account of cinema as a fundamentally realist medium, but, as I hope to show, in a way that in turn alters our perception of Bazin's project.

Bazin and Godard: For and Against Realism

I want to begin by rehearsing Bazin's well-known position on realism. According to Bazin, the essence of cinema derives in the first instance from its basis in pho-

tography and photography's status as a trace of the real, the recording of reflected light on exposed film (Bazin 1985c, 9–17). As Daniel Morgan has noted, this relationship is often understood nowadays in semiotic terms borrowed from the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce.[1] According to Peirce's typology of signs, a photograph is an index, a sign generated from its original as an effect derived from a cause (like smoke from a fire):

> Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they are physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that respect, then, they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection [indexical signs]. (Peirce, 1931–1958, 159)

For the semiotic reading of Bazin, his account of the photograph emphasizes the indexicality of the recorded image, its causal relationship to a pre-existing reality before the camera: "En ce sens, on pouvait considérer la photographie comme un moulage, une prise d'empreinte de l'objet par le truchement de la lumière".

(One might consider photography in this sense as a molding, the taking of an impression, by the manipulation of light) (Bazin, 1967b: 12; 1985c, 12). So much for still photography. For Bazin, cinema's advance over photography lies in its capacity to record time in duration rather than to seize a single moment. Cinema captures a trace of the real not only in space (the disposition of people and objects before the camera, as in still photography) but also in time (the movement of people and objects, their changing relationships). Hence Bazin's preference for films that respect the spatial and temporal continuity of the real world before the camera, a respect for continuity achieved in two ways: first, through the use of deep-focus photography, with its rendering of everything within the frame in equal visibility; and second, through the exploitation of the long take, with its sustained attention to human movement and action in real time (Bazin 1967a: 23–40; 1985b, 63–80). The ultimate aim of this aesthetic for Bazin was to ensure that cinema did not reduce what he considered the essential ambiguity of human reality to a set of simplistic meanings that denied the spectator the exercise of his or her own judgment. The wider context for Bazin's aesthetic was post-war French Catholic existentialism or *personnalisme*, with its emphasis on personal responsibility and social engagement.[2] However, his emphasis on the values of freedom and choice was congenial also to postwar American liberalism, and it was by virtue of these ideological implications that Bazin's film writing was criticized from a variety of left-wing Marxist perspectives.[3]

Bazin found the values of ambiguity and freedom in a wide range of filmmakers such as Murnau, von Stroheim, Renoir, Welles and Rossellini. On the other hand, the enemies of ambiguity were for Bazin German expressionism and Soviet

montage, which in their different ways reduced and traduced reality through distortion (expressionism) or fragmentation and selection (montage). Montage in particular broke up the unity of reality and denied its ambiguity through its recombination in terms of unequivocal meaning (often political, in Soviet cinema). This meant that montage for Bazin was a necessary evil, and should only be used sparingly and only then in the service of spatial and temporal continuity.

Godard's relation to Bazin's theories is ambivalent, to say the least. In his second feature film, *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier) (1961), the photographer protagonist played by Michel Subor famously defines cinema as the "truth 24 times a second," a clear allusion to Bazin's account of the photographic basis of cinema and its relation to reality. His early films all contain experimental long takes, while in a major interview in 1962 he expressed his admiration for Bazin as the only significant film writer of his generation (Godard, 1998, 215). Further, his 1963 feature *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*) opens with a quotation attributed to Bazin: "the cinema substitutes to our gaze a world in accordance with our desires." But that attribution is of course a misattribution, and what appears to be a homage to Bazin turns out to be much more ambiguous, the putting into his mouth of words by another critic, Michel Mourlet, whose opinion he may very well not have endorsed.[4] This false quotation points then to other parts of Godard's work where Bazin's ideas are contradicted or qualified. In contrast to *The Little Soldier*, for example, *Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) (1963) expresses the greatest skepticism about the relation between mediatized images and truth; its protagonists cannot distinguish between postcards and the monuments they reproduce photographically, while one of them ends up punching his way through a cinema screen in his frustration at not being able to get a better angle of vision on the projected image of a naked woman in a bath. One of the film's messages is that a photograph is only a photograph, and not the thing itself, thus anticipating the handwritten refrain of *Vent d'est* (The East Wind) (1969), "pas une image juste, juste une image" (not a just or accurate image, but just an image). Godard's most direct confrontation with Bazin, however, occurred in the pages of *Cahiers du cinéma* in December 1956, when he responded to an article by Bazin entitled "Montage interdit" (Montage prohibited) (Bazin, 1956, 32–36) with an article of his own entitled "Montage, mon beau souci" (Montage, my beautiful concern) (Godard, 1956, 30–31). To Bazin's interdiction on montage, Godard replied with a lyrical defence, arguing that the opposition between fluid mise-en-scène and montage was false and that montage constituted an indispensable resource in all filmmaking.

Godard and Aragon: Collage

From the jump cuts of *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) (1959) on, Godard's films have been associated with an aggressive use of montage, and this emphasis on editing

has led to the description of his style as one of *collage*, or cut-and-paste, modelled on the Cubist experimentation of Picasso and Braque.[5] Early and influential anglophone critics such as Richard Roud and Susan Sontag stressed this dimension of Godard's work (Roud, 1968, 92; Sontag, 1994). The most important proponent of this interpretation in France was the poet and critic Louis Aragon, whose perspective diverged significantly from the prevailing views of *collage* within Anglo-American art criticism. Within the anglophone cultural world of the early 1960s, the dominant theoretical account of *collage* was a formalist one, developed by the American critic Clement Greenberg, who saw in *collage* the acknowledgement and exploration of the flatness of the picture plane onto which materials such as oilcloth and newspaper were pasted: "Painting had to spell out, rather than pretend to deny, the physical fact that it was flat, even though at the same time it had to overcome this proclaimed flatness as an aesthetic fact and continue to report nature" (Greenberg, 1961, 71). For Greenberg, *collage* constituted a compromise between a residual representational art and the emergence of a formalist abstraction.

In order to protect his guiding notion of the modernist autonomy of art, Greenberg largely ignored both the foreignness of the materials and their provenance. From the 1930s on, however, European critics such as Walter Benjamin and Louis Aragon had been developing a different understanding of *collage*. For both Benjamin and Aragon, *collage* was a way of integrating the material and objects of everyday life into art. To use the distinction advanced by the literary historian Peter Bürger, *collage* was not a modernist practice presupposing the autonomy of art but rather an avant-garde one that deliberately transgressed the boundary between life and art and thereby increased the social content and relevance of the latter (Bürger, 1984). In 1935, Benjamin wrote:

> The revolutionary strength of Dada consisted in testing art for its authenticity. Still lifes put together from tickets, spools of cotton, cigarette butts, that were linked with painted elements. The whole thing was put in a frame. And thereby the public was shown: look, your picture frame ruptures time; the tiniest authentic fragment of daily life says more than a painting. Just as the bloody fingerprint of a murderer on the page of a book says more than the text. Much of this revolutionary content has gone on into photomontage. (Benjamin, 1978, 229)

Aragon articulated a similar view the same year:

> En face de la décomposition des apparences dans l'art moderne, renaissait ainsi sous les aspects d'un simple jeu un goût nouveau, vivant, de la réalité. Ce qui faisait la force et l'attrait des nouveaux collages, c'était cette espèce de vraisemblance qu'elle empruntait à la figuration d'objets réels, jusqu'à leur photographie. (Aragon, 1980b, 83–84)

> (Faced with the decomposition of appearances in modern art, a new and living taste for reality was thus reborn in the guise of a simple game. What constituted

the strength and attractiveness of the new *collages* was this type of verismilitude
(*vraisemblance*) borrowed from the figuration of real objects, up to and including
photographs of them.)

Both Benjamin and Aragon advance a realist account of *collage* as distinct from
the formalist version propounded by Greenberg; for both, the essence of *collage*
lies in its appropriation and integration of elements of the real world into paint-
ing, thereby breaking the boundary of the frame that separates art from life. The
shared reference to photomontage is significant; photography, like *collage*, is under-
stood as a vehicle for the integration of the real into the field of art, and so points
to how Godard the filmmaker might be considered a *collage* artist.[6]

Louis Aragon was one of the first critics to give sustained attention to how
Godard's work might be related to *collage*. In two texts in 1965, Aragon discussed
what he called Godard's "collage cinématographique" (cinematographic collage)
in relation to *Une femme mariée* (A Married Woman) (1964) and *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot
the Mad) (1965). In the first instance, Aragon is anxious to defend Godard against
the charge of compulsive and arbitrary quotation in his films. For Aragon, Godard's
multiple references to the cinema and the history of literature and the other arts
are not examples of quotation but of *collage*, the key distinction for Aragon being
that quotation implies passive repetition while *collage* implies an active appropria-
tion of source materials with a view to an original project.[7] What appears to
hostile critics to be manic quotation is for Aragon a conscious technique used in
the service of a self-critical method where the procedures and devices of cinema
are laid bare.[8] For Aragon, *Pierrot le fou* marks a radicalization of Godard's use
of *collage*: "les collages ne sont pas des illustrations du film, ils sont le film
même" (the *collages* are not illustrations of the film, they are the film itself)
(Aragon, 1965, 8).[9]

Aragon's reading of Godard as a *collagiste* was immediately disputed by the film
critic Robert Benayoun, who saw in Godard's style a mere repetition of a cultur-
ally dominant trend towards the empty quotation of the authorities of the past,
a trend he associated with the ascendency of Gaullism and the consumer society.
According to Benayoun, Godard's films simply reflect "l'hilare système de pensée
de notre actuel régime castrateur, où le fourre-tout, méthode favorite d'André
Malraux, engendre chez nos maîtres à penser une catatonie toute voisine de la
momification" (the merry system of thought of our present castrating regime,
where the catch-all style, the favourite method of André Malraux, engenders in
our leading thinkers a catatonia verging on mummification) (Benayoun, 1966, 93).
Hence, according to Benayoun, "Godard, en assemblant un puéril scrapbook de
calembours, de réflexions stupides empruntées à ses amis, et de bonnes pages
cérébrales, passe pour dominer un matériel qui, en fait, le domine, lui, et devient
le lauréat gaulliste d'un cinéma-drugstore ou self-service" (Godard, in assembling
a puerile scrapbook of puns, stupid reflections borrowed from his friends and
pages from brainy books, passes himself off as mastering a material that in fact

masters him, and becomes the Gaullist laureate of a drugstore or self-service cinema) (Benayoun, 1966, 93). In spite of his clear dislike of Godard's films, the crux of Benayoun's disagreement with Aragon's reading of *Pierrot le fou* is their respective understandings of *collage*. For Benayoun, Aragon's definition is too elastic and ignores the fact that the value of the juxtapositions effected within *collage* works depends on the difference or distance between the elements brought together:

> Il faudrait tout de même que l'on explique à Aragon que, dans le vrai "collage," l'image poétique ne se forme qu'à partir de deux réalités distantes, lesquelles se situent l'une l'autre selon une dialectique secrète inaccessible à un simple manieur de ciseaux. Faire un collage, ce n'est pas coller n'importe quoi n'importe où. (Benayoun, 1966, 96)

> (All the same someone should explain to Aragon that in "real" *collage* the poetic image is only formed on the basis of two distant realities, whose relationship to one another is determined by a secret dialectic that is inaccessible to a simple wielder of scissors. Making a *collage* is not a matter of simply gluing anything anywhere.)

For Benayoun, then, Godard's work is disqualified as *collage* because of its apparently indiscriminate and random combinations of elements.

Given the divergent opinions voiced by Aragon and Benayoun, to what extent does Godard's work qualify as *collage*? Broadly speaking, his films might be said to operate as *collage* in two senses. First, and most obviously, Godard practises a kind of *collage* through the splicing together of shots of disparate elements, such as a woman and an advertising image. This is montage as *collage*. Second, Godard often effects abrupt or dramatic juxtapositions within the shot itself, such as placing a woman in front of a billboard advertisement and then photographing her. This is mise-en-scène as *collage*. *Une femme mariée* (1964) and *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things That I Know About Her) (1966) abound in examples of both kinds of *collage*. Montage as *collage* resembles classical Cubist practice in its reconstruction of a meaningful whole from fragments in the cutting-room. Mise-en-scène as *collage*, on the other hand, records the juxtapositions proposed in front of the camera. Montage as *collage* is closer to Benayoun's understanding of *collage*, with the proviso that Godard in his terms fails to juxtapose elements that are sufficiently different. Mise-en-scène as *collage* corresponds to Aragon's broader sense of *collage* and retains a sense of the found object or material that was so important to early *collage* (in this case, the juxtapositions that are simply found within the shot rather than imposed by montage). But this element of foundness also offers the beginnings of an alternative understanding of Godard's cinema in terms of visual arts practice, one that in certain respects represents the opposite of *collage*, namely *décollage*.

Godard and *Décollage*

The practice of *décollage* was first developed in France in the late 1940s by Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé but also taken up across Europe by artists such as Mimmo Rotella in Italy and Wolf Vostell in Germany.[10] *Décollage* works, also known as *affiches lacérées*, or torn posters, consist of defaced posters that have been removed from their original setting, mounted on canvas and displayed as artworks. The term was invented by the Surrealist and detective novelist Léo Malet in the late 1930s, occurring for the first time in the *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* (1938): "Léo Malet a proposé de généraliser le procédé qui consiste à arracher par places une affiche de manière à faire apparaître fragmentairement celle (ou celles) qu'elle recouvre et à spéculer sur la vertu dépaysante ou égarante de l'ensemble obtenu" (Léo Malet has proposed the generalization of the procedure that consists in tearing off parts of a poster in order to reveal fragments of the poster or posters underneath and in speculating on the capacity of the overall effect obtained to disorient and lead astray) (*Dictionnaire*: 9; Malet, 1969, 421). In postwar European art practice, the verb *décoller*, which literally means to unglue, refers in the first instance to the anonymous actions of tearing off posters or strips of posters through vandalism, and second to the artistic act of removing the damaged posters from their original street setting. In many ways, *décollage* is as its name suggests, the opposite of *collage*.[11] Notwithstanding the potential of *collage* to call into question the hierarchies and distinctions of traditional easel painting, the effects of *décollage* are arguably more radical.[12] Whereas *collage* may be construed as authored, constructive and additive, *décollage* presents itself as anonymous, destructive and deductive. *Décollage* produces a discordant palimpsest of public speech from layers of assertion and contestation, whereas *collage* potentially articulates the coherent private statement of an individual artist. Villeglé attributed his works to a collective "Lacéré anonyme" ("anonymous lacerated"), a collective consisting of both defacers of posters and collectors of defaced posters such as himself (Villeglé, 1969, 41). Villeglé further stressed the interventionist dimension of defacing posters, namely the interruption of the discourse of politics and advertising that occupies the walls and billboards of the modern Western city: "Par la déchirure, antidote contre toute propagande, la publicité, *condensé de civilisation*, fut introduit au domaine de l'heureusement illisible" (Through tearing, the antidote to all propaganda, advertising, *that condensed version of civilization*, was introduced to the realm of the happily illegible) (Villeglé, 1986, 47).

This articulation between the torn poster and the disruption of advertising activates another sense of the word *décollage*, namely its use in economic discourse and aviation terminology, where *décollage* means "take-off." In French, to take off (*décoller*) is literally to "come unstuck" from the ground. That the *décollagistes* were fully aware of the association with air travel was demonstrated by the fact that Raymond Hains entitled one of his early works "Décollage pour le Cinquantenaire

de l'Aéronautique" (Take-off for the Fiftieth Anniversary of Flying).[13] The German artist Wolf Vostell was later to exploit the double sense of the word further. In September 1954, Vostell was living and working in Paris when he glimpsed a newspaper headline about an air crash at Shannon airport in Ireland: "Peu après son décollage un superconstellation tombe et s'engloutit dans la rivière Shannon" (Shortly after take-off a Superconstellation falls and is engulfed in the river Shannon). For Vostell, this headline indelibly associated the notion of "take-off" with that of "coming unstuck," not just in the sense of "ungluing" but in the sense of breakdown, collapse, crash:

> what shocked me so noticeably about the report in *Figaro* as opposed to those of all other aircraft disasters was the contradiction in one word, for dé-coll-age means the take-off of an aircraft as well as the tearing away from an adhesive surface. The flying body was décolle [sic] as much by take-off as by unsticking, one word included two or more contrary happenings, thus the accident is already in the automobile as it drives, the obsolescence is already prefabricated and built in. (Vostell, 1996, 724–725)

For Vostell, the practice of *décollage* reveals in its very name the logic of consumer society and its promotion of intentionally obsolescent technology, its necessary association with disaster and death. As such, the art of the torn poster operates as a critique of a further sense of the word that names it, for, as mentioned earlier, the *décollage* of aviation technology refers by extension to economic take-off, a term given currency by the work of the American economist W.W. Rostow in the 1960s. For Rostow, take-off was one of the five stages of economic growth that issued in the age of high mass-consumption in the United States and Western Europe in the mid-twentieth century.[14] Although for Rostow the term referred to early industrialization (so France from 1830 to 1860), economic take-off was widely if mistakenly taken to designate the postwar consumer boom instead (Rostow, 1971, 13). In this context, the *décollage* of the torn poster was a satirical critique of the *décollage* of economic take-off.

Godard's work arguably relates to the postwar art practice of *décollage* in terms of both content and form. From the mid-1960s on, his films are in large measure dominated by the critique of contemporary French society and in particular its consumerist emphasis. Both he and the *décollagistes* take as their subject the same media-saturated cityscape, with its billboards, signs and posters, and both are engaged in tearing strips off French society by disrupting the public discourses of politics and advertising. While the films of the late 1960s exploit *collage* techniques, notably through the insertion of brief close-up shots of book covers whose content relates to the images displayed before and after, they also record the publicity- and propaganda-saturated environment of the modern city and its contestation through vandalism in the form of torn posters that figure in the background of the action. Further, through framing, advertising slogans, images and graphics are frequently truncated and rendered illegible or subjected to alternative readings, as

in *Made in USA* (1966) and *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*. Thus, in the latter film, an ESSO sign is reduced, none too subtly, to the more sinister acronym SS. This visual *décollage* is matched by aural *décollage* on the soundtrack, as the noise of aircraft taking off drowns out key dialogue throughout *Made in USA*. Godard then both records the *décollage* of others and practises his own form of poster defacement. With all due respect to Aragon, his work is at least as much a project of cinematographic *décollage* as of cinematographic *collage*.

Bazin, Godard, and the Index

There is a further sense in which Godard's work might be related to *décollage*, and this brings us back to Bazin and his conception of the nature of cinema. We have already seen how one standard reading of Bazin is to translate his analysis of the photographic image into the terms of Peirce's semiotics, whereby the photograph becomes the index of the reality before the camera, a trace enjoying a causal link back to its original. But, as Morgan has pointed out, this reading chooses to ignore some of the key claims that Bazin makes for the status of the photographic image.[15] For Bazin frequently refers to the image participating in the reality of its original and even speaks of the identity between photographic image and thing or person depicted: "L'image peut être floue, déformée, décolorée, sans valeur documentaire, elle procède par sa genèse de l'ontologie du modèle: elle est le modèle" (No matter how fuzzy, distorted or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model) (Bazin, 1967b, 14; 1985c, 14).

   In these terms, Bazin is actually arguing for the ontological coincidence or shared identity of image and reality; at some level, they share the same being. So the image is not just a trace but part of the thing itself. Morgan concedes that some of Bazin's formulations might result from a degree of rhetorical overstatement but chooses to take Bazin's text literally and so develops a reading of the nature of cinema along lines established by the philosopher Stanley Cavell. For Cavell, photography and cinema participate in the self-presentation of the world, allowing the elision of a distorting human subjectivity through their automatic technology: "Objects participate in the photographic presence of themselves; they participate in the re-creation of themselves on film; they are essential in the making of their appearances" (Cavell, 1979, xvi). Morgan effectively transforms Bazin into a precursor for this view and so argues for a reaffirmation of the ontological status of photography and cinema in Bazin's work, its actual participation in the real, or more accurately, in the self-presentation of the real.

   Without necessarily following Morgan's argument to its conclusion, I want to pursue the theme of ontological identity in the relations between cinema and

reality by exploring two interrelated metaphors in Bazin's writing, that of skin and touch. Tactility is a common motif throughout Bazin's writing and recurs frequently in his texts on Italian Neo-Realism. On several occasions, Roberto Rossellini is praised for his "cinematographic tact" (Bazin, 1971, 32–33; Bazin, 1985a 276–277). Here tact is both metaphorical, designating the tactfulness or sensitivity with which Rossellini deals with the real, and literal, referring to the concrete handling of material, the way in which Rossellini's films touch the physical world they represent. But in what sense can a film physically touch the world? The answer lies in part in Bazin's key early essay on "The Ontology of the Photographic Image." There Bazin famously describes the photograph as enjoying the same relationship to the real as a fingerprint does to the finger that left it behind: "L'existence de l'objet photographié participe [. . .] de l'existence du modèle comme une empreinte digitale" (The photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint) (Bazin, 1967b, 15; 1985c, 16). For Bazin, the fingerprint is not a mere trace, it actually "participates" in the reality of the finger, retains some of its reality, a layer of epidermis. It is as if the photographic image removes a layer of skin from the reality before the camera, or perhaps more accurately consists of that layer of skin.[16] This explains how Bazin could say of the films of Jean Renoir that they are made "with the skin of things" (les films de Renoir sont faits avec la peau des choses).[17] There is a sense in which cinema for Bazin is a process of stripping a layer of skin from reality, winding it up on a spool and running it through a projector. In these terms, Bazin's model of photography and cinema is one of *décollage*, of stripping off layers of reality that have their own materiality, and then representing them in a different context that makes them over into art. And if this is an accurate description of the relationship between film and reality, then Godard's work is an exercise in *décollage* not just in terms of its subject matter and mise-en-scène but at the deepest possible level of the ontology of cinema itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the notions of *collage* and *décollage* permit a renewed investigation of the relationship between Bazin and Godard in terms of the relations between cinema and reality. While Bazin and Godard may appear antagonists in their views of montage and by extension *collage*, the notion of *décollage* allows a rereading that places them in a different relation to one another and to the real. This relation to the real posits cinema as the vehicle for tearing strips off reality, not just metaphorically, in terms of critical content, but also ontologically, in terms of the implications of the photographic process itself.

As a result, Bazin's relation to the real is not necessarily one of unqualified respect held at one remove by the mechanism of the index, as the semiotic reading

suggests, but rather one of a robust tactility brought into close contact with the skin of things. Godard, then, would turn out not to be the anti-Bazinian exponent of *collage* he is often presented as, but rather a *décollagiste* whose practice bears out some of the implications of Bazin's theorizing. Ultimately, what an investigation of the relations between Bazin, Godard and *décollage* suggests is how, for all their differences, Godard and Bazin are accomplices in the cinematic act of skinning the real.

Notes

1   See Morgan (2006, 446–447), who traces the semiotic interpretation back to Wollen (1998).
2   On the place of Catholicism and existentialism in Bazin's intellectual background, see Andrew (1990).
3   See for example Sadoul (1950, 6) and Gozlan (1962).
4   See De Baecque (2003, 61).
5   On the links between collage and montage, see Hoffman (1989, 11–12).
6   See Ades (1976).
7   See Aragon (1980a, 134–135).
8   See Aragon (1965, 1, 8).
9   For a reading of *Pierrot le fou* that explores the film as an attempt to overcome sexual difference and the gap between word and image through the exploitation of *collage*, see Della Vacche (1995).
10 On *décollage* art, see Hains (2001), Duplaix (2008), Buchloh (1991), Feldman (2004), McDonough (2007), and Mesch (2000).
11 See Hoffman (1989, 6).
12 On the capacity of collage to subvert the assumptions of traditional painting, see for example, Crow (1985, 251–252).
13 See Villeglé (1969, 36; 1986, 30).
14 See Rostow (1971, 4–16).
15 Morgan (2006, 443–481). For further critiques of the semiotic reading of Bazin and the indexical status of the photograph, see Gunning (2004) and (2007).
16 In spite of some overlap in terminology, what is proposed here is a much more literal notion of cinematic tactility than that advanced by the more phenomenologically oriented theorists of "haptic" cinema. See for example Lant (1995) and Marks (2000, xi–xii).
17 Bazin (1989: 80). The standard English translation elides this particular turn of phrase.

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16

The Children of Marx and Esso

Oil Companies and Cinematic Writing in 1960s Godard

Thomas Odde

Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street* (*Einbahnstraße*) begins its critical itinerary under the heading "Filling Station," a seemingly odd choice in light of the weighty work of philosophy that preceded it, *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*. A topos many might consider empty of cultural, philosophical or political import, "Filling Station" nevertheless would provide a point of entry into an unconventional book, published in 1928, that would pursue the most pressing issues of the period: the catastrophic upheaval caused by World War I, the rise of European fascism, sudden economic inflation, the deadening effects of rationalization on life and work, and the increased organization of the social field by mass media and advertising. At stake for Benjamin was a commitment to developing inventive practices of writing that could tactically alter the current state of affairs. Seeking to counteract literary and philosophical activity beholden to "the pretentious, universal gesture of the book" (Benjamin, 1986, 61), Benjamin extols the virtues of creating

> leaflets, brochures, articles, and placards. Only this prompt language shows itself actively equal to the moment. Opinions are to the vast apparatus of social existence what oil is to machines: one does not go up to a turbine and pour machine oil over it; one applies a little to hidden spindles and joints that one has to know. (Benjamin, 1986, 61)

A supple and effective practice responsive to the moment, writing should emerge from the fabric of everyday life to fashion allegories that illuminate the present condition.

Close to a photomontage in its fragmentary and collagist presentation, and thus cinematic in its own intervention, *One-Way Street* exits an insular philosophical world and unfolds its discourse by navigating through, as Susan Buck-Morss (1991, 17) avers, the "outside world of gas stations, metros, traffic noises, and neon lights," all of which in Benjamin's penetrating analysis "rub against thought with a friction that generates cognitive sparks, illuminating the reader's own life-world'" (Buck-Morss, 1991, 17). Benjamin's combustive theoretical concoctions proceed from dialectical images in which the ephemera of everyday life connect with the depth and breadth of history and thought; they harness the volatile power and affective energy contained in neon signs, illuminated billboards, and advertising copy. Making inventive allegorical use of the cultural artifacts he encounters in the world around him, Benjamin, the writer cum mechanic or engineer, adopts a timely and critical relationship to the experience of modernity.

Although in his early period Godard was most likely unfamiliar with Benjamin's writings, I would suggest that Godard's films of the 1960s nonetheless seem to take a cue from *One-Way Street* in two crucial ways. First, Godard's collagist methods evince a strong commitment to being "actively equal to the moment" through a filmic style alchemical in its mixing of sound, writing, and image. Godard, like Benjamin, applies spurts of oil here and there in the machinery and workings of social existence and does so by emphasizing the relationship between cultural artifact and theoretical critique. His films of the period grapple with a host of contemporary concerns: the historically unrivalled production and consumption of cheap energy; colonial politics and the wars in Algeria and Vietnam; the Americanization of French culture and growth of mass consumerism. Second, the locale of the filling station, and more broadly the oil company it represents, provide a key source of fuel for Godard's poetics and politics. Almost every single film from this period contains evidence that the filmmaker discerned in filling stations valuable matter for critical work. In some instances, we witness only brief glimpses of Shell, Total, BP, or Esso fuel pumps or corporate logos that populate a film's mise-en-scène. Other inscriptions carry significant narrative force, as in the brutal kidnap of Bruno Forrestier at a BP station in *Le Petit soldat* (Little Soldier) (1960), the climactic car crash in *Contempt* (1963) at a Mobil stop south of Rome, the playback of propaganda audiotapes inside a garage in *Made in U.S.A.* (1966), or the filching of a Ford Galaxy under the sign "Total" in *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad) (1965). Furthermore, films including *Two or Three Things I Know about Her* (1966), *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) (1967), *Weekend* (1967), and *Le Gai savoir* (Joy of Learning) (1968) make noteworthy stops at gas stations or embed oil company icons in their discourse to stage self-conscious reflections on politics, consumerism, and image culture. Whether a detail in the frame apprehended almost by chance, a site of narrative development, or a trope meant to spur self-reflexive thought, oil companies and filling stations "brand" the image and figure prominently in Godard's early period. They inflect the image with everyday artifacts proliferating in French cities and the countryside, and like

Benjamin's neon signs and traffic noises catalyze broader reflection on salient contemporary issues.

In addition to its frequent presence within narrative context or as a chance detail detected in the image, the filling station sign or oil company insignia yields verbal-visual material incorporated into Godard's poetic and essayistic sensibility. Corporate iconography becomes part and parcel of a unique notion of filmic writing that Godard felt fundamental to his art. In an interview from 1962, Godard stressed that filmmaking and writing partake of the same labor: "I think of myself as an essayist, producing essays in novel form or novels in essay form: only instead of writing, I film them" (Godard, 1986, 171). He, like other critics at the *Cahiers du cinéma* under the editorship of André Bazin, extended film criticism into filmmaking practice. New Wave filmmakers inscribed a literary and essayistic dimension in their films.[1] In his seminal essay "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra-Stylo*," originally published in 1948 and highly influential in the *Cahiers* circle, Alexandre Astruc theorized a cinematic language that would be as flexible in range of expression as its literary counterpart.[2] The filmmaker does not provide pictures for the script; rather, Astruc argued, "The filmmaker/author writes with his camera as a writer writes with his pen" (Astruc, 1968, 22). Ideas, thoughts, and relations, he felt, can be translated (or traced) into (or onto) images through movement, as a novelist does with his or her pen.

Tom Conley's concept of the film hieroglyph takes up Astruc's figure of the camera-pen to highlight how cinematic writing develops when image, writing in the image, and sound blend creatively:

> Implicit in the concept of *caméra-stylo* is a film hieroglyph, a writing that unites and divides word and image; that invokes memory to recall analogous forms of legibility and meaning, which serve and contradict what is before our eyes; that fashions rebuses or unforeseen combinations of pictures and writing that are controlled neither by the film nor by the viewer. (Conley, 1991, xxv)

By creating tensions between word and image, film demands that the reader apprehend or decipher the image through movement. Film images don't just mimetically represent the world out there, they also inscribe a written dimension seen in the movement of shapes and letters, the convergence of speech and writing, and the interaction between image, writing in the image, and sound.[3] Viewed as a site of textual play, the screen becomes legible and not simply representational, so that readers creatively juggle acts of seeing, listening, and reading, rather than passively consuming the images it offers. Because oil companies and gasoline service stations form uncanny hieroglyphs in Godard's discourse, I term cinematic writing in such moments "*petrolglyphic*." Close study of how petrolglyphs imbue Godard's cinematic writing and how in turn this writing probes prevalent tensions found in early 1960s France will be pursued in this chapter.

Deux ou trois choses que je sais de Shell

Petrolglyphic writing essays a world in rapid transformation and responds to a moment suffused by the strangeness of words and things from elsewhere. French postwar filmmakers often displayed a marked fascination with American automobiles and commodities. As Kristin Ross argues in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (Ross, 1995), postwar French films struggle with a third world war, a cultural war launched by the United States and waged with automobiles and films.[4] History repeats itself: the Allied invasion of Normandy returns with the landing of the alloyed steel of automobiles and other American mass-produced durable goods. French filmmakers began to work out and work through the experience of Americanization – the rapid shift to Taylorist and Fordist production methods, and the assimilation of the speed and timelessness of modernity – via the automobile, the windscreen of which functions as a mirror reflecting broader cultural and economic shifts.

Equally important, petrolglyphs permeate the frame along the autoroutes and busy streets coursing through Godard's cinema. The filmmaker's windscreens may reflect history and denote a captivation with objects from America, as Ross sees it, but they also *screen* an economy of writing afforded by automotive travel and mobile images. Filled with moving shapes and forms, the landscape encountered while driving opens a book where letters, figures, and images circulate and pass before the driver's (and reader's) eyes. When viewing Godard's films, he or she takes note of how the importation and translation of things and images of foreign stamp mold a scriptural idiom particular to the director. Petrolglyphs invite readers to see in cars and filling stations not only symptoms of Americanization but crucial elements within a filmic discourse deciphered by attention to wit, puns, and verbal-visual interplay screened through spaces traversed by automobiles.[5]

Consider our first glimpse of Odile (Anna Karina) in *Band of Outsiders* (1964) and how cars, oil companies, and desire intermingle and circulate through operations of wit. The two male protagonists, Franz (Sami Frey) and Arthur (Claude Brasseur), navigate their Simca open convertible through a dreary Paris suburb. Espying his object of desire and future partner in crime, an excited Franz cranes his neck above the windshield to better his view. The subsequent long shot shows Odile pedaling her bicycle ostensibly toward the pair. Oncoming traffic, including an Azur tanker that forms a portmanteau word seemingly fusing Franz and Arthur's gaze and desire, whizzes by behind Odile and obstructs our view of the building façade opposite the camera. A let-up in the flow of cars affords Odile the opportunity to turn her head and take in, and we through her relay, the graffiti and posters that at first glance blend comfortably with the surroundings but in fact map the entire film. At the far left of the frame, we see two identical posters for the Simca 1300 and 1500 models; at the far right, a poster advertising *"L'Oiseau bleu"*; between them, a billboard filled largely with white space, save a rounded

object in the middle. The graffiti puns *"Oui, c'est Shell que j'aime!"* (Yes, It's Shell that I love) and spans much of the middle third of the image. It appears to issue from the Simca grill, proof of what oil companies have been telling consumers for years: not only do humans prefer one commodity over another, so do commodities themselves. Simcas prefer *"Shell red"* to *"Oiseau* (or Esso) *bleu"*[6] or *"Azur* azure," just as Franz and Arthur prefer she (*elle,* or Odile) to other women.

The narrative that follows performs an endless shell game – best embodied by the musical chairs sequence in the café and the migrating money that is never in its expected place – with exchanges and substitutions driving it forward. The director too catches his audience off-guard by playing a glyphic shell game with images, writing in the image, and sound. A signature emerges when below the Simca posters we discern the names "Godard & Rimeau." Who loves whom in this film? Simcas love Shell gasoline? Godard loves Karina? Franz and Arthur love Odile? Viewers love any or all of the three? Through the pun, a Godardian knot of wit tangles narrative concerns, the subject of enunciation in the film, and the director's own love life with his star and commodified image, Anna Karina. The petrolglyph attests to a form of cinematic writing that at once displaces meaning, like the shell game's mobile pea, yet summarizes the concerns of an entire film, a game in which desire, money, writing, and characters rotate through the narrative and image. Part of the fabric of everyday life, the graffiti and posters in the shot turn automotive movement and commodified culture, represented by the Simcas and their brand of choice, into key elements of a broader circuit of writing.

Across several films Godard will continue to tip corporate icons into the image in order to create a highly mobile form of cinematic writing. His second film, *Le Petit soldat*, inscribes oil firm insignias to fashion petrolglyphs that focus concerns on contemporary politics, namely the war in Algeria. Drawn from the anonymous spaces of Total and BP gas stations, petrolglyphic writing riddles the image with effects of colonial conflict that Godard felt unable to depict directly. A brief pit stop there will provide a transition and point of entry into *Pierrot le fou*, a film richly filled with petrolglyphs that critically engage with the war in Vietnam and consumerism through critique of the Esso brand and its marketer, Standard Oil of New Jersey.

Le BP Soldat

Initially banned by the French government for its scenes of torture and overt references to the war in Algeria, *Le Petit soldat* solders petrolglyphs to a story that blends political intrigue and elements of film noir. Perhaps taking a cue from Samuel Fuller's *Pick-up on South Street* (1953), a film that grafts noir style to a then timely narrative about Cold War operatives, Godard transposes the ambiguity and cruelty of noir into a European political context, with the struggle for Algerian independ-

ence its narrative backdrop. In telling its tale of colonial struggle conducted by covert agents in Geneva, the film offers things that to its viewers and protagonist, Bruno Forrestier, "don't add up": double crosses, a prototypical femme fatale's manipulations, sadistic torture, and the machinations of secret organizations that foster a sense of paranoia. In addition, the protagonist's voice-over narration, the night-time scenes shot with minimal or high-contrast lighting, and the predilection for location shooting instead of studio soundstage firmly situate Godard's film in a world borrowed from and screened through postwar Hollywood. Equally important are the numerous scenes that take place in automobiles and filling stations. They inscribe spaces commonly seen in noir, indicative of postwar decentralization of the urban core and the growing network of highways, while simultaneously opening the image to petrolglyphic play that summarizes the film's overall focus on tensions between France and Algeria, and the difficulty of representing those tensions.

Consider how, early in the film, automotive and textual movement interact as Bruno, squeezed between two right-wing terrorists in the backseat of a sedan, shuttle through suburban Geneva. Tinged with noir tough-guy traits, the pair informs Bruno of his assigned task: political assassination. As the dialogue progresses, the camera cuts between interior and exterior shots of the auto, allowing the viewer to take in the semi-rural countryside they navigate through. At one point in a long shot the car approaches, and we see in the upper left-hand corner of the frame a "Total" sign situated atop a tall, slender pole. The camera proceeds to follow the auto's left-to-right course via a very rapid pan, characteristic of the film's edgy style, to capture the other end of the Total station. Like a postage stamp, the word "Total" is now affixed in the upper right-hand corner of the frame as the car recedes from view. Signaling drivers approaching from either direction, the noticeable marker, rhymed graphically and framed to attract our attention, ascribes totality and completion to a camera movement that highlights doubled forms (the twinned signs) and interchangeability of terms (two totalities exchanged suddenly by swift panning). Product placement in the frame effectuates textual and formal displacement that questions whether meaning or genre can be firmly fixed spatially.

Part of the growing system of the autoroutes and autostrade refashioning the postwar European landscape, the gas station provides the texture of a placeless place in any automotive itinerary. "Its very ubiquity allows the motorist to screen out its image. The gas station embodies architectural and cultural dimensions that most of us tend to overlook" (Vieyra, 1979 xiii). An in-between space normally "screened out" of driver perception and often in film narratives about automotive journeys, the gas station, however, crops up frequently in film noir. Viewers familiar with Hollywood film noir will recall how *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Tay Garnett, 1946), *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946), *Detour* (Edgar G. Ulmer, 1945), and *Crime Wave* (André De Toth, 1954) among others commence when an automobile approaches a

service station. Countless other noirs – including *Decoy* (Jack Bernhard, 1946), *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946), *Impact* (Arthur Lubin, 1949), *They Live by Night* (Nicholas Ray, 1949), *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949), and *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1954) – make narratively important pit stops in the milieu or have their characters find employment there. Emblematic of what Edward Dimendberg terms "centrifugal space" in the noir cycle, such locales evince growing anxieties in the late 1940s and early 1950s about "the uncertainty produced by a spatial environment increasingly devoid of landmarks and centers and often likely to seem permanently in motion" (Dimendberg, 2004, 172), as opposed to the sturdy granite and steel edifices found in urban centers. Dispersion, speed, and mass communication characterize this nascent spatiality of late modernity. The centrifugality of film noir space – with its emphasis on anonymous or non-descript places, such as filling stations, auto courts, road-side taverns, and grimy diners, inevitably shadowed by the potential for crime – de-centers and fragments what once appeared as solid, stable and coherent. Equally significant, the textual space within the frame takes on a polycentric character, as writing in the image asks viewers to read as well as see a mobile frame, rather than merely consume the images offered.

Godard here and across the 1960s makes frequent trips to the filling station topos both to revive and continue the tension in noir underscored by Dimendberg, as well as to document a changing landscape increasingly (un)settled by icono-graphic writing presented to consumers. In a film so insistent about playfully recasting Hollywood genre and idiom, both the scene and "Total" sign would appear to conflate Switzerland and film noir spaces. This de-centering of place – whether as "screened out" postwar centrifugal locale, as "screened in" intertextual reference to Hollywood noir, or as writing in the image legible in movement – renders filmic representation highly unstable and open to polyvalent readings.[7] Centrifugal spatiality is invoked in the numerous car journeys, filling station stops and train journeys that are folded into the frame. The film's setting proves germane to thinking of the film in terms of in-betweeness. Bruno notes that Geneva is a city divided by Lake Leman, a point underscored by the many bridges and passages he traverses on foot or by car. On a greater scale, Geneva is situated between Paris and Algiers, France and Algeria, already a space extrinsic to the battleground and an elsewhere in relation to the two warring sides. The reference to the Total brand suggests Franco-Algerian relations, as well. Total is marketed by *Compagnie Française des Pétroles* (CFP), a firm owned in part by the French government and supplied throughout its history by abundant crude oil and natural gas found in Algeria. Like most integrated international oil corporations, it crosses numerous political, spatial, and cultural boundaries, and in this case colonial ones too.

The film's political perspective proves as difficult to pin down as its spatial and textual meaning. The bookend "Total" signs captured on each side of the station lot invite both Bruno and viewer to totalize elements of a film and political state of affairs saturated by duplicity, indefiniteness, and confusion. Filmic writing alle-

gorizes and summarizes the stakes of representing politics and colonial struggle in a world muddled by uncertainty. Godard intended the film to puzzle: "Since it is a film about confusion, I had to show it. It appears throughout, and it is experienced by the hero, who discovers both the O.A.S. and the F.L.N. quote Lenin. Moreover, my character, often theoretical, increases the confusion by seeking in a sense to simplify things."[8] A filmmaker who felt obligated to "bear witness to the period [through the war in Algeria]" yet unsure which side to take, or rather bewildered by the overall colonial situation, Godard produced a text marked by violence and doubled forms that shadow the little soldier lost in the fog of war. Bruno and viewer frequently slide between two worlds, between two totalities that through a whip pan can suddenly exchange places or textually communicate by verbal and visual proximity of glyphic material.

Space and language become imbricated as the film unfolds and bridge the gap between legibility and visibility. Petrolglyphic writing resists totalization of meaning and fosters perplexity when Bruno, with a pair of friends in tow, receives coded instructions to proceed to the Geneva train station (*gare*). Bruno's voice-over reflects that his passengers misheard him and thought he had said "*guerre* [war]. I said it was the same thing." Even though Bruno's eventual trip to the *gare* does further the aims of French Intelligence and perpetuates a cruel *guerre* waged against leftist educators and public figures, "war" and "station" are equivalent only as an effect of punning. The mix-up between words and worlds is further complicated when at the moment we hear Bruno say "*guerre*," we see a BP service station and read the word "*gar*age" before an abrupt and spatially jarring cut shows the car, in high angle, traversing a bridge. Through hearing (*gare* or *guerre*), seeing (the auto garage), and reading ("garage"), viewers discern a petrolglyph that attests to the film's baffling weave of events and language. Paronomasia and homonyms indicate that any attempt to totalize the film's politics must reckon with its verbal-visual interplays. Whereas the homonym *gare/guerre* figuratively embeds an unfixed or uncertain location in a broader terrain of warfare, the BP garage suggests that through petrolglyphic punning any space in the image or any topos in the narrative may be a potential site of international conflict. The indefinite spatial nature implied by centrifugality and allusion to Hollywood noir is doubled by a textual indeterminacy that makes "war" legible in the film's locales (trains, highways, garages), yet directly visible nowhere in the image.

In sum, the spatial and scriptural uncertainty discussed show that *Le Petit soldat* does not necessarily fail to depict colonial struggle with clarity and insight, as Godard feared. In the film war seeps into the image through rebuses and glyphs, fragments of a conflict often waged elsewhere and outside the representation. Rather than presenting a spatiality extensive or stable enough to circumscribe the complexity of the Algerian war, and thus achieve a totality of representation and implicitly a totality of meaning, the film instead stresses fragmentarily how war and trauma entrench themselves in the image through petrolglyphic writing. Bruno's deferral of carrying out his task, on which much of the narrative hinges,

ultimately catches up to him at a BP garage. Filmed at night and permeated by film noir aesthetics, especially the minimal lighting, Bruno is violently abducted by agents working for the F.L.N. Bruno's earlier off-hand remark, in voice-over, that conflated *"guerre"* and *"gare"* suddenly takes on grave consequences; the initial site of textual bewilderment, the profound but slight difference separating the two words, takes on new meaning. This BP *ga*rage in Geneva becomes a temporary war zone, where F.L.N. and French Intelligence operatives finally cross paths and wage their battle. A prelude to the ensuing scenes of torture that, to French authorities, warranted a censorship label, the brutal kidnap stages what we had heard, read, and seen earlier. Subtle differences in language achieved through wordplay possess profound and perhaps deadly ramifications. Whereas the slight difference of *gare/guerre* allowed Bruno to defer action aiding his cause, the conjunction of *garage/guerre* marks the moment when his body becomes written, and legible, in political terms.

I now turn to *Pierrot le fou* to show how a poetics and politics of petrolglyphic inscription trains its sights on Vietnam by combining and exploding fragments of writing. The film introduces a recurrent character in Godard's oeuvre, the Esso tiger, while re-citing the "Total" sign seen in *Le Petit soldat*. It begs viewers to totalize a world shot through with warfare and madness.

Total Cinema

Akin to *Le Petit soldat* in its experimentation with miscible petrolglyphs that simultaneously invite and deny totalization of meaning, *Pierrot le fou* deploys a textual practice that stitches the colonial war in Vietnam into its fabric of writing. The film's eponymous hero, played by Jean-Paul Belmondo, abandons his dead-end marriage and job prospects at Standard Oil and escapes Paris with the baby-sitter and femme fatale, Marianne (Anna Karina). In keeping with the outlaw-lovers-on-the-run noir narrative framework, the pair travels south toward Italy by car, a journey peppered with stops at service stations. A fill-up at Total departs from generic course, however, and veers into a violent Laurel and Hardy burlesque comedy routine. Pierrot jokingly asks the station attendant to "put a tiger in my tank," erroneously citing the well-known Esso brand slogan. Unable and unwilling to pay, Marianne crushes the attendant beneath the hood of the red Peugeot as he checks the oil. A second appears, prompting Marianne to tell him they will instead pay with the sun (*soleil*) before dispatching him with a light punch to the chest. Pierrot comically plays the pugilist and spars with a third Total employee, who roiled emerges from inside the station. Visible behind the boxers is the familiar Total company poster found in its gasoline outlets across Europe, in which flags of different nations unfurl to create a patchwork carpet of highway through an undulating green landscape. Its message of nations and consumers united

under one ubiquitous company brand, already undermined by Pierrot's mistaken slogan, will be tested in ensuing shots.

As the heroes drive off, the camera pans with the car and stops its itinerary to fill up the frame with the station's red "Total" sign. Marianne and Pierrot, in voice-over accompanied by paintings on the image track, immediately offer divergent opinions on how best to summarize the film: she argues it's a love story, while he counters that an adventure film is more apropos. It is both and neither, and while those two genres are prevalent, others are as well, including the violent comedy routine just witnessed at the pump and the political thriller filled with talk of gun-running that defines the next scene. Issues of genre, theory, and filmic writing are taken up in this moment. Given the incessant jostling between genres and, as we shall see, verbal and visual registers, "Total" would seem to bear on two comple-mentary problems: How can cinema capture the totality of life when it must proceed through genres, through categories of art that by necessity are partial and apt to produce multivalent readings (are we seeing a love story or adventure film, comedy sketch or politically committed art film)? More self-reflexively, how can thought totalize and unify the heterogeneous series of sounds and images that compose a film?

The "Total" glyph tempts viewers to apply Hegelian dialectic to make sense of the film's narrative, montage, and heterogeneous writing style. In this view con-tradictions and tensions explored by Godard would ultimately be overcome by unified meaning or resolved by narrative denouement. Inspired by the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein presented a quite remarkable application of hieroglyphic writing to cinema, arguing,

> The point is that the copulation (perhaps we better say combination) of two hiero-glyphs of the simplest series is to be regarded not as their sum, but as their product, i.e., as a value in another dimension, another degree; each, separately, corresponds to an *object*, to a fact, but their combination corresponds to a *concept*. From separate hieroglyphs has been fused – the ideogram. (Eisenstein, 1965, 25).

Montage unites two different hieroglyphs, which in turn create the ideogram that totalizes the summoned associations. The concept both subsumes and determines the differentiation of parts into a greater whole. The art of editing entails properly transmuting liquids into gas, so that one can compare montage and its inner work-ings to that of a high-performance motor:

> If montage is to be compared with something, then a phalanx of montage pieces, of shots, should be compared to the series of explosions of an internal combustion engine, driving forward its automobile or tractor: for, similarly, the dynamics of montage serve as impulses driving forward the total film. (Eisenstein, 1965, 38)

Although I have amalgamated his figures somewhat, Eisenstein nevertheless cata-lyzed his cinema through editing that relates neutral pieces of raw material to

ignite meaning through a newly forged accord. Montage acts as an organizer of images and meanings, unifying them under the identity of the concept, and his petrolglyphic analogy nicely captures the explosive, sublating power harnessed by dialectical thought. Although often as dynamic as that of Eisenstein, Godardian montage proceeds quite differently. If one can totalize the sum of a film's parts, it is only by accounting for the utter difference that separates them.

In contrast to Eisenstein's totalizing and sublating petrolglyphic montage, Godard's editing maximizes difference and heterogeneity between verbal and visual registers. A key petrolglyph occurs as Marianne and Pierrot, strapped for cash, stage the Vietnam War as a mock U.S.O. show for American tourists and servicemen. Burning petrol on a calm ocean represents napalm bombing; Marianne speaks pseudo-Vietnamese on the soundtrack, a voice perhaps testifying to atrocity; a hand with a wooden stick wedged between its fingers stands in for a fighter jet. Dressed in a US naval officer's uniform and waving at turns a service revolver and whiskey bottle, Pierrot aggressively speaks directly to the camera. His fragmentary "lines," spoken in English, seem to issue from the barrel of a gun and lips of the bottle: "Sure . . . Yeah, yeah . . . New York . . . Oh, yeah . . . Hollywood . . . Communist." Non-diegetic sounds of bombs exploding are heard as Marianne, dressed as a Vietnamese peasant, agitatedly reacts to Pierrot and ostensibly the explosive noises by screeching at the camera. As the din of verbal-visual conflict peaks, the film out of nowhere cuts to the face of the Esso brand iconic tiger in close-up followed by, in extreme close-up, the bold and blood-red letters "SS" of an Esso sign. Across the cut, spurts of non-diegetic machine-gun fire amplify the incongruity produced on the image track. Vietnam, Esso tiger, "SS": The relationship between terms is perplexing to say the least. I would suggest that two interpretive paths avail themselves to explain it.

In his 2004 essay "Godard, Hitchcock, and the Cinematographic Image," Jacques Rancière asserts that Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1989–1996) proceeds through a delinking of iconic and key images from individual films in order to re-link them as components of a greater (cinema) history. Godard's difficult work chronicles the twentieth century as isomorphic with cinema, underscoring how the history of one is perhaps impossible to tell without the other. Associational paths and verbal-visual connections single out highly charged moments in cinema and embed them within patterns of broader historical and hermeneutic significance. Two methods of relinking or rebinding images become apparent in the director's historical project, one dialectical that "stresses the homogeneity of elements that are placed together to reveal the connection of things hidden behind everyday reality" and the other symbolic, which "also brings together distant realities but it does so in order to produce an analogy, a familiarity of the strange."[9] The former unearths the dark underside shadowing the familiar and exposes, as one possible articulation, the secrets that power conceals to maintain its grip; the latter uncannily creates familiarity by comparing disparate things or ideas, much

as metaphor does. Respectively, the dialectical way of montage makes the familiar strange; the symbolic way makes the strange familiar. Although at first blush these two paths seem quite divergent in orientation and direction, they also often overlap to the point of indiscernibility. The Vietnam/Esso/"SS" petrolglyph implies both tendencies as it intertwines them in twists of meaning. Viewers make sense of the film by working in two directions at once, grasping the dialectical critique of oil companies complicit with the perpetration of modern-day atrocity and the symbolist force of writing that figuratively unleashes tremendous energy and disperses the painful fallout of warfare.

Few figures insist and persist so strongly in Godard's work in the 1960s as the Esso tiger coupled with the letters "SS." Suggesting a link between the atrocities committed by the German *Schutzstaffel* and the consumption of a well-recognized oil brand, the image catalyzes a potent mixture of politics, visual culture, and colonial affairs. *La Chinoise* restages the Vietnam War scene from *Pierrot le fou*, this time with Juliet Berto dressed in rags and eating rice with chopsticks, her head crowned by a conical lampshade serving as a Vietnamese peasant's hat. Attached to strings, model airplanes of American and MIG fighters hover over her. She sits in the lower right-hand corner of the frame, dwarfed by the giant Esso tiger that eats up the upper portion of the image. As the cartoon feline perches atop a gas pump offering "Napalm Extra" and "Supercarburant," its cheerful grin becomes ironic as its eye-line takes in airplane dogfight, the victim Berto, and the red letters "SS" beside her. Nazism, napalm, and colonial conflict interact through image and writing.

A powerful dialectical image and petrolglpyh that resonates strongly with *Pierrot le fou*, this figure collapses into one image the key concerns of the U.S.O. scene. A condensed or short-hand version of its predecessor, it too points to the decisive role oil companies played in the development of napalm and other technologies of mass destruction. As petrochemical giant I.G. Farben enabled the creation of Zyklon B, the toxic gas used in concentration camps, petrochemical companies have long profited from manufacturing death. When the Second World War began, the relationship of Standard Oil of New Jersey, marketer of Esso gasoline, to Nazi Germany and I.G. Farben was questioned by many, most notably Thurman Arnold of the United States Justice Department. As Roger and Diana Olien note, Arnold's persistent claims of unsavory agreements between the two, as well as bold claims of Standard Oil supplying "the Axis with gasoline by selling it to German and Italian airlines in Brazil against State Department admonitions" (Olien and Olien, 2000, 233) had a profound effect on a public already accustomed to distrusting the Standard. The Oliens tersely summarize public sentiment toward the company: "To the casual reader [of the popular press], Standard Oil was a Nazi collaborator" (Olien and Olien, 2000, 233). Standard Oil also helped the US Chemical Warfare Service develop jelled gasoline that allowed the flammable napalm to stick to its target rather than splash off of it, thus maximizing its lethal

capacities. In *Oil for Victory*, under the heading "Oil Specialized as a Killer," the editors of *Look* magazine gush about the incendiary ingenuity of jellied gasoline. Developed by oil industry technologists,

> the flaming jelly splatters in all directions, sticking to everything, burning furiously. . . . The same jellied gasoline was the prime ingredient of the incendiary bombs that burned out whole sections of Japanese cities in the effective B-29 fire raids. (Editors of *Look*, 1946, 20)

Another key ingredient to allied victory, toluene too provided the stuff nightmares are made of: "Had we not discovered how to make petroleum yield toluene for TNT, saturation bombing of German cities would have been only a dream" (Editors of *Look*, 1946, 33). Prominent oil personnel also have left tainted legacies. Henri Deterding, the man who thrust Shell into the forefront of oil manufacture, was a committed Nazi. Niko Bensmann, a Texaco man in Germany, supplied the Nazis with reports about the American aircraft industry as it geared up for war, while in 1940 a prominent Texaco lawyer and advisor, Gerhard Westrick, dissuaded American companies from helping Britain in the war effort.[10] The connection established between warfare and petroleum manufacturers dialectically exposes a rather dubious history, the dark undercurrent of oil that fuels military campaigns and mass murder of innocent civilians.

To go a step further, as Godard does at the end of *Two or Three Things I Know about Her*, the oil company produces not only weapons of death, the napalm used in Vietnam or petrochemical compounds in Nazi Germany, but also the means of forgetting the event of death and those who benefit from it:

> I listen to commercials on my transistor. Thanks to E-S-S-O, I serenely take the road of dreams and forget all else. I forget Hiroshima and Auschwitz. I forget Budapest. I forget Vietnam and minimum wages. I forget the housing crisis. I forget the famine in India. I've forgotten it all, except that since it takes me back to zero, I have to start over from there.

Behind the congenial Esso tiger icon, crafted by a former Warner Brothers' cartoonist, Bob Jones, Godard dialectically shows how consumption of oil, and perhaps of images themselves, in fact triggers the production of war.[11] As consumers not only of petroleum but also of the branded images and advertisements oil companies create as marketing tools, we pay the price both at the pump and in our (collective) memory banks. "The road of dreams" fueled by fantasies of escape and speed, a feeling cultivated by automobile makers and oil concerns, outruns the cruel reality of destructive energy unleashed by petroleum manufacture and the unacceptable losses it creates.

By contrast, the symbolist path links disparate figures to explore the mysterious connections that bring them together.[12] Its fundamental operation is wit, so that

Esso (or "S-O") and SS figure of the U.S.O. show scene is located within a broad band of hieroglyphic writing that frequently surfaces across *Pierrot le fou*. A brief sample of Godard's wit will suffice to demonstrate the verbal-visual elements at play. In Marianne's flat, the scripted "OASiS," the "OAS" in blue and the "iS" in red, would seem to suggest a safe-haven from the intrigue and violence that follows in the film. The fragment *"so"* from a poster for the director's *Le Petit soldat* and letters of "oasis" are scrambled when we later see Pierrot squashed against a red billboard that reads, with letters in white, "S.O.S." Postcards of Picasso paintings stuck to the white walls fold a modern art museum into the space filled with signifiers of war (the barrels of a dozen or so assault rifles resting against the wall, the scripted "OAS") and film noir (in Marianne's bed a dead body with scissors inserted in its bloody neck, a figure so strange and straight out of *The Big Sleep*). Throughout the film, the soundtrack stresses sibilant sounds heard in expressions (*"Allons-y, Alonso"*), names (Mr and Mrs Esp*ress*o, Mr *Sos*thene in a nod to Céline), literary works (occasional reference to *"Un Saison en enfer"* (A Season in Hell) by Rimbaud), as well as speech (as Pierrot and Marianne escape Paris, we hear repetitions of *"en silence"* (silently), which verbally conjures the intimidating sniper rifle with silencer we see, and the emphatic *"partir en vitesse"* (Go quickly)). Attentive readers note a perpetual shuffling of letters across verbal, scriptural, visual, and intertextual registers that catalyze an obsessive play with language.

Filmic references continue the anagrammatic play with Esso and SS. Although based on Lionel White's novel *Obsession*, *Pierrot le fou* owes as much to James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, the narrative of which unfolds at a service station, and Visconti's version of the novel, *Ossessione* (1943). When Frank arrives unexpectedly at Marianne's, Pierrot distracts him by palming the top of a bust and engaging in friendly chitchat. Frank's head and the bust, an uncanny doppelganger of the visitor, are positioned as bookends in the screen. The compositional balance of the twin heads, two globes or circular fragments offered as totalities, becomes suddenly altered when Marianne clubs Frank over the head with a champagne bottle, dispersing liquid and glass everywhere. At this explosive moment, viewers recall not only *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, in which the femme fatale Cora similarly clubs her husband on the skull, but also Irving Pichel's *O.S.S.* (1946). A noir spy thriller that pits agents from the Office of Strategic Services, the World War II Allied intelligence-gathering service, against their Nazi counterparts, *O.S.S.* fashions exploding glyphs to depict the violence of war waged in coded writing and simulacra. Assigned the important task of destroying a strategically significant bridge, Geraldine Fitzgerald creatively sculpts a bust of a German general out of plastic explosives and detonates it when the train traverses the viaduct. Doubled forms populate the film: the doppelganger bust of the general, the game of espionage between the SS and OSS, the fabrication of bone (*os*) made of C-4, and the SOS signals repeatedly sent by distressed agents. The blast emblematizes the film's style of filmic writing, as shards of words seen in dispersed letters fall out to fill the frame.[13]

Wit and reference inscribe the effects of war across the surface of the screen. Protean figures and letters shuffle in maddening arrays of allusion, writing in the image, figure, and speech. Esso, SS, "OASiS," "S.O.S.," *O.S.S.*, Espresso, *Ossessione*, and so on establish a world constituted by incessantly metamorphosing forms and explosions of sense. Fragments of filmic writing scatter across the frame, and, to keep up, viewers must perform something akin to hermeneutic triage, assembling strands and series of meaning from an anagrammar of splintered language. A double operation of montage disperses and fuses simultaneously. On the one hand, letters and figures gravitate toward one another from disparate segments of the film, as the "S.O.S." sign congeals with "OASiS" or the Esso tiger with Mr and Mrs Espresso. The scramble invites viewers to follow associative paths sparked by the jumbled fragments the film brings together. Confounding attempts at linear reading, the path of "good sense," *Pierrot le fou* agglomerates shards of writing held together by difference. On the other hand, volatile mixtures disperse those same fragments. Textual fallout, the effects of violent collisions and detonations, is discerned everywhere in the frame and arrests narrative movement. Earlier we saw how in *Le Petit soldat* the Algerian war is located by pun at a BP garage. In *Pierrot le fou* "SS" embeds itself in the film noir framework and corporate icon, Vietnam in an adventure film, the OAS in the "oasis" sought by the last romantic couple, "S.O.S." signals in a political thriller. "The film is like a battleground," as the great Hollywood auteur Samuel Fuller describes to Pierrot his film adaptation of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (The Flowers of Evil). Indeed, *Pierrot le fou* stages a theater of operations that symbolically binds disparate elements drawn from everyday life and allusion; it taps the vital and powerful energy released when dissimilar things are compared. Alchemies of petrolglyphic writing leave their mark everywhere in the image.[14] Jarring juxtapositions of sound, image, and writing invoke sensations of war, and in filmic writing we perceive the scattered textual effects of an unseen event. In its volatile combinations, the symbolist path of combining and diffusing glyphic fragments suggests that the experience of colonial politics and struggles for liberation perhaps can be translated through petrolglyphs. Rather than acting as consumers of meaning and of images, viewers sense and piece together the deadly effects of conflict by attending to the interplay between dialectical and symbolic associations. Thanks to the glyph E-S-S-O and SS, we remember Vietnam.

In Godard's early cinema writing on and in the image becomes something akin to an oliography, in which the writer "applies a little [oil] to hidden spindles and joints that one has to know." The filmmaker cum mechanic diagnoses the social condition, whether it is the confusion elicited by the Algerian war in *Le Petit soldat*, or the catastrophic napalm bombing in Vietnam in *Pierrot le fou*. If the films essay how these significant social and political issues impact French life, they do so in alchemical rebuses and glyphs that make meaning precarious and subject to endless displacement. Attempts to totalize the perplexing politics of French-Algerian relations meet with homonyms that make viewers see, read, and hear

double, so that the war itself is legible as an effect of writing; in *Pierrot le fou* an anagrammar of petrolglyphic writing dialectically combines figures drawn from heterogeneous sources only to symbolically explode them in exercises of wit, leaving the image scarred by violent collisions and replete with textual fallout.

Notes

1   Nora Alter's analysis of Chris Marker's essayistic visual style pertains to Godard's as well: "Like its ancestor, the written essay, [the essay film] poaches across disciplinary borders or transgresses conceptual and formal norms" (Alter, 2006, 19). By hinging his analogy on the essay form, Godard announces the traits that will define much of his film work: a foregrounding of cinematic language, the blurring of documentary and fiction, unconventional alloys of genres, a critical and theoretical inflection. All of these traits of the essay-film certainly inform Godard's filmic writing. Timothy Corrigan's recent *The Essay Film* explores similar issues (Corrigan, 2011).
2   Michel Marie (2003, 31–33) argues that Astruc's essay constituted a manifesto for the developing artistic school called The Nouvelle Vague.
3   Marie-Claire Ropars's incisive pages on *Breathless* (1959) also inform much of the work that follows. In "The Graphic in Film Writing" (Ropars, 1981–82), she follows the interplay between disseminative and funerary aspects of Godard's glyphic language.
4   See especially Ross (1995, 15–70).
5   Godard's petrolglyphs take recondite oil trade names (Esso, Azur, Mobil, BP, Total, Shell) and subject them to poetic distortion that spur associations that connect not only separate parts of one film but of several films. Godard appears to tap the enchanting powers of oil explored by Louis Aragon, an author the filmmaker regularly quotes in the period and whose novel *Paris Peasant* profoundly influenced Benjamin. Aragon discerned in oil company names conjurations of an alchemical power, namely petroleum, that would inspire religious fervor and supplant Christianity: the stations of the cross are replaced by gas stations, pilgrimages by movements of commodities, divinities of old by totemic gas pumps. To modern eyes, never before have "destiny and force look[ed] so barbaric" when beholding the gas pump bearing the mark of its incantatory trade name:

> O Texaco motor oil, Esso, Shell, great inscriptions of human potentiality, soon we shall cross ourselves before your fountains, and the youngest among us will perish from having contemplated their nymphs in naphtha. (Aragon, 1994, 117)

Like Benjamin and Aragon's texts, in part alchemical surrealist exercises in writing, Godard's films also tap into the metamorphosing power contained in oil company names and icons to alter the shape and perception of things modern. Godard's films of the 1960s often recognize the powers of fascination and abundant energy contained within petroleum, and they transfer that potency to a practice of filmic writing.
6   I thank Marysia Wojtaszek for making this connection.
7   Casting intertexts as key elements of filmic writing, T. Jefferson Kline's *Screening the Text* devotes an insightful chapter to show how in *Breathless* and *Pierrot le fou* Godard

screens out his artistic sources and screens in fragmentary writing. See especially Kline (1992, 184–221).

8   Godard (1986, 178). Godard is referring to the OAS or *Organisation de l'armée secrete*, which was a far-right organization that used torture and assassination with the goal of preventing Algerian independence. The FLN or *Front de libération nationale* is a political party decisive in Algerian independence.

9   Rancière (2004, 224–225). Rancière notes that both terms, "dialectical" and "symbolic," should be taken in a "conceptual sense that crosses the boundaries of a particular doctrine," rather than referring specifically to, say, Hegelian dialectic or Symbolist poetry.

10 See Sampson (1975, 77–86).

11 The connection between the manufacture of war, petrochemicals, and entertainment predominates in this period of Godard's work. In *Masculin-Feminin* (1966) Jean-Pierre Leaud worked at a certain "Naphthachemie" factory, the "big white building by the Citroën plant," before switching to opinion polls and media surveys. The two soldier-buffoons in *Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) (1963) claim the rights to oil and "Hollywood's Technicolor Plant" as the spoils of war. Marianne's "brother" in *Pierrot le fou* illegally traffics guns to Africa between producing mindless television shows.

12 Harun Farocki and Kaja Silverman alertly note how the symbolist feature of Godard's work proceeds by bundling differences rather than identities. Silverman argues that *Vivre sa vie* (My Life to Live) "accommodates relationships between the most divergent of terms, since it does not predicate those relationships on the basis of identity" (Farocki and Silverman, 1998, 6).

13 In his "Language Gone Mad," Tom Conley maps how *Pierrot le fou* simulates effects of madness through glyphic language: "In the mosaic of images and discourses, any given fragment appears to be the interstice of an infinite number of others, coextensive, that are not set in any prearranged compartments" (Conley, 2000, 87). Filmic writing unfolds a space in which a fragmentary language perpetually combines and atomizes.

14 Edward Dimendberg's cogent essay on Alain Resnais and Raymond Queneau's short pseudo-industrial film *Le Chant du Styrène* (The Song of Styrene) (1958) explores how the New Wave film explores the manufacture of plastics and petroleum-based Styrene as an allegory for broader concerns of energy, celluloid images, and contemporary politics. Poetic interplays between voice-over and image provide "a revealing window onto the French political and global economy of the late 1950s, rewarding close reading with a veritable return of repressed geopolitical relations" (Dimendberg, 2005, 65). Textual slippages in the film attest to how ambiguously natural and technological substances, styrene and petroleum, ultimately inscribe colonial politics into its documentary form.

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One or Two Points About *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*

Jacqueline Levitin

It is evening, the first fiction scene of *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* in what will be 24 hours in the life of Juliette, a resident of a high-rise HLM[1] on the out-skirts of Paris. We have already met Marina Vlady / Juliette on the balcony of her apartment. Evoking Brecht, in nearly identical shots Godard introduces Marina Vlady first as actor, then as character. About 30-years-old, Juliette lives with her husband, Robert, and their two young children. Robert and a friend are now twist-ing dials on a short wave radio, he with the headphones reporting to the other a broadcast from Washington and Saigon.[2] Their conversation is a second Brechtian didactic moment, a theatricalized rendition of a Jules Feiffer cartoon satire on the Vietnam war. "With a heavy heart," Robert reports President Johnson saying, "I ordered the bombing of North Viet Nam. But Hanoi won't negotiate. . . . Hanoi should know, my patience has its limits."[3] "Hey, how did you pay for your Austin?" the friend asks Robert, changing the subject. "It's Juliette who found it," replies the husband. "She's amazing – always finds bargains."

The way Juliette pays for it, we soon learn, is by occasional prostitution. Juliette has already interrupted the talk about Vietnam to read an ad. in the *L'Express*[4] for Louis Feraud's *trompe-l'oeil* nylons that "make one's calves look charming." Juli-ette, the recited ad. prompts us to understand, has been colonized by consumer-ism. The advanced capitalism of modern life, Godard proposes, has turned us all into prostitutes,[5] and advertising is capitalism's pimp (Godard, 1971e, 12).

This discussion of a Juliette's amazing talent for economics with its hint of a husband blind to her activities (as well as most of the narrative pieces in the film) is lifted from two articles that appeared in the *Le Nouvel observateur*, a left-leaning French weekly, in early 1966 (*Le Nouvel Observateur*, 1966; Vimenet, 1966). The

journal made waves with an exposé claiming that prostitution was common among wives and mothers living in the new HLM complexes. Former slum dwellers relocated from Paris to new HLMs, the *Nouvel Observateur* proposed, were unable to keep up with the expenses of their new location, and new surroundings stimulated immigrant and working class tenants' desires for a better life style.[6] Marina Vlady reports that she and Godard discussed the articles and decided to abandon their earlier ideas for a film together in favor of the story of prostitution presented in the two *Le Nouvel observateur* articles.[7]

Godard describes *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* as "a sociological essay in the form of a novel" written with "notes of music" (Godard, 1971d, 16). Earlier in the decade, filmmakers admired by Godard had explored film-as-sociology (Haycock, 1990)[8] and Godard had recently experimented with the film essay in *A Married Woman* (1964) and *Masculine Feminine* (1966).[9] As to the aesthetics of the essay form, Agnès Varda offered a brilliant model for combining fiction with documentary images of Paris in *Cléo From 5 to 7* (1962), and Chris Marker's films exemplified the poetic. But "in the form of a novel" and "written with notes of music" indicate that Godard intended to push formal experimentation much further with this new film. Jean-Pierre Léaud, the male lead Paul, and Godard avatar in *Masculine Feminine*, comes to an important realization at the end of that film: The interview questions he had posed in his work as pollster were wrong; they reflected an ideology incapable of understanding the collective mentality of life today, and thus frequently betrayed and distorted it. Paul tells himself that he has to be vigilant, and sets himself guidelines: "A philosopher is a man who pits his conscience against opinion: To have a conscience is to be open to the world. To be faithful is to act as if time did not exist. Wisdom would be if one could see life, really see, that would be wisdom" (Godard, 1969, 172–177). If one considers *Made in USA* (1967) a detour in terms of concerns, and *Masculine Feminine* more accurately as the film that precedes *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*,[10] Godard embarks on *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* as a sociological essay from Paul/Léaud's achieved understanding of the previous year.[11]

Two or Three Things I Know About Her was the fourth film Godard embarked upon in the span of one year. The effect of such intense exploration was a new assuredness. Threads of ideas previously addressed – prostitution, the city under capitalist consumption, ubiquitous advertising, and the individual's search for meaning in this environment – come together in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* in a sure and studied fashion. Indeed, in addition to a more detailed than usual script, Godard composed a number of pages (Godard, 1971d) – not to be seen by the producers – where he described to himself what he was searching for, and made a list of scenes he would shoot.[12] At this point, Godard seems to have clarified his role in relation to politics. To participate politically did not require joining organized activities (as Robert, Paul's friend encourages him to do in *Masculine Feminine*, but is turned him down because Paul is preoccupied with love). Rather, filmmaking could be a political act.

Godard does "take himself seriously" in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. He does so almost to the point of putting aside his usual concerns for film as commerce, and the need for "tricks" to draw in audiences.[13] Prostitution-as-subject is an obvious exception, but not so Godard's treatment of prostitution. The activities of Juliette's day are presented as mundane and routine, and Juliette's encounter with her john is dedramatized. Eliminated is the sensationalism of earlier films – the guns, the knives, the gangster film apparatus, and the random violence presented with detachment. Gone, too, is most of the irony that cloaks the filmmaker in cool detachment. Godard as narrator of *Two or Three Things* may pun at times, but his intent is distinctly serious. The characters of *Two or Three Things* survive and are required to face another day. If there is no "transcendence of sudden arbitrary romantic love" here that Susan Sontag describes as typical of Godard's early films (Sontag, 1969, 182), there is instead what biographer Brody calls a "secular exaltation of consciousness" equal to that of Bresson's religious work (Brody, 2008, 97–98).

Susan Sontag described *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* as more "radically a first person film than any Godard has made" (Sontag, 1969, 170–171). In the dress shop, Marina Vlady says for Godard: "No one today can know what the city of tomorrow will be. A part of its past semantic richness . . . will certainly be lost . . . Perhaps . . . the city's creative role will be carried out by other systems of communication. . . . Television, Radio, Vocabulary and Syntaxe, scientifically and deliberately." Godard clearly believes he can restore some of the city's lost semantic richness by creating new communication in images and sounds. It is his faith in his role as filmmaker, finally, that gives this film a discernible optimism, despite its grim analysis of society.

Realism: Challenging the Codes of Documentary and Fiction

Two or Three Things I Know About Her stretches between documentary or newsreel, and fiction. The numerous views of Paris, and the ordinariness of what is shown – buildings, bridges and roads under construction, highways, apartment buildings, signs – accompanied by a narrating voice, seem to be traditional indicators of established codes of documentary cinema. But there is strangeness in all this mundanity and a pattern in this collection of views of the city. Dump trucks are red and blue against white buildings, or red lettering on a sign is framed together with pale gray cement bridges against blue skies. Neither the framing, nor the angle of view, nor the colours are comfortably "natural." New building constructions are not grounded, but rather hang suspended in the frame of the image. A woman is depicted amidst advertising signs; it is difficult to distinguish which – she or the signs – is the centre of interest. The Techniscope image views the world in "large as life" proportions, but the camera cuts people off below the
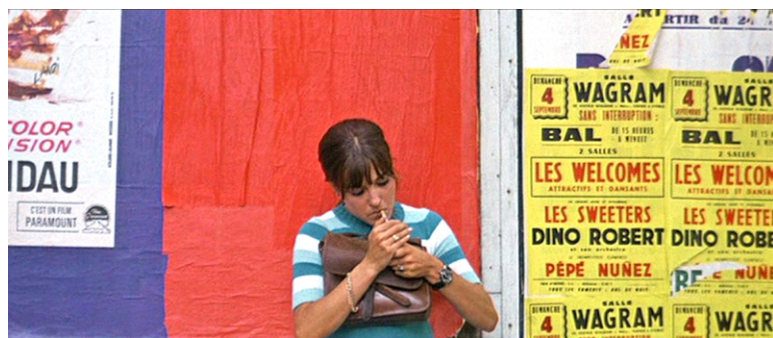
Figure 17.1   Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

head and then isolates them at the bottom of the screen, overwhelmed by the rest of the image (Figure 17.1). Rather than standard newsreel views of Paris, these images are calculated to connote red, white and blue Gaullism, and capitalism's alienation and isolation.

In fact, the commentator is not normal at all. He whispers rather than speaks and his comments do not pretend to be objective, but rather philosophical, political, and personal. An ordinary box of Pax washing detergent appears on the screen. In a serious voice, the commentator announces: "Pax Americana, super-economical brain-washing." The non-traditional narrator begins with, rather than proves, the statement of the problem and its cause – the penetration of American-style culture in France.

The fictional code is similarly untypical. Lines of division between story and non-story blur. For example, Juliette has last been seen dropping off her daughter to the care of Monsieur Gérard. On the screen are shots of Paris – canals, buildings, the Seine. Soon after, a commentary begins over a shot of a young woman leaning against a wall in the manner of a prostitute. Her framing, which echoes Anna Karina's stance as Nana, the prostitute in *Her Life To Live* (1962), and the approach of a man who plays a pimp, code this scene as fiction. "Always the same story . . ." the commentator begins. Meanwhile the film cuts to a busy street where Juliette is seen in the distance. The manner in which the commentary intersects both the shot of the woman leaning against the wall and Juliette on the street makes it possible to attribute the story of an apprentice seamstress who falls into prostitution to either woman. Though fiction's codes typically do not permit an extended story about a woman who appears but once, attribution of the story to Juliette, seen only vaguely on the street in a long shot during the second part of the commentary seems equally unlikely. It is the editing, the appearance of Juliette

again after, that gives the spectator the impression that Juliette could be the subject of this story.

This technique is not new to Godard. In *Her Life To Live*, Nana appears to be an example in depth in a film about prostitution, but one scene is particularly poignant because Godard lets the spectator confuse three levels of discourse – the commentary, the fiction of Nana, and the story she is reading (Poe's "The Oval Portrait") and its premonition of the death of its heroine. However, in *Two or Three Things*, confusion over to whom to attribute the narrative is the method of the entire film. The result is that by the film's end, the spectator, who has actually learned nothing of Juliette's past and can only intimate the significance of the scenes of her day that are shown, feels as if Juliette is a very familiar personality: Juliette has become typified and her story has become a model of a social situation.

De Gaulle=USA[14]

Although Godard introduces Juliette saying "elle, c'est Juliette" ("she is Juliette"), post film he clarified that "elle" was not Juliette the character. Rather, "elle" was the Paris region (Godard, 1971a, 17). Godard writes that Juliette was not even to be a constant subject in the film. Rather, her story was a "part" in the "ensembleW" (a pun on the French term for the mini-cities of apartment blocks intended), one that is examined in greater depth "to suggest that the other parts also exist in depth" (Godard, 1971d, 15).

None the less, the film's trailer (Godard, 1971b, 10) lists 12 definitions for "elle," each feminine in French, and each a subject of concern in Godard's sociological essay: "la cruauté (the cruelty) of neo-capitalism;" "la prostitution;" "la region parisienne;" "the bathroom that 70% of French don't have;" "the terrible law of the housing complexes;" the "physical act of love;" "life today;" "the war in Vietnam;" the "modern call girl;" the "death of modern beauty;" the "circulation of ideas;" and "the gestapo of structures." The items on this list are not equally self-evident. The last "elle," the "gestapo of structures," likely refers to French government plans for an astounding number of complexes to house and deal with the population (cf. Cardin, 2006, np). The "bathroom that 70% of French don't have" (an accurate statistic) is illustrated with sly humour in a scene where a meter reader barges in on a woman taking a bath. ("That (hot water bill's) going to hurt," he remarks to himself as the woman who overindulges in baths she cannot afford berates him in Serbo-Croatian in the background.) "Elle" – "the physical act of love," and "elle" – "the death of modern beauty" require more discussion, and I will come back to these later. The "circulation of ideas" refers to Godard's assertion that intellectual rigor is lacking in contemporary society: This society that

produces prostitution and large housing complexes "distributes, in pocket book form, a culture that people absorb in a fragmentary and derisory way," he remarked (Godard, 1971c, 16–17); "Idées" ("Ideas") is the title of a non-fiction series of paperbacks.

The Method

Two characters whom Godard calls Bouvard and Pécuchet (named after nineteenth century novelist, Gustave Flaubert's, heroes in the search for complete mastery of the knowledge of the world) read and copy random snatches from books piled in front of them in a café where Juliette's husband, Robert, converses with a young woman. "Since you think you know so much about things," says the young acquaintance challengingly to Robert, "do you know yourself?" "Not very well, no," Robert replies, while the voice-over of Bouvard continues reading his random selection: "Gilbert's face tensed slightly. Martine noticed and blushed." Following like a narrator's voice, the passage Bouvard is reading seemingly interprets the scene between Robert and the young woman. Godard lets the humour of this timely but obviously inappropriate description serve his attack on the sequential narrative and typical methods of conveying psychology.[15] Godard was not against narrative as such, but argued that he was against "drama." Employing a narrative, he stated, allowed him to improvise.[16]

Godard has described his own narrative method in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* as the juxtaposing of apparently arbitrary but justifiably related events. "Anything can be put into a film," and "everything should be put into a film," he declared. "When people ask me why I talk or have my characters talk about Vietnam, about Jacques Anquetil,[17] or about a woman who cheats on her husband, I refer the questioner to his own newspaper. It's all there. And it's all juxtaposed" (Godard, 1971e, 12). Striking in Godard's description of his cinematic method is the equal importance he gives to human and non-human elements, and to objective and subjective description of each: The habitual centrality of characters in a fiction was to be set aside. In addition, Godard emphasizes the emotional correctness of the life portrait that should result: *Two or Three Things* should effect a certain "overall feeling" ("sentiment d'ensemble"), he notes; the film should "emotionally correspond to the laws that one must discover and apply to live in society" (Godard, 1971d. 15–16).

For persons, Godard explains, the objective description is generally the exterior view of a person's face. According to the existential phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whom Godard cites in his "Approach," this should already indicate a lot. In a 1945 speech entitled "The Film and the New Psychology," Merleau-Ponty argued for a visual cinema on the grounds of the physical immediacy of emotions: "We must reject that prejudice which makes 'inner realities' out of love,

hate, or anger, leaving them accessible to one single witness: the person who feels them. . . . They exist *on* this face or *in* those gestures, not hidden behind them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 52–53). Although, Merleau-Ponty had found few pure examples – particularly in sound – of what he thought cinema capable, he describes cinema as "peculiarly suited" to "make us *see* the bond between subject and world, between subject and others, rather that to *explain* it" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 58–59).

How does Juliette herself experience what surrounds her? Godard asked in "Ma demarche . . ." (My approach) (Godard, 1971d). What are the means (if he refuses Hollywood-style psychology) to express how Juliette, herself, "physically experiences her rapport with others and the world?" The technical means, Godard proposed, noting that he was quoting Malraux, is the voice: "One hears the voice of others with the ears, and one's own voice with the throat." Godard indicates this is something that the spectator should feel throughout the film (Godard, 1971d, 15). Accordingly, there are two sets of voices in the film: a voice with which characters address each other, and another – a monologue that the actor speaks aloud, but which the other characters are understood not to hear. In the beauty salon, for example, while Marianne manicures her nails, Juliette carries on a conversation that is at once for her friend (exterior) and for herself (interior). In the following extract, italics indicate the interior dialogue:

MARIANNE:	Say, you're really tanned. Where've you been?
JULIETTE:	In Russia.
MARIANNE:	Whereabouts?
JULIETTE:	*Silence!* In Leningrad.
MARIANNE:	Are the Russians nice?
JULIETTE:	*Happiness*. Oh, they're like everyone else.
MARIANNE:	I'm just asking.
JULIETTE:	Well, they're nice. . . . *A few sounds*.
MARIANNE:	Say, have you seen the Duperrets again?
JULIETTE:	I saw them when I was going by Saint Lazare station. . . . *It's true, on the other hand, one never knows oneself.*
MARIANNE (inspecting Juliette's nail):	It's broken.
JULIETTE:	*Robert. Christophe. . . . Blue spiral notebooks.*
MARIANNE:	And how are you doing?
JULIETTE:	Okay. *Not to have to make love.*
MARIANNE:	You know, this is better than the factory.
JULIETTE:	Me, too. I wouldn't want to work in a factory.
MARIANNE:	Your kids – how are they doing?

JULIETTE:	Okay. *What I say in words is never what I say.* Okay. But you know, they don't behave. . . . *I wait. I watch.*
MARIANNE (showing a bottle of nail polish):	I'll put this on you.
JULIETTE:	Okay, fine. . . . *My hair.* . . . (A telephone rings.) *The telephone.*

That it is Marina Vlady as herself that overlays her character Juliette is evident in the answer "Russia" as the source of Juliette's tan: Russia is the place Marina Vlady has likely been travelling, not Juliette her character, though both, we are told, are "of Russian origin." Godard had experimented with the interview in both *A Married Woman* and *Masculine Feminine.* Typically, Godard would ask questions of an actor (he said he preferred to call them "people") and (in *Masculine Feminine*) substituted a character as the questioner at the editing stage. The purpose for this "scientific research" (as Godard called it), that mixed chance with control, was to get actors to invest in their role by way of their own thinking: With the actor present both "in character" and "not in character" – in contrast to what Godard labeled Hollywood's pernicious and insidious methods of directing actors – something "unpreconceived" and "uncontrolled" could result (Youngblood, 1998, 32–34).

Godard's prompt to Marina Vlady in *Two or Three Things* is by way of a hidden earphone. Although Godard continues to evoke Brecht-the-theatre-theorist's instructions to actors to perform as if citing their character's words,[18] as a filmmaker in the 1960s, Godard was taking Brecht's experiments with realism in another direction. Parallel with the banalities of her conversation with Marianne, Vlady's disjointed but real answers in response to questions posed by Godard through the hidden earphone give the impression of penetrating the character on a profound level. Although Godard expressed frustration that he was not able to get Marina Vlady to relax sufficiently to "be herself in her character" (her prior training as an actor at odds with Godard's method (Brody, 2008, 286–289)[19]), his technique often achieved a sense of the unexpected, and its effect – so unusual in the cinema – was riveting.

Significantly, the earphone-interview procedure is not limited solely to Juliette. Various major and minor characters in the film also stop and address the camera. "My name is Paulette Cadjaris," a hairdresser at the salon says in what appears to be a real interview. "I failed as a secretary-typist. No, I don't believe in the future. I go for walks. I don't like to be shut in. When I can, I do some reading. Yes, and I really like to study people's characters. . . . Later, when I'm married to François . . . What else have I done? A lot of ordinary things." The material of her announcement is not as philosophically intriguing as Juliette's, but the sense of a subjective projection of character is the same. While most of the interviews in *Two or Three Things* are scripted, based on the *Nouvel Observateur* documents (for example, the statements of the middle-aged secretary who cannot get a job despite speaking English and Italian), they "ring true." Notably, in the interviews in *Two*

or Three Things, Godard appears not to prejudge his characters (particularly his female characters) as he had in *Masculine Feminine*.

Alienation: The Emotional Portrait of a Society Under Capitalism

In the last fiction sequence of the film, having returned from the city, Juliette and Robert enter their kitchen carrying bags of groceries:

ROBERT:	Ouf. . . we've arrived!
JULIETTE:	Arrived where?
ROBERT:	(moving out of frame) Home.
JULIETTE:	And after, what are we going to do?
ROBERT (off screen):	Sleep. . . . What's gotten in to you?
JULIETTE:	(removing the shopping) And after that?
ROBERT (off screen):	We'll wake up.
JULIETTE:	And then?
ROBERT (off):	The same. We'll start again. . . . (Juliette opens a cupboard and puts away a package of noodles). . . We'll go to work. We'll eat.
JULIETTE:	And after that?
(Robert comes back in the room and looks at Juliette. He takes off his glasses.)	
ROBERT:	I don't know. (He looks at her then puts on his glasses.) . . . Die.
JULIETTE:	And after that? (Close up insert of a gas station meter moving from 00:00 to 01:10)

While the theatre of Brecht is often assumed to de-emotionalize the experience for the spectator, Brecht explained that, in fact, what, he rejected was the *habitual* triggers of emotion. "The crude aesthetic thesis that emotions can only be stimulated by means of empathy," he stated, "is wrong" (Brecht, 1964a, 145). Instead, he indicated, the spectator of his epic theatre should say to himself: "I'd never have thought it – That's not the way . . . It's got to stop – . . . That's great art: nothing obvious in it – I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh" (Brecht, 1964c, 71). Godard does something similar.

Inserts such as the gas pump meter not only break up and distance the action, they become interpretive substances borrowed by the scene: Zeros on a gas pump ironically reflect Juliette's spiritual state, while saving the spectator from non-productive empathy. Emotion is also displaced because "zero" in the Godard lexicon is a positive notion: "Back to zero" is where change begins. The scene's emotional subject is thus not only left intact but elaborated. If Godard employs Brecht's techniques to create a reflective attitude, he also cultivates the emotional

content of the disruption to build a film portrait of society as a "sentiment d'ensemble" – an "overall feeling."

Film Time vs. Real Time

As if Juliette's story were not a fiction, the commentator states the hour with precision: "Here is how Juliette at 16:37 . . .", "it is 16:45." The fragments of Juliette's day are placed in a context: the inexorable march of hours and minutes – bourgeois culture's pseudo-cyclical time. The arbitrariness with which the hour is determined reflects on the arbitrariness of metered time (Godard, 1967, 8). While these references intimate a criticism of bourgeois society and narrative's typical conventions of time, Godard also explores a new sense of time.

Godard attempts to give the impression of viewing events as they happen, or of what he calls in his "Approach", life's "mutation," This impression is deepened by the interpenetration of fictional time and the time scale of Godard and Marina Vlady's making of the film: "Should I speak of Juliette or the leaves," the commentator asks at the end of the gas station sequence, his commentary followed by music. "We'll say that they both trembled softly at the end of an October afternoon." Why October? A sequence later, Juliette, in the hotel room of the American correspondent remarks, "It's strange that a person in Europe on the 17th of August 1966 would think of another in Asia . . ." The dates allude to both time in the fiction and to the place and time of filmmaker and actor editing the film.

This undifferentiated mingling of the time scale of fiction and the time scale of the making of the fiction has the consequence of attributing fiction's emotion to life and life's substantiality to fiction. It becomes a substitute, though highly sophisticated formula to create cinema as experience. The contrast of real time and film time do not question the fiction. Real time instead becomes "story."

Sound

Though challenging the codes of naturalistic sound, Godard's use of sound in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* ultimately adds to the emotional portrait of "the ensemble" towards which the entire film strives. Music is heard only momentarily and at rare intervals. In general, it accompanies Juliette's most intimate addresses to the audience, or the commentator's equally personal references to the heroine. For example, early in the film, at the kitchen sink, Juliette addresses the camera:

JULIETTE:	A kind of "proof of another existence": I was doing the dishes. I started to cry. I heard a voice that said to me: "You are indestructible." I, me, myself, everyone.
(A FEW CHORDS OF MUSIC.)	
ROBERT (off-screen, yelling):	Juliette! Juliette!
JULIETTE:	It's all confused. Time . . . I don't know. . . . No, a definition doesn't necessarily come to mind.
ROBERT (off-screen, yelling):	Juliette! Roger's leaving!

The music underlines the vague significance of what is being recalled by Juliette, filling the holes of meaning in Juliette's statements by giving them an emotional impact. Godard's use of music is consistent in the film: music sets an intimate and nostalgic tone which is then cut; intimacy is always broken by the strident call of the objective world, here Robert yelling from the next room, later the appearance of the man we recognize as the pimp who harassed Juliette in the bar, or the deafening sounds of construction.

The environment noise track and the voice of the commentator follow the pattern of music – creating an experience of intimacy and its destruction. Loud construction sounds break off into silence; the construction consequently sounds louder and the silence more silent. The voice of the commentator, whispered, is barely audible. We strain to hear what he says because the pattern of signification equates noise with alienation, and silence, music, and whisper with its opposite. Sound in *Two or Three Things* does not underline naturalism; it does create experience.

It is to this end as well that the effects track is calculated. The sound of real machine gun fire is heard to a plastic toy. Real sounds of bombs falling and real rumblings of airplane motors are heard to the image of a radio whose tubes, coloured like the flags of countries, are actually obscured by the smoke of cigarettes and not of bombs. It is not natural sound attached to its natural instrument that underlines the reality of an instrument, but its opposite. Real machine gun fire gets back to the essence of toy guns, and real bomb blasts reveal the disguised violence of cool news broadcasts.

People vs. Objects

A confusion of objects and people is also used to evoke the experience of alienation. For example, Godard makes a "false" continuity cut. To please the American Vietnam war correspondent, Juliette and Marianne cover their heads with Pan Am and TWA flight bags. The camera follows the two women as they parade, crossing back and forth in front of the correspondent, then cuts out the window to two

moving cranes. Here, the identification of the cranes and the women ("crane," Guezzetti (1981, 247) reminds us, is slang for prostitute), already symbolically objectified by the bags that cover their heads,[20] is experienced visually and rhythmically: The framing of the women is repeated in the framing of the cranes and the cranes continue the dynamic of the two women's movement.

Other examples are less subtle, yet perhaps more emotionally significant. A cartoon figure of a woman appears in a huge close-up on the Techniscope screen, a Bentley behind her. She is minimally drawn, but resembles Juliette because the colours of the cartoon repeat the colour scheme that Godard has just used to depict his heroine. Shown in life-size proportions, and following a scene of Juliette and carefully cut off from any context that situates the cartoon as cartoon, the image takes on the identity of Juliette's depersonalized existence.

Later, Juliette's car is shown in a tight close-up. It is red and glistening in the sunshine and emanates more vitality than the shots of Juliette and her friend Marianne that immediately precede it: Cut off at the neck, and shot under flat lighting, the women look doll-like and devoid of character. "Dead objects are always alive," explains the commentator. "Living people are often already dead." Under the conditions of advanced capitalism, Godard would like the audience to feel, people are losing what makes them human. His style of shooting, which anthropomorphizes objects and cartoon images and objectifies humans, creates this conclusion as an intuitive response.

The Philosophical Position

Finally the film attempts to communicate the experience of moving out of alienation. "I don't know where or when," Juliette is prodded to recall twice in the film. "I only remember that it happened. It's a feeling that I was trying to recapture the whole day. There was the scent of trees. That I was the world . . . that the world was me." The harmonious world of objects and people that Juliette describes evokes what Sartre called "being-in-the-world," the transcendent aspect of being experienced when one moves beyond "being-in-the-midst-of-the-world" that is, from being an object to becoming that which projects a world (Sartre, 1972, 419–420).[21]

The state of "being-in-the-world" is evoked in the first of the two scenes through a fluidity of editing all the more remarkable because *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* relies predominantly on sequence shots. For the first time, Juliette's voice acts as off-screen commentary. Viewed in long shot, she moves left to right in an angle towards the camera along a sun-filled, tree-lined street. The camera captures her three times at different distances in the same movement, but the effect is fluid rather than jarring. The third time she is running, then turns away from us and disappears off screen. A strong sensual impression of harmony

is achieved. The visual image becomes rhythmical, ending with a musical resolution to Juliette's receding figure in the centre of the frame.

The second time Juliette repeats "I was the world . . . that the world was me" comes at the end of the film. She has returned to the HLM; the kitchen scene is yet to come. She begins in interview with Godard, but her text is actually recited off screen. Rather than trees and sunlight, this time, a 360-degree pan captures nothing but the endless high-rises that encircle Juliette. Given the voice-over delivery of both texts, it is likely that both were created at the post-production stage.[22] Returning home from Paris – where, at this time, buildings were uniformly no more than seven storeys high – to the oppressive HLMs of the suburbs, Juliette's recounted memory contrasts starkly with her alienating surroundings.

Another scene illustrating the movement toward what Sartre would call "conscious existence" – once again accompanied by texts likely created in post-production, pronounced this time by Godard – appears just prior to the scene described of Juliette on the street. This scene takes place in the café where Juliette spends the afternoon. It is complex but, again, polished to achieve a feeling of unified space and uninterrupted flow.

Untypically, in this scene, Godard employs invisible editing. It is not the characters' words, but the visual interaction of persons with persons and persons with objects that directs the scene's flow. What Godard wrote ten years earlier, could describe his method here:

> Cutting on a look is almost the definition of montage, its supreme ambition as well as its submission to mise en scene. It is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favour of that of time. (Godard, 1968, 54)

A sense of suspended time dominates. The role of the commentator becomes central in this scene, and his philosophical position more obviously Existentialist.

Though Godard continues to couch what he says in literary references, the tone of his words becomes more personal. A man and Juliette have periodically been shown exchanging glances. A cup of coffee cuts between these exchanges in increasing close-ups, finally occupying the entire screen. "What is an object?" the commentator asks over a mesmerizing shot of slowly swirling coffee. "Perhaps an object is what allows a relationship, to move from one subject to another, thus to live in society, to be together ('ensemble')."

In this scene, we appraise the full intention behind the commentator's role. Commentary has progressed from political didacticism to personal involvement and the position of an "I." The commentator, who earlier seemed to be above the social and psychological disorder he described, now admits to being part of what he pretended only to observe. Commentary becomes monologue – no longer the voice of a narrator commenting upon a situation, but a state of alienation taking a voice. Film time and real time begin to mix completely. It becomes evident that

the film does not have any ready lessons to teach: The subjective filmmaker-commentator is struggling as he creates.

It is the breaking of focal length as measure of separation between subjectivities that accounts for the impact of the cafe sequence. Verbally and stylistically, the filmmaker reveals his desire to be in harmony with the world. Juliette, who performs the words of the filmmaker, who is the fiction's centre of focus, here shares this role with other characters and other objects. This is the political intention of the film: The statement of alienation is a pretext for a demonstration of cinema as a renewing social force, and the filmmaker as example in the struggle out of alienation towards consciousness and to what Existentialism calls authenticity. Airing one's subjectivity is permissible, according to Godard of the moment of the making of *Two or Three Things*, on the condition one is a poet, and if one has faith in the existence of a corresponding set of associations in spectators' minds capable of apprehending one's poetic vision.

Freedom

Cinema is political, Godard might say in 1966 because the imaginative process that is the basis of both the filmmaker and the spectator's relation to cinema is aligned with Freedom. "If someone asked me to continue this song. . . . Yes, I could. . . . I could continue," Juliette says. "What sort of process does this represent . . . this certainty that one can continue something? . . . I don't know." Finally, what Godard elicits from Juliette is that the process of knowing one can continue something is a "substitution of an effort of imagination for the examination of real objects," or, as Sartre explains, imagining, the act of projecting oneself into the non-existent, is what characterizes consciousness and is the definition of Freedom. In Sartre's words:

> Imagination is not an empirical and superadded power of consciousness, it is the whole of consciousness as it realizes its freedom; every concrete and real situation of consciousness in the world is big with imagination in as much as it always presents itself as a withdrawing from the real. . . . The unreal is produced outside of the world by a consciousness which *stays in the world* and it is because he is transcendentally free that man can imagine. (Sartre, 1966, 243).[23]

The surpassing of the real is only possible by way of the imaginative act.

This idea seems so central to Godard, that he has Robert pronounce a very similar text in one of the film's final scenes. "Yes, yes," Robert answers looking at the camera, thus clearly in response to Godard, "I would be tempted to write that down." He repeats what he writes: "That since no real objects exist that can always guarantee the truth . . . (he looks toward the camera), the truth of our thoughts,

it is not the real that we think . . . (Juliette, emerges from the kitchen and moves into the frame, toward the camera. Robert's glance follows her) . . . it's a phantom of the real."

Godard creates his film phantom, Juliette (that is, nothing but light and shadow), and the film *Two or Three Things* as "totality," world or "life," in order to extract himself and to pull others out of that world. "I watch myself filming," Godard said of his role in the film, "and you hear me think. In short, it isn't a film; it's an attempt at making a film and is presented as such. It properly belongs to my personal research" (Godard, 1971e, 12). As the film of "Godard thinking film," *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* is actually about the conscious act of self-creation that Godard opposes to the indifference characteristic of the society that he studies. "AGITATE, DEMAND" reads the poster behind Juliette and Robert as they return home. The poster advertises a demonstration against the war in Vietnam – a war ignored by an unconscious society. Godard uses the slogan to exhort the spectator to imitate the example of his own experimentation in film aesthetics – to become consciously alive again.

The Emotive Power of the Image in the Association of Ideas

Asked, "What is art?" the commentator answers quoting Malraux: Art is "that by which forms become style." "But," the commentator adds, "style is human. So, art is that by which forms become human." Corresponding to this commentary is first an insert of the word "ART", written in black on a red window but read backwards in the reflection of a mirror. T∼A is a metaphor for the process of art: the process of reflection stylizes form; and style humanizes because by style one reflects one's own image of the world.

This definition of Art directly follows another mirror image similar to the one described. It appears in the middle of the scene where Juliette prostitutes herself to the young man who works in the subway. The young man is sitting on the edge of the bed, viewed in close-up. His eyes follow as Juliette passes in front of him. He lights a cigarette. Juliette's hand enters the frame, caressing his face.

JULIETTE (off screen):	What do you like?
THE YOUNG MAN:	I don't know.
JULIETTE (off):	Do you want it Italian style?
THE YOUNG MAN:	What's that?
JULIETTE (off):	You stand and I kneel. That way you can watch me.
(Insert of a text written on the window.)	
THE YOUNG MAN:	Yes.

The inserted text – the word "beauty" in red spelled backwards – breaks up the scene. It is possible to interpret this insert that blocks the act of prostitution

(Juliette's lips are now painted bright red) as a metaphor for Godard's goal in *Two or Three Things*. "Beauty" is a Baudelairian equivalent for Godard's ideal "new city" (*cité nouvelle*). Spelled backwards, beauty is a metaphor for the scene: beauty is "outside," not in this room. Interrupting the scene, the word visually blots out both a view of alienated love – the scene of prostitution – and the reinforcement of that alienation – bourgeois cinema: The word blocks out the representation of sex at what should be the height of spectator arousal.

A film is only the reality of an idea in the mind of the director who makes the film and of the spectator who perceives the film. The particular patterns of light and patterns of sound are real but they are not the idea itself. Like the painter discussed by Sartre in *The Psychology of the Imagination*, the filmmaker "does not realize his mental image at all: he simply constructs a material analogue" (Sartre, 1966, 247). The film is the material referent for Godard's image of society. A *new* society is to be evoked by the spectator by a parallel act of associative imagination.

A new cinematic language was a risk because, as Sartre writes,

> I cannot even conceive what effect my gestures and attitudes will have since they will always be taken up and founded by a freedom which will surpass them . . . Thus the "meaning" of my expressions always escapes me. I never know exactly if I signify what I wish to signify nor even if I *am* signifying anything. (Sartre, 1972, 486)

"Is this then cinema?" Godard questioned after exposing his "Approach in four movements". "And am I right in wanting to continue?" (Godard, 1971d, 16). Political responsibility is left in the hands of the spectator whom Godard hopes will be enlightened by the film. Meanwhile, Godard goes on to his next project. "You can read something else if you don't like it!" Robert retorts at the end of the film to Juliette who had expressed displeasure with his book, appropriately on the "man of the future."[24] The comment is apparently addressed to the film audience as well. Godard is taking cover, just in case.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1   "HLM" ("*habitation à loyer modéré*") is the term used in France for rent-controlled or subsidized housing.

2   Roger Monsoret, who plays Robert, could be considered a Godard stand-in. Jean Narboni, who plays the friend, was later to become an editor at *Les Cahiers du cinéma* and co-author of the initial collection of Godard's writings.

3   Quoted dialogue is based on the transcription of the film (Godard, *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*). Here as elsewhere, translations are my own.

4   *L'Express* is France's equivalent of *Time* magazine.

5   Of the film's subject of prostitution, Godard stated, "The thing that most excited me was that the anecdote it tells coincides basically with one of my most deep-rooted theories. The idea that, in order to live in Parisian society today, at whatever level or on whatever plane, one is forced to prostitute oneself in one way or another, or else to live according to conditions resembling those of prostitution" (Godard, 1971a, 17).

6   Vimenet originally claimed that one in two women in the new HLMs engaged in occasional prostitution as the solution to economic difficulties. Following much heated reader feedback, in the second article, the editorial team modified this to an indefinite but smaller percentage. However, as the editors noted, readers were not alarmed that the situation existed; they only objected to exposure of the fact of prostitution. It is worth noting that Godard misleads the spectator as to the location of the shoot, which actually took place at La Courneuve, whose 4000 lodgings were completed in 1963 (cf. Cardin, 2006, np).

7   Godard and Vlady had discussed both an idea modeled on the 1835 Honoré de Balzac novel, *Le Lys dans la Vallée* (*The Lily of the Valley*), and another inspired by an André Gide story ("The Signal") depicting a situation of non-professional prostitution. Originally a suggestion of his producer, Anatole Dauman, the latter idea had already been used in *Masculine Feminine* in the film within the film, but it was still on Godard's mind. (Godard had also used "The Signal" in "Une femme coquette" (A Flirtatious Woman) filmed in 1956 in Geneva (Bergala, 2006, 288–289, 292–293, 324–326; Vlady, 1971). Interestingly, the Balzac novel concerns the ardent but never consummated affection between Felix de Vandenesse and Henriette de Mortsauf. There are parallels here to Godard and Marina Vlady. Godard admits that he was "vaguely in love" with Vlady. She reports that their relationship was never consummated but that he twice proposed marriage. She turned him down – just before shooting began on *Two or Three Things*. As a result, Godard refused to speak again to her directly (De Baecque, 2010, 334–335, 338; Brody, 2008, 276–278, 286–289).

8   Godard stated, "if I have a dream, it is to one day become a news director for French television" (Godard, 1971e, 12). In the spring of the year of the production of *Two or Three Things*, he had been negotiating to make a series of TV newsreels (De Baecque, 2010, 340).

9   By essay, Godard also means "scientific." He frequently described cinema as naturally inclined to science, for example, "At the beginning, cinema was a tool for study. It should have been a tool for study – for it is visual, and very close to science and medicine. The camera has a lens, like a microscope, to study the infinitely small, or like a telescope, to study the infinitely distant. Having studied that, you could then convey it in a spectacular fashion" (Béhar, 1995, np). He similarly described *A Married Woman* as the work of an entomologist (Youngblood, 1998, 24).

10   Godard agreed to quickly shoot a film – *Made in USA* (released January 1967) – to help Georges de Beauregard, his producer and friend, out of financial difficulties

(Bergala, 2006, 310, 341). *Made in USA* has a gangster plot like many of Godard's previous films. The only significant overlapping aspect with *Two or Three Things* is the USA theme, and experiments in colour coding.

11   It is worth noting that in *Masculine Feminine*, Catherine (Madeleine's roommate) unexpectedly mentions young women and prostitution in a voice over in the scene where Paul first arrives at the office where Paul's love interest, Madeleine, and Catherine work, but there is no follow up on this idea. It is possible that Godard was already thinking of the *Nouvel Observateur* articles when he wrote these voice-overs for *Masculine Feminine*. According to Bergala, that film was completed on July 5, 1966 (Bergala, 2006, 307). Godard typically included new ideas in voice-overs at the time of editing.

12   These scenes were all shot in one form or another. However, Godard abandoned the idea of a TV crew investigating the story of prostitution in the HLMs that was his first impulse (Bergala, 2006, 329–334). According to Bergala, a few scenes filmed for *Two or Three Things* made their way into *Made in USA* (Bergala, 2006, 341). Making a list of scenes to shoot, says Bergala, comes from Rossellini (Bergala, 2006, 334).

13   "For commerce is also a necessary component of it all" (Béhar, 1995, np).

14   Graffiti in *Masculine Feminine*.

15   This vignette might have been added when Godard, calculating that his film was turning out to be too short, returned to the café for additional shooting. Fourteen minutes of screen time was shot in the café in one day (cf. Bergala, 2006, 339).

16   "There is always a narrative line. In *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) I am narrative about ideas, and in *Contempt* I am narrative about people. That's the only difference. In both, I was very much narrative. And if I was not, I couldn't go on shooting. It's only because I have a narrative line in mind that I'm able to improvise and to go on shooting every day" (Youngblood, 1998, 39–40) "When I say drama, to me it's the same as show business. . . . I like show very much, but since everybody does show business, at least someone must try to make something else" (Youngblood 1998: 41). The distinction between narrative and drama is also Brecht's (cf. Brecht, 1964b, 33–42).

17   A French cyclist.

18   A year after *Two or Three Things*, Brecht's was the last name standing on the blackboard of the revolutionary cell in *La Chinoise* (1967).

19   Godard could be insistent on this point: "Having an actor is not only having a person who has to act. His real life belongs to the picture, too, and you have to use it. It's not being disloyal to him. Rather, it's like liberating him from slavedom" (Youngblood, 1998, 34).

20   Significantly, their identities are obscured by symbols of (then) major representatives of American capitalism.

21   I quote Sartre here, but the likely inspiration for Godard at this moment is Heidegger, whose thinking inpired Sartre's Existentialism. Already during the shoot of *Two or Three Things*, and certainly during the editing period, Godard was beginning an intense relationship with Anne Wiazemsky. She had failed the oral section of her baccalaureat exam in June 1966 and was receiving private tutoring from philosophy professor and former resistance fighter, Francis Jeanson, with Godard in attendance (Brody, 2008, 297). It is perhaps to this that Godard's renewed interest in the Existentialists and Phenomenologists can be traced.

22 Indeed, in the part of the description given by Juliette on screen, she says the event might have occurred when the subway worker led her to the hotel – a scene not in the final film.

23 The actual reference for Godard on the imagination was likely Merleau-Ponty, whose definition of imagination came to differ from Godard's when he abandoned the distinction between "being" and "nothingness." (Dufourcq, 2012, 191–197). In *Le Gai savoir* (Joy of Learnng) (1969), Godard declared that "knowledge will be controlled by the imagination representing class consciousness." While the imaginative process remains central in this later film, the political qualification is significant.

24 It is the French translation of Vance Packard's *The Pyramid Climbers* (1962).

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18

Godard's Remote Control

John Hulsey

The opening scene of Jean-Luc Godard's *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her) (1967) shows two men, Robert and Roger (Roger Montsoret and Jean Narboni), sitting at a table piled high with disassembled electrical gadgets, circuit boards, and a large transistor radio (Figure 18.1). Their backs are turned to the camera as they listen in on the White House's radio transmissions: "C'est fantastique," says Robert, wearing a pair of headphones as he repeats President Johnson's radio address to the Vietnamese government. "En '65 . . . pour obliger Hanoï à négocier . . . j'ai ordonné . . . la mort dans l'âme . . . à mes aviateurs . . . de bombarder le Nord-Vietnâm." His speech is punctuated by regular pauses as he listens in on the live radio feed. "C'était formidable . . . mais Hanoï n'est pas venu négocier" (In '65 . . . in order to force Hanoi to negotiate . . . I ordered . . . with a heavy heart . . . my aviators to bomb North Vietnam. . . . It was wonderful . . . but Hanoi refused to negotiate).[1] The two men take turns repeating Johnson's proclamations, each of which vaunts a different military victory against the Viet Cong. And in each case the closing phrase, "c'était formidable, mais Hanoï n'est pas venu négocier," comes as a sardonic coda and deadpan condemnation of Robert and Roger's repetition of the American president's hawkish discourse.

The dry humor of this sequence was calqued from Jules Feiffer's contemporaneous American comic strip parodying the US government's entanglements in Vietnam,[2] and it is through this set-piece that Godard introduces us to the principal structuring operation of *2 ou 3 choses*, setting into motion a complex dynamic of subjectivation that traverses the duration of the film.[3] Of significance here is not just that Godard would make use of citations (whether the characters' repetitions of "Johnson's" speech, or the director's own appropriation of Feiffer's strip), but

Figure 18.1   Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

the way this sequence suggests the manner in which Godard has instructed his actors say their lines, what this says about his *mise-en-scène*, and, ultimately, what this process says about the construction of the modern subject in mid-1960s France. Indeed, the film's operative device, whereby Godard uses hidden microphones and earpieces to whisper improvised fragments of dialogue to his actors, allows for a broader analysis of the ways in which mechanisms of communication and command function in a control society.

Godard had already in his earliest films begun to formulate his characters' subjectivities as intertextual weaves of citations, starting with 1959's *À bout de souffle* (Breathless), but this idea becomes increasingly inflected over the course of the early- to mid-1960s by a Marxian critique of consumer capitalism and the ways in which state and corporate power interpellate subjects through elaborately articulated systems of signs. In *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot The Mad), released in 1965, a year before the making of *2 ou 3 choses*, Godard films a high-society cocktail party in which guests speak to each other exclusively in advertising language: women parrot beauty product slogans to each other, while men vacuously recite automobile ads boasting of their cars' four-wheel disc brakes and luxurious interiors. Robert and Roger's repetition of Johnson's radio broadcast can be seen as an extension of this comedic operation, with two principal differences: while it remained possible for *Pierrot*'s titular hero (Jean-Paul Belmondo) to imagine breaking free from the mirror-box of repetitions by hurling cake at the assembled guests in a paroxysm of despair and escaping to the Côte d'Azur in a stolen car, there is no imagined "outside" to the locked-in language games in which Robert and Roger engage. Further, the mechanism by which power exerts its ineluctable influence is rendered concrete, in *2 ou 3 choses*, through the device of the radio transmitter, which defines the process of control as part of a larger historical expansion in communications and media technologies, raising questions about the possibility for agency, opposition, and resistance in the age of the audiovisual.

Indeed, the decades that preceded the making of *2 ou 3 choses* had been marked by a massive restructuring of economic and social life in France. Produced at the height of the 30-year period of economic growth following the end of the Second World War and on the eve of the revolts of May 1968, the film reflects critically upon the transitions that marked the Gaullist Fifth Republic: the implementation of vast urban redevelopment programs, the accelerated application of mass marketing and American-style manufacturing, and the development of a middle-class culture of consumption. "Le pouvoir Gaullist prend le masque d'un réformateur ou un modernisateur," whispers Godard over images of construction cranes, gas station pumps, and furniture showrooms, "alors qu'il ne veut qu'enregistrer et régulariser les tendances naturels du grand capitalisme" (De Gaulle's government takes the mask of a reformer or a modernizer, while actually seeking to encode and regularize the natural tendencies of capitalism). While redevelopment programs were transforming the spatial arrangement of French cities into highly managed urban zones, the expanding field of communications – whether in the form of state-run television and radio agency ORTF or mass-market magazines like *Paris-Match* and *Elle* – was transforming the symbolic environment into what Jean Baudrillard would call a "semiocratic" space, one controlled by the power of messages and signs.[4] The same year that *2 ou 3 choses* was released, Guy Debord published his seminal excoriation of the rise of spectacle culture, *La société du spectacle* (Society of the Spectacle), and *2 ou 3 choses* – filmed in 1966 and released in 1967, just a year before the massive student uprisings and general strikes of May '68 would shake the country with the promise of a "year zero" – similarly reflects upon these semiotic systems of control, teasing out the conditions for experience in the period that immediately preceded this historical breach.

In a televised discussion on ORTF in October 1966, shortly after principal photography for *2 ou 3 choses* had ended, Godard speaks at length about how the film aims to analyze the ways in which Paris of the 1960s had become "a grand bordello."[5] His protagonist, Juliette Jeanson (Marina Vlady), lives with her husband Robert in a housing complex in the working-class Parisian suburb of La Courneuve; she does sex work on the side to earn petty cash in order to afford consumer goods, and this plotline serves as a guiding metaphor for the film's critique of social relationships under boom-era capitalism. When Godard proclaims, with more than a bit of bombast, that all relations in contemporary France have become "forms of prostitution"[6] he gestures more broadly toward the ways in which individuals are called upon to "obey"[7] systems of control, pointing up mechanisms by which individuals' labor and desires are directed to fulfill the goals of a spectacular consumer society whose garish detritus litters the film's visual landscape: images of mass-produced goods and advertisements cram the visual field like a comic strip, suggesting a social order organized massively around the corporate manufacture of desire. According to Godard, this attitude of obedience exists on all levels of society, from the banker to the mechanic; and while the choice to home in on Juliette's informal labor as the privileged metonym for this general

social alienation reiterates certain masculinist undercurrents of the contemporary critical discourse, the director places all of his subjects, male and female, into situations of social or ideological submission – even if the specific task of sex work is reserved exclusively for the film's female characters. Robert and Roger, the opening scene's morally malleable ventriloquist's dummies, engage in precisely this dynamic of submission: they allow their voices to become the vessels for the militaristic speech of President Johnson not only by repeating ideologically suspect language but by molding their very rhythms and cadence of speech onto those of the radio transmission.

This episode functions, on a more subterranean level, as an internal critique of the relationships of power embedded in the production of the film itself, standing as a metatextual reflection on the device that Godard used throughout the shooting of *2 ou 3 choses*. This process, one of the film's most ubiquitous and innovative procedures, is revealed in an episode of the French woman's magazine show *Dim, Dam, Dom*, directed by Luc Favory and aired March 1, 1967 on ORTF. In it, we see Godard on location in a Paris hair salon giving instructions to a young woman who happened to be on set the day that filming began.[8] In the version of this scene that appears in the finished film, we see the same young woman in close-up, sitting in profile under a hair dryer (Figure 18.2), speaking absently about her fears for the future:

> Je suis très prudente pour traverser les rues. . . . Je pense à l'accident avant qu'il puisse arriver . . . et que ma vie s'arrête là . . . Le chômage . . . la maladie . . . la vieillesse . . . la mort, jamais. . . . Je n'ai pas de projets d'avenir, car l'horizon est fermé.

> (I am very careful when I cross the street. . . . I think of the accident before it happens . . . and that my life could end there . . . Unemployment . . . illness . . . old age . . . death, never. . . . I don't have plans for the future because the horizon is closed.)

Figure 18.2   Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

Figure 18.3   Screen captures from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

This short sequence belongs to a series of moments in *2 ou 3 choses* in which Godard solicits working-class women, usually non-actors found on location (Figure 18.3), to speak about their leisure activities ("I get off at 7 o'clock. . . . I am meeting Jean-Claude at 8 o'clock. . . . We're going out to eat, and maybe to a movie," says one anonymous woman before ducking out of frame). With their pared-down, monotone delivery, these fragmentary interviews appear direct and factual, aligning themselves with a series of documentary-inflected moments in

Godard's work from the early to mid-1960s in which interviews figure as eruptions of the real into the fictional fabric of the film.[9] But, as the episode of *Dim, Dam, Dom* shows, the *cinéma direct* aspect of the hair salon sequence is a carefully crafted fiction. In the program, we see Godard crouched behind the camera, whispering fragments of dialogue into a microphone while the young woman under the hair dryer listens in through a hidden earphone. "Je suis très prudente pour traverser les rues," Godard whispers, pausing to wait for the woman to repeat after him. "Je suis très prudente pour traverser les rues," she follows. He continues: "Je pense à l'accident avant qu'il puisse arriver." She repeats: "Je pense à l'accident avant qu'il puisse arriver."

This method, in which the director murmurs fragments of speech that the actors then repeat, gives rise to several of the film's most remarkable features. The performers' flat and mechanical diction, as well as their exaggerated pauses between sentence fragments, can be understood as artifacts of this process of call and response: the prolonged moments of silence that punctuate nearly every instance of speech in the film may be understood as the actors' efforts to hear the lines that they will repeat moments later. Here, it is not the actors who improvise, but the director who improvises through them, and the transistor radio in the opening sequence functions as a *mise en abyme* of the film's operative structuring principle. The actors ventriloquize the director's voice just as Robert and Roger ventriloquize the voice of President Johnson; the voice of authority vaunting military victories to a country overseas coincides with Godard's whispered injunctions to his actors from outside the frame.

While touched upon briefly in the critical literature, this technique of off-camera microphones and hidden earpieces, used in nearly every scene of *2 ou 3 choses*, is one of the film's most radical and underexplored propositions.[10] It may be considered a serializing operation, following the filmmaker's method of breaking the visual surface of the film into a succession of repetitive modules: images of rectangular display cases in a clothing store, rows of gas-station pumps, or windows in a vast *banlieue* (suburban) housing complex (Figure 18.4) tend to critique the alienating seriality of the contemporary Parisian cityscape and its grid of regulation and control.[11] The intervals that separate Godard's promptings from his actors' recitations transform the irregular rhythm of speech into evenly spaced segments: rather than being heard in a single breath, or with the pauses and hesitations accompanying everyday utterances, these verbal fragments are systematically interrupted by regularly spaced pauses. Such sustained alternation between silence and speech transforms the space of discourse into a serialized field, organized not by the irregularity of an actor's spontaneous reactions, but by the regularity of his or her acquiescence to an invisible authority's command. Godard's technique resembles the disciplinary scenario *par excellence*: the *dictée* or dictation, that mechanism of social training deployed in the French primary and secondary education systems, whereby the instructor recites a text that the student copies down, word for word.[12]

Figure 18.4   Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

From the actor's point of view, we might conjecture, there is a difference between learning a text by heart and receiving that same text in saccadic fragments, without having the opportunity to synthesize the shards into a whole. The actor who receives a script in advance has the implicit ability to appropriate its sense, to structure the process of meaning-making for herself; the actor who is constrained to recite fragments of speech the moment that she receives them strikes a very different relationship to the language of the text. In this second scenario, which functions more according to mechanisms of repetition rather than to codes of representation, the actor is prevented from affectively recuperating the text's dramatic movement: faced with a structural inability to fully "master" her own performance, she is constrained to repeat the promptings she receives, even if the voice that delivers them to her speaks in another verbal time or a different gender.[13]

Yet even as Godard's system of remote control submits the actor to a rigorous and disciplining serial order, it gives rise to an array of interruptions, slippages, and interferences through which she may momentarily elude or resist it, at times causing the system itself to fold back on itself and unravel. Towards the end of the film, Juliette speaks directly to the camera, perched on the edge of her son Christophe's bed, while the young boy bounces giddily in the background, forming a comedic counterpoint to the seriousness of the scene's ostensible subject matter:

> Montrer mes yeux?
> (*pause; looks at the camera*)
> Je sais que ce sont mes yeux parce que je vois avec.
> (*pause*)
> (*to the camera*) Je sais que ce ne sont pas mes genoux ou mes épaules parce qu'on me l'a dit.

(*pause*)
(*to the camera*) Comment je ferais si l'on me l'avait pas dit?

(Show my eyes? . . . I know that these are my eyes because I see with them. . . . I know that they are not my knees or my shoulders because that's what I've been told. . . . What would I do if nobody had told me?)

Vlady's, "Montrer mes yeux?" (Show my eyes?) marks a moment of confusion, a difficulty distinguishing between the director's dictations and stage directions. We may imagine this question as the actor's response to Godard's off-camera instruction to look up ("show your eyes"): her repetition can be read as a momentary hesitation, an effort to understand what the off-screen voice wants her to do, and it is only after having reiterated the command that she follows it, looking fixedly in the direction of the camera. The question also marks a slippage between character and actor. Here, as elsewhere, the film's subjects will be referred to alternately by their character's names ("Juliette") and by the names of the actors that play them ("Vlady"). This procedure follows Godard's own system of appellation: in an early sequence, his off-screen voice introduces the film's principal subject first as the actor Marina Vlady and then, in a second shot that is slightly skewed, as the fictional character, Juliette Jeanson. And while the film deliberately obviates any clear indication of which of the two, character or actor, we are witnessing at any given moment (Godard has said that *2 ou 3 choses* is both a film and the making of a film, more "document" than fiction[14]) it is to be inferred that the identity of the film's main subject is in a state of continuous negotiation.

In order to parse Vlady's elliptical remarks, we might attempt to supply the director's half of the dialogue under erasure. Through an imagined reconstitution of this inaudible dialogue, we might begin to understand the preceding fragments as Vlady's perspicacious, reticent, or literal responses to Godard's prompts:

GODARD: Montre tes yeux.
VLADY: Montrer mes yeux?
GODARD: Oui.
(*looks at the camera*)
GODARD: Comment tu sais que ce sont tes yeux?
VLADY: Je sais que ce sont mes yeux parce que je vois avec.
GODARD: Mais comment tu sais que ce ne sont pas tes genoux ou tes épaules?
VLADY: Je sais que ce ne sont pas mes genoux ou mes épaules parce qu'on me l'a dit.
GODARD: Et comment tu ferais si on te l'avais pas dit?
VLADY: Comment je ferais si l'on me l'avait pas dit?

GODARD: Show your eyes.
VLADY: Show my eyes?
GODARD: Yes. How do you know that these are your eyes?

VLADY: I know that these are my eyes because I see with them.
GODARD: But how do you know that these are not your knees or your shoulders?
VLADY: I know that these are not my knees or my shoulders because that's what I've been told.
GODARD: And what would you do if nobody had told you?
VLADY: What would I do if nobody had told me?

Three distinct categories of utterance can be imputed to Godard's off-camera voice here. In addition to dictations, the filmmaker asks questions that are intended to elicit an answer ("How do you know that these are your eyes?") and offers stage directions that instruct her to complete an action ("Show your eyes"). Since Godard alternates rapidly and seamlessly between these three forms – interrogations, dictations, and commands – Vlady, who is forced to make decisions off the cuff about how to interpret these instructions, at times elides one category with another, repeating back a command or a question instead of simply answering or following it. The interferences and miscommunications that arise from these shifts in register complicate intelligibility, at times short-circuiting the director's system of remote control.[15] And while these slippages in communication issue from the director's own improvised reshuffling of communication cues, the results can be understood as a joint performance on the part of both director and actor. Marina Vlady's margin of maneuver does not reside in her ability to dramatize her performance, to summon a voice that would speak from outside the mechanism of control put into play by the filmmaker's system, nor does it consist in a refusal to comply with an implicitly or explicitly stated command. Rather, resistance – if resistance is to be found here – emerges in the actor's ability to cause the serial structure of the film to bend back upon itself, to make it reflect, according to the Brechtian dictates of the film's prologue, its own structural and ideological presuppositions. Precisely because the film refuses to posit an outside to the disciplinary relationship between director and actor, it is in these moments when command and action, question and response, dictation and repetition are confused that the governing logic of the system emerges most forcefully into view.

The one instance in which a dictation is outright refused in the film serves precisely to affirm the ways in which such explicit opposition is elsewhere foreclosed. In the scene at the Elysee-Marbeuf café, over the clattering of pinball machines and the shouts of servers, an anonymous woman played by Juliet Berto speaks to Robert, who sits writing in his notebook at an adjacent table (Figure 18.5). "Je capte des messages de l'Au-delà," (I'm capturing messages from the Beyond) he tells her flatly. At another table, two characters, Bouvard and Pécuchet (Claude Miller and Jean-Patrick Lebel) read aloud sentences pulled at random from romance novels, political tracts, classified ads, and copy them down. Both Robert's faux-romantic transcription of esoteric spirit voices and the comic reference to Gustave Flaubert's buffoonish anti-heroes[16] function in ways analogous to Roger's and Robert's word-for-word repetition of President Johnson's radio speech. In

Figure 18.5   Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

each instance, the semiotic landscape of the film is pictured as teeming with voices, swirling with inchoate messages: characters act like transistor radios, tuning into the frequencies of oral transcripts and written records. They offer their voices over as vehicles for these messages. They are, themselves, bundles of retransmitted, recoded, and reformulated signs.

In the midst of this process of capturing and repeating, dictating and reciting, the camera trains its gaze on Berto's face, cutting Robert out of the frame. From that point on, Robert slips into the role typically inhabited by Godard, asking her a series of questions from off-screen. "Dîtes-moi quelque chose que vous trouvez intéressant" (Tell me something that you find interesting), he asks her. When she avoids the question, staring blankly off-screen, he continues: "Est-ce que vous savez ce que c'est, parler?" (Do you know what it means to speak?). She replies with a smirk, "Parler, c'est dire des mots" (To speak is to say words). "Je vais vous demander de dire une phrase," he says, "mais je suis sûr que vous allez refuser" (I'm going to ask you to say a sentence, but I'm sure that you're going to say no): "'Mon 'sexe est placé entre mes jambes'" (My sex is located between my legs). He urges her to repeat this statement: "Dîtes cette phrase. . . . Allez, répétez" (Say

this sentence. . . . Go on, repeat it"). Berto's character responds in disgust with a shrug of the shoulders: "J'suis pas à l'école" (I'm not in school). He attempts to convince her again, arguing that to speak frankly about sex is to "parler vraiment" (to really speak), and thereby to enter into a compact of intimacy not typically allowed in film: "Au cinéma, on ne parle pas" (In cinema, nobody really speaks). She continues to refuse: "C'est absurde" (It's absurd), she says. "Dire une évidence aussi banal, c'est pas la peine (To say something so obvious and so banal isn't worth the trouble).

Between the disembodied male voice that cajoles, commands, prods, and interrogates and the female figure that responds or does not respond, complies or does not comply, speaks or does not speak, the exercise of control in *2 ou 3 choses* is a firmly gendered enterprise. If Godard's erased directorial voice sublimates the drive for (sexual) dominance by having Vlady parrot questions cribbed loosely from philosophical texts ("I know that these are my eyes"), Robert's bald and prurient reference to female anatomy ("My sex is located between my legs") reveals the underlying truth of these exchanges: the voice that transmits commands to actors who are paid to do the job is the voice of both the "pimp" and the "john." And while the replies of Berto's character are by no means radical challenges to the whims of patriarchy, what is striking in this ancillary scene is the way it throws the rest of the film's suppressed dialogues into relief. Perhaps because Robert exists within the world of the story, both as an embodied voice and a character with a particular set of associations (Robert the bewildered husband, Robert the buffoon), it is possible for Berto's character to speak back to him, to refuse to repeat the line that he feeds her. The relationship that Godard strikes with his actors, by contrast, is qualitatively different. Insinuating himself through hidden earpieces that function like connective tissues linking intention to action, body to mind, his voice is both omnipresent and absent. In this sense, the relationship that Godard forges with his actors is a cipher for a wider complex of power relationships that Berto's line ("I'm not in school") affirms in the negative: his inescapable voice is the mimed voice of disciplinary authority, which is why to watch Berto respond to Robert's off-screen antics is to watch an "absurd" or irritating conversation, whereas to watch Vlady address the camera is to witness the actor in the grips of the murky and unseizable process of subjectivation.

In his short essay on *2 ou 3 choses*, "Ma démarche en quatre mouvements" (My Process in Four Movements) Godard posits that "toutes choses existent à la fois de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur" (Everything exists both from the inside and the outside).[17] The subject is interpellated, called upon to participate in the social game with fixed rules and results that may have been determined in advance, but neither can the subject be entirely defined by these forces nor explained solely in terms of "tactical" ruses that work against this structure from within. Rather, it is in the force field between control and resistance, which manifests in moments of confusion or self-reflection, that one may begin to trace out the processes of subjectivation at work in the film. Juliette's statements in the preceding exchange

testify to such a fluctuation: when asked how she "knows that these are [her] eyes," she responds, "because I see with them." But when asked to explain "how [she] know[s] that these are not [her] knees or [her] shoulders" she proffers that her knowledge is based upon convention ("because that's what I was told"). In the first instance, her conclusions are drawn from a pragmatic sense of rightness ("I see with them"), but in the second case she admits that this denotation is itself constituted by social rules, determined by her linguistic community. And while being asked to field questions about her "eyes," "knees," or "shoulders" is not the same as Robert's plea that Berto talk about her *sexe*, the circumscriptions around what types of speech are demanded of the film's female actors are nonetheless equivalent: Godard here borrows fragments from the philosophy of language (Wittgenstein, *inter alia*) in an attempt to disentangle "interior" from "exterior" points of view, while mobilizing them toward an extended reflection on those aspects of his actor's experience that are most readily available to his camera's gaze: her body.

To be sure, Godard's other subjects are caught in the grips of these machinations, albeit from different social and symbolic locations. In the film's penultimate scene, which follows directly on the preceding episode with Juliette on the bed, we see Robert, at the end of the day, listening once more to his transistor radio and repeating what he hears. This time the political imaginary of the recited text is more free-floating and hallucinatory:

> Si Hitler arrivait, je vais lui tirer dessus . . .
> (*pause*)
> Comment je vais dire ça?
> (*pause; takes a plastic machine gun and aims it towards the door as if he is going to fire*)
> Parce que je l'attendrais . . .
> (*pause*)
> Et dès qu'il entre, tu lui tires dessus
> (*fires the gun and looks over his shoulder at the camera*)
> Non, je ne sais pas où il est.
> (*pause*)
> Quand je ne sais pas j'imagine.
> (*pause*)
> Comment je fais pour imaginer quelque chose quand je ne sais pas où elle est?
> (*pause; looks again at the camera over his shoulder*)
> Non, je ne sais pas s'il existe encore.
> (*pause*)
> Oui, peut-être je confond la réalité et la pensée.
> (*pause; looks at the camera over his shoulder*)
> Oui, oui, je serais tenté de dire ça.
> (*pause*)
> Que, parce que il n'existe pas toujours d'objet réel . . .
> (*pause*)
> . . . qui puisse garantir . . .

(*pause*)
. . . la vérité de nos pensées . . .
(*pause*)
. . . ce n'est pas le réel que nous pensons . . .
(*pause*)
. . . c'est un fantôme du réel.

(If Hitler came in, I would shoot him. . . . How should I say that? . . . because I would wait for him . . . and as soon as he comes in, you shoot him down. . . . No, I don't know where he is. . . . When I don't know, I imagine. . . . How do I imagine something when I don't know where it is? . . . No, I do not know if he exists anymore. . . . Yes, perhaps I confuse reality and thought. . . . Yes, yes, I would be tempted to say that. . . . That, because there does not always exist a real object . . . that can guarantee . . . the truth of our thoughts . . . It is not the real that we think . . . it is a phantom of the real.)[18]

By the time *2 ou 3 choses* nears its final moments, the film has moved through various scenes in which the process of dictation and recitation, first laid bare in the opening radio sequence, has been interfered with and disrupted, complicating the film's structuring logic of command and control. Here Godard's directorial process is revealed in its most chaotic light, as though the transistor itself were on the verge of short-circuiting, exploding into static and white noise.[19]

Several of Montsoret's lines formally mirror the confusions already witnessed in the preceding scene with Vlady. A similar reconstruction of the suppressed dialogue between director and actor might read as follows:

GODARD: Est-ce que tu sais où il est?
MONTSORET: Non, je ne sais pas où il est.
GODARD: Comment tu fais pour savoir où il est quand tu ne sais pas où il est?
MONTSORET: Quand je ne sais pas, j'imagine.
GODARD: Comment tu fais pour imaginer quelque chose quand tu ne sais pas où elle est?
MONTSORET: Comment je fais pour imaginer quelque chose quand je ne sais pas où elle est?"
GODARD: "Tu sais s'il existe encore?"
MONTSORET: "Non, je ne sais pas s'il existe encore."

GODARD: Do you know where he is?
MONTSORET: No, I don't know where he is.
GODARD: How could you know where he is if you do not know where he is?
MONTSORET: When I don't know, I imagine.
GODARD: How do you imagine something when you don't know where it is?
MONTSORET: How do I imagine something when I don't know where it is?
GODARD: Do you know if he still exists?
MONTOSRET: "No, I don't know if he still exists."

When Robert asks, "How do I imagine something when I don't know where it is?" he repeats Vlady's "What would I do if nobody had told me?" responding to Godard's question by repeating it back. In this moment, the serialized progression of call and response has momentarily stumbled.

Something more troubling emerges in the fragment of dialogue that begins with "Si Hitler arrivait" and ends with "tu lui tires dessus":

GODARD: Si Hitler arrivait, je vais lui tirer dessus . . .
MONTSORET: Si Hitler arrivait, je vais lui tirer dessus . . .
GODARD: parce que je l'attendrais – Dis ça avec le fusil à la main.
MONTSORET: Comment je vais dire ça?
GODARD: Avec le fusil à la main.
MONTSORET: (*takes the plastic machine gun and aims it towards the door as if about to fire*) Parce que je l'attendrais . . .
GODARD: et dès qu'il entre, tu lui tires dessus.
MONTSORET: et dès qu'il entre, tu lui tires dessus.
(*fires the gun and looks over shoulder at the camera*)

GODARD: If Hitler came in, I will shoot him . . .
MONTSORET: If Hitler came in, I will shoot him . . .
GODARD: because I would be waiting for him – say that with the gun in your hand.
MONTSORET: How am I supposed to say that?
GODARD: with the gun in your hand.
MONTSORET: . . . because I would be waiting for him . . .
GODARD: and as soon as he enters, you shoot him down.
MONTSORET: and as soon as he enters, you shoot him down."

With the question, "Comment je vais dire ça?" Montsoret steps abruptly out of character in order to clarify how he is to say his line; Godard responds by instructing him to recite the words, "parce que je l'attendrais" while holding the black plastic gun to mime Hitler's assassination. Montsoret takes the gun in hand, as if seized by a sudden certainty both about his mission as Robert (to "assassinate Hitler") and as Montsoret (to figure out "how to say that"), and recites the line while unloading a cartridge into the empty doorframe.

This ostentatious sense of disorientation is prolonged throughout the following series of exchanges, in which Montsoret confounds commands and dictations, mixing verb tenses and times. In the space of four utterances, he shifts between the imperfect ("arrivait") to the future ("je vais") to the conditional ("je l'attendrais," which may alternately be heard as the future, "attendrai") to the present ("tu lui tires dessus"), and this verbal confusion resonates with the short-circuiting of historical time presented in the confrontation between Robert and Hitler in 1966. Robert's use of the imperfect would normally have been the beginning of a conditional statement ("Si Hitler arrivait"), but in the following clause he shifts to the

future ("je vais lui tirer dessus") instead of the expected conditional ("je lui tirerais dessus"). He then remains in the future ("Comment je vais dire ça"), only to lapse back to a conditional ("je l'attendrais"), ending up, without warning, in the present ("tu lui tires dessus").

But this last move has a more unnerving consequence. For in the last two lines, Robert appears to have shifted, across the space of a pause, from speaking about himself in the first person ("je") to considering himself in the second person ("tu"). The original "je" was of course itself fractured. At times it pointed towards the "je" of Godard, ventriloquized by Robert ("Si Hitler arrivait, je vais lui tirer dessus"), whereas at others it pointed towards the "je" of Montsoret interrogating Godard's orders ("Comment je vais dire ca?"). The transition from "je" to "tu," then, multiplies the consequences of this originary fracture. On one level, this can be understood as a confounding of registers: instead of hearing Godard's injunction, "dès qu'il entre, tu lui tires dessus" as an invitation to visualize an imaginary situation, Montsoret heard it as a fragment of text that the director instructed him to recite. In this sense, Montsoret's misprision is something that Godard may have anticipated, even if its exact manifestation might not have been predicted. By rapidly changing registers from dictation to direction, he reshuffles the rules and complicates the logic of command.

This confusion of messages, this interchangeability of the interpellative "tu" and the expressive "je," points toward the film's conception of subjectivity in a society of control. *2 ou 3 choses* describes the enunciative individual in a process of oscillation between interior thoughts and social commands, between a feeling of one's self as a subject on the trail of epistemological questions ("comment je sais que ce sont mes yeux?") and a subject defined by the "signes parmi nous" ("signs among us").[20] At times characters speak from within, while at other moments, having interiorized socially determinant forces, they consider themselves from without. This transforms the subject into a crossing-ground, a zone of contact, where several voices can be heard, as if on a transistor, across a fog of frequencies: in concert or in conflict, speaking in different tenses and varying times, they prod the listener to capitulate to a set of transmitted desires or to respond with incomprehension and perplexity, thereby halting, if only for a moment, their mechanism of remote control.

Of course, in the symbolic landscape of the film, this procedure is differentially applied. As Godard's surrogate, Robert enjoys the privilege of acting as the instigator of communication ("say the phrase") while at the same time figuring as the film's most hyperbolically vacuous receiver of others' commands ("capturing the messages from the Beyond"). Whether in his role as emitter or receiver, however, he serves the function of rendering explicit the processes of transmission that underwrites the film: by laying bare with comic absurdity the director's structuring device, from the opening radio scene to the Elysée-Marbeuf to the final encounter with Hitler, Godard's system is both exposed and neutralized. By contrast, with Juliette, as with the other anonymous women in the film, the process

of control is submerged symbolically beneath the surface of the film. On the one hand Godard imputes a kind of existential gravity to Juliette (and, to a lesser degree, his ancillary female characters) reserving the film's most memorably searching and aphoristic lines for the scenes in which she speaks alone to the camera; on the other hand, precisely because the mechanism of remote control has been shunted from view in these scenes – there are no clunky metallic earphones, no radio transmitters, no broad scenes in which characters wrangle over language, exposing the technological or gendered means by which power is exercised – the relationship between director and actor has been, if not exactly naturalized, at least suffused into the film's very fabric.

If, as has been this chapter's presiding contention, Godard's directorial method provides an acute demonstration of the relations of power that define 1960s French society, it may appear that it skirts dangerously close to reifying the very structures that the film sets to critique. By persistently figuring female characters as flattened bodies that either succumb to or resist off-screen commands, Godard both internally critiques and ramifies the techniques by which contemporary spectacle culture transforms the female form into an immobilized image.

Yet his mechanism of remote control is deliberately set up to short-circuit. In scene after scene, he and his actors push the film's logic to the verge of collapse, opening up the possibility of "starting over from scratch" ("tout recommencer de zéro," whispered by Godard on the voice track[21]). Indeed, by the year after *2 ou 3 choses* was released, 1968, the filmmaker's work will take a decidedly different tack, redrawing the cinematic terrain according to more unambiguously revolutionary political propositions. If in 1966 the wistful intimation of a "retour à zéro" (return to zero) is the end-point of analysis, it is from here that a film such as *Le Gai savoir* (Joy of Learning) (1969) begins, with its programmatic attempt to restructure cinematic language from the ground up. Cast against the final years of the 1960s, *2 ou 3 choses* provides a more circumspect account of the potential for politically liberatory action. Robert and Juliette have no remedy for the routines that define them: "The horizon is blocked," as the woman in the salon says, and these characters' moments of self-reflexivity are always inserted into larger configurations that frame and limit their ability to act upon the conditions that define their lives. Godard's process of *dictée* and repetition provides the film's most forceful demonstration of the formation of the subject in contemporary France. Caught in the grips of a rapidly urbanizing environment and a structural transition to an information economy, the film's actors work their way through a thicket of telecommunicated signs. Pausing to listen to Godard's whispered commands, they repeat, hesitate, question, smirk, and stumble. In replying or not replying, answering or hesitating, following directions or repeating them back, they rehearse the conditions of possibility for experience in a control society, moving between subservience and resistance, obedience, and the glimmer of revolt.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1 Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
2 Jules Feiffer's cartoon was published in France in the *Nouvel observateur* on August 24, 1966 (Guzzetti, 1981, 47).
3 This notion of "subjectivation" is borrowed from Michel Foucault's use of *assujetissement* and *subjectivation* (Foucault, 1975; 1994).
4 Baudrillard (1976).
5 "On retrouve les choses qui caractérisent le bordel, où la population obéit, fait trottoir enfin de la même manière." (One finds the same things that characterize the bordello, where the population obeys, walks the streets in the same way) (Godard and Saint Geours, 1966).
6 Godard (1998, 295–297).
7 Godard and Saint Geours (1966).
8 "Marina" (1967).
9 Cf. Nana's interview of Brice Parain in *Vivre sa vie* (My Life To Live) (1962), Paul's interview of "Mademoiselle 19 Ans" in *Masculin-féminin* (Masculine-Feminine) (1966) and Véronique's interview of Francis Jeanson in *La chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) (1967).
10 The technique is noted by Guzzetti (1981, 55, 95, 187) and Martin (2006). MacCabe mentions it in relation to Wiazemsky's interview with Francis Jeanson in a later film from 1967, *La chinoise* (MacCabe, 2003, 198).
11 See Deleuze on the series in Godard (Deleuze, 1985, 234–245). The notion of control finds form elsewhere in the film: while taking a bath, an anonymous woman is interrupted by a representative from EDF (Eléctricité de France), who enters her home unannounced for a spot-check, or *contôle*, of her meter.
12 Godard's system functions as a test, both in the sense of the schoolmaster's *dictée* and Walter Benjamin's "optical test." The actor stands before an artillery of recording equipment, and his or her response functions as a rehearsal – *repetition* – for collective adaptations to the specific conditions of modernity (Benjamin, 1968, 211–244).
13 Cf. Bertolt Brecht's disapproval of methods employed by actors to "put themselves" in "a mood": the actor "ought to move away from himself" (Brecht, 1964, 26). "Parler comme des citations de vérité," says Vlady in an early sequence, "c'est le père Brecht qui disait ça" (Speak like citations of truth. It's Father Brecht who said that). Godard's method of directing also draws on techniques employed by Robert Bresson (see Bresson, 1975).
14 Godard (1998, 296).

15   Jean-Patrick Lebel, who assisted on the set of *2 ou 3 choses*, notes that the system of wireless transmission designed by sound engineer René Levert did not always produce a clear signal: "les ratés du système, dont [Godard] a évidemment tiré parti, étaient parfois imprévues et involontaires, car la transmission HF n'était pas encore parfaitement au point" (the failures of the system, from which [Godard] has obviously benefited were sometimes unexpected and unintended, for HF transmission was not yet fully developed) (Lebel, 2007).

16   Cf. Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881).

17   Godard (1998: 297).

18   These final lines come from the French translation of *The Blue and Brown Books* (Wittgenstein, 1965, 70–71).

19   The metaphor is rendered concrete at the end of the first radio sequence: in it, we see two close-up shots of the transistor radio transformed into a Vietnamese city bombarded by the Americans, exploding in a cloud of smoke.

20   Cf. Godard's voice-over in the carwash scene: "Pourquoi toutes ces signes parmi nous, qui finissent par me faire douter du langage, et qui me submergent de significations, en noyant le réel, au lieu de le dégager de l'imaginaire?" (Why all these signs that make me distrust language and submerge me in meanings, drowning reality, not freeing it of the imaginary?). The phrase "Les signes parmi nous" later figures in *Histoire(s) du cinema*.

21   The phrase finds visual form in a series of images in which the numeral "zero" is transcribed as a circular image: a cigarette tip resembles a solar flare, and the swirl of foam in a cup of espresso resembles a spinning galaxy.

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La Chinoise . . . et après?

Aging Against Tradition

Grace An

During a 1981 interview in a documentary about actresses and their treatment by the film industry, Anne Wiazemsky expresses alienation from her role in *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman), one of Jean-Luc Godard's most idiosyncratic yet iconic films, released in 1967. She played Véronique Supervielle, a student who spends a summer reading philosophy and dreaming revolution in a *groupuscule* (small group) with other comrade youths: theatre student Guillaume Meister (played by New Wave icon Jean-Pierre Léaud), Communist Henri (Michel Semeniako), the painter Kirilov (Lex De Bruijn), and their domestic/prostitute Yvonne (Juliette Berto). They insert themselves into a romanticized genealogy of revolutionaries, namely the Red Guards of Mao's Cultural Revolution in China, as they plot their own revolt in Paris. Véronique is singled out as *la* Chinoise for her absolute emulation of the Red Guards in the fight they declare against the evils of capitalism, imperialism, and Gaullism.

"La Chinoise" was also the nickname for Maoism, a new political vogue embraced by a certain branch of the Communist party in France. The charismatic force of Mao's image and persona energized the search for novel articulations of ideology after the rejection of long-standing Soviet models of Marxism, deemed failing, if not already defunct. French Maoists embraced his emphases on anti-imperialism and all forms of systematic oppression as they grappled with enduring conflicts in Algeria and Vietnam, as well as an increasingly oppressive Gaullist regime at home. The Marxist-Leninists who helped Godard learn about Maoism might not be surprised by Wiazemsky's expression of estrangement from this career-defining role. They, too, rejected their portrayal by the film, which seemed to make a mockery of their commitments and portrayed them as provocateurs, while assuming their nickname as its title.[1] Even worse, according to one Maoist

in particular, *La Chinoise* managed to turn these political radicals into "bourgeois youth who have adopted a new disguise."[2] "La Chinoise, c'est pas moi!" (*La Chinoise* is not me!) might be an entire chorus.

Almost 15 years after the release of *La Chinoise*, Wiazemsky reflected on a film whose enduring mystique is locked into a particular moment in time – the late 1960s in France – which may not have produced any lasting change, however symbolic the moment might have been for the latter part of the twentieth century. "La Chinoise, c'est pas moi!" is suggestive of how the actress might have aged away from the film, the character, or the period, or how anyone referenced in this film would hardly recognize herself since it seemed to speak through her about something else. More importantly, Wiazemsky's remarks about the lack of self-knowledge and the imposition of a foreign persona articulate a central problem of *La Chinoise* and its relationship to the concept of a fixed identity. Seen through the lens of her experience, these two words would together emblematize how identities are borrowed, appropriated, re-imagined, contorted, and perhaps even destroyed – with no person, word, or thing being spared.

Forty years after its premiere at the Avignon theatre festival in 1967, *La Chinoise* continues to fascinate, shock, and mystify. It is either lionized by a limited group of cinephilic devotees or subjected to mixed critical reviews. Awarded the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1967, *La Chinoise* would hover in the shadows of Godard's better known films, such as *Breathless*, *Pierrot le Fou* (Pierrot the Mad), *and My Life to Live*, and would be among his last to transfer to DVD, bypassing the VHS cassette era altogether. The film followed the process by which eager youths travelled the continuum between, on the one hand, a searching and idealistic engagement with thought and politics, and on the other, the dangers of reckless utopianism, with terrorism as a precipitous conclusion. Godard's relationship to his own presentation of revolutionary fervor would challenge critics in their assessment of his actual political commitments.[3] Was he championing these misguided youths, or was he mocking them? How seriously should one take his characters' antics, slogans, skits, and gestures? If this film was a parody or a satire, to which ends? Why make this film so hard to watch, let alone decipher?

The critical ambivalence and the haze around *La Chinoise* might be explained in part by Godard's own wrestling match with his artistic and political crisis at that point of his career. Such desperate uncertainty can be felt in the simultaneous constructive-deconstructive mode of "un film en train de se faire" (a film in the making), as well as in the bewilderment and frustration entrapping viewers once the students botch their own attempted revolution – particularly the attempted assassination of the Soviet Minister of Culture during his visit to Paris – not to mention their failure carry out any plan at all. Godard's experience of non-recognition or alienation with the film seems to parallel that of Wiazemsky, now his ex-wife. During a famous train scene in the last third of the film, her character, Véronique, urges revolution to her philosophy teacher Francis Jeanson, who, playing himself, was Wiazemsky's philosophy professor and a militant previously

involved with the Algerian National Front during the Algerian War. In response, he repeatedly challenges her with the question "et après?" (And after?). Speechless and stumped, Véronique can neither anticipate the future implications of her misguided ideas nor identify her real cause in the present. Amidst the elaborate mise-en-scène of the film, agitational and counter-didactic as it might have appeared, what could have been the real cause of *La Chinoise*, or its answer to "et après?"?

Later, Godard would admit that he had the details but not the structure. *La Chinoise* has been described as "self-canceling" and deceptive in its split consciousness, while Richard Brody has understood the film as "an intellectual purge [. . .] largely of Godard himself, who was wiping out his own ample literary culture [. . .] indeed, something of an intellectual suicide" (Brody, 2008, 307). The scene where Guillaume wipes important names off the blackboard encapsulates this process, which leaves only one name standing: Brecht. *La Chinoise* may even be understood as a film whose violence not only characterized the ideological struggles for his students but also artistic battles waged by the director with himself. When the film announces itself as "a film in the making," its self-conscious collage construction (what Godard called "un film de montage") ultimately implies its undoing – ironically, since it thematizes a desire to undo all that has supported the great evil powers that the students so want to fight. The real war, however, is directed at the intellectual resources to which Godard, Véronique, and Guillaume might have turned in order to stage such a battle in the first place. Alas, the likes of Sartre, Aeschylus, Cocteau, and Schiller have been erased from the students' blackboard.

Wiazemsky's retrospective account of dis-identification from *la Chinoise* (role and film) challenges the narrativized connections between the film and the historical reality it seemed to record or anticipate, even through distortion. It also dares one to identify just who or what *La Chinoise* actually was. Her remarks nudge viewers past the film's supposed signature quality (a prescience regarding the student revolts at the barricades during the following year in May 1968), help respond to Jeanson's question "et après?," and are especially relevant in a collection of essays celebrating Godard's 80th anniversary. The story to be told here recounts the ways in which the privileged yet isolated project that was *La Chinoise*, despite its almost legendary iconoclasm and aggressive experimentation toward reinvented cinematic ideals, has functioned as an artifact, a totem object that preserves – but also questions – the myths of '68: revolutionary fervor, the New Wave, and utopianism in art and politics. Instead of fetishizing its past and its supposed place therein, we may turn to Chris Darke's description of the events of May '68 as "a long unfinished film" (Darke, 2008, 19) and open *La Chinoise* up again in a similar vein to rethink how it has aged, and perhaps even continued making itself – or unmaking itself – over time. Between Richard Brody's account of the film as the "undoing of a self-portrait" for Godard, and Wiazemsky's

declaration of a film identity crisis, I would argue that *La Chinoise* is a film that does away with the past, whether by displaying the students' rejection of established thinkers, writers, and poets, or by undoing itself by the time it ends. What I'd like to suggest is that *La Chinoise* accesses a different notion of the past, against the pressures of memorialization and nostalgia that have interceded with our ongoing experience with the film.

Out of the Time Capsule, A Long Unfinished Film

With its extreme formalism and oft-noted Brechtian tactics of distanciation and estrangement, *La Chinoise* shows Godard's attempts at novel film form by which political and personal commitments could find expression across continents and generations, and between the past and the future it so wanted to proclaim. The film constantly breaks its own narrative frame, and so much so that the actors can't act without immediate debriefing about the project at hand and its realization, and viewers can't always determine when a scene is not one of the strange skits they perform for themselves. Eschewing psychological realism and narrative flow, *La Chinoise* virtually never strays away from its dominant meta-consciousness, which may well befit Godard's struggle with didacticism and counter-didacticism, theory and practice, and himself. The didactic quality of the film mostly comes from the editing, given the arbitrary order of sequences Godard playfully edited from an excessive amount of footage collected for that very purpose, as well as the palette of the film, reduced mostly to red, blue, and yellow. Godard's choice to limit himself to the three primary colors was part of a plan to simplify the aesthetic of the film, to find "a new alphabet," and thus a new beginning for the language of cinema (Youngblood, 1998, 24). He would claim that he no longer knew how to speak (Youngblood, 1998, 38). In pursuit of a new speech, Godard also levels a great deal of fourth-wall demolition, what with actors addressing the camera; actors speaking to an off-screen and barely audible Godard in interviews about the making of the film; shots of cameraman Raoul Coutard, a sound technician, and their equipment within the frame – abruptly punctuated by the clapboard, slapping us into a new shot, or slicing one end into another.

Although the film is not a "reflection" of a period or a moment, it functions like art, which, according to Kirilov, "does not reflect reality but is the reality of a reflection." Even through the filters of conspicuous parody and self-referentiality, Godard's mise-en-scène of students dreaming revolution entertains a dangerous proximity to the imaginative work done by French Maoists themselves. Its narrative basis draws from the ways an actual band of students, under the influence of Louis Althusser at the École Normale Supérieure, looked outside France for new models of Marxism. Their ideological adoption of Mao's Red Guards served, in

Richard Wollen's words, as an "exit strategy to escape from the straitjacket of (the Soviet model) of orthodox Marxism," as well as a source of renewal "to perpetuate the intoxications of the French revolutionary tradition" (Wollen, 2010, 20). Organized as the *Mouvement communiste français*, Maoism was an intellectual movement that especially inspired youths already imbued with the persona of Mao, whom they saw as the authentic voice of Marxist-Leninism. When Mao declared revolution in 1966, he brought international attention to the presence of the Third World, which resonated poignantly for a France in the throes of both an emerging Algerian independence and reported atrocities of the Vietnam War. Maoism was one of a number of factors sowing the seeds of a volatile transition that would erupt in 1968, while inspiring a trend of Parisian Maoist chic. Ideological emulation turned into the reinvention of cultural identities.

This political transition sought by the New Left occasioned an artistic and political transition for Godard, whom future leftist collaborator Jean-Pierre Gorin introduced to the Marxist-Leninist group at the École Normale.[4] The discourse regarding the liberation of Vietnam and the Third World from imperialists helped Godard articulate an urgent agenda of his own. He would liberate cinema from its great oppressors – Hollywood, Cinécitta, MosFilms – even claiming that cinema had become the "agit-prop of Capitalism."[5] He would also try to rescue cinema from the passage of time – which is to say, from both the classical tradition that his preceding work had become, as well as influences with which he had previously engaged enthusiastically, albeit irreverently, but from which he hoped to disentangle his work of the future. For both Marxist students and filmmaker, a break from the past required a violent rupture from enemy giants, for the distinction between the past and the future (or expired and emerging commitments) was Manichean and absolute, yet hard to traverse. It was not enough to re-imagine their immediate contexts in which to seek alternative politics, worlds, practices, and ideas. To liberate oneself was to destroy the cultural elite, even if the program included the bombing of the Sorbonne, the Comédie Française, and the Louvre, as demanded by Véronique. Accordingly, the fight "on two fronts" articulated the endeavors of the political and artistic avant-gardes.

Although never uttered during the film, the presence of the words "la Chinoise" in the film title emphasizes the composite constructions that underpinned both "Chinoises" – the Maoists and the film they inspired. Rather than unfolding as a film about a Chinese woman or the people who use her as a mascot, the title *La Chinoise* conceptualizes the film as portraying the ideological imagination at work in the late 1960s in search of alternative models and cultures, dissociated as they had become from their original contexts. Godard maps his own biography and ideas about cinema onto this context as he absorbs this phenomenon into an essay film. Originally intended to be a film comparing Soviet and Chinese models of Communism, *La Chinoise* had become, as his own words, "a narrative film about ideas" that would seek to liberate the seventh art from the same abstracted oppressors that fellow Maoists were fighting themselves (Youngblood, 1998, 40). His

adoption of the Maoist "Chinoise" would morph into the character Véronique, which in turn also absorbed biographical traits from Wiazemsky, a philosophy student at Nanterre and Godard's new bride, as well as other Véroniques in his filmic past: a character in *All The Boys Are Called Patrick* (1959), and the name of Anna Karina's character in *Le Petit Soldat* (Little Soldier) in 1963 (Brody, 2008, 302). Filmic and non-filmic lives coalesced in the apartment on rue Micromesnil near the Champs Elysées, where Godard and Wiazemsky lived during the production of the film, and where Véronique and her friends would create the Aden Arabie *groupuscule* that one intense summer.

Drawing from both narrative and documentary forms, Godard searched within cinema for an untouched or unexhausted radicality to match the politics around him. In "Struggle on Two Fronts," the famous *Cahiers* interview on *La Chinoise*, Godard lamented the "real gap between cinema and politics," and complained that "film lagged so far behind life" (Bontemps et al., 1968, 22). He also suggested that cinema became the subject of the film precisely because it calls itself into question. "I don't see any way I could have kept it from coming into the movie less than it does," Godard volunteers, while noting that "in this sense the camera that filmed itself in a mirror would make the ultimate movie" (Bontemps et al., 1968, 23). Cinema identifies itself as a potential identity precisely when it undoes itself, in accord with Rey Chow's theorization of self-referentiality as a mode by which doubts about the medium find expression. But these doubts call film's other to mind as well, especially in light of how Andreas Huyssen described "the nostalgic lament for a lost past" as "a shadow that had held the promise of a better future" (Huyssen, 1986, 172). Emphasizing a masochistic quality in this extremist film, Richard Brody refers to Godard's state as one of "despair," as observed in the moments when "the contortions to which he would have to subject himself to press the cinema into the confining mold of those politics began to come into view" (Brody, 208, 309). Often identified as Godard's particular lens on student revolutionaries,[6] the violence that Brody evokes strikes not only at targets identified by the student characters, but the film project that was *La Chinoise* and its director. In a film that plays with attachments to definitions and distinctions, to adopt a recognizable identity was to become a target that was never meant to last but to fuel one's engagement with an almost metaphysical challenge, if not threat, at least until the next ideological or intellectual stand-off.

Yet such a process would be problematized by Godard's working notion of a film as "the reality of the movie moving from reality to the camera [. . . as if existing] between them" (Youngblood, 1998, 29). This intermediate zone assumes a meta-romanesque quality, too, since everything and everyone is a walking quotation or carrying a literary persona other than one's own. From Paul Nizan's inscription in the students' cell to Goethe's ghost in the name Guillaume Meister, *La Chinoise* ventriloquizes texts, word for word, such as excerpts from Althusser's *Pour Marx* and Mao's red book (spoken by Omar, the African student, played by Omar Diop), and famous Maoist slogans such as "Revolution is not a dinner party,"

as chanted by Gérard Guégnan in the memorable pop song "Mao Mao." All of these names, words, and histories build composite figures in the film while blurring lines between the filmic and non-filmic, only to ironize the relationship between words and things, always reversible and changeable.

The film encloses the students' world into a cell unto itself and makes us aware of what is so present to the students but isolated (if not irrelevant or nonexistent) from everything else outside. If there is any time capsule at all to be found in *La Chinoise*, it is the fictional Aden Arabie cell, existing in both spatial isolation and a temporal freeze. As puppets of Godard, the students are caught between a past they want to flee and a future they can't fully imagine. What pierces the walls of their ideological bubble, especially for Véronique, is the train conversation with Francis Jeanson, mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is the first time she emerges from the apartment, the first time anyone challenges her. Once a militant himself, Jeanson is skeptical when Véronique blithely promotes the bombing of the universities and he proceeds to break her ideological spell by posing simple yet challenging questions: What happens after your revolution? You think you can make a revolution for others? What's the struggle? What's the point of killing people if you don't know what's coming next?

Jeanson's repeated challenges lead to an important question about how legitimate and logical it is to "think for others," which is a counterpart to the film's early questioning of the concept of using "the discourses of others." Another way to pose the problem is to identify it as one between dogmatism and the unknown – is there room for real thought? The pseudo-documentary aspect of this sequence, focusing on Jeanson's political history and his relationship to Wiazemsky as professor at Nanterre, relieves us partially from the claustrophobia of the Aden Arabie cell, as well as the reference-packed film. It opens up the temporality of *La Chinoise*, since Jeanson's background and his insistence on "et après" define a sense of time that exists before and after the film, while allowing the oxygen to return through what are revealed as porous boundaries between the film and reality. By minimizing the artifice, hyperbole, and theatrical antics in this scene, Godard enables viewers to witness an understated but powerful moment of disillusion. Ultimately, Jeanson says that he no longer wants to change the world. He just wants "to prepare the world in a slightly different way": end of conversation, end of drama.

By the end of the film, the contours of the time capsule that was the Aden Arabie cell have dissolved, and the summer has passed. In fact, the film ends in literal and figurative ruins, already looking back on itself before it arrives at its last shot, announced by the intertitle "DERNIER PLAN DU FILM." The students have vacated the apartment, but have left traces of their stay with slogans painted on the walls and red books on the shelves. Time has passed these mere objects by, divested of the effects of the student ideological imagination. A lack of pathos characterizes this transition as undisruptive if not insignificant. In a continuation

of his interview about his exile from the group for not endorsing the assassination plot, the conservative Communist Henri speaks retrospectively about his ghostly former comrades, whose whereabouts are unknown to him. In the meantime, the daughters of the apartment's owners speak of the disgust they felt upon their return to an off-screen Véronique, who speaks both outside the frame and the cell as she stands on the balcony outside before re-entering the frame and the apartment, but only to say goodbye to a moment that's already past.

As for Guillaume, he will finish the film in a ruin of a different sort, a theatre called "Théâtre Année Zéro." He stands between two women in bikinis, one young the other old, knocking on glass doors as they look at him from behind. As we watch both in a state of gradual *déshabillement*, we observe a passage of time internal to that play within the film. In the meantime, we read "the theatrical vocation of Guillaume Meister and his years of apprenticeship and of travels on the road with a true socialist theatre" in gradual intertitles, while Véronique ventriloquizes Mao in voice-over, observing the passing experiment as one that might have been "a leap forward" but ended as "the first timid steps of a long march." The *groupuscule* has expired into one discrete, albeit increasingly ephemeral moment, in the long duration of history. A time capsule dissolves into uncertainty, risking even oblivion. Where do we find a place for that energy and passion, the imagination of a better future?

Et après? A Time Machine Against Tradition

The DVD release of *La Chinoise* may have been occasioned by certain cinephilic anniversaries: the fiftieth anniversary of the French New Wave in 2009 and the fortieth of May '68. These two events have occasioned a ritualized nostalgia for both the New Wave and the period, in what Kristin Ross and others have described as a "memory industry," especially in a time declared post-cinematic and post-cinephilic form, and when "the management of May's memory [. . .] is now, thirty years later, at the center of the historical problem of 1968 itself" (Ross, 2002, 1). In this context, beginning even a few years before the anniversaries, a film like *La Chinoise* could become the poster film for the New Wave and May '68 in nostalgic period pieces such as *The Dreamers* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 2003), which follows three young protagonists from the Langlois Affair in February 1968 to the events in May.[7] The great cinephilic event of the late 1960s, the Langlois Affair has forever linked the New Wave to '68, since François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard led the crowd of directors and actors who came from all over the world to defend both Henri Langlois and the film mecca he created, the Cinémathèque Française, from state encroachment by André Malraux, the Minister of Culture under Charles de Gaulle. Nevertheless, as noted by Antoine de Baecque, the Affair has also been a

bookend event to signal the death of both the New Wave and cinephilia. It functions symbolically as both a rallying cry and a funeral.[8]

In this context, the iconicity of *La Chinoise* can evoke the relationship between the cause of cinema and complex political contexts, or excite viewers to defend ideas and ideals against oppressive regimes. Like films such as Gilles Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* or Lindsay Anderson's *If . . .*, *La Chinoise* can fly the revolutionary flag (although *If . . .* and *La Chinoise* simultaneously deflate the symbolic cause). It may even serve as a platform for the causes of the Langlois Affair. Bertolucci turns *La Chinoise* into a set piece, literally flattening it into a poster on a bedroom wall that signifies rebellion, idealism, and bourgeois-ified struggle, where spoiled cinephiles play high-stakes film trivia games and cook up sexual dramas. Accordingly, Godard's film is no longer a film but a myth, disconnected from its constitutive ambivalence, a prop become souvenir, an objectified memory. Neither does *La Chinoise* promise the same kind of memory trip back to the late 1960s, however, nor does it serve as a "reflection" of that period or French Maoism. The nostalgia of a preservationist sort is most excessive and indulgent in *The Dreamers*, whose treatment of the period and the New Wave turns its back on the films it cites, such as *La Chinoise*, which resists its own future memorialization.[9]

What travels time less comfortably, perhaps especially for the modern American viewer, is the French Maoist appropriation of a supposedly Chinese model of communism. This phenomenon has been well documented by such scholars of the period as Kristin Ross and Richard Wollen, who understand it as a demonstration of how, through structures of projection, French students wrestled with their own provincialism at a time when they were ready to reject Western traditions of thought altogether. If we consider French Maoism as the late 1960s incarnation of French Orientalism among others (geographically diverse though they may be), we may observe how colonial factors motivated much of the development of past French Orientalisms, as postulated by Edward Said only a decade after *La Chinoise*, in *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). Orientalisms find their imprint in an ideological construction for a group of militants who spoke against colonialism, imperialism, and hierarchies between the industrialized and undeveloped worlds. I raise this point not to diagnose the wrongness of this 1960s form of Europeanized "China" but to emphasize the logical bind that challenged students as they were trying to reject traditions of thought and representation. After all, they still relied on those traditions against which – but simultaneously *with* which – they would forge their future. This bind seems crucial to the most crucial questions that *La Chinoise* can raise: What are the possibilities for an avant-garde film practice? What is the stuff from which it could emerge?

The so-called failure that many have perceived to occur in this film – whether the students' failure to understand, much less activate, their revolutionary ideals, or Godard's failure to find a strong position on the very questions he raises – registers the self-critical aspects of *La Chinoise*. Whether one looks for a picture of Maoism or a taste of revolutionary fervor, one will find instead a film that

emphasizes the dynamism of relationships to ideas, peoples, and things – relationships can that include, say, a projection of a romantic ideal, as well as a re-imagination, mis-imagination, and appropriation of that ideal. The film displays a struggle with the sometimes burdensome weight of the history of ideas, but reveals its temporality and therefore impermanence in the impasse between "the discourses of others" and forging the future of others. In other words, *La Chinoise* is like a time machine that offers a diversity of temporalities, especially since what is more important to the film than those temporalities is the question of temporality itself.

Because of my attempts to read *La Chinoise* against tradition, and beyond enduring attachments to its symbolism and aura regarding revolution and leftist politics, this chapter aligns itself with James Williams's concern for the vigor of the film, as well as his imperative "to stop fetishizing retroactively the film's mysterious prescience," an approach that has obscured the ways in which the film challenges "the impossibility of simple solutions and change through the practice of terrorist violence, and, just as crucially, the potential for terrorism within language and discourse, even that of love" (Williams, 2010, 217). Because of the defiant challenges posed by *La Chinoise*, the failed experiment can still "remain an essential and profoundly political experience" (Williams, 2010, 217). Howard Hampton might argue that the film betrays itself. On the one hand, he claims that the film "presents blankly counterproductive actions as necessary (if unfortunate) stages in the revolutionary process" despite "hopes that a fully cooked Marxist-Leninist omelet will emerge from the shells" (Hampton, 2008, 47). Affirmative readings of *La Chinoise* might seek validation for the film from within or through their critical memorializations of the film, in contradistinction to its ethos, as ambivalent as it may have seemed, but as consistently self-challenging as it was – and remains.

While scholars such as Colin MacCabe, Richard Brody, and Antoine de Baecque identify the end of the New Wave around the events of May '68, what also deserves mention is the anticipated failure of the auteur project, which Godard and others had theorized and imagined into a thriving existence from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. At one point, the New Wave represented an avant-garde cinema in its own right, one that broke away from its predecessors and leapt into the future of cinema, reinventing its rich history anew. Yet by the time we reach the end of the 1960s, the New Wave has become a classical cinema, with "the end of cinema" declared in *Weekend*. The future that the New Wave once claimed would appear as circumscribed and contained, stamped with an expiration date (as if clapped by the very slate we see and hear throughout the film), and, by the end of the decade risking an evolution into a mere tradition and intellectual/artistic artifact.

To memorialize *La Chinoise*, or to make it into a tradition, would be to turn our backs on the spirit of the film. Like certain remembrances of the Langlois Affair, it could celebrate its relationship to cinema as much as celebrate its funeral.

As if in search of a more generous version of his contention of a work of art's relationship to the past, Godard himself observed, "We make a mistake in looking at any work of art as something that exists wholly in itself for all time" (Youngblood, 2010, 68.) To a certain extent, Godard settles the score by practically demystifying revolutionary ambitions, while acknowledging the impending assimilation of supposed revolutionary artistic practices, even auteurism, into classical traditions. But have we?

A more poignant way to think about this film from our contemporary perspective would be to ask if it is possible to have an avant-garde filmic practice at all, and even if it is possible to identify and appreciate it as such. In regard to life after "failure," we may take our cue from what Godard shared in an interview with Pauline Kael:

> I was trying, but I'm glad I was wrong. It took me quite a lot of time to discover it and it was my way to do this leftist trip, too. I'm glad I went deep enough to see that there was no gun [. . .] It's a rather good picture, in the sense that you say, he's a "good man" or he's a "good human being." [. . .] after seeing it 15 years later, we discover that all those people, even Bobby Sands a few days ago, are childish, and it's that they are childish that they are important people. (Kael, 1982, 181)

Godard makes it meaningful to be wrong because of the surprise it elicits, the surprise of a new or different "reflection." His comment about the length of time it took to understand how "wrong" he was can offer a clue as to the process by which a place in film history is found for *La Chinoise*. The value of this failure over time resides in that which keeps the questions alive and prevents the film from ossifying into a great tradition. Instead, for Godard, it is a "good film," much like a "good guy." There may be no need for cultural heroes, at least not in *La Chinoise* with its captivating but misguided students, its erasure of important names from counter-academic blackboards, and faces smeared with fruits and vegetables. This "childishness" that Godard privileges and respects seems crucial insofar as it represents the curiosity that burns hard for a liberating narrative of the life cycle of ideas, yet burns through the fixed identities that these ideas could become. It may seem as ephemeral as cinema for Godard, who claimed, "At the time I was beginning to make cinema, I thought of cinema in terms of eternity. Now I think of it as something very ephemeral;" (Bontemps et al., 1968, 30) that ephemeral yet enduring ideal – indeed, an enduring theoretical narrative – of an artistic avant-garde. These simple yet persistent questions emerge from Godard's fear of making artifacts or edifices out of the "discourses of others." And as much as he may have worried about his own ability to keep with the times, he was already anticipating being outdone by "young Turks" of the following generations, left to stand in his own filmic ruins. These ruins signify endings and beginnings, in their multiplicity, making and remaking the cinema, theorizing against all resonances of tradition. In the meantime, the past has not completely gone

away. There is one name left on the blackboard, after all, and the past is one step in a long march that endures.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   Godard would later regret not having been more explicit about modeling the characters of *La Chinoise* specifically after the Red Guards, as opposed to the Marxist-Leninists: "En fin de compte, sans doute n'ai-je pas assez souligné que mes personages ne faisaient pas partie d'un véritable groupe marxiste-léniniste. Au lieu de se prétendre marxistes-léninistes, ils auraient dû se prétendre gardes rouges. Nous aurions évité quelques equivoques" (Ultimately, I did not stress enough that my characters were not part of a genuine Marxist-Leninist group. Instead of appearing to be Marxist-Leninists, they should have appeared to be Red Guards. We would have avoided some ambiguities) (Godard, 1967).

2   Much of this chapter owes a great deal to the scholarship of Richard Brody and Colin MacCabe on Godard's life and career. It is especially Brody's chapter on *La Chinoise* that provides a comprehensive account of the production history of the film, while both Brody and MacCabe provide helpful and informative accounts of Maoism in the context of Godard's work.

3   Godard's other films "about" Maoism and/or the conflict in Vietnam are *See You At Mao* (1970) and the Dziga Vertov collective film *Loin du Vietnam* (Far From Vietnam) (1967) with Joris Ivens, Chris Marker, William Klein, Alain Resnais, and Agnès Varda.

4   See Brody (2008) and MacCabe (2004) for comprehensive accounts of the beginning of the Godard–Gorin relationship, as well as Lesage (1983).

5   This comment from the original "Struggle on Two Fronts" interview in *Cahiers* did not appear in the English translation of the article.

6   See MacCabe (2004, 198).

7   Bertolucci's relationship to *La Chinoise* extends from the quick nod to the film poster on the wall to the cameo appearance of Jean-Pierre Léaud, in both found footage and dramatized reenactments of his great Palais de Chaillot speech during the Affair. In effect, Léaud becomes a human monument to himself in a period film that indulges in the fancy of transporting one's self into a moment still intact, as if preserved by nostalgia.

8   De Baecque (2003). I also acknowledge the invaluable resource that is Sylvia Harvey's *May '68 and Film Culture* (Harvey, 1978).

9   Another period piece that harkens back to the events of '68, Philippe Garrel's *Les amants réguliers/Regular Lovers* (2005) starts at the student riots in May, and then follows the student types as they try to rebuild their lives afterwards. Respectively yet differently, *The Dreamers* and *Regular Lovers*, as filmic reconstructions of the period, serve as self-referential films that indulge in veneration, paying their debts to the film artistry that seems to be locked away in the past. Together they trace an entire emotional cycle, from the euphoria and excitement in the air when there's a romantic *desire* for revolution, to the uncertainty, doubt, and disillusionment once revolution seems to only produce disruption or emptiness. Moreover, they are homages to the New Wave as well.

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20

Jean-Luc, Community, and Communication

Marc Cerisuelo[1]

In following ten years of a very mixed production that is sometimes very arid but always logical the truly "historical" spectator discerns the various components of the essential relationship that Godard constantly maintains with the idea of "community." The sense of the term is taken both from texts by Maurice Blanchot[2] and Jean-Luc Nancy[3] and the more *singular* (hence eminently double) meaning that Godard gives the word without even speaking it. This is what this chapter seeks to discover.

The purpose is not to "communicate" anything regarding *La communauté inavouable* or its companion volume *La communauté désoeuvrée*. The writing in those works is so meticulous that it forbids any mechanical rehearsal, didactic use or even any "résumé." This form of thinking communicates in a "common" necessity of writing, what Nancy calls a "literary communism." Blanchot focuses his reflections on "the insufficiency of language that such words as *communism* or *community* seem to reveal, if we sense that they mean something entirely different than what might be *common* to those who would claim to belong to an ensemble, to a group, to a council, to a collective even if it meant guarding against belonging in any way whatsoever." How can this evocation be useful to us if we must (almost) – under pain of betraying it – separate ourselves from it at the very moment we speak it. What is its connection to Godard?

We are led to believe that here it's really a question of relationship and that ultimately the elements of any answer seem to lie outside what the metaphysical tradition has named the subject. "Community thoughts" situate the *outside oneself* which – whether presence or absence – appears as the defining concept of their use. Blanchot has of course indicated that "the space of intimacy or of interiority is never [in George Bataille's writing] that of a subject, but the slippage outside of

established limits;" whereas in a more general way Nancy points out that "the question of the community is the missing link in the metaphysics of the subject."

From his beginnings Godard conceived of cinema from a phenomenological perspective.[4] From *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) to *Week-end*, however evident the interrogation and realization were, this position was never deliberately rejected. May '68 allowed Godard to push to their limit the questions that had been visibly undermining his work since *Masculin-Féminin* (Masculine-Feminine). If *Week-end* seemed expressly like an ultimate experiment it was merely an invitation from that point on to go beyond every sort of limit or frontier and to take his work in a direction consistent with this reflection. This gesture now implies an exit from "normal" cinema and a never-ending search for new modes of production, indeed the abandonment of his status as author and the need to conceive a *shared or communal image*: shared among many but more fundamentally by two and intended for those who need it. These revolutionary attitudes "naturally" find the source of their energy in the ideological context of 1968, but beyond those productions, which are more or less related to '68 (*Le Gai savoir* (Joy of Learning), *Un film comme les autres* (A Film like the Others), *One + one*, Les ciné-tracts, the films of the Dziga Vertov group and *Tout va bien* (All's Well)) they also prepare the way for his later activity in the Grenoble period (*Ici et ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere), *Numéro 2* (Number 2), *Comment ça va?* (How's it Going?)) as well as the series of television programs (*Six fois deux* (Six Times Two), *France tour/detour* (France Tour/Detour)) up until his re-entry into work on the "traditional" cinema beginning in 1979 with the production of *Sauve qui peut la vie* (Every Man for Himself).

At every one of these stages Godard attempts to *start over at zero*. This expression has the value of doctrine. The manifest lifelessness of the work in 1966–67 (as evidenced by the final words of *2 ou 3 choses . . .* (Two or Three Things . . .)) forecasts the inevitable redirection of Godard's production that materializes in *Le Gai savoir*. Straddling the events of May '68 the film is groundbreaking in several ways. Coproduced by the O.R.T.F. it was originally intended to be broadcast on television, but French Television rejected the final result just as they had left unopened every canister proposed by the Dziga Vertov group: *British Sounds* was produced and rejected by the B.B.C.; *Luttes en Italie* (Struggles in Italy), likewise, produced and rejected by the R.A.I., *Vladimir et Rosa* produced and rejected by German television. There could be no understanding between Godard and what he maliciously called, parodying Althusser, "the state television apparatus."

The resolutely didactic nature of *Le Gai savoir* is announced in its subtitle: *"Eléments de télévision et de cinéma"* (Elements of Television and Cinema) and is confirmed by "Emile Rousseau," the name of the character played by Jean-Pierre Léaud. Juliet Berto plays Patricia Lumumba (a feminization of the name of the temporary head of the Congolese government in its experiment with socialism that was promptly interrupted by Colonel Mobutu). Education and revolution are paired here, and clearly the program is conducted over a period of three years

under the aegis of Mao Tse Tung's *Little Red Book*. The first year was dedicated to collecting images and sounds. In the second year "we critique all that, we'll take it apart, reduce it, make substitutions and reconstruct it. And afterwards, during the third year, we'll make two or three models of sound and image."

The apparent modesty of their ambitions was entirely symptomatic of the desire to establish a new base of operations, of the need to start over at zero, as if this first contact with television had authorized them to question and contest TV's image stream, the very heart of television production and mentality. This critique of the "tube" is programmatic and remains intact at the end of the loop when Godard makes *France tour/detour* in which he again attacks the specificity of the televisual image. Godard's slow motion shots form a counter point to TV's flow of images; but in articulating its function this technique highlights the difference of approach from the mainstream media, and yet this time Godard's work gets broadcast on Antenne 2. *Le Gai savoir* was banned from projection in theaters. Zero will be the prevailing number for this bitter decade: Robert Linhard asks the little boy in *France tour/detour* if there's nothing before the number 1; in its frenetic search for origins, the film teaches us other basic elements: where does the letter A come from? The circle, zero and hence "a material means to find the right direction if we ever lose our way." But from then on the problem takes a different shape and, after *Sauve qui peut (La Vie)* Godard's films constitute, as has often been noted, "a cinema of bodies," a feature which owes less to the dominance of flesh than to the relationship, so often represented, between the body and memory via the intermediary of language: Godard's images constantly make visual this relationship, but only on condition that the space of these images is constantly renewed, menaced as it is by threat of annihilation posed by writing and the dominant ideologies (of the image).

Zero constitutes the integral part of *Le Gai savoir*. It justifies, situates, and symbolizes the film. One of Patricia's and Emile's "working papers" shows Godard's unshaven face – one dark lens of his famous sunglasses missing – accompanied by the following graphic, written in his own hand as it should be: zer0. The symbol of equivalence (not of equality. . .) or more precisely here, it seems to me, of the reciprocal implication of all statements and illustrating, as it were, the location, the moment and the subject of this type of relations. Such an inscription of the problematics of his film is a strong indication of his obsessional nature and when, nearly ten years later, Deleuze returns to this crucial theme, he defines zero as "lacking its own identity." Beyond the aptness and generality of a formula articulated in relation to *Six fois deux* (1976), the philosopher points to the historical moment that began with *Le Gai savoir:* a time of *inactivity*, a moment that implies the idea of sharing and consequently, as Nancy wrote (by a strange coincidence) "the non-identity of the work with itself."

But we ought not forget that we should be dealing with the cinema and hence with *images and sounds*. This first partition – the constitution of this first couple – is, of course, created by Godard as of *Le Gai savoir*. The avowed objective is to

valorise the second term and thereby to work on a veritable liberation of sound. Examples of this abound in Emile's and Patricia's statements:

- Voices are the best expressions of freedom.
- The eye must listen before looking.
- In a film we always see people talking, never listening.
- They refuse to show movies with the original soundtrack. From the beginning of the talking pictures they've never seen a spoken film. It's incredible, terrifying: they prefer an enslaved sound to a liberated sound.

As Serge Daney noted a decade before, the screen is henceforth treated as a blackboard since the return to zero is also a return to school, the point being the basic lesson of this pedagogical film. The other important partition concerns the protagonists: actors and spectators, creators and analysts, Patricia and Emile constantly bring us back by and for themselves, to the immanent duality of the cinema (and of television). This doubling of the roles of the characters is intimately connected to the frequent disjunction of the image from the sound.

Thus the stylistic procedures of older criticism encounter in Godard's praxis (or in his research) fundamental concepts of the Marxist and Leninist ideology, for which he is the embodiment of a spokesman. The unity of opposites is particularly evident in this film in the assimilation of actor/spectator. We witness here the beginning of the establishment of new relationships between sound and image or between man and woman. The revolutionary breakthrough is achieved by the valorization of the second term ("the oppressed of history and the story"). From this point on and for a long time, the revolutionary demands will be articulated by a woman's voice.

But the particular flavor of *Le Gai savoir* is especially evident in the humour of the dialogues and the performance of the actors. Perhaps this is why the film is *only* reformist . . . The fundamentally "fired up" nature of Godard's text which Berto and Leaud, in their coldly complicit way, push to delirium is one of the best moments of pre-'68ist oppositionality; Godard films them proclaiming endlessly their "Right on!"'s to prove that the "the voice is the best expression of freedom." You have to hear the voice of a student returning to the university after the state has required schooling until age 55.

The transition seems evident enough. But before discussing the more historical risks of the overpopulation of the universities we must remember that the first large political demonstration of '68 concerned the cinema. It was in February and was called "The Langlois Affair." After the censorship of Jacques Rivette's *La Religieuse* (The Nun), adapted from Diderot, (a decision that earned Malraux a bloody Godardian epistle entitled "Letter to the Minister of Kultur"), one of the most brilliant cultural ideas of the Gaullist government was to offer Langlois's job as head of the Cinémathèque to the then (and still) obscure Pierre Barbin. This daring initiative did not appeal to the cinephiles and more particularly to "The

Children of the Cinémathèque"; led by the principal filmmakers of the New Wave, the February 15 demonstration allowed 3000 people to test the solidity of the gendarmerie's nightsticks. In this melee Godard, who had but one lens in his glasses in *Le Gai savoir*, lost the other. For both sides of the political spectrum a very hot spring was on the horizon. When Mao-Tse Tung's *Nearly Complete Works* appeared, led as they were by an unknown redhead (who didn't remain in the shadows for long), a few students in Nanterre – then not yet familiar with the thoughts of Mao – began to celebrate his work in their own way. (This is where I myself began to get politicized.)

April in Paris floated by, accompanied by a few measures of Duke Ellington, but May found Godard in Cannes where he and Truffaut interrupted the Festival in the name of the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma* (General States of the Cinema). This was an exciting moment, particularly if we connect it to the Langlois Affair, for it marks the final hours of the collective activism of the New Wave. But what is more deeply important, it constitutes a critique of the idea of the *auteur* which was already germinating in Godard's work. This contestation seems to owe its beginnings not just to these events (and in the contact with a rising wave of discontent) but through a divorce with a certain past: it is paradoxically at the very moment that Godard joins Truffaut in this struggle that he splits away from him in a more permanent way. The dialectic of the groups plays out here: that of the *Cahiers* was allied *"par excellence"* with unique works of art while those to come would found their identities in collectives and put "communtary" considerations foremost among their priorities.

Between these two kinds of groups, Godard continues to assemble images and sounds. When he returns from Cannes he participates in the production of the famous *"ciné-tracts,"* short films which served as a kind of liaison service at the very moment that the workers in the film labs who claimed solidarity with the directors were on strike and thus prevented (what a contradiction!) the production of revolutionary films. Based on principles they could all agree on (including calligraphy and the style of the organization of shots) Abraham Segal attributes authorship of *ciné-tracts* numbers 7 and 10 to Godard and in these films where already certain lessons of *Le Gai savoir* were emerging we can see a connection with the demands of the militant filmmaker: collective creation, low budgets, an insistence on simple and clear messages and the primacy of production over distribution.

It is principally on this last point that Godard split off from the different currents represented at the *Etats Généraux*, not to mention the groups that had sprung from it, such as *Cinéma parallèle* or *Cinéthique*, which remain a privileged voice for Godard). This dominance of production remained a constant for one of the most productive of filmmakers: he felt the necessity to continue working and each of the films (*À bout de souffle* as a *ciné tract*, the broadcast of *Six fois deux* and *Prénom Carmen* (First Name: Carmen)) had to find *its* public.

This need to stay productive pushed Godard to leave Paris in June after a last public appearance at the demonstration on May 29. He headed to London to shoot *One + One* with (Ladies and Gentlemen) The Rolling Stones. The result did not add up to two. Despite long stretches of boredom it's still the best rock film to date in the history of cinema, and upon reflection it can be claimed that this per-emptory affirmation demonstrates two things which are really one: (1) there wasn't much competition and (2) Godard had only to compare one reel of his film with a reel of *Monteray Pop* to realize that he could never work with Leacock and Pennebacker as he misguidedly attempted to do on *One American Movie (One A.M.)* later that year. Can one really compare a film founded on the use of long takes, on a single song (*Sympathy for the Devil*), and on holding to a very engaged political stance (very "minority voices") *vs.* a frightening conglomeration of zooms that would make Rossellini look lazy?

The interest of *One + one* – what makes it still watchable – derives from the freedom and the responsibility the filmmaker gives the spectator to line up, connect or oppose the various elements presented. For this play of combinations many series can be suggested: music and image, the artist's solitude and the politi-cal world, documentary (The Stones in a studio) and police-political fiction, stere-otypical representations of violence between oppressors and oppressed, ideological logorrhea and Eve Democracy's (Anne Wiazemsky's) silence during her "inter-view." But these diverse components don't line up symmetrically. Their conjunc-tion and repetition are what create meaning and throw us back to the *a priori* of filming. The use of the long takes and its democratic distribution (5 for the Stones and 5 for the others – Eve Democracy, the fascist bookstore, the junkyard for Black Panthers' cars, and the final sequence on the beach) together justify the relation-ship between image and music: Godard never cuts, since the Stones are those who "edit" their own work at the moment of recording it. Yann Lardeau noted, "if the Stones retain their freshness in *One + one* it's because, exceptionally, they offer us an image which is outside of their legend – cool, fluid and intimate. To film the music is to film the work, the creativity, the rehearsals and the time all of that takes (its rhythm) in a recording studio and not in a public concert" (Lardeau, 1983, 27). The music *belongs* to the studio and the slow movements of the camera constantly isolate it within that space (certainly a case of internal focalization). We can thus understand Godard's anger with the producers who edited in a few "Pleased to meet you, hou hou!" in the final sequence. "In my version," he insisted, "you can't hear the Stones any more because we're out on a beach and not in the studio and then it ends . . ."). This incident reveals the truth as well as the limits of this type of enterprise: it is fine to show Blacks during the Watts riots, whether in the excess of traditional representation of the history of cinema (since Griffith) or simply of history in general (as Fanon said, "It's the White Man who makes the Ni__er"): however, it is even better to insert this image between two sound-clips of a group whose music – at that time – (thanks to Keith Richards) was (as

it were) one of the accomplishments of the blues. Legitimately, the plan of this apparatus reveals the inevitable perversion of all discourses of revolt and at the same time establishes a critique of the star status of Godard + The Stones. Yet this kind of editing worked on large swaths of meaning, and as a result Godard thus managed "only" to reintroduce a critique of representation that had already been *accomplished* in 1967. The film is of the highest interest in this particular genre but a resurgence of inactivity in the period right after May '68 seemed to mark the end of Godard's "artistic" interrogations. In this sense, *One + one* marks the end of a certain Godard.

Un film comme les autres, shot in August, is one of the first audio-visual reflections on the Events of May. Students from Nanterre and workers from the Renault plant are filmed in a discussion in a field. The images of the discussion are intercut with images in black and white from the Events of May filmed by the *Etats Généraux du Cinéma*. These two image-tracks are accompanied by what Godard already labels a "sonorous image," essentially made up of quotations from revolutionary texts. When reference is made to the "anti-spectacles" of militant filmmaking, the situationists ought not be included because they were comic and called for audience participation. To be sure, one might cite the work of the Dziga Vertov group, but their single reference to Brecht shows that things aren't so simple: ultimately it's *Un film comme les autres* that best represents this genre.

Godard had for a long time been overloading his two sound tracks; here it's very often frankly inaudible. Moreover, we never see – or else they're too far away – the faces of the participants in the discussion. "To speak is to fail to see" [*parler, ce n'est pas voir*] Blanchot wrote repeatedly, and it is in this film, which proposes nothing to the audience – which doesn't allow the viewer to identify any specific source of the voices – that the sense of such a sentence really blooms. It bursts into flower in *Numéro 2* (especially in the passage on the blind).

This last film can serve as the culmination of Godard's "cinematic silence" (1972–1975). In the meantime, however, he undertakes a memorable collective experiment: the Dziga Vertov group. Without minimizing the contributions of the other members (Gérard Martin, Armand Marco, Nathalie Billard, Jean-Henri Roger) the "group" consisted essentially of Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin. Their meeting led to a real desire to work in common (as a pair) on images and sounds. Godard was well aware of the logic of group work ever since his days at *Cahiers*, and prior to '68 he had participated in certain collective experiments, but his status as a star, as an *auteur* and as a "crazy bourgeois" (as he was labeled at the time) inevitably caused him to reconsider his position: the *désoeuvrement* of his films since *Week-end* had to lead to a radical re-examination of his position – especially since the various collaborations attempted at the end of 1968 were failures (*One A.M.* but also work with an experimental TV station in Canada).

The relevance of the Godard–Gorin association is due to the convergent trajectories of two very different itineraries: a militant Marxist-Leninist (a supporter of the Union de la Jeunesse Communiste Marxiste-Léniniste (UJCML) (Young

Marxist-Leninist Communist League)) needed the cinema to pursue its revolutionary practice; a filmmaker fresh out of ideas is looking to support a "good" political discourse in order to continue his work in the cinema. Here the truth is the exact opposite of what was (and is still, alas!) claimed by the experts: the real "creative suicide" for Godard would have been *not to work with Gorin*. Along with the "vampirization-of-Godard-by the-Maoists" thesis appeared the claim that he had abandoned the cinema. Yet, if it is true that Godard had effectively removed himself from center stage, the optical illusion on the part of most of his contemporaries (i.e., his already ex-fans) was due to the Dziga Vertov group's scrupulous respect for their primary objective: the primacy of production over distribution. The films were scarcely seen (since they were rarely screened) but there were, in fact, four of them in a single year (1969). So, why are these films reputed to be invisible – and yet remain less so than certain commercial sketches?

These materialistic films speak the language of belief (in a myth) and of faith (in a certain dogma). To believe in this myth, to believe in class struggle and in the pronouncements of dialectical materialism was a watershed in film production: in its content, its form, but especially (Godard and Gorin frequently insist on this notion) in a *new set of relationships* between the film and the spectator, between image and sound, and between the very form and content of the work. These relationships are clearly class-based according to Godard and Gorin. In this respect these works both touch the limits of "proletarian writing" and powerfully renew our conception of the work of cinema. The D-V group gives in to the fantasy of the equivalence between art and politics that had graced every one of the experiments derived from the Proletkult, and knowingly situates itself in a self-contradictory situation that condemned them to the half-life of the active phase of left-wing activity (1968–72) as well as to the inevitable return of contemporary thinking about excess. The backdrop for these experiments was woven from the cloth of the same lack, that of the absence of the people.

But these insufficiencies cannot completely obliterate D-V's success and its relevance. The very notion of the relationship and the unity of opposites that Godard worked out with Gorin demonstrate the continuity of the Godardian project which had always derived from concepts of binary opposition. His encounter with Marxist-Leninist ideology is all the more impressive inasmuch as it follows similar intellectual itineraries. This argument, however, does not have much explanatory value, and if one looks for stylistic connections between Godard and Gorin it would be useful to consider the situationists who, in theory, propose a position of opposition that, as Guy Debord put it in *La Société du spectacle* (The Society of the Spectacle), it "is not the negation of style but the style of negation." Their sense of this formula did not prevent Godard (who supported them) from being labeled "the dumbest of the pro-Chinese Swiss" (graffito found in the Sorbonne in 1968) But the "Situs" had already been gone from the political stage well before the post-68 debates began, and their "wait and see" position was opposed by the general activism of all the *gauchistes*.

First, the Maoists: *Les Cahiers marxistes-léninistes* condemned Godard's *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) as *"gauchiste."* Thus the official organ of the UJCML reacted to the "folkloric" description of the militants: "This is not a film about Marxist-Leninist youth. It's a film about bourgeois youth who have adopted a new disguise." The-brilliant-Althusseriens-of-the-Ecole-Normale-Supérieure were able to pass themselves off as the inspiration for Godard's work since it was contact with Robert Linhart, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Claudie Broyelle and their school that had given him the idea of the film (without actors and – already – in video) as the breakthrough of the official version of Maoism in France. *A posteriori* it appears that Godard admirably served up this Maoist soup to the Parisians and that he gave them their first platform just as they had thrust Althusser into the forefront of French philosophy. Indeed, their reaction was considerably less lively than that of the "officials" of the future Parti communiste marxiste-léniniste de France (PCMLF) who, writing in *L'Humanité nouvelle* lambasted *La Chinoise* as "fascist provocation."

In the context of 1968, the UJCML league evolved in the direction of "placing" militants among the workers. Gorin analyzed this situation concretely as a worker in the cinema. After May, the organization was dissolved and broke into several smaller cells (*La Gauche proletairienne, Vive la Révolution, La ligne rouge*). The PCMLF was also outlawed but seemed actually to prosper from this ban, yet saw a growing number of its members criticize its revisionism and move toward more spontaneity. Likewise, the opposition movement was large enough in scope after May 1968 to elicit or tolerate moments of unity which somehow transcend or disregard the many contradictions that are inherent in the confluence of so many different tendencies. And so we can now follow various trends in the D-V groups films in which one line became predominant over the others: rather "spontex" in *Pravda*, unifying (at least during the shooting) in *Vent d'est* (The East Wind) where the March 22 movement and the Maoists find common ground, theorizing (à la Althussser) in *Luttes en Italie*. The growing influence of Gorin was now accepted openly and culminated in this last film, but the evolution of the group which held no allegiance to any specific movement was accompanied by its capacity to swallow its internal contradictions in the course of the production of the films.

This political detour is not without its usefulness. It flags the subject and function of the films: political films which should be made politically. Politics is the true foundation of these films. Such is the belief in the myth. And so invocation of Vertov responded to a double necessity: in the first place the desire to link up with the one attempt recorded in the history of the cinema to produce a truly proletarian film (the Kinoks) and to oppose the "bourgeois filmmaker in each of us," that is, in the Soviet context, to play Vertov against Eisenstein.[5] The insistence on Marxism-Leninism is thus doubly justified: it is the increasingly dominant ideology under the rule of Gorin as evidenced on the sound-track; but it is also *the essence of adequation* since the political position adopted by the Maoists is the basis

for Godard's and Gorin's explicitly oracular formula: *"to politically make political films."* Negatively it dissociates their project from "the political film" that appeared and the end of the 1960s in France in films by Costa-Gavras or Karmitz and critiques them – not unjustly – for not having been produced "politically," but for being bourgeois "auteur" films.

Likewise, to establish oneself as the spokesperson for a political discourse was to impose on the group certain formal constraints whose originality and relevance continue to astonish us 20 years later. Contemporaries of the golden age of a semiology which, far from being limited to scholars of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes, had spread to many different research centers after May 1968, notably *Les Cahiers du cinéma*. The D-V group's films, pushing the limits as they did, are exemplary in their critique of traditional representation in the cinema. Everything had become suspect: movie theaters (a bad place), the process of identification and the "hysteria" that naturally follows it, and even the image itself. Completely *neutralized* by the soundtrack, the image achieves a high-degree of abstraction in the group's films rather than simply being destroyed. Hence the famous insert in *Le Vent d'est: "Ce n'est pas une image juste, c'est juste une image"* (This is not a just image, it's just an image). It is ironic that Godard's most famous and most often quoted slogan comes from the most criticized period of his work and from one of the films with the smallest audience. Even more interesting is the fact that it appears on one of the white-on-black inserts so symptomatic of the group's and Godard's work – and especially this difficult film where theory and practice are so unified. Hence a crucial point: this esthetic is possible and comprehensible only within a militant cinema engaged in an attempt at communication which rejects every accusation of formalism. At this point in his work it was clear that Godard was not looking for new forms but rather new relationships. He evidently felt that the only way to do this was to destroy the only relationships between things – if only the formal relationship between things. Only then could one see the connections between the formal properties of the film and the social and working conditions the film sought to portray.

New relationships, even as they define the problematic issues to be addressed by the group, also allow Godard to continue his ongoing reflection on the duality inherent in the cinema, as evidenced by this declaration to Alain Jouffroy published just before work started on *British Sounds:* "Cinema is theory and praxis at the same time. Just as literature is, but one is more aware of it in the cinema and so it is theoretically nearer to its praxis." The tune is the same as it has been, but the verses change significantly and continue to do so even now, when Godard's belief in the cinema that goes back to origins since there were *two* Lumière brothers: a single Edison was enough to discover how to record sound, but two were necessary to figure out how to project images *and* sounds. Indeed the nature of the cinema saves the D-V group from mere proletarian adequation since it is the only form of production where relationships are included *de facto* in the program. When that belief crumbles and when, with *Tout va bien* the group falls apart, as

will be shown later, the logic of the absence of community requires another kind of communication.

British Sounds, the first film produced by the D-V group, was directed by Godard with the collaboration of Jean-Henri Roger. The initial statement of the film sets the tone for the resolutely Marxist stance of the film: "The bourgeoisie creates the world in its own image. So, comrades, let us destroy this image!" The voice is edited into an image of a fist which punches through the Union Jack. The film is composed of six sequences illustrating the different English sounds (factory, women, capitalists, workers and students ending up with the sound of the Revolution). A heavily over-recorded sound-track answers each of the simple images and the various textual inserts. Unlike the subsequent films, *British Sounds* provides no obvious political line and slides around a bit through various sociological enumerations but clearly addresses the need to create images and sounds that depart from classical representation.

The group gets serious with *Pravda* and *Le Vent d'est*, which clearly form a pair, since it is through these two experiments that the group identifies its method and its message of the progressive takeover of Marxism-Leninism. *Pravda*'s subject is Czechoslovakia after August 1968, and thus there appears for the first time one of the major contradictions of the enterprise: How can French militants possibly give a satisfactory account of such a subject? Would such a shoot be possible? According to Godard, who finished the film by himself after starting out with Paul Burron and Jean-Henri Roger, the problems arose, in fact, during the shooting. The film was not very "vertovian" since it did not follow the golden rule that editing should be done before, during and after the shooting. But the whole work of elaborating *Pravda* (which was edited after *Vent d'est* was shot) derives from a critique of this shooting and so began the sectioning of films into clearly announced parts, the real methodological signature of the group's work of which *Luttes en Italie* can be considered far and away the best example.

The first part of *Pravda* is thus composed of a collection of images (such as one might find in a news report or tourist film) each discussed in order: "There are women newscasters who wear cashmere sweaters." "There are tanks, you hear?, yes *tanks* spying on the farmers." Etc. The second example takes the form of a dialogue on the soundtrack between two protagonists whose names are symbolic: (Wladimir and Rosa) attempting to analyze the concrete situation. This enumeration is interrupted at section 48 of the film: "Okay. What we've seen there, Rosa, is the concrete situation in Czechoslovakia, but that's all. Just impressions from our trip, memories, like Delacroix's of Algeria, or Chris Marker's of Rodiaceta." Inscribed in the process, the critique of the shooting implies a passage to the second part of the film (ROSA: "that means beginning to edit the film") which is dedicated to the diagnosis of the film (WLADIMIR: "We're among sick people, that's obvious. But what kind of sickness do they have?"). There follows the obligatory critique of revisionism (the obvious sickness) and of its corollary, Occidentalism presented on both the theoretical and practical levels. From the abundant series

of proofs dedicated to defining the Czech problem, under the rubric "theoretical Occidentalism" mention should be made of a triple stigmatization of the Czech cinema which attacks the humanist positions of Vera Chytilova, Milos Forman's presence in Hollywood, and the broadcast of *Angélique marquise des Anges* in Prague. After the images presenting the diagnosis of this "illness," the dialectics of the film require a section of the sound track presented as a medical prescription. And then: "Part three: Connect a sick image with a sound which is not sick. Part three: Connect a true sound with a false image to create a true image." One could easily make light of such a dogmatic approach, especially since the so-called third part (true sounds) is really only a series of Chinese texts about the workers the previous year, the re-education of the intellectuals and other happy topics. One could also evince serious doubts about the worth of the opposition "truthful sound/ false image" an assertion of dubious value and an abyss of ideological definitions. But *Pravda* is worth much more than such an overview: it allowed the group to come to grips with the essential problem of image analysis. To re-project such images with a new soundtrack, to attempt a dialectical elaboration of the film and to found it on the primacy of editing are henceforth the bases of the ongoing work in progress.

Vent d'est often appears to be a point-by-point response to the uncertainties of *Pravda*. "Just an image" gets Godard away from the awkward problem of the "just image" (or false one), but the film, marked as it is by the takeover of Marxist-Leninism power, offered him the occasion to do some ideological and practical housecleaning. Right away we can see *Vent d'est* as a great opportunity to front their project. The scenario was written by Godard and Cohn-Bendit; the editing was the work of Godard and Gorin. Right away we are confronted with the two dominant tendencies of May '68: the March 22 movement and the Maoists. Confusion and disagreements. Cohn-Bendit imagines they'll make a "leftist western" while Godard and Gorin are interested in "the struggle against the bourgeois concept of representation" as evidenced in the quintessential Hollywood films.

On the one hand we see good anarchist gamblers throwing their money at the production as if it were an Italian fantasy, on the other we have Godard regularly rushing off the set to work on *Pravda*. A three-ring circus on both fronts . . . But *Vent d'est* is a milestone. The first film to actually take up the struggle against "the closure of representation," it signals both the end of man (the actors are merely "political positions": imperialist, revisionist, minority) suggesting the necessity of an absolute break with everything the cinema has thus far produced. The film borrows from the western. A ranger (Gian Maria Volonté), an Indian (Allen Midgette), actors in period costumes (in a Godard film!) all of which have a certain Jean-Marie Straub quality in the Italian countryside. We are very far indeed from *À bout de souffle* and *Une femme est une femme* (A Woman is a Woman), and we can certainly get a sense of the distance covered in the decade. Here the text indicated in images (inserts) and dialogues read or heard during the sequences make the Western (and traditional representation in general) undergo shock treatment.

Images are only reflections and should be considered as such. Godard's critique is directed at the staging of realism and the enemy is clearly identified: "Hollywood wants us to believe that this reflection of a horse is a horse and then that this shadow of a horse is more real than a real horse which, of course, it cannot be . . ."

What is criticized, beyond the attack on Hollywood, is the transparence and the pertinence of the concept of *presentation* (*Darstellung*) and the remarkable force it acquires in the domain of the cinema: film presents the object for us to look at and brings it into its own being. If the romantics of Iena *invent* literature (and modernity) based on the concept of presentation, we know to what degree Godard after this critique (and particularly the intrusion of Hölderlin into *Le Mépris* – which is no accident) was unconsciously a tributary of this same auto-regulatory procedure. Indeed, the New Wave replayed Iena in the cinema. But here, in the heart of the most virulent critique of the concept and of the representation, Godard and Gorin remain within the confines of romanticism, since they accord all the power to the film itself. Or at least believe they've done so – since in the matter of communication their efforts have borne no fruit. During the projections of their film they are obliged to stop, explain, discuss.

And yet the critical effort, contemporaneous with work in semiology, seems to succeed: the excess of language (in the film) corresponds to the silence of the spectator viewing the images. Even if they aren't adherents of (popular notions of) Maoism, the public who watches this film finds their spectatorial attitudes severely tested by the "incredible" exchange between the film's images and sounds, preventing what Serge Daney called "peaceable mental ruminations." The example of the horse is telling. The presentation is reflexive and metadiscursive: the film speaks about what it is showing. The primacy of sound is still emphasized; the real change concerns the characterization of the word: its allusive power makes the film a hint of what kind of work might be possible. Pointed at, just an image, like a photograph.

This regression (or advance in reverse) corresponds to a more radical distancing marked by a practice of outbidding, which, even if it isn't a new tactic for Godard – remember the post cards in *Les Carabiniers* (The Soldiers) – covers a wider register and is well matched to a real social movement that cannot be equated with an increase in spectatorship. In her book on Glauber Rocha, Sylvie Pierre insists on this notion of outbidding evoked by Godard himself as the only recourse open to good filmmakers other than prostration.[6] But this "third-world" attitude is also critiqued in *Vent d'est*: Rocha, in a discussion of hypothetical avenues open to the creative filmmaker is quite simply unable to describe the future for political film to Pierre. He describes a "dangerous, divine, marvelous" cinema, a cinema that should be created for the third world. Godard's and Gorin's ambition is simply to destroy. They deliberately stigmatize other forms of cinema: progressive cinema, Underground cinema, esthetic-philosophical experiments all alike get rejected as "A cinema in which nothing is taboo . . . except class struggle."

Indeed, class struggle is the veritable subject of the film as indicated by the title and the different "roles." Very "Leninistically," the question "what should we do?" allows them to articulate the different parts of their film and on the political level to demonstrate that the very notion of representation is null and void. The union delegate, emblematic figure of revisionism, becomes the principal target of the revolutionaries at the very moment he exercises his duties: "When the delegate translates, he betrays." Faced with this failure of representativity, with this betrayal by the communist official, the minorities can only *stutter* a call for a general strike. The term lacks the constructive value that Deleuze will give it in 1976 and which will be incarnated (!) by Isabelle Huppert in *Passion*: The minority stuttering in the cinema of the word will be felt as a lack. The belief in class struggle should permit an *articulation* that no representation (whether political or esthetic) seems to authorize. And the film ends up with a famous slogan ("We are right to revolt") spoken with authority by the revolutionaries and stammered empirically by the minorities.

This scientific demand culminates in *Luttes en Italie* which borrows from Althusser both process and terminology in order to show the different stages of the revolutionizing of a student through the ideological apparatuses of the State. The film may be considered to be a "structured" re-reading of *La Chinoise*. The problem of representation is resolved here with a remarkable economy of means: Each theory is introduced by signs (health, for example, is visualized by tea and medicines placed on a table) and the essential elements of the cinematic material, in interior shots, is focused on the girl (Paola Taviani) with the exception of a few images of her Italian environment. The film's essence lies in its construction, in the rigor of its tripartite structure (the fourth part, the conclusion, as in *Pravda*, takes the form of a harangue to the viewer). When finally rid of all of the constraints of the shooting and the inadequacies of their team, Godard and Gorin give free rein to their penchant for formalization, and invent topoi that the former will ceaselessly rework in his later productions. The principle among these will be the repetition of images at various moments in the film: in repeating they are no longer the "same" images, they inscribe their difference, create a before and an after and thus forge a new meaning. The organization of the film is quite illuminating in this respect:

- *The First Part:* Paola claims to be a revolutionary, but remains strongly marked by bourgeois ideology. In almost alternating shots we see a shot of her and then fade to black, then a shot of a work table, fade to black, etc. She is speaking Italian with voice-over in French. Different State apparatuses are presented (The University/Science, society, health, housing, sexuality, identity). The *mise en scène* is extremely simple, the dialogues very "everyday." Lots of fades to black.
- *The Second Part:* The move to theory. What is "hidden" by these fades to black? Pushed to articulate some explanation, Paola is called on to reflect and to

question her situation. Why is her discourse insufficient? Why is it dotted with blackouts? The answer must be derived from Althusserian ideology (that is, the necessarily imaginary expression of the relationship people experience between their notion of self and the conditions of their existence), and by the theory of the reflections, positive when they express ideology, negative when they deny it. In this second part (which presents itself as such) the written discourse is presented as the re-reading of the images of the first part. In the same way, the fades to black (the equivalent of shots) have not yet been replaced, but indicate their source: the ideology which prevents us from seeing. Moreover, the problems of sex and the couple occupy a central place (multiple repetitions of the corresponding shot-as-sign, a hand closing a glass door!)

- *The Third Part:* "The same thing is expressed in images and sounds . . . Something has changed since the first part and because of the second." After having attention drawn to it, the fade to black is modified and replaced by what ideology was masking: the image of a connection to production. Thus between two shots of a family meal Godard inserts a shot of a factory: the fade to black and its questioning of its meaning and its eventual substitution together create the possibility of a before and an after within the flow of images. There is henceforth a follow-up of the subject that is not merely immanent to the shot and can be considered in its (social and not just ideal) generality.

Once again the dialectical process is clearly self-regulating: it is submitted to a reflexivity so clearly delineated that Paola can internalize the theoretical analyses and "herself" reorganize the film, reminding herself of her filmic objectives: for example, "I must situate my own discourse between shots of capitalist production." Beyond the play between ideology and infrastructure, beyond the finality (the *communism*) of the doctrinal expression, the veritable "novelty" of her approach is the re-creation of an in-between. Here, thanks to Gorin, Godard remains on course and stores up provisions for future work – a lesser evil after so much ab-negation. The future productions of our filmmaker will all bear the mark of this work – a kind of stylistic calling card, a new interpretation of *signatura rerum*: images will be reviewed, thrown out, or chosen and from the incidence of their return will be born a machinery of meaning, a meaning which, little by little will distance itself from dialectics.

Luttes en Italie demonstrates real progress vis-a-vis *Vent d'Est* and these films, both on a theoretical and cinematic level, justify all by themselves the Dziga Vertov enterprise. But their novelty can only be seen in the film itself and between Godard and Gorin. The other members of the group, the viewers and the people don't seem to share their taste for abstraction. In any case, the censuring of these films before they can be broadcast on television creates the disconnect that makes all of this research seem very solipsistic. The rare reviews published by friendly journals (*Cinéthique*, *Cahiers du cinéma*) arrive too late and bear witness (towards 1972) to the lack of dynamism of the entire project.

However in the spring of 1970 the members of the group get underway in a very ambitious project. Contacted by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), they are asked to make *Jusqu'à la victoire* (To Victory), a film dedicated to promoting "the theory and planning of the Palestinian revolution." The problem facing Godard and Gorin was, as it would be for any serious filmmaker, quite simply: What to say? And what to show? Given the context of the protagonists, the answers are fairly obvious. After several trips to Jordan, the choice is to follow the analyses of Fath (the majority tendency) and the film, despite some difficulties, is shot during the summer. During the autumn, Black September. In the spring of 1971: another defeat for the Palestinians. Godard and Gorin can't seem to finish the editing. Their direct contact with these historical events overwhelms the militants and the Palestinian experience produces a sense of guilt that prevents them from continuing the Dziga Vertov experiment, if only in name. Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville later rediscover these "stolen" images in their splendid *Ici et ailleurs*.

Meanwhile, during the spring of 1970 the group released what is certainly the least serious and most joyful of its films: *Vladimir et Rosa*, a remake and Brechtian parody of the trial of "the Chicago Eight" (Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and their friends) which was irreverent enough since the accused were cleared of principal charge of conspiracy against the state but given heavy sentences (especially for Hoffman) for insubordination to the court. The trial itself had lasted six months, from the autumn of 1968 to the spring of 1969. The event was recent enough, and the context sufficiently theatrical to warrant acting out – dramatic but carefully controlled by Godard and Gorin within the group. Wasn't this "plot" the brainchild of a certain Minister of the Interior? (It is imperative to point out that Godard was completely obsessed by Raymond Marcellin, and saw his hand in everything, and whom he portrayed – in addition to his multiple incarnations – as the symbol of Gaullist France.)

Indeed, the admirers of the previous D-V productions are generally in agreement in considering *Vladimir et Rosa* a "political regression" or at the most an "amusing sketch" (the excellent "collective" and "posthumous" study by *Cahiers* is a worthy exception to this view). What's more, the actors who dared play in this film and abandon themselves to a veritable re-presentation would seem to have forgotten the lessons of *Vent d'Est*; and the construction of the film can hardly rival the rigor and structure of *Luttes en Italie*. Yet the (very Godardian) tone of nasty derision exacerbates the tendency that had always characterized their films. This tone refers to a "register" of the voice that is no longer a matter of articulation but of *modulation*. The exploitation of this extreme seems to suggest a degree of confusion that prefigures the end. However pertinent (and justified by the Palestinian debacle) this interpretation may be, it misses the essential elements of the *rest* of the film. If Godard and Gorin (alias Friedich Vladimir and Karl Rosa) are the clowns, it would be inappropriate at the very least – even frankly unacceptable – to suggest the cliché of "forced-hilarity-badly-hiding-an-ever-present-malaise."

Perhaps such an attitude could be attributed to Godard himself in his later work but for very different reasons. Here the two comrades provoke, insult, fall on the ground in the purest burlesque tradition and give the most telling image of their real (or should we say their "concrete") situation in a sequence worthy of anthologizing: on a tennis court, during a match, Vladimir and Rosa, in the midst of blistering serves and other volleys, interview each other and record the sounds. It is not simply (as James Roy MacBean has written) a matter of juxtaposing (the self-satisfaction and bourgeois leisure of the tennis players on the one hand and the work and struggle of the militants making the film on the other) but of symbolizing what up until then has been excluded: the relationship with the others, "those who go to the beach in their spring outfits."[7] The difference is effected here by the insertion of the *authors* into the shot in a *game* that is fundmentally theirs but which nevertheless doesn't belong to them. Rather than a different form of behaving, leaving an impression of a state – as one might say "to be in a strange state" – emblematic of a position determined by factors that never allow us to understand ourselves completely. There is no "guilt trip" here, not even a "double fault" – but a question posed based on the practice of self-criticism so prevalent at the time: for whom? This is a reasonable question since *Vladimir et Rosa*, once the commission has been accepted – it would seem – in order to finance *Jusqu'à la victoire*, occupies a medial position in the group's filmography. As opposed to the Palestinian project, it seems to derive from no discernable necessity, it employs self-derision, theatrical aspects and a relative absence of purely formal questions and seems to address an audience more receptive to its relatively relaxed revolutionary stance and more likely to approve its politically engaged presentation of a recent historical event. This public is still absent, however, and for good reason because political discourse is no longer the "open sesame" it once was. If the image is supposed to respond to some material need, this latter is more and more difficult to determine in the imagery of the Occident. Collective creation frankly becomes a myth.

In 1971, neither the abandonment of the Palestinian film, the dissolution of the D-V group nor the evolution of the French ultra-left leads to the separation of the couple. Godard remains a zealous militant of the proletarian left. He collaborates on *J'accuse* in which he delivers a news report on the Perrier factory in Vergèze and a piece of film criticism signed Michel Servet, from which we can cite the following ineffable example: "in the *Red Circle* they're all named Marcellin. And that's why the film is so rotten." One could laugh at this but other than the fact that it's not – or is merely – funny, Godard sets up another critical figure – which could be called exemplary assimilation – to which he will frequent have recourse in his interviews: If Marcellin represented "the cop within us all," the "rotten filmmaker" will always be Verneuil (who in 1971 was probably called Marcellin . . .). Moreover, Servet's article tirelessly rehearses the relationship between the film and its public, or rather the film's public. Maoist activism concentrated almost uniquely on the working class and the necessity of its mobiliza-

tion: if the political results are extremely modest, they are catastrophic and immeasurable on the ideological and cultural level. How can one prevent a worker in the Renault plant from going to see *Le Cercle rouge* (The Red Circle)? And then how can one prevent the inevitable demobilization of the aforementioned spectator? The cinema has really become a place to avoid and the "popular spectators" increasingly unacceptable, forged from a twisted and meaningless amalgam of obsolete ideas. And yet, Godard and Gorin hold fast to their conception of political communication through the image: it's a time for summing up not only for the group's activities but for the left in general. So many good reasons for envisaging an "original" solution that would propel them out of the ghetto of cinematic third-worldism and allow them to address the French public head-on: in response, they would do a full-length feature that obeyed the conventional norms. What a scandal!

The opening credits of *Tout va bien* include the words: "To make a film you need money." On June 7, 1971, on his way to meet potential investors in his new project, Jean-Luc Godard has a very serious motorcycle accident. Immobilized for several months, rehabilitation takes several years. And yet shooting begins at the end of the year and the film is released in the spring. It's a splendid success and owes this success to a young "tycoon" from Gaumont who will remain right up to his early death one of the most endearing figures of French cinema: Jean-Pierre Rassam. Aside from the problem of distribution, Rassam, the executive producer, allows this extravaganza to see the light of day: *Tout va bien* brings together Yves Montand and Jane Fonda and recounts the political awakening of two bourgeois characters who witness the kidnapping of their boss; they discover that their love story can continue only in relationship to the History of class struggle. The film presents itself as a history of the Left in France between 1968 and 1972.

They prepare for the film's release with particular care. A publicity campaign announces "A great film sure to disappoint" or, in a more direct tone, "Yes, George (Marchais or Pompidou), better than in '68." Expectations are high and it's hard to believe the first slogan, "It's the return of Godard, he's been returned to us!" The misunderstanding is enormous and has repercussions across the film world. Distributors, the public, and especially the wonderful French critics, envy of the whole world, won't listen to a word of it, much less see an image. Gorin is forgotten, judged a negligible quantity, it's all about the "old" Godard, *enfant terrible* of the New Wave," who becomes the sole spokesperson for the film. The hatred is mutual. Finally there's a real relationship between Godard and his public, but the problems are deeper and will have as a consequence the very real "exit" from the cinema.

The film is, however, excellent and especially clear in its exposition: the credits, the presentation of the couple, the kidnapping, the political awakening, Montand at work, Fonda at work, scenes at home, a return to political events, the leftist ending at the supermarket, ending on "It will be sunny today over all of France," by Stone and Charden and one last address to the audience.

Tout va bien coincides with the end of leftist politics: during the shooting, Pierre Overney was assassinated by a vigilante from the Renault Company: Hubert Nogrette, one of the directors of Renault, was taken hostage as a reprisal and this mess taught the board of Renault just how disastrous sequestration could be. At the same time a new voice is heard in the concert of protesters and covers the "totally political" voices by its very strength: the voice of the women. All of that can be found in the film with a short autobiographical excursus and a cinematic lesson. The opening shot indicates the dates and the subject: MAY 1968 – MAY 1972 – FRANCE 1972. The film's title, which follows immediately, brings together all the irony and resentment inherent in the project. Credits, Sound of the clapper, Fade to Black. A dialogue (off) starts between a man and a woman:

> HE: I wanna make a film.
> SHE: To make a film you need money.

An insert of a man signing checks corresponding to the different expenses of the production. The series is interrupted by the appearance of the name Yves Montand. The dialogue picks up again:

> SHE: If we hire stars they'll give us money.
> HE: Ok, then we'll have to hire stars.

Checks are signed for these "international stars"; they each represent 23 percent of the total budget(!).
On the screen we now see the names YVES MONTAND – JANE FONDA.

> SHE: And what are you going to tell Yves Montand and Jane Fonda? Because actors, you know, if they're going to agree to do the film there has to be a story.
> HE: Ok, so we got to have a story.
> SHE: Yeah, pretty much gotta have a love story.

There follow two images and two perfectly symmetrical "sounds": Montand is running after Fonda on a country road and then we see the reverse. Alternatively (and off) they take up again the series of questions about love that we recognize from *Le Mépris* (Contempt): "Do you love me? Do you love my . . .?"
Here the scenario can be interrupted since we now have the essential idea of the *couple* (that is, *two* elements, not one).
A couple of model "producers" bring up the "starring" couple of a film made by a couple who make films – a "dual" practice where, in essence, the work (or what's left of it) is shared. But this truth is not essential, it's the cinema that teaches it to us and Godard's task is to reveal this fact: he should not be confused with some "messenger" or other; his function is not that of a blank screen on which a message would be projected. If he is communicating, his communication is absent of any image, and when we think of the status of "problem child" that Godard

occupies in the cinema and, more specifically, of the often bizarre relationships between his films and the public, one thinks immediately of Jean-Luc Nancy's conclusion about what is "communicable" in writing: "The great majority of the criticisms directed at the "elitist" character of the works are irrelevant. From the writer to someone who, for lack of information or education, cannot even be considered to be his reader, the communication cannot be considered to be a message, but it happens." In this case the conscious communication of a failure will take place.

But to affirm any "primacy of the couple" whatever would push the misreading to the limit; Godard directs our attention to the man *and* the woman rather than to the couple as an entity. From one, two things, and not from two things one. This constant theme of the work will become the primary motif in the video works that will follow but – as with the relationship between love/work – it is affirmed forcefully and consciously in *Tout va bien*.

Repetition thus takes on the function of driving the work and all the knowledge gained in the Dziga Vertov experiments find a place here. For quite a while every image of the film will be seen (at least) twice; beyond the didactic value of the lessons learned from fiction, this procedure allows the film to completely realize its subject. Difference is marked in the repetition of the images in reverse order. The figure of the credits will be repeated at the end of the film: HE and SHE are reunited after a separation: he is seen waiting in a café and she taps on the window. Then the inverse. The voice-off commentary of the "producer" and of the "producer-ess" doubles the effect and distances us further by repeating their words in indirect discourse.

Other modes of repetition of images also structure the film. The important shots of the strike will be repeated and cleverly edited together to portray the political awakening of the protagonists. The phrases, slogans, intertitles and even the (leftist) songs will have a significant impact as they are repeated. And even in the false-connections that suggest the transitory aspect of the film, repetition will be important; it's through a process of overlapping chronology, as old as the history of the cinema itself, (and whose effectiveness Godard will rediscover in *Prénom Carmen*) that the authors pay their respects to discontinuity. In the scene of the couple at home – another authorial emblem – Jane Fonda twice – at her arrival and again at the end of the scene – repeats a gesture she had made in the previous scene. The distanciation effect is guaranteed, and this film proclaims loudly and clearly its "Brechtian" side, but whose profound originality goes well beyond the usual references.

The theatricality of the décor of the factory and its truly epic quality are undeniable, but it is in the composition of the tableau and (what Bourdieu would call) the "social gestus" of the sequence that the poor "BB" is the most completely revered. The tableau "structured through irreversibility and incorruptibility" (as Barthes would say) is clearly expressed in the reflective attitude of the authors and can be best seen clearly in the gaze of the actors at the camera and in frames

where we see the actors – suddenly immobilized, frozen, prisoners of the "frontal-ity" of the camera – able to respond only to each other and their presence rather than to the demands of representation. Repetition plays a part in this contract, but the tableau presents a specific moment – the strike and the hostage taking – a *gesture* in the Brechtian sense which allows us to comprehend the other part of the subject: the French situation between 1968 and 1972. If *Tout va bien* succeeds in this impossible attempt at translation, it is because of the mediation between old and new: the tracking shots of the 1960s are there to guide gesture and move-ment. But they simply don't work any more, they come and go, repeat themselves and succeed in making the very mobility of the film's point of view the most significant discursive weapon.

The end of the film offers a "keeper" sequence portraying the swan song of leftist politics: a supermarket is sacked by a horde of hairy protesters who proclaim the new law of the consumer ("It's free!") to all and sundry. This long scene is composed of four lateral tracking shots taken from the perspective of the check out area: Everything is very "classically" founded on the notion of "off-screen" activity and various symbolic moments – an aside from a communist book sales-man, the arrival of the police – punctuate the action. The scene is held-together, for a time, by Susan's gaze, but the tracking shots complicate things through this attempt to tie everything to her point of view. The entire scene gives the impres-sion of Godard's "mastery" in the presentation of the absence of control.

The epic side does not undo the documentary aspect of the film. Montand articulates twice the importance of the events of May, most obviously in his inter-view where he becomes the spokesman for Godard, with one or two personal traits of his own. The essential thing to note is that "he was ready to take May '68 right in the face" and that the big question was what to do next. For the moment, like Godard, he's making advertising films and he speaks of a project "he's been planning for about three years to make a political film about France." The autobiographical part is interesting just for the way it allows us to see Godard take on the character of a guy rather than a filmmaker. Politics is the way to access the real as soon as the legendary nature of the May events cools down. Montand remembers this period again when he evokes the militants' action at Flins. (Godard and Gorin offer in this regard a very moving re-presentation of the events of May by focusing on a single gesture – in this case a sequence of a CRS agent chasing down a protester).

But he comes back to this because Susan has raised questions about it in her interview about the depths to which the journalistic profession has sunk. "I'm an American correspondent in France which no longer means anything." The feminine side of things gets a nudge: a woman's voice – belonging to a radio reporter – confronts the man and tells him to think about reality – which means, in Godard's work, the necessary collaboration between love and work. At the end of the tale, HE and SHE remain in the shot and the other HE and the other SHE discuss their journey to date. "Well, we could say that HE and SHE have begun to

think HI-STOR-I-CALLY." At the end of the film, one last sentence (off) drives home the point: "May each one be his own historian; only then will he live more carefully and more thoughtfully." And the final intertext sums up laconically the sense of the film in an address to its real public: "THIS WAS AN ACCOUNT FOR THOSE WHO ARE OF NONE."

As it happens, French, unlike German or in a sense English, does not allow different words that distinguish the science of history from fiction. Henceforth, Godard will continue to get the maximum play from the ambiguity of the word *"histoire,"* but for the moment *Tout va bien* marks the final attempt to do so. The consubstantial relationship between the institution of the cinema and fiction – this blind task of producing images – has long since been deconstructed by Godard, but for an equally long period his penchant for *"histoires"* has kept Godard connected to the cinema and, when he has found a way to feed the monster, he will present these very unusual stories that are his films. His first project – in the US – will be called, of course, *The Story*.

Notes

1 This chapter has been translated by T. Jefferson Kline.
2 Blanchot (1983).
3 Nancy (1983).
4 "Mise en scène is like modern philosophy, lets say Husserl's or Merleau-Ponty's. There are not words on one side and thoughts on the other. When I say it's not a language, I mean that it's simultaneously a thought." (Godard, 1961).
5 I don't know who gets credit for this name but can't help noting, as the (red) line of Godard's story that it's once again an *active desire to reference* – a position that parallels the political impact of the films and materially inscribes the project in the sense of adequation; in this sense the term "group" as a name for what is an attempt include all of the participants (when the group is really two) illustrates this desire.
6 Pierre (1987).
7 Macbean (1975).

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On and Under Communication

Michael Witt

Sonimage

This chapter examines the collaborative work made by Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville under the name "Sonimage" from 1973 to 1979.[1] Following the dissipation of leftist activity in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the break-up of the Dziga Vertov Group, Godard's serious motorcycle accident in June 1971, the poor reception of his and Jean-Pierre Gorin's attempt to make a relatively big budget political film, *Tout va bien* (All's Well) (1972), and his abandonment of plans to make a film about himself under the title "Moi Je", he and Miéville established the Sonimage studio-laboratory in Grenoble in the winter of 1973–1974, and subsequently moved it to Rolle in Switzerland in 1977. Their main aims throughout this period were clear: to put talk of audiovisual decentralization into practice; to work collaboratively with small production teams on projects relating to concerns arising from their daily experience and immediate environment; to engage with television; to study a variety of communication processes; and, through acquisition and ownership of the necessary production equipment, to explore the technical and aesthetic potential of video as a compositional medium. "What I have tried to do with Sonimage", Godard explained in 1975, "is to have a little bit of material with which to re-learn, and to take the time to compose with it. This is why we felt the need to situate ourselves away from Paris, and, conversely, to come to Paris from time to time due to its central position. You have to leave Paris to create information."[2]

Although their early ambition of producing three low cost films per year proved unrealistic, the scale of Sonimage's output was phenomenal. Between 1973 and 1979, Godard and Miéville completed almost 19 hours of material for television

broadcast or cinema release: three films (*Ici et Ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere) 1974; *Numéro deux* (Number Two) 1975; *Comment ça va* (How is it Going) 1975), a short video clip based on a song by Patrick Juvet (1977), and two monumental 12-part television series: *Six fois deux (Sur et sous la communication)* (Six Times Two: On and Under Communication) (1976) and *France tour détour deux enfants* (France Tour Detour Two Children) (1979). Despite Godard's prominence in world cinema, and the transformation in distribution brought about by video, DVD and the Internet, much of this work – especially the two television series – remains remarkably difficult to see.[3] Likewise, in spite of the quantity of critical writing devoted to Godard, the Sonimage work (again, the television series in particular) still remains comparatively understudied and in my view underrated.[4] Scholars have tended to ignore calls for further investigation of the corpus by pioneering commentators on it such as Colin MacCabe and the late Jill Forbes (MacCabe, Mulvey, and Eaton, 1980, 149; Forbes, 1980, 45). In an article published in 1980, MacCabe noted that for viewers perplexed by the forms and concerns of Godard's *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (Every Man for Hmself) (1979), the Sonimage work constituted the crucial "missing step" in his activities (MacCabe, 1980, 112); three decades on, the same remains largely true for viewers of his subsequent output.

It is important to bear in mind when discussing Sonimage that the venture was very much a collaborative one. Centered around Godard and Miéville, it included significant contributions from creative and technical collaborators such as Gérard Martin, William Lubtchansky, Gérard Teissèdre, Dominique Chapuis, Philippe Rony and Pierre Binggeli. In view of the frequent underestimation and misrepresentation of the scale of Miéville's contribution, let us note here that she co-directed, co-authored and co-edited all of the Sonimage works listed above, with the exception of *Numéro deux*, which she nevertheless co-authored and co-edited, and of the Juvet clip, in which she and her daughter feature.[5] Given the quantity of work they produced, it would be impossible to do justice to all aspects of it in a single chapter. What I shall do here is examine the main features of their principal fields of inquiry, television and journalism, through particular reference to *Ici et Ailleurs*, *Comment ça va* and the two television series.

From the Dziga Vertov Group to Sonimage

The Sonimage work is characterized intellectually by a rejection of the Marxist-Leninist theory that had underpinned the work of the Dziga Vertov Group and the Godard–Gorin collaboration. The key film that articulated this shift was *Ici et ailleurs*, which served as both a trailer and manifesto in relation to the remainder of the Sonimage project.[6] A revisionist political agenda is integral to the structure of *Ici et ailleurs*, and explicit in the flashing intertitle "En repensant à cela" ("On thinking about that again") that punctuates the film. This film, we recall,

began life as a Dziga Vertov Group project entitled *Jusqu'à la victoire* (To Victory) devoted to the struggle of the Palestinians, which Gorin and Godard had envisaged as being the culmination of their collaboration. Many hours of material for the film were shot by cinematographer Armand Marco in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan between late 1969 and mid-1970. The Jordanian army's offensive under King Hussein against the Palestinians in Amman in September 1970, subsequently known as Black September, resulted in the deaths of thousands of combatants and civilians, including many of those filmed by Godard, Gorin and Marco. These events fundamentally altered the status of the film from a vital historical work designed to herald imminent victory to an archival record of a tragic and ill-conceived moment in the history of the Palestinians. They also made nonsense of the optimism of the film's underlying political thesis that had assumed Arab unity, and its misguided conception as the depiction of a series of strategic steps that would lead to inevitable victory.

According to Miéville, she and Godard spent every day for a year and a half during 1973 and 1974 organizing and editing *Ici et ailleurs* (Miéville, 1989, 13). In the process of doing this, they dissected the political rationale that had governed the filming of the original material, and questioned the motivations of Western intellectuals generally who were eager to project a desire for revolution onto other people in distant countries – "to be revolutionaries in their place," as Miéville puts it in the film – rather than confront the need for change at home. In addition, she and Godard severely criticized the way the Dziga Vertov Group had imposed a political interpretation on the images via the soundtrack rather than seeking to learn from what the images and sounds actually showed. This autocritique is exemplified in *Ici et ailleurs* in a sequence depicting an amplifier and a recording of the Internationale. As the sound of the Internationale is increased, Godard reflects as follows:

> We did what quite a few people did: we took images, and we put the sound up too loud. With no matter what image: Vietnam, always the same sound, always too loud, Prague, Montevideo, May 68 in France, Italy, Chinese cultural revolution, torture in Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Chile, Palestine . . . The sound so loud that it ended up drowning out the voice it wanted to produce from the image.

In the place of the "loud sound" of the Internationale, the duo advocate throughout the Sonimage work – especially in *Ici et Ailleurs*, *Comment ça va* and *Six fois deux* – taking one's time, reflecting, and when in doubt placing one's trust in the revelatory potential of silence.

The repudiation of political theory is first articulated in the Sonimage work in this sequence in *Ici et ailleurs*, where Godard's words "drowning out the voice it wanted to produce from the image" introduce and continue over a shot of a young girl reciting a Mahmoud Darwish poem in the bombed-out ruins of a house in the Jordanian town of Karameh. They rehearse the same idea later in the film

in the context of a discussion of some footage of a group of Palestinian Fedayeen that had been filmed for inclusion in *Jusqu"à la victoire*. All the members of this group, we learn, were later killed during Black September. Against this backdrop, Godard strongly criticizes his earlier assumption that as a militant Western intellectual, far removed from mortal danger, and divorced from the daily realities of the Fedayeen, he might have had anything of value to say about or contribute to their cause. This distance, suggest Godard and Miéville, is what was obscured by the heady political optimism governing *Jusqu"à la victoire*. The point of departure of *Ici et ailleurs*, and by extension of the Sonimage work as a whole, was a realization that the footage of the Fedayeen talking among themselves had not been translated, and that the content of their conversations had not only been ignored, but obscured by the filmmakers' over-zealous political theorizing on the soundtrack. Rather than discussing political strategy, or the interrelationship of theory and practice, it transpired that the Fedayeen were essentially talking about their love of the land, and the dangers they faced. In a later sequence, they are shown venting their anger and talking through the practical weaknesses of their tactics following a night-time manoeuvre during which two of their group were killed. Elias Sanbar, Godard and Gorin's interpreter in Jordan and Lebanon during the shooting of *Jusqu"à la victoire*, has contributed a fascinating testimony regarding the impact on himself and on Godard of the realization that these crucial discussions had not been translated. When revisiting the material in 1973, Godard turned down the volume of the overlaid theoretical discourse, raised that of those shown sitting in a circle on the ground, and asked Sanbar to translate their exchanges. According to Sanbar, the result was a revelation:

> We were stunned. He, because he hadn't asked me at the time to translate what these men were saying. And I, whose mother tongue it was, felt profoundly guilty that I hadn't heard a word, the theories and convictions having struck me deaf. It's by using this scene, and this discovery, that Godard constructed what for me is the strongest and most tragic sequence in *Ici et ailleurs*: the moving one in which Godard shows this scene and recounts in a broken voice how our voices had obscured those of the men that we were listening to, to the extent of wiping them out completely. (Sanbar, 1991, 116)

As Sanbar indicates here, these sequences came to play a central role in *Ici et ailleurs*, where the silences, pauses, tones and inflections of the Palestinian voices are accorded particular prominence, and the act of translation is foregrounded (the French is spoken by Miéville with a slight delay).

The Sonimage work is thus fiercely skeptical of political dogma, and of any sort of blinkered self-subjugation to or heavy-handed deployment of political theory. This is not to suggest, however, that it is not nourished by theory; on the contrary, it is informed by a multiplicity of ideas drawn from the realms of political, cultural, feminist, psychoanalytic, communication, scientific, and mathematical theory. A brief list of some of the thinkers on whom Godard and Miéville draw

would need to include the following: Louis Althusser, Bertolt Brecht, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, Bernard Lambert, Ivan Illich, Jean Baudrillard, Germaine Greer, Annie Leclerc, Michel Foucault, Françoise Dolto, Ilya Prigogine and Robert Herman, Robert Linhart, François Jacob, and René Thom. It is not possible to explore Godard and Miéville's dialogue with all of these figures here. In what follows, I shall focus on their engagement with four key thinkers, whose work is particularly central to Sonimage: Althusser, whose article on "Ideological State Apparatuses" had been a decisive influence on much of the Dziga Vertov Group, and continued to inform Godard and Miéville's practice throughout the 1970s; Foucault, whose *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*) appeared in 1975; Shannon, whose 1949 book *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (accompanied by a philosophical essay by Warren Weaver) was belatedly translated into French in 1975; and Linhart, who published an eloquent defence of Lenin's later political thought in 1976, *Lénine, les paysans, Taylor* (Lenin, the Peasants, Taylor), followed by an influential account of his time as a militant intellectual who had taken a factory job in 1968–1969 with a view to promoting political consciousness and action among the workforce, *L'Établi* (1978).

Information Theory

Looking back on his work from the perspective of 1975, Godard identified the major shift in focus of his work since 1968 as follows:

> For me, for example, the real influence of May 68 has been to open myself up to information in general, bearing in mind that this, in my area of work – images, sounds, a salary – travels as much via television as cinema.[7]

When he and Miéville established the Sonimage studio in premises vacated by a computer firm in Grenoble, they more or less adopted the firm's logo: rather than "Informatique, calcul, écriture" (Computing, calculation, writing), they substituted "Information" for "Informatique" and retained the rest.[8] An investigation of various forms and process of communication – notably television, cinema, journalism, and language – had been central to Godard's concerns from the mid-1960s onwards, and is at the heart of essayistic works such as *Le Gai Savoir* (Joy of Learning) (1968) and the Dziga Vertov Group films. Indeed the principal interest of his collaborative political work from 1969 to 1972 arguably lies less in its politics than in the study of communication processes that runs beneath its surface. We should recall in this context that Godard had been nurturing the idea of a vast multi-authored 24-hour film project devoted to contemporary communication since 1968 under the title "Communications." According to Gorin, all of the Dziga

Vertov Group films essentially evolved out of a script he wrote at the beginning of 1968 entitled "Un film français" (A French movie), which he had developed as his proposed one-hour contribution to Godard's "Communications" project.[9] In this perspective, the Dziga Vertov Group work can be viewed with hindsight as a protracted exploratory trailer for the Sonimage project, with "Communications" coming to belated fruition in the Sonimage work, especially in Godard and Miéville's first television series, *Six fois deux*, whose focus is explicit in its subtitle: "on and under communication".

Among the various theories listed above, one occupies a particularly crucial position in the Sonimage work: Claude Shannon's information theory. We know from interviews that Godard was keenly interested in information theory prior to the publication in 1975 of the French translation of Shannon's landmark *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. In 1972, for example, he was already signalling Shannon as an important reference (Kolker, 1973, 132). The attraction to him of information theory is not difficult to understand: it offered a relatively simple communications model with apparently almost limitless potential applicability in different fields, from television and the media to language, genetics, and cybernetics. Based on the premise that the transmission and reception of all information is governed by universal laws, Shannon had set out to explore the accuracy with which symbols are transmitted, how these symbols convey the desired meaning, and how efficiently this meaning affects behaviour. His model consists of an information source, a message, and a transmitter that changes the message into a signal suitable for sending over a communication channel to a receiver. It also allows for incidental interference (or "noise") to the encoded message while it is in the channel. Shannon's work was enthusiastically adopted by numerous scientists and social scientists from the late 1940s onwards, who applied his model to a wide variety of information systems.

Information theory underpins Godard and Miéville's analyses of communication throughout the Sonimage period. Its presence and importance is explicit in *Comment ça va*, where the unnamed man (played by Michel Marot) recalls the terms in which the female character, former union delegate Odile (played by Miéville), had chastised both him and the French communist party (the PCF) for failing to move beyond repetitive denunciations of reactionary forms: "Instead of tiring yourself out shouting 'death to fascism' for 50 years, you would have done better to study Shannon's theories a little." Godard also discusses the implications of Shannon's theory at some length with René Thom in episode 5b of *Six fois deux*, *René(e)s*, the latter expressing exasperation at loose uses of the term "information" ("Oh, that word "information": what a disaster. [. . .] People use it for anything they want, especially the vaguest ideas."), in particular in the contexts of journalism and advertising, where, he argues, the fact that the creation of messages precedes demand for them means that they are in fact entirely contrary to real information. Indeed in *René(e)s*, Thom even graphically depicts Shannon's model on the blackboard. Given these overt references, it is curious

that Shannon's significance to the entirety of the Sonimage work should have passed virtually without comment.[10]

Information theory helped Godard and Miéville in four principal ways. First, it offered a model of a communication circuit in which the position and function of the receiver/viewer is fundamental to the communicative process. They illustrate this circuit simply at various times throughout the Sonimage work, and especially in *Comment ça va* and *Six fois deux*, through the representation of the process of conceiving, writing, sending, and receiving a letter.[11] Second, it gave them a means of scrutinizing a wide range of communication processes, and allowed them – in conjunction with their quasi-scientific use of video as an audiovisual research tool – to identify a wide variety of information flows. "Our films," Godard indicated in 1975, "give a visual account of what might constitute information channels" (Even, 1975, 13). Third, having identified a flow, it enabled them to isolate and analyse points of blockage. Fourth, it provided them with a model of communication through which to theorize their own lacunary essayistic practice. According to information theory, the more entropic a message, and the larger the distance between its constituent elements, the greater the amount of information that is conveyed when the uncertainty and potential is resolved. This principle allowed them to theorize how to maximize the quantity and quality of information that they communicated in their work. A reflection on this topic underpins the lengthy sequence in *Comment ça va* constructed around the conceptual and graphic combination of two photographs taken in very different contexts (one during a strike at the Joint Français factory in France in 1972, the other during the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974–1975). This sequence provides a succinct summary of their thinking on communication during this period, and announces Godard's theory and practice of image-making in his later work.[12]

Video

Where information theory provided Godard and Miéville with a conceptual framework within which to analyze contemporary communication processes, video technology provided them with a new tool through which to pursue their experiments. Godard, we recall, had shown a keen interest in video from the late 1960s onwards: in 1967, he considered using one of the first Philips video camera/recorder outfits as a tool for auto-critical political analysis in *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) (1967), and the following year he employed some of Sony's earliest 1/2" black-and-white video equipment when contributing to the fabrication of quick rough videotapes that were distributed via François Maspero's bookshop in Paris.[13] By 1970, he was calling openly for the use of video equipment by militant groups (Godard, 1985, 349), and the same year he and Gorin first employed

video in one of their films, *Vladimir et Rosa*, where they included an emblematic scene depicting a fight over video technology, in which a group of revolutionaries sought to resist the absorption of video into mainstream television. Part of the attraction of video derived from the fact that ownership of the technology afforded Godard and Miéville control over the whole production process, from inception through project development, filming and editing to postproduction:

> The idea was to work across the whole filmmaking process. But it's difficult: you can't have a lab at home, it's too specialized. I found video interesting because it allows you to work across the process cheaply. From the camera to the monitor, there's just one wire. It's easier than in cinema. Or at least in cinema you can't do it in the same way."[14]

Thus video gave them a high degree of economic and creative autonomy, allowing them, as Godard put it, to be both worker and boss, and to pursue their work in the Sonimage laboratory-workshop with the sort of flexibility and freedom more usually associated with writers and painters.[15]

In addition, Godard welcomed the manner in which the immediacy of the new technology democratized the filmmaking process, facilitated dialogue, and helped to dissolve the divisions and hierarchies between the various technical roles in mainstream film and television production:

> Video is interesting, could be interesting, because you see the image straight away. The technical relationships and hierarchy are no longer the same, or could be no longer the same, since the camera operator can see. [. . .] . . . I think that being two creates a very interesting relationship, and video allows you to be two on an image, to be several, to be obliged to be several because you see the image straight away. (Godard 1980a, 181–182)

The video image can not only be viewed by the entire crew as it is recorded, but can also be immediately reviewed and subjected to collective discussion. Simple changes such as these, Godard suggested during the making of *Numéro deux*, resulted in significantly different and generally much smoother working relations (Godard, 1985, 380). In addition, the length and relatively low cost of videotapes allowed for the extended scrutiny of people and objects. Moreover, as Godard observed in 1975, the new technology also enabled them to incorporate all manner of different types of imagery, from paintings to photographs in magazines, and to combine and reflect on the material they had assembled through use of a wide variety of cheap post-production techniques:

> The interest of video is primarily that it permits me to re-inject all the images I want, and allows all manner of transposition and manipulation. And above all it allows me to think in images, not in text.[16]

Under Television

The Sonimage work is rooted in part in an uncomfortable recognition that the most profound transformation to French society between 1968 and 1973 had been brought about less by political activism than by the spread of the media generally, and of television in particular. This is one of the senses of the phrase "under communication": industrialized countries had been colonized by the mass media, their citizens subjected to steady streams of conventional representations. For Godard and Miéville, this situation had a number of important implications. First, they viewed the sheer quantity of images in circulation in the media as forming a dense fog through which it was difficult to see clearly. Second, this mass of reproductions served less to elucidate and communicate than to disorientate and manipulate. Thus in *Comment ça va*, Marot's character speaks of the existence of a "wall" of images, which obscures reality rather than interrogating it or revealing it afresh: "One says 'the wall of sound,' but there's also 'the wall of images.' which is transformed into a wall of silence, noise of silence, silence before the storm, storm during the night . . . fascist night. . . ." This aspect of their thinking anticipated Jean Baudrillard's argument, in a celebrated article first published in 1977, that capitalist societies had come to be characterized by "proliferating information and shrinking sense," and that instead of facilitating communication, information exhausted itself in the process of *staging* of communication (Baudrillard, 1980, 137). Third, as Godard makes clear in *Ici et ailleurs*, he and Miéville identify a direct relationship between media imagery and the formation of identity:

> How does one find one's own image in the order or disorder of others, with the agreement or disagreement of others, and to do that, well, how can one create one's own image? A brand image, that is, an image that brands, an image that leaves a mark.

Fourth, as the Marot character observes in *Comment ça va*, at the heart of the film-within-the-film is the far-reaching suggestion that the wash of the modern media was having a deeply negative contagious impact on human perception:

> What was Odette ultimately saying with this little video? That television and the press were rotten. And since we watched and read them, that the look was also rotten, as were our mouths and hands. In short that we had cancer, us first of all, but we didn't say so.

Lastly, they were acutely aware of how the increase in the quantity of imagery in circulation in the media would impact on how their own work would be received and understood. In *Ici et ailleurs* they talk of the "vague, complicated system" that has come to govern the circulation and reception of images and sounds, in which

the meaning of any new attempt to communicate is circumscribed and inflected by the chains of pre-existing connotations already associated with the topic in question.

The first stage in Godard and Miéville's quest to scrutinize the functioning and effects of television involved removing themselves from its French epicentre: Paris. Godard stressed that their move to Grenoble was first and foremost a move away from Paris: "It's not Grenoble, it's the provinces, and above all *'not Paris.'*"[17] The decision to establish their base in Grenoble was in part a deliberate act of resistance in the face of the intensely centralized system in France of televisual and cinematic production and distribution. It also functioned as a step in the direction of Switzerland, to where Miéville, a Swiss citizen, wished to return, and offered the possibility of collaboration with Jean-Pierre Beauviala, whose Aäton camera factory was situated there (Godard, 1985, 23). Above all, it provided them with an outsider's perspective on the structure and workings of broadcast television, and allowed them to explore the possibility of making a different type of local, regional television.

This strategy of decentralization was in part a belated realization of one of the most important aspirations formulated in 1968 by the filmmakers and technicians radicalized by the events of May, who in the wake of the events had debated the structure and organization of the film and television industries within the framework of the États Généraux du Cinéma Français (Estates General of French Cinema). The result of the Estates General's discussions had been the proposal of 19 "projects" designed to bring about a profound restructuring of the industry.[18] Among the most controversial of these was Project 4, which advocated confronting the centralized nature of cultural production in Gaullist France through the implementation of a series of far-reaching decentralizing initiatives, including the complete reorganization of the film industry around a network of regional offices to support training, production, and exhibition. It was largely the enormity of the implications of the issues raised by Project 4 that lead to the failure of the Estates General to arrive at an agreed overall policy statement. The ideas explored in Project 4 can nonetheless be seen as underpinning Godard and Miéville's move to Grenoble, and informing statements by Godard in interviews in the mid-1970s on the importance of regional production: "The ideal in the future, in a decentralized socialist France, would be for films to be conceived and co-produced by town councils or local groups."[19] Indeed as René Prédal has argued, by putting the idea of regionalization into practice, Sonimage's move to Grenoble anticipated by ten years government action in this area in the form of the creation of eight regional film production centres.[20]

It is worth noting that Godard and Miéville were not alone in exploring the new possibilities opened up by video in the early 1970s in Grenoble, where the "Nouvelle Ville" was a focus for extensive experimentation with cable television during this period. Although Godard was fully aware of the existence of these parallel experiments, he generally sought to distance himself from them:

> We didn't choose Grenoble because of the video or cable television experiments taking place here. I've never seen them. We didn't have a product to propose to them. Now that we have, we're able to go and see them to see whether there's anything that can be done, which I doubt at the moment, since it's primarily conceived as a form of cultural activity. They're people who distribute before producing. What they produce is so conditioned by the means of distribution that they make the same type of program as Chauvel on TF1.[21]

Godard's position here is consistent with the stance he had adopted regarding the primacy of production over distribution from the time of the Estates General of French Cinema onwards. Rather than prioritizing the creation of new distribution networks, and assuming that enough sufficiently interesting content would then be produced to supply them, he argued that one's point of departure should always be a desire to communicate on a given topic, followed by a distillation of that desire into a specific form, which would in turn dictate how it should be distributed, and to whom. In interviews in the early 1970s, Godard alluded to violent disagreements that he and Gorin had had on this topic with other militant filmmakers (Godard, 1985, 369). The same principle lies behind his suspicions regarding the Grenoble cable television experiments: in his view, they put the cart (distribution) before the horse (production), thereby replicating at a local level – and with very limited funds – an undesirable communication model derived from broadcast television.

Godard, Gorin, and Miéville's thinking on this topic, and on the structure of broadcast television generally, was very much in step with that of other contemporaneous left-wing critics of the media in the 1970s such as Raymond Williams and Hans Magnus Enzensberger. In his influential study of television published in 1974, for instance, Williams located the specificity of radio and television in the fact that – unlike all previous communications technologies – they *devised transmission and reception as abstract processes, with little or no definition of preceding content* (Williams, 1974, 25; original emphasis). Thus the means of communication, as he put it, *preceded the demand* (Williams, 1974, 25; original emphasis). Writing in 1970, Enzensberger drew up a manifesto for an emancipatory use of the media that anticipated Godard and Miéville's project closely in a number of important respects, notably in its insistence on collective control over the production process, decentralized programming, and audience activity and feedback (Enzensberger, 1970, 26). This latter question – that of the place and function of the viewer – is central to both Williams and Enzensberger; it is also crucial to Godard and Miéville, who return repeatedly to what they consider the monologic structure of broadcast television, to the issue of the pre-determined position of the audience ("On television the viewer was invented before the programs," as Godard put it (Godard, 1985, 406)), and to the challenge of how to think about, address, and engage that audience as a group of individuals rather than as a uniform mass.

On Television 1: *Six fois deux (Sur et sous la communication)*

We shall now turn to Godard and Miéville's two practical interventions in television, *Six fois deux* and *France tour détour deux enfants*, both of which were designed in part as illustrations of what a more authentic, local type of television might look like. *Six fois deux* is organized around pairs of interrelated programs. "For me," suggested Godard, "one always means two, it goes without saying. The presentation of two episodes in one facilitates the passage of thought to and fro between them" (La Bardonnie, 1976, 1). Each pair was broadcast on FR3 at 8.30pm on consecutive Sunday evenings over a period of six weeks starting on July 25, 1976. The length of the individual programs varies, but together each pair runs to approximately 100 minutes:

1a: *Y'a personne* (Nobody's There) (57'21) / 1b: *Louison* (41'45)
2a: *Leçons de choses* (Lessons About Things) (51'33) / 2b: *Jean-Luc* (47'48)
3a: *Photos et cie* (Photos and Co) (45'39) / 3b: *Marcel* (55'07)
4a: *Pas d'histoire* (No History) (56'45) / 4b: *Nanas* (Chicks) (42'42)
5a: *Nous trois* (Us Three) (52'12) / 5b: *René(e)s* (52'55)
6a: *Avant et après* (Before and After) (44'32) / 6b: *Jacqueline et Ludovic* (49'48)[22]

The first program in each pair raises a loose set of concerns, which are then picked up and reworked through reference to an individual or group of individuals in the second.

A useful way of thinking about both series is in terms of the idea of "planned flow" formulated by Raymond Williams to describe the predictable mosaic of the programming grid (Williams, 1974, 86). This pre-planned grid, he argues, is filled with a disparate assortment of units (game shows, commercials, news bulletins, soap operas, and so on), which combine to create what he considers the principal characteristic of broadcast television: the flow itself, which is punctuated and sustained by a steady stream of trailers announcing forthcoming attractions. The misleading impression conveyed by this seamless flow, for Williams and Godard-Miéville alike, is one of authority and veracity, which in turn produce a false sense of familiarity and security. They set out in *Six fois deux* to disrupt the flow, to contest the impression it gives of truth and plenitude, and to propose a gentler and more human way of rendering the world through what Godard referred to variously as a "regional," "municipal," or even "village-based" television.[23] The series' interventionist ambitions are evident in the opening sequence of each of its 12 episodes, where we see Godard's hand inserting a critical capsule (in the form of a U-matic videotape) into the flow with a view to slowing it down and examining it.

In order to counter the veneer of professional television in *Six fois deux*, Godard and Miéville pursue a number of strategies. First, they treat the image not as a

window, but as "just a screen on which things arrive and are registered" (*Avant et après*). These "things" can then be subjected to analysis and criticism. Throughout *Leçons de choses*, for instance, they use the screen as an electronic blackboard, drawing and writing with a video pen on the black screen or over images. Second, following on from this, they subvert the impression created by television of transparency and naturalness by drawing attention to the mediating processes involved in the making and transmission of the programs. Exemplary in this respect is the curious male figure in *Avant et après*, who is neither a technician nor a journalist, but simply a *mediator* whose function is that of relaying the words he receives from Godard via a set of headphones. The time-lapse experienced by the viewer between Godard's virtually inaudible whispering, and its repetition by his on-screen intermediary, foregrounds and magnifies the work of mediation elided in conventional television. Third, as suggested in the outline of the series given above, they complicate television's sequential flow by including references backwards and forwards between the various episodes, and in particular between the two programs that make up each pair. Fourth, they undermine the illusion of television's instantaneity and constant "present" through frequent tense changes on the sound track and references to the past, present and future, and in particular to the time lapse between production, recording, and transmission.

Fifth, they pursue a systematic strategy of deprofessionalization (or amateurization), which serves to cast in relief the arbitrary nature of many of the conventions governing mainstream television production. An example of this, which Colin MacCabe rightly identified as one of the series' defining formal features, is their avoidance of direct address (MacCabe, 1980: 143). Another example is the manner in which they undermine the integrity of on-screen space and interrupt the flow of programs though the casual inclusion of off-screen noises and voices, and looks off-screen to people whose identity and role is never explained. In *Jean-Luc*, for example, Godard turns at one point to someone out of shot and says – apparently referring to a group of people wanting to enter the Sonimage studio during the filming process – "Oh they can come in, but they musn't make any noise." Such is the success of this strategy that when Godard and Miéville quote material from mainstream television in the series, the viewer's attention is immediately drawn to qualities such as the mode of address and speed of delivery, and to the artificiality of the *mise en scène* (colors, lighting, framing, and so on).[24] Indeed in their new context, these clips acquire an otherness, an unexpected beauty even, and not the least of Godard and Miéville's achievements in *Six fois deux* is that of having succeeded in making conventional television look strange.

The sixth main feature of Godard and Miéville's deprofessionalizing strategy, which has profound implications for the make-up of the programs and their effect on the viewer, is the manner in which the material they contain is presented. Rather than being introduced, contextualized and explained by an authoritative on-screen expert, people and objects are frequently simply *presented*, often at considerable length in uninterrupted static shots. This is what Robert Stam has char-

acterized well as the "scandal" of *Six fois deux* (Stam, 1983, 42). A striking example of this occurs in *Pas d'histoire*, where two separate shots of children are presented, with no prior justification or accompanying commentary, for just over three and a half minutes and a little under four and a half minutes respectively. Similarly, the manner in which the farmer (in *Louison*) and the two psychiatric patients (in *Jacqueline et Ludovic*) are presented, without introduction or explanation, extends this strategy to entire programs. In these instances, the viewer's attention is directed as much onto the interviewees' silences, hesitations and behavior as it is to any easily accessible meaning contained in what they might be saying.

No guarantee is given regarding the intrinsic interest of any of the material, and the viewer is left free to observe, engage with and extract sense from the footage, and indeed to navigate an individual route through the heterogeneous elements that make up the series as a whole. The combination of long uncut shots, silences, and absence of conventional editorializing is accompanied by various formal fissures and disjunctions, such as abrupt cuts and wipes (often involving intense clashes of color), sudden shifts in pace and rhythm, jumps in sound level, and the eruption on the soundtrack of unexpected noises, such as that of the wind buffeting the microphone. In terms of information theory, the programs are highly entropic, and incorporate clear instances of noise, sometimes actual (audible) noise, as in the sounds of passing traffic in *Y'a personne* that occasionally drown out the voices of the interviewees.[25] Here is how Godard summarized in *Jean-Luc* his and Miéville's view of the productive role of entropy and noise in communication, where he once again drew an analogy between his work and the writing, sending and reception of a letter (or in this instance, a postcard):

GODARD: I realize that in relation to the young girl, if you like, I read her post-cards solely because she makes lots of spelling mistakes, and that the fact the she makes lots . . .

JOURNALIST: That's what speaks to you?

GODARD: No. But it *forces* me to read. Hey, what's she written? If she didn't make them, I wouldn't read the card. Even if she writes "Lots of love, see you soon," given that she makes ten mistakes in three words, I say to myself "Hey, what word has she written there?" Then at least I'm reading, at least I spend twenty seconds more with her. With *her*, a real part of her. Well, it's no more than that.

On Television 2: *France tour détour deux enfants*

Following the broadcast of *Six fois deux*, the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA), which had co-produced both this series and *Ici et ailleurs*, recontacted Godard and Miéville regarding a project long cherished by Antenne 2: a televisual adaptation of G. Bruno's celebrated nineteenth-century school primer, *Le Tour de*

la France par deux enfants: devoir et patrie (The Tour of France by Two Children: Duty and Country).[26] The production costs were split equally between Antenne 2 on the one hand, and the INA and Sonimage on the other, and the resultant 12-part series, *France tour détour deux enfants*, was filmed in Rolle and Paris in 1977–1978. Each episode lasts 26 minutes, and is framed by two or three terms.[27] Where *Six fois deux* had intervened in television's planned flow through an abrasive strategy of amateurization, the 12 episodes of *France tour détour deux enfants* were designed for insertion into the flow on a weekly basis in the early afternoon and appear initially to be much more at home within the framework of the programming grid in terms of color, lighting, framing, and the structural use of sequential segmentation and repetition. The main formal strategy that Godard and Miéville pursue in *France tour détour deux enfants* is that of the simulation, parody and *détournement* of familiar televisual codes, especially those associated with magazine style news and discussion programs. Indeed there is even a sequence in each episode, introduced each time by a title announcing "television," devoted to a cryptic reflection on the rhetoric of prime-time television. In the series, the usual ingredients are all available – presenters, talking heads, direct address, reverse angles, bounce lighting, news bulletins, interviews, and so on – but redistributed according to obscure, precise rules. Whenever we encounter the conventions, they are always a little out of place or stylistically excessive, as for example when the actors who play the role of the series' presenters, Albert (Albert Dray) and Betty (Betty Berr), having announced a forthcoming "story," turn their heads in an exaggerated manner to look off screen. Jean-Paul Fargier summed up the series succinctly at the time of its broadcast in 1980, when he observed that Godard and Miéville had succeeded in presenting "the whole of television every time in each episode" (Fargier, 1980, 36).

The television broadcast of *France tour détour deux enfants* was delayed following its completion for almost a year as a result of personnel changes at Antenne 2: Marcel Jullian, who headed the channel when the series was commissioned, had been replaced by Maurice Ullich by the time it was completed. After viewing 15 minutes of one episode, Ullich reportedly declared himself categorically opposed to its broadcast, the official reason given being that "it does not correspond to the product that was commissioned."[28] Claude-Jean Philippe, a well-known film critic who presented a program on Antenne 2, *Ciné-club*, eventually broke the deadlock by offering *France tour détour deux enfants* a home within the framework of his series. It was, therefore, belatedly broadcast in four blocks of three episodes at 11pm in the *Ciné-club* slot on Friday evenings in April 1980. While this solution at least made the programs available, few were happy with the compromise, least of all Godard, who felt that what he and Miéville had conceived as "news programs" had been severely damaged through their reclassification as "classic cinema."[29] He complained vigorously, with considerable justification, that failure to integrate the series into the programming grid on a weekly basis in accordance with the manner in which it had been conceived amounted to sabotage, if not

censorship: "They didn't know whether it was cinema, television, or what. In fact it was made to be shown before *Aujourd'hui Madame*. [. . .] The time of broadcast was deliberately chosen to wreck my work."[30]

For Godard and Miéville, following commentators such as Louis Althusser, television was a major vehicle for ideological manipulation by the State.[31] Their critique of television in *France tour détour deux enfants* forms part of a broader analysis of the socialization process, one that they conduct through reference to another of Althusser's key "Ideological States Apparatuses": school. The series examines the conditioning of the human infant as a docile subject of capitalism through a 24 hour trip to and from school that begins and ends with the two children who feature throughout the series, Camille and Arnaud, preparing in turn for bed. School is treated in the series less as a place for learning than as one designed for enforced incarceration and social programming. Already in *Leçons de choses*, Godard and Miéville – echoing not only Althusser, but also thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Ivan Illich – had characterized children as "political prisoners," who are detained in school, fed instructions, and held in reserve for pre-designated future roles. This idea is explicit in the seventh episode of *France tour détour deux enfants*. When one of the children in a gym class, Marina, is harshly admonished by the teacher for losing concentration and making a mistake, the voice-off on the soundtrack offers the following response:

> The copies conform. The unusual ones are knocked into shape. From birth onwards, the monsters are taken in hand by military organizations designed to provide cheap, docile labor for the large industrial companies.[32]

Godard and Miéville's analysis of the socialization process in *France tour détour deux enfants* was nourished by Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, which appeared two years before they made the series. Indeed as I have argued elsewhere, it could almost be considered the real scenario of *France tour détour deux enfants*, and is certainly as significant a source as *Le Tour de la France par deux enfants: devoir et patrie* (Witt, 2004, 200–213.) Foucault's study might best be thought of as the radical lens through which Godard and Miéville read Bruno's textbook against the grain. In his account of the metamorphosis of the economy of punishment, and the birth of the modern prison, Foucault charted the emergence of an insidious form of modern slavery located in the body, one that is less a result of appropriation and ownership than of the imposition of "docility-utility" arising from the effects of various ostensibly non-ideological constraints, all veiled manifestations of a disciplinary monotony active throughout everyday life. In this perspective, daily life implies subjugation to modes of disciplinary control that are different only in intensity, not substance, from those formalized in the penal system proper. Consequently, we are all subject to a vast social *mise en scène*, wherein the body is exposed to a finely tuned, quasi-militaristic process of calibration.

In episodes 1a, 1b and 3a of *Six fois deux*, probably inspired partly by the concept of "visual analysis" advanced by Robert Linhart in *Lénine, les paysans, Taylor* (in the context of a discussion of Dziga Vertov and Taylorism), Godard and Miéville had sought to record and compare a variety of gestures associated with the world of work.[33] In *France tour détour deux enfants*, where Godard adopts the pseudonym "Robert Linard" (as the name is rendered in production documents relating to the series), they take this principle of visual analysis a significant step further through their use of slow motion. Informed by Foucauldian theory, and armed with video and the power of altered motion, they set out – as Albert puts it at the end of the fourth episode – to "slow down the machinery of the State," and to study a variety of instances of manipulation, copying, reproduction, dictation, and repetition in Camille's and Arnaud's daily lives. By conducting a sort of videoscopic ultrasound of the calibrated body through the use of altered motion, they sought to cast in relief the regulatory constraints, privations, and obligations involved in producing human docility-utility.

Furthermore, Godard and Miéville employ Foucault's model as a conceptual framework within which to think about television. The latter's concern for the institutionalized compartmentalization and capitalization of space and time in daily life is eminently applicable to the superficiality and predictability of television's planned flow. In a fine discussion of *France tour détour deux enfants*, Constance Penley has explored Godard and Miéville's relationship to Foucauldian theory in terms of a common concern for the institutional organization of space and time, and for the function of spatial and temporal grids in the normalizing process (Penley, 1982, 52). She has also noted Godard and Miéville's eloquent demonstration of the fact that Arnaud's and Camille's lives are very *like* television programs: "The interrogation of the children's lives in the interviews ceaselessly points to the serialization, the regulated flow and repetition of their domestic, school and leisure schedules" (Penley, 1982, 34). This dual critique of social and televisual programming operates fluidly through the connotations of terms such as "chaînes" (channels, but also chains) and "programs," which Godard often played on when discussing the series in interviews:

> The other logic was that of the day . . . The day of a worker, or of a pupil, since children's work in western countries is school. We begin at night, but night is just before daybreak, and we proceed until dusk at the rhythm of the two children's *program* . . . (Godard, 1985, 410; original emphasis)

The series is punctuated with depictions of people moving across or beneath the surface of the earth (on escalators, in métro tunnels, along streets, etc.). In these sequences, as is made explicit in an extended reflection on this topic in the eleventh episode, the flow of bodies – filing past the camera on political demonstrations, streaming along roads in cars, or simply making their way in waves to and from work – serves as a self-reflexive image of the flow of television.[34] Godard and

Miéville's scrutiny of the image through altered motion represents an active inter-vention in both flows: social *and* televisual.

On Journalism

Besides television, Godard and Miéville scrutinize a range of other aspects of the print and broadcast media, such as advertising, cliché, the use of photography in magazines, and image–text relationships. In particular, they treat advertising, in line with René Thom's critique mentioned above, as a paradigm of a false infor-mation circuit, whose aim is not genuine communication, but rather the manipu-lation of desire and maximization of profit for the advertiser. Thus they repeatedly dissect individual advertisements, often critiquing them through the use of graffiti and other forms of *détournement*. Moreover, in the closing sequence of *Photos et cie*, they eloquently demonstrate the reliance of the press on income from adver-tising: in a single shot that lasts a little under three minutes, Miéville literally tears up a copy of *Le Nouvel observateur*, removing all the pages that either contain advertisements, or are attached to others that do. At the end of her demonstration, not a single double page remains intact. This sequence illustrates a key aspect of Godard and Miéville's study of communication: their quest to isolate and magnify the presence of capital in information flows, and to examine its potentially cor-rupting impact on the nature and quality of any messages they might contain.

Above all, their critique of the media focuses on journalism, and in particular on the activity of journalists. These concerns constituted a direct extension of Godard's involvement with the leftist press in the early 1970s, especially his con-tribution as a journalist to the leftist newspaper *J'accuse* and his role as a catalyst in the inception of the Agence de Presse Libération (APL), both in early 1971.[35] A pilot edition of *J'accuse* was published in November 1970, following which it appeared monthly from January 1971 until its merger with another prominent leftist newspaper, *La Cause du people*, in May the same year to form *La Cause du peuple-J'accuse*. *J'accuse* was edited by Robert Linhart, who, as we have seen, is a major reference in the Sonimage work.[36] One of the first of the group of young militants at the École Normale Supérieure in the 1960s to have been decisively influenced by Althusser, Linhart had founded the Maoist "Union des Jeunesses Communistes marxistes-léninistes" (UJCML) in 1966, whose theoretical journal, *Cahiers marxistes-léninistes*, Godard had shown several times on screen in *La Chi-noise*. A consistent thread running through Linhart's thinking, which resonated strongly with that of Godard during the years following May 1968, was that of a quest for a viable and constructive political dialogue between intellectuals and workers.[37] One of the attractions for Godard of *J'accuse* was that it sought to draw on the links forged between these sections of society during and after May 1968, to focus on events ignored by the mainstream press (notably the daily reality of

working life), and to insist on the inclusion of those habitually excluded from giving their opinions as both interviewees and *authors*. This desire to hand over the power of authorship and speech to those habitually marginalized in the mainstream media directly informed the choice of a range of socially marginalized interviewees in *Six fois deux* (a farmer, prostitute, cleaning woman, psychiatric patient, and so on). The culmination of this strategy comes at the end of *Y'a personne*, where a young unemployed immigrant welder reads out his version of the news in the form of a heartfelt call to combat unemployment and institutionalized racism.

A study of journalism, and a critique (facilitated by information theory) of the position and function of journalists in the construction and transmission of the news, is the central focus of *Comment ça va* and *Photos et cie*, and informs several other episodes of both *Six fois deux* (*Jean-Luc*, *Pas d'histoire*, *Avant et après*) and *France tour détour deux enfants* (episode 5). In *Comment ça va*, Odette and her journalist collaborator (Marot) set out to make a video designed to study the manner in which information is processed and relayed by the PCF, and to examine the obstacles it encounters and the distortions to which it is subjected. To achieve this, they slow down and magnify the passage of a single photograph via the communist newspaper for which the Marot character works to the reader in France. Odette's plan, as the latter summarizes it, is to "start from an image, only one, in the same way that science starts from atoms in order to see how they move and all fit together." The image they select depicts the Portuguese Carnation Revolution. In the course of the journalistic process, Portugal clearly "enters the machine," as they put it; but how does it fare over the course of its journey, and what does it look like when it comes out the other end?[38] Their conclusion, which resonates across the Sonimage work, is that journalists, in their key role as mediators, are more than happy to occupy their allotted position in the communication circuit, and to accept to be paid for doing so, but fail dismally in their duties to invest themselves in, reflect on, and relay the information over which they wield such power. "I'm simply saying that journalists," as Godard expresses it in *Jean-Luc*, "when they work, *don't work*." Or as he puts it more provocatively elsewhere in the same episode: "The crime, the historical criminal in this historical era, is the journalist, who doesn't *transmit* information, even though he has it in his hands."

Extracts of Godard's comments about journalism recorded for and used in *Jean-Luc* reappear on the soundtrack of *Comment ça va*, where he again reiterates this characterization of journalists as criminals: "Criminals, those who were paid to pass on news of others, but didn't mention them." This theme of journalistic "criminality," and of what Godard summarizes at the beginning of *Numéro deux* as "the crime in information," recurs across all the Sonimage work. For instance, it lies behind Odette's furious and repeated denunciation of "journalist scum" in *Comment ça va*, and the acerbic critique of photojournalist Don McCullin in *Photos et cie*. It is worth noting that the highly critical treatment of photojournalism in *Photos et cie* did not go unnoticed, provoking a furious response from the profes-

sional body for photojournalists, the Association nationale des journalistes reporters-photographes et cinéastes (l'ANJRPC), who wrote a blistering letter of complaint to *Le Monde* following the program's broadcast, in which they decried the "verbiage of an imported Swiss 'revolutionary' that is designed to confuse."[39] Perhaps the sequence in which Godard and Miéville's critique of journalism is developed most fully, however, is the study of the reporting of a speech by the then leader of the PCF, Georges Marchais, in *Photos et cie*. This is also one of the key sequences that they subsequently return to in the penultimate episode of *Six fois deux*, *Avant et après*, where they reflect back on and take stock of the series. It opens with Sonimage's camera descending an aisle towards Marchais in the packed conference hall, before turning to face and confront the great mass of reporters, who are depicted not as a mediating channel but as a *barrier*. To underscore the suggestion made visually here that journalists are responsible for blocking rather facilitating the flow of information, Godard and Miéville subject the sequence to extensive written commentary through use of the video pen, which is further reinforced by a withering verbal attack on journalists by Miéville on the soundtrack.

Other Communication Processes

I have focused in this chapter on Godard and Miéville's critique of television and journalism. A full study of the Sonimage work would need to situate this critique within the context of their broader investigation of other communication processes in the realms of politics and human relations. For instance, they consistently scrutinize political and union representation for traces of theatricality and blockage. Their principal focus in this regard, as we saw in our discussion of the Georges Marchais sequence, are established Left-wing political parties and unions, notably the PCF, which they consider to be excessively bureaucratic and – beneath a veneer of revolutionary rhetoric and posturing – profoundly reactionary. Here, of course, they were echoing a key leftist refrain from May 1968, one that Godard had anticipated in *La Chinoise* and returned to across the Dziga Vertov Group films.[40] The difference in the Sonimage work is that the PCF is not just criticized for being ossified and out of touch, but also for being complicit with the media, and comparable to the media in its conventionality.

Human relationships are a further important focus of Godard and Miéville's discourse on communication. The majority of *Nous trois*, for instance, is devoted to an attempt to give visual form to the relationship between an unnamed prisoner and the woman he loves. As in the case of the institutionalized media and politics, however, relations between the sexes are frequently presented as being blocked. This is particularly true of *Numéro deux*, whose narrative is constructed around a set of interrelated themes of political, social and sexual paralysis: Pierre's (Pierre

Oudry) impotence, union militancy, and job (which involves testing microphones and checking advertising copy for sound systems . . .); Sandrine's (Sandrine Battistella) constipation, and her despair in the face of the State ("an entire social system that rapes you," as she puts it); the blocked plumbing system in their flat; and their relationship itself, which descends sporadically into physical and sexual violence. Elsewhere, Godard and Miéville explicitly examine sex in terms of communication. It is, for example, the subject of a two and a half minute audiovisual study in *Leçons de choses*, which centers on a photograph of a couple having sex on a beach. The topic also features in *Comment ça va*, where the Marot character describes sexual reproduction to his son as follows:

> One day you [my sperm] entered a corridor, your mother's cunt, and several months later you came out of the corridor, of the tunnel, of the channel. There was an "in" and "out" socket, and your mother received a signal. How does she communicate it? How does it go from the entrance to the exit of the machine? The reproductive machine. The machine for making copies. You, a copy of me.

In the same film they also touch on the topic of the transmission of genetic information via DNA (the cover of the French edition of James D. Watson's account of the discovery of the structure of DNA, *The Double Helix*, is shown on screen), and by extension the tension between attempts to bring about political change and the influence of heredity, a theme later pursued by Godard in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*.[41]

Lastly, a survey of Godard and Miéville's engagement with other communication processes would not be complete without noting their critique of language, which culminates in *France tour détour deux enfants*. I shall, therefore, conclude by outlining the main features of this critique. Their study of the socialization process in this series includes an examination of linguistic conditioning. Adopting a broadly structuralist perspective, wherein reality is not reflected by language but produced by it, they set out in the interviews with Camille and Arnaud to examine and cast in relief the ideological charge of some of the clusters of dead metaphors (what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have termed the "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980)) through which the children perceive, make sense of and inhabit the world. In his influential commentary on *Six fois deux*, Gilles Deleuze argued in this context that Godard and Miéville's (very Althusserian) characterization of children in *Leçons de choses* as political prisoners should be taken at face value:

> Now, it's open to question whether the schoolteacher is transmitting pieces of information when she explains a mathematical operation or teaches spelling. She is in charge, so she is, rather, transmitting passwords. In fact children are provided with syntax in the same way that workers are given tools, to produce statements that conform to the dominant meanings. Godard's phrase must be understood quite

literally: children are political prisoners. Language is a system of orders, not a medium of information.[42]

Godard was explicit in interviews about the linguistic dimension of *France tour détour deux enfants*:

> *Six fois deux* surprised people, *Le Gai Savoir* was somewhat infantile and provocative, but this time I'm amazed that it wasn't treated as a serious piece of work, and that people looked for provocation where there wasn't any. Yes, it's a work on the French language, like an anthology of songs from days gone by; not the tour of the French language, but the tour of expressions. (Godard, 1985, 404)

As indicated above, this interrogation of language is pursued primarily via Linard/ Godard's conversations with the two children, whom he treats in part as "containers" of a cross-section of inherited terms and expressions. In order to tease out the ideological charge of everyday language, he adopts three strategies: first, he takes a phenomenon (e.g., "light" in the second episode), and demonstrates how it feeds into various expressions (to light up, shed light on, enlighten, etc.) and determines how we think about whole spheres of experience; second, he pursues this strategy in reverse, subverting the metaphorical charge of a given expression by revealing its link to the phenomenon that originally inspired it; and third, he prompts the children to think critically about the language they employ by involving them in the imaginative work of metaphor-making. In addition, Godard and Miéville pursue their reflection on language in a number of other sequences in the series, including a particularly striking one in the sixth episode devoted to the language of love. Introduced by an intertitle announcing "Français" (French), they depict a teenage couple exchanging platitudes and trading adjectives, evidently incapable of articulating their feelings for one another without resorting to cliché. The scene provides another exemplary instance of a blocked information flow. Or, as Godard observed elsewhere in a discussion of the poverty of the language used by lovers, which offers a succinct coda to this sequence, and indeed to the series as a whole: "it's a television programme between them" Godard, 1985, 406).

Notes

1   Godard first used the name "Sonimage" in late 1972. See Marcorelles (1976, 14). Sonimage continued to exist as a commercial entity into the 1980s, co-producing Godard's work from *Scénario de Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1979) to *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (1982). He and Miéville were eventually obliged to relinquish the title since another company was registered and trading under the same name. For the purposes of this chapter, I shall use the term "Sonimage" to designate specifically the collaborative work they made between 1973 and 1979.

2   Godard (1975c, 11–13, esp. p. 12). Unless otherwise stated, all translations from French are my own.

3   *France tour détour deux enfants* is at long last due to be released on DVD in a series curated by Nicole Brenez for Éditions Montparnasse. One very much hopes that *Six fois deux* will follow.

4   Even a prominent recent commentator such as Antoine de Baecque engages only superficially with the Sonimage work. The account he gives of *Six fois deux* in his journalistic biography of Godard suggests that he has not seen the series in its entirety, but has relied instead on the summaries of the programs included in the published script. This unfortunately leads him to offer a description of an episode that does not exist: the outline he gives of episode 4b is that of a program that Godard and Miéville had planned originally for inclusion in the series under the title *Anne-Marie*, but which they ended up replacing with an entirely different one, *Nanas*. See De Baecque (2010, 540). The script is available in Godard (1985, 387–399).

5   In 1978, Miéville directed her first solo film, *Papa comme maman* (Dad as Mum). In addition, she and Godard embarked on a number of ultimately unrealized projects, including (in 1978) an ambitious series of five "TV-cinema" programs for the government of the People's Republic of Mozambique provisionally titled "Nord contre sud" (North against South), or "Naissance (de l'image) d'une nation" (Birth (of the image) of a nation).

6   *Ici et ailleurs* was not released in cinemas until 1976, which was after the completion and first screenings of Sonimage's next two films, *Numéro deux* and *Comment ça va*, and after the television broadcast of *Six fois deux*. This belated release of *Ici et ailleurs*, the transitional piece that defined and announced the nature and concerns of the Sonimage project, meant that these later works lacked the necessary introduction and contextualization, a fact that undoubtedly contributed to their generally lukewarm or hostile reception by the public and many critics.

7   Godard (1975a, 15).

8   Godard (1975c, 11).

9   See Gorin (1974, 17). According to Gorin here, Godard intended "Communications" to be about and with groups involved in areas such as politics, music and theatre who were trying to live in new ways. See too Gorin's discussion of "Un film français" in the interview with him included on the Criterion Collection DVD of *Tout va bien*.

10   I first explored Godard and Miéville's engagement with information theory in my doctoral thesis (University of Bath, 1998). Since that time the only commentator to have pursued the issue in any depth is Kevin Hayes (2002, 67–83). This article offers a very useful discussion of the question of noise in relation to *Comment ça va*, and also notes that Godard had been interested in information theory prior to the publication of the French translation *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* in 1975. It does not however address the broader significance of information theory in relation to the other Sonimage work. In the light of my earlier comments regarding the inaccurate manner in which Miéville has all too often been represented, it is unfortunate that the title of this article gives the impression that *Comment ça va* was directed by Godard alone.

11   Episode 5a of *Six fois deux, Nous trois*, is constructed entirely around the composition and sending of a letter. The narrative of *Comment ça va* is structured around two

letters: the first is sent by the Marot character to his son, while the second is written by the son to his girlfriend as the film unfolds.

12   See Witt (2013, chapters 2 and 6).

13   Other contributors to this video magazine, *Vidéo 5*, included Alain Jacquier and Chris Marker. See the radio program *Vidéo out, Vidéo 00, Vidéo cent fleurs, Vidéa et les insou-muses . . .*, France Culture, 19 September 2006. I am grateful to Nicole Brenez for bringing this program to my attention.

14   Godard (1975c, 11).

15   Godard suggested that video put them in the privileged position of being "audiovisual workers" who were also their own bosses. See Godard (1975d, 29).

16   Godard (1975b, 13).

17   Godard (1975b, 13, emphasis in original).

18   See "Les États Généraux du Cinéma" (1968, 23–46).

19   Godard (1975d, 28).

20   Prédal (1984, 238). See too Prédal's earlier comments on Sonimage *vis-à-vis* regional cultural policy in Prédal (1977, 23–26).

21   Godard (1975c, 12). Jean-François Chauvel was a prominent journalist who produced a news program on TF1 in the mid 1970s entitled *Satellite*.

22   The series was commissioned at short notice and made extraordinarily quickly. In June 1976, the then director of FR3, Maurice Cazeneuve, faced with imminent unanticipated gaps in the Summer programming schedule, offered Manette Bertin at the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA) six one-hour evening slots that same August. INA originally offered Sonimage a single one-hour slot. Godard responded that he would prefer to have them all, and went on to negotiate and obtain six even longer slots of one hour forty minutes each. See, too, Forbes (1984, 14).

23   Godard (1975c, 12; 1978, 60).

24   Cf. MacCabe's suggestion that one of the effects of this strategy of quoting material from conventional television is that of emphasizing the idiomatic qualities of the language used by the interviewees. See MacCabe et al. (1980, 143–144).

25   In one of the explicit references to information theory in *Comment ça va*, Miéville raises the question of the function of "noise" in communication ("And isn't noise linked to information?"). She also insists that they return later to the topic of noise.

26   Bruno (1878). Bruno's real name was Augustine Tuillerie, subsequently (after marriage) Madame Alfred Fouilée. She authored numerous school text books, among which this one proved spectacularly and enduringly popular.

27   The episode titles are: 1 Obscur/Chimie (Obscure/Chemistry), 2 Lumière/Physique (Light/Physics), 3 Connu/Géométrie/Géographie (Known/Geometry/Geography), 4 Inconnu/Technique (Unknown/Technique), 5 Impression/Dictée (Impression/Dictée), 6 Expression/Français (Expression/French), 7 Violence/Grammaire (Violence/Grammar), 8 Désordre/Calcul (Disorder/Calculation), 9 Pouvoir/Musique (Power/Music), 10 Roman/Économie (Novel/Economy), 11 Réalité/Logique (Reality/Logic), and 12 Rêve/Morale (Dream/Morality).

28   Bruneau (1980, 28); Achard (1979, 11).

29   See Claire Devarrieux's introduction to her interview with Godard (Devarrieux, 1980, ix). Her comments are not included in the version of this interview anthologized in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, vol. 1.

30   Godard (1980b, 34). *Aujourd'hui madame* (Today, Madam) was a popular daytime tel-evision program at the time on Antenne 2.

31   Already in the explicitly Althusserian *Lotte in Italia* (1970), Godard and Gorin had argued that since Italian television belongs to the State, "every day a representative from the State comes and speaks to the Italian people."

32   Adults are referred to throughout the series as "monsters."

33   See Linhart's discussion of Vertov in Linhart (2010, part 2, chapter 4). It is worth noting in this context that one of Godard's unrealized projects following the completion of *France tour détour deux enfants* was a nine-part television series about and featuring Linhart provisionally entitled *Travail* (Work). See De Baecque (2010, 555).

34   This episode is in part an extension of a rigorously constructed sequence in *Leçons de choses*, where in the course of a reflection on the protest by the sailors in Odessa from the battleship Potemkin, Godard draws a distinction between the ritual activity of protesting (that is, going on a political demonstration) on the one hand, and the articulation of a new reality through the invention of fresh forms on the other. There is a good deal one could say about this important sequence. For a succinct discussion of it, which emphasizes the pessimism of Godard's position, see MacCabe et al. (1980, 145–147).

35   I have discussed Godard's involvement in the leftist press in Witt (2006, 165–173). The articles that Godard contributed to *J'accuse* are also reproduced here.

36   Following the banning of *La Cause du peuple*, the APL aimed to draw together progres-sive leftist journalists into a loosely-grouped agency with the objective of countering mainstream press reports in both substance and form. It existed as an agency from 1971 to 1973, the year that saw the launch of the radical newspaper *Libération* which went on to negotiate successive financial and editorial crises before mutating into the broad-Left daily paper of the same name still published today. For a discussion of these events, and of Linhart's role at *J'accuse*, see Samuelson (2007 [1979]), 97–112). Jérôme Prieur was the only commentator to note the significance of Linard/Linhart as a "key pseudonym" in *France tour détour deux enfants* when the series was first shown. See Prieur (1979, 27).

37   Linhart later took up a post at the Université de Vincennes (Paris VIII). See the Col-lectif Rameau Rouge's film *Les Murs et la parole* (1982), which includes extensive interview material with Linhart. It can be viewed in the Forum des Images in Paris. For an insight into his life since the early 1980s, see Linhart (2008).

38   Although not stated explicitly, the implication is that the newspaper for which the Marot character works is the communist *L'Humanité*. The photograph of Portugal in question had in fact originally been used to illustrate an article by the editor of *Libération*, Serge July, that appeared in that newspaper in September 1975. Godard and Miéville shot the video material for the film-within-the-film not in the offices of *L'Humanité*, but in those of *Libération* and *Le Parisien*. See De Baecque (2010, 537).

39   Lattes (1976, 11). Lattes was writing in his capacity as a member of the ANJRPC board. The ANJRPC, which was founded in 1962, merged in 2000 with another pho-tographers' association, FreeLens, to form ANJRPC-FreeLens. It is now known simply as FreeLens.

40   For a key account of leftist dissatisfaction with the PCF and communist trade unions at the time of the events of May 1968, see chapter 3 in Cohn-Bendit and Cohn-Bendit (1968).

41   Kevin Hayes has argued that the genetic model offers a way of contesting the misogynistic Shannon-influenced account of biological reproduction advanced by the Marot character in *Comment ça va*. See Hayes (2002, 80–81).

42   Deleuze (1992, 37) (First published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in November 1976.) Cf. Althusser's similar comments on language teaching in schools in Althusser (1976, 72).

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22

Factories and the Factory

Amie Siegel

Looking out from the curtain wall of my Greenwich Village apartment block – stacked apartments separated by a courtyard of trees and cement shapes – I am reminded of the recurrent, robotic panning shots of Parisian apartment blocks in Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967) (Figure 22.1a and Figure 22.1b). Those slabs of condensed repetitive concrete living spaces re-surface in Godard's *Numero Deux* (Number Two) (1975), where the apartment forms the center of an exchange between family and factory that often mirrors the earlier film.

My own late 1950s Manhattan apartment complex, with its sectional, flag-like interspersion of red, yellow and blue tiles in a white facade is oddly Godardian (and French), the two buildings staring at each other from across the way (Figure 22.2). Browsing in a nearby used bookstore I come across a volume detailing how these very New York city blocks were once settled by the Gallic and called "French-town" until the 1870s, when the French moved uptown and it became the "Latin Quarter," rife with brothels and taverns. Evidence of these sundry early days was removed by the mid-century demolition that made way for this middle-class apartment complex not far from Washington Square Park, yet resurface unexpectedly across the ocean, in the occupation of Godard's protagonist Juliette Janson (or the actress that plays her, Marina Vlady), a young housewife and part-time prostitute who lives in the new rectangular geometries of the *grande ensembles* of the Paris suburbs. Godard has said he based his 1967 film on a letter in *Le Nouvel Observateur* from a woman reader replying to an inquiry into part-time prostitution in the new high-rise housing developments.

In the midst of this balcony reverie, I realize I must depart for my own shoot in Paris – to film objects by the Paris-based mid-century Swiss architect, Le Corbusier – but the travel is discovered to be mis-ticketed, and a new flight to Paris

Figure 22.1a Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

Figure 22.1b Screen capture from *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967), produced by Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Les Films du Carrosse, Parc Films.

Figure 22.2 Manhattan apartment blocks. Photograph © Jack Manning/The New York Times/Redux.

must be bought at the last minute, this one routed through Morocco. That night I stumble down the aisle of the Air Maroc plane and find myself on the dark, lonely tarmac of the Casablanca airport, a humid fog sifting through the palm trees. I shudder at the strange doubling back through cinema history, looking for Bogart and Bacall over my shoulder. Hours later I disembark again, this time at dawn in Paris, at Orly, not far from the viewing platform where Chris Marker staged *La Jetee* (The Jetty) (1962), the descent of a man through time who circles back to his own death, in still images. Just two years before Marker's film, with the airport's great jetty in the background, Jean Seberg in *Breathless* joins a cadre of journalists, asking the just arrived celebrity novelist, "Do women have a role to play in modern society?"

Numero Deux was pitched as a remake of *Breathless* (*Numéro 2: À bout de souffle*), as Godard persuaded his financier Georges de Beauregard of this 15-year-on remake, working with the same low budget as the original, now together with Anne-Marie Miéville. Yet it seems the repetitions in *Numero Deux* of Godard's earlier work derive not from *Breathless*, but are rather extensions, or replays, of the primal familial scenes and architectural locations of *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, re-cast within the electronic field of video.

Once again a family (husband, wife, two children) live in a long parallel housing block, the woman recast as housewife and mother, her body the space of production, of re-production, and the apartment a space on an assembly line of exactly similar apartments (and narrative events). The balcony sequences, this time of the children (Figure 22.3), echo the opening of Marina Vlady on her balcony. The husband – rather than tinkering with a radio announcing news of Saigon while

Figure 22.3   Screen Capture from *Numero Deux* (Number Two), directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1975).

his wife announces advertising copy from *L'Express*, as in *Two or Three Things* – describes his work testing microphones in the Beyer factory, the Swiss electronics manufacturer, while his wife announces advertising copy from a Beyer brochure. In each, the children question the mother ("Maman – quel est ce langage?" (Mum, What language is that?) and deliver sage observations. The domestic choreography of bath, bed and kitchen are repeated, even the posture of the wife in repose is reiterated. Is *Numero Deux* a Swiss remake of *Two or Three Things*?

Numero Deux's apartment block, visible in recurrent establishing shots of the complex – with its winding internal pathways and snow-capped mountains in the background – suggests Switzerland as its locale and, like many post-war social housing blocks, owes its design to the concrete buildings of Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier, particularly his widely influential Unité d'Habitation in Marseille. As evidenced in *Towards a New Architecture*, Le Corbusier was deeply inspired by factories and ocean liners – their clear lines, symetrical stacking and identical lodging arrangements, and his Unité is often compared to an ocean liner, condensing vast numbers of people within a single compartmentalized unit, replete with smoke stacks and roof deck (Figure 22.4a, Figure 22.4b).

Back across the Atlantic, I return from France and resume my New York balcony reverie at night. Looking from one block across to the other, each glowing window presents a tiny narrative frame – blue television light, a figure washing up in a bright yellow kitchen (Figure 22.5), a balcony filled with dark moving silhouettes and distant music. I think back to *The Sleepers* (1999), my early 16 mm film of windows at night, shot in the modernist vertical grids of Chicago, the floating apartment rectangles a simultaneous montage of action within the single film frame, often bounded by sheer darkness.

Godard staged his first boundless expanse of darkness onscreen in *Le Gai Savoir* (Joy of Learning) (1969), a discourse/dialogue on labor, students and revolution, performed in a black theatrical space – bodies and props outlined by spotlight. In 1972 Godard's *Tout va Bien* (All's Well) presented a proto-multiscreen cinematic architecture, a set that was a vivisection of the film's sausage factory, sliced to reveal simultaneous narrative frames to the spectator (Figure 22.6). Brecht's breaking of the fourth wall made material, the whole entity of the factory and its assembled parts viewable at once.

Numero Deux, three years later, moves the cut-away film set of *Tout va Bien* into a multi-screen space of video reshot on film. The housing block scenes of wife, husband, children and grandparents unfold in rectangular frames – or two frames simultaneously – set within an inclusive black field (Figure 22.7): the voided dark space of *Le Gai Savoir*, the nighttime expanse of an apartment block, a background for the proliferation of images, an image factory. "I clock out at work," the husband states, "and I clock in at home".

Whereas *Two or Three Things* depicts the housing block – setting scenes in the horizontal slabs of the new mid-century architecture: lateral windows, flat built-in kitchens, modular beds and baths, all formally re-iterating the horizontal cine-
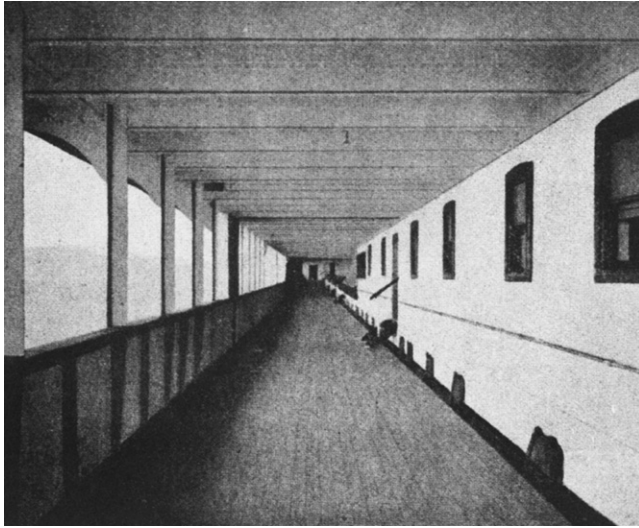
Figure 22.4a   The clear lines that influenced Le Corbusier.

Figure 22.4b   Photograph courtesy of Natalia Waaijer.

mascope frame, *Numero Deux enacts* the housing block – placing individual scenes as simultaneous architecture within the frame. The single shots or tableaux become communal and isolated, connected and distant, apart and together, they inhabit a familial proximity. They are incestuous. The factory has come home.

I return home one evening at dusk and something disturbs my view. Rising up behind the curtain wall of apartments across the way is the Empire State Building,
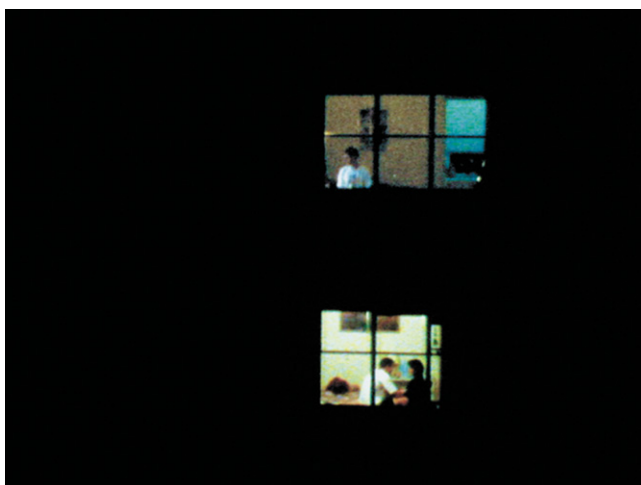
Figure 22.5   Screen capture from *The Sleepers*.

Figure 22.6   Screen capture from *Tout va Bien* (All's Well) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1972).

its vertical lights suddenly illuminated (Figure 22.8). As I gaze at the building from the balcony, the flattened skyline is like a matte background painting for a Hitchcock film and tiny flashes of silver light, perhaps from tourists taking pictures, emanate from the viewing platform below the massive art-deco spire. Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948) took place over a single Manhattan day and night, the transition ren-

Figure 22.7   Screen capture from *Numero Deux* (Number Two), directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1975).

dered visible through tiny electric lights in the painted background of the film set's apartment window, the skyscrapers slowly illuminating as evening progressed. But it was another New York day-to-night film, also composed of long-take camera rolls, that suddenly shifted into mind out there on my balcony – Warhol's *Empire* (1964) (Figure 22.9).

It was filmed in the first Factory, in midtown, likely looking south to the Empire State Building. Warhol's second Factory was not far from here, on Union Square. The view from my balcony compresses elements from both Godard and Warhol – the housing block and the Empire State Building – in the same view. The film director obsessed with factories, and the artist whose studio was a Factory.

In the summer of 1965 Norelco loaned Warhol an early portable video camera, and with it he made his first double-screen film, *Outer and Inner Space*. In it Edie Sedgwick confronts a closed-circuit broadcast of her own image on a TV set. She smokes, laughs, chews gum, and talks to the 16 mm camera that captures both her and her videotaped image. Sedgwick looking at herself on the television monitor – a kind of extended video screen test, or Marina Vlady encountering herself – is enacted twice for the 16 mm film camera, each film reel then projected side by side (a doubling of the double) (Figure 22.10).

Various multiple screen and composite frame films predate (or exist alongside) these works by Warhol and Godard – from Abel Gance's tri-color/tri-projection *Napoleon*, to Hugh MacDonald's *This is New Zealand*. But what sets *Outer and Inner Space* and *Numero Deux* (Figure 22.11) apart, and in relation to one another, is the *performative* space of darkness within which the rectangles of video sit, their ongoing layers of temporal unfolding, replay and self-proliferation, as well as the "role" of women, on and off camera.

Figure 22.8   The Empire State Building.

Figure 22.9   Screen capture from Andy Warhol *Empire*, 1964. 16 mm film, b/w, silent, 8 hours and 5 minutes @ 16fps. ©2014 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved. Film still courtesy of The Andy Warhol Museum.

Both the Warhol and Godard films have a double site of film time – the first duration unfolds on video (the taped family scenes in *Numero Deux*; and the Norelco video camera recorded images of Edie) – while the second is the resituating of the first video recordings in a dark space, where the video image is replayed on TV monitors, a "performance" of simultaneous video images (or montage)

Figure 22.10   Screen capture from Andy Warhol *Outer and Inner Space*, (1965). 16 mm film, b/w, sound, 66 minutes or 33 minutes in double screen. ©2014 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved. Film still courtesy of The Andy Warhol Museum.

Figure 22.11   Screen capture from *Numero Deux* (Number Two), directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1975).

captured by their re-shooting onto celluloid film, creating the second layer of time (Figure 22.12a, Figure 22.12b).

As Warhol's two reels are projected simultaneously (adding a third temporal expanse), the Factory space is seen. In the opening of *Numero Deux*, it is Godard who reveals the space of production as, smoking a cigarette (like Edie), he confronts a video feed of his own image on a TV monitor (Figure 22.13), and delivers a monologue on the production of images, and factories (Figure 22.14).

Figure 22.12a   Andy Warhol *Outer and Inner Space*, 1965. 16 mm film, b/w, sound, 66 minutes or 33 minutes in double screen. ©2014 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved. Film still courtesy of The Andy Warhol Museum.

Figure 22.12b   Screen capture from *Numero Deux* (Number Two), directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1975).

Born two years apart, Warhol and Godard both manufactured, and used, celebrities in their films. Godard's casting often set a character as a thing in quotations (Fritz Lang, Sam Fuller, Brigitte Bardot, Jane Fonda . . .), appropriating them from the image factories of Hollywood. Warhol created celebrities by casting the poets, drag queens, socialites and hustlers populating his Factory, people "performing
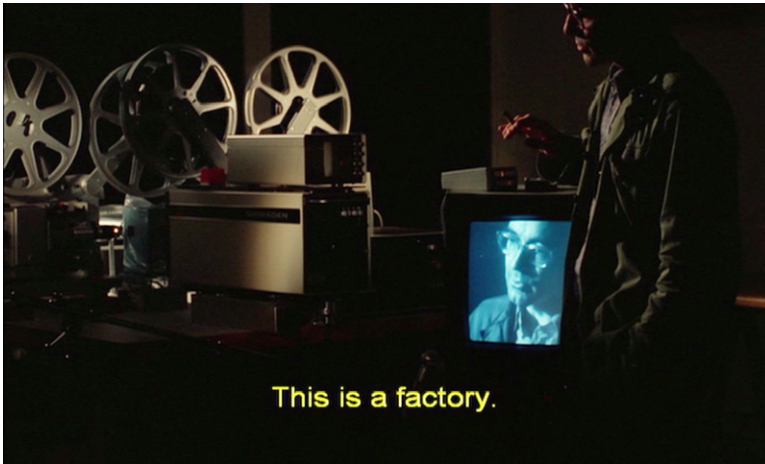
Figure 22.13   Screen capture from *Numero Deux* (Number Two), directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1975).

Figure 22.14   Screen capture from *Numero Deux* (Number Two), directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1975).

themselves," often already a quotation of movie genre – be it queer motorcycle habit, glamour queens, or movie stars – a kind of estranged copy of a copy. Not the least of these was Edie Sedgwick, her shorn blond hair and pixie physique an acute mimicry of Jean Seberg's character in *Breathless*, whose question, "Do women have role to play in modern society?" echoes throughout both *Outer and Inner Space* and *Numero Deux*. Edie, looking at herself, stretching time through various postures and attitudes, is a kind of latent Jean Seberg. Edie is positioned,

serialized, reframed – women are an image, a thing to be looked at, a reproducible image in a factory of images (Figure 22.15a, Figure 22.15b, Figure 22.15c). Warhol, an artist whose continual engagement with portraiture and the multiple, creates a multiplication of Edie's image within an image, an extended noir mirror-scene where the "real" Edie is undecipherable amongst all her reflections, the frames within frames.

This architecture of the woman as multiple, a factory, arises perhaps most crudely in the British poster Alan Aldrige designed for Warhol's second double projection film, *Chelsea Girls* (1966) – a woman's naked body pictured as the apartment hotel, a vessel for the various stories / windows, her vagina the hotel entrance.

In *Chelsea Girls*, Mary Woronov's character is named "Hanoi Hannah," calling to mind the radio broadcast sequence in *Two or Three Things* and now, more acutely, Godard's use of Jane Fonda in *Tout va Bien*. Fonda – her image later a Warhol screen print – arrived directly from *Klute* to the Godard film, still wearing the shag haircut of the prostitute / actress character Bree Daniels, enabling a kind of latent image to be referenced, joining Godard's long series of troublesome representations of women as prostitutes. It is the same haircut Fonda, dubbed "Hanoi Jane" by the American press, sported while visiting Vietnam after the filming of *Tout va Bien*. A photograph of Fonda in Vietnam, originally published in *L'Express* – the magazine prostitute / actress Juliette Janson reads advertising copy from in *Two or Three Things* – became the subject of Godard and Gorin's post-script film, *Letter to Jane*.

The women in *Two or Three Things* and *Numero Deux* variously monotonize and monetize the home (Figure 22.16). *Numero Deux* follows the family choreography within the housing complex, even the grandparents – the similar domestic squabbles they have, and histories they tell – create a production line manufacturing of familial narratives, female subjugation, domestic and sexual labor (where the husband calls the shots), replete with primal scene. Reproduction is an act of repetition. And so are gender roles. Both Sandra Bastistella, the wife, and Rachel Stefanopoli, the grandmother, are each in turn called whores by their husbands, and are subject to their abuse. Is Sandra Bastistella, ironing clothes in her robe in *Numero Deux* and answering her child's questions, not a willing double of Jeanne Dielman, cutting vegetables and turning tricks on the Quai du Commerce, produced that very year?

In *Numero Deux* and *Outer and Inner Space*, video shot by Godard and Warhol forms the primary set of images, but broadcast television itself becomes an intrusion from the outside world, and a chance operation of montage – commercial, melodrama, genre – interrupting the image. Godard's film begins with him switching channels, opening the image to manufactured images of the world, while at the end of *Outer and Inner Space*, as the tape of Edie runs out, the TV set channel is changed, and a western comes on.

The television set no longer articulates a compressed, planar film image, but a sculptural, three-dimensional object. The early days of video art were often

Figure 22.15a Screen capture of Jean Seberg, *À bout de soufflé* (Breathless) directed by Jean-Luc Godard.

Figure 22.15b Screen capture of Edie Sedgwick. Andy Warhol, *Outer and Inner Space*, 1965. 16 mm film, b/w, sound, 66 minutes or 33 minutes in double screen. © 2014 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved. Film still courtesy of The Andy Warhol Museum.

Figure 22.15c Screen capture of Juliet Berto *Le Gai savoir* (Joy of Learning) directed by Jean-Luc Godard.

Figure 22.16   Screen capture of Delphine Seyrig, *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, directed by Chantal Akerman (1975).

Figure 22.17   Screen capture from *2 ou 3 Choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967). © 1967 Argos Films.

sculptural (Paik, Jonas, Birnbaum, Campus . . .), as well as performative. Yet film has a flat, painterly depth of field, which Godard exploited in his cinemascope features, re-iterating the flatness of billboards, posters, advertising and comic books as image and inter-title. Godard ultimately echoed the layout of the city grid, the new stratified apartment blocks, using various household cleaning and product boxes of various sizes to stage the city suburb at the end of *Two or Three Things* (Figure 22.17). Warhol's pop Brillo boxes as sculptural surrogates for the new Parisian suburbs.

Perhaps Godard and Warhol never crossed paths. Their work did, rather unexpectedly, as each approached the manufactured, post-war world from very different directions (Figure 22.18a, Figure 22.18b). Theirs seems to be a latent, ongoing

Figure 22.18a Production photograph. Reproduced by permission of The Waverly Press.

Figure 22.18b Production photograph – from *2 ou 3 Choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967). © 1967 Argos Films.

exchange of aesthetic goods – the figure of Jean Seberg from *Breathless* haunted Edie and Andy, as they cut their hair short, dyed it silver and wore matching striped shirts. While Godard depicted and made a metaphor of factories in his continual notion of Marxist revolution (*La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman), *See You at Mao*), Warhol used the factory's assembly-line structure and repetitions, creating (and having others create) multiples of everyday products and images (even a screen print of Chairman Mao) as artworks.

Before building his Unité in Marseille, Le Corbusier designed plans for a factory in St. Dié-des-Vosges, a town which burned to the ground in the Second World War, and eight Unité apartment blocks, residences for the workers of the factory. The town rejected his new vision for their city, but built the factory, Claude et Duval, which still functions to this day making high-end textiles for Balenciaga, Celine and Chanel.

Before the war (both the Second World War and Franco-Algerian), Le Corbusier had turned his attention to then French North Africa, creating plans for Algiers, a city also an occasional topic for Godard. In *Numero Deux* Godard mentions – among his list of cinema factories including Fox, Los Angeles and Mos Film, Moscow – the Algerian Center for Cinematography. As I recall the Air Maroc plane from Casablanca to Paris, it occurs to me that my fellow passengers are the current residents of La Courneuve, the Paris apartment complex in which Godard filmed *Two or Three Things* . . . The people that populate Godard's "elsewhere" not long thereafter became the "here" of France, taking up apartments in the banlieu of Paris and the countless Unité-mimicked apartment blocks in its own hometown of Marseille. Though Paris-based Le Corbusier never managed to build his *Ville Radieuse* in former North Africa, the descendants of its would be inhabitants have taken up residence in the very apartment blocks of the Paris suburbs he so assuredly influenced.

23

Passion's Ghost

Murray Pomerance

What if I were to say that *Passion* begins with a limpid blue sky speckled with puffy, gay clouds, and the ruler-straight jet trail of something silver and very far away slowly etching itself heavenward; all this while on the sound track majestic contrabassoons and French horns in somber fanfare begin the proceedings of Maurice Ravel's Concerto in D for the Left Hand? Nature and artifice, then; the randomness of the white clouds upon the blue ether and the orthography of that vaporous line; heat, molecules, and condensation and the byproduct of techno-logical innovation; sanctity and capitalism; the magnitude of *what is* and the defini-tion of *what can be inscribed*. The film cuts to a brief factory shot: Isabelle Huppert wheeling a laden dolly forward, leaning over it, doing work. Then back to the sky, with some build up of the musical track and a first appearance, as the camera glides, of pewter darkness in a moving cloud mass. A second cutaway, to Hanna Schygulla tucking in her blouse, as Michel Piccoli strides away unconcerned. Back to the sky. Then Huppert catching a ride by grasping the door handle of Jerzy Radziwilowicz's car as he chuffles down a country road in sunshine. The sky becoming more ominous, the music swelling, with strings. We can be reminded of Dziga Vertov's assessment of March 20, 1927:

> We leave the film studio for life, for that whirlpool of colliding visible phenomena, where everything is real, where people, tramways, motorcycles, and trains meet and part, where each bus follows its route, where cars scurry about their business, where smiles, tears, deaths, and taxes do not obey the director's megaphone. (Michelson, 1984, 167)

Regarding their nature as given here, the clouds have motion but not vector, they head for no conclusion, and indeed, the very idea of progress toward a resolution,

that essentially dramatic idea, is not germane to the presence of clouds. But that airplane . . . is not the bold creamy line that it traces across the sky – that is, the pilot's ability, tendered and abetted by the aeronautical engineering that rests mute in the craft's history, to navigate geometrically (geo/logically) – a bold indication of the possibility of continuity and linkage to us, supporting any nuance of desire to adjoin and interrelate Huppert at work or catching a lift and Schygulla tucking in? The old Aristotelian admixture of fragments and stitches, again.

Admixture with rhythmical stirring. Godard told Colin MacCabe that he tries to make pictures "the way other people cook" (MacCabe and Mulvey, 1980, 103). Not, surely, following a recipe, but in the sense that elements are placed in intimate conjunction and subjected to the passion of heat and the torture of spicing. One has to suspect that in the deep background Lévi-Strauss quietly observes this elemental transformation through cuisine, in which culture invades nature by preparation, inversion, extrapolation, and ostentation. The fat is trimmed off posture or habit, a meter added to the haphazard tide of thought and breath, the sliced orientation configured against its opposite, the unitary world divided and rendered political. Posture, habit, breath, and dream-thought flow from depths:

> The unconscious, then, is not a closet full of skeletons in the private house of the individual mind; it is not even, finally, a cave full of dreams and ghosts in which, like Plato's prisoners, most of us spend most of our lives . . .
> The unconscious is rather that immortal sea which brought us hither; intimations of which are given in moments of "oceanic feeling"; one sea of energy or instinct; embracing all mankind, without distinction of race, language, or culture; and embracing all the generations of Adam, past, present, and future, in one phyloge-netic heritage; in one mystical or symbolical body. (Brown, 1966, 88–89)

Godard looks for that "sea of energy or instinct" above, not below; the "sea above," as is written in the Enuma Elish, and of which the waters of earth are a reflection. The aircraft is a flying Leviathan. As for cooking, it makes the uncon-scious conscious. But Godard speaks on, inscrutably. He makes films "to make enough time that one doesn't have to go to a snack bar or have to make hamburg-ers and salad. You have to have time to enjoy it. I explain to people that I don't enjoy cooking because you only have one life and you only have time to enjoy one thing." It is thus not – or not only – cooking in the elemental sense that he means as analogue to his practices with the camera, but also some thoroughly purposive rejection of the "fast food" rhetoric permeating the financial institutions that have captured and corrupted filmmaking art. That plane sailing across the sky: it is fine to return to it again and again only to watch, only to see the white line etched between the white clouds upon the blue sky, high technology as writing implement, the sky limitless, viewing time prowling and recycling like those Alpine phrases the French horns blow.

What, however, can Godard mean when he says to MacCabe, "You only have one life and you only have time to enjoy one thing"? Did there inhere in his sentiments at that critical point, and then linger forward into his future filmmaking (the interview with MacCabe and Laura Mulvey took place before 1980) a foreboding of the mortal eclipse? Was he thinking, already at the beginning of *Passion*, that as high as the plane might climb, as far as it might fly, a runway already existed upon which, when the fuel was gone, its wheels like life rafts would settle down with a dull finality? If Aristotle had claimed that every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end; and if Godard had played upon that in stating that every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, but not necessarily in that order; had he in making this opening shot come to know that every story is only the pretext for its end, every conjunction of attitudes or alignments only evidence of a grander, utterly conclusive, design? Someone says in the film, "The story was concluded when it started." And that jet trail: the straight line wending off as far as the eye (with its delicious limits) can see, and then further, always further, until it has gone all the way around the universe and come back upon itself, an *ouroboros* that eats it own tail, proclaiming, "In my end is my beginning."

Or something else. Is that jet trail nothing less than a Deleuzian Aion, according to which "a future and past divide the present at every instant" (Deleuze, 1990, 164) and which, of itself, "stretches out in a straight line, limitless in either direction . . . the eternal truth of time" (Deleuze, 1990, 165) and "[traces] a frontier between things and propositions; and . . . traces it with its entire straight line" (Deleuze, 1990, 166). "It always remains present behind the wall of my flesh like the muffled thunder of a permanent avalanche which obliterates there, beyond me, all the structures of my imagination, all the landmarks of my conscious self" (Nabokov, 1989, 84). I take the sky to be the thing, the jet aircraft to be the proposition; the given, the present of experience to be the thing, the propulsion of narrative to be the proposition. Further, writes Deleuze, without this Aion, "sounds would fall back on bodies" (Deleuze, 1990, 166). But Godard has been careful as a composer to slice away the sound track from the image's bodies (if not from its own body). The Ravel concerto is not the sound of the plane, nor the sound of the viewer and thinker watching the plane, nor, precisely, the sound of the clouds or the oncoming future. It is not music being piped into the factory where Huppert is travailing, or into the dressing area where Schygulla is putting her street façade back on, nor is it coming from a radio in Radziwilowicz's car. Historically, too, the music is not continuous with the image, having been composed in 1929–30, copyrighted by Durand et fils in 1931, and premiered by Jacques Février in 1932, but his performance is not the one reproduced for the sound track here. How is one to hear the music while watching the image? Should I retreat from the screen toward a recognizable nook in the forest of my own musical history, where this concerto is a well-known conifer and the act of climbing among its branches with one hand locked behind the back a complete mystery?

Histoire

Where Jerzy is going in that car – where he is headed – is to a set, because he is trapped in the inexorable puzzle of making a film, in this case a film for television to be entitled "Passion" and up for sale to the highest bidder (who has not yet materialized). We may imagine the branches of the tree to which the webbing of this project is glued: the producer, the milling extras, the too faithful script girl, the skillful but basically taciturn grip, the randy assistant director in his sky-blue sweater, the boring lover, and so on. The producer is a vitriolic and tempestuous man, a perfect "Italian," looking for a story and presently situated, with one of the many pretty girls involved in the production attached to his elbow, at an incalculable distance from success: "Il me faut une histoire!!," (I need a story) bellows he and Jerzy snaps back, nodding at the lazy companion, "Elle est l'histoire!" (She is the story). Jerzy spends relatively little time with the production, wandering around the countryside with a head presumably full of ideas, remonstrating with Hanna, a lover he is planning to abandon even while he occupies a room in the motel she owns near the studio in Rolle (where Godard lives). She is with the morose, considerably older and, in a matter-of-fact, businesslike way, wiser Michel, but he is hopelessly demanding and she will leave him to drive off to Poland (with a gymnastically minded maid in her employ, who doesn't like cars), where at the moment Solidarity is pressing its work. Michel owns a factory, a deceptively clean environment where at an indiscreet number of swank drills and presses a small corps of workers turn out objects we never see and whose purpose we are therefore never positioned to calculate. Isabelle is trying to unionize her compatriots there, somewhat laboriously because she speaks with a stutter, but, like the film within the film, this project makes little headway and is aborted when Michel has her thrown out into the winter slush by local gendarmes. "Passion," meanwhile, stutters onward, shot after bejeweled shot, all of pieces apparently involving reproductions through living pose and limned backdrops of some of the great tableaux in the history of painting, from Rembrandt's "Night Watch" (1642) to Goya's "Execution of the Defenders of Madrid, 3rd May, 1808" (1814) through work by El Greco and Ingres to Delacroix's "Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople" (1840). The "camera" being used is mounted on a massive Louma crane and we see it, now and again, gently circling through the choreographed performers like a wraith. Just as frequently, the view to which we are treated is the one captured by that device, which is focusing on faces, eyes, lips, the folds of cloth, the happenstance arrangement of limbs and blood and fingertips. Cutting away from the studio to life around the motel or in the factory, away from the agon of Goya's execution to the agon of Jerzy's confrontations with Hanna and Isabelle's with Michel, it is never possible to forget – especially since lyrical passages by Mozart, Ravel, Fauré, and others

are overlapped to join the scenes – that what happened for the painter before the painting was, precisely, life, just as life is happening for the filmmaker before, during, and after his shots are made. A voice near the beginning of the film informs us, "Il faut vivre les histories avant de les inventer" (You have to live stories before you find them). Michel has a hacking cough and always carries a rose between his teeth.

Not only in the film is the pressure for a "story" unrelieved. "Godard seems to have alienated just about everyone," writes James MacBean, "by turning the tables on them over the issue of how to proceed without a script or even a rough scenario. To demonstrate the difficulty of his predicament, and, also, he claims, to seek their collective help, Godard, in effect, said to everyone: 'Look, you want me to put something in writing; what if I in turn ask you to put in writing what *you* can do, what you *want* to do on this particular film?' Of course, nobody took Godard up on this" (MacBean, 1984, 17). Nobody took him up because the question was itself the answer, even an alienating answer. It becomes itself the filmmaker's "personal enunciation," by which he joins the post-1960s self-asserting auteurs who are to be found "signing, as it were, their films with some more or less flamboyant and arbitrary marks of their own characteristic eununciation" (Aumont et al., 1992, 234).

Also near the beginning of the film we hear someone ask Monsieur Coutard (Raoul Coutard, the cinematographer here, as he had been for many times for both Godard and Truffaut: *À bout de soufflé* (Breathless), *Tirez sur le pianiste* (Shoot the Piano Player) (both 1960), *Le mépris* (Contempt, 1963), *La peau douce* (Soft Skin, 1964), *Weekend* (1967), *La mariée était en noir* (The Bride Wore Black, 1968), and much else) what a film is, and he replies that one must look at people the way Rembrandt did, the eyes, the lips. One watches this film gripped by this passionate idea, and never slides the gaze away from the characters' eyes and lips. Everything is corporeal and illuminated, which is to say, of the body as it appears in the actual instantaneous flow of light. A body turns, the light enshadows part of the face; or turns again and the light falls upon the lips, wounded, waiting. In an extended scene Jerzy, having persuaded her to work for him, is sitting in a cutting room with Hanna watching on a small monitor a double head shot of him fondling her face. Both on the screen-within-the-screen, and on the screen itself, Hanna expressively and delicately shifts the direction of her gaze, rotates her head in the light, presents now a soft pink cheek (straight out of Boucher), now purple lips (Modigliani), now frightened eyes (Da Vinci), now ecstatic relief (Caravaggio), as he touches her with both fascination and desire. "Le travail que vous me demand, c'est trop proche à l'amour" (The work you ask of me, it is too close to love), she had protested to him. "*Too* close to love": she is clearly not refusing; is she surrendering? Her two faces, in different planes of focus, one on the television and one here with Jerzy watching it, are photographed so as surgically to reveal the elusive tissue that connects art and labor,

the vision and the factory. "It's hard," that unknown voice also told us at the film's beginning, "because you have to record *everything*." This is, of course, Godard's great mantra: to show without the crippling falsity of modesty or restraint.

"For many," wrote MacCabe and Mulvey, "the use of a naked female body immediately casts doubts on Godard's project. The very image for the most visible exploitation that women endure in a sexist society cannot be used with impunity, cannot be used without a certain complicity" (MacCabe and Mulvey, 1980, 87). So even Jerzy's complicity – and through it, Godard's – is fodder for the camera's appetite, a kind of *noblesse oblige*. Nevertheless, it is the world as it is to which Godard's eye is affixed, not the world as it could or should be. Accordingly, he has no hesitations in declining to accept as iconic either his own images or the paintings his simulacrum is working to reproduce. The light shifts to cast what was highlit into shadow and vice versa; the sound of a voice, laid across a facial shot, does not match the movement of the lips; many voices are heard interrupting from off, or even from another place or time; Jerzy is always making notes – "What are you writing all the time?" asks Isabelle – but there is no way to tell if they will spring to life or merely roll across his memory like tumbleweeds, removing him from the action that he has initiated. As we watch the Goya "Execution," and the camera – now occupying the space of that central victim in the white shirt, whose hands are flung up in defiance – shows the barrels of the executioners' guns pointed straight into our faces, a sharp voice suddenly calls, "Stop! The light isn't working! It's coming from nowhere." The whiteness of the white shirt indicates the importance of luminosity for the execution itself, since every aim is a project of the eye. Here now we see the gun barrels, the squinting eyes of the shooters, the lips turned down with purposive focus, even though all of this is only a performance, only a lookalike.

And Jerzy has worked his collaboration with Godard to provide himself a certain freedom from both ancestry and history, an ecstatic standing aside from Goya that permits a reproduction sufficient to solicit identification (and secret communication with the watcher) at the same time as it liberates. Two figures are added to the scene, neither one of them to be found in the painting itself but both, evidently, present in the "notebook" the filmmakers are carrying always in their heads. First, a young man with his fist upraised in proud negation. Second, a sheepish priest in somber brown, his hands clasped floridly in prayer.

Looking – that is, detection, interpretation, interaction – is all contingent, too. In the "Constantinople" scene, Jerzy has been having trouble communicating to a model positioned at the edge of a square pool he has had constructed on a platform overlooking the heights of the "city" (constructed of white plaster miniatures, like Godzilla's Tokyo). She sits impassively no matter how many times he tells her to take off her robe and get into the pool. In the far distance, meanwhile, the huge painted backing with roiling gray clouds and sun-shot sky, done in two pieces, has not been closed up, so that through a giant open door the outside

world gapes into this modernist rendition of action from the crusades of 1204
like a knife blade slicing time. "Un faux ciel de cinéma" (A false cinema sky) notes
Pascal Bonitzer, "ce qu'on appelle une découverte, dont les deux moitiés séparées
sur le plateau ne se rapprochent jamais complètement, restent scindées" (what
one calls a discovery, two separate moieties that do not close completely, but
remain split) (cinemalefrance, n.d., 1). A young woman steps in, noting that the
model's hearing is bad. She whispers gently into the ear of the girl, helps her off
with the robe, sweetly guides her into the pool, where the performer now
stretches on her back and spreads open her legs. But Jerzy and his assistant,
worried about money, have sat down with their backs turned. The backdrop
closes, but not completely, so that the light of the present continues to affect the
re-performance of the past, crusaders on horseback prancing among the build-
ings, seizing naked occupants, handing them around. We hear the Fauré Requiem,
and the camera slowly hovers and gathers, but what is the story? What is the
story of "Passion" or *Passion*? In his motel room, Michel was arguing with Hanna
next to a picture window outside of which could be seen the street, the little cars
parked, the empty gray sky, and he kept fiddling with that rose between his teeth,
but what one heard, incessantly, from a world on the other side of the wall, was
a man with a snapping voice, chanting over and over, "Di-ta-fa! Di-ta-fa!" Impos-
sible to really look at Hanna and Michel, at the relationship dissolving from
between them like a sugar cube dipped in tea, because the light is so strong and
because . . . "Di-ta-fa! Di-ta-fa!" Now we cut to the adjacent room, where in the
vestibule the grip is screwing one of the models (Sophie Loucachevsky) from
behind, and with each thrust forward he commands, "Dites ta phrase! Dites ta
phrase!" (Say your line!) "Dites ta phrase!" For her part, the girl is gyrating her
hips in silence. What is the line that she does not, will not, say? Bonitzer calls
"serial cinema" this method of "treating different events according to the linear
causality of a homogenous statement" (cinemalefrance, n.d., 2). He wants her to
make him explode, or he is rehearsing her for a part in Jerzy's film, which? And
is the missing line the crux of the story that we cannot find? Or have we indeed
found the story?

Interiors

Because Jerzy's TV camera, mounted on its dolly, has tremendous flexibility of
movement, can swivel and tilt, can be raised and lowered and turned in every
direction (the elegant grip [Jean-Claude Stévenin] being – both on camera and in
real life – a real master at getting the cables out of the way and negotiating the
practicalities of studio life), it can move not only over and around the "picture"
that is being reinvented, like a voracious eye, but also slip into it and turn around
its elements in a living composition from within. In the "Constantinople" sequence,

for example, we can track the crusaders even from behind as their horses tromp through the city. In the Goya sequence, it is this freely moving camera that makes possible the stunning medium close-ups by which we stare into the faces, and at the gun barrels, of the executioners ready (yet always only ready) to fire. "Sometimes I see films, or television, and they don't show the work that's going on," Isabelle murmurs. Here and unmistakable are the strained biceps attached at the shoulders of the riflemen as they steady their weapons for eternity, the tension in the orbicularis orbis as each squints an eye in taking aim, the perfunctory tidiness of the uniforms, which bespeaks submission of the self to a rigidly demanding social organization. For the viewer of the film, two disarming revelations: the painter's prison and the torturer's politique.

Painter's prison

As to the history of painting and its traps, Ortega y Gasset has suggested of Cézanne that by contrast with Giotto, who "seeks to render the actual volume of each thing, its immediate and tangible corporeality," he "substitutes for the bodies of things non-existent volumes of his own invention, to which real bodies have only a metaphorical relationship" (Ortega y Gasset, 1972, 125). With cubism, then, painting "instead of putting us within what is outside, endeavored to pour out upon the canvas what is within: ideal invented objects" (Ortega y Gasset, 1972, 126). We enter the mind of the painter rather than seeing his world; and the painting is thus also a reflection of what is in the viewer's own mental arrangement. In *Passion*, finally, painting steps completely away from Renaissance perspective, the painter no longer trapped within the limits of what light can reflect to him when he stands at a chosen point. Cubism can only suggest the green fields that might lie outside the prison walls of perspective. The painter is inexorably fixed in space, with his body dangling from the fingertips that seize the brush, his torso confronted abruptly by the canvas stubbornly posing before him. However he has attempted to devour and divulge the rotundness of things, their vulnerable placement, their inherent anticipations, the painter has been limited to the blinders associated with a point of view, has been required to not see at every instant of seeing, to be constrained at every whisper of freedom. The sense of liberation we feel when we look at Cézanne, Della Francesca, Van Eyck – certainly these are all triumphs of the painterly art, but triumphs over what? Triumphs over stolidity and placement, triumphs over the horrifying fact that when seen from a given point, a point we would like to imagine ourselves rhapsodized by electing but finally to which we are pinned by the ineffable gravity of the art, the world really does resemble a two-dimensional spread, and because of this the painting can seem captivating and alive. The film camera makes possible something entirely other: it can move around the subject, showing not only the many points of view that cubism suggested but its very act of

moving to achieve this. In showing through motion the fact of motion itself, the film camera breaks off from painting, and this is what Godard wishes to show us in *Passion*. As he wrote about *À bout de souffle*, so with this and his other films: it "was the sort of film where anything goes: that was what it was all about" (Godard, 1972, 173).

In penetrating the canvas – surely it was necessary to hire models to garb themselves and replicate the painterly postures – what Godard produces (everything Jerzy produces Godard produces with him) is a revelation of more than feeling, attitude, posture, conviction, status, alignment, responsiveness; also present is the person of the model as such, and thus the laborer straining sinew and rationality to sustain what will be converted, through the technique of the master, into a look. Painting, Alain Bergala suggests, is here treated "like something that cinema, because of its impurity, can still try to measure, in a studio, in the shadow of natural light and the sounds of the world" (Bergala, 1982a, 48). Isabelle notices at a critical moment in the factory that every act of manufacturing resembles an act of love, they include the same movements, the same desires, the same intents. Thus, in showing her wrestling with her posture as she argues with her co-workers for calling in the police, Godard is focusing on the same kinds of facial gestures and bodily commitments – commitments of the gaze, commitments to one's own basic comfort in a stranger's space – as Jerzy does in circling around the starchy bodies of the "Night Watch" or penetrating to the heart of the hand gestures and the perspiration on the necks in the "Execution."

In the painting of the "Execution" – "even more than Picasso's 'Guernica,' the ultimate 'political' painting" (MacCabe and Mulvey, 1980, 20) – the figures are symbols of historical types as much as representations of historical personae. But they also generalize into political abstractions, since each of them, caught in a pose against others, is this and only this, cowering, reaching, stooping, aiming, now and for all time. To look at the painting is to imagine history. "Politics," said Godard, "involves both past and present. . . . It is more difficult in the cinema: you have no time since you are dealing with the present" (Godard, 1972, 225), a present, to be sure, inflated through the constant hum of a musical lyric as the camera flows past and around it. This camera – in truth it cannot possibly belong to Jerzy, who seems lost in a dream, mechanical, snagged on a branch – seems to float in a tranquil little stream, call it the stream of anticipation. It moves slowly and thoughtfully, the way Jerzy moves, but unlike Jerzy, who seems to have no similar impulse, nor any impulse at all – as we see when he runs his fingers through Hanna's hair without urgency, without desire; it lingers now and then with a desire to see at length, to fulfill the moment by expanding it with the gaze. The moving camera thus gives us a relentless present, and a relentless viewpoint on labor, control, submission, stress, the flamboyant – because obvious and universal – imbalance of creative impulses between those who pay and dictate and those who sweat and suffer.

The torturer's politique

All this, at any rate, is implied in our movement into the pictures, our definitive sense that as much as they are being seen they are being staged. Equally present – more evidently in the "Execution" sequence but not only here – is what I have called the "torturer's politique," a distinct and assessable form of social organization here skinned and opened to view. It is impossible, after all, in the Goya painting to see what Godard's Jerzy invents a way to reveal to us here, the executioners' faces as they proceed with their macabre and questionable task. Less than the fact that the gliding camera actually works to reveal face after face, what is central in the sequence is the blunt, even capricious fact of our viewpoint, that we can take as our principal object of valuation not the victim in his bleached shirt with his hands upraised in hopeless anger but those slaves to authority, overfed so they can be kept jovial for this purpose, now forming with willing bodies and pointed thoughts nothing less than a breathing mechanism for the elimination of criticism and dissent. Godard is quoted by MacCabe: "They always photograph the ones who are doing the torturing from the back and their victims face on" (MacCabe and Mulvey, 1980, 127). That *Passion* can stand up to negate this ethic depends on this strategy of camera motility, the ability to enter the picture and reverse the direction of gaze. And the fact that Godard contrives to shock his viewers at this moment – to have the rifles pointed directly into the lens, with the artillerymen squinting with such turgid, such unquestioning purposiveness – points expressly to this torturer's politique, this systematic, repetitive, obfuscating compositional arrangement in which it is only the torturer's back that we see. As a face, as a person, he is rendered innocent through disappearance. And because the victim's face is, blatantly, as much in our focus as in his executioners', he takes on the mantel of guilt and the glow of specialness while we, ardently observing, hide beneath a cloak of professional distance.

In a related moment, Michel has arrived at his factory where angry workers are marching outside to confront him in his car. Beeping the horn, he moves forward, letting the bumper obscenely nudge them away. Here again, technology and etiquette – at least road etiquette – are on the side of the brute, and the vehicle hides (and betrays) his face to the same degree that the faces of the workers are thrown up, in their defensive maneuvering, for cataloguing. By jumping with the camera to the front of the car and showing it lurching toward the camera, Godard again accuses by watching. If in Godard's earlier political films, as Julia Lesage writes, "our world is outside the film's action" (Lesage, 1979, 13), this film works very differently. It goes beyond the call "to reveal and enhance social contradictions and specifically to unmask the mechanisms of bourgeois ideology at work in the dominant narrative arts" (Lesage, 1979, 28) by unmasking the mechanism of bourgeois ideology present in the very act of watching a film that unmasks the mechanism of bourgeois ideology. The shots of the executioners in the Goya

sequence are to be taken as Jerzy's shots; the shots of Michel trying to run Isabelle over are only Godard's.

Godard-Truffaut

Persistently here, Godard works (works=claims) to show us "what film is." For example, as he told Alain Bergala, Serge Daney, and Serge Toubiana March 8, 1982 in Rolle, "There was one moment when someone moved a light to fix a Goya tableau where a light had shifted . . . to show that film consists in following the lighting" (Bergala et al., 1982, 10). Lighting, that reveals a unity beyond narration, but that also, of course, is paid for by the producer, arranged by the gaffer, devoured by the cinematographer, bathed in by the performer, even as it is always slipping through the director's fingers. But however light plays, and whatever lamps are moved or replaced, left on, burnt out, it remains unavoidably evident that cinema is an arbitrary matter, resulting from decisions enacted by the powerful upon the powerless. *Passion* is a Godardian testament to the degree that it posits itself as a clear window upon film's creative wellsprings and their social establishment. So it is that decision, not accident, produces here the curious relationships between the stymied Jerzy, his nervous producer, his former lover Hanna and her present partner Michel, Isabelle who wants to form a union, the bizarre tableaux vivants and all their obedient personnel, and the roving camera (watching the entire world of the film, it seems). Filmmaking is labor; and also love; it is problematic to distinguish the labor from the love; the body is tormented by an unending sequence of exploitations, manifested as postures and gestures, identities and masquerades, sexual labyrinths and employment conflicts. In some respect, because it belongs to that happy genre of films about (French) filmmaking, this epic is yet another way of telling what was told in Truffaut's *La nuit américaine* (Day for Night, 1973). To which film I must turn, at least obliquely and, for starters, by way of some charming but also alarming little Godardian *clichés* from 1965:

> A hot Saturday in July, we set off from the Place Clichy . . . the most beautiful square in Paris, so François insisted . . . we bought cigars next door to the Atomic . . . then went on to the Pax-Sèvres, where my godmother gave me ten thousand francs, a month's allowance in advance . . . François's great dream then was to live in the Hotel Truffaut, Street ditto, but they weren't in the same district . . . a unique address which no postman will ever read . . . even in a novel by Giraudoux, whom he likes less than Balzac, and he's right . . . *Truffaut, Paris* . . . but François can take heart . . . from hundreds of millions of spectators . . . in Chile, Singapore, Montreal, Yokohama, Helsinki . . . he sells damn well abroad . . . how is it that shyness and tenderness go hand-in-hand . . . that technique is the sister of emotion . . . (Godard, 1972, 211)

Note how the clean, reflective surface of an undeniable friendship – buying cigars together, the affectionate acceptance of a chum's rhapsody for a Parisian square, assent to a staunch literary preference, reveling in being fat with cash, acknowledging the sweetness of shyness – is marked by ominous ripples of jealousy: Truffaut "selling well," his name circulating around the world. Truffaut, meanwhile, has distinct admiration for Godard's work and the feeling goes two ways. François sides with Jean-Luc on the vicious controversy over *Le petit soldat* (Little Soldier); Jean-Luc writes of *Les Quatre cent coups* (The 400 Blows) "What shall I say? This: *Les Quatre cents coups* will be a film signed Frankness. Rapidity. Art. Novelty. Cinematograph. Originality. Impertinence. Seriousness. Tragedy. Renovation. Ubu-Roi. Fantasy. Ferocity. Affection. Universality. Tenderness" (Godard, 1972, 121). Even after his blow-up with Godard, solidified by the letters I will excerpt below, François clings staunchly to the view that *À bout de souffle* "is probably the masterpiece of films shot entirely in real interiors and locations" (Truffaut, 1989, 394).

For Truffaut with *400 Blows*, Godard with *Breathless*, the films that for Richard Brody launched the *nouvelle vague* (Brody, 2008, 56), there had been, if not positive accord at least the substance of something that years later could be recollected with fondness: "It was a good time to be alive," Godard would reflect in 1988, "And the fame that lay ahead had not yet begun to weave the shroud of our unhappiness" (Truffaut, 1989, ix). But by May of 1973, having seen *Day for Night*, Godard can no longer bring himself to bear the touch of Truffaut's "tenderness," no longer find his "impertinence" original. In a rather long letter he says:

> Probably no one else will call you a liar, so I will. It's no more an insult than "fascist," it's a criticism, and it's the absence of criticism that I complain of in the films of Chabrol, Ferreri, Verneuil, Delannoy, Renoir, etc. You say: films are trains that pass in the night, but who takes the train, in what class, and who is driving it with an "informer" from the management standing at his side? Directors like those I mention make film-trains as well. And if you aren't referring to the Trans-Europ, then maybe it's a local train or else the one from Munich to Dachau, whose station naturally we aren't shown in Lelouch's film-train. Liar, because the shot of you and Jacqueline Bisset the other evening at Chez Francis is not in your film, and one can't help wondering why the director is the only one who doesn't screw in *La Nuit américaine*.
> . . .
>   If you want to talk it over, fine. (Truffaut, 1989, 383–384)

In truth he could have had little hope of a conversation, but after Truffaut's death (the filmmaker succumbed to a brain tumor in Paris in 1984) he persisted on casting their early friendship as one that could not naturally lead to antipathy: "Why did I quarrel with François? . . . what bound us together more intimately than the false kiss in *Notorious* was the screen, and nothing but the screen. It was the wall we had to scale in order to escape from our lives, and there was nothing but that wall, and we invested so much of our innocence in the idea of that wall

that it was bound to crumble beneath all the fame and decorations and declarations that lay ahead" (Truffaut, 1989, ix–x).

I will come to Truffaut's rejoinder to the carping Godard note (Godard's film about filmmaking would have the stridency of Alban Berg; Truffaut's had the calculated sweetness of, well, Fauré), but not before indicating that my bringing these two sufferers together here (they never came together this way in life) is spurred exactly by the ghostly silent claim to superiority one finds in Godard's *Passion* as a self-proclaimed *true* indication of the basal realities buried in the deep muck of filmmaking, as compared, ostensibly, with Truffaut's more romantic and less revealing examination. Not the fact that Truffaut filmed *Day for Night*, but that it was in regard to *Day for Night* that Godard chose to take him to task, this in a kind of preface to the arduous labor of searching for the real "story" of cinema that would, in a decade, be *Passion*, is the rotund object of my fascination here. Not that Godard – who had cared for Truffaut and clearly loved his early work – had soured in his view; not that *Day for Night* did not live up to his expectations *in itself alone*, but that Godard should have slaved so carefully to make a film that would say it all, that would spell out all the dirty equations, *and this in reflection of the Truffaut film*, seems what is buried most deeply at the heart of *Passion*.

What, then, does Truffaut write back to his old friend, the old friend who ends his stunning diatribe by begging co-production funding for *Un simple film* and says, with unsurpassed presumptuousness, that he's perfectly willing to sit down and talk? What does Truffaut say that could possibly provoke Godard – because this is the end of their correspondence – to spend ten years of his occasional time dreaming up Hanna and Michel and the stuttering Isabelle and the utterly perfidious creative sac, Jerzy? First there had been a fight in 1968, at the offices of Les Films du Carrosse (Truffaut's production company), witnessed by the actress Anne Wiazemsky – who had appeared for Godard in *Weekend* and *La Chinoise* (The Chinese Woman) (both 1967). The issue, according to Brody, was exporting the Parisian students' fight to the Avignon theater festival. Truffaut to Godard: "I will never be on the side of the sons of the bourgeoisie" – the students, like Godard, came from money; the police were all working class (Brody, 2008, 62). That was the end of it. That was the – as Godard had put it onscreen to conclude *Weekend* – "end of cinema." But in May–June 1973 Truffaut's persisting anger can be collared no longer. "I feel the time has come to tell you, at length, that in my opinion you've been acting like a shit" (Truffaut, 1989, 385). It is a long, careening letter, fully expressing a kind of David O. Selznick *furioso*, striking upon Godard's humiliating letter to Jean-Pierre Léaud, his offensive rudeness on being introduced to Helen Scott, his derogatory and abusive neglect of Janine Bazin in her illness, and much more:

> Today you're unassailable, everyone thinks you're unassailable, you're no longer the long-suffering swain, like everyone else you think you're better than everyone else and you know you think you're better than everyone else, you regard yourself as a

repository of truth on life, politics, commitment, the cinema and love, it's all an open book to you and anyone who has a different opinion from yours is a creep, even if the opinion you hold in June is not the same one you held in April. In 1973 your prestige is intact, which is to say when you walk into an office, everyone studies your face to see if you are in a good mood or whether it would be better to stay put in one's own little corner; on occasion you're prepared to laugh or smile; you call people *tu* now instead of *vous*, but the intimidation is still there, as well as the easy insult and the terrorism (that gift of yours for the backhanded compliment). (Truffaut, 1989, 389)

"You're the Ursula Andress of militancy," Truffaut sang out in finale, "you make a brief appearance, just enough time for the cameras to flash, you make two or three duly startling remarks and then you disappear again, trailing clouds of self-serving mystery." Was it because she had incarnated Aphrodite in *Clash of the Titans* (1981) that Godard did not choose Andress as one of his "crew" for *Passion*'s film-within-the-film? (She was no longer a lure for the flash of cameras, as she had been in *Dr. No* (1962), and in Truffaut's enduring memory.)

Passion, at any rate, had to overcome – for Godard himself, if not for Jerzy – the sting of these comradely barbs. His political position had been assailed at Carrosse, by a man whose "tender" films were much more pleasing to the establishment but whose class affiliation was unassailable. His aesthetics had been reduced to the status of attention-grabbing tactics employed without shame for uplifting a media-saturated career. His human feelings had more or less utterly rotted, since the young Léaud to whom he had apparently written begging for money ("Truffaut considered it indecent" (Brody, 2008, 63)) had worked diligently for him onscreen, and since André Bazin's widow should have had all reason to count on the friend-ship of this egoist who was now, at least in one man's estimation, neglecting her like a stranger. By 1978, Godard was telling *Télérama*, "François absolutely doesn't know how to make films . . . Truffaut is a crook who passes himself off as an honest man" (Brody, 20008, 64), and two years later Truffaut told *Cahiers du cinéma* that "even at the time of the New Wave, friendship with him was a one-way street" (Brody, 20008, 64). Brody notices how in his work after the late 1970s, Godard "kept the tacit dialogue going in his films," with *Passion* explicitly referencing a moment in *Day for Night* when the crew hitch rides home from the set (Brody, 20008, 65). This "tacit dialogue" was a gab-fest at its heart, in the original sense of a "mockery and derision, particularly as a prelude to combat or as part of a banquet" (see Huizinga, 1970, 91). Godard may have been thinking of this when he included the sequence of the entry of the crusaders to Constantinople, since on their visit to the Emperor there, as Huizinga tells us, "Charlemagne and his twelve paladins find twelve couches made ready after the meal, upon which, at Charlemagne's sugges-tion, they hold a *gaber* before going to sleep" (Huizinga, 1970, 91).

Regardless of the light and rhythm through which one views it, *Passion* is far from a film to be blithely dismissed, as, David Sterritt tells us, it was "by critics who looked just far enough beyond its high-powered cast . . . to find what they

considered inward-gazing artiness and self-conscious reflexivity. In time, however, its meditative treatment of longtime Godard themes – including the struggle to create meaning through beauty, the division between love and work, and the relationships among word, image, and narrative – raised it to canonical status" (Sterritt, 1999, 162). My own suspicion is that *Passion* was a ghost film for its maker, a pretext for bringing into com/position with one another not only the antinomies that plagued his social and political thought (love and work, which in fact the film harmonizes and unifies through its focus on light and struggle) but also the temperaments. Wheeler Winston Dixon dubs it "an altogether breathtakingly gorgeous catalogue of the difficulties and inherent transcendence afforded by the waking dream of the cinematographic process" (Dixon, 1997, 145), and by calling it a "waking dream" he invokes a world that is not fundamentally rational, not fundamentally pragmatic. If *Passion* was a ghost film, it was Godard's way of coming to terms with his past.

Perhaps, through his dark-haired, bespectacled Jerzy (asked by an assistant, at one point, to authorize the use of a blue shawl with an ochre garment, just as Truffaut's director, Ferrand, is asked, in *Day for Night*, to authorize the choice of a firearm; and surrendering to voluptuous women in mockery of Ferrand's being "the only one who doesn't screw"), he was summoning Truffaut back from the dead, demanding that impossible conversation now sealed in silence. Was he not insisting on continuing their argument, as to the proper way to make a show of the business of making shows? Not asking again who is riding the cinema train, and in what class, and what informer from the management is lurking on the set? All of what *Passion* labors to show, and that films typically elide, Truffaut had included in *Day for Night*, except without the exciting and confusing tone of interrupting and interrupted sound, without the searching hunger of the moving camera unsure of what to frame, without the actors or models entirely naïve as to the full meaning of their presence and yet sensitive to its implications. With the help of Valentina Cortese, Jean-Pierre Aumont, and Bisset, Truffaut had dramatized the work that is imbricated with the love of cinema. Godard went beyond dramatization, beyond making the characters and events real, so as to illustrate. As to his own camera and microphone, his own presence on the sets where the "set" of "Passion," the motel, the factory are placed before our eyes, it is as mute, obscure, and unfathomable as Jerzy's is blunt, confrontational, and floundering. Godard himself, one might choose to believe, is the "informer from the management," our central conundrum being, in the end, whom it is exactly that he informs, and how fruitful, as we grow together, his information will prove to be.

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24

Schizoanalyzing Souls

Godard, Deleuze, and the Mystical Line of Flight[1]

David Sterritt

In an article on montage written for Cahiers du cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard made an observation that has been quoted many times in many contexts:

> If direction is a look, montage is a heartbeat . . . what one seeks to foresee in space, the other seeks in time. . . . Cutting on a look is . . . to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favor of that of time.[2]

This passage appeared in 1956, almost three decades before Gilles Deleuze published *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* in 1983 and 1985, respectively. Yet despite the distance between those dates, the young critic's remark anticipates key aspects of the philosopher's film-theoretical stance. The need to displace the notional bias toward space with a conception of time as a concrete and dynamic force is the single most vital element in the thinking of Henri Bergson, whose ideas about this subject – ramified into such areas as affect, memory, perception, language, and the ontological properties of mind itself – play indispensable roles in Deleuze's writings on cinema and allied areas of immanence, multiplicity, and difference.

Godard's statement also resonates with Deleuzian theory in its preference for the material (heart) over the abstract (intelligence) and in its praise of filmmaking that breaks the "link between man and the world," in Deleuze's phrase. When a technique of this kind detaches a film and its spectator from the "general system of commensurability" that habitually orders perception and action in space and time, cinema can perform its liberating function of bringing thought "face to face

with its own impossibility" and animating the "higher power of birth" that this encounter can catalyze. "The sensory-motor break," Deleuze declares, "makes man a seer who finds himself . . . confronted by something unthinkable in thought." Seeking cinematic expression of precisely this – the unthinkable in thought – through innovative and far-reaching means, Godard works the assemblages of montage and *mise-en-scène* into volatile folds that reveal, refract, and reflect upon their own rich mysteries. Above all he probes the potential of the irrational cut, which for Deleuze marks a limit or interstice between paradoxically "non-linked (but always relinked) images," (Deleuze 1989: 169, 277, 168, 169, 278) producing structures more akin to the productive branchings of the rhizome than to the arborescent linearity of classical film.

In this chapter I consider ways in which certain ideas developed by Deleuze and Félix Guattari, particularly in connection with the practice they call schizoanalysis, illuminate the 1985 film *Hail Mary* (*Je vous salue, Marie*), which is actually two films in one – a molar ciné-assemblage, in Deleuzian terminology. The longer portion, written and directed by Godard, presents the biblical myth of the Virgin Mary translated to the present day, depicting Mary as a young Swiss woman who works in her father's gas station, plays basketball for relaxation, receives the Annunciation when the angel Gabriel flies in on an airplane, and has a cab-driving boyfriend named Joseph who is understandably perturbed when she tells him she's pregnant. This is preceded by The Book of Mary (Le Livre de Marie), a shorter piece made by Anne-Marie Miéville that focuses on an adolescent girl coming to terms, psychologically and spiritually, with her parents' impending divorce. Sharing the collective title *Hail Mary*, the movies are connected by a splendid irrational cut: the Mary of Miéville's film is sitting at a table with a soft-boiled egg before her; a tight close-up shows her cracking off the egg's top with a knife; the severed portion falls onto the table; and an intertitle reading At That Time (En ce temps là) instantly appears, followed by a shot of light rain falling across windswept reeds on a country slope. This marks the start of Godard's film, which slides into existence so softly and subtly that one isn't sure it has begun until the opening credits appear shortly afterward.

I'll focus my attention on Godard's portion of *Hail Mary*, which I've chosen from his expansive oeuvre because it is one of his most intellectually and aesthetically adventurous works, and because its complex imbrications of narrative drama, theological speculation, Catholic iconography, and Protestant music are well suited to the themes I want to explore. One of these is the connection between Godard's highly intuitive cinema and the "transcendental unconscious" that Deleuze and Guattari speak of in Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, where they declare that a materialist revolt against psychoanalytical strictures must rediscover the unconscious as an assemblage of desiring-machines, geared not to representation and meaning but to the production of desire and "libidinal investments of the social field" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 350) Another is Godard's interest in the theologically informed psychoanalytical theories of Françoise

Dolto, and how this relates to the schizoanalytically informed atheology that Deleuze and Guattari espouse. A third is the applicability of some central schizo-analytical tropes – deterritorialization, lines of flight, nonhuman becoming, and the body without organs – to Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 322), which deterritorialize being in ways that are physical, metaphysical, astrophysical, or all three. And throughout the discussion I'll be following (sometimes tacitly) the notion of soul as it winds through Godardian cinema and Deleuzian theory, often using such aliases as virtuality and élan vital and spiritual automaton.

My goal is less to arrive at a conclusive destination than to emulate the strolling schizo imagined by Deleuze and Guattari, scanning the horizon for intriguing desiring-machines, spiritual automata, flows of becoming, and breaths of fresh film-philosophical air (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 2). Our guide for this excursion is Godard, who attempts in *Hail Mary* to achieve "an 'Immaculate Conception' of the frame,"[3] by which he means a mode of improvisational practice that eschews preconceived framing, selection, and organization so as to open fresh frontiers of intuitive perception. The most powerful way to experience his work is to follow its flows toward the non-place that Deleuze and Guattari describe, "a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 322). In other words: find the body without organs in Mary's enigmatic egg; apply the "schizoanalytic flick of the finger" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 321) as decisively as she cracks its macrogametic shell; then watch as one story closes and another, surpassingly schizoid tale begins.

God/ard

Godard was interested in psychoanalysis when he started conceptualizing *Hail Mary*; more precisely, he was interested in a particular species of Freudian thought, which he found in a book by Françoise Dolto, a French physician and psychoanalyst (1908–1988) who specialized in child psychology. A member of the Freudian School of Paris who worked alongside Jacques Lacan for many years, she developed the very Lacanian idea that beginning in the fetal stage, persons evolve an "unconscious image of the body" that constitutes the "symbolic incarnation of the desiring being."[4] By the late 1970s she was "the best known and most beloved psychoanalyst in France," according to psychoanalytic theorist Sherry Turkle, who summarizes her core contribution thus: "Where other psychoanalytic thinkers stressed childhood sexuality, Dolto insists on childhood lucidity."[5]

Most important for our purposes, Dolto was also a practicing Roman Catholic who wanted "to add a mystical foundation to her thesis of the body image," according to psychoanalytic historian Élisabeth Roudinesco; her reasoning was that the Incarnation and the Resurrection, through the Crucifixion, "pulled Christ out of a 'placenta' and a uterine world to accede to eternal life," allowing him to

become "the very metaphor of desire that leads humankind . . . on a great identity quest" (Roudinesco, 2005, 508). Dolto believed that "psychoanalysis which seeks to substitute analysis for 'acting out' reinforces the Christian ethic just as the Christian ethic reinforces the psychoanalytic one" (Turkle, 1995, n.p.). One of Dolto's projects was a series of radio dialogues with Gérard Sévérin, another Freudian School psychoanalyst. These were published in book form as *L'Évangile au risque de la psychanalyse* (Dolto and Sévérin, 1977), the text that captured Godard's interest.

According to biographer Richard Brody, the roots of *Hail Mary* lie in an unrealized Godard project provisionally called Fathers and Daughters, a film "about incest" that would feature Godard playing the role of God, an "invisible and ubiquitous" presence, opposite the young actress Myriem Roussel, with whom he was infatuated. When he ran into resistance from Roussel, who was wary of the ticklish material he was coming up with, he looked for a more sensitive way of approaching the subject of forbidden desire. For a while he considered a story about Sigmund Freud and the early patient known as Dora, he said later. "Then, I looked at it with regard to God the Father. And I came upon the story of Mary" (Brody, 208, 457–458). He also came upon Dolto's work, or at least one corner of it.

Although the typical Godard film is liberally bestrewn with literary allusions and quotations, there is often a surprising murkiness about what Godard has actually read, since he is frequently content to cite a work on the basis of fleeting acquaintance rather than serious engagement. (No matter what appears within a movie, biographer Colin MacCabe writes, "it would always be a mistake to assume that Godard had read a particular book" (McCabe, 2003, 207.)) This uncertainty extends to Dolto's work. Godard ran across her book, he recalled, "and in her introduction – I didn't really read the rest of the book – she spoke of Mary and Joseph in a way that I never heard before. It seemed very cinematic: the story of a couple. And I'm very traditional. I've always made love stories and stories of couples. So that's how I got to the story of 'God and his Daughter'" (Brody, 2008, 457).

This theme – a couple in love – sounds rather too conventional for Godard in the 1980s, and his account of its genesis sounds rather too neat, asking us to see him as a teller of tales whose unfettered imagination peers down all manner of challenging conceptual byways – incest and taboo, father Freud and daughter Dora, God and Godard himself – and ultimately returns with "the story of a couple" that is "cinematic" and "traditional." Is something wrong with this picture?

There certainly is. It will be obvious to anyone who encounters *Hail Mary* that not even Godard could have set out to make a traditional "story of a couple" and somehow ended up with the exfoliating schizz-flows of this eminently rhizomatic film. Here as elsewhere, Godard's statement of intent is a creative semi-fiction – a purposefully inchoate supplement to a cinematic experience that is irreducible to language and unrepresentable except by its own intensive singularities. Godard's films usually do tell stories, but his real business is forging a new kind of cinema – a cinema of "between" and a cinema of "and," as Deleuze describes it, which

"does away with all the cinema of Being = is" and makes visible "the indiscernible" (Deleuze, 1989, 180). Whatever role Dolto's psychoanalysis, or anyone's psychoanalysis, played in the origin of *Hail Mary* is surely outweighed by these grander considerations.

I don't mean to suggest that Dolto's psychoanalytical work exercised no influence whatever on the evolution of *Hail Mary*. Godard was sufficiently interested in *L'Évangile au risque de la psychanalyse*, or at least the introduction, to mention it in interviews about the film; a few of its phrases appear in the dialogue; and certain of its ideas are detectable within the movie's intellectual and affective matrices. But while Godard's limited Dolto reading influenced the early stages of his script, the finished film reflects little of her thought. (This isn't surprising. I find her book a naïve and superficial work marked by essentialism, nebulous language, and biblical hermeneutics that turn into flights of self-indulgent fantasy.) In sum, it is as clear as matters can be with a Godard film that *Hail Mary* was influenced very little by psychoanalytical ideas. On this score the authors of Anti-Oedipus can rest content.

. . . and . . . and . . . and . . .

Deleuze and Guattari state that the infinite series "and . . . and . . . and . . ." is the very fabric of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 25). The additive is a concept long embraced by Godard, whose films and videos continually strive to erase boundaries and celebrate the productivity of paradox.[6] An endless ". . . and . . . and . . . and . . ." would be the perfect subtitle for his oeuvre. One of Godard's closest affinities with Deleuzian thought lies in his insistence on a radically intuitive cinema that opens lines of escape from linearity, rationality, and organicity and toward the open-ended natural-historical-social multiplicities of the transcendental unconscious. This is the non-metaphysical unconscious that Deleuze and Guattari describe as

> material rather than ideological; schizophrenic rather than Oedipal; nonfigurative rather than imaginary; real rather than symbolic; machinic rather than structural – an unconscious, finally, that is molecular, microphysical, and micrological rather than molar or gregarious; productive rather than expressive. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 109–110)

The transcendental unconscious radiates automatic desire, and the subject attached to its desiring-machines has "no fixed identity" but is "forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 20, emphasis in original). Although he does not use schizoanalytic language, Godard approaches the unconscious as the schizoanalysts do, not as a site for archeology (the psychoanalytic task) but as a plane of immanence that forever pulsates with positive

desire, which can either be diverted into static being or liberated into boundless becoming. The idiosyncrasies, eccentricities, excesses, and paradoxes of his films are products of his instinctive urge to create a destabilized and destabilizing cinema that seeks to purge the sociopolitical unconscious of entrenched habits and beliefs. *Hail Mary* envisions a virtual, intensive realm, showing Mary's desiring-becomings as lines of flight toward the nonhuman sexualities of impregnation by spirit and production of intermingling Word and flesh, and Joseph's as matters of the social field, of the codings and stratifications that are flummoxed and then vanquished by his intimacy with Mary's deterritorializing flows. At the end of the film both characters are again enmeshed in quotidian reality, and the addition of their child to the household (. . . and . . . and . . . and . . .) indicates, as does Gabriel's valedictory appearance to Mary, that they are newly defined by the states through which their decentered becoming-souls have passed and are continuing to pass.

"Just as in the New Testament," critical theorist John E. Drabinski observes, "Godard's Mary is uniquely chosen to make a home with God in a world from which the true God has fallen away,[7] reconnecting by way of his soon-to-be son. . . . The virginal space of Mary . . . extends to her a social economy in which she is an uncanny presence" (Drabinski, 2008, 91–92). This is an important point, and all the more so because the uncanny in Godard, and in Deleuze, has been regrettably undertheorized to date. Exploring it is outside the scope of this chapter, but I'll append two statements that I find illuminating in this regard. The first is Martin Heidegger's remark in *Being and Time* that "uncanniness pursues Da-sein and threatens its self-forgetful lostness" (Heidegger, 1996, 277). The second comes from Robert Mugerauer's gloss of Heidegger's point: "[T]he uncanny is liberating for us because in it and through it we can be called to and find a way to recover what has gone missing, to come back into what is our own and to find a new ground in place of the groundlessness of the they"(Mugerauer, 2008, 42). This is the ground that Mary and Joseph are recovering at the end of *Hail Mary*, and that their uncanny child is discovering in ways that are radically inflected by his uncanniness. "The big error, the only error," Deleuze has said, "would be to believe that a line of flight consists of fleeing life; a flight into the imaginary, or into art. But to flee [fly] on the contrary, is to produce the real, to create life, to find a weapon" (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002, 49). This is exactly what Mary and Joseph have done, and what their child will continue to do. As his counterpart in the Bible says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."[8] A weapon.

A Euclidean Postulate

"There was a certain democracy in those great Protestant families that I come from and that left me the time to find, by myself, that in fact it is not the body that has a soul. And I found that line in Artaud, in which, by a simple play on words, he

posits, like a theorem, a Euclidean postulate: 'I want the soul to be body, so they won't be able to say that the body is soul, because it will be the soul which is body.'" (Godard, 1993, 124)

Turning to the above-quoted statement by Deleuze that subjectivity "is never ours, it is time, that is, the soul or the spirit, the virtual," and bearing in mind Deleuze's high regard for Godard, who explicitly addresses questions of soul in *Hail Mary*, we may ask whether the two film-philosophers have the same sort of thing in mind when "soul" comes into their discourse. Clearly neither is referring to conventional beliefs of traditional religions. "I'm not a religious person, but I'm a faithful person," Godard has said. "I believe in images" (Shafto, 2001, n.p.). Although the positions of Deleuze and Guattari vis-à-vis the spiritual are complex, an indication of their attitude toward theology can be gleaned from their statement in *What Is Philosophy?* that atheism "is not a drama but the philosopher's serenity and philosophy's achievement. There is always an atheism to be extracted from a religion" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 92). One can take this as an affirmation of philosophy's mission to demonstrate the emptiness of religion and the fallaciousness of religious faith, but on this level it is uncharacteristically reductive, oversimplifying the philosophers' own contention that every discipline necessarily interacts (as Jacques Derrida would obviously insist) with its own negation; philosophy itself, they argue, "needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it . . . just as art needs nonart and science needs nonscience."[9] More interestingly, one can take it as an extension and expansion of Deleuze's earlier statement in *Difference and Repetition* that philosophers have "too often been invited to judge the atheist from the viewpoint of the belief or the faith that we suppose still drives him – in short, from the viewpoint of grace; not to be tempted by the inverse operation – to judge the believer by the violent atheist by which he is inhabited, the Antichrist eternally given 'once and for all' within grace" (Deleuze, 1993, 96).

Deleuze yields to that temptation in a discussion of the "adventure of faith," which would be a good alternate title for *Hail Mary*. The believer who engages in this adventure has a dual identity, Deleuze asserts: on one hand, the seeker is a "tragic sinner" bereft of grace, and on the other, the seeker is what Søren Kierkegaard would call a "comedian and clown" in contact with the paradoxical absurd. In a process supercharged with cosmic humor and towering irony, Deleuze continues, the believer conducts a quest for "a self rediscovered and a god recovered," failing to understand that Friedrich Nietzsche finessed those naïve ideals with the teaching of the eternal return, which is not a faith, doctrine, or belief, but rather "the truth of faith . . . the simulacrum of every doctrine . . . the parody of every belief" (Deleuze, 1993, 95–96).

Truths, simulacra, and parodies are complicated articles, however, bearing kinship with the nomadic, the minoritarian, and the powers of the false; and it is none other than Nietzsche, according to Deleuze, "who, under the 'will to power,' substitutes the power of the false for the form of the true," thereby resolving "the

crisis of truth . . . in favor of the false and its artistic, creative power" (Deleuze, 1989, 131). By replacing the escape into theology with the embrace of the eternal return and its tantalizingly ambiguous "belief and . . . doctrine eternally yet to come," (Deleuze, 1993, 96) Deleuze negates the counterfeit claims of religion while affirming the unbounded becoming held forth by infinite recursions of molecular vibration over the course of sempiternal time.

Sensation

Art responds to vibrations along the plane of immanence, the Deleuzian scholar Patricia Pisters reminds us, by contracting them to humanly accessible tempos; the results are what we call sensation, an intensity of material elements preserving the fullness of duration in modes of "quality" and "variety" that extend to every form of life, actual and virtual, organic and inorganic. "In this vitalistic conception of spirituality," Pisters writes, "when speaking of the soul or force of life that art can make us feel, the cosmic universe is full of microbrains that are constantly moving, acting and reacting, but that in sensations find a moment of pause, where all options are still open" (Pisters, 2012, 32, 154). Decisions among the options must be made, and in this "spiritual choice," the alternatives are "not between terms (such as good or bad) but between modes of existence of the one who chooses." Making the "true spiritual choice" is a matter of faith, since one must choose whether to believe that one has choices in life or to believe that one has not. At stake here is faith in one's connection with the world, and the issue is a crucial one because so many in the modern world no longer try to find, work to forge, or manage to sustain faith in that connection. "This link must become an object of belief," Deleuze maintains: "it is the impossible which can only be restored with a faith. . . . Only belief in the world can reconnect man to what he sees and hears." And seeing and hearing is where movies come in. "The cinema must film, not the world, but belief in this world. . . . Whether we are Christians or atheists, in our universal schizophrenia, we need reasons to believe in this world."[10] Hence the need, Pisters adds, to explore not only illusions of reality but the reality of illusions as well.

The reality of illusions is a core concern of *Hail Mary*, which bodies forth cinematic intuitions of Mary's sensations, transmuting them into the artwork that is the character's (virtual) life and the artwork that is Godard's (actual) film. Like every film, it is a simulacrum of all that it depicts, and it is also a parody (in the musicological sense) of certain strains within the centuries-long history of Marian iconography.[11] Beholding it with receptive senses and responsive mind can bestow an aesthetic joy that feels very much like grace, and if an Antichrist lurks within this experience, it is less a glowering demon than an imp of the perverse, a metaphysical counterpart of the comedian and clown that dwells within Godard and inflects all of his movies.

Enter the Body Without Organs

The essential point is that Godard and Deleuze and Guattari bring soul, spirit, and related terms into play when it suits their purposes, and this can't be written off as careless terminology. Godard has stated that while he doesn't practice the Protestant religiosity which with he was raised, he is "very interested" in aspects of Roman Catholic thought (Shafto, 2001, n.p.). And no philosopher exercised a stronger influence on Deleuze than Henri Bergson, whose metaphysics of body, mind, and soul – of *corps*, *esprit*, and *âme* – leads him to say that, "giving the name of Idea to a certain *settling down into easy intelligibility*, and that of Soul to a certain *longing after the restlessness of life* . . . an invisible current causes modern philosophy to place the Soul above the Idea."[12] Some 30 years later he declares that if we are able to get beyond the brain's restrictive function of attentiveness to the instrumental and extensive, "there enters in something of a 'without' which may be a 'beyond.' . . . Suppose that a gleam from this unknown world reaches us. . . . Joy indeed would be that simplicity of life diffused through the world by an ever-spreading mystic intuition" (Bergson, 1977, 315–117).

These are not theistic statements, nor would it make sense to tie Deleuze or Guattari to them. What does make sense, I think, is to detect a connection between Bergson's conception of soul and the notion of the body without organs. Deleuze and Guattari discovered the Body without Organs in Antonin Artaud's extraordinary 1947 radio play *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*, which concludes thus:

> Man is sick because he is badly constructed.
> We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape
>   off that animalcule that itches him mortally,
>
> god,
> and with god
> his organs.
>
> For you can tie me up if you wish,
> but there is nothing more useless than an organ.
> When you will have made him a body without organs,
>
> then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
> and restored him to his true freedom.
> Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out
> as in the frenzy of dance halls
> and this wrong side out will be his real place. (Artaud, 1976, 571)

Deleuze and Guattari limn the body without organs as the antithesis of the theological body whose unyielding organ-ization, imposed by God, is always already

stopping up fluxes, draining off flows, squashing intensities, and blocking becomings at every pass. "[T]he system of the judgment of God," Deleuze and Guattari assert, "the theological system, is precisely the operation of He who makes an organism . . . because He cannot bear the Body without Organs, because He pursues it and rips it apart so He can be first, and have the organism be first." The organism is "a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation" that strangles the Body without Organs with "forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 158–159). The body without organs is a fundamental trope of schizoanalysis, and it has strong links to schizo-cinema. Films that connect the Body without Organs with the viewer-screen assemblage can open up the latter (that is, us) to becoming by engulfing us with affect that, as Anna Powell puts it, "undermines spatial and temporal orientation and unravels symbolic hierarchies. . . . Slumped in our cinema seat, or in front of the domestic screen, our customary mind/body maps become fluid and perceptive Bodies without Organs" (Powell, 2008, 123).

The body without organs is related to the theory of thought that Deleuze and Guattari encapsulate in *What Is Philosophy?* when they present a tripartite schema of disciplines and their productions – philosophy/concepts, art/affects, science/functives – whose criss-crossing interactions culminate at points where "[e]ach created element on a plane calls on other heterogeneous elements, which are still to be created on other planes: thought as *heterogenesis*." (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 199 Emphasis in original) This is a discursive way of expressing the concept of chaosmos, a portmanteau word borrowed originally from James Joyce and referring to the interchangeability of cosmos and chaos, order and disorder. The body without organs is surely a chaosmic being – a concatenation of plateaus, a "component of passage" that is "always swinging between the surfaces that stratify it and the plane that sets it free." It is "that which one desires and by which one desires." It is "nonstratified, unformed, intense matter, the matrix of intensity, intensity = 0; but there is nothing negative about that zero" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 161, 175, 165, 153). It is "the body without an image," on which "the proportions of attraction and repulsion . . . produce, starting from zero, a series of states in the celibate machine; and the subject is born of each state in the series, is continually reborn of the following state . . . consuming-consummating all these states that cause him to be born and reborn." And it is the "intense . . . tantric egg" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 8, 20; 1987, 153).

It is also a hazy, mysterious presence in *Hail Mary*, evoked in subtle ways that are all the more striking by virtue of the fortuitous nature of their congruity with schizoanalytic discourse. Perhaps it's the tantric egg, "the full egg before . . . the organization of the organs," that closes *The Book of Mary* and opens the chaosmos of Godard's film, in which Mary's indiscernible ovum plays a pivotal role. "There is a fundamental convergence between . . . the biological egg and the psychic or cosmic egg." Maybe the non-negative zero is what we see in the 10 on Mary's

basketball jersey, or maybe it's what we hear when Gabriel accosts Joseph with the words, "What's the common denominator between zero and Mary? Mary's body!" (Maybe we also sense it when he calls Joseph an "Asshole!") More substantially, it is surely the body without organs that pulses within the deterritorialized flows of soul-body-becoming when Mary endures a night of solitary schizo-orison before the birth of her child, wracked with delirium as her soul and body pass through the molecular deaths and micrological births of dis-organized desiring-machinic parturition. The schizoanalysts use Artaud's vision to exemplify a "destratified, decoded, deterritorialized" body, consisting exclusively of "connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 153, 164, 40, 161) that escape the judgment of God across and upon the plane of immanence. Godard uses it to crystallize a cinema of frameless images, of immaculate signs, of the "process of making nature possible," and of the univocity of metaphor and actuality (Dieckmann, 1998, 170–171). "Reason is always a region," Deleuze declares, "carved out of the irrational – not sheltered from the irrational at all, but traversed by it and always defined by a particular kind of relationship among irrational factors. Underneath all reason lies delirium, and drift" (Deleuze, 2004, 262). Like him, Godard sees delirium and drift as entirely positive qualities that proffer our best hope for freeing our machinic flows from stifling cultural categories and liberating them into torrents of untrammeled love and productive desire.

Conceptual Personae

The particularities of style in *Je vous salue, Marie* are of course crucial in conveying the affects and ideas that Godard has on his mind. One of his starting points for the film was his wish to juxtapose "Catholic images and Protestant music" (Marin, 1993, 55), not as harmonious consorts but as contrapuntal elements in dialogue with each other and with the movie's larger deterritorializing objectives. "I knew that the only music that would work would be Bach," he said in 1985. "And it couldn't have been Beethoven, or Mozart, because historically Bach was the music of Martin Luther. And . . . Luther was attacking the Catholic church, specifically the way the church makes images" (Dieckmann, 1998, 171). Expanding on the theme of Bach's uniqueness, critic Charles Warren writes that the composer's music evokes "a grasp of the things of the universe in their essentials and essential relations, and as they may, on principle, be recombined. . . . Bach is thus in accord not so much with law as with an unaccountable, personlike spirit at the heart of things" (Warren, 1993, 14–15). Warren makes no mention of Deleuze or Guattari, but the "spirit" he alludes to sounds very like what they call the conceptual persona, the "something else, somewhat mysterious, that appears from time to time or that shows through and seems to have a hazy existence halfway between

concept and preconceptual plane, passing from one to the other" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 61). The sound and spirit of Bach in *Hail Mary* serve wonderfully as conceptual personae, as "fluctuating figures who . . . express qualities or perspectives that want to become-other, to deterritorialize towards another plane by constructing its concepts," in theorist D.N. Rodowick's words (Rodowick, 2000, n.p.).

Similar things can be said about the painterly impulses in *Hail Mary*. Filmmaking is "like painting," Godard told me in 1994, "but it's also different from painting, because you use not just space but time" (Sterritt, 1998, 177). Film scholar Sally Shafto points out that Godard has often presented himself as a cinematic painter, playing down the collaborative nature of filmmaking and thereby promoting the filmmaker's work as a "solitary and divine creative act." The painterly aspects of *Hail Mary* also mirror his respect for Renaissance Catholicism, which responded to Luther's faith in words by reaffirming the power of images; this inspired Godard's remark that Luther reformed not only the church but also the audiovisual domain. God has long been an alter ego for Godard, according to Shafto, who argues that he likes to see himself as a "distant as well as omniscient and omnipotent creator." Hence the special vitality of light in Godard's aesthetic, serving not only as the material ground of cinema but also as a symbol of and metaphor for the divine (Shafto, 2002, 144, 145).

Turning to the all-important subject of montage, *Hail Mary* may be Godard's most far-reaching essay in the irrational cut. Destabilizing edits occur constantly, and their disorienting effects are often intensified by unorthodox camera placements that blur conventional notions of foreground and background. The primary narrative, centering on Mary and Joseph, is intercut with subplots – Joseph's strained relationship with his former girlfriend Juliette, a Professor's relationship with a student named Eva – in such jaggedly interstitial ways that newcomers to the film often have trouble sorting out what's going on, much less sounding its deeper dimensions. These devices turn *Hail Mary* into a planar filmic entity, a mercurially shifting surface that eschews empirical logic and psychological depth, instead folding narration back upon itself through faux raccord cuts and radical relinkages that transform the arboreal protocols of narrative thrust, linear montage, figural representation, and naturalized *mise-en-scène* into a rhizomatic assemblage of ontological conundrums and epistemological ruckuses.

Sublimity

[A] creator who isn't grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator." (Deleuze, 1995, 133)

The issues I've raised and the examples I've adduced are far from exhaustive; but I think they give a reasonable overview of the territory, so that we can now

consider a central question: is it is justifiable to claim that soul has connotations for the Godard of *Hail Mary* and the Deleuze of schizoanalysis that go beyond the negational, skeptical, and metaphorical meanings often encountered in materialist philosophy and art? I think the answer is yes, with the obvious caveat that the soul of which I speak has nothing to do with that of religious orthodoxy. In the essay "Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos," which appears in Deleuze's last published book, he writes, "The soul as the life of flows is the will to live, struggle and combat."[13] This idea and its ramifications may not equal the visionary intuitions of a Saint Paul or a John of Patmos, but Deleuze's reference to soul (not the only one in this essay) reinforces the impression that his thinking has drawn close to theological terrain, and may perhaps have entered it. If this conclusion seems to go against the Deleuzian grain, the reason might have more to do with modernist intellectual biases than with the actual trajectory of the philosopher who said in 1980 that

> if philosophers have spoken to us so much of God – and they could well be Christians or believers – this hasn't been lacking an intense sense of jest. It wasn't an incredulous jesting, but a joy arising from the labour they were involved with. . . . God and the theme of God offered the irreplaceable opportunity for philosophy to free . . . concepts . . . from the constraints that had been imposed on them. (Deleuze, 2001, 161)

Deleuze may be jesting as well, but if that's so, the jest has the richly positive aura of which he speaks; if "atheism is the artistic power at work on religion," as he said in the same discussion, he has at times been a highly creative artist in this field. Godard jests a good deal in *Hail Mary* as well – at times Gabriel is almost a slapstick character – and as a comedian and clown of the paradoxical absurd, he does so in the same affirmative spirit. He too has known the elation of freeing concepts from the preconceptions and prejudices that have so long blocked off their flows of infinite becoming.

Some critics group *Hail Mary* with its immediate predecessors, *Passion* (1982) and *First Name: Carmen* (*Prénom Carmen*, 1983), as a "trilogy of the sublime";[14] the sublimity of *Hail Mary* takes its most vivid form in exquisite nature imagery. Godard's growing fascination with sights and sounds of nature indicates a wish to bypass his individual ego so as to produce "virgin" percepts and affects in his films. ("The inalienable part of the soul appears when one has ceased to be an ego" (Deleuze 1998: 52).) The immersion of *Hail Mary* in the natural world extends to its lyric celebration of Mary's virgin body as a sublime substance, revealing Godard's urge to approach the spiritual not through transcendence of the physical but through a passionate awareness of materiality; this in turn reveals the ongoing influence of Godard's early mentor and teacher André Bazin, a devout Catholic who regarded cinema as the most privileged means of recording the glory of the physical world and thereby unveiling materiality as not the

representation but the embodiment and incarnation of the holy spirit. Godard's nature images exploit the retinal reality-effects of cinema while simultaneously segmenting, fragmenting, and collaging those effects into a mosaic of discontinuous surfaces, aiming to penetrate the hard shell of material reality (perhaps as Miéville's young Mary shatters her enigmatic egg) and gain some glimmering of invisible realities beyond. Along with this eloquent fracturing of space comes a profound reconfiguring of time, within scenes and among them, transforming chronological-extensive time into durational-intensive time – the time of the Deleuzian crystal-image, "the indivisible unity of an actual image and 'its' virtual image," which uncovers "the hidden ground of time," the double flow of "presents which pass and . . . pasts which are preserved." By merging our spectatorial brains with the "peaks of present and sheets of past" on the crystalline screen, we find that memory, the virtual, "is not in us; it is we who move in a Being-memory, world-memory" (Deleuze, 1989, 78, 98). Absorbing this counterintuitive lesson is exactly as difficult (or easy) for us as it is for Mary to realize that the soul has a body, not the other way around.

Into the Chaosmos

Another character in *Hail Mary* who strikingly manifests the Godardian-Deleuzian ethos is one I briefly touched on earlier: the Professor, an unnamed academic from Czechoslovakia who is having an affair with a student named Eva and working out a kind of chaosmic philosophy. We first meet him in a classroom, where he is explaining his theory that life on Earth could not have originated through random chemical reactions. He points to a scientific chart, showing a slender horizontal line bisecting a red bulge at the center, and says it "can only be explained by something . . . intercepting light at a specific wavelength." For him, this establishes the presumption that what we know as life originated "in space" and that we are extraterrestrials as much as we are Earthlings, perhaps even more so. "The astonishing truth," he continues, "is that life was willed, desired, anticipated, organized, programmed by a determined intelligence." He demonstrates this thesis by having a student named Pascal work a Rubik's Cube while Eva covers his eyes and verbally guides his choices. To solve the cube blindfolded would take 1.35 trillion years, the Professor says, but one move per second guided by the eyes and mind can do the job in two minutes.

There is nothing very impressive about the Professor's notions, which have the hollow ring of Erich von Däniken and "intelligent design" pseudoscience. Godard is not vicariously pitching theories, however. He is schizoanalyzing theory, not using schizo terminology but performing schizo operations, such as transforming commonsense instances of either/or reasoning – the Earth/space binary, the us/them duality, the difference between 1.35 trillion years and two minutes – into

assemblages marked by rhizomatic intensity and radical multiplicity and indiscernible difference and crystalline consistency, mapping escape trajectories of the body without organs in all its deterritorializing virtuality. By saying we were born in the heavens, which could include Heaven itself, the Professor and Godard take us along lines of flight that are incomprehensible to the soul-as-body but radiantly clear to the body-as-soul.

Mary is swept by this clarity at the end of her transformative night of spiritual suffering; but as prelude to this outcome her organ-ized theological body must be therapeutically twisted, distorted, and wrenched way from the desiring-machines that have enchained her to the ordinary human sphere. We perceive traces of her becoming-soul in the words of her interior monologue, which zigzags rhizomatically between negative and positive poles:

> Earth and sex are in us. Outside there are only stars. Wanting isn't expanding by force. It's recoiling into oneself from level to level, for eternity. You don't need a mouthhole to eat with and an asshole to swallow infinity. Your ass must go in your head, and so descend to ass level, then go left or right to rise higher. . . . I'm a woman, though I don't beget my man through my cunt.

And then suddenly, luminously, "I am not resigned. Resignation is sad. How can one be resigned to God's will? Are we resigned to being loved? This seemed clear to me. Too clear." And a bit later, after her child's birth, "How did He look? What was He like? There are no looks in love, no outward seeming. No likeness. Only our hearts will tremble in the light." Only now, and in the film's final scene, does Mary realize the promise she intuited at the beginning: "I wondered if some event would happen in my life. I've had only the shadow of love . . . in fact, the shadow of a shadow, like the reflection of a water-lily in a pond, not quiet, but shaken by ripples in the water, so that even the reflection is not yours. . . ."[15]

The supreme act of philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari write, is "not so much to think THE plane of immanence as to show that it is there, unthought in every plane, and to think it in this way as the outside and inside of thought, as . . . that which cannot be thought and yet must be thought" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, 59–60). Accordingly, the challenge each of us confronts is to discover, in Rodowick's words, the "thinker within me that is the unthought of my thought [and] is . . . the power to transform life by revealing new lines of variation in our current ways of thinking and modes of existence" (Rodowick, 1997, 200–201). Godard comes amazingly close to visualizing this insight at the end of *Hail Mary*, when Mary hears Gabriel's last greeting ("Nothing. Hail, Mary!") and then gets into her car and lights a cigarette. She is simply having a smoke, like countless characters in countless New Wave movies; but sometimes a cigarette is not just a cigarette. Its smoke blurs the borderlines between inner (body) and outer (world) as it transubstantiates an ordinary herb into a vaporous essence, subliminally dis-organizing Mary's self in an act of inspiration that is both literal and metaphorical. She then

draws a lipstick tube toward her mouth, almost as if she were testing the Professor's theories with her own tiny spaceship; and indeed, the Professor's diagram closely resembled the inverse of this image, a closed mouth with puckered lips. After a tentative touch or two she begins to apply the lipstick, and the film ends on an extreme close-up of Mary's open mouth, so large that parts of it don't fit within the frame, ringed by her red lips but dominated by the dark emptiness at its center.

One valid Deleuzian interpretation of this shot would lead in negative directions: we are looking at a black hole, the part of the white wall/black hole facial system wherein the latter element, modeled after light-trapping singularities in space, is a territorializing blockage, the upshot of a failed line of flight (Bogue, 2003, 89). We may also interpret it in positive terms, however – as an instance of what Deleuze calls the "gaseous image, beyond the solid and the liquid," which seeks (like drugs) to *"stop the world"* and *"make one see the molecular intervals*, the holes in sound, in forms, and even in water" and to *"make lines of speed pass through these holes in the world"* (Deleuze, 1986: 64, 85, emphases in original). Or we can take it as film scholar Kevin Z. Moore does when he finds it the emblem of the "virginal source" of Mary's power, to wit, her "belief in the body as an aspect of mind," the effects of which we can observe in physical action but can see only as "the black hole outlined by the film" (Moore, 1994, 24).

I incline toward the second and third options, but I think a more productive, liberating, and intensive way of fathoming this quintessentially mysterious image leads beyond the realm of mystery to that of mysticism. Although this subject is more explicit in Bergson than in Deleuze, its resonances with Deleuzian film theory are articulately brought out by cultural critic Michael Goddard when he understands mysticism as a set of practices that actualize a "prediscursive seeing and hearing," which opens an ecstatic pathway to and through the crystalline regime of signs. Goddard notes that while hallucinatory and ecstatic experiences can be brought about by schizophrenia, drug consumption, and mystical practices, it is only through the latter that "processes of recollection can maintain and extend their sensory metamorphoses into sustainable processes of subjectivization," formulating time crystals whereby "experience of the unknown, of the virtual, can be reintegrated and redeveloped as spiritual experiences . . . without sacrificing their singularity." Goddard concludes that "the 'spiritual' or 'spirits' . . . can be conceived of as virtually inhering in the material world in the form of temporalities, or conversely the material world can be conceived of as existing in the spiritual or in God in the same way that it exists in time. The spiritual and the material are simply two distinct yet indiscernible sides of the same fold." He adds that a truly crystalline cinema must lead back out of the movie theater "into a re-spiritualization of life itself, through the transmission of [the] experience via the crystalline regime of signs to the spectator" (Goddard, 2002, 54–56).

Godard, the faithful filmmaker who believes in images, would surely agree; and so might Mary, who rejoins the quotidian world at the end of her story, bringing

with her the knowledge of a singularity – a child, a soul, a thought, a virtuality, a body without organs, an unprecedented upsurge of the élan vital – that promises to deterritorialize the actual in literally inconceivable ways. "At the limit," Deleuze himself observed, "it is the mystic who plays with the whole of creation, who invents an expression of it whose adequacy increases with its dynamism" (Deleuze, 1988, 61–62). In this play there arises the intense sense of jest – of joy – that brave philosophers have found by pursuing thinking toward the becomings-flows of the infinite. If we share this delight it is because, as Deleuze tells us, "the essence of art is a kind of joy, and this is the very point of art. There can be no tragic work because there is a necessary joy in creation: art is necessarily a liberation that explodes everything." Mary, too, feels the gladness of creating, and never more so than at the end of her tormented night, when she climbs out from under the impenetrable judgment of an inexplicable God and says, softly and simply, "I am joy. I am she who is joy." At such a moment the unthought in thought, for Mary and Godard and perhaps us as well, is tremblingly close to being thought.

Notes

1   A different version of this chapter appeared as "Schizoanalyzing Souls: Godard, Deleuze, and the Mystical Line of Flight," by David Sterritt, *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy – Revue de la philosophie française et de langue française*, 18 (2) (2010), pp. 9–28.
2   Godard (1986, 39).
3   Godard and Sollers: (1993, 124).
4   Binet (1999, 445–454).
5   Turkle (1995, n.p.).
6   Sterritt (1999, 14, 141, 262).
7   Recall a remark made by Fritz Lang, playing himself, in Godard's film *Contempt* (*Le Mépris*, 1963): "Now it's no longer the presence of God, but the absence of God, that reassures man."
8   Matthew 10:34, Authorized King James Version.
9   Deleuze and Guattari (1994, 218). Quoted in Pisters (2012, 14).
10 Deleuze (1986, 114, 116). Quoted in Pisters (2012, 32).
11 For more on this, especially the tradition of Madonna lactans, see Sterritt (1999, 187).
12 Bergson (2007, 46–47, emphases in original).
13 Deleuze (1998, 52). Mary Bryden compares different versions of this essay in Bryden (2001, 111).
14 Cerisuelo (1989, 207–232).
15 Jacques Derrida cites Kierkegaard's biblical allusion to "your father who sees in secret" (Matthew 6:18, English Standard Version) in connection with three modes of invisibility that Derrida has outlined: "the invisible as concealed visible, the encrypted visible or the non-visible as that which is other than visible." For me, Mary's plainspoken "No likeness," like the phrase from Matthew, "echoes across the reach of these limits." See Derrida (1995, 90–91).

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Godard the Hegelian

Daniel Fairfax

Eight minutes into *Allemagne Année 90 Neuf Zéro* (Germany Year 90 Nine Zero), Count Siegfried Zelten (played by Hanns Zischler) recites several lines from a philosophical work which can be situated, without too much difficulty, within the German Idealist tradition. On the image track, we are taken from a dowdy East German hairdressing salon, through staccato video footage of the ballroom scene from Vincente Minnelli's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*,[1] to a library filled with teeming bookshelves, into which Zischler steps. Delphine de Staël (Nathalie Kadem) follows him in, and brings him tea. After the scene is interrupted by a shot from Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen*, of the eponymous character ascending the grand staircase of a Nazi-era party headquarters, we see Delphine assist Zelten in his translation project. She holds up a book, and the source of the text which continues to be spoken on the soundtrack – in both German and French – is made clear: Hegel's *La Raison dans l'Histoire* (Reason in History).

Or so we assume – and our assumption here is shared by Bamchade Pourvali, who, in one of the most thoughtful responses to this film, casually notes that Zelten and Delphine "translate together a passage from *La Raison dans l'Histoire*" (Pourvali 2006, 18). But even a cursory thought given to the matter will already show cracks appearing in this supposition. If Zelten and Delphine are engaged in translating Hegel from German into French, why is Delphine reading from an *existing* French translation of the text? Granted, they could be consulting a previous rendering of the work, in order to hone their own effort – a common enough practice for translators, particularly those dealing with a source text as prickly as Hegel's. And indeed, Zelten himself is holding a dark green paperback, whose title can not be made out in the film, but which the viewer could take to be an original German edition of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history. Closer investigation, however, rules this out. The French translation Delphine has in her

hands is a paperback edition prepared by Kostas Papaioannou, who based his translation on Johannes Hoffmeister's edition titled *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte* (see Hegel 1965; Hegel 1955). This is a popular version of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history, but by no means an authoritative one – and it is here that we enter into the murky world of Hegel editions, a world made even murkier by Godard's mischievous streak. For the most part, Hegel's mature works remained unpublished in his lifetime. Instead, they were largely given as lectures, repeated over the course of many years, and come to us in the form of his own (piecemeal) manuscripts, combined with notes taken by a clutch of attentive students. How these notes should be collated into a legible textual synthesis is thus a matter for editorial conjecture. There is simply no single version of these texts which can claim absolute fidelity to Hegel's own thoughts, and the results from the various efforts undertaken can vary widely.

It pays, therefore, to go through the sequence from *Allemagne Année Neuf Zéro*, roughly three minutes in duration, very carefully. The passage opens with the following lines, in a German voiceover read out by Zischler:

> Wenn also die Philosophie bei einem Volke hervortreten soll, so muß ein Bruch geschehen sein in der wirklichen Welt. Die Philosophie ist dann die Versöhnung des Verderbens, das der Gedanke angefangen hat. Diese Versöhnung geschieht in der ideellen Welt, in der Welt des Geistes, in der jeder Mensch entflieht wenn ihm die irdische Welt nicht mehr befriedigt.

> (If philosophy is to emerge within a nation, a rupture must have taken place in the real world. Philosophy is, therefore, the reconciliation of the corruption instigated by thought. This reconciliation occurs in the ideal world, in the world of the *Geist*, into which every man flees when the earthly world no longer satisfies him.)

At the moment when the last sentence of this extract (beginning with "Diese Versöhnung . . .") commences, the scene, as mentioned, switches to Zelten's library, where, as he takes the mysterious dark green book from a nearby shelf, he begins to recite a French translation of these lines, completing the passage above and adding the line: "La philosophie commence par la ruine d'un monde réel" (Philosophy begins with the ruin of a real world). Zelten continues, as, on-screen, his library is replaced with black and white newsreel footage of quasi-abstracted wartime explosions, and, on the soundtrack, his voice must compete with jarring, atonal piano chords, but now he alternates, at regular intervals, between the French and the German renditions of the text. Those who presume, however, that he is translating from German into French may be surprised to learn that it is actually the German which *follows* its French equivalent in this sequence, in the following manner:

> Il en est ainsi chez tous les peuples, pour ainsi dire, – Und so bei fast allen Völkern – la philosophie ne fait son apparition que – tritt dann erst die Philosophie hervor, –

lorsque la vie publique ne satisfait plus – wenn das öffentliche Leben nicht mehr befriedigt – et cesse d'intéresser le peuple – und aufhört, das Interesse des Volkes zu haben, – quand le citoyen ne peut plus prendre part à l'administration de l'état – wenn der Bürger so sehr keinen Anteil mehr nehmen kann in der Staatsverwaltung.

(And thus, in nearly all nations, philosophy only emerges when public life is no longer satisfying, and ceases to have the interest of the people when the citizen can no longer take part in the administration of the state.)

If the diligent viewer attempted to locate the source of this passage, an inkling of the perversity of Godard's practice of textual citation could be glimpsed. For he will not find it in *any* edition of Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, where we would assume the passage to be derived from. Instead, he would have to turn to another of Hegel's works, with a title whose devilish similarity to the aforementioned text has no doubt tripped up many a would-be Hegel scholar: the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (Lectures on the History of Philosophy). But the vagaries of Hegel editions mean that, perusing the most commonly available German version of this text, Volume XVIII of the 1986 Suhrkamp *Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, one would still be unable to locate the words read out by Zischler. Only a few scattered fragments on pages 71–72 would give us any semblance of the sought-for passage, too remote from it to be a satisfactory source. Our viewer would rather have to turn to an edition of the text found in Volume XVa of a *Gesamtausgabe* prepared by Hoffmeister, and published by the Felix Meiner Verlag in Leipzig in 1940 – a time when, it needs hardly be reminded, most of Europe was under Nazi occupation. (Hegel, 1940)

In the end, I managed to track down a copy of this recondite text, and, thumbing through the book's yellowed pages, literally crumbling in my hands, found the elusive passage, comprising two blocks of text on pages 151–152, which are reproduced by Godard without any alteration. Zelten's French translation, meanwhile, is not an original effort at all, but can be found, unmodified, in a 1954 translation of Hoffmeister's edition, undertaken by a certain J. Gibelin, and published in two volumes under the title *Leçons sur l'histoire de la philosophie* (Lectures on the History of Philosophy) (Hegel, 1954, 176–177). From this point, however, the sequence only becomes more twisted. A few seconds of black leader precede a cut to a two-shot of Delphine in a frontal view, and Zelten in profile, as they simultaneously read out French and German renderings of the following text:

DELPHINE: En poursuivant leurs intérêts, les hommes font l'histoire, ils sont au même temps, les outils et les moyens de quelque chose de plus élevé, de plus vaste, qu'ils ignorent mais qu'ils réalisent de façon inconsciente.

ZELTEN: Und sind gleichzeitig die Werkzeuge und Mittel für das höheres und weitrechenderes, das sie selbst nicht kennen, und dessen sie auf unbewußte Weise innewerden.

(By pursuing their interests, men make history, and, at the same time, they are the tools and the instruments of something higher, vaster, of which they are unaware, and which they realise in an unconscious fashion.)

Delphine then takes exception to Zelten's effort, stating:

"Mais." En français on dirait "mais." Quelque chose de plus élevé, de plus vaste, qu'ils ignorent *mais* qu'ils réalisent de façon inconsciente.

("But." In French we would say "but." "Something higher, vaster, of which they are unaware *but* which they realise in an unconscious fashion.)

In response, Zelten almost churlishly retorts with the line (which must be from Hegel, we assume): "Die List der Vernunft ist es, der Nicht-Vernunft zu bedienen, um sich in der Welt durchzusetzen." Delphine transforms this, we suppose, into French in the following fashion:

"C'est la ruse de la raison qui utilise la non-raison –" La non-raison? Je dirais plutôt "la déraison." "– pour se produire dans le monde."

("It is the cunning of reason which utilises non-reason –" Non-reason? I would rather say "unreason." "– in order to be produced in the world.")

The baton is passed to Zelten, who rejoins with: "'Die Geschichte ist jenseits von Gut und Böse –' J'en suis là," ("'History is beyond good and evil –' That's where I'm up to]," only for Delphine to respond with what we take to be her French translation of one of the most well-known lines from Hegel:

L'histoire est au-delà du bien et du mal et des choses de la vie ordinaire. L'histoire universelle n'est pas le lieu de la félicité. Les périodes de bonheur y sont les pages blanches.

(History is beyond good and evil and matters of everyday life. Universal history is not the site of happiness. The periods of happiness there are blank pages.)

With nods to "the cunning of reason" and "the blank pages in history," even someone with a cursory knowledge of Hegel may feel on solid ground with this passage. And yet, attempting to locate these lines in their original state in Hegel's *Philosophie der Geschichte*, we find that, once again, a perverse operation is taking place. In fact, the passage spoken by Zelten and Delphine is nowhere to be found in Hegel's published writings. It can nonetheless be located, with minor variations, within the covers of *La Raison dans l'Histoire* – in Papaioannou's *introduction* to Hegel's text (Hegel, 1965, 19).

The full extent of Godard's abstruseness thus takes shape before our eyes: what we initially believe to be a translation from Hegel's German into French is in fact a recitation of a French translator's introduction to Hegel's work, sections of which are then translated back into German.[2] To crown this act of perversity, however, the passage taken from Papaioannou actually contains brief passages which are direct quotations from his own translation of Hegel – but here, Papaioannou lightly contradicts himself. The line "les *moyens* et les *instruments* d'une chose *plus élevée*, plus vaste qu'ils ignorent et accomplissent inconsciemment, (the *means* and *instruments* of a *higher*, vaster matter, of which they are unaware, and which they accomplish unconsciously)," (Hegel, 1965, 110) in his translation is thus transformed, in his introduction, to the passage read out by Delphine. Similarly, "L'histoire n'est pas le lieu de la félicité. Les périodes de bonheur y sont ses pages blanches," (History is not the site of happiness. The periods of happiness there are its blank pages) (Hegel, 1965, 116) also undergoes a slight metamorphosis. Godard's mis-quotation of Hegel, therefore, actually stems from the translator's liberties with his own text. And, to top it all off, when Zischler's German translation of Papaioannou coincides with the translator's citation of Hegel himself, the resultant rendering is distinctly at odds with the original. Hegel's "zugleich die Mittel und die *Werkzeuge eines Höhern*, Weitern sind, von dem sie nichts wissen, das sie bewußtlos vollbringen," (Hegel, 1955, 87) therefore becomes Zischler's uncanny line: "Und sind gleichzeitig die Werkzeuge und Mittel für das Höhere und Weitrechendere, das sie selbst nicht kennen, und dessen sie auf unbewußte Weise innewerden."

But the point of this admittedly protracted preamble, scrutinizing a small segment of an overlooked film, is not merely to underline the thorny nature of Godardian citation. Rather, it is to emphasize the pronounced concern with Hegel which has marked Godard's project to historicize the cinema. This sequence, indeed, is not the only one where Hegel is cited in Godard's later work. Earlier in *Allemagne Année Neuf Zéro*, the beginning of the celebrated "Owl of Minerva" passage from Hegel's introduction to the *Grundlinien einer Philosophie des Rechts* (Elements of the Philosophy of Right) is read out, with, once again, German and French versions overlapping each other: "Wenn die Philosophie ihr Grau in Grau malt, dann ist eine Gestalt des Lebens alt geworden, und mit Grau in Grau läßt sie sich nicht verjüngen, sondern nur erkennen" (When philosophy paints its grey in grey, a shape of life has grown old, and it can not be rejuvenated with grey in grey, but only recognised) (Hegel, 1970a, 28). This passage – in fact, the very same audio recording – is repeated in a pivotal moment in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, towards the end of Episode 4B. In both cases, the Hegel quote is followed by one of the most iconic, charged images in Godard's work: a car unceremoniously drives over a street sign, left in the gutter as mere detritus, which bears the name "Karl-Marx-Straße."

Do these citations mean that Godard is a Hegelian? Yes, if we are to believe the filmmaker himself. In interview after interview, he has noted the affinity between

his project and Hegel's historical method. In 1989, for instance, Godard divulged: "I'm currently reading a bit of Hegel, *La Raison dans l'Histoire*, things like that, and I agree with it" (Albera, 1989, 82). Similarly, in 1995, Godard will note: "History is never alone. It is populated by you and me, and this bothers it, because sometimes it wants to be left alone. I am rather Hegelian. I think that history is alone and that the cinema is one of its best representatives" (Labarthe, 1998, 296). In his long interview with Youssef Ishaghpour for *Trafic* in 1998, Godard often turns to Hegel, stating at one point: "From what little I know of Hegel, what I like about his work is that for me he's a novelist of philosophy, there's a lot that is novelistic about him . . .," (Godard and Ishaghpour, 2005, 27, translation modified). Giving his first interview to *Positif* in the same year, he will, however, temper his claims: "I don't know Hegel. I cite a lot of people when I've only read three sentences of their work. Hegel speaks of the end of history. But he believes that history exists, like Péguy when he wrote *Clio*. And I believe that too" (Ciment and Goudet, 1999, 50).

With this evidence in hand, it is surprising that the link between Godard's late work and Hegelian philosophy has gone largely ignored, with very few exceptions. Junji Hori does pick up, in vague terms, on the use of Hegel in *Allemagne Année Neuf Zéro*, but it is only to claim that Hegel's approach to the philosophy of history is "clearly opposed to Godard's historiography," and he instead conceives of the broader *Histoire(s)* project as an application of Deleuze's "method of the between" and the "dialectical image" of Benjamin's *Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen* (History of Philosophy Theses) (Hori, 2004, 335). Similarly, Scémama asserts that the "dialectic of *Histoire(s)*" is "more Benjaminian than Hegelian," given that it contains "no synthesis, reconciliation or arrangement between the things that are opposed to one another" (Scémama 2006: 146). Philippe Forest, meanwhile, accepts a certain link to Hegel in Godard's work, but only to critique the latter's "banally Hegelian rhetoric" which is offset by the "active paradox" of *Histoire(s)*, which "in no way allows itself to be dissolved and resolved" (Forest, 1998, 17).

Only Jacques Aumont has seriously explored the Hegelian aspect of Godard's later work. Discussing the link in several texts, Aumont views Godard as an "old Young-Hegelian," for whom, "history is the history of fatalities, or, more accurately, it is the actualisation of the immense, threatening virtuality of the *Fatum*" (Aumont, 1997a, 21). In *Amnésies* (Amnesia) the former *Cahiers* critic claims that, "the type of history that Godard practices is easily identifiable: it is philosophical history, which Hegel distinguishes from original history and reflective history, in the same way that the interest in thought is distinguished from the interest in the present in history" (Aumont, 1999, 145). This classification, laying the theoretical groundwork for Hegel's approach to world history, occupies the introduction to his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Lectures on the Philosophy of History) (Hegel, 1970b, 11–29, cf. also Hegel, 1955, 1–23). Philosophical history distinguishes itself from the earlier two forms of history in recognizing that, "the idea is the guide of peoples and of the world, and it is the *Geist*, its rational and

necessary will, which has guided and still guides the events of the world" (Hegel, 1955, 22). Aumont proceeds, however, to clarify that, even though it is Hegelian, "the History of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is nonetheless a philosophical history which has lost its reason; if the universal history of which Godard speaks *in* the history of the cinema is rational, its reason is chaos, loss, the remoteness of *Geist*" (Aumont, 1999, 145).

Later, Aumont relates that, at virtually the same time as one of the earliest articulations of Godard's project, in lectures given in Montreal in the late 1970s, film historians held a landmark conference in Brighton, which "would lead to the remarkable renaissance [. . .] of an interest in early cinema" (Aumont, 1999, 169). While Aumont does not make this move himself, it would thus be tempting to view Godard's "philosophical history" as an unconscious response to the "new film historians," a Hegelian *Aufhebung* (repeal) of their "reflective" form of film history, which itself had transcended the "original," anecdotal histories of the "traditional" film historians, such as Sadoul, Mitry, Ramsaye, and Jacobs.

Further references to Hegel are liberally sprinkled throughout this and a handful of other texts by Aumont. In "Beauté, fatal souci," (Beauty, Fatal Concern) for instance, he argues that, "in Hegelian terms, [*Histoire(s)*] pertain at once to both conceptual history and philosophical history: they are interested less in chronology than they are in thought. The cinema may well have a history, but above all it *is* history," (Aumont, 1997a, 17) while in "La mort de Dante" (The Death of Dante), he characterises *Histoire(s)* as "the last echo of the Hegelian ideas reformulated by Malraux: art as a successor to religion, giving access to a 'divine' without God" (Aumont, 1997b, 135). Or, as he will explain in *Amnésies*: "To the Hegelian postulate of art as con-substantial to Western art, [Godard] adds the neo-Hegelian assertion of the assassination of art by far-Western culture" (Aumont, 1999, 146).

But these references, as precious as they are, do not amount to a holistic argument by Aumont regarding a deeper affinity between Godard and the German philosopher. Beyond the idea of *Histoire(s)* as a form of "philosophical history," he does not set out to prove the validity of conceiving Godard as being, fundamentally, Hegelian in his historical outlook – which is what, in the limited fashion which its framework permits, the rest of this chapter will attempt to do. Before proceeding, however, it is vital to acknowledge that claiming Godard as a Hegelian by no means seeks to exclude other competing theoretical optics through which to view his work, which, with its exceptional density, allows for the coexistence of numerous, even mutually antagonistic, intellectual forebears and influences. In addition to Godard the Hegelian, there is, undeniably, Godard the Benjaminian and Godard the Deleuzian; there is Godard the Nietzschean and Godard the Adornoan; Godard the Malrucian, the Péguyian and the Braudelian; Godard the Warburgian, Godard the Langloisian and Godard the Faurian. There is also, of course, Godard the *vaurien*, the impish mischief maker who, in his very acts of allusion and citation, deliberately frustrates his exegetes with *fausses pistes* (red

herrings) and theoretical dead-ends. But his nods to Hegel – it will be emphatically asserted – do not fall under this category.

In order to embark on this undertaking then, it will first be necessary to give a brief overview of Godard's "thesis" on the history of the cinema, and its putative death at Auschwitz, aired in innumerable forums over the last three decades. Central to this hypothesis is a paradoxical appraisal of the role of montage in the cinema's history: Godard gives credence to the Malrucian notion that montage is essential to the specificity of the cinema as an art form – in the same way that *perspectiva artificialis* constituted the specificity of Western painting, and the bourgeois novel the specificity of Western literature (Malraux, 2003), and has stated that cinema's *"vraie mission*, [its] true goal" was to "arrive at a way of elaborating and putting into practice what montage is" (Smith, 1998, 190). Paradoxically, however, montage is "a continent which has never existed," it is something that the cinema has never actually attained, and, while numerous filmmakers have sought to work with montage, "none have found it" (Godard, 1998b, 242, 248). The cinema has never attained its true purpose – to use montage as a tool to uncover hidden truths about the world – and has thus been stunted at birth, it is a "child which has been prevented from growing up," a "blocked chrysalis which will never become a butterfly" (Vezin and Derouet, 1995; Godard, 1998c, 403). Instead of aspiring, like all art should, to a "documentary" function, the cinema has instead been used for the banal purposes of spectacle and entertainment, and each new technical innovation – the script, sound, colour, television – serves only to progressively crush film's nascent "humble and formidable power of transfiguration" (Godard 1998a, 92). A handful of anointed directors were able to resist this tendency, but even they were not powerful enough to fulfill the cinema's historic mission: to prevent the impending cataclysm of World War II and the concentration camps. Only select moments in films such as *Die Nibelungen*, *La Règle du jeu* or *The Great Dictator* performed this function, but their warnings were not heeded: "Chaplin, despite being more famous than anyone else, more than Napoleon or Gandhi, [. . .] when he made *The Great Dictator*, nobody believed him. Renoir, when he released *La Règle du jeu* or *La Grande Illusion*, nobody gave him the slightest bit of attention" (Godard, 1998c, 405). The flame of the cinema, then, its ability to throw light on the movement of history, was definitively extinguished at Auschwitz; the only worthwhile films made since then, by Hitchcock, the neo-realists or the *nouvelle vague* filmmakers, are nothing but "aftershocks of the aftershock," and fail to constitute "the cinema" (Daney, 1998, 169). The catastrophic result of this situation is the predominance of the televisual in global culture, in which "nothing is created, nothing is lost, nothing is transformed. There are only means of communication, but there is no more communication" (Devarrieux, 1998, 407).

At first glance, therefore, it would seem that nothing could be further from this apocalypticist vision than Hegel's philosophy of history, which is so often characterized as a stridently optimistic, teleological account of the inexorable process of the self-realization of *Geist* and the universalization of human freedom. Hegel

does indeed maintain that the history of the world is the "rational, necessary path of the *Weltgeist*, of the *Geist*, whose nature is always one and the same, but which discloses its nature in the existence of the world" (Hegel, 1955, 30). While the general course of history is viewed in such progressive terms, Hegel's philosophy is, however, striated with a deep melancholy with regards to what is lost through the onset of the inevitable transformations that take place in the universe. The outlook for *individual* nations, therefore, is not a rosy one: "The individual national spirit is subject to transience. It perishes, loses its world-historical significance, and ceases to be the bearer of the highest concept the spirit has formed of itself" (Hegel, 1955, 69). Such a perished nation "may still have much to do in war and in peace. [. . .] It still has movement, [but] its greatest and highest interest has vanished out of its life" (Hegel, 1955, 68), Thus, while Hegel does conclude that "the category of change" has a "positive side to it[,] for out of death, new life arises," an extended, profoundly mournful passage focuses precisely on the negative aspect of this change:

> It depresses us to think that the richest form and the finest life find their demise in history, and that we wander amidst the ruins of excellence. History tears us from the finest and noblest of our interests: the passions have destroyed them; they are transient. Everything appears to perish, nothing appears to remain. Every traveller has felt this melancholy. Who has stood amidst the ruins of Carthage, Palmyra, Persepolis or Rome without being induced to consider the transience of empires and men, to mourn the loss of the rich and vigorous life of a bygone era? (Hegel, 1955, 35)

This dichotomy between the progress of the universal and the melancholic transience of the particular also governs Hegel's considerations of art in *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Lectures on Esthetics) (Hegel, 1907c). Famously, Hegel used these lectures to declare the "end of art" – to affirm that with the passing of the classical era, epitomized by Attic sculpture, art had lost its vitality. With this perspective, Hegel does not, of course, claim that meaningful artistic production has ceased. Indeed, paradoxically, the post-classical, "romantic" era of art is marked by the unprecedented flourishing of three art-forms – painting, music and poetry. The evolution of art from the symbolic (pre-classical) era, typified by architecture, to the classical and then romantic eras, *is*, on the one hand, depicted as a progressive move from sensual art-forms to the spiritual (*geistig*) art of poetry, which is the "universal art of the liberated *Geist*, not bound to external-sensual material for its realisation." (Hegel, 1970c, 123). But such a shift also constitutes a move away from art as such and towards religion and philosophy, which are viewed as higher forms of the self-awareness of the *Geist*, or, as Hegel puts it: "It is precisely, however, on this, the highest level, that art transcends itself, by leaving the element of reconciled sensualisation of the *Geist* and shifting from the poetry of the imagination to the prose of thought" (Hegel, 1970c, 123). The history of art is thus

conceived of as a dialectical progression that reaches its high point in the classical era, before subsiding to give way to religion and philosophy as adequate expressions of the collective intelligence – the *Geist* – of a particular era. In classical sculpture, the idea and the form of a work had reached a harmonious state of unity and equilibrium, before they were once again sundered in romantic art. In Hegelian terms, the three periods "consist of the striving towards, attaining and surpassing (*Erstreben, Erreichen und Überschreiten*) of the Ideal as the true idea of beauty" (Hegel, 1970c, 114). Thus, even though he was writing at the time of Goethe and Schiller, Schubert and Beethoven, Friedrich and David, a deep melancholy pervades Hegel's attitude towards his artistic contemporaries. He speaks of his time as the "afterwards" (*das Nach*) of art, which has lost its central role in society, as the *Geist* looks elsewhere for its realization. In a passage characteristic of this outlook, Hegel laments:

> Well may one hope that art will ever continue to progress and perfect itself, but its form has ceased to be the highest necessity of the *Geist*. Let us still find the Greek divinities masterfully accomplished, let us still see the Lord, Christ and Mary worthily and perfectly depicted – it helps not, we no longer kneel down before them. (Hegel, 1970c, 142)

Clearly, much of this conceptualization of the history of art is not shared by Godard, but, beyond the common lament for the passing of an irretrievably lost moment of artistic perfection, it productively relates to his account of the cinema in a number of ways. First, Hegel's notion of art's self-transcendence in favor of religion and philosophy is echoed by Godard's persistent claims that the cinema could be used for scientific, philosophical or even judicial purposes. The cinema is not only "the last chapter in the history of the art of a certain type of Indo-European civilisation," (Daney, 1997, 49) it is also imbued with a scientific function, with Godard placing the invention of the cinema alongside that of the telescope or the microscope – the cinema, he claims, is "an apparatus which can show neither the infinitely small nor the infinitely large but the infinitely average, that is to say: us" (Fleischer, 2009). As far back as the Montreal lectures, Godard's stated aim with his project was to "relate the history of the cinema not only in a chronological manner, but in a rather more archaeological or biological manner" (Godard, 1980, 21) and to demonstrate this method, he would give the analogy of the historical method of François Jacob:

> If you say that Copernicus, in about 1540, brought about this idea that the sun stopped revolving around the Earth. And if you say that, at about the same time, Vesalius published *De corporis humanis fabrica*, where we see the interior of the human body, the skeleton, the muscles. Well, then you have Copernicus in one book and Vesalius in another . . . And then, 400 years later, you have François Jacob saying: "The same year, Copernicus and Vesalius . . ." Well now, here, he's not doing biology any more: he's doing cinema. (Daney, 1998, 163)

This cinematic method of doing history is fundamentally based on montage, and it is precisely the comparative capacity of montage which, in Godard's fantastic vision, can be used to solve criminal cases, cure diseases, or make discoveries about the universe.

Second, while the cinema, for obvious reasons, does not have a place in Hegel's schema of the arts, the broader notion that specific art-forms emblematize historical eras is reflected in Godard's, far from unique, view that the cinema was the decisive art-form of the twentieth century. The Hegelian view of the "reflection" of a historical moment in specific artistic manifestations has been influential on later, particularly Marxist, aesthetic theorists, whether Lukács in his discussion of the nineteenth-century bourgeois novel, or Jameson with his notion of postmodernism as the "cultural logic" of Mandelian late capitalism (see Lukács 1983; Jameson 1991). But Godard does not view the cinema as a near-simultaneous reflection of the events and developments of the twentieth century. Nor does he envisage a relationship of *décalage* or time-delay between the broader social transformation and its aesthetic counterpart. Instead, Godard *reverses* the hierarchy: the cinema is the paramount art-form of the twentieth century due to its innate potential to *predict* the key events of this period – above all, the unprecedented horrors of the Second World War. As we have seen, however, this potential was not fulfilled, save for a few moments in the work of a select group of directors. Nonetheless, this is sufficient for Godard to declare that: "The cinema, or rather the cinematograph, disappeared at this moment. It disappeared because it announced the camps. In the same way that Vienna and its music had announced World War I, the cinematograph had previewed World War II" (Godard, 1998c, 404).

This comparison to music's ability to foreshadow the social rupture of the First World War can be traced back to Godard's Montreal lectures, where he states: "I have always thought that the cinema represents today what music used to be: it represents in advance, it imprints in advance great movements in the process of taking place. And it's in this sense that it shows things" (Godard, 1980, 70). In a 1997 interview with Régis Debray, however, he would finally admit to the provenance of his idea: "It's not specific to the cinema. It's the same for music. It's what that brigand Attali said in one of his books: he showed that Viennese music announced 1914" (Debray, 1998, 425), Here Godard is referring to Jacques Attali's distinctly neo-Hegelian work *Noise: A Political Economy of Music*, which argued that the development of musical harmony in the eighteenth century had acted as a precursor to the rationalization of economics in the nascent capitalism of the nineteenth century, while, conversely, its breakdown at the turn of the twentieth century symbolized the later decomposition of this system and its descent into mutually destructive war. In Attali's view,

> Music at the end of the nineteenth century was highly predictive of the essentials of the ruptures to come. And practically everything that happened took place in

> Vienna: it was there that music announced a decline, a rupture, and simultaneously a tremendous theoretical accomplishment. (Attali, 1985, 81)

To the best of my knowledge, none of the innumerable critical interpretations of *Histoire(s)* has explored its links to Attali's hypothesis, despite Godard's own admission of his debt to it. Indeed, the chronology of this relationship is striking: Attali's work was first published in 1977 – that is, immediately before Godard's Montreal lectures – and it is thus tempting to posit that it was exposure to *Noise* which transformed Godard's project from a mere overview of film history to a Hegelian-inflected "philosophical history" of the cinema and its relationship to the twentieth century. To Godard the Hegelian, therefore, we should add Godard the Attalian.

But here, too, nuanced differences distinguish Godard's ideas from Attali's thesis. For Attali, it is the structural transformations in musical form itself which foretell future events in the realm of political economy, whereas, in Godard's view, the cinema only plays this function by means of fleeting moments or visual motifs in a rarefied selection of films. Indeed, it was to a large degree the technical developments in filmmaking which *impeded* the cinema's ability to play a role as a "Cassandra" for the disasters to come. Here it is important to note Didi-Hubermann's distinction between filming the camps and *showing* the camps, in order to fully take stock of Godard's historical thesis. For the philosopher, as for Godard, the camps *were* filmed. Indeed, footage of the camps abounds in *Histoire(s)*, and Godard speaks of "a few meagre newsreels which saved the honour of the recording of the real, a few meagre newsreels, with which we have not done anything" (Labarthe, 1998, 299). As Didi-Huberman points out, however: "Footage is not enough to make cinema. [. . .] According to Godard, nobody was able to do the *montage* – that is, to *show* in order to *comprehend* – of the existing footage" (Didi-Huberman, 2003, 176).

It is striking that, of the thousands of cuts in the 4½ hours of *Histoire(s)*, barely a single one corresponds to a pre-existing cut in the original work cited. The one aspect of the cinema of which *Histoire(s)* is not a history, then, is montage – or more accurately, *Histoire(s)* can properly be understood as a history of the *absence* of montage in the cinema. It is also, however, an attempt to retrospectively rectify this absence, and this is a major source of the productive tension guiding the work. In striving for a montage approach to history – the *only* valid approach to history, in Godard's view – the filmmaker returns to a form of dialectical montage pioneered not only in the films of Eisenstein and Vertov, but also in Godard's own earlier work, from the mid-1960s onwards, and pushes it to a new level of semantic dexterity.[3] Perhaps the key sequence in this regard, and the one which has provoked the most opprobrium, is the moment in Episode 4B when Godard alludes to the fact that concentration camp inmates, the majority of whom were Jewish, were dubbed "Muslims" by camp administrators when they were so close to death

that they had lost control over their physical faculties. Those who have objected so strenuously to the rapprochement have clearly been unable to perceive the polyvalence of the dialectical montage at work here.

The sequence in question begins with footage of a Feddayin taken from *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere), before cutting to the renowned photograph of Eisenstein examining a strip of celluloid; the centre of this image, however, has in turn been submitted to an iris-effect showing a film reel flitting through the whirring cogs of an editing table. At this point, on-screen text transforms the word "Israel" into "Ishmael," before continuing: "It was, if I'm not mistaken, a German Jew." Mathias Grünewald's painting *The Mocking of Christ* is then briefly shown, before another cut ushers in footage of two soldiers dragging the skeletal corpse of a camp victim, and the text progresses from "German (*Allemand*)," to "Jew (*Juif*)," "Muslim (*Musulman*)," and then, finally, "The Human Race (*L'espèce humain*)."[4] Here Godard is emphatically *not* making a simple equation, in some bowdlerized form of Eisensteinian montage, between the suffering of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation and the attempted extermination of the Jewish race by the Nazis. Instead, the sequence demonstrates that there are unerring parallels *and* innate differences between the two historical phenomena, and by creating such a juxtaposition he is doing no more nor less than "provoking a spark" between them (De Baecque, 2002). Crucially, it is at this very moment that the "Owl of Minerva" passage from Hegel's preface to his *Philosophie des Rechts*, is reprised from *Allemagne année neuf zéro*. This quote, as is well known, lays bare Hegel's attitude, also included in the passage from *Geschichte der Philosophie* cited in Godard's earlier film, that it is only once a historical moment has come to an end – when a nation, set of ideas, or artistic movement has perished – that philosophy can adequately take stock of it. Broadly conceived, this idea animates virtually all of Godard's late work. It has become a commonplace, within academic Film Studies, to claim that the advent of film theory marked the moment its object of study met with its demise. But for Godard, it is the cinema's death which allows for it to *become* theory, for the montage-methods it discovered to be used for the purposes of history, science, and even metaphysics.

Hence, the same contradictory attitude, incorporating melancholy at a lost past and optimism about the future, suffuses the work of both Hegel and Godard. The idea that the cinema has died, that, whether due to the advent of sound films, the inaction when confronted with Auschwitz, or the onslaught of television and the digital image, we are no longer moved to kneel down before the cinematographic art, is a constant theme in Godard's late work, and generates a profoundly sorrowful tone in all of his films and public interventions. And yet Godard has clearly stated that he does *not* consider *Histoire(s)* to be a despairing work:

> It shows things that induce despair. There's a fair amount to be despairing about, but existence can't despair. We can say broadly that a certain idea of cinema . . . has

passed, as the Fontainebleau School passed, as Italian painting passed. . . . You could say that a certain cinema is now concluded. As Hegel said, an epoch has ended. (Godard and Ishaghpour, 2005, 112)

Amidst his overwhelmingly gloomy discourse, Godard expresses the hope that in the wake of the "death" of the cinema, a "new cinema," a "different art" will arise, "whose history will be made in 50 or 100 years" (Godard and Ishaghpour, 2005, 112). In his *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Hegel posited his own work as the pinnacle and summation of Western philosophy, but instead of bringing it to a close, he galvanized a discipline in which the echoes of his thought still reverberate now, 200 years later. Similarly, the power of *Histoire(s)* is that, even while forcefully contending that the cinema is dead, its remarkable formal innovations disprove its own thesis by breathing new life into the medium. A cinema revitalized by the versatile use of montage in *Histoire(s)* may yet have a promising future ahead of itself. As Godard himself was to say: "It is true that for the cinema I have a sentiment of dusk, but isn't that the time when the most beautiful walks are taken? In the evening, when the night falls and there is the hope for tomorrow?" (Bachmann, 1998, 138).

Notes

1   This can be interpreted as a sly acknowledgement of debt to Minnelli, whose use of superimposition in this film can be seen as an important precursor to Godard's own development of the technique.
2   We can take it that the German translations were actually carried out by Hanns Zischler himself, given that he is not only an actor, but also a professional translator, who is credited, among other works, with the German version of Derrida's *De la grammatologie*. See: Derrida (1983 [1967]).
3   For more on this issue, see Fairfax (2010).
4   *L'Espèce humaine* was the title of an account of the concentration camps by the poet and maquisard Robert Antelme (See Antelme (1947)).

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Godard's Ecotechnics

Verena Andermatt Conley

The 90-minute *JLG/JLG* (1995) has all the familiar trappings of many Godard movies, especially those he has directed since the 1980s. It is not, in the words of the filmmaker himself, an "autobiography," a story of his life but what he calls an "autoportrait of December." It is also an essay, consisting of aphorisms, bare rewritings of his previous works and insertions of numerous quotations from other poets, writers, philosophers, and filmmakers. The portrait is rife with allusions to political and historical events past and present. At the forefront are memories of the Second World War that were at the center of Godard's childhood, and allusions to recent wars, such as the debilitating conflict in Bosnia (1992–1995). Godard quotes from his own haunting video, *Je vous salue Sarajevo* (Hail Sarajevo) (1993), a tribute to the siege of the city by Serbian forces while, like many French theorists and artists, inserting allusions to the perpetuation of violence in the world, among others, the conflict between Israel and Palestine. These wars fall under the sign of what in 1996 he sees as a worldwide American imperialism in synch with the commercialization of the world where a general equivalence of material, cultural, and natural goods is now found all over the globe. Art is lost in a mercenary culture where proudly displayed emblems are cigarettes, t-shirts, and computers, where tourism reigns supreme while, in places such as Bosnia, war is ceaselessly waged on what remains of an "art" of living.

In this climate of death and destruction, *JLG/JLG* professes to be on the side of art, that is, the exception, and not of culture or the rules of law governing commercialization. Since exception cannot be said (*dit*) (lest it become part of culture), it can only be written or recorded (*enregistré*). Both a film and a published text – the latter bears the subtitle, "Phrases" – as art *JLG/JLG* is under the sign of mourning. Godard takes great pain to distinguish himself from common mortals

by telling us that he does things in reverse. First, as a prominently displayed photograph (seriograph) of the filmmaker as a child at the beginning of the film demonstrates, Godard began by mourning . . . but death never came. He continually mourns, however, all the human catastrophes that include the loss of art. If the first part of the portrait is under the sign of history and memory, the second deals with the difficulty of making films in an era of crass commercialism. As Gilles Deleuze would have it, "when everything is under the spell of marketing, art can no longer serve as a locus of resistance" (Deleuze, 1995, 176).

Yet Godard's auto-portrait is far from being simply morose. He introduces several scenes with his signature irony, his tell-tale jokes, such as those in which he appears in various odd costumes and disguises, walking in a long overcoat in deserted landscapes, stepping fully dressed into the waters of Lake Geneva, parodying a line of Shakespeare by declaring, while pointing west, that he must mourn his lost kingdom of France. He also plays an odd game of tennis – a game he enjoys because, in his words, the ball always bounces back but during which he claims to have been "passed." For the game, Godard is dressed up in a preppy pre-war costume suggesting that he too is past. Other highly comical scenes punctuate the film: in *contrejour* a nude housekeeper vacuums a floor, perhaps in parody of Brigitte Bardot in Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu créa la femme* (And God Created Woman).

The film is striated by shots of white, lined pages of a notebook that are being turned by an invisible hand and that emphasize the presence of the written word and of language in the film. Sparse handwritten inscriptions become legible. Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire, Nivôse, Pluviôse, Ventôse: the fall and winter months of the French republican calendar support the artist's portrait of December, although (as is usual for Godard) they are not mentioned in chronological order. The pages feature literary allusions, one of which is to Martin Heidegger's *Holzwege*, in French as *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part* (Paths that lead nowhere) a title also parodied through visual and verbal irony. At other times, the pages turn so rapidly that they become blurred, their surface converting into a dense grayish fog reminiscent of the death camps, if only because they are accompanied by a strange soundtrack that simulates war.

The white page, Godard states, alluding to poets and writers that include Stéphane Mallarmé and Georges Bataille, is the origin of all communication. Whether as a fraying of voices, as an *écrire-penser*, or as a meditation, writing produces art. Film is again a medium of writing that subsumes all others, from literature to painting and music. The written text differs from the film. While the text, a kind of Wittgensteinian assemblage of sentences or *phrases* – quotations from philosophers, poets, novelists, lines from films, high art or low art – functions more as a discontinuous continuum, the film distinguishes between voices and introduces tensions between them and the images, a dimension that disappears in the text. As in most of his films, in this portrait, Godard transforms familiar scenes into art or the "exception." In the first half of the film, Godard's house on Lake

Geneva is transformed into a series of aesthetic surfaces. Shots of the windows that open onto other houses behind them become abstract shapes and lines alternating with blocks of color. In lengthy tracking shots, table lamps function at times as a source of emission of light against a dark background, where rows of books in chiaroscuro become reminiscent of paintings by Georges de La Tour. At others, the lamps illuminate shelves full of books while the camera glides over the spines and transforms them into abstract lines of minimalist paintings. Scenes of the everyday become truly an "art of the everyday" that Godard deplores as being lost in a climate of violence. These repeated shots of abstract still lifes are juxtaposed to paintings on the wall. As in many of Godard's other films, women in the paintings are put side by side with scenes from films featuring women in similar positions. In a complex structure of simultaneous video recordings and viewings Godard composes his own portrait with allusions to films by Jacques Rozier, Nicholas Ray, Roberto Rossellini and others, while he defamiliarizes objects and scenes so as to transform them into abstract designs. As he puts it, reality is always produced by the juxtaposition and relation of images:

> L'image est une création
> pure
> de l'esprit
> elle ne peut
> naître d'une comparaison
> c'est vrai
>
> mais du rapprochement
> de deux réalités
> plus ou moins
> éloignées
> (. . .)
> plus les rapports
> des deux réalités
> rapprochées seront lointains et justes
> plus l'image sera forte
> deux réalités qui n'ont aucun rapport
> ne peuvent se rapprocher
> utilement
> il n'y a pas de création d'images
> et deux réalités
> contraires
> ne se rapprochent pas
> elles s'opposent
> une image
> n'est pas forte
> parce qu'elle est brutale ou fantastique
> mais parce que l'association

> des idées est lointaine
> lointaine, et juste. (Godard, 1996, 21–23)

> (The image is a pure creation/of the mind/it can't be/born of a comparison/that's true/but of juxtaposing/two realities/more or less/remote/(. . .)/the more relations/of two juxtaposed realities/are remote and just/the more the image will be strong/two realities that have no relation/cannot be drawn into proximity/usefully/there is not creation of images/and two contrary/realities/are not juxtaposed/they are opposed/an image is not strong/because it is brutal or fantastic/but because the association/of ideas is remote/remote, and just.)

The image is a creation of the mind produced through the juxtaposition of distant realities that resonate with each other. Far from opposing each other, these realities are in a relation that produces an image. The image is neither a representation nor simply a metaphor.

What kind of juxtapositions do we find in *JLG/JLG*, and what kinds of realities are juxtaposed to create images? We have already seen how in his portrait, Godard juxtaposes shots of the pages of a notebook, a kind of journal, with others taken in or around his own house. Yet both of these sets also alternate with a series of landscapes. Given the state of the world Godard describes and the fact that the portrait is under the sign of mourning we are not surprised to find shots of winter landscapes taken of and around Lake Geneva. Shots of the lake in front of his house alternating with others of the woods above, on the slopes of the Jura, are inserted in the film without seeming narrative continuity. The accompanying soundtrack is used less to underline the image than to introduce a tension, such as when the sound of waves hitting a dock becomes distorted to simulate the sound of a violent explosion, a process familiar to viewers of Godard's films. In *Two or Three Things I Know about Her* (1966), Godard uses sound to simulate explosions in a scene where the husband of Juliette and a friend are listening to a short wave radio. Here, by contrast, shots of landscapes with at times rough at others calm waters featuring the Jura mountains and the Savoy Alps in the background, often shrouded in clouds, alternate with snowy forest roads rutted with dark tire tracks that disappear around a bend and, of which, we are told that they "lead nowhere." A shot of a pristine white forest scene defined by a barely visible, snow-covered path with no tracks recurs several times in the second half of the film in order, it seems, to be juxtaposed to the white pages. At the end, Godard introduces a couple of shots of green fields that, especially in the last scene suggest, perhaps, death and rebirth. The landscapes in *JLG/JLG* are mainly deserted except for one each of the first two series – the water and the fields/forest – in which Godard himself appears in such a way as to frame the physical and mental journey in his auto-portrait with irony.

Unlike those in many narrative films today, the shots of landscapes are not intended to sell tourism. Colorful use of landscapes and cityscapes, from Montana

to Hawaii, from Paris to Rome, and the list goes on, is standard fare today in many films. The respective tourist offices are often thanked in the credits perhaps less for contributing money than for facilitating the shooting of the film on location. In turn, the city officials expect spectators to come and visit the site. This practice is far from Godard's method or approach. His landscapes are not framed in the usual way with built or natural landmarks in the center. The odd framing and stark beauty of Godard's landscapes are hardly meant to have spectators *voir et visiter*, to see and visit Lake Geneva. The stormy lake whose flotsam washes over pebbled beaches and the wet forest roads and fields are not invitations for a boat ride or leisurely strolls. The watery and muddy conditions of the paths open the possibility for a literal reading of Godard's exclamation: "Ah! Combien sont difficiles les cheminements" (How difficult are our travels/travails). Aside from the two pristine shots of a snowy forest scene, we see mainly grayish colors with splotches of white and black and even with pinkish hues of a sunset. The gray waters, at times stormy, at others calm, translate a somber mood of someone in mourning while the forest paths where the grey turbulent water has been replaced with dark spruces and ruts in a white, melting snow cover invite solitary reflection and meditation. The images of these landscapes would hardly be approved by the Swiss Tourist Office that always features its cherished lake in solid blue under sunny skies, often with the bright red splotch of a proud Swiss flag. The turbulent or frozen, immobile winter landscapes are clearly the expressions of someone with an "exceptional" (in the sense of Godard) artistic intelligence and sensibility.

Well before *JLG/JLG*, Godard had started to insert shots of landscapes in many of his films, such as the ocean in *Prénom: Carmen* (First Name: Carmen]) (1983) or *Soigne ta droite* (Keep your Right Up) (1987). The practice becomes especially insistent in *Je vous salue Marie* (Hail Mary) (1985) where, in accord with a mood, recurring shots of Lake Geneva are framed through the open French doors of Godard's house. Others of lush and deeply colored fields and of the full sun setting over the Jura Mountains alternate with angular shots of the city of Geneva and its train tracks. Again, for Godard, these shots are neither representations nor quite metaphors. They alternate with other series of shots and with the sound track so as to produce *images*.

It is first in a short film, *Letter to Freddy Buache* (1982), that Godard makes a sustained use of this practice while also giving an explanation. Buache, a journalist, well-known film critic and then director of the *cinémathèque* of Switzerland had approached Godard about trying to find someone to make a film for the commemoration of the city of Lausanne's 500th anniversary. In response, Godard who lives near the city, proposed to make the film himself. The documentary, alas, was never released. In the *Letter*, Godard recounts the story of the making of the film and how the city officials had such an adverse reaction to it that they complained of a misuse of funds. Godard's film did not conform to the expectations of the

sanctioned genre of a commemoration film that shows decorous clichéd images of a city, of the kind reproduced on every poster. In Lausanne the genre would have included historic architecture, from the cathedral to the city's old houses in hilly neighborhoods laced with winding streets, without forgetting the sun shining over the lake where white-capped mountains define the horizon in the background. Instead, as Godard explains, he wanted to convey what in the city of Lausanne had affected and touched him.

In the film-letter Godard is seen sitting in front of a vinyl record, playing Ravel's *Bolero*. Godard addresses his friend Buache who is never seen. One of the first shots of the *Letter* is of a scene suffused by light. Taken directly against the light, that is, against the most basic of cinematographic rules, the shot blurs the outline of people and objects. Through the light blotches, the spectator can make out Godard behind a car stopped on the shoulder of a Swiss highway or *autoroute*, talking to a policeman. Staged or not, Godard's voice over talks about the beauty of the light and the fact that the policemen stopped him because he broke the "rule" and there was no *urgence*, or "urgency," a term that in French translates *emergency*. Godard explains that an effect of light lasts only a few seconds and therefore there was *urgence* or "emergency" when recording an exceptional, artistic image. A countryside suffused by a certain light that touches the filmmaker has to be recorded even if it is against Swiss law to stop at this particular time in this place on the side of the highway. From this exceptional "establishing shot" of sorts, Godard will explain how his vision of the city did not impress the officials more interested in representation (that translates into glossy prints) than in "realities" consisting of subjective impressions and moods (translated as color blocks and lines) whose juxtaposition leads to the creation of images. Lamenting not only that cinema is dying but that he is too old, he is past, *passé*, as he puts it during the game of tennis in *JLG/JLG,* Godard details the creative process for images that, for him, render best the city of Lausanne.

To make a film, one has to go to the bottom of things into "realities" that precede ordinary visibility. Rather than on fair weather representations, his recordings are based on affect and sensation. Godard explains the film in terms of light and energy. His film is not *on* but takes off *from* the city. He records the way he feels the city that goes from the green in the hills to the blue of the water by way of the grey of the built city itself. Straight lines and stone surfaces exist only in the city itself. The city for him consists of three shots: the higher, the middle and the lower. The upper shot, near the sky and the lower shot consist of forms and colors. The middle shot is composed of stone and straight lines. The upper and the lower link together and surround the center. The green and the blue pass through the grey of stone and eternity. This kind of documentary, the filmmaker declares, can only be made from a place that one inhabits. Art and place are, perhaps, constitutive of each other. We are reminded of Jean-Luc Nancy who writes that

> To inhabit is necessarily to inhabit a world, that is to say, to have there much more than a place of sojourn: its place, in the strong sense of the term, as that which allows something to properly take place. To take place is to properly arrive and happen [*arriver*]; it is not to "almost" arrive and happen and it is not only "an ordinary occurrence." (Nancy, 2007, 42)

To inhabit, is linked to an ethos, a way of being in the world. In addition to capturing its light and colors, Godard wants to find a rhythm of the place where he lives. Doing so, he focuses on the peripheries more than the center, that is, on the green of the hills beyond the city and the water below. The green of the hills alternates with the blue of the water both seen in full screen rather than as representation of a lake. In between, the city of Lausanne – that Godard claims to know mainly from riding through on a train between Vevey and Geneva – is, for Godard, made of what he calls "solid architecture," a perception that, for him, translates into straight lines taken mainly of modern buildings around the train station. A first series of forms and colors alternates with the angular shots of the city. The latter series of abstract lines is inter-spliced with shots of pedestrians milling about the streets. Their mask-like faces and colors are put in relation with these lines of the streets as well as those of the waves of water and the fields. For Godard then, a film on Lausanne follows the rule of a mental construction of images, that is, of the translation of affect and sensation, or of colors, shapes, lines and montage. Godard is more interested in peripheries, that is, in what is above and below, in the hills and the water, rather than in the center of town. For him the "center" is rendered as a sea of anonymous faces of pedestrians in movement alternating with the rectangular lines of architectural constructions around the train station.

JLG/JLG uses the same themes and techniques. Godard shows the peripheries, that is, the lake "below" and the fields above the house he inhabits. The shots of the lake are hardly those that would make a pretty postcard. There are no landmarks such as (Lord Byron's) Château Chillon romantically cast against waves or other landmarks that serve as the usual centers against the background stage of mountains and lake. Godard provides the spectator with shots of a lake that only a few can recognize.

If Godard's images are the construction of the mind (*l'esprit*), they also rely on sensation, affect and touch. To see is never simply an exercise of recognition. In his auto-portrait, Godard explains visibility by way of Diderot's *Letter on the Blind*. He has a young blind woman whom he hires to help him edit the film ponder:

> Si ma main gauche
> Peut toucher ma main droite
> Pendant qu'elle touche
> Les choses
> La toucher
> En train de toucher

Pourquoi
Touchant la main d'un autre
Ne toucherais-je pas
En elle
Le même pouvoir
d'épouser les choses
que j'ai touché
dans la mienne
or, le domaine
on s'en aperçoit vite
est illimité. (Godard, 1996, 69–70)

(If my left hand / Can touch my right hand / While it touches / Things / The Touch /
As it touches / Why / Touching the hand of another / Wouldn't I touch / In it / The
same power / to espouse the things / that I've touched / In mine / Thus the domain /
We notice quickly / is limitless.)

If to see begins with touch, the visible also penetrates us and constitutes us. It surrounds us and at the same time is in us. Godard by way of the blind woman calls it a "wave" that rises in us: "Si j'ai pu comprendre comment en moi naît cette vague comment le visible qui est là-bas est simultanément mon paysage" (Godard, 1996, 69) (If I can understand how in me this wave is born how the visible that is over there is simultaneously my landscape). The visible is outside but also makes up our own inner *paysage* (Godard, 1996, 71).

Using the "metaphor" of the wave that echoes those of Lake Geneva, Godard explains at length how the visual both traverses and envelops him (Godard, 1996, 70). By way of corollary, the viewer is reminded of Hélène Cixous who spoke of "Writing blind." Here Godard, going through a feminine voice, can be said to record (*enregistrer*) blind. The visual begins at the level of sensation and affect. Rather than apprehend with the eye as it is done in a representational schema, Godard relies on touch. Something touches and penetrates us. As Jean-Luc Nancy again put it elsewhere: "In sensation, there is a simultaneous affirmation of the outside and the inside, of the body and the soul, if you like: I see this green shining in the sunlight, I am in it, I pass into it, I merge with it (. . .)" (Nancy, 2011, 215). And he adds: "'I' become the green of the tree and the sunlight in which 'I' find 'myself' – I sense myself, I feel myself – as I go deeper as I immerse myself in this sensation" (Nancy, 2011, 215). He concludes: "The speaking subject is not content just to speak: he or she also wants to grasp and replay, to intensify the sensation itself. 'This' green becomes a work of painting, or a photo, but it can also switch to a rhythm, a sonority, etc. or become a work of words" (Nancy, 2011, 216–217), to which we can add here, and a work of images or a film. When the sensation becomes reflexive, it translates itself into words or images.

Through touch, that is, through affect and sensation, Godard creates his own artistic world or what he calls, his *pays*, or country. As he puts it further, in *paysage*

there is *pays*" (Godard, 1996, 53). One has both a given and an adoptive country. The adoptive country has to be conquered, "tel ce négatif dont parlait Franz Kafka et qu'il s'agissait de faire, le positif nous ayant été donné (such this negative of which Franz Kafka spoke and what had to be made, the positive having been given to us) (Godard, 1996, 53). The world itself is to be created through words, images or sounds. It is a critique of that which was given, that is, the positive. Rather than represent what preexists, we have to be touched in a certain way. Through reflection, the sensation becomes a sentiment prolonged into images, words and sounds. These images are not really representations of a preexisting reality, rather they are creations from sensations before the visible. They are both as Godard has it, individual and universal (Godard, 1996, 74) and carry with them a certain responsibility. In his portrait, Godard calls on an art that is also an *art de vivre*, a way of seeing the world and one's surroundings, of feeling them and of translating them into a quasi-documentary, or a "docu-fiction" from a place that, in the strong sense of the verb, he inhabits. Art translates sensations into images. Godard focuses on peripheries, that is, on the grey of the lake and the green of the fields. Blocks of color and light are more important than meaning. Art also helps relate to the world in ways other than through simple recognition.

Far from being an autobiography, Godard's portrait in December is not only one of age but also of mood. His is not the story of his life with a beginning, middle and end. Comparatively, again: Hélène Cixous repeatedly deconstructed portrait/*portrait* into *porte*, door, trait, a *trait*, a drawn line, and *porter*, to carry. Hence, perhaps, the ubiquitous presence of doors, windows and even video frames that allows the passage of affect and its translation. When writing about Rembrandt, Cixous notes: "The *camera obscura*, the machine for seeing gives us: photographic visions, from foreground to background. Here [in a painting by Rembrandt]: no objects in the foreground, no fruits. No spools of thread. Here no exterior, nor era, no city. Where does Rembrandt take us? To a foreign land, our own. A foreign land, our other country. He takes us to the Heart" (Cixous, 2000, 5). Similarly for Godard, a sensation, like a wave as he says, is born and communicates itself to him. It creates a foreign land through art (Godard, 1996, 74).

The focus on nature could put Godard on the side of ecology. Yet, if he is interested in broaching the topic of ecology, it is mainly from the point of view of what Nancy might call an *ecotechnie*. His would be a spatial ecology of sorts, an art of living and of inhabiting, of occupying a place. Godard likes certain colors, certain country-sides bathed in a special light because they resonate in him, such as the grey and the green in his auto-portrait. Creating an art of the everyday or a *techne*, he wills to escape the mental and physical compression of contemporary life and consumerism.

By way of affect and the putting in relation of different realities, Godard creates an art that is at the same time an art of the everyday. While grey, white with occasional pink and yellow alternate throughout most of the film in contrast with the dark woods, the last shot is taken in the green hills above the lake and

nearer the sky, in a new periphery that points to a rebirth. In this deep shot in a spring-like landscape we hear Godard's voice-over claiming that he belongs to all humans and that he has to embrace humanity by sacrificing himself for love in a quasi-Paulinian gesture. Through an art born from sensation he overcomes a reigning, oppressive, lethal culture. The perfection of the snow-covered landscape, with in between the green and grey colors, gives way to a final shot in deep focus of a spring-like green landscape dotted with budding trees in the hills above Godard's town. In voiceover, Godard declares, as we hear the sound of the third movement of Beethoven's string quartet No. 15 that the composer had written, after a long illness, with the indications: "with innermost sentiment" (*Mit innigster Empfindung*) and "feeling new strength" (*neue Kraft fühlend*). In this voiceover Godard himself declares that at the end of this enterprise he will finally be able to love and deserve his name, that is, to become *"rien qu'un homme et qui n'en vaut aucun mais qu'aucuns ne valent"* ("just a man and who is not worth any other, but whom no other can equal) (Godard, 1996, 81). Perhaps we prefer the Godard of hard lines and resistance to the one of such a sacrifice. Nonetheless, even though shrouded in mourning, Godard's insistence on inhabiting a world and on finding beauty in everyday life, cast in his appeal to communality without celebrity, will continue to haunt many spectators.

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27

Retrospective Godard

Elisabeth Hodges

Jean-Luc Godard was a no show at the Cannes Film Festival in 2010. Invited there to present his latest film, *Film Socialisme* (Film Socialism), instead, Godard sent a fax to Thierry Frémaux, Cannes' délégué general, that was later reproduced in the newspaper *Libération*,

> Suite à des problèmes de type grec, je ne pourrai être votre obligé à Cannes. Avec le festival, j'irai jusqu'à la mort, mais je ne ferai un pas de plus. Amicalement. Jean-Luc Godard"[1]

> (Following problems of a Greek sort, I cannot be your guest at Cannes. With the festival, I will go until death, but I will not take a step more. In friendship, Jean-Luc Godard.)

He was a no show in both a literal and figurative sense. For other than his film, which ends enigmatically with a title card that reads "NO COMMENT," only his signature and a portrait Godard included in his fax of the Japanese film director, Yasujirô Ozu (1903–1963) appeared in his place. Complaints about his financial straights and a reluctance to show himself both in public and on screen are nothing new in the great, yet enigmatic Swiss director's over 50-year career. His friendship with François Truffaut famously ended, when, in 1973 after years of testing their friendship with constant demands for money to finance his films, Godard demanded that Truffaut "make amends" for his film "La Nuit Américaine" (Day for Night) by putting up money for Godard to make a film in response.[2] Yet, the question remains, why the elaborate refusal to show himself and does Godard's reluctance to appear bear something in common with his recent work, which critics largely

characterize as part of a melancholic and pessimistic turn in the famous New Wave director's career.[3]

Jean-Luc Godard's films of the last 20 years seem born out of the director's sustained mourning for the loss of History. In stark contrast to the playful dissidence of his early work in the 1960s and the political films of the 1970s–1980s (what critics refer to as his Maoist period), Godard's later films, from the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) (1988–1989, 1997–1998) to *Notre musique* (Our Music) (2004) and more recently *Film Socialisme* (2010) signal a shift to a retrospective quality in his films. Retrospection, generally speaking, involves the idea of a return to past and is often associated, as in the case of art, with the idea of an ending that brings with it a sense of the complete (finished) work of an artist and provides a narrative of the evolution of their work in a teleological framework. Godard's later films seem to participate in a broader move to reexamine and reconfigure the cultural artifacts of the past made notable by historical projects like Pierre Nora's monumental, *Lieux de mémoire* (Places of memory) project (1984–1992), or, similarly, efforts in fiction to reconcile the often traumatic freight of the past in works like Patrick Modiano's *Dora Bruder* (1997) or, more recently, Jonathan Littell's *Les Bieveillantes* (2006). It is as if one of the great dilemmas of the late twentieth century is how to understand (and possibly reconcile) this melancholic turn to the past as a symptom of a broader historical malaise that has unsettled the potential of art to work with, work through, or understand the past, and especially the extreme violence of the past century.

For Godard, this malaise characterizes the opening of *Notre musique* which begins with a six minute-long sequence including the title credits featuring a heterogeneous assemblage of digital overprints of newsreel, stock footage, and fiction film. Divided into three Dantesque realms, (the film moves from Hell through Purgatory and into Godard's interpretation of Paradise), *Notre musique* implicitly questions the ethics of the image, its power to convey meaning, as it represents the complicity of filmic images in the long history of humanity imagined as a barbaric parable of war. Like Jacques Rancière, Godard seems to be questioning the future and the ethics of the image at an historical moment when both the philosopher and the filmmaker have insisted that art must make stark political choices.[4]

Godard's retrospective turn, however, expresses itself quite differently in *JLG/JLG. Autoportrait de décembre* (JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December) (1995), the film I'd like to consider for this chapter. Originally commissioned in 1993 by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Godard was to create a film to honor the centennial of the invention of the cinema.[5] Godard had already been working off and on on the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* project, a four-hour video in eight parts about the history of cinema made for French television finally released in 1997. *JLG/JLG* was starkly different from this other project in a number of ways. It was filmed on location in Godard's home and film studio in Rolle, Switzerland during the winter of 1993–1994 and is filmed in 35-millimeter print, not digital video, a

technology Godard had used for the *Histoire(s) du cinema* project. Where elsewhere in his films of the period, the reuse of found images and stock footage dislodged from their original context and temporality characterizes Godard's strategy for expressing the past in the rhetorical mode of retrospection, *JLG/JLG* entails a retrospective look designed to reveal both the ontological self of cinema roughly one hundred years after its invention and Godard's understanding of his own cinematic self-image toward the end of his life. For unlike his *non-appearance* at Cannes in 2010, Godard *appears* in *JLG/JLG. Autoportrait de décembre* as if in in a sustained encounter with an image of himself as well as with other "images" of cherished paintings, iconic films, and texts that make up what we might understand in terms akin to Michel de Montaigne's claim to be the matter of his own creative work, "Je suis moy-mesme la matière de mon livre" (I am myself the matter of my book), an expression of consubstantiality between the book, the film, and the self. Similar to Agnès Varda's *Les Plages d'Agnès* (The Beaches of Agnès) (2008), this retrospective turn functions almost as a form of epitaph, as a means to preserve their image and memories in a sort of cinematic crypt.[6] For Abraham and Torok (2009), the crypt is a space in which an experience that cannot be spoken is buried, and thus is inadmissible in the work of mourning since it cannot be spoken as a loss. While both films speak directly of loss, the traumatic event both filmmakers appear to encrypt is contained in a cinematographic prolepsis that gestures toward their own death. If these filmic crypts function as a place inside the self where the loss that cannot be spoken (or shown because it has not yet come to pass) is preserved, then how does retrospection translate Godard's mourning for a self he has not yet lost? If his self-identity is one that is always already disappearing obscured, replaced, or a no show, how then does Godard appear, when he does so very rarely on screen, and what are the conditions of such an appearance.

Divided Portraits

JLG/JLG opens with the shrill extra-diegetic ring of an unseen telephone over a black screen. A call that, in the second shot, seems to hearken to an elsewhere that Godard implicitly links to the film's production value as a handwritten title card appears on screen. The page of the notebook turns to reveal the familiar lined pages of a schoolboy's notebook, an association reinforced by the slow layering in of a soundtrack of children playing outside at a unknown distance. A third cut occurs when the page turns in order to reveal the film's title and author's initials, as two series of the letters JLG appear written in cursive hand one on top of the other. This pairing of the film's subject with its author, of its signifier with the referent, belies one of a series of coincidences Godard establishes throughout the film, namely, the doubling and division of his self-portrait. The director's

signature signals a division that will be maintained throughout the film, for the densely elusive self-portrait will always be multiple, one that is not one, but divided by the dual presence of Godard in a sustained encouter with earlier iterations of himself. A productive division between himself at one time and another, an encounter he wishes to create between himself, his films, and his thought at a given time, which like the measure one can imply in the ruled and repeated lines of the notebook, implies two temporalities, two *JLGs* enthralled in a mirrored encounter with one another.

The next cut repeats this reckoning of Godard's past and present selves introduced in the title card. Godard opens with a medium shot of an interior space. We see the wall of a room partially obscured by distinctive shadows while the cool wintery light illuminates the room partially. A closet door is left ajar to the right of the screen dividing this side of the image like the cells of a film strip, the darkened shelves of an empty closet, like a black screen, could bear the potential for another set of images, other stories contained in frames in the rhetoric of cinematographic language. One of the only distinguishable features of the shot aside from the objects adorning the top of a marble mantle is the shadow of an arm that extends to the right of the frame and slowly covers over a digitally altered photograph of a young boy on the mantle (Figure 27.1). As the camera zooms slowly in on the photograph, we distinguish other objects that emerge from within the shadowy *mise-en-scène*; a duck decoy to the left, and a handwritten manuscript framed in a matte on an easel, the photograph, and an ashtray, as the figure whose shadow covers these objects and the left side of the frame moves in to reveal two distinctive arms, the one human, the other the mechanical arm of a digital camera on a tripod the cameraman in silhouette controls.

The strains of a cello color the scene much in the same way as the cameraman's shadow with a melancholic hue. Extra-diegetic sound cues previously attributed

Figure 27.1   Screen capture from JLG/JLG. *Autoportrait de décembre* (JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1995), produced by Gaumont.

to the first few shots (children at play, the telephone, the lone cry of a distant bird) largely disappear as Godard presents us with an encounter between an image of his present self cast in shadow over a digitally altered photograph of the same self as a child, one of the only images of Godard as a child to have surfaced. JLG-child is mediated by two screens that signal two different temporalities Godard sutures together in his self-portrait, the one mediated through the digital lens of the director's December gaze upon a portrait taken by another lens in another time, over 60 years prior. As the cameraman leans in to the viewfinder, he shows us a reflection of the camera's gaze directed on these dual selves, the self in shadow seems to announce a Godard who was, as the director claims only a few minutes later in the same sequence, "déjà en deuil de moi-même, mon propre et unique compagne . . . Et je me doutais que l'âme avait trébuché sur le corps et qu'elle était repartie en oubliant de lui tendre la main" (I was already mourning myself, my lone and unique companion . . . I suspected that the soul had stumbled on the body and that it set off again forgetting to extend a hand to the body).[7] What remains after the soul wanders off, forgetting its corporeality, its grounding in an embodied form of the real, seems akin to what Godard claims to already mourn, a loss predicated by the dispersion of a fantasy of a unified self, and the denial of the camera's transivity, its capacity to bring together the subject and object *JLG/JLG*, Godard today in a sustained encounter with his earlier other self. While there is no death here, nor is there the loss that usually precedes mourning, there is an acute absence, an incommensurate gap that seems to rehearse an almost obsessional treatment of the self as a reflection of an irreconcilable division between the image and its subject.

Thierry Jousse, a filmmaker and the editor-in-chief of *Cahiers du cinema* (1991–1996) described the film as,

> [. . .] un chant funèbre, quelque part entre un deuil revendiqué et une mort introuvable. [. . .] Un autoportrait, donc *pas une autobiographie.* Un genre peu cinématographique, un genre de retour sur soir animé par un mouvement interne difficile à saisir [. . .]. Reconstruction d'un cosmos intime, avec ses démons familiers et ses gestes domestiques. Le peintre dans son atelier et l'homme dans son intimité, l'acheminement vers la parole et la fragilité du geste. Comme une esthétique de la solitude, une sorte de retrait modeste sans rien de hautain. (Jousse, 1995, 36)

> (a dirge, somewhere between willful mourning and an elusive death [. . .] a self-portrait, thus, *not an autobiography*. A genre that is hardly cinematographic, a genre about the turn to the self animated by an internal movement difficult to ascertain [. . .] The reconstruction of an intimate cosmos with its familiar demons and its domestic gestures. The painter in his studio and the man in his intimacy, the path to the word and the fragility of the gesture. Like an aesthetics of solitude, a sort of modest retreat with nothing haughty about it.)

Jousse's description, while accurate, suggests a reading of the film as born out of Godard's death drive, if death is understood as an event, a being-there-in-the

image, a showing up onscreen as the subject and self collapse into one another in the work of Godard's self-portraiture. As such, we might understand Godard's mourning as a loss that signals an underlying tension about the representational limits of the image the director relentlessly tests by layering in and over different strata of signification (sound-image-text) that, when brought together, are designed to suggest a self-portrait, or a series of self-portraits in *JLG/JLG*. Like the schoolboy's handwritten ledger intercut throughout the opening sequence, which evokes the director's childhood and the silent rhetoric of origins of the cinema itself, Godard's retrospection is a product of an entirely artificial apparatus through which the director creates his *autoportrait*. An initial sleight of hand references the Revolutionary calendar, "frimaire (November), brumaire (October), vendémiaire (September)," then, rather than move forward, teleologically, in tandem with the *real* mouvement of time, these intertitles turn instead to the past, moving backward in time and eventually into objects and citations (chambre noir, lanterne magique, Sein unt Zeit) while in voice-over Godard evokes the constructed nature of the work at hand, an exercise in the artifice (and magic) of the cinema.

> Exercice 174. Procéder. La distribution des rôles. Commencer les répétitions. Résoudre les problèmes de mise-en-scène. Régler soigneusement les entrées et les sorties. Apprendre son rôle par cœur. Travailler à améliorer son interprétation. Entrer dans la peau de son personnage.[8]

> (Exercise 174. Begin. The distribution of roles. Start rehearsals. Resolve problems of mise-en-scène. Carefully organize entrances and exits. Learn one's role by heart. Work to improve one's interpretation. Enter into the skin of one's character.)

As the voice-over hesitates, so does the temporal framework of the film, which lurches backward in time and uncomfortably through the empty rooms and landscapes that clutter a house full of memory and sound images, the bric à brac of the elderly Godard's mind translated onto the screen.

JLG/JLG is not a narrative film, rather it is as a densely "layered aural palimpsest," a labyrinth of sound fragments detached from their original contexts and layered over 35 mm images of a solitary Godard sitting alone in his dimly lit apartment reading and writing or wandering alone along the shores of lake Geneva, like Rousseau's solitary walker.[9] The aphorisms read or dubbed in voice-over by the filmmaker hint at the affective underpinnings in the film's otherwise wintery melancholic feel.[10] This collage of text-image-sound drawn from philosophers, painters, and writers Godard admires (he cites Hegel, Stendhal, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Diderot, includes film soundtracks from Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954) Rossellini, Vigo, and Melville and paintings, largely portraits, of courtesans by Velâzquez, Boucher, Fragonard, Courbet, and Manet), functions as *image-affection*, or affection-images, which in Gilles Deleuze's taxonomy of the cinema, are most often associated with the close-up and found the sensory rhetoric of cinematographic language along with "action" and "perception"

images.[11] For Godard, the screen becomes a shared space on which he projects these affection-images, a collection of persons, things, and words he loves as a means to disperse palpable images of the self.

Framing Solitude

Much of *JLG/JLG* is characterized by a tension that pivots between vacancy and presence, between representations of emptyness, like the vacant shelves in the opening sequence of the film that may point to the loss Godard claims to already be mourning, yet at the same time, the film's visually sparse environment is cluttered with endless and often decontextualized citations. It is not, as the director explains, necessarily death that he mourns, for that has not yet come, but perhaps it is a hidden anxiety about emptiness itself, about the director's aethsetic dilemma when faced with an empty frame, with these cinematic crypts which, like Mallarmé's *page blanche*, are nervously awaiting signification. These empty rooms begin, like the opening shots, with an image shrouded in darkness. The left side of the frame is largely obscured by shadow, which draws the eye to the right of the shot toward a lone chair at a table in the distance one sees through another frame, a doorway that emphasizes its distance, difference, and isolation (Figure 27.2). An open window creates a third interior frame in the shot and provides us with a restricted glimpse of white shutters against a muted blue building across the street. In multiplying these interior framing effects, Godard amplifies their separation, which is mirrored in another shot later in the same sequence. Again, interior framing takes place on the right side of the frame and an empty chair

Figure 27.2   Screen capture from JLG/JLG. *Autoportrait de décembre* (JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1995), produced by Gaumont.

appears next to a window, as if a metaphorical screen to an elsewhere, to an expansive openness that while closed (all the windows on the building opposite are closed and the shades drawn), the camera cannot or will not, move into, as if paralyzed in its isolation. The effect of these multiple screens remind us that we are always already seeing through another's lens in the cinema. Godard's emphasis on framing here also recalls the visual stylistics of the long interior sequence in his earlier masterpiece, *Le mépris* (Contempt) (1963), where a couple falls out of love divided on the one hand, by their non-communication, and on the other, by a series of literal divisions Godard inserts constantly throughout the sequence to divide the couple.

Perhaps, we should read *JLG/JLG* in a similar vein, as a filmic parable about Godard's division from his self and the subsequent mourning of a loss that is literally screened through transparent and reflective surfaces that appear throughout the film. By first multiplying interior framing devices, as we have seen, Godard reinforces the solitary qualities of his self-portrait. On screen he is alone, he becomes an image, like the portrait of himself as a young boy, altered by a representational medium that has nonetheless defined his creative work for a lifetime. By adding a series of screens, whether reflective surfaces or the actual screen of a small digital camera set atop the lonely table and whose gaze is fixed on the closed window across the way, Godard doubles and divides the shot into two separate screens brought together, both of which point to a form of loss akin to that which the director may well be mourning. For the image is a form of death, a loss of an authenticy of presence one could attribute to the lamp in the foreground of the image, strangely out of focus, but still providing sufficient light for its double to be reflected on the glass door. It is almost as if Godard is grieving the separation of things from their image, of the divided nature of signs and referents allegorized in the Platonic cave. These doubles, whether screens, portraits, images, or texts circulate in the self-referential framework of *JLG/JLG* and reflect, I think, a tremendous ambivalence about images and their ability to provide an image the self. Encased in glass, perceived through a series of other screens, shown out of context and with an almost polyphonic voice and text-over, perhaps all we really have at the end of *JLG/JLG* is, as Godard's has famously quipped elsewhere is *juste une image*, and not an *image juste*, an image that might be aedquate to representing the self. But if the image is the medium and the mode chosen by the director to show himself after a long absence from the screen, how might we undestand the inherent ambivalence Godard's inflects throughout his cinematic self-portrait?

A possible response may be found in the last sequence, where we see an image of Godard watching two screens (Figure 27.3). The middle ground is in focus and both screens roll a series of film fragments. An electronic beep marks interior cuts (a rude approximation of montage) on the two screens as the director appears to fast forward through clips while he defines the image in a voice-over occasionally interrupted by diegetic sound emanting from the clips.

Figure 27.3   Screen capture from JLG/JLG. *Autoportrait de décembre* (JLG/JLG: Self-Portrait in December) directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1995), produced by Gaumont.

> L'image est une création pure de l'esprit, elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées. Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et *justes*, plus l'image sera forte. [. . .] Une image n'est pas forte parce qu'elle est brutale ou fantastique mais parce que l'association des idées est lointaine. Lointaine et *juste*.[12]

> (The image is a pure creation of the mind, it cannot be born from a comparison but rather from drawing together of two realities, more or less distant. The more the ties between these two realities brought together are distant and *just*, the stronger the image will be. [. . .]An image isn't strong because it's brutal or fantastic but because the association of ideas is distant. Distant and *just*.) (My emphasis)

This distance and separation we see on screen here and elsewhere in the film is thus perhaps a means to understand Godard's conception of what makes an image strong. In the assimilation on screen of multiple and discrete realities, of the film-maker in his youth and today, of the texts and images that shaped him then and now, he looks not so much in an effort to nostalgically reconcile the past with the present tense of his self-portrait, but rather to bring together in order to create something entirely new, a retrospective way of looking unmoored from its ties to the past, and instead bound to the event of an encounter with itself.

When Michel de Montaigne wrote "Je veus qu'on m'y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans contention et artifice car c'est moy que je peins" (I want to be seen here in my simple, natural and ordinary, way without straining or artifice as it is myself that I portray) he initiated a new genre of self-representation, the essay, which ever since has served writers as the preeminent space for the representation of self-reflexive intimate thought.[13] At the heart of perhaps one of the most familiar citations by this great sixteenth century author,

is the notion that the particular genre of the self-portrait is the most authentic way to represent the self. As a genre, the self-portrait brings together two different temporalities; the present tense of creative production of the hand of an author or artist who encounters the image formed of the self, and the image itself, which has a history and a place in time.

Clearly, *JLG/JLG. Autoportrait de décembre* participates in this longstanding tradition of the self-portrait, yet with a difference. Godard's self-portrait draws attention to the divided nature of a genre in which author, artist, and self appear in an uncanny encounter with their own representation. Unlike Montaigne, who exhilarates in the consubstantiality of the book, Godard is a far more reluctant painter of the self, insofar as he inflects the film with loss and mourning for a screen-self that will perhaps never coincide with the real and that perhaps will serve as an insufficient epitaph for the director's *oeuvre* and for his cinematographic legacy.

Notes

1   *"A Cannes, Godard fait défection"* (In Cannes, Godard Defected), *Libération*, May 16, 2010. All translations from French are my own.
2   Brody (2008a, 63).
3   For more on Godard's life and films, see MacCabe (2003), De Baecque (2010), and Brody's (2008b).
4   Rancière (2003). See, also, Rancière's recent reading of Godard's political cinematography in *"Notre musique"* in Rancière (2011, 125–126).
5   Antoine de Baecque in extra features on *JLG/JLG. Autoportrait de décembre* DVD (Godard, 1995).
6   See Abraham and Torok (2009).
7   Godard (1996, 14).
8   Godard (1996, 7–8).
9   Alter (2000, 82).
10 Alter (2000, 82).
11 Deleuze (1986, especially 87–101).
12 Godard (1996, 22–23).
13 Montaigne (1992, vol. 1, 3).

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"An Accurate Description of What Has Never Occurred"

History, Virtuality, and Fiction in Godard

Scott Durham

In *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) (1988–1998), Godard makes clear from the outset that the history of cinema cannot be recounted as a single narrative. It must, Godard insists, be written in the plural: "histoire du cinéma, avec un s." This is first of all because cinematic history begins and ends at points where multiple archival series meet, while their own ends and origins lie elsewhere. Painting, writing, sound, photography, television: all are like so many strata in which the cinema must be situated archaeologically, as a form encompassing multiple strands and temporalities, which sometimes converge and sometimes diverge from one another.[1] It is also because this history must include all the paths not taken: for example, "the stories of all the films that were never made." But it is above all because the powers inherent in cinema as a medium – of which projection and montage are privileged here – produce different effects over the course of the history of cinema than they will after that history is over.

In *Histoire(s)* and his related works of the 1990s, Godard will thus not only recount the actuality of cinema – what film effectively was, in the successive moments of its history – but will also bring before us the virtual potentialities that haunted that history from the beginning. That is why Godard himself also plays more than one role, appearing sometimes as a narrator and witness of film history, who can recount its life and death, and sometimes as a visionary or medium, conjuring up the memory, now that the history of cinema is over, of what it failed

to become. This emphasis on what one might, in Deleuzian terms, describe as a virtual dimension of film that doubles film history, endows *Histoire(s) du cinéma* with an undeniably fictive character. It is, as Godard tells us in *Allemagne 90 neuf zero* (Germany Year 90 Nine Zero) (1991), "between two aleatory truths, that of the document and that of fiction," but in a very special sense. Fiction here is an expression of the real powers of cinema to become something different from what it has been historically – potentialities which are still available today, if only as part of a different history.

The paradoxes of recounting history in this fictive mode are perhaps best summed up in Godard's appropriation of Oscar Wilde: "To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is the task of the historian."[2] Godard's narration of that history is thus not merely memory. It is also creation: it is memory *as* creation. It is less the fictive memory of a past that never was, than the memory of a future, in which the heretofore unactualized powers of cinema return in another form. If Godard's retelling of film history must be viewed as being in some sense a fiction, this is less a matter of a falsification of history than of a narration of history conceived as an expression of what Gilles Deleuze has called "the powers of the false" – powers of metamorphosis which, precisely because they were not yet thinkable within the actuality of any historical present, can only return in the form of fiction.[3]

The relationship of Godard's staging of cinematic history to that of Deleuze is, however, far from simple. Godard – who keeps faith in his own way with the Deleuzian imperative that art and thought must be "resistance to the present" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, 108) – is more contestatory in his approach to the history of cinematic practice than is Deleuze. Deleuze, rather than reading films as interventions in their situations, extracts from the work of each great auteur the cinematic concepts of which he offers a taxonomy, according to the ways in which they permit us to think the relation of the actual to the virtual. Thus he insists that he is neither writing a history of film nor engaging in polemics on the politics of cinematic form. "The cinema is always as perfect as it can be, taking into account the images and signs which it invents and which it has at its disposal at a given moment".[4] To be sure, Deleuze offers a periodizing hypothesis: the period after the war produces a crisis of the movement-image, thus bringing to the forefront potentialities of the cinematic image that had previously remained virtual and undeveloped. But, for Deleuze, the post-war crisis of the movement-image does not determine the forms of the cinema that follows. It serves, rather, as the environmental trigger for the time-image's mutations.

Things are quite different in Godard, where the affirmation of the powers of cinema begins with a critique of cinematic history. In Godard, it is against its historical actuality that cinema's unactualized powers are affirmed as powers of the false. In his works of the 1990s, Godard, in contrast with Deleuze, is thus not content to offer an image of thought that actually existing film is supposed to have

perfected. Rather, he produces the memory of the virtual, not only as the unthought of the cinema of movement, but as what the history of cinema has excluded or repressed. For in Godard, to reverse Deleuze's formula, the cinema appears as never having been as perfect as it should have been, "taking into account the images and signs which it invented and which it had at its disposal at a given moment." If the cinema was always haunted by certain potentialities, it is because they were both what it should have sought from the beginning and what it could not yet bring itself to think, because of the political, cultural and esthetic constraints within which its powers were deployed. In short, the history of cinema is first of all the history of its failure to embrace its own powers of thought, and the memory of cinema is the memory of the resistance of cinema to the forms and practices that falsified and contained them. That is why film, for Godard, can only live to the extent to which it outlives its history, as the posthumous memory of what it has never been, of what it may be in the process of becoming. That is also why there can be no real creation within film that is not at the same time resistance to the history of cinema, just as there can be no memory of film which is not at the same time esthetic creation.

Stories of Cinema: Parodic Figures of the Dialectic

The necessity of this relationship of critique and resistance to creation is articulated in Godard through the interplay of different stagings of cinematic history and memory, each of which gives rise to a different way of thinking the relationship of historical document to the powers mobilized by cinematic fiction. Particularly important for thinking the disparity between cinema's potential and its actuality are those fictions that dramatize the different uses of two constituent powers of cinema – projection and montage – over the course of cinematic history and after that history is over. We will thus begin by focusing on two narratives in the early chapters of *Histoire(s)* representing cinema, the medium whose history would seem to be coterminous with that of the twentieth century, as having projected its own task as that of resolving the problems inherited from the political, esthetic and philosophical culture of the nineteenth. The cinema, for Godard, was essentially "a nineteenth-century matter that was resolved in the twentieth century." *Histoire(s) du cinema* elaborates this aphoristic observation by dramatizing how film's interpretation of its own powers of montage and projection realized, in the twentieth century, the images of the dialectical thought that were its nineteenth-century inheritance. In one such fiction, projection aims to reconcile the desires of a subject with the historical world in which it seeks its objects, a movement through which the "petite histoire" of the individual would seek its truth by writing itself into the "grande histoire" of nations and collectives. In

another, montage is placed at the service of state-sanctioned collective narratives that recount history as the dialectical unfolding of the truth of founding national myths through the actual histories of nations and peoples.[5]

One strategy pursued by Godard in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* will thus be to produce, in broad satiric strokes, a series of highly compressed narratives of these ways of imagining history in order to show us how they work and how they fail. Godard thus performs a parodic resurrection of what, in Deleuzian terms, we might call their "image of thought." For example, Godard stages the history of projection through an extended reading of Baudelaire's seminal poem *Le Voyage* in light of the dialectical problem of reconciling an infinite desire with the world of its objects. "To a child in love with maps and prints, / The universe is in scale with his vast appetite." The narrator of the poem exults in projecting a phantasmagoria of exotic landscapes and fabulous possessions, "whose fairy pomp would be a ruinous dream for your bankers," and whose mythic proportions (to cite the epigraph of *Le Mépris* (Contempt) (1963))[6] "correspond" to his or her "vast appetite". This is a first sense in which Baudelaire's poem anticipates the history of cinema as (in Godard's words) "bigger than the others because it's projected," whereas "the other histories can only be reduced."

But such stories of projection – whose protagonists, "hearts swollen with rancor and bitter desires . . . [Rock their] infinity on the finite seas" – inevitably lead to disillusion with the finitude of the actual images and objects composing the historical world onto which these infinite desires are projected. Once possessed, those objects, like the world in which they were once sought, appear diminished (as Godard earlier says of unprojected televisual images) "to Tom Thumb scale": "Ah! How big the world is under the lights! In the eyes of remembrance how small is the world!" Godard elaborates this dialectic through a succession of dazzling and melancholic images from the works of modernist painters and their cinematic successors which appear, through his brilliant use of superimposition, as visions projected by the actress (a Renoiresque Julie Delpy) who plays the reader of the poem.[7] Cinematic projection – in both its splendor and its misery – here projects the contradictions of Baudelairean modernism.

It is also as a fiction of projection that Godard paints his darkly comic portrait of a solitary and embittered Howard Hughes. Hughes initially appears as the film-maker and aviator who sees the map of the world as a screen upon which to project his "vast appetites." One text, superimposed on images evoking Hughes's career as an aviator (and quickly followed by a tommy-gunning Paul Muni from Hughes's production of *Scarface* (1932) alternating rapidly with newsreel footage of Hughes's plane flying over New York), says it all: "Je vais écrire mon nom partout" (I'll write my name everywhere). And if Hughes's feats of aviation provide his narrative with a mythic content, combining the type of the handsome aviator with that of the captain of industry, film plays the crucial mediating role as the apparatus ("une belle machine à écrire" (a beautiful typewriter)) which would seem to make it possible to rewrite the history of the century as the

progressive fulfillment, in an ever-widening series of projections, of one exemplary individual's fantasies of conquest and possession.

But Hughes's story is also exemplary in another way: in that the dream of conquest that it projects ultimately comes to naught, as he winds up (to cite another poem of Baudelaire) "like the king of a rainy country, / Rich, but impotent"[8] in the isolation of his Las Vegas hotel suite. Godard's Hughes ends his days in the confinement of his last projection room mad and alone, projecting his impotent rage toward the lost objects whose images he obsessively rescreens. This narrative of projection culminates in a sequence where, superimposed on a caricature of a cadaverous and embittered Hughes, floats a projection of *Gilda*'s Rita Hayworth (1946), whose bewitching image, appearing under the sign of *Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1922), is then cruelly juxtaposed, in Hughes' retrospective fantasy projection, with that of the old woman burned as a witch in Dreyer's *Day of Wrath* (1943). The arc of Godard's story of Hughes – from the swashbuckling images of his younger self projected across the world-historical vistas of his conquest, to a private domain, cut off from history, where, like a television viewer, he can only rescreen diminished images in which he no longer believes – thus ends in a sterile repetition of the same impasse as the dialectic of projection anticipated in the nineteeenth century by Baudelaire's *Voyage*. For Hughes's "bitter desires," while at first seeming to project an infinite horizon, find their truth in the isolation of a subject who ends his life alone with the reproductions of his past projections: "Bitter knowledge derived from the voyage! / The world, monotonous and small, today, / Yesterday, tomorrow, always shows us our image: / An oasis of horror in a desert of boredom!"

Meanwhile, there is another dialectical fiction that is centered less on the projection of the individual's "petite histoire" onto the world's screen than on the "grande histoire" of cinema as an institution intimately bound up with the histories of nations themselves. To be sure, this history of collectives begins (like that of Hughes) as the story of an exceptional individual: that of Irving Thalberg, the "boy wonder" and "last tycoon" of Hollywood legend, portrayed by Godard as Hollywood's "founding father," who, until his tragic early death, was alone capable of overseeing all the films being made in MGM's vast studio in the most minute detail. Singular as he was as an individual, however, Thalberg figures in Godard's narrative as the unwitting agent of social and historical forces that transcend him: "And it had to be that this history would go this way – a young body, fragile and beautiful, as Scott Fitzgerald describes it – in order for that to come into existence. . . . that: the power of Hollywood." This power is first that of the studio system, "the genius of the system" that Thalberg's individual genius helped create, although it will outlive him. But this power is also inseparable in Godard's narrative from that of expanding American capital and empire: "the power of Babylon." America's "dream factory," by projecting a populist version of Hughes' dreams of global possession in spectacular form ("The world for a nickel!"), serves as the tip of the spear for the penetration of international markets by American

products. Whence the slogan, oft-cited in Godard's late works, of Hollywood's early allies in Washington: "Trade follows films."[9]

This leads us to our second dialectical fiction, where the power of Hollywood's dream factory is matched against an antagonist in a mock-epic battle – announced by the title "Tempête sur le cinéma" (Tempest Over the Cinema) (superimposed over a shot from Pudovkin's *Storm Over Asia* (1928)). It opposes the rival visions and founding myths of American and Soviet cinema – which, as Eisenstein would be the first to remind us, are inseparable both from different approaches to montage and cinematic form, and from opposing visions of society and history. Here, Godard will explore how the history of film can be narrated as an "art of the state" consubstantial with the history of the twentieth century, both in the narrower sense that the film industry serves as a political instrument, and in the broader sense that film weaves relations between collective dreams or concepts of the social on the one hand and the actuality of a particular collective on the other. In this case, the populist promise of "the world for a nickel" will confront, in a clash of images worthy of Eisenstein, the dream of socialism, where the collective is not so much promised the possession of a world projected by the cinematic spectacle, as it is offered the possibility of knowing itself in the world it both produces and inhabits, as at once object and subject of history.

In Godard's montage, images figuring the utopian promise of revolution are juxtaposed, not only with archival footage documenting the decadence and barbarity of czarism, but also with images evoking post-revolutionary terror, against which the potential truth of those same utopian claims are measured. The relationship between them is suggested by a classic Godardian play on words: "histoire(s) du cinéma: actualité de l'histoire, histoire de l'actualité." "Actualité de l'histoire" can be translated as "actuality of history," but also as "actuality of the story"; "histoire de l'actualité" as "history of the newsreel," but also as "the story of actualities." The problem of Soviet film as "cinema truth" (as announced by the intertitle "Kino Pravda") is thus staged by Godard as that of a montage capable of making visible the dialectical interweaving of the relations between these opposing terms, especially between the great narratives and ideas of History ("la grande histoire") and their historical actualities and national narratives. The story of Hollywood's struggle with Soviet cinema – figured at the end of the sequence as a struggle between two comically incommensurate founding fathers, Lenin and Thalberg – takes place in the movement between these apparently polar opposites: actual and ideal, newsreel and legend, documentary and fiction. It is, from this perspective, only through the movement between these terms that either of them can lay claim to being true. In other words, while only those actualities that realize and develop a dream, idea, or story are grounded in the truth, the value of that same dream, idea, or story is measured by its power of actualization.[10]

But, in a third moment of this sequence, Godard suggests that this dialectical way of measuring truth has itself been surpassed by historical actuality. This is no

doubt in part, as the sequence reminds us, because Soviet film, despite the utopian impulses it mobilizes (underscored in Godard's remix by close-ups, in which the radiant smiles of the actors seem to express, not an individual and particular happiness, but the promise of happiness in its as-yet-unrealized and absolute form), is too encumbered by the grim actuality of war, repression, and "primitive socialist accumulation" to offer a real alternative to the capitalist society it critiques. But if the dialectic of utopian dream and actuality in history is seen to fail in this sequence, it is less because of specific historical obstacles than because the movement of history itself has ceased to be narratable in dialectical terms.

This end of the dialectic is allegorized in a series of images, ironically recalling Vertov's *Three Songs About Lenin* (1934), where we see not only that the real factories (of which the dead leader, recumbent in eternal sleep, seems at first to dream under the inscription "usine") have been out-produced by American dream factories, but that the founder of the Soviet state himself no longer appears to be dreaming of working class subjectivity, but of stardom in America.[11] For the image of Lenin dreaming ("il faut rêver") on his catafalque, after some intervening dream images drawn from Hollywood and Soviet film, soon gives way to that of another recumbent figure, his American dream double: a bare-breasted prospective Hollywood starlet on a bed of dollars, with "rêver" followed by "make me a star" superimposed – an image which then rapidly alternates with the marquee of Grauman's Chinese Theatre, advertising MGM's all-star *Hollywood Revue* (1929). The Soviet dream, ultimately unable to compete with the American one, has seemingly been lured into the latter's terrain, where it is no longer the collective that dreams of revolutionary subjectivity through its leader, but Hollywood that dreams through the individual spectator, whose pursuit of happiness, now divorced, like that of Hughes, from any collective project, can itself be consecrated as collective myth.

The ultimate triumph of this myth ("the world for a nickel!") over its communist rival is confirmed at the end of the sequence by the rhythmic pulsing of Thalberg's image in place of the lion at the center of MGM's trademark, signaling Thalberg's victory over Lenin like the jackpot on a slot machine. The dialectical truth claims that might have been made for Soviet cinema are trumped by the superior performative effects of truth later referenced in *Eloge de l'amour* (In Praise of Love) (2001), where the maintenance of American hegemony in postmodernity through Hollywood's power to remake history in its image is summed up by a strategic misquote of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962): "When the facts become legends, obey the legend." In an arena where mythic images produce their own actuality, Lenin, the founder who dreamed of factories, turns out to be no match for Thalberg, who founded a factory of dreams. Here, the end of the dialectic appears as a moment where the legend, dream or concept no longer seems to require either the authority of an origin or mediation by the actual. On the contrary, its image serves as its own origin and actualization, foreclosing the actuality of history in the name of the myth that has displaced it.

Post-Cinematic Fictions: The Archive and the Monad

Such dialectical fictions retrospectively create an image of what cinema was before its history – and, with it, the dominance of its dialectical inheritance – was over, as well as marking the points beyond which their narratives can only lead to dead ends. But they also raise the question: what new effects might be produced by the powers of cinema against the grain of the dialectical narratives by which they had been oriented and contained? In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, such resistance often flashes up in symptomatic or prophetic signs of potentialities that the cinema which gave rise to them could not yet allow itself to fully think without undoing its way of making films and the "art of the state" that it too often served.

This is particularly striking in Godard's treatment of cinema's inadequate response to fascism and the catastrophes of war in *Histoire(s)*. If premonitory images of extermination (as with "the death of Captain de Boïeldieu" and "the death of the little rabbit" in *La Règle du Jeu* (The Rule of the Game) (1939)) were produced in films before the war; if a call to resistance might have been heard in the murmur ("Je lutte" (I struggle)) of Agnès in *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* (The Ladies of the Bois de Boulogne) (1945); if the "poor cinema of *actualités*" did not offer war as spectacle, but projected its sufferings as a "vision" (which, reinventing Rembrandt's "terrible black and white", "will not be shown on a screen, but on a shroud"), all of this had to remain largely unthought within a historical conjuncture where, while there were "resistance films," "there was no cinema of resistance." The potentialities of such images from which Godard retrospectively projects the memory of a cinema of resistance that never fully emerged, will only be developed by the new deployment of the powers of cinema explored by Godard after its history is over – a history over the course of which cinema failed, with few exceptions, to keep faith with the injunction that "poetry should be resistance first and foremost". But when that history ultimately comes to an end with the unraveling of its dialectical narratives, Godard reweaves the strands of film history into new strategic fictions, allowing us both to remember what cinema could have been and to imagine what the powers of cinema might yet invite us to become beyond the limits of their history.

It is from this vantage point that Godard's project may be said to once again converge with the problematic of Deleuze. One type of fiction associated with this new moment embeds the "archaeological" image that Deleuze already associated with the work of Godard in the 1970s in a dense cinematic archive which is perhaps fully accessible only once the history of cinema is over.[12] Such are, for example, the archaeological fictions of *Allemagne 90 neuf zero*, where we follow characters and events across overlapping but non-communicating series of words and images, in such a way that a single event appears divided between divergent times and worlds, generating, with each displaced repetition, different potentialities and effects. To be sure, Godard's frequent citations and *détournements* of Marx

and Hegel invite us to reflect, in the wake of German unification and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, not only on the historical failures of the dialectical legacy, but on the abiding critical force of dialectical thought, which (like cinema) "lives on," to borrow Adorno's formulation, "because the moment to realize it was missed" (Adorno, 1966, 3). But what is most essential is the way in which *Allemagne* elaborates narrative fictions adequate to a serial practice of montage that – no longer governed by a dialectic of concepts and their actualization, or of opposing collective projects and legitimating narratives within the same historical world – gives way to an inflection of an archaeological image's effects and potentialities in distinct historical and discursive worlds, each of which expresses what is virtual but unactualized in the others.

In one of the most moving sequences of the film, Godard begins with the dreams of Freud's Dora of a new life beyond the dominion of her father. This part of the sequence is dominated by Freud's text, read by Lemmy Caution: "If the first dream indicated detachment from the man she loved and the return to the father, which is to say flight from life into illness, this second dream announced that she would detach herself from her father and be reconquered by life." After Dora disembarks from an arriving train on the arm of an older man, she comes to stand alone on the platform. As Lemmy seems to reflect on her transformation, we see a close-up of her face: the tentative beginnings of a smile play across her lips, as if she were sharing a fleeting moment of complicity with Lemmy at the thought of imagining a different life. As music swells, we see images from Eisenstein's *Potemkin* (1925), showing the people of Odessa as they sail out to the rebellious battleship to celebrate their communion with the sailors, followed by an intertitle: the word "Hope." This part of the sequence culminates in a close-up of a girl whose joyous face, shown here in slow motion, seems, as the music reaches its crescendo, to take to a higher intensity all of the hope previously contained by the face of Dora, as if the utopian image of a collective, reborn on the sea, can, once her hope has been named, unleash in another the hope that Dora herself could not fully actualize.

The extraordinarily condensed construction of this mini-narrative, so characteristic of Godard's late work, in which Dora's hope itself, no longer anchored in any localizable subject, becomes the protagonist, is in itself remarkable enough. For we move, in the space of 30 seconds, between two divergent discursive universes encompassed by the European cultural legacy explored in this film – the first identified with the western elaboration of the internal richness and complexity of bourgeois subjectivity and its individual desires (from Goethe to Freud), and the other with the utopian dreams of a socialist revolutionary tradition. But still more striking is the way in which the relation between these two series is imagined. Rather than an image of hope mediating between individuals and collectives participating in a single history, as in Eisenstein, the image of hope appears here as a pure potentiality haunting individuals and collectives irrespective of any actual or possible relations between them. It marks the point where divergent histories

can be seen as resonating with one another, without subsuming the differences between them to an overarching collectivity or narrating them as moments of a single subject's experience.

In short, the archaeological image as a pure effect or potentiality creates a relationship between incommensurate historical series without diminishing their distance. It is the strange power of the film's fictive characters (as when Dora becomes Goethe's Charlotte Kestner, or when Lemmy questions Don Quixote, or briefly assumes the role of Faust) to be affected by these potentialities as they leap between the divergent historical strata that delimit their various identities, developing in each world the effects of yet another role:

> Everyone says that is Margarete Kirchner, but that's not so, that is me too the day before yesterday. And tomorrow my name will be Greta, Frieda, Herta, Paula, Claudia, Marussia, Alexandra, Viveca, Griselda, Asta, Anna, Magdalena . . .

For such characters, history – no longer narrated as a dialectical progression but, as in Deleuze, according to a logic of affirmative disjunction, in which incompossible identities, series and worlds communicate – is, indeed, "histoire avec un s."[13]

A second type of fiction rethinks the relationship of projection to memory, as in Godard's reinvention of the monadic interior in *JLG/JLG: autoportrait du décembre* (*JL/JLG: Self Portrait in December*) (1994). Here breaks between archaeological strata are no longer confronted as external limits over which a character might pass, but are folded inward, to form a labyrinth of nested chambers where memory and reflection may wind and unwind their paths.[14] It is as the brooding denizen of this interior that Godard appears in *JLG/JLG*, sometimes visible only as a silhouette to mark the presence of a remembering or reflecting gaze, leaving fully illuminated only the hands holding the book or object of which he speaks. As in some sequences of *Histoire(s)*' dramatizing projection, he merges with the shadows out of which the objects of his contemplation – books, paintings, films – emerge like flickering images isolated in the darkness of a room, before receding into the interior distance like the memories of a now inaccessible world.

Sometimes it is enough for the camera's gaze to fall upon an object to resurrect the cultural memory it contains, as in the exquisitely slow pan of books in JLG's library, which murmur over one another in their various languages as the camera progresses – German, Russian, English, French – like so many remembered voices. Sometimes this camera-gaze traces a more complicated movement around walls or through interior windows, which at the same time serve as screens, superimposing the reflected image of an object from an illuminated room upon the shadowy image from a darker room behind it, as if the memory of each chamber were carried over into the other. Such shots place the relationship between the voices and images haunting different chambers, and the multiple planes of memory they envelop, into motion, as if to show how each layer of a personal archive is

figured by a surface (a projected image, a painting, a reflective window, a view-finder) which is, in turn, enveloped and complicated by the others.

In a sense, JLG's situation as he mourns the death of cinema in solitude doubles that of Howard Hughes, but this only serves to underscore the difference in their way of picturing projection. In *JLG/JLG*, projection no longer aims, even retrospectively, to conquer an imagined world beyond it. Rather, all the landscapes remembered, painted and filmed (including Godard's own films, both made and unmade), accompanied by the murmured voices of two centuries of philosophy and literature, are projected inward across the play of screens that compose the interior's memory. The effects of that memory are, as the pages in JLG's notebook suggest, less those of cinema as such than of a "magic lantern," which not only, as in Proust, transforms the familiar place of work and habitation into a "dark room" where memory develops and intertwines images and voices from the most distant times and worlds, but also opposes its valorization of the untimely to the cultural politics of the historical present.

But unlike Proust's legendary interiors, JLG's fiction of the monad cannot presuppose its autonomy from the present it resists, since it is formed by folding inward content from outside – not only discourses, images and media of every kind, but also labor, capital and the state – that threaten to erode it from within or pry it open like a shell. This is evident in JLG's diegetic interactions with his housekeepers, his assistant and his financial backers, but is especially striking in the darkly comic *politique de l'auteur* which is the focal point of JLG's conflicts with the "cinema center inspectors", who, having invaded the authorial interior, pursue an inquest into JLG's opinions, his filmography and his critical positions, as well as his cultural and political debts and allegiances. Their accusatory questioning moves from image to image and from statement to statement, much like the remembering gaze of JLG, but to a different purpose: not in order to discern what is as yet unthought in the darkness, but in order to fix his authorial image once and for all by passing judgment on his interventions and situating him between national cinemas and authorial lineages. History – specifically, a historical narrative of authorship institutionally delimiting the working artist's situation in the present – appears within the monad as the internalized limit against which memory and thought resist.

It is as if there were two JLGs – the documentary image, situated historically in a time and place (as one can date the photo of a young Godard with which the film opens) and the mobile gaze which, in weaving relations between the multiple layers of autobiographical and cultural memory, can never be precisely located in any present. When JLG writes across the screen, "Je suis une légende" (I am a legend), we may take "legend" in this double sense: as the caption attributing a determinate identity and history to an image of cultural authority, and as the fictive memory of a legendary figure whose potentialities are not localizable within any past, since they have yet to be fully lived. JLG's self-portrait – which must incorporate both history and fiction, since, like the cinema, he has outlived

himself – is necessarily a double one, incorporating both the past as actually lived and the virtual dimension of a past remembered that, in its coexistence with the present (to cite JLG's translation of Faulkner), "n'est même pas passé". Like its title, this film's interior is thus traversed by the fine line that separates history's actuality from the memory of the virtual: JLG/JLG.

In Godard's post-cinematic fictions, the death of cinema does not entail the disappearance of its powers. Rather, it marks the end of a history in which those powers could be developed only in dialectical form. For Godard, what has come to an end is the history of an error: the notion that it was the task of a twentieth-century medium to resolve the political, philosophical and aesthetic probems posed by the nineteenth. But the death of cinema in Godard is like the death of man in Foucault: the dissolution of a nineteenth-century historical form clears the path for a reconfiguration of the forces it contains.[15] In these fictions, Godard redeploys the powers of cinema, both to explore their potential for a critique of cinematic and cultural history, and to articulate in different ways the distance between the actuality of cinematic history (and of history as such) and the fictive memories that undo its dialectical narratives. Godard's use of montage in *Allemagne* breaks open the archive and multiplies its series in archaeological fictions whose figures and affects remap the relations among the historical strata of the past. The stories of Lemmy and Dora confront the distances between historical worlds, sometimes as limits that arrest their movement and sometimes as frontiers to be overleapt, as they trace potential lines of flight between the multiple worlds that compose the historical archive. *JLG/JLG*, by way of contrast, folds those distances into the darkroom of its interior, where history appears as the internal limit that separates the subject from its own potentiality – as the historical given against which memory resists. So it is that the Godard of the 1990s rethinks the history of cinema from the perspective of a present no longer in thrall to what were once its dominant forms. In his later films – most notably, in *Eloge de l'amour* – Godard will reverse the angle of inquiry to reformulate the problem in yet another way, by asking how the powers of cinema, having broken with those forms, might prompt us to reimagine its interventions in the present. But that, in the words of *Eloge*'s Edgar, will be "une autre histoire . . ."

Notes

1   Thus Godard speaks, for example, of the contingent encounter of "images and sounds, like people who have met while traveling and can no longer be parted." All translations from French are my own. In translating from *Histoire(s)*, I have consulted Howe's translation (Godard, 1999).

2   See Wilde's "The Critic as Artist": "To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is not merely the proper occupation of the historian, but the inalienable privilege of any man of parts and culture" (Wilde, 1989, 1015).

3 On "The Powers of the False," see Deleuze (1985, 126–155).

4 Deleuze (1991, x).

5 Godard explicitly makes a similar claim regarding another cinematic power which space does not permit us to address here: that of photography: "This relation between positive and negative, which was expounded by Hegel, existed in cinema on the simplest material level. Cinema is the image of it, but with digital the negative disappears, there's no more negative and positive [. . .], the contradictory relation between day and night no longer exists, it took a century to disappear [. . .] Cinema is a nineteenth-century idea that took a century to become a reality and disappear" (Godard and Ishaghpour, 2000, 108–109). Silverman emphasizes a different aspect of the dialectical legacy in the late Godard, by focusing on echoes of the problem of sovereignty and recognition posed by Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, and reading Godard's late works (in light of Martin Buber) as exploring the possibility of resolving that problem in a different way from Hegel by ethically "affirming the *you*" by whom the sovereign subject is recognized (Silverman, 2002, 19). But what, Godard suggests, comes to an end with the history of cinema (in *Histoire(s)* as in the quote above), is not only particular solutions to dialectical problems to which alternative solutions might be proposed, but dialectical forms and narratives themselves as the frame in which such problems are posed. Such narratives appear in *Histoire(s)* as pastiches or reconstructions of a formation that has disappeared, while Godard's post-cinematic serial approach to picturing history is closer to Foucault – where subjects appear, not as originary terms, but as derived from the forms of discourse and visibility from which they emerge – than to the Hegelian or phenomenological traditions.

6 *Le Mépris*'s epigraph – "The cinema substitutes for our gaze a world that corresponds to our desires" – is also foregrounded early in *Histoire(s)*.

7 The first line of Baudelaire's poem, for example, is accompanied, following a shot of a projectionist, by a shot of Delpy reading the poem slowly dissolving into William Turner's *Peace – Burial at Sea* (1842).

8 *Spleen* (Baudelaire, 1961, 70).

9 On "the 'trade follows films' thesis", see Staiger (1984, 52–53).

10 As Godard, referencing the young Marx, puts it in *Allemagne*, it is only "when an idea penetrates the masses" that "it becomes a material force."

11 "A dream factory," intones Godard's voice-over: "factories like that, communism wore itself down dreaming them up."

12 Deleuze suggests that Godard inherited from Rossellini "an 'archaeological' conception almost in Michel Foucault's sense" (Deleuze, 1985, 248). On the relationship of Foucauldian archaeology to post-war film more generally, see Deleuze (1986, 64–65), as well as Conley's discussion of the related figure of stratigraphy in Deleuze (Conley, 2009).

13 On affirmative disjunction, see Deleuze (1969, 169–176). This movement across historical worlds is often articulated formally in *Allemagne*, as Skoller (2005, 76–77) notes, through Godard's use of reverse shots and depth of field, suggesting a point of view encompassing multiple times rather than a single space. Morgan links such devices to a temporal, rather than spatial, inflection of projection in Godard, although, in interpreting them as staging a "simultaneous presence" (Morgan, 2013, 245) of elements from distinct historical formations as "part of the same world" (Morgan, 2013,

215), Morgan elides a crucial characteristic distinguishing temporal from spatial projection: the passage of a point of view between irreducibly heterogenous times and worlds, allowing potentialities, unactualizable in one, to be thought and developed by passing into another. Godard's recasting of the modernist fiction of the monad in *JLG/JLG* (discussed later) addresses a related rethinking of projection.

14   On the monad elsewhere in the late Godard, see Murray's discussion of Godard's *King Lear* (1987) (Murray, 2008, 85–110).

15   On the implications of the death of man, see Deleuze (1986, 124–132).

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Noli me tangere

Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(e)s du cinéma*

Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli

Jean-Luc Godard's eight-part *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998) has provoked a series of debates ranging from the ethics of imagistic representations of Holocaust trauma to the use of cinematic affect in the production of historical consciousness, and the role of montage in the production of memory. The video-essay's emphatic use of iconic images from mostly the liberation of the concentration camps and the cinematic representation of the Holocaust (Figure 29.1) has reignited the debates about the ethics of making such horror visible and the (im)possibility of representing the Holocaust.[1] But it is Godard's style of layering, superimposing, and juxtaposing filmic, musical, textual, voice-over, and art historical citations one on top of the other that triggers the most charged critical accusations as to whether Godard's montage can yield ethical, philosophical, spiritual, or historical redemption.[2]

My aim is to show how the video-essay recites many of these arguments without producing decisive forms of representation, whether in the form of redemption, eternal damnation, the figure of excess, the law of purity, or the absence of the image.[3] *Histoire(s) du cinéma* turns acts of repetition, in the form of citation, into movement and transformation that stimulate thought without conforming to the laws of representation – creating resemblances, and therefore establishing identity through generalization, equivalence, and narrative. As Gilles Deleuze argues, "repetition is not generality . . . [its] reflections, echoes, doubles and souls do not belong to the domain of resemblance or equivalence . . . [R]epetition is a transgression [that] puts law into question, it denounces its nominal or general character in favour of a more profound and more artistic reality."[4] This is not to say the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is without an ethics or that it

Figure 29.1   This screen capture from Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* creates an encounter with an iconic color shot of the entrance to Auschwitz in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (1955) with Robert Bresson's black and white film, *Les Anges du péché* (1943). *Histoire(s) du cinema: Toutes les histoires, by Jean-Luc Godard (1988), produced by Canal+ (present) (as CANAL plus), La Sept, France 3 (FR 3) (as fr3), Gaumont, JLG Films, Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) (as cnc), Télévision Suisse-Romande (TSR) (as rtsr), Vega Film (as vega films).*

escapes into indifferent beauty or the sublime, for it relentlessly returns to the devastation of war, the Holocaust and the inability (of particularly the French) to come to terms with their role in the extermination of the European Jews. The video-essay insists that we think critically about the images, writings, histories (or lack thereof) that have reflected and recalled the events of the Holocaust.

Weaving together a series of (filmic, photographic, musical, and textual) citations with found footage, advertisements, and various iconic references to art, history, religion and philosophy, the video-essay is formally experimental, closer to conceptual art than narrative cinema. The first time the image of Hitler appears in part 1A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, he is shown in a grainy black and white photograph, seated at a table, dining with a middle-aged woman. Superimposed on this image is the moving image of a conductor presumably directing an orchestra. The shot of the conductor is a medium close-up of his hands and torso. But the footage is slowed down to enframe the face of Hitler as if he were both part of the orchestration and the opera itself. But instead of symphony music we hear Taina Elg singing *Ça, c'est l'amour* (That is Love) (from George Cukor's 1957 *Les Girls*) that is carried over from the last sequence of images.[5] Along with the sound track we hear Godard in voice-over, '*en même temps que l'armée allemande*' (at the same time as the German army). This is a fragment of a voice-over from a few minutes before

when he comments on a love triangle that begins between Max Ophüls, Madeleine Ozeray, and Louis Jouvet as Germany invades France. Godard declares: "1940, Geneva, *L'École des femmes* Max Ophüls, he pounced on Madeleine Ozeray's ass, at the same time that the German army was taking the French army from behind, and Louis Jouvet [her ex-lover], the impresario, surrenders."[6] Yet the repetition of this line is distorted. It resonates with echoes. As the sound of Godard's voice and the music from *Les Girls* dissolves into the sound of planes dropping bombs the moving image of the conductor freezes and is no sooner reset to oscillate, in a rapid sequence of montage, between the double exposed image (of Hitler and/as as the conductor) and a color porno film set in Nazi Germany where we see an SS officer filming a couple fornicating in front of the iconic swastika flag. Godard repeats a longer fragment from the previous voice-over: "en même temps que l'armée allemande / prend l'armée française par derrière" (at the same time the German army takes the French army from behind).

The double entendre about the German army taking the French from behind first appears as a crude analogy diminishing the seriousness of the German Blitz-krieg and occupation of France in 1940 – the taking of the French Army from behind the Maginot Line – by comparing it to the actual affair that ensues between Ophüls and Ozeray that takes place after the invasion in June of 1940. The remark appears as an accusation about the failure of the cinema of the 1940s to confront the Nazi genocide of the Jews and the Vichy government's collaboration in the Holocaust. The argument follows that, by neglecting serious topics as the Holo-caust, cinema has made itself insignificant.[7]

However, even the double entendre is not quite as simple as it appears: Ophüls (the German director) who has an affair with Ozeray (the French actress) is both a German Jew and a known anti-Nazi activist, Jouvet (the French theatre director) who surrenders (his lover), also flees France with both Ophüls and Ozeray to return only after the war.[8] Furthermore, the film *L'École des femmes* is never made – on account of Jouvet's finding out about the affair but more importantly, the filmmaking was interrupted by the war, and the fact that as a Jew and an anti-Nazi, Ophüls was unable to work in Vichy France. This set of correspondences consti-tutes what Jacques Rancière calls a "phrase-image" – a convergence of images and words in the form of multiplicity, dissimilarity, paradox, and contradiction that expands their expressive potential.[9] These convergences allow us neither to privi-lege one image, sound, word or historical context over another, nor to treat them as equal.

Les Girls (Les Girls), is synched with the lines about the German army taking the French from behind and repeated over the image of Hitler and/as the conduc-tor (Figure 29.2); this at once echoes the context of cinema's failure to present images of Nazism and the Holocaust and reconfigures this set of relations so as to reflect on Hitler's own orchestration of the cinematic spectacle. Not only does the image of Hitler encounter that of Hollywood – Taina Elg singing *Ca, C'est L'Amour* seems to be directed at Hitler rather than Gene Kelly (as it was in the

Figure 29.2   This is the first time Hitler appears in part 1A of *Histoire(s) du cinema*. He is shown in a grainy black and white photograph, seated at a table, dining with a middle-aged woman. Superimposed on this image is the moving image of a conductor presumably directing an orchestra.

scene from *Les Girls*) – but it also confronts the obscenity of sexualizing Nazism in the postwar period. Hitler is relentlessly juxtaposed to post-war Nazi-porno, where we see both a man and a woman shot from behind. Rather than just comment on Nazi eroticism this convergence of images and sounds points to the disparity between [these very] images, sounds and voice-over commentary. Saul Friedländer qualifies this paradox when he argues "Hitler was indeed an object of desire," yet "not necessarily the actual person – but the idealized image of the chief expressing both a universal sentimentality and the attraction to nothingness that sometimes seizes contemporary crowds." However, at the same time Friedländer concludes that Hitler "cultivated [an] image of the petty bourgeois Mr. Everyman, the middle class common denominator."[10] In this sequence he appears as possibly all of these – an object of desire, the chief or conductor, and the unsexy middle-aged petty bourgeois figure.

It is when Hitler is installed in a post-war porno film that his status as an image becomes even more problematic. The porno film, like the narrative structure of *Les Girls*, seems to offer three different perspectives setting up possible love triangles and competing view points: First, just as the music dissolves into the sound of war planes dropping bombs, we see a mid-range shot of an SS officer filming a couple fornicating in the foreground. Like the conductor the couple are shot from the torso to the hip. We are looking at a film within a film. Given the subjects shown, this instance of self-conscious filmmaking may not be so conscious about its aesthetic choices given. Second, we see the porno film that this officer has made

or is making. And third, we have an image of another SS officer who seems to be watching, but it is not clear if he is watching the film that we see or the filmmaking itself. If we are to draw an analogy between the porno film and Hitler, it is difficult to place him within this the given relation: is he the self-conscious director and filmmaker of some prurient Nazi fantasy, the sexual fantasy itself, the voyeur – or is he all of these at once? Yet, the image of Hitler stands out, since unlike the porno film that is shot in vivid color, he appears in black and white. Rather than comment on the past, this sequence demonstrates how such a commentary involves various layers and layerings of the past. Each stratum is also a representation of Hitler and Nazism for which esthetic choices must be made that in turn produce analogies, create metaphors, establish points of view, and plot a narrative. By superimposing one image on top of another, Godard refuses to translate images, sounds and correspondences into meaningful analogies.

In the *Histoire(s)* images of Hitler are instead made to confront the sexual fantasies of Nazism (that do not, but are made to, include Hitler) in the post-war period.[11] The almost strobe-like montage that alternates between the image of Hitler and the pornographic film calls attention to the distance between the actual image of Hitler and the post-war erotic representations of Nazism. The volley of images asks us to think not only about how we make sense of Hitler's appeal to the masses, but also why Nazism has been eroticized in the post-war period. More importantly, the sequence of images asks us to think about whether the very (post-war) attempt to make sense of Hitler's appeal to the masses also participates in the eroticization of Nazism.[12]

The continuous use of the song (*Ça, c'est l'amour*) and the repetition of the phrase (*"en même temps que l'armée allemande / prend l'armée française par derrière"*) does not simply connect the previous set of corresponding images, citations, and sounds in a image-phrase: it effectively exposes the paradoxes and contradictions between such relations and the past. The montage reveals the simultaneous and inexplicable presence of the past (in the from of haunting images and sounds of Hitler and *Les Girls*), of the present (Godard's own voice-over and his use of montage that juxtaposes these images, sounds, and citations), and of a possible future (the possible reconfiguration, thinking through or adding onto these sets of images).[13] Cinema, like narrative, cannot engage with the past without transfiguring it, making visible the various layers of time. It is the repetition and variation of images, sounds, and citations that does not allow us to reduce these convergences into a metaphorical rendering of history, the past or memory. Gilles Deleuze describes the work of repetition as "a work of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind"[14] The repetition of images, phrases, sounds and citations produces also a thought-cinema. But rather than thinking through images (establishing relations) this type of cinematic reflection requires that we consider the assumptions these various relations are making. The work of repetition cannot claim to give us a new image of truth or to resurrect some historical reality; repetition suspends the very prin-

ciple of reality, by pointing out that these convergences of images, sounds and texts are neither authentic nor stable. What we are left with is a process that summons the logic of the very relations it sets up.

Toutes les histoires or *Une histoire seule*

By naming the first two segments of the video-essay, *Toutes les histoires* (All Stories) (1A) and *Une histoire seule* (One Story) (1B), Godard asks us to think if there is a "proper" way to historicize events like the Holocaust. *Toutes les histoires* suggests not only that history, like public memory, is comprised of multiple histories from a variety of competing perspectives, but also that such a history must include all voices, events and perspectives, including those versions of history we consider to be contemptible and falsifying. If we accept *toutes les histoires* as a model, then we cannot exclude the voices of Hitler, Himmler, Pétain, or even Robert Brasillach. Nor can we claim that there is only one way to understand these voices.[15] As a model, *toutes les histoires* functions much like a genealogy, in which history cannot be contained by an event. Instead it slips into *a priori* and *a postori* relations (esthetic, literary, political, philosophical) to the event. *Une histoire seule* already suggests that history is either hegemonic or radically singular. But this singularity has multiple meanings: it is something we experience alone as *histoire de la solitude*; and an event without representation that disrupts or interrupts the way we order the world (*"l'histoire, pas celui qui la raconte"*). The term *une histoire seule* suggests that there is only one historical reality and that history is unlike other narratives (*"solitude de l'histoire"*). Yet, this singularity presents us with a paradox, since it is not clear whether it privileges the universal or moral (ideological ordering of the world) over the particular (event). If we accept *une histoire seule* as a model, then how can we present any event without either returning to radically singular (multiple) perspectives (*toutes les histoires*), or generalizing such perspectives, esthetic modes, or images of thought to represent all others?

The video-essay reminds us that the representation of events requires images, not just visual images, but images of thought – that is, philosophical or moral concepts that organize the past.[16] For Rancière such images do not simply provide us with pure presence; they are "operations that bind together the demonstration of something and a mode of signification."[17] Yet, with regard to cinematic representations of the Holocaust this "mode of signification" that Rancière refers to always also creates an ethical relation to the past. Since cinema, however, is more than a mere image of thought (an act of demonstration and signification), it also is a process of revealing its own fabrication of images and sounds, relations, and ordering of time. That is, cinema can also visualize (make present) its own devices of fabrication, thus demonstrating how "modes of signification" are also what Deleuze calls "powers of the false." Aside from the ethical and conceptual practice

of cinema, Godard reminds us that the making of cinema is also deeply connected to commercial interests. Because cinema is a speculative enterprise it is designed to appeal to consumers. As Godard puts it, cinema "boils down to entertainment." This boiling down to entertainment puts ethics and philosophical thought in direct relation to commerce and consumption. But in the case of representing traumatic events of the magnitude of the Holocaust, profit, politics, and entertainment have been concealed by the greater demand that cinema adhere to conventional ethical standards.

The question of the entertainment value, ethics, and politics of representation lies at the heart of the *Historikerstreit* ("historians' debate") of the mid-1980s that responded to both the historical revisionism of Right-wing German historians, notably Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber[18] and filmic and televisual representations like the TV mini-series *The Holocaust* (1978) and *Heimat* (1984). The *Historikerstreit* reframed historical questions in terms of philosophical problems: whether or not Nazism, fascism, and the "Final Solution" can be represented (or made sense of or visualized), and whether or not the tension between intensely singular traumatic experiences and the popular culture's obsession with historicizing (and possibly profiting off) the Holocaust can be resolved.[19] This debate demonstrated that the real ground of history was the contemporary relevance of such ethical and political representations of the past, rather than an examination of events or even a thorough understanding of the past as such – to understand Nazism and the Holocaust was deemed ethically reprehensible. Calls for political purity from historians, critics and filmmakers have only intensified since the *Historikerstreit*. Historians have chosen other films as their grounds for dispute: most immediately, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1994), which has been (mostly negatively) compared to Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah* (1985), and more recently, *Shoah* has been used to criticize and has been criticized by Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

What Lanzmann proposed through *Shoah*, was not a history or even a documentary, but an "event" – the unfolding of memory in the present, *un histoire seule*. The privileging of the voice (the testimony over the image), or to put it more precisely, the privileging of the one image over many disparate images, leads to the treatment of any archival images as suspect.[20] Shoshanna Felman spells out how the theory of the one-image (*une histoire seule*) can embrace both the Eichmann trial and the filmic event of *Shoah*: the Eichmann trial produced, "for the first time a radically original new event," which as she sees it "translated thousands of private, secret traumas into one collective, public and communally acknowledged . . . monumental or sacred narrative."[21] This view marks a shift from those who make history (the Nazis) to those who were subject to history as the moral and historical authority – it amounts to "the universalization of the victim."[22] Like the Eichmann trial, *Shoah* treats testimony as a form of transcendence, allowing the oppressed victim who has no language to become the person who reclaims her legal subjecthood by bearing witness.[23] But, ironically, the act of testifying to injury or survival, has itself become a media spectacle. It remains the only source

of recognition and identity in a world with few available forms of self-affirmation.[24] The very process of transforming the immediate, imageless trauma of such experiences requires the detachment of the witness from her suffering: "because the only credible narrative of suffering is that in which the victim has already mastered or controlled the traumatic or other symptoms of his or her experience."[25] Even the mode of witnessing ascribes to a certain aesthetic sensibility, that of minimalist realism – "a sophisticated style characterized by aesthetic and emotive restraint."[26]

The multi-layered citational cinematic style of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* stands in sharp contrast to *Shoah*'s minimalist aesthetics of testimony, but it demonstrates how even Lanzmann's film recycles and produces iconic images. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma* references to *Shoah* are few, but they present critical junctures in Godard's treatment of the Holocaust. The first citation of *Shoah* in the *Histoire(s)* is also a citation of Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog) (1955). Forty-three minutes into *Shoah*, Lanzmann replicates Alain Resnais's "low-angle dolly following grassy railroad tracks that lead to an Auschwitz crematorium [which] is virtually reprised and extended, though Resnais' use of Eastmancolor is even more vivid."[27]

The monumental image of tracks leading to Auschwitz represents a trace-image that signifies all that cannot be seen – the millions of victims that Lanzmenn's interviewees give testimony to, and the destruction of evidence that leads Resnais to point out that none of the accused have accepted responsibility for the event of the Holocaust. This image of the tracks leading to Auschwitz has become and icon of the destruction of destruction (erasing the evidence). Yet, the encounter with *Shoah* and *Nuit et brouillard* in *Histoire(s)* does not simply recycle this iconic image, it also superimposes the image of Catholic nuns prostrating themselves before the mother superior taken from Robert Bresson's black and white film, *Les Anges du péché* (Angels of Sin) (1943). In Godard's assemblage the nuns seem to prostrate themselves on the train tracks leading to Auschwitz, reminding us that from 1984 to1993 a Roman Catholic Carmelite convent was housed in one of the buildings belonging to the Auschwitz compound.[28]

This allusion is given to us through Bresson's film about a woman (Thérèse) who is unjustly accused of a crime and, convinced by one of the devout nuns to come to the convent to rehabilitate. Even under pressure by the nuns, Thérèse refuses to join, but once she leaves and kills the real perpetrator, she returns to become a nun. Joining the convent is a form of hiding one's crime. The stationing of convents or churches at or adjoining Auschwitz, Birkenau, or Dachau, has been seen as both an attempt to commemorate Christian victims of the death camps, and a cynical gesture that occludes the overwhelmingly Jewish victims of those same camps. Hence it is hard to imagine how this image can be seen as a sacralization or Christianization of the Holocaust. Instead it points to the politics of such a gesture – a politics that does not return us to the image as fact, or even the image as an icon. But Godard does not leave us with a sole or singular image. Rather he gives us an assemblage of images from various periods and contexts: we see the

post-war picture of Auschwitz juxtaposed next to the 1943 film made under the occupation of France. As Godard will later state in the last installment of the *Histoire(s)*: "The image is not strong because it is brutal or fantastic but because its association of ideas is far-reaching." Even then these far-reaching ideas are constantly coming together and dissolving into other constellations of images.

While the image of Auschwitz taken from *Shoah* has not incited particular interest, the second reference to *Shoah* in section 1A of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has been seen as more incendiary. The image of Henryk Gawkowski leaning out of the locomotive making a gesture by drawing his finger across his throat to symbolize the immanent death of the passengers who were to arrive in Treblinka, draws attention of critics like Libby Saxton, who accuses Godard of refusing to "pay any more than the most cursory lip service to a work that has become an ethical touchstone and raises a series of disturbing questions."[29] But, ironically, she goes onto argue that: "It is only when it is recycled in extreme slow motion by Godard in Chapter 1A of *Historie(s)* that its iconic status is revealed, that we realize that these images have an afterlife, and that Gawkowski, too, has entered the archive."[30] Hence, at the same time Godard's ethics are in question because of the fact he does not cite Lanzmann enough, his very citation of Lanzmann is presented as undermining the iconoclastic ethics of *Shoah* by revealing that even Lanzmann's images can become iconic. In fact, the throat-slicing gesture from Shoah was already reenacted in *Schindler's List*.[31]

By becoming iconic, Marianne Hirsch asks: "Do [photographs] now act like clichés, empty signifiers that distance and protect us from the event? Or, on the contrary, does their repetition in itself retraumatize, making distant viewers into surrogate victims who, having seen the images so often, have adopted them into their own narratives and memories, and have thus become all the more vulnerable to their effects?"[32] Unlike Saxton and Miriam Heywood[33] who read the reproduction of traumatic images as a shield against the real, Hirsch concludes that photographs interpellate the viewer, installing them in complex relations that have the potential to both reproduce (as a distancing effect) and produce traumatic affects. But these potential distancing or traumatic affects are not grounded in a particular history. The photograph is elusive, it gives us a ground that is itself ungrounding, opening up to irreducibly heterogeneous and radically incommensurable stakes, which do not necessarily reflect any stake driven into the ground, any particular moment in the past.[34]

I would like to argue here that *Histoire(s)* does not treat the image of Gawkowski's throat-slitting gesture as an icon (it does not stand in for the real) nor as a cliché. Rather, the video-essay reveals the difficulty of locating this image. Gawkowski is a retired Polish train driver hired by Lanzmann to drive the train to Treblinka. He spontaneously performs the throat-slitting gesture (by drawing his finger across his throat) for the camera as the train arrives in the Treblinka station. But it is not clear whether this gesture is: a performance for the camera; a sign of some repressed traumatic memory conjured during reenactment of the journey

to Treblinka itself (35 years after the fact); a cynical gesture (signaling that the Jewish passengers would meet their death, but knowing they would not be able to escape); or an act of historical revisionism, where Gawkowski alters the historical record to appear more favorably in the film (by seeming to appear to warn the Jewish passengers of their impending fate).[35] At the same time, this gesture also points to the fact that the Jews have already been annihilated. That is, the gesture points to both the absolute past (the Final Solution), and memory of the future (the future of the Final Solution to come, the fate awaiting the Jews at Treblinka) in that past. But just to complicate matters, the gesture is also a performance, for Lanzmann and the camera, and a performance for the Jews in the absolute past as well as the Jews to come. Yet, it is also an actual performance of a gesture that is not necessarily a true representation of the past (an alleged performance). The gesture itself demonstrates how such memory, false memory, or falseness confuses the past with the present. More importantly, it confuses the performance of the past with a performance for the present.

What is so polemical in Godard's turn of a phrase-image is not that he pays too little respect to Lanzmann, but that he installs the very image used to advertise the film *Shoah* into a sequence of archival images – the very ones that Lanzmann refused to show. Godard makes this ambiguity between the image of the past, the re-animation of the past and the performance or enactment of the past even more explicit when he squeezes this image from *Shoah* between two iconic photographs of the Holocaust and two moving images of Hitler. The first photographic image is taken from the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, where survivors await their ration of potato soup and the second image taken of a line of naked women holding on to their infants before being murdered by the Einsatzgruppen.[36] In the video-essay this first image of the liberated prisoners is cropped to reveal mostly a group of women (at the center of the photograph) who appear in the infamous striped concentration camp uniform. Over the image, the title card *"Les anges du péché"* flashes a few times. *Les anges du péché* refers to Robert Bresson's 1943 film that had already been cited in section 1A of the video-essay, but this time it evokes both the Bressonian paradox of liberation and imprisonment – Thérèse's liberation from her crime (of killing the man who committed the crime she went to jail for) by accepting her punishment, imprisonment – and the fact that guilt is the trigger of such liberation (incarceration). But the title, *Les anges du péché* (angels of the street or angels of sin) sits uncomfortably over the image of Holocaust survivors, questioning not only the attempt to read the Holocaust in terms of Christian values – redemption, sacrifice, and selflessness, all the themes that are portrayed in Bresson's film – but more importantly, questioning the relationship of Christian values in the production of the Holocaust.[37]

In addition to the title card from Bresson's film we hear both Hanna Schygulla singing *Lili Marleen* from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1981 film by the same name, and a fragment from Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not To Be* (1942) where Mr Tura (played by Jack Benny) impersonating Colonel Ehrhart jokes "so they call me

concentration camp Ehrhart." But in the middle of the line the image shifts from the young Jewish girls behind the barbed wire fence to footage of Hitler riding on a train laughing in slow motion. Yet his laugh coincides with the fake Colonel Ehrhart's, and, therefore, seems to be animated by Jack Benny's laughing the words "well, well." Within this sequence, the element of laughter is jarring, but Godard also reminds us that the only Western films shot during the war that addressed the plight of the European Jews were two comedy films – Lubitsch's 1942 *To Be or Not To Be* and Charlie Chaplin's 1940 film *The Great Dictator*. Both films are about resistance as a form doubling, theatre, and role-play (anti-Nazis playing Nazis or Jews playing the part of Hitler). In this sequence Hitler seems to laugh with an American accent, which makes the encounter (of sound and image) complex – pointing to the fact that *To Be or Not To Be* was one of very few films that addressed the issue of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust during the war, at the same time it suggests that cinematic representations of Hitler have been appropriated by Hollywood, and most disturbing, the laughter placed over the face of Hitler reminds us that the Nazis got away with carrying out the Holocaust.

This doubling of images, sounds, and sound-tracks produces a series of doppelgängen – doublings that do not invoke dichotomies as much as radical uncertainty. In fact, the conjuncture of contradictory images (Hitler and the Holocaust) and sounds (from a comedy film about Hitler, the Holocaust, and doppelgänger) is also underscored by the melancholic version of the song "Lili Marleen." The German love song that was originally recorded and sung by Lale Andersen (in 1939) became popular following the Nazi blitzkrieg of Belgrade in 1941. But by using Schygulla's version of song the from Fassbinder's film, Godard again forces an encounter between the iconic song of the Second World War used to entertain the soldiers on the various fronts, and the post-war period recounting of that particular past. The film *Lili Marleen* was loosely based on Lale Anderson's autobiography.[38] In the film *Lili Marleen* the song operates on a variety of levels. It is simultaneously, a front for Willie (played by Hanna Schygulla) who sings it as a means of survival, and uses her celebrity from singing "Lili Marleen" to smuggle out photographs of the death camps to the Allies. At the same time the song is used to show the radical disconnect between the emotional state (the longings) of the soldiers and the events of the war. Every time Willie sings "Lili Marleen" in the film, her singing is preceded by images of melancholic looking soldiers listening to her sing on the radio, but her singing is always interrupted by the images and sounds of warfare.

Like Fassbinder, Godard questions where to place "Lili Marleen" in historical and political terms: the song cannot simply be considered Nazi Propaganda, nor can it be dismissed as pure entertainment either.[39] It is both a song about melancholic reverie (initially banned by Goebbels) and Nazi conquest; the lyrics are written from the perspective of a soldier remembering his lover "Lili Marleen," but sung by a woman (often confused with the subject of the song). Despite its iconic status during the war, the song continues to question how we read the

relationship of entertainment made in Nazi Germany to politics and propaganda. In this segment of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* the song plays over the archival photographs of the Holocaust, the footage of Gawkowski from *Shoah* and archival footage of Hitler seated on a train. But by playing the song over a series of images that range from Hitler to the Holocaust, Godard prevents us from turning affect into emotion, for it is not clear to whom the song is addressed and how we are to identify the addressee – with the survivors, those murdered in the Einsatzgruppen massacres during Operation Barbarossa, Hitler, or the Polish train conductor? Does the song mourn the dead or haunt the living? Is it a song for or from *Les anges du péché* or the *cinéma du diable* (the words written over both the clip from Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and the second image of the Holocaust which depicts a line of undressed women carrying their babies as they await their execution at the hands of the Einsatzgruppe)?

What is more provocative than simply showing how this image from *Shoah* can also be considered iconic (as Saxton suggests), is that the slow motion footage of Gawkowski on the train is placed after the slow motion footage of Hitler who is also riding in a train. Although Gawkowski is conducting the train while Hitler is riding comfortably inside, they both appear to be moving in the same direction. By juxtaposing the two images, *Histoire(s)* suggests that Gawkowski and Hitler share a common destination: Treblinka. The sign for Treblinka can be clearly seen in the background of Lanzmann's shot of Gawkowski who makes the infamous gesture where he draws his finger over his throat. Furthermore, the image of Gawkowski is not only labeled *cinéma du diable*, it also dissolves into the archival image of Jewish women awaiting execution during the early stages of the Holocaust (sometime between September 1941 and October 1942). It is this dissolve that links Lanzmann's witness (Gawkowski) to what remains unseen in Lanzmann's film (archival images of the Holocaust), but also to the unseen witness who takes the photograph of these women who are about to be killed, thus connecting Gawkowski's gesture to that of the camera that records (and witnesses) the event of the Holocaust.

The text *cinéma du diable* (Figure 29.3) bridges the cinema of the witness (*Shoah*) and the cinema of the perpetrator (the photograph taken by an unknown photographer present during the massacre of the Jewish women captured in this image). But rather than undermining an act of bearing witness, this sequence forces the encounter between Hitler, the gesture of destruction played out by the Polish witness (Gawkowski) who led the Jews to their death (by conducting trains full of Jewish passengers to Treblinka), and photographic images of the Holocaust. As Godard puts it in *Histoire(s)* "poor images still strike . . . like the butcher . . . images and sounds like people who have met while travelling and can't bring themselves to part." Rather than separate or purify the image of the witness, victim, and perpetrator, the video-essay demonstrates how they cannot be unlinked. This does not mean that victims can be confused with perpetrators or witnesses like Gawkowski, only that we (as secondhand witnesses) cannot touch

Figure 29.3   Former train conductor (Gawkowski) in Lanzmann's *Shoah*. The image is labeled *cinéma du diable*, and dissolves into the archival image of Jewish women awaiting execution during the early stages of the Holocaust (in the Einsatzgruppen massacres during Operation Barbarossa sometime between September 1941 and October 1942).

or be touched by the traces of the Holocaust without also touching on the traces of the perpetrators and the witnesses. Rather than strike as an icon, *Histoire(s)* images strike as rather complex layering of images, sounds, citations, quotations, and perspectives from different temporal strata. It is the assemblage (the way cinema thinks) rather than the image that strikes.

The sequence comes to a close when the song "Lili Marleen" fades out with image of a woman approaching with flowers. This footage comes from a Nazi propaganda film taken during the capture of Vilnus.[40] The image follows the footage of Hitler on the train, which reminds us that Nazism was welcomed by various ethnic groups in the Former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries at the same time the Einsatzgruppen were mass murdering Jews, gypsies and Soviets – often in front of these same local populations. Over the footage of the woman greeting the Nazi occupiers is written *Liebelei*, recalling again the attraction (flirtation) of the masses to (or with) Hitler, and the 1933 German film directed by Max Ophüls (who fled Nazi Germany that same year). The film was based on a play by Arthur Schnitzler that tells the tale of a love affair between a young lieutenant and a musician's daughter. It ends tragically when the lieutenant is killed in a duel (over the love and honor of a different woman), causing the girl to commit suicide.[41] The term "Liebelei" therefore, cannot be read as a simple flirtation or attraction to Nazism or Hitler in particular, since it is attached to various histories (*fin-de-siècle* Viennese love triangles, Operation Barbarossa, the Holocaust, the flight of the German Jews, post-war Europe), texts (Schnitzler,

Ophüls) memories (of the occupiers, occupied, perpetrators, victims, survivors, and witnesses), and cultural imaginaries (Nazi, German-Jewish, Austrian, French, and New-German cinema).

Histoire(s) du cinéma continually juxtaposes "documentary" footage and photographic evidence next to fiction film, popular and protest songs, propaganda, recorded voices, and even testimony. In their mix of texts, soundtracks, music and double exposures, these assemblages do not simply fetishize the image, nor do they undermine the impact that these images, sounds or words exert upon the viewer. Rather *Histoire(s)* asks us to think about how we distinguish *une image juste* (a just image) from *juste une image* (just an image). But neither *une image juste* nor *juste une image* constitutes what Didi-Huberman calls a "fact image" – an image that will provide us with some form of knowing, evidence in the face of denial, and effacement of such evidence. The image is not an *a priori* given of representation but a structure elaborated by the filmic economy itself.[42] That is, the image ceaselessly reforms itself and is reformed with figures, which are also always reinventing themselves or being re-invented. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* reflects this elusive quality of both the image and testimony. Their instability in relation to other images, sounds, texts, and contexts ungrounds what we take as given. But this ungrounding that "swallows up or destroys every ground which would function as an instance responsible for the difference between the original and the derived, things and simulacra"[43] questions whether the past is past, and shows how the powers of the false can affect the way we perceive an event. That is, it is the very ungrounding of the image or thought-image that produces affect as a troubling unsettlement rather than a pre-mediated emotional device.

Histoire(s) du cinéma is not concerned with determining the accuracy of the image nor the accuracy of testimony – encounters with fiction film, fantasy, propaganda, and entertainment do not cast any doubt about the events of the Holocaust. For Godard "A simple rectangle thirty-five millimetres wide saves the honour of reality," but these images cannot be separated from the powers of the false, since they include fiction films like *To Be or Not To Be* and *The Great Dictator* alongside other new reel footage and photography. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* demonstrates that we cannot extract the image, the imaginary, propaganda, or popular media from the archive, since they all affected, effected, and acted as secondary witnesses to the Holocaust. Rather than attempt to recover lost time (the pure presence of the past) the video-essay demonstrates how testimony works as a form of memory on two very distinct levels. On the one hand, memory bears witness to the active force of withdrawal: what Maurice Blanchot calls the "freedom of the past" whose irremediable character has no present, only the compulsion to "start over, again, again, and again, infinitely . . . without end, without beginning [and] without a future."[44] On the other hand, memory grounds time, but this ground "appears as an immemorial Memory or pure past, a past which itself was never present but which causes the present to pass, and in relation to which all the presents coexist . . . ."[45] Thus, remembrance or rethinking the

traces that remain of the Holocaust cannot make the past present. Instead these assemblages reveal how such traces work like memories (withdrawing and reflecting on their own grounding which is also the process of ungrounding).

Although testimony relies on personal memory, unlike memory, testimony (in order to be accepted) must adhere to the genre of the dispassionate realist discourse (mastery of that trauma). Even if testimony involves many voices, it must adhere to the standard of the one voice that constitutes *une histoire seule*. It is not "free": it is judged on historical accuracy.[46] Only as a secondhand witness is one allowed to be "touched" (in other words affected) by such trauma. This is a shift to "analyze events through their effects rather than through their causes."[47] It is the validation of an affective history (a cinematic history) that sanctions transmission of post-traumatic affect while prohibiting the question why (as evidenced in Lanzmann's echoing Primo Levi's remembered line, "there is no why"). But the notion of affect or touching becomes problematic in the age of post-memory and secondary witnessing, where empathy or compassion has been conflated with identification.

Identification with a traumatic experience such as the Holocaust creates a "cognitive impasse" that has the potential to slip over into vicarious victimhood, or unconscious identification that takes the form of being possessed or haunted by the other.[48] Emerging from this misidentification was the problem of, on the one hand, fetishization of evil Nazis (a point that Sontag addresses in her celebrated "Fascinating Fascism" (Sontag, 1980, 73–105), and on the other hand, the fetishization of survival (what LaCapra (1998) calls "survivor envy"). Both forms of fetishization are not just problematic for the spectator, or reader of histories, but also for the historian. Raul Hilburg characterizes his work (*The Destruction of the European Jews* (Hilberg, 1961) as tracing minute steps taken in logical order. However, his relationship with the archive seems more affective than dispassionate or logical. In *Shoah* he explains, "when I hold a document in my hand, especially when it is an original document, then I hold something that is actually what the original bureaucrat has held in his hand. It is an artifact; it's a leftover. It is the only leftover there is. The dead are not around." It is as if the *touching* of the physical document establishes a different type of evidence: it establishes a physical relation to the past – an embodied affective relation to that particular past. But what is this excessive or affective relation, and how can touching a document that was itself touched by others constitute knowledge? Is this an attempt to identify with the original bureaucrat that produces understanding, or, what Godard describes through Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, the attempt to "see with one's hands"?[49] However, Wittgenstein argues that our hands are not objects of knowledge: "We do not know our hands at all. The relation is more intimate, for the body is a ground, not an object of knowledge."[50] For Wittgenstein the ground of bodily experience does not imply knowledge, rather it is a ground that suggests that our difficulty resides in our inability "to realise the groundlessness of our believing" – a believing we mistake for knowledge "because it still has to be dem-

onstrated that there is a relationship between the body and the mind, between thought and existence."

Here the role of the historian (Hilberg) and the filmmaker (Lanzmann) also seems unsettled, shifting between working though the past (making sense of the past), and being affected by the past (identifying with the traumatic past). How can we recount such a traumatic experience without over-identifying with or fetishizing the subject if the history of the Holocaust must be told as affective history? By privileging the embodied experience of the eye-witness as living trace to the horror (catastrophe that was and is the Shoah) over archival evidence (images and documents) of Nazi atrocities many historians are left to grapple with the uncertainty of recreation, the inability to re-experience trauma, the obscenity of fascination with such trauma, and the violence of forced testimony. And yet, they continue to demand, our obligation is to remember as a pure presence of the past.

Such debates around traumatic images and pure experiences of the past amount to what Nietzsche calls "historical sense without restraint" which "uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs the things that exist of the atmosphere in which alone they can live."[51] This historical justice, as he describes it is done with the "purist intentions" but it is a "dreadful virtue" whose "judgment is annihilating," since "it brings to light so much that is false, crude, inhuman, absurd, violent, that the mood of pious illusion in which alone anything that wants to live can live, necessarily crumbles away."[52]

Godard instead shows us that it is only in relation to an already established cannon of images of the Holocaust, and litany of testimonies that darkness and silence can speak about the Holocaust. That is, affect only works as an interstice, not as the lack of an image or the bodily-experience or trace of the witness. Because affect is an interstitial image or response to images, sounds, and narratives, it is unstable – dissolving and repeating with the archive of images, sounds, and texts that produce other affects rather than reproduce proper ethical responses. Once bearing witness becomes symbolic or sublime, it cannot be an "unmediated experience" simply because it involves memory, coding and contextualizing of the subject who stands as the mark or trace of the past.[53] Or as Godard puts it at the end of Section 1B: "who among mortals is able to discern such a trace, it is characteristic of traces often to be unnoticeable and they are always the legacy of an assignation hardly foreseen." For this reason bearing witness can never be returned to a pure trace of that one particular past. That is, we can never extract this *histoire seule* from *toutes les histoires*.

Does Reanimation Amount to Resurrection?

Perhaps the most provocative, and therefore most discussed, sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* occurs in the last few minutes of section 1A, when Godard declares "and

if George Stevens hadn't been first to use the first sixteen millimeter color film at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück there's no doubt that Elizabeth Taylor's happiness would never have found a place in the sun." This statement accompanies two detailed images from Goya's *Disasters of War* series of etchings. A gesture of interruption accompanies Godard's deliverance of these lines. Godard pauses between the line about the Steven's footage shot at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück and the line about Elizabeth Taylor's happiness. During the pause the image fades to black, and a color image of bodies of Holocaust victims piled in railway cars at Dachau appears out of the darkness, gradually the black and white image of Elizabeth Taylor stroking the head of Montgomery Cliff in *A Place in the Sun* (George Stevens 1951) is superimposed over Steven's color image of Holocaust victims (1945) (Figure 29.4). It is in the transition between these two images that Taylor appears to cradle the head of another figure, one of the victims of the Holocaust. The head of the victim is smaller than Clift's, but it seems to rest on her arm closer to her chest than Clift's. The two images merge, but do not fuse together as they might in a collage.[54] The saturated colors of mostly red, but also blue and white, bleed into the image of Elizabeth Taylor, while Clift's image disappears. The fading in and out does not suggest the replacement or exchange of the figure of the victim for Clift (or vice versa) as much as it offers a rather shocking contrast to this same image.

The image of Elizabeth Taylor that Godard describes as presenting "a simple secular feeling of happiness" comes in a sequence where Angela (played by Taylor) tells George (played by Montgomery Cliff) about the drowning of a man
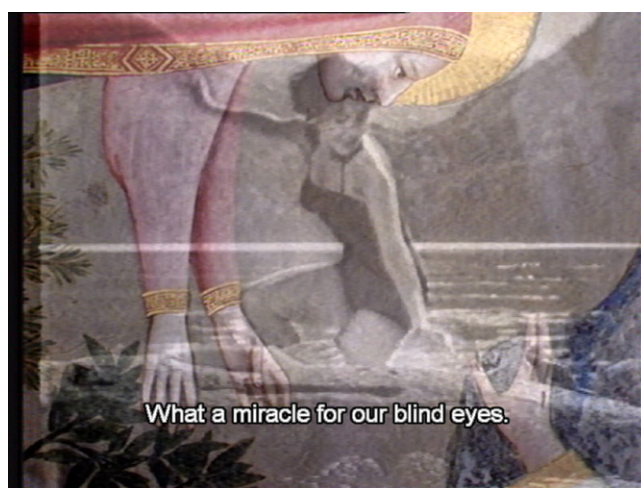
Figure 29.4   Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun*, directed by George Stevens (1951), seems to be inserted into a detail of Mary Magdelene reaching toward the resurrected Christ from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (1304–1306).

and a "girl" that occurred at the same lake in which she has just been swimming.[55] When she asks George what he is thinking about, we assume he is thinking about the possibility of murdering Alice – the woman he is being forced to marry due to her becoming pregnant with his child. In fact, the sequence in *A Place in the Sun* dissolves with George staring out at the lake and Alice (played by Shelley Winters) emerging from a house. The few seconds of superimposition make it appear as if Alice were emerging from the lake, suggesting the link between the previous drowning and the fact that Alice will drown in the same lake. Like *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, *A Place in the Sun* also casts a shadow on this image of secular happiness, by defining the location (Loon Lake) as the site that conceals two mysterious deaths, and the site of an intended murder to come. Similarly, Godard echoes statements made by George Stevens in a 1963 interview, where he claims that his filmmaking was forever changed by what he had seen and filmed at Dachau.[56]

The slow dissolve in this scene of *A Place in the Sun* makes explicit the causal relation between Alice (whose image is seen in a double exposure over the lake) and George (who intends to kill her). However, the relationship of Elizabeth Taylor to the images from the Holocaust and to Giotto's Mary Magdalene in *Noli me tangere* (Don't Touch Me), that appears in the second part of this sequence, is far less clear. While the link between Stevens' 1945 footage of Dachau and his 1951 film might be explained by Godard's statement or Stevens' own admission that filming the camps forever changed the way he made films, it is not clear why this sequence draws together the images of Stevens' film to the image of Mary Magdelene from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (1304–1306). There is only a loose thematic correspondence between these three images and Stevens' postwar films – *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) about the life of Jesus, *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) which also stars Shelley Winters, and *A Place in the Sun* (1951). But the fact that the "traumatic footage of the camps was confined to Stevens' basement until after his death" portends the next line from Godard.[57] He utters, "thirty-nine forty-four, martyrdom and resurrection of the documentary." While these images of the camp have been resurrected from oblivion, Giotto's painting of the resurrection complicates the notion of resurrection itself, placing the return of the images of the camps in relationship to the sacred in the Christian tradition. The detailed image of Giotto's Mary Magdalene appears at a ninety-degree angle hovering over the image of the resurrected Jesus (who remains out of frame with the exception of one hand). We are reminded that it was Mary Magdalene who was the witness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. At the same time this image of Mary Magdalene that floats over Angela (Elizabeth Taylor) and George (Montgomery Cliff) remind us of the act of witnessing; it marks Godard's rather anachronistic practice of using iconic artworks as affect images. But because the image is a painting made over six hundred years before the event of the Holocaust, it cannot stand in for a "fact image." Instead it marks the iconic place of the witness at the same time it demonstrates its absence. That is, the image of

the witness stands in for the absence of witnessing, but in so doing points to its own falseness. It is with the superimposition of Giotto's Mary Magdalene over the moving footage of Angela raising from kissing George that Godard states: "Oh how marvelous to be able to look at what we cannot see. What a miracle for our blind eyes." Here the image of Mary Magdalene stands in for the absence of seeing, and affect itself. Similarly the face of Rembrandt from his 1630 etching, "Self-portrait with a cap, with eyes wide open" seems to watch over a scene from Andrzej Munk's *The Passenger* (1963) where the male camp orchestra performs the Adagio of Bach's E-Major Violin Concerto for the commandant and his staff. It is with this sequence of images that Godard rather enigmatically states that the "war newsreels say nothing, they do not judge . . . and this time only, the only art which had been genuinely popular is converging with painting, that is, with art that is reborn out of what has been burned."

In a reading of the sequence in *Film Fables*, Rancière casts a different reflection on the "angel of resurrection." He contests not her presence as such but the question of how the image in which she appears is generated – and thus, too, how these different images are related to one another. While he sees in Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* the co-presence of dialectical filmmaking (or thinking that constitutes criticism through images in opposition) and symbolism (the art of analogy), he reads Godard as favoring symbolism (analogy). By describing the montage and superimposition of sound-tracks, texts, and images as a form of analogy, Rancière, himself, engages in analogical thinking by arguing that the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is an example of the emptiness of avant-garde purity and symbolism.[58] As Deleuze points out, "analogy is itself the analogue of identity within judgment."[59]

Even if we read Godard's superimposition of images as simple analogies, we are still confronted with the fact that we are dealing with a network of images, sounds, texts, and citations rather than a single image supplementing another. No longer, as Godard had done in *Pierrot le fou* (Pierrot the Mad) and other earlier features, are single images supplementing or adding upon each other. The moving network of forms leads to the dilemma of how we read thousands of images and sounds that converge and generate other associations: how is it that we settle with only one analogy, identity, or judgment value? Why select Elizabeth Taylor as the angel of resurrection and not Mary Magdalene, one of the figures from Dachau, or one of the many images of vampires that appear just prior to this sequence? How many possible connections must be edited out in order to make such an assertion? And if we are to accept such "an angel of Resurrection, who manifests, rising toward us, the immortal power of the Image rising from every death," then how can we deny the return of the other images, such as Hitler, and the victims of the Holocaust who also are reanimated?

Rancière, in fact, offers us only two possible (conflicting) readings of Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in Sun*, next to the dead of the Nazi concentration camps and Giotto's *Noli mi tangere*. He first asserts that this superimposition could suggest

the "shameful secret of extermination underlying American happiness," but he prefers reading the image of Elizabeth Taylor as "an angel of the resurrection, a sign of hope," one that Saxton sees as disturbingly Christianized. Rancière, like Saxton, seizes on the numerous Christian images reproduced in the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and Godard's own allusion to St Paul that the image will come at the resurrection, and therefore, faults Godard for sacralizing (Christianizing) the Holocaust. Yet, the quotation of St Paul comes in part 4A ("Control of the Universe" of the *Histoires du cinéma*, not in 1A) and rather than simply align the image with the resurrection, it recalls biblical disputes over interpretation of Pauline passages as much as it relates the image to death and, therefore, resurrection. Godard announces: "images first but the ones St. Paul mentions which are death, therefore a resurrection." The statement seems to refer to Philippians 3:11 (εις την εξανα στασιν την εκ νεκρων), which arguably points to the resurrection of Saint Paul himself as opposed to the resurrection of Christ. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* does not offer us an image of the resurrection or redemption of the image as much as its reanimation or return. This might be why we only see the hand of Christ – that is the gesture of the hand that invokes the title of the painting *Noli me tangere* ("don't touch me" or more precisely "you may not want to touch me").[60] Hence, the image that returns in *Histoire(s)* is one devoid of the image of resurrection, maintaining only its unsettling gesture.[61]

What is so unsettling is that the painting or series of paintings entitled *Noli me tangere* confuse the tangibility of touch with the intangible of touching as form of affect or hapticity. In the painting, the image of Christ is both embodied and disembodied and Mary Magdalene has both touched and been touched by Jesus but she cannot touch him. The relation of the tangible to the intangible is performed in the painting through the connection and confusion of the senses: touching with the eye substitutes for touching with the hand, and touching with the voice draws attention to what we cannot see. As Barbara Baert explains, "the hands play an indexical role by assuming the function of speech on the basis of their expressive-gesticulating capacity, and on the strength of their capacity to compensate for the deficiencies of the other forms of communication."[62]

The many citations of religious paintings in the *Histoire(s)* juxtaposed next to the Holocaust and Hollywood cinema only add to this unsettlement by refusing to distinguish between the image of man (which is both embodied and disembodied by cinema itself) and the image of the sacred (that is disembodied but embodied in the image), the historical, the untimely, the commercial, and the *image juste* (just image or just an image), leaving us to wonder what remains out of reach and within reach. But the fact that the detail from Giotto's painting (like the lines from St Paul) is juxtaposed next to Hollywood cinema questions if this image is *just* another Hollywood version of the resurrection – like Stevens' own *The Greatest Story Ever Told* – which does not ask us to think about the incommensurability between the unsettling image and the enigmatic biblical passage but tells us to believe.

Godard's allusion to the lines from St Paul is preceded by the lines: "sometimes you find that a film is looked at solely for its content without any recourse to the style or manner in which the story is told." Here, and indeed before the fact, Godard takes issue with critics of Rancière's ilk who attempt to restore representational or political art that favors content (the intangible) over aesthetic form (the tangible). Instead of simply linking the Christian icons or doctrine to cinema's ability to reanimate the dead, Godard offers a collage of quotations, images, and critical thinking about cinema and its relation to Christianity. His montage does not produce a reading via analogy, but examines the politics of analogy itself – the linking of tangibles and intangibles. Indeed, in section 3A (*la monnaie de l'absolu* (The Currency of the Absolute)) Godard reminds us that: "the fact that cinema was made initially for thinking will be forgotten straight away." What has replaced thought cinema is a "false aura of Hollywood realism."[63] And in fact, the image of Elizabeth Taylor fades into an image of the American flag, recalling and thus altering the vision of red, white and blue we see with Stevens' images from Dachau.

Histoire(s) du cinéma does not reinforce the connection of the image (the tangible) to redemption (the intangible), instead it rethinks the relation between belief (intangible) and knowledge (empirical fact). It is the co-dependency of the tangible and the intangible in the image (it is both there and not there) that presents it as an aporia. In section 1B (*Une histoire seule*), Godard cites Wittgenstein's questioning of the relation of belief to knowledge, which seems to undermine claims that he advocates that cinema, or for that matter Christianity, can redeem history:

> Cinema, like Christianity, is not founded on an historical truth. It gives us a narrative, an *histoire*, and it tells us: now believe! Not: Grant this narrative, this *histoire*, the faith appropriate to this *histoire*, but believe come what may. And this can only be the result of an entire life. You have a story here don't treat it like history.[64]

Rather than return to the binary logic of either critique or redemption (dialectical materialism or symbolism, opposition or analogy), for Godard the cinematic image is far more complex: it is at once mechanical and commercial, uncanny and iconic, haunting and a forward-looking potential image to come. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* shows that capturing or even reciting images is not the same as unlocking (demystifying) them. There are literally thousands of images of the Holocaust, and yet we have argued that these images do not provide us with any knowledge (neither an analogy or dialectic).

Ironically, Rancière pursues only one analogy – that of Elizabeth Taylor to, not Mary Magdalene but, the angel of resurrection – and he reads it as analogy to resurrection or redemption of the saved without thinking about other possible analogies. Early Church traditions portrayed Mary Magdalene as the "Patroness of Erring Women," and in this double-exposed image she is portrayed hovering above not just Angela, but George (who is the erring man in the film), and the

victims of the Holocaust. In Giotto's painting she is dressed in red, or in red-violet, what was considered to be a more penitent color. But this red bleeds into the exaggerated color of the victims' blood, confusing penitence with sacrifice and carnage. Mary Magdalene is an enigmatic figure in Christian doctrine and iconography; she is both the embodiment of Christian devotion, and a sexual icon – she is both the first apostle and the penitent whore. It is not the hands, but the eyes that touch or recognize the gesture of touching. But this is an overwhelming act of touching, connecting and contaminating the scared with the sacrificial, the sexual and the sex symbol, the moral with the immoral, and the resurrection of Christ with the Final Solution.

To conclude study of a work that defies conclusion: *Histoire(s) du cinéma* refuses to enter into the politics of subjectivity by revealing the differences between the images, the perception of those images by others (whether first-hand or second-hand witnesses), and the abstraction of embodied experiences – especially the images of suffering, which are clearly treated here as images in a political economy of suffering, or the trafficking in suffering.[65] Images of pornography are juxtaposed, placed next to or within the images from The Second World War and the Holocaust in particular in ways where images of sex, death, suffering, and visual pleasure become indiscernible. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* shows how the appropriation of images and documents of such suffering and violence are made to reinforce existing political, religious or ethnic formations. The film draws away from these scenarios, their implicit and highly problematic moralism. Where Godard brings together images that convey far reaching and lofty ideas, he creates a myriad of problems for those who wish to speak about moral encounters, or to use art for political purposes.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1   The debate over representation of the Holocaust dates back to Theodor Adorno's famous (1949) statement that "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric" (Adorno, 1967, 19). Such concerns over the use of images of the Holocaust and estheticizaiton of such trauma produced a series of reflections on the limits of representation and the crisis of historicizing the Final Solution (see Friedlander (1992)). More recently such objections to the use of (archival) imagery in the aesthetic representation of the Holocaust have been taken up by Lanzmann (1994), Wajcman (2001), Pagnoux (2001). Lanzmann, Wajcman, and Pagnoux have categorically condemned Georges

Didi-Huberman's, *Images malgré tout* (Didi-Huberman, 2001). See also *Images in Spite of All* (Didi-Huberman, 2008). In this book Didi-Huberman responds to the critics and addresses the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as a work of thought cinema that produces its own history through montage and provokes us to think about the role of the image as both document and an assemblage of resemblances. In *Film Fables* (Rancière, 2006), Jacques Rancière argues that the *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* may complicate the relationship of the image to history, but it does so at the expense of morality. See also Agamben (1999), where Agamben problematizes the notion of witnessing, picking up on Primo Levi's notion that: "We who survived are a meager anomalous minority: we are those who, through prevarication, skill or luck, never touched bottom. Those who have, and who have seen the face of the Gorgon, did not return, or returned mute: they are the 'Muslims,' the submerged, the true witness, the one's whose disposition would have general significance" (Levy, 1986, 64–65, my translation).

2   Most notably Jacques Rancière and Libby Saxton find Godard's superimposition of a detail from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* in the Scrovengi chapel in Padua over Elizabeth Taylor's image (just after her image has been superimposed over George Stevens' color footage of a convoy of dead victims in transport from Birkenau to Dachau in 1945) as a disturbing Christianization of the images of the Holocaust. Rancière argue that the figure of Mary Magdelene is transformed into the "Angel of Resurrection," while Saxton argues that the multiplication of allusions to sacred music, texts and images lends themselves to the image of Christian redemption. In fact, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is a work of "endless resurrection." See Rancière (1999, 58–61) and Saxton (2004, 364–379). Didi-Huberman, Richard Neer and Miriam Heywood argue that 'religiosity is procedural' (Neer, 2007), and that seeing only the angel of resurrection is a simplification (Didi-Huberman, 2008, 120–150; Heywood, 2009, 273–283) of an otherwise deeply complex set of images and texts.

3   See Bergala (1999), where he argues that Godard's repetition of historical images, fragments, amounts to a search for precise signs that forewarn of the coming horrors of war and the Holocaust.

4   Deleuze (1994, 1). Deleuze points out that analogies and equivalences are always false: "it is no more possible to exchange one's soul than it is to substitute real twins for one another. If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition."

5   As Silverman (2002, 6) points out, "Virtually every word spoken in *Histoire(s) du cinema* is a quotation, and often a quotation of a quotation. The same holds true for this work's musical score; it is stitched together out of elements drawn from a multitude of sources." Ironically, *Ca, C'est L'Amour* is one of the only citations we hear in its entirety.

6   Mille neuf cent quarante Genève / l'ècole des femmes Max Ophüls / il tombe sur le cul de Madeleine Ozeray / en même temps que l'armée allemande / prend l'armée française par derrière / et Louis Jouvet le proprio laisse tomber.

7   As Witt argues, "cinema as a vital cultural form [is] condemned to languish in shame . . . [Cinema] has been usurped and marginalized, reduced to the status of merely one in a series of proliferating electronic distractions, the power of the cinema enveloped by, and absorbed into, the great mass of the 'visual.'" He continues: "current filmmaker representatives [are] pale bureaucratic shadows of those elevated by

Godard to his pantheon of great 'combatants' such as Eisenstein, Lang or Rossellini"
(Witt, 1999, 334–337). See Witt (1999, 331–346), where he argues that this failure
marks one of many deaths of cinema.

8   In 1940 (until the Blitzkrieg) Ophüls worked for the Propaganda Ministry, producing
    and performing anti-Nazi broadcasts for radio. See Bacher (1996, 19–22).

9   See Rancière (2007b). See also Israel-Pelletier (2005, 33–46).

10 Friedländer (1993, 40).

11 See Sontag (1980, 97) where she argues that it is/was the image of the SS that proved
    to be the site of sexual attraction since it was "the ideal incarnation of fascism's overt
    assertion of the righteousness of violence. They were supremely violent, but also
    supremely beautiful."

12 See Ravetto-Biagioli (2001, 1–5), where I trace the puzzling continuity between fascist
    and anti-fascist aesthetics and their shared reliance on turn-of-the-century images of
    political decadence, perversion, and degeneration.

13 See Deleuze (1986, 100–102), where Deleuze adopts St Augustine's formulation:
    "there is *a present of the future, a present of the present and a present of the past*, all impli-
    cated in the event, rolled up in the event and thus simultaneous and inexplicable . . .
    time is revealed inside the event, which is made from the simultaneity of these three
    implicated presents, from these de-actualized peaks of present." Although Godard
    has some harsh words for Deleuze's cinema books, many of Godard's points about
    cinema, cinematic time, and the impossibility of recollecting the past, are quite
    similar to Deleuze's own understanding of cinema.

14 Deleuze (1994, 8).

15 The very name *Histoire(s) du cinéma* recalls French fascist journalist and writer, Robert
    Brasillach's and Maurice Bardèche's critical history of cinema *Histoire du cinéma*,
    written in 1935 and re-edited in 1943. The reference to this volume, and the quotation
    of Brasillach's "Testament" in which Brasillach compares himself to a resistance
    fighter as he awaits his own execution, have not gone unnoticed. Godard has been
    accused of his own anti-Semitism by his biographer Richard Brody, which triggered
    debates over Godard's alleged bigotry in newspapers journals like *The New York Times*,
    The Jewish Journal, *The Jewish Literary Review*. Here the very citation of Brasillach is
    considered evidence of anti-Semitism, and Godard's criticism of the postwar politics
    of the State of Israel is collapsed into wartime anti-Semitism (that is the Holocaust).
    The inclusion of Brasillach is both an important reminder of French anti-Semitism
    during the war, but also asks us to think about, as Alice Kaplan does in her book on
    the execution of Brasillach (Kaplan, 2000), the relationship of words to crimes.

16 See Cohen (2008, 181), where he discusses the image of thought as "a presupposition
    of elements of prephilosophy (immanence) that link to each other (consistency),
    further specified as laying out, inventing and creating."

17 Rancière (2007a, 217.

18 See Nolte (1986), where he argues that the Death Camps were modeled after the
    Soviet Gulag camps, suggesting that the Nazis merely copied the Soviets. This piece
    along with Andreas Hillgruber's *Two Kinds of Destruction: The Shattering of the German
    Reich and the End of European Jewry* (Hillgruber, 1986) sparked the Historikerstreit. By
    comparing the annihilation of the European of the Holocaust with the devastation
    of the German Army on the Eastern Front, Hillgruber was accused (most notably

by Jürgen Habermas, Richard Evans, Jürgen Kocka, Eberhard Jäckel, and Saul Friedländer) of moral relativism by his critics, who found his decontextualization of German suffering at the end of the war morally reprehensible. His emphasis on Hitler's responsibility for the Holocaust also downplayed wide-spread anti-Semitism and seemed to suggest that Nazi officers were not responsible for the Shoah.

19   Public memory was pitted against personal memory and historical representation. Debates regarding the cinematic representation of the Holocaust have been exemplified by responses in the late 1970s to the TV mini-series *Holocaust*, and again at the end of the millennium in response to films like, *Life is Beautiful* (dir. Roberto Benigni, 1997) and *Schindler's List* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1993). While Elie Wiesel (1978) argued that the blatant commercialism and lack of historical authenticity of the mini-series *Holocaust* was "an insult to those who perished and those who survived," Andreas Huyssen (1993) argued that the Holocaust is unrepresentable but the docudrama *Holocaust* allowed the German audience to identify with the suffering of the Jews. Similarly, Claude Lanzmann (1994) and Gertrude Koch (1989) argue that Speilberg's *Schindler's List* gives an image to the unimaginable. On the other hand, Miriam Hansen (1996) has argued that the dichotomy between the representation and the unrepresentable representation of the Holocaust is not productive: "the attack on *Schindler's List* in the name of *Shoah* reinscribes the debate on filmic representation with the old debate of modernism versus mass culture, and thus with binary oppositions of 'high' versus 'low,' 'art' versus 'kitsch,' 'esoteric' versus 'popular.'" See also Loshitzky (1997). More recently, Christopher Classen has returned to the debate over popular memory and intellectual integrity, arguing that: "One might welcome this emergence (and thus Schindler's List) as a contribution to a global implementation of human rights – certainly one full of good intentions. Yet at the same time one has to ask the question what exactly is legitimized when appealing to the Holocaust: in actual political conflicts the distinction between good and evil is usually less simple than the historical reference might suggest" (Classen, 2009, 77–102).

20   *In Images in Spite of All*, Georges Didi-Huberman argues that the four images taken in Auschwitz were designed to be evidence, to show the world what happening inside the camps, but he adds: "It goes without saying that the four photographs of August 1944 do not tell the 'whole truth.' One would have to be quite naïve to expect that of any kind of witness, be it in the shape of things, words, or pictures. The four photographs are tiny details of a complex reality, short moments of an incident that stretched over five years in total. But for us and for our view today they are the truth, a trace of it, a poor scrap, of what remains visible of Auschwitz" (Didi-Huberman, 2008, 38).

21   Felman (2001, 201–238). See page 227 where she writes: "I argue that the trial is, primarily and centrally, a legal process of translation of thousands of private, secret traumas into one collective, public, and communally acknowledged one." Also on p. 236 she writes: "The Eichmann trial, I submit, was a singular event of law that, through its monumental legal record and its monumental legal chorus of the testimonies of the persecuted, unwittingly became creative of a canonical or *sacred narrative*."

22   Felman (2001, 232).

23   See Felman (1992), where she argues that the film functions as a voice, and it also operates as a witness.

24 Wieviorka (2006, 134–144).

25 See Dean (2010, 85–99). She argues that rather than express trauma, "the denial and displacement of the victims' traumatic experiences take place in the form of recounting and acknowledging loss and suffering as if the victim were no longer affected by his or her past and thus is able to express the appropriate amount of 'reticence' and detachment" (Dean, 2010, 95).

26 Dean describes minimalism as a product of 1960s that "is not only a sophisticated style, it is also often conceived as an antidote to the alleged media exploitation of the Holocaust and as insurance against the unstable and narcissistic representations of the event associated with overwrought memory" (Dean, 2010, 87).

27 Rosenbaum (2010).

28 While the Carmelite nuns were housed in a red-brick structure that was not technically inside the camp, it was the two-story building the Nazis had used as a storehouse for the deadly Zyklon B gas that was clearly visible at the entrance of the camp. The Polish Communists leased the building to the nuns in 1984 providing Polish Catholics with a memorial to martyrs like St Maksymilian Kolbe and Sister Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein, a converted Jew) who had been executed by the Nazis. Similarly there was a Catholic church placed in the SS administration building at Birkenau, which led to a dispute between Jewish survivors who were offended by placing Christian symbols at death camps designed to annihilate the European Jewry and Polish Catholics who wanted to commemorate the Polish resistance fighters who also died at the hands of the Nazis. Also one of the Nazi guard towers at Dachau was turned into a convent.

29 Saxton (2004, 364). Saxton never really explains what these disturbing questions are, she only suggests that Godard needs to justify himself. Saxton's own appeal to ethics with respect to Lanzmann, who has himself been at the center of serious debates over the ethics of treating his interviewees, is quite puzzling. Nowhere in her essay does she justify why Lanzmann's film should be the model of ethics to which all other films should be measured.

30 Saxton (2004, 379).

31 For a thorough reading of *Schindler's List* as pastiche see Hirsch (2004, 143–150).

32 Hirsch (2001, 21) argues "The encounter with the photograph is the encounter between two presents, one of which, already past, can be reanimated in the act of looking."

33 Heywood (2009, 281) argues "To confront and make visible the archive, counters the Nazi self-effacement policy that sought to blank out any traces of the systematic murder of millions of their prisoners." But this power of the image "to tear of the veil and rediscover the horrors that lie beneath it" returns to treat the image as fact. Given the uncertainty of the status of the image, Godard does not claim to redeem the past or make the past present as Lanzmann does.

34 Tagg (2009, 80).

35 When asked by Lanzmann why Gawkowski and others made this gesture, Gawkowski responds, that they were indeed warning the Jews of their impending fate, but in the context of the film – that presents the Poles as at best bystanders in the Holocaust and at worst conscious collaborators in the destruction of the European Jews – this gesture is not clear.

36 According to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum the first image (that enframes the image from *Shoah*) is a photograph of the liberation at Bergen-Belsen that was taken by the photographer for the British 11th Armoured Division on April 28, 1945. The second photograph was taken either during the massacre of the Jewish population of Kiev on September 29–30, 1941 or on October 14, 1942 during the massacre of the Jews from the Mizocz Ghetto, then in Poland, now in Ukraine. It was most likely taken by a member of the Einsatzgruppen (possibly from Einsatzgruppe C under the command of SS-*Gruppenführer*, Otto Rasch) as a trophy image.

37 See Durgnet (1998, 430). Durgnet argues that there are affinities between Bresson's film *Les Anges du péché* and Pétainist values, though this is not the whole story, since Bresson's own Christianity (his self-proclaimed, Christian-atheism) leaves us with a moral paradox. However, because the film comes out under the Nazi occupation of France, and is likened to the images of the Holocaust, Godard reintroduces such ambiguities between Christian morality and the events of the Holocaust.

38 *Der Himmel hat viele Farben* (Heaven has many colors).

39 Gobbels had originally banned the song as a "tearjerker with the dance of death."

40 The image comes from July 9, 1941, Deutsche Wochenschau No. 566.

41 This film was made in 1933, the year that Ophüls and his family left Hitler's Germany for Paris, where he immediately directed a French version of *Liebelei*, re-shooting only the closeups and dubbing the rest into French. As France fell in 1940, Ophüls and his family fled to Switzerland, where he directed several plays but could not get film work; and in 1941 they moved to Hollywood.

42 Nicole Brenez (1998: 362).

43 Deleuze (1994, 80).

44 Blanchot (1982, 30). The quote reads: "Memory still bears witness to this active force. It frees me from what otherwise would recall me; it frees me by giving me the means of calling freely upon the past, of ordering it according to my present intention. Memory is the freedom of the past. But what has no present will not accept the present of a memory either. Memory says of the event: it once was and now it will never be again. The irremediable character of what has no present, of what is not even there as having been there, says: it never happened, never for a first time, and yet it starts over, again, again and again, infinitely. It is without end, without beginning. It is without a future."

45 Deleuze (1994, 273–274).

46 Gross and Hoffman (2004, 40).

47 Felman (2001, 215).

48 Dean (2010, 92). See also LaCapra (1998, 11), on the Binjamin Wilkomirski case, where he points out that we still expect the truth from historical memoirs. Similarly, there are cases of "mis-identification" of images, places, and people. For instance, the image of the small boy with his hands raised taken during the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, as Janina Struk tells us, is the "favourite photograph" through which many people have seen themselves. She writes "Yad Vashem, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Ghetto Fighters' House have all had a number of visits, letters, and phone-calls from those who claim either to be the boy or to know who he is" (Struk, 2005, 200).

49 Wittgenstein, L. (1969–1975). See section 125 that reads: "If a blind man were to ask me 'Have you got two hands?' I should not make sure by looking. If I were to have

any doubt of it, then I don't know why I should trust my eyes. For why shouldn't I test my *eyes* by looking to find out whether I see my two hands? *What* is to be tested by *what*? (Who decides *what* stands fast?) And what does it mean to say that such and such stands fast?" This passage is quoted by Godard and accompanied by the images of Morton from *Germania Anno Zero*, who covers his face before he jumps to his death.

50 Neer (2007, 144). Neer demonstrates how Godard connects shots of hands to Wittgenstein, Denis de Rougemont thinking with one's hands, and Heidegger's notion of handicraft. "Episode 4A likewise combines numerous shots of hands with a lengthy passage from Denis de Rougemont's Penser avec les mains (To Think with Your Hands). (The passage appears as well in episode 2A.) De Rougemont insists that work in film – or in stone or paint – generates thoughts in and as practice . . . De Rougemont anticipates by more than a decade Heidegger's assertion that thinking is a handicraft" (Neer, 2007, 146).

51 Nietzsche (1983, 95).

52 Nietzsche (1983, 95).

53 See LaCapra (1998, 28–29), where he argues that: "There is nothing unconscious, repressed or painful for Himmler in his depiction of murder, his repetition evinces only pleasure. Secular sublime, nazi sublime (the increased number of bodies marks a 'radically transgressive limit-experience for the Nazi perpetrator.'" Given LaCapra's astute critique of the problems of identifying vicariously with survivors so as to transmit the history of the Holocaust intergenerationally or historians' own overidentification with their subject, it is troubling that he obsessively returns to critique *Shoah* for what he perceives as Lanzmann's wish to experience the witnesses' past, while at the same time attempting to understand the Nazi elation over the genocide, as presented in Himmler's "Posen" Speech (on April 10, 1943). This obsessive return by LaCapra to Lanzmann's *Shoah* and Himmler's Posen Speech, is symptomatic if not telling about the limitations of Trauma Studies. See also Klingerman (2007, 50–51) who, argues that: "Counter to any claim that this scene [Himmler's shock of seeing the bodies] is "unrepresentable," Himmler's silence bespeaks not sublimity but criminality. Despite the analogy LaCapra makes between Himmler's words and the reverence once feels before Kant's categorical imperative (LaCapra, 2003, 109), this law of genocide can be both visualized and measured by the increasing number of Jewish dead. In contrast, Kant's act of subreption comes to an end as the subject collapses before the moral law – there is no adequate sensory experience to convey the moral law. The notion of a transgressive sublime becomes a deficient category in discussing perpetrator elation, for there is no catastrophic moment in which the imagination reaches its limit before the expanding pile of bodies in Himmler's speech.

54 As Ishaghpour explains: "every time an image appears a mass of connections, interferences and resonances spring up around it" (Godard and Ishaghpour (2005, 25).

55 Bellour and Bandy (1992, 165).

56 See Cronin (2004). In the 1963 interview with William Kirschner he talks about how the war changed his outlook on life and how he was no longer capable of making a comedy film after returning from the war, as well as how important it was for him to make the *Diary of Ann Frank* as well as the film about the life of Jesus, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (Cronin, 2004, 21–22). In the interview with Robert Hughes, he discusses his own inability to process the camp, and his revulsion when confronted with the prisoners whom he describes as covered with lice and malnourished.

57   Conley (2009, 226–227).

58   In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze reminds us that analogy is deeply tied to judgment, determining equivocity. Deleuze argues that such judgment has precisely 'two essential functions, and only two: distribution, which it ensures by the partition of concepts; and hierarchization, which it ensures by the measuring of subjects' (Deleuze, 1994, 33).

59   Deleuze (1994, 33).

60   For a discussion of the term and image of *Noli me tangere* see Nancy (2008). Nancy points out that the original of John 20 in Greek reads *me mou haptou* (don't cling to me), but which in Latin should be *non me tangere* rather than *nolo* which is the opposite of *volo* (to want). Nancy reads the image of Christ as an image of withdrawal.

61   As Starn (2013) puts it: "There are oppositions in the picture [*Noli me tangere*], but they are unsettled, mutually interdependent, and figured most compellingly in the paradoxical simultaneity of tangibility and intangibility, embodiment and disembodiment. What the picture shows, without saying, and implicates in the viewer is something like 'we touch and the touching that puts us in touch puts us out of reach, at a distance.'"

62   Baert (2006).

63   Conley (2009, 226). Conley argues that this sequence is unlikely to be redemptive since "the revealing of these traumatic images give way to the false aura of Hollywood realism."

64   Godard quotes Wittgenstein from *Culture and Value*, who is in turn commenting on Kierkegaard's notion of the absurdity of faith.

65   For a description of trafficking pain see Reinhardt and Edwards (2007, 7–12).

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Godard the Historiographer

From *Histoires du cinéma* to the Beaubourg Exhibition

Trond Lundemo

Godard's work in cinema has long been deeply engaged in questions of montage practices. For Godard, cinema is montage, and montage is a technique for articulating the past. The past, which is produced through juxtapositions and connections of many different kinds, may involve various media and art forms. As Godard claims in his eight-piece video project *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) (1988–1998), only montage can produce historical connections because history is always a matter of juxtaposing one thing with another (Godard, 1998, 402).

A date, a name, and a place alone, are just the facts of the past, and only when they are connected to other dates, objects, and fragments do they form historical relationships. Montage is a form of thinking that proceeds with connections, resonances, and configurations. For this reason, the single photograph or the single film shot is not yet history. Like Sergei Eisenstein, who found montage throughout the history of the arts (for instance, in architecture), Godard doesn't see montage as the prerogative of cinema. The writing of history also relies on montage, he claims, and Godard's own work over the last 35 years has been engaged with producing books, music CDs and exhibitions, parallel to his work in film and video. However, as time-based audiovisual media, film and video have access to techniques of movement decomposition and superimpositions of images that produce specific modes of historical articulations.

This idea of the articulation of the past as montage leads us to ask a number of questions concerning the relationship between history and memory, recollection and forgetting, history and archaeology, and which media have access to this

dimension of montage. Most importantly, which modes of historical articulations can result from which techniques of montage? Can this epistemological notion of montage offer alternative modes of production of the past compared to established historiography in written form? If montage is indeed history, tone must distinguish between various modes of historiography.

History and Archaeology

The idea that cinema has access to History is, in its basic sense, an old insight. The cinematic image, due to its photographic technology, is always an image of the past. In his pamphlet for a film archive from early 1898, Boleslas Matuszewski saw cinema as a "new source of history" because the historical effects documented in the film image shed light upon its causes:

> this simple ribbon of imprinted celluloid constitutes not only a historic document, but a piece of history, a history that has not vanished and need no genie to resuscitate it. It is there, scarcely sleeping, and – like those elementary organisms that, living in a latent state, revive after years given a bit of heat and moisture – it only requires, to reawaken it and relive those hours of the past, a little light passing through a lens in the darkness! (Matuszewski, 1995, 323)

All documents in the archive are stored with a potential future usage in view. But cinema is here understood not as an archival document like any other, but as a "piece of history" itself, comparable to a living organism that is re-awakened by the light of the projector. Even if there are affinities with Godard's concept of history in the idea of the return of the past itself in projection, Matuszewski does not describe cinema as montage. Here, History lies in the single shot, and not in its combinations and juxtapositions.

This photographic property of the cinematographic technology is also what Siegfried Kracauer analyzed in his last unfinished book, *History: The Last Things Before the Last*, as the technological condition for the emergence of the modern concept of History. He finds in a famous statement by Ranke from 1824, where the author aims to show "how things actually were," a harbinger of the realist approach of modern historiography (Kracauer, 1995, 48–52). In Heine's *Lutezia* of 1854, the references to photography become explicit, as the author compares his reports to "a daguerrotypic history book in which each day entered its own picture," and claims that the assembling of these pictures creates an authentic faithfulness to life. The idea of history as multiple snapshots, to state it anachronistically, from various angles and at different times, draws upon the principle of juxtaposition and montage. Nonetheless, it is a concept of montage as inanimate pieces in a puzzle that all contribute details to the larger picture of the past.

Godard's notion of montage as history, however, is quite different. The single shot alone offers no access to history. Matuszewski's archive of film, according to Godard's principle of history, would only be the reserve for montage, and not in itself a "source of history." Godard has repeatedly given an example of the contrast between the historical document and history as montage. He has often stated how cinema failed at its hour of truth: the Shoah (Godard, 1980, 269–270). There was no image of the atrocities of the extermination camps at the time of the Second World War, because there was no montage making them visible.[1] This lack of filmic representation of the Shoah contrasts the shot as a document of the past with cinema as history, because there were many shots of the mass graves and the camp prisoners *after* the liberation; Godard knows this well, employing these post-liberation images frequently in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, as well as in *Notre Musique* (Our Music) (2005) and *De l'origine du XXIe siècle* (The Origin of the Twenty-first Century) (2006). For this reason, montage is a dimension cinema never fully attained, at least not at the right time, and remains a potential that it never reached, "a plant that never really emerged from the ground" (Godard, 1998, 402). This unrealized potentiality of montage is connected to the major trope of the end of cinema, which in Godard's concept of history is also the end of art itself. History requires the "right" montage at the right time, and cinema has not always been able to provide it, indicating that Godard is concerned with a very specific concept of montage and history beyond the photographic document or the pieces of a puzzle. In order to access this dimension of montage, one needs to address the question of historiography, and ask what kind of production of the past is at stake.

In order to assess Godard's concept of history, it is helpful to contextualize his work in the history of cinema. Indeed, many have noted that Godard's work enters into a specific relationship to history. Serge Daney has suggested that the *nouvelle vague* (New Wave), in France and elsewhere, is the first generation of filmmakers who think of themselves historically. They arrive at the medium when there is an established film history to reflect on, as transmitted through film histories, journals, and cinémathèques. Godard has emphasized how his work as a film critic at *Cahiers du cinéma* was already a way of making films, and, we could add, by juxtaposing films from different contexts and epochs in his writings. As with many of his compatriots in the *nouvelle vague*, he was not formed by the contemporary concerns of the film industry by following established criteria for promotions within studios, but rather got his education of film history in Henri Langlois' legendary Cinémathèque. Curating and programming films are already articulations of history without words – and not only film history, as is made explicit by Godard's long-term plan for a project with the Cinémathèque. This resulted in the series of programs and talks which eventually took place in Montreal only after Langlois' death in 1978, and were published as the book *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* (Introduction to a True History of Cinema) (Godard, 1980).

Why was this history *véritable*, as an implicit opposition to all the conventional accounts of film history? In Godard's words, "True" history proceeds through programming and montage, "made with images and sounds and not texts" (Godard, 1980, 15). The seminars were conducted with the projection of selected excerpts and reels from films from the Western canon of cinema, followed by one of Godard's own films. Although these films are mostly distributed chronologically over the seminars, or "voyages" as they are called in the chapters of the book, there is no historical development represented by the choice of the excerpts from film history. The voyages are not informed by a traditional historical narrative of the development of film forms or themes in the series: "I wanted to tell the history of cinema not only from a chronological viewpoint, but rather from an archaeological or biological one" (Godard, 1980, 21). The relationship between the films often remains distant and ambiguous, even after Godard's discussion of his motivations for juxtaposing them. Godard thus approaches film history as a complex of interrelations and connections that remain to be worked out, as an experimental practice where preconceived ideas of a film's historical position and role are subdued for the benefit of temporary matches and productive connections.[2]

Rather than approaching the films selected for these seminars as illustrations of established schools or movements in film history, as causes for other films or as effects of technological, social, or economic movements, Godard activates them as material objects or events that still await their explanation – which they will receive, if the montage is successful, in light of the other films programmed in the seminar. This is not a traditional historiographical approach, but rather, an archaeological one. As in Foucault's contrast between the document and the monument, Godard approaches fragments of films, as well as other arts and media, as events and material objects that speak directly of their time, without being submitted to the narratives of history. The technique is archaeological because it makes use of material objects of the past before they have received their explanation. According to Frank Overbeck, "history only begins where the monuments become accessible for understanding" – a statement that Knut Ebeling quotes to contrast history with archaeology (Ebeling, 2012, 13). The latter approaches material culture as monuments, without drawing on its received explanation, as documents *of* something, but rather producing other articulations of the past by forging new connections. Ebeling contends that the twentieth century was really archaeological rather than historical, and if his key examples are Freud, Benjamin, and Foucault, they could in a sense also include Godard. This, in turn, means that the works of these key names do not produce history as representations or narratives of the past. Rather, they are engaged in the production of the past as a process, open to a number of connections, combinations, repetitions, and re-arrangements.

Marie-Claire Ropars (1987, 193–207), Raymond Bellour (1999, 134–135), Volker Pantenburg (2006) and Christa Blümlinger (2009, 190–192) have all noted how Godard's technique of quotation depends on a Romantic concept of the fragment,

where the part entails the work in its totality. These are key observations for reading Godard's work with quotations and excerpts, as the mention of the name, or the photo, of a filmmaker, a theorist, or a critic often stands for their work in its entirety. This use of fragments seems to contradict the idea that Godard approaches the event, the movement, or the work before it has received its explanation. Godard's work with the fragment and the ruin entails its totality, seen from a perspective where it has not yet entered into a relation of montage. One should remember, nonetheless, that these quotes in turn are subjected to various modes of montage at work in Godard's analysis. The fragment, with all its associations and reverberations, is approached archaeologically when it enters into a montage with other elements. The articulation of the past in Godard's work is not in the isolated fragment or the single quotation, but these are the materials for evoking other visibilities through montage. Godard engages the fragment as an object, which, even if it carries with it an established reading, is subjected to a montage that seeks to establish new connections other than the received explanation.

Histoire(s) du cinéma explicitly addresses this principle. An image that can be edited (in its epistemological sense) is an image that can enter into a relation with another image. According to Robert Bresson's *Notes on Cinematography* (Bresson, 1977), quoted in part *2b; Fatale beauté* (Fatal Beauty), images that already carry an interpretation do not act on, nor react to, other images, and are useless in the cinematographic system. If the Godardian approach to montage is more "archaeological" than "historical," it is because it creates gaps and resonances between things, places, and events. This is why the original plan for the long-term exhibition project at Centre Pompidou, which will be discussed further later, had a working title that associated montage with archaeology: *Collage(s) de France; archéologie du cinéma* (Collage(s) of France; Archeology of Cinema).

While Ebeling's studies of archaeological works proceed from written sources, even if they are engaged with monuments rather than documents, with seeing rather than writing, Godard's articulation of the past mostly proceeds with audio-visual means. This takes the archaeological endeavor to a dimension beyond written texts. Sounds and images do not only represent the past; rather, in Godard's concept of montage they inquire into how the past may be produced. Most films, texts and exhibitions may narrate or represent a historical event or period, but films with an analysis of different "methods of montage" at their center also raise questions concerning the constitution of the past: what it is, what it can be, and what it can do.

Periods

What is to be excavated in this form of archaeology? Godard's concept of montage always centers on a certain moment in history, a rupture in time. This caesura

eludes visibility, like the Shoah, and needs to be worked out through montage. The principle of this visual description is presented at the opening of part *2a, Seule le cinéma* (Only the Cinema) of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: "To make a precise description of that which has not taken place is the work of the historian" (*Faire une déscription précise de ce qui n'a eu lieu est le travail de l'historien*). It would be a misunderstanding to interpret this quote as a statement saying that historians should devote themselves to fiction, since, keeping Godard's prime example of the Shoah in mind, this would lead to revisionism. Instead Godard treats history as an affirmative force, even when it is not produced in an absolute and eternal way. Cinema is endowed with specific properties for producing the past through its access to montage and projections. The emphasis in the quote above should rather be on the *lieu*, the place. The point of rupture in history has not "taken place" in the sense that it has not been captured visually, taken place as an image, and needs to be described through other visual techniques. To work this moment through entails making it visible, but as a montage configuration rather than as a single image – a montage necessarily in movement, ephemeral and transient.

With this focus on historical ruptures, there is, therefore, a strong element of periodization in Godard's films and writings. Periodization is at odds with the archaeological enterprise, as it tends to prefer successions of epochs leading up to a coherent and continuous account of "history." However, the role of periodization in Godard's production of the past is very different from that of most historical narratives. Periods fold and overlap in this account of the past; they are simultaneous movements rather than successive epochs, superimposed through a montage that does more than just allow for comparison between events and objects. They superimpose to make visible their point of folding, which is the historical rupture itself.

The rupture in the past is almost always situated in wars in Godard's accounts, and most often in the Second World War. 1945 is the pivotal point structuring *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, perhaps most visible in the first episode, *1a; Tous les histoire(s)* (All the History(ies)), but remaining the key point of rupture throughout the series. The Shoah and the extermination camps remain in focus, the lack of resistance of French cinema, but also "the year zero" of Rossellini's film shot in the ruins of Berlin. *Germania anno zero* (1947), among the most frequently quoted films in the repertoire of Godard's archive of film history, itself proclaims a rupture in its title, and if Rossellini is the most revered of filmmakers in Godard's pantheon, it is because he occupies this point of rupture, the year zero, by making films both before and after, as well as during the liberation from fascism. The rupture enunciated in Rossellini's title is of course reactivated by Godard in the title of his own film on the reunification of Germany: *Allemagne 90 neuf zero* (Germany Year 90 Nine Zero). In this film, the structure around a point of rupture is not only historical, situated at the end of the war in 1945 and the end of East Germany in 1990, but also geographical, as it describes a journey from the East to the West.

The war also marks the folding point in the title of Godard's film commissioned by the BFI, in their series of films on national cinemas at the centenary of the Cinématographe: *Deux fois cinquante ans de cinéma français* (2 × 50 Years of French Cinema) (1995). This periodization may seem strange for this film, which puts little emphasis on the French cinema during the war. Its structure of montage is not directed explicitly at these years, even if there are a few quotes from *Les visiteurs du soir* (The Evening Visitors) (Carné, 1944), often seen as an allegory of the occupation, and *Les enfants du paradis* (Children of Paradise) (Carné, 1945). It is rather a quote from Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* (Hiroshima my Love) (1959) – "Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima" (You haven't seen anything in Hiroshima) – that speaks about the point of rupture: the invisibility of the atom bomb. This historical event forms an invisible moment in several respects, as any representation of the bomb or its consequences were censored by the occupation powers after the war until its end in 1952. If the bomb could only be depicted as a flash of white light, its nuclear radiation defies any photographic inscription whatsoever.

Another title invoking periodization is *De l'origine du XXIe siècle* (2007). This look at the twentieth century spans back and forth between the dates 1990–1975–1960–1945–1930–1915–1900, all indicated by intertitles. This "lost century," as it is said, is divided into 15-year intervals, which for the most part correspond with European wars. There have always been several wars occurring in the century of cinema, but keeping to Godard's returning preoccupations, let us just mention the First World War (1915), The Second (1945), the Algerian war (1960), the Vietnam War (1975), the end of the Cold War, and the beginning of the Balkan wars (1990). Indeed, many of these dates also correspond to key dates in Godard's own life. He was born in 1930, and makes his first feature film in 1960, just to mention two references made in the film, as he quotes the ending shot of Jean Seberg looking into the camera in *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) (1960). Godard also installs periodizations of his own life into the title of the exposition at the Centre Pompidou in 2006: *Voyages(s) en utopie; Jean-Luc Godard 1946–2006 – à la recherche d'un théorème perdu* (Travel(s) in Utopia, Jean-Luc Godard 1946–2006 – In Search of a Lost Theorem). We will return to the periodizations and montages in this exhibition later, but now we must ask why the date starts in 1946. As mentioned, Godard is born in 1930. Is 1946 the year he came of age, started thinking of utopias or utopically, or is it again the year zero after the war? Independent of the answer one prefers, the title tells of a recurrent focus on dates and periodizations, which constitute the "problems" that will activate the montage of the works.

Which factors motivate these periodizations? In history, different periodizations are motivated by various approaches, be they technological, economic, aesthetic, or social. In film history, a history of style will not always coincide with the periodization of economic history or social history. We have seen that these points of rupture, instantiated through periodization, often coincide with wars. However, wars have both economic, technological, and social motivations and consequences. Which are the determining factors in Godard's periodizations? Unless we take Godard's own statement in the first part of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* at face value – that

the ass is the basis and foundation of history – this is a hard question to answer, since he activates all of these factors in his articulations of the past.

Godard's history places a strong emphasis on economical conditions of the image. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* opens with Hollywood and a sequence on Irving Thalberg, and the maxim that "trade follows film." In its most basic sense, financial conditions are activated by the account of the cost of the use of Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning picture of a small starving girl with a vulture behind her in the MOMA commission for *The Old Place* (2000), for which the Sygma corporation demanded 2856 Francs. The funding of films is a recurrent topic in many of the commission films and in the seminars of *Introduction*. He locates the invention of the film script in the bookkeeping techniques in the period of transition to a classical cinema (in Mack Sennett's production in *Histoire(s) du cinéma, 2b. Fatale beauté*). The points of rupture informing the periodizations are often economical, but not unequivocally the motors for the shifts of history. With Godard's focus on the technology of cinema, it would be tempting to see a technological determinism at work. In *Deux fois cinquante ans de cinéma français*, he confronts the commemoration of the centenary of cinema with celebrating the exploitation of cinema, that is, the first paying audience at a screening, instead of the invention of the camera and the technical apparatus. However, in spite of this confrontation of the economical with the technical, just as in history in general, there is no single motor of cinema history.

There is not one single determining factor in Godard's archaeology because periodizations do not serve a historiographical principle submitted to causes and effects. Godard's archaeology is concerned with cinema as a *dispositif*, a condition for the configuration of what is sayable and visible at a given time. In Foucault's own very general definition of a *dispositif*, it is "the strategies of power relations supporting – and supported by – forms of knowledge" (Foucault, 2001). History is arguably a most powerful form of knowledge, and Godard's archeology of the *dispositif* aims at excavating what has been made visible and what has remained invisible in the twentieth century. While Foucault's concept of the *dispositif* focused our attention on statements in large, Godard focuses on the role of cinema. However, the analysis of the cinema *dispositif* does not aim only at writing film history. As indicated earlier, cinema is a technology for producing the past in all fields of interest, and for articulating the history of the twentieth century in economic, technological, aesthetic, and social terms. This is expressed in the double meaning of the parenthetical *s* of *Histoire(s)*; the histories of cinema, but also *its* histories – that is, history through, or more exactly, *as* cinema.

Superimpositions

The *dispositifs* of cinema, because there are clearly multiple ones, are epistemic tools for producing the past. Through its capacity for montage, cinema may work

out the blind spots of history – its points of rupture – visually. These ruptures are not emphasized as the causes of later developments, as in a traditional historical narrative, but rather constitute the points of interrogation themselves. They are not immediately visible, but need to be excavated through the right form of juxtapositions and superimpositions – in short, through montage. This is the sense in which Godard understands montage as a historiographical means, which far exceeds the simple analogies or causal chains of events dominating historical enunciations in most texts and films. It sees the point of rupture neither as motor nor explanation for a development, but as a problem to be worked out in order to become visible.

The points of rupture in history are moments that elude visibility. The camps are never shown, he claims, but in the next moment he will use footage of their liberation. The atom bomb turned Hiroshima into a camera, and etched its immense white light into the cityscape, which was itself invisible. Godard quotes a photo of the shadow of a ladder on a wall in Hiroshima in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. These are caesurae, intervals, and suspended moments in history. There is a suspended visibility in these moments that the single photograph or shot cannot attain, because they demand a counter-shot, a montage.

Godard's political project is to make these moments visible, to provide them with a counter-shot. Only in the intervals between images, in their juxtaposition, does history become visible. Godard's famous iconophilia, criticized by Jacques Rancière and defended by Georges Didi-Huberman among many others, depends on making visible what has only been verbally described or narrated.[3] In this sense, there is an affinity between Godard's view of cinema's incapacity to show the decisive events of its century, and Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the testimony as a remains, a dark margin. Agamben's analysis rests on Foucault's archaeology, more specifically his theoretical concept of the archive, and is focused on the suspension between language and enunciation, life and death, the human and the inhuman. (Agamben, 1999) Whereas Agamben's analysis focuses on the witness and the subjectivizing impetus of the testimony, Godard approaches the suspensions of visibility in the historical point of rupture, the testimony of cinema itself.

The montage of *Histoire(s)* and other works does not proceed through a linear account of history, in a causal chain of events where one event occurs after, and because of, another. It is exactly in cinema's capacity to make historical events and evolutions simultaneous that montage plays its historical role. In superimpositions, resonances, and reverberations between films, events, and movements, history can become visible instead of just narrated and told. Simultaneity suspends temporal and historical distance. In the second part of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, *1b, Une histoire seule* (One Story), Godard cuts to an image of Sergei Eisenstein, the foremost theorist and practitioner of montage, at the editing table with the text written over the image: "Holding in his hand, the past, the present and future."

One should not assume, however, that Godard does not establish causal relations in his accounts of history. On the contrary, they abound as small anecdotes. In the famous passage in the first part of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, it is because George Stevens has filmed the horror of the exterminations camps in color, being a member of the US military troops in Europe during the final days of the war, that he could render these moments of happiness between Elisabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift in *A Place in The Sun* (1946). This causality expressed in the commentary, however, implodes in the montage. The technique of superimposition shows the before and after at the same time: the corpses and the young lovers in the sun overlap, and the sequential linearity is folded over, rendering the past and the present simultaneous.

It is worth noting to what degree this simultaneous structure of the articulations of the past in Godard's works, especially those explicitly addressing historical issues, has been dependent on video technology. Video is the technology of simultaneity, emerging after the war, and opens a space for more varied montage techniques than celluloid film. Not only can it transmit images in so-called real time, but the interlaced image of video also allows for non-cinematic superimpositions, which have been insistently researched in Godard's works in analog video since the mid-1970s.[4] Video editing always involves two images and two monitors, where one sees the previous and the next image, the past and the future, simultaneously. These two images are often interlaced through various techniques in Godard's works of the1970s (his video period), and are put to an archaeological use of the image in the works addressing history.

Video can of course be projected, but in Godard's productions this is most often addressed as a different mode of image than film. As demonstrated in *Numéro deux* (Number Two) (1975), a film where almost every shot contains a video image on a monitor, video contrasts film in that it does not project an image bigger than life-size human beings, but one where we lower our eyes to see. It does not project the historical project. Therefore, two of the works addressing history formations make this contrast a feature of the problem of an audiovisual history. For example, *2a; Seule l'histoire* of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* stages a conversation between the critic Serge Daney and Godard on the history of cinema, with a TV monitor screening sports behind Daney. This trope reoccurs in *Deux fois cinquante ans de cinéma français*, where Michel Piccoli, acting as the President of the Association for the Celebration of the First Century of Cinema, interrogates hotel staff members on their memories of French cinema, while TV transmissions run on a monitor in the room. In Godard's account, film and analog, if not digital and video, are contrasted as *dispositifs* for seeing the past. This is why Godard describes his project as unrealizable, quoting Brecht in the discussion with Daney in part *2a* of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, stating that history can only be produced videographically. Here again one witnesses a dark margin of history, of visibility, where cinema history is reproduced in another medium, through a quotation of the film image in video.

The Unattainable Past

If the image of the past is only attainable for quotation and analysis in video, it always comes after the fact, in another medium. If montage had never been discovered, in its epistemological sense, by cinema, history would also never have been realized. The historical point of rupture – for example the Shoah and the camps, or the atom bomb, or Srebrenica – eludes visibility, and can only be worked out after the fact, after its montage has inevitably changed the events of the past. This is a constant paradox in Godard's work on the image of the past, which his films and writings never really resolve. Godard treats history in the affirmative, while its image always comes too late, after the fact. Of course, the articulation of history is always after the fact, but in Godard's project the production of the past aims at a *virtual* past, one that was never realized. As quoted above: "To make a precise description of that which has not taken place is the work of the historian."

In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, there is a section of part *1a, Toutes les histoire(s)*, which claims that history must also take into account all the films that were never made. Godard includes himself in the series of filmmakers with unrealized projects, together with Welles, Eisenstein, Ophüls, Renoir, and Stroheim, and the unachieved project is a figure included in several of Godard's own films. The problems of the production of *King Lear* (1987) as well as of the Centre Pompidou exhibition in 2006, repeatedly postponed and changing titles, indicate how previously unachieved projects become the topic of the works themselves. The exhibition consequently makes use of excerpts from Godard's and Miéville's *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere) (1975), constructed on the ruins of the aborted project in Palestine, *Jusqu'à la victoire* (Towards Victory).

For several reasons, Godard's exhibition at Centre Pompidou in 2006 approached the issue of montage and history in a particularly interesting way. First of all, his only venture into the installation medium entails a different understanding of "montage" than that of cinema, or history. Likewise, the troubled history of the exhibition project is reflected in the installation in a complex way. The original plan for the exhibition was a project called *Collage(s) de France; Archéologie du cinéma*. This is the first time Godard classifies his project as archaeology, instead of the "histories" of the previous video projects, and he does so in connection with the concept of collage, rather than montage. The title also refers to the aborted project of organizing a series of lectures on cinema history at the Collège de France a few years earlier. The juxtapositions in the south gallery of Centre Pompidou may be understood as a collage rather than a montage, as a contrast to the time-based juxtapositions of film and video. However, it still works with montage in the epistemological sense that Godard lends to the term, as it is concerned with ruptures in history and how to render them visible.

The exhibition eventually realized as *Voyages(s) en utopie; Jean-Luc Godard 1946-2006 – à la recherche d'un théorème perdu*, is constructed on the ruins of the previous, aborted project.[5] As the background text, ostensibly written by the museum curators, explains at the entrance of the exhibition, the original plans were cancelled due to "financial, technical, and artistic reasons." Godard crossed out the two first adjectives to state that artistic questions alone were responsible for the project not being realized. Perhaps more importantly, the nine rooms planned for the *Collage(s)* exhibition are included in the first room of the *Voyage(s)* exhibition in the form of models (and enlarged reconstructions) made by Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville for the original proposal. As a result, the *Voyage(s)* exhibition becomes even more archaeological than the original project, as it excavates the remains from the architecture and layout of the first exhibition.

Besides the autobiographical periodization of the title, as mentioned earlier, the exhibition constructed three spaces separated as rooms, each named by the vague periodizations "Avant-hier," "Hier," and "Aujourd'hui." This process of naming follows the structure of the triptych, which Godard also deploys in *Notre Musique* (2004), divided into the Dantesque chapters "Inferno," "Purgatory." and "Paradise": "It is an idea I and Anne-Marie Miéville have in common: to make triptychs. A past, a present and a future. One image, another image, and what is in-between, what I would call the real image" (De Baecque, 2010, 792). The historical point of rupture, whether in the past, present, or future, evolves in the juxtapositions of two events or movements. Here we see the principle of montage as history, but in the exhibition mode these constellations work in a different way than in film and video. Likewise, the periodical structure of *Voyage(s) en utopie* had no room for utopia or the future. Rather than a divine comedy it is structured like a tragedy, with ascent, peripety, and the fall situated in the room "Today."

The room "Before Yesterday" contained the mentioned models of the *Collage(s)* proposal, some pre-cinematographic toys, several paintings from the modernist collection of the museum (a Matisse, a Hans Hartung and a Nicolas de Staël), and a wall with miniscule "smartphone"-sized screens showing old and new films by Godard. The presence of contemporary screening devices in the first room already disturbs any expectation of a linear periodization. However, one way of reading this inclusion is to see these technological devices as allusions to pre-projection cinematic devices allowing for individual viewing only, such as the Kinetoscope.

The middle room titled "Yesterday" juxtaposed excerpts from Godard's arsenal of films that also populate his various video productions on History. The space had a garden of plants in the middle, with the video screens distributed along the walls and on the floor. A toy train transporting various goods passed continuously from the one room to the other through a hole in the wall. The emblematic train for a cinematic modernity secured the passage between the "Before Yesterday" and "Yesterday" spaces. To the room "Today" there was no such passage. Populated by LCD screens screening advertisement spots, pornography and US

propaganda films such as *Black Hawk Down* (Ridley Scott, 2005), as well as French neo-Baroque films like *Barocco* (Techiné, 1982) and cheap home furniture, the screening context of "Today" offered a bleak and pessimistic view of the image in contemporary culture.

The gallery installation mode may not have offered the most fertile ground for Godard's search for the lost theorem – presumably, that of montage. The overall structure of the exhibition was, in other words, rather linear in its periodizations, and hardly attained the superimposition of movements conducting the archaeological montage of Godard's video works. On the other hand, it demonstrated the differences between montage as superimpositions and simultaneities in video and the conditions for the moving image in art installation. The two different screening modes were further highlighted by the programming of a complete retrospective of Godard's films and videos at the cinema of Centre Pompidou during the exhibition.

The main contribution of the exhibition to a concept of the past as montage, however, lies in the role of the nine models within the architecture of the exhibition. The planned nine rooms had very heterogeneous titles and contents defying any easy periodization: "The Myth (Allegory)," "Humanity (Image)," "The Camera (Metaphor)," "The Film (*Devoir*)." "The Alliance (The Unconscious)," "The Assholes (Parabole)," "The Real (Dream)," "The Killing (Montage)," and "The Grave (Fable)." The models contained reproductions of paintings, fragments of texts, and small screens showing films planned to be projected in the spaces.[6] A non-linear historical account of cinema and its century was included within the more conventional historiographical layout of the realized exhibition, and may provide the figure of superimposition and simultaneity that is associated with Godard's "archaeological method." Thus, the presence of an unrealized image of the past within the existing triptych creates a point of rupture in the montage between two superimposed exhibition projects, a relation that can be seen as the "real image" of the exhibition.

History and montage remain unrealized in the Centre Pompidou exhibition project, for much the same reasons that cinema history can only be produced on video, as Godard states in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. In the final chapter of the series, *4b; Les signes parmi nous* (The Signs Among Us), Godard evokes this unattainable dimension of history by involving excerpts from Charles Péguy's *Clio* in a montage of fragments deploying the production of the past. Péguy's meditation on history is in many respects close to Godard's own project. In the text, the discussions of history are interlaced with literary analyses, particularly of Victor Hugo, and fragments from poems are constantly repeated in different contexts, similarly to the film clips in Godard's works. As such, the dialogue is also structured in a serial, repetitive form. The reference to *Clio* bears on the role of repetition in Godard's montage, which is never just a return of the same but on the contrary serves to rewrite history as it occurs in different combinations each time. The repetition of Clio's historical-philosophical theses is a restart for "writing history" at each

instance, without history ever being achieved. Godard quotes the repeated comment on the historical project from *Clio*: *le soir tombe toujours, les vacances finissent . . .* Night always falls. This passage in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is immediately preceded by the Pompei sequence from Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia*, where the traces of history are born from what has turned into dust, from the empty casts of people. These indexical monuments thus refer to the photographic image, and its element of past-ness.

The evocation of Maurice Blanchot that follows in this sequence is vital in its description of the image as a reserve for history, since he states that the image is always "after the fact." The image demands that the thing disappear before it can be re-conceived, just as, if recollection can take place, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* pinpoints the need to forget. Maurice Blanchot describes "the image as the thing in its state of disappearing" (*la chose comme éloignement*) in his account of the aesthetical principle of *dèsœuvrement*. For Blanchot, the myth of Orpheus is central to this understanding of the ephemeral role of the image. However, Godard seems to endow cinema with the power to transgress this ephemerality when he states in *2a; Seule le cinéma* that "cinema allows Orpheus to turn around without killing Eurydice." This access to the past comes at a price. What Orpheus sees is a fixed image of the past, as the salts of the photographic emulsion is compared (in *3a: La monnaie de l'absolu*) (The Currency of the Absolute) to Lot's wife, who turns into a salt statue when she turns around to see Sodom. It is the task of montage to animate these frozen images of the past. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma* the Orphic myth is evoked as a principle for the unattainability of history, which is the reason why the series of quotes from Charles Péguy's *Clio*.

According to *Clio*, history is unachievable. Godard quotes long passages: "A king may achieve his reign, but never the history of that reign, one may make a revolution, but one never achieves the history of this revolution" (Péguy, 1917, 238). Clio states, "It takes me a day to make the history of a second. It takes me a year to make the history of a minute. It takes me a life to make the history of an hour; it takes eternity to make the history of a day. One can do anything, excepted the history of what one does" (Péguy, 1917, 239). The reason for the temporal aporia of history lies in its abundance of documents. In contemporary history, there are always too many documents. Péguy's dialogue, just after the passage quoted in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, emphasizes the need for selections, for missing documents and censorship for history to come into being, with the result that history becomes art (Péguy, 1917, 241–243). One recognizes a Nietzschean ring in the diagnosis of an obsession with the past as a hampering of "life" and the production of the new. Clio asks:

> What if [history] was not about a text, but about movement itself, of an idea, of reality, of life [. . .]. Or if it simply was about a text, but where it wasn't about determining it on the basis of words, but on an idea, for instance, or on an intention, on a movement. Or a usage. (Péguy, 1917, 239)

According, to Godard, this is exactly where cinema is able to transcend the traditional historical project. Through montage, cinema can approach movements, ideas, and usages without immobilizing them in their established explanations. This is the archaeology of the ideas of montage.

Notes

1   Georges Didi-Huberman has devoted a long discussion to this problem in Godard's work (Didi-Huberman, 2003, 172–187).

2   Here we see the difference from the approach to history of another key name in the theory and practice of montage, Sergei Eisenstein. In his *Notes on a General Theory of Cinema*, there are also juxtapositions of works, but only from literature, painting, music and theatre, because these serve as points on lines that conduct to a teleological concept of cinema as the synthesis of montage in the previous arts (Eisenstein, 2013).

3   Jacques Rancière returns to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in several texts in order to question the idea of an absolute separation between the word and the image, to which he argues the composite notion of the "phrase-image" (Rancière, 2001, 236; 2003, 72). Didi-Huberman, on the other hand, borrows support from Godard's iconophilia in arguing exactly that the photographic archival image of the Shoah would contribute to understanding the event. He discusses the role of four still photographs taken from the transportation of dead bodies from the gas chambers of Auschwitz and put into mass graves, and argues that they form a kind of montage, together with all other sorts of documents, of this decisive event for Western civilization. It seems, however, that this is, in many ways, a different concept of montage than Godard's (Didi-Huberman, 2003, 172–187).

4   In the 1997 Documenta X in Kassel, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* was screened within Dan Graham's *Installation for Viewing Videos*. Each of the eight parts of the series was screened on monitors in separate compartments of a glass construction. [The arrangement and disposition of the ensemble] made the images of the other monitors superimpose and reflect in each compartment. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* was thus submitted to its own approach to film history, allowing for interlacing and reflecting images in each other. [The installation] made a very interesting screening space for the series, even if the artist himself in vain had rejected the idea of the curator Catherine David (personal communication with the artist).

5   A photographic documentation of the exhibition by Michael Witt is available on: http://www.rouge.com.au/9/godard.html

6   Godard and Miéville describe the preparation of the models for the exhibition in the video *Reportage amateur: maquette expo* (Amateur Story: Model Expo) (2006).

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The Old Place, Space of Legends

Margaret C. Flinn

The Old Place is not a particularly widely known work by Godard and Miéville – completed in 1999, it premiered at the Cinémathèque Française and MoMA in 2001, and became available as part of a DVD set of Godard-Miéville shorts in 2006.[1] It is the type of film that makes a career on the festival circuit, a useful filler for themed or auteur series at archives and cinémathèques, incidental late-night television documentary time-slots and an attractive find for cinéphiles trolling for (illegally) downloadable gems. In voice-over early in the film, Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville state the essentials of the contract between themselves and the Museum of Modern Art in the making of *The Old Place*: "On Page 5, the agreement states: The producers must examine any object or subject, ordinary or extraordinary, in any field, according to their actions or ideas, making sure to identify any existing trace of what we have agreed to call art . . . to finally discover if art is a myth [in French, *légende*] or a reality."[2] Colin MacCabe, in an essay entitled "The Commerce of Cinema," clarifies that in fact the clause does not appear in the legal document, but nonetheless "represents a formulation that makes clear the double origin of the film, both in a question posed from outside and in the new meaning that the questions has [sic] provoked inside" (MacCabe, 2004, 97). MacCabe's essay elaborates on the double origins present not only of *The Old Place* but of several of Godard and Miéville's other films – commissioned works that took on fundamental importance as the questions posed by the commissioning body intersected with or developed into questions of importance to the couple themselves. That the statement of the film's origin (like MacCabe and taking a cue from Godard, I will refer to *The Old Place* as a film) may be true to the spirit of the contract but not its precise language seems particularly appropriate in that the contrast between legend/myth and reality is central to the film's

problematization of the relationship between truth, legend, reality, cinema, art, and dreams. In this chapter, I propose to examine how *The Old Place* works within the gaps between language and image(s). By continually displacing and rearranging the relationships between words and images and words as images, Godard and Miéville create a constantly renewed space of understanding and spectatorial challenge. They apply this technique to a constellation of philosophical and historical questions, not least of which is the meaning and practice of art itself.

Intertitles: *Légendes* at Play

The Old Place is structured by a constant triangulation between voice-overs by Godard and Miéville (sometimes speaking their own "dialogue," sometimes reading extended passages of the works of others – authors credited at the film's ending), title cards, and an audio-visual collage of film clips, paintings, and new footage. Since the mid-1990s, Godard has published a paper "equivalent" of his films – an illustrated edition bearing the same name that reproduces a certain portion of the text (verbal, written, or both) of the film. In the case of *The Old Place* and the short films available on the same DVD, these texts appear in the 118 page hardcover book that doubles as the DVD case.

The title cards in *The Old Place* do not appear as part of the print text, only the voice-over. This is a curious omission, in that the title cards seem to play a prominent role in the film itself. Fourteen numbered cards divide the film into chapters or sections of unequal duration. Another 50-some (depending upon how one counts repetitions) feature three lines, one word to each line (echoing, in their number and arrangement the appearance of the film's very title). Another handful of cards include only one word, often either a hold over or anticipation of a word appearing on an adjacent three word card. The cards are simple black with the words in white, all capital, sans-serif lettering.

If certain of these intertitles seem to suggest a quasi-explanatory caption—"LE VIEUX MUSÉE" (The Old Museum) or "AGONIES DES PENSÉES" (Agonies of Thoughts), for instance – their dominant function seems to be to pose the question of the relationship between what we could consider to be the keywords of the film. Two sets following each other early in the film read, "VÉRITÉ LÉGENDE RÊVERIE" (Truth, Legend, Reverie) then "RÊVERIE CINÉMA VÉRITÉ" (Reverie, Cinema, Truth). The substitution of the second term and inversion of truth and reverie between these two title cards suggest two completely different relationships between the word concepts. In the first case, the implication is that truth is the origin, becoming obscured in legend or myth and eventually leading to a dream-like state. The second term, *"légende,"* however leans heavily on a double meaning in French – not only a legend/myth, the term is commonly used for a caption. Using this meaning, a completely different signification is suggested: truth

is captioned or explained, and then leads to reverie. In the second case, dreaming gives birth to cinema, which inspires the understanding of truth. Either of these linguistic series could be taken as Godard and Miéville's understanding of their film's project – truth precedes the commentary they make upon it, bringing themselves as narrators as well as their spectators to a state of reverie; simultaneously, the filmmakers' (or more broadly, the artist's) reverie brings them to make cinema, which is truth.

While some of the sets of three words are a series of substantives that bear a meaning suggested by their juxtaposition and order – in other words, their montage – other title cards made of only two substantives conjoined or compared. "RÉALITÉ COMME LÉGENDE . . . LÉGENDE COMME RÉALITÉ . . . CINÉMA COMME LÉGENDE . . . ART COMME LÉGENDE . . . CINÉMA COMME RÉALITÉ" (Reality as Legend . . . Legend as Reality . . . Cinema as Legend . . . Art as Legend . . . Cinema as Reality). The way in which cinema, art, reality, and legend are shuffled, taking each others place in comparisons implies that they are interchangeable. However, "comme," which could in fact mean "like" or "as," also suggests masquerade. Thus, cinema may take the place of Reality, but Cinema is not reality.

I take the suggestion that the title cards hold the key to *The Old Place*'s project from those cards themselves. These three word cards hold the explanation to which all critics refer in characterizing the film, "VINGT TROIS [as if two separate words] EXERCISES" and then "DE PENSÉE ARTISTIQUE" (twenty-three exercises in artistic thinking). The number carries a mystery glossed over by all the same critics and reviewers who call attention to the exercises in artistic thinking – the numbered title cards only go to 14, leaving a curious gap of nine. How many exercises are there, and does the number in reality matter? Is the exercise to pose a possibly unanswerable question?

A Resistant Text

The reception of *The Old Place*, while positive, remains marked by the difficulty of accounting for the many references and puzzles that characterize the film. *Variety*'s Lisa Nesselson characterized the work as "ponderous," but "also lilting and profound" – containing "enough food for thought to cater a scrumptious banquet for the intellectual elite, with ample leftovers for the common man" (Nesselson, 2002, 1). Nesselson's overall favorable judgment on the "layers of erudition" that make up the film, is that "Man-made art can be terrific, but nature's handiwork is better. Nobody emerging from a dark auditorium in the Palais des Festivals onto the Cannes beachfront on a sunny day could argue with that." While Nesselson purports to recommend the film, her concluding sentences bring to the surface an undercurrent that would seem to cater to a presumably anti-intellectual

audience: you might be happier, she suggests, if you stay outside on the beach, rather than diving down the rabbit hole of Godard-Miéville's on-screen musings.

In *Artforum* Anders Stephanson suggests that the film "invites deciphering – not summary" (Stephanson, 2001, 41), but even the most erudite insider echoes Nesselson's cautionary note: in the same article as cited above, MacCabe writes that "in many ways, *The Old Place* defies comment. The complexity of the references to painting, music, philosophy, literature and film would daunt any individual" (MacCabe, 2004, 97). Thus, I would characterize *The Old Place* as a resistant text, one that, like *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, makes certain demands on its viewers, one that issues a challenge to play the game of "identifying citations" and then proffers an audio-visual assemblage that eludes almost any viewer's ability to win such a game.

Cyril Neyrat, for his part, claims that *The Old Place*

> makes the mueseological purpose of [Godard's] life's work explicit. Having recorded the dreams and horrors of the 20th century, cinema has become an "old place" where all those who "refuse time, because they don't want to lose rank," find refuge. It's up to cinema to build its own refuge, and to welcome in images from the past; because "from Botticelli to Barnet, it's the same gaze, the same suffering" – a possible development of the "classic = modern" equation written on a blackboard in *Bande à part* [Band of Outsiders]. (Neyrat, 2006, n.p.)

I concur with Neyrat's characterization: Godard and Miéville work constantly with the paradox of old and new, classic and modern. And indeed, they frame this temporal, historiographical problem as one that is spatialized.

The film's very title poses an immediate query, what and where is "The Old Place?" Knowing the work is a MoMA commission, one is tempted to presume that this particular museum is the site in question. Indeed, the opening titles refer to "The Museum of Modern Art, New York City" and the museum's Celeste Bartos film center. At approximately halfway through the film's duration, a title card reading "LES TEMPS MODERNES" (Modern Times – a simultaneous reference to Charlie Chaplin's eponymous film and the literary journal founded by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1945), appears, superimposed on an artist's rendering of MoMA's exterior, which in its turn is superimposed on another street scene – possibly a more frontal view of the same museum building. This repeats with a slight variation the superimposed images that underlie "THE OLD PLACE" in the title sequence and in fact conjoins the film's title, "of Modern Ar . . ." running down the side of the building and just visible in the artist's rendering, and the inscription "© MOMA 1999." Thus, on the eve of the new millennium, the 20th century appears to become old. Through this superimposition, along with the further juxtaposition to "Modern Times" Godard-Miéville visualize the conundrum: how is something both "modern" and "old?"

The title cards evoke a similar tension: besides "LES TEMPS MODERNES" are also "ANCIENS", "LE VIEUX MUSEE" (The Old Museum) appears twice among the cards as does "MODERN ART MUSEUM" (in English in the original). The

recurrence of these paradoxical temporal markers, both poses and resolves itself through spatial means, by appearing to refer to the same location. Similarly, Godard and Miéville offer a series of art works from prehistoric cave painting to the 20th century with dates superimposed upon them – including photographs with time stamps in the corner. This series is preceded by Miéville saying that to understand the connection between stars (both movie stars and stars seen in the sky) and between images you must start by looking at the "simple links" and by title cards reading "NAISSANCE DU TEMPS, BAPTÊME DU MONTAGE" (Birth of Time, Baptism of Montage). It is the coexistence and succession on the same screen – the montage – that collapses the distance in time between the images. Cinema becomes the site where art's temporal paradoxes are resolved. As Jacques Rancière has said about *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Godard "seals the global co-belonging of text and film to the same world of image" (Rancière, 2006, 174). Where Rancière was specifically referring to the simultaneous viewing of images taken from one film with the text of another film, I believe we can extend this characterization to include the successive juxtapositions of various types of language/text and image that operate in *The Old Place*.

It is the voiceover of section "(7) HORS DU TEMPS" (Out of Time) that reiterates a spatial solution to a temporal problem. Jean-Luc Godard says: Can one tell the story of time? Time in and of itself, as is and as itself . . . No, in truth, this would be a mad enterprise." Anne-Marie Miéville responds: "Art was not sheltered from time. It was the shelter of time."[3] We are here, at the film's center, not quite perfectly so in terms of minutes elapsed, but at the seventh of fourteen sections. Godard and Miéville position this slightly off-center vanishing point as being "out of time," as ever, working with two possible meanings – being without remaining time, but also outside of time. What is crucial in Miéville's response is that instead of art being spared subjection to the passing of time, it is the repository of time itself. Cinema, as Godard and Miéville have it in *The Old Place* becomes a collection site for time, as represented by the vast number of works that are integrated to a single film.

Commercialism meets Semiotics

Near simultaneity is what happens during opening credits when the location of MoMA, "NEW YORK CITY," is shown over a vividly colored street scene of the city and over a black and white image of a young woman in what may be nineteenth-century costume walks tentatively on the street. The images flash, alternate, and are superimposed so rapidly that it is difficult to watch them. This momentary glimpse offers two different versions of the cityspace. On the one hand, the glossy, curvilinear automobile, emblematic of consumerist modernity, à la Jacques Tati, and on the other hand, the overwhelming experience of the timid

pedestrian struggling not to be lost in the crowd. Both of these are of course representations of the city, not the city itself. The rapid-fire montage refers to a Vertovian city symphony, but the inclusion of mid-century modern commercial design (via the automobile) suggests an even more advanced state of consumer culture.

Indeed, Godard and Miéville seem to resent the collapse of art and commerce. As the film approaches its end, the voiceover cleaves closely to the images – *légende* corresponds to cinema. Godard says "When Jean-François Millet paints two peasants in a field and calls it the 'Angelus,' the legend/caption corresponds to the real."[4] Miéville then continues, "When Francis Picabia draws a bolt and calls it 'Portrait of a young American girl in a state of nudity,' the legend/caption no longer corresponds to the real." This series begins with the voice-over *légende* corresponding to the image on screen: Godard speaks of Millet as Millet's "Angelus" is shown; Miéville speaks of Picabia as a detail of Picabia's drawing appears. Yet, before Miéville has completed the title, in fact, at the moment she gives the title, the image switches to an Andy Warhol Marilyn Monroe – a young American girl known for appearing in states of nudity. Miéville's words begin by corresponding to the art historical real – telling the title of the visible work, even if that title operates on the disjunction between signifier and signified. By inserting the Warhol Marilyn, Godard and Miéville play a game of substitution: causing Picabia's title to align signifier and signified, they in their own turn make their *légende* no longer true to the art historical fact of Picabia's work. Picabia would probably not care, as Godard's voiceover continues on, moments later – and Picabia indeed would probably appreciate their double *détournement*. But Godard then suggests that the "owner of the train station brasserie won't care either, when presenting the desert menu": a menu we see on screen, a reproduction of an impressionist painting (a Renoir?), on a white linen covered table.

When the disjuncture between *légende* and "real," between word and image, thus, can be interpreted as a reflection on the creation of meaning, there is not a problem, but when art and commerce collapse, things become more problematic. Thus, after Warhol, there has been a decisive turn. "The image today," says Godard in voice-over, "is not what one sees, but what the caption says. It's modern advertising."[5] From the facile usage of the mechanically reproduced art work as a restaurant menu, Godard continues on to bemoan the collapse between the catalogues of La Rédoute, a relatively low-budget clothing retailer, and the august London auction house of Christie's to a single investment portfolio – that of François Pinault, who in 1998 acquired a 27.2% voting stake in the latter.[6] Miéville responds gravely that the latest Citroën will be called the "Picasso" – a gesture recalling the Picasso painting that flashes under "Celeste Bartos" during the film's credits. The linguistic collapse between commercial object and artistic signature symbolized in the naming of an automobile after an artist causes a semiotic misalignment for Godard and Miéville: assigning "Picasso" both to a painting and an automobile does not seem to be a productive accentuation of the arbitrariness

of the relationship between signifier and signified, but rather a transgression upon the potential power of art to act, meaningfully, within the world.

The Signature of *Légendes*

I have, in the previous section moved from a focus on *The Old Place*'s intertitles as a visual language, the image of language on screen, towards the spoken language present in the voiceovers of Godard and Miéville. Their verbalizations – a mixture of their own words and citations from various authors identified in the end credits as "Textes" (but not otherwise cued en route) – function then as another type of captioning. For most of the film, Miéville and Godard pass the speaking role back and forth like a baton: one picks up a text where the other left off, without an exchange between the two speakers. Instead, they simply give two different voices to a single line of thought. Or, one simply adds on to continue the previous thought. However, in the third section "L'Armée des Ombres" (a reference to Jean-Pierre Melville's 1969 film of the same name, *Army of Shadows*), the dialogue between Miéville and Godard is structured more like a real conversation: she asks if she may question him, he assents, she questions, he answers, she comments, he replies, and so on.

This conversation is marked as being – almost – outside of the "exercises in artistic thinking." At the end of the section, Godard says "Alors, continuons les exercices" (So, let's go on with the exercises), as if what had preceded was not one of these exercises. We might also infer that one exercise was simply coming to an end, except that the section opens with a staged confusion. Footsteps crunch on an outdoor path, intermittently lighted by a flashlight that reveals the shadow of a walking couple holding hands. The couple – Godard-Miéville? – is twice intercut with images of statues, before the image track returns to the pure collage of artworks with the meditative, non-diegetic piano music that has come and gone since the beginning of the film replacing the diegetic footfalls. Meanwhile the dialogue begins:

AMM: It's time to see where we're at. But it's hard, we're kind of flying blind.
JLG: That's true: *légende*, reality, art, cinema, the year 2000 . . . The New York people didn't really ask for anything specific. They want things set, as one says, but without knowing how.[7]

Here, Godard's voice-over picks up the same keywords that make up the intertitle shell game an example of how the *légendes* pass from written to aural registers throughout the film. Their uncertainty here is presented through narrative, rather than being enacted through visual montage (between and within the individual title cards).

As the section continues, the music gives way to a soundtrack without images, where we hear a fragment of another (younger) Godard passionately declaiming

something about Hölderlin and utopia in a public forum (a fragment of another voice may be discerned). Just as the viewer has identified the voice, present-day Godard nearly drowns it out: "Alors dans ce cas, la légende, c'est nous" (So, in this case, the legend is us). Godard's remark is a logical entry in his dialogue with Miéville about free will and ghosts, where the "us" would seem to be all human-kind, but the interaction between his two voices and the images on screen at the time – at this point, a series of painted portraits of individual men and women – would suggest that "us" is precisely the two filmmakers. Godard here competes with himself to give the caption, a mise-en-abyme between younger and older selves that reads as self-elevation to myth. After all, in the break in present-day Godard's speech after "c'est nous," the other Godard can again clearly be heard to exhort, "Alors, osez-le!" (Literally "So dare [to do / say it!"] but delivered like the present day idiom "So, own it!"). Godard does not have a reputation for false modesty – he does dare and he does own it – so *légende* as myth or legend certainly fits this episode. But *légende* as caption, or as commentary serves as well, because here we have a case where if JLG and AMM are "us" the legend does not match the real (the portrait images are not representations of them).

The couple does appear in the film, in the fourteenth and final section ("L'Enfance de l'art" (Infancy of Art) – an appearance that Colin MacCabe takes as an indication of the project's personal importance for the pair (MacCabe, 2004, 97).[8] I would draw a connection between this dual portrait and the notion that "we are the legend" from the Army of Shadows section: formidable as they are, two is hard to consider an army, but the face of each is nearly obscured in shadow – leaving only enough visible for a positive identification. They gaze directly towards the camera and spectators, the *légendes* taking their place within the image, the reality becoming cinema.

The *Légende* Comes Full Circle

Although *The Old Place* affects a primarily elegiac tone, with the occasional note of outrage (at the exposition of "art" of atrocity, or the commercialization of art in general), the film remains surprisingly hopeful and positive. Rebounding from the Citroën Picasso, AMM muses "Even so, I have the feeling that there's some-thing resisting, something that is original – that the origin will always be there and that it resists."[9] From this refusal to succumb to cynicism, the voiceover advances to read a lengthy citation of Jorge Luis Borges's *Book of Imaginary Beings* (Borges and Guerrero, 2005) – in fact the entirety of the entry on the "A Bao A Qu." Miéville reads the story of this mythical creature who follows humans to the top of the Tower of Victory in Chitor, achieving full visibility and form when the pilgrim it follows is a man or woman of the utmost purity, and the rest of the time languishing in great suffering in its incomplete state. Godard takes over

the narration for the final sentence: "Sir Richard Burton recounts the legend of the A Bao A Qu in a note to his version of *A Thousand and One Nights*." Then he adds, "We have decided to end with this text, because it illustrates the film perfectly."[10]

The story of the A Bao A Qu, perfect illustration of *The Old Place*, is a Sisyphian tale of repetition – the legendary creature will follow pilgrims again and again, even though it only once throughout the century has achieved perfection. The inclusion of this story may function as a final *légende*, but it also illustrates one last mise-en-abyme of Godard and Miéville's praxis. The Indian legend is delivered in a translation of Borges, who in turn ascribes his source as Richard Francis Burton, the nineteenth-century British explorer and translator of *The Arabian Nights*. Godard and Miéville thus inscribe themselves as yet the latest (audio-visual) scribes in a long chain of translation, re-telling or citation, not to say plagiarism, for as Lisa Nesselson (2002) quips, "a cynic might say that Godard and Miéville took MoMA's $500,000 and spent it on quotation marks." And indeed this is how the exercises in artistic thinking continue. They are exercises, meant to be repeated, by filmmakers constantly re-dedicating themselves to the interrogation, the "endless dialogue between imagination and work."[11] Like the used clothing "resurrected" by Boltanski documented early in *The Old Place*, Godard and Miéville resurrect images, retell legends and in so doing, re-open the possibility of understanding and negotiating the relationships between words and images that constitute their art, the cinema.

Notes

1   Godard and Miéville (2006).
2   JLG: Page 5, le protocole déclare:
    AMM: Les producteurs devront examiner n'importe quel objet ou sujet, ordinaire ou extraordinaire, dans n'importe quelle domaine que ce soit, et au hasard de leur actions ou réflexions, d'y relever avec le plus grand soin la trace encore existante ou pas de ce à quoi nous sommes convenue le nom d'art.
    JLG: Pour savoir enfin si l'art est une légende ou une réalité." Translations are my own.
3   "Peut-on raconter le temps? Le temps en lui-même, comme tel et en soi . . . Non, en vérité, ce serait une folle entreprise." "L'art n'était pas à l'abri du temps. Il était l'abri du temps."
4   "Quand Jean-François Millet peint deux paysans qui prient dans un champ et qu'il appellee ça l'Angelus, la légende correspond au réel."
5   "L'image, aujourd'hui, n'est pas ce que l'on voit mais ce qu'en dit la légende. C'est la publicité moderne."
6   Vogel (1998).
7   AMM: C'est le moment de savoir où nous en sommes. Mais c'est difficile, on navigue un peu en aveugles.

JLG: C'est vrai: légende, réalité, art, cinéma, an 2000 . . . Les gens de New York n'ont pas vraiment demandé quelque chose. Ils voudraient être fixés, comme on dit, mais sans savoir à propos de quoi.

8   "That we finally see them together after 25 years shows the importance they both accord to this piece" (MacCabe, 2004, 97).

9   "Cependant, j'ai le sentiment que quelque chose résiste, quelque chose d'original, que l'origine sera toujours là, et qu'elle résiste."

10   "Le capitaine Burton rapporte la légende de l'A Bao A Qou dans une des notes de sa version des *Mille et Une Nuits*. Et si nous avons jugé bon de terminer le film par ce texte, c'est qu'il en est l'illustration."

11   "dialogue sans fin entre l'imagination et le travail" (AMM voiceover, section 14 *The Old Place*).

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Notre musique

Juste une conversation

Erin Schlumpf

Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre musique* (Our Music) (2004) borrows its three-part struc-ture – Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven – from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. However, Godard's film does not give each realm equal attention, devoting considerably more time to Purgatory. During this second part of the film, situated in a dimly lit classroom in post-war Sarajevo, Godard gives a lecture to a group of film stu-dents. If his film essay has a thesis, it is lodged in this sequence. Godard's lecture, like much of the film, arrives at its argument by a process of comparison, contrast, and correspondence, which he describes by using the grammar of film editing: shot/reverse shot.

Presenting the students with two stills from Howard Hawks' *His Girl Friday* (1940), Godard remarks that the shot of Cary Grant and that of Rosalind Russell are mirror images of each other. Their resemblance results, according to Godard, from Hawks' inability "to see the difference between a woman and a man."[1] This assessment of the director also speaks directly to one of the central themes in *His Girl Friday*: the difference between female and male desire. Throughout *His Girl Friday*, Cary Grant's character, Walter Burns, manipulates events in order to con-vince Rosalind Russell's character, Hildy Johnson, that her desires match his. Her subsequent return to his embrace comes to pass only after considerable coercion, dishonesty, and violence, giving the screwball comedy a sinister edge. The story of this man's successful subjugation of another person to a role, his *girl* Friday – a title reminiscent of Robinson Crusoe's relationship with his black manservant – is both a narrative of enslavement and a spirited, romantic romp. Both of these descriptions fit Hawks' film. Godard does not choose stills from *His Girl Friday* in order to censure Hawks for bad gender politics; he urges the viewer to remember that any story has (at least) two sides. He also reminds the viewer that the shot/

reverse shot and continuity editing – on the left, Cary Grant's profile, the phone to his ear, on the right, Rosalind Russell shown in the same posture – provides for the smooth transmission of narrative, but also creates the illusion of a spatial whole, an illusion fabricated by the director.

Godard stages the two shots from Hawks' film in the middle of a row of students: Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell face the film spectator, framed by the backs of those students who hold the printed images. The deep-space composition places the images in the foreground, the first row of students in the middle ground, and the backlit Godard in the background, his face out of focus. By amputating these two stills from the diegetic world that endowed them with volume and narrative sense, and inserting them into the *mise-en-scène* of his own film, Godard strips them of reality and reveals their ghostly, iconic flatness.

For the remainder of his lecture, Godard pursues this question of the relative "truth" of images. "For instance," he proposes, "two pictures of the same moment in history. Then you see that truth has two faces . . ." The sequence alters between shots of the dimly lit classroom: Godard sitting in front of three rows of students, a translator to the side. In these shots, Godard holds up images to illustrate his points before they are passed around the class. His voice comes from the scene space and is surrounded by the other noises in the room (the whispers or laughter of students, the voice of the translator, the squeaking of chairs). However, certain images are allowed to fill the screen space, during which time Godard's lecture continues as voiceover.

Drawing an example from history, Godard scans two photographs and explains: "In 1948, the Israelites walked in the water to reach the Promised Land. The Palestinians walked in the water to drown. Shot and reverse shot. The Jewish people become the stuff of fiction, and the Palestinians, of documentary." The film continually questions the role that Israel has played in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, not as an isolated case of violence between two religious groups, but as a recent and pressing example. Both of the young female protagonists in *Notre musique* (whom I will discuss later in this chapter) are Jewish, and incredibly concerned by unequal treatment of Palestinians in Israel. Of course, this contemporary occurrence of sustained bloodshed for religious and territorial reasons allows the film to reflect on others: the Bosnian War, the genocide of the Native Americans, and the German Occupation of France. In his films, Godard habitually (though sometimes discretely) evokes the memory of Vichy France and the extermination of European Jews. *Notre musique* is no exception.

A high-angle shot of the ceiling shows a swinging light bulb, and we hear Godard in voiceover: "Shot and reverse shot. Imaginary: certitude. Reality: uncertainty. The principle of cinema: go toward the light and shine it on our night. Our music." The pendulous light bulb, light and darkness, certitude and uncertainty all recall a similar sequence from Henri-Georges Clouzot's *Le Corbeau* (The Raven) (1943). Clouzot's film, shot during the Vichy years, takes place in the fictional provincial French town of Saint-Robin. Dr Rémy Germain (Pierre

Fresnay), a recent arrival to the town, receives a threatening, anonymous letter accusing him of being an abortionist, signed "Le Corbeau." However, the mysterious enemy does not stop at Germain. Letters from "Le Corbeau" proliferate until almost everyone in the town has received threats that their private crimes will be disclosed or has learnt unflattering secrets about someone with whom they are close. Of course, the information in these letters is rarely true. Still, the townspeople's suspicion and paranoia escalates rapidly leading to accusations of guilt, violence, and several deaths. Toward the end of the film, Dr Germain and an older doctor, psychiatrist Michel Vorzet (Pierre Larquey), gather together the town's leading suspects in a schoolroom, and hold a long, collective dictation (*dictée*), hoping to identify "Le Corbeau" by his or her handwriting. The exercise is cut short when Denise (Ginette Leclerc), Germain's lover, whom we later discover is pregnant with his child, collapses from the sustained effort. After they have cleared the room, Vorzet and Germain enter into a troubling discussion, which is the philosophical center of the film. Heretofore, Vorzet has stood out as a voice of reason. Even while many letters have circulated claiming that Germain and Vorzet's wife, Laura (Micheline Francey), are having an affair, Vorzet has never doubted Laura's fidelity, and has always treated Germain with paternal kindness. Now that they are alone, Vorzet admits that Denise's handwriting is similar to that of "Le Corbeau," but not close enough to constitute proof of her guilt. Germain vows that he will never be intimate with her again if she is the culprit. Here, the conversation takes an interesting turn, as Vorzet goes behind the teacher's desk, on which sits a globe, a single light bulb hanging above. Vorzet mocks Germain: "You are incredible. You believe that people are all good or all bad. You believe that the good is light, and that darkness is the evil." Here, Vorzet reaches up and jostles the light bulb so that it sways back and forth. He continues, "But, where is the darkness? Where is the light? Where is the border of evil? Do you know if you are on the good or bad side?" The camera is now behind Vorzet, and the spectator sees his back, the globe in the center of the frame, and Germain in the background. Light shines on and off the globe and Germain's face as the bulb vacillates. Significantly, the side of the globe turned toward the camera is the one containing the continent of Europe. It is illuminated and then plunged into darkness as Vorzet speaks. Germain moves to stop the light bulb, and burns his fingers, symbolically confirming Vorzet's point about the impossibility of pinning down morality.

In examining just this portion of the scene, it is clear what made Clouzot's film so disturbing and repugnant to many French during and after the Occupation. Vorzet, who turns out to be "Le Corbeau," his face sweaty and pale, also confesses to Germain that he is an opium addict. Pétain's French State took as its motto "Travail, Famille, Patrie" (Work, Family, Fatherland) (replacing the French Republic's "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity)), and drug use, abortion, and birthing children out of wedlock were all rigorously frowned upon.

The presence of these socially unacceptable practices (or, at least allusions to them) on the part of many of the characters in *Le Corbeau* makes the film scandalous for its era. Additionally, attributing these habits to common French bourgeois, exactly those likely to be in favor of Pétain's government, suggests a moral laxity and hypocrisy among this population. The fact that Vorzet seems to speak such sense, and yet is responsible for the turmoil in Saint-Robin, leaves the spectator without a response to his question, "Where is the border of evil?" And what of this image of Europe, which light and darkness traverse intermittently? Is Vorzet so much worse than his fellow townspeople, who turn on each other with the slightest encouragement? Who among the French is innocent of the crimes of the Occupation, a time that would later be referred to (and excused) as the *années noires* (Dark years)? During the years of the Occupation, between three and four million letters of denunciation were sent to mayors' offices all over France. Citizens accused others of being Jewish or political enemies of the French State. *Le Corbeau* darkly mocks these informants, as well as the notion of a strict moral code. We can't help but admire the charismatic Vorzet, even when his guilt is clear. He has successfully manipulated the entire town. The film refuses to pick sides between the hero, Germain, and the villain, Vorzet.

Notre musique engages the history of the Occupation in an ongoing debate about how to counteract contemporary violence and work through historical trauma. Cinema, which attempts to shine light on our darkness, "our music," is implicated in this discussion. Godard claims that film ought to show the uncertainties, the dark music, of human experience. Yet film is also an art of illusion, a sea of images. Between the illusion and the reality, with the help of other voices, Godard develops a conversation about the place of the intellectual artist in the political landscape.

Hell and Other People

Although Godard's lecture functions as the film's core, *Notre musique* begins in Hell. For approximately nine minutes, the film takes the form of a collage: sequences drawn from fiction films and newsreels, slowed down or sped up, the colors filtered or oversaturated, all edited together in order to present a visual summary of human violence and destruction. From helicopters and tanks to a battle between cowboys and Indians to bulldozed bodies to children begging in the street, the film seems to remind us that Hell is, indeed, other people. However, the narration reaches a different conclusion. The voice of Sarah Adler, who plays the role of Judith Lerner in the film's second part, accompanies our passage through Hell. Her words cast a wide net, insinuating that man's heritage has been marked by a trail of blood. "And so, in the time of fables after the floods,"

she says, "there appeared on earth men armed for extermination. They're horrible here with their obsession for cutting off heads. What amazes me is that there could be any survivors." The somber piano music of Hans Otte punctuates the images. Rather than responding to the violence with revulsion or outrage, the voiceover turns to the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." She pauses before continuing, "Yes, as we forgive them and no differently." A longer pause, followed by the eventual reassertion: "Yes, as we forgive them and no differently." By qualifying the kind of forgiveness offered to each aggressor, the narration retreats from the possibility of unconditional exoneration and proposes equality. Should we forgive, let us be forgiven. However, should we fail to forgive, let us be likewise condemned. Peace, like war, is the work of more than one body.

Adler concludes by gleaning a redemptive message from history's darkest chapters. She contends: "We can consider death in two ways: one, as the impossible of the possible, the other, as the possible of the impossible. Now, 'I' is another ('*je' est un autre*)." This last thought echoes the findings of Jacques Lacan more closely than those of Arthur Rimbaud. While Rimbaud claims prior credit, his pronouncement of "Je est un autre" (dating from an 1871 letter to Georges Izambard) suggests that he sees his poetic creations as emanating from something beyond his own self-understanding. Lacan's elaboration of the mirror stage, on the other hand, reveals that the collapsing boundaries between the self and the other emerge during an early stage of life, and constitute an essential part of human identity. Around the time of 18 months, the child has an experience of visual recognition, which leads to a notion of the self as existing in a world peopled by others. Lacan theorizes that the child's simultaneous association with and alienation from the self in the mirror corresponds to the first awareness of the world outside the self, the dual existence of an inner-world and an outer-world. The child recognizes the self in the other, and understands that dependence on others and social interaction form the skeleton of human life. Therefore, according to Lacan, altruism lies near the base of human psychology. The self understands that s/he has a duty to the other, just as s/he has a responsibility to the self. *Notre musique* begins by showing us that Hell results from a collaborative effort between us and other people. An end to this misery requires a collaboration of another kind.

The statement "'I' is another" also elliptically quotes Charles Baudelaire, to whose poems Godard alludes in other films, notably *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know about Her) (1967). Towards the middle of that film's diegesis, the female protagonist Juliette has gone to a café. She sits down at a table, and we see her in close-up. We hear the noise of the flippers from the pinball machine in the background. Juliette slowly drinks her coffee, and examines a nearby couple. Then, there is an inserted close-up of the magazine *Lui*, which the woman in the couple (who is out of frame) skims. The pages of the magazine are filled with suggestive graphics of women who make commen-

taries in speech bubbles. The text is unreadable. Here, Godard offers a whispered commentary:

> Here is how Juliette, at 3:37 in the afternoon, saw the pages of this murmuring object, which in the language of journalism, is called a review. And here is how, approximately one hundred and fifty images later, another young woman, her likeness, her sister (*sa semblable, sa soeur*), with the same object. Where, therefore, is the truth? Face on or in profile? And, above all, what is an object?

In language and image, Godard pushes the viewer to question the status of the magazine, and of the two women who perceive it. Juliette sees the magazine from a relative distance, and therefore is not able to make out the details of its content. The other young woman has the magazine and the images directly in front of her. Which perspective encapsulates the "truth" of this object? It is impossible for the women to take in the object simultaneously from a variety of points of view. This limits their conception of the magazine, but should these limitations define the magazine as an object? Is an object no more (or no less) than our perception of it? Godard, likewise, refers to the other young woman as Juliette's "likeness, her sister" (*sa semblable, sa soeur*). This reference to Charles Baudelaire's "Au Lecteur," the first poem in his collection *Les Fleurs du mal* (first published in 1857), alludes to the poem's last line (slightly modified in Godard's film), in which the text famously accuses its reader of Ennui and hypocrisy:

> C'est l'Ennui! – l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,
> Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka.
> Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,
> – Hypocrite lecteur, – mon semblable, – mon frère!
> (Baudelaire, 1918, 18)

> "It's Ennui! – watery eye filled with involuntary tears,
> He dreams of scaffolds while smoking his hookah.
> You know him, reader, this delicate monster,
> – Hypocritical reader, – my likeness, – my brother!"

Throughout Baudelaire's poem, the narrator has employed the relatively mild pronoun "we." After accusing this "we" of myriad vices, the aggressive shift to "you" at the poem's conclusion comes as a shock. Baudelaire meant to cause a reaction. Referring to the second line of the stanza, Ross Chambers points out:

> The image of the houka-smoking dreamer of gallows is, first and foremost, a figure for the social tyranny exerted, especially after 1851, by a victorious bourgeoisie whose boredom producing "order" rested, both historically in the past and continuously in the present, on the bloody repression of the working class. (Chambers, 1988, 98)

However, the text not only inculpates an other, but gestures simultaneously inward, equating its author with the hypocritical reader, "my likeness, – my brother!" Baudelaire's melancholy movement does not dampen the poem's brutality, but it does render the message more ambiguous. When the narrator acknowledges his own hypocrisy, the forthrightness of his text also comes into question:

> The text wears a mask, and acknowledges it; in so doing, it invites us to look beneath the mask for what is unacknowledged. Thus "mon semblable, – mon frère!" functions primarily as an accusation, but secondarily and *après-coup*, as self-denunciation, and the primary accusation/self-denunciation of hypocrisy conceals, but also makes readable a secondary one of cruelty . . . The *je-tu* relationship at the end gives the clue to a reading of the whole poem as a cruel denunciation of "hypocrisy" in the reader, that is, his failure to acknowledge what he intimately *knows*. (Chambers, 1988, 105)

Baudelaire's text provokes the reader to inquire into what lies beneath his unacknowledged Ennui. Godard's appropriation of Baudelaire implies the filmmaker's shared goal of provocation. When he compares the actions of Juliette and the other young woman in the café, calling her Juliette's "likeness, her sister," Godard indicates that the women share the guilt for something unnamable. Here they both seem to be guilty of frittering away their afternoon over the pages of a magazine, but that is not all. Godard wants his viewer to demand more of these women: What separates these two human subjects? What separates them from the sexualized images of women in the magazine? For the viewer of Godard's film, the magazine graphics as well as the two human actresses have been distilled into images. How does one parse out one's own individuality from the proliferation of like images circulating in mass media? I would suggest that this paradox is echoed at two other instances in *2 ou 3 choses*, during which Juliette announces, "Suddenly, I had the impression that I was the world, and that the world was me." At these moments, as in the sequence with the magazine, Godard suggests that the existential status of individuals and objects has been destabilized by the production of images. The fact that the line ("Suddenly, etc . . .") is repeated later in *2 ou 3 choses* emphasizes this point. Juliette conflates herself with the world, because she understands herself as an image, a simultaneously universal and mutable symbol in a world, which can be either a combination of such symbols or distilled into one symbol. Yet, it seems that the line might also suggest something else. What Godard wants Juliette to discover is that she bears the responsibility for the fate of the world. Juliette "is the world" and "the world is" Juliette; a stranger in a café is equally her "likeness, her sister"; Godard suggests that individuals have a shared role to play in history. The first section of *Notre musique* continues this line of argumentation and extends it beyond the realm of Hell into the film's second territory, Purgatory.

Purgatory: One Must Imagine Godard Guilty

In Purgatory, set in contemporary, post-war Sarajevo, Godard joins a group of writers, interpreters, students, and journalists at the conference "European Literary Encounters." Godard plays himself. His ostensible interest in attending the conference is to deliver a lecture to local students on the text and the image. The viewer encounters other real personages later in the film, such as the Spanish writer, Juan Goytisolo, and the late-Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish. However, *Notre musique* is also peopled by fictional characters, and two of these, Judith Lerner (Sarah Adler) and Olga Brodsky (Nade Dieu) – "her likeness, her sister" – share central roles.

Judith Lerner, a Franco-Israeli journalist, comes to the conference to interview Mahmoud Darwish. She carries a small camera, photographing first the SFOR troops stationed outside the airport in Sarajevo. On the drive to the city center, Judith tears up as they pass the devastated landscape and discuss the Bosnian War.

We follow Judith to the home of the French Ambassador, Olivier Naville (Simon Eine). He keeps her waiting. Reuniting with an "old classmate," the French writer Pierre Bergounioux (who plays himself), the Ambassador inquires into his presence in Sarajevo. Bergounioux, like the other characters we have encountered, plans to attend the conference where he will present his new monograph, *From Homer to Faulkner*. Standing beside a table littered with newspapers from around the world, the two men's conversation quickly turns philosophical. The Ambassador asks his friend, "Do writers know what they're talking about? Do they really know?" Bergounioux responds, "Of course not. Homer knows nothing about battlefields, slaughters, victories, or glory. He is blind and bored. He has to settle for recounting what others did . . . Those who act never have the ability to say or think adequately about what they do. Conversely, those who tell stories don't know what they're talking about. Remember Mao Zedong." This sequence and its paradoxes – the juxtaposition of an array of national newspapers and a conversation about Homer and Mao Zedong by two Frenchmen in Sarajevo – returns to several of the central questions of the film: can intellectuals (artists, writers, filmmakers) both create and act effectively? Or, when poets attempt large-scale political action will their lofty ideas be crushed by historical realities? The cautionary tale of Mao Zedong, of course, suggests the latter. Throughout *Notre musique*, Judith Lerner and Olga Brodsky, both young idealists, struggle with how they might act to encourage peace in Israel. While Judith remains hopeful, Olga despairs. I will trace Olga's trajectory later in this chapter, but let us return to Judith.

The visitors to the French Ambassador's mansion convene in a sitting room, and sip champagne, nibble cookies; one middle-aged man even dances awkwardly with a reticent servant. This liminal space, neither France nor Bosnia, appears to exist out of time, ensconced in a dream of luxury and forgetting. Judith finally

catches the Ambassador alone and extends a letter from her grandfather, "Not for the ambassador, for the man." He tries to brush her off, but Judith persists. As he rushes out the door, she calls after him, "Lyon. 1943. The Gestapo." Only then do the two enter into conversation. She explains that her position as a Jewish woman living in Tel Aviv prompted her to visit Sarajevo. She "wanted to see a place where reconciliation seemed possible." She questions whether the article she plans to write about her trip will be published, but remains unconcerned: "Anyway, it's for myself." She reminds the Ambassador of her grandfather, whom the Ambassador, then a young student, hid from the Vichy police in 1943. She continues, "Later, you were awarded the title of 'The Righteous' (*le Juste*). But you turned it down. You were applying to *Normale Sup'* and you said it was normal." She invites him to join her and others at a meeting where she promises "Not a *just* conversation, *just* a conversation. No military or political solutions. Just basic problems." She hopes to begin their discussion with the topic of atonement. The Ambassador counters with a warning, "A young German Catholic woman said in 1943: 'The dream of the individual is to be two. The dream of the State is to be one.' They cut her head off." Judith follows him to his car, and he tells her he will have to think about her offer. She takes his hand and, shaking it, replies, "That's normal."

The wordplay in this sequence requires the spectator to inquire into the meaning of what is "just" and what is "normal." Godard has juggled these words before. In *À bout de souffle* (Breathless) (1960), as Patricia and Michel struggle to stay one step ahead of the police, traversing Paris in a stolen car, Patricia declares, "I think informing is very wrong (*très mal*)." Michel responds, "No, it's normal. Informers inform, burglars burgle, murderers murder, lovers love." The verbal irony in Patricia's statement and the truth in Michel's rebuttal come to light at the end of the film when Patricia proves herself to be among the league of informers. *Notre musique*, too, takes an ironic approach to the word. The fact that the Ambassador risks his own safety by saving French Jews and later matriculates at the elite *Normale Sup'* (École normale supérieure) proves that he is far from "normal." That he refuses laudation for his bravery only increases his notability, his divergence from "normal" behavior during and following the Vichy years.

Judith, clearly thankful for the sake of her grandfather and impressed by the Ambassador's modesty, takes up his own language when she proposes "*just* a conversation." This punning reminds of another work by Godard, his epic *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Histoy(ies) of the Cinema) (completed in 1998), in which the filmmaker quotes his own statement from *Le Vent d'est* (The East Wind) (1970) that cinema is "not an exact image (*pas une image juste*), but just an image." *Histoire(s)* both celebrates and criticizes film for its precarious position between dream and reality. Is it the stuff of fantasy (ethereal women clad in flowing chiffon)? Or, is it painfully real (Holocaust victims being dragged across a field by SS soldiers)? Godard extracts images from their original places in cinematic

history, creating a montage of filmic, artistic, and literary material. As Jacques Rancière says of Godard's film: "he dissociates the indissociable" (Rancière, 2001, 219). The combination of violent and sexually-charged images totally removed from the narrative structures of the films from which they are taken, and placed within Godard's own narrative/history, as well as consistent interpolation, is an attempt on the part of the film to awaken the viewer to the facility with which images can be manipulated in cinema, as well as the power these images have in their own right. Ecstasy and agony are decontextualized (as Rancière says, Godard makes images into "visual units") in Godard's series in an effort to point out how intertwined these experiences are in human existence, but also how violence is excused, ignored, and eroticized in cinema and by extension in human history (Rancière, 2001, 221). Godard extends this thesis specifically to remind his viewers of the Holocaust and France's and cinema's shameful cooperation with the Third Reich.

Notre musique certainly remains concerned with the power of images, but by highlighting conversation, the film extends Godard's approach to treating historical violence. Though still the *auteur*, Godard opens his film to other voices. These constructive interactions between strangers, especially between Judith and the Ambassador, foster hope.

Lest the spectator worry that the film tends too much toward the utopic, the second central protagonist, Olga Brodsky, corrects this misconception. A French Jew of Russian origin, Olga functions as Judith's foil. The two young women resemble each other physically to such a degree that it is possible to watch the entire film without realizing they are separate and distinct individuals. We first encounter Olga among the students at Godard's lecture, but she does not speak. When she appears again, Godard introduces her as a contrast and complement to Judith ("her likeness, her sister"). She walks toward the camera, which remains static in an unfocussed long-take. In a voiceover, Olga explains: "There are two people side by side. I'm next to her. I have never seen her before. I recognize myself. But I have no memory of all that. It must be far from here. Or later on." The camera comes into sharp focus and seizes Olga in a close-up. She looks skywards, and her eyes blink and water at the brightness of the sun. Then she gazes directly into the camera. She mouths something, but we cannot hear her. This inability to communicate lies at the core of Olga's characterization. (Later in the film, she asserts, "If anyone understands me, then I wasn't clear.") She turns, pauses with her back to the camera, and then proceeds away in the same direction from which she came. Her voiceover now tells of landscapes strewn with barbwire, explosions, fires, and ruin. The last line is ominous: "The lucky ones are the defeated." Though Olga's and Judith's heritage and appearance correspond, their method of coping with the conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians differs dramatically. Whereas Judith mourns and moves forward, Olga languishes in melancholia.

We next see Olga conversing with her uncle Ramos Garcia (Rony Kramer) in a café. She drums her fingers on a well-worn paperback of Julien Green's *Midnight* (1936). Green, an American who wrote in French, may appeal to Olga as someone caught between cultures. More likely, however, she finds resonance in the tragic story of *Midnight*: the eventual corruption of the pure heroine, Elisabeth, by the evil influences dominating her life. How can Elisabeth fight this corruption? How can Olga? Ramos reads a passage from *Midnight* aloud: "But she didn't feel like she was falling. On the contrary, it seemed as if the ground was rising toward her with appalling speed." Olga counters by quoting Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "Suicide is the only truly serious philosophical problem." This appears to be her solution to corruption, as well as her answer to countering violence between people. Her martyrdom in Jerusalem would be an act of protest against the subjugation of Palestinians by the state of Israel. Her goal is not to kill herself out of terror, but "to kill terror." However, Olga misappropriates Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*; she quotes merely the first line of the first chapter ("The Absurd and Suicide"). Had she continued reading the long essay, she would have discovered Camus's answer to the philosophical question of suicide. Illustrating the absurdity of human existence by way of the myth of Sisyphus, a man eternally condemned to push a boulder up a steep hill only to have it roll to the bottom each time he reaches the summit, Camus concludes that, "One must imagine Sisyphus happy." In her desperation to effect change, Olga refuses to hear or be heard.

Godard might have saved Olga. Passing the filmmaker in the hall of a hotel, she tries to give him a copy of a digital film she has made. Godard brushes her off, telling her to give it to his assistant. Several scenes later, a group of students bid farewell to Godard in the airport; one of them hands him Olga's film. Opening the disc's case, a close-up of Olga's face – lips slightly parted, eyes wide in consternation – is lodged into the left side and doubled by the image's reflection on the shiny DVD. Godard examines the case casually, without real interest. After returning home to Switzerland, in the midst of tending his garden, the filmmaker receives a call from Ramos Garcia, Olga's uncle. After reminding Godard of their meeting three weeks ago in Sarajevo, Ramos recounts some troubling news from Jerusalem. A French Jewish girl of Russian descent took hostages in a cinema by claiming she wanted to blow herself up. The girl granted the audience five minutes to leave, saying "if there was one Israeli who would die for peace with her – for peace, not for war, she'd be happy." But everyone left the theater. The police shot her down. Inside her backpack were not bombs, but books. Romas knows that the martyr was his niece Olga. The girl Godard barely remembers, whose film he almost certainly has not bothered to watch. Would it have changed anything if Godard had acknowledged Olga when she first attempted to give him a copy of her film? And, what about the content of this film? Might it have prompted Godard to reach out to the girl? By portraying himself as partially culpable for Olga's death, Godard makes visible in the diegesis something that is always true but generally obscured: directors decide the fates of their films' characters. In this

moment, the difference between reality and illusion collapses: the Godard in *Notre musique* and the Godard creating *Notre musique* are one.

Paradise

The final minutes of *Notre musique* show us Olga's arrival in Paradise, an idyllic island covered in forest and pristine streams, but rigorously guarded by American soldiers. She comes to a beach on which a young man reads a French version of David Goodis' *Street of No Return* (1989), providing an additional reminder that Olga has passed into another realm. However, it seems that only part of Olga exists in this Paradise-cum-prison. The film's final shot gives us a last close-up of Olga's countenance. Her eyes are closed. She opens them and we hear her speak, ghostly, disembodied, in voiceover: "It was a relatively fine, clear day. One could see a long way off." She knits her brows, adding, "But not as far as Olga had gone." She closes her eyes, and the film ends. The opening and closing of eyes recalls a moment from Godard's lecture during which he suggests that seeing something involves both looking at it (*regardez là*) and imagining it (*fermez les yeux*). With her eyes open, Olga can see the place to which she has come. However, she no longer understands herself to be the Olga she was in life. She must close her eyes again to see this Olga. Godard picks up the contrast between reality and illusion once more in order to reiterate that matching images (Olga in life and in death, but we should also recall Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell) may disguise different essences: Shot/reverse shot. Jacques Rancière accuses *Notre musique* of engaging a "political dialectic [which] drives inclusive words around the shot/reverse shot," (Rancière, 2011: 125) but Godard does strive for a complete answers. If human reality is incertitude and darkness, then that is all the cineaste may disclose. That is *Notre musique*.

Note

1   All translations are my own.

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Jean-Luc Godard

To Liberate Things from the Name that We Have Imposed on Them (*Film* . . .) to Announce Dissonances Parting from a Note in Common (*Socialisme*)

Irmgard Emmelhainz

Jean-Luc Godard's latest film, perhaps his last, is a search for images of the real parting from the poetic imaginary and memory. An assemblage of images, texts, and sounds, the film forces spectators to work with the film's signifiers in order to add referents and find meaning. *Film: socialisme* (Film Socialism) is a triptych and the first section, "Movement," is set in a luxury cruise ship, the "Costa Serene" sailing across the Mediterranean hosting on board leisurely European tourists enjoying hedonist pleasures. They are far away from the world woven around them by Godard, who stages one of his characteristically mosaic narratives on board: a transnational spy story that involves a former Nazi spy, a French investigator, a Russian major, a Mossad agent, a Palestinian couple, and three thinkers: an intellectual, a philosopher, and an economist. Aside from the narrative, Godard includes an assemblage of images, histories, memories, and sensible regimes from the Mediterranean sea passing through three countries and three cities that have been fundamental for the filmmaker: Egypt, Palestine, Odessa, Greece, Naples, and Barcelona (Godard, 2010a, n.p.). The second part of the movie, "*Quo Vadis Europa*" focuses on the Martin family, who manage a gas station in the East of France. The mother is planning to run for office in the local elections. A news crew hangs around the gas station hoping to get some images of Mrs Martin.

Children play a key role in the narrative design that divides them in two groups: Alissa and Ludo, who roam about the cruise ship looking and listening, while the Martin kids, Florine and Lucien, interrogate and discuss, as their parents signed an agreement to hold a debate with them every year (Mas and Pisani, 2010, n. p.). The last section of the film, "Nos humanités" (Our Humanities) is a film essay and collage revisiting the sites that the cruise ship passed through in the first part of the movie. The sites draw a historic-political geography that evokes memories of revolt, occupation, annihilation, civil war (or fraternal combat), and resistance. The question of the search for the image of Palestine is at the center in "Nos humanités," as we will see.

Film: socialisme encompasses images, sounds, histories, and characters that resonate among each other and deliver an image of the past that affords actualization in the present. Therefore, in Godard's assemblage, the temporality of *Film: socialisme* is that of the revolutionary possibility of the reinvention of the past in the present. Moreover, the movie posits a geopolitical, economic, and sensible history of the twentieth century that has as its center: revolt, gold, democracy, and tragedy, bracketed by both "Film" and "Socialism." To build such a history, Godard uses the constructivist principles of simplicity, clarity, and reorganization: Mrs Martin presents herself in the movie by reciting the description of her character. In this regard, *Film: socialisme* offers a great fresco of *forms of organization*, offering a rich panoply of contemporary sensibilities (Brenez, 2010, 26–27).

The movie figures or quotes fragments from the history of socialism along with references to civil war and to situations of revolt and mobilization: Spain in 1937, especially Barcelona, evoking the fratricidal combat among the Republicans, Greece after the war, and the repression of civilians in Odessa in 1905. Stories of resistance are recalled by the reference to Yousef Chahine's film of 1985, *Adieu Bonaparte* (Farewell, Bonaparte), about an Egyptian family resisting Napoleon's occupation; by *Quattro giornate di Napoli* (The Four Days of Naples), by Nanny Loy (1962), which narrates the history of the resistance of the Neapolitans against the Nazis; there is also André Malraux's anti-fascist film *Espoir* (Hope) (1945) about the Spanish Civil War. Godard invokes the "Réseau du musée de l'homme" (Network of Mankind's Museum) and the "Famille Martin" (The Martin Family), which are names of French resistance groups operating during the German occupation during the Second World War. The detour to Odessa is necessary: this is for Godard the only moment in which cinema was at the same level as History (Douchet and Ganzo, 1972). In this regard, the images assembled in the movie contain the potential for the "spontaneous liberation of the people." We could evoke here a constant feature of Godard's work, at least since *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and Elsewhere) (1970–1974) and that is the generative principle of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (History(ies) of the Cinema) (1978–1998): Godard's subscription to Walter Benjamin's notion of revolutionary redemption by way of repetition of the past. A recurrent aphorism in Godard's movies is worth recalling: *L'image viendra au temps de la résurrection* (The image will come at the time of

resurrection). This aphorism attests to Godard's faith in the redemptive potential of the Image that will come by invoking images that persist in the collective imaginary like historical specters, haunting memory, demanding their divulgation, and insisting on becoming alternative visions of the past in the present. This Marxist historiography has the task in *Film: socialisme*, not of describing or imagining events as they happened, or of explaining how they generated the ideological illusions that accompanied them, but to open a breach between socialism and its totalitarian outcome. It was also intended to unearth the emancipatory utopian potential that was precisely betrayed in the actuality of revolutions.[1]

Like much of Godard's work, *Film: socialisme* questions the destiny of Europe. What is it, and what it will become? The film also alludes to a post-political Europe operating according to world market interests. Bearing in mind that Europe as a communitarian project is falling apart in Athens, the filmmaker argues that for many reasons Europe is indebted to Greece and not the other way around: such is the idea of democracy seen in HELLAS, which includes the echo of HELL in HÉLAS [Hellas, Hell, Hel(a)las]. Brought together, the images in the film evoke the actual moment of crisis in Europe as a community project, passing through the breakdown of world financial capitalism: "l'argent est un bien publique, comme l'eau," (Money is a public good, like water), is among the first lines that we hear in the voiceover in the movie. In second part, *"Quo Vadis* Europa" Florine and Lucien accuse their parents of having betrayed the values of liberty, fraternity, and equality, for having saddled them with future debts and a dismantled welfare state. In this regard, the film alludes to the current historical era, marked by the progressive disintegration of trade unions, parties of the left, and welfare states. This is also a moment in which militant apathy is limited to expressing an ambiguous position, faced with what could be a response to the economic crisis and fiscal austerity measures taken up by European governments. This section of the film ends by making reference to the "Famille Martin," a resistance group during the Second World War whose credo was: "To liberate and to federate." On the other hand, *Film: socialisme* calls for a re-politicized Europe with a shared emancipation project, the Europe of Greek democracy and of the French and October revolutions. It is perhaps that when thinking of the first scenario that utopia can emerge at the moment of the suspension of the political (Jameson, 2004, 37). Bearing this in mind, the forms of historical events evoked by the movie are strata in the image of the present.

1 Socialism

Godard declared in a 2010 interview that *Film: socialisme* is a collection of images that draw a variety of associations by resonating among each other, in order to open up the indescribable. He also declared that if we speak about "association"

we can say "socialism" and that if we say "socialism," we can talk politics (Godard, 2010b, n. p.). This does not mean that in the movie or through the movie Godard seeks or vouches for rescuing a "socialist politics;" the word and images of "socialism" do not operate in the movie like predicates and neither are they referents of political action. Apparently the title of the movie derives from Jean-Paul Curnière's confusion in a letter to Godard, in which he links film and socialism when pointing to their exhaustion at the beginning of the twenty-first century. For Curnière, this exhaustion is due to the poverty of ambitions and vulgarity in the recent use of both terms, and what Godard does in the film, in his view, is to open up a road that had been blocked until then, calling for a creation of forms that can only emerge from a beginning that constitutes them.[2] Debatably, by evoking the image and word "socialism," an operation of intellectual subjectivation takes place. That is, the symbolic narratives invoked by "socialism" are situated like symbols to affirm the possibility of a flight from the actual state of things; these narratives point also toward the uninterrupted existential sequence of socialism (as association, as politics) circulating at the latent, imperceptible level. The ideological illusion becomes a symbolic fiction charged with the possibility of inserting itself in reality in order to form part of our singular experience of matter. By dissociating "socialism" from its historical representation and its totalitarian connotations, its social function is rescued from the imminent dismantling and disintegration of the social. Dénis de Rougement's phrase that Godard cites in the movie, and elsewhere evokes in an interview, sketches out the movement of ideological illusion toward singular experience: "Socialisme, un sourire qui congédie l'univers" (Socialism: a smile that dismisses the universe) (Godard, 2010a, n.p.). "Socialism," also implies the possibility of elaborating a sensibility, to share it, and to show the existence of the commonweal and of the construction of a force in common.

2   Gold

The first part of the triptych, "Movement," is a typical Godardian mosaic narrative that unfolds during the passage of a cruise-ship in the Mediterranean. It tells a transnational story of spies seeking a portion of the "Spanish Gold" lost in the 1930s during a trip to Moscow.[3] The fiction is inspired in a historical fact: gold that the Bank of Spain had stored during the regime of the Spanish (socialist) Republic was shipped to the Soviet Union for the purpose of safekeeping. Two thirds of the gold disappeared between Odessa and Moscow. In Godard's version of the story of the gold that Spain had taken from its colonies from the sixteenth century on, it is a former Nazi spy, Otto Goldberg, who takes the gold back to Cartagena via Moscow and Odessa. The Russian major on the ship, Kamenskaïa, is concerned with the disappearance of the gold in the Soviet Union and we know that the money passed through the hands of Comintern impresario Willy Münzenberg.

Somehow, a parallel is drawn to the disappearance of the gold from the British Bank of Palestine, which by inference, explains the presence of the Palestinian couple and Mossad agent in the boat. With this story of gold, we are reminded of the role of the movement of capital in history and in geopolitics. In "Nos humanités" Godard cites Fernand Braudel's study of the history of the Mediterranean focused on the economic relations among its inhabitants, according to which, the movement of gold was crucial:

> Les vicissitudes de la monnaie; c'est l'histoire totale des sociétés et des civilisations qu'elles contribuent a éclairer puissamment. Elles ont valeur de signe. Elles ont valeur de cause.

> (The fluctuation of money contributes to the enlightenment of the total history of societies and civilizations. They bear sign-value and cause-value.) (Braudel, 1946, 10)

The gold stories recall also one of the premises of the socialist utopia (From Thomas More to Proudhon): that equality is connected to economics and that the roots of evil are gold, money, and ambition. In this frame, ambition is a psychological evil that needs to be repressed through utopian laws that convey resolutions for a better and more human life (Jameson, 2004). "Money was invented not so we don't have to look each other in the eye," is a line in *Film: socialisme*. The last words of Braudel's study, "Ainsi se rythment les chapitres de l'histoire du monde. Á la cadence des fabuleux métaux" (The chapters of the history of the world move at the pace of precious metals) (Braudel, 1946, 21) and this could be said to be the thread that unites the three parts of the movie (Mas and Pisani, 2010, n. p.).

3   Sensible Memory

In *Film: socialisme*, Godard renders homage to Jean Daniel Pollet's and Völker Schlondorff's *Méditerranée* (Mediterranean, 1963), to Michelangelo Antonioni's penultimate film, a short titled *Lo sguardo di Michelangelo* (Michelangelo's Gaze, 2008) and deconstructs Manoel de Oliveria's *Um filme falado* (A Spoken Film, 2003). The latter narrates the story of the visit of a mother (a history professor) and her daughter to the main sites of the Mediterranean civilization. In the narrative, political discussions are interwoven with ancient and contemporary history. In Oliveira's film, moreover, East and West are confronted from a Western point of view, as the film ends with the boat being blown up by a bomb from Aden. Antonioni's movie depicts the filmmaker's visit to Michelangelo's *Moses* sculpture in the Saint Pietro in Vincoli Church in Rome. Godard chose to reproduce in *Film: socialisme* a shot in which we see the filmmaker caressing the sculpture with his gaze. We are reminded of instances in which Godard is "seeing with his hands"

in other films like in *Numéro deux* (Number Two) (1976) and in *Scénario du film Passion* (1982). Godard is known to have said many times that as a filmmaker, he would prefer to lose his sight (as opposed to) rather than the use of his hands (Mas and Pisani, 2010, n. p.). Bearing in mind these key references, *Film: socialisme* could be described as a search for the poetic imaginary of the reality of the present based in the sensible experience of matter, from which memory is inseparable.

The sites where the cruise ship stops in *Film: socialisme* awaken sensible memory in a comparable manner to that portrayed in *Méditerranée*,[4] a film that transforms a tourist trip into a mythological voyage, recreating a legendary Mediterranean sea with documentary images. Godard resurrects in his movie many of the images that appear in *Méditerranée*: a young girl buttoning down her dress (similar to the one Florine wears in the second part of the film), the Egyptian god Horus, a statue with her mouth closed, a shot of a *corrida* (to signify Spain), and the sea seen through barbed wired (to signify Palestine). According to Jean-Paul Fargier, *Méditerranée* owes its relevance to its repetitive shots, its associations and oppositions, and to the incessant flux of images and text that break with the logic of cinematographic writing. Fargier posited the film's multiplying repetitions to be more akin to music and poetry than filmic writing. *Méditerranée* was thus understood as the cinematic equivalent of procedures used in modern Literature and hence it was conceived as a materialist and thus a revolutionary film. The logic that governs the succession of shots in the movie was understood as a deconstruction of the "idealist system of Representation" as well as of filmic narrative. The film was thought to be revolutionary because like *Film: socialisme*, it forces the spectator to work with the film's signifiers and to look for external signifieds in order to add referents and find meaning. Moreover for Fargier, because the sequences repeat themselves and return unexpectedly, the shots are chained according to the logic of the unconscious, the "logic of the signifier," and thus resend infinitely to one another opening up meaning (Fargier, 1972, 16). Evidently the work of memory is pivotal to the experience of watching both films. The assemblage of images in *Méditerranée* is accompanied by a voiceover based on a non-descriptive and poetic text by Philippe Sollers (Fargier, 1972, 16). Arguably, Pollet established in *Méditerranée* a paradigm of the image based in a material and sensible imaginary, in duration and unconscious memory, in a melancholic search and sensible gaze of the past and toward the past:

> Sommeil par effacement, région des passages et des doubles et des choses vues sans vision [. . .] Que le point de vue se situe également partout. Tableaux [. . .] L'accumulation de mémoire se poursuit, monotone. Tandis qu'une clarté, un réveil aveuglant, déborde et recouvre tout en silence, où l'on n'est plus qu'un point de plus en plus perdu et lointain [. . .]

> (A fading dream, a region of landscapes and their doubles, of things that are seen without a vision [. . .] Let the point of view be placed everywhere in the same

manner. Frames [. . .] The accumulation of memory takes place monotonously. In the meantime, a clarity, a blinding dream overflows and covers everything in silence, there where one is nothing more than a point, more and more lost on the far away horizon [. . .]).[5]

As opposed to *Méditerranée* and Oliveira's *Um filme falado*, Godard converts the passage through the "Cradle of civilization" into a search for the traces of the sensible in which the geographical distinction between East and West becomes blurred: Figurative language (Egypt), European painting (Naples), ways of narrating wars – the genre of tragedy – Greece, revolutionary film (Odessa), and the problem of esthetic-political representation (Palestine). Ultimately Godard produces a concatenation of texts and images of solidarity with allusions to resistance texts by Ernst Hemingway and Simone Weil (Weil, 2001, 10), and the images of Robert Capa and Roman Karmen produced in the Spain at the time of the Republican conflict.

4   Poetic Imaginary and Montage

In "Movement" Godard interweaves the sensible regimes of tourism, capitalism, and historical memory in order to fashion a voyage into the imaginary that neither describes the real nor strives to become real. Rather, the immanence of the imaginary in the real is revealed during the passage of the ship that travels toward the imaginary. The unconscious associations, the strata of signification, the aphorisms and citations are based on scrutiny of the simplified and generic image of a Mediterranean sea as imagined by the tourist industry and the world of the retired European baby boomers hedonistically entertaining and enjoying themselves. The images of the ship itself constitute, on the one hand, an assemblage of high definition and shiny images that create blocks of color; and, on the other hand, low-quality material made up of surveillance images and cell phone photographs or videos degraded and edited with psychedelic visual interference. All the images have optimized color and a strident palette[6] that affirms the persisting effects of digital technology. The sharpness of the external shots of the impeccably clean boat, defy its corrosion by ocean water, denoting in this manner a very Calvinist notion of the triumph of capitalism and industry over nature, in this case, the primitive action of the ocean (Wallace, 1997, 263). The cruise ship becomes a symbol of the capitalist fantasy of the conquest over decay and entropy. As such, the vessel conveys the myth of betterment on which the industry of sensorial anesthetization, simulation, and self-complacency thrives.

   Godard's emphasis on the omnipresence of photographers and photographed in the ship, posits the digital image as the predominant mediator between subjects and reality. Reality becomes a series of events to be documented, depriving both

travel and the image from the work of imagination and memory. When seeing the movie, we are reminded of Susan Sontag's classic analysis of photography and tourism.[7] For the writer, the tourist's compulsion to photograph is due to the fact that this activity may assuage the feelings of disorientation he may experience when traveling; in this way, experience becomes a way of seeing, which in turn, is identical to taking photographs.

Godard is said to have launched a war against digital media, when, already with the appearance of video in the 1970s, he announced the death of cinema. Why? I believe it has to do with the indexical nature of cinema: According to Mary Ann Doane, the index in cinema attests to existence and thus bears the potentiality of the cinematic image to become an icon. As an indexical image, cinema stakes a claim of authenticity by the privilege of contact, touch, physical connection with its referent. In contrast, digital media is a medium without materiality. It is comprised of pure abstraction, made up of zeroes and ones because it is a binary code. It is the presence of absence and thus suggests the dematerialization and annihilation of the medium (Doane, 2008, 10). If the digital outlasts its material support, "what is perceived as lost in the move to the digital is the imprint of time, the visible degradation of the image" (Doane, 2008, 10). Analogue cinema, by contrast, depends upon a photochemical epistemology and ontology that signify the utopia of the certitude of the imprint or trace on a concrete medium. It is not a matter of realistic representation of objects or people; rather, analogue media verify an existence and thus reveal more than the digital. Moreover, analogue media are the index fossils of historical reality, meaning that the history of photography and cinema is the history of perception as it is historically encoded (Stiegler, 2008, 195). Finally, like the impeccable cruise ship, the digital survives in spite of the decay of its support, contrary to the politics of cinema as medium, which, as Doane points out, in its promise to touch the real, attempts to grasp and retain embodiment and corporality – which are conditions for the possibility of signifying as a form of historical labor (Doane, 2008, 12). The transparency of the digital image is analogous to the transparency that a historical city may acquire when it gets "branded," as its identity gets over-simplified, its singularity obliterated by making its generic characteristics stand out. Cities and sites are rendered transparent like logos that become the currency of tourism.

It could be argued that every historical moment is accompanied by a particular sensible regime, that is, a historical and hegemonic form of *imagining* the real. Images, in other words, materialize conceptions of reality at a given time. Our contemporary epoch is distinguished by images of simplifying transparency, and this evidences the current failure of imaginative power and the obliteration of memory, which Godard precisely gives himself the task of making operative (as opposed to rescuing or preserving) in the movie. In his editing, the images resonate among each other and are thereby transformed into emblems, descriptions, allegories, fetishes, symbols, clichés, signals, ideograms, cultural citations (Minerva's owl in Potemkin's staircase) (Brenez, 2010, 26–27). Much like memory, the

sensorium of the past, locked in the Mediterranean, remains secret, indescribable, and undecipherable, in the form of tangible yet blurry strata.

The notion of "the real" in *Film: socialisme* could be explained by recalling Gaston Bachelard's "poetic imaginary," which implies an external gaze entering and exiting the "materiality" of things. Bachelard was somewhat inspired by what Merleau-Ponty called the "visual field": "the world hidden from us beneath all the sediment of knowledge and social living [. . .] a vision of things themselves, the presence of the world of lived experience, where objects *hold our gaze* and ask questions of it" (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, 92–93). Along similar lines, for Bachelard "the real" is rendered by forms that are transformed into poetic images. The poetic image stems from pure imagination and emerges in language, and that *is reality* (Bachelard, 1964, xxvii). For Godard, however, "dire ne suffit jamais" (Saying is never enough), and thus by way of montage, the film opens up a gap between things, and the name that we have imposed on them. Thus the pertinence of the question the film poses early on: "Comment mettre de la réalité dans la réalité?" (How to insert reality within reality?).

Evidently, the kind of realism evoked here has nothing to do with truth, immediacy or the transparency of the image. It is also absolutely foreign to the genre of realism that prevails in the contemporary audiovisual field characterized by an esthetics of demise that has given itself the task of documenting the horrors of capitalism and war. The realism that Godard appeals to could be said to be that of literary or spoken imagination translated into a cinematographic image (Bachelard, 1964, xxvii). For Bachelard, our Being is defined by our experience of the world, that is, as individuals we are surrounded by matter and our experience of matter gives form to our being. The phenomenology of the poetic image is based on the principle that poetic images emerge at the intermediary zone between the unconscious and rational consciousness, at the limit of rational thought, that is, at the limit of the objective knowledge we have of the world. For Bachelard, the poetic image has the potential of changing the perception and habitual experience of matter surrounding us, considering not the reality of the object, but the object as a conduit of the real:

> We always want imagination to be the faculty of *forming* images. But in reality, it is the faculty of *deforming* images, those images given by perception and above all, the faculty of freeing us from the first images, to *change* images. (Bachelard, 1964, xxvii)

Bearing in mind that matter is what directs our imagination, even our own being, to aspire to the poetic image implies aspiring to new images, *prompting images to move with imagination*, charging them with "spiritual mobility." In "Movement," Godard establishes a tension between "static images" (digital, surveillance, capitalism, the Mediterranean under the gaze of tourism and "culture") and "poetic images." Therefore, Godard opts for the transformation of images by charging them with "spiritual mobility," rejecting the projection of intimate impressions on

the external world (gaze and touch). One thinks, for example, of Antonioni's *Lo sguardo de Michelangelo*. Bachelard's notions of "poetic image" and "spiritual mobility" could be linked to Henri Bergson's phenomenology of duration which Godard evokes with the following quote in many of his movies: "L'esprit emprunte à la matière les perceptions d'où il tire sa nourriture, et les lui rend sous forme de mouvement, où il a imprimé sa liberté" (The mind borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds, and restores them to matter in the form of movement which it has imprinted with its own freedom) (Bergson, 2012, 378). Bergson's phenomenology of duration could definitely serve as a metaphor for cinema, and this is precisely what interests Godard: the idea that the mind feeds itself from perceptions of matter, giving back, imprinting on them their freedom by way of movement. Bergson drew an analogy between consciousness and the process of appearance of the photographic image facilitated by chemicals, positing consciousness as a revelation, an analogy that Godard evokes in *Film Socialisme* with: "Clarum per oscurum," or "clarity seen or perceived through darkness." We could interpret this sentence and link it to Bergson's quote and argue that both allude to the apparatus of the daguerreotype in which the image "reveals itself" from darkness. Going back to the notion of duration in relationship to consciousness, the idea of explaining change through movement in terms of "becoming" instead of "being" is crucial.

In Godard, the real is in the movement of becoming, and images are "relationships" (des rapports) or associations among things established by way of montage. The montage of *Film: Socialisme* is based on a logic that Godard calls: "dissonant resonances," which could be interpreted as a montage striving to become an organizing force that finds its way toward dissonant things, images, and words that change their vibrational pattern and allow for the energy within and around them to flow effortlessly. Dissonant resonances among things, images, and words parting from the search not only for a realist poetic image but also for an image based on the material experience of sensible memory embedded in the materiality of things, in the place of "the truth of things." Montage in *Film: socialisme* becomes thus "dissonances announced by a note in common,"[8] made up of asymmetrical analogies and unexpected associations that come up between image, text, and meaning, in a search of another way of imagining the real. The principle of resonances, as opposed to analogy or similitude, implies dissonance (differential equivalence) and contagion: what is constituted in this manner propagates like a shock wave, and what resonates is a singular body dispersing itself in time and space.

5   Nos Humanités: Palestine

"Nos Humanités" is a collage of returns to the places the cruise ship visited in "Movement." It includes images quoted from Pollet's *Méditerranée* and others that

come back phantasmagorically from the first section of the film. In the second stop in Odessa, the filmmaker alludes to the repression of civil resistance and revolutionary cinema juxtaposing scenes from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) – which appeared in "Movement" – with images of a group of teenagers doing a guided visit to the Odessa steps. In general, the films quoted in "Nos humanités" take up politics as a subject, and sometimes they address East/West relations. Examples are Claude Lanzmann's *Tsahal* (1993), Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Il fiore delle mille et una notte* (*Arabian Nights*) (1974), Udi Aloni's documentary about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Local Angel* (2002) and Karin Albou's *Chant des mariées* (*The Song of the Brides*) (2008). Moreover, at the center of this section of the film we find an investigation of the image and the imaging of Palestine and the Palestinians. This investigation is announced by an image of young veiled Muslim women enjoying ice cream while they contemplate the Mediterranean accompanied by a quote in the voiceover from Jean Genet's book *Un captif amoureux* (*Prisoner of Love*) (1986), his book about Palestine and the Palestinians: "Mettre à l'abri toutes les images du langage et se servir d'elles, car elles sont dans le désert où il faut aller les chercher" (Store up all of language's images and use them, because they're in the desert and you must go look for them).

In "Movement" a photograph is shown both as a *mise-en-scène* and as inserted through montage.[9] As a *mise-en-scène*, the photograph appears in the hands of Palestinian intellectual Elias Sanbar who shows it and passes it on to someone else outside of the frame while we hear in the voiceover:

> Après la réception de Daguerre par Arago a L'Académie des Sciences [i.e., en 1839] une armada de majorité britannique – donc bien avant la déclaration de Lord Balfour (i.e. in 1917) – se précipitait en Palestine. Voici l'une des premières photographies de la baie d'Haïfa.

> (After Arago received Daguerre at the Science Academy (in 1839), an army of photographers – for the most part British – and well before the Balfour declaration (in 1917) rushed to Palestine. Here is one of the first photographs of the Haifa bay).

Until that moment, we have seen the photograph only from the back, but it is now held by a woman who passes it on, again out of the frame, to take a photograph with a digital camera (we do not see what she records with her camera's lens).[10] She states:

> Ayna Anti al Aan? Ayyatuja Al Ard Al 7abiba.

> أين أنت الآن؟ أيتها الأرض الحبيبة.

"Where are you, oh my beloved land?" Two images later, we see the photograph she had been observing. According to Roland-François Lack, the way Godard treats this image is highly connoted. The image could be associated with the army

of photographers that invaded Palestine at the time of the invention of photography just mentioned. As Lack argues, however, the photograph was taken by Felix Bonfils, a Frenchman living in Beirut who took the picture around 1880. Lack discusses how the photograph was colored by a Swiss workshop that also effaced the photographer's signature – in that sense, the "Swiss" appear as manipulators of images, and the Palestinian woman, by taking the photograph, becomes the maker of (searching for) her own image. The view of Haifa is followed a few frames later by an explicitly political image of an olive tree taken by Joss Dray in 1989. The source of both images is Sanbar's book *Les Palestiniens: la photographie d'une terre et de son peuple de 1839 a nos jours* (Palestinians: Photographs of a Land and its People from 1839 to Date) from 2004, an illustrated history of the representation of Palestine and Palestinians. The premise of the book is precisely that the condition of possibility of their image has been their absence as nation and as a people. Along with the North American Native Americans Palestinians embody the figure of territorial dispossession and Palestine is the emblem of geographical invisibility. Their aesthetic-political dilemma has been how to inscribe their historical presence as a function of geographical, discursive and figurative absence. According to Zionist discourse, the Palestinians were never there in the first place and that is why they are absent from the land. This is how the possibility of their "mise en image" questions the conditions of possibility and the limits of aesthetic-political representation. Sanbar underlines this point in his brief appearance in "Movement," stating that Palestinians, in order to exist, have had to use what we commonly call "images," in spite of the fact that from the beginning they have been absent from them: the negative and Orientalist figure of the Arab as decadent or inferior,[11] or as victims demanding recognition and restitution, bearing witness, denouncing the violation of their rights, as fundamentalists or terrorists. In an evocative passage in *Memory for Forgetfulness, August, Beirut, 1982*, Mahmoud Darwish writes that the image that Palestinians have created for themselves is a problematic foothold of vision (Darwish, 1995, 45–46). Setting the political reality against its own materiality, such an image invokes, in his view, a specific kind of representation that becomes reality itself by way of its becoming image – something like a "speech act" in Deleuze's sense: what is spoken (or imaged) creates a state of affairs (Baudrillard, 1994, n.p.). These forms of imagining Palestine and Palestinians are not unproblematic and have been specific to historical junctures.

The question of the "mise en image" of Palestine has been key in Godard's work since the 1970s. In the movies in which the filmmaker has taken up the Palestine question, he has explored new ways of imagining the conflict. In *Ici et ailleurs* (1970–1974), Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville juxtaposed images and sounds of the Palestinian resistance movement next to images and sounds of the political situation in France after May 1968. The movie is a reflection of the circulation of images from "elsewhere" in the mass media "here." The Palestinian revolution appears embedded in the histories of revolutions and their failure. In *Notre musique* (Our Music) (2004) Godard alludes to the actual circulation of

images of war and disaster in the sensible regime that reflect the global permanent state of war. The narrative in that earlier movie problematizes the complicity between NATO's self-proclaimed right to interfere, the organizations of humanitarian help and ethnic wars waged in the name of the defense of human rights. In *Notre musique*, Godard approaches the conflict by making a stop in post-war Sarajevo. Palestine appears like one of the strata that integrate a palimpsest of histories of wars of annihilation cemented on the Homeric account of the war of Troy. The war of annihilation is invoked with the appearance of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish as he declares himself to be "The poet of the Trojans"; with the spectral appearance of three Native Americans with allusions to the extermination of the European Jews and the appearance of the Israeli descendants of their survivors, and to the recent war. Godard's concern with the poets and historians of the defeated people invokes the Homeric moment of the writing of history and poetry, giving predominance to poetry. The vanquished are those who have been denied a legitimate and stable place in their vital territory, their life-stories. The vanquished are the survivors that try to give hope or transmit signals that, in spite of the situation, still have hope.

As in *Notre musique*, in *Film: socialisme* the very form and content of the expression of struggle and of political violence are at stake. In "Nos humanités" we see the cover of Racine's *Principles of Tragedy* and in the stop in Greece, Godard declares that civil war is the daughter of democracy and of tragedy: "Démocratie et tragédie ont été mariées à Athènes, sous Pericles et Sophocle. Un seul enfant: La guerre civile" (Democracy and Tragedy were wed in Athens under Pericles and Sophocles. They had a single child: Civil war). The Greek philosopher Solon's definition of democracy applies here: the right to politics and thus civil rights relies on upon taking a stand. According to him: "Whoever does not take a stand in a civil war is full of infamy, cowardice and loses the right to politics" (Aristotle, 1891, n.p.). Civil war demands the equation of action and thought, and Godard situates civil war in the terrain of language, indicating how actions, ideas, words, gestures, and life are intrinsically linked. The stop in Barcelona evokes, as I mentioned earlier, the texts, literature, and images produced about and during the civil war in 1936, an epoch when, as we hear in the voice-over, "Les spectateurs sont partis à la guerre" (The spectators went to war). The allusion to the Spanish Civil War implies an active call to join in the struggle against the passivity of spectators and intellectuals, an issue raised by Susan Sontag and Juan Goytisolo in Sarajevo in 1993 and evidently a focus of *Notre musique*.[12] In that sense, the assemblage of images, sounds, and texts in *Film: socialisme* goes against the grain of the current reduction of war to empty forms and images that lack the work of the imagination and that paralyze the viewer. It also counters the degradation of political engagement to the liberal ethics of the defense of human rights, which Jean-Paul Curnier so harshly criticizes (2004) in *Notre musique*. Moreover, in "Nos humanités," the third section of *Film: socialisme*, we see the inscription in the screen: "ACCESS DENIED" followed by an image of the sea seen through barbed wire

that Godard gleaned from *Méditerranée*. According to Nicole Brenez, this shot signifies the impossibility of filming Palestine (Brenez, 2010, 26–27); however, this take, along with Godard's allusion to the refusal of access to Palestine, evokes more the apartheid state in which Palestinians live and their status as forced exiles rather than refugees simply because they are increasingly distanced from the possibility of return. When she's asked where she's headed to, the Palestinian woman in the cruise ship says, "Palestine," adding that: "Il s'agit d'un aller pour l'instant, pas d'un retour" (For the moment, is a question of going, not of returning).

Furthermore, in another intertext in *Film: socialisme*, Godard situates the problem of the figuration and self-determination of Palestine and the Palestinians directly in the terrain not of the image, but of language. Godard superimposes the word "Falestine" (Palestine, in Hebrew) over "Daula Filastinia" (Palestinian state, in Arabic language).[13] Here, the issue of the obliteration of Palestine becomes a textual re-inscription. We should take into account that, on the one hand, the word "Falestin" does not officially exist in Hebrew and it is not accepted in Israel, except by the radical left.[14] On the other hand, part of the conditions of the Israeli right for peace with the Palestinians is that Palestinians and Arab countries recognize Israel as a Jewish state. The problem is that, if Palestinians and Arab countries accept Israel as a Jewish-only state, Israel could expel the Palestinians living in Israel and eliminate the right of return of the Palestinian refugees. Within this panorama, Palestinians could only focus their efforts on bettering their conditions within their subjection to the occupation. With the intertext, moreover, Godard indicates the "Hebrewization" of Palestine by way of the inclusion of its territory and the exclusion of its population, while paradoxically, to confer on the Palestinian state its name in Hebrew, would imply its recognition by the Israeli state along with the possibility of a binational state. Moreover, "Palestine" in Hebrew is not an Israeli state and here Godard confers to Palestine and to the Palestinian state the same territorial status at the level of language, underscoring the asymmetry between the status of the land and the unacknowledged people or their obliterated state. At the same time, he posits the following question (whose answer is obvious according to the point of view one has on the conflict): Which one of them is a fact? The juridical status of the "state," or of the physical territory?

In *Notre musique* Godard shows the vanquished Native Americans, Palestinians, Jews, Europeans, Trojans) as historically concrete subjects expressing a real predicament by way of poetic language. He does this not to express relationships among things, but so that by way of *language emptied out of discourse*, something that is neither divine word, or what we call speech or communication be transmitted in a *conversation*. In the movie, Godard makes a plea for a simple conversation (*juste une converastion*), as opposed to a "just, impartial, reasonable conversation" (which was the dubious premise of reconciliation and forgiveness discourse in the Balkans and in the Middle East during the hopeful post-Oslo years in the 1990s) between the past (the extermination of the European Jews) the present (Sarajevo, Palestine), the far away past (the Native Americans in North America, the Trojans)

and the future. Now the noun in Latin *conversation* comes from the Medieval verb *conversari* which means to keep company, *to live together*. In this manner, the movie seeks the possibility of a polyphonic world. Polyphony is a condition of our coexistence and this aspect is underscored with the title of the music, *Notre musique*, our music, that which is between us. This is a departure from the question that Godard asks, "What aspect of our music is destroyed with the war of annihilation? And what is left of our music?" (Witt, 2005, 28–30).

In *Film: Socialisme*, Godard approaches the conflict in a short and dense collage in the section of "Nos humanités," which is intrinsically related to *Notre musique*. The collage is made up of an image of Palestinians rendered prisoners wearing the iconic eye-cover used by the IDF; that of a young Israeli Jewish soldier praying on the battlefield; the shot of the marble angel from Udi Aloni's 2002 film *Local Angel* that evokes Walter Benjamin's Messianic Angel while it recalls Aloni's mix of hope and skepticism in the movie faced with the possibility of Abraham and Isaac, connecting to the Holocaust (as the catastrophe in the Bible and the Shoah), to images of war and destruction, to blood-stained hands, to a statue of the virgin Mary and to a crocodile devouring a goose while we hear: "Palestine." In addition, Godard inserts three elements that become key to re-imagining peace in the Middle East. They are located in a sequence that the filmmaker borrowed from Agnès Varda's, autobiographical movie, *Les plages d'Agnès* (The Beaches of Agnès) (2008). The sequence consists of three circus artists doing acrobatics on a trapeze in front of the ocean while we hear the voice of a young woman singing the first line of the Talmud and the voice of another one singing the Koran. The voices come from the Tunisian movie *Le chant des mariées* (The Wedding Song) (2008), a narrative about the friendship between a Jewish girl and her Muslim neighbor and how their friendship survives in spite of the separation of their communities by the oppression of Jews and the political pressure exerted on Muslims during the Nazi occupation of Tunisia. In the meantime, we see the trapeze artists exchanging places with one another; immediately after, we hear another sound with a heavy symbolic charge: Marlene Dietrich's voice singing "Sag mir wo die Blumen sind" (Originally: "Where have all the flowers gone?") a pacifist song very well known in the 1960s. Dietrich sang this song during a tour she did to Israel in 1966; by singing in German, she broke the taboo of speaking German in public that until then had prevailed in Israel. In an interview in which Godard speaks about *Film: Socialisme*, he made an analogy between socialism, resistance, the trapeze artists, and peace in the Middle East: "If Israelis and Palestinians opened a circus and performed together a trapeze act, things would be different in the Middle East, they would be in perfect harmony" (Godard, 2010c, n.p.). This is because the trapeze artists "se renversent, s'endonnent en silence," which means that they "cross over to turn to the other side to give themselves to each the other in silence," at a moment in which singular bodies resonate, evolving in time and space. For Godard, both socialism and the trapeze artist have the capacity to "announce the dissonances by a note in common."[15]

In *Notre musique*, Godard makes a plea in the name of a poetic text appealing to a relation with the other beyond mutual comprehension or understanding. In this manner, he evokes the particular spatiotemporal instance in which a "parmi nous" happens, a "between us," which is something that is "in all of us, inherent to everyone." This "in all of us" is not the differential multicultural space of co-existence, which emerged in the 1990s as a solution to the destruction of the common world that existed in the Balkans before the war, substituting *life together* in the different communities that made up the social fabric. The "between" is the event of poetic language among people; it is *living together* deriving from an ontology of Being as Being-with (*être-avec*). If in *Notre musique* Godard makes a plea in the name of what joins us, in *Film: Socialisme* he vouches for what we have in common in a dissonant resonance, which is the possibility of living together located in and announced by poetry and by the power of poetic imagination. For Bachelard, the poetic image is reverberation, it has a sonority of being, resonances dispersed on the different planes of our life in the world. Repercussions are what invite us to give greater depth to our existence: "In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own. The reverberations bring about a change in being. The multiplicity of resonances then issues from the reverberations' unity of being" (Bachelard, 1964, xxii). The latter is posited as superior to rational and scientific epistemology in order to be able to negotiate a utopian re-conception and reorganization of human life. Evidently, the call for peace in *Film: Socialisme*, beginning as it does from the principle of: "turning around to look at the other to allow himself to change places," is much more ambitious than the plea Godard makes in *Notre musique* for the redistribution of the signs in common, the sensible among us – and perhaps we should say: utopian. No doubt, this is an important gesture, for the situation is much more urgent than not so long ago.

Notes

1   Žižek (2010, 97). About Benjamin's materialist historiography and Godard see: Hori (2004) and Ishaghpour (2005).
2   The letter is reproduced in a booklet containing the script and portraits of those who participated in the film (Godard, 2010b).
3   For a detailed description of the film's script see the interpretation by Mas and Pisani (2010).
4   *Méditerranée* was pivotal for Godard as well as for French critics and theorists in the 1960s. Along with Godard's work, *Méditerranée* was placed at the center of a debate about engaged cinema that took place between *Tel Quel* and *Cinéthique* in 1969. *Cahiers du cinéma* dedicated an entire issue to the movie (No. 187, February 1967), which included "Impressions anciennes," Godard's own review of the film.
5   From the voiceover in *Méditerranée*, written by Philippe Sollers, http://www.pileface.com/sollers/article.php3?id_article=268 (accessed December 22, 2013).

6   This taxonomy of images in the "Movement" section is provided by Andréa Picard in her review of *Film: Socialisme* for the Canadian magazine *Cinema Scope*, (Picard, 2010).

7   She argues that: "Cameras make real what one is experiencing [. . .] [a] way to certify experience, taking photographs is also a way of refusing it – by limiting experience to a search for the photogenic, by converting experience into an image, a souvenir" Sontag (1977, 18).

8   From the voiceover in *Film: Socialisme*.

9   Lack, R.F. (2010). The version in English appeared in *Vertigo Magazine* (Lack, 2012).

10 The action of the characters "passing" images is reminiscent of Godard's emblematic and well-known scene of the staging of the filmic apparatus in *Ici et ailleurs* (1969–1974) in which we see people parading themselves holding still images in front of a movie camera. This action emulates the passage of the photogram through the film projector.

11 Said (1991, 54).

12 See Emmelhainz (2009, 649–656).

13 Although in the intertext is not written properly, it is:دولة فلسطي as opposed to: دولة فلسطينية

14 These reflections emerged from the comments and a conversation with Mexican visual artist Silvia Gruner about the implications of the intertext in the movie.

15 From the voiceover in *Film: socialisme*.

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Index