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# Jean-Luc Godard's Political Filmmaking

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## Introduction

L'esprit emprunte à la matière les perceptions d'où il tire sa nourriture, et les lui rend sous forme de mouvement, où il a imprimé sa liberté. Henri Bergson<sup>1</sup>

Vladimir Lenin predicted that the background of the twentieth century would be wars and revolutions and thus the world's common denominator would be violence.<sup>2</sup> Taking further Lenin and in historical materialist terms, Hannah Arendt argued in 1969 that revolutionary violence had brought history to a standstill worldwide as opposed to accelerating historical progress toward its completion. "The Revolution" had been Western Modernity's hegemonic referent and discourse within Leftist intellectual culture. As a discursive container, "Revolution" became retroactively the fatal harbinger of terror and totalitarianism. With the increased prevalence of this casual arithmetic (Revolution + Realization = Totalitarianism), the enthusiasm for any potential human emancipation or

<sup>1</sup> "Spirit borrows from matter the perceptions on which it feeds, and restores them to matter in the form of movement which it has imprinted with its own freedom." This is the last sentence of Henri Bergson's *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (1939). Available at [http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/bergson\\_henri/matiere\\_et\\_memoire/matiere\\_et\\_memoire.pdf](http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/bergson_henri/matiere_et_memoire/matiere_et_memoire.pdf). English translation: *Matter and Memory*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2004), p. 332.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (1969) (New York: A Harvest Book, 1970), 3.

redemptive change waned away,<sup>3</sup> or became its own cause for suspicion. Despite attempts to ideologize, depoliticize and aestheticize, and accusations of Eurocentrism, conservatism and classicism, Jean-Luc Godard's work follows the illustrated, liberal and positivist tradition of radical Western leftist intellectuals engaged with proclaiming and helping to advance the Modernizing potential of the Revolution. Godard's films are inscribed in a long-standing reflection of a complex meditation and are a rewarding opening on the contradictions embedded in the relationship between ethics and politics and the artists' ability or responsibility to represent or to be involved in historical or actual political events. These interrogations translate into matters of visibility and technique, how to render present the absent or give voice and presence to those who lack it, in relationship between action or intervention and *poiesis*. In order to pursue this, Godard encompasses in his work Dziga Vertov's factography, Bertolt Brecht's pedagogy, Jean-Paul Sartre's engagement, Maoist direct action, Guy Debord's iconoclasm, the Post-structuralist demise of representation, militant film, the emancipatory potential of the media as counter-information, self-representation and the post-colonial native informant, an inquiry on the capacity of images to bear witness or to give testimony, the irrepresentable, the sacred of the image and the problem of the hyperreal versus more dialectical approaches dealing with the privileged position of the observer/reporter/artist-ethnographer. Most importantly, his *oeuvre* must be inscribed within the tradition of materialist aesthetics and his films described as "dialectical materialist films." Materialism is a method to produce objective knowledge through the cognition of this objective whole, describing it in *action*, focusing on the relationships of production. Moreover, materialism seeks to render the world visible by producing *reflections* or *consciousness* of the relationships of production by means of the dialectic between essence and appearance, thereby producing objective knowledge of the world. Rooted in debates in the late 1960s about engaged filmmaking and partly inspired by Godard's own work, Jean-Paul Fargier defines political films neither as ideological nor as undoing ideology, but as achieving a non-ideological status by realizing a form of theoretical practice. Non-ideological films are truly political precisely because they are conscious of the materials they are based on, they are not confused with political practice, and in them aesthetic-ideological specificity is

<sup>3</sup> See Martin Jay: "Mourning a metaphor: The Revolution is Over," *Parallax* 9:2, (April 2003), pp. 17–20.

taken up to a stage of knowledge that transforms the subjective element and thus contributes to social change.<sup>4</sup>

In *Le Gai savoir* (1968) Godard establishes the foundations of his materialist filmmaking. In the film, two students, Patricia Lumbumba and Émile Rousseau, meet in a television studio for seven days to investigate techniques and strategies to shatter representation and implement a new visual regime. The first year, the plan is to collect sounds and images; the second year, to critique, reduce, decompose and substitute them. In the third, they give themselves the task to build alternatives. All activities converge in Godard's own filmmaking program, which is based on a radical questioning of the signifying and representational logic of filmmaking and an epistemological inquiry in tune with key Structuralist and Post-structuralist works like Louis Althusser's *Pour Marx* (1965), Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967), Michel Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), Roland Barthes *Éléments de sémiologie* (1964) or Julia Kristeva's *Séméiôtiké* (1969). It could be said that the tasks Patricia and Émile give themselves of speaking, listening and seeing as a way to move from *savoir* (impersonal, objective knowledge) to *connaissance* (subjective or personal knowledge),<sup>5</sup> were the methods followed for decades by Godard himself or together with Anne-Marie Miéville. In the little-known films from the Dziga Vertov Group (DVG) period, Godard made in collaboration and/or in dialogue with Jean-Pierre Gorin and Jean-Henri Roger, Paul Bourron, Isabel Pons, Raphaël Sorin, Nathalie Biard and D.N. Pennebaker—from *One Plus One (Sympathy for the Devil)* 1968, *One A.M.*, 1968, *British Sounds (See You at Mao)*, 1969, *Pravda* (1969), *Le Vent d'est*, 1969, *Luttes en Italie*, 1969, *Vladimir et Rosa*, 1971 to *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*, (1972)—they take further the theoretical explorations Godard began in *Le Gai savoir* on the relationship between text and image, words and sounds in the context of the crisis of aesthetic representation (voice, image, text). In the DVG films, the crisis of representation is explored explicitly in terms of political processes of the ordeals experienced by militants in the context of the effervescence of May 1968 and the demise of Marxism-Leninism epitomized in *Tout va bien* (1972) and *Tiermondisme* (or Third Worldism) in *Ici et ailleurs* (1974).

<sup>4</sup> Emiliano Jelčić, Jean-Lois Comolli, et al. *Mayo Francés: La cámara opaca: El debate cine e ideología* comp. Emiliano Jelčić (Buenos Aires: El Cuenco de Plata, 2016), p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> See Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking About Godard* (New York and London: NY University Press, 1998).



Critics such as Raymond Bellour and Colin MacCabe see in Godard's 1974 film, initially *Jusqu'à la victoire* in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin and Armand Marco about the Palestinian Revolution, eventually *Ici et ailleurs*, edited together with Anne-Marie Miéville within the context of their Sonimage project, a radical break in Godard's *oeuvre* at the level of his political commitment and aesthetic engagement, as they see a qualitative and quantitative change in his engagement from the Marxist-Leninist period to the Sonimage years. This break is usually described as the quandary of an intellectual, who, realizing the limitations of his previous position of "erroneous engagement," enacted a "turn" that would prevent such a "mistake" from occurring again. Along similar lines, film historian Junji Hori notes a passage in Godard's work moving from an active Third Worldism to a melancholic reflection about Europe's destiny and its complexities.<sup>6</sup> I, however, along with Michael Witt, see coherence in Godard's work with regards to his militant practice. Moreover, recent scholarship on Godard by Georges Didi-Huberman, James S. Williams, or Stoffel Debuysere has given *Ici et ailleurs* its righteous place not only as a key work in Godard's *oeuvre*, but also in the history of militant filmmaking and its relevance to contemporary debates that range from commitment and political art, the legacy of radical filmmaking, the Image in times of the regime of the visual, and the controversy about Godard's take on the representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Shoah. *Ici et ailleurs* marks qualitative changes in Godard's political engagement insofar as they respond to the actuality and to the shifting historical conditions that have brought changes to the form of political action. Therefore, against the idea that Godard "retreated" from his political engagement or that he "retrenched back to Europe" (his position had always been self-reflexively Eurocentric) one can argue that the historical conditions for engagement changed and Godard's work along with them. The impasse of the Left regarding Marxist engagement was spelled out by Merleau-Ponty: the militant could, on the one hand, accept the factual reality that allows for effective militantism and engaged practice, and on the other, seek refuge in a quiet philosophical state in which the principles of Marxism could be

<sup>6</sup>Junji Hori, "La Géopolitique de l'image dans les *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* de Jean-Luc Godard," unpublished in French and available at [http://www.desk.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/download/es\\_3\\_Hori.pdf](http://www.desk.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/download/es_3_Hori.pdf)

maintained (i.e., at the level of the “imaginary” proletariat).<sup>7</sup> The choice here is between an objective long-term engagement and a subjective immediate intervention—both overseeing the “bastard reality.” Godard took up neither of Merleau-Ponty’s options, insisting on a practice of theoretical filmmaking engaging with material reality. The two television series that followed *Ici et ailleurs* and done in collaboration with Miéville, *Six Fois Deux: Sur et sous la communication* (1976) and *France Tour Détour Deux Enfants* (1978–79), as well as their video-film *Numéro Deux* (1976) deal with a kind of “familial politics,” exploring the private sphere in relationship to the pervasiveness of television at home. After the end of the Leftist period, Godard continued to explore the contradictions between the political and the aesthetic, by constructing the confrontation of the subjects and the objects of history and the actuality, exploring further the European historical, philosophical and aesthetic imaginary. Moreover, Godard would experiment with a relationship between aesthetics and the political as exclusive of each other but crossing paths in *Passion* (1982) and in *Nouvelle Vague* (1990), in which we see signs not of the notion of a Marxist class struggle but of class antagonism.<sup>8</sup> Another example is Godard’s *Allemagne 90 Neuf Zéro* (1991), in which he outlines the change of the world politically, economically, cinematically and historically in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In that regard, we could trace a series of transitions in Godard’s work coherent with historic-political changes from an anti-capitalist politics grounded class relations and relationships of production, to an ethics of restitution in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, to a kind of dialectical materialism strongly critiquing humanitarianism grounded in Homeric history whose (post- or pre-political) subjects are established either as victors and vanquished in *Notre musique* (2004) (but

<sup>7</sup> Merleau-Ponty cited by Rossana Rossanda, “Les Intellectuels Révolutionnaires et l’Union Soviétique,” *Les Temps Modernes* no. 332 (March 1974), p. 1537.

<sup>8</sup> Yosefa Loshitzky argues that “Godard’s former subscription to the Marxist utopia of a classless society has been replaced by a belief in the Christian utopia of the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ promised by Jesus to his poor followers... In Godard’s new semi-religious vision, the world of money is the world of materialism and the world of nature is the world of spiritualism.” I disagree with Loshitzky on the grounds of the necessity to avoid turning religion into an episteme. This argument, however, would be worth exploring more in terms of Godard’s rhetorical (secular) shift to Icon theory in terms of montage and to some religious motifs that have appeared in his films since *La Chinoise* (1967). See Yosefa Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 97–98.

with a genesis in *Je vous salue Sarajevo* (1993) and *For Ever Mozart* (1996)), to a search for the means to revive the paradigm of the French resistance against the Nazi occupation as a means to resist forms of power at the eve of a Dantesque twenty-first century (*Éloge de l'amour*, 2001, *Film: socialisme*, 2010). In this regard, Godard's version of history resonates with Lenin's prediction and Arendt's assessment, as he sees the twenty-first century as inheriting the failed revolutions of the twentieth century translated into ethnic wars. In this context, Godard's Eurocentric cartography addresses the contemporary "realist" politics of Neoliberal Empire, positing the world as engaged in a total, righteous, permanent war of "all against all." In Godard, righteous cultural (and actual) wars stand against a "sky red with explosions" inhabited by restored ruins, still in flames, purporting the false unity of a culturalized past as the condition of possibility of a present of "co-existence" codified by the culture and memory industries, which in the 1990s, in a Frankfurt School vein, becomes the target of his critique.

Therefore, in this book I situate Godard's work *as an aesthetic-political project* according to historical changes in the past 50 years: from the "politics of representation" and its crisis in the 1960s (as explored in the DVG films), to the "politics of visibility" and counter-information in the 1970s, which he posits as "audiovisual journalism" in his Sonimage videos, to an exploration of the new modes of subjectivation by capitalism and self-representation in the 1980s (the Marithé-François Girbaud videos (1987), *Le Rapport Darty* (1988)), to his critique of the culture and memory industries (*Je vous salue Sarajevo*, *Éloge de l'amour*, *Notre musique*), to the ethics of speaking truth to power and humanitarianism (*Je vous salue Sarajevo*, *Notre musique*, *The Old Place* (2001)), to his controversial juxtaposition of the Shoah and the Nakba (*Ici et ailleurs*, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, *Notre musique*) and his plea to restitute the verb to the dead bodies, to the post-political call for the redistribution of the sensible and to peripheral languages (*Vrai/Faux Passeport* and *Voyage(s) en utopie*, *Film: socialisme* and *Adieu au langage*), to his engagement with three-dimensional (3D) technology as a way to reverse the "loss of historical depth" brought by the technology itself (*Les Trois désastres*, *Adieu au langage*). These concerns relate to Godard's long-standing explorations of how to retrieve a

<sup>9</sup> See: Seyla Benhabib, "The Legitimacy of the Human Rights," *Daedalus*, vol. 137, No. 3, (Summer 2008).

genuine Image from the imagery circulating in Spectacle, the mass media, the cultural industry: the sensible regime.

In a 1967 interview he gave in front of students at Nanterre University in the outskirts of Paris, Godard declared that cinema under the effect of capitalism is aberrant; that is why he gave himself the task of fighting against capitalism in cinema, attacking first, “imperialist film” and the “mass media,” in the 1970s, and the “culture industry” since the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> In this context, he has claimed to be “the Jew of cinema.” This statement is a paraphrase from Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*: “German words of foreign derivation are the Jews of language.”<sup>11</sup> We can read Godard’s utterance as his ongoing effort to construct a marginal position within the hegemonic historical discourse of Judeo-Christian Europe, a self-proclaimed position of an insider outside regarding Cinema—his current production company with Miéville is called *Périphéria*.

History (“mon histoire, l’histoire du cinéma, raconter une histoire ou pas”)<sup>12</sup> is a pivotal concern. Godard’s history is Eurocentric and privileges World War II. Godard was 15 when the extermination of European Jewry unfolded in silence: “On disait, qu’on n’avait rien vu, rien entendu...je me suis rendu compte beaucoup plus tard...qu’est-ce qui c’est passé, tout ça; en regrettant souvent qu’il n’ont jamais fait des films de 40 au 45.”<sup>13</sup> In another interview, he stated: “Alors c’est ici qu’on peut dire que là où le cinéma s’est pris les pieds dans lui-même, c’est que cette obligation de voir, il n’a pas su, n’a pas voulu, il n’a pas pu, il ne l’a pas fait au moment du nazisme.”<sup>14</sup> Godard hints here at his idea that the history of cinema is that of “a missed rendezvous with the history of its century during World War II.” By this Godard does not mean that cinema was incapable of filming the extermination camps but that cinema was unable to *see* and to *give*

<sup>10</sup> Entretien entre J-L Godard et M. Cournot, “Quelques évidentes incertitudes,” *Revue d’esthétique* (Janvier-mars, 1967), pp. 115–122.

<sup>11</sup> Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 110.

<sup>12</sup> “My history, the history of cinema, whether to tell a story or not.” Godard in an interview with Oliver Bombarda and Julien Welter for *Cahiers du Cinéma* on November 2007. <http://www.cahiersducinema.com/article1424.html>

<sup>13</sup> “It used to be said that none had seen or heard anything; some time later, I think, or a lot later I realized...what had happened; I regretted often that films weren’t made between 1940 and 1945 [in Europe].” Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “Thus, it is here that we could say that cinema caught itself against itself, because cinema’s obligation is to see, and at the time of Nazism, it did not know how, it did not want to see, it was unable to see.” Youssef Ishaghpour in dialogue with Godard, *Archéologie du cinéma et mémoire du siècle* (Tours: Farrago, 2000), p. 73.

to see what was going on. In a project of restitution and resurrection, Godard constructs a history in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998) of films “forewarning” the extermination, comprised of films like *Faust* (1926), *Nibelungen* (1924), *La Règle du Jeu* (1939), *The Great Dictator* (1940), *Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922).<sup>15</sup> The “missed rendezvous” between cinema and history are the *fictional* objects constructed by the confrontation between poetics and temporalities in his monumental *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1978–98).<sup>16</sup>

Akin to Walter Benjamin, Godard conceives the past as an infinite gallery of images that we can interrogate, render eloquent and charge with meaning. These images are deposited in our memory. The filmmaker, as an archivist or a collector, gathers the fragments of the past in order to save it, recomposing it by means of asymmetrical juxtapositions that, rather than rewriting history, ask questions. His method is the Benjaminian-Reverdian juxtaposition of two images and/or sounds potentially evoking an unthought third. The potential of seeing happens in montage, by juxtaposing two “good” images. As he expounds pedagogically in his 2006 film *Vrai/Faux (Passport pour le réel)* “Good” images bear with them a “passport” that allows them to “reach the border to the real.” The “real” in cinema is the “false” reproduction that we come to believe in. In Godard’s theory, cinema neither seeks truth nor stands as proof of something other than the Image itself, which is at the border between two images—sounds, texts, figures—in montage. It may be that sometimes two “bad” images (e.g., low density images, stereotypes, shield-images) do not make up a third. Thus to juxtapose two “Good” images is to make two different scales co-exist, to associate two textures, to confront two points of view as through the montage technique of the shot/reverse-

<sup>15</sup>Debatably, Godard’s reading of cinema before and during World War II is aligned with Siegfried Kracauer’s psychological reading of German film between 1918 and 1933 in which he argues that films were addressed to the middle-class, influencing mass behavior and shaping public opinion, creating “deep psychological dispositions predominant in Germany... which influenced the course of events during that time and which will have to be reckoned with in the post-Hitler era.” (Kracauer, p. 10) Examples are, Caligari’s idolization of power, insane authority and state omnipotence or *Die Nibelungen* as the triumph of the ornamental over the human and as the patterns of the film as used in Nazi pageantry; or *Kuhle Vampe*, a film in which young athletes glorify collective life. (Kracauer, p. 20) See Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, (Princeton: The University Press, 1947).

<sup>16</sup>Jacques Rancière, in the interview by Marie-Aude Baronian and Mireille Rosello in 2007, available at [http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/jrinterview.html#\\_ftn5](http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/jrinterview.html#_ftn5). See also Rancière’s *La Fable cinématographique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 217.

shot. The purpose of these operations is to disturb our visual habits and that is how they provoke the unthought: alternative visions of the past and the present. For Godard a good Image “comes from a long way” and it is a combination of Brunschwig’s “trinity” composed of Montaigne’s “I doubt,” Descartes’ “I know” and Pascal’s “I believe.”<sup>17</sup> The Image is reached through self-reflexivity and machinic epistemology; for Godard (as for Dziga Vertov), making images is not “taking images” (*une prise de vue*), but a way of considering the camera as an epistemological tool that can “capture” something that is neither visible nor audible that can be complexified by montage. Doubt in the image is the ambivalence woven in between the thing, text, and image; belief in the image is the search for man’s destiny and place in the world in the Modern situation of the shattering of the link between man and the world, rooted in a desire to see.

### REPRESENTATION AND ITS CRISIS

For Martin Heidegger, Modernity is the era of representation and, as such, it is characterized by bringing forth a point of view that draws a certain relationship between the masses, the individual and power. In the political realm, representation implies that the state or political parties deal with individuals who are “represented” in the universal sphere, marking a gap between their empirical particularity and their legal universality. In aesthetics, representation is a description, an image that stands for something in the world that makes its absence incomplete and only temporarily present with the aid of speech. Yet representation, in fact, operates through its own restraint because it pre-supposes a totality and can thus become a totalitarian form of control and of representation.<sup>18</sup> In aesthetics, fascist representation means that meaning is reified, reflexivity and criticality eliminated along with relationality, ambiguity, even beauty; appearances become a series of minor variations derived from the same source. In spite

<sup>17</sup> He is quoting Léon Brunschwig’s *Descartes et Pascal: Lecteurs de Montaigne* (Neuchâtel: Balconnière, 1942). For Brunschwig, the three authors share the concern with taking the question of man away from a formal discipline (epistemology, empiricism) in order to address issues concerning man’s place in the world and destiny. “I doubt, I know, I believe” expresses fundamental attitudes of thought and denounces the mediation of metaphysics evidencing a relationship to Christian theology and French thought. Godard cited Brunschwig in “Jean-Luc Godard—Elias Sanbar,” *Politis*, Sunday January 16, 2005, available online: <http://www.politis.fr/article1213.html>

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 133.

of the potential claims for totality and the colonizing dangers of representation, the relationship between political engagement and aesthetics as the problem of representation, following Fredric Jameson, “must be perpetuated as a throbbing pain that won’t go away, rather than as an X-ray plate.”<sup>19</sup> From this we can infer that representation should be taken not as a formal device, but as a tortuous mechanism that is a given, necessary to account for the act of mediation by way of translation, intercession, negotiation, which are the means that are inherent to conveying a world, a point of view.

The totalizing aspect of representation was underscored by post-structuralism and by the May 1968 movement, bringing aesthetico-political representation into crisis. Making a homology between knowledge, language and politics, students and workers in May 1968 contested their authority as regimes of representation<sup>20</sup> by asking: “Who speaks and acts, for whom and how?” This question can be traced back to Lenin’s inquiry, “What is to be done?” which assigned intellectuals the role of anticipating or theorizing the coming emancipation of the proletariat. Having inherited the Leninist model of engagement, intellectuals associated with the French Communist Party had the roles of “fellow travelers,” or of the consciousness of the people. Along with professors and labor union delegations, intellectuals’ scholarly theories, and the representativeness of language, students and workers rendered them suspicious as totalizing enterprises. In political terms, May 1968s call for self-organization and direct intervention did away with representation by breaking away from organizing around the fixed signifiers of the Party and of class struggle. Activists dismissed the Party and organized around specific struggles in *groupuscules*, emphasizing direct action and the capture of speech. At the same time, students and workers brought knowledge and common sense to their limit by breaking down language to demonstrate its paucity and inability to account for reality. This was manifested through stammering, nonsensical speech, and by a refusal to speak. Speaking in the name of others was deemed unworthy and anyone and everyone was encouraged to speak in their name, all in an attempt at non-mediated expression, exercis-

<sup>19</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 164.

<sup>20</sup> Michel De Certeau, “The Power of Speech,” *The Capture of Speech and Other Political Writings*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis and London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 26.

ing direct democracy. In tune with political struggles, Post-structuralist philosophers laid out an intellectual project to undo representation in Western metaphysics (and thus art and literature) by bringing difference to the core of representation separating signifier from signified and text from voice. Godard joined the battle against representation transubstantiating the class struggle into the image/sound struggle by way of the preposition: “Le son c’est le délégué syndical de l’oeil.”<sup>21</sup> He furthermore highlights in his films the fact that the condition for representation is language: as he also posits it in *Le Gai savoir*, in every image “someone speaks.” That is, speech is part of what is made seen and thus representation depends on speech in order to “make visible.” If the essential function of speech is to make seen and to arrange the visible, it does so by fusing two operations, a substitution (which places “before our eyes” that which is remote in space and time) and an exhibition (which makes visible what is hidden from sight—*it shows*). Speech thus makes visible by referring, summoning the absent and calling the hidden.

Because the danger of fascism is always present in representation, Godard’s radical representation includes a practice of self-reflexivity. For instance, in his “documentary” about the Black Panthers, in collaboration with D.A. Pennebaker,<sup>22</sup> *One American Movie* or *One A.M.* (1969), Godard interviews—or rather records, as he is visibly intimidated by the leader and barely dares to address him—Eldridge Cleaver giving his views about the black struggle. Later on in the movie, Cleaver’s recorded speech is replayed and repeated by a white actor in various contexts: at a school, the streets of New York, a classroom full of black teenagers and dressed up as a Native American. The film highlights the mutations Cleaver’s speech undergoes as it is spoken through a white body in various contexts. By using an array of strategies for cinematic reflexivity, Godard seeks to make the viewer aware of how the film’s representation of the Black Panthers’ Struggle is contingent upon Godard and Pennebaker’s white, male gazes. Placing self-reflexivity at the core of the movie enables the filmmaker to express solidarity with the black struggle. The need for self-reflexivity in political and aesthetic representation in order to avoid fascism (or reified

<sup>21</sup> “Sound is the union delegate of the eye.” From the script of *Le Gai savoir* (1967).

<sup>22</sup> *One A.M.* (or *One American Movie*) is the title of an unfinished film by Godard shot in the United States in 1968 in collaboration with D.A. Pennebaker and Richard Leacock, produced by PBL, the forerunner of Public Television. After shooting, Godard left off with Gorin to travel in the United States and thus Pennebaker edited it titling it *One P.M.* or *One Parallel Movie* or *One Pennebaker Movie*.



representation as an embodiment of power) is linked to the double bind that constitutes Modernism: as Godard's film seeks to pedagogically show, in representation something always needs to be exposed or represented, and yet, the desire to expose or represent is colonizing. At the same time, concealing and failing to represent or speak on behalf of others is as colonizing.

Godard's take on aesthetic-political representation in cinema has drawn upon not only the post-structuralist bringing into crisis of representation, but also from interpretations of Marx and realism in the 1960s. For Godard, an analogue image "ce n'est pas le réel d'une réflexion mais la réflexion du ce réel."<sup>23</sup> Aligned with Brecht's critique of Lukács, Godard's filmic materialism entails that there is a gap between reality and its cinematic reflection, which is rendered opaque by the cinematic apparatus. Through a scientific practice of filming and montage, it becomes possible to pierce through the ideology of the apparatus and arrive at the real—which is self-knowledge: "I try to see." In a word play between reflection in the materialist sense and *réflexion* (in French, "thought process"), he has stated, "Je réfléchis des réflexions,"<sup>24</sup> calling attention to his conception of the camera as an epistemological tool and of montage as a site for thought, "*Réfléchir*, pas renvoyer une image." Furthermore, for Godard "capturing" an image (*prise de vue*) is mortal, although the recording of reality can capture something that is neither visible nor audible otherwise. For Godard, that which is captured can be restituted and resurrected by way of montage and projection. That is why for him, cinema is "la réalité vingt-quatre fois par seconde."<sup>25</sup>

The cinematic apparatus consists of the projection of the succession of photograms in the filmstrip. Human eye perception has the particularity that the retina keeps a memory of the previous photogram, and that is why in the projection, we see the illusion of cinematic continuity. For Godard, this visual memory is tied to language because we narrativize the film *after-image*. Furthermore, there is something mortal in sight insofar as forgetting is immanent to the actualization by way of the language of visual memory—this is where the potential of the new is lodged. Godard's call for resisting to give up the essential is not a denigration of vision, but

<sup>23</sup> "It is not the real of a reflection, but a reflection of the real." The sentence was written on a wall in the flat where *La Chinoise* (1967) was filmed.

<sup>24</sup> In *Le Petit soldat* (1963) and *JLG par JLG autoportrait en décembre* (1994).

<sup>25</sup> "Reality twenty-four times per second."

an acknowledgment of the limits of the visible. The “essential” is the belief in images, which can only be sustained in dissimilitude because things in images are substantially foreign to the things themselves. This further implies, following the logic of the icon, that the image is founded in the gap between the visible and the subject of the gaze, as this gap is made visible by the voice.<sup>26</sup> The “essential” is the possibility of “incarnation,” a promise of flesh: the becoming verb, word, of the voice and of speech, and the body is the threshold for containing the verb. Therefore, for Godard cinema is a privileged site for the interplay between language and the image, cinema is “des formes qui cheminent vers la parole.”<sup>27</sup>

A formulation that may prove more effective to describe representation in aesthetics and politics is “sensible.” The sensible is the juxtaposition of the “form of the visible” and the “form of the utterable” that creates a diagram or figure made out of discursive and visible formations. This means that the visible and the expressible define two different regimes that are irreducible to each other, as incommensurable strata that cross over, regulating the “visible” through technologies of observation and procedures of expression. Here, visibility and utterability are not sight and speech, but what can be rendered as intelligible and knowable in a society at a given epoch.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, everything can be represented for Godard, and he has drawn distinctions between the “unrepresentable,” the “invisible,” the “inexpressible” and the “infigurable.” For instance, in *Soft and Hard* (1985), a short collaboration with Miéville, she states that images of tenderness between a couple are inexpressible, and that they can be made visible only like the shell of an egg that allows us to see the surface but not what is happening inside. The infigurable in icon theory is God’s face, and incarnation is the becoming image of the infigurable. For Godard, the infigurable is “No movement, no depth, no artifice: the sacred.”<sup>29</sup> The sacred is linked to the redemptive aspect of his project of the restitution of the verb to images by way of montage, as we will see. Thus, in his films he makes images appeal (*comparaître*) to the viewer, delivering (*donne à voir*) sensibilities (the signs amongst us), as opposed to

<sup>26</sup> Marie-José Mondzain, *L’image—peut-elle tuer?*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> “Forms that walk towards speech.” From the voiceover of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, chapter 3a (1998).

<sup>28</sup> D.N. Rodowick, *Reading the Figural or Philosophy After the New Media* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 54–56.

<sup>29</sup> Line spoken by Godard in his lecture in *Notre musique*.

rendering or making visible. “Making visible” pre-supposes concealment, an absence and invisibility as the opposite of visibility. For Godard, to deliver sensibilities is to offer the possibility of *seeing*. According to the logic of the icon to which Godard subscribes secularly, the invisible is not the negative of the visible, but the ambivalence of the material apparition of an immateriality, an ambivalence that is sustained by the voice. Exploring the image’s relationship to the visible, that is, how it appears within the apparatus and how it addresses the viewer, he experiments with technique, form and a pedagogical mode of address—imbued by anxiety of blindness and the desire to see. To deliver sensibilities, Godard invokes allegories, performing the acts of naming, showing, juxtaposing, and citing. His methods are the Kino-eye, appropriation and stratigraphy. For him, cinema is not “une pensée qui forme,” but “très exactement une forme qui pense”<sup>30</sup>—that is the power of montage.

#### REPRESENTATIVITY AND AUTHORSHIP

The opening scene of *Le Petit soldat* (1963), Godard’s second film, begins with the statement in the voice-over: “Pour moi le temps de l’action a passé, j’ai vieilli. Le temps de la réflexion commence.”<sup>31</sup> The film is about the existentialist dilemmas of Bruno Forestier, a militant who arrives from France in Geneva and receives orders to murder a radio interlocutor as an action in favor of Algerian independence. He falls in love with Veronika Dreyer (Anna Karina) and changes his mind about carrying out the mission and thus activists with the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale or Algerian Independence Movement) kidnap and torture him. The film deals with France’s dirty war and torture against those who were involved and sympathized with the FNL, as well as the dilemmas of Modern man in a post-war society. The character embodies Jean-Paul Sartre’s existentialist quandary of what choice, freedom and responsibility are in relationship to political engagement. In the film, for the first time, appear Godardian tropes and aphorisms such as “Le cinéma c’est la vérité 24 fois par seconde,”<sup>32</sup> the history of painting, classical music, the question of what an image is, newspaper clips and an engagement with philoso-

<sup>30</sup> “It is not a kind of thought that forms but quite exactly, a form that thinks.” From the voiceover of 3a in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998).

<sup>31</sup> “For me, the time of action had passed, I had grown old. The time of reflection began.”

<sup>32</sup> “Cinema is truth 24 frames per second.”

phy and literature, that would come to characterize his work and research. In a wall in Foerstier's apartment there are images and references to World War II, the Spanish Civil War, Brigitte Bardot, a Soviet Tank and André Malraux' *La Condition humaine* (1933), which are juxtaposed and serve to show Bruno's ideological confusion.<sup>33</sup> In a way, Bruno Forestier is Godard's alter-ego undergoing existentialist predicaments. He embodies a contradiction grounded in his desire for Veronika, which compels him to flee with her, and being governed by duty, which is the same quandary underwent by the Communist characters in *La Condition humaine*. The parallel that is drawn between the French torturers in Algeria and the Nazi crimes, moreover, expresses Godard's early interest on the construction of a historical memory to understand the present that could be linked to a paradigm of resistance to actual forms of power.

As in *Le Petit soldat*, in most of his films, the characters are historical figures in the materialist sense that they are borne out of a reality: they are social types in struggle carrying objective meaning in the total context of the materialist worldview of class struggle (i.e., "Maoist Students," "Third Worldist Filmmakers," "Worker," "Oligarch," "Poet," etc.).<sup>34</sup> These figures are constructed and deconstructed over and over again, as they come to be traversed by the forces of the historical moment and of capital. For instance, *Éloge de l'amour* tells "not the history of Eglantine, but the moment of history traversing Eglantine," as we hear in the film. How that history is told, is a matter of the technical junction of politics and aesthetics. Other characters stand for the filmmaker's *alter ego* to express autobiographical quandaries or philosophical concerns. In this regard, it can be argued that one of Godard's main concerns is *representativity*—his own, and his characters'. In order to explore representativity self-reflexively, he has posited himself in his films as Maoist, self-repentant Maoist, self-flagellating failed filmmaker, machine, idiot, "individual", blank screen and thus literally medium, "JLG," Historian, dialectical-materialist filmmaker, professor, gardener, etc. This constitutes a diversification of authorial voice in line with May 1968s demise of the notion of *auteur* and experiments with reconfiguring the authorial voice in relationship to political discourse in literature, art and cinema as *écriture*.

<sup>33</sup> Philip Watts, "Godard's Wars" A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard, Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline, eds. (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), p. 197.

<sup>34</sup> Georg Lukács, "Realism in the Balance" (1938) trans. Roney Livingstone, *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ernst Bloch (London and New York: Verso, 1987), p. 33.

In a text between literature and political engagement, Roland Barthes distinguished three realms of speech: artistic enunciation (artist/writer), engaged activism (intellectual) *and* a pedagogical project (professor). The three forms of speech are intrinsically linked: the professor is on the side of speech, the artist/writer is the “operator” of form on the side of *écriture*, and the intellectual is in between the two, printing and publishing his speech. For Barthes, when the *professor speaks*, there is an intrinsic connection between voice and mind, and thus with the voice’s signifier; when the intellectual writes, there is also a production of the signifier through writers’ or intellectuals’ operative symbolization through conventions of written words or artworks. What is at stake, then, is the production of a signified by mental experience or written speech. For Barthes, *writing* (*écriture*) is a site in which the subject is absent, his/her identity is lost, and writing has as its sole function the practice of the symbol. *Écriture* is a hand that loses its voice and thus its origin; writing begins when the author enters his/her own death. For Barthes thus, writing implies death and destruction insofar as enunciation is an empty process, writing is a gesture of inscription and not of expression. Barthes’ solution to the problem of political engagement and literary enunciation was embodied in the figure of the *scripteur*, “situated halfway between the party member and the writer, deriving an ideal image of the committed man and the idea that a written work is an act.”<sup>35</sup> Foucault’s critique of Barthes’ concept of *écriture* opposes the notion of the “death” of the author. For Barthes, it is a matter of the separation between speech and appearance—the author “disappears” into his/her text, as opposed to dying for a signifying voice. For Foucault, the relationship between text and author lies in the manner in which the text points to the “figure” of the author which is outside of it and antecedes it: this “figure” is an appearance, as opposed to an absence or effacement. Foucault critiques the notion of “death” of the author because, in his view, this idea transposes the empirical characteristics of the author into a transcendental anonymity, creating enigmatic excess and the *a priori* of neutralization of the voice. What is important for Foucault, is to draw a distinction between writing and expression (as self-expression), as for him, writing refers only to itself, to its own unfolded exteriority, effacing the writing subject’s individual characteristics and canceling out

<sup>35</sup> Roland Barthes, “Écrivains, Intellectuels, Professeurs,” *Tel Quel* no. 47 (Fall 1971), p. 3, and “The Death of the Author” (1968), *Image, Music, Text*, 142–146. See also Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, p. 11.

the signs of his/her particular individuality. Foucault insists that the author had disappeared, and even the author's name is the manifestation and appearance of a certain set of discursivities indicating the status of this discourse within a society and culture. Thus, Foucault considers the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse.<sup>36</sup>

Godard was aware of these debates and experimented with different models of authorship and thus forms of representativity. Serge Daney explains Godard's use of cinematic voice and authorship, based on his practice of authorial divestiture by repeating the already-said-by-others as a kind of ventriloquism. For him, Godardian voice-overs are like lectures (Barthes' professor); in his account, in Godard's films, the filmmakers become professors repeating their lesson and reiterating word by word that which others have said. For Daney, Godard's appropriation of citations, slogans, posters, jokes, histories and newspaper headlines, is a questionable anti-archaeological procedure. This is because Godard takes word by word that which others have said with the purpose of avoiding establishing his own regime of enunciation.<sup>37</sup> Daney thus locates the weight of Godard's authorship in montage, because:

A l'obsécinité d'apparaître comme auteur (et bénéficiaire de la plus-value filmique), il a préféré celle qu'il y avait à se mettre en scène dans l'acte même de la rétention.<sup>38</sup>

Debatably, Godard not only repeats a given discourse, but he seeks another discourse, enunciation, image or sound that will bring the two into creative contradiction: montage includes voice, and both constitute enunciation.

According to Daney, Godard's archaeological method turns him into an empty place, a blank screen through which images and sounds coexist, neutralize, recognize, designate, and struggle with each other. Furthering Daney's argument about Godard's discursive site as a blank screen through

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" (1970), *Écrits Complètes*, vol. II (Paris: Gallimard), 821. Translated to English by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, "The Author Function," available online at <http://foucault.info/documents/foucault.author-function.en.html>

<sup>37</sup> Serge Daney, "Le Thé(rr)orisé (Pédagogie godardienne)," p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> "To the obscenity of appearing as *auteur* (and beneficiary of the greatest filmic surplus value), he has preferred to stage himself in the very act of memorization." Serge Daney, "Le thé(rr)orisé (Pédagogie godardienne)," *Cahiers du Cinéma*, nos. 262–263 (1976), special issue of five essays on *Numéro Deux* by Godard, p. 37.

which others' quotations pass, Kaja Silverman uses a phenomenological and psychoanalytical model to explain it. She argues that Godard's is a project of authorial divestiture that implies an infinite staging of authorial suicide, rendering him a receiver. In her view, the first time Godard committed suicide as an author was in *Weekend* (1967), by consigning the film in his opening title sequence to "the scrap heap." From then on, Godard's research into authorial divestiture consisted of incessantly staging his own authorial death by ceding responsibility to quotation. In Silverman's account, Godard is something like Veronica's veil, the total embodiment of a blank screen, a "pure receiver" with a double function: the surface onto which perceptual phenomena project themselves and the wall from which such phenomena bounce back toward the spectators. In Silverman's model of reception/deliverance *techné* and *poiesis* are inextricable, the former defined as "making appear," the latter as "bringing into presence" or "unveiling." In Silverman's Heideggerian reading, Godard, in his double being as receptacle and reflector, *offers* his own authorial death so that the world can appear. For Silverman, Godard's alleged attempt to receive Being and to display what comes to him from the world, becomes a pure act of giving.<sup>39</sup> This notion of authorship follows a model that implies that all expression realized in a medium must disappear in the fully realized expression; once the medium—the author—disappears, it "gives to see." The world Godard "gives to see" is given from the point of view of the historian/historiographer interweaving the history of the twentieth century, his own biography, audiovisual and the history of cinema, and the history as it has been recorded by reproducible images. Godard thus makes history by bringing together disparate phenomena as the basis for the creation of poetic-historical images.<sup>40</sup> As Georges Didi-Huberman recently put it, through formal interventions, Godard puts forth propositions about the future by means of an immense constellation of "quoted pasts" destined to open our eyes to the historical world his images are interwoven with. In Godard, citation is an act of language that transforms the quotation while depersonalizing speech, creating a distance while produc-

<sup>39</sup> Kaja Silverman, "The Author as Receiver," *October* no. 96 (Spring 2001), pp. 17–34, and Silverman's interview with Gareth James, "I said I love. That is the promise," *The video politics of Jean-Luc Godard* (Berlin: oe + b Books, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard, Cinema Historian* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013), p. 11.

ing effects of signification.<sup>41</sup> Godard summons images, sounds and texts, according to Didi-Huberman, based on a dialectic of a simultaneous double gesture that states *vois, là* (see, that), which implies orienting the gaze, proposing relationships and *voilà*, a gesture that supposes artistic freedom: take it or leave it. For Didi-Huberman, this dialectic delivers a contradictory effect and a centrifugal play of associations, sometimes susceptible to contradictory or irreverent effects.<sup>42</sup> By this Didi-Huberman means that Godard's efforts to *show things otherwise* bears a clear political line which is not always aligned with political correctness and is clearly and unwaveringly anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-occupation. Regarding the last, for Godard, as we will see, the frame for political and aesthetic struggle since the defeat of the revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, and in the present, is that of *occupation*, of which the Nazi occupation of France is the model translating to the occupation of everyday life, history, memory and culture by the pervasiveness of capitalism, for instance.

#### CONDITIONS OF VISUALITY/*LES SIGNES PARMI NOUS*

For Godard in the late 1960s, a critique of Spectacle following Debord's indictment of the "totalitarianism of the mass media" was untimely because such critique is predicated upon the notion of the need for fixed forms of political representation, appealing to the utopia of social authenticity as well as burdening images with the weight of "truth" and therefore with the apparent desires of the collectivity. The question of Spectacle, as having come to mediate social relationships imbued with capital, is for Godard not a problem of the "truth" of images, or their relationship or non-relationship to the "original," but the fact that they make concrete a concept ("Sign Value") according to which reality becomes a system of signs. According to Baudrillard, this means that in Late Capitalism, even the most ordinary things have become signs, and all the signs lead to another sign creating chains of signs, decoding and recoding one another. What is at stake here are, on the one hand, the forms of the intelligibility of the visible that we have in common when reality comes to be perceived as a system of signs. The transformation of things into signs is evidently one of the principles of cinema, and for Godard this implies, "the submission of

<sup>41</sup> See: Georges Didi-Huberman, *par JLG L'œil de l'histoire*, 5 (Paris: Minit, 2015), pp. 15–19.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.



cinema to the narrative.” On the other hand, the relationship to alterity as in this system, “On produit et on consomme notre image avec celle de l’autre.”<sup>43</sup> As in *Adieu au langage* Godard posits digital media as having destroyed language and face to face communication. In *Soft and Hard* Godard explains that the mass media have disturbed the relationship to alterity through the logic of projection in psychoanalysis to explain the constitution of the subject, which in his view has been substituted by Television: “With cinema, one projects one-self on the screen, while television projects itself upon the spectator.” And yet, the image itself includes the possibility of restituting a link to the other as “Une image [photographique] est un regard, sur un autre regard présenté à un troisième regard, déjà représenté par l’appareil.”<sup>44</sup> Godard repeats his formula in *JLG par JLG* (1993) as the “law of stereo”: “l’un est dans l’autre et l’autre est dans l’un,”<sup>45</sup> a triangle which constitutes a projection. The image is thus for Godard a relationship between I and the other—a third—and in many of his films he transubstantiates couples’ dilemmas into larger socio-political and historical ordeals: in *Tout va bien*, the problems of a couple of militants, played by Yves Montand and Jane Fonda, are transubstantiated into class struggle as a strike; *Nouvelle vague* (1991) is a film about a couple whose asymmetrical relationships are parallel to those between the upcoming financial oligarchy and the working class; and in *Adieu au langage*, the couple’s problems with communication are restored by Roxy the dog. Godard and Miéville further insist on the “being two” of images—in *Notre musique* (2004), as we will see, this “being two” of images is translated into the shot/reverse-shot logic in montage. “To be two” means not only juxtaposing two images to deliver a third, but as we have seen, in the sense of *Le Gai savoir* and the way in which Godard and Miéville had been working in their Sonimage films, as being two to see, to discuss, to speak images.

One of the aspects of Godard’s work, which is often overlooked, is his contributions and reflections to what is known as *Tiermondisme*, a form of political engagement in France in the 1960s and 1970s that implied solidarity with revolutionary subjects seeking self-determination by way of decolonization and national liberation movements. Disinterested emphatic

<sup>43</sup> “We produce and consume our image with that of the other,” from the voiceover in *Ici et ailleurs*.

<sup>44</sup> “An image is a gaze upon another gaze presented to a third gaze, already represented by the apparatus,” from the voiceover in *Ici et ailleurs*.

<sup>45</sup> “The one is in the other as the other is in the one”

intellectuals, cultural producers and journalists engaged with Third World struggles on the basis of a common political ideology side by side with a new historical figure that embodied a political agent in a decolonizing struggle seeking self-determination. Godard created self-reflexive films under this genre of political filmmaking having traveled to Cuba, the United States, Canada, London, Czechoslovakia and Italy, virtually to Vietnam and Portugal, as well as to Palestine and Mozambique.

When the revolutions failed or became totalitarian dictatorships in the Third World, a new form of emancipation of the people of the Third World was grounded, leading to the substitution of politics for a new ethics of intervention. *Tiermondisme* had been a universal cause giving a name to a political wrong. For the first time, the “wretched of the earth” emerged for a specific historic period as a new figuration of “the people” in the political sense: the colonized were discursively transformed into the political figures of the Algerian immigrant worker, the Chinese barefoot doctor, the revolutionary from elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> Yet, a new “ethical” humanism (or humanitarianism), substituted revolutionary enthusiasm and political sympathy with pity and moral indignation, transforming them into political emotions within the discourse of “pure actuality” and emergency. This led to new figures of alterity in the 1980s and 1990s, the “suffering other” that needs to be rescued, and to the post-colonial “subaltern” demanding restitution, pre-supposing that visibility within a multicultural social tissue would follow emancipation. The urgency of the state of exception elsewhere prompted morally interested observers to bring the precariousness of life to the fore in the most direct and realistic way possible, leading to an explosion of visibilities of “wounded subjectivities” demanding to be rescued or recognized. Documentary form is the privileged genre to carry out the ethico-political imperative to bear witness and to speak truth to power, because of its capability to convey “reality effects” that signify immediacy and urgency. Moreover, the domain of rights as “non-discourse” tends to efface the distinction between the documentarist’s position as external observer. Victims and witnesses speak the language of singular counter-memory, testimony or confession, denouncing oppression, injustice and dispossession. The problem is that presence is imposed as immediacy at the cost of speech, rendering the speaking subject and the subject of speech indistinguishable, amalgamating *voice*

<sup>46</sup>Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, The University Press, Chicago, 2002, p. 11.

and *face* as well as document *and* subject of speech. This is linked to images' burden to convey knowledge (or information) and their interexchangeability with the kind of knowledge that can be acquired from empirical experience. For Godard representation becomes a matter of regulating the *distance* to what is seen and heard, as we will see, while he tracks all these changes in the *figuring* of others and their political struggles as well as those in the foreign intellectual engaged in them, most notably in *Notre musique*, which also conveys Godard's critique of the "humanitarianist turn."

Thus in Godard's films, not only the link to the other is at stake, but the link between humans and the world (*L'Origine du XXème siècle*, 2001). After contesting pragmatic perception through montage in his films, the problem became for Godard the fact that the world had become unbearable: as it ceased to be a place in which humans act, humans had become onlookers of its unbearability. For Godard this is linked to the fact that the concentration camps bring into question the notion of "humanity" as prescribed by the Enlightenment. And because this is intolerable, the world ceased to be able to think a world or to think itself. The intolerable is not, in Paola Marrati's reading of Deleuze, serious injustice (the banality of evil), but the permanent state of everyday banality. The way out is "To believe, not in a different world, but in a link between man and the world, in love or life, to believe in this as an impossible, the unthinkable, which nonetheless cannot but be thought."<sup>47</sup> Godard's battle against the excess of "realistic" visibilities, the violence of exposure, how the subject, in being the subject of an image, has been captured by apparatuses of power is grounded in his efforts to resacralize the image to re-enchant the world in a battle against the disappearance of meaning, history and the destiny of man. The link in the world and to the other can be re-established by seeing, which is for Godard a pragmatic act that begins with the declaration: *Je vois* blindly (I see blindly); sight is enabled by means and in the process of montage. *Ici et ailleurs* belongs to the genre of the "video-essai," which means: I try to see (*Video* in latin means "I see"). Like for Rimbaud, the act of vision for Godard is conditioned by a disarray of the senses, by a shock of thought.

<sup>47</sup> Paola Marrati, "The Catholicism of Cinema: Gilles Deleuze on Image and Belief," *Religion and Media* ed. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford: The University Press, 2001), p. 238.

Chapter 2 of *Jean-Luc Godard's Political Filmmaking* begins with an overdue exploration of Godard's "militant filmmaking" in the context of the intellectual history of May 1968 and the debates around political filmmaking in France. The chapter centers on the period known as his "Marxist-Leninist Years" (1967–74) and is oriented around the question that was asked by both students and workers in May 1968, "Who speaks and acts, for whom and how?" This question brought about a crisis of aesthetic-political representation and is the lens through which I analyze Godard's films of this period, which were made within the frame of the Dziga Vertov Group (the collective formed with Jean-Pierre Gorin in 1969). I propose that in their experiments with image and sound juxtapositions, the DVG stage over and over again the crisis of representation while they experiment with the ideologemes of the Left. I also examine their use of Maoist techniques, such as the logic of contradictions, self-critique or positing the sound/image struggle as analogous to the class struggle. Two final questions that persist in the DVG's films and that are asked in an array of experimental forms relate first to the representability of the political struggle and indignation, and second, the authority of the voice of the filmmaker as the harbinger of political change. Chapter 3 is focused on Godard's militant filmmaking in relationship to *Thirdworldism*. In 1969 Godard and Gorin visited Palestinian training and refugee camps to make a film sponsored by the Palestinian Liberation Organization. In this chapter, I consider this film—originally titled *Jusqu'à la victoire*—in the context of Western intellectuals and artists' visits to Third World countries undergoing revolutionary or decolonizing political processes. I then posit anxiety of blindness, or the fear of blind naïve identification with the struggle, as the key issue that Godard grappled with as he finished *Ici et ailleurs*. In order to sustain this claim, I compare *Ici et ailleurs* to Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Passenger* (1974) and *Chung kuo Cina* (1976). Once Marxist-Leninism was rejected as the frame of progressive politicized filmmaking and international solidarity relationships, Godard moved on to do experiments with Anne-Marie Miéville, with the mass media and information as potential yet problematic means to bring about socio-political change within the framework of additive montage, "journalism of the audiovisual" and an "epistemology of seeing," influenced by Dziga Vertov's *Kinoeye*. I explore this in Chap. 4 including an analysis of Godard's experimentations with the video-apparatus in *Ici-et ailleurs* to describe his notion of "videographic machinic expression," which he developed in the context of the change from the paradigm of Spectacle to that

of Flows of Information. In parallel, Godard developed his concept of “images de marque,” or trademark images, images from the mass media that become part of history and that need to be deconstructed, which he sought to do through the method of additive montage in the film. During the winter years, the working class began to slowly disappear from the political arena in Europe. Bearing this in mind, in this chapter I devote a section to comparing *Numéro deux* and *Passion* where Godard portrays—among other things—the ordeals of the working class and of women while exploring the formers’ incipient disappearance. During these years, Godard is careful not to resort to either counter-culture or to cynicism; instead of adapting previous positions to the day, he tries to resituate them in the context of the failure and falling myths and political models of the twentieth century. Taking this into account, I further develop the idea that Godard’s juxtapositions in *Passion* of classical paintings with an array of contemporary figures, such as a circus acrobat, a film director, a factory worker, a café owner, etc., as well as a variety of urban settings (a hotel, a factory, suburban housing) is the basis for further experiments in his series of commercial short films commissioned by fashion designers Marithé and François Girbaud. In them, Godard shows classical portraits alongside everyday street images of Paris, ordinary people and the models hired to wear Girbaud jeans. Godard ponders—as he does in *Ici et ailleurs*—What is the *in between* of these images and the text in the voice-over? This research is taken further in *Rapport Darty*, where he explores the new forms of Semiocapitalist exploitation: filming Darty’s workers in action, he and Miéville analyze the incipient form of “affective labor” based on communication and personal interrelations; while they deconstruct (literally and textually) the then ubiquitous consumerist experience, they maintain their search for the figure that will lead history on. Finally, I take up Christa Blüminger’s discussion of the cinematic apparatus of the “défilé” as used by Godard in *Ici et ailleurs* and one of the Girbaud shorts, *On s’est tous défilé* (1988), which is an exploration of the becoming image of the *figurants*. In *Le Rapport Darty* as in *On s’est tous défilé*, Godard experiments with the reduction of figures to single semiotic matter and their disjunction from the background; the image of the figure of history to come is to be seen in the gap between stasis and movement, slowing down and *videomélange*. Chapter 5 begins with positing the aesthetic-political problem of the figure of the victim as witness and proceeds, in the first part, with an analysis of Godard’s controversial filmic debate and interviews with Claude Lanzmann (in Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in which he responds to

Lanzmann's *Shoah*) on the matter of the representability of horror, catastrophe and trauma. When Georges Didi-Huberman stated that Auschwitz had been rendered unimaginable, he was referring, amongst other things, to the polarity and polemic around the ethics and aesthetics of the representability of the Shoah triggered by Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (released in 1998). In this film, Godard set himself a double task: first, to denounce cinema for not having filmed the extermination camps, and second, by means of the juxtaposition of images from Western visual culture (including documentary images of the camps), to render temporarily visible the horrors of the Shoah. Critiquing Godard for statements he made about the existence of archival footage of the Shoah and about the possibility of filming the event, I analyze the stakes in French psychoanalyst Gérard Wajcman's claims that the Shoah is unrepresentable not as a matter of choice or interdiction, but because "it is *impossible* to see." I further elucidate Wajcman's position with regards to Claude Lanzmann's, for whom the very existence of the extermination camps implies a forbidden representation. For the filmmaker, "there is nothing to see" because what the Holocaust shows is that "there is no image." These injunctions mean that the horror of the event exceeds any image seeking to transmit it. Any attempts to represent it would be grotesque, and images trying to convey the horror would domesticate the event, create a distance or provide consolation. Bearing these issues in mind, this chapter focuses on the Godard/Lanzmann debate under the light of *Bildverbot* (the Biblical interdiction on representation) as well as on Godard's controversial juxtaposition of the Shoah and the Nakba, the Jewish and the Palestinian catastrophes, for which Godard has been accused of anti-semitism. The second part of Chap. 5 is devoted to *Notre musique*, starting with a description of Godard's Dantesque version of the twenty-first century, a vision foreshadowed by his short video-films of the 1990s: *The Origin of the 21st Century* (1999) and *Je vous salue Sarajevo* (1993). I further devote a few pages to describe the characters in *Notre musique*, a combination of "real" and "imaginary" figures that intersect in Purgatory. In the following section I address the question of the relationship between text and image in the film, which is inextricable from Godard's method of montage of the shot/reverse-shot. I then discuss how Sarajevo and the Balkans War became the paradigm of intervention elsewhere in the 1990s, elucidating Godard's clear ambivalence toward "humanitarian solidarity" with war victims and survivors. This is linked to the filmmaker's critique of the "humanitarian intellectual" and helps explain why he decided to go to Sarajevo after it had been

“reconciled,” to think about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here I draw a comparison between Roberto Rosellini’s *Germania Anno Zero* (1946) in which he situated a story of survival documenting the ruins of Berlin, and Godard’s decision to come to Sarajevo after “reconstruction” and “reconciliation.” A further section is devoted to Godard’s critique of the “commemoration industry” through the role that the reconstruction of the Vijećnica Library and the Mostar Bridge play in the film. In the following section, I discuss how Godard engages with the work of Elias Sanbar and Mahmoud Darwish, and makes a plea beyond “speaking in the name of others” to “simple conversations” bestowing the potential of salvation to the “vanquished.” I conclude with Godard’s apology on behalf of the text, as “it has been covered by images,” while he vouches for a secular resacralization of the image. By way of the logic of the icon, he problematizes the current obsession with visualization, which has reduced images into standardized objects equated to empirical knowledge. Chapter 6 is centered on Godard’s dialectical materialist filmmaking for the twenty-first century. As I argue, Godard’s most recent feature length films—*Vrai/Faux Passeport* (2006), *Film: socialisme* (2010), *Le Pont des soupirs* (2014), *Les Trois désastres* (2014) and *Adieu au langage* (2014)—as well as his 2006 exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou, *Voyage(s) en utopie*, take up his decade-long explorations of the relationship between the contemporary and history, aesthetics and politics, image and text, sound and language, the ontology of the image and its status with regard to the legacy of Modernism. By analyzing and comparing these films, I articulate the coherence between Godard’s original and more recent explorations of representability, irrepresentability and representation that can be thought of as an array of experiments with montage. For instance, *Voyage(s) en utopie* is an experiment in 3D translated into the exhibition format of the museum installation in which Godard plays with various supports of the image to (re)visit the utopian aspects of his work in dialogue with contemporary art and mass media creating a kind of archive of rescued utopias. In *Vrai/Vaux Passeport*, Godard takes up the pedagogy of the image that he began to develop in *Le Gai savoir* and the DVG films, which becomes an exercise of judging images as “good” or “bad” in dialogue with Serge Daney’s notion that not any image makes an image. *Film: socialisme* encompasses images, sounds, histories and characters that resonate with each other and deliver an image of the past—the betrayed potential of the concept and idea of Socialism—that affords actualization in the present. A recurrent aphorism in Godard’s movies, *L’image viendra au temps de la résurrection* (The image will come

at the time of resurrection), attests in *Film: socialisme* to Godard's faith in the redemptive potential of the Image that will come by invoking images of resistance, revolution and revolt that persist in the collective imaginary. In *Adieu au langage*, Godard reintroduces the logic of the shot/reverse-shot he explores in *Notre musique* by positing it as a tension of opposite points within a single frame filmed with 3D technology. This tension within the frame becomes an allegory of the crisis of communication brought about by the dictatorship of digital media. Both *Film: socialisme* and *Adieu au langage* address the failure of humanities to define the human. His most recent film begins and ends with a classic revolt song, Alfredo Bandelli's "La violenza" (1968), an Italian militant song. I conclude that like *Film: socialisme*, *Adieu au langage* is a call to arms; if the former foresaw the massive 2011–12 worldly mobilizations, *Adieu* is the novelty announced by the scream of the newborn and the bark of Roxy the dog, which we hear at the end of the movie. In both films what is to come—a political project and new forms of mediation and enunciation—is yet to be invented. In Chap. 7 I conclude with an analysis of the legacy of Godard's militant filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s. Before the impending need to visibilize the intolerable brought about by permanent war everywhere, recent films and art projects have revisited militant filmmaking. The legacy of Godard's political filmmaking, however, is very far removed from his post-1970s materialist filmmaking and manifests today in a problematic niche in cultural production termed *sensible politics*. Godard's materialist filmmaking is a constant search for figures that bear a concrete relationship to history and to possibilities for resistance by revealing historical consciousness. The legacy of Godard's militant filmmaking can be described as: first, questioning Modernity as expressed in the definition of the "human" by the humanities and of "alterity" by Western universalism; second, Godard shows that the modern promise of an enlightened humanism is bankrupt as exemplified by SS guards who listen to Beethoven while they perform their duties; third, he makes a plea in the name of fiction in an attempt to reconstitute the link between man and the world.

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