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Jean-Luc Godard
and the Other History of Cinema

by

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of Doctor of Philosophy in French Studies

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This work is for Rachel...

...et pour moi-même.
DM, August 2002.

Declaration

I confirm that the material in this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Abstract

Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998) is a video work made up of visual and verbal quotations of hundreds of images and sounds from film history. But rather than simply telling (hi)stories of cinema, Godard makes a case for cinema as a tool for performing the work of history. This is partly because the film image, by virtue of always recording more of the real than was anticipated or intended, necessarily has history itself inscribed within its very fabric. It is also because montage, as the art of combining discrete elements in new ways in order to produce original forms, can be seen as a machine for realising historical thought. This thesis examines these ideas by discussing Godard's account of the role of cinema in the Second World War, and by analysing some of his recent work as examples of historical montage which attempt to criticise our current political climate through comparison with earlier eras.

After a first chapter which sets out Godard's argument through an extensive commentary of *Histoire(s)* 1A and B, a second chapter discusses Godard's depiction of the invention of cinema and traces a complex argument about technology and historical responsibility around the key metaphorical figure of the train. Chapter 3 explores the ways in which Godard's historical approach to cinema allows him to maintain a critical discourse with regard to the geopolitical realities of late twentieth-century Europe (Germany, the Balkans), but also to the communications and business empires that have developed over the past few decades. A final chapter offers a detailed consideration of the nature of Godard's cinematic quotation and seeks to explicate the apocalyptic rhetoric of his late work. Aside from *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, films discussed include *Nouvelle Vague* (1990), *Allemagne neuf zéro* (1991), *For Ever Mozart* (1996) and *Éloge de l'amour* (2001).

Not half a dozen men have ever been able to keep
the whole equation of pictures in their heads.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Last Tycoon*

Tout ce qui est intéressant se passe dans l'ombre
décidément. On ne sait rien de la véritable histoire
des hommes.

Céline, *Voyage au bout de la nuit*

... und wozu Dichter in dürftiger Zeit?

Hölderlin, 'Brot und Wein'

Introduction

‘On est là pour apprendre ou pour apprendre une sorte de méthodologie, pas fixe, mais des méthodes et des moyens d’approcher le cinéma ou la manière dont on le fait, de manière peut-être utile, de manière qu’on ne se plaigne pas simplement.’

- Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*¹

Histoire(s) du cinéma is an eight-part video work about film history which is put together principally out of the images and sounds of cinema itself. The work was first made commercially available in France in the autumn of 1998 although the project has a long history in Godard’s career. The idea for a project about the history of cinema, to be made on film and video, was originally conceived by Godard and Henri Langlois in December 1976 with the intention of raising money to help continue to fund Langlois’s ailing Cinémathèque Française. Unfortunately, Langlois died in January 1977, although an implicit recognition of his role in the genesis of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* comes in Godard’s reverent homage to the father of the Cinémathèque in chapter 3B of the work. Then, in 1978, Godard took Langlois’s place delivering a series of lectures on film history at the Conservatoire d’art cinématographique in Montreal. In each session, Godard would project one of his own films in conjunction with another from the history of cinema before improvising a discourse around the films which was later transcribed and published as *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*. This comparativist methodology, but also the autobiographical approach to film history are features that would be retained in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, as we shall see.

¹ Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* (Paris: Albatros, 1980), p. 261.

Godard began work on *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in the mid- to late-eighties² and early versions of the project were screened on Canal Plus in France and Channel 4 in the UK at the end of that decade. The final version of the *Histoire(s)* was made available to the public in 1998 as a boxed set of four video cassettes with a total running time of 265 minutes, divided into eight (or four times two) chapters of unequal length. The finished product was also shown on Canal Plus over eight weeks in the summer of 1999. In addition, the videos were accompanied by a set of four art books, published by Gallimard³, containing still images from the film together with the (almost) complete text which is spoken by Godard and others in the work. Furthermore, the complete soundtrack to the film has since been made available on a five-CD set by the German avant-garde music label ECM. Thus, although *Histoire(s) du cinéma* did not have a theatrical release, its appearance was nevertheless something of a multi-media event (at least in France: the work is as yet unavailable in the UK and no subtitled version of the complete series of films has been produced. The versions of the two first episodes shown on Channel 4 were subtitled). The arrival of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* marked a revival of interest in the work of a filmmaker who had sunk into relative critical and commercial obscurity, at least outside France, since the mid-1980s. The three years since the appearance of the *Histoire(s)* have thus seen the re-release, in Britain, of some of Godard's early-sixties works, *Bande à part* (1964, re-released in 2001) and *Vivre sa vie* (1962, re-released in 2002), as well as the revival, in France, of the previously undistributed *King Lear* (1987, released in France in 2002). This renewal of Godard's reputation was further consolidated by the completion of *Éloge de l'amour*, released to critical acclaim

² The accepted dates for *Histoire(s) du cinéma* have now been set at 1988-1998 although Jacques Aumont argues that Godard began work on the *Histoire(s)* around 1986. See *Amnésies: Fictions du cinéma d'après Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: P.O.L., 1999), p. 11. Meanwhile, Michael Temple and James S. Williams suggest that 1985's *Soft and Hard*, a video dialogue between Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, gives the first glimpse of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*'s 'distinctive historical idiom'. See 'Introduction to the Mysteries of Cinema', in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard, 1985-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), pp. 9-32 (p. 15).

³ Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard/Gaumont, 1998).

in 2001 and receiving the most significant distribution in Britain of any film by Godard since *Je vous salue Marie* (1983).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Godard's renewed commercial success has coincided with a resurgence of academic interest in the director's work, in both French and Anglophone film studies. A week-long colloquium on Godard which was held at Cerisy-la-Salle in August 1998 was the occasion for one of the first public screenings of the completed version of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.⁴ Meanwhile, a major international conference was held at the Tate Modern in London⁵ to coincide with a complete retrospective of Godard's work at the National Film Theatre in the summer of 2001. In addition, the autumn of 1998 saw the republication of the invaluable source book *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard* with a new volume devoted to Godard's work since 1984.⁶ In general, there has been a concerted effort to shift the focus of Godard scholarship on to the previously neglected later works together with an attempt to re-assess many of the better-known early films in the light of the more recent output. Although Godard has been as prolific as ever over the past fifteen years or so, releasing some twenty-seven works since 1985, ranging from ten-second advertisements to full-length features, much of the recent academic work focuses on *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. This is partly because the sheer scale of the work commands attention. But it is also because many of the short, medium and full-length films produced by Godard since the late eighties tend to appear almost as marginal notes to the *Histoire(s)*. Many of the video pieces from this period quote images and sounds that also appear in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and even the feature films include lines of dialogue and other hidden references to film history. At the same time, though, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* repeatedly quotes

⁴ The proceedings of this conference have since been published as *Godard et le métier d'artiste*, ed. by Gilles Delavaud, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi and Marie-Françoise Grange (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

⁵ Proceedings to be published as *For Ever Godard*, ed. by Michael Temple, James S. Williams and Michael Witt (London: Black Dog, forthcoming 2003).

⁶ *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. by Alain Bergala, 2 vols (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1998).

images and sounds from these late features, like *King Lear*, *Hélas pour moi* (1993) and *For Ever Mozart* (1996). Furthermore, the same quotations from literary, philosophical, historical and critical texts recur time and again across these films and the same pieces of music, both popular and classical, are used repeatedly. The endless re-combination of the same citations thus serves to rehearse in different ways an argument about film history – but also more widely about art and culture at the end of the twentieth century – that receives its fullest expression in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

The trouble with much of the work that has so far been published on *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is that the quality of the *Histoire(s)* that attracts the work – its monumental scale – prevents most articles from giving an adequate account of the film. Faced with four and a half hours of densely packed text, many commentators are able only to offer a reductive overview of Godard's argument and a brief analysis of a short sequence or, at best, an episode.⁷ Several writers have sought the historical and theoretical influences on Godard's argument (as will we) amongst thinkers like Hegel, Malraux and Faure, Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze, but this is too often at the expense of a concerted engagement with *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in its textuality.⁸ Godard's history of the cinema has been compared to the work on art history by André Malraux and, to a lesser extent, Élie Faure, both of whom are quoted in Godard's text.⁹ In this argument, the cinema is seen to be the natural heir to painting in its role as representation of

⁷ The best accounts of individual episodes of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* to date are James S. Williams's 'European Culture and Artistic Resistance in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Chapter 3A, *La Monnaie de l'absolu*', in Temple and Williams, *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 113-139 and Jacques Aumont's 'Mortelle beauté' (on chapter 2B), in *Amnésies*, pp. 67-99, repr. as 'Mortal Beauty', in Temple and Williams, pp. 97-112.

⁸ Aside from the works mentioned below, we might note Aumont's discussion of the influence of Hegel (*Amnésies*, pp. 55-60 and 145-150) and Heidegger (pp. 70-79) and Jacques Rancière's consideration of the parallels between Godard's film history and Deleuze's two-volume work on the history and philosophy of cinema. See *La Fable cinématographique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 156. Both writers also note, in passing, the influence of Theodor Adorno.

⁹ See Michael Temple, 'Big Rhythm and the Power of Metamorphosis: Some Models and Precursors for *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', in Temple and Williams, *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 77-95 and James S. Williams, 'The signs amongst us: Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', *Screen*, 40, 3 (Autumn 1999), 306-315.

reality and, indeed, this recording of the real appears not only as a possibility but a *moral obligation* for the cinema. In Godard's argument, as paraphrased by the likes of Temple and Williams, it was the neglect of this duty which led to the cinema's downfall or death. However, this discourse on the death of cinema in the *Histoire(s)* does not come without its redemptive counterpart, the imagery of resurrection. For if, according to Godard, cinema refused to recognise the real, instead burying it under layers of fiction and fantasy, this destruction of the real turns out in fact to be its *sacrifice*, with the real subsequently 'resurrected into light'¹⁰. This imagery of resurrection in the *Histoire(s)* has proven disturbing to certain critics, most notably Jacques Rancière who has lamented the way in which 'l'apparent iconoclaste des années 60 s'est lentement transformé en le plus rigoureux des iconodules'¹¹, an accusation we will address in our first chapter.

If Godard has produced a history of the cinema comparable to other histories of art, it is video that has enabled him to do so. Dominique Païni has made this point, suggesting that video is what makes possible Godard's *Histoire(s)* since it allows the reproduction of films (just as first engraving and, later, photography allowed the reproduction of paintings), but further, by allowing for films to be shown in parallel, together or side by side, video facilitates the *comparative* work of history.¹² A certain continuity has thus been remarked between Godard's earliest experiments with video in the Sonimage project undertaken with Anne-Marie Miéville in the 1970s and the monumental achievement that is *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. In particular, Michael Witt has made a persuasive case for re-evaluating the work of the 1970s which increasingly appears to mark a crucial juncture in Godard's career.¹³ *Histoire(s) du cinéma*,

¹⁰ Williams, 'The signs amongst us', p. 311.

¹¹ Jacques Rancière, 'La Sainte et l'héritière: A propos des *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 536 (July-August 1999), 58-61 (p. 61). This argument is taken up again in *La Fable cinématographique*, pp. 217-237.

¹² Dominique Païni, 'Que peut le cinéma?', *Art Press*, hors série, *Le Siècle de Jean-Luc Godard: Guide pour "Histoire(s) du cinéma"* (November 1998), 4-7.

¹³ See Michael Witt, 'The death(s) of cinema according to Godard', *Screen*, 40, 3 (Autumn 1999), 331-346.

with its discourse about the death of cinema, must therefore also be understood as a continuation of the critical engagement with television that formed a central part of Godard's political work in the seventies. This aspect of the *Histoire(s)* will be discussed in our third chapter.

If the cinema is dead or dying, as so many of Godard's commentators insist, it is partly because, as we saw with Williams above, in its reliance on fiction, on certain standardised narrative forms, cinema has lost touch with that real which it has the privilege and the duty to represent. But, as the ambiguous 'histoire(s)' of Godard's title implies, this dependence on narrative has far greater consequences than simply what we watch on screen in the movie theatre. For Godard's film, as Marie-José Mondzain has argued, is about the interpenetration of cinema and history, about the way that cinema, as the art form of the twentieth century, changed not only the way history was written, but also the way it was lived. On the one hand, this means that history is now routinely related and understood 'sous forme de scénario'; on the other it implies that 'ce qui se passe historiquement dans ce siècle est par nature cinématographique'¹⁴. Thus, if Godard's *Histoire(s)* appear particularly fascinated by American cinema, it is because it was 'la nation américaine qui, la première, demanda au cinéma de se charger du récit de son histoire'¹⁵. Mondzain suggests that Godard is wary of this narratorial approach to history because it fails to account for the singularity of the event. This explains why Godard structures his *Histoire(s)* less around a narrative than around a montage, which allows for a different approach to history, one which is not without recalling the philosophy of Walter Benjamin, as we shall see in chapter 2.¹⁶

¹⁴ Marie-José Mondzain, 'Histoire et passion', *Art Press*, hors série, *Le Siècle de Jean-Luc Godard: Guide pour "Histoire(s) du cinéma"* (November 1998), 91-97 (p. 91).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹⁶ On the influence of Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' on *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, see Alain Bergala, 'L'Ange de l'histoire', in *Nul mieux que Godard* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1999), pp. 221-249 and Monica Dall'Asta, 'Godard and his Angel', in Temple, Williams and Witt, *For Ever Godard* (forthcoming).

Most commentators on *Histoire(s) du cinéma* have insisted upon the importance of montage as a governing principle in the work, although it is not always clear whether the montage referred to indicates the actual videographic editing of Godard's film, a wider notion of montage as the most original artistic invention of the cinema, or an even larger quasi-philosophical concept touching on domains outside the immediate influence of cinema. But, as Michael Witt has shown, this semantic uncertainty is due to the fact that Godard's own conception of montage has become increasingly wide and inclusive in recent years. Not only must we accept 'the expansion of the idea of montage to include every stage of the film-making process', moreover the concept of montage has become 'a productive principle accompanying the combination or juxtaposition of two or more events, facts, or objects'¹⁷. Noting Godard's debt both to cinematic pioneers like Marey and Muybridge and to the radical theories of avant-garde filmmakers like Jean Epstein and Dziga Vertov, Witt argues that, for Godard, it is through montage that cinema could have, or could still, become a quasi-scientific instrument capable of increasing our understanding of the world. But, if montage is a scientific tool, it is also a poetic device and, in another article, Witt compares Godard's use of montage to the metaphorical process in literature, an idea we discuss briefly in our second chapter.¹⁸ But this idea has also been proposed by Philippe Forest who attempts to place *Histoire(s) du cinéma* within the tradition of literary modernism, arguing that the work's self-reflexivity and its positioning as it were beyond the end of its own medium recall great modernist works like Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and Ezra Pound's *Cantos* (the latter is briefly quoted at the end of *Histoire(s)* 4B).¹⁹ But, if this widening of the net to encompass the literary influences on Godard's work is a welcome move on

¹⁷ Michael Witt, 'Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph', in Temple and Williams, *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 33-50 (pp. 36-38).

¹⁸ Michael Witt, 'L'image selon Godard: théorie et pratique de l'image dans l'oeuvre de Godard des années 70 à 90', in Delavaud et al, *Godard et le métier d'artiste*, pp. 19-32.

¹⁹ Philippe Forest, 'La rose dans la poussière d'acier', *Art Press*, hors série, *Le Siècle de Jean-Luc Godard: Guide pour "Histoire(s) du cinéma"* (November 1998), 13-26.

the part of Forest, his attempt to argue for the *Histoire(s)* as a poetic work falls back on a rather formulaic prose/poetry distinction which fails to take account of the specific cinematic qualities of Godard's work.

This failure to address at any length the actual textual detail of Godard's film has been the most common problem with the work so far produced on *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. We need to look at the specific operations by which Godard makes meaning in individual sequences, but also at the way in which meaning accumulates over the whole work, if we are to achieve a fuller understanding of Godard's conception of montage, if we are to follow the more alarming turns of his argument about cinema and history, or if we are to offer a more nuanced interpretation of the rhetoric of death and resurrection. Accounting for the singular experience of viewing the *Histoire(s)* has proved the most difficult obstacle to the handful of commentaries on the work which have already appeared. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* consists for the most part of images and sounds borrowed from the history of cinema. Godard edits together images from silent and sound cinema, black and white and colour, fiction, documentary, animation, newsreel, video and television, whilst on the soundtrack film dialogue and voiceover commentary mix with radio broadcasts and classical and popular music (in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian). Meanwhile, Godard's videographic equipment allows him to write over the image in much the same way he has done since his first experiments in the medium in the seventies. The sheer amount of information presented to the spectator at any one time can be quite overwhelming. As a typical (if hypothetical) example, two images might be superimposed over one another whilst a third flashes in and out in an iris; a short text may be written across these images whilst, on the soundtrack, film dialogue, a piece of music and Godard's voiceover commentary all compete for the spectator's attention. To label *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as, say, a documentary about film history (which, on one level, it is), is to elide the most important

aspect of the work, that is the sheer, unprecedented intensity of this aesthetic experience which is sustained for four and a half hours.

This criticism even pertains to the first book-length study to be written about *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Jacques Aumont's *Amnésies*. Appearing only a few short months after the *Histoire(s)* itself (and thus written largely in response to earlier versions made privately available to Aumont), *Amnésies* is certainly valuable as a first attempt to come to terms with the extraordinary reach of Godard's project. But, as Aumont himself admits, his book is not so much a scholarly work but rather written 'in sympathy' with the *Histoire(s)*:

[P]artant de l'ébranlement qu'ont provoqué les *Histoire(s) du cinéma* de Jean-Luc Godard, j'ai tâché de l'amplifier ou au moins, de le faire durer à la mesure de mes forces, sans vouloir en donner l'analyse rigoureuse ou exhaustive, ou même le commentaire suivi.²⁰

In this way, *Amnésies* comes to resemble the *Histoire(s)* itself: rather than annotating his sources, Aumont gives only the vaguest of acknowledgements in the text itself; rather than pursuing a systematic analysis of the film, he allows himself to follow the associative paths opened up by Godard and, like Godard, has a tendency to repeat himself in later chapters.

Nonetheless, Aumont's book offers a good introduction to the problematic of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Aumont makes an important contribution to the discussion of montage in and around the *Histoire(s)*. Montage, he suggests, is related to thought and memory because, in order to think, one must first remember, one must be able to store traces and subsequently put them into new relations, just like cinematic montage which operates by creating new relations out of the latent potential in individual images. Godard's argument in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is thus that, if montage granted us a new way of *seeing*, it should also have led to a new way of *thinking*, yet somehow failed to do so. This

²⁰ Aumont, *Amnésies*, p. 10.

interpretation of montage in terms of thought and memory subsequently allows Aumont to account for various qualities of Godard's recent work. For instance, he suggests that the repetition of the same images and quotations in this work, 'bien loin d'être radotage ou amnésie, est donc au contraire le travail même de la pensée qui doit se gagner sur le mémoriel'²¹. In other words, Godard has first to *forget* film history in order to remember it, in order that pieces of that history may become re-inscribed as personal memories, hence the autobiographical strand to the *Histoire(s)*. Hence also Godard's homage to – and his own position within – a French critical tradition: this is simply a further demonstration of 'le cinéma comme opérateur de mémoire, c'est-à-dire de compréhension, c'est-à-dire de pensée critique'²².

Once again though, however good Aumont's analyses of individual sequences may be, the main problem with his book is the absence of sustained textual analysis. This, then, is one of the ambitions of this thesis: to demonstrate in detail how meaning is produced in the text of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, not only in individual examples, but across whole episodes and indeed the whole of the work. One of the dangers of studying the *Histoire(s)* is to fall back on an approach that simply identifies some of the hundreds of sources quoted by Godard and considers their relevance to the project. The identification of sources has naturally occupied a significant portion of this research and indeed much of this thesis is spent considering the relevance of some of these sources. But Godard has been very clear, in interviews, that the viewing of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* should not descend into a game of spot-the-quotation²³ and it is one of the contentions of this thesis that the film can still make sense to a spectator who is incapable of identifying all of the works cited by Godard. The self-selecting spectator of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* doubtless has cinephilic tendencies and is

²¹ Ibid., p. 26.

²² Ibid., p. 105.

²³ See for instance 'Le bon plaisir de Jean-Luc Godard', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 305-322 (p. 312).

likely to recognise some of the more canonical quotations, but few if any viewers could hope to identify all of Godard's sources, at least not without painstaking research. In practice, then, and certainly on initial viewings, the spectator of the *Histoire(s)* is likely to take particular images not as representatives of precisely-identified films, but rather as generic images evoking a particular national cinema, a particular film genre, a given era of film history, or simply, in the broadest sense, *cinema itself*. This thesis thus seeks to achieve a balance between an approach that identifies Godard's sources and explores their importance, and an approach that would account for the film's impact on the spectator regardless of whether he or she was an expert in film history. Passages of concentrated textual analysis are thus interspersed with more digressive sections which pursue some of Godard's associative paths and explore their theoretical implications.

Aside from the clips and stills from films that are reproduced in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Godard's practice of quotation ranges from direct and didactic readings from books, through unacknowledged visual allusions to other filmmakers or the unexplained enunciation of enigmatic titles, to the wholesale adoption and transformation of narrative structures from other works in his recent feature films. Thus, in addition to the visual effect of images in their plasticity and the apparent significance of texts in their immediate context, Godard's images and sounds repeatedly refer to *other* texts and *other* contexts which, when evoked in the memory of the spectator, carry their own burden of signification which subsequently connects with the context of Godard's quotation in order to generate new meanings (this, need we add, is part of the extended meaning of montage for Godard). In following the movement of Godard's associations, this thesis will thus be repeatedly drawn outside the spheres of film history and theory in order to engage with literary and philosophical texts evoked in the *Histoire(s)* and related works. It is important to take these references seriously in Godard's work and to explore their resonance

to the full since they demonstrate that Godard, as a filmmaker, is a creative and critical thinker of the same stature as many of the philosophers, poets and novelists he cites. At the same time, though, since these associative paths are properly inexhaustible and since, as we have said, the spectator's familiarity with Godard's sources cannot be assumed, we have taken care regularly to return to the text at hand and to illuminate Godard's intertexts by exploring the new meanings given to them through the act of their quotation and re-combination.

To this end, the first chapter of this thesis presents a detailed study of the opening chapter of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, 1A, which is the longest and one of the most dense of all Godard's eight episodes. As 1A sets out at length the argument which will be further rehearsed throughout the *Histoire(s)* and other late works, our own first chapter seeks to describe and explain this argument, exploring in detail its more problematic and paradoxical twists and turns. At the same time our commentary will offer the reader a comprehensive introduction to Godard's methodology by demonstrating precisely how this argument is conveyed in images and sounds. Having thus established both the theoretical standpoint and the rhetorical strategies of the *Histoire(s)*, subsequent chapters of this thesis will range more widely over Godard's film and related works, exploring the ramifications of his argument through specific thematic examples and textual figures. For instance, our second chapter will investigate Godard's argument about cinema and technology by tracing the privileged metaphorical figure of the train, from *Histoire(s)* chapter 1B with its extensive discussion of the invention of cinema through to 3A where the train is a key component of a montage devoted to the idea of historical responsibility. It is also here that we shall discover the extent to which Godard's theoretical and practical approach to history owes a debt to the philosophy of Walter Benjamin.

In the latter half of this thesis (divided, like the *Histoire(s)* itself, into four times two chapters), we will focus in particular on what Godard's historical approach to cinema and to the twentieth century has to say about the present. In

so doing we will refute a popular view of Godard as some sort of hermit cut off from social and cultural reality whose work would have ceased to engage with political questions some time in the 1970s. Thus, in our third chapter, we will consider how the evocation of Europe's historical agony is matched to Godard's continued concern for human rights abuses (in particular around the tragedy of Bosnia), just as his exploration of the history of cinema takes place in the context of a serious reflection about today's visual culture. Our fourth chapter will return to a detailed consideration of the textuality of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, using the work of Jacques Derrida to explore the nature of quotation in late Godard, before turning, still with Derrida's guidance, to the apparently apocalyptic rhetoric of much of this late work. The thesis will close on an interpretation of *Éloge de l'amour*, seeing how this latest feature continues and prolongs the arguments raised by Godard in the *Histoire(s)* and related texts.

Given the length of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, but also the sheer number of works produced in its margins, there are inevitably omissions in this thesis. Many of the features and shorter works from Godard's last decade and a half of activity receive little more than cursory mention here. Perhaps more seriously, the reader will find very little discussion of the second chapter (2A and B) of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* itself. This particular oversight, necessitated by lack of space, was dictated partly by the nature of Godard's text and partly by the critical work already existing around it. Chapter 2A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, 'Seul le cinéma', is a relatively short and simple episode consisting essentially of two sequences. The first is a filmed interview between Godard and Serge Daney in which they discuss Godard's historical project in terms which reappear elsewhere in the film (we will consider Godard's relationship with Daney at some length in our third chapter). The second half of 2A, meanwhile, consists of Julie Delpy filmed performing various banal daily activities whilst she reads Baudelaire's poem 'Le Voyage'. Although this footage is intercut and superimposed with other images from film history, the main point of the sequence is to be found in

the metaphorical importance of Baudelaire's poem which Godard makes clear in another film, *2 x 50 ans de cinéma français* (1995). Here, Michel Piccoli, in his real-life role as Président de l'Association du Premier Siècle de Cinéma, takes to reading Baudelaire and announces that 'ça annonce le cinéma', as evidenced by the following lines:

Nous voulons voyager sans vapeur et sans voile!
Faites, pour égayer l'ennui de nos prisons,
Passer sur nos esprits, tendus comme une toile,
Vos souvenirs avec leurs cadres d'horizons.

Chapter 2B, meanwhile, entitled 'Fatale beauté', although more complex than 2A, is largely absent from this thesis because it has already been the object of an important analysis by Jacques Aumont. 'Fatale beauté' is about the cinema's twin obsessions of sex and death and Aumont explores the relation between the cinema and the concept of beauty around the trope of light. He suggests that Godard draws a distinction between the *bad light* of Hollywood glamour which seeks to *replace* life, to cover over the sinister reality of death, and, on the other hand, 'une tout autre brillance, celle de l'être'²⁴ which, following Heidegger, Aumont interprets as being-towards-death. But, since the cinema proved unwilling or unable to stare this mortal being in the face, to confront the *nudity* of its being (and not simply the nudity of its body), beauty has only been possible in cinema when it has been coupled to, or expressed in, narrative. The fatality of cinema, suggests Aumont, has thus been to *tell stories* and these, fatally, have been stories of desire, of 'la douleur du désir de posséder la beauté'²⁵.

These questions, although not discussed at greater length in relation to 2A and B, will be picked up in different ways in this thesis, notably in our brief consideration of the role of pornography in the *Histoire(s)* in our second chapter,

²⁴ Aumont, *Amnésies*, p. 75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

and, more generally, in the concern throughout this thesis with the ontology of the image. It is the peculiar, ambiguous nature of the image that seems at once to resurrect and thereby immortalise the real and, at the same time, to underline precisely its frailty and impermanence, that is key to our interpretation of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. This quality of the image accounts not only for our childlike fascination with cinema but also for its power as a political tool. It is this power, its unhappy fate in the twentieth century and its undiminished potential as we enter the twenty-first, that Godard traces in his history of the cinema. In order to see how, let us turn now to the text itself.

Chapter 1

Splendeurs et misères

‘Les oeuvres d’art: instruments de découverte ou plaques commémoratives?’

- Michel Leiris, *Journal*¹

1.1

‘When you read a work of history, always listen out for the buzzing.’

- E.H. Carr, *What is History?*²

Toutes les histoires

Histoire(s) du cinéma begins with a Latin title, taken from Virgil, bearing the legend ‘Hoc opus, hic labor est’, thus immediately introducing a duality that will reappear in multiple guises throughout the film.³ Here the distinction is between two different senses of what, in English, we call ‘work’: on one hand, the work of art as object or monument (*opus*), and, on the other, the *work* of art as labour, as process, and indeed, as we shall see, as the very *unworking* of the monumental tendencies of art. Following this title, we see a close-up of James Stewart peering out from behind his telephoto lens in *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954) and a couple of shots from *Mr Arkadin* (Orson Welles, 1955) in which a

¹ Michel Leiris, *Journal 1922-1989* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 44 (journal entry samedi 17 mai 1924).

² E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Penguin, 1961), p. 23.

³ The line, taken from the *Aeneid*, VI, 129, is not usually credited, in English translations, with the duality that we highlight here, yet its position within Virgil’s epic is nonetheless significant. It comes as the Sibyl addresses Aeneas prior to his journey into the underworld, telling him that the descent is easy, ‘But to retrace your steps to heaven’s air/There is the trouble, there is the toil’ (see *The Aeneid*, trans. by Robert Fitzgerald (London: Harvill, 1993), p. 164). The line is thus bound up with the imagery of death and resurrection which we will consider in detail in the second half of this chapter. It also resonates with Godard’s lengthy borrowings, in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* from Hermann Broch’s *Death of Virgil*, in which the moribund Latin poet considers burning the *Aeneid*, one of many references in the *Histoire(s)* evoking the end of art and the end of civilisation. Finally, the descent into Hades also recalls the legend of Orpheus whose relevance to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is discussed at length by Jacques Aumont (see *Amnésies*, pp. 36-55). For more on this last point, see below, ch. 3.2, n. 18.

flea circus is observed through a magnifying glass. These shots, then, serve to inscribe the cinema within a certain lineage of technologies of vision, and this sense of cinema as technique, as *machine*, is strengthened in the rest of this opening sequence. For now comes the first appearance of a motif that will recur throughout the first chapter (1A and B) of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: a close-up of an editing table with film speeding through its gates, lurching to a sudden stop before being moved forward or back a few frames, whilst on the soundtrack film dialogue is sped up and slowed down almost beyond recognition in parallel with the motion of the film through the Steenbeck.

If these shots stress the view that *cinéma is an art of montage*, the next machine to appear in this sequence would seem to symbolise another aspect of filmmaking. A medium shot shows us Godard himself sitting at a typewriter into which he feeds a sheet of paper. When he strikes a key, the machine types something from memory. This electronic typewriter, a machine which is already looking surprisingly dated, is used by Godard, I suggest, because of the intriguing parallel between its operation and that of cinema itself. Whereas the typewriter remembers a text which it subsequently imprints on a piece of paper, the strip of celluloid film is imprinted with an image which, in Godard's rhetoric, comes to be described as a *memory of the real*. In *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, Godard played on the various senses of the word 'impression', suggesting that a work of cinema could be seen as emerging out of 'deux mouvements différents': 'l'expression, qui consiste à sortir quelque chose, et puis au contraire l'impression, quelque chose qui consiste à rentrer quelque chose'⁴. In other words, the filmmaker seeks to *impress* the audience with his or her personal *expression*, but the film also bears the *impression* of a real that is never entirely under the filmmaker's control.

Over the next five minutes or so, we see Godard at his typewriter, reading and typing the titles of three films and, with each new title, the image of Godard

⁴ Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, p. 63.

dissolves in and out of shots from a different film. Also reappearing throughout the sequence is the image of the editing table with film running at various speeds through its gates. After the title *La Règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir, 1939), we see a still of Charlie Chaplin and Claudette Colbert on a picnic and shots of Chaplin at the piano. Accompanying *Cris et chuchotements* (*Viskningar och Rop*, or *Cries and Whispers*; Ingmar Bergman, 1972) is the image of Ida Lupino placing a slide into a viewfinder in Fritz Lang's *While the City Sleeps* (1956). Finally, under *Le Lys brisé* (*Broken Blossoms*; D. W. Griffith, 1919), we witness scenes from the last days of Nicholas Ray's life from the film that was completed by Wim Wenders after Ray's death, *Lightning over Water* (aka *Nick's Movie*, 1980). What we have here, then, is a brief summation of the 'life' of cinema (and this sequence introduces the *kind of organicist view of cinema which will allow* Godard to talk of its death): three periods of film history – the early, silent era; classical narrative cinema; and a contemporary postmodern cinema that makes explicit reference to the past – are mapped on to the three ages of life: the innocence of childhood, symbolised by Chaplin, the adult sexuality of Lupino, and the frailty of old age, incarnated by Ray.⁵

But such a schematic description ignores the peculiar texture and unsteady rhythm of this opening sequence. It comes across not as a grand and authoritative overview of film history but as an awkward and arbitrary plunge into the stuff of cinema. The titles which emerge from Godard's mouth do so only with difficulty, stammered into a precarious existence: *Le lys brisé* does not appear fully formed but dislocated and strung out: 'Le...le lys...le lys...brisé...brisé...le lys brisé...' The editing table in this montage is not a tool

⁵ The titles read by Godard also imply one representative from each era of film history, although the scrambled order perhaps invites us to read these titles more metaphorically: *La Règle du jeu* resonates with the idea of the rules dominating the classical narrative system; *Cris et chuchotements* reminds us that cinema is also a *sound* medium, and suggests the extremes of experience it is able to convey (just as the soundtrack is bringing us the shrieks and murmurs of accelerated and slowed down film); *Le lys brisé* implies a certain fall from innocence and invokes the broken bodies and broken dreams of old age. (This notion of cinema's fall from a state of childlike innocence will be a central theme of our next chapter.)

for the neat organisation of material, but rather the site of lurching, nauseous stops and starts, the images and sounds distorted beyond recognition in the tortuous accelerations and decelerations. This is key to the sequence: all of these images – of Chaplin, Lupino and Ray – are slowed down, stopped, reversed, as though Godard were searching for something that isn't there, trying to pinpoint the precise moment when an event, an action, a film comes into existence.

Significantly, the image that is treated at greatest length in this way is that of Ida Lupino and, since she is handling a slide viewer, this particular moment becomes a kind of meta-commentary on machines of vision: Godard, with one viewing apparatus, seeks a vision of Lupino who, in turn, manipulates another device in search of another image.⁶ Yet there remains something in the image which resists these attempts at manipulation, an elusive yet irreducible quality which, try as one might, one cannot approach or control. So this opening sequence, for all its emphasis on technology, on an art that requires a certain mastery of machines, ultimately implies that there is always an aspect of the cinematic image which remains beyond the control of the filmmaker. As Godard puts it in *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, 'on croit qu'on s'exprime et on ne se rend pas compte que dans cette expression il y a un grand mouvement d'impression qui ne vient pas de vous'⁷.

The sequence thus introduces a duality that is constitutive of cinema itself, that is responsible for what one of the opening titles calls its 'splendeur et misère'. Already, in commenting upon these few opening minutes of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, we have come across a number of binary pairs: work as monument and work as process, impression and expression, montage and mise-en-scène: the cinema as a tool for the passive recording of the real and for its active organisation. These binaries proliferate in the *Histoire(s)* (we will see in a

⁶ In Lang's film, Lupino's character pretends to be looking at racy pictures whereas, in fact, the viewer contains an image of a baby. It is an appropriate image of the childlike *naïveté* which, for Godard, remains the base upon which the cinema's sophistication is constructed.

⁷ Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, p. 63.

moment how day and night, light and darkness are similarly prominent pairs) and there is a tendency for them to overlap or drift into one another. At the same time, the opposing poles of a specific pair are rarely stable, tending instead to find points of convergence. It is thus appropriate that ‘splendeur et misère’ should be the first such pair we encounter in the film and so stand in for all the others. For there is doubtless an implied reference here to Balzac’s novel *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (the sequel to *Illusions perdues* whose title appears briefly in 2B) in which the two apparently distinct and mutually exclusive layers of Parisian life – high society and the underworld – are shown in fact to be intimately linked. So too in the cinema, it is the association of apparently incompatible spheres, ideas and operations that accounts for the medium’s unique appeal. The cinema is thus linked to the poetic world of myth at the same time as it is rooted in the prosaic realities of commerce. But, more than this, the ambiguous pairing of *splendeur* and *misère* accounts for the fundamental operations of cinema as an art form: the cinema’s formidable status as a machine for organising the real is only made possible by its initial recording of a real that cannot be manipulated since it testifies to a reality that *was*, whether we like it or not. At the same time, then, the cinema tends to expose our own *misère*, our inability to account for or comprehend a reality that is present to us in all its unfathomable muteness. It is in this sense that cinema, for Godard, is ‘ni un art, ni une technique: un *mystère*’, hence its unprecedented capacity to leave untold millions of spectators spellbound. And it is this extraordinary power of influence over masses of people that allows Godard to draw the analogy between the history of cinema and the history of the twentieth century, itself one of *splendeurs* and *misères*: the unique ambition of utopian political projects and the moral bankruptcy of their conclusion in genocide. The cinema captured all of this, implies Godard, and at the same time became a sort of vast metaphor with which to represent it.

The overall impression that the spectator takes from the opening moments of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is determined by this dual operation. It is not only the proliferation of images of visual technologies, but also the unprecedented complexity of Godard's montage – with its systematic use of superimposition, the rapidly flickering juxtaposition of two images, the slow-motion decomposition of movement and the inscription of text across the image – that gives us a sense of a filmmaker with an impressive command of a highly technical medium. At the same time, though, with its false starts and unfinished allusions, Godard's film begins in an apparent absence of structure and order, coming across as an arbitrary arrangement of images and sounds that appear and disappear with little or no motive. For, aside from the images mentioned, a number of other stills and clips, some readily identifiable, others impossibly obscure, come and go in these first five minutes. A shot of Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina kissing in *Pierrot le fou* (1965) irises out from the centre of the screen then disappears back into it; Fay Wray is filmed on her way to the South Seas in *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933); a gangster fires his gun into the camera in slow motion... We have the sense that Godard is attempting the impossible in trying to tell 'toutes les histoires' (as the title of 1A puts it), all the (hi)stories of cinema.

One of Godard's arguments in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is that the cinema, because it composes with the real in all its excess, is particularly well placed to record history, to capture *in the flesh* the weight of real experience that tends to be absent from history books. Paradoxically, though, the cinema can only capture this history by transforming it, by arranging it as art, even if a certain core of reality remains indomitable and is thereby enabled to express itself or, better, to *impress*, to imprint itself on the film and on the psyche of the spectator. If the history of cinema is the history of this relationship, this tussle between the organisational powers of cinema and a resistant, recalcitrant real, then Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, telling the history of film *in film* and *as film*, must

necessarily repeat this struggle even as it demonstrates it. Godard's history of the cinema seeks to demonstrate the excess of film history, the impossibility of ever accounting for all of the cinema, ever approaching its myriad stories and its infinite connections with the rest of history. But, since this history of cinema is itself a work of cinema, it can only evoke this excessive history which defies form by imposing form upon it, that is to say by developing an argument which in places threatens to cohere into a totalising vision of cinema (as in the equation of cinema's rise and fall with the life span of a human being). But, as we have already seen, Godard's montage in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is a paradoxical one which, despite its obvious sophistication and its many breathtaking conceits, frequently conveys an impression of randomness and a sense of the chance encounter, implying that film history can only ever be approached in this incomplete and unsatisfactory way with the complete picture remaining forever beyond our grasp.

Mon beau souci: Cinema and seduction

The temptation of formalism offered by cinema, the desire to reduce this complex phenomenon to facile formulae is demonstrated in the following sequence of 1A.⁸ After Godard announces his intention to discuss not 'toutes les histoires qu'il y aura' or 'qu'il y aurait', but rather 'qu'il y a eu', a Beethoven string quartet begins on the soundtrack, coupled to a long speech by Giorgio Albertazzi taken from *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961). A montage of scenes then juxtaposes first Murnau's *Faust* (1926) with Minnelli's *Band Wagon* (1953), then Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* with Mizoguchi's *Crucified*

⁸ My division of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* into sequences itself represents a concession to this reductive approach. I cannot stress enough the extent to which these 'sequences' are arbitrary divisions chosen to ease the exposition of my argument. In reality, the density of Godard's montage unleashes so many associative chains that the whole film often seems to work as one unbroken flow of images and sounds. That said, it is further proof of the organisational capacity of montage that units such as sequences can nonetheless be posited within this overall movement. (In addition, some sections of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are more easily divided than others: in the second half of this chapter, for instance, the divisions will be imposed almost entirely by the stages of my own argument and not by any logical breaks in Godard's film.)

Lovers (1955) and finally *Menschen am Sonntag* (Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer, 1929) with *Broken Blossoms* and *Rancho Notorious* (Fritz Lang, 1952). Over all this, titles relate the aphorism usually attributed to André Bazin and already used by Godard in the credits to *Le Mépris* (1963): ‘Le cinéma substitue à notre regard un monde qui s’accorde à nos désirs.’ This sequence would thus appear to be a fairly basic demonstration of what montage is and how it works. If montage involves bringing out the qualities of one reality by juxtaposing it with another reality, then it can operate by contrast – as in the contrast of the rich technicolour of *The Band Wagon* with the faded monochrome of *Faust* – or by comparison – as in the parallel scenes of pursuit through a forest from *La Règle du jeu*, where a rabbit is pursued from left to right across the screen, and *The Crucified Lovers* where Osan (Kyoko Kagawa) is pursued from right to left. It is this ability to make connections across space and time that makes montage such a powerful rhetorical and political tool since it allows us to compare conditions of living in different contexts. Thus when images of the poor weakened Lucy (Lillian Gish) stumbling through the streets in *Broken Blossoms* are juxtaposed with a happy couple swimming in the sea from *Menschen am Sonntag* or with the decadence of *Rancho Notorious* where cowgirls ride men like horses, a poignant, if unformed, sense of injustice is born.

Again, then, it is the *splendeur* and *misère* of cinema that is underlined here: in terms of the subject of cinematic fictions that have dealt in both glamour and grit, but also in terms of the cinema’s own paradoxical status as both omniscient organiser of material and impotent witness to the real. For this sequence also demonstrates the cinema’s ability to manipulate its spectator and to shape his or her views. It is worth bearing in mind here that both the clips from *Faust* and *The Band Wagon* deal in scenes of *seduction*. The scene from Murnau’s film represents Faust’s temptation by the devil whilst, in *The Band Wagon*, Gaby (Cyd Charisse) performs a dance of seduction for Tony Hunter (Fred Astaire). The dialogue from *Marienbad* is similarly seductive since here

the male character tries to persuade his female companion to remember something which may never have happened (or at least not the way he tells it). And the cinema itself performs a similar work of seduction since it tries to convince us to *remember as real* something which, in a sense, never really happened: real people may have performed these real actions, but the sense of the whole was constructed after the fact in the montage. What we see on screen is not a group of actors performing for the camera (at least, not when cinema *works*), but a persuasive fantasy that has the status of reality, 'un monde qui s'accorde à nos désirs'. Although it may not represent a fictional world, Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* here reproduces the seductive quality that it is seeking to demonstrate since, following the uncomfortable stop-start rhythms of the first five minutes, the smooth string quartet, the more straightforward montage and the lengthy voiceover fool the spectator into thinking that this sequence represents a passage into main body of the text (in fact the film will continue as erratically and unpredictably as it began).

One of the more economical ways in which Godard generates meaning in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is simply by declaiming a series of titles of books, films and other works which, although often of little apparent relevance, serve to offer an oblique commentary on the argument that is being developed in images and sounds (these titles, which are plentiful in the first chapter of the *Histoire(s)*, gradually become less frequent in later chapters). For instance, at this point in the film, after a brief homage to the first and greatest practitioner of montage with clips from Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1938), *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Strike* (1925), Godard pronounces the following list which recurs in 1B: *Matière et mémoire*, *Les Mille et une nuits*, *Les Faux-monnayeurs*. The title of Bergson's philosophical work *Matière et mémoire* can be read as a kind of shorthand for cinema itself which appears as the *memory of matter*, matter which, however it may have been arranged, has nonetheless *existed*. If the *1001 Nights* and Gide's *Faux-monnayeurs* both present, like *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, a series of

stories within stories, their metaphorical importance here is perhaps also due to a certain deferral of reality: Scheherazade puts off the moment of her death by telling stories, fiction coming to take the place of her life, just like the characters of Gide's novel who confuse storytelling with living. Godard implies that there is a fine line between a cinema that *shows* us the real in new and revealing ways and a cinema that simply *replaces* the real with potentially disastrous consequences. By inviting the spectator to surmise and construct such arguments as this from the cryptic references contained in his titles, Godard solicits an active engagement with his text that would prevent it from becoming the kind of replacement reality in which the spectator can abdicate all responsibility for meaning. Godard's evocative titles force us to retrieve these allusions from our memory before proceeding to a kind of critical montage of our own in order to make sense of them. It is, to follow Jacques Aumont's argument that we expounded in our introduction, an example of how Godard uses the cinema to demonstrate and to represent the process of thought itself.

Histoire de la nuit

This use of titles is instrumental too in the following sequence of 1A devoted to the legendary producer Irving Thalberg, a section which illustrates Godard's unorthodox approach to film history and his determination to demonstrate cinema's duality at every turn. The sequence also provides an illustration of another binary pair that Godard evokes in *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*: what he calls 'l'industrie du jour' and 'l'industrie de la nuit'. At first glance, this distinction appears to refer to the cinema's industrial or commercial aspect (*jour*) and its mythical dimension (*nuit*), yet closer inspection reveals that this distinction cannot easily be maintained: once again there is a certain unstoppable slippage from one pole to the other. In *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, Godard describes 'l'industrie du jour' as 'celle qui fait fonctionner les corps', for instance, 'les gestes des ouvriers pour construire des

objets' and he demonstrates a fascination for the days of the Hollywood production line (the 'usine de rêves') when everyone from the writer and the director to the gaffer and the best boy would be treated simply as salaried employees much as in other professions.⁹ But there is also a hidden or untold dimension to film history, 'l'industrie de la nuit [...] qui vient du fonctionnement interne des corps', that is to say 'les désirs, la psychologie, les nerfs, les sensations, la sexualité [...] où le fait de vouloir sortir de soi est exploité'¹⁰. But this distinction cannot simply be reduced to the public versus the private spheres of the film industry, since *l'industrie de la nuit* accounts not only for the desires of filmmakers that are translated into screen fantasies and connect with the desires of spectators; it also refers to the shady connections between the cinema as industry and the unscrupulous practices that link big business to organised crime and other *industries de la nuit*, 'les jeux, la prostitution, la drogue, le tourisme, les sports...'¹¹ Finally, *l'industrie de la nuit* must also refer, for Godard, to the mysterious – not to say mystical – power of the image and its resistance to theorisation: before or beyond any explicit or implicit textual strategies designed to manipulate our response as spectators, we are, for Godard, always already transfixed by the haunting presence-in-absence of the real that cinema shows us: 'la puissance extraordinaire de l'image et du son qui va avec... c'est contenu à mon avis dans l'histoire du cinéma et ça reste invisible'¹².

For an example of how *Histoire(s) du cinéma* combines the history of both *l'industrie du jour* and *l'industrie de la nuit*, showing them, ultimately, to be inextricably linked, let us examine the section of 1A devoted to pre-war Hollywood, the so-called Golden Age of late silent and early sound cinema.

⁹ Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, p. 246.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. This association between cinema, big business and crime will be considered again in our chapter 3. It is perhaps worth noting that 'l'industrie de la nuit' tends to evoke one particular profession of the night, namely prostitution, a recurring theme across Godard's *oeuvre* from *Vivre sa vie* (1962) through *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966) to *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1979) and beyond. Prostitution (the original subject, remember, of Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères*) is often used metaphorically to represent the film industry.

¹² Ibid., p. 22.

Godard's focus on the producer Irving Thalberg allows him to highlight both the industrial and the mythical sides of cinema. This section of *Histoire(s)* is organised around a montage in which a photographic portrait of the young Thalberg is alternated, through a videographic dissolve, with stills from a string of Thalberg's most successful and/or most famous films as producer: *The Crowd* (King Vidor, 1928), *Freaks* (Tod Browning, 1932), *Greed* (Erich von Stroheim, 1923), *A Night at the Opera* (Sam Wood, 1935), *The Merry Widow* (Erich von Stroheim, 1925), *Ben-Hur* (Fred Niblo, 1925), *Flesh and the Devil* (Clarence Brown, 1927), *Mark of the Vampire* (Tod Browning, 1935), *Treasure Island* (Victor Fleming, 1934) and *Billy the Kid* (King Vidor, 1930). On the soundtrack we hear snatches of dialogue from the sound films, both in English and dubbed into French, and Anita O'Day sings Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'Bewitched'. What seems to be stressed here, then, is *l'industrie du jour*: Thalberg's reign at M-G-M as executive in charge of production took place during the height of the Hollywood studio era, and, in an industry almost entirely driven by profit, Thalberg in particular 'never forgot the box office'¹³. Godard's commentary, which reads: 'Un directeur de télévision pense au maximum deux cents films par an; Irving Thalberg a été le seul qui, chaque jour, pensait cinquante-deux films', may be exaggerated for effect, but the statistics are based on fact: after Loew's first merged with Metro and Goldwyn Pictures in 1924 to become M-G-M, Louis B. Mayer stated that the studio would release fifty-two movies a year, with Thalberg in charge of delivering this promise.¹⁴ And indeed, M-G-M succeeded in releasing fifty films per year, more than any other studio and the only one consistently to turn a profit throughout the Depression.

But a different version of the Thalberg legend emerges out of Godard's text and, in particular, the titles – also spoken by Godard - which are inserted in the mix over the main text. The full commentary reads thus:

¹³ Roland Flamini, *Thalberg: The Last Tycoon and the World of M-G-M* (London: André Deutsch, 1994), p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Est-ce que le 'u' qu'il y a dans 'produire' empêche qu'il y ait 'dire' dans 'produire'?

- *Le livre des rois* -

Dire Hollywood: dire par exemple l'histoire du dernier nabab

- *Les enfants terribles* -

Irving Thalberg. Un directeur de télévision pense au maximum deux cents films par an; Irving Thalberg a été le seul qui, chaque jour, pensait cinquante-deux films. La fondation. Le père fondateur. Le fils unique.

- *Les enfants terribles* -

Et il a fallu que cette histoire passe par là

- *Le lys dans la vallée* -

un jeune corps, fragile et beau, tel que le décrit

- *Les fleurs du mal* -

Scott Fitzgerald, pour que ça se mette à exister, ça

- *La peste* -

la puissance de Hollywood...

The titles in the text, then, suggest the hidden story behind this history (the *histoire* behind the *Histoire*, as it were): *Les Fleurs du mal*, for instance, with its typical Baudelairean conflation of good and evil, light and dark, in itself evokes the kind of conjunction of *jour* and *nuit* which Godard is aiming for, whilst *Le Livre des rois* begins to suggest the other side of Thalberg's story which interests Godard. For Thalberg is an ideal subject for Godard's *histoire de la nuit*, being an altogether mythical character in the history of cinema. Looked upon as an infallible genius who could do no wrong, Thalberg was head of Universal at twenty before going on to produce a string of hits for M-G-M, turning around the fortunes of potentially loss-making epics like *Ben-Hur*. Yet Thalberg's history remains, to a large extent, in the shadows since, despite his huge influence at the studio, his name never appeared on any of the films he produced.

But it is the repeated title *Les Enfants terribles* and Godard's reference to 'un jeune corps fragile et beau' which evoke the truly mythical aspect of Thalberg's life: Thalberg is a mythical figure because a tragic one, the 'doomed prince of the movies'¹⁵. Fighting a lifelong battle with a wasting heart disease, Thalberg's extraordinarily prolific career at M-G-M took on the aspect of a race

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

against time. In his biography of the producer, Roland Flamini argues that, from an early age, the movies, for Thalberg, represented an escape from the world in which his physical condition would never let him play a full part. Thalberg was a man who lived and died by the movies and it is even suggested that his dying words were ‘disconnected lines of dialogue from his pictures’¹⁶. This would seem to be the point of the imagery of childhood in this sequence, not just the *Enfants terribles* title (which, when read for the second time, appears over Count and Countess Mora (Bela Lugosi and Carol Borland) from *Mark of the Vampire!*) but also *Billy the Kid* and the lyrics to ‘Bewitched’ which read ‘I’m wild again, beguiled again/A whimpering, simpering child again/Bewitched...’. The suggestion is not only that Thalberg, despite his great power, remained in some sense a sickly child living vicariously through cinema, but further that this is what cinema *makes of us all*: beguiled, bewitched children, dumbfounded at a reality become spectacle.

Godard emphasises the ambiguity in the legend of Thalberg - at once awe-struck child and all-powerful movie mogul - through his montage which mixes comedies (*A Night at the Opera*) and spectacular epics (*Ben-Hur*, *Treasure Island*) with horror films (*Freaks*, *Mark of the Vampire*) and serious works about the effects of industrial capitalism on human desire (*Greed*, *The Crowd*). The actual process of transition from one image to the other in this sequence (for which the term ‘dissolve’ is only an approximation) is highly unusual: essentially one image (say, from *The Crowd*) irises out from the centre of the other (say, Thalberg) but also moves in from the edges of the frame so that there remains, briefly, a band of Thalberg in the middle of *The Crowd*. At the same time, though, the screen is divided into horizontal lines (this would appear to have been motivated by the stripes on Thalberg’s tie in the image used by Godard!) with the individual images appearing on alternate lines, one line of Thalberg, one

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 271. Similar stories abound about Balzac who, on his deathbed, is alleged to have called for the fictional Dr Brianchon. This is perhaps one reason for the presence of *Le Lys dans la vallée*, another story of idyllic wish-fulfilment, in this sequence.

of *The Crowd*, and so on. The result, then, is that the images merge and Thalberg's 'jeune corps fragile et beau' is confused with images of freaks and duelling madmen, with vamps and vampires.

By juxtaposing Thalberg with various creatures of the night, Godard implicitly evokes the way that the commercial *industrie du jour* can become corrupted by its associations with a criminal *industrie de la nuit*. For the film industry passed through some dark times during Thalberg's reign, a side of Hollywood perhaps alluded to by Godard's mischievous insertion of *La Peste* into his commentary. The Golden Age was a period characterised by scandals and cover-ups which led to calls for a stricter moral code on the industry; by infighting and witch-hunts (in the mid-'30s, Thalberg was heavily involved in schemes to discredit the Screen Writers Guild, a barely-disguised anti-communist witch-hunt which foreshadowed the investigations of the House Committee on Un-American Activities a decade later); and by the turning of a blind eye to the fascist politics of Germany and Italy in preference to maintaining profits from distribution in those countries ('Trade follows films' reads a title later in 1A, a pronouncement which, as the film *JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de décembre* (1994) informs us, was made to Congress by one Senator McBride in 1914¹⁷).

Usine(s) de rêves

The combination of heroic deeds and dark desires is played out on a wider scale in the following sequence which builds on Godard's evocation of 'la puissance de Hollywood'. This power – financial, political (trade follows films), but also psychological – is represented by the unprecedented grandeur of certain films of the silent era, most notably D.W. Griffith's re-creation of Babylon for *Intolerance* (1916). And this marshalling of tremendous human and material resources mirrors the great historical dramas of the twentieth century ('Histoire

¹⁷ This quotation reappears in *Éloge de l'amour* where it is somewhat loosely translated as 'le cinéma est à l'avant-garde du commerce, il est l'avant-garde du commerce'.

des actualités, actualité de l'histoire' reads Godard's voiceover). One of Godard's key observations in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and particularly 1A, is that the cinema, as an industrial art form requiring the logistical organisation of considerable manpower and machinery in order to realise the visions and desires of a few creative minds (precisely, the *usine de rêves*), is a singularly appropriate tool to represent and to document twentieth-century history which itself mobilised unimaginable forces in defence of ideas and arguments, of dreams and desires that are often associated with a handful of visionary leaders. Thus, if Godard gives a lot of space in the *Histoire(s)* to privileged filmmakers (Hitchcock, Chaplin, Lang, Renoir) and to prominent politicians (Hitler, Stalin, de Gaulle), he also chooses repeatedly to represent the massed, anonymous forces of twentieth-century history with images of crowds (hence the citation of King Vidor's 1928 film in the Thalberg sequence). The crowd is the privileged figure in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in which history and cinema meet and so, in addition to crowd scenes from epic films, we see footage of fanatical supporters voicing their allegiance to dictators and, most disturbingly, the mass graves of the Nazi concentration camps in which it is no longer even possible to distinguish individual bodies.

It is in this Hollywood sequence of 1A that this imagery is first introduced with wide shots of hundreds of extras from historical epics matched to evocations of twentieth-century history, notably the First World War, alluded to with footage of the Archduke Ferdinand leaving the City Hall in Sarajevo. But the depiction of Hollywood's Golden Age is also interrupted by the appearance of Soviet cinema figured through the sudden arrival of the Cossack soldiers on the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin* prompting the crowd to flee. This is thus the occasion for a brief evocation of the Soviet century with quotations of the image and voice of Stalin and with Godard reading the titles of Arthur Koestler's *Le Zéro et l'infini* and Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Archipel du goulag*, two works which depicted the imprisonment of revolutionaries by the Stalinist

regime. But the rapid juxtapositions of Stalin's image with pictures of Hollywood starlets suggests that the Soviet catastrophe was simply another example of great forces organised in support of a dream but subsequently running out of control. 'Une usine de rêves,' repeats Godard, 'Des usines comme ça, le communisme s'est épuisé à les rêver...' The parallel between the two dream factories is further suggested at the end of this sequence with an unexpected return to Irving Thalberg. The same portrait as before irises out of the lion's head on the M-G-M logo, Thalberg's 'jeune corps fragile et beau' given a new power through his association with the studio. As Godard notes, his voice resounding with reverb, that Thalberg was 'en plus, marié à l'une des plus belles femmes de la terre', a still of his wife, Norma Shearer, tinted with a nostalgic sepia-orange glow, irises out from the centre of the screen. History, Godard seems to be suggesting, whether it be film history or the history of the twentieth century, results from the interpenetration of the unfathomable desires of individuals and the ungovernable might of peoples and institutions, a combination with almost unlimited potential for creation but also for destruction.

As if to drive this point home, Godard turns now to a portrait of Howard Hughes whom he named in *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* as one of the key figures marking the link or the point of contact between *l'industrie du jour* and *l'industrie de la nuit*.¹⁸ For most of his life, Hughes was one of the richest and most powerful men in America. In order to get a sense of the extent of the influence of a man who was 'producteur de *Citizen Kane* et patron de la TWA', Godard offers the following comparison: 'comme si Méliès avait dirigé Gallimard en même temps que la SNCF'. But Hughes's business interests (and particularly his desire to preserve monopolies and avoid taxes) led him into many different spheres of life, from the legitimate to the criminal: he supplied arms to the US military and had close ties to the CIA, but was also linked to the Mafia, rumoured to be involved in plots to assassinate Fidel Castro, and heavily

¹⁸ Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, p. 246.

implicated in the Watergate scandal. Yet, in earlier years, Hughes was a national hero thanks to his exploits in aviation, breaking speed and endurance records and several times narrowly escaping death. Godard illustrates this aspect of Hughes's life with images of planes and tickertape parades (like the one that greeted his successful flight around the world) and the scene from the beginning of *La Règle du jeu* which re-creates an attempt on the transatlantic flight record.

But, says Godard:

avant que la Hughes Aircraft se mette à repêcher au fond du Pacifique les sous-marins de la CIA, il obligeait les starlettes de la RKO à faire chaque samedi une promenade en limousine à deux à l'heure pour ne pas risquer d'abîmer leurs seins en les faisant rebondir.

As in the Thalberg sequence, these tall tales are actually based in fact. Hughes did indeed salvage a submarine (although it was in fact a Russian sub) for the US government and, later in life, when he was already a recluse, he continued to keep a stable of starlets and, although he never saw them, exerted strict control over their every movement.¹⁹ Godard illustrates this little speech by rapidly intercutting the title card from Méliès's *Vingt mille lieues sous la mer* (1907) with a shot from *Underwater!* (John Sturges, 1954), one of Hughes's typically racy and risqué productions. For, in addition to being a successful entrepreneur, Hughes was also a promiscuous sexual predator, a fact Godard acknowledges by listing a handful of the hundreds of Hollywood women with whom he had relations - Billie [Dove], Terry [Moore], Faith [Domergue], Joan [Fontaine], Ginger [Rogers]... - and by showing images of others: Jane Russell in *Underwater!*, Yvonne de Carlo in *Criss Cross* (Robert Siodmak, 1948), Virginia Mayo in *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949)... Movie-making for Hughes was largely a way of fulfilling voyeuristic fantasies.

¹⁹ On these aspects of the Hughes legend, see Charles Higham, *Howard Hughes: The Secret Life* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1993), pp. 192-193 and 250-251.

This aspect of Hughes's character undoubtedly fascinates Godard as much as his great wealth and power. There is a sense in which his business success and his aviation exploits, but also his sexual promiscuity and his eventual decline into paranoia and reclusivity ('mort comme Daniel Defoë n'a pas osé faire mourir Robinson', as Godard puts it) all stem from the same powerful desire and the same troubled psychology. His sexual pathology can thus not be separated from his wilder business decisions. As a voiceover from *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946) puts it: 'The crazier a man is about a woman, the crazier he thinks and the crazier he does.' A couple of titles appearing on screen here imply that Hughes was subject to a mysterious and powerful force governing his destiny, the singular combination of heredity and experience responsible for a personality whose life would be played out in such a tragic arc. One title is Jean Genet's *Un captif amoureux*, the other a quotation from Georges Bernanos: 'Tout lui appartenait, mais ce n'était là qu'un détail; l'important était de savoir à qui il appartenait lui.' It was this conjunction of a glorious career played out under the dictates of a psychological compulsion that Hughes could neither understand nor control that made him, in the words of one associate, 'the poorest man, as well as the richest, in the world'²⁰, and that makes him an ideal representative of the *splendeur* but also the *misère* of cinema.

So if Thalberg and Hughes are in one sense exceptional figures in the history of cinema, in another sense they come across as fairly typical representatives of such an ambiguous form. And if 'toutes les histoires' include those of Thalberg and Hughes, they also necessarily include that of Godard himself who, in the following sequence, seems to acknowledge the parallels between the various (hi)stories of cinema he has been recounting and his own personal history. Godard rapidly evokes three other French filmmakers with the first name Jean in order to assert his identification with these predecessors and to underline his own place within the film history he is producing. Jean Cocteau

²⁰ Robert Maheu, quoted in Higham, p. 193.

appears in a clip from his autobiographical film *Le Testament d'Orphée* (1959); Jean Vigo is present in a shot from *L'Atalante* (1934) in which the hero, also named Jean (and played by Jean Dasté), dives into the river and sees a vision of his wife Juliette (Dita Parlo); finally Jean Epstein is evoked through the momentary appearance in onscreen text of his aphorism 'La mort nous fait ses promesses par cinématographe'. Shortly afterwards, there follows a clip from Godard's own *Bande à part* (1964) with Anna Karina sadly addressing the camera whilst Godard's voiceover intones two new titles with obvious symbolic resonance: *Adieu ma jolie* (*Farewell My Lovely*, Raymond Chandler's novel filmed by Edward Dmytryk in 1944), *Bonjour Tristesse* (Françoise Sagan's novel filmed by Otto Preminger in 1957). This rather touching moment is not, however, prolonged since it is immediately followed by a clip from an early pornographic film in which a woman tries vainly to resist a man's attempts to undress her and, as Godard intones 'Le fond des choses: le cul', Tex Avery's lubricious cartoon wolf is juxtaposed with a still from a western in which a cowboy eyes up a woman's backside. This appears, then, as a kind of *mea culpa* on Godard's part, the next title – Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* – implying that Godard, like so many other figures in the movie industry, Howard Hughes included, has had to play out this sentimental education largely in public, indeed that the history of cinema *is* to a large extent precisely this playing out of private desires on a public stage.

It is, as we have seen, one of the main contentions of 1A that the cinema is a domain in which such traditionally opposed pairs as public and private, day and night, reality and fantasy cease to be tenable as the fixed poles of a binary and begin to collapse into one another. If this ambiguity accounts for much of the cinema's potential to depict human relations with a hitherto unimagined sophistication and complexity, it is also responsible for the cinema's threat to extinguish our real lives in favour of an idealised but empty simulacrum. But if cinema represents on one level the destruction or negation of the real, the real is

always able to return since it is inscribed on the film strip in a manner that is always surplus to requirements. The *excess* of the real recorded on film guarantees its rebirth on the movie screen. And it is imagery of death and rebirth that colours all the quotations of Jeans in this sequence of 1A: the clip from *Le Testament d'Orphée* shows Cocteau pierced by a spear and yet the film, marking Cocteau's return to cinema after an absence of some ten years, explores precisely the cinema's miraculous ability to restore lost time. Similarly, in *L'Atalante*, when Jean dives into the river the rest of the crew on the barge fear him drowned, yet the underwater apparition of Juliette has a reviving effect upon him. Finally, the promises that, according to Jean Epstein, death makes to us via the cinematograph are equally ambiguous: for the cinema promises death itself by showing us the passage of time and yet also, by preserving a moment of time intact and unchanged, it hints at the promise of resurrection. It is precisely this rhetoric of death and resurrection which must now organise our discussion of the second half of *Histoire(s)* 1A.

1.2

'[L]'image ne peut plus imaginer le réel, puisqu'elle l'est.'

- Jean Baudrillard, *Le Crime parfait*¹

La fin du jour: Cinema and war

In keeping with his choice to represent an unofficial, an invisible or unseen history of the cinema, Godard continues 1A by ruminating on 'Toutes les histoires des films qui ne se sont jamais faits'. The list includes Eisenstein's unfinished *Bezhin Meadow*, halted in mid-production by the Soviet authorities, and André Malraux's novel *La Condition humaine*, a film of which was projected and then abandoned by both Eisenstein and Fred Zinnemann. The list also includes Orson Welles's unfinished *Don Quixote*, on which he worked for fifteen years, and a version of *L'École des femmes* by Max Ophüls which lends its organisation to the next sequence in *Histoire(s)* 1A. Here, in contrast to the other examples, Godard offers specific details of the ill-fated film, situating the anecdote precisely: '1940, Genève.' In June 1940, Louis Jouvet and his partner Madeleine Ozeray met Max Ophüls in Aix-en-Provence and proposed a film version of *L'École des femmes*, a production which Jouvet had recently brought to the stage. Filming began in early 1941 but was brought to an end when Jouvet learned of a relationship that had developed between Ophüls and Ozeray.

Godard illustrates this anecdote with stills of the three principal players in this drama, but also (since footage of *L'École des femmes* is unavailable) with a scene from *Les Girls* (George Cukor, 1957), another film about infidelity in a theatrical setting. Godard quotes the musical number 'Ladies-in-Waiting' performed by Kay Kendall, Mitzi Gaynor and Taina Elg, during which Angèle (Elg) panics upon spotting in the audience her husband who is unaware of her career as an exotic dancer.

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Le Crime parfait* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), p. 18.

If all this sounds a little frivolous, it is worth pointing out the sense of urgency that colours this sequence. Having finished the number, Angèle refuses to go back on stage and is exhorted no less than three times (once each by her fellow performers and once, in French, by a stagehand) to hurry up. And this sense of urgency and alarm is of course given a new resonance by the context in which Godard quotes this scene: for, as the reader will have realised, the interruption of *L'École des femmes* was due not simply to a love triangle between Jovet, Ophüls and Ozeray, but also to the situation in occupied France.² As Godard's commentary puts it: 'Il [Ophüls] tombe sur le cul de Madeleine Ozeray en même temps que l'armée allemande prend l'armée française par derrière'. Godard distorts the facts a little, making it sound as though Ophüls and Ozeray's affair was concurrent with the German invasion, when in fact they did not meet until afterwards, but it was because he was prevented from working by the Nazis that Jovet eventually left to tour *L'École des femmes* in South America, taking Ozeray with him. One could argue that Godard is belittling the German invasion of France with his sexual innuendo here: the line quoted above is repeated twice, the first time to coincide with *les girls* flashing their *derrières*, the second in conjunction with a brief clip from a pornographic film. But in fact this scene is perfectly consistent with the pattern we have seen developing across 1A, Godard refusing to subordinate the micro-history of desire between Ophüls, Jovet and Ozeray to the wider geopolitical movements of 1940, implying instead that the real story is to be found in the conjunction of the two.

As the music from *Les Girls* dies away, a series of titles suggests the significance of this episode for Godard. 'Nous passons,' read these titles (and their arrangement on the screen serves to highlight the sudden silence:

² There is an interesting parallel here to a scene in 3A in which Godard uses Marcel Carné's *Quai des brumes* much in the same way as he uses *Les Girls* here, to evoke the imminent outbreak of the Second World War (the use of Carné's film perhaps makes more immediate sense since it was released in 1938): here, too, the sense of urgency implied by the historical situation is symbolised in a line of dialogue, Jean (Jean Gabin)'s dying words to Nelly (Michèle Morgan): 'Embrasse-moi. Vite, on est pressés.' We will discuss this scene in our second chapter.

nous/pas/sons) ‘de l’objet du théâtre à l’objet du cinéma’. Godard reads a line from Bresson’s *Notes sur le cinématographe* - ‘Le théâtre est quelque chose de trop connu, le cinématographe quelque chose de trop inconnu jusqu’ici’³ – before the titles conclude: ‘nous sommes l’un et l’autre ses sujets’. On screen, we witness the loaded gazes of a few young women: Madeleine Ozeray as before, Cathy O’Donnell in *They Live by Night* (Nicholas Ray, 1948) and Giulietta Masina in *La Strada* (Federico Fellini, 1954). In Godard’s account, then, the enforced abandonment of Max Ophüls’s film of *L’École des femmes* becomes symbolic of the cinema’s obligation to abandon a theatrical model when suddenly faced with a reality whose drama renders the theatre redundant. An implicit presence throughout this sequence is a film starring Jouvett and Ozeray entitled *La Fin du jour* (Julien Duvivier, 1939). This film, like others from the late thirties (as we shall see) could take on an allegorical meaning for Godard since, set in a retirement home for ageing stage actors which is itself threatened with closure, it appears as a work about the *impossibility* of theatre in this era. ‘L’Art,’ as one character opines early on, ‘est foutu’.

1A continues with a series of metaphorical evocations of the outbreak of war in Europe. Over paintings of sunny, springtime scenes, we read lines from Aragon’s poetic reminiscence of this time: ‘O mois des floraisons mois des métamorphoses/Mai qui fut sans nuage...’ (here misremembered as ‘Mai qui fut sans douleur’) and finally, over a slow-motion close-up of Hitler’s hand clenching into a fist, ‘...et juin poignardé’⁴. A brief shot of Quasimodo (Lon Chaney) grabbing Esmeralda (Patsy Ruth Miller) from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Wallace Worsley, 1923) would seem to symbolise the fall of Paris to a monstrous enemy. This sequence also sees the consolidation of a motif which, first introduced in the shots from *Les Girls*, will recur throughout the rest of 1A, namely the image of a conductor leading an orchestra. This is another image

³ Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p. 123.

⁴ Louis Aragon, ‘Les lilas et les roses’, in *Le Crève-cœur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), pp. 45-46 (p. 45). Excerpts from this collection are also quoted in 3A.

which seems designed to unite the cinema and twentieth-century history, drawing out parallels between the two. For both the film director and the dictator might be compared to a conductor, orchestrating the diverse activities of a large group of individuals with various specialised competences. The conductor could never be said to exert complete control over the musicians and, certainly, the symphony could never be brought into being through his efforts alone, yet it is he who is credited with the vision to oversee the creation of the complete work. This sequence thus strengthens the comparison between cinema and twentieth-century politics as mysterious apparatuses which somehow achieved the organisation of large and apparently ungovernable forces into terrifyingly seductive forms. ‘Histoire(s) du cinéma,’ intones Godard here again, ‘avec des S, des SS’. The essence of Godard’s argument, in what follows, is that if cinema, as a fictional form, began a steady decline at this stage of its history, it was because it was faced with a reality stranger than any fiction, indeed a reality that appeared to us *as fiction*. Because, continues the argument, the paradox of film history is the following: if the cinema achieved the miraculous feat of predicting (or at least foreshadowing) the terrible events of twentieth-century history, at the same time its reliance on fiction, on codified narrative forms was partly responsible for the loss of our capacity to *relate to the real*. Where cinema could have been a privileged tool with which to sharpen our appreciation of the real, to show us the world anew, in fact the seduction of its pre-arranged forms left us vulnerable to a reality that crept up on us ‘par derrière’.⁵

Godard now overlays on the soundtrack a speech by Hitler about the triumphant German people and a speech by de Gaulle about the spirit of France that will resist its oppressor, whilst rapid intercutting juxtaposes the image of a

⁵ This suggestion of being taken from behind recurs elsewhere in late Godard. A quotation from Hermann Broch that appears first in *Soigne ta droite* (1987) and later in *Histoire(s)* 1B and 3B reads ‘C’est parce qu’une dernière fois la nuit rassemble ses forces pour vaincre la lumière... Mais c’est dans le dos que la lumière va frapper la nuit’ (this battle of light and darkness is also typical of Godard’s characterisation of cinema in this period as we shall see in chapter 4). Meanwhile, *King Lear* (1987) presents itself as ‘A film shot in the back’.

diving bomber with a city in ruins. We see footage of Nazi rallies and ecstatic German crowds as well as filmic recreations of Nazi Germany in *To Be or not to Be* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1942) and *Lili Marleen* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1980) then, as titles recall the popular resistance ditty 'Radio Paris ment/Radio Paris est allemand', Godard reads the following text:

Trente-neuf, quarante, quarante-et-un: trahison de la radio, mais le cinéma tient parole. Parce que, de *Siegfried* et *M le maudit* au *Dictateur* et à Lubitsch, les films avaient été faits n'est-ce pas? Quarante, quarante-et-un: même rayé à mort, un simple rectangle de trente-cinq millimètres sauve l'honneur de tout le réel. Quarante-et-un, quarante-deux: et si les pauvres images frappent encore, sans colère et sans haine, comme le boucher, c'est que le cinéma est là, le muet, avec son humble et formidable puissance de transfiguration. Quarante-deux, quarante-trois, quarante-quatre: ce qui plonge dans la nuit est le retentissement de ce que submerge le silence; ce que submerge le silence prolonge dans la lumière ce qui plonge dans la nuit...

The suggestion here, then, is that, if the radio could not be trusted to provide a faithful account of developments, the cinema, or at least a *certain* cinema, continued to document the reality of the situation in Europe. In order to illustrate this cinema that is placed on the side of resistance, Godard shows a clip from the end of Bresson's *Dames du bois de Boulogne* (1945) with the defiant words of Agnès (Élina Labourdette): 'Je lutte' (this scene will be used again in 3A where we will discuss it in a little more detail), but also an image of two novice nuns from Bresson's *Anges du péché* (1943) superimposed over a shot of Auschwitz taken from Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) as though the nuns were kneeling to bless the train tracks with their kiss.

What kind of cinema is Godard identifying here? He implies that the cinema of resistance he has in mind does not partake of classical narrative forms but rather recalls 'le muet, avec son humble et formidable puissance de transfiguration', that is to say a cinema that returns to the values of the first

filmmakers by recording the real and thereby transforming it, but that is only able to transform the real because it has first accepted its indelible imprint (the cinema's 'puissance de transfiguration' is 'humble' before it is 'formidable'). It is thus significant that it should be Bresson who is chosen to illustrate this idea, a filmmaker whose fundamental operation seems to be to accept the real with a perfect passivity in order to highlight that which escapes our understanding in such a real (what could be more anti-naturalistic than the realism of Bresson?). 'Ne change rien pour que tout soit différent': these words, again from Bresson's *Notes sur le cinématographe*⁶, are the very first we hear in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The last lines in the text quoted above ('Ce qui plonge dans la nuit...') are taken from Élie Faure's *Histoire de l'art* and recur frequently across late Godard. We will discuss them in relation to their original context in chapter 4, but here they would seem to evoke *resistance itself*, forms of life that continue despite being plunged into darkness or smothered by silence. It is because the real is *necessarily resistant*, because there are always aspects to it that will escape any form one attempts to impose upon it, that the cinema, by virtue of composing with that real (and particularly a cinema that is aware of its limits with regard to the real), is, for Godard, in a privileged position to become an *art of resistance*.

La grande illusion: Representation and reality

Appealing though this argument may be, there are certain inconsistencies in Godard's account. After all, how can Fritz Lang's *Siegfried* and *M*, two films dating respectively from 1924 and 1931 be considered films of resistance? And doesn't Godard cite *To Be or Not to Be* and *The Great Dictator* (Charles Chaplin, 1940) in his list of films which 'tiennent parole' despite the fact that these are Hollywood narrative works? But these inconsistencies are due to the complexity

⁶ Godard alters the original text which reads: 'Sans rien changer, que tout soit différent', *Notes sur le cinématographe*, p. 138.

of the relationship between cinema and the real in Godard's argument. His commentary continues as follows:

Voilà la leçon des actualités, de *Naissance d'une nation*, de *L'Espoir*, de *Rome ville ouverte*... Le cinématographe n'a jamais voulu faire un événement mais d'abord une *vision*, parce que l'écran, n'est-ce pas, c'est la même toile blanche que la chemise du samaritain. Ce que retiendront les caméras légères inventées par Arnold et Richter, pour ne pas être prises de vitesse par les cauchemars et le rêve, ce n'est pas sur un écran qu'on le présentera mais sur un suaire.

If the cinema is interested in representing not an event, a narrative, but rather a *vision* of the real (and a vision that is almost *sacred*), then in recording the real the cinema will always find itself left with more than it bargained for, a supplementary reality that could not be predicted or controlled.

It is in this way that certain films which pre-date the Second World War can come to be seen as announcing or foreshadowing it since, whether intentionally or – more likely – unconsciously, they have recorded, through the cracks in the narrative, the reality of what was happening to Europe. This was the case with certain privileged films of the 1930s and, most especially, *La Règle du jeu* which, as we have seen, recurs throughout 1A. Godard goes on:

Et si la mort de Puig et du Négus, la mort du capitaine de Boïeldieu, la mort du petit lapin ont été inaudibles, c'est que la vie n'a jamais redonné aux films ce qu'elle leur avait volé et que l'oubli de l'extermination fait partie de l'extermination. Voilà presque cinquante ans que, dans le noir, le peuple des salles obscures brûle de l'imaginaire pour réchauffer du réel. Maintenant celui-ci se venge et veut de vraies larmes et du vrai sang. Mais de Vienne à Madrid, de Siodmak à Capra, de Paris à Los Angeles et Moscou, de Renoir à Malraux et Dovjenko, les grands réalisateurs de fiction ont été incapables de contrôler la vengeance qu'ils avaient vingt fois mise en scène.

If *La Règle du jeu*, *La Grande illusion* (Jean Renoir, 1937) and Malraux's *Espoir* (1939) warned of the coming catastrophe, their spectators, it seems, were unable to recognise this warning. And it was this misrecognition of the true power of cinema that led to its subsequent decline in the face of a real that was beyond our imagination. A recurrent formula employed by Godard in recent films (although it dates back at least as far as the 1970s) is that of our inability to *imagine the real*. We somehow lost this ability through our reliance on fiction and are now no longer able to establish an imaginative relation to the real world, hence also our political inertia, our incapacity to transform the real conditions in which we inhabit the world. And it is when we begin to take the real for granted, suggests Godard, that it will have its revenge...

This argument is illustrated with the scene of the theatrical performance from *La Règle du jeu*, introduced by the music emerging as if by magic from a player-piano. Here again then is a machine, analogous to cinema, which wrests control from the operator and begins to work on its own, like a film camera that would record, in our absence, a reality not determined by our will. The subsequent *danse macabre* from Renoir's film dissolves in and out of footage of prisoners who survived – but only just – the Nazi camps whilst an excerpt from a viola sonata by Paul Hindemith adds its harsh, dissonant commentary. This, the short third movement from Hindemith's sonata op. 25 no. 1 (1922) has become famous for its notation which stipulates that it is to be played with 'Raging tempo – Wild – Beauty of tone is of secondary importance'. It is tempting to offer this as a description of this section of 1A in which the unexpected clash of images and ideas and the emotion they generate in the spectator take precedence over the coherence or historical rigour of the argument.

This is not the view, however, of Jacques Rancière who implies instead that, with this argument, Godard has become caught in the trap of a narrativised, indeed a romanticised version of film history. Rancière has been highly critical of this most difficult, but also most vital stage of Godard's argument in

Histoire(s) du cinéma. Summarising the argument thus – ‘Le cinéma est coupable pour ne pas avoir filmé les camps en leur temps; il est grand pour les avoir filmés avant leur temps; il est coupable pour ne pas les avoir reconnus’ – Rancière suggests that it is confused and unsustainable.⁷ Worse than this, though, for Rancière, is the way that Godard’s account of the martyrdom of cinema (symbolised by Boïeldieu, Puig and Négus, and the rabbit) tips over into an account of its *resurrection*. The cinema will be redeemed by the great neorealist tradition of post-war European cinema and, in 3A, Godard will declare *Rome Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) the one true film of resistance, not only for its resistance to fascism, but also to ‘une certaine manière uniforme de faire le cinéma’. ‘L’image viendra au temps de la résurrection,’ a line attributed to saint Paul is quoted repeatedly by Godard in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and other late works. Troubled by all this religious imagery, Rancière suggests that Godard’s raising of the film image to the status of icon partakes of a metaphysics of presence and insists: ‘Il n’y a pas à sauver Godard de ce spiritualisme de l’icône qu’il revendique pleinement.’⁸

In order to respond to these criticisms by Rancière, as we intend to do below, it will first be necessary to explore the sense and the provenance of the religious imagery in late Godard, a detour that will take us into the work of André Malraux.⁹ For, immediately preceding the lengthy text quoted above, Godard reads a brief quotation from the end of Malraux’s *Esquisse d’une psychologie du cinéma*:

Les masses aiment le mythe, et le cinéma s’adresse aux masses. Mais si le mythe commence à Fantômas, il finit au Christ. Qu’entendaient les foules qui écoutaient

⁷ See Jacques Rancière, ‘La Sainte et l’héritière’, p. 59.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁹ The influence of André Malraux on Godard’s thinking about art and history has been noted on more than one occasion in recent work on the director. For the most substantial treatment of this question, see Michael Temple, ‘Big Rhythm and the Power of Metamorphosis: Some Models and Precursors for *Histoire(s) du cinéma*’, in Temple and Williams (eds.), *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 77-95.

prêcher saint Bernard? Autre chose que ce qu'il disait?
 Peut-être, sans doute. Mais comment négliger ce que
 nous comprenons à l'instant où cette voix inconnue
 s'enfonce au plus profond de notre coeur?

All other sound cuts out here as Godard reads this text over images of a plane dropping bombs and the Nietzschean title 'Par-delà bien et mal' appears on screen to recall a little of Malraux's text that has been elided: 'les masses aiment le mythe, *en bien et en mal*'¹⁰. Then the equally Nietzschean 'Ecce homo' flashes on the screen as we hear the opening chorus of Arvo Pärt's sacred work *Passio* ('Passio domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem'). Shortly thereafter, as Godard reads his text about the deaths of Puig and Le Négus, we are shown the clip from *Espoir* in which this pair charge a Franquist artillery position in a motor car and an image of the young Malraux is juxtaposed with a shot from another film about the Spanish Civil War, Ingrid Bergman in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sam Wood, 1943).

These are in fact only a few of the many instances in which Godard quotes Malraux in recent works. The title of *Histoire(s)* 3A, 'La Monnaie de l'absolu', is taken from a section of Malraux's monumental work on the history and psychology of art, *Les Voix du silence*, which is itself another of the titles intoned by Godard in 1B. Meanwhile, a line from the beginning of Malraux's autobiography – 'D'abord, les gens sont beaucoup plus malheureux qu'on ne croit. Et puis, le fond de tout, c'est qu'il n'y a pas de grandes personnes'¹¹ – appears not only in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* but also *Soigne ta droite* and *For Ever Mozart* (1996). It may seem a little strange that Malraux should have become a privileged point of reference for Godard given his very vocal condemnation of the former Minister of Culture in the sixties over issues like the censorship of

¹⁰ André Malraux, *Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), n.p. In addition, the original text reads 'Mais comment négliger ce qu'elles [les foules qui écoutaient prêcher saint Bernard] comprenaient à l'instant où cette voix inconnue s'enfonçait au plus profond de leur coeur?'

¹¹ See Malraux, *Antimémoires* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Folio, 1972), p. 9.

Jacques Rivette's *Suzanne Simonin, la Religieuse de Diderot* (1965) and the threatened removal of Henri Langlois from his position as curator of the Cinémathèque Française. Nonetheless, Godard would seem to quote the *Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma* out of genuine respect for a work whose view of cinema he shares to a large extent. For instance, Godard's evocation, in 1A, of the passage from 'l'objet du théâtre à l'objet du cinéma', resonates with Malraux's assertion that the cinema could not become an autonomous means of expression until it broke with the circumscribed space of the stage, something only made possible through the development of montage.

But Malraux's study of the cinema is essentially only an adjunct to his wider history of art, and indeed he begins the *Esquisse* by situating cinema within the history of western art. Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* attempts a similar contextualising of moving pictures, but, more than this, it could be argued that he borrows the overall shape of Malraux's art history in order to apply it to the cinema. For Malraux, primitive painting attempted to capture the sacred in the most evocative and persuasive way possible. It was only after the Renaissance that the goal of western painting became the most faithful representation of reality, a realism determined by a series of conventions and conforming to a pre-determined concept of beauty. Meanwhile fiction entered into painting when art ceased to be simply the evocation of a real and became a dramatic representation (most notably, of course, in the depiction of scenes from the Bible). The advent of modern art, initiated by Manet and later exemplified by Cézanne, is marked, in Malraux's account, by the rejection of this regime of representation, these painters seeking instead to evoke the real through the autonomous language of art, now better understood in its *universal* sense thanks to our increased knowledge of non-western artistic traditions.

It is, of course, difficult to apply this argument wholesale to the cinema since the problem of representing the real is to some extent rendered redundant by cinema's basis in the photographic image which *necessarily* records the real.

Malraux, like many others, sees first photography as taking over the representative function previously assumed by painting and subsequently given a specific artistic language by cinema. Nevertheless, the overall structure of Malraux's argument finds an echo in Godard's view of cinema as beginning with an awe-struck apprehension of the real and moving through the development of a codified and standardised fictional form before a modern cinema, inaugurated by Rossellini, seeks to restore the real as the first and only concern of cinema. The problem with this argument in Malraux, but also in Godard, is that the sacred – the metaphysical – which one sought to leave behind with the 'primitives' returns, as it were, by the back door (*par derrière!*) and, as Maurice Blanchot puts it, 'sous le nom d'idéal et de valeurs de culture'¹². Art itself becomes the guarantor of immortality and there is thus a monumentalising, a totalising tendency to this narrative. Malraux's art history, notes Blanchot, takes on a Hegelian structure, charting the development of the autonomous language of art through its metamorphoses across the works of generations of different painters. And, as in Hegel, this process has an end point, when the universal nature of the language of art becomes known and painting can, essentially, develop no further. This tendency also threatens to limit Godard's history of the cinema. After all, few today would agree that film history was already over, *played out* by the 1940s. Yet this seems to be the implication of Godard's *Histoire(s)*: reference is made to Italian neorealism and the French New Wave as the final flourishes of an already moribund form, but *Histoire(s) du cinéma* contains very few quotations from films dating from beyond the end of the 1960s, with the exception of Godard's own (the filmmaker thus seeming somehow to have miraculously survived the death of cinema).

¹² Maurice Blanchot, 'Le Musée, l'Art et le Temps', in *L'Amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 21-51 (p. 35).

To be or not to be: Image and absence

But to what extent can Godard really be said to be mythologising or monumentalising the cinema, the cinematic image, in his *Histoire(s)*? It is perhaps worth re-reading the text that Godard quotes from Malraux's *Esquisse*. For, if it equates cinema with myth, it is not in the sense of a reductive simplification but rather of a productive obfuscation. If Christ is a myth, suggests Malraux, this myth is not based on the teachings of the saints, but rather on what the crowd heard, or *thought they heard* of these teachings and this degree of mediation cannot be ignored. 'Histoire(s) du cinéma,' repeats Godard towards the end of 1A, 'histoire sans paroles, histoire de la nuit'. Here, then, Godard picks up the imagery from earlier sequences of 1A in which the history of cinema was seen to be mythical to the extent that it was both *unspoken* (associated with illegal activities and illicit desires) and *unspeakable* (residing in the irresolvable ambiguities of the image and its relationship to the real).¹³ The film image is that obscure point of convergence where fantasy becomes reality and reality becomes fantasy: where the unconscious desires of both filmmakers and spectators achieve a fleshy incarnation just as the recorded reality recedes behind a fictional representation. If rebirth is implied in this process – fantasy reincarnated as reality and a past reality resurrected into fiction – it is nonetheless impossible to fix the meaning of this unstable site upon which so many different desires and determinations converge.

If this is an 'histoire sans paroles' as well as an 'histoire de la nuit', it is because the cinema of the real that responded to the war allowed the terrible ambiguity of the image to speak for itself, it required no commentary to anchor its meaning. In recent interviews, Godard has been endlessly critical of the omnipresent verbal commentary which means that, in our 'image society', we are

¹³ Interestingly, given Godard's evocation of 'les films qui ne se sont jamais faits', Malraux in the *Esquisse* recounts an episode in Persia when he saw 'un film qui n'existe pas', which had been edited together out of various scenes from Charlie Chaplin movies: 'le mythe,' says Malraux, 'apparaissait à l'état pur'.

ironically incapable of understanding images without a laborious and largely redundant commentary. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma* he states:

Ce qu'il y a de cinéma dans les actualités de la guerre ne dit rien, il ne *juge* pas. Jamais de gros plans: la souffrance n'est pas une star [...] Peu de panoramiques, une plongée peut-être, mais c'est parce qu'une mère pleure l'enfant assassiné...¹⁴

Many of the images from the war are so horrific they require no comment, like the shot Godard quotes from Andrzej Munk's *Pasazerka* (1963) in which an Auschwitz prisoner fends off the attack of an SS dog. In fact, one could argue that Godard does comment on this image since the word 'jamais' appears over it, although interestingly it is split on the screen into two different words: 'ja/mais'. The effect of this is to change the title from the authorised, automatic response to Auschwitz ('never again') into an enigmatic description of the operation of cinema itself, a kind of 'yes, but': cinema is the passive acceptance of reality, an unconditional 'yes' to the real, *but* there is something in this image of reality that we can never approach or apprehend.

The word 'jamais' written over this image is in fact part of a series of titles which continue the quotation of Aragon's 'Les Lilas et les roses' begun earlier in 1A: 'Je n'oublierai jamais les lilas ni les roses/Ni ceux que le printemps dans ses plis a gardés'. Godard literalises this last line in memory of those killed in the spring of 1940 with an image of bodies being covered by a sheet. This then cuts into a reproduction of Nicolas de Staël's *Nu couché bleu* (1955), used here as it is in 3A because of its reminder of the French tricolor, over which is written 'Bon pour la légende'. This suggests Godard's own contempt for anyone who would indulge in myth-making over the memory of the Second World War:

¹⁴ There is an echo here of Jacques Rivette's famous article which condemned the film *Kapo* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1960) for featuring an unnecessarily emotive tracking shot on to a woman who commits suicide by throwing herself at the electrified fence of a concentration camp. This article, which first appeared in *Cahiers du cinéma* in June 1961, is discussed at length by Serge Daney, for whom it is emblematic of the *Cahiers* criticism of which Godard was also an exponent. See *Persévérance: Entretien avec Serge Toubiana* (Paris: P.O.L., 1994), pp. 15-39.

the building of myths, whether they be myths of national heroism or of immortal art, can only ever gloss over the incommunicably real suffering of countless millions at the hands of fascism. Such would also seem to be the sense of a scene which brings to its conclusion the recurrent imagery in 1A of conductor and orchestra: images of a group of concentration camp prisoners forced to play for their captors. This implies that the Final Solution was the ultimate outcome of fascism's terrifying orchestration of destructive desires. But it also suggests the difficulty of monumentalising, of mythologising this art: for, no matter how beautiful the music produced by these prisoners, it can never reduce the singular horror of the situation in which they were forced to play. We can no more approach this horror than we can grasp the music as it reverberates in the air.

The impossibility of *approaching the image* is discussed by Blanchot in his critique of Malraux's art history. For instance, Blanchot criticises the fact that, in Malraux's account, the evocation of untold horrors in the work of Goya (whose paintings and drawings are frequently seen in the *Histoire(s)*), must always be accompanied by a sense of deliverance which is attached by Malraux to the mastery of the art itself. Blanchot notes that, although one can approach the work of art – the painting or the statue –, one cannot approach the image which appears to exist outside of time as a kind of 'présence sans fin'¹⁵. Resemblance, therefore, does not so much imitate life as make it inaccessible: a being only ever resembles itself, says Blanchot, in death, 'cette éternisation de la fin'¹⁶. A portrait does not resemble a face but expresses the absence of that face, the resemblance only being made possible by that absence. Art, then, for Blanchot, is related to our capacity and our desire to put an end to the world, to that which puts us in danger or removes us from the security of the world. The paradox of the work of art is as follows: since the image is distanced from the

¹⁵ Blanchot, 'Le Musée, l'Art et le Temps', p. 42. Note that, in the case of cinema, even the physical work of art has become problematic: one certainly does not go to the cinema to see the strip of celluloid in its cans but the film, once projected, is *not really there*. (We will return to this bizarre presence-absence of the film in chapter 4.)

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

work in its solidity, it remains to some extent outside time, sheltered from time. And yet, because the work *is* its own absence, because it insists that ‘il n’est pas là et ce qui est là n’est *rien*’, then the work can never be complete, never accomplished: ‘toujours faite et défaite’, it can only ever be an impossible indication of an unreachable totality, ‘riche de toujours plus de sens que nous ne lui en prêtons et, aussi, pauvre, nulle et silencieuse’.¹⁷ A quotation from the end of this essay appears in a privileged position at the end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*’s last episode, a quotation which expresses precisely this paradox. Because of its ability to imply a halt, a shelter from the movement of time, this quotation suggests,

l’image est bonheur, - mais près d’elle le néant séjourne
[...] l’image, capable de nier le néant, est aussi le regard
du néant sur nous. Elle est légère, et il est immensément
lourd. Elle brille, et il est l’épaisseur diffuse où rien ne se
montre.¹⁸

It is this challenging definition of the image as at once comforting us against the approach of oblivion and at the same time *partaking* of that oblivion that can help us to understand Godard’s own at times paradoxical argument in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and that provides the most persuasive argument against Rancière’s accusations of a kind of neo-Christian mythologising. In particular, this idea can help elaborate a passage from 1A that has proved one of the most controversial of Godard’s film. The passage in question is organised around another of Godard’s elliptical and deceptive texts. ‘On a oublié cette petite ville et ses murs blancs cerclés d’oliviers, mais on se souvient de Picasso, c’est à dire de Guernica.’ Here details from other works by Picasso are superimposed with footage of planes dropping bombs. ‘On a oublié Valentin Feldman, le jeune philosophe fusillé en quarante-trois,’ continues Godard over images of people

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 47-48, p. 51.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

not shot but hanged, ‘mais qui ne se souvient au moins d’un prisonnier, c’est à dire de Goya?’ and we see one of Goya’s drawings of a man in chains. Godard concludes: ‘Et si George Stevens n’avait utilisé le premier le premier film en seize en couleurs à Auschwitz et Ravensbrück, jamais sans doute le bonheur d’Elizabeth Taylor n’aurait trouvé une place au soleil.’ Here, images of corpses stacked in the ovens at a Nazi extermination camp, taken from *D-Day to Berlin*, the film edited together out of George Stevens’s war footage in 1985, dissolve in and out of Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift’s lakeside idyll from *A Place in the Sun*, directed by Stevens in 1951. Finally Godard superimposes over these images a detail from Giotto’s *Noli me tangere* (1304-1306) in which Mary Magdalene, rotated through ninety degrees, appears as an angel reaching down to claim the young Elizabeth Taylor. It was these ‘rapprochements à l’emporte-pièce’ that first inspired Rancière’s article on *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and this scene that he takes as most emblematic of Godard’s rhetoric of resurrection:

C’est cette résurrection que vient annoncer ce profil qui descend du ciel pour tracer le halo de lumière dans lequel apparaît Liz Taylor, non point sortant du bain mais proprement ressuscitée d’entre les morts, ces morts qu’avait filmés le cinéaste quelques années auparavant.¹⁹

But this montage needs to be considered carefully and, in particular, we need to ask precisely what is going on in Godard’s *text* here. For, presented with these three successive examples, the spectator tends perhaps to amalgamate them into a single argument about art providing an immortal monument to the sufferings of history which are otherwise forgotten (a version, in other words, of Malraux’s argument that is criticised by Blanchot). And yet, on closer inspection, it proves difficult to maintain the analogy between these three examples. In the first, admittedly, Godard suggests that, if we remember the bombing of Guernica, it is largely thanks to Picasso’s painting, a fairly classical

¹⁹ Rancière, ‘La Sainte et l’héritière’, p. 61.

argument about art as witness. But the second example is already more problematic: after all, there is no logical connection between Valentin Feldman and Goya, who died over a hundred years earlier. And, if Goya is chosen as an artist who communicates something of the experience of *imprisonment*, the argument is further complicated by the fact that this imprisonment, in Goya's case, is metaphorical, the isolation caused by his sudden deafness. There is already, then, a metaphorical slippage from a real historical event to an unrelated artistic corpus and this conceptual instability continues in the example of George Stevens. We are not, in other words, authorised to think that *A Place in the Sun* could not have been made if Stevens had never filmed the Nazi camps, nor that Elizabeth Taylor is in any meaningful sense the resurrection of the victims of these camps: these are simply two heterogeneous examples linked by the chance presence of George Stevens. The only connection to be made is between the *unspeakable* horror of the Nazi crimes and that which remains *inexpressible* in the image.

The word 'bonheur' in Godard's commentary perhaps provides the key to this montage, and it is a word Godard has expanded upon in interview:

Dans *Une place au soleil*, je trouvais un sentiment profond du bonheur que j'ai peu retrouvé dans d'autres films, même bien meilleurs. Un sentiment du bonheur laïc, simple, à un moment, chez Elizabeth Taylor. Et lorsque j'ai appris que Stevens avait filmé les camps et qu'à l'occasion Kodak lui avait confié les premiers rouleaux du 16 mm en couleur, je ne me suis pas expliqué autrement qu'il ait pu faire ensuite ce gros plan d'Elizabeth Taylor qui irradiait une espèce de bonheur sombre...²⁰

This 'bonheur sombre' of which Godard speaks and, in 1A, the juxtaposition of Taylor's beatific smile with the gaping mouth of a lifeless skull, captures

²⁰ 'Histoire(s) du cinéma: Godard fait des histoires', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 161-173 (p. 172).

precisely the ambiguous nature of the image – at once protection from oblivion and oblivion itself – of which Blanchot writes. And if, in *A Place in the Sun*, Elizabeth Taylor is resurrected to eternity, if her youthful body is preserved forever, it is only because the image composes with absence, with death, and it is this impossible-invisible that motivates the return of the sacred in Godard's montage. For here, at the end of this montage, Godard adapts a line from Bernanos that appears at the spiritual centre of Bresson's film of *Le Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951): 'O quelle merveille que de pouvoir regarder ce qu'on ne voit pas! O miracle de nos yeux aveugles!'²¹ What Godard seeks to do in this montage, as in others in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, is thus not simply to raise the film image to the status of icon, but rather to stress that which, in the image, remains unapproachable, inexpressible; the image for Godard does not symbolise resurrection or the sacred, rather it evokes *as* sacred precisely that which cannot be symbolised, an absence which can never be made present. If Godard's argument deals in an idea of the sacred, it is a sacred that cannot simply be reduced to a Christian concept, even if it is Christian imagery that proves the most convenient stand-in for this sacred for an artist schooled in the western tradition. And the reference to Bresson is again significant here: for it would be cruelly reductive to cast Bresson simply as a 'Catholic filmmaker'. Although Catholic imagery may have a certain currency in his cinema, his films exude an impression of the endlessly inexplicable miracle of the real that ultimately resists confinement within any historically specific religious interpretation.

²¹ The original line reads: 'O merveille qu'on puisse faire présent de ce qu'on ne possède pas soi-même! O miracle de nos mains vides!' The exchange of hands for eyes (or vice versa) and the theme of blindness are recurring tropes in late Godard, as we shall see again in a moment.

Amère victoire

After this, the poetic climax of 1A, Godard continues in more prosaic fashion:

A part ça, le cinéma est une industrie. Et si la première guerre mondiale avait permis au cinéma américain de ruiner le cinéma français, avec la naissance de la télévision la deuxième lui permettra de financer, c'est-à-dire de ruiner tous les cinémas d'Europe.

This is accompanied by clips from *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) and footage of a fourth-of-July parade with a child proudly bearing the American flag. In particular, Godard quotes the shot from the end of *The Searchers* in which Ethan Edwards (John Wayne), having found his daughter (Natalie Wood), lifts her in his arms, a shot which came almost to symbolise the *Cahiers* critics' love of American cinema (Godard compared it to 'Ulysse retrouvant Télémaque'²²), even when that love was tempered by political incompatibility:

Comment puis-je haïr [...] John Wayne qui soutient Goldwater et l'aime tendrement quand il prend brusquement Natalie Wood dans ses bras dans l'avant-dernière bobine de *La Prisonnière du désert*?²³

Once again, then, whilst evoking the sober economic realities of the cinema as an industry, there is an implicit reference to an emotional response to cinema that surpasses ideological commitment.

But these final moments of 1A offer a further challenge to any attempt at mythologising cinema. For what Godard seems to suggest here is that the myth of modern America, a myth after all in large part constructed and disseminated by Hollywood cinema, was created *at the expense of European suffering*. If America was able to secure its mythological status in the hearts and minds of the

²² 'Super Mann', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, I, pp. 163-167 (p. 166).

²³ 'Trois mille heures de cinéma', *ibid.*, pp. 291-295 (p. 291).

rest of the world through the dream factory of the Hollywood studios, it was only because European cinema had been decimated by two world wars. Once again, myth is only made possible by that which is irreducible to myth, by the inexpressibly real pain of millions of people. Godard invites such an interpretation by juxtaposing the triumphant American parade with images evoking Europe's premature demise: the suicide of young Edmund (Edmund Moeschke) in *Germania Anno Zero* (Roberto Rossellini, 1947); the repetition of scenes from *L'Atalante* whose director died of tuberculosis at the age of 29; and the French comic Max Linder who died poor and disillusioned, having lost his audience to Charlie Chaplin. Also here is the heavily-accented voice of a woman describing dispassionately the operation of the Nazi gas chambers, and the time it took to die depending on one's proximity to the vents which emitted the deadly Zyklon B. Of course, this notion of the American myth built on European suffering is equally applicable to the Elizabeth Taylor montage just discussed²⁴, but also to an earlier montage in which the poetic testament written by the fascist collaborator Robert Brasillach prior to his execution is read over footage of a firing squad which is intercut with Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron's dance by the Seine from *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951).

But this final sequence of 1A is another one singled out by Jacques Rancière as an example of Godard's questionable rhetoric. He notes that the scene of Edmund's suicide is here superimposed with a close-up of 'le regard naïf par excellence, celui d'une autre icône du cinéma néo-réaliste, la Gelsomina de *La Strada*'²⁵. This suggestion of a renewal of vision in the cinema is then reinforced by the slow-motion movement of Edmund's sister (Barbara Hintz) lifting herself over a wall to see her brother's body and thus appearing, to Rancière's eyes, as an angel of the resurrection. If this latest identification of an

²⁴ Given Taylor's British origins, it is worth remembering here also just how many of the filmmakers and actors responsible for disseminating Hollywood's vision of the American dream were ex-pat Europeans, including many of those most revered by Godard: Chaplin, Lang, Lubitsch, Hitchcock...

²⁵ Rancière, *La Fable cinématographique*, p. 231.

image of resurrection (and a resurrected image) by Rancière seems a little forced, any temptation towards mythologising in this sequence is, I would suggest, definitively undone by two factors. The first is the sound in this sequence which features the most systematic abuse of the Steenbeck since the opening minutes of 1A. Dialogue is no longer even detectable in Godard's treatment of the film strip here, the sound becoming simply bursts of a formless white noise utterly devoid of sense as though implying that which, in the image, resists all attempts at interpretation and recuperation. The other is the text that Godard reads over Edmund's suicide, a quotation from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* that Godard filmed for *JLG/JLG* and which appears in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* split into the sound, found here in 1A, and the image (of Godard reading from a French translation) in 3A:

Si un aveugle me demandait, 'As-tu deux mains?', ce n'est pas en regardant que je m'en assurerais. Oui, je ne sais pas pourquoi j'irais faire confiance à mes yeux si j'en étais à douter. Oui, pourquoi ne serait-ce pas mes yeux que j'irais vérifier en regardant si je vois mes deux mains?'²⁶

This quotation, picking up the imagery of blindness, eyes and hands from the earlier Bernanos citation, stresses precisely the *unreliability* of vision and therefore contributes further to questioning the elevation of cinema to the status of a pure or essential vision. Wittgenstein uses this example in order to demonstrate the lack of any absolute certainty independent of context and its use by Godard would seem to imply an image that knows its limits, that recognises its necessary incompleteness. And, if Godard juxtaposes here Italian neo-realism with Hollywood, it is, I suggest, in order to oppose an idea of the image *as absence* to the image of plenitude, the image *as plenitude* that has come to

²⁶ See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. by Dennis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969), § 125 (pp. 18-19).

dominate our audiovisual sphere today (this is a question to which we will return in later chapters).

The whole operation of this opening chapter of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has thus been to demonstrate the ambiguity of the cinema as an industry that runs on money but also on desire, and as a form that relies upon the always ambiguous entity that is the image: at once a desire to contain and control the real and its impotent impression; now a temporary shelter from the passage of time, now a glimpse of oblivion. It is appropriate then that 1A should end with one last evocation of this mysterious phenomenon. The very last image we see in 1A is a portion of the last page of Samuel Beckett's short prose text from the 1950s, *L'Image*, which ends with the declaration 'c'est fait j'ai fait l'image'²⁷. This quotation does give a sense of finality, of completion or achievement to the end of 1A: 'j'ai fait l'image.' But at the same time, Beckett's text offers another consideration of the strange, unstable nature of the image. *L'Image* is essentially a ten-page stream of consciousness in which the narrator evokes an image of himself and a woman having a picnic in the country. The text opens in a kind of shapeless quagmire symbolised by the mud in the first words ('La langue se charge de boue...'²⁸), then continues through a gradual, if incompletely understood, process of naming ('j'ignore d'où je tiens ces histoires d'animaux je les tiens un point c'est tout [...] n'essayons pas de comprendre surtout'²⁹), before concluding in at least partial success with the assertion 'c'est fait j'ai fait l'image'. An image, Beckett seems to suggest, is something that detaches itself from the formless background of the real, something that is constructed out of the real, of the same *stuff* as reality, and so in a sense is indistinguishable from it and never really *there* as an independent entity (the words which evoke the image are not *essentially* any different to the muddily incoherent words with which the text

²⁷ Samuel Beckett, *L'Image* (Paris: Minuit, 1988), p. 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

opens). Although we may construct an image, it is, in a sense, always already there ('*c'est fait*' precedes '*j'ai fait*') even as it is always *elsewhere*.

With this final image, then, this final image of an image of an image, Godard addresses the paradoxical nature of his project in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Working with the same *stuff* that he seeks to describe and understand – images and sounds – , Godard has produced an *image* of cinema itself. It is not possible to say exactly *where* this image is; it has no existence apart from the jumble of images and sounds that make up 1A; and yet it cannot be reduced to those images and sounds. In much the same way as the montage of Chaplin scenes that Malraux remembers seeing in a cinema in Persia, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* could be described as 'un film qui n'existe pas' since it is essentially collected together from pieces of other films (and certainly, if one strung together only those sequences shot specifically by Godard for the project, the result would hardly be worth watching). And yet the recombination of all these images and sounds makes *Histoire(s) du cinéma* into a unique work of art that is the equal of many of those cited by Godard (and the superior of many more). It is Godard's unceasing awareness of the ironies of this project, the disorientating parallel between the process he is *describing* and the process he is *re-enacting*, that gives *Histoire(s)* its greatness and prevents it from falling back on simple, reductive formulae. In the image of that which it imagines, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* gives us to see the infinite regress of the image, that which first captivates us in the cinema and continues ever after to exert its fascination.

Chapter 2

Matière et mémoire

‘Il serait excessif de prétendre, comme on l’a fait, que le cinéma est né dans un mauvais lieu. On ne peut nier qu’il y ait fait, en partie, son éducation.’

- Bardèche and Brasillach, *Histoire du cinéma*.¹

2.1

‘Pour la première fois, [la caméra] nous ouvre l’accès à l’inconscient visuel, comme la psychanalyse nous ouvre l’accès à l’inconscient pulsionnel.’

- Walter Benjamin, ‘L’Oeuvre d’art à l’époque de sa reproductibilité technique’.²

A la recherche du siècle perdu: Godard’s century of cinema

There is a moment in the middle of the interview between Godard and Serge Daney which constitutes the first section of chapter 2A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in which Daney, in an offhand remark, refers to cinema as ‘l’affaire du vingtième siècle’; Godard immediately interrupts him with the following correction: ‘Pour moi, le cinéma, c’est l’affaire du dix-neuvième siècle qui s’est résolue au vingtième’. Such a statement appears strange upon first hearing. After all, it would seem logical to argue that cinema is ‘l’affaire du vingtième siècle’, that it is, in short, the art form that most unambiguously *belongs* to the twentieth century, having been born with the century and, if Godard is to be believed, having died with it as well. Yet this notion that cinema is ‘l’affaire du dix-neuvième siècle’ deserves serious consideration since it is absolutely central to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and most especially to chapter 1B, ‘Une histoire seule’.

¹ Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, *Histoire du cinéma* (Paris: Denoël and Steele, 1935), p. 26.

² Walter Benjamin, ‘L’Oeuvre d’art à l’époque de sa reproductibilité technique (Dernière version de 1939)’, in *Oeuvres*, 3 vols, trans. by Maurice de Gandillac, Rainer Rochlitz and Pierre Rusch (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Folio, 2000), III, pp. 269-316 (p. 306). All references to Benjamin in what follows will be given to this French edition, partly for the ease of identifying Godard’s quotations, but partly also for the convenience of referring to all texts in a single edition.

Drawing on certain key personalities (Zola, Proust, Manet, Freud) and iconic objects – most especially the *train* -, Godard weaves a complex network of imagery around the technologies and ideologies of the late nineteenth century that are contemporaneous with, and in many ways inseparable from the birth of cinema. In the first half of this chapter we will look at the concentration of this imagery in ‘Une histoire seule’ before going on, in the latter half, to see how it spills over into other sections of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* to connect with other arguments and lines of thought.

Before looking at 1B in detail, however, it is worth considering a couple of other occasions in which Godard discusses cinema on the grand scale of centuries.³ At the end of 4B, Godard quotes a text by the American avant-garde filmmaker and critic Hollis Frampton in which Frampton suggests that an art form created in a given era does not attain its full expression until after the end of that era. Thus an era can best be defined by the art form that survives it. In Frampton’s words, ‘C’est ainsi que l’art du dix-neuvième siècle, le cinéma, fit exister le vingtième qui, par lui-même, exista peu.’

This idea that the twentieth century ‘exista peu’, that it is somehow a *missing* century, is central to the short film that was commissioned from Godard to open the Cannes Film Festival in the year 2000, *De l’origine du XXI^e siècle*. In this short film, which recycles much familiar material from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and other late works, Godard begins at the end of the twentieth century and works backwards because, of course, to find the origin of the twenty-first century, one needs to find the origin of the twentieth and so on: the work of history is never over. Nothing like an origin is ever found, instead a title informs us that we are ‘A la recherche du siècle perdu’. There is a sense of loss and waste to Godard’s history of the twentieth century which, as in *Histoire(s) du*

³ Jacques Aumont has noted Godard’s tendency to discuss cinema in terms of centuries and offers the important reminder that this is a very western-specific approach to art history: ‘il est des peuples pour qui le cinéma n’a rien modelé, mais ceux-là n’ont pas la notion de “siècle”, laquelle n’a de sens que dans une histoire qui contient l’histoire de l’art occidental’. *Annésies*, p. 229.

cinéma, focuses on war and bloody conflict. Beginning with the last great conflict of the century, the Balkan wars, he retraces his steps to a 1970s dominated by the war in Vietnam. The central section of the film is not, as one might suspect, dominated by the Second World War, but rather by the two decades following the war which an ironic intertitle refers to as ‘Les plus belles années de notre vie’. Here, film images suggesting innocence, youth and possibility – Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), Jerry Lewis’s *Nutty Professor* (1963), Pasolini’s *Accattone* (1961), Godard’s own *A bout de souffle* (1959)– and shots of John F. Kennedy find darker counterparts in images of colonial wars, an association strengthened by readings from Pierre Guyotat. Moving further back through the Russian Revolution and evocations of the Gulag, Godard arrives finally at 1900 where the celebrations greeting the new century are represented by scenes of ballroom dancing from *Le Plaisir* (Max Ophüls, 1953) and ‘The Night they Invented Champagne’ from the soundtrack of *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, 1957) (also quoted in *Histoire(s)* 1B). Once again, a darker note is sounded by the quotation of the last line of Ophüls’s film (which also appears in *Éloge de l’amour*), ‘Le bonheur n’est pas gai.’

This film, then, and these last scenes in particular, tend to chime a note of discord in the prevailing mood of millennial celebration in which *De l’origine* was made. Godard seems to ask why and, perhaps more precisely, *what* exactly we think we are celebrating, given that the twentieth century, for all its uniquely ambitious political aspirations and extraordinarily rapid technological transformations, was most profoundly marked by death and destruction on a scale never before seen. This questioning of our fin-de-siècle discourse is implicit in much of Godard’s recent work. *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, after all, is quite consciously positioned at the end of the century, casting a critical eye over the past hundred years. But this critique of commemoration becomes most explicit in *2 x 50 ans de cinéma français*, Godard’s intervention around the centenary of cinema. Here Godard forces Michel Piccoli to recognise that what

is being celebrated in this centenary is not the invention of cinema, or its first productions, but its first commercial exploitation, the cinema as marketplace and the film as merchandise. In addition, Godard suggests that commemoration is really just a way to appease our conscience about things that we have allowed to fade from memory, be that the history of cinema or the Holocaust.

En train de se faire: Cinema and modernity

So let us turn now to Godard's own celebration (though the word is perhaps insufficiently ambiguous to describe Godard's project) of the beginnings of cinema in chapter 1B of the *Histoire(s)*. The basic argument which runs throughout 1B differs little from that which we have already seen in our chapter 1, from that which informs the whole of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. It might be summarised thus, largely in the words of Godard's own commentary from 1B (this commentary is read over a lengthy scene from *Duel in the Sun* (King Vidor, 1946) in which Jennifer Jones scrambles up a rock face; the soundtrack also contains Bernard Herrmann's theme from *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), a song by Leonard Cohen and dialogue from *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954)): 'Le cinéma projetait et les hommes ont vu que le monde était là.' In the beginning, this world had no story, no narrative attached to it: 'Un monde encore presque sans histoire. Mais un monde qui raconte.' What the cinema 'tells' at this point is not a story as such but simply the *existence* of a world. 'Mais pour, au lieu de l'incertitude, installer l'idée et la sensation, les deux grandes histoires ont été le sexe et la mort.' But this existence is too mysterious, too insubstantial, too uncertain to be maintained, and thus cinema becomes coupled to a narrative of life and death, 'le sexe et la mort'. In this way, the *real* world that was captured on film becomes lost in a fictional representation, a mask, a lie:

Dans le fond, le cinéma ne fait pas partie de l'industrie des communications, ni de celle du spectacle, mais de l'industrie

des cosmétiques, de l'industrie des masques, qui n'est elle-même qu'une mince succursale de celle du mensonge.⁴

Hence the reliance of so much cinema on spectacle: 'On ne peut pas expliquer autrement que le cinéma, en héritant de la photographie, a toujours voulu faire plus vrai que la vie.' But all the spectacle of moving pictures is only possible because of the cinematograph's ability to reproduce the real: the filmic fantasy necessarily contains within it the *memory* of the real: 'le cinéma n'est une industrie de l'évasion que parce qu'il est d'abord le seul lieu où la mémoire est esclave'⁵. And, by inheriting from photography the ability to reproduce the real, cinema inherited also the *duty* to do so. This section introduces the key trope of the double with which Godard underlines the doubling of reality which is the fundamental operation of cinema.⁶ Godard's ruminations on cinema belonging to 'l'industrie des cosmétiques' are accompanied by images of actors and actresses gazing into, or reflected in mirrors, notably Chaplin applying his make-up in *Limelight* (1952) and Clara Calamai in *Ossessione* (Luchino Visconti, 1942), whilst Godard's voice also intones the title *Le Théâtre et son double*. This theme of the double leads into the consideration that the inventors of the cinematograph themselves, the Lumière brothers, 'avaient presque la même bobine', the use of the slang word for 'face' allowing the neat slippage into the

⁴ The final sub-clause of this sentence is almost entirely inaudible on the soundtrack.

⁵ The words 'le seul lieu où la mémoire est esclave' reappear later in 1B as a title over a shot from *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964). Godard slows down the image of Marnie (Tippi Hedren) rushing across a room to remove a vase of red gladioli from a table. Since Marnie's action here is dictated by a childhood trauma which has left her with a morbid fear of the colour red, she is a slave to memory whereas, in the cinema, the memory (of the real) is enslaved.

⁶ The theme of the double also recalls Godard's stress on the fact that cinema is not an activity that can be performed alone, it requires at least two people. The Lumière brothers (see below) were merely the first example of this truism. This is presumably also the justification for the still from *Fängelse* (Ingmar Bergman, 1949, the film is known in English as *The Devil's Wanton* and in French as *La Prison*) which recurs relentlessly throughout 1B as well as in other chapters. The image shows a man and a woman grouped around a film projector and staring into the camera. It is surely no accident that the pair bear more than a passing resemblance to Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville.

observation that 'Depuis ce temps là, il y a toujours deux bobines pour faire du cinéma, une qui se remplit et une qui se vide'.⁷

But Godard's reflections on cinema as a nineteenth-century art form or, perhaps more precisely, as a child of the nineteenth century (we shall return to this theme of childhood and the child below), begin in earnest with the following text which, in a typically enigmatic and allusive fashion, sets out the entire problematic of chapter 1B:

Héritier de la photographie? Oui. Mais en héritant de cette histoire, le cinéma n'héritait pas seulement de ses droits à reproduire une partie du réel, mais surtout de ses devoirs. Et s'il hérita de Zola, par exemple, ce ne fut pas de *L'Assommoir* ni de *La Bête humaine*, mais d'abord d'un album de famille, c'est-à-dire de Proust et de Manet. Et pour aller du début à la fin de ce livre immense avec quoi les hommes ont violé désespérément la nature pour y semer la puissance de leur fiction, pour aller de Giotto à Matisse et de Madame de la Fayette à Faulkner, il faudra cinq fois moins de temps qu'il n'en a fallu à la première locomotive pour qu'elle devienne le TGV.

This text is accompanied by images of early cameras, including one held by Zola⁸, and early trains, including footage from Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1923), paintings by Manet, Giotto and Matisse, and Godard in his library holding open copies of *La Princesse de Clèves* and *Absalom! Absalom!*

As is often the case with Godard's writing, this is a difficult, elliptical, and densely allusive passage. It is easy to misinterpret it, or to miss its significance entirely, particularly if one simply hears it in passing amidst the

⁷ Jacques Aumont has evoked this issue of the doubling operated by cinema in his consideration of the difficulty of defining the *material* of cinema. It is problematic to take the image as this material since the image is already a complex entity: 'c'est l'image photographique du réel, une image déjà complète en elle-même, qui pourrait éventuellement se suffire, s'épuiser dans sa fonction de double parfaitement analogique'. But it is no more simple to argue for *light* as the basic material of cinema since it too is doubled, the light from the projector serving to reveal another light, 'enregistrée telle qu'elle tombait sur les choses filmées'. See *L'Oeil interminable: Cinéma et peinture* (Paris: Librairie Séguier, 1989), pp. 172-173.

⁸ A keen photographer, Zola took pictures, notably, of many of the exhibits and inventions at the 1900 Paris Exposition, images which would become iconic of the high modernity of the late nineteenth century.

multi-channel murmur of the *Histoire(s)* soundtrack. One could be forgiven for thinking that Godard is drawing a comparison between the passage of time between Giotto and Matisse, Madame de la Fayette and Faulkner on the one hand, and the first locomotive and the TGV on the other, and that the point being made is one about the increased rate of cultural change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But this interpretation confuses both the terms of the comparison and its sense. The development of the train is being compared not to the history of painting or literature, but to the history of *cinema*. The cinema remains the (absent) subject of the last sentence in this passage; the grammatical subject, 'ce livre immense', refers back to 'un album de famille' of which cinema was seen to be the heir. Cinema, then, like the other arts, has undergone a development from the innocent, enraptured representations of its beginnings, through the elaboration of standardised procedures of representation ('avec quoi les hommes ont violé désespérément la nature pour y semer la puissance de leur fiction') to a final representational crisis akin to the modernist experiments of Matisse and Faulkner. The trajectory is essentially the same as that described by Malraux's account of art history that we discussed in chapter 1; Godard simply stresses the relative speed with which the cinema accomplished this trajectory. The mathematics are a little vague, but if the time span between the first locomotive and the TGV is agreed to be around 150 years, then one fifth of that time would account, in cinematic terms, for the whole of the silent era, in other words from the birth of cinema, through the development of narrative in Hollywood, to the European avant-garde movements of the 1920s.

The comparison between the histories of cinema and the train is decisive here and it sets up an elaborate network of associations. The train, of course, has long been guaranteed a place in the mythology of film history thanks to the apocryphal tales of the first spectators of Lumière's *Arrivée d'un train en gare La Ciotat* (1895) running terrified from the cinema, an image that provides a kind

of cinematic primal scene.⁹ Lynne Kirby, who has written about the parallel histories of the train and the cinema, notes that, since the train was the fastest vehicle in the world at the time, it was particularly useful for demonstrating the cinema's ability to capture movement and speed, and held a special appeal for many early filmmakers who were inventors with a vested interest in machines, progress and technology. In addition, both inventions were instrumental in the development of tourism since they opened up to a wider public the possibility of experiencing new places, if only visually.¹⁰ The visual experiences of train travel and cinema spectatorship are, after all, strikingly similar, an immobile spectator watching the unfolding of a moving image through a window-like frame. And, in the words of Jacques Aumont, 'le cinéma, reconnaissant, fera de la locomotive sa première star'¹¹. The histories of the cinema and the train are therefore entwined in a complicated nexus which relates to the development of technology, the transformation of sensory experience, the emergence of new leisure activities and the expansion of industrial capitalism via the circulation of merchandise.

In general terms, the technological advances and increasing pace of life meant that city dwellers at the end of the nineteenth century met with an unprecedented level of sensory input amidst the traffic, noise, advertisements and window displays of the modern metropolis. And cinema merely represented one aspect of this new visual environment. Jacques Aumont, for instance, points out that, in cinema, we pass from one image to another only by virtue of 'un petit trauma visuel' which he suggests must have represented, for cinema's first

⁹ Godard memorably satirised/paid homage to this myth in *Les Carabiniers* (1963) in the scene in which Michel-Ange (Albert Juross, who appears in 1B in a still from the film, saluting a Rembrandt painting) goes to the cinema. Following an intertitle which reads 'Hier je suis allé pour la première fois au cinématographe', Michel-Ange shields his eyes from a train entering a station and laughs at a film of a child's meal (a vulgar version of *Le Déjeuner de bébé*: 'Bouffe, nom de Dieu, espèce de putain d'enfant de fasciste!' cries the child's father!) before pulling the screen from the wall in an attempt to get a better angle of vision on a *femme du monde* taking a bath.

¹⁰ See Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997), pp. 32-41.

¹¹ Aumont, *L'Oeil interminable*, pp. 44-45.

spectators, ‘une véritable agression, une monstruosité oculaire’¹². There is a kind of vicious circle to the experience of modernity whereby the shocks to perception of the newly mechanised and fragmented world have a blunting effect on the sensorium such that the subject craves ever more intense distractions, such as those provided by the cinematograph, which simply contribute to the saturation of visual experience and perpetuate the cycle. Meanwhile, information about reaction times and thresholds of fatigue provided by the study of physiology and perception could be used by the manufacturing industries in order to maximise productivity in the factory.¹³

The key thinker of this experience of modernity, and of the place of cinema within that experience, is Walter Benjamin who exerts a crucial influence over much of Godard’s recent work. We will see in the second half of this chapter how Benjamin’s essay on the philosophy of history is quoted in *Hélas pour moi* (1993) and *Les Enfants jouent à la Russie* (1993). If Benjamin is so important to Godard it is perhaps because both men share a profound ambivalence with regard to the cinema and, more generally, the reproductive technology that makes it possible: a sense of the tremendous potential of this technology that has been scandalously misused, tragically wasted. Benjamin sees the rapidity with which images succeed each other on the movie screen as a prime example of the perceptual shocks that characterise modernity.¹⁴ But, in his essay on Baudelaire, Benjamin suggests that the anguish provoked by unassimilated shocks may be an important component of the creative process.¹⁵ Benjamin notes certain sinister parallels between the art of cinema and the mechanised production line. The actor on set faced with a group of technical experts seems almost to be taking a test, in much the same way that a worker is

¹² Ibid., pp. 96-97.

¹³ See Jonathan Crary, ‘Unbinding Vision: Manet and the Attentive Observer in the Late Nineteenth Century’, in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. by Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 46-71.

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, ‘L’Oeuvre d’art à l’époque de sa reproductibilité technique (Dernière version de 1939)’, p. 309.

¹⁵ ‘Sur quelques thèmes baudelairiens’, *Oeuvres*, III, pp. 329-390 (p. 341).

daily tested by the rhythms and quotas of the factory. But, if the actor can safeguard his humanity in the face of the machine, he perhaps offers a vision of redemption to the masses who abdicate their own humanity during the working day.¹⁶ Cinema, in a sense, teaches us how to live in the modern world, how to accommodate its shocks. Benjamin takes issue with the traditional distinction between art, which provokes reflection, and entertainment, which provides distraction for the masses. For distraction, he suggests, is important. After all, it is when we are able to perform operations whilst distracted that we know they have become habitual. And cinema provides the distraction that allows us to get used to the perceptual challenges of the modern world.¹⁷

For Benjamin, it is precisely their technical exactitude that can give photographs a magical quality absent from paintings. In them we find ‘la petite étincelle du hasard, d’ici et maintenant, grâce à laquelle le réel a pour ainsi dire brûlé un trou dans l’image’¹⁸. It is, says Benjamin, a different nature that speaks to the camera than speaks to the eye, and he talks famously of photography introducing us to an unconscious optics just as psychoanalysis introduces us to unconscious drives.¹⁹ But this phenomenon, because of the necessary proximity of the reproduction to the reality, coincides with the loss of what Benjamin calls *aura*, that irreducible distance which gives the work of art an inexhaustible vision of reality.²⁰ However, this concept of *aura* is an ambiguous one, and it is never entirely clear whether its loss is to be celebrated or mourned. Godard and Miéville highlight this ambiguity in *The Old Place* (1998), their film about, and commissioned by, New York’s Museum of Modern Art. Miéville quotes Benjamin: ‘L’oeuvre d’art, dit-il, est l’apparition unique d’un lointain, aussi proche soit-il.’ After a pause she goes on: ‘Mais je ne suis pas sûre de

¹⁶ ‘L’Oeuvre d’art à l’ère de sa reproductibilité technique (première version, 1935)’, *Oeuvres*, III, pp. 67-113 (pp. 87-88).

¹⁷ ‘L’Oeuvre d’art (Dernière version)’, pp. 312-313.

¹⁸ ‘Petite histoire de la photographie’, *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 295-321 (p. 300).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 301 and ‘L’Oeuvre d’art (Dernière version)’, pp. 305-306.

²⁰ ‘Sur quelques thèmes baudelairiens’, p. 380.

comprendre: proche égale lointain.’ The aura is ‘une trame singulière d’espace et de temps’²¹ and this *hic et nunc* testifies to the work’s inscription within a history, to the material effect of time upon it. This guarantees the authenticity of the work of art. Indeed, for Benjamin, the work’s uniqueness and its inscription within a tradition are one and the same thing.²² But this notion of aura is thus bound up with a traditional elitist high culture which is held at a respectful distance as opposed to the low culture or ‘distraction’ of cinema which we saw Benjamin defend earlier. It can therefore be argued that all that is lost with the aura is a false historical consciousness, an illusion of historical continuity obtained by cushioning the shocks of modern life.²³ What cinema shows us is that it is no longer enough simply to reproduce reality; we need instead to construct it in a way that reveals the reality of human relations in the world.²⁴ But, by constructing an impression of reality through montage, we find that ‘le spectacle de la réalité immédiate s’est transformé en fleur bleue introuvable’²⁵.

We will return to Benjamin, and to the consequences of his paradoxical theories for a cinematic practice, in the second half of this chapter. For now let us simply acknowledge Benjamin as the theorist of this particular historical conjuncture that is evoked by Godard in 1B and that is characterised by the circulation of money and merchandise, of bodies and images in the service of industrial capitalism.²⁶ This structure is inseparable from the vast project of discipline and control analysed by Michel Foucault which consisted largely of processes of surveillance, the gathering and cataloguing of information about

²¹ ‘Petite histoire de la photographie’, p. 311. This quotation is followed by the line quoted in *The Old Place*.

²² ‘L’Oeuvre d’art (Dernière version)’, p. 279.

²³ See for instance Michelle Henning, ‘Digital Encounters: Mythical Past and Electronic Presence’, in *The Photographic Image in Digital Culture*, ed. by Martin Lister (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 217-235 (pp. 232-233).

²⁴ Benjamin, ‘Petite histoire de la photographie’, p. 318.

²⁵ ‘L’Oeuvre d’art (Dernière version)’, p. 299.

²⁶ Tom Gunning has proposed this notion of circulation with which to gather together the various technological, economic and social factors of modernity. See ‘Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives and Early Cinema’, in Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, pp. 14-54.

individuals as well as the establishing of statistically supported definitions of normality. For the end of the nineteenth century also saw the beginnings of clinical psychiatry and psychoanalysis and the description of conflicts within apparently settled and sane individuals, the cleavage at the heart of the subject that is revealed in different ways by photography ('une micro-expérience de la mort', as Barthes referred to it²⁷) and by the literature of modernism (Serge Doubrovsky has argued that the split or alienated subject 'n'est ni la "découverte" de Freud ou de Lacan, mais celle de Proust'²⁸). Meanwhile, Freud's discovery of the unconscious, that domain of inexperience which is replaced by a representative *that can represent it only as absent*, provides a trenchant point of comparison between psychoanalysis and cinema.

Illusions perdues: The Fall of cinema

This whole historical conjuncture is powerfully evoked in an extremely concentrated section at the end of *Histoire(s)* 1B. As usual, it is difficult to specify exactly where the sequence begins but let us take as a starting point Godard's enunciation of the title *Mort à crédit*. For Céline's 1936 novel is a tale about the turn of the century, a story of fantastical inventions, of economic and experiential poverty and of existential horror; but, above all, it is a novel about a wasted childhood. And the theme of childhood, and in particular the loss of childhood innocence, governs much of this sequence at the end of 1B. Godard's commentary reminds us that the Lumière brothers declared the cinema to be 'un art sans avenir' and we see the scene in the screening room from *Le Mépris* (1963) with this legend written in Italian beneath the screen. The commentary continues:

²⁷ Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire: Note sur la photographie* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Gallimard/Seuil, 1980), p. 30.

²⁸ Serge Doubrovsky, *La Place de la madeleine: Écriture et fantasme chez Proust* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1974), p. 120.

D'abord, même pas cent ans après, on voit qu'ils ont eu raison.
Et si la télévision a réalisé le rêve de Léon Gaumont – apporter
les spectacles du monde entier dans la plus misérable des
chambres à coucher – c'est en réduisant le ciel géant des
bergers à la hauteur du petit Poucet.

The title *Le Diable, probablement* (from Robert Bresson's 1977 film) appears over a still from *Greed* showing ZaSu Pitts enjoying her decadent lifestyle. Then a still from Bresson's film, with Antoine Monnier and Henri de Maublanc sitting in a church, is rapidly intercut with the title card from *Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (Murnau, 1922). After a clip from Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964) in which Christ cures a leper, the still from *Le Diable* reappears superimposed over a shot of Charlton Heston's Moses in Cecil B. De Mille's *Ten Commandments* (1956). Here, then, we see the 'ciel géant des bergers' from Godard's text, whilst the realisation of Léon Gaumont's dream receives an ironic commentary from a title reading 'Dark Victory' (the title of a 1939 melodrama directed by Edmund Goulding). Godard thus illustrates this story of television's 'victory' over cinema in Biblical terms, thereby suggesting, however ironically, a narrative of Fall. The quotation of *Le Diable, probablement* is particularly intriguing here as Bresson's film is about a suicidally-depressed student in despair at a world where neither political nor spiritual ideals have any real role to play.²⁹ In the scene from which Godard's still is taken, a group of would-be radical students distribute tracts in a church and one of them declares 'Le christianisme du futur sera sans religion'.

'Et ensuite', continues Godard, 'on les a mal compris. Ils disaient sans avenir, c'est-à-dire un art au présent, un art qui donne, et qui reçoit avant de

²⁹ In this sense, the themes of *Le Diable*, made in response to the nascent world order of global capitalism, are particularly relevant to our discussion in chapter 3.1 which focuses on Godard's own reactions to this new economic reality. The scene which gives Bresson's film its title is key here. It takes place on a bus where students are complaining about the government and other passengers join in: 'Dans le monde entier à l'heure actuelle, personne, aucun gouvernement ne peut se vanter de gouverner. Ce sont les masses qui régissent les événements: des forces obscures dont il est parfaitement impossible de connaître les lois.' – 'Qui nous mène par le bout du nez?' – 'Le diable, probablement.'

donner. Disons: l'enfance de l'art'. The theme of childhood becomes explicit here with the recurring title *L'Enfance de l'art*³⁰ as well as images and sounds from Godard's *France tour détour deux enfants* (1977-78). But the theme is immediately channelled back into the historical context we have been discussing with the following observation:

D'ailleurs, les Saint-Simoniens, il s'appelait comment, le fondateur? Enfantin, le baron Enfantin. Et s'ils rêvaient d'Orient, ils n'appelèrent pas ça la route de la soie, ni celle du rhum, ils l'appelèrent le chemin de fer parce que, en route, le rêve s'était durci et mécanisé.

The theological undertones continue here with the quotation, in voiceover, of Christ's sermon on the mount from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. But the technology of the nineteenth century remains uppermost in Godard's meditation on the utopian dreams of the Saint-Simoniens that were lost, or rather petrified (*durci*) under the unrepentant and unfeeling mechanisation of the nineteenth century.³¹ Once again, then, it is the *train* that becomes the signifier of this unrelenting progress which crushes all beneath it and the connection to the previous sequence (from the first locomotive to the TGV) is made through the use of the same music, Arthur Honegger's *Pacific 231*, itself inspired by a train. The question of the colonial expansion made possible by this technology is also evoked with the quotation of a clip from *Bhowani Junction*, George Cukor's 1955 melodrama which brings together personal and political themes about racial identity at the end of British colonial rule in India (the film's French title, *La Croisée des destins*, is given on screen).

³⁰ *L'Enfance de l'art* is also a short film which Godard made with Anne-Marie Miéville in 1990 for a UNICEF compilation film on the theme of children's rights entitled *Comment vont les enfants?* For a critical view of this title and theme in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, see Jacques Aumont, *Années*, pp. 64-65.

³¹ Having begun as a form of socialism, Saint-Simonism became a religion before ending up by focusing on the industrialism which was central to Saint-Simon's doctrine at the end of his life. Enfantin, an engineer by trade, founded in 1845 a railway company, la Compagnie de la ligne de Lyon.

As the soundtrack of the sermon on the mount from Pasolini's film is joined by the image of Christ, another voice enters the mix: that of Sigmund Freud speaking (in English) from exile in London at the end of his life. Godard's own voiceover commentary now turns to the invention of psychoanalysis:

Et c'est le soir du dix-neuvième, ce sont les débuts des transports en commun; et c'est l'aube du vingtième, ce sont les débuts du traitement de l'hystérie. C'est le vieux Charcot qui ouvre au jeune Freud les portes du rêve. A lui de trouver la clé des songes. Mais où est la différence entre Lillian Gish sur sa banquise d'*A travers l'orage* et Augustine à la Salpêtrière?

The title *Les Portes de la nuit* (from Marcel Carné's film of 1946) is displayed over a portrait of Charcot and we see a still of Lillian Gish on the ice floe from *Way Down East* (D.W. Griffith, 1920) and a reproduction of André Brouillet's 1887 painting of a clinical lesson at La Salpêtrière. Interestingly, Godard adds an iris around a detail of this painting which shows Charcot holding an hysterical patient, an effect which serves to make the painting look like a photograph. Also here is a reading by Maria Casarès from the French translation of Heidegger's essay 'Wozu Dichter?'³², a meditation on the role of the poet in a godless world, plus a number of images of the United Artists, themselves lent religious significance when the title 'Hail Mary' appears over a still of Mary Pickford.

Godard concludes this lengthy sequence by restating his argument as a question of life and death.

Ensuite il suffira d'une ou deux guerres mondiales pour pervertir cet état d'enfance et pour que la télévision devienne cet adulte imbécile et triste qui refuse de voir le trou d'où elle est née et se cantonne alors dans les enfantillages. Parce que voilà ce qui s'est passé: au petit matin du vingtième siècle, les techniques ont décidé de reproduire la vie. On inventa donc la

³² The French translation of this essay appears in a collection entitled *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*, one of the recurring titles voiced by Godard in these early chapters of the *Histoire(s)*. Godard has Casarès read from the early sections of Heidegger's long essay inspired by Hölderlin's poem 'Brot und Wein'. There is thus an association here with *Le Mépris* (1963), also quoted repeatedly in 1B, in which Fritz Lang recited the last lines of Hölderlin's poem.

photographie et le cinéma. Mais comme la morale était encore forte, et qu'on se préparait à retirer à la vie jusqu'à son identité, on porta le deuil de cette mise à mort, et c'est avec les couleurs du deuil, avec le noir et avec le blanc, que le cinématographe se mit à exister.

Godard here makes an association between mechanical reproduction and biological reproduction but I would suggest that this is more than a flippant pun and is, in fact, central to Godard's argument. The wars mentioned at the start of the text are evoked with a clip from *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979) and a quick juxtaposition of Chaplin and Hitler, then we see a number of studies of motion in animals by Eadweard Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey – a lion, a deer, a bird – juxtaposed with a clip from an early pornographic reel (all of this to the strains of Otis Redding's 'I've Been Loving You Too Long', itself perhaps a comment on Godard's ambivalent cinephilia). The rest of this sequence is made up of images – mostly stills – of male-female couples from films including *Madame de* (Max Ophüls, 1953), *La Nuit du carrefour* (Jean Renoir, 1932), *La Bandera* (Julien Duvivier, 1935), *You Only Live Once* (Fritz Lang, 1937) and *Deux sous d'espoir* (Renato Castellani, 1952). In most of these examples, the man is considerably older than the woman and there is some suggestion of seduction, coercion or perversion, in other words, a further loss of innocence (a notion also implied by the reading, on the soundtrack, of Ramuz's 'L'Amour de la Fille et du Garçon' in which the author's voice trembles with emotion as he describes the way a flush on the girl's cheeks travels down her body 'pour finir jusqu'ou on n'ose plus aller voir'³³). The sequence also includes Fay Wray in the gorilla's fist in *King Kong*, Janet Leigh in the shower in *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960) and Pierre Batcheff's lecherous fondling of buttocks in *Un chien andalou* (Luis Buñuel, 1928). There is thus a rather sinister tone to all the

³³ C.F. Ramuz, 'L'Amour de la Fille et du Garçon', in *Oeuvres complètes*, 20 vols (Lausanne: Éditions Rencontre, 1967), X, pp. 83-88 (p. 88)

sexuality on display here, as though the terrible mortal consequences of their sexual acts were hanging over these characters.

When Godard complains that television ‘refuse de voir le trou d’où elle est née’, it suggests, on one hand, that television fails to acknowledge its artistic forebear (cinema) but, more literally, it implies that television chooses not to recognise the disturbing truth of birth and death whereas, at the beginnings of cinema, we find the potential to represent life in all its frailty, as bordered on all sides by its absence or death. Earlier in 1B, it may be remembered, Godard lamented the fact that cinema’s pure representational potential had become hijacked by narratives of sex and death, and this same question will be the object of a lengthy treatment in chapter 2B, ‘Fatale beauté’³⁴. But we need, here, to distinguish between two different ways of reading and representing sex and death in the cinema. Television bombards us with images of sex and violence, but they are only objectionable because they are so inconsequential: the mortal consequences of these actions are rarely implied by their representation. On the other hand, Godard argues, a visual medium that puts us in a direct and visceral contact with our own mortality – regardless of whether it actually operates through images of sex and violence – is a tool of tremendous social and political potential because the maintaining of an awareness of mortality gives an unshakeable sense of urgency to political engagement.³⁵

This, ultimately, is the sense of the Fall evoked across this last section of 1B. It is not a fall from an ideal and original state of innocence into a corrupt and decadent present (even though these may be the terms of reference of Godard’s imagery), but it *is* a moral failure. In making this argument, Godard aligns himself not only with Walter Benjamin, but with the likes of Robert Bresson and Jean Epstein, filmmakers whose critical and theoretical works are

³⁴ For a detailed commentary on this chapter of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, see Aumont, *Amnésies*, pp. 67-99.

³⁵ We can see in this argument the continued influence on Godard’s political thought of the existentially-inclined phenomenology of the 1930s, ‘40s and ‘50s.

quoted in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* along with their films. The failure systematically to exploit the cinema's potential to remind us, in the most visceral of ways, of our mortality has led to the forgetting of the form's early utopian promise and its depressing transformation into a conveyor belt of merchandise.

But, in the end, it is perhaps rather misleading to talk of a 'fall' at all. For there is no original, ideal state of cinema to which it would be possible to return. The proof comes in the moment described above where early motion studies are juxtaposed with an early porn reel. What this suggests is that a split occurred early on in film history – too early, no doubt, to be meaningfully located – leading, on the one hand, to scientific studies of behaviour in humans and animals and, on the other, to the narrative representation of animal behaviour in humans. Cyril Beghin has made this suggestion, arguing that, for Godard:

Il y aurait un chaînon manquant entre Marey et Lumière, entre l'analyse et la synthèse du mouvement – manque dans lequel le cinéma entier aurait dû s'engouffrer mais qu'il a en fait massivement ignoré.³⁶

What Godard objects to most forcefully is thus this artificial distinction between a technology that might be used for social, scientific, political or philosophical ends, and one that is deemed fit only to entertain. Godard himself frequently talks of cinema in terms of a medical discourse, comparing films to X-rays and the camera to a microscope, suggesting it could be used to cure physical as well as social ills. He has even suggested that his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are 'des biopsies où on dépiste des maladies et des bonnes santés de notre époque'³⁷.

³⁶ Cyril Beghin, 'Invention de l'animation', *Art Press*, hors série *Le Siècle de Jean-Luc Godard: Guide pour "Histoire(s) du cinéma"* (November 1998), 52-57 (p. 52).

³⁷ 'Le bon plaisir de Jean-Luc Godard' in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 305-322 (p.310). Compare this statement from Walter Benjamin: '[L]orsqu'on considère un comportement en l'isolant bien proprement à l'intérieur d'une situation déterminée – comme on découpe un muscle dans un corps –, on ne peut plus guère savoir ce qui nous y fascine le plus: sa valeur artistique ou son utilité pour la science. Grâce au cinéma – *et ce sera là une de ses fonctions révolutionnaires* – on pourra reconnaître dorénavant l'identité entre l'exploitation artistique de la photographie et son exploitation scientifique, le plus souvent divergentes jusqu'ici.' - 'L'Oeuvre d'art (Dernière version)', p. 304 (original emphasis).

Such comments routinely lead to Godard being accused of elitism, of having no time for popular culture. But surely the opposite is true: the implications of Godard's argument are that the technological descendants of Muybridge and Marey's proto-cinematic machines, the military and medical imaging hardware that are the preserve of a real technocratic elite, could be redirected into a revolutionary educational programme with the power to touch as many lives as television does today. Utopian this argument certainly is, and the practicalities of how it might work are far from clear, but the egalitarian sentiment behind it is unimpeachable.

There is no escaping the fact that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in places, and particularly in 1B, takes on a decidedly moralistic tone which is often tinged with a distinctly, if never unambiguously, religious flavour. In the rest of this chapter, we shall follow Godard's arguments throughout the middle section of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* to see just what were, according to him, the consequences of giving in to the temptations of simple mechanical reproduction offered by the cinematograph, without accepting the necessary moral and aesthetic obligations which went along with it. We shall see what happens when sex and death become fodder for representation and entertainment and are detached from the disturbing gravity of their mortal consequences. And we shall begin to think about the possibility of a responsible kind of representation, to consider how the cinema might still be used to reflect and to remember.

2.2

'L'orgie est nécessairement décevante.'

Georges Bataille, *L'Érotisme*.¹

Scientia sexualis: Pornography and Technology

Histoire(s) du cinéma contains a number of brief but explicit clips from pornographic films, both contemporary video hardcore and early silent pornographic reels or so-called 'stag films'. What is perhaps most striking about these sequences is the frequency with which they are juxtaposed or otherwise associated with images of horror and death, and particularly with the Nazi extermination camps. This apparently moralistic stance comes as quite a shock in a culture in which pornography is increasingly viewed, in both legal and popular cultural terms, as a harmless form of entertainment. Godard's hard-hitting montage even suggests an unlikely alliance between him and the reactionary anti-porn pro-censorship lobby. Andrea Dworkin, for instance, has actually used the term 'concentration camp pornography' to express the implicit harm done to women by such representations.² Godard has long had an ambiguous relationship to pornography in his work, from the deconstruction of pornographic discourse in *Numéro deux* (1975), through the sardonic parody of pornographic scenes in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1979), to the ironic appropriation of the language of pornography for the title of *Soft and Hard* (1985) and what Peter Wollen has seen as a kind of pastiche of gay porn in 'Armide', Godard's sketch for *Aria* (1987).³ But the association between pornography and fascism in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is perhaps closest in spirit to two scenes from Godard's

¹ Georges Bataille, *L'Érotisme*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-1988), X (1987), pp. 7-264 (p. 129).

² See Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 21. For a critical discussion of the way anti-porn feminists have tended to reinforce arguments about 'natural' sexual norms and therefore to condemn other sexualities as deviant, see Williams, p. 19.

³ See Peter Wollen, 'L'Éternel retour', in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image 1974-1991*, ed. by Raymond Bellour and Mary Lea Bandy (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), pp. 187-195.

radical period. In *One plus one* (1968) there is a scene set in a fascist bookshop in which, following a title that reads ‘The Heart of Occident’, we witness a man reading from a text by Adolf Hitler whilst the camera pans in close-up over an array of pornographic magazine covers. Meanwhile in a film made with Anne-Marie Miéville, *Comment ça va* (1975), which deals largely with print media, as a man leafs through a pile of pages taken from magazines, we see a black and white photo of Hitler and other Nazi officers saluting which is placed over a colour picture of a woman fellating a man with the title ‘Suce ton patron’. The way the man moves one picture on top of the other leaves no doubt as to the content of the pornographic image, even though the hardcore detail remains concealed. I would suggest that Godard’s use of pornographic images is not intended simply to shock (although that is a necessary stage of the signifying process). Further, Godard’s position with regard to pornography is not one of pure moral opposition, but nor is it the kind of frivolous play with the genre that might be dubbed ‘postmodern’. Rather his engagement with pornography in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is part of the historical argument about cinema that we are seeking to elaborate in this chapter.

There are about a dozen ‘quotations’ of pornography in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, spread across the four chapters and mostly lasting only a few seconds each. As already mentioned, in more than half the cases, the sexually explicit material is linked with scenes of horror, whether the generic horrors of the movies or the real horrors of war. We mentioned in our first chapter a scene from 1A in which the German army’s taking of the French ‘par derrière’ in 1940 is illustrated with a pornographic clip. In addition, in 3B a scene of rape⁴ is associated with images from *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931); in 4B pornography is associated with *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), and in 4A an orgy

⁴ This scene does not, in fact, come from a pornographic film, although it can appear so when quoted out of context. The clip is from a French film entitled *La Machine à découper* (Jean-Pierre Mocky, 1986), a drama which Hervé Le Roux in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 382 (April 1986), pp. 46-8, interestingly described as ‘un authentique film d’horreur’. The film is about a mad scientist who goes on the rampage, hence the link to *Frankenstein*.

scene is intercut with a grinning mongoloid from *Freaks*, before cutting into the image of the emaciated corpse of a concentration camp victim being dumped into a mass grave. But the most explicit examples of pornography in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are both to be found in chapter 2. The first arrives as an interruption to Julie Delpy's reading of 'Le Voyage' in 2A. Under the title 'Le monde perdu', we see a reproduction of Courbet's *L'Origine du monde* (1866) with its close-up of the female genitals⁵. Then, as Godard, in his interview with Daney, happens to pronounce the name Mack Sennett, a punning onscreen title restates Godard's obsessive equation between cinema and prostitution by reinscribing the name as 'Mac c'est net' over an image of Tex Avery's leering cartoon wolf with the bulging eyes (a character already associated with pornography in 1A). Finally, a dramatic split screen positions ranks of hollow-eyed concentration camp victims on the left whilst, on the right, we see a close-up of vaginal penetration from an early stag film. Meanwhile, at the end of 2B, Godard quotes a scene from Chaplin's *A King in New York* (1957) in which Chaplin, as the eponymous exiled king, and his butler go to the movies. In this scene they watch a trailer (Godard changes the titles to read: 'Bientôt sur cet écran: *Histoire(s) du cinéma*') for a western, turning their heads to watch bullets fly as though they were spectators at a tennis match, subsequently emerging from the cinema rubbing their sore necks. Although Godard keeps the sound of the gunshots, he replaces the images of the western with an explicit scene of penetration *a tergo* from a contemporary hardcore video, thus, when Chaplin and the butler emerge from the cinema rubbing their strained necks, it appears to be in reaction to this new spectacle. And the spectator of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* may feel not unlike Chaplin here: this sequence marking the halfway point of what can, at times, feel like a gruelling

⁵ Blurring the boundaries between art and pornography, Courbet's painting, which was commissioned by a Turkish collector, changed hands surreptitiously and was usually displayed behind some kind of concealing device. The painting's last notable owner, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, kept it behind a sliding wooden door on which André Masson sketched an outline of Courbet's original. See Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan: Esquisse d'une vie, histoire d'un système de pensée* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), pp. 248-249.

marathon viewing experience, it also represents, with its pornographic images, a kind of soulless nadir of the cinema itself, and the spectator can emerge from the viewing feeling sullen and brow-beaten, the hollow sound of gunshots still ringing in his ears.

But it is appropriate that Godard should have chosen to quote *A King in New York* here, since the original film is itself a satire on America's image culture, targeting in particular television, advertising and cosmetic surgery and, as such, it fits neatly into the argument that Godard seems to be developing around pornography. The pornographic scenes in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are inscribed directly within the logic of the argument we have been tracing in this chapter around the nineteenth-century technologies of reproduction which instituted the cinema. As we saw in 2.1 above, the excerpts from Marey and Muybridge's studies of motion in animals are juxtaposed at the end of 1B with a silent stag reel (which is also used in 1A) showing a man undressing a woman. Earlier in 1B, Godard reads the following text:

Depuis *L'Arrivée du train en gare* ou *Le Goûter de bébé* jusqu'à *Rio Bravo*, la caméra n'a jamais changé fondamentalement, et la Panavision Platinum est moins perfectionnée que la Debie 7 avec laquelle le neveu d'André Gide partit en voyage au Congo. Les techniciens vous diront que c'est faux, mais il faut se souvenir que le dix-neuvième siècle qui a inventé toutes les techniques a inventé aussi la bêtise, et que *Madame Bovary*, avant de devenir une cassette porno, a grandi avec le télégraphe.

and we see an image of Jennifer Jones in Vincente Minnelli's *Madame Bovary* (1949) (superimposed over Godard in his library) and the title 'Emma 69/69', before another stag film (or possibly the same one as before) showing a woman performing fellatio.⁶

⁶ Earlier versions of this sequence were even more explicit as stills reprinted in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 529 (November 1998), pp. 57 and 59 attest: the image of Jennifer Jones was in a split screen with a close-up of fellatio from a contemporary hardcore video (possibly the porn version of *Madame Bovary* Godard mentions?).

By developing a link between pornography and the transformation of vision by nineteenth-century technology, Godard shares an insight with what is doubtless the most rigorous academic study of film pornography to date, Linda Williams' *Hard Core*. Williams sees the development of film pornography as belonging to what Michel Foucault has called the 'scientia sexualis', the nineteenth-century drive towards knowledge of the 'truth' of sexuality which merely represents one aspect of the vast project of surveillance and normalisation in the nineteenth century that Foucault has analysed. Williams argues that the visual pleasure to be had from watching the reproduction of bodily motion emerged partly as a by-product of this quest to see the unseeable, the 'truth' of motion. Williams cites, for instance, an occasion when Muybridge recreated a photographic study of a woman's hysterical convulsions which had originally been recorded at Charcot's clinic in La Salpêtrière. 'Thus, with this ability to induce and photograph a bodily confession of involuntary spasm, Muybridge's prototypical cinema arrives at the condition of possibility for cinematic hard core'⁷. Hardcore pornography has continued in the quasi-scientific trend of making visible the 'truth' of sexuality, something it achieves through generic conventions like close-ups and overlighting of the genitals and the externally ejaculating penis, although it faces a considerable difficulty with the problem of how to represent female sexual pleasure. Williams even suggests that it is the search to represent just this elusive phenomenon that drives hardcore pornography, the quest for 'the out-of-control confession of pleasure, a hard-core "frenzy of the visible"'⁸.

Paradoxically, though, the more we see of the sexual act, the closer and more penetrating the pornographic gaze becomes, the less real are the bodies on display which, in the very abolition of distance, become distanced from the reality of sexual relations and enact a purely mechanical performance of sex.

⁷ Williams, *Hard Core*, pp. 47-48.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

Jean Baudrillard has commented on this paradox. He argues that porn is too close, too true, too real, and it is this hyperreality that makes it at once fascinating and obscene: pornography is the end of distance, the end of illusion, an orgy of realism. Porn promises to deliver the truth of sex, yet, as Baudrillard puts it, 'la nudité n'est jamais qu'un signe de plus':

Plus on avance éperdument dans la véracité du sexe, dans son opération sans voiles, plus on s'immerge dans l'accumulation des signes, plus on s'enferme dans une sursignification à l'infini, celle du réel qui n'existe déjà plus, celle d'un corps qui n'a jamais existé.⁹

The pornographic body is reduced to a machine, it belongs, as Gertrud Koch observes, to 'the world of machines, of interlocking systems and cogs, in which everyone, ultimately, is caught up'¹⁰.

Machines of war, war of machines

The theme of the body as machine is one taken up by those commentators who took a critical view of the particular forms of alienation engendered by the technological advances of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Theodor Adorno, for instance, complained that, by producing precise, brutal movements, technology was subjecting men 'to the implacable, as it were ahistorical demands of objects':

The movements machines demand of their users already have the violent, hard-hitting, unresting jerkiness of Fascist maltreatment. Not least to blame for the withering of experience is the fact that things, under the law of pure functionality, assume a form that limits contact with them to mere operation, and tolerates no surplus, either in freedom of conduct or in autonomy of things, which would survive as the

⁹ Jean Baudrillard, *De la séduction* (Paris: Galilée, 1979), p. 52.

¹⁰ Gertrud Koch, 'The Body's Shadow Realm', in *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power*, ed. by Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson (London: BFI, 1993), pp. 22-45 (p. 37).

core of experience, because it is not consumed by the moment of action.¹¹

Walter Benjamin suggested that the tendency to subordinate human beings to the demands of technology could ultimately only result in war which would then appear as ‘une révolte de la technique contre la condition servile dans laquelle elle est tenue’¹². Writing in 1930 Benjamin warned that such a war would represent the last chance for us to correct our incapacity to relate to each other and to nature through technology. In a sentence which, in retrospect, chills the blood, he stated: ‘Si cette correction échoue, des millions de corps humains seront déchiquetés et dévorés par le gaz et l’acier’¹³.

Although writing in a very different context (the rise of consumerism in France in the 1960s), the analysis of Guy Debord is not so far removed from that of Benjamin and Adorno when he laments the subordination of properly human concerns to what he describes as a kind of war waged between and on behalf of merchandise. This is characteristic of Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, defined as the moment when ‘la marchandise est parvenue à l’occupation totale de la vie sociale’¹⁴. It is no accident that Debord should use the metaphor of occupation here, since, elsewhere in his book, he does not shy away from comparing the logics of advertising and dictatorship. Like a dictator, each new product must present itself as sovereign, capable of satisfying all of the consumer’s needs (needs that are, in any case, created and shaped by advertising) whilst refusing to recognise the legitimacy of any rival product. It is only when the spell of the commodity is broken (as it necessarily must be: by entering into the consumer’s possession, the product reveals itself to be not some miraculous trophy but a

¹¹ Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E.F.N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974 [1951]), § 19 (p. 40).

¹² Benjamin, ‘Théories du fascisme allemand’, in *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 198-215 (p. 199).

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁴ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Folio, 1992 [1967]), § 42 (p. 39).

banal, mass-produced object) that the groundlessness of the product's claims to sovereignty are revealed:

Chaque *nouveau mensonge* de la publicité est aussi *l'aveu* de son mensonge précédent. Chaque écroulement d'une figure du pouvoir totalitaire révèle la *communauté illusoire* qui l'approuvait unanimement, et qui n'était qu'un agglomérat de solitudes sans illusions.¹⁵

Debord's theories were of course highly influential on the Godard of the mid-sixties who undertook a criticism of the consumer society (and particularly of the role of the image in that society) in films such as *Une femme mariée* (1964) and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966).¹⁶ Godard pays homage to Debord twice in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. At the end of 4B, Godard quotes a deliberately blurred and distorted photograph of Debord that first appeared in the Lettrist journal *Ion* in April 1952 (this image thus fits in with 4B's oblique approach to self-portraiture which will be discussed in our chapter 4). But Debord is also mentioned at the end of a sequence in 3A which we are now going to examine in detail. Appropriately, given Debord's use of the metaphor of occupation, noted above, this sequence looks at the cinema during the German occupation of France. Godard was working on this episode of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in 1994 against the backdrop of celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation. It is in this context that we find the reference to Debord:

Encore cinquante ans et on fête la libération de Paris. C'est à dire que la télévision - puisque tout pouvoir est devenu

¹⁵ Ibid., § 70 (p. 65).

¹⁶ Debord himself was a filmmaker, though his films are notorious for refusing the spectator any room for identification or pleasure and thereby becoming almost unwatchable, more so than the most extreme of Godard's radical experiments. There are nonetheless similarities between the two projects: for instance *Hurléments en faveur de Sade* (1953) contains elements of self-portraiture and film history and, like Godard's recent work, militates in favour of 'a return to the absolute promises made by the avant-gardes in the first part of the century'. See Andrew Hussey, *The Game of War: The Life and Death of Guy Debord* (London: Pimlico, 2001), p. 64.

spectacle - organise un grand spectacle. Mais on ne décore même pas Guy Debord...

La croisée des destins

This sequence in 3A is particularly important because it picks up the imagery of the train that we began to analyse in the first half of this chapter. Having been used in 1B to represent the birth of the cinema amidst the technology of the nineteenth century, the symbolic trajectory of the train in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* reaches its chilling destination in this sequence which revolves around two fateful train journeys which took place in 1942.¹⁷ There is also a strong autobiographical element to this sequence which will become clear when we describe its end. For the time being, let us note simply that the sequence deals with French cinema under Vichy which Godard has suggested represents, in autobiographical terms, the beginnings of his experience of cinema: 'la première fois que j'ai été au cinéma,' he has said, 'c'était à Vichy, j'avais dix ans'¹⁸.

The sequence is introduced by the same photo of Émile Zola with his camera that was used in the train sequence of 1B. This photo is superimposed over the image of Godard in his library as he speaks the following text:

Oui, j'étais seul, perdu, comme on dit, dans mes pensées...
Arrive Émile Zola avec son éternel appareil-photo. Il a
terminé *Nana* par ces mots: 'A Berlin, à Berlin!' Alors arrive
Catherine Hessling et, quarante ans et deux guerres après Zola,
comme par hasard, elle prend le train pour Berlin. C'est la

¹⁷ This sequence has already garnered a certain amount of commentary which has been useful to us in the identification of sources. Godard himself talks about the sequence in 'Résistance de l'art', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 443-446; Bernard Eisenschitz comments on it 'Une machine à montrer l'invisible', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 529 (November 1998), pp. 52-56; and James S. Williams discusses it in 'European Culture and Artistic Resistance in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Chapter 3A, *La Monnaie de l'absolu*', in Temple and Williams (eds.), *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 113-139 (pp. 123-126).

¹⁸ Godard, 'Dans Marie il y a aimer', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, I, pp. 597-608 (p. 599). Just a few years older than Godard at the time was Jacques Siclier who would later write a first-hand account of his experience of French cinema under the German occupation in *La France de Pétain et son cinéma* (Paris: Henri Veyrier, 1981). It will be interesting to compare Godard's text with Siclier's in places, particularly since Siclier stubbornly refuses to judge the cinema of Vichy retrospectively.

première coproduction avec l'UFA; la dernière sera *Quai des brumes*. Mais Goebbels fera tout foirer: à ses yeux, Michèle Morgan n'a pas de beaux yeux.

This over the image of Catherine Hessling in Renoir's film version of *Nana* (1926) which Godard wrongly identifies as the first French co-production with the German company UFA¹⁹ and the scene of Jean (Jean Gabin)'s death from the end of *Quai des brumes* (Marcel Carné, 1938), including his declaration to Nelly (Michèle Morgan), 'T'as de beaux yeux, tu sais?' *Quai des brumes*, and this scene in particular which Godard intercuts with an image of Goebbels, represents a swan song of the great French cinema of the 1930s which was to disappear with the war (and this sense is reinforced by the funereal tolling of a bell on the soundtrack). Both Gabin and Morgan went into exile until after the war and poetic realism was suppressed under Vichy because of its pessimistic tone. In Siclier's words, it was

une transposition esthétique et littéraire de la fin d'une société prête à sombrer avec ses illusions perdues. Ce climat fataliste allait causer sa perte. Le régime de Vichy mit à l'index ces films 'défaitistes'.²⁰

This death marking the beginning of the war – in which Nelly watches Jean die - is matched by a death from the end of the war, from Rossellini's *Païsa* (1946), in which an American nurse (Harriet White) watches an Italian partisan (Gigi Gori) die, before Godard's commentary continues:

Oui, hélas, j'étais seul ainsi à penser qu'ils étaient plusieurs encore dans ce train de 1942, un an avant la libération de Paris, Viviane, Albert, Danielle, Suzy, Junie, alors qu'allait tomber le maquis des Glières, malgré l'appui que la plus jeune des dames du bois de Boulogne lui apporta dans un murmure...

¹⁹ See Eisenschitz, 'Une machine à montrer l'invisible', p. 53 and Williams, 'European Culture and Artistic Resistance', p. 123.

²⁰ Siclier, *La France de Pétain et son cinéma*, p. 156.

‘Ce train de 1942’ refers to a journey undertaken as part of a promotional tour when the French stars Viviane Romance, Albert Préjean, Danielle Darrieux, Suzy Delair, Junie Astor and others visited German studios in Berlin (but also Munich and Vienna).²¹ Against this collaborationist activity on the part of the French cinema establishment, Godard cites the example of resistance provided by *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* (Robert Bresson, 1945) and particularly its last scene in which Agnès (Élina Labourdette) declares ‘Je lutte’ (and, having spent the duration of the film being manipulated and blackmailed by a vindictive older woman (Maria Casarès), Agnès’s final effort does indeed represent a declaration of independence with potential symbolic resonance). That Bresson’s film is on the side of the Resistance is persuasively implied by Godard’s montage, here, in which this last scene dissolves rapidly in and out of images of Resistance fighters brandishing their artillery or standing proudly atop a captured Nazi tank. This back-and-forth motion between these documents and Bresson’s film creates a sense of the fluid movement by which reality bleeds into the fiction, causing it to resonate with a profound, if unspoken significance. This association is strengthened by the soundtrack which carries the Italian Resistance song ‘Bella ciao’ (and thus leads on from the scenes of *Païsa*). No such respect is accorded to the stars who embarked upon the German visit: Danielle Darrieux, Viviane Romance and Suzy Delair are represented in glamorous production stills, together with original newsreel footage of their departure from gare de l’Est and a rendition of the opening bars of ‘La Marseillaise’ that fairly drip with irony (a more positive version of the French national anthem is included later in the sequence, reminding us that all is context...).

But, in addition to the quoted images and the soundtrack, there is a third channel providing crucial information in this sequence. Godard’s use of

²¹ Siclier dismisses this episode as altogether insignificant: ‘A ces comédiens, à ces comédiennes, les spectateurs ne tinrent jamais rigueur d’être allés à Berlin, à Vienne et à Munich. En regard des nombreuses tournées de music-hall qui firent le voyage d’Allemagne jusqu’en 1944, ce déplacement de quelques-unes de nos vedettes n’est plus qu’une anecdote historique.’ (p. 33).

intertitles and surtitles is particularly important here since it allows him to provide further information, to pass comment on the events he is describing, but also to engage in a kind of meta-reflection on his own montage. Consider, for instance, the representation of the stars who made the trip to Germany. Godard writes over their portraits what at first seem to be innocent references to the films from which these stills are taken: thus Godard writes ‘la Vénus aveugle’ over Viviane Romance in reference to Abel Gance’s 1940 film of the same name in which she starred²² and ‘Drôle de gosse’ over Danielle Darrieux who played in *Quelle drôle de gosse* (Léo Joannon, 1935). But ‘la Vénus aveugle’ also implies Romance’s blindness or refusal to recognise the reality of the situation in the country she chose to visit; and ‘Drôle de gosse’, in addition to suggesting the foolishness or childishness of Darrieux’s decision, echoes the ‘drôle de guerre’ that followed Hitler’s invasion of Poland. Meanwhile, the title ‘son petit tralala’ over a still of Suzy Delair in *Quai des Orfèvres* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1947), aside from recalling the song sung by Delair in that film, accuses the criminal frivolity of this decision to visit Nazi Germany. If any doubt remained as to the implication of all these titles, the next one in the series dispels such uncertainty: ‘Le salaire de la peur’, appearing against a black background, emerges from the association with Clouzot but also condemns these stars for choosing to further their career by implicitly offering their support to a political regime based on terror.

But if these titles suggest that Godard is taking an authoritative, or even omniscient, stance over the figures in his montage, others imply just the opposite by questioning Godard’s reliability as a narrator. On several occasions in this sequence (and, in fact, throughout 3A), Godard corrects his own voiceover commentary by flashing up ‘Erreur’. For instance, his voiceover describes the French stars’ trip as taking place ‘un an avant la libération de Paris’ and it is left

²² According to Siclier, *La Vénus aveugle* was a ‘monument de prétention et de symbolisme qui ne fut même pas emporté par le délire baroque du Gance d’autrefois’ (p. 81). Siclier also notes that the original version of the film contained an obsequious dedication to Pétain.

to a title to signal ‘Erreur: deux ans avant’. But, rather than being simple laziness on Godard’s part, this deliberate leaving-in of mistakes serves a function in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* by reminding us of the necessary unreliability and partiality of memory. So, at moments when Godard’s montage is at its most dense and forbidding, a title will remind us of the human fallibility of its creator, thus wilfully breaking the authorial spell.

Nevertheless, Godard’s titles can, and frequently do serve to increase the range of intertextual reference of a sequence. In this particular sequence, for instance, the titles introduce quotations from Louis Aragon’s war poetry. Over the clip from *Quai des brumes*, Godard quotes the refrain from ‘Elsa je t’aime’: ‘Au biseau des baisers/Les ans passent trop vite/Évite évite évite/Les souvenirs brisés’²³. Written in 1940, it is a poem that evokes the pain of remembering a more innocent time. Over the clip from *Païsa*, meanwhile, Godard quotes a stanza from ‘Vingt ans après’: ‘L’ère des phrases mécaniques recommence/L’homme dépose enfin l’orgueil et la romance/Qui traîne sur sa lèvre est un air idiot/Qu’il a trop entendu grâce à la radio’²⁴. This poem, written at the moment of Aragon’s mobilisation in October 1939, is misremembered or misrepresented by Godard who jumbles the lines and substitutes ‘je’ for ‘il’, thereby necessitating another confession of ‘erreur’. Needless to say, the reference to Aragon adds a further dimension to Godard’s evocation of resistance across this sequence.

It is through titles, finally, that Godard introduces the information that ultimately gives this montage its sense. Following the presentation of the French stars who made the trip to Germany, a melancholy piano sonata starts up on the soundtrack and two titles tell us that ‘Dans le train d’après il y avait/cette conne d’Irène’. We see a photograph of the young Jewish writer Irène Nemirovsky in the corner of which are written the words: ‘Juive russe, écrivain français, l’exil,

²³ Louis Aragon, ‘Elsa je t’aime’, in *Le Crève-coeur*, pp. 66-68.

²⁴ ‘Vingt ans après’, *ibid.*, pp. 9-11 (p. 10).

l'écriture, la gloire, la déportation'. A split screen superimposition then juxtaposes this photo with a fragment of text from Nemirovsky's *Journal* in which the author recalls the filming of her successful novel *Le Bal* (1930) with Danielle Darrieux in the starring role.²⁵ Two more titles, grey on black, complete the tragic itinerary: 'Son train partait/Pour Auschwitz'. Here Godard includes a colour painting by Kandinsky entitled *Murnau, view with railway and castle* (1909)²⁶. Over the bottom half of this painting of a train, Godard superimposes some film footage of the wheels of a moving train, giving the impression that this painted train is in motion.

Nemirovsky's deportation, then, is directly juxtaposed with the French stars' promotional tour of Germany, the association turning around, on the one hand, the presence of Danielle Darrieux, both in the film of Nemirovsky's novel and in 'ce train de 1942', and, on the other hand, the gare de l'Est, from which both trains would have departed. By making this juxtaposition, Godard suggests in a forceful way the culpability of the French stars. The argument is not that they were somehow directly responsible for Nemirovsky's deportation: as in the Elizabeth Taylor montage of 1A, we are not dealing in causal logic here, but rather chance associations chosen for their ability to reinforce an argument. Godard seeks to show us, in this montage, precisely what Darrieux, Romance et al refused to see: that the political regime to which they lent their support – however implicitly or unconsciously – was a regime guilty of mass murder, and

²⁵ *Le Bal* was filmed in 1931 by Wilhelm Thiele but Godard has wrongly identified this film, in an interview ('Le bon plaisir de Jean-Luc Godard', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 305-322 (p. 318)), as *Un carnet de bal* (Julien Duvivier, 1938) which does not feature Darrieux at all. Whereas *Le Bal* is about an adolescent girl whose parents are blind to her *états d'âme* so preoccupied are they with their preparations for a ball, *Un carnet de bal* is about a widow who revisits the various suitors who danced with her at a ball when she was sixteen. As such, it is perhaps significant that Godard should make this slip of memory on to a film which deals, precisely, in the territory of memory, regret and so on.

²⁶ Another work painted by Kandinsky in Murnau is included at the end of 4B. The echo in this German town of the name of the great silent filmmaker is evidently not lost on Godard. The inclusion of this painting in this sequence serves to recall another of Godard's examples of historical montage from 2B which is similar in principle to the one undertaken here: there Godard relates that 'Friedrich Murnau et Karl Freund [...] ont inventé les éclairages de Nuremberg alors que Hitler n'avait pas encore de quoi se payer une bière dans les cafés de Munich'.

that this *rapprochement* between the French cinema establishment and Nazi Germany was thus a failure to assume the necessary historical responsibility. But such an abstract elaboration of the argument does nothing to convey the powerful sense of sadness mixed with indignation that is generated by Godard's montage here, particularly when seen for the first time. First of all, it should be noted that the presentation of Nemirovsky's deportation in intertitles, far from burying the detail as some kind of afterthought, actually gives it *more* force for the spectator. Over the course of this sequence, not to mention the whole of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the spectator has grown used to the fact that privileged and emotive information is provided by titles (as in the condemnation implied by 'Le salaire de la peur'). But there is a further dimension to Godard's choice of titles here: whereas the stars' German visit is presented with the razzmatazz of a celebrity newsreel and the pomp of the *Marseillaise*, Nemirovsky is evoked by a quiet piano sonata and mute intertitles. The significance is clear: it was the stars' collaboration that gave them the right to such a clamorous voice at a time when so many, Nemirovsky included, were definitively reduced to silence.

Also key to the emotional tone of this montage is the fact that Godard refers to Nemirovsky as 'cette conne d'Irène'. This title works on a number of levels. Firstly, it refers to Nemirovsky's foolishness in the historical circumstance of her deportation: having reached safety in the South of France, she made the unwise decision to return to Paris to retrieve a bracelet and was promptly arrested. Secondly, the sheer brutality, the sudden obscenity of this insult serves to evoke the vicious, indefensible nature of the Nazi crimes; in this sense, the title can be compared to the other examples, noted at the beginning of this chapter, where Godard cuts together footage of Nazi camps with pornography. Thirdly, though, the title is a reference to *Le Con d'Irène*, Louis Aragon's erotic novella that was published anonymously in 1928 and, since Aragon is already such an important presence in this sequence (again, through *titles*), this serves to line Nemirovsky up on the side of artistic resistance. But,

even for a viewer unaware of Nemirovsky's history or of Aragon's novella, 'cette conne d'Irène' is central to the impact of this montage. For Godard masterfully manipulates our emotions here: for a moment, we suspect that he is about to launch into one of his irreverent diatribes against this mysterious Irène, until the revelation of her train's destination wipes the smirk from our faces. Godard takes us from haughty amusement to abject pity in a matter of seconds with the result that *we too* are made to feel guilty, the weight of historical responsibility is forced suddenly upon us. The effect, at least on initial viewings, is quite devastating.

And it is important to stress the extent to which Godard's montage, simply by its calculated rhythmic effects, can be appreciated at a very immediate level by a spectator who possesses little knowledge of Godard's reference points. One need know nothing of Danielle Darrieux or Viviane Romance to be indignant at their tour of Nazi Germany; one need never have heard of Irène Nemirovsky to be moved by her death. Godard's use of music across this sequence is a good example of how effective his montage can be even in the absence of intertextual information. The individual pieces of music cited each have their own effect – the stirring resistance song 'Bella ciao', the ironic *Marseillaise*, the sad piano music that greets Nemirovsky – but, because only a brief excerpt of each is included, the cumulative effect is of the tension of all these different emotions building on top of each other. The result is that when, at the end of the sequence, Godard finally quotes a song in its entirety – 'La Nostra Lingua Italiana' by Riccardo Cocciante, over his homage to Italian cinema of the war and post-war years (and this is the *only* time Godard quotes a whole song in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*²⁷) – the sense of *release* is palpable and complements Godard's rhetoric of redemption by cinema.

²⁷ To be precise, this is the only complete *song* in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, but not the only complete piece of music as we will see when we discuss Giya Kancheli's *Abii ne viderem* in chapter 4. However, the Cocciante song, unlike the Kancheli piece, is uninterrupted by other noises on the soundtrack. Laurent Jullier, who has also noted this fact, is wary of it, wondering whether Godard isn't in danger of creating an 'effet-clip' here, something he scrupulously avoids

Brief encounters: History as constellation

This sequence, then, is a prime example of what Godard has achieved in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: it is history as montage and montage as history. It is, of course, of crucial importance that this sequence should be centred around *train* journeys since, as we have seen, the train comes almost to represent cinema in the *Histoire(s)*, or at least to signify cinema's place within a wider network of nineteenth-century technologies and ideologies. And, since the final destination of the train in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* proves to be Auschwitz, Godard once again aligns himself with Walter Benjamin, warning of what can happen when this technology is misused or taken as an end in itself, rather than being used to strengthen and improve our relations to each other as human beings. In addition, though, this imagery in *Histoire(s)* is inscribed within a long tradition in Godard's films, particularly over the past two decades, of representing trains. In *Prénom Carmen*, pairs of illuminated trains cross in the night; in many films, from *Sauve qui peut* to *Hélas pour moi*, conversations are drowned out by fast-moving trains hurtling through stations; *Éloge de l'amour* contains a beautifully-shot scene in a rail yard... Godard has described the cinematic image in terms of 'un moment de rencontre [...] une gare où deux trains passent'²⁸. Michael Witt cites this remark in an article on Godard's conception of the image. Reading Godard's approach to montage in terms of the theory of metaphor, Witt suggests that what is important for Godard is the transposition of sense from one image to another. Recalling the etymological meaning of metaphor, Witt goes on to propose that the many images of modes of transport in Godard's work represent

in his use of music elsewhere. See Laurent Jullier, 'JLG/ECM', in Temple, Williams and Witt (eds.), *For Ever Godard* (forthcoming). However, I think it is necessary to consider the Coccianta song in context: it cannot be divorced from the rhythmic function it fulfils at the end of the arduous journey through 3A.

²⁸ Godard, 'Propos rompus', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, I, pp. 458–471 (p. 463).

a kind of literalisation of the metaphoric process.²⁹ This sequence in 3A, then, aside from being a concrete example of historical montage based on real historical events, can also be read as a meta-reflection on Godard's project, a sequence about cinema and the image, cinema and history, how cinema imag(in)es history.

Another favourite image used by Godard when discussing montage is that of scales.³⁰ By allowing us to weigh up two separate realities, montage represents the beginning of a process of judgement. It does not deliver a judgement but evokes, in Godard's words 'une envie de jugement'³¹. By juxtaposing the two train journeys from 1942, for instance, the historical injustice becomes clear. This approach to history owes a debt, once again, to Walter Benjamin, specifically to his last major work, the posthumously published 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' which, although they do not make an explicit appearance in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, are quoted in *Hélas pour moi* and *Les Enfants jouent à la Russie* and discussed in *The Old Place*.

In his work on the philosophy of history, Benjamin takes issue with the traditional Enlightenment notion of historical progress and its necessary corollary, a view of time as a kind of empty, homogeneous vessel for this progress. Benjamin argued that our 'surprise' at the barbaric events of recent history (he was writing in 1940) should lead us to question the very concept of progress that causes us to be so surprised in the first place. He suggested that if opposition to fascism in Germany had failed, it was partly because of politicians' blind faith in progress, and partly because German workers had become

²⁹ See Michael Witt, 'L'image selon Godard: théorie et pratique de l'image dans l'oeuvre de Godard des années 70 à 90', in Delavaud et al, *Godard et le métier d'artiste*, pp. 19-32 (pp. 26-27).

³⁰ See for instance Michael Witt, 'Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph', in Temple and Williams, *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 33-50 (p. 47). This metaphor of the scales may well have been borrowed from Denis de Rougemont's *Penser avec les mains* which Godard quotes at length in 4A. Rougemont argues that we should not forget the etymological connection between the words 'penser' and 'peser', saying 'la pensée est un poids que nous jetons dans la balance' – *Penser avec les mains* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Idées, 1972), p. 156.

³¹ 'Le bon plaisir de Jean-Luc Godard', p. 318.

corrupted by the idea that following the course of progress – specifically a techno-industrial progress – constituted a political act. They were sold on the promise of improved working conditions regardless of the fact that the goods thereby produced remained out of their reach. Social democracy encouraged the working class to turn its attention away from its enslaved ancestors towards the future ideal of a liberated descent. In doing so, the working class ‘désapprit tout ensemble la haine et l’esprit de sacrifice’³².

(Benjamin’s position here finds an interesting echo in another work on history that Godard quotes at length in 4B, Péguy’s *Clio*, a dialogue with the muse of history. One aspect of *Clio*’s argument in particular is worth signalling here. She argues that, in seeking judgement from history, we envision an infinite series of future generations all turned back towards the present moment and ready to give their historical assent to our actions. What the present generation fails to realise however is that ‘la postérité c’est eux plus tard’³³. Thus, turned resolutely toward the future, the present generation is blind to the infinite series of *past* generations that are looking to it for judgement. ‘Ce n’est point l’appelant qui est un et le juge qui est indéfiniment plus nombreux. C’est le juge qui est successivement un et les appelants qui sont indéfiniment plus nombreux.’³⁴)

For Benjamin, the real sense of the past emerges in that moment of danger when the memory of the past risks being hijacked by the dominant class. Benjamin proposes an empathic historiography that seeks to safeguard the memory of the defeated of history, rather than its victors. For, as he points out, cultural history is shaped, not just by the efforts of a handful of geniuses, but by ‘[le] servage anonyme de leurs contemporains’³⁵. For Benjamin, the image of

³² Benjamin, ‘Sur le concept d’histoire’, in *Oeuvres*, III, pp. 427-443 (p. 438 § XII).

³³ Charles Péguy, *Clio: Dialogue de l’histoire et de l’âme païenne*, in *Oeuvres en Prose 1909-1914* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1961), pp. 93-308 (p. 216).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

³⁵ Benjamin, ‘Sur le concept d’histoire’, p. 433 (§ VII). Remember the anonymous crowds that people *Histoire(s) du cinéma* alongside great and revered directors.

the past only appears *in a flash*, as the past enters into a relationship – a constellation – with the present before slipping from view. It is this notion of the constellation – an image occurring momentarily out of the unexpected bringing-together of two moments in time – that allows Godard to link Benjamin's ideas to his own conception of montage. In *The Old Place*, Godard notes:

L'idée, c'est le rapprochement. De même que des étoiles se rapprochent, même en s'éloignant les unes des autres, tenues par des lois physiques par exemple, pour former une constellation, de même, certaines choses pensées se rapprochent pour former une ou deux images. Alors, pour comprendre ce qui se passe entre les étoiles, entre les images, il faut examiner en premier des rapprochements simples.

There follows a short series of paired images with which Godard and Miéville make connections across time: a representation of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt is matched by a photo of refugees fleeing Kosovo: the principal mode of transport in both images is the donkey. A Roman amphitheatre is compared to a modern-day film theatre and a cave painting from 17 000 BC is mirrored in a painting from 1910. Finally, the agony on the face of an Algerian woman photographed in the twentieth century appears almost identical to that on an Italian Renaissance statue from the seventeenth century. As Godard himself suggests, these are but basic demonstrations of the principle of montage, and it would be wrong to read too much into them. But this demonstration leads into much more complex examples of historical montage like the crossing trains which work on the level of a simple juxtaposition between two historically specific train journeys; of the wider examination of European history and artistic resistance in 3A; and of the large scale meditation on cinema's place in nineteenth-century technology that ranges across *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

In Benjamin's approach, the goal of the historical image, of the constellation, is actually to *halt* time, or at least to step outside of the march of progress to envisage a utopian alternative. The materialist historian must learn to

see a present ‘qui n’est point passage mais arrêt et blocage du temps’³⁶. One of the most startling, and moving, aspects of Benjamin’s writing (but also Adorno’s) is this desire to call an immediate halt to historical development, as though in an act of childish petulance. He cites the example of revolutionaries firing upon clock faces in July 1848, not in a tone of derision, but of real empathy. For this is a sign of Benjamin’s revolutionary messianism, his belief that the oppressed will not be freed through the deferred gratification of progress (which necessarily implies that one group suffer for another) but only with a messianic cessation of happening and the installation of entirely new conceptions of time, history, work and so on. In his intervention around the question of experiential poverty, for instance, a subject much discussed after the First World War, Benjamin maintains that what people need is not new and richer experiences, but rather to be liberated from experience altogether: that is, to live in a world in which their existence can be recognised as valuable in itself, a world in which happiness is not some ever-receding point on the horizon but is immanent to ‘une existence qui en toute circonstance se suffit à elle-même de la façon la plus simple et en même temps la plus confortable’³⁷.

This is also the sense of Benjamin’s famous image of the angel of history who seeks to stop time, ‘réveiller les morts et rassembler ce qui a été démembré’, but is prevented from doing so by the wind of ‘progress’³⁸. Alain Bergala has explored the relevance of this image to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* with an analysis of the last four shots of 1B. These are: a painting of an angel by Paul Klee; a shot of Godard in his role as the idiot from *Soigne ta droite*; the title ‘Ne te fais pas de mal car nous sommes tous encore ici’; and the scene of James Stewart’s rescue of Kim Novak from the San Francisco Bay in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958). The Klee angel recalls the *other* Klee angel that inspired Benjamin’s image. Bergala argues that, by juxtaposing his own image with Klee’s angel, ‘le cinéaste

³⁶ Ibid., p. 440 (§ XVI).

³⁷ Benjamin, ‘Expérience et pauvreté’, in *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 364-372 (p. 372).

³⁸ Benjamin, ‘Sur le concept d’histoire’, p. 434 (§ IX).

se représente en cette fin de siècle comme l'Ange de l'Histoire selon Benjamin³⁹, and that Godard's life and work testify to Benjamin's assertion that we have a duty to the generations that preceded us. This, for Bergala, is the sense of the title, attributed to saint Paul, which recurs across Godard's late work, 'nous sommes tous encore ici': it is the voice of our ancestors: '*nous sommes tous encore ici à attendre de toi la Rédemption*'⁴⁰. And the scene of James Stewart's rescue of Kim Novak from *Vertigo* similarly explores 'la problématique du secours' tying it indissolubly to the question of memory with 'le personnage au nom peut-être ironiquement proustien de Madeleine':

James Stewart sauvant Lucy de la noyade est l'allégorie la plus juste de l'anamnèse selon Godard: faire remonter à la surface une image, en l'occurrence celle de Madeleine, menacée de disparition définitive, et lui réinsuffler une vie après sa mort à travers un jeune corps vivant.⁴¹

We can see this same process at work in the sequence from 3A. After all, doesn't Godard rescue the name, the face, the work of Irène Nemirovsky who had been more or less forgotten, erased from the history of French literature? Godard's montage works to freeze time in 1942, to remember Nemirovsky as the talented young novelist of *Le Bal*. And, once again, the image of the train is decisive here. Malcolm Bull points out that, in his notes, Benjamin toyed with another image for the cessation and blockage of time: picking up Marx's metaphor of proletarian revolution as the locomotive of human history, Benjamin mused 'Perhaps revolutions are the human race, who is travelling in this train, reaching for the emergency brake'⁴². Bull himself remarks that 'the image of the train stopped by the slaves it is transporting' is 'in 1940, a poignant one'⁴³.

³⁹ Alain Bergala, 'L'Ange de l'Histoire', in *Nul mieux que Godard*, pp. 221-249 (p. 222).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223, original emphasis. *Nous sommes tous encore ici* is also the name of a film directed by Anne-Marie Miéville in 1997 in which Godard plays a starring role.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

⁴² Quoted in Malcolm Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision and Totality* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 157.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

Having thus explored the theoretical influences on and implications of Godard's montage in this central sequence from 3A, let us now see how it ends. Godard's voiceover commentary continues on his train of thought:

Et probablement que je suis seul encore pour imaginer que l'un des visiteurs de ces tristes soirs de '42, que Gilles - non, pas celui de Drieu - rend visite à Dominique ['Erreur: Anne', corrects a title] et demande, 'Alors, on le prend ou pas ce train de '42?' et que leur coeur battait, battait, battait...

This text refers to Marcel Carné's medieval fantasy *Les Visiteurs du soir* (1942) starring Alain Cuny and Marie Déa who, as Godard notes, chose not to make the promotional visit to Germany in '42. Like *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne*, *Les Visiteurs du soir* can be seen as having symbolic resonance in occupied France, the hearts of the lovers (Cuny and Déa) which continue to beat ('leur coeur battait, battait, battait...') even after they have been turned to stone by the devil (Jules Berry), symbolizing the still-active spirit of France crushed beneath her oppressor.⁴⁴ Godard illustrates this part of the sequence with an imaginary reconstruction in which Cuny, playing himself, asks Déa, played by Juliette Binoche, 'Alors ma chère Marie, ce train est-ce qu'on le prend ou est-ce qu'on ne le prend pas?' Godard shoots the scene at a house in the country with Cuny wandering outside while Binoche/Déa sits inside reading aloud a poem by Emily Brontë. James Williams has noted helpfully that this poem, begun in 1842 shortly before Brontë returned home from Brussels on account of the deaths of her aunt and foster mother, 'is linked to a real journey induced by loss and pain', and thus fits neatly with the other journeys in this sequence.⁴⁵ But it is also worth pointing out that Brontë's poem, which begins 'The evening passes fast

⁴⁴ Siclier, we might note, scoffs at such suggestions: 'Le film fut même crédité d'intentions politiques nées d'une rumeur dont j'ignore l'origine: le diable aurait été Hitler, le coeur des amants continuant de battre sous la pierre des statues aurait été celui de la France opprimée... Il ne faut pas prendre ces billevesées au sérieux! Jules Berry en Hitler, c'était vraiment du délire!' (p. 144).

⁴⁵ Williams, 'European Culture and Artistic Resistance', n. 19, pp. 244-245 (note to p. 124).

away', in the French translation read by Binoche reads 'Le soir passe d'un train rapide'⁴⁶: the *train*, once again, is linked to the painful passage of time and to the desire to bring it to a halt.

And, in actual fact, there is a remarkable sense of calm and stillness to this scene. After the jumble and clamour of the rest of the sequence, this moment when the soundtrack is reduced to Binoche's reading (quite heavily treated with reverb) and the sound of birds in the trees, does almost convey a sense of the peace installed once time is brought to a stop. Of course, if time is halted in this scene, it is only in the sense that a new constellation is created. For Godard uses a similar technique here to that used on *Les Dames du bois de Boulogne* earlier (the other French film lined up on the side of resistance), dissolving back and forth between the live action present and the frozen past with stills from Carné's film. One moment is particularly striking here: Godard's camera, inside the house with Binoche, tracks forward to frame Cuny in close-up outside the window whilst a simultaneous dissolve leads into a still of the young Cuny as Gilles chained up in the Baron's castle. As we hear a sudden tapping noise on the soundtrack, the image dissolves back into a close-up of Cuny's hand rapping on the window. What we have here, then, is a powerful image of the past enslaved and unable to defend itself, helplessly calling on the present for recognition. The use that Godard makes of Alain Cuny here is significant too since it is but one example of his predilection for actors of a certain age who seem to carry the weight of (film) history in the lines of their face and the sonority of their voice: think also of Eddie Constantine in *Allemagne neuf zéro* (1991), Alain Delon in *Nouvelle Vague* (1990) or Maria Casarès's readings for 1B.

This little scene ends when a close-up on Binoche reading is intercut in a rapid flickering montage with the same reproduction of Nicolas de Staël's *Nu*

⁴⁶ See Emily Jane Brontë, *Poèmes (1836-1846)*, trans. by Pierre Leyris (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 71.

couché bleu that was used in 1A.⁴⁷ The colour scheme of this painting, with its reflection of the French tricolor, then leads into a montage about the Liberation. Bells ring joyfully on the soundtrack in happy counterpoint to the death knell that has tolled throughout 3A and we see images of and hear speeches by General de Gaulle in liberated Paris. Over these images, though, Godard writes the words ‘son grand tralala’, in echo of Suzy Delair’s ‘petit tralala’ from *Quai des Orfèvres* (which we now hear on the soundtrack), and a glimpse of the young Marguerite Duras and the cover of her 1985 autobiographical work *La Douleur* imply a critical view of de Gaulle’s Liberation rhetoric. Duras, whose husband had not yet returned from his imprisonment in Dachau at the Liberation, found de Gaulle’s silence over the deportation to be unforgivable at this time.⁴⁸ The end of this sequence thus places it firmly within the context of Godard’s interrogative approach to the practice of commemoration which we discussed earlier. And Godard’s personal stake in the political and historical questions raised by the sequence is made explicit by two references to his life and work. Amidst this Liberation sequence, we see a grainy black and white photo of Godard as a young boy, probably taken around 1944 (the dates 1944-1994 are emblazoned, flashing blue, white and red, across it). (This photo, which reappears in *JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de décembre* (1994) will be the subject of a discussion in our chapter 4.) A little later, Godard quotes a lengthy clip from *Pierrot le fou* (1965) in which Ferdinand (Jean-Paul Belmondo) and Marianne (Anna Karina) are driving at night and Marianne talks sadly of the war and of her difficulty in conceiving of the *reality* of Resistance fighters who died for their cause. Godard thus closes this historical montage by evoking his own place as historian within that montage, his own difficulties and limitations in performing the work of history, but also and most importantly, his own sense of responsibility as a

⁴⁷ Remarking that this work was painted just before de Staël’s suicide, James Williams notes that Godard also quotes in the *Histoire(s)* the last works by Van Gogh and Klee, suggesting that he is ‘consistently drawn not only to the late period of artists, but also to the early tragic’, ‘European Culture and Artistic Resistance’, n. 20, p. 245 (note to p. 124).

⁴⁸ See notably *La Douleur* (Paris: P.O.L., 1985), p. 41.

filmmaker to use the art of cinema in order to resurrect the memory of those who fought and died, as well as those who never got a chance to fight, in the terrible war that divided the twentieth century in two.

Terminus

But Godard's policy of using the cinema to remember the crimes of the twentieth century and, in particular, the Shoah, has given rise to more than a little controversy. Godard has repeatedly stated that the Nazis must have filmed their crimes in the death camps (presumably because of their material and ideological investment in images) and that this footage, which doubtless exists in an archive somewhere, could be used to silence revisionist historians and to educate people about this most shameful episode of human history. Indeed, as we have seen and will continue to see in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Godard does not hesitate to make use of whatever footage he can find of the camps (though, for the most part, this represents what was left of the camps after their liberation rather than the actual process of mass extermination). In voicing these opinions, Godard has encountered opposition from Claude Lanzmann, whose nine-hour documentary *Shoah* (1985) is based on the impossibility, and indeed the undesirability, of ever providing an accurate representation of the horror of the death camps.⁴⁹

In an unlikely move, Gérard Wajcman has suggested that Godard's desire to make and show images of the camps is comparable to that of Steven Spielberg, whereas Lanzmann's insistence on the impossibility of representing the Shoah aligns him more with the position of Theodor Adorno.⁵⁰ But the comparison of Godard with Spielberg seems absurd when one considers that Godard has spoken out on more than one occasion against Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* (1993) and in particular a scene in which a group of deported

⁴⁹ For a useful overview of this argument, see Libby Saxton, 'Anamnesis – Godard/Lanzmann: The Possibility of an Ethics of Cinema', in Temple, Williams and Witt (eds.), *For Ever Godard* (forthcoming).

⁵⁰ See Gérard Wajcman, "'Saint Paul" Godard contre "Moïse" Lanzmann?', *Le Monde*, 3 December 1998, p. 15.

Jews are herded into a large room expecting to be gassed, only to find they are actually given a shower. Godard comments: ‘Pour moi, ce film s’appuie sur un mensonge. Car ce n’est pas comme ça que ça se passait dans les camps [...]’. Même si cela s’est passé une fois, il faut en montrer cinquante autres à côté’⁵¹. Godard further demonstrates his disdain for Spielberg’s film at the end of the sequence from 3A which we have been analysing: Godard observes that ‘[Les Polonais] ont fini par accueillir Spielberg lorsque “plus jamais ça” est devenu “c’est toujours ça”’ over another image from the scene in Andrzej Munk’s *Pasazerka* (1963) in which a female prisoner tries to fend off the attack of an SS dog. Also, in *Éloge de l’amour*, the Hollywood production company preparing to make an exploitative movie out of Mme Bayard’s past in the Resistance is called Steven Spielberg Associates. At the mention of Spielberg, Godard has a character scoff, ‘Mme Schindler n’a même pas été payée. Aujourd’hui elle vit dans la misère en Argentine’.

Libby Saxton has suggested that, although Godard’s aesthetic in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* may be diametrically opposed to that of Lanzmann in *Shoah*, they ultimately have the same effect: both Lanzmann’s aesthetic of absence, with its refusal of representation, and Godard’s aesthetic of excess, with its proliferation of images, resist the formation of sense into a coherent, easily digested whole. What this suggests, says Saxton, is that, ‘in the case of the Holocaust, there can be no purist ethical orthodoxy, there can be no monopoly on ethics’⁵². Saxton suggests that, if there is one place in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* that Godard’s ‘multiplicity of narratives [...] threatens to cohere into a single causal history’⁵³, it is around the crossing trains of 3A. After all, this sequence provides something of a centrepiece to the *Histoire(s)* (to the extent that this unusually dispersed and divergent work could be said to have such a defining structural

⁵¹ Godard, ‘Godard/Amar: Cannes 97’ in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 408-422 (p. 417).

⁵² Saxton, ‘Anamnesis’ [n.p.].

⁵³ Ibid.

feature as a centrepiece) and represents the point at which a variety of arguments, themes and images (the nineteenth-century technologies of photography and the train, war and resistance, sex and death, love and redemption, and so on) come together in a bravura montage. But, if Godard's argument shares some of Walter Benjamin's misgivings about the applications of nineteenth-century technology, it never lapses into the kind of simplified teleology that could lead to a reactionary rejection of that technology. Godard's argument is at once too broad, too inclusive, too wide-ranging to support such a conclusion and, at the same time, too focused on individual points (such as Nemirovsky's deportation) which, in their irreducible singularity, refuse to give rise to generalisation. Just as it looks as though Godard's train of thought might cohere around a causal logic, it pulls off into a siding, overcome with sadness.

There is a certain similarity between Godard's approach here and that of Jacques Derrida in an essay on Walter Benjamin. In a post-script to a lengthy commentary on Benjamin's critique of violence, Derrida reflects on how Benjamin's philosophy might be used to extrapolate a logic of the Final Solution. Derrida identifies a number of elements in this philosophy – the critiques of violence and of representation, the analysis of the logic of the state and the corruption of parliamentary democracy – that could be applied in this way, but he also argues that Benjamin's philosophy demands we respect that which, in the Final Solution, defies all logic and confounds all representation, that which can be met only by stunned silence or by active resistance.⁵⁴ Similarly, Godard recognises that the politics of fascism and the mechanics of the Final Solution belong, in part, to the same techno-ideological nexus to which we owe the cinema, centred around an industrial capitalist economy that objectifies human beings even as it seeks, with quasi-scientific rigour, to complete its knowledge of those human beings and to realise their perfectibility. And yet, if Godard's

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"', in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. by Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson (New York, London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3-67 (pp. 57-63).

history returns so obsessively to the Shoah, it is also because there is something in it that resists all attempts at understanding. Wherever we turn in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, another image of the camps, another evocation of Nazi terror, another allusion to this war unlike any other seems to await us. The Shoah lies at the end of all the associative paths in the *Histoire(s)*, but it is also what drives the movement of association and montage: it is that which lies beyond the confines of thought, that outside of thought that propels thought inexhaustibly onward. It is Godard's achievement in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* to have shown this process at work in the art of montage: by making historical connections across time, Godard's montage serves, among other functions, to highlight historical injustice but, by constantly and almost inevitably running up against the most *unpardonable* injustice⁵⁵, the desire for justice, necessarily frustrated, is forever rekindled and launches Godard into new and different historical considerations.

This is true not just of individual examples of montage in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, but across the work and, indeed, the process spills out from *Histoire(s)* to other works. The Second World War has been the implicit or explicit focal point of the first two chapters of this thesis, from the discussion of the cinema's role in the war in chapter 1 to our tracing, in this chapter, of the evolution of technologies and ideologies that made the war possible. In the rest of the thesis, our focus will shift to more recent historical and political concerns addressed by Godard and, reversing the movement of *De l'origine du XXI^e siècle*, we will progress from the end of the nineteenth century, to the end of the twentieth. In doing so, however, we will see that the Second World War remains a constant point of reference across Godard's late work, with the Shoah continuing to provide a kind of limit-concept in which history, politics and philosophy break down. It is, ultimately, as a warning against what must never be allowed to

⁵⁵ For a discussion of why the Shoah remains unforgivable, inexpiable, see Vladimir Jankélévitch, *L'Imprescriptible* (Paris: Seuil, coll. Points, 1986). This book is prominently displayed at one point during *Éloge de l'amour*.

happen again, that all of Godard's historical work in the cinema tends towards the unthinkable absence at the heart of the twentieth century.

Chapter 3

Les Mains sales

‘L’Histoire ne commence pas à vingt heures.’

- Marc Ferro, *Cinéma et Histoire*¹

3.1

‘Au moment où le *surcroît* des richesses est le plus grand qui fut jamais, il achève de prendre à nos yeux le sens qu’il eut toujours en quelque façon de *part maudite*.’

- Georges Bataille, *La Part maudite*²

Plus ça change: Godard and the Balkans

Chapter 3A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, ‘La Monnaie de l’absolu’, the chapter which goes on to feature the sequence of crossing trains from 1942 which we have just analysed, begins with Godard reading, in what Aumont describes as ‘une voix renvoyée tout entière dans l’arrière-gorge’³, a lengthy excerpt from a text by Victor Hugo entitled ‘Pour la Serbie’⁴. In this text, written in August 1876 in response to the atrocities committed in the Balkans in the build-up to the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, Hugo describes in vivid detail the horrors witnessed in the region at the time:

[N]ous apprenons aux gouvernements d’Europe ceci, c’est qu’on ouvre les femmes grosses pour leur tuer leur enfant dans les entrailles, c’est qu’il y a dans les places publiques des tas de squelettes de femmes ayant la trace de l’éventrement, c’est que les chiens rongent dans les rues le crâne des jeunes filles violées...⁵

¹ Marc Ferro, *Cinéma et Histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Folio, 1993), p. 16.

² Georges Bataille, *La Part maudite*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, VII (1976), pp. 17-179 (p. 44).

³ Aumont, *Amnésies*, p. 160.

⁴ See Victor Hugo, ‘Pour la Serbie’, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Jean Massin, 18 vols (Paris: Le Club Français du Livre, 1970), XV, 1401-1403.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1402

Godard illustrates this horrific litany with more images of World War II and the Nazi camps, but also with a proliferation of paintings from European art history by the likes of Gentileschi, Fuseli, Delacroix, Grünewald, El Greco and Uccello, but most especially by Goya, and in particular engravings from his 'Disasters of War' series, created in the wake of the Franco-Spanish wars.⁶ Naturally this sequence cannot fail to evoke the more recent conflict in the Balkans, and Godard makes explicit this connection by including a contemporary French magazine cover with the headline 'Bosnie: les armes high-tech' as well as a photograph of a female victim of the recent war which is also quoted in *For Ever Mozart*, Godard's 1996 feature which itself responds to the Balkan conflict.⁷

With this sequence, then, Godard is invoking the terrible lineage of war and atrocity in European history, but also the lineage of artists and artworks which have testified to those horrors, from Goya and Hugo, through Rossellini (*Germany Year Zero* is also quoted in this sequence as we shall see in a moment), right up to Godard himself (though he would doubtless never be so immodest as to consider himself the equal of such imposing figures as these). And this terrifying inheritance is crucially important since it is what continues to drive European history: after all, it was the memories (and myths) of historical persecution which fuelled the rise of Serbian nationalism in the lead-up to the recent war, whilst memories of the pro-Nazi Ustaše Independent State of Croatia were responsible for the Serbian suspicion that greeted a renewed Croatian bid for independence.⁸

⁶ For a detailed enumeration of the paintings involved, see James S. Williams, 'European Culture and Artistic Resistance', pp. 118-119.

⁷ The sequence from 3A also features an image of a bridge which Williams (p. 119) identifies as the Ponte Vecchio, but which also recalls that *other* bridge over the Neretva River in Mostar which, when it was destroyed by Bosnian-Croat artillery fire in 1993 after having stood for over four hundred years, became a potent symbol of the destruction of the multi-ethnic ideal of Bosnia itself. See Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin/BBC, 1995), p. 323.

⁸ See Silber and Little, pp. 91-99.

But, despite the unmistakable irony when Godard quotes Hugo's question 'Quand finira le martyr de cette héroïque petite nation?', Godard's business here is not to take sides within the Balkan conflict, any more than it is in *For Ever Mozart*. For the main rhetorical thrust of Hugo's text is in the blame it places on the Western European powers who allowed the atrocities to be committed, a stance which remained relevant in the 1990s as we witnessed the singular failure of common foreign-policy making by the EC (the premature recognition of the independence of Balkan states can be seen to have precipitated the civil war in Bosnia⁹), whilst the tragedy of Srebrenica demonstrated the impotence of the UN, its role reduced to essentially aiding in ethnic cleansing by evacuating thousands of Muslim refugees.¹⁰ Godard highlights this connection by showing a photo of François Mitterrand as Hugo's text, following on from the section we quoted above, continues:

...c'est que tout cela est horrible, c'est qu'il suffirait d'un geste des gouvernements d'Europe pour l'empêcher, et que les sauvages qui commettent ces forfaits sont effrayants, et que les civilisés qui les laissent commettre sont épouvantables.¹¹

A similar stance is taken in *For Ever Mozart*. In this film, a group of young Parisians, inspired by the example of Susan Sontag and an article by Philippe Sollers, travel to Sarajevo to put on a production of Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*, but are caught up in the fighting and killed.¹² Godard has been at pains to point out that *For Ever Mozart* is not a film 'about' Bosnia.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 221-222.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 293-304.

¹¹ Hugo, 'Pour la Serbie', p. 1402. Williams suggests that Godard's critical stance is further demonstrated when, over Goya's portrait of General Antonio Ricardos, who was killed in the Franco-Spanish wars, he types the words 'Monsieur le vicomte le laquais d'Orsay', a name which conceals the home, on the quai d'Orsay, of the French Foreign Office, one of the guilty parties in the EC's decision-making over Yugoslavia (Williams, p. 119).

¹² Godard took the idea for the film from an article in which Sollers, in response to Susan Sontag's production of *Waiting for Godot* in Sarajevo, suggested Marivaux's *Le Triomphe de l'amour* would be more appropriate (see 'Profond Marivaux', *Le Monde des Livres*, 20 May 1994). Musset is chosen when the local bookshop is sold out of Marivaux.

‘Je ne voulais pas montrer la guerre’, he has said¹³ and insists he knows nothing about it, although, in typically enigmatic fashion, he goes on to say: ‘C’est précisément parce qu’on ne connaît pas qu’on peut dire quelque chose qui manque à ceux qui connaissent. On peut justement parler du manque’¹⁴. The soldiers in the film are not identified as Serbs, Croats or Muslims, but rather, with an ironic echo of the Spanish Civil War, as ‘des brigands internationaux’. Naturally, the film is self-reflexive enough to anticipate criticisms of its treatment of the war: Vicky Messica plays a director making a film called *Boléro fatal* and his producer fumes ‘Quand est-ce que vous tournez la bataille?’ (Vicky responds by tearing the pages of the battle from the script) and complains that the locations are not ‘natural’ enough (Godard shot *For Ever Mozart* not in Sarajevo but, as usual, on the shores of Lake Geneva). At the end of the film, *Boléro fatal* proves to be a spectacular failure at the French box-office, the youngsters in the queue declaring ‘Allez! On va voir *Terminator 4!*’

But the most explicit and pointed political commentary in *For Ever Mozart* comes in a scene where Vicky, having returned from a trip to Madrid, declares:

Voilà ce que m’a dit Juan Goytisolo quand je l’ai vu à Madrid: est-ce que l’histoire européenne des années 90 n’est pas une simple répétition, avec de légères variantes symphoniques, de la lâcheté et de la confusion des années 30?

The association between the two decades is strengthened by incidental references throughout the film: Camille (Madeleine Assas), one of the members of the theatre troupe, is referred to as ‘la petite-fille d’Albert Camus’, from whose *Mythe de Sisyphe* the famous opening line is quoted (‘Le suicide est le seul problème philosophique vraiment sérieux’). Malraux is also present in a poster

¹³ ‘Le cinéma est toujours une opération de deuil et de reconquête de la vie’ in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 380-390 (p. 383).

¹⁴ ‘Parler du manque’, *ibid.*, pp. 360-379 (pp. 369-370).

reading 'L'espoir' and a quotation of the ubiquitous lines from the opening of *Antimémoires* ('D'abord, les gens sont beaucoup plus malheureux qu'on ne croit...'). In a casino, the film producer chooses number 36 on a roulette wheel, saying 'Ça me rappelle le Front Populaire'. This is the most important message of *Mozart* as it is, ultimately, of the opening sequence of 3A: that the failure of the West to prevent catastrophe in the Balkans in the 1990s mirrored not only a similar failure in the 1870s, but also the failure, in the 1930s, to resist the rise of Nazi Germany and the remilitarisation of the Rhineland that would subsequently enable Hitler's invasion of Europe. Europeans may have long memories when it suits them, Godard seems to suggest (Serbian memories of martyrdom, for instance), but elsewhere their memories are woefully short, the lessons of the darkest period of European history all too quickly forgotten. At one point in *For Ever Mozart*, a Serbo-Croat graffito is translated for the French visitors: 'Sarajevo, putain de l'occident'.¹⁵

For Ever Mozart and 'La Monnaie de l'absolu' demonstrate that, while much of Godard's work in the nineties may have been focused on the past, he remained in touch with developments in the present, and indeed the real richness of his work across the decade is in the interplay between the two.¹⁶ This gives the lie, once again, to those commentators who would have us believe that Godard's engagement with contemporary socio-political realities ceased some time in the 1970s. Following the opening sequence of the Hugo text, 3A continues with Godard recalling his famous remark about how, as a child, he was reprimanded for 'telling stories' whereas, once he became an adult and a filmmaker, he was berated for *not* telling stories. His voiceover then continues:

¹⁵ In a letter to his cast preceding the avant-première of the film, Godard wrote, 'un peu de la marchandise sera exposée bientôt dans deux villes. L'une capitale de l'Europe [Strasbourg]; l'autre, de la douleur [Sarajevo]; et celle-ci ayant abandonné celle-là.' See *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, p. 396.

¹⁶ In *Éloge de l'amour*, for instance, which we will consider in detail in chapter 4, the memory of resistance in the Second World War is evoked alongside discussions of the contemporary situation in Kosovo.

De quelles histoires s'agit-il alors? Celle de la bataille de Borodino, et de la fin de la domination française, racontée par Tolstoï; celle de la bataille de Bagdad, racontée par CNN: le triomphe de la télévision américaine, et de ses groupies.

The evocation of the Gulf War is further proof of Godard's continued interest in contemporary geopolitical realities, and there is one other reference at the start of 3A which is important here: the quotation, in the Hugo sequence, of the scenes preceding the suicide of young Edmund (Edmund Moeschke) in *Germany Year Zero* invokes, if only implicitly, another important Godard feature of the nineties, *Allemagne neuf zéro* (1991), whose presence will be more discernible in 3B, both in direct quotation and through intertextual echoes of *Alphaville* (1965) with which it shares a character and a star (we will be examining this relationship in detail in the second half of this chapter). If *Germania Anno Zero* represents the physical ruins of Berlin in 1946, *Allemagne neuf zéro* represents its cultural ruins in 1990. *Allemagne neuf zéro* is 'about' the reunification of Germany in much the same way that *For Ever Mozart* is 'about' Bosnia (i.e. indirectly, enigmatically, tangentially, but nonetheless undeniably). The conjunction of these three important historical events from the late eighties and early nineties - the reunification of Germany, the Gulf War and the conflict in the former Yugoslavia - has become representative of an important transition in international politics: with the thawing of the cold war, the focus has shifted from the traditional monolithic opposition between east and west and the west has refined its role as mediator and peacekeeper in conflicts outside its own territories, partly as a result of the economic stakes involved in the so-called 'global village' of late capitalism.

Universal pictures: From the Hollywood brand to CNN

The evocation of the Gulf War is followed by a brief and rather cryptic sequence in which Godard tells two anecdotes, one about the founder of Universal Pictures

(wrongly identified as Erich Pommer, in fact Carl Laemmle – ‘Erreur’, confesses one of Godard’s intertitles), the other about the legendary producer David O. Selznick. This reappearance of classical Hollywood in a chapter which is otherwise almost exclusively devoted, as James S. Williams has shown, to European artistic tradition and the idea of resistance, may seem a little incongruous. Wouldn’t the sequence be more at home in 1A, the Universal logo sitting alongside those of M-G-M, Fox and RKO, the Selznick anecdote accompanying tales of Irving Thalberg and Howard Hughes? The short answer to this is that Hollywood is what necessitates a European cultural resistance (*Rome Open City*, at the end of the chapter, will be declared the only European film of the war years to resist ‘une certaine manière uniforme de faire le cinéma’). But it is worth considering these examples a little more closely. For instance, why Universal? The largest of the so-called Little Three, Universal was nonetheless a relatively humble studio compared to the mighty Big Five, and it produced mainly inexpensive genre pictures. Surely, rather than the historical reality of the studio, it is the name, the word Universal itself which here becomes symbolic of Hollywood’s universalising aesthetic, its quest for a form that would transcend national boundaries: Godard attributes to Laemmle the declaration, ‘Je ferai pleurer le monde entier dans son fauteuil’ (although, as we know, this transcending of frontiers had more to do with the contingencies of economic history than with the essential nature of the classical Hollywood mode of representation).

‘Universal’ has become a key word in discussions of the global community of late capitalism which we are beginning to identify as the constant, if at times undeclared, backdrop of Godard’s recent filmic reflections on history. The attempt by the west to ensure the universality of such concepts as parliamentary democracy and human rights, whilst apparently laudable in itself, has been criticised on the grounds that universalism is itself a western concept with roots in Enlightenment thinking. The universalising drive takes place, in

practice, through a politics of assimilation which tends to mean assimilating the weaker to the model of the strong. The global community becomes a managerial one, run by the western powers for the protection of their own interests.¹⁷ In global business, for instance, western companies like to claim that, by ‘outsourcing’ their production to third world countries where labour is cheap, they are contributing to the industrialisation and economic development of these countries. But since this production takes place in export processing zones, designed to have little or no corporate taxes, specifically to entice the multinationals, the contribution to the local economy is negligible.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the central functions of the management of the global economy remain disproportionately concentrated in highly developed countries whilst a private (Americanised) justice system deals with questions of international arbitration. Industry has become so dispersed that company leaders can deny any responsibility for factory working conditions on the other side of the world, whilst the protection of rights, no longer the provision of the state, has passed into that elusive territory of ‘universal’ human rights codes.¹⁹

This general structure of global capitalism is reflected on the smaller scale of the Hollywood film industry today. There too the large studios tend to contract out work to small, independent, specialised firms in order to share the risk of investment. But, although the independents may be producing more, the majors continue to control distribution and take the lion’s share of profits. In reality, the companies which control the majority of the Hollywood film industry (Paramount, Fox, Warners...) have changed little since the studio heyday. If anything, their position is more secure since they can give the *appearance* of diversity and competitiveness *and* attract risk capital from the independents

¹⁷ See Fred Dallmayr, ‘An “inoperative” global community? Reflections on Nancy’, in *On Jean-Luc Nancy: The Sense of Philosophy*, ed. by Darren Sheppard, Simon Sparks, and Colin Thomas (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 174-196, (pp. 185-188).

¹⁸ See Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (London: Flamingo, 2001), pp. 225-226.

¹⁹ See Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 7-27.

whilst still controlling distribution.²⁰ Meanwhile, with much of the production work contracted out, the studios can pour their money into advertising and dedicate themselves to the business of securing their brand identity.²¹ The idea of branding - a form of marketing in which the actual product takes second place to the creation of an intangible *essence* of the company itself - has become vitally important in the age of global capitalism where the business interests of multinational companies have become so dispersed and impenetrable. But, although it may have gained an unprecedented predominance in the 1990s,²² the notion of the brand is nothing new. I would suggest that the idea of a Hollywood brand lurks behind Godard's anecdote about David O. Selznick:

Voilà ce que demandait David O. Selznick: 'Je veux del Rio et Tyrone Power dans une romance ayant pour cadre les mers du sud. Peu m'importe l'histoire pourvu qu'elle s'intitule *Birds of Paradise*, et que del Rio saute à la fin dans un volcan!'

Godard reads this text over images not from the real *Bird of Paradise* (King Vidor, 1932) but a superimposition of two other South Pacific dramas: *King Kong* (Cooper and Schoedsack, 1933) and *Captain Horatio Hornblower* (Raoul Walsh, 1951). Although this anecdote is attached to the brief Universal sequence, Selznick never worked for Laemmle's company and *Bird of Paradise* was produced at RKO. But it is less a studio name that matters here than the evocation of a time when Hollywood itself was a kind of universally marketable brand which sold America to the world; Selznick's declaration is a recognition that the product itself is less important than the idea, the brand image attached.²³

²⁰ See Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins, 'Hollywood for the 21st Century: global competition for critical mass in image markets', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 16, 1 (1992), 1-22.

²¹ See Toby Miller, 'Hollywood and the world', in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 371-381 (pp. 377-378).

²² See Klein, *No Logo*, pp. 3-61.

²³ David Thomson, in a biography of Selznick, confirms Godard's anecdote. Neither Selznick nor Vidor, it seems, had read the play (by Richard Tully) on which *Bird of Paradise* was nominally based. See *Showman: The Life of David O. Selznick* (London: André Deutsch, 1993), pp. 131-132. Godard includes another reference to this anecdote in *For Ever Mozart*: the

With the competition for control of image markets greater than ever, brand identity is crucially important in today's visual media. One of the greatest marketing success stories of the past two decades is that of MTV since its viewers watch not individual shows but simply MTV itself.²⁴ And, if MTV is the channel of global youth, its grown-up equivalent, CNN (one of the preferred targets of Godard's ire) is doubtless the channel of the global business community. In both cases, the brand image of the channel far outweighs in importance the image content of any of its shows. It is perhaps the inheritance of Hollywood's global brand by this kind of contemporary American televisual media which further justifies Godard's choice of Universal in this sequence, for, as Thomas Schatz points out:

If any Hollywood studio was prepared for the coming media age, it was Universal. With its long-standing dual agenda of low-cost formula pictures and A-class productions via outside independents, Universal had been gearing up all along for TV and the New Hollywood.²⁵

Indeed, the company's production style was so suited to telefilm-series production that, by the early 1960s, when it was taken over by MCA, Universal was the most profitable company in Hollywood. Furthermore, Godard points out that Universal is now part of Matsushita Electronics²⁶, a perfect example of the

producer of *Boléro fatal* declares: 'Je me fiche de l'histoire! Ce que je veux, c'est que ça s'appelle *Le Boléro fatal* et que la fille meure à la fin dans un cyclone!'

²⁴ See Klein, *No Logo*, p. 44.

²⁵ Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 463.

²⁶ Although Godard's information was correct at the time he was making 3A, in 1994, the situation has since changed: MCA-Universal was bought by Matsushita in 1990, then by Seagram in 1995. It is now owned by Vivendi who merged with Seagram and Canal + in 2000. Vivendi-Universal now controls, in entertainment, Universal Studio and Music, Canal + and UGC; in communications, Vodafone, Cégétel and Vivendi-Net; as well as what used to be France's Compagnie Générale des Eaux (although, at the time of going to press, this situation was changing once again, with Vivendi in the process of breaking up to some extent). This eye for a multinational merger is typical of Godard's continued interest in the ever-shifting terrain of geopolitical influence: in *For Ever Mozart*, the Baron Félix (Michel Francini) is asked 'ce qu'il pense des accords Time-Warner avec Toyota' (Time-Warner - now of course the even more powerful Time-Warner-AOL - own CNN).

former Hollywood studios' desire to become key players in an integrated global image business. Since feature films go on to enjoy an extended life on television, video and DVD, it is in the interest of companies to control the production of hardware as well as software. Matsushita's purchase of MCA-Universal was in response to Sony's buy-out of Columbia-CBS.²⁷

Le mode du système: Television and terror

The Universal sequence is, then, the occasion for Godard to outline a brief reflection on television, whose dominance of the current audiovisual field is the background against which Godard sounds the death knell of cinema (and literally so with the bell that tolls ominously throughout the opening sections of 3A). So Laemmle promised to make the world cry in its seat: 'Peut-on dire', asks Godard, 'qu'il a réussi?'

D'une part, il est vrai que les journaux et télévisions du monde entier ne montrent que de la mort et des larmes; mais d'autre part, il est vrai aussi que ceux qui restent à regarder la télévision, ils n'ont plus de larmes à pleurer: ils ont désappris à voir.

Godard's aversion to television is well known, another of his more famous aphorisms being that, whereas 'on lève le regard au cinéma, on baisse les yeux pour regarder la télévision'. For Godard, television offers an illusion of choice, of democracy, whilst restricting our freedom: 'Il suffit de regarder la télévision dans sa chambre d'hôtel pour voir que nous avons accepté de ne plus nous libérer; en échange nous avons ce que nous appelons la démocratie'²⁸. This it does by *taking the place* of the real world: if television spectators 'n'ont plus de larmes à pleurer', if 'ils ont désappris à voir', it is because television does not look at the world: 'quand la télévision est venue, elle s'est mise très vite à la

²⁷ See Aksoy and Robins, 'Hollywood for the 21st Century', pp. 17-18.

²⁸ 'Ne raconte pas d'histoires...' in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 224-225 (p. 225).

place du monde, et elle ne l'a plus regardé'²⁹. In this, its project is similar to the totalising ambitions of fascism. The equation of television with fascism is one Godard is not afraid to make: he notes that 'Le tube de télévision, l'iconoscope, a été inventé par un Juif allemand, Zworykin, au moment de l'ascension d'Hitler, en 1932'³⁰ and a favourite image is that of cinema 'occupied' by television.³¹ This same connection is made in 3A: when Godard talks about 'le triomphe de la télévision américaine et de ses groupies', he types a list of these 'groupies': CBS, TF1, RTL, ZDF, then NBC, FR3 and RAI, the last finally transforming to 'REICH'.

Godard's views on television here are actually not far removed from those of other, particularly French, critical commentators on the contemporary audiovisual sphere like Jean Baudrillard, Régis Debray, Pierre Bourdieu and Jacques Derrida. But his argument is particularly close to that of the film critic Serge Daney. Great admirers of each other's work, Godard and Daney's critical trajectories during the late eighties and early nineties evolved in parallel as they mapped the end of the cinema's great project and its replacement by the empty and monotonous spectacle of television. Daney's work was cut short when he died in 1992 and Godard pays homage to him, as we know, by including their filmed interview in chapter 2A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. In the autumn of 1987, Daney wrote a regular column for *Libération* chronicling the pleasures and disappointments of TV channel-hopping (what the French call *le zapping*).³² Daney suggests that the idea of zapping originally had a utopian dimension to it, representing the triumph of individual freedom over the dictatorship of programming schedules. But, since rival TV networks have a tendency to programme similar shows in the same time slots, all that zapping ultimately

²⁹ '*Histoire(s) du cinéma: A propos de cinéma et d'histoire*', *ibid.*, pp. 401-405 (p. 404).

³⁰ 'Jean-Luc Godard rencontre Régis Debray', *ibid.*, pp. 423-431 (p. 426).

³¹ *Ibid.* On this point, see also Michael Witt, 'The death(s) of cinema according to Jean-Luc Godard', *Screen*, 40, 3 (Autumn 1999), 331-346 (p. 339).

³² These articles have since been collected under the title *Le Salaire du zappeur* (Paris: P.O.L., 1993).

reveals is 'l'horreur des choix binaires obligés'³³. The great paradox of television is that, by substituting itself for our lives, it prevents us from enjoying the rich range of activities available in our modern liberal democracies while implicitly and explicitly extolling the virtues of this choice of which it claims to be a part. In this way, television has always been assumed to fulfil a social function by compensating for something that is otherwise lacking in people's lives. Daney dares to dream:

Un jour, peut-être, une télévision pourrait naître qui abandonnerait la vieille fonction compensatoire pour entrer dans une ère nouvelle, une ère où il lui suffirait d'accompagner la vie des téléspectateurs au lieu de se substituer à elle.³⁴

Of course, this is precisely what live television, and in particular the recent vogue for so-called 'reality TV' claims to do: to offer a direct and immediate presentation of *real life*. And yet it is live TV, the concept of 'real-time' broadcasting and the instant transmission of information by the news media that has been the subject of the most pointed criticism. Where live TV claims to grant us immediate access to the unfiltered reality of a newsworthy event, critics have argued that the event itself has a tendency to recede and ultimately disappear behind the fact of its representation. As Régis Debray puts it, 'Quand la *réalité de l'événement* a pour critère objectif *l'avènement de sa trace*, *l'événement devient la trace elle-même*.'³⁵ This is essentially the argument of Jean Baudrillard in his controversial book *La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu*. He suggests that the reality of this war was *invisible*, replaced by a constant

³³ Serge Daney, 'La rentrée des casses', in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 9-13 (p. 13). (Originally published in *Libération*, 14 September 1987.) One scene in Godard's oeuvre perhaps represents more powerfully than any other the underlying violence in the choice that a capitalist economy so proudly offers us: in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, a young woman is tugged from both sides and slapped by two brutish suitors who demand 'Choisis!' On this point see Marc Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: L'Herminier/Éditions des Quatre Vents, 1989), p. 205.

³⁴ Daney, 'La télé ne compense rien', in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 156-159 (p. 158). (Originally published in *Libération*, 2 December, 1987.)

³⁵ Régis Debray, *Vie et mort de l'image: Une histoire du regard en Occident* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), p. 296 (original emphasis).

stream of images generated for television. Baudrillard reads the Gulf War symptomatically, suggesting that certain of its most memorable images resonate with us precisely because they address our position as spectators: the bird with its wings stuck together by oil is an image of us as spectators glued to our screens, whilst the enforced exhibitionism of the American hostages paraded on Iraqi TV is a mirror image of our own enforced voyeurism.³⁶

Jacques Derrida has taken issue with this argument, insisting that we should not allow our criticism of the news media to give way to a denial of all events. Rather, we should seek to rescue from the levelling sweep of TV coverage the event in all its singularity, 'ce qui arrive de façon inappropriable, inopinée, et donc urgente, inanticipable'³⁷. For instance, we should not lose sight of the fact that every death incurred by war is irreducibly singular. But Derrida is perhaps a little unjust with Baudrillard here. For the point of Baudrillard's polemic is that, if the Gulf War was invisible, if we can have no sense of the war that took place other than what we saw on television, it is because this paradoxical visible-invisibility served certain vested interests.³⁸ Baudrillard writes of the New World Order of Western liberal democracy that rules by consensus and refuses to recognise its other, preferring that there be nothing rather than something on our screens and in our heads: this is 'le consensus par la dissuasion'³⁹. This New World Order is thus the enemy of disorder, of alterity; its wars are fought to protect its own situation and are won whenever a force of disorder is brought under bureaucratic control, regardless of the political leaning of that new order (this is why Saddam was never removed from power in Iraq).

³⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu* (Paris: Galilée, 1991), pp. 23, 33.

³⁷ See Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Échographies: de la télévision* (Paris: Galilée/INA, 1996), p. 18.

³⁸ It is worth noting that the title of Baudrillard's original newspaper article, 'La Guerre du Golfe n'aura pas lieu' (first published in *Libération*, 4 January 1991), contained a reference to Jean Giraudoux's play *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu* which, first published in 1935, took a satirical swipe at those who denied the likelihood of a Second World War. The point of Baudrillard's text was thus precisely that the Gulf War *would* take place even if we were unable to recognise its reality.

³⁹ Baudrillard, *La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu*, p. 94.

One of the consequences of the televised and technological war is that the Americans never had to look the enemy, the *other*, in the face, whereas it is precisely the *recognition* of their alterity that is at stake for America's enemies.

This is the way the system of postmodern capitalism deals with its other: not by destroying it but by defusing its threat and ultimately absorbing it into the system. The ideology of development that dominates today states that it is always possible to introduce a third term between two existing terms and thereby to increase the capacity and complexity of the system. There is no finality to this system as there was to the great emancipatory narratives of the Enlightenment; the process of complexification can be extended indefinitely and indeed the interests of humans are subordinated to the survival of complexity beyond all limits and obstacles, both foreseeable and unforeseeable, up to and including the natural life expectancy of our own solar system.⁴⁰ One consequence of this economic and social organisation is the knowing tone of so much contemporary culture that seeks to pre-empt criticism by including or addressing it in an ironic mode. Serge Daney suggests this is one reason why criticism of television is so difficult, or, worse, so *redundant*: because television employs a type of humour 'qui consiste à intérioriser la critique pour ne plus avoir à la subir'⁴¹. This strategy is also employed by advertising campaigns which appropriate a counter-cultural discourse with its implicit or explicit criticism of consumer society and sell it back to customers as the latest designer accessory, a desirable attitude that can be acquired by sporting the right pair of running shoes or drinking the right cola.⁴² Godard himself has not been able to avoid this appropriation by the advertising industry. The series of ten commercials he made for the designer jeans manufacturers Marithé and François Girbaud in 1988 afford little room for artistic merit, social commentary or political subversion. Consisting for the most

⁴⁰ This is the argument presented by Jean-François Lyotard in *L'Inhumain: Causeries sur le temps* (Paris: Galilée, 1988). See in particular 'Avant-propos: de l'humain', pp. 9-15.

⁴¹ Serge Daney, 'La fin du mot de la fin', in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 69-73 (p. 72). (Originally published in *Libération*, 13 October 1987.)

⁴² On this point see Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, pp. 63-85.

part of brief readings from the poetry of Rimbaud and Baudelaire over images of models in various states of undress, the advertisements serve only to attach some high-cultural cachet to the Girbaud brand (which, of course, is precisely what they were intended to do).

Godard bataille Darty

But I would like to end this section by considering another commercial film in which Godard is more successful (presumably because working on a larger scale) at subverting the corporate ethos and at evoking that which falls definitively outside the appropriating drives of consumer culture. In 1989, the French electrical goods retailer Darty – one of the most prominent advertisers and recognisable brands on the French market⁴³ - asked Godard to make a film about the company based on their annual report. Although it may seem foolhardy for a business like Darty to work with a director of Godard's artistically difficult and politically radical reputation, it is a calculated risk by which the company implies its openness to progressive ideas and thereby deflects attention away from the reality of its business practice. But in *Le Rapport Darty*, co-directed with Anne-Marie Miéville, Godard took the opportunity to lead an interrogation, couched in reference to social, political and anthropological theory, of the very nature of commerce and its relation to desire. When Darty complained about the film, Godard and Miéville incorporated the complaint into the film such that it becomes a kind of self-reflexive critique of the marketing strategies of big business and points the way towards a form of resistance to the appropriation operated by this corporate culture.

The opening shots of *Le Rapport Darty* are immediately reminiscent of Godard and Miéville's radical work in television and video from the 1970s.

⁴³ Having grown out of a small Parisian family business, and modelled itself on American wholesale retailers, Darty now has 190 outlets in France. The company is today part of the British based Kingfisher Group which also controls chains like B & Q and Comet as well as electrical retail and distribution outfits in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Over an establishing shot of the outside of a Darty store at night, we hear employees discussing the hours they work, complaining that their actual hours are in practice considerably longer than their *contractual* hours. This cuts into the image and sound of a Darty team leader giving a corporate presentation superimposed over a shot of a bank of television screens. Next we see slow-motion images of people going about their business in the street (as, on the soundtrack, Barbra Streisand sings ‘People who need people are the luckiest people in the world’!). It is clear from the outset, then, that Godard and Miéville’s *modus operandi* will be the same here as in works like *Six fois deux* (1976) and *France tour détour* (1977-78): a desire to represent the real lives of real people and to see how they are formed and deformed by the economic structures of capitalism.

Le Rapport Darty continues with Godard and Miéville in voiceover adopting characters. Claiming that the real filmmakers took Darty’s money and ran away to the Bahamas, Miéville introduces herself as the office secretary, Clio, and Godard as Nathanael, ‘un vieux robot de la première fondation qui traînait dans un placard’. Clio, of course, is the same heroine of Charles Péguy’s dialogue with the muse of history that we mentioned in the last chapter, and who reappears in *Histoire(s) 4B*. *Le Rapport Darty* quotes some of the text in which Clio discusses people’s desire to seek historical justification through the judgement of future generations and Clio/Miéville suggests that, by commissioning this film from them, what Darty are really looking for is the judgement of their children, ‘paraître devant le tribunal de leurs enfants’.

Now this suggestion would seem to emerge out of a symptomatic reading of Darty’s famous ‘contrat de confiance’. Described by their website as ‘la clé de voûte de la philosophie Darty’, this is essentially an insurance policy which guarantees free maintenance after sale.⁴⁴ But, under the scrutiny of the muse of

⁴⁴ The famous ‘Service après vente’. See Darty’s website, <http://www.darty.fr>, for more details. Interestingly, Baudrillard makes his own sardonic appropriation of this term in *La Guerre du*

history, it becomes something more: a kind of metaphor for the very conception of time that a capitalist economy imposes on our lives as well, perhaps, as an indication of the desire for deliverance from this time. Miéville talks of ‘cette confiance, cette sorte de crédit qu’ils se font de génération en génération’, recalling Clio’s description, in Péguy’s text, of the pure, homogeneous time that dominates modern western thought: ‘le temps de la caisse d’épargne et des grands établissements de crédit’⁴⁵. There is an echo here, too, of the empty time that Walter Benjamin saw as being essential to the ideology of progress and the necessary suffering that accompanies that progress. Closer to our own era, Jean-François Lyotard has discussed the tendency of the postmodern capitalist economy to stockpile money and information in order to provide against unforeseen eventualities, in order to reduce the risk of ever being caught unawares by an unpredictable event. The result is an economic climate in which the present is routinely subordinated to the future by the injunction to *save* which serves ultimately to sacrifice the pleasure of the moment in favour of the continued and exponential growth of the system.⁴⁶

Just as Godard’s historical montage, inspired by Walter Benjamin, seeks to halt the march of progress in order to reveal the suffering that is its corollary, *Le Rapport Darty* rejects the triumphant statistics of Darty’s annual turnover and its boastful litany of new franchise outlets, and instead invokes the muse of history and raises the question of responsibility before our children in order to question whether our progress can really be measured in these numerical terms. The film takes the time to observe the workers and especially the shoppers who pass through Darty’s stores, recognising that a business would be nothing without the customers on which it relies, but suggesting that the dreams and desires on which Darty preys must ultimately escape any attempt at

Golfe n’a pas eu lieu when he writes: ‘On reconstruit l’Irak avant même de l’avoir détruit. Service après vente.’ (p. 53)

⁴⁵ Péguy, *Clio*, p. 130.

⁴⁶ See Lyotard, ‘Le temps, aujourd’hui’, in *L’Inhumain*, pp. 69-88.

classification, quantification or appropriation. What Godard and Miéville succeed in doing, as so often in their television and video work, is in showing us a reality that is at once immediately familiar and unlike anything we've been shown before (the comparison of these images and sounds with those of so-called 'reality TV' is an instructive one).

We see, for instance, a lengthy scene in which a Darty salesman tries to convince an old woman of the merits of a supplementary insurance policy in addition to the original warranty. The scene is shot with all the unflattering verisimilitude of direct sound in the hangar-like acoustics of the Darty superstore. It is subsequently superimposed and intercut with scenes from Eric Rohmer's *Perceval le Gallois* (1979) in a montage which serves to compare this hard sell to some sort of jousting tournament. The modest intertitles protest that this is 'pas une image juste, juste une image': and yet there is a delicious accuracy to the comparison. After all, here is a pointless power struggle between two parties who must steel themselves for the inevitable clash, preparing to parry the thrusts and absorb the rebuffs of the other whilst fighting to maintain some semblance of dignity. The montage suggests, then, in a way Bataille might have appreciated, that our sophisticated service economy which appears so terribly civilised is in fact only a few steps away from a kind of ritualised warfare, or indeed from some sort of religious trial. For Miéville, noting the salesman's diabolical appearance in his red blazer, suggests that he sees this barter as a way to buy back his soul. And one of the great achievements of Godard's camera here is to capture not just the confusion and vulnerability of the customer, but also the pain and barely-concealed terror of the salesman as he tries to atone for his sins the only way he knows how: by selling this old woman some peace of mind.

As already mentioned, Godard and Miéville quote at length in *Le Rapport Darty* from texts by political and economic theorists including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Pierre Clastres, Marcel Mauss, John Locke and Karl Marx. But

perhaps the longest quotation comes from Bataille's *La Part maudite*. In this work, Bataille argues that all living things and systems generate an excess of energy (the eponymous *part maudite*) that has to be expunged, lost, expended, for, if we do not destroy this energy, ceremoniously or otherwise, it will destroy us. Godard and Miéville quote a section from the end of Bataille's chapter on the potlatch tradition of the native American tribes of the Pacific northwest who would bestow lavish gifts upon their rivals in order to humiliate them and assert their own social standing. The same effect would sometimes be achieved by the public *destruction* of wealth. Although Bataille recognises that ostentatious displays of wealth may still be taken as conferring status, he argues that a common mistake today is in trying to mark one's wealth by the accumulation of possessions, a futile attempt to hold on to a formless energy that can only be expended and destroyed: the individual accumulation of resources is doomed to destruction, says Bataille, because the status it confers is ultimately like an explosive charge waiting to go off. A society's wealth is, at a very fundamental level, a lie, and the true luxury, in a society like ours, lies in the contempt for riches, the indifference which opposes 'une insulte silencieuse au mensonge laborieux des riches'⁴⁷. As this text is read, a shot taken outside a Darty store at night wipes rapidly back and forth across a scene inside the store where a couple are looking at washing machines. This second shot pans right to frame the Darty salesman just as Miéville is announcing that 'les formes présentes de la richesse décomposent et font une dérision de l'humanité ceux qui s'en croient les détenteurs'⁴⁸. The montage comes to rest in a split screen under the title 'la part maudite' with the darkness of the night sky on the left seeming almost to represent this elusive and accursed share that escapes commodification amongst the shiny objects and artificial illumination of the Darty sales floor.

⁴⁷ Bataille, *La Part maudite*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, VII, p. 78.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

What, then, has become of this *part maudite* in a system dominated by the rule of profit and efficiency, where there seems little room for the kind of spiritual ritual or warfare through which this excess energy might once have been spent? Daney suggests that this energy has actually been channelled into the world of advertising where we bear witness to a kind of ‘potlatch de signes’⁴⁹. In many advertisements, the actual sale of the product seems of only secondary importance compared to the evocation of ‘un monde entier, plein et organique’ which is implicitly promised to the consumer with the purchase of the product.⁵⁰ This is of course what makes branding such a powerful marketing tool, but, with all this energy directed elsewhere than at the product itself, there is always a risk that, to quote the title of Daney’s piece, ‘la publicité passe à côté’: the meaning of the advertisement threatens to escape the advertisers’ control and connect in unpredictable ways with the desire of the spectator-consumer. This is precisely what happens in *Le Rapport Darty*: originally conceived as part of a marketing strategy to strengthen Darty’s brand image, the energy spent on this project in the form of what Godard calls ‘un grand nombre de centimes’, becomes diverted into the production of a work of art that escapes their control and begins to signify on its own terms.

What Godard and Miéville seek to do in *Le Rapport Darty* is not to capture this accursed share, this excess of formless energy – it is after all necessarily ungraspable – but simply to hint at its existence: to paraphrase Jean-François Lyotard, they do not present the unrepresentable, but rather the fact that *there is an unrepresentable*.⁵¹ As the voiceover reminds us, desire is that which cannot be made subject to negotiation: it is only when desire is solidified into objects that commerce can exist. But there would be no commerce, no business, no Darty without that which remains outside all commerce whilst making it

⁴⁹ Daney, ‘La publicité passe à côté’, in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 133-135 (p. 133). (Originally published in *Libération*, 20 November 1987.)

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ See Lyotard, ‘Représentation, présentation, imprésentable’, in *L’Inhumain*, pp. 131-140.

possible. Through the relentlessness of the camera's gaze on the transactions at Darty, says Godard, 'on finit presque par voir le désir à l'état pur'. Note the 'presque': we *almost*, but not quite, succeed in seeing desire in its pure state. Miéville states that, in making and viewing all these hours of images in the Darty stores, 'on a vu l'air infiniment perdu de cette population'. There follows perhaps the most startling, but also the most simple montage in the film: a series of shots of customers caught, in slow motion, at their most tired and vulnerable: a baby in a carrying harness bows its head on its mother's chest; an old man rocks back on his heels and a woman mops her brow as she passes through the store; a bored child gazes into the middle distance, and a young couple steal an embrace amongst the washing machines. Daney has remarked upon the scarcity of images of fatigue or ageing on television which tends instead to transform bodies 'en mires et en loges vivants'⁵². Godard and Miéville's images tend instead to emphasise the fragility, the mortality of bodies. Over these images of tiredness and resignation, Godard remarks:

Des heures entières ils restent à fixer interminablement des objets qu'ils côtoient depuis leur enfance. Comme si cet objet allait pouvoir, une fois encore, les délivrer – mais de quel mystérieux fardeau?

This burden that they seek to have lifted from their shoulders is of course none other than Bataille's *part maudite*, an excess of energy seeking an outlet, but which will never be satisfied by the purchase of a product and is instead pursued across an unending chain of objects until its necessary victory. For death itself is the work of this *part maudite* and the miracle of *Le Rapport Darty* is to show this energy at work in the bodies and on the faces of Darty's customers, to show what Cocteau called 'la mort au travail', what was the most fundamental subject of

⁵² Daney, 'Mésaventure d'un genre idéal', in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 77-80 (p. 78). (Originally published in *Libération*, 21 October 1987.)

cinema for both Godard and Daney and remains television's most profound and under-exploited possibility.⁵³

Darty, perhaps unsurprisingly, were far from happy with Godard and Miéville's film. As mentioned above, the filmmakers incorporate this negative response into the film by discussing a letter in which Darty express their concern (we see a fragment of this letter in which the word 'incompréhensible' is prominent!). Darty, it seems, express contradictory demands: they ask Godard and Miéville to tell their fortune, yet they complain when they are presented with a fairytale. What they seem to forget is that the filmmakers themselves are customers, like the poor souls they portray in the film, and further that they too, like the management of Darty, wish to pass on a report to their children. (There is a beautiful shot here in which a close-up of a sleeping baby is superimposed over the image of a Darty van unloading at night with the Eiffel Tower illuminated in the background.) In Miéville's words, 'Pour la première fois – et, je le crains, la dernière, l'unique – un client leur parle'. Darty, doubtless fearing for their brand identity and the all-important shareholder value, withdrew the film from circulation such that this powerful and moving work has been deprived of an audience. But anyone who has seen *Le Rapport Darty* will be unable to forget its message, given a new urgency in the closing minutes by the accelerated rhythm and part-harmony of Godard and Miéville's dual-track commentary: the image, a mysterious, ambiguous, elusive entity capable of showing us the most complex and inexplicable of human phenomena (desire, death) in their physical reality has become, in today's corporate culture, solidified into a banal object to sell or be sold, a simple 'image de marque', 'tout comme Hollywood est devenu Thomson'. And yet, when it is used in the most simple and innocent ways, that is to say, to observe the life unfolding around us, the image still has the power to move and surprise us through the revelation of that which remains irreducible

⁵³ See Daney, 'Le rire bref de Normandin', in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 147-151 (p. 150). (Originally published in *Libération*, 30 November 1987.)

and incommunicable – *obscene* – about our existence. Darty took a calculated risk in hiring Godard and Miéville to make a film for them but, in the true tradition of the potlatch, the filmmakers gave them much *more* than they could ever have wanted. Whatever way you look at it, *Le Rapport Darty* is an *embarrassment of riches*.

3.2

‘seule en vaut la peine la transmission de l’intransmissible’.

- Maurice Blanchot, *La Communauté inavouable*¹

Vaguely new

Entitled ‘Une vague nouvelle’, chapter 3B of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is more or less (to the extent that one can ever assign a single subject to Godard’s work) about the Nouvelle Vague. Yet, for a film which prides itself on telling film history in its own terms, that is, in the images and sounds of cinema itself, there are precious few Nouvelle Vague films to be found in 3B. In fact, with the exception of a glimpse of Anna Karina and a snatch of dialogue from *Une femme est une femme* (1961), the only Nouvelle Vague film to be found in the chapter is Truffaut’s *Les quatre cents coups* (1959), from which Godard quotes the final scene of Jean-Pierre L aud running on the beach.² Admittedly, this immediately identifiable scene alone could be taken to stand for the whole of the Nouvelle Vague (and we will see why later), but the absence of other works by Godard’s contemporaries from the late fifties and early sixties is initially disorientating.

‘Une vague nouvelle’ opens with a stunning superimposition of two shots of corridors, one from Rossellini’s *Pa sa*, the other from Cocteau’s *La Belle et la B te* (1946)³, before continuing with a montage of films including *Touch of Evil* (Orson Welles, 1958), *Ivan the Terrible* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1944/46), *Les Anges du p ch * (Robert Bresson, 1943), *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1949) and *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931). What soon becomes clear is that Godard has chosen to illustrate the Nouvelle Vague not with the films of the late fifties and

¹ Maurice Blanchot, *La Commun t  inavouable* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), p. 35.

² *Alphaville* (1965), which features prominently in 3B and which we will be discussing in a moment, dates from after the Nouvelle Vague if it is strictly defined as running from approximately 1958 to 1963.

³ Jacques Aumont gives an excellent account of the ramifications of this montage, ‘deux hors-lieu hors temps dat  de la m me ann e 1946, du m me lendemain de guerre – mais l’un succ de   Rome, ville ouverte, tandis que c’est aux *Visiteurs du soir* que succ de l’autre’. *Ann sies*, pp. 15-16.

early sixties which made its name, but rather with the films of the forties and fifties which influenced its development. This is eminently sensible since, as has been widely documented⁴, the history of the Nouvelle Vague is largely the history of the film criticism which developed at *Cahiers du cinéma* over the forties and fifties, the critics, educated in cinema at Henri Langlois's Cinémathèque Française (of which more later), in turn becoming filmmakers themselves. Godard has famously stated that 'Ecrire, c'était déjà faire du cinéma'⁵ and, indeed, the films of the Nouvelle Vague were in a sense a continuation of the *Cahiers* criticism, filled as they were (and Godard's more than most) with implicit and explicit references and homages to their American and European forebears. The much vaunted *freshness* of the Nouvelle Vague, which saw its filmmakers take to the streets to record life as it was lived there and then, cannot be divorced from the sense of cinematic tradition, of history, in which these films inscribe themselves. As Antoine de Baecque puts it:

Il faut donc remettre la Nouvelle Vague dans le sens de son histoire: elle est autant l'aboutissement d'un cinéma qui a été pleinement partagé par une génération de spectateurs qu'une fracture moderne qui égarerait le public. Elle tente d'être les deux en créant à partir de l'ancien et en jouant avec les centaines de visions que tout spectateur de l'époque a accumulées depuis l'enfance. Si la Nouvelle Vague possède ainsi une histoire, c'est surtout celle du cinéma.⁶

For instance, one of the films which de Baecque identifies as being the most important in influencing the filmmaking practice of the Nouvelle Vague is Bergman's *Sommaren med Monika* (*Summer with Monika* or simply *Monika* in

⁴ Two recent books offer a valuable contribution to the wealth of writing on the Nouvelle Vague: Michel Marie's rigorously factual and highly informative *La Nouvelle Vague: Une école artistique* (Paris: Nathan, 1997) and Antoine de Baecque's *La Nouvelle Vague: Portrait d'une jeunesse* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998) which, as the title suggests, is as much about the generation of young people who were labelled the Nouvelle Vague as it is about the cinematic movement of the same name.

⁵ 'Entretien', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, I, pp. 215-236 (p. 215).

⁶ Antoine de Baecque, *La Nouvelle Vague*, p.131.

French (1952)) from which Godard quotes a love scene between Harriet Andersson and Lars Ekborg in a montage in 3B which also features scenes from *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958) and *Hardly Working* (Jerry Lewis, 1979). De Baecque argues that what the 'Jeunes Turcs' of *Cahiers du cinéma* saw in Monika, in *Monika*, was

Un corps libéré des pesantes traditions, un corps enfin contemporain [...] Le corps de Monika, une fois vu et compris, est comme la matrice de la Nouvelle Vague: le désir, la liberté, la nature, la provocation, la jeunesse.⁷

In this sense Bergman's film was more important than the frequently cited *Et Dieu créa la femme* (Roger Vadim, 1956). Godard himself wrote, on the occasion of *Monika*'s re-release in 1958, '*Monika*, c'était déjà *Et Dieu créa la femme*, mais réussi de façon parfaite'⁸. Meanwhile, de Baecque suggests that Harriet Andersson's thirty-second gaze directly into the camera in the last reel of Bergman's film, what Godard called 'le plan le plus triste de l'histoire du cinéma'⁹, directly influenced Jean Seberg's look to camera in *A bout de souffle*.¹⁰ For the Nouvelle Vague, then, the impetus to film young people (an onscreen text in 3B reads: 'Ce qu'on voulait, c'est avoir le droit de filmer des garçons et des filles dans un monde réel et qui, en voyant le film, sont étonnés, eux, d'être eux-mêmes et au monde') itself came from another film.

The upshot of all this is that, when Godard comes to evoke the Nouvelle Vague in his *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, he can only do so *indirectly*. The object of

⁷ Antoine de Baecque, 'Peut-on apprendre à voir? Comment la critique a inventé la Nouvelle Vague', *Cahiers du cinéma*, hors série, 'Nouvelle Vague: Une légende en question' (November 1998), 30-33 (p. 32). It is worth pointing out that, in *Les Quatre cents coups*, Antoine Doinel (Léaud) and his friend René (Patrick Auffay) steal a production still of Harriet Andersson in *Monika* from the foyer of a cinema whilst playing truant. Meanwhile a still of this theft from Truffaut's film is featured in Godard and Miéville's *The Old Place* (1998).

⁸ 'Bergmanorama', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, I, pp. 128-132 (p. 130).

⁹ '*Monika*', *ibid.*, pp. 135-137 (p. 137).

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the influences upon, and the references contained within, *A bout de souffle*, see Dudley Andrew, 'Au Début du Souffle: le culte et la culture d'*A bout de souffle*', *Revue belge du cinéma*, 16 (Summer 1986), 11-21.

historical analysis ultimately resists appropriation since it recedes as one approaches it in a process of infinite regress. So just as, in order to locate the ‘origin of the twenty-first century’, Godard had to explore the twentieth which, in turn, sent him back to the nineteenth, so too in evoking the Nouvelle Vague Godard finds himself drawn further back into the cinema which preceded and influenced that movement. Godard’s new wave is only vaguely new, his ‘vague nouvelle’ also a vague story. This elusive quality to the object of historical enquiry would seem to be the point of the rather cryptic clip from *Hélas pour moi* (1993) which appears at the beginning of 3B (we will analyse this film about the difficulty of approaching and circumscribing historical events in our next chapter). Over the images from *Les Anges du péché* we hear the voice of Aude (Anny Romand) declaring ‘La vérité dont il est question ici entre nous a toutes sortes de propriétés mais certainement pas d’être transmissible’ before we see Aude through an iris with the rest of the shot masked. The ‘truth’ of the Nouvelle Vague, for instance, is not transmitted directly but emerges out of the gaps in the montage of 3B, a montage built from films dating from before and after the Nouvelle Vague.

Godard’s historical approach to the Nouvelle Vague thus serves to counter those critics who would lament the fact that, whilst Godard’s earlier films were vital snapshots of the present moment, the later works seem to form some sort of inward-looking museum of western culture. ‘Une vague nouvelle’ proves that Godard’s earlier works were just as suffused with a sense of cultural history as his more recent ones. In addition, by analysing 3B alongside two recent features that are evoked either directly or by association in the chapter (*Allemagne neuf zéro* and *Nouvelle Vague*), we aim to show how Godard continues to draw a critical picture of contemporary reality through his idiosyncratic system of historical and cultural reference. Following Godard’s lead, we will pursue associative paths to explore ideas across these interconnected texts, taking detours into some of Godard’s most richly allusive

references, but always returning to the texts of the filmmaker himself. In particular, we will see how the kind of corporate culture explored in 3.1 above is further discussed across these texts and thrown into sharp relief by an historical approach that tends to point up and condemn the short-sighted concerns of this culture.

The theme of money – and particularly the opposition between, on the one hand, money as the sole end and objective in life and, on the other, a more spiritually enriched or awakened existence – this theme is broached early in 3B. Aude's monologue from *Hélas pour moi* and the images from *Les Anges du péché*, both with obvious religious significance, cut into the clip from *Gun Crazy*. From this somewhat unremarkable B-movie, Godard quotes what Marc Cerisuelo has identified as the one remarkable shot: a bank robbery filmed in one long take from inside the getaway car.¹¹ Over this scene, however, and against the backdrop of Carlo Gesualdo's *Tenebrae* motets written for the celebration of Holy Week in the early seventeenth century, Godard quotes a distorted and unrecognisable dialogue in which a woman tells a man 'Vous ne pouvez pas comprendre ça: qu'on vive pas pour gagner de l'argent'. Later in 3B, a similarly striking montage opposes Pasolini's Christ declaring (dubbed into French) 'Vous ne pouvez pas servir aussi Dieu et l'argent', with a scene from *Touchez pas au grisbi* (Jacques Becker, 1954) in which Max (Jean Gabin)'s precious *grisbi* goes up in smoke following a car crash.

Voyage au bout de la nuit: Alphaville

Following the scenes described above, Godard quotes at length from his own *Alphaville* (1965). As mentioned above, *Alphaville* cannot, strictly speaking, be counted as a Nouvelle Vague film if we follow the received chronology and confine the movement to a period of time running roughly from 1958 to 1963.

¹¹ See Marc Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 49. Cerisuelo refers to *Gun Crazy* in the context of its influence on *A bout de souffle*, dedicated to Monogram Pictures who produced Lewis's film.

Nonetheless, *Alphaville* is given far more space in 3B than, say, *Les Quatre cents coups*. Omitting only the speech by Alpha 60 which forms a prologue to the film and a pan across the nighttime city, Godard quotes the whole of the scene – image, music, voiceover and dialogue – in which Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine) arrives in Alphaville, checks into his hotel, rides up in the elevator and is led to his room by Béatrice, the ‘séductrice d’ordre trois’ (Christa Lang). Over this scene, Godard superimposes another from Fritz Lang’s silent classic *Der müde Tod* (1921) in which a girl (Lil Dagover), having taken a poison, ascends, unbidden, to Death’s kingdom to request that her lover’s life might be spared. Again, Godard quotes the scene in its entirety and with the original montage, German intertitles and all, periodically shifting focus to concentrate on one film or the other. Death’s kingdom is a gothic arrangement of many candles, each one representing a human life which, as Death explains, can be extinguished at God’s will.

So why this lengthy quotation from *Alphaville* and why the association with *Der müde Tod*? The first answer is that this sequence neatly illustrates the point that the films of the Nouvelle Vague were deeply and consciously indebted to the history of cinema. The high contrast lighting of *Alphaville* can be traced back to the aesthetic of German expressionism. Jonathan Rosenbaum notes a number of other more specific nods to expressionist films in Godard’s science fiction classic: a camera moving through a hotel’s revolving door borrows from *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh* (F. W. Murnau, 1924)); the figures clinging to the walls, lost in the labyrinthine corridors of the Institut de Sémantique Générale recall *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919); and a brief passage in negative is not without evoking *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), which is also the alias of Professor von Braun.¹² But, although these films may have exerted a direct

¹² See Jonathan Rosenbaum, ‘Trailer for Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma*’, *Vertigo*, 7 (Autumn 1997), 13-20 (p. 14). The figures clinging to the walls are also reminiscent of Cocteau’s *Le Sang d’un poète* (1930) and *Orphée* (1950). On the influence of *Orphée* over *Alphaville*, see below n. 18.

influence over the Nouvelle Vague directors, they were also routed through a whole series of American thrillers and films noirs of the 1940s and '50s under the influence of German émigré directors like Fritz Lang himself. For instance, in the scene Godard quotes from *Touch of Evil*, Susan Vargas (Janet Leigh) is spied upon while dressing in her hotel room, by a man across the street with a torch; but Godard eliminates all the reverse shots which reveal her voyeur, thereby highlighting the effect of expressionist lighting on the sequence: Susan's startled look as she is caught in the torch beam, then the sudden darkness as she unscrews the light bulb to hurl it at her onlooker. Implicit in the *Alphaville* sequence of 3B, then, is a whole history of cultural exchange between Europe and America as German expressionism was incorporated into American film noir before impacting back upon the French New Wave (and, not wishing to labour the point, we might add that the Nouvelle Vague directors were in turn influential on a whole generation of post-Hollywood American filmmakers).

So much for the film historical angle. But how does *Alphaville* – a science fiction film – reflect the Nouvelle Vague's tendency to film real life as it was lived on the streets of Paris at the time? As we have already suggested, Godard has long had a tendency to look at the present through a temporal *décalage* which brings the now into sharper relief. He famously 'predicted' the events of 1968 in 1967's *La Chinoise*, and we will continue to see in this chapter how Godard's view of the present seems often to be relayed from a position somewhere in the past or future. *Alphaville* may take place in a generic future, but its hero is from the past: despite his nominal designation as 'secret agent', the archetype for Lemmy Caution is clearly the private detective from 1930s and '40s American fiction, and his voiceover narration further consigns the events of the film to a mythologised past.¹³ Thus we have a hero from the past in a story from the future all taking place in what is identifiable as the Paris of 1965.

¹³ See Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking about Godard* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), pp. 60-61.

Indeed, Chris Darke can argue that ‘with *Alphaville*, the Nouvelle Vague aesthetic of shooting in the streets reaches an apotheosis’¹⁴. The dystopian vision of Paris in *Alphaville* is a reaction to the dehumanising effects of the mass-scale housing projects which would be further criticised in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1966). At one point, Lemmy Caution’s voiceover tells us that:

Quand un individu présentait des chances de récupération, on l’envoyait dans un HLM [pan up the outside of a tower block] – un hôpital de la longue maladie – où il guérissait rapidement grâce à des opérations de mécanique et de propagande.

Another figure whose presence weighs significantly on *Alphaville* is that of Franz Kafka. One of the films most frequently cited as an influence on *Alphaville* is Orson Welles’s adaptation of *The Trial* (1962) which foreshadows Godard’s film with its noirish lighting and its setting in an urban wasteland of high-rise flats, warehouses and *terrains vagues*. The presence of Akim Tamiroff who plays Bloch in *The Trial* and Henry Dickson in *Alphaville* (he also appears in *Touch of Evil*) further connects the two films. In addition, though, Kafka’s nightmarish vision of an impenetrable and unanswerable bureaucracy which, in its enslavement to logic, reaches into the realms of the absurd, is a definite precursor to Godard’s *Alphaville*. In *The Castle*, Kafka describes how the eerie superficial politeness of the villagers and their ‘indistinguishably similar smiles’¹⁵ sit uneasily with the pervasive mood of intolerance and hostility in the village, in much the same way as the citizens of *Alphaville* proffer their all-purpose greeting/response ‘Je vais très bien, merci, je vous en prie’ which, as Kaja Silverman notes, ‘completely forecloses an answer’¹⁶.

¹⁴ Chris Darke, ‘It all happened in Paris’, *Sight and Sound*, 4, 7 (July 1994), 10-12 (p. 11).

¹⁵ Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. by J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 55.

¹⁶ Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard*, p. 62.

Deleuze and Guattari have argued that Kafka's fiction foresaw the terrifying dogmas that would take hold of so many societies in the twentieth century:

Ce qui angoisse ou jouit dans Kafka, ce n'est pas le père, un surmoi ni un signifiant quelconque, c'est déjà la machine technocratique américaine, ou bureaucratique russe, ou la machine fasciste.¹⁷

Should we take *Alphaville* as seriously, as a work of predictive science fiction? Alphaville is a society which recognises only the present, it has no history. Both Alpha 60 and Natacha von Braun (Anna Karina) are heard to say 'Dans la vie, il n'y a que le présent. Personne n'a vécu dans le passé et personne ne vivra dans le futur'. Alphaville is also a purely logical society since it is run by a computer, and the relevance of this to our own experience is underscored when Henry Dickson identifies computer companies of our era (IBM, Olivetti, General Electric) as the distant ancestors of Alpha 60. Ruled by Alpha 60, Lemmy sees that 'les gens sont devenus esclaves des probabilités' and indeed, in Natacha's words, Alpha 60's whole *raison d'être* can be seen as the drive to 'réduire les inconnus du futur'. In this world, that which is illogical – love, tenderness, poetry – has no place and is punishable by execution. This vision of a technocratic society concerned only with maintaining the performativity of the system and insuring against future risks thus prefigures to some extent the system of postmodern capitalism described by Jean-François Lyotard. And the relevance of Godard's science fiction allegory beyond its immediate context in the Paris of the mid-sixties is underscored by other images that are briefly glimpsed in the *Alphaville* montage in 3B. Further newsreel footage of the Nazi

¹⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Minuit, 1975), p. 22. These three dogmas are intriguingly condensed in the name of the character played by Anna Karina in *Alphaville*, Natacha von Braun: aside from the Russian 'Natacha', the surname evokes Werner von Braun, the German physicist who invented the V1 and V2 rockets and subsequently went to work in the American space programme.

camps suggests that Godard was already committed at this time to keeping active the memory of fascist crimes through fictional representation¹⁸, whilst clips from *Grandeur et décadence d'un petit commerce de cinéma* (1986) – another film lamenting the death of cinema amidst the all-conquering aesthetics of television – looks forward to connect *Alphaville*'s bleak prophecy to the kind of 'televisual consensus' criticised by Baudrillard.

In *Alphaville*, the Bible is a dictionary from which words are regularly removed. Natacha notes the disappearance of some of her favourite words: 'rouge-gorge', 'pleurer', 'lumière d'automne', 'tendresse'. Also missing from the vocabulary is 'conscience'. Kaja Silverman points out that, in English subtitles, this word is usually given as 'conscience', but she rightly argues that 'consciousness' would be a much better translation.¹⁹ For it is consciousness that is missing from *Alphaville*, consciousness of the self as other, consciousness of the other as revealing to myself the necessity of my death, my existence in time. This is perhaps another reason for the association between *Alphaville* and *Der müde Tod* in 3B: for in Lang's film, death is not seen, as Lotte Eisner points out²⁰, as a cruel or vindictive figure, but simply as man's natural and inescapable destiny (*Destiny* is the film's English title), and our attempts to avoid or delay that fate are foolish and futile: all of the girl's attempts to rescue her lover serve only to hasten his demise. It is Lemmy Caution's task in *Alphaville* to bring Alpha 60 to a consciousness of its own finality: by asking the computer an impossible riddle for which the only solution (as Silverman and Farocki note²¹) is time itself, Lemmy brings Alpha 60 to a realisation of its being-in-time, its

¹⁸ *Alphaville* has also been compared to the legend of Orpheus who descended into the kingdom of darkness to retrieve the woman he loved, and Jacques Aumont similarly characterises Cocteau's *Orphée* as a film, like many others of its time, about a Europe in ruins, with Orpheus's *look back*, 'acte de mémoire et d'oubli', a look back at the horrors of the Nazi camps (*Amnésies*, p. 38). Orpheus becomes, in this account, a metaphor for the operation of cinema itself which, by looking back, remembers the past but also, in a sense, forgets it, freezes it into a statue, a myth.

¹⁹ Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard*, p. 63.

²⁰ Lotte H. Eisner, *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*, trans. by Roger Greaves (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), p. 89.

²¹ Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard*, pp. 81-82.

being-towards-death. Having thus become, in Lemmy's Baudelairian words, 'mon semblable, mon frère', Alpha 60 destroys itself. We might say, rewriting the history of Alphaville in terms of the philosophy of community, that if Alphaville fails as a society, it is because it is based on productivity and performance, rather than on the shared experience of mortality, that is to say, on 'conscience'.

Dark victory: *Allemagne neuf zéro*

Lemmy Caution appears again in Godard's oeuvre some twenty-five years later in *Allemagne neuf zéro*. In this film, Lemmy is discovered by the narrator (André S. Labarthe)'s friend Zelten (Hanns Zischler) who is working on German cinema. Zelten identifies Lemmy as 'le dernier espion', the last spy left in East Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall. Seemingly unaware of these historical developments, Lemmy is encouraged to return to the west and spends the rest of the film attempting to do so. Lemmy visits various sites of historical and cultural interest in Berlin such as the former headquarters of the Gestapo and the bridge where the communist Rosa Luxemburg was murdered in 1918, the houses where Schiller wrote *Die Räuber* or where Liszt met Lola Montès (reference here, too, to Max Ophüls's 1955 biopic). All this takes place against the backdrop of readings from the likes of Hegel and Benjamin, music by Bach and Beethoven, and film clips from Murnau, Lang and Fassbinder.

Godard uses Eddie Constantine in this film like a living embodiment of film history. It was one of the last films Constantine was to make prior to his death in 1993, and his imposing frame and time-scarred features carry with them a sense of history which is augmented by references to his film career. When he is discovered by Zelten, Lemmy is found gazing at a postcard reproduction of Tamara Lempicka's *Jeune fille en vert* (1932) whom he identifies as the 'Poison Ivy Kid', a reference to the first film to feature Lemmy Caution, *La Môme vert-de-gris* (Bernard Borderie, 1953). When Lemmy expresses uncertainty about

returning to the west, Zelden suggests that he could always stay in the hairdresser's salon where he has been living 'avec ces dames': 'Ah, les femmes s'en balacent!' replies Lemmy, quoting the title of another of his films (*Borderie*, 1954). Later, Lemmy plays, on a tape recorder concealed in his suitcase, some lines of dialogue from one of his old films, the contrast between the assured gallantry of his young voice and his current breathlessness inspiring him to melancholy. Finally, in one of only a couple of direct references to *Alphaville*, in a west Berlin hotel room at the very end of the film, Lemmy picks up the Bible from the bedside table, opens it and sighs wearily, 'Ah, les salauds!' A suggestion, perhaps, that the forces of darkness he combatted in *Alphaville* have finally won?

This practice of taking a fictional character and imagining their life many years on from a previous incarnation is reflected in one of the many German works to which Godard alludes in *Allemagne neuf zéro*. Lemmy passes a stall where a man is selling various items which he claims have been found in concentration camps. Lemmy purchases a copy of Thomas Mann's *Lotte in Weimar*, apparently found in camp Dora, when a young woman (Claudia Michelson) who is sometimes identified as the Dora from Freud's case study, but here claims to be Charlotte Kestner, the heroine of Mann's novel, claims the book as her own. In *Lotte in Weimar*, Mann appropriates the character of Charlotte Kestner from Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) and imagines her travelling to Weimar some forty years later to meet, and settle her score with, Goethe himself. But *Allemagne neuf zéro* shares with *Lotte in Weimar* not only a taste for borrowing fictional characters, but also a political strategy: written while Thomas Mann was in exile in America and first published in Sweden in 1939, *Lotte's* early nineteenth-century setting allows Mann to comment upon contemporary events in Germany through an historical constellation with an earlier era. The evocations of Napoleon's occupation of Germany thus bring to mind another leader's dreams of a united Europe whilst, in one particularly

incendiary passage, Mann has Goethe speak of a massacre of Jews by Christians at Eger and suggests that the peculiar mixture of respect and violent hatred that the Jews have historically inspired in other peoples 'could be compared with that felt in the case of only one other people: the Germans'²².

By looking at Germany through the eyes of Lemmy Caution who, as we suggested above, is at once a relic of the past and a figure miraculously returned from the future (from Alphaville), Godard too is able to achieve a different perspective on contemporary German reality, distancing himself from the happy consensus which seemed to greet reunification.²³ Godard's position could be summarized as regret at what he sees as the loss of a German culture as the East begins to follow the West in a model that has become thoroughly Americanised:

[Les Allemands] ont fait tellement d'horreurs qu'ils ont perdu, qu'ils ont discrédité l'idée même d'être allemand, c'est pourquoi une partie a choisi d'être américaine, l'autre a choisi de ne pas bouger. Maintenant celle qui a choisi de ne pas bouger va rejoindre celle qui est américaine, mais il n'y a plus d'Allemagne.²⁴

One way that Godard indicates the threat posed to Germany is by evoking, as so often in his nineties work, the 1930s as a comparable era in terms of shifts in geopolitical influence. Zelten's friend the narrator, for instance, is revealed to be pursuing '[d]es recherches sur le poids du fascisme allemand chez les jeunes romanciers anglais d'avant-guerre' and decides, 'moi aussi, après Christopher

²² Thomas Mann, *Lotte in Weimar*, trans. by H.T. Lowe-Porter (London: Minerva, 1997 [1939]), p. 296.

²³ There is an intriguing parallel here with Günter Grass's fictional response to reunification, *Too Far Afield* (trans. by Krishna Winston, London: Faber and Faber, 2000 [1995]) which relates events through the eyes of an East German civil servant who has a kind of pathological identification with the nineteenth-century novelist Theodor Fontane. Like Godard, then, Grass achieves his effects through the juxtaposition of classical art and literature with the postmodern surfaces of the western city (nineteenth-century ballads recited in McDonalds, for instance). The two works are naturally drawn to some of the same details: like Lemmy Caution, Grass's hero visits the site of Rosa Luxemburg's murder and, like Godard, Grass draws timely significance from the advertising slogans of West brand cigarettes.

²⁴ 'Ne raconte pas d'histoires...', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 224-225 (p. 225).

Isherwood, de faire mes adieux à Berlin'. The reference to Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*, also published in 1939, is to a melancholy work which, much like *Allemagne neuf zéro*, celebrates all that the author loves about Berlin but which he sees as threatened with disappearance. Isherwood chronicles the political confusions and mounting hostilities of thirties Germany whilst his portraits of friends are darkened by the knowledge that many of those he loves the most – the poor, the Jewish, the homosexual – will suffer tragic fates in the years to come.

It should come as little surprise that Kafka also makes an appearance in *Allemagne neuf zéro*. This appearance occurs in a scene in the countryside where Lemmy comes across a mammoth piece of earth-moving equipment grinding and clanking away in the distance. This short scene is one of the most unforgettable and also perhaps one of the most mysterious in late Godard and, although it would be futile to attempt to pin down its meaning, it is worth considering its resonance at some length. The scene begins with a long shot of the great machine at work in a valley, before cutting first to a closer angle and then to a close-up of a page from the German text of Kafka's *Castle*. Lemmy approaches the machine and recites a text by Rilke: 'Les dragons de notre vie ne sont que des princesses qui attendent de nous voir beaux et courageux'. He sits down and listens to the recording of a younger Lemmy Caution described earlier. There approach a knight on horseback and a man driving an old Trabant. The knight, framed like don Quixote against a windmill, recites the lines from Rilke in German before Lemmy picks up the baton in French: 'Toutes les choses terrifiantes sont peut-être des choses sans secours qui attendent que nous les secourions', before the knight and the Trabant ride off towards the giant machine. The glimpse of *Das Schloß* in this sequence encourages us to look on this machine as an image of the kind of inconceivably large and complex apparatus of power that Kafka imagined in his novels²⁵, and the rather

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari write of power in terms of cogs and gears: 'Étant un agencement, le désir ne fait strictement qu'un avec les rouages et les pièces de la machine, avec le pouvoir de la machine. Et le désir que quelqu'un a pour le pouvoir, c'est seulement sa fascination devant ces

anachronistic aspect of this huge and cumbersome machine in the age of the information-driven economy might lead us to take it as an image of the old East German administration. But the figure of the knight, aside from its reference to don Quixote, is based upon an engraving by Dürer entitled 'The Knight, Death and the Devil' (1513) which, in German Romanticism, became a kind of emblem of German national identity. The knight's charge at the machine, following Lemmy's question 'Which way is the west?', might therefore represent Germany's headlong rush towards an American technocratic capitalism. Meanwhile, the Rilke text comes from his *Letters to a Young Poet*, presumably chosen for its preoccupation with solitude.²⁶ The passage quoted comes at the end of a long paragraph in which Rilke argues that we have no reason to fear or mistrust the world since it resembles us, 'if it has terrors, they are *our* terrors'; 'We must always trust in the difficult', says Rilke²⁷, give it a chance, welcome it, love it, in order to see its value, its beauty. In the present context this could be read as an exhortation by Godard to accept the challenge of trying to read critically the current political consensus, just as it is a challenge to the viewer not to be daunted by this most difficult of Godard's late works.

It is, as I said, impossible to decide upon a final meaning for the scene. Jeffrey Skoller, in an article on *Allemagne neuf zéro* influenced by the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, suggests that the machine, which he identifies as a piece of strip-mining equipment, can be read as 'historicism itself':

It tears away stratified layers of earth, each one a different period of time, keeping substratum that is of value to the

rouages, son envie de faire marcher certains de ces rouages, d'être lui-même un de ces rouages – ou, faute de mieux, d'être du matériel traité par ces rouages, matériel qui est encore un rouage à sa façon' – *Kafka*, p. 102.

²⁶ *Allemagne neuf zéro* was commissioned as part of a series of telefilms on the subject of solitude for Antenne 2. Godard chose to make a film about East Germany, 'seule entre les seules' (- 'Ne raconte pas d'histoires...', p. 224). Earlier in the film Godard quotes Rilke on solitude: 'La solitude est une, elle est par essence grande et lourde à porter'.

²⁷ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. by Stephen Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1984), p. 92.

needs of the historian and discarding the detritus that seems insignificant.²⁸

This follows ‘a model of history that is geological rather than chronological, in the sense that moments of time are sedimented and become strata’²⁹ which coexist with the present. A connection might be made here with the work of the French historian Fernand Braudel whose name crops up in 3B and whose dictum that there are two kinds of history, ‘une qui avance vers nous à pas précipités, et une qui nous accompagne à pas lents’, has become one of Godard’s preferred refrains in recent years. Braudel is keen to stress that history does not happen at the speed of instantaneous news broadcasts and live satellite link-ups; it proceeds through the almost imperceptibly slow development of what he calls ‘la longue durée’, the gradual accretion of history as plurality. The appeal of this approach for Godard is perhaps to be found in the notion of resistance since, in his work on the history of France to which Godard alludes in 3B, Braudel suggests that a national identity is precisely that which resists the natural erosion operated by the passage of time and the accumulation of events. Braudel even remarks that it was at the time of the French defeat in 1940 that he first began to reflect on the idea of a ‘France profonde [...] condamnée à se continuer vaille que vaille’³⁰.

This opposition between a profound and resistant cultural history and the instant history of the postmodern world is at work in *Allemagne neuf zéro*. East Germany is the site of the densely layered but continually co-present strata of German cultural history but, when Lemmy crosses into the west, he finds only what Skoller calls the ‘eternal present’³¹ of an Americanised city, a place characterised only by advertising hoardings, corporate logos and the featureless buildings of international finance, the Deutsche Bank and the Intercontinental

²⁸ Jeffrey Skoller, ‘Reinventing Time, or The Continuing Adventures of Lemmy Caution in Godard’s *Germany Year 90 Nine Zero*’, *Film Quarterly*, 52, 3 (Spring 1999), 35–42 (p. 40).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Fernand Braudel, *L’Identité de la France*, 3 vols (Paris: Flammarion, coll. Champs, 1990 [1986]), I, p. 19.

³¹ Skoller, ‘Reinventing Time’, p. 40.

World Bank, this latter ominously surrounded by a murder of crows. In this sequence, Godard has a young couple, identified as Hans and Sophie Scholl – members of the Weisse Rose student resistance movement executed by the Nazis in 1943 – look around a BMW showroom. Although there is obviously an element of postmodern playfulness to this scene, I would suggest that Hans and Sophie Scholl are also symbolic figures through which Godard seeks to portray a political spirit that would resist the march of progress towards a free-market capitalism on the American model, and that this is a serious attempt to highlight the possibility of an alternative system of values in our consumer-driven culture.

It is here in West Berlin that Lemmy reads an arranged passage from the end of Oswald Spengler's 1922 *Decline of the West*. Spengler essentially takes an organic view of cultural development which suggests that, once a culture has fully expressed its own unique spirit, it becomes a civilisation, which is to say it begins to stagnate in a process of repetition without innovation and, eventually, dies. Spengler's method may not be exactly rigorous but, as Fernand Braudel points out, to compare his *Decline* to more serious historical works is like comparing poetry with prose³², and one can see how this grand narrative of rise and fall might appeal to the Godard of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The passage read by Eddie Constantine is as follows:

Une lutte désespérée s'engage aujourd'hui sur les sols des villes mondiales où l'argent pénètre en vainqueur. Mais, comme il est une forme de la pensée, il s'éteint dès qu'il a pensé jusqu'au bout le monde économique. Et il invente Auschwitz et Hiroshima. Alors le dernier combat commence: le combat de l'argent et du sang.³³

³² Fernand Braudel, *Écrits sur l'histoire* (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), p. 273.

³³ Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West: Perspectives on World-History*, trans. by Charles Francis Atkinson, 2 vols (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1922), II, p. 506. The quotation is arranged from a paragraph on the penultimate page of this work. The sentence about Auschwitz and Hiroshima is Godard's own addition.

For Spengler, money must be understood as a category of thought and, as such, 'it fades as soon as it has thought its economic world to finality'. Thus begins the struggle between blood and money. For Spengler, 'blood' signifies such things as family and national character, that is to say race, and one can hear certain fore-echoes of National Socialism when he talks, for instance, of 'race-quality, the triumph of the will-to-power'³⁴. It is presumably to distance himself from such connotations that Godard adds the anachronistic reference to Auschwitz and Hiroshima, implying that these are the bloody consequences of capitalism. Transformed by Godard's quotation, this 'combat de l'argent et du sang' now refers not to any racial argument but rather to the innocent lives destroyed by the abstract flow of capital.

But Godard is not the only one to have attempted a rehabilitation of the largely forgotten Spengler. Theodor Adorno wrote an essay reconsidering the *Decline* after the war and suggested that Spengler was forgotten in the accelerating tragedy of history which, ironically, he predicted. But, 'Forgotten, Spengler takes his revenge by threatening to be right'³⁵. Spengler foresaw a world 'in which men experience themselves solely as objects of opaque processes' and, in the Nazi camps, suggests Adorno, 'that regression has become overt'³⁶. Meanwhile, in seeing how the media can be used to manipulate and pacify the people, 'Spengler predicted Goebbels'³⁷. He further showed how 'the principle of democracy develops into its opposite through the rule of the party'³⁸. In demonstrating the primitive nature of culture, Spengler showed that it necessarily 'bears the mark of death', that it is always impelled towards its own decay, that, being complicit with 'blind domination', it threatens to annihilate itself and its victims.³⁹ Adorno concludes by rescuing from the decline of the

³⁴ Ibid., p. 507.

³⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Spengler after the decline', in *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), pp. 51-72 (p. 54).

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 55-56.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 71.

west the image of the powerless who, although they may be swept aside by Spengler himself, represent for Adorno the only hope of resisting the dictatorship of culture:

In their protest lies the only hope that fate and power will not have the last word. What can oppose the decline of the west is not a resurrected culture but the utopia that is silently contained in the image of its decline.⁴⁰

To have and have not: *Nouvelle Vague*

The notion that cultures are finite, which is interpreted in very different ways by Spengler and Adorno, is present throughout Godard's work of the 1990s and appears also in his first film of that decade, *Nouvelle Vague*. In this film, set amongst the international finance community, a voiceover by Jacques Dacqmine is twice heard (most things happen twice in this film) declaiming the following text:

Bientôt, certaines formes de la vie sociale, des habitudes, des principes, des sentiments invétérés auront disparus. On peut tenir pour défunte la société où nous avons vécu. Si on l'évoque dans les siècles futurs, elle apparaîtra comme un instant charmant de l'histoire des hommes. On dira... On dira, 'C'était le temps où il y avait encore des riches et des pauvres, des forteresses à prendre, des degrés à gravir, des choses désirables assez bien défendues pour conserver leur attrait... Le hasard était de la partie'.

In other words, this film, just like the others we have looked at in this chapter, takes a typically detached view of the present. As Robert Stam comments:

We are made to regard the alienated present from the imagined perspective of a distant future, just society [...]

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

Present power arrangements and hierarchies, it is suggested, are not necessarily permanent.⁴¹

So, although *Nouvelle Vague* ostensibly has little to do with the Nouvelle Vague beyond its title,⁴² which seems more a pun related to the narrative and formal importance of water in the film, Godard's movie is closely related to the others we have considered in this chapter by its method of approaching the present through a densely woven fabric of quotation and cultural reference.

The reference which is perhaps uppermost in *Nouvelle Vague* is to Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye*⁴³. It is difficult to summarize either the labyrinthine plot of this novel or the skeletal narrative of Godard's film, so I will describe both as schematically as possible. In *Nouvelle Vague*, Roger Lennox (Alain Delon) is almost run over by successful businesswoman Elena Torlato-Favrini (Domiziana Giordano)⁴⁴. He has a copy of *The Long Goodbye* in his suitcase. The pair become lovers and, six months later, Lennox has become a partner in her business. Elena takes Lennox out on a boat, pushes him in the

⁴¹ Robert Stam, 'The Lake, The Trees', *Film Comment*, 27, 1 (January-February 1991), 63-66 (p. 66).

⁴² Janet Bergstrom has observed that, over the past two decades, Godard has often attempted to resolve the problem of the tyranny of the story by giving his films titles which suggest a mythic or generic story. This minor concession to the marketplace dispenses with the problem of actually telling the story and allows Godard to pursue his unique compositional style. Aside from the obvious *King Lear* (1987), *Prénom Carmen* (1982) and *Je vous salue Marie* (1983), Bergstrom cites examples like *Passion* (1981), *Détective* (1984) and *Nouvelle Vague*. (- Janet Bergstrom, 'Nature in Godard's Remakes: Digressive Thinking in Images', in Temple, Williams and Witt (eds.), *For Ever Godard*, forthcoming).

⁴³ A quotation from Chandler also appears in the scenes in West Berlin at the end of *Allemagne neuf zéro*, read by Constantine: 'Voilà donc Noël et son cortège d'antiques frayeurs. Les magasins sont pleins d'incroyables saloperies mais ce dont on a besoin on ne le trouve plus.' Interestingly, Serge Daney employed this same quotation at the start of his last television article for *Libération*. See 'En attendant la neige...' in *Le Salaire du zappeur*, pp. 182-184 (p. 182), originally published in *Libération*, 24 December 1987. However, as the quotation is first used by Godard in *Grandeur et décadence d'un petit commerce de cinéma* (1986), it seems likely that Daney borrowed it from Godard. Whoever used it first, this little fragment of Chandler is further evidence of the dialogue between the two men.

⁴⁴ Torlato-Favrini is the name of the eponymous countess in Joseph Mankiewicz's *Barefoot Contessa* (1954) from which Godard also quotes dialogue in *Histoire(s)* 1A and images in 4A. At the end of 3B, Godard juxtaposes a still of Giordano from *Nouvelle Vague* with a T-shirt emblazoned with the words Torlato-Favrini Industries, the initials in red recalling the French TV channel TF1 and thus making another connection between television and the unscrupulous world of big business. (The image also recalls one of Godard's lines from *JLG/JLG* (1994): 'L'Europe a des souvenirs; l'Amérique a des T-shirts.')

water and watches him drown. But he, or his twin brother (calling himself Richard Lennox), returns, seeking his share of the business. In *The Long Goodbye*, Philip Marlowe helps his friend Terry Lennox leave the country before discovering that Lennox is suspected of murdering his wife Sylvia. Meanwhile, Marlowe is hired to find Roger Wade who has been having an affair with Sylvia Lennox. It is eventually revealed that Wade's beautiful wife Eileen, who had been married to Lennox when he was living under a different name during the war, killed Sylvia fearing that she would steal both the men she loved. In Godard's (extremely) loose adaptation of Chandler, then, Alain Delon's character(s) collapse(s) both Terry Lennox and Roger Wade whilst Elena has elements of Eileen Wade: her first name, her long blonde hair, and a taste for murder. What is most important to the two narratives, however, is the trope (much cherished by Godard) of resurrection: in *The Long Goodbye*, Terry Lennox cheats death twice, once during the war and once when he fakes his own death in hiding in Mexico, only to appear to Marlowe at the end of the novel. In *Nouvelle Vague*, Roger Lennox survives being run over and drowned by Elena. Water is important in the deaths of the novel as it is in the film: in *The Long Goodbye*, Marlowe is distracted by a speedboat on the ocean whilst Roger Wade is murdered (by his wife), although, in Robert Altman's 1973 film version, Roger Wade drowns himself in the ocean.⁴⁵

But a further connection is established between *Nouvelle Vague* and *The Long Goodbye* in the equation of crime with big business, what Godard in *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma* called the *industries du jour et de la nuit*. In Godard's film, we listen to the chatter of the managerial classes, we hear Elena discussing currency exchange on the telephone ('You go through Singapore and then Bogotá to end in Geneva, and then your dollar's worth...'); Richard Lennox in an interview cites the paranoid management philosophies of

⁴⁵ It is also difficult not to be reminded of Alain Delon's earlier role as Tom Ripley in *Plein soleil* (René Clément, 1960) where, after killing his friend Philip Greenleaf (Maurice Ronet) at sea, Ripley assumes his identity.

global business and discusses an article in *Business Week* about using subatomic particles to increase the speed of microchips. But all of this takes place alongside a story of murder. In *The Long Goodbye*, too, big business is tied up with the crime narrative: Sylvia Lennox's father is a multi-millionaire at pains to keep quiet the deaths of his daughter and son-in-law, and a gradual association is developed between the similarly shady worlds of crime and business, the equally unpleasant spheres of the rich and the criminal into which Marlowe is drawn. At one point this comparison becomes explicit when an associate of Marlowe's says, 'That's the difference between crime and business. For business you gotta have capital. Sometimes I think it's the only difference'⁴⁶. Something similar is perhaps being suggested when the waitress Cécile (Laurence Côte) asks, 'Mais les gens riches sont-ils si différents de nous?' and is told 'Oui, ils ont plus d'argent'.⁴⁷

At the same time, though, *Nouvelle Vague* is a love story, the story of the relationship between Lennox and Elena, and the film is full of quotations and aphorisms regarding love and the relationship between the sexes. One of the few quotations which is actually attributed in the film is from Denis de Rougemont's *L'Amour et l'Occident*. In one section of this book, Rougemont suggests that, since the western conception of love has always been based in *passion*, that is to say, at root, in *suffering*, it is not surprising that love has so often been linked to

⁴⁶ Raymond Chandler, *The Long Goodbye* (London: Penguin, 1953), p. 160. Later, police lieutenant Bernie Ohls announces 'There ain't no clean way to make a hundred million bucks. Maybe the head man thinks his hands are clean but somewhere along the line guys got pushed to the wall, nice little businesses got the ground cut from under them and had to sell out for nickels, decent people lost their jobs, stocks got rigged on the market, proxies got bought up like a pennyweight of old gold, and the five per centers and the big law firms got paid hundred grand fees for beating some law the people wanted but the rich guys didn't, on account of it cut into their profits. Big money is big power and big power gets used wrong. It's the system. Maybe it's the best we can get, but it still ain't my Ivory Soap deal.' (p. 234).

⁴⁷ Silverman and Farocki (*Speaking about Godard*, p. 205) attribute these lines to an exchange between F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. It is perhaps worth noting, too, that, in *King Lear* which, following Norman Mailer's advice, explores the connections between King Lear and the mafia - Lear as gangster - Lear (Burgess Meredith) writes a text which is read by his daughter Cordelia (Molly Ringwald) and which points out that all the big casinos in Las Vegas, with their roots in organised crime, now belong to major entertainment conglomerates like M-G-M. The subtitle of Godard's *Lear* is 'Fear and Loathing', so Las Vegas is *sous-entendu* throughout.

‘le goût de la guerre’⁴⁸. Rougemont thus traces the parallel histories of forms of war and forms of love from the *chevalerie* of the Middle Ages to the French Revolution where passion was transposed on to the collective plane of the Nation, and on up to the end of the nineteenth century where this passionate nationalism became mingled with the commercial capitalist concerns of colonial wars just as bourgeois love was ‘un bien bizarre mélange de sentimentalisme à fleur de nerfs et d’histoires de rentes et de dots’⁴⁹. With the advent of World War I, however, a total war based around technology allowing great destruction over great distance, the link between love and war is lost since the object is no longer the breaking down of the enemy’s resistance but his complete annihilation. The result, argues Rougemont, is that ‘les relations individuelles des sexes ont cessé d’être le lieu par excellence où se réalise la passion’⁵⁰: we have entered the era of the errant libido which searches for a new domain in which to exercise its passion. At a time when war barely seems to exist anymore in the so-called civilised western world (as we saw with Baudrillard), and has been replaced by aggressive business practices as the main method of achieving international influence, *Nouvelle Vague* seems to suggest that it is precisely on to this world of business that our errant libidos have become fixed, it has, as Frederic Jameson laments, become ‘sexy’⁵¹. At one point in the film, in a speech which seems to telescope all of the themes we have been discussing, the character Dorothy Parker (Laure Killing) declares:

Ce que nous appelons la paix ressemble beaucoup à la guerre. Il est aussi difficile de distinguer la ligne qui sépare les affaires du vol pur et simple que de décider du moment où une femme légère devient une femme libre.

⁴⁸ Denis de Rougemont, *L’Amour et l’Occident* (Paris: Plon, coll. 10/18, 1939), p. 205.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁵¹ Fredric Jameson, ‘Postmodernism and the Market’, in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 260-278 (p. 273).

So, just as rich nations lend money to the third world and cripple them with debt ('Il faut imposer l'idée de la dette,' says the CEO (Jacques Dacqmine) at one point), so in affective relations, it is she who receives the gift of love who finds herself facing bankruptcy: 'En me délivrant de mon existence,' Elena tells Lennox, 'vous me l'avez volée'. It is a sort of updating of the potlatch principle described by Bataille.

It is perhaps only in the justly celebrated shot, following their near-collision, where Elena and Roger's hands reach out for each other against the rich background of the countryside – a composition which recalls Michelangelo's fresco for the Sistine Chapel ceiling – that we witness a love free from the pursuit of gain. As Kaja Silverman comments:

This luminous moment stands altogether outside the psychodynamics of power. Since what is given is not owned, it cannot indebt or obligate. It is even unclear who has given, and who has received, this purest of all gifts.⁵²

It is this shot which seems to dominate the composition of the whole film: it is the memory of the shot which makes more terrible Elena's ignoring Roger's outstretched hand as he drowns, then, later, which gives the redemptive quality to the reverse scene where Lennox rescues Elena. It is appropriate, finally, that this shot should have become as famous as the one in *Je vous salue Marie* of Joseph's hand approaching Marie's belly since the two are related: *Nouvelle Vague* represents, in a sense, the culmination of Godard's concern, across his eighties films, with the themes of love and work. And both shots could be taken as illustrations of Adorno's dictum: 'Love you will find only where you may show yourself weak without provoking strength'⁵³.

⁵² Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard*, p. 202.

⁵³ Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, § 122.

This defence of the weak (and don't forget that in 3B Godard quotes Christ's sermon on the mount from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* where it is prophesied that the meek shall inherit the Earth) is further implied in an obscure reference in *Nouvelle Vague* to Howard Hawks's *To Have and Have Not* (1945). It is interesting that Godard should quote Hawks's film since it is a model of creative appropriation, almost but not quite as irreverent as what Godard does with *The Long Goodbye*. For the plot of Hawks's film borrows only the short initial section of Hemingway's novel, abandoning the last two thirds of the book which opens out into a kind of panorama of life in the Depression. Filming during the war, Hawks makes his adaptation a piece of committed cinema, shifting the action from Cuba to occupied Martinique and describing the burgeoning political consciousness of the ne'er-do-well Captain Harry Morgan (Humphrey Bogart) who no longer runs guns and booze but Free French resistance fighters. The line quoted by Godard is the repeated motif of Harry's alcoholic shipmate Eddie (Walter Brennan), 'Was you ever bit by a dead bee?', rendered in French as 'Vous avez déjà été piqué par une abeille morte?' and delivered by Elena's chauffeur Laurent/Raoul (Christophe Odent). In itself, the line is as meaningless as it sounds, but it is important to the narrative of *To Have and Have Not* since the only person who deigns to honour Eddie with an answer, aside from Harry, is Harry's lover Slim (Lauren Bacall⁵⁴), and, in *Nouvelle Vague*, Lennox, such that, when the line is repeated again at the end (in both films), as the couple depart together, it signifies a shared moral stance, their concern for the weak and defenceless Eddie. (Eddie is, however, considerably more important to the plot of *To Have and Have Not* than is Laurent/Raoul to that of *Nouvelle Vague*: it is when the fascists capture and torture Eddie that Harry finally decides to side with the Free French.)

⁵⁴ It is possible that Bacall's star entrance in *To Have and Have Not* – we hear a voice asking 'Anybody got a light?' before a cut shows her leaning against a wall – is gestured to by Anna Karina's entrance in *Alphaville*: Lemmy Caution, taking target practice, lights his Zippo with his gun before Karina appears asking demurely 'Vous avez du feu?'

Nous sommes tous encore ici

A similar zeal towards saving the weak, the lost, the helpless is found, oddly enough, in Godard's portrait of Henri Langlois in the latter part of 3B. The founder and lifelong curator of the Cinémathèque Française where so many of the Nouvelle Vague filmmakers learned their craft, Langlois, along with André Bazin, is one of the patron saints of the movement. Langlois's philosophy could be summed up as an evangelical belief in the value of cinema, a conviction that *all* film was worth preserving. As François Truffaut writes in a foreword to Richard Roud's biography of Langlois:

If, in spite of his capriciousness, Langlois was the best cinémathèque director, it was because, ever since his early days as a collector, he refused to select, to choose; and because he decided that every piece of exposed film should be preserved, precisely to save it from the capriciousness of judgements conditioned by the fashions of a period.⁵⁵

I would argue that it is in this sense that we should understand Godard's sometimes baffling choice of films to represent some of the Nouvelle Vague's favourite directors: *All the Marbles* (aka *The California Dolls*, 1981) for Robert Aldrich, or *The Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend* (1949) for Preston Sturges.⁵⁶ It would be wrong to see this as a continuation of the old auteurist dogma whereby a bad film by an *auteur* is more interesting than a good film by a *metteur en scène*. Godard has been endlessly critical of the 'politique des auteurs' in recent years and, in a brief dialogue with Domiziana Giordano and Christophe Odent filmed for the end of 3B, he has Odent declare 'C'était ça, la Nouvelle Vague, la politique des auteurs: pas les auteurs, les oeuvres' and Godard himself confirms, 'D'abord les oeuvres, les hommes ensuite'.

⁵⁵ François Truffaut, 'Foreword', in Richard Roud, *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française* (New York: Viking, 1983), p. xiii.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Rosenbaum makes this point. See 'Trailer for Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', p. 18.

In his homage to Langlois, Godard explains that the films he and his friends came to love at the Cinémathèque formed part of a kind of invisible cinema. These were not 'les films du samedi, ceux du Vox, du Palace, du Miramar, des Variétés', rather:

Le vrai cinéma était celui qui ne peut se voir, n'était que celui-là. C'était... C'était... C'était Mary Duncan - n'est-ce pas Jean-Georges Auriol? – mais on ne verrait jamais *La Femme au corbeau*, et il nous fallut l'aimer, aveuglément et par cœur. Idem avec les foules d'*Octobre* et celles de *Que viva Mexico!*, n'est-ce pas Jay Leyda? Idem avec les tramways de *L'Aurore*, n'est-ce pas Lotte Eisner? Parce qu'oublié déjà, interdit encore, invisible toujours... Tel était notre cinéma; et cela m'est resté, et Langlois nous le confirma, c'est le mot exact.

A rapidly intercutting juxtaposition here between a shot from *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954) and the candles from *Der müde Tod* suggests the co-existence, for French cinephiles of the fifties, of these two cinemas, the popular and the invisible. These were films, then, made familiar through the work of a generation of film critics which preceded the *Cahiers*, but no longer visible because lost, forgotten or banned. The picture that emerges is of the Cinémathèque as a kind of place of worship where one cultivates a reverent belief in an object which cannot actually be seen. This metaphor is extended through Godard's picturing of Langlois in split screen next to Catholic icons and the religious language of this sequence: the very Catholic 'Langlois nous le confirma' and the Biblical opening to the sequence, 'Un soir nous nous rendîmes chez Henri Langlois, et alors la lumière fut'. The characterisation of the Cinémathèque as a kind of church and Langlois as its curate, of *cinéphilie* as a religion, is nothing new in French film history and criticism; if anything the metaphor has become something of a commonplace. Antoine de Baecque shows that Jacques Laurent, editor of the journal *Arts*, was expounding on the idea as

far back as 1955.⁵⁷ But in any case, one needs to take all of this with a pinch of salt for, as Godard is talking in hushed and reverential tones about this cinema ‘qui ne peut se voir’, the images of 3B are contradicting what he says. For Godard *shows us* a clip from *La Femme au corbeau* (*The River* (Frank Borzage, 1929)), from *Que viva Mexico!* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1932) and from *Sunrise* (F. W. Murnau, 1927), these supposedly ‘invisible’ films. The point, of course, is that, thanks to Henri Langlois, these films are no longer invisible. Langlois’s firm belief was that the best way to preserve film was to project it: he insisted that nitrate film was *alive* and that, festering in its cans, it was more likely to die. A spurious logic, perhaps, but at least by airing the film, the harmful gases that had collected in the cans would be dissipated.⁵⁸ Meanwhile the lucky spectators at the avenue de Messine could see many otherwise abandoned and forgotten films. But, lest we fall into the trap of attributing the genesis of the Nouvelle Vague to one man’s singular vision, it is worth pointing out, as Antoine de Baecque does, that the Liberation years in France were particularly propitious towards the development of cinephilia, what with the opportunity to see many pre-war films which had been, in one way or another ‘mutilés ou censurés’, the backlog of American films unreleased during the Occupation, and the actuality of Italian neorealism.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, Langlois’s specific influence over Godard remains considerable. Godard’s homage in 3B is not just an acknowledgement of a mentor of the Nouvelle Vague, but a very personal tribute to a man who was to be his creative partner on *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.⁶⁰ We mentioned in our introduction how Godard’s original plan to collaborate with Langlois on a history of the cinema was thwarted by the latter’s death. But Langlois’s work in the

⁵⁷ See Antoine de Baecque, *La Nouvelle Vague*, p. 28.

⁵⁸ See Roud, *A Passion for Films*, pp. 20, 87.

⁵⁹ See Antoine de Baecque, *La Nouvelle Vague*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ We should also note that chapter 1A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is dedicated to Mary Meerson, Langlois’s partner who is also mentioned in *Éloge de l’amour* along with her colleague Iris Barry, curator of film at New York’s Museum of Modern Art.

Cinémathèque continues to exert an influence over *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. We have seen how Godard first began to think seriously about the project whilst lecturing on film history at the Cinémathèque de Montréal, a position he had taken over from Langlois, and Godard's projection of films for those lectures, in which he juxtaposed his own work with films from the history of cinema, can be seen as directly indebted to Langlois's programming habits at the Cinémathèque. Langlois's method of programming two or three films in an evening which had no ostensible relation but some hidden connection which 'unconsciously [the audience] would learn from the juxtaposition', was, as Roud stresses, already a form of montage.⁶¹ It is here that Godard first learned the potential of cinematographic montage for connecting up historical constellations of the kind we discussed in chapter 2 and which we have continued to see throughout this chapter. Godard recognises this debt at the end of his tribute when he says:

Nous étions sans passé, et l'homme de l'avenue de Messine nous fit don de ce passé, métamorphosé au présent; en pleine Indochine, en pleine Algérie, et lorsqu'il projeta *L'Espoir* pour la première fois, ce n'est pas la guerre d'Espagne qui nous fit sursauter, mais la fraternité des métaphores.

Following more images of watery death – a quotation of the last lines from Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* ('Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!') and an image of Cordelia's death from his *King Lear*⁶² - Godard opines:

⁶¹ Roud, *A Passion for Films*, p. 134.

⁶² *The Waves* feature heavily in *King Lear*, the line in 3B being taken from a much longer quotation from the last page of Woolf's novel which, in Godard's film, comes to serve almost as a suicide soliloquy for Cordelia, juxtaposed against Lear's lament. The film also features a shot in which waves lap against a copy of the novel placed on a beach. The wave, of course, symbolizes the cycle of life, so present in *Nouvelle Vague*: before our eyes, like an image of our own mortality, a wave is born, expends itself and dies, before another wave repeats the pattern. This is surely its metaphorical importance for Godard as for Woolf. Michael Witt has also suggested that Woolf's novel is important to Godard as a model of musical composition (- personal communication).

Notre seule erreur fut alors de croire que c'était un début: que Stroheim n'avait pas été assassiné, que Vigo n'avait pas été couvert de boue, que les quatre cents coups continuaient alors qu'ils faiblissaient...

The reference to *Les Quatre cents coups* is significant because, as we mentioned at the beginning of this section, it can be taken to represent the whole of the Nouvelle Vague. If this is so, it is because its final scene of Antoine Doinel running on the beach is profoundly ambiguous: like the Nouvelle Vague itself, it constitutes at once a beginning and an end. On the one hand, the scene connotes freedom, Doinel seemingly graduated to adulthood and prepared to head out alone into the world. On the other hand, we are forced to recognise that, throughout the film's narrative, Doinel has systematically closed off every issue, leaving him with nowhere left to turn, and the final zoom and freeze-frame further enclose the boy within a cage, a hunted look in his eyes. Meanwhile, the starkness of the beach and the water are such that it doesn't take much of a leap of the imagination to read Doinel's death in these images. The Nouvelle Vague is similarly ambiguous: for all the stress on its role in bringing a breath of fresh air and renewal to French cinema, it remains nonetheless the *last gasp* of an art form. Godard suggests that the Nouvelle Vague was the first *and the last* example of a film movement whose practitioners were schooled enough in the history of cinema to gain international appeal whilst nevertheless being rooted in a national tradition, bringing an unmistakably *French* reality to the screen. The audience for the Nouvelle Vague films, Serge Daney has suggested, was 'le dernier public *universel*' as it represented the birth of the international art cinema audience and coincided with the end of national cinemas. What we have today is 'un *cinéma de festival* qui, à terme, se retrouve au même titre que les autres arts modernes: au musée'. Meanwhile,

ce qui reste du 'cinéma national' se cantonne dans la gestion paresseuse de son propre provincialisme [...] et produit des films nationaux-populaires qui, du fait qu'ils

sont destinés à nourrir ‘en boucle’ un public connu d’avance, ne peuvent plus avoir d’histoire ni d’évolution propre.⁶³

It is at this point in 3B also that Godard features clips from Aldrich’s aforementioned *All the Marbles*. A film about women’s tag-team wrestling, it is the rather sad, even embarrassing, spectacle of a once great director trying desperately to connect with an audience who cares little for film history. And the scenes quoted themselves – of the wrestling heroine hurled and manhandled around the ring – seem almost to provide an image of a weary little art (the ‘petit dernier’ that is the cinematograph) buffeted by the forces of public indifference and the burgeoning televisual aesthetic. Daney confirms:

La génération de la Nouvelle Vague est peut-être la dernière à avoir eu à la fois un rapport à son terreau d’origine (la France, la langue française) et à cet espace imaginaire fait de tout ce qui s’était joué mondialement à travers les films depuis Griffith: le Cinéma.⁶⁴

The Nouvelle Vague was a movement which sought to give voice and representation to a generation of young people and their real experience of the world through the self-conscious display of a cinematic culture and history that was deeply ingrained in the memory of the filmmakers. Throughout this chapter we have seen the legacy of this approach to cinema in Godard’s work of the 1990s. Just as *Alphaville* borrowed from German expressionism and American film noir in order to represent a world which simultaneously looked back to Europe’s past and forward to our multinational future whilst also commenting very specifically on the Paris of 1965, Godard’s recent films have favoured a similar temporal ambiguity in order to sharpen their critique of historico-political

⁶³ Serge Daney, ‘Survivre à la Nouvelle Vague’, *Cahiers du cinéma*, hors série, ‘Nouvelle Vague: une légende en question’ (November 1998), 62-66 (p. 66).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* It is worth pointing out that this view of the Nouvelle Vague only really makes sense from within a French, or French-centred, history of cinema. But it should also be understood in terms of the very personal, autobiographical *identification* with cinema that colours Daney’s writing and that he shares, to some extent, with Godard.

developments. Thus, *For Ever Mozart* and *Allemagne neuf zéro* compare events from the early 1990s to the politics of the 1930s, whilst *Le Rapport Darty* and *Nouvelle Vague* read late twentieth-century economics through the lens of mid twentieth-century anthropological theory and detective fiction respectively. This is not just a frivolous game on Godard's part, but rather a serious attempt to put historical thought into action, to demonstrate the constructed and inessential nature of the current political consensus (or, worse, indifference) and to disturb that consensus by evoking the historical tragedy of another age in which political commitment and active resistance constituted a real and urgent necessity rather than a distant, foreign ideal. In our final chapter, we will pursue these ideas as we explore what Godard's practice of citation reveals about the very nature of cinematic language, and, returning to the theme of the end of history, we will see how Godard's recent work continues to offer hope for new forms of thought, survival and resistance in the face of such a pessimistic discourse.

Chapter 4

Mort à crédit

‘Ton film, qu’on y sente l’âme et le coeur, mais qu’il soit fait comme un travail des mains.’

- Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe*¹

4.1

‘L’art, c’est brosser la réalité à rebours.’

- Walter Benjamin, ‘*Adrienne Mesurat*’²

Abii ne viderem: Voice and music in 4A

One of the most important aspects of chapter 4A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and indeed of the film as a whole, is its attention to the voice. The chapter begins with a reading of a poem by Paul Valéry entitled ‘Psaume pour une voix’ which attempts to describe the elusive character of a voice. It continues with two of the most lengthy texts in the *Histoire(s)*, one drawn from Denis de Rougemont’s *Penser avec les mains*, the other from Elie Faure’s *Histoire de l’art*, this latter being read by the immediately recognisable and incomparably rich tones of Alain Cuny. Both sequences are filmed, as we shall see, in a way that tends to concentrate attention on the text and the voice reading it. It is worth remembering here that almost all of the sequences Godard filmed specifically for *Histoire(s) du cinéma* consist of simple, unadorned shots of people reading: aside from the many instances of Godard himself at his typewriter or standing by a bookcase, we have Julie Delpy reading ‘Le Voyage’ in 2A, filmed performing banal daily activities (drinking a glass of water, taking a bath); Sabine Azéma reading from Broch’s *Death of Virgil* in a single, static head-and-shoulders shot,

¹ Robert Bresson, *Notes sur le cinématographe*, p. 30.

² Walter Benjamin, ‘*Adrienne Mesurat*’, in *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 109-112 (p. 110).

dressed in a plain black rollneck sweater that further de-emphasises interest in the image, smoking a cigarette and looking off-screen as the camera tracks slowly, almost imperceptibly in to a close-up; and we have Juliette Binoche sat on the steps in front of a house in the country, reading a poem by Emily Brontë.

In general, and despite Godard's undoubted visual inventiveness, it is often voices and texts that one remembers most clearly from late Godard. This is partly because many of the texts recur so frequently, and often in the same voice: consider Eddie Constantine reading Wilhelm Hauff's poem 'Reiters Morgengesang' (which begins 'Morgenrot/Leuchtest mir zum frühen Tod?')³, or François Périer's readings of Broch from *Soigne ta droite*. But it is also because of Godard's extraordinary *treatment* of the voice. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, this treatment is manifested in essentially two ways: first, the quotation of voices which are distinctive and full of character (Maria Casarès, Orson Welles, Jeanne Moreau, André Malraux, Paul Celan, Ezra Pound); and second, the distortion of voices which causes the listener to pay attention to the singular physical qualities of the sound of a voice, rather than simply accepting it as a neutral channel for information. Thus Godard adds reverb until texts are almost inaudible (particularly in 4B), speeds up and slows down voices until they no longer even sound like voices (1A), consigns them to a relatively low position in the mix so that they have to compete with other sounds (for instance, Serge Daney in the interview in 2A), or actually works on the physical production of the voice to make it unrecognisable (Godard's throaty murmur reading Hugo in 3A).

Following terms proposed by Michel Chion, we might describe this treatment as a movement from a 'voix-je' to a 'voix-objet'. Chion argues that the 'voix-je', the voice as signifier of subjectivity, is conveyed by such recording conventions as proximity to the microphone and lack of reverb. If one manipulates this voice using techniques like those employed by Godard, '[la

³ Hauff, who died just a few days shy of his twenty-fifth birthday, is another example in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* of an artist who died young with his work tragically unrealised.

voix] n'est plus alors un sujet avec lequel s'identifie le spectateur, elle est voix-objet que l'on perçoit comme un corps dans un espace'⁴. Chion is interested in particular in those voices he considers to be specifically cinematic, that is those which, due to the cinema's manipulation of off-screen space, appear 'ni tout à fait dedans, ni clairement dehors' but are rather 'laissées en errance à la surface de l'écran'⁵. Chion notes the term 'acousmatic' to describe 'un son que l'on entend sans voir la cause dont il provient'⁶. Since the acousmatic voice refers, in the last instance, to the voice of God, it carries associations of mysterious power, it is equated with ubiquity, panoptism, omniscience and omnipotence. In the cinema, however, the acousmatic zone is fragile and fluctuating, since a sound or voice which occurs in off-screen space may always become visible in subsequent images. Godard exploits the uncertainty caused by this device in 4A: the Élie Faure text read by Alain Cuny begins as a voiceover, accompanied by a series of stills and clips, but then Cuny appears in the image. Or rather, he half-appears: lit from the front right so that only his left eyebrow and his chin are clearly visible, Cuny on-screen retains much of the elusive, shadowy quality he had when he was only an off-screen voice.

If this filming of Cuny draws attention away from the image, away from the man, and on to the voice and the text, then so too do the images with which Godard accompanies this reading. In this sequence, as in the earlier one with the Rougemont text, the images illustrate the text rather than the text commenting upon the images. However, what we have, in both cases, is not a coherent sequence of images representing a cluster of ideas, like in the Hugo sequence from 3A where the images work together to suggest the parallel histories of European conflict and artistic testimony. We have instead a string of images, mostly stills separated by black leader, with no apparent relation between them, and which complement not the overall argument of the text, but individual lines.

⁴ Michel Chion, *La Voix au cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l'Étoile, 1982), p. 48.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Thus, in the Faure sequence (the text is taken from a piece on Rembrandt in which Godard systematically substitutes the words ‘le cinéma’ for the artist’s name; we will consider this conceit more closely below): under the words ‘l’ombre et le rayon qui rôdent’, we see a still from *Nosferatu* with the vampire frozen in surprise as daylight penetrates the room; a shot from *King Lear* of a young woman holding up her finger appears as Cuny reads ‘un doigt levé’; as he pronounces ‘un phare d’auto, un visage endormi’, images from *For Ever Mozart* show both these things; a landscape from *JLG/JLG* illustrates ‘un chemin boueux’; ‘il n’y a que des traits noirs croisés sur une toile blonde’ gives rise to one of the most beautiful moments of this sequence: the shot of the crows rising off the climbing frame in Hitchcock’s *The Birds* (1963), here rendered in black and white, irises in and out of a colour still of Tippi Hedren. In the Rougemont sequence, ‘une main tendue’ is illustrated with the hands of Lennox and Elena from *Nouvelle Vague* whilst the assertion ‘On serait parfois tenté de souhaiter qu’en France l’activité de l’esprit redevienne passible de prison’ is accompanied by the scene of Henry Fonda in jail from *The Wrong Man* (Hitchcock, 1956). Because there is no apparent continuity between these images, they tend to have the effect of fragmenting the text, the listener paying attention less to the overall meaning than to individual (verbal) images and turns of phrase and hence to the distinctive timbre of the voice that forms them.

In order to appreciate the overall sense of these texts, it is perhaps easier to turn to the CD soundtrack of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Available as a set of five CDs from the German ECM label, this is not simply a compilation of the music used in Godard’s film, but rather the *complete* soundtrack with its snippets of music, voiceover narration, samples of dialogue and other ambient noises. It is perhaps a little ironic, given the reputation of ECM’s sound engineers for producing an exceptionally clear and close sound quality, that it is above all in the *video* version of the *Histoire(s)*, where Rougemont and Faure’s texts are continually fragmented by the play of images, that we are most attuned to the

voice in all its materiality. Certainly, the release of the complete soundtrack (and on a label with ECM's avant-garde reputation) suggests that Godard's work with sound is innovative enough to constitute an autonomous aesthetic experience in itself, and indeed the CDs are fascinating documents. But it is difficult, when listening to them, not to be reminded of the images from the film. Ultimately, and perhaps unsurprisingly, one is forced to conclude that, although Godard's images and sounds may have a separate existence and be quite capable of signifying independently of each other, Godard achieves his most memorable effects and generates his most profound meaning by playing them off against each other.

This can be illustrated by considering Godard's use of music in 4A. In recent years, Godard has borrowed a lot of contemporary music from ECM's own catalogue and, in 4A, he employs a work by the Georgian composer Giya Kancheli. Kancheli's *Abii ne viderem* (1992-94) is, along with Riccardo Cocciante's 'Nostra Lingua Italiana', the only piece of music to be cited in its entirety in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. However, the spectator unfamiliar with this composition is unlikely to notice the fact since the lengthy silences and range of the work may mislead the listener into thinking that Godard is actually quoting several different pieces of music. *Abii ne viderem* begins with a single, barely audible note played repeatedly on the viola and is regularly interspersed with sudden string flourishes which build into occasional crescendi before falling back into silence. Kancheli is one of a number of composers from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union whose music has been used by Godard in recent years, composers who marked their opposition to the dogmatic and censorious Soviet regime by seeking to infuse their music with a deep sense of spirituality.⁷ Godard's quotation of this music thus forms a part of his increasingly serious meditation on the possible links between Christianity (and in particular Christian

⁷ The other most notable composer from the former Soviet Union is the Ukrainian Arvo Pärt. Godard quotes the opening chorus from Pärt's sacred work *Passio* (1988) in *Histoire(s)* 1A, JLG/JLG and *Les Enfants jouent à la Russie*.

art) and forms of resistance, a connection hinted at in the imagery of 1B and which we will discuss again in our consideration of *Éloge de l'amour* in the second half of this chapter. The title of *Abii ne viderem* (meaning, 'I turned away so as not to see') is also significant here. It contains an autobiographical reference to Kancheli's feelings of guilt and pain at leaving his home country amidst the internal conflict which followed Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union. But, for Godard, it doubtless also evokes the cinema's neglect of its duty to testify to reality, however difficult or disturbing. The title appears on screen in 4A at the beginning of the Faure sequence, juxtaposed with a still of Patty Duke Astin in her role as Helen Keller from *The Miracle Worker* (Arthur Penn, 1962).

The title and provenance of this piece are thus significant even before we have heard the music. The music itself proceeds through periods of pregnant silence, inspired by the particular stillness experienced in churches, punctuated by sudden – and usually quite short and intense – bursts of sound, serving to highlight the apparently unjustified, almost miraculous appearance of this music as if from nowhere. Kancheli's composition thus calls upon us to appreciate these sounds in their material singularity just as Godard's images seek to frame reality in the irreducible event of its occurrence. At the same time, though, the sounds and silences of *Abii ne viderem* become raw material to be woven into Godard's montage and combined in new and unexpected ways with images. The large empty spaces of Kancheli's 25-minute composition allow Godard to include the lengthy readings from Rougemont and Faure in 4A without either text or music having to be sacrificed for each other. More than this though, the design of *Abii ne viderem* generates a structure for this episode of the *Histoire(s)*, the periods of silence dividing 4A up into neat sections whilst the multiple crescendi are made to coincide with various key moments in Godard's montage. So, the series of string flourishes at the beginning of *Abii ne viderem* work to punctuate the Valéry text that opens 4A whilst Kancheli's first crescendo marks

the end of this first sequence. A quiet, almost pizzicato-like passage that is gradually dominated by stabbing chords of increasing volume lends a sense of tension and urgency to the beginning of the sequence on *Penser avec les mains*, itself a text about the urgent need for a responsible thought that is conscious of its extension in action. As mentioned, the most dramatic moments of Kancheli's score are often accompanied by examples of bravura montage, as at the end of the Faure sequence, where the suggestion of the cinema/Rembrandt's ability to 'faire briller dans un linceul une rose ou un bleu pâle aussi frais qu'une rose' is illustrated by Kandinsky's *Coppia a cavallo* (1906-1907), with its palette resembling a stained glass window, which irises in and out from the centre of a close-up of Eisenstein's *Odessa Steps martyr*. The painting appears to emerge from her mouth, like an expression of her almost holy agony, as Kancheli's strings rise to a climax before returning again to stillness. We will see other examples of how Godard builds his montage around Kancheli's music in the rest of this chapter.

Parallel tracks: Reading Godard with Derrida (and vice versa)

In 4A, then, as elsewhere in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, text and image combine to bring out the singular material qualities of a voice, or images compose with music in order to reinforce a montage. Ultimately, there seems little point in arguing about which element in audiovisual media is dominant – sound or image – and which subordinate. Consider, for instance, an average television news broadcast: which element, sound or image, is more powerful, which more insidious in the communication of ideology? Is it the image used as a guarantor of the immediate presence of reality, or is it the identification of the presenter with an authoritative voice of truth? Surely the real power of audiovisual media, and hence its real danger, lies not in either one of these ideological operations but rather in their combination, in the way they reinforce each other. Roland Barthes identifies three messages that are usually contained in an image: the iconic, or

denotative message; a linguistic, or connotative message (since most images in our culture are accompanied by some kind of discourse); and a third message which specifies the tautological relationship between the signifier and the signified.⁸ It is, as Barthes admits, a somewhat artificial gesture to separate these messages like this, since it is difficult, often impossible, to distinguish between them at the moment of reception. What the linguistic message serves to do is to fix the meaning of the image, to anchor its natural polysemy in a definite sense that is determined in advance. The iconic, denotative quality of the image then works to naturalise this connotative operation:

c'est très exactement le syntagme du message dénoté qui 'naturalise' le système du message connoté [...] le monde discontinu des symboles plonge dans l'histoire de la scène dénotée comme dans un bain lustral d'innocence.⁹

Barthes was writing, in particular, about the photos that appear in newspapers and the textual commentary that accompanies them, but his analysis is equally valid for the voiceover commentary of cinema, and perhaps even more so since, as Chion suggests, the voiceover narrator is psychologically linked to our very first experiences of understanding in the world:

Depuis la nuit des temps, *ce sont les voix qui montrent les images* et donnent au monde un ordre des choses, et qui le font vivre et le nomment. La première montreuse d'images est la Mère dont la voix, antérieurement à l'apprentissage (éventuel) des signes écrits, fait que les choses se détachent dans une temporalité vivante et symbolique.¹⁰

But, at the same time as the twin narratives of an audiovisual system work to reinforce each other, we must also remember that the very fact of their co-

⁸ See Roland Barthes, 'Rhétorique de l'image', in *L'Obvie et l'obtus: Essais critiques III* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), pp. 25-42.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰ Chion, *La Voix au cinéma*, p. 47.

existence gives a potential for disunity or disjunction, for the opening up of a breach, or rather for the revelation of a breach which is in fact constitutive of all forms of representation.

In his commentary on Husserl in *La Voix et le phénomène*, Derrida addresses the apparent transcendence of the voice which, for Husserl, resides in the fact that the signified, *Bedeutung*, seems to be immediately present in the act of expression. This is because the phenomenological 'body' of the signifier seems to erase itself in the very moment it is produced. When I speak, I hear myself at the same time as I am talking. The signifier animated by my breath and by my intended meaning remains absolutely close to me. There is thus an alleged purity to this 'auto-affection' which is not present when I see myself or touch myself and my body takes on a relation with the outside world. 'La voix est l'être auprès de soi dans la forme de l'universalité, comme conscience. La voix est la conscience'¹¹. It is for this reason that speech, since Aristotle, has been thought to enjoy a 'natural' relation to reality, to be expressive of the full and immediate presence of things to our consciousness, whereas writing has tended to be seen as a mere secondary representation resting upon an arbitrary system of signs. But the Valéry text which opens 4A (a text about a voice, remember) ends with an image of consciousness, of what Derrida calls the 'se parler', which suggests that it is anything but fixed and stable, pure and natural. 'Je songe aussi pour finir,' writes Valéry, 'au bruit de soie seul et discret d'un feu qui se consume en créant toute la chambre, et qui se parle, ou qui me parle, presque pour soi'¹². Here, then, the voice is compared to the sound of a fire which is, in turn, referred back to a voice as it 'talks' to itself. Meanwhile, the same sound is compared to silk, a 'bruit de soie'. There is, then, an unstoppable slippage of metaphors from one to the other and back again, with the image of

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène: Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: P.U.F., 1967), p. 89.

¹² Paul Valéry, 'Psaume pour une voix', in *Oeuvres*, ed. by Jean Hytier, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960), II, p. 682.

silk appearing – in its happy rhyme with the ‘soi’ of self – almost as an image of the slipperiness of language itself in its constituent metaphoricity. In addition, the image of the fire consuming itself as it creates an atmosphere recalls another recurring line from *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: ‘L’art est comme l’incendie: il naît de ce qu’il brûle’. The image of fire is of a shapeless, ungraspable entity that grows from its own negation. Cyril Beghin has suggested that if fire is so important as a recurring image in the *Histoire(s)* it is because of its similarity with the elusive nature of cinema itself: there is ‘[une] identité entre le perpétuel devenir du feu et le perpétuel changement des images tenu dans le défilement dans la pellicule’¹³.

Whenever I move outside my immediate consciousness, continues Derrida’s exposition of Husserl, whenever I try to communicate something of my lived experience to another, my communication must necessarily pass through a physical mediation (sound, gesture, etc.), and, argues Derrida:

Cette médiation irréductible engage toute expression dans une opération indicative [...] il y a indication chaque fois que l’acte conférant le sens, l’intention animatrice, la spiritualité vivante du vouloir-dire, n’est pas pleinement présente.¹⁴

This full and immediate presence is not possible in the world, in nature, but only – according to the western metaphysical tradition – in ‘la vie solitaire de l’âme’ where lived experience is ‘immédiatement certain et présent à soi’¹⁵. But, writing elsewhere, Derrida takes issue with this concept of the self as a pure source of some mythical fullness, insisting that the self is not and cannot be present and identical to itself. If all that is not me can be defined as that which appears to me, ‘apparaît comme non-moi à un moi et depuis un moi’, then the self is that which *does not* appear to itself: ‘N’étant jamais à elle-même présente,

¹³ Cyril Beghin, ‘Invention de l’animation’, *Art Press*, hors série, *Le Siècle de Jean-Luc Godard: Guide pour “Histoire(s) du cinéma”* (November 1998), 52-57 (p. 56).

¹⁴ Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène*, p. 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 47.

la source existe à peine'¹⁶. But another kind of *source* (the spring from which water flows) exists in the world, it appears to me. Must we therefore conclude that the source is a metaphor for this 'pure self'? But precisely this pure self 'n'est rien en dehors de ses métaphores', has no existence unless it is transported outside of itself at the instant of its birth. The source always flows away from itself, can never return to itself *as source*. 'Si la conscience pure et le moi pur sont *comme* la source, c'est de ne pouvoir revenir à eux'¹⁷. All language, all signification and expression is similarly a movement outside itself since it is fundamentally constituted as metaphoricity. It is not possible, within language, to separate representation from reality because, whenever I make use of language, 'je dois d'entrée de jeu opérer (dans) une structure de répétition dont l'élément ne peut être que représentatif'¹⁸. The structure of language is the movement of the same outside itself in repetition, but this movement is only possible if we posit an archaic trace as inscribing the absolutely other against which the sign can signify, a trace in which 'le tout autre s'annonce comme tel – sans aucune simplicité, aucune identité, aucune ressemblance ou continuité – dans ce qui n'est pas lui'¹⁹. Western metaphysics has always conceived of the other in relation to being, that is *being present*, but Derrida insists 'Il faut penser la trace avant l'étant' since the trace is what makes possible such oppositions as presence/absence, being/not-being, self/other, what makes possible in fact 'la structure du rapport à l'autre, le mouvement de la temporalisation, et le langage comme écriture'²⁰.

The trace of the influence of Derrida's thought on Godard's work is visible as early as *Le Gai savoir* (1968), made only a year after the publication of *La Voix et le phénomène*, *De la grammatologie* and *L'Écriture et la différence*.

¹⁶ Derrida, 'Qual quelle: Les sources de Valéry', in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 325-363 (p. 334).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-337.

¹⁸ Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène*, p. 55

¹⁹ Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p. 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

In the film, we catch a brief glimpse of the cover of *De la grammatologie* with the word 'savoir' written over the image in red. More important than this direct reference, however, is the evidence that Godard has absorbed Derrida's ideas and used them to fashion a methodology. Taking on board the notion that there can be no natural link between language and truth, and that the assumption of such a link is burdened with a long ideological history, Godard applies the idea to cinema and attempts to question the relationships between image and reality, image and sound, image and text, cinema and language. His students (Jean-Pierre Léaud and Juliet Berto) announce their intention to 'dissoudre des images et des sons'²¹ in an attempt to achieve a kind of 'degré zéro du cinéma'. The students investigate the signifying chain of language by playing word association games with a young boy and an old homeless man. They examine the exteriorisation of the internal voice by playing the old man's words back to him with a tape recorder (a 'drôle de phénomène qui répond', as he calls it). They consider the socialisation of children in language by reading a classroom alphabet ('J'ai faim quand je me mets à table' reads an entry under the letter F; 'Et les enfants du tiers monde qui n'ont pas de table?!' screams Léaud). They demonstrate the detachment of language from truth by having Berto pronounce patent falsehoods ('J'ai 84 ans. Je mesure 90 mètres...'), thereby proving that signifiers can still *make sense* even in the absence of a referent that could act as guarantor of the veracity of that sense. The real heart of language, they discover, is not some privileged relationship to the 'real' world, but the difference structuring the system. Berto: 'Les banques existent pour nous prêter des billets, et les dictionnaires, les mots. Mais ce qui ne s'emprunte pas, c'est la distinction entre tel ou tel billet et tel ou tel mot'. At the end of their course of study, Berto concludes 'C'est un peu le néant qu'on a découvert, non?'

²¹ This idea of dissolving is very dear to Derrida himself. See Gregory L. Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology: Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 57.

Indeed it is. As we suggested above, the structure of language and consciousness, as well as the movement of time itself, can only be thought if we posit first of all the archaic trace of that which is absolutely other to presence and against which presence signifies itself. The western philosophical concept of time is based in the ‘maintenant-présent’, which is ‘l’évidence même, la pensée consciente elle-même, il commande tout concept possible de vérité et de sens’²². But Derrida argues that the presence of the present can only appear as such provided it continually composes with a non-presence and a non-perception. These non-perceptions are essential to the possibility of the perceived present (of the present perception). But to admit this continuity of the now and the not-now, of perception and non-perception, is to accept

la non-présence et l’inévidence dans le *clin d’oeil* [*Augenblick*] de l’instant [...] Cette altérité est même la condition de la présence, de la présentation et donc de la *Vorstellung* en général, avant toutes les dissociations qui pourraient s’y produire.²³

So the possibility of repetition, ‘la trace au sens le plus universel’, constitutes the actuality of the now, of the present, ‘par le mouvement même de la différence qu’elle y introduit’²⁴. The movement of temporality, whereby the now becomes past with the spontaneous generation of another now, is a pure auto-affection in which ‘le même n’est le même qu’en s’affectant de l’autre, en devenant l’autre du même’²⁵. One cannot describe this movement in any terms other than the metaphorical, that is to say in the terms of that which it makes possible. ‘La temporalisation est la racine d’une métaphore qui ne peut être qu’originale’²⁶. So this pure difference reintroduces into auto-affection all the impurity that one wanted to exclude from it. The living present, the presence of the present

²² Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène*, p. 70.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

emerges out of its non-identity with itself. It is always already a trace, that trace which is never simply present but always already engaged in the movement (the *différance*) of signification. As this movement is that of the relation of the intimate to exteriority, to the outside, the temporalisation of sense is a kind of spacing (*espacement*), which suggests that there *is* no absolute interiority, that ‘L’espace est “dans” le temps, il est la pure sortie hors de soi du temps, il est le hors-de-soi comme rapport à soi du temps’²⁷.

Cinema, being an art of space and time, necessarily partakes of this movement of *différance*. In cinema, each image is effaced to be replaced by another and sense is produced through this movement of montage. In the Eisensteinian conception of montage, cinema signifies not so much through the accretion as the *collision* of sense: the juxtaposition of two images produces a third meaning. But, as Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier points out, this movement, this chain of signification can take up the whole of the film and thus prevents the identification (or the production) of a signified, since to do so would be to halt the process: ‘parce que son origine est toujours récusée et partout diffusée, le sens ne peut avoir lieu – ne peut avoir de lieu’²⁸. Sound plays a crucial role in this relay of sense across the film. As Michel Chion remarks, sound in cinema contains a kind of centrifugal force, driving the narrative on as the sense of the film is always moving outside itself: ‘Le son hors-champ provoque dans le plan une *tension vers le futur*, en faisant attendre la réponse que promet le plan suivant ou la suite du même plan’²⁹. But Peter Brunette and David Wills point out that it is not only sound that is responsible for this movement, but elements within the image itself. In a shot/reverse shot formation for instance, the lines of sight always have the potential to overspill, to ‘continue

²⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁸ Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier, *Le Texte divisé: Essai sur l’écriture filmique* (Paris: P.U.F., 1981), p. 49.

²⁹ Michel Chion, *Le Son au cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma/Éditions de l’Étoile, 1985), p. 20.

irredeemably outside of the frame'³⁰. In this way, they argue, the distinction between moving and still images can be collapsed since, even in stills, the lines of force within the image threaten to set it in movement, in relation with another image. After all, the movement, in moving pictures, is not inherent in any individual picture but rather emerges between them, is supplementary to them.

Devoirs d'auteur: Cinema and citation

In the history of philosophy, writing has been seen to serve the purpose of communicating something when the recipient of the message is absent. But, says Derrida, this absence has tended to be conceived 'comme une modification continue, une extension progressive de la présence [...] dans la représentation'³¹. Derrida insists instead that it is a condition of all writing that it must remain readable even in the event of 'la disparition absolue' of any recipient. A piece of writing must remain repeatable – *iterable* - even in the absence of all empirically determinable recipients. 'Une écriture qui ne serait pas structurellement lisible – itérable – par-delà la mort du destinataire ne serait pas une écriture'³². The same is true of the producer of a text. Writing remains readable in the event of the absence or death of the author, or indeed if it is disowned by the writer who claims not have intended its meaning, 'cela même qui semble s'être écrit "en son nom"'³³.

So a written sign is a mark which remains and which can be repeated in the absence of its producer. By virtue of this fact, a written sign contains 'une force de rupture avec son contexte'³⁴, that is it is capable of breaking with the moment of its inscription without losing its ability to function, and capable of functioning differently when inserted into a new syntagmatic chain. But these

³⁰ Peter Brunette and David Wills, *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 108.

³¹ Derrida, 'Signature, événement, contexte', in *Marges de la philosophie*, pp. 365-393 (pp. 372-373).

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 374-375.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

qualities of the written sign apply just as well to spoken communication and, suggests Derrida, ‘à la limite dans la totalité de l’“expérience” en tant qu’elle ne se sépare pas de ce champ de la marque’³⁵. Any sign, written or spoken, linguistic or non-linguistic, may be *cited* and

par là il peut rompre avec tout contexte donné, engendrer à l’infini de nouveaux contextes, de façon absolument non saturable. Cela ne suppose pas que la marque vaut hors contexte, mais au contraire qu’il n’y a que des contextes sans aucun centre d’ancrage absolu. Cette citationnalité, cette duplication ou duplicité, cette itérabilité de la marque n’est pas un accident ou une anomalie, c’est ce (normal/anormal) sans quoi une marque ne pourrait même plus avoir de fonctionnement dit ‘normal’.³⁶

This conception of citation can allow us to see Godard’s work in a new light, and particularly his late work which, as we know, is full of quotations from the history of cinema, literature, painting, music and philosophy. But, moreover, we can begin to see this practice of quotation as simply an extension of the citational logic of cinema itself. Jacques Aumont suggests that the principle of cinema (indeed of any art, but especially cinema) lies in the citation of reality:

Citer, c’est convoquer le réel, le réel tout entier; monter, c’est le transformer, le remodeler, le refaire selon d’autres régularités, d’autres possibles. C’est en faire un autre réel – qui soit pourtant le même.³⁷

Peter Brunette and David Wills have looked at this question from an explicitly Derridean perspective. They recall that, in the traditional realist conception of cinema, and notably for Bazin, cinema bears the ‘imprint’ of reality. But, ‘as reality imprints itself upon the image, it must also necessarily imprint itself as different from itself’³⁸ and, paradoxically, appears even ‘less’ real by virtue of its

³⁵ Ibid., p. 378.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 381.

³⁷ Aumont, *Amnésies*, p. 194.

³⁸ Brunette and Wills, *Screen/Play*, p. 68.

closeness to that reality. In other words, 'If [the image] is a repetition of the model, it can have no value in itself; but if it is not a simple repetition, it is not a faithful copy'³⁹. Thus it is *difference* and not similarity that constitutes the film image. If, on the other hand, realism is taken to mean a form that reveals the truth of reality, we run into a similar problem. 'For if reality equals truth, what need is there for cinema? Reality thus doubles with truth to exclude cinema, whereas the whole point of realism was to tie reality to cinema in simple material effect'⁴⁰. Thus the very notion of an originally intact 'reality' preceding the representation is called into question.

If, however, the image is conceived as *writing*, then one has to concede that it can function in the absence of that reality, just as an utterance can function in the absence of its producer, or indeed in the absence of its referent: it can still make sense in the face of this absence, indeed this absence opens up the possibility of its making sense, such is the function of iterability that lies behind any representation.

If the image is a trace, it is the mark of an absence, and if there is something privileged about it in comparison to other representations, its privilege is to show more clearly than those other forms how systematically in our culture, whenever absence comes into relation with presence, by some trick of magic the latter always asserts itself at the expense of the former.⁴¹

As a form of writing, then, film is subject to the same vagaries, the same principles of dissemination, the same supplementary meaning as the letter. And indeed, the very nature of the film-making process proceeds through the construction of a considerable *remainder*. The founding of cinema in montage means that the creative process performs an act of material *over*production before constructing the final film through a paradoxical process of excision. In

³⁹ Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 75-76.

fact, the whole complicated procedure of fabricating a film involves, at each step along the way – exposure, developing, printing, editing, projection, perception – a complex interplay between the presence and absence of the image on the film strip, on the cinema screen, and on the spectator’s consciousness.

Although he may not couch his arguments in the same terms we have been using here, Godard’s recent work, and his statements about and around that work, have consistently demonstrated an understanding of the *inevitability* of citation incumbent upon anyone who undertakes a work of representation. Godard is fond of claiming that he doesn’t invent anything in his films, but merely assembles things⁴² and he said of *Nouvelle Vague*, ‘Ce n’est pas moi qui ai fait le film. Je n’en suis que l’organisateur conscient’⁴³. Although his recent films, in some cases, are made up almost entirely of quotations, he rarely attributes them, wary of his films becoming exercises in ‘connaissance livresque’ or resembling spot-the-quotation television quiz shows.⁴⁴ He is adamant that the images quoted in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* should not necessarily recall their source and has stated that he would be happy to go to court and defend his film ‘pour faire jurisprudence’⁴⁵. When it comes to the question of copyright (in French ‘droits d’auteur’), Godard’s approach – ironically appropriating a conservative argument that duty precedes rights – has repeatedly been to replace the word ‘droit’ with ‘devoir’, suggesting that issues of authorship and quotation should not be a question of ‘rights’ but of *duty*. When asked by others for permission to quote his work, Godard replies ‘Non seulement vous avez le droit mais vous avez le devoir de le faire’⁴⁶ but insists that only his work, and not his name, be used (if

⁴² See ‘Le cinéma est fait pour penser l’impensable’, in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 294-299 (p. 297).

⁴³ ‘Tout ce qui est divisé m’a toujours beaucoup touché’, *ibid.*, pp. 200-203 (p. 201).

⁴⁴ ‘Le bon plaisir de Jean-Luc Godard’, *ibid.*, pp. 305-322 (p. 312).

⁴⁵ ‘Une boucle bouclée’, *ibid.*, pp. 9-41 (p. 32).

⁴⁶ This play on ‘droit’ and ‘devoir’ occurs in other contexts as well. Speaking about the *Nouvelle Vague*, Godard remembers, ‘Nous découvrons le droit de faire nos devoirs sans pour autant aller en classe’ (*Histoire(s) du cinéma: A propos de cinéma et d’histoire*, *ibid.*, pp. 401-405, p. 401) and, in *Éloge de l’amour*, when a character talks about the ‘devoir de mémoire’, he is told, ‘Non, pas le devoir, le droit. La mémoire n’a aucun devoir, lisez Bergson’. In *Le Rapport Darty*, after

the other party insists on using his name, he asks for the money he is owed to be paid to Amnesty International⁴⁷). Jonathan Rosenbaum has stressed the subversive nature of this gesture which suggests that film history and criticism belong to us, that is to say 'to everyone today with a VCR' rather than to the state (which Rosenbaum identifies quite unequivocally with Disney!). With his *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Godard is proposing an appropriation of film history, encouraging in us the duty to take it back from the entertainment conglomerates that hold its 'rights' (and Rosenbaum proposes a slogan: 'Paramount belongs to us'⁴⁸).

An example of Godard's creative quotation might be the Élie Faure sequence from 4A. As we mentioned briefly earlier, this text, arranged from a passage in Faure's *Histoire de l'art* on Rembrandt, substitutes for the name of the artist the words 'le cinéma', thereby proving Derrida's point about the ability of a signifier to be detached from its context and reinscribed within a new syntagmatic chain, taking on new meanings. The substitution works remarkably well, with the qualities attributed to Rembrandt attaching themselves happily to the cinema. Cinema, it is noted, like Rembrandt, follows human life from cradle to grave: 'Il suit notre marche à la mort aux traces de sang qui la marquent'⁴⁹. But most striking is a lengthy passage in which Faure argues that perhaps Rembrandt's best work was accomplished 'quand il n'a[vait] pour instrument de travail que le noir et le blanc'⁵⁰ and his art was reduced to a simple, timeless drama of light and shade.⁵¹ The parallels with cinema here are obvious, although

some of the more provocative sequences, Miéville asks, 'Avons-nous le droit de dire tout cela? Oui, nous l'avons, et le *devoir*.'

⁴⁷ 'Parler du manque', *ibid.*, pp. 360-379 (pp. 373-374).

⁴⁸ Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'Trailer for Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*', p. 20. Rosenbaum is of course making his own quasi-quotation here, evoking the title of Jacques Rivette's debut feature, *Paris nous appartient* (1961).

⁴⁹ Élie Faure, *Histoire de l'art: L'art moderne I* (Paris: Denoël, coll. Folio essais, 1987), p. 109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101. Godard is obliged to elide a little of Faure's text here: the original reads, 'quand il n'a pour tous instruments de travail que sa pointe d'acier, sa plaque de cuivre, son acide, rien que le noir et le blanc...'

⁵¹ It is from this passage in Faure that the frequently cited sentence we noted in chapter 1 originates: 'Ce qui plonge dans la lumière est le retentissement de ce que submerge la nuit. Ce que submerge la nuit prolonge dans l'invisible ce qui plonge dans la lumière' (p. 101). The lines

the cinema's relationship with light and darkness goes considerably deeper than the simple monochrome stock it relied upon for its first thirty or forty years. The play of light and dark in film can be read in terms of the complicity between presence and absence which makes the image possible in the first place. As Brunette and Wills point out, the notion of the film frame contains within it a structural absence constituting the film since it is the border between frames, in conjunction with the action of the shutter – in other words it is a momentary non-presence - that permits vision to take place. In addition, the film frame exists for the viewer on the screen by virtue of the constitution of a non-frame, an outside of the frame around it. But this outside is in fact created out of precisely the same matter as the inside of the frame, that is to say light, the diffusion of light from the projector.⁵² As Brunette has written elsewhere, 'we literally could not even *see* the cinematic image unless it were, through the operation of the shutter, just as often *not* there'⁵³. This adds a further, and perhaps more empirical, significance, to the Blanchot quotation which we discussed in chapter 1 and which Godard quotes at the end of 4B: 'Oui, l'image est bonheur, - mais près d'elle le néant séjourne...'

Ce qui reste d'Hitchcock

In order to explore this question of quotation further and to consider its implications for cinematic creation, I propose to examine in detail the sequence in 4A which is sandwiched between the Rougemont and Faure texts, namely Godard's homage to Alfred Hitchcock. As I will refer very specifically to

are given extra emphasis in 4A by another flurry of strings from Kancheli's *Abii ne viderem*. These sentences, which are already somewhat obscure in Faure's text, when detached from their context become a kind of all-purpose evocation of the play of light and dark that is constitutive of cinema. In the original text, they refer to Rembrandt at the end of his life whom Faure imagines happy to live in squalor since the slightest ray of light serves to remind him of all the marvellous things he has seen in his life.

⁵² Brunette and Wills, *Screen/Play*, p. 104.

⁵³ Peter Brunette, 'Post-structuralism and deconstruction', in Hill and Gibson (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, pp. 91-95 (p. 93).

various aspects of this sequence, I have set out in the table below the complete text of Godard's voiceover together with a brief description of the images that accompany this text. I specify all of the films alluded to in the voiceover, as well as all those cited on screen.

Voiceover text	Images
On a oublié pourquoi Joan Fontaine se penche au bord de la falaise (<i>Suspicion</i> , 1941)	Grainy black and white close-up of Hitchcock's face
Et qu'est-ce que (<i>sic</i>) Joel McCrea s'en allait faire en Hollande (<i>Foreign Correspondent</i> , 1940)	<i>Psycho</i> (1960): view from Marion Crane (Janet Leigh)'s rearview mirror as she is pursued by a police car
On a oublié à propos de quoi Montgomery Clift garde un silence éternel (<i>I Confess</i> , 1953)	<i>Dial M for Murder</i> (1954): Captain Swan Lesgate (Anthony Dawson) attempts to strangle Margot Wendice (Grace Kelly) over a telephone table
Et pourquoi Janet Leigh s'arrête au Bates motel (<i>Psycho</i>)	<i>North by Northwest</i> (1959): a small crowd of people watches a burning tanker truck
Et pourquoi Teresa Wright est encore amoureuse d'oncle Charlie (<i>Shadow of a Doubt</i> , 1943)	<i>Foreign Correspondent</i> : the sails of a windmill begin to turn in the opposite direction
On a oublié de quoi Henry Fonda n'est pas entièrement coupable (<i>The Wrong Man</i> , 1956)	<i>Suspicion</i> : John Aysgarth (Cary Grant) carries a glass of milk into close-up
Et pourquoi exactement le gouvernement américain...	<i>Marnie</i> (1964): in close-up, Marnie (Tippi Hedren) pushes a key down a drain with her toe
... engage Ingrid Bergman (<i>Notorious</i> , 1946)	<i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i> (1934): close-up of a musical score
Mais, on se souvient d'un sac à main (<i>Marnie</i>); mais, on se souvient d'un autocar dans le désert (<i>North by Northwest</i>); mais, on se souvient d'un verre de lait (<i>Suspicion</i>), des ailes d'un moulin (<i>Foreign Correspondent</i>), d'une brosse à cheveux (<i>The Wrong Man</i>)	<i>Notorious</i> : scene in the wine cellar: a bottle of Pommery falls from a shelf in slow motion and smashes on the floor spilling a strange dust; Alicia Huberman (Ingrid Bergman), hearing the noise, looks over her shoulder
Mais, on se souvient d'une rangée de bouteilles (<i>Notorious</i>)	<i>Strangers on a Train</i> (1951): in close-up, Bruno Anthony (Robert Walker)'s murder of Miriam Haines (Laura Elliott) is reflected in a pair of spectacles
D'une paire de lunettes (<i>Strangers on a Train</i>), d'une partition de musique (<i>The Man Who Knew Too Much</i>)	<i>Marnie</i> : in close-up, Marnie washes the black dye out of her hair
D'un trousseau de clés (<i>Notorious</i>)	<i>Vertigo</i> (1958): close-up on the curl of

	Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak)'s hair
Parce qu'avec eux, et à travers eux, Alfred Hitchcock réussit...	<i>Strangers on a Train</i> : Bruno Anthony's hand reaches through a drain, grasping for the lighter he has dropped
... là où échouèrent Alexandre, Jules César, Hitler, Napoléon	<i>Marnie</i> : opening shot: Marnie shot from behind walking along a train station platform carrying a yellow handbag, the bag moving out from a close-up
Prendre le contrôle de l'univers [followed by silence]	<i>The Wrong Man</i> : Rose Balestrero (Vera Miles) seizes a hairbrush to strike Manny (Henry Fonda); <i>Psycho</i> : view from Marion Crane's windscreen in heavy rain; shower scene: Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins)'s arm stabbing downwards, counter-shot of knife against Marion's stomach, close-up of her feet as blood drains away; <i>Suspicion</i> : Lina peers over the cliff edge; <i>Vertigo</i> : Madeleine floats in San Francisco bay
Peut-être que dix mille personnes n'ont pas oublié la pomme de Cézanne, mais c'est un milliard de spectateurs qui se souviendront du briquet de <i>L'Inconnu du Nord-Express</i> (<i>Strangers on a Train</i>)	<i>Strangers on a Train</i> : from opening sequence: the feet of Bruno Anthony and Guy Haines (Farley Granger) walking along the platform dissolve into train tracks shot from a moving train
Et si Alfred Hitchcock a été le seul poète maudit à rencontrer le succès, c'est parce qu'il a été le plus grand...	<i>Notorious</i> : Alicia Hubermann drops a key on the floor
... créateur de formes du vingtième siècle et que ce sont les formes...	<i>To Catch a Thief</i> (1954): fireworks
... qui nous disent finalement ce qu'il y a au fond des choses.	<i>To Catch a Thief</i> : John Robie (Cary Grant) and Frances Stevens (Grace Kelly) kiss
Or, qu'est-ce que l'art sinon ce par quoi...	<i>To Catch a Thief</i> : fireworks
... les formes deviennent style, et qu'est-ce que le style, sinon l'homme?	<i>Vertigo</i> : John Ferguson (James Stewart) and Madeleine Elster kiss

This text seems to suggest that what we remember from Hitchcock's films is not narratives but a series of objects, or at least a few privileged images of specific objects. This argument has come in for criticism from Jacques Rancière who paraphrases it thus: in Godard's analysis, Hitchcock's cinema 'est fait d'images dont la puissance est indifférente aux histoires dans lesquelles elles

sont enchaînées'⁵⁴. Rancière insists, on the contrary, that, if we remember these objects, it is only because they carry an emotional charge born precisely of their *narrative* situation. This argument deserves to be considered in some detail. Rancière gives the example of the bottles from *Notorious*. If we remember these bottles, he says, it is not for any inherent quality in the bottles themselves, but because of the tension of the scene in which Alicia and Devlin (Cary Grant) hunt for the uranium hidden in a bottle of Pommery whilst Alicia's husband (Claude Rains) entertains above them, the declining levels of champagne upstairs threatening to necessitate a trip to the wine cellar that would expose our heroes. There are several points to be made here. It is one thing to remember the very specific *tension* of this scene generated by intercutting between the party and the cellar; it is quite another to remember why Alicia came to South America or how Ingrid Bergman came to be married to Claude Rains but searching a cellar with Cary Grant. Thus, even though it may be the narrative situation that generates the tension, it is perfectly possible to remember a scene or an image in the absence of that narrative information.⁵⁵ Godard never says that Hitchcock's images are 'indifferent' to the stories they tell. He does not suggest that we never knew or cared about these stories, only that we have forgotten them ('on a oublié...') and, on that point, it is difficult to argue with him. After all, why does Rancière provide a footnote 'pour rafraîchir les mémoires sur les allusions de Godard'⁵⁶, unless Godard is right and we have, indeed, forgotten these plot details? Revealingly, this footnote contains a couple of errors or misremembered details on Rancière's part: he identifies the 'sac à main' mentioned by Godard as belonging to Marion Crane, and yet the handbag we see in 4A belongs to Marnie

⁵⁴ Jacques Rancière, *La Fable cinématographique*, p. 218.

⁵⁵ Similarly, we may remember the 'Ce qui plonge dans la lumière...' line from Faure even though we are not entirely sure what it means, or though we may never have read Faure; we may be able to recite the first stanza of Hauff's 'Reiters Morgengesang' purely from the memory of Eddie Constantine's intonation, even though we have only a vague sense of what the German words mean...

⁵⁶ Rancière, *La Fable cinématographique*, p. 218, n. 2.

who, like Marion, uses it to keep stolen money in.⁵⁷ This raises another problem: we may well remember details but not remember which films (or at least which Hitchcock films) they come from. Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* frequently play on the unreliability of memory, as demonstrated by all the *erreurs* Godard chooses to leave in the final version of 3A. And the Hitchcock sequence in 4A is only too willing to exploit these slips of memory. Given the cine-literate audience that the *Histoire(s)* doubtless attract, it is likely that most spectators will recognise *some* of Godard's visual and verbal allusions to Hitchcock, but unlikely that they will be able to identify or remember *all* of them (at least on initial viewings). This confusion is exploited by Godard who deliberately chooses certain ambiguous motifs that could be taken from various films. The handbag is one example; keys are another. The 'trousseau de clés' Godard mentions is doubtless a reference to *Notorious*, and indeed we see an image of a key from this film. But we also see a key from *Marnie* and the spectator may in addition be reminded of the keys which are equally important to the complicated intrigue of *Dial M for Murder*, even though they are not actually shown in this sequence.

If this mixing-up of Hitchcock's films is facilitated by Godard's montage, it is because there is a disjunction between text and images in this sequence. In very few cases does the image on screen refer to the same scene, or even the same film, that Godard mentions at any given moment. In a couple of cases (the bottles from *Notorious*, the glasses from *Strangers on a Train*), image and text appear close together, almost in the tradition of the relay of sense in classical narrative cinema where sound calls up the next image. But here, it is the image which appears first with the textual allusion following close behind. Where the

⁵⁷ Rancière also identifies the 'autocar dans le désert' as 'celui qu'attend Roger Thornhill', which is also incorrect: Thornhill is *dropped off* by a bus; he is *waiting* for a contact with information about the mysterious George Kaplan. But *North by Northwest* is also the site of misremembering by Godard himself, since this is not the 'desert' at all, but rather the prairies of the American mid-west. Thornhill, after all, takes refuge from a crop-duster plane in a corn field, two things rarely found in the desert!

textual referent and the iconic referent are distanced from each other, it is possible to see new relations developing between the two, the text seeming to confer new meaning upon the image or vice versa. Thus, if Godard is right and we do not remember the narrative details of Hitchcock's films, then, judging by the beginning of this sequence, we might be tempted to believe that it is Joel McCrea driving Marion Crane's car; or that Montgomery Clift is keeping quiet about the murder of Grace Kelly; or that Henry Fonda is 'not entirely guilty' of poisoning his wife with a glass of milk.

Rancière argues that, by removing these images from their original context and recombining them, Godard creates a kind of 'anti-montage' and transforms the images into 'icônes de la présence originaire des choses'⁵⁸. According to Rancière, with this sequence from 4A we have the sense that the images emerge out of an 'arrière-monde des images', a 'sensorium originaire' composed of an infinite number of images and all able to combine with each other in an infinite number of ways. Here we are approaching the fundamental subject of Rancière's book. *La Fable cinématographique* traces what Rancière calls 'la dialectique constitutive du cinéma': the art of cinema is born out of a 'combinaison d'un regard d'artiste qui décide et d'un regard machinique qui enregistre'⁵⁹. The cinematic image is thus always an ambiguous entity: a passive reality which is complete in itself is selected and framed by the active intervention of the filmmaker and subsequently placed into new relations with other realities. However, since this reality speaks in and for itself, the filmmaker can never be entirely in control of the meaning thereby produced. The art of cinema is thus a continual spiral of give and take between a reality that is expressive *in and of itself* and a filmmaker who organises that reality *in order that it may express itself*. Rancière thus takes issue with those film critics and theorists whom he sees as privileging one aspect of this relationship above the

⁵⁸ Rancière, *La Fable cinématographique*, p. 221.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 205.

other, particularly the autonomous expressivity of images over the organising activity of the filmmaker. He accuses both Deleuze and Godard of performing this operation with regard to Hitchcock: Deleuze overstates the symbolic importance of paralysis in Hitchcock's heroes to illustrate his teleological argument about the transition from the movement-image of 'classical' cinema to the time-image of 'modern' cinema; Godard underestimates the importance of Hitchcock's narrative construction in asserting the unique claim of certain privileged images to our memory.

But, if we have no problem with Rancière's overall argument about the fundamental duality of cinema, there seems nonetheless to be an injustice about his application of this argument to Godard. For Rancière ultimately says nothing different to what Godard says himself and he is therefore guilty of presenting as a critique what is essentially only a commentary, that is to say an argument that differs only in its terms, not in its substance. For the point of Godard's homage is surely that, if we remember certain key images from Hitchcock, it is because of the strength of his montage. It is not the details of narrative that cause us to remember certain images so much as the organisation of montage sequences, as in the example of the dramatic cross-cutting between party and cellar in *Notorious*. And this is surely what Godard means when, echoing the conclusion of Rohmer and Chabrol's book on the director, he describes Hitchcock as 'le plus grand créateur de formes du vingtième siècle'⁶⁰ and suggests that this manipulation of forms allowed him to 'prendre le contrôle de l'univers'.

Given that this phrase ('Le contrôle de l'univers') gives 4A its title, it seems a little ironic that this, the conclusion of Godard's homage, should be forgotten in discussions of the sequence. But, in a dizzying kind of *mise en abyme*, what seems to be happening here is that Godard's sequence is meeting the same fate as Hitchcock's films. So, just as Hitchcock's narratives are forgotten in favour of a handful of key images whose importance is granted by

⁶⁰ See Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *Hitchcock* (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1957), p. 159.

their place in a narrative but which are nonetheless remembered as significant *in themselves*, so too the tribute that Godard pays to Hitchcock's skill as a filmmaker is rather overshadowed by his own montage of those same images which, once again, are assumed to be meaningful *in themselves*. Ironically, then, Godard demonstrates Hitchcock's skill in a montage which repeats its effect. The spectator tends to overlook Godard's conclusion and assume that this is just a collection of images that are somehow *inherently* evocative. Why does this happen? Partly because of Godard's masterful organisation of this sequence. Rancière mentions the disjunction between text and image and the separation of the images with strips of black leader, but he shows no appreciation of the rhetorical strategy by which Godard divides his text into two distinct halves around the forcefully repeated conjunction '*Mais*', thereby focusing attention on to the apparently either-or opposition of narrative *versus* image. Nor is Rancière attuned to the use of Kancheli's music in this sequence, which builds steadily throughout the first half of the text, ingeniously matched to the close-up pan across a musical score from *The Man Who Knew Too Much* as it reaches a mini-climax before dropping into quiet again before the first, decisive '*Mais*'. (Later, as the strings reach another high-pitched crescendo, they will serve irresistibly to recall Bernard Herrmann's music for *Psycho*, just as the shower scene appears on screen.)

By creating a kind of caesura to balance his sequence, Godard thus focuses attention on the opposing poles (narrative/images) of his argument, rather than on its wider sense (montage, form). In addition, though, our attention is drawn to these key Hitchcockian images by the impression of embryonic narratives and micro-networks of signification that they seem to be generating, almost miraculously, amongst themselves. Consider, for instance, the keys we mentioned earlier. Godard quotes a shot of Marnie pushing a key down a drain, a scene which, in the film, is relatively unimportant and unlikely to be remembered (having stolen some money from her employer, Marnie hides the

trappings of her false identity in a suitcase which she puts in a locker before disposing of the key and we never see or hear of it again). But Godard seems to quote the shot because of the ease with which it enters into relation with other elements in the sequence: it is matched by the key that Alicia Hubermann drops in *Notorious* whilst, when Bruno Anthony puts his hand down the drain in *Strangers on a Train*, we might believe he were searching for Marnie's key, were it not for the fact that one scene is in colour and the other black and white. Similarly, the shot of Marnie washing the dye out of her hair seems to call up the following close-up of Madeleine's curl, evoking a neat symmetry: Marnie begins her film a brunette and ends up blonde; Kim Novak, in *Vertigo*, does the reverse. An association around water is developed between the rain and the shower of *Psycho*, the crashing waves of *Suspicion* and Madeleine's plunge into San Francisco Bay. This juxtaposition also answers Godard's question of why Janet Leigh stops at the Bates motel (because it is raining), and so further demonstrates Hitchcock's mastery of form: we may not remember Marion's reason for stopping, but we remember the shower scene which, with its visual echo of the driving rain outside, adds a sense of fatality to Marion's trajectory. Marnie's hair-washing also connects with this scene since, with her arm barely visible in the corner of the frame, the black dye against the white porcelain might be mistaken for Marion's blood in the shower.

The whole sequence demonstrates, then, how images can be detached from their context and yet still be made to signify, how they contain a remainder of significance which can be placed back into circulation with a new series of signifiers. We cannot be sure to what extent these micro-networks were planned by Godard and to what extent they emerged *as if of their own accord* from this combination of images. And it is precisely this uncertainty, or this trade-off, between the filmmaker's conscious organisational activity and the unexpected and uncontrollable signifying process thereby set in motion that constitutes cinema. It is only thanks to Hitchcock's understanding of montage that we

remember certain images, certain objects from his films, but, once these images come into contact with other images in the perception or the memory of a spectator, they must necessarily escape to some degree from Hitchcock's control to enter into new and unforeseen relations and signifying patterns. All images are *quotable*, they may be endlessly repeated and combined in new ways, but it is the particular instance of quotation, the particular arrangement of signs in a given moment that is singular. This bundle of images – the keys, the bottles, the handbag, the glass of milk – does not take the same form, does not signify in the same way in Hitchcock's montage as it does in Godard's, any more than it would have precisely the same meaning in my memory as it would in yours. Each new inscription of a quotation is irreducibly singular. As Godard puts it, 'qu'est-ce que l'art sinon ce par quoi les formes deviennent style, et qu'est-ce que le style, sinon l'homme?' In the second half of this chapter, we will pursue these questions further by considering the compatibility of this citational aesthetic with a certain autobiographical discourse in late Godard and we will examine the ways in which a self can only be constructed through – or, better, *in memory of* – the other.

4.2

‘On les connaît, c’est un de ces marchands de fin du monde, on en voit beaucoup depuis quelque temps; comme si ça pouvait me faire quelque chose, à moi, que le monde finisse ou non.’

- C. F. Ramuz, *Les Signes parmi nous*¹

I am Legend: Godard and the *autoportrait*

Next to 1A, chapter 4B of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, ‘Les Signes parmi nous’, is perhaps the most dense and difficult part of the whole film. But, if the spectator initially despairs at penetrating the mysteries of this thick river of images and sounds, repeated viewings do permit the identification or isolation of sequences as coherent units of sense just as in 1A, and in fact much of this last chapter works to restate and summarise much of the material presented in earlier sections of the work.

The opening dedication to 4B, ‘A Anne-Marie Miéville... et à moi-même’, suggests that this will be the most personal episode of the *Histoire(s)* for Godard, perhaps even the most autobiographical. Although it is 1994’s *JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de décembre* that is recognised as Godard’s ‘autoportrait’, it would be a somewhat artificial and reductive gesture to separate this work from the more general tendency towards self-portraiture in late Godard. As Julie Dior points out, ‘il n’y a presque pas de différence entre les autres films de Godard qui tendent déjà vers l’autoportrait et cet autoportrait dans *JLG/JLG*’² since the latter work offers no more psychological depth than any of Godard’s other films. Raymond Bellour agrees, arguing that, in Godard’s work,

la dimension de l’autoportrait se déploie globalement, comme une sorte de couche constitutive, de mouvement interne, assurant la circulation entre deux grands principes opposés: une rhétorique de la pédagogie et de la

¹ C.F. Ramuz, *Les Signes parmi nous*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, IX, 7-134 (p. 14).

² Julie Dior, ‘A la poursuite du je: *JLG/JLG*’, *Cinémathèque*, 12 (Autumn 1997), 25-33 (p. 30).

(re)fondation du monde (...); un désir de mythes et de fictions.³

The notion of the 'autoportrait' under discussion here has been most comprehensively elaborated by Michel Beaujour.⁴ Beaujour suggests that the autoportrait gains its coherence from a series of relations and correspondences between homologous elements and is thus constructed according to principles of anachronic juxtaposition or montage. The autoportrait is not a totalising form since its end is not given in advance, unlike the traditional autobiography which follows a strict chronology from birth to the present moment of writing. The autoportrait thus tells not 'what I have done' but 'who I am'. What we get in *JLG/JLG*, for instance, is not a recounting of Godard's life but a portrait, in the words of Marie-Françoise Grange, of 'un artiste au travail', 'une pensée en train de se faire'⁵. In this chapter, then, we will attempt to explicate something of the structure and sense of 4B by seeing how it, and related films, work to produce an autoportrait of Godard. In the process, we will discover that the most abiding impression from a film preoccupied with endings is that of an artist at work, whose oeuvre is not over but rather a work in progress.

Beaujour suggests that the autoportrait relies on the found object which is given a self-descriptive sense by the writer. Yet the writer of the autoportrait never really knows where his text is going: it is rather his cultural tradition that provides him with the categories around which his autoportrait is organised: virtues and vices, likes and dislikes, the five senses, and so on. Consider how Godard has so often organised his films like lists or taxonomies, dividing them into chapters, sections and fragments, from the 'film en douze tableaux' of *Vivre sa vie* (1962) to the '23 exercices de pensée artistique' of *The Old Place* (1998).

³ Raymond Bellour, 'Autoportraits', *Communications*, 48 (1988), 327-387 (p. 384).

⁴ See Michel Beaujour, *Miroirs d'encre: Rhétorique de l'autoportrait* (Paris: Seuil, 1980). We will adopt the term 'autoportrait' in the rest of this chapter to avoid confusion with the English 'self-portrait'.

⁵ Marie-Françoise Grange, 'Images d'artiste', in Delavaud et al, *Godard et le métier d'artiste*, pp. 97-108 (p. 105). Remember that *La Chinoise* described itself as 'un film en train de se faire'.

Remember, too, the preponderance of numbers in Godard's titles, from *Deux ou trois choses* to *One plus one*, from *Six fois deux* to *Deux fois cinquante ans...*

The writer of the autoportrait finds herself caught between the absolutely personal (her own death) and the absolutely impersonal: the categories of understanding that are at large in society and the language through which they are mediated and disseminated. The autoportrait is thus always 'l'entrelacement d'une anthropologie et d'une thanatographie'⁶. Julie Dior notes the occurrence of clichés and commonplaces in *JLG/JLG* like the equation of a human life with the duration of a day or the cycle of the seasons. At one point, too, we see a weeping willow as Godard is talking about his grief.⁷ But this rendering banal is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the expression of the personal in the impersonality of language. As Jacques Derrida remarks, the subjects that are the most difficult to talk about are those that are closest to us 'parce que le propre disparaîtrait dans le commun, parce que la structure spongieuse du signe épongerait le nom propre dont il voudrait parler, dont il voudrait signer'⁸. Godard recognises as much when, at the end of *JLG/JLG*, he quotes a text by Brice Parain about the necessary universality of language:

Lorsqu'on s'exprime, on dit toujours plus qu'on ne veut
puisqu'on croit exprimer l'individuel et qu'on dit
l'universel. J'ai froid. C'est moi qui dis 'J'ai froid', mais
ce n'est pas moi que l'on entend. J'ai disparu entre ces
deux moments de ma parole. Il ne reste plus de moi que
l'homme qui a froid, et cet homme appartient à tous.

Our use of language to express ourselves thus reveals our dispossession and death. As Derrida points out, this is most immediately true of our own name. A person's name always survives, always has the possibility of surviving their

⁶ Beaujour, *Miroirs d'encre*, p. 13.

⁷ Dior, 'A la poursuite du je', p. 32. Similarly the journey of life symbolised by Baudelaire's 'Le Voyage' is incarnated in 2A by Julie Delpy's passage through a typical day.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Signéponge/Signsponge*, with a translation by Richard Rand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 101.

death. Thus, even while a person is still alive, their name ‘*lui survit déjà* [...], disant et portant sa mort chaque fois qu’il est prononcé’⁹. And, once the person is dead, all we have left is the memory and the name, which suggests that the two are somehow intimately linked: the name is always already ‘in memory of’. Death reveals, then, that the proper name can always – and has always been able to – be repeated in the absence of its bearer, and it therefore appears that it is not ‘proper’ at all, but a perfectly *common* name, as common as the shifter ‘I’ ‘qui pourtant veut dire le rapport à soi d’une intériorité’¹⁰. Writing elsewhere about Friedrich Nietzsche’s own autoportrait, *Ecce Homo*, Derrida suggests that one opens, in one’s name, a certain credit (indeed, an *uncertain* credit: ‘démésuré’) but, as Nietzsche admits in the preface to *Ecce Homo*, one can never know, during one’s lifetime, whether this credit will be honoured. So the life that he relates in his autoportrait only belongs to him ‘sous l’effet d’un contrat secret’, it is only a kind of pre-judgement, or a death sentence since ‘elle [l’anticipation risquée] ne pourra se vérifier qu’au moment où le porteur du nom, celui qu’on appelle par préjugé un vivant, sera mort’¹¹.

In *Ecce Homo* (a title that appears, as we saw, in *Histoire(s)* 1A), Nietzsche famously compared himself to Christ and Beaujour suggests that, if the autoportrait so frequently deals in myths of resurrection and resuscitation (he cites also Malraux’s *Izare*), it is because of ‘le paradoxe de l’autoportrait qui assure une survie à *personne*, de telle sorte que personne ne s’y représente jamais, du moins dans la particularité d’un corps unique, et irremplaçable’¹². The autoportrait must deal at some level with this particular, contingent body since it is always situated between ‘l’incarnation individuelle et le lieu commun’¹³. But the author of the autoportrait can never establish a direct,

⁹ Derrida, *Mémoires: pour Paul de Man* (Paris: Galilée, 1988), p. 63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹ Derrida, ‘Otobiographie de Nietzsche’, in *L’Oreille de l’autre: Otobiographies, transferts, traductions – Textes et débats avec Jacques Derrida*, ed. by Claude Lévesque and Christie V. McDonald (Montreal: VLB, 1982), pp. 11-56 (p. 21).

¹² Beaujour, *Miroirs d’encre*, p. 303.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

immediate relationship with his body because it is always mediated through language or images. As Roland Barthes notes in his own autoportrait:

Vous êtes le seul à ne pouvoir jamais vous voir qu'en image, vous ne voyez jamais vos yeux, sinon abêtis par le regard qu'ils posent sur le miroir ou sur l'objectif (il m'intéresserait seulement de voir mes yeux quand ils te regardent): même et surtout pour votre corps, vous êtes condamnés à l'imaginaire.¹⁴

This perhaps explains why, in Godard's 'self-portrait', his own body is so stubbornly refused to the gaze of the spectator. Almost never filmed frontally, Godard's body in *JLG/JLG* is repeatedly shot from behind ('shot in the back' as *King Lear* puts it) or in profile and concealed in semi- or complete darkness. We see Godard's form silhouetted against a table lamp or walking in the murky half-light of dusk; he is filmed with his head in his hands or his face concealed by the brim of a hat. In this way, notes Marie-Françoise Grange, Godard's body becomes just one more compositional element in the shot, the shot being the main criterion of organisation in the film, over and above any concern for narrative.

Par l'ombre qui le dissimule totalement ou partiellement, Godard est un élément qui s'incorpore dans une organisation plastique et non un corps qui se modèle ou se détache dans un espace qui le mettrait en scène.¹⁵

Godard gives his body to cinema, his body becomes cinema, in what Grange sees as a clear demonstration of the particular becoming general, becoming universal in the autoportrait.

At the beginning of *JLG/JLG*, Godard shows us a close-up of a grainy, highly contrasted photo of himself as a small boy. This image is intercut with

¹⁴ Roland Barthes *par Roland Barthes* (Paris: Seuil, coll. Écrivains de toujours, 1995 [1975]), p. 42.

¹⁵ Grange, 'Images d'artiste', p 102.

waves breaking on the lakeshore and blue light filtering through dark rooms

whilst Godard reads the following text:

D'habitude, cela commence comme cela: il y a la mort qui arrive et puis l'on se met à porter le deuil. Je ne sais exactement pourquoi mais j'ai fait l'inverse: j'ai porté le deuil d'abord. Mais la mort n'est pas venue, ni dans les rues de Paris, ni sur les rivages du lac de Genève. D'où sans doute l'air un peu catastrophé que j'ai sur la petite photo et qui ne venait pas d'une simple paire de claques ni d'une entorse – ou alors entorse au règlement, au jugement dernier – et ça ne devrait être que l'objet de ce film de le déterminer. Non, j'étais en deuil de moi-même, mon propre et unique compagnon. Et je me doutais que l'âme avait trébuché sur le corps et qu'elle était repartie en oubliant de lui tendre la main.

In an interview with Godard, Alain Bergala notes the striking resemblance between this picture and the famous photo of a young Jewish boy arrested in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943. Bergala points out that, whereas the young Godard was sheltered from History, the Jewish boy, who would have been of a similar age, was plunged into it.¹⁶ In the opening minutes of 'Les Signes parmi nous', Godard quotes this photograph of the Warsaw ghetto and, since 4B has already established, with its dedication, its autobiographical credentials, it is hard for the informed viewer not to make the connection with the image of the young Godard seen in *JLG/JLG* and again in 3A. Godard does not go so far as to juxtapose the two pictures. Instead, the Jewish boy appears in a split screen with a still of Dorothy McGuire holding a candle on the eponymous spiral staircase of Robert Siodmak's 1945 film. The right half of the frame is submerged in darkness out of which fades the Warsaw photo. This film noir about an unseen murderer terrorising a small town by murdering all disfigured women is used like many other examples of German expressionism and its descendants in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as a kind of shorthand for evoking the horrors of fascism, a device that

¹⁶ See 'Une boucle bouclée', in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, II, pp. 9-41 (p. 25).

contains an implicit nod to Siegfried Kracauer's psychological history of German cinema, *From Caligari to Hitler*.¹⁷ This is another example, then, of the way in which the particular becomes generalised in the autoportrait: rather than comparing an unhappy moment from his own childhood with the experience of a boy in the Warsaw ghetto (which would, after all, have been quite breathtakingly crass) Godard offers the Jewish experience of dispossession in the Europe of the 1940s as a way of thinking the alienated self that was delineated by the psychology and philosophy of the twentieth century.

Over this montage, Godard reads the final paragraph from *L'Ordre du discours*, Michel Foucault's inaugural address to the Collège de France in 1970 (this text, like many in 4B, is treated so heavily with reverb that the words are almost inaudible on first listen). The end of this text refers back to its beginning where Foucault confessed his anxiety at making the speech and expressed his wish that there be a voice behind him, urging him to continue. Foucault suggests that there is a certain disquiet with regard to discourse in its material reality and a desire for something to anchor us within 'cette existence transitoire vouée à s'effacer sans doute, mais selon une durée qui ne nous appartient pas'¹⁸. Later, Foucault identifies this mysterious guiding voice with the figure of Jean Hippolyte, the eminent Hegelian scholar whom he is replacing at the Collège de France, and ends (in the passage quoted by Godard): 'Je sais ce qu'il y avait de si redoutable à prendre la parole, puisque je la prenais en ce lieu d'où je l'ai écouté, et où il n'est plus, lui, pour m'entendre'¹⁹. This is a text, in other words, which acknowledges an influence and which expresses a grief.

In *Mémoires*, a text that mourns the passing of Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida muses on the fact that, when we know a friend is dead, we talk about her living on 'in us'. This being of the other 'in us' that occurs in grieving memory

¹⁷ Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1947).

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

is not the resurrection of the other, nor a simple narcissistic fantasy included within our subjectivity. Or rather, the structure of narcissism is sufficiently ambiguous that it is already the other who marks 'le soi du rapport à soi', such that the grieving memory of the other is *already there* in subjectivity, as it were *before her death*.²⁰ Because 'I' am never 'myself', never identical to myself, my self-reflection can never close on itself, it is made possible by the presence of the other in the self, that is to say by the possibility of the death of the other, the possibility (which is also the impossibility) of mourning. The terrible solitude I experience at the death of the other constitutes the relationship to self that we call subjectivity, or 'me' or 'us'. The possibility of death (of the other and, hence, my own) has always already arrived, making possible this subjectivity itself: 'nous arrivons à nous-mêmes par cette mémoire du deuil possible'²¹. In Freud, the work of mourning is understood as the interiorisation of a part of the other.²² But this interiorisation has always already happened, and the part is greater than the whole. Because what is evoked beyond this internalised memory is an older memory, that of 'l'autre comme autre, la trace non totalisable, inadéquate à elle-même et au même'²³.

This other memory is concerned not with a past that was once present, but rather with

de[s] traces d'un passé qui n'a jamais été présent, de traces qui elle-mêmes ne se tiennent jamais dans la forme de la présence et restent toujours, en quelque sorte, à venir, *venues de l'avenir*, venue du futur.²⁴

²⁰ Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 44.

²¹ Ibid., p. 53.

²² See 'Mourning and Melancholia', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1966), XIV (1957), 237-260.

²³ Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 56.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 70.

There is, then, a kind of memory of the present, which divides the present, inscribes or reveals the difference in the very presence of the present. If the present is never truly present, to itself or to us, it can only ever be remembered, or mourned, like a ghost, ‘présence sans présent d’un présent qui seulement revient’²⁵. And if art, in Hegel’s famous dictum, is a thing of the past, it is because, in its reliance upon signs, upon writing, upon the *technè*, it is necessarily preoccupied with this ‘passé qui n’a jamais été présent et ne se laissera jamais ranimer dans l’intériorité d’une conscience’²⁶. This is as true of cinema as any other art form and, in his one experience on film, playing himself in Ken McMullen’s *Ghost Dance* (1983), Derrida recognised as much:

Dès qu’on me demande de jouer mon propre rôle dans un scénario, j’ai l’impression de laisser parler un fantôme à ma place [...] Le cinéma est un art de fantômachie, si vous voulez [...], un art de laisser revenir les fantômes.

Revisiting his experience over a decade later, Derrida remarked, in terms which recall his analysis of the dispossession effected by the name: ‘comme nous savons que, une fois prise, une fois captée, telle image pourra être reproduite en notre absence, comme nous le savons *déjà*, nous sommes déjà hantés par cet avenir qui porte notre mort’²⁷.

Chapter 4B of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has a haunted, ghostly quality about it that makes it compelling viewing. If there is one recurring motif that gives this spectral quality to ‘Les Signes parmi nous’, it is the figure of the vampire. The vampire admittedly does not have the same paradoxical presence/non-presence

²⁵ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁷ Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Échographies*, p. 131. Derrida also talks movingly in this work of his emotion at reviewing his scene with Pascale Ogier who died of a cocaine overdose shortly after *Ghost Dance*: ‘J’ai pu avoir le sentiment bouleversant du retour de son spectre, le spectre de son spectre revenant me dire, à moi ici maintenant: “Maintenant [...], oui [...], je crois aux fantômes”’ (p. 135).

that so fascinates Derrida in *Spectres de Marx*²⁸, but it is nonetheless another emblem of the *undead*. Vampires, as Nina Auerbach points out²⁹, are rich in metaphorical possibilities and tend to be read in ways that reflect their times. Different interpretations of the vampire are suggested in its many occurrences in 4B. The scene from *Nosferatu* in which Ellen (Greta Schröder) flings open the window to admit the vampire (Max Schreck) into her bedroom highlights the erotic dimensions of the vampire myth. This clip is quoted in 4B amidst a series of clips and stills from sexual melodramas like *Ai no corrida* (Nagisa Oshima, 1976), *Splendor in the Grass* (Elia Kazan, 1961) and *Et Dieu créa la femme* (Roger Vadim, 1956) which revisit Godard's meditation on sex and death in cinema from chapter 2B. Later, a still of Count Mora (Bela Lugosi) from Tod Browning's *Mark of the Vampire* (1935) is superimposed over what may be a photograph of a gas chamber, taking the monstrous vampire as an image of the horrors of twentieth-century history. 4B also features a still of Renée Mandel from Carl Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932) and an intriguing montage of Max Schreck's vampire with a photo of Maurice Blanchot.³⁰

But the first appearance of the vampire in 4B, again from *Nosferatu*, comes shortly after the *Spiral Staircase* montage discussed above. The menacing shadow of the vampire is wiped in superimposition back and forth over a crowd of happy moviegoers in a cinema, before an M-G-M title announces 'The End'. This cues us to thinking about the possible links between the vampire, with its peculiar relationship to death, and the question of ends and ending, and most particularly the end of cinema which is of course at stake throughout this last episode of the *Histoire(s)*. Another vampire reference is of interest here. At the end of *JLG/JLG*, during the reading of the Parain text quoted earlier, we see

²⁸ See Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), p. 25.

²⁹ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1.

³⁰ As this latter appearance of the vampire has been quite comprehensively analysed by Leslie Hill, I will not discuss it further here. See "'A Form that Thinks": Godard, Blanchot, *Citation*', in Temple, Williams and Witt (eds.), *For Ever Godard* (forthcoming).

written in Godard's notebook the words 'Je suis une légende'. This is, I suggest, not just an ironically immodest boast on the part of Godard, but another quotation, namely the French title of Richard Matheson's classic 1950s sci-fi vampire novel, *I Am Legend*³¹. This book (which was filmed by Boris Sagal in 1971 as *The Omega Man*) is narrated by the last surviving member of the human race after a terrible plague has turned all his fellow humans into vampires. The reference is thus perhaps a sly gesture on the part of Godard to his sense of isolation as an artist working in a soulless, relentlessly commercial industry. (The twist, of course, as the narrator of *I Am Legend* realises at the end of the novel, is that, in the new world order, he is, in a sense, the vampire's vampire: it is he who has become legend.³²)

The vampire, then, is related to the end of things: the end of cinema, the end of humanity, the end of the world. And yet, strangely, the vampire *knows no end*. One of the most remarkable features of the vampire literature and cinema is a pervasive sense of melancholy (which is also a common component of late Godard, and particularly 4B). The melancholy, I would suggest, derives necessarily from the vampire's immortality. Deprived of the limit that gives meaning and urgency to the experience of life, the vampire is a sad and lonely individual. Vampire stories are, of course, stories about our own mortality. Nina Auerbach suggests, not unreasonably, that the horror of the vampire genre reflects not 'the dreadfulness of death' but rather 'the innate horror of vitality'³³. But the sorry fate of the vampire can just as easily serve to remind us of the value, of the *gift* of our mortality. The paradox of the genre, though, is that it also speaks to our own *immortality*. For, in a sense, we can no more die than can Dracula. Death is not something that happens to us: to paraphrase Epicurus,

³¹ Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (London: Gollancz, coll. SF Masterworks, 2001 [1954]). It is far from unlikely that Godard should be referring to the novel since, in *JLG/JLG* and elsewhere, he quotes other American science-fiction writers such as A. E. Van Vogt and Clifford D. Simak.

³² On the notion of the artist as vampire, see James B. Twitchell, *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1981), pp. 142-191.

³³ Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, p. 95.

when it is here, I am not and when I am here, it is not. The end of the world has as little meaning for us as it does for the vampires of Matheson's novel.

Night on Earth: The Apocalypse according to Jean-Luc

The impossibility, so frequently stressed by the post-structuralists, of ever achieving a full and direct experience – of 'reality', of oneself, of death – is a recurring problem in late Godard. It is, for instance, the central problematic of the mysterious and difficult *Hélas pour moi* (1993). This film of such marked theological overtones is not, I would suggest, primarily about the question of whether 'God' can have any meaning for us today; rather, its tall tale (inspired by the story of Amphytrion) of a god who enters the body of a man to spend a night with his wife is used in order to approach its real subject: the unapproachable itself, the event.³⁴ The film revolves around this event: God takes the form of Simon Donnadiou (Gérard Depardieu), ostensibly away on a business trip, in order to spend the night with his wife Rachel (Laurence Masliah). Abraham Klimt (Bernard Verley) has got wind of this miracle and spends the film questioning – with limited success – the locals on the lakeside in order to discover what really happened. Godard obsessively works over the key moment of Simon's departure, filming different versions of it to correspond to the varied testimonies collected by Klimt.³⁵ Even when we see Rachel and God together in the lengthy scene in the Donnadiou's house, the suggestion is still that the event has taken place elsewhere. They continue to argue about what really happened when Simon left and, later, after Godard elides what we presume to be their lovemaking, Rachel remains uncertain as to what has actually taken place: 'Il s'est passé *quoi?*' she demands to know.

Alain Bergala, who has written quite brilliantly about the film, argues that the key question of Godard's cinema is how to represent these essential points in

³⁴ Which, perhaps, amounts to the same thing and is merely a question of terminology.

³⁵ On this point see Laetitia Fieschi-Vivet, 'Investigation of a Mystery: Cinema and the Sacred in *Hélas pour moi*', in Temple and Williams (eds.), *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 189-206 (pp. 194-196).

time, these tiny events that may last only a fraction of a second. One cannot approach them, as it were frontally without wiping them out ‘aussi sûrement qui si l’on voulait prendre un oeuf avec la mâchoire d’un bulldozer’³⁶. In fact, rather than trying to represent the fraction of time at all, ‘il faudra la faire *revenir*’³⁷, starting always from a new angle or approach, endlessly defining, or declining the moment so that it is never exactly present nor the simple return of a self-identical past. And Bergala suggests that we can tie this to Godard’s ethics of cinema. If cinema failed to capture that single, crucial moment that was the Nazi death camps, then ‘Godard s’est condamné lui-même avec acharnement à chercher plan par plan le point exact où a eu lieu l’erreur de trame’³⁸. But, at the same time, he has instigated a research for ‘une image d’une nouvelle nature’, an image-resurrection, image-redemption that might compensate for the earlier fault; something that only becomes possible given a non-linear conception of time, where each present moment communicates with the past ‘dont il serait à la fois la reprise un peu somnambulique et une version *légèrement corrigée*’³⁹. We can see this, too, in the way Godard recalls the utterances of others in his films: their return is never exact, Godard’s quotation always approximate, because it is only ‘grâce à cette minuscule différence que la phrase peut réellement *revenir*’⁴⁰.

Derrida, too, sees the possibility of a politics of the ghostly, the spectral (the *revenant*), which would amount to a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generation. Derrida argues that a politics – a justice – must take into account those who are no longer or not yet here, those who are not *presently* living, already dead or not yet born.⁴¹ (In Derrida’s text, as in Bergala’s, the spectre of Walter Benjamin is never far away. His ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’

³⁶ Alain Bergala, ‘*Hélas pour moi, ou De légères corrections au présent*’, in *Nul mieux que Godard*, pp. 171-182 (p. 176).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 180.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 181.

⁴¹ See Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 15.

are quoted in *Hélas pour moi*, notably in an intertitle which reads ‘Nous avons été attendus sur terre’.) *Spectres de Marx* grows out of the *Communist Party Manifesto*’s opening observation that Europe is haunted by a spectre, that is by the possible arrival of communism. Derrida argues that, 150 years later, we are still pre-occupied by the spectre of communism, only now it seems to be *past*. But, says Derrida, the subtext to this discourse on the death of Marxism is ‘faisons en sorte qu’à l’avenir il ne revienne plus!’ Because, he insists, ‘Au fond, le spectre, c’est l’avenir, il est toujours à venir, il ne se présente que comme ce qui pourrait venir ou re-venir’⁴². Noting the distinct eschatological edge to a certain trend in historical thinking; deploring the continued conflicts caused by the three main messianic religions; and acknowledging the messianic element to Marxism itself, Derrida suggests that there may be something in all this that resists deconstruction: ‘une certaine expérience de la promesse émancipatoire [...], la formalité d’un messianisme structural, un messianisme sans religion, un messianisme même, sans messianisme...’⁴³ The very concept of democracy exists in the form of a promise which partakes of ‘cette espérance messianique absolument indéterminée en son coeur’, an openness towards ‘l’événement qu’on ne saurait attendre *comme tel* [...], à l’événement comme l’étranger même’⁴⁴, a limitless hospitality which would be the very condition of the event and of history itself.

Hélas pour moi, which, by a delicious coincidence, was released in the same year as *Spectres de Marx*, deals with similar questions, particularly in one short but breathtakingly condensed scene. The scene takes place in a café in a single, unchanging wide shot. Various characters⁴⁵ move rapidly in and out of the shot exchanging comments on the political, the theological and the mythical.

⁴² Ibid., p. 71.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 102.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁵ Pascal Bonitzer has written well about the ‘innombrable population’ of the lakeside in *Hélas pour moi*, the dizzying proliferation of people crossing the frame which makes it virtually impossible to count (let alone identify) the characters in the film, or even the *figures*. See ‘Dieu, Godard, le zapping’, in *Trafic*, 8 (Autumn 1993), 5-12 (p. 10).

The scene begins in voiceover with one man declaring: ‘Nous ne sommes pas capables de nous libérer nous-mêmes, la chose ne fait aucun doute. Et nous appelons cela: la démocratie’. Someone remarks that the *Communist Party Manifesto* was published in the same year as *Alice in Wonderland*. It is pointed out that, during the Gulf War, no one seemed to worry about the Mesopotamian ziggurat, - situated in what is now Iraq - great stone staircases for the gods, ‘qu’ils puissent redescendre sur la Terre’. The scene ends with Simon suggesting they drink ‘un dernier rouge’ for ‘le dernier communiste de notre toute jeune Europe’ before the entire party disperses. Here too, then, the political is presented as inextricably bound up with the eschatological, the messianic.

Godard quotes *Hélas pour moi* at some length in 4B. Following the sex-and-death sequence alluded to above, we see an establishing shot of the Donnadius’ house lit up at night, then a long lateral tracking shot through its rooms. On the soundtrack Rachel, varying her intonation from the sarcastic to the quizzically uncertain, repeats, ‘Alors, maintenant c’est le jour je pense?’ Impatient with the brevity of night on Earth, God had tried to make it last longer in order to prolong his pleasure with Rachel. The result was a confusion of night and day: although still nighttime, it was light outside. Now, with darkness fallen again, Rachel assumes morning must have broken. We saw in the first half of this chapter how cinema is constituted through a play of light and dark. In 4B, appropriately for a work that suggests the end of cinema, this imagery of light and dark proliferates and begins to suggest a crisis. In the rest of the *Hélas* sequence quoted in 4B, we hear God relating how the Dutch physicist Jan Oort discovered dark matter (here named ‘la matière fantôme’, extending the spectral theme), the mysterious, invisible substance now thought to account for over ninety per cent of the mass of the universe. Later, we hear (in French translation) Dylan Thomas’s exhortation not to ‘go gently into that good night’. The sequence ends with a shot of Rachel’s naked lower body lit by a sparkler, a lighting effect also favoured in *King Lear*. There is an almost primal sense of

light and dark in much of late Godard which frequently passes through imagery of fire. In *King Lear*, reproductions of artworks are lit only by a naked flame, as though they were cave paintings, and we see Julie Delpy and Leos Carax daring each other to hold their hands over a fire. In *JLG/JLG*, Godard strikes a match with one hand and uses it as a light by which to write. ‘L’art est comme l’incendie’, as he repeats countless times over this late period, ‘il naît de ce qu’il brûle’.

The following sequence in 4B places the emphasis on darkness. We hear André Malraux’s tremulous voice reading his oratory for the transfer of Jean Moulin’s ashes to the Panthéon in 1964. Malraux evokes the time when ‘la grande lutte des ténèbres a commencé’; ‘le temps des caves et de ces cris désespérés que poussent les torturés avec des voix d’enfants’. Here Godard cuts in a shot of Manfredi (Marcello Pagliero) screaming as he is tortured with a blowtorch in *Rome, Open City*. The image from *Mark of the Vampire* occurs here, along with a series of photographs of the battered and scarred faces of torture victims. A string of intertitles widens the scope and presents a litany of twentieth-century horrors - Hiroshima, Leningrad, Madagascar, Dresden, Hanoi, Sarajevo – whilst, on the soundtrack we hear the haunting music of György Kurtág’s *Ligatura*, scored for double-bowed cello. Paul Celan reads his poem ‘Todesfuge’ as we watch newsreel images of the death camps, cities reduced to rubble, Jewish children with the star of David sewn to their clothes and, in another series of titles, we read the words of Heinrich Himmler: ‘Pour la patrie, nous devons être prêts à verser pas seulement notre sang mais aussi celui des autres’. An image of Charlie Chaplin dissolves into one of Adolf Hitler (this section repeats much of the material from 1A). The sequence moves on to bear witness to the Russian century, the death of Ivan the Terrible from Eisenstein’s 1944 film dissolving into the death of Stalin, thereby suggesting the Soviet director’s complicity in constructing the Stalinist myth.⁴⁶ After more material

⁴⁶ Leslie Hill makes this point in “‘A Form that Thinks’”.

recycled in large part from *Les Enfants jouent à la Russie*, the sequence comes to a close with a text by Walter Benjamin which discusses the pain of waking from dreams and the tenderness with which ‘chacun évite de réveiller l’autre du rêve, de lui faire regagner l’obscurité, quitter la nuit de la nuit, qui n’est pas le jour’, over redemptive images of a young couple in love and a community dance hall from Ermanno Olmi’s *Il Fidanzati* (1963).

After this lengthy sequence (or series of sequences), Godard presents, in intertitles, a summary of the novel from which 4B takes its name: Ramuz’s *Les Signes parmi nous*. First published in 1919, this is an apocalyptic fable about a *colporteur*, Caille, who arrives in a small rural community with tidings of the end of the world. When a terrible storm erupts, the villagers assume the warnings of apocalypse are true. But when the storm passes, Caille is hounded from the village. Godard illustrates this tale with images and sounds of storm and flood – including the flood from *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926) – but also more images of the Second World War including the recurring shot (taken from *Nuit et brouillard*) of a Jewish child loaded on to a train for deportation. The sequence ends with the title: ‘Ce colporteur, c’était le cinéma’. Here, then, Godard repeats from 1A the idea that the cinema predicted the terrible events of the Second World War yet was subsequently neglected and fell into decline. Once again, the imagery of light and darkness predominates here in this suggestion of apocalypse: car lights pierce the darkness in *La Nuit du carrefour* (Jean Renoir, 1932); bombs light up the night sky in high-contrasted newsreel footage; a lamp swings back and forth across the horrors of *Psycho*’s basement scene; then, finally, when ‘le soleil revient enfin’, a blazing yellow sun from *Je vous salue Marie* burns in the sky. This crisis of light, it is worth stressing again, is a feature of apocalypse. Jacques Derrida points out that, since Kant and the Enlightenment, ‘toute eschatologie apocalyptique se promet au nom de la

lumière [...], d'une lumière plus lumineuse que toutes les lumières qu'elle rend possibles'⁴⁷. Or a light so bright it blinds and leads to darkness.

At the beginning of this sequence, as the titles inform us that 'un jour un colporteur arriva dans un village', Godard shows a shot from *King Lear* of William Shakespeare V (Peter Sellars) emerging from a wheat field, his head buried in a book as though he were the doom-monger of Ramuz's tale. *King Lear* is another film about ends. Shakespeare's play, of course, is already about old age, madness and inheritance, and features a near-apocalyptic storm plus portentous heavenly movements mixing light and darkness (the Duke of Gloucester blames the narrative's disturbances on the 'late eclipses in the sun and moon' (Act I, Scene ii)). Godard's *Lear* plays up these associations and adds a few of its own. Godard himself plays Professor Pluggy, expert in 'signification visuelle', a sort of mad scientist figure with dreadlocks made of electrical cables and connector leads. But there is also an implicit equation in the film between Godard and Lear himself, variously incarnated in the film by Norman Mailer and Burgess Meredith. Lear's line, 'You must bear with me: I am old and foolish', is repeated as though it might be a refrain for Godard himself. Light and dark are constantly in play here too. Pluggy builds a model cinema, basically just a shoebox with a light bulb (or a sparkler⁴⁸) poked through a hole in one end. Asked about it by a journalist from the *New York Times*, Pluggy tells her, 'The light, my dear, it may kill you'. 'You mean like the truth?' she replies. The film also features an image of the end of the world that is breathtaking – and inspired – in its ineptitude: as Pluggy announces 'the last judgement', a swinging light bulb illuminates an arrangement of cheap plastic dinosaurs whilst, on the soundtrack, we hear the screeching of what could be either insects or birds.

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1983), p. 63.

⁴⁸ Laurent Benoît gives an interesting interpretation of this distinction: 'la lumière régulière s'efface derrière la lumière-paillettes électronique. Le cinéma cède la place à la vidéo'. See 'King Lear de Jean-Luc Godard', in *Le Journal des Cahiers*, 76 (September 1987), p. II, in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 399 (September 1987).

Godard's *Lear* presents itself as a film about the end of art. William Shakespeare V claims to be 'le seul survivant de la culture de la signification', and he wanders around in a kind of post-apocalyptic landscape which is repeatedly denoted as existing 'after Chernobyl'. Shakespeare is trying to reconstruct his ancestor's text which no longer exists as original text but parts of which have been absorbed into discourse. He thus spends much of the film furiously scribbling notes whenever someone quotes a line from the play. As Timothy Murray puts it, 'the classical text of Shakespeare is recovered only by the arbitrary reassemblage of its language, line by line, phrase by phrase, as uttered by the cultural unconscious of the post-nuclear public'⁴⁹. Godard offers his own observation on this situation in his running commentary that occupies the entire length of the soundtrack. At the beginning, and again at the end, Godard remarks that he had assumed making a film in English would guarantee success since everybody speaks English. What he failed to realise is that 'Il ne suffit pas de savoir l'anglais, il faut aussi savoir le Shakespeare, qui est une autre langue'. It soon becomes clear not only that 'personne ne parlait le Shakespeare', but also that 'personne ne parlait les images'. This then becomes the reason for Godard's tortu(r)ous and interminable commentary which translates, as best it can, the English into French, often with painful results, as when Lear (Meredith)'s neat pun to Shakespeare, 'Are you trying to make a play for my girl?' has to be laboriously explained by Godard.⁵⁰ Notes Laurent Benoît: 'Un producteur US, un dramaturge anglais, un réalisateur franco-suisse... cette chimère, Godard en revendique hautement l'intraduisibilité. C'est là le moyen de restituer la barbarie du Shakespeare baroque'⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Timothy Murray, 'The Crisis of Cinema in the Age of New World Memory: the Baroque Performance of *King Lear*', in Temple and Williams (eds.), *The Cinema Alone*, pp. 159-178 (p. 167).

⁵⁰ Elsewhere the translation mauls Shakespeare's poetry – as when Lear's 'Mend your speech a little' to Cordelia is translated as 'Fais attention à ce que tu dis, ma petite fille' – , is inconsistently archaic - 'Your voices have deceived you' given as 'Vos voix vous ont déçue' – or just plain wrong: 'Give me the map' says Lear in a restaurant, a literal translation of 'Donnez-moi la carte'.

⁵¹ Laurent Benoît, '*King Lear* de Jean-Luc Godard'.

The result is a glorious mess and it is perhaps not surprising that the film was lambasted by American critics and became for a long time one of Godard's great 'lost' works, very rarely seen anywhere.⁵² But Jonathan Rosenbaum is insistent that it is perfectly possible to see *King Lear* as a serious meditation on one aspect of Shakespeare's play, namely Cordelia's refusal, unlike her sisters, to declare her love for her father, to turn her sentiment into 'a commodity, a public display of "proof"'. Instead she says nothing, and the play's obsession with the word and the idea of nothing is clearly one of the aspects Godard finds most fascinating ('Words are one thing and reality is another thing, and between them is no thing' runs an opening remark). Godard, in Rosenbaum's assessment, is merely modelling himself after Cordelia's refusal to conform:

Like Lear, we all wind up disinheriting [Godard's film], much preferring the comfortable lies of a Goneril or a Regan [... whereas] The film aspires, like Cordelia, to be (and to say) 'no thing', to exist and to function as a nonobject: ungraspable, intractable, unconsumable.⁵³

It is thus finally the recalcitrant nature of the text itself in Godard's *Lear* that prevents the formation of a coherent argument that could be appropriated as a definitive statement about the 'end' of art. Similarly, in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the apparently apocalyptic sequence at the heart of 4B is largely undermined by Godard's lengthy engagement, in what follows, with Péguy's *Clio*. As we have already evoked this work in previous chapters, we will not discuss it in detail here but, suffice it to say that the main conclusion of *Clio*'s discourse is that history can never reach an end, any attempt at totalising history is doomed to failure: 'On peut tout faire excepté l'histoire de ce que l'on fait, on peut tout achever excepté l'histoire de cet achèvement.'⁵⁴ The work of history is thus only

⁵² *King Lear* was re-released in France in 2002.

⁵³ Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'The Importance of Being Perverse: Godard's *King Lear*', in *Placing Movies: The Practice of Film Criticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 184-189 (p. 189).

⁵⁴ Péguy, *Clio*, p. 240.

possible as a selective and comparative process and Godard demonstrates his subscription to this argument with a shot from *King Lear*'s epilogue that shows, in close-up, his hands at work on an editing table whilst a voiceover describes the art of film editing as 'handling, in both hands, the present, the future and the past'.

In the closing minutes of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Godard quotes in quick succession a number of texts, some long and some short, which deal in various ways with the relationship between art and the state. A number of these quotations seem to be unidentified, misremembered, wrongly attributed or simply made up. A text by the experimental novelist and art critic Bernard Lamarche-Vadel talks sarcastically of the privilege of living and working as an artist in France, a corrupt and decadent nation in decline. A text by the American avant-garde filmmaker Hollis Frampton (presumably taken from his *Circles of Confusion*) suggests that the only thing to survive the end of an era is the form of art generated by that era, and which only *becomes* art after its end. A text attributed to Arthur Rimbaud informs us that 'Les hommes et les femmes croyaient aux prophètes; maintenant, on croit à l'homme d'état'. A text by Georges Bataille opposes the image of the loved one to that of the state, arguing that the state is unable to 'embrasser devant nous la totalité du monde', something that is only possible in the act of love. This final sequence also features Blanchot's text about the image which we quoted in chapter 1, a fragment of poetry by Emily Dickinson and an excerpt from the first of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*. Images include footage of de Gaulle's return to France in Bayeux in June 1944 and the Red Army's arrival in Berlin in 1945 (taken from *The Fall of Berlin* (Michail Chiaureli, 1949)); a drawing of Stalin by Picasso and another of Kandinsky's Murnau paintings; more German Expressionism (*Nosferatu* again and *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari*); and scenes from Orson Welles's *Othello* (1952).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ For a fuller description of this sequence, see Leslie Hill, "A Form that Thinks".

Finally, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* draws to a close, ending, as it must, with a quotation, and in fact with a quotation of a quotation, a text by Coleridge remarked by Jorge Luis Borges: ‘Si un homme’, reads Godard, ‘Si un homme traversait le paradis en songe, qu’il reçut une fleur comme preuve de son passage, et qu’à son réveil il trouvât cette fleur dans ses mains – que dire alors? J’étais cet homme’. On screen we see Francis Bacon’s *Study for a Portrait of Vincent Van Gogh IV* (1957) which dissolves into a black and white photo of Godard’s face over which is superimposed a rose. But not just any rose: the white rose which, in *Allemagne neuf zéro*, is used to remember Hans and Sophie Scholl, decapitated in 1943 for posting anti-fascist tracts in Munich. The film ends, then, with a typically condensed series of images, leaving us to think about art and the experience of time, art and the community of artists, art and resistance and, of course, quotation. Borges reads Coleridge’s text as a reflection on the unlocatable movement of art itself which is irreducible to any single work or artist. He compares it to Valéry’s notion that literary history should not be the history of authors or works ‘but rather of the Spirit as the producer or consumer of literature’; to Emerson’s impression that ‘one person wrote all the books’; and to Shelley’s idea that all poems ‘were episodes or fragments of a single infinite poem’⁵⁶. Borges sees Coleridge’s flower as a perfect image:

a *terminus ad quem*, a final goal. And of course it is just that; in the sphere of literature as in others, every act is the culmination of an infinite series of causes and the cause of an infinite series of effects.⁵⁷

It provides the perfect end to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* which tells the story of an art (the story of art) in the terms of that art. Here we have Godard quoting Borges

⁵⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, ‘The Flower of Coleridge’, in *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952*, trans. by Ruth L. C. Simms (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1964), pp. 10-13 (p. 10).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11. It is worth noting that this is not the only time Godard has borrowed from Borges a fable with which to give a poetic ending to a film. *The Old Place* closes on a reading of the Malaysian tale of the A Bao A Qu, the first entry in Borges’s *Book of Imaginary Beings* (London: Penguin, 1969).

quoting Coleridge and Godard quoting Bacon quoting Van Gogh, and this artistic communion is given extra gravity and pathos by the implicit political memory of the white rose. It is a fine image of Godard's artistic, historical, emotional and political achievement.

Histoire de la résistance/Résistance de l'histoire: Éloge de l'amour

If we have passed somewhat rapidly over the end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, this film which seems at times to be all about endings (the end of cinema, the end of the century...), it is because, in many ways, it is a *false* ending. The apocalyptic rhetoric of 4B and other works, the repeated assertions of the death of cinema, the preoccupation with the last works of various artists, the melancholy autoportrait that comes under the sign of December, last month of the year... all these things tend to set up an expectation that the *Histoire(s)* will be Godard's *last* work, his swan song. This suspicion seems definitively confirmed by the last words we hear in the film, 'J'étais cet homme', the past tense seeming to imply that Godard's work as an artist is now behind him. But although, even allowing for irony, there is more than a touch of self-aggrandisement about this ending and about the overall tone of much of Godard's late work, the rather pompous effect of the great artist drawing the curtains on his career is negated by the simple fact that Godard has *continued working* since the completion of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The three years since its release have seen not only the emergence of the striking short and medium-length pieces *The Old Place* and *De l'origine du XXI^e siècle*, but also the release, in 2001, of Godard's most critically-acclaimed and widely seen feature for at least fifteen years, *Éloge de l'amour*. As this new film essentially picks up where the *Histoire(s)* left off, prolonging its discussion of history and memory, responsibility and resistance, politics and cinema, I propose to end this thesis with an analysis of *Éloge de l'amour*, considering again the ways in which Godard's recent preoccupation

with history can be turned towards an appreciation of the present and a concern for the future.

The opening sequence of *Éloge de l'amour* sets the (uncertain) tone for the rest of the film. In voiceover above the credits we hear Edgar (Bruno Putzulu) describing a scene that takes place at 'la fin d'une manif' in which a woman with a yellow star sewn on to her jacket is attacked by a group of people declaring 'Tu veux voir des fascistes, ben, tu vas en voir!' The young *beur* woman listening to Edgar and whom we see in close-up sighs 'Quelle époque!' But what is going here? The scene appears to be an audition that Edgar is holding for his project (film, play, opera or novel, he is not yet sure) on the four moments of love, but this information can only be deduced in retrospect from the following scene in which Edgar discusses the project with the young woman who will play the heroine, Églantine (Audrey Klebaner). In the initial absence of this information, the spectator is entitled to wonder whether this anecdote Edgar is telling refers to some distant past or to the present, just as the era alluded to in the exclamation 'Quelle époque!' is unclear.

This ambiguity continues with the ellipses suggested by the strips of black leader between shots serving only to confuse matters further. Interviewing the actress who will play Églantine, Edgar mentions Hugo's *Les Misérables*, saying 'il y en a partout aujourd'hui'. In the subsequent scene, a homeless man appears in the audition room and one wonders whether he has come to read for a role or simply wandered in off the street (the fact that his discourse is more poetic than the actresses' does not necessarily clarify matters). Edgar also interviews an older woman who reads the following text which will be repeated in the second half of the film by Edgar himself:

Quelqu'un qui a pour projet d'aller encore de l'avant
implique dans son moi précédent un moi qui n'est plus et
il se désintéresse. Par contre, le projet de certains refuse
le temps, et un lien solidaire très fort avec le passé
s'établit. C'est le cas de presque tous les vieillards.

This text sets up an opposition - which may be more apparent than real - between an approach to life that, by 'refusing time', establishes a privileged relation to the past, and an approach that, by looking to the future, relates to past selves in the mode of mourning. *Éloge de l'amour* seeks immediately to set up a dialogue between the past and the present, through which the suffering of history may be made present to us in such a way as to encourage not only the remembering of historical injustice but also the resistance to any policy that threatens to repeat that injustice. This is one way in which we can read the empty pages of the book that provides the first shot of the film and recurs throughout its first half: as a suggestion that history need not repeat its mistakes, that the future remains to be written.

But how can this work be accomplished, asks Godard's film, how can we maintain this link to the past, to history, in a world that seems to deny history, in the perpetual present of a corporate culture conforming to a model provided by America, that is to say, a country without a history? The Americans are the subject of quite relentless scorn in *Éloge de l'amour*, a tirade that goes too far for many tastes (the two films that Godard singles out for ridicule in particular – *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) and *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999) – are, after all, among the more interesting products to come out of Hollywood in recent years). But the central argument is an intriguing one and is summarised by Edgar thus: '[Les Américains] n'ont pas de mémoire à eux, ou très peu... Leurs machines, oui, mais pas eux personnellement, alors ils achètent celle des autres...' This sets up the plot of the second part of the film in which an American production company – the provocatively named Spielberg Associates – come to make a film about the Resistance activities of Monsieur and Madame Bayard (Jean Davy and Françoise Verny), now aged grandparents. The subsequent discussions with the producers are the occasion for further attacks on America. Berthe (Cécile Camp) remarks that, since the Canadians, the

Mexicans or the Brazilians would have equal claim to the title ‘United States of America’, the citizens of the USA are a people without a name, without identity: ‘Pas étonnant qu’ils aient besoin des histoires des autres’. This interest in the history of others is not in itself problematic – indeed, it would be laudable if conducted with the proper respect – but, says Berthe, ‘ça peut se faire doucement, amicalement’. The objection is rather to the American appropriation of other people’s history (and not just their history, their *pain*), its exploitation for profit in a form which threatens to reduce its specificity to the level of an amorphous entertainment. Madame Bayard remembers the time she gave a lecture tour of the US to discuss her experience of the War and the concentration camps: ‘les gens réagissaient comme maintenant devant leur écran de télévision’.

But how, then, are we to resist this dictatorship of (North) American culture and create work that draws on the specificity of our European history and takes account of its lessons? Godard’s answer, as is often the case, is double, necessitated by the dual nature of cinema as, on the one hand, the miraculous *mise en scène* of the real and, on the other, a complex process of montage. To some extent, then, in order to appreciate the multiple ties that bind us to the past, it is enough just to look around us, and Godard’s filming of Paris in the first part of *Éloge de l’amour* is suffused with a rich sense of history. This is not, as too many people have suggested, the first time Godard has filmed in Paris since the late sixties, but it is undoubtedly his most sustained attempt to produce a cinematic portrait of the city since that time. Perhaps the most historically resonant of the scenes filmed in Paris comes when Edgar accompanies Berthe home after her night shift doing cleaning work first in rail yards to the north of the city, then in offices at place d’Italie. They meet on a bridge at night where a plaque commemorates René Revel, a *gardien de la paix* who was killed ‘par les Allemands’ in August 1944, and Berthe suggests that this tribute could be more carefully worded: ‘On ne *devrait* pas dire ça comme ça: ni “le gardien”, ni “la paix”, ni “les Allemands”.’ Edgar remarks that, in discussions, people often say

‘Ça, c’est une autre histoire’: ‘Mais on ne la dit jamais, cette autre histoire.’

Éloge de l’amour attempts to do precisely that, to fill in the story of its characters – of Edgar’s project and his tentative relations with Berthe – with the *other* story of the political history of Paris in the twentieth century. As Edgar says of his project, ‘ce n’est pas l’histoire d’Églantine, mais un moment de l’histoire – la Grande Histoire – qui passe à travers Églantine’.

After an ellipsis implied by a moment of black leader, we find Edgar and Berthe, having followed the river, overlooking the abandoned Renault factories at Billancourt. As a barge drifts past, we hear one of Maurice Jaubert’s songs from *L’Atalante*, evoking another age of a traditional French working class cinema, now long since abandoned just as this class has itself been abandoned, as Edgar suggests, by the CGT. This wider cultural history is then turned back into the story at hand as Berthe reveals that her parents committed suicide in circumstances related to the current economic climate: ‘Mon père, il a laissé une lettre: il ne disait pas “la mondialisation”, il disait “la scène universelle”...’ Whereas the earlier scene on the bridge recalled the political surrender of Paris to Nazi Germany, this scene thus implies France’s economic surrender to multinational corporations with Berthe’s observation that she was born ‘trois ans avant ‘68’ recalling the last gasp of the workers’ struggle in France. Gazing in the direction of the wealthy suburb of Auteuil far in the distance, Edgar now evokes a much earlier instance of invasion when, in 52 BC, the Roman army crossed the Seine to attack the Gauls. As Edgar remarks that the bois de Boulogne is all that now remains of a vast forest that would once have covered this landscape, a piano is heard on the soundtrack and a lyrical tracking shot moves across the trees. The effect of this sequence is much like that of the voiceover that begins *Nouvelle Vague*: by evoking history on a much larger scale (Braudel’s *longue durée*), Godard suggests the impermanence of the current global economic hegemony, no more an eternal structure than the Renault factory that is now falling into ruin.

But although history is, in some senses, all around us, it would be wrong to think that we can simply reach out and touch it, that it is always immediately within our grasp. *Éloge de l'amour* implies also that we have to *work* at history, and the complex montage of Godard's film, which requires the spectator to work to reconstruct a narrative, seeks to demonstrate this sense of history as an active *process*. For the object of history often (and indeed perhaps *necessarily*) eludes our grasp and thereby serves continually to reactivate the historical process and to regenerate thought. *Éloge de l'amour* implies that we can learn not only from the history of resistance, but also from the *resistance of history*, its fundamental incompatibility with easy solutions and the difficulty of its appropriation.

The resistant, recalcitrant nature of history is best demonstrated in matching scenes, one from the first half and one from the second half of the film, one discussing recent history, the second looking further back. In the first, Edgar goes to a bookshop where Berthe works to listen to the American journalist Mark Hunter give a talk about Kosovo. The most striking thing about this scene is the difficulty that the spectator has in achieving any kind of identification or orientation amongst the figures on screen. We see a series of shots of people listening to the talk but, as is frequently the case in this first section of *Éloge de l'amour*, it is so dark that faces are barely discernible. These people occasionally interject comments ('c'est exact'), talk amongst themselves or make shushing sounds but they do not contribute to the debate. The two principal speakers are Berthe and Hunter, but they do not take turns, rather their voices overlap. Hunter talks in English, giving eye-witness accounts of children traumatised by the killing in Kosovo. Berthe speaks in French, complaining about the media's one-sided presentation of events. The suggestion is not that the two people are deliberately talking over one another; rather Godard has reconstructed this scene with a dual voiceover in order to underline the fact that it is always misleading to give only one point of view on a subject like this. Meanwhile, references are made to other historical examples of ethnic cleansing: when asked his nationality

by another listener, a man claims to have none, 'kurde, mais déchu' (in the darkness, this man is almost entirely invisible, adding to the symbolic erasure of his identity). Berthe handles copies of Jankélévitch's *L'Imprescriptible* and Ruth Klüger's *Refus de témoigner*, an account of a childhood spent in the Nazi concentration camps, whilst Hunter bemoans our apparent failure to learn from the lessons of history:

Since the Second World War, how often have the victims been asked to live among the victimisers, without any acknowledgement of the facts by their authors, without judgement, without planning for the slightest reparation from the guilty party?

'Watching impotently is an intrinsic part of this profession,' declares Hunter at the end of this scene, an observation that would seem to communicate some of Godard's own sense of guilt and hopelessness as a political filmmaker. And this scene does imply Godard's own complicity in rash and over-simplified judgements, since it questions the anti-American discourse that pertains elsewhere in the film. Inspired by the example of Hunter, who left America in the Reagan era, Edgar admits 'Il y a aussi de bons américains', and one member of the audience tells a French woman 'Vous avez voulu l'Amérique, vous l'avez'. When she protests that she never asked for this, he adds, 'Alors vos parents en 1944 et vos grands-parents en 1918... C'est de l'histoire'.

This scene is matched, in the second half of *Éloge de l'amour*, by the scene in which Edgar interviews the real-life historian Jean Lacouture, author of a well-known biography of Charles de Gaulle. Edgar has come to Brittany to interview Lacouture in relation to a thesis he is writing about Catholics and the Resistance, and it is here that he will first meet Berthe. The way Godard films this interview, and particularly the treatment of sound, is very much reminiscent of the earlier scene in the bookshop (the scene in Brittany is, in fact, divided in two: Edgar talks to Lacouture once at the beginning of this section and once at

the end. It is not clear whether these are two separate interviews or two scenes of the same interview). We never actually see Lacouture in these scenes, the camera remains on Edgar, fading out occasionally to photographs of resistance fighters. Although there is more of a conventional dialogue here, again the speech of the two men overlaps so that we hear both talking at once. Meanwhile, somewhere off-screen, a telephone rings, another device used in the bookshop scene. And again, Godard seems deliberately to make a simple scene difficult in order to prevent us drawing easy conclusions. For Lacouture confirms that ‘indubitablement, le catholicisme fait partie de l’esprit de résistance’, but he cautions that this connection is bound up with a long and complex history of Anglo-French relations and that if ‘les catholiques et les monarchistes ont été en gros les premiers à rejoindre Londres, c’est qu’ils étaient assez originaires de là-bas’. And, just as in the earlier scene, the evocation of these ‘liens très originaux avec l’Angleterre’, forces Edgar to reconsider any simplistic opposition to Anglo-American culture. It is at this moment that two young girls in traditional dress arrive at the door seeking signatures for their petition to have *The Matrix* dubbed into Breton. This scene was much remarked upon in reviews of the film and guarantees laughs in the cinema, but I would suggest that, given the context, it is not simply a joke, but also a call for more carefully considered, more thought-out relations that could open up a dialogue between today’s America and traditional European culture and history.

There is, then, in *Éloge de l’amour*, an attempt to explore the historically-grounded possibility of a link between Catholicism and Resistance, a theme that resonates powerfully with the Christian imagery in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and with Godard’s repeated use of spiritual and sacred music in recent years (and also one that is typically unfashionable given the recent vocal condemnation of the Catholic church’s silence over the Shoah). But it is perhaps *Éloge* that brings us closest to answering the enigma of all this Christian reference in Godard’s late work. In a short scene sandwiched between the Kosovo presentation and Edgar’s

meeting on the bridge with Berthe, Edgar is driven through the streets of Paris by his benefactor Rosenthal (Claude Baignères) who discusses politics and religion:

L'Église marche avec le temps comme une troupe de soldats à travers des pays inconnus où le ravitaillement normal est impossible. Comment rendrait-elle aux pauvres qui sont les héritiers légitimes de Dieu un royaume qui n'est pas de ce monde?

Here we see the objection to any simple equation of Christianity and Resistance: the promise of salvation offered by the Church can only be fulfilled in another world. It seems that Godard, like Walter Benjamin, or like Derrida following Benjamin, would like to appropriate something of the structure and the sense of the messianic religions in order to apply them to the politics of the here and now. For it is, after all, Christianity's compassion for the weak and the abandoned that appeals most to Godard, as we suggested when discussing *Histoire(s)* 3B. This sense is reinforced by the brief prayer offered by Berthe's grandmother (Françoise Verny) near the end of the film: 'Merci, mon père, de révéler aux petits ce que vous dissimulez aux sages et aux intelligents.' And *Éloge de l'amour*, like so many of Godard's films before it, is determined to show us the weak and the lost, to show those who are without homes and without identities, to show the real working lives of the poor, those condemned, in Berthe's image, to enter life by the 'entrée de service'.

But, finally, if Godard is cautious of Christianity's sense that the visible world is only a prelude to another domain of experience, his films encourage us to identify this alterity – *cette autre histoire* – at the heart of our lived experience, to see it as existing nowhere else than in that visible, audible, tangible world that cinema is able to capture. And this, I suggest, is ultimately the importance of 'love' as it gives its title to *Éloge de l'amour* and its organisation to Edgar's project. The relationship between Edgar and Berthe is far from a conventional one by the standards of movie romance. Edgar confesses at the end of the first

section that he never even learned her name (the name Berthe is only pronounced once by her grandfather and is easy to miss, although there is an unconscious echo of it when Edgar, discussing her talents with Rosenthal, declares ‘C’est pas Berthe Morisot, si vous voulez mon avis’). On more than one occasion, Edgar makes dismissive or unkind remarks about her: in an early scene he describes her as ‘pas très attirante’ and, after they have gone their separate ways, he says ‘C’est vrai qu’à la longue elle faisait pitié’. It is unclear whether the couple ever even touch each other, and certainly there is no suggestion that they ever make love, Berthe at one point ridiculing the way that, in American films, ‘toutes les jeunes filles doivent se déshabiller et se rouler sur leurs amants’. The point of this relationship in *Éloge de l’amour* is very different. What Godard seems to stress is not the external contact with the other, but the *internalisation* of the other, the way contact with the other can operate a change in the structure of the self. And what this ultimately implies is that the self can only ever be a collection of impressions and inspirations absorbed through other people. This would appear to be the sense of the scene in which Edgar and his two young actors rehearse Perceval’s departure from Églantine. Perceval (Jérémy Lippmann) tells Églantine: ‘Je t’aime tellement, tu es tellement là tout le temps, tu existes si fort pour moi et à jamais qu’il est inutile que je te voie encore puisque tu seras toujours là, quoi qu’il arrive.’ Perceval need no longer see Églantine *in person* since her person has now become a part of him.

This conception of love is thus quite resolutely opposed to the formation of the couple which tends to organise the Hollywood romance. It is not the fixed couple that is important, but the transformation operated in the individual by the other. This is crucial because it leaves the other their freedom, their autonomy, whilst still acknowledging their influence. There is no sense in which this conception of love could tip over into a relationship of *possession* of one partner by the other. The way that Godard films Cécile Camp tends to confirm this impression. It is perhaps only on repeated viewings that the spectator begins to

realise that we never really *see* Berthe: we have little sense of what she actually looks like. In the majority of scenes in the first section of the film, which take place at night, Berthe is concealed by the darkness, only a vague outline or a small part of her face illuminated by the rare light sources, the rest hidden in shadows. In those scenes, particularly those of the second part of the film, which take place in the daytime, she is consistently filmed from behind or in profile with her hair hiding her face. In fact, we only get one good look at Berthe's face, seen through a window, the first time Edgar lays eyes on her.⁵⁸ Now it could be suggested that this approach to filming a heroine simply reproduces in a different way the traditional gender division of narrative cinema, with Berthe as the elusive, enigmatic woman and Edgar as the questing subject of the narrative. But it should be pointed out that Godard's filming of Cécile Camp definitively denies the spectator any kind of fetishistic appropriation of her body. (It might be further remarked that she is never dressed provocatively, wearing, for the most part, a large, unflattering coat or indistinct black clothing.) What all this means is that Berthe exists for us essentially as a *voice*. In the final scene of the first section, Edgar says of Berthe 'son ton de voix m'intéressait'. And indeed, since we almost never see her face, and since she often talks in voiceover, it is as a voice that we will remember Berthe, a voice with earnest, interesting and intelligent things to say about various aspects of life and culture, but particularly visual culture. Hers is not some transcendental voice, but a particular, a singular voice, and if we remember certain of her remarks it is because her tone, her timbre, her intonation stay with us, just as was the case with Alain Cuny in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* or with Eddie Constantine in *Allemagne neuf zéro*.

It is, then, quite extraordinary how we can have such a pronounced impression of a character despite never really seeing her. But this is generally

⁵⁸ Disappointingly, but perhaps predictably, this shot was one of the ones used on the poster for *Éloge de l'amour*, and thus thoroughly unrepresentative of the visual experience of much of the film.

one of the most striking features of *Éloge de l'amour*: its power of *suggestion*.

Reviewing the film for *Cahiers du cinéma*, Charles Tesson remarked:

Rarement, au cinéma, et encore plus chez Godard, le spectateur a ressenti ce qu'il éprouve au contact d'*Éloge de l'amour*: cette sensation de saisir une histoire dans toute sa richesse, tout en ayant la certitude que le film ne nous l'a jamais racontée.⁵⁹

Indeed, *Éloge de l'amour* powerfully evokes a story that stays with us, even though many of what we would suspect to be its key elements (a relationship between Edgar and Berthe, Edgar's completed project, the Resistance activities of Berthe's grandparents) never appear on screen. If the film acts so much upon the memory, it is doubtless largely due to its structure, divided into two (unequal) halves, the latter half taking place two years before the former. Twice in the film, characters remark (Berthe in Paris, Edgar in Brittany) on relationships that have ended and on their impression that it is only since their separation that 'les choses commencent à prendre un peu de sens'. When Edgar says this, at the end of the second section as Berthe is driving him to the train station, she explains, 'C'est parce que c'est là que l'histoire commence'. And the film seems to subscribe to this philosophy since it too only really begins to make sense for the spectator once it is over. It is only then that certain connections begin to become apparent between the two halves of the film, it is only in the light of the second half that the events of the first take on their full significance. *Éloge de l'amour* is thus a work that generates thought for the spectator but also that generates desire, the desire to see the film again. And *Éloge* almost *demand*s to be seen more than once. Not only its structure, but its sheer density – the complexity of its ideas, the depth of its intertextual reference, the beauty of its images and the poetry of its texts – calls for several viewings to be appreciated. This is not just an elitist cultural strategy, but a stubborn refusal of a disposable culture in which, as Serge

⁵⁹ Charles Tesson, 'Et l'âge de l'amour', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 557 (May 2001), 38-39.

Daney lamented, we go to the cinema to confirm what we already know we are going to see. *Éloge de l'amour*, on the other hand, by demanding to be seen more than once, invites the spectator to enter into a personal relationship with the film, and, if it begins to make sense after it is over, it is because that is when it begins to resonate in the mind, when certain ideas, images, phrases begin to circulate in the spectator's memory, to gather new meaning and take on a life of their own...

All of these ideas could perhaps be articulated around a single quotation that recurs in *Éloge de l'amour*, a text attributed to Georges Bataille:

Rien n'est plus contraire à l'image de l'être aimé que celle de l'État dont la raison s'oppose à la valeur souveraine de l'amour. L'État n'a nullement, ou a perdu, le pouvoir d'embrasser devant nous la totalité du monde, cette totalité de l'univers donnée en même temps au-dehors, dans l'être aimé comme un objet, au-dedans, dans l'amant comme sujet.⁶⁰

In the first part of the film, Edgar gives this text to someone to read at an audition, saying he first heard it two years previously. In the second half of the film, we discover that it was Berthe whom Edgar heard reciting the text in Brittany. The text is about love and its relation to the State and there is a sense that, whereas love is precisely characterised by this confusion of outside and in – the other that is incorporated into the self, altering the self and yet still remaining in some sense outside, as other - , the monolithic State recognises no such point of merger between itself and its neighbours, be they friends or enemies. The theme of love relates in this way to the wider discussion of politics and international relations in the film, with the implicit suggestion that a State like the USA might benefit from seeing things in these more fluid terms. Moreover, all this relates back to the very structure of the film. This discussion of love and

⁶⁰ In the film this text is misleadingly or erroneously linked to *Le Bleu du ciel* from which it is not taken. But this misremembering itself suggests the way in which the quotation has become detached from its source and taken on a life of its own in Godard's oeuvre.

subjectivity suggests an intuitive understanding of Derrida's analysis of the structures of consciousness and time – consciousness *in* time or *as* time – in which the same can only be identified as the same by always already marking itself off from itself, thus by recognising itself as different; an understanding, too, that subjectivity is constituted through the grieving memory of the other which is in fact already the grieving memory of the self. This structure of loss and repetition is built into the montage of Godard's film via the device of a first section that responds to events in a second section that are chronologically anterior. So, when people discuss things in the first part of the film, they seem to do so for the first time but are in fact repeating things they have already said. And later, when people seem to be repeating themselves, they are actually talking for the first time. All of which suggests that there *is* no first time, that is to say it is a consequence of our existence in history that every utterance we make is always a composite of a myriad of other utterances absorbed during our life, even though our recombination and expression of those utterances may be absolutely singular. Take for example the Bataille quotation: when Edgar uses it for his project, he is quoting Berthe, but the text is already a quotation of Bataille and, furthermore, this is an example of Godard quoting himself since the text already appears at the end of *Histoire(s)* 4B. Each time it appears, this text is slightly different, each time given a new configuration of sense by its context and by the voice that pronounces it, and yet each time it retains a certain nucleus of meaning handed down from Bataille.

If we have thus chosen to conclude our analysis of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* with a lengthy discussion of *Éloge de l'amour*, it is because this new film prolongs but also extends the concerns of Godard's historical work. *Éloge de l'amour* continues *Histoire(s) du cinéma*'s citational aesthetic, being built out of explicit and implicit, acknowledged and unacknowledged, blatant and buried references to literature, philosophy, painting, music and, of course, cinema. But *Éloge* also extends this concern for quotation to see how it governs our most

precious human relations and our most basic sense of self, inviting us to consider *love as quotation*, and quotation as love. *Éloge de l'amour* prolongs *Histoire(s) du cinéma*'s discourse about the dual nature of cinema, both miraculous reproduction of the real and complex construction of montage. But *Éloge* also gives a bravura demonstration of this notion of cinema by creating a fictional world that is at once breathtakingly *tangible* and beguilingly absent, emerging most forcefully through the spectator's own work of (re)construction. *Éloge de l'amour* prolongs *Histoire(s) du cinéma*'s argument about film history, incorporating into its audiovisual texture a variety of homages to a cinema that it mourns (Bresson, in particular, is uppermost), whilst provocatively pointing up the lamentable state of today's cinematic culture. But *Éloge* also, by its very existence, negates some of the pessimism of the *Histoire(s)* discourse by demonstrating the continued possibilities of its medium: from the sumptuous black and white photography of the first section which shows that the cinema is still capable of capturing a modern city with all the magic that it had in the days of Jean Vigo; to the saturated colours of the second half on digital video whose images nonetheless *vibrate* with the presence of a world so real you can almost smell it, and which confirm that new technologies need not necessitate the loss of that special relationship to the real that conditioned our love for cinema. If *Histoire(s) du cinéma* ends, as it began, by suggesting that film history is over, *Éloge de l'amour* opens on to the future by suggesting that it is only now that the work of understanding – the work of mourning, the work of *love* – can really begin. *C'est là que l'histoire commence...*

Conclusion

'L'histoire devenue réelle n'a plus de *fin*.'

- Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*¹

As a work which tells the history of cinema in cinema and as cinema, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is necessarily self-reflexive, repeating in its own textual operations the same phenomena that it seeks to describe in the object of its investigation. But it is important to distinguish between two kinds of self-reflexivity: on the one hand, that practised by postmodern ironists who construct an impregnable textual edifice that closes on itself by pre-empting and absorbing criticisms; and, on the other hand, a self-reflexivity that consistently undermines the foundations of its own discourse, everywhere revealing the paradoxes and ambiguities of its operation. Thus, while the first form is closed to all discussion and debate, the second invites critical thought and dialogue with the reader or spectator through its open and unfinished structure. This latter kind of self-consciousness, with its roots in German Romanticism and a long tradition stretching across European high modernism, has always been practised by Godard and this thesis has shown that, whereas the ironic self-deprecation of contemporary televisual media serves only to reinforce the *plenitude* of the image, Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* never allows us to forget the paradoxical *nothingness* of the image that makes this plenitude seem possible. By highlighting the fragile, unstable nature of the image, Godard's cinema has repeatedly been able to stress the impermanence of certain social and ideological forms.

But, if the cinema is particularly well placed to perform this political work, it is also because its most decisive invention – *montage* – allows the filmmaker to give a practical demonstration of the constructed, and hence inessential, nature of reality. Montage, in other words, is a practical extension of

¹ Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, p. 74.

historical thought. By bringing together two images, ideas or events, montage – at its most ambitious – allows for the unexpected contrast or comparison between two historically-specific realities which can enable us to look at those realities in an entirely new way. Montage, then, for Godard, is not simply a device for organising narratives, but a properly revolutionary tool for renewing our relation to the world. By eschewing traditional narrative forms, Godard has always sought to restore montage to this more aspirational function, but particularly since the explicitly political work from the late sixties onwards. In recent years, though, and thanks to the monumental research undertaken with *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Godard has become increasingly aware of the properly historical applications of montage, using it to interrogate and explore the implications and interconnections of art, politics and thought in the twentieth century. The theoretical basis of this exercise, together with the increasingly dense intertextual layering of the work itself, has led Godard to be characterised, at least in popular discourse, but sometimes too in academic circles, as a difficult and didactic filmmaker or, worse, as an isolated and introspective figure whose filmic research has little application in the outside world. But what this thesis has argued is that Godard's historical method, like that proposed by Walter Benjamin which it closely resembles, represents an *empathic* approach to history rather than an intellectual one. In Benjamin's constellations, the suffering of history strikes the historian in an immediate and emotional way, lending an urgency to this historiography that is absent from more rigorously factual and comprehensive accounts. By making his history of the century of cinema not in words but in images and sounds, Godard is better placed to replicate this emotional experience of history. An immediate and irreducible response is generated by the images in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, be they the bewitchingly beautiful images from Godard's or other people's films, or the singularly horrific images that testify to the crimes of the twentieth century. Similarly, the texts quoted by Godard are lent extra weight by the uncommon attention paid to the

qualities of the voices that read them, and Godard's use of music, more perhaps than any other on film, captures the sheer magic of sound and its incalculable impact on the spectator. In reconstructing Godard's argument and tracing his historical thought in our analysis of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and its many adjacent texts, we have been careful at every stage to remain attentive to this initial level of emotional, *visceral* response on the part of the spectator which is a vital first stage in the absorption of the historical argument and, indeed, a key component of the process whereby historical thought is prolonged in political action.

It has been suggested that the unexpected, indeed unprecedented, proliferation of religious imagery in Godard's work over the past two decades undermines this would-be critical discourse by re-inscribing a traditional metaphysical argument about the image as *icon*. However, our investigation of the sources and resonance of Godard's religious thought suggests that he draws inspiration from a tradition in twentieth-century philosophy which seeks to extract from religious belief its most radical meaning: that there is a domain of experience which remains inexpressible and unassimilable to the project of a totalising thought and that one can only await or attend this *absolutely unexpected* quality in a real whose existence remains *absolutely* groundless. Once again, the cinema, by virtue of always recording *more* of the real than was ever intended, is particularly well placed, if not to capture then at least to *suggest* something of this impenetrable mystery of the unjustified and obscene *thereness* of the real. So what cinema at its best has sought to capture, or has evoked in spite of itself, is paradoxically the ungraspable, the intangible itself, and if cinema is a privileged instrument for performing the work of history, it is because of its ability to suggest the properly *inexhaustible* nature of the real. History, as the interminable excess of Godard's recent work demonstrates, is a process without end.

In the course of this thesis we have traced Godard's ideas about the relation of the image to the event, about the image *of* the event and the image *as*

event, by exploring parallels with certain key thinkers of the past century, from Benjamin to Baudrillard, via Bataille and Blanchot, Derrida and Lyotard. It is our contention that Godard can be considered as the equal of these thinkers and that, just as they have explored similar problems and reached similar conclusions through the unique channels of their individual writings, so too Godard, influenced by the phenomenology and anthropology of the first half of the twentieth-century, has been led on an equally serious philosophical journey in his cinematic career across the second half of that century. The difference, of course, is that Godard has pursued this project, not in discursive text or literary fiction but in *images* or, more precisely, in the montage of images and sounds. The advantage of this, as we have shown, is that difficult arguments about the unfathomable nature of our relationship to the real, or about the endlessness of thought, are given practical demonstration in a form that resonates immediately with the viewer. In a climate in which major political change is considered impossible and undesirable, in which free market capitalism is accepted as an inevitability when it is not heralded as a triumph, such challenging work as Godard's is invaluable. The likes of Derrida and Lyotard have explained that, if thought can have no end, then politics, as a manifestation of thought, is never finished: as Derrida suggests, democracy itself is never complete, but always *yet to come*. The films of Jean-Luc Godard, which are always open and alive, unfinished and interminable, have, in their own way, adopted and pursued this political project. This kind of courageous and unpredictable filmmaking has an essential role to play in the closed circuit of pre-determined choice that constitutes today's visual culture. We need films capable of showing us how images can still be used to think the unthought and the unthinkable, to expose the limits of contemporary forms of thinking by paradoxically exposing the limits of thought itself, that is to say the impossible end of thought that forever rekindles and renews the process of thinking as an unattainable but irresistible goal.

At the end of *Éloge de l'amour*, a shot of Edgar is superimposed over the saturated colours of a sunset as he looks across the bay at a lighthouse in the distance. As Edgar muses on the fact that he cannot think of one thing without thinking of something else, that this landscape is only new for him because it is compared to another landscape in his memory, Godard employs a staggered, slow-motion reverse zoom which gives the effect of the lighthouse gradually receding into the distance. This is surely one of the most successfully realised *images of thought* – of thought in its infinite regress – that the cinema has ever produced. It is a perfect image of the argument that Godard has been developing in his extraordinarily rich film and video works over the past decade and a half: that the cinema is not only a form that thinks, but a form for generating thought and, as such, a miraculous demonstration of that ambiguous gift that is our own inability ever to come to the end of thought.

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Filmography

Films by Godard

This is a complete, chronological list of all film and video works directed by Jean-Luc Godard. The list was compiled mainly following the filmography in volume 2 of *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*.

Key: *d.* = director; *p.c.* = production company; *p.* = producer; *sc.* = screenplay; *d.ph.* = director of photography; *ed.* = editor; *s.* = sound)

Opération béton (Switzerland, 1954) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Actua-Films; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Adrien Porchet; 20 mins, b/w.

Une femme coquette (France, 1955) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *sc.*: Hans Lucas [Jean-Luc Godard]; *d.ph.*: Hans Lucas; *cast.*: Marie Lysandre, Roland Tolma; 16mm, 10 mins, b/w.

Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick (Charlotte et Véronique) (France, 1957) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Films de la Pléiade; *p.*: Pierre Braunberger; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard and Eric Rohmer; *d.ph.*: Michel Latouche; *ed.*: Cécile Decugis; *cast.*: Jean-Claude Brialy (Patrick); Anne Colette (Charlotte), Nicole Berger (Véronique); 35mm, 21 mins, b/w.

Une histoire d'eau (France, 1958) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Films de la Pléiade; *p.*: Pierre Braunberger; *sc.*: François Truffaut; *d.ph.*: Michel Latouche; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: Jacques Maumont; *cast.*: Jean-Claude Brialy (lui), Carole Dim (elle), Jean-Luc Godard (narrator); 35mm, 18 mins, b/w.

Charlotte et son Jules (France, 1959) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Films de la Pléiade; *p.*: Pierre Braunberger; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Michel Latouche; *ed.*: Cécile Decugis; *s.*: Jacques Maumont; *cast.*: Jean-Paul Belmondo (Jean), Anne Colette (Charlotte), Gérard Blain (le type); 35mm, 20 mins, b/w.

A bout de souffle (France, 1960) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie, Productions Georges de Beauregard, Imperia; *p.*: Georges de Beauregard; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Raoul Coutard; *ed.*: Cécile Decugis, Lila Herman; *s.*: Jacques Maumont; *cast.*: Jean Seberg (Patricia Franchini), Jean-Paul Belmondo (Michel Poiccard), Henri-Jacques Huet (Berruti), Jean-Pierre Melville (Parvulesco), Liliane David (Liliane); Daniel Boulanger (inspector); 35mm, 90 mins, b/w.

Le Petit soldat (1960) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie, Productions Georges de Beauregard; *p.*: Georges de Beauregard; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Raoul Coutard; *ed.*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Herman, Nadine Marquand; *s.*: Jacques Maumont; *cast.*: Michel Subor (Bruno Forestier), Anna Karina (Véronica Dreyer), Henri-Jacques Huet (Jacques), Paul Beauvais (Paul), Laszlo Szabo (Laszlo); 35mm, 88 mins, b/w.

Une femme est une femme (France, 1961) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Rome-Paris-Films; *p*: Georges de Beauregard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Herman; *s*: Guy Villette; *cast*: Anna Karina (Angela Récamier), Jean-Claude Brialy (Émile Récamier), Jean-Paul Belmondo (Alfred Lubitsch), Nicole Paquin (prostitute); Marie Dubois (Suzanne); 35mm, 84 mins, Eastmancolor.

La Paresse (France/Italy, 1961), episode of *Les Sept péchés capitaux* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Films Gibe, Franco-London-Films, Titanus; *sc*: Jean-luc Godard; *d.ph*: Henri Decaë; *ed*: Jacques Gaillard; *s*: Jean-Claude Marchetti, Jean Labussière; *cast*: Eddie Constantine (Eddie Constantine); Nicole Mirel (the starlet); 35mm, 15 mins, b/w.

Vivre sa vie (France, 1962) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Films de la Pléiade; *p*: Pierre Braunberger; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Lakshmanan; *s*: Guy Villette, Jacques Maumont; *cast*: Anna Karina (Nana), Sady Rebot (Raoul), André S. Labarthe (Paul), Peter Kassovitz (young man), Monique Messine (Élisabeth), Brice Parrain (philosopher); 35mm, 85 mins, b/w.

Le Nouveau monde (Italy/France, 1962), episode of *RoGoPaG* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Arco Film, Cineruz, Société Cinématographique Lyre; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Jean Rabier; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Lakshmanan; *s*: Hervé; *cast*: Alexandra Stewart, Jean-Marc Bory, Jean-André Fieschi, Michel Delahaye, Alexandre Alexandre; 20 mins, b/w.

Les Carabiniers (France/Italy, 1963) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Rome-Paris-Films, les Films Marceau, Laetitia; *p*: Georges de Beauregard, Carlo Ponti; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Roberto Rossellini, Jean Gruault; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Lakshmanan; *s*: Jacques Maumont; *cast*: Marino Masse (Ulysse), Albert Juross (Michel-Ange), Geneviève Galéa (Vénus), Catherine Ribeiro (Cléopâtre); 35mm, 80 mins, b/w.

Le Grand escroc (France/Italy/Japan, 1963), episode of *Les Plus grands escroqueries du monde* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Ulysse Productions, LUX/CCF, Vides Cinematografica, Toho/Towa, Caesar Film Productie; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Lakshmanan; *s*: Hervé; *cast*: Jean Seberg (Patricia Leacock), Charles Denner (l'escroc), Laszlo Szabo (inspector); 35mm, 25 mins

Le Mépris (France/ Italy, 1963) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Rome-Paris-Films, Films Concordia, Comania Cinematografica Champion; *p*: Carlo Ponti, Georges de Beauregard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Lila Lakshmanan; *s*: William Sivel; *cast*: Brigitte Bardot (Camille Javal), Jack Palance (Jeremiah Prokosch), Fritz Lang (himself), Michel Piccoli (Paul Javal), Georgia Moll (Francesca Vanini), Jean-Luc Godard (assistant director); 35mm, 105 mins, Eastmancolor.

Bande à part (France, 1964) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Anouchka Film, Orsay Film; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Françoise

Collin; *s*: René Levert, Antoine Bonfanti; *cast*: Anna Karina (Odile), Claude Brasseur (Arthur), Sami Frey (Franz), Louisa Colpeyn (Mme Victoria), Danièle Girard (English teacher); 35mm, 95 mins, b/w.

Montparnasse-Levallois (France, 1964), episode of *Paris vu par...* - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Les Films du Losange, Films du Cyprès; *p*: Barbet Schroeder; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Albert Maysles; *ed*: Jacqueline Raynal; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Johana Shimkus (Monika), Philippe Hiquily (Ivan), Serge Davri (Roger); 16mm blown up to 35mm, 18 mins, Ektachrome.

Une femme mariée (France, 1964) - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Anouchka Films, Orsay Films; *p*: Philippe Dussart; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Françoise Collin; *s*: Antoine Bonfanti, René Levert, Jacques Maumont; *cast*: Macha Méril (Charlotte), Bernard Noël (Robert), Philippe Leroy (Pierre), Roger Leenhardt (himself), Rita Maiden (Mme Céline), 35mm, 98 mins, b/w.

Alphaville, une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution (France/Italy, 1965) - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Chaumiane Productions, Filmstudio; *p*: André Michelin; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Eddie Constantine (Lemmy Caution), Anna Karina (Natacha von Braun), Akim Tamiroff (Henri Dickson), Howard Vernon (Professeur Leonard Nosferatu/Professeur von Braun); 35mm, 98 mins, b/w.

Pierrot le fou (France/Italy, 1965) - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Rome-Paris-Films, Productions Georges de Beauregard, Dino Laurentiis Cinematografica; *p*: Georges de Beauregard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Françoise Collin; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Jean-Paul Belmondo (Ferdinand), Anna Karina (Marianne), Dirk Sanders (the brother), Raymond Devos (man at the port), Graziella Galvani (Maria); 35mm, 112 mins, Eastmancolor.

Masculin féminin (France/Sweden, 1966) - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Anouchka Films, Argos Films, Svensk Filmindustri, Sandrews; *d.ph*: Willy Kurant; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Jean-Pierre Léaud (Paul), Chantal Goya (Madeleine), Marlène Jobert (Elizabeth), Michel Debord (Robert), Catherine-Isabelle Dupont (Catherine-Isabelle); 35mm, 110 mins, b/w.

Made in USA (France, 1966) - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Anouchka Films, Rome-Paris-Film, Sepic; *p*: Georges de Beauregard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot; *s*: René Levert, Jacques Maumont; *cast*: Anna Karina (Paula Nelson), Laszlo Szabo (Richard Widmark), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Donald Siegel), Yves Afonso (David Goodis), Ernest Menzer (Typhus), Jean-Claude Bouillon (inspector), Kyoko Kosaka (Doris Mizoguchi); 35mm, 90 mins, Eastmancolor.

Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle (France, 1966) - *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Anouchka Films, Argos Films, les Films du Carrosse, Parc Film; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Françoise Collin, Chantal Delattre; *s*: René Levert, Antoine Bonfanti; *cast*: Marina Vlady (Juliette Janson), Anny Duperey (Marianne), Roger Montsoret (Robert Janson), Raoul Lévy (the

American), Jean Narboni (Roger), Christophe Bourseiller (Christophe), Marie Bourseiller (Solange), Joseph Gehrard (M. Gérard); 35mm, 90 mins, Eastmancolor.

Anticipation, ou L'Amour en l'an 2000 (France/German Federal Republic/Italy, 1966), episode of *Le Plus vieux métier du monde* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Francoriz Films, Films Gibé, Rialto Films, Rizzoli Films; *p*: Joseph Bergholz; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Pierre Lhomme; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Jacques Charrier (Dick), Anna Karina (Natacha), Marilù Tolo (Marlène); 35mm, 20 mins, Eastmancolor.

Caméra-Oeil (France, 1967), episode of *Loin du Vietnam* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: SLON; *d.ph*: Alain Levent; 16mm, 15 mins, colour.

La Chinoise (France, 1967) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Anouchka Films, Les Productions de la Guéville, Athos Films, Parc Films, Simar Films; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot, Delphine Desfons; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Anne Wiazemsky (Véronique), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Guillaume), Michel Semeniako (Henri), Lex de Bruijn (Kirilov), Juliet Berto (Yvonne), Omar Diop (Omar), Francis Jeanson (himself); 35mm, 96 mins, Eastmancolor.

Week-end (France/Italy, 1967) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Films Copernic, Comacico, Lira Films, Ascot Cineraid; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Agnès Guillemot; *s*: René Levert; *cast*: Mireille Darc (Elle), Jean Yanne (lui), Jean-Pierre Kalfon (the chief), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Saint-Just), Yves Afonso (Mon Gros), Daniel Pomereulle (Joseph Balsamo), Blandine Jeanson (Emily Brontë), Virginie Vignon (Marie-Madeleine); 35mm, 95 mins, Eastmancolor.

Le Gai savoir (France/German Federal Republic, 1968) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: O.R.T.F., Anouchka Films, Bavaria Atelier; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Georges Leclerc; *ed*: Germaine Cohen; *cast*: Juliet Berto (Patricia Lumumba), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Émile Rousseau); 35mm, 95 mins, Eastmancolor.

Un film comme les autres (France, 1968) – *d*: Groupe ARC; *d.ph*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; 16mm, 100 mins, Ektachrome.

One plus one (Great Britain, 1968) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Cupid Productions; *p*: Michael Pearson, Iain Quarrier; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Tony Richmond; *ed*: Ken Rowles; *s*: Arthur Bradburn, Derek Ball; *cast*: The Rolling Stones, Anne Wiazemsky (Eve Democracy); 99 mins, Eastmancolor.

One American movie (USA, 1968) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker; *p.c*: Leacock-Pennebaker, Inc.; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: D.A. Pennebaker, Richard Leacock; *ed*: D.A. Pennebaker; *s*: Mary Lampson, Robert Leacock, Kate Taylor; *cast*: Richard Leacock, Eldridge Cleaver, Jean-Luc Godard, Anne Wiazemsky, Rip Torn, The Jefferson Airplane; 16mm, 90 mins, Ektachrome.

British Sounds (Great Britain, 1969) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger; *p.c*: Kestrel Productions, London Weekend Television; *p*: Irving Teitelbaum, Kenneth Trodd; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger; *d.ph*: Charles Stewart; *ed*: Elisabeth Koziman; *s*: Fred Sharp; 16mm, 52 mins, Eastmancolor.

Pravda (France, 1969) – *d*: Groupe Dziga Vertov; *p.c*: C.E.R.T.; *p*: Claude Nedjar; 16mm, 58 mins, Agfa-Gevaert colour.

Vent d'est (France/Italy/German Federal Republic, 1969) – *d*: Groupe Dziga Vertov; *p.c*: Kuntz Films, Poli-Film, Anouchka Films; *p*: Gianni Barcelloni, Ettore Rosboch; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Sergio Bazzini; *d.ph*: Mario Vulpiani; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; *s*: Antonio Ventura, Carlo Diotarelli; *cast*: Gian Maria Volonte, Anne Wiazemsky, Paolo Pazzesi, Christiana Tullio Altan, Allan Midgette; 16mm, 100 mins, Eastmancolor.

Luttés en Italie (France/Italy, 1969) – *d*: Groupe Dziga Vertov; *p.c*: Cosmoëion, Anouchka Films; *cast*: Christiana Tullio Altan, Anne Wiazemsky, Jérôme Hinstin, Paolo Pozzesi; 16mm, 76 mins, Eastmancolor.

Vladimir et Rosa (France/German Federal republic/USA, 1971) – *d*: Groupe Dziga Vertov; *p.c*: Munich Tele-Pool, Grove Press; *cast*: Anne Wiazemsky, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Jean-Luc Godard, Juliet Berto, Ernest Menzer, Yves Afonso, Claude Nedjar; 16mm, 103 mins, colour.

Tout va bien (France/Italy, 1972) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; *p.c*: Anouchka Films, Vicco Films, Empire Film; *p*: J.P. Rassin; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; *d.ph*: Armand Marco; *ed*: Kenout Peltier; *s*: Bernard Orthion, Antoine Bonfanti; *cast*: Yves Montand (him), Jane Fonda (her), Vittorio Caprioli (the boss), Jean Pignol (C.G.T. delegate), Pierre Oudry (Frédéric), Elisabeth Chauvin (Geneviève), Eric Chartier (Lucien), Yves Gabrielli (Léon); 35mm, 95 mins, Eastmancolor.

Letter to Jane (France, 1972) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; *p*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin; 16mm, 52 mins, b/w & colour.

Ici et ailleurs (France, 1974) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: Sonimage, INA; *d.ph*: William Lubtchansky; *ed*: Anne-Marie Miéville; 16mm, 60 mins, Eastmancolor.

Numéro deux (France, 1975) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sonimage, Bela, SNC; *p*: Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph*: William Lubtchansky; *s*: Jean-Pierre Ruh; *cast*: Sandrine Battistella (Sandrine), Pierre Oudry (husband), Alexandre Rignault (grandfather), Rachel Stefanopoli (grandmother); 35mm, 88 mins, colour.

Comment ça va (France, 1975) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: Sonimage, Bela, SNC; *sc*: Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: William Lubtchansky; *cast*: M. Marot, Anne-Marie Miéville; 78 mins, colour.

Six fois deux (Sur et sous la communication) (France, 1976) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: INA, Sonimage; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph*: William Lubtchansky; six programmes of around 10 mins each, colour.

France tour détour deux enfants (France, 1977-1978) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: INA, Sonimage; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *cast*: Camille Violette, Arnaud Martin, Betty Berr, Albert Dray; 12 programmes of 26 mins each, colour.

Sauve qui peut (la vie) (Switzerland/France, 1979) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sara Films, MK2, Saga Production, Sonimage, CNC, ZDF, SSR, Österreichischer Rundfunk-Fernsehen; *p*: Alain Sarde, Jean-Luc Godard; *sc*: Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Claude Carrière, Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: William Lubtchansky, Renato Berta, Jean-Bernard Menoud; *ed*: Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: Jacques Maumont, Luc Yersin, Oscar Stellavox; *cast*: Isabelle Huppert (Isabelle Rivière), Jacques Dutronc (Paul Godard), Nathalie Baye (Denise Rimbaud), Roland Amstutz (client), Anna Baldaccini (Isabelle's sister), Fred Personne (client); 35mm, 87 mins, Eastmancolor.

Scénario de Sauve qui peut (la vie) (1979) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; video, 20 mins, colour.

Lettre à Freddy Buache (Switzerland, 1981) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sonimage, Film et Vidéo Production (Lausanne); *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Jean-Bernard Menoud; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; video, 11 mins, colour.

Passion (France/Switzerland, 1981) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sara Films, Sonimage, Films A2, Film et Vidéo Production SA (Lausanne), SSR; *p*: Alain Sarde; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Isabelle Huppert (Isabelle), Hanna Schygulla (Hanna), Michel Piccoli (Michel Boulard), Jerzy Radziwilowicz (Jerzy), Laszlo Szabo (the producer); 35mm, 87 mins, Eastmancolor.

Scénario du film Passion (France/Switzerland, 1982) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: JLG Films, Télévision Romande; video, 54 mins, colour.

Changer d'image (1982), episode in the series *Le Changement a plus d'un titre* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *cast*: Jean-Luc Godard; video, 9 mins, colour.

Prénom Carmen (France/Switzerland, 1982) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sara Films, Films A2, JLG Films; *p*: Alain Sarde; *sc*: Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph*: Raoul Coutard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard, Suzanne Lang-Villar; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Maruschka Detmers (Carmen), Jacques Bonnaffé (Joseph), Myriem Roussel (Claire), Christophe Odent (the boss), Jean-Luc Godard (uncle Jean), Hyppolite Girardot (Fred); 35mm, 85 mins, Eastmancolor.

Je vous salue Marie (France/Switzerland, 1983) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Pégase Films, SSR, JLG Films, Sara Films, Channel 4, Société Nouvelle des

Établissements Gaumont; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Jean-Bernard Menoud, Jacques Firmann; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Myriem Roussel (Marie), Thierry Rode (Joseph), Philippe Lacoste (the angel), Juliette Binoche (Juliette), Johan Meyssen (the professor), Anne Gauthier (Eva); 35mm, 72 mins, Eastmancolor.

Petites notes à propos du film *Je vous salue Marie* (1983) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *cast*: Jean-Luc Godard, Myriem Roussel, Thierry Rode, Anne-Marie Miéville; video, 25 mins, colour.

Déetective (France, 1984) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sara Films, JLG Films; *p*: Alain Sarde; *sc*: Alain Sarde, Philippe Setbon, Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Bruno Nuytten; *ed*: Marilyn Dubreuil; *s*: Pierre Gamet, François Musy; *cast*: Nathalie Baye (Françoise Chenal), Claude Brasseur (Émile Chenal), Johnny Hallyday (Jimmy Fox Warner), Stéphane Ferrara (Tiger Jones), Eugène Berthier (Eugène), Emmanuelle Seigner (Grâce Kelly), Laurent Terzieff (William Prospero), Jean-Pierre Léaud (inspector), Alain Cuny (mafioso); 35mm, 95 mins, colour.

Soft and Hard (A soft conversation between two friends on a hard subject) (Great Britain/France, 1985) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: Channel 4, JLG Films; *cast*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; video, 52 mins, colour.

Grandeur et décadence d'un petit commerce de cinéma (France, 1986) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: TF1, Hamster Productions, Télévision Suisse Romande, JLG Films, RTL; *p*: Pierre Grimblat; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Caroline Champetier; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Jean-Pierre Mocky (Jean Almereyda, dit Jean Vigo), Marie Valéra (Eurydice), Jean-Pierre Léaud (Gaspard Bazin); video, 52 mins, colour.

Meetin' W.A. (France, 1986) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: JLG Films; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Woody Allen, Jean-Luc Godard; video, 26 mins, colour.

Armide (Great Britain, 1987), episode of the film *Aria* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Boyd's Company, RDP Productions, Virgin Vision, Lightyear Entertainment; *p*: Don Boyd; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Caroline Champetier; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Marion Peterson, Valérie Alain, Jacques Neuville, Luke Corre, Christian Cauchon, Philippe Pellant, Patrice Linguet, Lionel Sorin, Jean Coffinet, Alexandre des Granges, Gérard Vives, Frédéric Brosse, Pascal Bermot, Jean-Luc Corre, Bernard Gaudray, Dominique Mano, Patrice Tridian; 35mm, 12 mins, colour.

Soigne ta droite, ou Une place sur la terre (France/Switzerland, 1987) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Gaumont Productions, JLG Films, Xanadu Films, RTSR; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Caroline Champetier, Jacques Loiseleux; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Jean-Luc Godard (the Idiot, the Prince), Jacques Villeret (the individual), François Périer (the man), Jane Birkin ('la cigale'), Michel Galabru (the admiral), Dominique Lavanant (the admiral's wife), les Rita Mitsouko; 35mm, 82 mins, Eastmancolor.

King Lear (USA, 1987) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Cannon Films International; *p*: Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Peter Sellars; *d.ph*: Sophie Maintigneux; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Burgess Meredith (King Lear), Peter Sellars (William Shakespeare V), Molly Ringwald (Cordelia), Jean-Luc Godard (Professor Pluggy), Woody Allen (Mr Alien), Norman Mailer (himself), Kate Mailer (herself), Leos Carax (Edgar), Julie Delpy; 35mm, 90 mins, colour.

Girbaud advertisements (France, 1988) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p*: Marithé and François Girbaud; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; video, 10 advertisements of around 15-20 secs each, colour.

On s'est tous défilé (France, 1988) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p*: Marithé and François Girbaud; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Caroline Champetier; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; video, 13 mins, colour.

Puissance de la parole (France, 1988) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: France Télécom, JLG Films, Gaumont; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Jean Bouise (Mr Agathos), Laurence Côte (Mlle Oïnos), Lydia Andréi (Velma), Jean-Michel Iribarren (Franck); video, 25 mins, colour.

Le Dernier mot (France, 1988), episode in the series *Les Français vus par...* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Erato Films; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: Pierre Camus; *cast*: André Marcon, Hanns Zischler, Catherine Aymerie, Pierre Amoyal, Michel Radio, Luc Briffoch, Laurent Rohrbach, Gilles Laeser, Laurence Nanzer, Damien Nanzer; video, 13 mins, colour.

Le Rapport Darty (France, 1989) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: Gaumont, JLG Films; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph*: Hervé Duhamel; *s*: François Musy; *cast*: Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard; video, 50 mins, colour.

Nouvelle Vague (France/Switzerland, 1990) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Sara Films, Peripheria, Canal Plus, Vega Film, Télévision Romande, Films A2, CNC, SOFICA Investimage, SOFICA Créations; *p*: Alain Sarde; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: William Lubtchansky; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: Henri Morelle, François Musy; *cast*: Alain Delon (Roger/Richard Lennox), Domiziana Giordano (Elena Torlato-Favrini), Roland Amstutz (gardener), Laurence Côte (governess), Jacques Dacqmine (C.E.O.), Christophe Odent (lawyer), Laurence Guerre (secretary), Joseph Lisbona (doctor), Laure Killing (doctor's wife), Cécile Reigher (waitress); 35mm, 89 mins, colour.

L'Enfance de l'art (How are the kids) (1990), episode of the film *Comment vont les enfants* – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: UNICEF; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph*: Sophie Maintigneux; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: Pierre-Alain Besse; *cast*: Antoine Reyes, Nathalie Kadem; 35mm, 8 mins, colour.

Contre l'oubli (France, 1991) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c.*: Amnesty International; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph.*: Jean-Marc Fabre; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *cast.*: André Rousselet; video, 3 mins, colour.

Allemagne neuf zéro (France, 1991) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Antenne 2, Brainstorm Productions; *p.*: Nicole Ruelle; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Christophe Pollock; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: Pierre-Alain Besse; *cast.*: Eddie Constantine (Lemmy Caution), Hanns Zischler (Comte Zelten), Claudia Michelson (Charlotte/Dora), André S. Labarthe (narrator), Nathalie Kadem (Delphine de Staël), Robert Wittmers (Don Quixote), Kim Kashkashian (violinist); 35mm, 62 mins, colour.

Les Enfants jouent à la Russie (Switzerland/France/USA, 1993) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Worldvision, Cecco Films, RTR; *p.*: Alessandro Cecconi, Ira Barmak, Ruth Waldburger; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Caroline Champetier; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: Stéphane Thiébaud; *cast.*: Laszlo Szabo (Jack Valenti), Jean-Luc Godard (the Idiot, Prince Mychkine), Bernard Eisenschitz (Harry Blount), André S. Labarthe (Alcide Jolivet); video, 60 mins, colour.

Hélas pour moi (France/Switzerland, 1993) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Les Films Alain Sarde, Vega Films, Periphéria, Télévision Suisse Romande, Département Fédéral de l'Intérieur, Cofimage 4, Investimage 4; *p.*: Ruth Waldburger; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Caroline Champetier; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: François Musy; *cast.*: Gérard Depardieu (Simon Donnadiou), Laurence Masliah (Rachel Donnadiou), Bernard Verney (Abraham Klimt), Jean-Louis Loca (Max Mercure), François Germond (the pastor), Anny Romand (Aude), Marc Betton (doctor); 35mm, 84 mins, colour.

Je vous salue Sarajevo (1994) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; video.

JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de décembre (France/Switzerland, 1994) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Periphéria, Gaumont; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Yves Pouliguen; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: Pierre-Alain Besse; *cast.*: Jean-Luc Godard, Geneviève Pasquier, Denis Jadot, Brigitte Bastien, Elizabeth Kaza, André S. Labarthe, Louis Séguin, Bernard Eisenschitz, Nathalie Aguillar; 35mm, 62 mins, colour.

2 x 50 ans de cinéma français (Great Britain, 1995) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c.*: British Film Institute; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *d.ph.*: Isabelle Czajka; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: Stéphane Thiébaud; *cast.*: Jean-Luc Godard, Michel Piccoli, Cécile Reigher, Estelle Grynspan, Dominique Jacquet, Patrick Gillieron, Xavier Jougoux, Fabrice Dierx-Bernard; video, 50 mins, colour.

For Ever Mozart (France/Switzerland/Germany, 1996) – *d.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c.*: Avventura Films, Periphéria, CEC Rhône Alpes, France 2 Cinéma, Canal Plus, CNC, Vega Film, TSR, Eurimages, DFI, ECM Records; *p.*: Alain Sarde; *sc.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph.*: Christophe Pollock; *ed.*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s.*: François Musy; *cast.*: Madeleine Assas (Camille), Ghalya Lacroix (Rosette), Bérangère

Allaux (actress), Vicky Messica (director), Frédéric Pierrot (Jérôme), Michel Francini (Baron), Euryale Wynter (Mozart); 35mm, 84 mins, colour.

Adieu au TNS (1996) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *cast*: Jean-Luc Godard; video.

Plus oh! (France, 1996), music video for France Gall – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *cast*: France Gall; 35mm, 4 mins 15 secs, colour.

Histoire(s) du cinéma (France, 1988-1998) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Gaumont, CNC, Fémis, Peripheria, la Sept, FR3, JLG Films, RTSR, Vega Films; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *cast*: Alain Cuny, Juliette Binoche, Sabine Azéma, Serge Daney, Julie Delpy, Jean-Luc Godard; video, 8 episodes, total time 265 mins, colour.

The Old Place (USA, 1998) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *p.c*: Museum of Modern Art, New York; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; video, 50 mins, colour.

De l'origine du XXI^e siècle (France, 2000) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Canal Plus, Vega Films; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *ed*: Jean-Luc Godard; *s*: François Musy; video, 15 mins, colour.

Éloge de l'amour (France/Switzerland, 2001) – *d*: Jean-Luc Godard; *p.c*: Avventura Films, Peripheria, Canal Plus, France Arte Cinéma, Vega Films, TSR, Studio Image 6; *sc*: Jean-Luc Godard; *d.ph*: Christophe Pollock, Julien Hirsch; *ed*: Raphaële Urtin; *cast*: Bruno Putzulu (Edgar), Cécile Camp (the woman), Claude Baignères (Mr Rosenthal), Remo Forlani (Mayor Forlani), Philippe Loyrette (Philippe), Audrey Klebaner (Églantine), Mark Hunter (himself), Jérémy Lippmann (Perceval), Bruno Mesrine (magician), Jean Davy (grandfather), Françoise Verny (grandmother), William Doherty (US official), Jean Lacouture (himself); 35mm and digital video, 98 mins, b/w and colour.

Other films cited

This is a complete list of all other films cited in the text of this thesis. (It is *not* a list of all films cited in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.) Films are listed alphabetically with their director, country of production and year of release.

- Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italy, 1961)
Ai no corrida (Nagisa Oshima, Japan/France, 1976)
Alexander Nevsky (S.M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1938)
All the Marbles aka *The California Dolls* (Robert Aldrich, USA, 1981)
American Beauty (Sam Mendes, USA, 1999)
American in Paris, An (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1951)
Anges du péché, Les (Robert Bresson, France, 1943)
Année dernière à Marienbad, L' (Alain Resnais, France/Italy, 1961)
Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1979)
Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat, L' (Louis Lumière, France, 1895)
Atalante, L' (Jean Vigo, France, 1934)
Bal, Le (Wilhelm Thiele, France, 1931)
Band Wagon, The (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1953)
Bandera, La (Julien Duvivier, France, 1935)
Barefoot Contessa, The (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, USA/Italy, 1954)
Battleship Potemkin (S.M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1925)
Beautiful Blonde from Bashful Bend, The (Preston Sturges, USA, 1949)
Belle et la Bête, La (Jean Cocteau, France, 1946)
Ben-Hur (Fred Niblo, USA, 1925)
Bhowani Junction (George Cukor, USA, 1955)
Billy the Kid (King Vidor, USA, 1930)
Bird of Paradise (King Vidor, USA, 1932)
Birds, The (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1963)
Bonjour Tristesse (Otto Preminger, Great Britain, 1957)
Broken Blossoms (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1919)
Cabinet des Dr Caligari, Das (Robert Wiene, Germany, 1919)
Captain Horatio Hornblower R.N. (Raoul Walsh, Great Britain/USA, 1951)
Carnet de bal, Un (Julien Duvivier, France, 1938)
Chien andalou, Un (Luis Buñuel, France, 1928)
Criss Cross (Robert Siodmak, USA, 1948)
Crowd, The (King Vidor, USA, 1928)
Crucified Lovers, The aka *Chikamatsu Monogatari* (Kenji Mizoguchi, Japan, 1955)
D-Day to Berlin (George Stevens, USA, 1985)
Dames du bois de Boulogne, Les (Robert Bresson, France, 1945)
Dark Victory (Edmund Goulding, USA, 1939)
Déjeuner de bébé, Le (Louis Lumière, France, 1896)
Deux sous d'espoir (Renato Castellani, Italy, 1952)
Diable, probablement, Le (Robert Bresson, France, 1977)
Dial M for Murder (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1954)
Duel in the Sun (King Vidor, USA, 1946)
Espoir (André Malraux, France/Spain, 1939)
Et Dieu créa la femme (Roger Vadim, France, 1956)

Fall of Berlin, The (Michail Chiaureli, USSR, 1949)
Fängelse (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1949)
Farewell my Lovely (Edward Dmytryck, USA, 1944)
Faust: eine deutsche Volkssage (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1926)
Femmes s'en balancent, Les (Bernard Borderie, France, 1954)
Fidanzati, Il (Ermanno Olmi, Italy, 1963)
Fin du jour, La (Julien Duvivier, France, 1939)
Flesh and the Devil (Clarence Brown, USA, 1927)
For Whom the Bell Tolls (Sam Wood, USA, 1943)
Foreign Correspondent (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1940)
Frankenstein (James Whale, USA, 1931)
Freaks (Tod Browning, USA, 1932)
Germania Anno Zero (Roberto Rossellini, Italy/France/German Federal Republic, 1947)
Ghost Dance (Ken McMullen, Great Britain/German Federal Republic, 1983)
Gigi (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1957)
Gilda (Charles Vidor, USA, 1946)
Grande illusion, La (Jean Renoir, France, 1937)
Great Dictator, The (Charles Chaplin, USA, 1940)
Greed (Erich von Stroheim, USA, 1923)
Gun Crazy (Joseph H. Lewis, USA, 1949)
Hardly Working (Jerry Lewis, USA, 1979)
Hunchback of Notre Dame, The (Wallace Worsley, USA, 1923)
Hurlements en faveur de Sade (Guy Debord, France, 1953)
Intolerance (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1916)
Ivan the Terrible (S.M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1944)
Johnny Guitar (Nicholas Ray, USA, 1954)
Journal d'un curé de campagne (Robert Bresson, France, 1951)
Kapo (Gillo Pontecorvo, Italy/France/Yugoslavia, 1960)
King in New York, A (Charles Chaplin, Great Britain, 1957)
King Kong (Merian C. Cooper/Ernest B. Schoedsack, USA, 1933)
Les Girls (George Cukor, USA, 1957)
Letzte Mann, Der (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1924)
Lightning over Water aka Nick's Movie (Nicholas Ray/Wim Wenders, German Federal Republic/Sweden, 1980)
Lili Marleén (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, German Federal Republic, 1980)
Limelight (Charles Chaplin, USA, 1951)
Lola Montès (Max Ophüls, France/German Federal Republic, 1955)
Long Goodbye, The (Robert Altman, USA, 1973)
M (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1931)
Machine à découper, La (Jean-Pierre Mocky, France, 1986)
Madame Bovary (Vincente Minnelli, USA, 1949)
Madame de (Max Ophüls, France/Italy, 1953)
Man who Knew too Much, The (Alfred Hitchcock, Great Britain, 1934)
Mark of the Vampire (Tod Browning, USA, 1935)
Marnie (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1964)
Matrix, The (Andy and Larry Wachowski, USA, 1999)
Menschen am Sonntag (Robert Siodmak/Edgar G. Ulmer, Germany, 1929)
Merry Widow, The (Erich von Stroheim, USA, 1925)
Metropolis (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1926)

Miracle Worker, The (Arthur Penn, USA, 1962)
Môme vert-de-gris, La (Bernard Borderie, France, 1953)
Mr Arkadin (Orson Welles, Spain/Switzerland, 1955)
Müde Tod, Der (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1921)
Nana (Jean Renoir, France, 1926)
Nibelungen, Die, 1. Teil – Siegfried (Fritz Lang, Germany, 1924)
Night at the Opera, A (Sam Wood, USA, 1935)
North by Northwest (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1959)
Nosferatu: Eine Symphonie des Grauens (F.W. Murnau, Germany, 1922)
Notorious (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1946)
Nous sommes tous encore ici (Anne-Marie Miéville, France/Switzerland, 1997)
Nuit du carrefour, La (Jean Renoir, France, 1932)
Nuit et brouillard (Alain Resnais, France, 1955)
Nutty Professor, The (Jerry Lewis, USA, 1963)
Omega Man, The (Boris Sagal, USA, 1971)
Ossessione (Luchino Visconti, Italy, 1942)
Othello (Orson Welles, Morocco, 1952)
Païsa (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1946)
Pasazerka (Andrzej Munk, Poland, 1963)
Perceval le Gallois (Eric Rohmer, France/German Federal Republic/Switzerland/
Italy, 1979)
Place in the Sun, A (George Stevens, USA, 1951)
Plaisir, Le (Max Ophüls, France, 1951)
Plein soleil (René Clément, France/Italy, 1960)
Portes de la nuit, Les (Marcel Carné, France, 1946)
Psycho (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960)
Quai des brumes (Marcel Carné, France, 1938)
Quai des Orfèvres (Henri-Georges Clouzot, France, 1947)
Que viva Mexico! (S.M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1932 unreleased until 1979)
Quelle drôle de gosse (Léo Joannon, France, 1935)
Rancho Notorious (Fritz Lang, USA, 1952)
Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1954)
Règle du jeu, La (Jean Renoir, France, 1939)
Rio Bravo (Howard Hawks, USA, 1958)
River, The (Frank Borzage, USA, 1929)
Roma, città aperta (Roberto Rossellini, Italy, 1945)
Roue, La (Abel Gance, France, 1923)
Sang d'un poète, Le (Jean Cocteau, France, 1930)
Schindler's List (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993)
Searchers, The (John Ford, USA, 1956)
Shadow of a Doubt (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1943)
Shoah (Claude Lanzmann, France, 1985)
Sommaren med Monika (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1952)
Spiral Staircase, The (Robert Siodmak, USA, 1945)
Splendor in the Grass (Elia Kazan, USA, 1961)
Strada, La (Federico Fellini, Italy, 1954)
Strangers on a Train (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1951)
Strike (S.M. Eisenstein, USSR, 1925)
Sunrise (F.W. Murnau, USA, 1927)
Suspicion (Alfred Hitchcock, 1941)

Suzanne Simonin, la Religieuse de Diderot (Jacques Rivette, France, 1965)
Ten Commandments, The (Cecil B. DeMille, USA, 1956)
Testament d'Orphée, Le (Jean Cocteau, France, 1959)
They Live by Night (Nicholas Ray, USA, 1948)
To Be or Not to Be (Ernst Lubitsch, USA, 1942)
To Catch a Thief (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1954)
To Have and Have Not (Howard Hawks, USA, 1945)
Touch of Evil (Orson Welles, USA, 1958)
Touchez pas au grisbi (Jacques Becker, France/Italy, 1954)
Treasure Island (Victor Fleming, USA, 1934)
Trial, The (Orson Welles, France/German Federal Republic/Italy, 1962)
Underwater! (John Sturges, USA, 1954)
Vampyr (Carl Dreyer, Germany/France, 1932)
Vangelo secondo Matteo, Il (Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italy/France, 1964)
Vénus aveugle, La (Abel Gance, France, 1940)
Vertigo (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1958)
Vingt mille lieues sous la mer (Georges Méliès, France, 1907)
Visiteurs du soir, Les (Marcel Carné, France, 1942)
Viskingar och Rop (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1972)
Way Down East (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1920)
While the City Sleeps (Fritz Lang, USA, 1956)
White Heat (Raoul Walsh, USA, 1949)
Wizard of Oz, The (Victor Fleming, USA, 1939)
Wrong Man, The (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1956)
You Only Live Once (Fritz Lang, USA, 1937)