The Weaponisation of the Camera

Filmic interventions into (and out of) extraordinary political events

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Short Abstract

I begin this thesis by exploring the postmodern status of the camera, theory, and audio-visual art in early reactions to 9/11. I outline my theoretical framework: from the concepts of weaponisation and the frame to the responsive eye and reflexive intervention. In Chapters 2 and 3, I offer a genealogy of the 'weaponised camera' by showing how Jean-Luc Godard has visibly practiced his own frame-work in his explicitly political films. Beginning with a modernist self-obsession with failing to enact a political event in the 1960s, he moved further into strident Maoism after the failure of May '68, attempting to immerse himself in collectivist filmmaking. By *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998), he was using montage and sustained juxtaposition to force a series of postmodern confrontations with the 'cinematographic form' of twentieth-century French history and collective memory.

Chapter 4 traces how the concept of 'the event' has developed across academic disciplines and the arts. Chapter 5 considers ethnographic docufiction films by Jean Rouch, Joshua Oppenheimer and Rithy Panh which, through acts of performance and reconstruction, have made reflexive interventions into significant political events in national histories. Each filmmaker stages confrontations with and through ritual, propaganda, trauma, and culturally enforced silences. These films, I argue, are positioned as performative, Austinian 'film acts': they reorganise the enduring narrative and 'documentary' forms of past events. In turn, they are intended to provoke 'film events', which might reorganise cultural understandings of the past. In Chapter 5, I describe how some protesters of the Arab Spring sought to use the distributed technology of the 'global village' as a weapon of revolution: not simply to record the event as it happened, but using this mediatisation as a reflexive frame itself, to bring the event into being as a global event and simultaneously as an act of postmodern filmic autoethnography.

Long Abstract

This thesis hinges on the complexity of the status of political filmmaking within a cultural context that is itself increasingly mediatised.

Many of the filmmakers I discuss can be seen to participate in historical events as they unfold, and/or to incite historical events to occur through their films (whether they are ultimately successful in this endeavour or not). Simultaneously, they are the historiographers of these events, even as they are incorporated into them or as they instigate or assist them. Their work is, then, inevitably 'documentary', in the sense that it will persist as a historical document of the event.

This status is further complicated by the context in which the filmmaker, their camera, and the subsequent film operate: a postmodern cultural condition which, from the mid-twentieth century, has become loaded with media images and sounds to the extent that they have become a constituent part of the everyday life of the societies in which they appear. Consequently, all members of these societies are implicated into the 'work' of these texts, and many historical events can be seen to be 'written' as they emerge, through media commentary which incorporates academics, journalists, witnesses, and political and military officials, in a stream of breaking news.

My questions are, then: how have explicitly 'political filmmakers' intervened into political events, and into the grand narratives that are usually used to explain these events (and even to stand for them)? How has this changed over time? How do they appear to perceive their own relationship to those events, and how do they negotiate the complex status of their films in relation to the events with which they engage – as historical documents, as activist tools, or even potentially as propaganda? My answer is based around the idea of a w*eaponised camera*, which I define as political filmmaking that is interventionist (seeking to change its audience's perceptions of political events and to alter or transform a political situation) yet self-referential (emphasising its filmic status and drawing from that status as part of its mode of engagement with the event).

The most germane approach I have found to building a filmography of the weaponised camera has involved moving across time periods and national borders. My corpus is therefore not delineated by a single country, nor is it made up of films from a single filmmaker or a single era – or even a single event. I trace the emergence of a 'weaponised camera' in avant-garde and ethnographic cinema, in documentary and in fiction, and its application leading up to, during, and even long after extraordinary political events.

Nevertheless, the structuring perspective of my argument could be characterised as genealogical and technological, as I acknowledge and account for the cultural shift from modernism to postmodernism in twentieth century culture, as well as the concurrent development of media technology from the twentieth into the twenty-first century. This provides the background for a detailed exploration of theory and art, sustained from Chapter One into the first part of Chapter Two. The camera becomes a portable 'camera-pen' in the

mid-twentieth century, enabling filmmakers to enter the world outside the studio and to conflate the camera's perspective with that of an individual more easily; it also facilitates the direct engagement and participation of the camera/filmmaker in political movements such as protests and strikes. As a medium, its dominant format will shift from film, to video, and then to a range of digital apparatuses; the rise of television as the predominant system of mass communication will give way to the computer and the internet.

By the second decade of the twenty-first century, most individuals carry video recording and viewing technology in their pockets, and many engage with screens regularly for work and entertainment. Together, they form a distributed system networked by the internet: a manifestation of what Marshall McLuhan predicted would become the 'global village' of mass communication systems. These developments have made the camera a crucial tool for institutions to plan and execute 'media events': as defined by Dayan and Katz, significant political events designed to be received by large audiences. At the same time, institutional powers contend with what Douglas Kellner has called 'media spectacles': shocking public events that dominate public attention and provoke reams of discourse in response to them.

The disclosure of an event through media instruments creates a dense web of occurrences and outcomes which will influence and even organise its cultural afterlife. I have described this predicament as an ongoing loop. Though most individuals will only experience the event itself vicariously through media images, they are likely to be affected by the event's political consequences. A media archive of the event as it unfolded, moreover, may develop very rapidly. But it will not only provide a record of the event: as such images are circulated and repeated, they will become a constituent part of the culture's collective memory of the event.

This conceptual knot has required my own analytical perspective to be carefully mapped out in its relationship not only to the films I discuss, but to the filmmakers' intentions and perspectives, to the political events which they take as their subjects, to the media images that survive from the original political event, and to the historical narratives that persist across cultures, which often organise shared assumptions about those events. 'Intermediality' is, then, my tool and my topic; it is the wider postmodern condition of the event, the films and of my analysis. This has led me to use a range of theoretical concepts as analytical instruments, from *framing* to the *responsive eye* to *reflexive intervention*. I argue that a

filmmaker who draws attention to the position of their film as a product of *and* as a contributor to the event, and who emphasises the issue of implication (their own implication and that of their participants and of their audiences), operates with a *weaponised camera*.

They might achieve this through various methods: for example, by drawing attention to the 'fictionality' of their film (the screen is not 'reality', and it does not disclose the fullness of the event it represents; it is a work of art, or an artefact of a past event) and to its 'factuality' (films can draw from reality for its depictions of events more directly than other media forms, *and* can contribute to social reality by staging provocations in the audio-visual language of the event), while drawing on the tension between these two states in film. The practice of weaponisation therefore often involves techniques taken from hybrid, liminal film genres such as docufiction, the essay film, and archive documentary; or it involves a fictional story set during real historical events. It might incorporate other art forms, such as paintings, into the frame. Weaponised films can be seen to both take their images *from* political circumstances and to feed them *back into* political circumstances, within the same narrative movements; they will stage and perform this operation not only for the contemplation of their audiences, but for their ethical and personal implication into the event.

I have drawn from disciplinary resources in film and media studies, in art history, sociology and information studies to explore the role of agency and implication in this form of political cinema. Particularly influential on this thesis, however, is the recent work of Antoine de Baecque and Slavoj Žižek. De Baecque, in *L'Histoire-caméra* (titled *Camera Historica* in its English edition) 'posits that modern cinema after the Second World War embodies the irruption of the "age of history" in the viewing of films' (Albera et al., 2010). He identifies a 'cinematographic form of history' that emerged in the aftermath of the War, in which the historical subject confronts the viewer from beyond their original time and place, from *out of* the cinema screen. From Žižek's extensive writing I take two philosophical methods: his insistence on taking a 'sideways glance' at political violence, so that the horror of it does not obscure its wider ideological significance, and his insistence on approaching the concept of the event 'in an eventual way' in order to fully appreciate its extraordinary nature.

The two authors, at first glance, represent opposite poles of academic thinking on film, one explicitly historical and the other theoretical (furthermore, Žižek's two approaches might

seem incompatible, with one implying that its subject should be tackled head-on, and the other that it should not). But they can be reconciled; each perspective accommodates for the complexity of the relationship between the event itself, the broader contexts of its place and time, and the roles of its witnesses and survivors, as well as for the event's potential emergence or re-emergence in a film and for that film's subsequent viewers. By drawing on both thinkers, I triangulate this study with the historical and the ideological perspectives of its films, positioning myself to investigate the complex relationships between fact and fiction, history and historiography, event and spectacle, and participation and spectatorship that emerge from them. After setting out my theoretical and historical contexts, I perform a series of close readings of films that deal with events in the past and the present in order to sustain an 'eventual' methodology (a methodology that takes a given film as a series of 'stops' in a journey towards a given event).

Mieke Bal has argued for the use of 'travelling concepts' as analytical tools in the humanities, or concepts which emerge in various forms across different disciplines, to encourage interdisciplinary discussions that are open-ended and mutually communicative. Extrapolating from Bal's methodology, and from Inez Hedges' literal and figurative use of the term in *Breaking the Frame*, I use *framing* as it appears in the humanities and in the social sciences as an organising concept for my argument; I hope for this to be not simply an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, but a compound, intermedial approach. In the humanities, the *frame* is often a visual object, as in the still frames that constitute a film, or the protective and emphasising frame that borders a painting. But it also appears in both humanities and social sciences in the theoretical *framework*. This framework can be the structure that exists around an individual, group, or a concept within a given topic and its culture; it can also be the structure developed to explore and to explain those pre-existing structures. In French, the word *cadre* can mean frame or framework; this double meaning manifests throughout the political cinema of Jean-Luc Godard, which I examine in Chapters Two and Three.

Chapter Four is the intermediate point of my thesis, in which I discuss the history of 'the event' as a theoretical concept and its development across academic disciplines and artistic genres. I begin by pointing out that even the dictionary definition of the term hints at a paradoxical, multivalent nature: 'events' can be defined as occurrences or as outcomes, as planned or as unplanned manifestations. I show that in philosophy, the event is the subject of extensive

debate: it has been described as a rupture, as an occurrence which is excessive (and which thus disturbs the framework of the world in which it appears), and as any occurrence which implicates its witnesses into it. In trauma and memory studies, an event is seen to persist as a personal frame for the survivor, through which future events will appear, will be received, and through which they will be interpreted and understood.

While the capacity of an artwork to hold 'evental' qualities has been explored by researchers and artists across mediums including painting, theatre, photography and the museum, the 'film-event' as a discrete concept remains underexplored in film studies. The philosopher John Mullarkey (John Ó Maoilearca) has recently broached the possibility of a 'cinematic event', which he defines as a philosophical 'becoming' that 'enfolds a multiplicity of properties' and which therefore cannot be set into hierarchical ontological categories. My own approach to the concept of a film event focuses on its 'applied', intertextual appearance in political and historical contexts, and on the significance of the audience's ethical implication into a given event in the context of media forms and their own assumed spectators.

The ethnographic films I have selected for Chapter Five each create their own frames around forms of silence or absence that persist in the wake of brutal political events from further back in the past. In *Chronicle of a Summer*, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin bring a survivor of the Holocaust to the frame, who struggles to articulate her experience. They seemingly make her an active participant in the film's production, while also appearing onscreen as interviewers: they position themselves as filmed, framed participants alongside the others. I argue that this is ethically problematic – and that it is intended to be so. In *S21*, a documentary about Cambodia's Khmer Rouge regime, Rithy Panh uses material artefacts as props to stage a series of theatrical re-enactments with perpetrators: from folders of documentary 'evidence' that were once fabricated to condemn prisoners, to artworks painted by a survivor of the S21 internment centre. The method is ritualistic, as the film summons the material and narrative details of the regime's abuses to its frame – but Panh is careful to emphasise that the dead can neither appear nor speak for themselves, and thus will never be fully recoverable.

Finally, in *The Act of Killing*, the first of two documentaries by Joshua Oppenheimer on the wave of killings targeting 'suspected Communists' in 1960s Indonesia, perpetrators are asked

to perform for the camera in a different way. As the gangsters are known to love American cinema, and as they have achieved fame in Indonesia as anti-Communist 'heroes', they are invited to act out past events for Oppenheimer's camera, reimagined in the style of various cinematic genres.

While *The Act of Killing* has attracted criticism for prioritising the voices of perpetrators and for lacking insight into the wider political context of the killings, I argue that the shocking excessiveness of the film's conceit is part of an effort to make it act as a form of Austinian speech-act: it uses the language of film to publicly implicate the gangsters into their crimes, with the aim of breaking the flattering frame which had been placed on them. This 'film-act' is in turn designed to break the silence imposed on the survivors, and to allow for a 'film-event' to manifest: a cultural space in which the voices of the survivors can be heard (though it is not inevitable that the attempted film-act will successfully provoke such an event).

In Oppenheimer's less ostentatious companion piece, *The Look of Silence*, the survivors and their relatives are prioritised instead: its protagonist is Adi Rukun, whose brother was murdered in the 1965 massacre at Snake River. *The Look of Silence* has a more contemplative tone, drawing on quiet metaphors of sight and silence to explore Rukun's loss. But it also uses them in the manner identified by De Baecque: the surviving historical subjects are seen to stare back out from the screen as they are offered up for contemplation. As the film's viewers are held by these metaphors in a sustained, mutually reflexive gaze, they are implicated or looped into the film's account of the past, and into its work in bringing about the return of (an account of) the event to the frame.

In my concluding chapter, I consider the role of the camera in a more recent political event: the 2011 series of protests across the Middle East and North Africa which became known collectively as the Arab Spring. The historical and political circumstances of each country leading up to the protests, and the extent to which the protesters were successful in bringing about lasting social change, are immense subjects that lie beyond the scope of my study. Furthermore, I do not contend that the use of cameras and social media 'triggered' or 'were responsible for' the Spring; this would be a facile reading of an extremely complex series of political actions. My interest is rather in how filmmaking was incorporated into the mechanics of the emergent movement: I describe how it was propelled forward, particularly in Egypt, in

part by a feedback loop of protesters filming each other and sharing the footage with news agencies and on social media. In doing so, the protesters transformed their movement into a global media spectacle that insisted upon its viewers' attention.

Through the protesters' organised efforts to shoot, collect and distribute footage, and the sustained, visible presence of cameras amid the event as it unfolded, the participants can be seen to implicate themselves *en masse* into the frame *and* into the wider media loop: in a sense, they consciously turn their bodies, their individual opinions and actions, and the emergent event of their political movement 'into a film'; that is, they publicly 'write' their story as it occurs (and often through sharing reflexive, rather Godardian anxieties about bringing an event into being). Correspondingly, many of the films that materialised from the Arab Spring – from narrative feature-length documentaries to non-narrative interactive databases – could be said to be 'weaponised', through their formally reflexive treatment of their compound, mutually-constituent relationship with the extraordinary political event.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

i. Disintegration loops

'One does not discuss a live image, one undergoes it.'[1]
Paul Virilio

The New York-based composer William Basinski had, in the summer of 2001, a box full of old magnetic tapes which he had decided to convert into a digital format. They contained an experimental piece of music he had originally composed in 1982. But as he played them back the magnetic iron oxide detached, and the tape loops began to disintegrate. This distorted the music, creating new sounds for the digital capture: droning, melancholic, ambient; cycling and repeating with slight variations. Basinski had finished his transfers, he recalls, the day before the Twin Towers collapsed.

The falling buildings and rising smoke and dust were visible from his apartment. Basinski has recounted climbing to the roof of his building and, finding no satisfying interpretation of the event from news outlets, creating his own:

[1] Paul Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*, trans. Michael Degener (London: Continuum, 2005) 34.

> …we sat there and watched the other tower going down… cascading glass… slow motion… and it was just… God. We couldn't believe it. We were all in shock. There was no news just people babbling on the radio and idiots babbling on the television. We went downstairs and put on the music. It was like, "This is the greatest show on Earth. Armageddon, here we go".
>
> […]
>
> I got a video tape because I knew my friend Peggy was on the roof with her video camera. She showed me how to frame it and we just left it recording and I said I'd pick it up in the morning. So I did and I went back to the studio and put the tape in the player and put 'Disintegration Loop One' with it…[2]

Michael Heumann has described Basinski's project as 'a living document: a field recording of orchestrated decay'.[3] The resulting re-composition was released as a series of four albums known as *The Disintegration Loops* (fig. 1). The 'captured moment' of sudden metaphorical coherence (and the accidentally perfect timing) were irresistible to listeners looking to make sense of what they had seen, and reviews were overwhelmingly positive. In 2011, *The Disintegration Loops* was re-released as part of an official tenth anniversary tribute. The pack included Basinski's music and video imagery on DVD, as well as liner notes by Basinski and by Michael Shulen, the creative director of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum. The project was formally inducted into the museum that year.

The concept of 'disintegration loops' could be applied to many of the most familiar images of Manhattan on 9/11: they were played again and again by TV channels, usually with commentaries from news pundits, politicians or celebrities accompanying them. In doing so, production teams created a new life for the images, making makeshift movies of these clips

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[2] John Doran, 'Time Becomes a Loop: William Basinski Interviewed', *The Quietus*, 15 November 2012 http://thequietus.com/articles/10680-william-basinski-disintegration-loops-interview Accessed 12 June 2020.

[3] Michael Heumann, 'William Basinski, The Disintegration Loops I-IV' (review), *Stylus Magazine*, 02 February 2004 (archived) https://web.archive.org/web/20080117004014/http://www.stylusmagazine.com/review.php?ID=1691 Accessed through archive, 12 June 2020.

as they tried to engage with the event. It is these 'loops' that Basinski met with his audio and video tape loops. For non-New Yorkers, and for those who had no personal connections to the victims, the live footage broadcast of the collapse of the towers constituted most or all of their experience of the event itself. But the concept of such a 'live' broadcast image might be considered a contradiction in terms, for an obvious reason: while the image is captured instantaneously, the event it captures is only experienced by the media viewer indirectly. The event is therefore not in fact experienced 'live' by its viewer, though they can still claim to have seen much of the event unfold 'live' on TV. They are, in a virtual way, also looped into the event.

However, the philosophical definition of what constitutes an *event* has been subject to debate across academic disciplines. Alain Badiou understands it not as a distinct occurrence, but as a rupture which makes new circumstances conceivable: 'For me, an event is something that brings to light a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable. An event is not by itself the creation of a reality; it is the creation of a possibility, it opens up a possibility.'[4] For the possibility that the event opens up to become real, Badiou continues, '…it's a matter, here, of the consequences in the real world of the rupture that the event is.'[5]

In the images of the September 11th attacks, such a rupture manifests in an almost literal way, as a tear across the sky that various recording devices were available to capture, and which mass communications systems were able to distribute. Jean Baudrillard argued that 'with the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, we might even be said to have

[4] Alain Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, with Fabien Tarby, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, 2017) 9-10.
[5] Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, 10.

before us the absolute event, the "mother" of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all the events that have never taken place.'[6]

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, finding measured analytical responses within the turmoil was unsurprisingly difficult. But some artists' reactions to 9/11, both early and delayed, were considered particularly inappropriate, and were received with dismay and opprobrium. Only a few days after the attacks it was reported that, at a press conference, the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen had compared 9/11 to an artwork:

> Hmm. Well, what happened there is, is of course — now you all have to adjust your brains — the greatest work of art that has ever existed. That spirits achieve in one act something we could never dream of in music, that people practice like mad for ten years, totally fanatically, for one concert. And then die. And that is the greatest work of art that exists for the whole cosmos.[7]

One year later, the British artist Damien Hirst would tell BBC News Online that 'it's kind of an artwork in its own right', identifying a shift in visual language enacted by the event:

> It was wicked, but it was devised in this way for this kind of impact. It was devised visually. […] I think our visual language has been changed by what happened on September 11: an aeroplane becomes a weapon — and if they fly close to buildings people start panicking. Our visual language is constantly changing in this way and I think as an artist you're constantly on the lookout for things like that.[8]

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[6] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York, NY.: Verso, 2012) 3.

[7] Excerpt from a Hamburg press conference with Karlheinz Stockhausen, 16 September 2001, quoted in Christian Hänggi, 'Stockhausen at Ground Zero', *Fillip* 15 (Vancouver: Projectile Publishing Company, Fall 2011) http://fillip.ca/content/stockhausen-at-ground-zero Accessed 12 June 2020. It should be noted that, as Ian Parsons points out, Stockhausen made his comments during a discussion of his opera cycle *LICHT* (*LIGHT*), and implied that Lucifer himself – one of the three archetypal characters in the project – was the creator of the 'greatest work of art'. See Ian Parsons, 'Dissonant Terror: Stockhausen's Lucifer and the Art of 9/11' *Journal of Musicological Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2020) 1–23.

[8] This interview was originally part of a BBC News Online video essay on 9/11 called 'September 11: One Year On', and is available here: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2002/september_11_one_year_on/2229628.stm Accessed 02 June 2020. See also Rebecca Allison, '9/11 wicked but a work of art, says Damien Hirst', *The Guardian*, 11 September 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/sep/11/arts.september11 Accessed 04 February 2020.

Hirst apologised for his remark a week later, while Stockhausen immediately retracted his and asked that no journalist report it; but in its wake, two concerts and the festival in Hamburg were cancelled.[9] The *New York Times* observed that 'Mr. Stockhausen was reported to have left Hamburg in distress'. After his death in 2007, an article for *The Guardian's* music blog noted that the composer 'was still under a cloud of suspicion' for what he had said.[10] While both artists recanted, their statements may have captured a feeling or opinion beyond themselves: Stockhausen's remarks are reminiscent of Basinski's, who seemed, from his description in the 2012 interview, almost to have welcomed the prospect of a New York-centred Armageddon.

In an article for the music magazine *Pitchfork*, Mark Richardson suggests of Stockhausen's comments that 'most of the time we don't worry so much about that line because the stakes are reasonably low. But when we're feeling wrenching pain and considering the deep and true suffering of real people, the lack of clear differentiation can seem obscene'.[11] He acknowledges that Stockhausen might also have been attempting to express a 'shift in consciousness' that happened on 9/11, one that is comparable to the aims artists have for their art. But he admits he feels uncomfortable when he listens to William Basinski's composition a year after 9/11: 'It was certainly "powerful" to hear Basinski's tragic and

[9] Hirst's apology was reported by *The Guardian* in 'Hirst apologises for calling 9/11 'a work of art'', *The Guardian*, 19 September 2002 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/sep/19/september11.usa while Stockhausen's retraction was reported by the *New York Times* in 'Attacks Called Great Art', *New York Times*, 19 September 2001 https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/19/arts/attacks-called-great-art.html Accessed 15 May 2021.

[10] Benjamin Ivry, 'Is it time to forgive Stockhausen?', *The Guardian* (blog), 23 June 2008. https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2008/jun/23/isittimetoforgivestockhau Accessed 15 May 2021.

[11] Mark Richardson, 'Disintegration Loops and Simplesongs', *Pitchfork*, 09 September 2011. http://pitchfork.com/features/resonant-frequency/8667-disintegration-loops-and-simplesongs/ Accessed 02 February 2020.

painfully sad music soundtracking these images, but I had a hard time connecting this "art experience" with actual documentation of what happened'.[12]

Interestingly, Richardson contrasts his own experience of 9/11 (he was not in New York, and so experienced it 'entirely through television, photographs, and the printed word'), and the experiences of those who look up the footage later on YouTube 'to absorb the enormity of the massive shifting of matter on a scale that we've never experienced in person'.[13] He suggests that there is a ritualistic element to the latter action, which is prioritized over memorializing the victims. But it does not seem trivial that both his experience of 9/11 and the archive of footage on YouTube are experiences that have occurred via media 'documentation'. Though Richardson differentiates between them based on intention, the modes of experience are constituted of the same materials: audio, video, (composites of) still images, text, and media commentary.

The problem is partly related to the concept of obscenity: that which a culture considers to be self-evidently unacceptable to the eye or ear, but the meaning of which is notoriously difficult to articulate.[14] This issue is often summed up with reference to Justice Potter Stewart's 1964 non-explanation of hardcore pornography: 'I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description [of 'hardcore pornography']; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But *I know it when I see it*, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that.'[15] The September

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] This issue is also apparent in philosophical, theoretical and artistic approaches to the concept of 'the event', which I will explore in detail in Chapter Four.
[15] Justice Potter Stewart, concurring, in United States Supreme Court, *Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 378 U.S. 187 (1964). Argued: March 26, 1963. Decided: June 22, 1964. The appellant had previously been convicted under state obscenity laws for showing Louis Malle's *Les Amants* in a movie theatre. Emphasis mine.

11th attacks brought with them a stream of unacceptable images, repeated *en masse* to the world *en masse*. So why was a work such as Basinski's considered an acceptable addition to the September 11th Museum? It might be that the composition presents the familiar images without textual or verbal media commentary. It does not include the sounds of screaming and sobbing which accompany other video captures. Instead, it offers an intentionally vague sense of capturing something difficult to define or articulate; an unexpected moment; a type of event. A particularly extraordinary or shocking event can be considered difficult to watch and difficult to look away from at the same time.

The music of *The Disintegration Loops* is mournful and gentle. Its sound seems to embody aurally the smoke and dust floating away into nothing (and it is itself the sound of mechanical deterioration). Audio-visually, it provides space and time for the audience to contemplate the event, rather than to respond with immediate, unfiltered fear responses, with commentary, or with further responses to commentary. Rather than discursive, it is recursive, repeating the memory of the event back to the viewer in the same medium in which most of them experienced it, albeit with modifications that frame it: its duration, its specific visual perspective from the roof of Basinski's apartment, and the added music track. The viewer-listener can watch the light slowly change as day turns to night and Ground Zero continues to smoulder. And by experiencing the event transformed in this way, they can take a certain unacceptable pleasure from it; a pleasure that they could not articulate, but which they can receive as it is articulated to them. They are in a paradoxical position: at once approaching the event again (at least in its mediatised form) and perhaps feeling alienated from it (even as it plays out again in front of them) as it audio-visually drifts away in 'real time'.

The reception of large-scale political events through the media has been explored by theorists in the context of their status as planned or unplanned events. Drawing from Guy Debord's Situationism, and particularly his idea of the 'society of the spectacle' (in which social life has been replaced with its representation), Douglas Kellner's body of research on 'media spectacles' emphasises the capacity of institutional powers to manipulate unplanned events to their advantage: he defines 'media spectacles' as 'phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution.[16] Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz also include such reactions in their taxonomy of 'media events': planned events which disrupt the usual flow of the television broadcast to present a ritualistic 'television of occasion'. They identify three types: *coronations* (a category which in this context includes various types of formal events such as funerals), *contests* (including sporting events and elections), and *conquests* (in which a powerful individual is seen intervening into a difficult, contested circumstance in order to transform it. Dayan and Katz offer the example of Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland in 1979, while it was still part of the Soviet Union). In each case, the stages of these events are carefully scripted and performed.

But immediate institutional reactions to highly sensitive, *unplanned* events can also be arranged in anticipation of their occurrence. These are sometimes intended to provide space for the institution to clarify what has happened; at the same time, they can stand as placeholding, protective non-reactions to the event. For example, BBC Radio has playlists of music ready to be deployed on the emergence of an extraordinary political event: a protocol

[16] Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacles*, (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2002) 2. See also Kellner, '9/11, Spectacles of Terror and Media Manipulation: A critique of Jihadist and Bush media politics' (2006) *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1:1, 41-64.

known as 'obit procedure'. The music is selected for its sombre and gentle ambiance; it usually has no lyrics, as lyrics could potentially contain inappropriate phrases in this new context even if they are not related to the event unfolding. Chris Price, head of music at BBC Radio One, has described details of the process:

> If you ever hear Haunted Dancehall (Nursery Remix) by Sabres of Paradise on daytime Radio 1, turn the TV on. Something terrible has just happened, possibly involving the death of the queen or an untold number of her subjects. If you're a fan of ambient and chill-out music, try watching the rolling news with subtitles on and the radio turned up – you may never hear Chris Moyles play so perfect a selection of Ibiza sunset moments ever again.[17]

Even here, it is suggested (if facetiously) that the listener should create a Basinski-esque remix of the event as it unfolds. While audible commentary would hypothetically be removed from the process, a new perspective and mode of experience would be created through capturing the moment aleatorically within its mediatised framework.

Postmodernist approaches to extraordinary political events have been criticised as nihilistic and facile, with accusations of either callousness to the real consequences of the violence, or to the systemic social problems behind it, depending on the political perspective of the critic. And certainly, Jean Baudrillard had previously referred to himself as a nihilist, which he defines in part as one who believes that 'the true revolution' of modernity was to be found in 'the radical destruction of appearances, the disenchantment of the world and its abandonment to the violence of interpretation and of history', and who additionally believes in 'postmodernity, which is the immense process of the destruction of meaning, equal to the earlier destruction of appearances.' Thus, no matter how an analysis might proceed, it will

[17] Chris Price, 'Soundtracking 9/11' (blog), *The Huffington Post*, 09 November 2011 (article updated 11 November 2011) http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/christopher-price/soundtracking-911_b_957331.html, Accessed 12 June 2020. The full title of the track Price mentions is 'Haunted Dancehall (Performed By In the Nursery)' by Sabres of Paradise, from Sabres' 1995 album of remixes, *Versus*.

become part of the 'precession of images' that makes up modern culture.[18] Baudrillard's reaction to such accusations is confrontational, and he specifically designates himself a type of terrorist: 'If being a nihilist is carrying, to the unbearable limit of hegemonic systems, this radical trait of derision and of violence, this challenge that the system is to answer through its own death, then I am a terrorist and a nihilist in theory as the others are with their weapons. Theoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource left us.'[19]

Baudrillard had previously been criticised for a series of essays published in the French newspaper *Libération*, in which he argued that the first Gulf War constituted a 'non-event'. He gave each essay a title that marked its stage of occurrence: 'The Gulf War will not take place', 'The Gulf War is not taking place', and finally, 'The Gulf War did not take place'. These provocative titles were intentionally designed to problematize the possibility of the political event's emergence in a hyperreal context. But if these characterisations are vulgar when engaging with violent events and their representations – whether this is taken to mean that they are insensitive to victims, or simply cynical or philosophically trite – they do share an intent beyond facetiousness: an agenda of attempting to cut through media 'babbling' by forming their own defiant soundtracks or stagings. The essays' titles evoke the Doppler effect as they are being listed; if Baudrillard wants to give the initial impression that the war did not happen, this is not borne out by the way he charts the movement of his own argument.

Baudrillard's discursive movement obligates his reader to distinguish between the event as they might straightforwardly define it or refer to it ('On September 11th 2001, two planes hit the World Trade Centre in New York City') and the event as it unfolded before them. If the

[18] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 160-161.
[19] Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 163.

world's ability to account for itself has moved from representations to a state of hyperreality, then meaning must be located in a way that moves beyond deciphering the sign as it appears at the time. Philip Clark suggested that Basinski's technique in *The Disintegration Loops* 'came to symbolise something concrete being shredded to dust as the tape loops unwound and collapsed towards static and noise',[20] but it may be useful to acknowledge that the tapes do not seek to translate the event from a reality into a symbol, but to face the event (such as it is, lingering as image), to imitate it, and to *take from it directly* in order to transform it artistically. This action moves the historical event away from the obligations that discourse has (to justify and explain itself and its public existence), and paradoxically, allows the excessiveness of the event to flow through a particular frame.

Slavoj Žižek released a short book on the concept of the Event itself, in which he argued that philosophers must approach events 'in an eventual way' in order to understand them. He finds an example of an event 'at its purest and most minimal' in Agatha Christie's story *4.50 from Paddington*, in which a woman on a train witnesses a murder on another train as it passes on a parallel track. In the first instance, he argues, the event is '…something shocking, out of joint, that appears to happen all of a sudden and interrupts the usual flow of things; something that emerges seemingly out of nowhere, without discernible causes, an appearance without solid being as its foundation'.[21] In tribute to Christie, and similarly to Baudrillard, Žižek structures his own book as a train journey with multiple stops. His first

[20] Philip Clark, 'The playlist: experimental – Edgard Varèse, William Basinski, Will Montgomery and more', *The Guardian*, 14 July 2015. https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jul/14/the-playlist-experimental-edgard-varese-william-basinski-will-montgomery Accessed 02 February 2019.
[21] Slavoj Žižek, *Event: Philosophy in Transit* (London: Penguin, 2014) 2.

chapter is titled 'Stop 1: Framing, Reframing, Enframing'. This first stop, he explains, 'will be a change or disintegration of the frame through which reality appears to us.'[22]

The full title of the book is *Event: Philosophy in Transit*.[23] Penguin, its UK publisher, asked philosophers to write books related to transit, and it has been marketed as 'short enough to be read on a commute'. The series title seems to be intended to bring together the literal and metaphorical meanings of the transit: the book will move the reader to new philosophical positions while the train moves them on their usual journey to work. The philosopher will intervene in the quotidian life of the reader and provoke them to philosophically challenge their assumptions: that is, they will ask that active movement or 'transit' emerges out of passive movement (as the reader is being passively moved by something else: the train). In this new understanding, the real, literal movement of the train is characterised as impassive and inert, while it is implied that the metaphorical movement of one's perspective is the real movement. Furthermore, the 'transit' refers to the new developments in philosophical thinking contained in the book, so that the philosopher moves, it is implied, along with the reader and their train.

Baudrillard in fact took the transiting titles of those *Libération* essays from a 1935 play by Jean Giraudoux, *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*, in which Hector actively tries to prevent the inevitable event from occurring.[24] The audience watches the play with the knowledge that its lead character will fail in his task, and that the title will not deliver what it promises. They are placed in the same position as the prophetess Cassandra, doomed to see events before they

[22] Ibid.
[23] The book was released in the same year as *Event: A Philosophical Journey through a Concept* (New York, NY: Melville House, 2014) by the American publisher Melville House; the idea of travel as a mode of engagement with the concept is maintained in the title.
[24] I have directly translated the French title here (*La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*), but the play was titled *Tiger at the Gates* in its English translation.

occurred, and they experience the narrative as a sustained instance of dramatic irony. Baudrillard position himself at first as a Hector in denial, but in his analysis of the war as a mediatised event, which was manifested selectively, he reveals himself to be closer to a cynical Cassandra.

Jean Baudrillard has often been used as an exemplar of postmodernism's supposed excesses and cynicism. However, this cynicism, employed in the mode of dramatic irony, allows the reader to see that the war is not revealed by the media that ostensibly shows it, but rather is hidden by it. The audience of *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place* knows from their previous knowledge of the story that Hector will fail to stop the Trojan War, while Baudrillard similarly knows that he cannot intervene to stop the Gulf War after it has occurred. However, he can point out the incongruities between understandings of the event and the actual occurrence: the first point to make is that the version of the event seen in the media is not the full story, but the next point to make is that, conversely, the war itself was mediatised even for those who participated in it, with screens and cameras used as weapons along with guns and bombs. Baudrillard argued in part that, as the armed forces of the United States were able to use these tools to reduce the usual risks of war for their side, the Gulf War should not be characterised as a war by the traditional definition, despite the violence that obviously took place.

Susan Sontag took issue with this characterisation, arguing that 'to speak of reality becoming a spectacle is a breath-taking provincialism […] It assumes that everyone is a spectator. It suggests, perversely, unseriously, that there is no real suffering in the world'.[25] John Tulloch

[25] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York, NY.: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2003) 98-9. Also quoted in John Tulloch and R. Warwick Blood, *Icons of War and Terror: Media images in an age of international risk* (New York, NY.: Routledge, 2012) 64.

and R. Warwick Blood, however, counter that Sontag misunderstood Baudrillard's intent, and point out that some academics 'have [instead] argued for the profound importance of his media theory as a challenge to the world of simulation he describes'.[26] But Sontag and Baudrillard's critical viewpoints could be seen as compatible, and I will briefly discuss Sontag's humanist perspective on mediatised violence later in this chapter.

Baudrillard himself would address the issue of appropriateness and indignation from another perspective. In the introduction to his 9/11 essay 'The Spirit of Terrorism', he presented the scale of moral outrage on display as a form of repeating the event in an acceptable way, and a psychological 'abreaction':

> All that has been said and written is evidence of a gigantic abreaction to the event itself, and the fascination it exerts. The moral condemnation and the holy alliance against terrorism are on the same scale as the prodigious jubilation at seeing the global superpower destroyed – better, at seeing it, in a sense, destroying itself, committing suicide in a blaze of glory. For it is that superpower which, by its unbearable power, has fomented all this violence which is endemic throughout the world, and hence that (unwillingly) terroristic imagination which dwells in us all.[27]

The concept of an 'abreaction' has its roots in psychoanalytic theory; it was first defined by Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud as a delayed reaction to trauma, in which the individual spontaneously relives the event through language. However, Baudrillard is referring here not to the grief of the survivors and the relatives of the dead, but to the much broader reaction developed in the sustained media response to the attacks. If such an event is one that subsumes interpretation into itself, then the corpus of post-9/11 media commentary could

[26] Tulloch and Blood, 64.
[27] Jean Baudrillard, 'The Spirit of Terrorism', in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays,* trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2012), 4.

be considered not a body of analysis, but a mode of repetitively reliving the experience, and of continually participating in and perpetuating the event.

Baudrillard notes that this creates a problematic context for any attempt to engage with it: 'The whole play of history and power is disrupted by this event, but so, too, are the conditions of analysis.'[28] Moreover, he identifies an '(unwillingly) terroristic imagination' in the spectator: an unconscious desire to see the 'definitiveness'[29] of a superpower destroyed, in the fulfilment of an unspeakable fantasy. 'The fact we have dreamt of this event […] is unacceptable to the Western moral conscience. Yet it is a fact, and one which can indeed be measured by the emotive violence of all that has been said and written in the effort to dispel it.'[30] The context is one in which event and commentary, as well as jubilation and condemnation, are symbiotic. Even further, one acts as an exorcist, desperately trying to cast out the other. In this view, the desire to engage with and to make meaning out of chaos becomes part of the collapse – even if it is assumed that such fascination is disingenuous and that it is caused by the 'terroristic imagination' shared by all viewers of the event.

One critical reaction to this loop of philosophical collapse and repetition might simply be frustration and fatigue. Even William Basinski has claimed to be tired of repeating his own 9/11 story (though he is not, he clarifies, tired of *The Disintegration Loops* as a piece of music).[31] And in turn, the identification of ongoing reflexivity and critical elusiveness in the modern media landscape is not new, as the effect has become starker in the age of social media and Internet-based news outlets (a manifestation of what Marshall McLuhan had

[28] Baudrillard, 'Spirit', 3-4.
[29] Baudrillard, 'Spirit', 4.
[30] Ibid.
[31] See Mark Richardson, 'William Basinski: The Disintegration Loops' (review), *Pitchfork*, 19 Nov 2012, https://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/17064-the-disintegration-loops/ Accessed 28 Feb 2021.

predicted would be a 'global village' of media communications). But media self-awareness, and further critical commentary with this information in mind, has not halted the process of the feedback loop, nor resolved the paradox of discovering reality in a cultural reality that is mediatised.

In 'The Spirit of Terrorism' Baudrillard discusses the 9/11 terrorist attacks as an event that defies contextualisation in philosophical frameworks: 'We try retrospectively to impose some kind of meaning on it, to find some kind of interpretation. But there is none. And it is the radicality of the spectacle, the brutality of the spectacle, which alone is original and irreducible. The spectacle of terrorism forces the terrorism of the spectacle upon us.'[32] In Baudrillard's postmodern formula, the event is instead excessive in a tautological manner, referring back to itself for meaning; in doing so, it is enforcing its own symbolic power and working as its own 'framing device'.

ii. Conceptual perspectives and framing devices

But Baudrillard perhaps moves too quickly to dismiss the 'terroristic imagination' that was inflicted on viewers in the media's response to the event of 9/11. The repetition of the footage of the collapse in the weeks following could be taken to be an enforced mode of traumatic flashback, working to blur the lines of distinction between the experiences of the spectator and those who were involved. Making the event into an assault on all Americans and their allies, and emphasising that it represented an 'existential' attack on Western values, allowed for a mode of discourse that established the metanarrative of American heroism in adversity

[32] Baudrillard, 'Spirit', 23.

versus a terroristic Other. This is more than compatible with the terrorists' intentions: it helped to enforce them, as Kellner has argued.[33]

It was also congruous with the emotional need for commonality in the aftermath of the event. One eyewitness to 9/11, David Vogler, pointed out that his experience was paradoxically both extraordinary and ordinary (in that he had it in common with other New Yorkers): 'What I went through was profoundly unique, yet at the same time wasn't unique. I mean, there was millions of other people, that morning, downtown, went through the same darn thing. Almost word-for-word what I went through.'[34] Here, in describing other New Yorkers' experiences as equivalent to his own 'word-for-word', Vogler not only links his ordeal and his account of it to that of other witnesses, but also conflates his live experience of the event with his later narrative account of it. Another eyewitness, Sam Reigel, expanded this sense of implication into the event even further, beyond the immediate experience of it: 'It happened to everybody, even if you didn't know anybody who was there, or have never even been to New York, you know, the country took the hit, not just the people in Manhattan.'[35]

The conflation of the event with the account of it occurs not only between the media and reality, but between theory (in the sense of an explanatory framework) and event. The terrorists consciously made their attack a 'disaster movie', one that incorporated real, large-scale killings, but which committed them in part to construct a sensational, devastating visual narrative. The attempt to 'retrospectively impose some kind of meaning' happened audio-visually in the weeks following, as the media re-edited the terrorists' movie, and held near-

[33] See Kellner, '9/11, spectacles of terror, and media manipulation'.
[34] *I-Witness to 9/11* (mini-documentary). Included as a special feature on the DVD release of *102 Minutes that Changed America* (documentary, 2008) 17.52.
[35] 18.02.

constant re-screenings. In this way, the terrorists' method of attack was the mediatised event, as well as the event itself.[36]

To locate meaning within the feedback loops, Baudrillard recommended imaginative radicalism, in which the terrorists' methods are imitated intellectually. But his idea could be repositioned if the media spectacle is seen as one of *propaganda of the deed* and argue that the deed in question is now filmic: it is a sustained series of images and sounds experienced collectively, as well as being immediately impactful as an act of physical violence. This might appear to be a modern form of the aestheticisation of politics that Walter Benjamin warned against, in which public expression is no more than a spectacle performed within the strict confines of a totalitarian regime. But many of the political filmmakers discussed in this thesis could be said to perform acts of 'terroristic imagination' in various ways (though they might not wish to use the phrase). They recover imaginative expression to an artistic plane, while still seeking to intervene into political events and their manifestations (or to try to provoke events themselves). At the same time, they use self-referential techniques to draw attention to their own role, and the complex relationship between themselves, the camera, the film, the event, its witnesses, the media, and the audience. There have been numerous films that perform a filmic intervention into the reality of September 11th, aiming to reconstruct or respond to the events of that day. Three of them exemplify the continuum of fact and fiction, and image and commentary, that came together after the occurrence to constitute the event on a cultural level: *9/11*, *102 Minutes that Changed America*, and *11'09"01: September 11*.

[36] Chris Knipp discusses Baudrillard, 9/11 and the media event as a weapon of terror in '*The Matrix*, a French Philosopher, and the Events of September 11', *Baltimore Chronicle and Sentinel*, 12 July 2003 http://baltimorechronicle.com/jul03_matrix.shtml (archived). Accessed 12 June 2020.

The documentary *9/11* was not initially intended to be about the attacks on the WTC. Two French filmmakers, Jules and Gédéon Naudet, were following a rookie firefighter around NYC when they inadvertently captured the moment that the first plane hit the towers. *11'09"01: September 11* is a sequence of short films made by filmmakers from around the world, on what '9/11' meant to them. Their interpretations of the theme were wide-ranging (and not all of them directly examined the attacks on the World Trade Centre; for example, Ken Loach's epistolary film explored the death of Salvador Allende on 11th September 1973, while Sean Penn made a fictional short about a lonely widower in a New York apartment, in which 9/11 is never directly mentioned). *102 Minutes that Changed America*, meanwhile, is a full-length documentary montage film which combines various types of still, video and audio footage captured during 9/11. It has no voiceover, nor interviews with witnesses ('Relive that infamous morning through the raw sights and sounds of confusion, uncertainty and fear as the terror unfolded, and remember the bravery and valour of ordinary citizens and emergency crews', the DVD's back cover suggests, perhaps trying to provide an ethically tidy route into vicariously experiencing the disaster once again).

102 Minutes begins with a textual warning about its upsetting content, then a further explanation of it:

> Everything you are about to see and hear was recorded the morning of September 11th, 2001, in New York City. The footage has been collected from more than 100 different eyewitnesses, who grabbed their cameras to record an unfolding event that became history.[37]

These eyewitnesses, using camera apparatuses to document the attack as it happened, also made themselves into camera-witnesses and historians; they were mediators of the event for

[37] *102 Minutes that Changed America* (documentary) 00.01.

others; conversely, the cameras were part of their own live experience of the event. Surprisingly, the film promises a renewed experience of the familiar event for its viewers, claiming that 'much of this archive has never been shown before'.[38]

The first non-textual image used in the film is visually similar to William Basinski's, once the camera has been focused and the subject framed: two women record smoke drifting from the eastern side of Tower One (fig. 2). One of them is on the phone to her mother, and the two women can be heard describing what they see in front of them. One giggles nervously, and exclaims, 'We're freaking *videotaping* it!'. She tells her mother to switch on the news. In the background, a news report begins, describing the sight she captured in real time on the camera.[39]

The next piece of footage shows tiny pieces of debris floating in the air; another shows reactions from witnesses on the ground.[40] Later, in a crowd of people in Times Square, various individuals hold cameras up to a jumbotron as it screens images of the burning tower.[41] The film layers in audio recordings of calls made to 911, and footage of emergency services driving towards the scene. As a woman stares at the screen and adjusts her Walkman, presumably listening to a live radio commentary, another newscaster is heard on the soundtrack.[42] The mixed-media nature of the event as it happened and as it was received becomes increasingly explicit. Adam Shanker, the cameraman in Times Square who filmed passers-by staring incredulously at the jumbotron images of the burning towers, has described capturing the viewing of captured images with his own camera: 'When the first building came down, we

[38] 00.09.
[39] 00.28-01.43.
[40] 01.43.
[41] 06.20.
[42] 07.20.

saw it right on the screen, it was live on the screen and we saw it. And it was… you know… unbelievable… people were just shocked. People had their mouths open, people were just not moving, they were just fixated on the screen.'[43]

The film carefully presents the co-ordinates of the event in space and in time, as well as an impression of the media's real time reaction to it. The title *102 Minutes that Changed America* immediately tells the audience the exact number of historical moments it will show to them. Throughout the film a digital clock periodically appears against a black screen, rapidly scrolling through microseconds. This adds a sense of dramatic tension, urgency and anticipation to the often-seen footage, but combines it with dramatic irony: the viewer knows what is occurring and what will follow. Some footage taken by people who recorded from their windows is labelled textually with their relative location ('three blocks northwest', for example) and their distance from the event ('one mile northwest'). In this way, the medium of film is used as a method to block out the events (in the theatrical sense) and to provide a clear narrative account of what happened and when, even as the audience watches eyewitnesses and hears news analysts struggle to parse it.

The film combines various pieces of acousmatic sound with the images, including voicemails left by victims on the planes, radio communications between firefighters, and sonorous ambient music; as well as the recordings of emergency dispatch calls to 911. While partly used to set the scene, this also disorientates the viewer somewhat. It could be said to reproduce the feeling of confusion of being in New York on 9/11, in a mode of carefully curated chaos. But at the same time, it moves the film further away from being a narrative historical account of the events. Instead, the filmmakers use the techniques developed by the pioneers of

[43] *I-Witness to 9/11* (mini-documentary), 13.42.

musique concrète (including Karlheinz Stockhausen). They 'remix' the sounds and images, which were captured from the real event, in order to produce new perspectives on the event itself. This is again comparable to Basinski's work; though in Basinski's case, the period was not selected retrospectively, but recorded live and as it occurred. But like the special edition of *The Disintegration Loops*, the artwork is made to stand as a sort of memorial to the dead, while also being drawn from the surviving material of the attacks. The media that was created that day, captured as part of a live experience by New Yorkers, becomes looped into a later cinematic experience. The effect is to some extent cumulative: it is difficult to extricate the live event from the footage of the live event, and to extricate these in turn from the cinematic artwork. Each becomes materially implicated into the other.

The DVD release of *102 Minutes* includes a companion mini-documentary called *I-Witness to 9/11*. It features 'nine of the stories behind the frightening images and sounds' in the film, including Adam Shanker's. Many of these witnesses describe how holding recording equipment gave them a feeling of being protected and distanced from the event: John Kalymnios, who filmed the towers from his apartment, points out that '…it's not something you wanna capture on film. And fortunately I had a wide-angle lens on the camera, so that sort of pushed it further away so that the connection wasn't so immediate.'[44] Cheryl Dunn also sees her camera in this deeply personal and instrumental way: 'I always had a camera on me. Always. It was how I – probably – emotionally dealt with the trauma, because I, like, had a mission.'[45] She suggests that her boyfriend has had emotional issues in dealing with the event because he did not have the 'act of documenting', while she 'had an objective, had a

[44] 07.56.
[45] 08.08.

mission, this… thing between me and this situation.'[46] She later continues: 'I was just shooting, shooting, shooting, and the sound… that it was a building falling never crossed my mind.'[47] The camera is here used as a barely-discriminatory defensive weapon against the unfolding event. Evan Fairbanks also describes how his camera helped him to process the horror of what he was witnessing, and even to navigate his way towards the source of it: 'I felt detached from this horrible event because I was seeing it through a viewfinder. And in a way it actually made me braver, and I ended up walking *closer* to the buildings.'[48]

The title of this mini-documentary, *I-Witness to 9/11*, is a multi-layered play on words. It includes 'eyewitness' and 'I witness', which allows it to emphasise the embodied experiences of those who were present, and what aspects of the event were visible from their unique perspectives. The phrase 'I witness' asserts the importance of the individual, restoring some sense of power to the survivors interviewed. But the title also imitates the name of Apple's iMac range of products, bringing a more objective, apparatus-orientated meaning to it at the same time. The camera equipment is, then, also included as a technological eyewitness to the event.

In *9/11*, it emerges that the experiences of eyewitnesses were further mediated by their fictional filmic reference points, which some of them used to describe what they were seeing to news crews ('Like something out of *The Towering Inferno*. Like a movie';[49] 'Like something you'd see out of the movies in Hollywood'[50]). In his interview, Gédéon Naudet describes how he searched for the meaning of the event through his own camera's lens: 'I knew there was

[46] 08.23; 08.31.
[47] 09.53.
[48] 08.41.
[49] *9/11*, 40.08.
[50] 52.21.

nothing I could really do. I mean, I was not a fireman. I had absolutely no medical expertise at all. I was just a civilian. But as a cameraman, yeah, there was something I could do, and it was to document what was happening… so the cameraman took over and just filmed.'[51] He adds later that 'strangely enough, the only thing that was my preoccupation was to clean my lens' [*He is seen in the footage blowing into the lens*]. 'I don't know if it was a way for me to try and focus on something, to stay away from the horror of the reality, but it was my obsession, my lens needs to be cleaned.'[52] By turning an unseeing lens on himself in the midst of the event, and trying to improve its sight, Gédéon Naudet presents a literal and metaphorical image of the struggle to see the event clearly amidst the chaos of its unfolding, even for those who were there.

His brother Jules Naudet describes the aftermath of the collapse, after he had taken cover, as another space that was mediatised: 'And then, of course, the images of the replay that never stops, of the planes hitting, the towers coming down. And it was like, "OK. Enough TV". Thankfully the power went off around that time, so it was a relief'.[53] But the need to keep repeating the stories and the images of 9/11 manifests at the end of the film, after two hours, when James Hanlon, the actor and firefighter who narrates the documentary, tells the viewer: 'All we can do is tell 'em the stories, and show 'em the tape'.[54] An uncomfortable relationship emerges between memorialisation, suffering, and the temporary satisfaction of compulsively repeating and imaginatively reliving a distressing event.

The composite film *11'09"01: September 11* is extremely varied, but the 'artistic producer's statement' by Alain Brigand, included on the DVD release, describes the original concept as a

[51] 01.05.40.
[52] 01.06.40.
[53] 01.33.28.
[54] 02.00.02.

consequence of the 'duty of reflection'; that is, to move beyond the images of the event itself, instead of continuing to receive them as if in a fixed, constant present of the event:

> September 11th 2001 was something we would never have dared imagine. In real time, images of the catastrophe, in all their violence, burst into our homes. At a stroke, grief became universal.
>
> How could one not feel compassion when simultaneously, in all four corners of the globe, television displayed the suffering of those who faced death? To evoke the planetary echo of this event, other than through these terrible images, it quickly became apparent to me that we had a duty of reflection. A reflection which would not remain in the present, but would be turned resolutely towards the future. Which would be able to change places, to travel. A reflection responding to images with other images.
>
> Thus I proposed to 11 renowned directors that they looked towards their own cultures, their own memories, their own stories, their own language. The brief was as follows: "Create a film lasting eleven minutes, nine seconds, and one frame – 11"09'01 – around the events of September 11 and their consequences".
>
> The directors grasped the subject and expressed their perceptions of the event, each nourished by the concerns and anxieties of his own country, his own story. The film gathers together diverse sensibilities and commitments. Each point of view is expressed freely, and in a spirit of complete equality. Without adopting a consensus, this cinematographic mosaic is by nature a work of contrasts, even to the point where it risks appearing out of step with the shared artistic and moral Charter initially adopted by each director.[55]

Brigand lays out his intent that the filmmakers translate the event of 9/11 from images into images; and additionally, that the diverse selection of filmmakers each create their films in 'their own language'. The filmmakers' use of their own spoken languages makes their responses personal, embodying this intent in a similar way to the title of the mini-documentary *I-Witness*. But again, the language of images is to a great extent the 'language' of the highly mediatised event of 9/11: for much of the world, it *is* the event in the form they

[55] Alain Brigand, 'Artistic producer's statement', *11"09'01: September 11* (film). The statement is included as a special feature on the Artificial Eye DVD release (France, 2002).

experienced it at the time; it is also the form in which the event was documented and the form in which it will persist through time. The film therefore can be said still to be, to some extent, in the event's own language. Brigand even stipulated that the length of each short film, as the title suggests, be 'responsive' to 9/11. In this way, he makes the camera and the screen structurally stand for as well as reflect the event of 9/11. The film provides an audio-visual commentary on 9/11 as a violent political event, *and* on the images it presents as material texts that respond to images *with* images.

In Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise* (*The Chinese Woman*), a slogan daubed on a wall reads: '*il faut confronter les idées vagues avec des images claires*' ('we must confront vague ideas with clear images'). This slogan could be axiomatic for many of the films I discuss in this thesis. I will therefore argue that a 'philological' attitude to them is potentially helpful; that is, to understand that these films are intervening in a political reality that is already mediatised and seek to reorganise (that is, to 'remix' or to re-edit) the remains of the event through their own frames, and even to 'correct' it as a text. The films must therefore be understood as texts *and as intertextual with the event as it persists materially through time*. This is not to obfuscate the existence of the very real violence that has been committed during extraordinary political events, but to account for how that violence has been processed and transmitted as part of a wider system of images (in some cases, even as it occurred), and to recognise that this has had very real consequences for how it has been perceived and understood.

Finally, I will outline some of the theoretical perspectives that converge on the issue of methodological radicalism (that is to say, how some theorists have engaged with the problem of philosophical limits when discussing violent political events). Specifically, I will consider the abstract question of the possibility of representing systemic violence, and how this has

been related to more concrete ethical questions of representing extraordinary political events on screen.

iii. Violence in Theory: Staring Back

Slavoj Žižek has enthusiastically entered the fray on issues concerning extraordinary political events, cinema, and what he sees as multiple forms of violence and their manifestations. However, in the opening pages of his 2008 book *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, he warns his reader not to be distracted by 'subjective' violence, including shocking, graphic images such as footage of terrorist attacks. Instead, he urges them to see the invisible problem that the subjective violence obscures: 'Subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence'.[56] The first 'objective' kind he identifies as a Heideggerian 'symbolic violence embodied in our language and its forms'. But it is the second objective kind that will be the main concern of his book: the 'systemic violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth running of our economic and political systems'. But for the first form, the distressing, potentially offensive subjective form, 'we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible 'subjective' violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent'.[57]

What I would like to tease out here is Žižek's assertion that these obvious manifestations of violence are by their nature obstructive of wider systemic issues because they are emotive and shocking. He points out that they will seem irrational until one understands the invisible

[56] Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2009) 1.
[57] Ibid.

violence inherent in the system,[58] and until the blindness to that which causes exclusion, displacement and alienation is cured.[59] His spatial metaphors emphasise that the visual nature, and the emotionally charged nature, of political violence can be disruptive enough to displace the unseen social forces of which they are symptomatic.

Žižek detects here, I would argue, the reappearance of the threat of obscenity with which Baudrillard engaged. Subjective violence becomes in this formulation a crude, literal, and rather obscene metaphor for a much larger problem. Of course, the literal brutality of violence (acting to end lives, inflict pain, to humiliate, and to bereave and traumatise survivors) continues to have its very real existence in the world, which propagandists will emphasise or obscure for political purposes (and which postmodernist art and theory, as I have mentioned, are frequently accused of handling with too light a touch). However, I would like to explore the idea that to some extent, media images of political violence inevitably stand not simply for, but in the way of, the events they 'represent'.

This problem leads Žižek to his 'sideways glances' at violence in his book.[60] His deviation away from subjective violence directs him to find potential salvation in both art and theory: moving back and studying 'is what we should do today when we find ourselves bombarded with mediatic images of violence. We need to "learn, learn, learn" what causes this violence.'[61] In this way, Žižek slides his reference point for 'violence' in the book between artistic representation and social presentation.

[58] Žižek, *Violence*, 2.
[59] Žižek, *Violence*, 12.
[60] Žižek, *Violence*, 3-4.
[61] Žižek, *Violence*, 7.

He quotes a passage from Anna Akhmatova's memoirs of the Stalinist purges, finding her description of an encounter in a queue outside a prison intriguing for its seemingly ambivalent relationship to the historical reality of the event:

> …surely […] not a realistic description of the situation, but what Wallace Stevens called 'description without place', which is what is proper to art. This is not a description which locates its context in a historical space and time, but a description which creates, as the background of the phenomena it describes, an inexistent (virtual) space of its own, so what appears in it is not an appearance sustained by the depth of reality behind it, but a decontextualized appearance, an appearance which fully coincides with real being. To quote Stevens again, 'What it seems it is and in such seeming all things are'. Such an artistic description 'is not a sign for something that lies outside its form'. Rather, it extracts from the confused reality its own inner form in the same way that Schoenberg 'extracted' the inner form of totalitarian terror. He evoked the way this terror affects subjectivity.[62]

A good artistic depiction of systemic violence is here one that moves away from historical realism, not valuing a compliment such as 'it's so accurate!', but instead a compliment that says, 'it's so evocative!'. The form emerges from itself, rather than from outside, Žižek argues. Works such as Akhmatova's and Schoenberg's extract terrors from confused reality and transforms them, rather than referring to their occurrence through a direct account of terror. Žižek uses these descriptions of art as examples of states that can also be achieved by theorising and 'learning' about violence: good art and good theory evoke the phenomena they describe so strongly, he argues, that what results is formal self-containment and self-sufficiency.

But such a self-sufficient framework is limiting when we consider that in the postmodern condition, especially in the context of contemporary technological changes in communications, media, art and society are experienced on a continuum of intermediality,

[62] Žižek, *Violence*, 5.

rather than in mostly separate spheres separated by geographical and temporal distance (most adults in the UK now carry around devices in their pockets that can both record and play films, for example, and which can capture events as they occur, and which allow the user to receive breaking news on events occurring throughout the world). While my 'philological' approach does argue that the films in this thesis delimit themselves against the continuum as a text – though they do not transcend it completely – there is a dual movement the film-text can perform into political events. They can have their own modes of confrontation with and intervention into the event, which position them to challenge and to potentially change orthodox cultural interpretations of it.

But given that there is a discrepancy between the subjective experience of suffering and an abstract knowledge of mass suffering, what happens when a filmmaker uses depictions of political violence to stand for larger and more abstract political points? Many of the films I analyse in this thesis ask their audience to focus on violent images at length and in detail. Of course, they intend to provoke emotional reactions and sustain dramatic tensions, but many engage quite consciously with such ethical questions of framing. The status of the film's frame, and its function as a delimiting site of analytic intelligibility, is thus often fraught and ambivalent. This relationship is complicated further by the filmmakers' approaches to the epistemological, ontological, and ethical issues of cinematic political violence.

Both Susan Sontag and Judith Butler, in *Regarding the Pain of Others* and *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* respectively, took on the task of reframing photographic representation to focus on victims of violence. Both chose puns for their titles, allowing them to announce that photography *and* theory are to be discussed and critiqued in their books. Butler takes up the issue of 'epistemological frames' in her opening lines:

> I am seeking to draw attention to the epistemological problem raised by this issue of framing: the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated. They are themselves operations of power. They do not unilaterally decide the conditions of appearance but their aim is nevertheless to delimit the sphere of appearance itself. On the other hand, the problem is ontological, since the question at issue is: What is a life? The "being" of life is itself constituted through selective means; as a result, we cannot refer to this "being" outside of the operations of power, and we must make more precise the specific mechanisms of power through which life is produced.[63]

There are living beings beyond the operations of power, whether it is possible to refer to them or not; unacknowledged, concealed beings, but beings, nonetheless. But it could be extrapolated from Butler's argument that the co-ordinates of the film frame are epistemological and ontological respectively, continually enforcing consequences on the situations they choose to depict and on their viewer's understanding of them. And from here, I would suggest, the frame can potentially bring the causes – the wide-ranging, systemic, invisible abstract values outlined by Žižek – back to the effects seen in the images, if it is made to visibly reframe the images (but this becomes possible only if it is enacted intentionally, through the filmmakers' sustained, reflexive treatment of the image and the event in question).

In the films I have selected this is achieved, or attempted, through what I have called weaponisation – the act of (or attempted act of) reflexive intervention into the event by the filmmaker. My argument is distinct from Paul Virilio's understanding of the camera as a weapon which is subsumed into the landscape of tele-conflict; in fact, it can be understood as a response to this media landscape, as it considers filmmakers who consciously negotiate and resist this version of reality, and who repurpose the camera in order to critique it and to 'correct' it. I acknowledge that the word 'weaponisation' is usually pejorative, referring more

[63] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010) 1.

commonly to the appropriation of an event or concept for partisan gain. Instead, I have appropriated it myself in this thesis, to emphasise the self-conscious use of the camera and the screen by these filmmakers as a method for intervening into (and/or helping to bring into being) political events. This is also intended to emphasise how the filmmakers themselves 'appropriate' the mediatic remains of political events in their films, thus approaching the event in an 'eventual' way. Rather than simply applying the word to various forms of institutional propaganda, I apply it to films which are reflexive, which emphasise their reflexivity, and which then use this self-consciousness to negotiate their position amidst the event, the media event (or spectacle), and what might be described as the film's own potential status as an artistic event.

Butler's *Frames of War* and Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* both take on the issues of political violence and media in the mode of moral resistance, sharing some of the dialectical methods of Žižek, but explicitly engaging with representative values and their relationship to political power. This perspective performs explicitly ethical interventions into visual narratives of political violence. It is encapsulated in Sontag's repurposed quotation from Baudelaire's 'Le Cygne' ('The Swan'), on the dedication page of *Regarding the Pain of Others*: *…aux vaincus!* (The original line is '*Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île*, */ Aux captifs, aux vaincus!... à bien d'autres encor!*': 'I think of the sailors forgotten on an island / Of the captives, of the vanquished!... and of many others besides!'). Though Sontag's excerpt translates in its poetic context as 'I think […] of the vanquished!' she transforms her fragment into a dedication (and almost into a toast, and/or a call to charge forward) '*…aux vaincus*!': '…to the vanquished!'. This obviously directs the reader to her subsequent attempt to disrupt the usual course of representation and interpretation, which often allows only one historical narrative to stand

as the publicly acceptable account of an event. Chapter Five will explore such representations of political violence in the context of trauma, memory, ethnography, and the ethical significance of reframing widely repressed or suppressed stories.

I have designed this study with the theoretical methodology outlined by Mieke Bal in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* in mind. This is an inherently interdisciplinary approach: throughout her book, Bal selects concepts that 'travel from one discipline to another' within the humanities, with the expectation that they will be open-ended and mutually communicative. Extrapolating from Bal's methodology, and from Inez Hedges' literal and figurative use of the term in *Breaking the Frame*, I use *framing* as it appears in the humanities and in the social sciences as an organising concept for my argument, as it allows me to account for the film's efforts to 'delimit' itself against the media event and its efforts to highlight its own relationship to the event. The cinematic frame can be takes as particularly suited for 'travel'; as Hunter Vaughan suggests, it is enigmatic, 'perhaps […] because it never moves, yet is the site of all movement; it never changes, yet is where all change takes place.'[64] It is thus a site, he continues, of both ambiguity and paradox.[65]

In taking this 'travelling' approach, I do not intend to suggest that the concepts of *frame* and *framework* as they appear in different disciplines are straightforwardly interchangeable. My analysis will involve carefully delineating the metaphorical, temporal, and literal frames at play in each film. Literal frames are often found in visual studies disciplines (the gilt frame of a painting, the still frame of a film) and more abstract frames in both the humanities and the social sciences, which describe the ways that individuals and groups perceive and interpret

[64] Hunter Vaughan, 'The Travelling Frame: The Tracking Shot in Resnais and Godard', in *Framed!: Essays in French Studies*, eds. Lucy Bolton, Gerri Kimber, Ann Lewis and Michael Seabrook (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007) 145.
[65] Ibid.

the world. But I would suggest that even if they are not neatly 'commensurable', these frames have enough in common as concepts to be mutually productive (in French, the same word, *cadre*, is used to denote literal frames and figurative frameworks). The work of framing (of including and excluding, of prioritising and emphasising) is inevitably at work in the films and in the audience's (and the academic's) reception of the films.

My approach can be characterised as intermedial, as intermediality 'refers to the interconnectedness of modern media of communication [as] means of expression and exchange', as Klaus Bruhn Jensen puts it.[66] Intermediality emphasises the interrelations between mixed media works, the 'combination of separate material vehicles of representation' such as print or digital platforms, and the interrelatedness of media institutions.[67] As the discursive term was derived from the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s, is it usefully reflexive for my own framing perspective: a 'composite' concept (as it draws from art and from theory) which, by its interrelatedness with its subjects, allows for the possibility of a theoretical perspective that moves to meet the event.

The concept of enframing, outlined by Heidegger in *The Question Concerning Technology*, is important here, travelling as it does beyond the literal, physical appearance of technology. As Krzysztof Ziarek points out, the concept is not simply technological: it is 'a broader unfolding of powers which make possible, regulate, and organize modern technology, and which Heidegger calls *das Gestell*, the enframing or, more literally, the com-positing (*Ge-stellen*). This term thus brings and holds together various modes of positing and em-placing, including

[66] Klaus Bruhn Jensen, 'Intermediality' (entry), in Klaus Bruhn Jensen, Robert T. Craig, Eric W. Rothenbuhler and Jefferson Pooley (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2016)
[67] Ibid.

the techno-scientific ones.'[68] But nor is this frame wholly abstract or metaphorical; as Heidegger clarified in a 1973 seminar, it phenomenologically organises our experience. Ziarek directs his reader's attention to a gloss on 'Gestell' provided by Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul in their 2003 edition of *Four Seminars*:

> In the *Ge-* one hears the gathering, the unification, the bringing together of all the modes of positing [*stellen*]. Let us be more precise about the positing. Heidegger says: the meaning of positing is here that of a challenging. It is in this sense that one can say: ''Nature is set upon [*hin gestellt*] to yield energy'' or nature is compelled [*gezwungen*] to deliver its energy. The meaning is that of being held to something, whereby that which is held to something is at the same time forced to adopt a certain form, to play a role, a role to which it is henceforth reduced. Nature, held to delivering its energy, henceforth appears as a ''reserve of energy.''[69]

An issue thus arises in negotiating frames: both in the sense of a perceiver's negotiation of the frame, and the frame's negotiation with them. Images can also take positions, as Georges Didi-Huberman puts it in *The Eye of History*; a theoretical and historical eye, in fact, must be acknowledged in (and developed in response to) the relationship between reading, writing and viewing explored in these filmmakers' engagements with historical events. The notion that images can take positions, and can engage with their beholders, can be found at work in mid-twentieth century art movements from surrealism (which I will discuss in Chapter 2) to Optical Art. An exhibition of Op Art at MoMA (February 23 – April 25, 1965) was titled *The Responsive Eye*; this title was also used for a short documentary by Brian de Palma, which documented the opening night of the exhibition and allowed a 'responsive eye' to roam still further. The Op Art movement, as Nadeije Laneyrie-Dagen explains, 'expressed an interest in

[68] Krzysztof Ziarek, 'The Limits of Life: a non-anthropic view of world and finitude', *Angelaki: a journal of the theoretical humanities*, Vol. 16, No. 4. (Dec 2011) 19-30; 20.
[69] Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (note), in Martin Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, trans. Andrew Mitchell and François Raffoul (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2003) 75. Also quoted in Ziarek, 'The Limits of Life', 21.

movement through the creation of works that – in stark contrast to traditional painting – […] featured screens and grids and the interplay of colour contrasts in order to create the optical illusion of movement.'[70]

One of Op Art's most significant figures, Josef Albers, would argue that practice must come before theory; that is, that a work of art can teach its viewer useful aesthetic and theoretical approaches for viewing it. His series of paintings *Homage to the Square* juxtaposed blocks of colour in order to demonstrate how a viewer's perception can be affected by the relative positioning of colour. In some of the paintings, identical blocks appear lighter or darker depending on the colour of the block next to them. In others, squares of different tones and sizes are arranged on top of each other to give the illusion of geometrical depth (fig. 3).

This illusion, known as the 'figure-ground' effect, would be used by the media theorist Marshall McLuhan to describe the relationship of media texts to their contexts or environments. It is important, McLuhan emphasised, not simply to acknowledge the importance of the figure (the specific piece of media; what McLuhan called the 'message') or the ground (the context of that media; what McLuhan called the 'medium'), but to realise that there is an ongoing interplay between the two. The medium of communication not only frames the message but is a constituent aspect of the message being delivered to the viewer. This, in turn, changes the conditions of analysis for media texts, whether they are under consideration as artworks, as historical data or documents, or as evidence of human rights abuses. Here, the problem of the 'hermeneutic circle' becomes visible. In 1972, Wallace Martin described the hermeneutic circle in which he believed that theorists had been arguing:

[70] Nadejie Laneyrie-Dagen, *How to Read Paintings*, trans. Richard Elliott (Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers, 2004) 260. Laneyrie-Dagen also ties the Op Art movement in the United States to that of Kinetic Art in Europe, which produced works that 'actually moved' (ibid.).

> …any discussion of literary meaning entails assumptions that are in principle separable from the criticism embodying them. Assumptions establish the boundaries of coherent critical discourse and constitute the very objects the critic sees, thus limiting his horizon and determining his perception. Furthermore, they inexorably entail circularity: what the critic ultimately sees and what he would reveal as existing is in fact implicit in his assumptions.[71]

There is a reflexive knot here, in which the critic's own framing boundaries of analysis are circular and therefore tautological, and risk being unproductive as a theoretical standpoint. Rob Munday and Daniel Chandler, in one of the definitions they offer for the 'hermeneutic circle', look to Heraclitus to resolve this problem of circularity: 'No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.'[72] The solution, then, appears to lie in understanding and accounting for the 'medium' (or the frame, or framework, or ground) as an active figure when taking one's critical position, which seeks to implicate the viewer into a given event, and in then tracing the complex 'loops' (rather than circles) that a film might be attempting to perform into (and out of) a political event.

In *Camera Historica: The Century in Cinema*, Antoine de Baecque outlines a hermeneutic 'cinematographic form of history' which emerged, he argues, after World War Two. He identifies a tree in the opening shot of Manoel de Oliveira's '*No', or The Vain Glory of Command* as 'a hermeneutic tree' through its relationship with the camera's gaze, its motion, and the eyes of the viewer: 'it materialises the triple gaze that the filmmaker casts towards history', he argues, as 'the spectator feels, all at once and in a single cinematic motion, that he or he is facing the tree, moving alongside it, and circling around it'.[73] Inspired by the 1572

[71] Wallace Martin, 'The Hermeneutic Circle and the Art of Interpretation', *Comparative Literature*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, (Spring 1972) pp. 97-117; 97.
[72] 'Hermeneutic circle' in Rod Munday and Daniel Chandler (eds.) *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (Oxford: Oxford Quick Reference, 2011)
[73] Antoine de Baecque, *Camera Historica: The Century in Cinema*, trans. Ninon Vinsonneau and Jonathan Magidoff (New York, NY.: Colombia University Press, 2012) Preface, *xi*.

epic poem by Luís de Camões, *O Lusíadas*, Oliveira's film follows a Portuguese soldier as he marches through an African colony, telling stories of the history of Portugal, such as of King Sebastian, and its mythology, such as the Island of Love (where, Camões suggests, the Portuguese people will become gods). But as De Baecque points out, the film is also more 'linear and precise' in recounting historical narratives such as the recent decolonisation of Portuguese Africa.

Oliveira brings together in '*No'*, *or The Vain Glory of Command* three modes of historical representation, according to De Baecque:

> …the figuring of history, following in the footsteps of a poet chronicler, through wide-angle static shots that, at regular intervals, provide recitatives of complete chapters of account; the narrating of history, through the group of soldiers helping the second lieutenant recall Portuguese defeats, supported by the vision (a dolly shot) of a truck moving through the countryside - itself the cinematographic sign of a linear historical narrative that links together four defeats spanning more than two thousand years; and finally, the circling of history, like Manoel de Oliveira around his tree, to capture the myth that cyclically drives each epoch, that of "Sebastianism", the Portuguese dream of unattainable grandeur.[74]

The Angolan tree itself (fig. 4) becomes the cinematographic form of history, De Baecque argues, which is 'the *mise en scène* developed by a filmmaker to give form to his vision of history.'[75] De Baecque explains that he initially came to this concept through watching post-WWII documentary films. They seemed to have a confrontational aspect, as though figures from history were gazing back at him through the frame:

> It was in watching, one after the other, Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog* and *Hiroshima mon amour*, and Roberto Rossellini's *Europa '51*, that a "cinematographic form of history" was first revealed to me. I had already seen the films, but not the forms. I would later locate others. In *Europa '51* a dolly shot captures several inmates of a lunatic asylum gazing intensely at the camera. These women were staring, and, all of

[74] De Baecque, *Camera Historica*, Preface, *xii.*
[75] Ibid.

> a sudden, they were staring at me. I then replayed scenes from *Hiroshima mon amour*, and I encountered the same fixed gaze, at the beginning of the film: Japanese women were waiting for me at the doors to their hospital rooms, beckoning me in, staring me in the face so that I might bear witness to their suffering as victims of the bomb. I watched the DVD of *Night and Fog* again. In some of the archival documents selected by Resnais – the images shot by American, British, and Russian cameramen as the camps were being liberated – the same fixed gaze emerges: gaunt survivors, staring out at me.
>
> Where did this gaze, this head-on intensity, come from? *From history*. Not specifically from the history of cinema – even though quite a few looks-to-camera had been cast at spectators in the days of silent movies, when burlesque films would wink in connivance with the audiences – but rather from a blind spot of twentieth-century history, its unrepresentability, which is, nonetheless, staring right back at us. This look attests, from beyond the grave, to the fact that survivors have seen extermination, have stared it in the face. There is a cinema after extermination, after images of the camps. Following Gilles Deleuze, I would venture that the true break in the history of cinema is embedded in the history of the century and that it illustrates the interpenetration of form and chronology.[76]

His suggestion that the cinematographic form of history came to him as a revelation is particularly intriguing: it reinforces the potentially eventual aspect of such a form even as it is described. De Baecque also describes the stare of the storyteller in Oliveira's film, who 'appears to implicate his spectators, through recurring and insistent glances at the camera.'[77] These gazes are 'untimely irruptions that disrupt the very material of the film, this specific *mise en scène*, which I call *cinematographic forms of history*.'[78] By reflexively engaging the audience in this way, from out of time and from a particular space (*mise en scène*), the characters appear to reach out from history itself and to require a response. Or, as James Elkins puts it in the context of art and the nature of vision, the object stares back and 'alters

[76] De Baecque, *Camera Historica*, 2. Also see Gilles Deleuze, 'Prefaces to the American Edition of *The Time-Image*', in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews, 1975-1995*, ed. David Lapoujade (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2006).
[77] De Baecque, *Camera Historica*, Preface, *xii*.
[78] De Baecque, *Camera Historica*, 3. Emphasis in original.

the thing that is seen and transforms the seer.'[79] De Baecque goes on to carefully chart the reciprocal relationship between two distinct historiographic treatments of the Event that plays out in Oliveira's film:

> This [cinematographic] form, in Manoel de Oliveira, is the sign of the composition of a monumental film on history. It may be compared to that which governs a no less monumental book on history, Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean*, which also rests, following a similar harmony, on a subtle terracing of time and historical narrative, which interlaces a civilisational vision – the oppositional between Spaniards and Turks – a historical vision – Braudel's *longue durée*, with which Manoel de Oliveira's long memory resonates – and the chronicle of an event – with the death of Philip II in Braudel finding echo in the Portuguese defeats, taken one by one.
>
> In *No, or the Vain Glory of Command*, this form can only lead to one shot, the film's finale: a doctor's hand inscribes in a register the date of death of the lieutenant-historian, who was fatally wounded by Angolan rebels, and then puts down his pen. This is the ultimate moment of the historical chronicle, the last casualty of the last battle. But that date – April 25, 1974 – also marks a historical event in Portugal: the Carnation Revolution. In the end this moment is also one of myth: the tipping point between the end of a world – which, in Portugal, is called the ancient regime – and the origin of a new one, that of contemporary Portugal in today's Europe, an undetermined shift in which, once again in the history of *portugality*, cataclysm and renewal meet. On that page of a military hospital's register, Manoel de Oliveira weaves together all the temporal threads of his story, his history. This cinematographic form echoes the first sequence, in which all the ways of entering into history meet around the tree. On the page of the register can be discerned all the ways out of it.[80]

Braudel's *longue durée* is an explicitly historiographic concept, used by his Annales School of historical writing in the mid-twentieth century to draw out the relationship between events and longer periods of social history. David Macey points out that 'historical studies of the *longue durée* tend to concentrate upon slow processes of historical change that are almost imperceptible to the individuals who live through them.'[81] This focus was intended to move

[79] James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York, NY.: Harcourt, 1996) 11-12.
[80] De Baecque, *Camera Historica*, Preface*, xiii – xv*.
[81] *Longue durée* (entry) in David Macey, *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory* (London: Penguin, 2001) 233-4.

away from François Simiand's *histoire événementielle* ('often translated as "factual history", though "event-bound history" is a better, if cumbersome, rendition' of the term, as Macey puts it).[82]

De Baecque's project to map the 'interpenetration of form and chronology', or 'the subtle terracing of time and historical narrative' in historical cinema/cinematographic history, is embodied (so to speak) in the French word *histoire*. As De Baecque points out in his analysis of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* (itself in some ways a 'monumental' film series on history and memory) the word can mean both 'history' and 'story'. It thus contains within it the capacity to disclose fact or fiction. In its use by Godard and then De Baecque, it potentially discloses both fact and fiction within the same interpretative act.

Thomas Beard has outlined the porous boundaries between fiction, documentary, performance and ethnography in the history of cinema:

> "For me, as an ethnographer and filmmaker," Jean Rouch once remarked, "there is almost no boundary between documentary film and films of fiction. The cinema, the art of the double, is already the transition from the real world to the imaginary world, and ethnography, the science of the thought systems of others, is a permanent crossing point from one conceptual universe to another; acrobatic gymnastics, where losing one's footing is the least of the risks." Through works like *Jaguar* (1967), which concerns the migration of three young men from rural Niger to the urban centers of Ghana, Rouch advanced a hybrid form by foregrounding the elements of self-dramatization inherent in ethnography. His predecessor Robert Flaherty put the paradox more bluntly: "Sometimes you have to lie to tell the truth." It's notable that one of documentary cinema's most iconic sequences, when the hero of *Nanook of the North* (1922) hunts a walrus, was an entirely staged affair, the protagonist armed with a harpoon even though the Inuit had by then replaced such weapons with rifles. Indeed, one could trace a compelling history of documentary film form by focusing on its relationship to fiction.

[82] *Histoire evenementielle* (entry), in Macey, 182-3.

> The beginnings of this genre, such as it is, can be found even in cinema's earliest moments, long before the current usage of documentary was introduced by John Grierson in the 1920s. Edwin S. Porter's 1903 *Life of an American Fireman*, for instance, signaled new possibilities in film narrative with its shrewd, relatively seamless intercutting of documentary "topicals" with scripted scenes. In the 1930s, Luis Buñuel would derange the still-nascent conventions of nonfiction filmmaking with *Land Without Bread*, a surrealist riff on ethnography that imaginatively distorts the film's supposed object of inquiry, the impoverished Las Hurdes region of Spain. Much later, Lionel Rogosin achieved the flophouse realism of *On the Bowery* (1956) by engaging his subjects in loosely improvised scenarios and combining that material with footage recorded on hidden cameras. But it would be the advent of portable sync sound for 16 mm shortly thereafter that ushered in the most significant strains of this richly variegated tendency within independent cinema. The new technology granted an unprecedented agility to the observational style of nonfiction filmmakers, forever altering the popular understanding of documentary's look, its feel, its claims to truth. And just as *cinema verité* became ascendant as a technique, figures like Jim McBride, Peter Watkins, and many others would cannily deploy its style in the service of fiction.[83]

In Beard's description, it is possible to see how coding and re-coding is taken up and moved around by filmmakers within film, documentary, and genres in-between. This is the intermedial scope of the rest of this thesis, rather than a single country, filmmaker, historical event, or time period; since film, as I have suggested, is a medium which can literally draw from the reality of the event, which can add back to the (media) event, and which is itself 'composite' and multidisciplinary. As Rouch put it, cinema is 'a permanent crossing point'.

The importance of the ability to move more freely with the camera is visible in Beard's description of the technological development behind the documentary form, and in De Baecque's explanation of history, storytelling, and the emergence of the cinematographic form. I have tried to make these developments evident in the structure of the rest of my argument, from my description of art and the postmodern condition in Chapter Two to my

[83] Thomas Beard, '*Medium Cool*: Preserving Disorder', Criterion Collection essay, 21 May 2013 https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/2773-medium-cool-preserving-disorder Accessed 11 May 2016.

account of Godard's progression as a political filmmaker (from the movable camera-pen immersed in the world towards a *caméra engagé* in the event of May '68, and later towards a juxtapositional *histoire-caméra* or *camera historica*). In the ethnographic work of Rouch, Panh and Oppenheimer, the boundaries between fiction and documentary are porous; the 'frame' of the film is positioned not as a site which fixes a specimen of the past ready for dissection, but as a complex, evental act of disclosure which implicates its subjects and its viewers into it as the film plays out.

CHAPTER TWO

JEAN-LUC GODARD I
CAMÉRA-STYLO TO *CAMÉRA ÉNGAGÉ*

Her eye discourses – I will answer it…
Romeo and Juliet (2.ii.13)

i. **Film Languages** (fig. 5)

One of the many stereotypical images of Jean-Luc Godard began to form early in his career. An article published in 1964 by *Film Quarterly* describes him in the familiar role of the tortured genius, with a mind that is enquiring, but too sensitive to deal directly with the reality of the world around him:

> Jean-Luc Godard is erratic, tormented, uncertain – not only of his own reactions, his own sensibility, but of the means to use in expressing himself. His career is a reflection of these contradictions. It reveals a temperament which is at the same time curious to know everything, to try everything, and also incapable of being settled, of going to

> the bottom of things, of looking reality in the face. Hence his frequent resort to a kind of verbal delirium.[84]

The 'verbal delirium' sensed by Louis Marcorelles and Ernest Callenbach, however, while often present in Godard's films, is more precise and meaningful than their article suggests; and rather than his work standing as a 'reflection' of his personal contradictions, his complex relationship with his camera is often brought to the screen as part of his formal political investigations into discourse and figuration.

Nonetheless, a 'verbal delirium' begins to manifest in Godard's career as a recognisably modernist method of facing reality and the world. As Robert Stam writes, 'with the advent of modernism, discontinuity becomes programmatic and rather aggressive. Interruption pre-empts spectacle; in fact, it becomes the spectacle. The modernist avant-garde subverts "good sense" and "reason" in a veritable explosion of otherness, incorporating madness, chance, discontinuity, and difference.'[85] If the fragmentation of reality and perception is characteristic of the modern experience, then the use of formal reflexivity could be said to characterise artistic responses to it, as when Ezra Pound laments in 'Canto CXVI', 'And I am not a demigod, I cannot make it cohere.'[86] The 'it' in this line can refer to reality, which he does not have the power to affect in a significant way, and to the poem itself, which he is struggling to write.

Even in Godard's earliest work, his narratives frequently interrupt themselves, allowing Godard to draw attention to his own storytelling methods. In 1962's *Vivre sa vie: Film en douze tableaux*, a tracking shot of the café is suddenly punctuated with the sound of machine

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[84] Louis Marcorelles and Ernest Callenbach, 'Jean-Luc Godard's Half-Truths' in *Film Quarterly*, University of California Press vol. 17, no. 3, Spring 1964, 5. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1210900

[85] Robert Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: from Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (New York, NY.: Columbia University Press, 1992) 7.

[86] Ezra Pound, 'Canto CXVI', *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York, NY.: New Directions Books, 1999) 816.

gun fire when the camera turns to film a gangster shooting outside.[87] As there is no visual cut between the café and the gangster, the sound could be said to function as an alternative method of cutting the scene. There is also a pun (at least in English) to be found on shooting a gun and shooting a film. This pun is more than simply a joke or a sly allusion, however; it allows Godard to construe the film's form as potentially wounding, and as potentially wounded. And conversely, this allows him to construe the film's depictions of violence as an act of critique. By combining a linguistic mode of expression (the pun) with the plastic modes of image and sound, and incorporating them into a single cinematic movement, the film asks the audience to consider the violence that the language of film can contain.

But a recurring problem throughout the history of film theory has been to describe and define the concept of 'film language'. Jean Mitry understood it as '…not a language in the conventional sense of the word', but rather 'a representation with signs developed within it in a way not to be compared with any pictorial or literary method of development.'[88] The semiotician Christian Metz suggested that the logic of coherence in cinema was directly analogous to that of verbal language,[89] with syntactical units of its own.[90] The grammar of cinema could, then, be located in the principle of montage.

A Bazinian reading, however, might take a more referential perspective, and emphasise the significance of depth of field within the frame.[91] André Bazin urged for an understanding of

[87] *Vivre sa vie*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France: Les Films de la Pléiade; Pathé Consortium Cinéma, 1962) DVD released by The Criterion Collection, 2010. (36.55).
[88] Benoît Patar, Editor's Introduction to Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema*, trans. Christopher King, ed. Benoît Patar (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2000) xiv-xv.
[89] Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* trans. Michael Taylor (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974) 71.
[90] Metz, 69.
[91] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* vol. 1, trans. and ed. Hugh Gray (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA.: University of California Press, 2005) 35.

film syntax that draws from photographic methods of expression, without subordinating the possibilities of the image in favour of the more obviously dialectical methods of montage. For Roland Barthes, the photographic image could, as with Metz, be understood as grammatical, though complicatedly so. The photograph contains a studium and a punctum, he argued in *Camera Lucida*: the former held the political and cultural meanings of the image, ready to be translated into words, while the punctum was more resistant to articulation. The punctum was the site of emotional violence in the image, he suggested, precisely because it could not be put into words ('What I can name cannot really prick me'[92]).

But as cinema can move through time and within (a) space in a sustained way, the relationship of studium to punctum in a film can be radically different from that of the photograph. In his explicitly political films, Godard's attempts to negotiate this relationship are obvious. In the 1960s, he began to combine audio-visual forms with verbal or textual forms. Cutting still images and texts from other sources (including real sources, such as archive footage, as well as fabricated, fictional sources) into his films allowed him to reflexively intervene in his own stories; and simultaneously, to intervene outside of them into his political reality. In this way, he comments on the medium of film and on contemporary political problems. As a critic of both politics and cinema, he has used filmmaking as his method of expression for each, and to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship they have. His camera is a weapon that shoots and cuts reflexively, often seeking to visibly put into practice problems usually associated with philosophy, theory, and criticism.

[92] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* trans. Richard Howard (New York, NY.: Hill and Wang, 1982) 51.

The question of ‘what a visual language is’ can subtly transmute even as it is under discussion, as a consequence of keeping the subject-object relationship between the viewer and the artwork separate and hierarchical. This forces the relationship between linguistic and plastic expression into a similar hierarchy. In film studies, the concept of ‘film language’ has encompassed the filmmaker expressing themselves in a cohesive visual language, and the audience which then sees and reads this language (this relationship is also detectable in television, as Stuart Hall outlined in his essay 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse').[93] But the phrase can also be seen to include the critic or philosopher subsequently writing about cinema, as they search for a language of film that they can use to discuss it, which will provide a robust structure – hermeneutic and discursive – for their verbal and textual interpretations.

From a historical perspective, Godard’s development as a filmmaker has happened in conjunction with the twentieth century’s move from the modernist experience into the postmodern condition. As modes of perception and engagement have become increasingly mediatised in the postmodern world, a film might be received by its audience not as a discrete form of art, but as part of a flow of data that includes other media (for example, as programming that is broadcast on television and separated by adverts or news bulletins). In this way, film and reality start to exist on a more complex continuum in the second half of the century, with each intervening in the other in tightening spatiotemporal loops and organising how the other is to be perceived (the most obvious example would be, again, in the cultural and political significance of news programming).

[93] Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'. Paper for the Council of Europe Colloquy on ‘Training in the Critical Reading of Television Language’. Organised by the Council and the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester, September 1973.

Jean-François Lyotard suggested that within the flow of the postmodern condition, there is a crisis of discourse so that consequently, knowledge is no longer principally understood as narrative. Rather, its meaning is situated in linguistic and symbolic forms. To grapple with these circumstances, Godard's philosophical aesthetic therefore problematizes the role of language within the image, and the idea of the image as a visual language. I will discuss the results of his transition into postmodernist filmmaking (and political radicalism) in further detail in Chapter Three, 'Jean-Luc Godard II: Cinema Letters to the *Histoirecamera*'.

ii. Discursive images and figurative texts: Godard's political formalism

In *Discourse, Figure* Lyotard identified a 'thickness' (*épaissance*) in the given (that which makes itself available to the eye), which resists conversion into language. The problem lies, he argues, in the obscured and obscuring role of discursive language: it is obscured because the eye necessarily ignores it as a means to an end in grasping meaning, and it obscures because it exists at an inevitable distance from what it describes. Lyotard suggested that 'philosophers enter the stage of "criticism" when they use concepts such as the symbolic, the Other, and the text'; that is, 'by way of this gap through which the work escapes being converted into meaning.'[94] And self-aware attempts to approach the given thing to be analysed, in order to fix its meaning in words, are still considered a type of discourse. Hegel,

[94] Jean-François Lyotard, *Ecrits sur l'art contemporain et les artistes, Textes disperses I: Esthetique et theorie de l'art / Writings on Contemporary Art and Artists, Miscellaneous Texts I: Aesthetics and Theory of Art* ed. Herman Parret, trans. Vlad Ionescu, Erica Harris and Peter W. Milne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012) 149. Also quoted in Welsch, *Undoing Aesthetics*.

he argued, moved away from the certainty of comprehension in the very act of moving towards it:

> Did Hegel not challenge sensory certainty to dare declare itself without falling into the anxiety of uncertainty? And even when, leaning over its shoulder, condescending to its silence, he endeavours to follow its finger pointing to the Here, does he not in the same movement extract from this supposed immediate faith the mediation of demarcation, the trajectory that he states is a discourse, the same negativity as that of language? In the end, then, depth seems empty, in its shadow all cows turn black, and the truth of the matter is that one must begin where one is, namely, from within words.[95]

Lyotard's re-configuration of discourse deconstructs the understanding of language as a closed system, and the subject and object as entirely separate, and existing within a clear hierarchy. The meaning of that which appears to the eye, such as beauty, is located not only in itself, but in the immediate, silent reaction of the beholder. But inevitably, Lyotard suggests, the figure must be approached through language if it is to be critiqued, and not only with the eye:

> The silence of the beautiful, of perception – a silence that precedes speech, an innermost silence – is impossible. Only from within language can one get to and enter the figure. One can get to the figure by making clear that every discourse possesses its counterpart, the object of which it speaks, which is over there, like what it designates in a horizon: sight on the edge of discourse.[96]

Though Lyotard begins his book by associating the discursive with the textual and the figural with the representative, he deconstructs this understanding by focusing on the process of interpretation itself. To traverse the gap between seeing, reading, and writing in this way is intended to be a 'mobile' and 'heuristic' approach to reconciling language and art, as D.N.

[95] Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure* trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis, MN. and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) 6. The expression 'All cows turn black' (or 'it all looks the same in the dark') is a reference to Hegel's critique of Schellingist absolutism in his letters.
[96] Lyotard, *Discourse*, 7.

Rodowick has put it.[97] It is a plastic approach to the nature of plasticity, which, rather than trying to fix a semiotic meaning within a text, finds significance in the text's capacity to put the beholder into motion. While his problem might begin as phenomenological, his solution is overtly Marxist.

Godard's films have used similarly Marxism-inspired processes to force the viewer to see and read differently, with different forms of Marxist theory apparent at different points in his career. They involve deconstructing the viewer's assumptions about textual and visual art, about linguistic and plastic forms of expression, and about political and aesthetic movements. This theoretical movement could be said to follow 'the eye's path in the field of language' to find a filmic mode of critique.[98] 'How can one render the inside?' Godard said of his approach to the representation of the café in *Vivre sa vie*. 'Precisely by staying prudently outside.'[99]

He has suggested that his work often resists direct articulation, with the critical dimension, or the essay aspect, subsumed into the film.[100] In one respect, this conforms to historical understandings of the relationship between linguistic and plastic forms. Michel Foucault identified two principles in the classical tradition of Western painting: resemblance, and affirmation. Affirmation, he argued, exists 'only where there is speech'. Yet as a visual mode of affirmation was developed, artists were able to combine these principles within one frame:

> Hence the fact that classical painting spoke — and spoke constantly — while constituting itself entirely outside language; hence the fact that it rested silently in a

[97] D. N. Rodowick, *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy after the New Media* (Durham, NC. and London: Duke University Press, 2001) xi.
[98] Lyotard, *Discourse*, 9.
[99] Interview with Jean-Luc Godard, *Cahiers du Cinéma* 138 (Dec 1962). Reproduced in *Godard on Godard*, eds. Tom Milne and Jean Narboni (New York, NY. and London: Da Capo Press, 1986), 187.
[100] Interview with Jean-Luc Godard, *Cahiers du Cinéma* 138 (Dec 1962). Reproduced in *Godard on Godard*, 171.

> discursive space; hence the fact that it provided, beneath itself, a kind of common ground where it could restore the bonds of signs and the image.[101]

Rodowick further points out that according to Foucault, '"Visibilities" are organised by their capacity to *resemble*, and speech functions to *bridge* difference.'[102] He identifies a post-Kantian understanding of aesthetics at work that continued into the modernist era, where 'the idea of the aesthetic has relied on an opposition between linguistic and plastic arts'.[103] Figures which lack 'eloquence', according to this framework, then risk '…dissolving back into the world of things, from which they have barely separated themselves in the act of representation'.[104] The influence of Derrida's concept of *différance* is clear at this stage of Rodowick's argument. It might also be deduced that the concept of Derridean *différance* includes hierarchical *deference*, as well as the act of deferring meaning continually from one linguistic signifier to another.

One of the objectives of the Modernists was to overcome such a perceived division. Foucault identified René Magritte and Paul Klee as artists who critiqued such a separation in their work. He described Magritte's word-image painting *Treachery of Images* as a sort of calligram (fig. 6). A calligram is usually defined as a piece of text shaped into a visual image. But in Magritte's painting, according to Foucault, a calligrammatic relationship between text and image is implied, only to be blown apart by what is committed to the canvas. In this way, the discursive tension is made clear within the frame:

> What misleads us is the inevitability of connecting the text to the drawing (as the demonstrative pronoun, the meaning of the word pipe, and the likeness of the image

[101] Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe, with illustrations and letters by René Magritte*, trans. and ed. James Harkness (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA.: University of California Press, 1982) 53.
[102] Rodowick, *Reading*, 59. Emphases mine.
[103] Rodowick, *Reading*, 35.
[104] Rodowick, *Reading*, 60.

> all invite us to do here) and the impossibility of defining a perspective that would let us say that the assertion is true, false, or contradictory.
>
> I cannot dismiss the notion that the sorcery here lies in an operation rendered invisible by the simplicity of its result, but which alone can explain the vague uneasiness provoked. The operation is a calligram that Magritte has secretly constructed, then carefully unraveled. Each element of the figure, their reciprocal position and their relationship derive from this process, annulled as soon as it has been accomplished. Behind this drawing and these words, before anyone has written anything at all, before the formation of the picture (and within it the drawing of the pipe), before the large, floating pipe has appeared – we must assume, I believe, that a calligram has formed, then unraveled. There we have evidence of failure and its ironic remains.[105]

In these 'ironic remains' some of Godard's work might be located as well. When Godard inserts text into his images, he utilises the power of the text (often political texts) to differentiate and to explicitly articulate within the frame. In *La chinoise*, discursive text is painted on to a wall in the revolutionaries' apartment, as it was in the streets of Paris in the 1960s, within the *mise en scène* of the film itself. In *Les carabiniers*, a more conventional use of text is evident, with phrases appearing on screen that help to tell the story, in the manner of the intertitles of a silent film. However, in the latter film these lines still constitute a part of the film proper, as they mostly come from letters sent by the main character to his wife.

Text is thus given a forcefully visual quality even in Godard's early political films. It is cut between (or cuts between or is placed over) visual images (and in his films of the late '60s, often still images). Books and posters, for example, tend to feature prominently. This could be seen as a filmic application not simply of collage, but as Douglas Smith suggests, of *décollage*, an artistic practice developed in the 1950s and '60s.[106] While collage involved constructing an image out of parts of other existing images, *décollage* was the process of

[105] Foucault, 20.
[106] Douglas Smith, '(Dé)collage: Bazin, Godard, Aragon' in Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline, eds., *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) 216.

removing parts of the original image. Its practitioners included the German artist Wolf Vostell (who published the '60s magazine *dé-coll/age*, printing images of car crashes and of the artistic happenings developed by Allan Kaprow[107]) and the French Raymond Hains. They aimed to take apart the 'collage' of text and images (or the discursive figurations) they saw in everyday life: for example, in poster advertising (fig. 7 and 8). The creative tension in many of Godard's films can be found in the compound use of text, sound and image (in the style of both concrete poetry and *musique concrète*) to *make* the film and at the same time to *unmake* it, within the same frame, through such discursive acts. The films could therefore be seen as calligramatic, positioned not as statements, but as 'sites of discourse' and even figural 'sites of becoming'.

Even decades later, in the series *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-98), Godard inserts text in between a vast selection of historical images, factual and fictional, with a different goal for differentiation. If Modernist art was characterised by the impulse to break up everyday imagery, postmodernist aspirations involved reconnecting these images with reality in some way: looping them back into the mediatised world while still acknowledging that they are constituted by it. However, Godard's postmodernist work should not therefore be assumed to be defeatist. In *Histoire(s)*, part of his aim is explicitly ethical, as he seeks to critique what he sees as cinema's complicity in WWII and other instances of historical political violence.

Godard could be said to make his own medium (or frame) when he repurposes *décollage*. He creates a type of concrete poetry to differentiate his cinematic work from the stream of visual-discursive material that constitutes the modern world, creating a somewhat

[107] See Judith F. Rodenbeck, *Radical Prototypes: Allan Kaprow and the Invention of Happenings* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2011) 192.

Situationist critique of it. We might see a late modernist/early postmodernist work such as *Le gai savoir* as a post-mortem of the May '68 demonstrations, as well as a work that attempts to bring into being a new figuration of discourse. Placing his characters in a TV studio, Godard aims his figural discourse at the narrative figurations of television's news media representations of world events. The conditions of virtuality and mediatisation in the second half of the twentieth century provided their own instructions for organising modern reality to the eyes of the observer.

Rodowick describes the shift in the relationship between figure and discourse that came about with the advent of 'new media' technologies:

> The Modern era required a strict separation between plastic space, which organises representation, and linguistic reference, which excludes it. But in the era of electronic and digital communication, the figural is increasingly defined as a semiotic regime where the world of things is penetrated by discourse, with its ambiguous power to negate and divide or differ, and the independent weight of things congeals into signs that proliferate anonymously in everyday life. This is a condition that Foucault characterised as similitude.[108]

In Godard's cinema, the production of the imaginary object – the fictional language – does not occur entirely 'intransitively', as Lyotard put it. Beyond the fact that Godard has made non-fiction films as well as fiction, he often uses footage of real political events in both. Moreover, in some of his films his characters look at photographs of political violence or take photographs themselves. In both instances, the meaning of interpretation becomes a diegetic point of discussion in the film. Most obviously, Godard uses text within the visual landscape of his films throughout his career, displacing the interpretative perspective of the viewer in relation to both text and image. This involves a representative flux. It is important to

[108] Rodowick, xii.

remember that the reader-response relationship is not a simple chiasmic loop, however. It is further complicated by the relationship of the text and image to their contextual political realities, and to their fictions, narratives, and media frames, in the wider world. Godard's post-May '68 co-director, Jean-Pierre Gorin, asserted that 'We think the split between documentary and fiction is false. Everything on the screen is fiction'.[109]

Moving from the modernist into the postmodern era required the observer to reconcile their existence with public spaces that had become explicitly graphic, textual, and discursive. The narratives broadcast through current affairs programming have their own material existence and consequences, regardless of the amount of truth within them; categorically speaking, they therefore could be said to exist in the same ontological space as Godard's films. They can even obscure the realities of death and suffering that they resemble (with photo/video journalism) or affirm (with commentary). This condition of reality and fiction moves in both directions: these public narratives are to some extent real and fictional, and Godard's films are in various ways fictional and real, in terms of both form and content.

Because of these elisions and shifts between the conditions of reality and fiction, it may be useful to take a broader understanding of 'form' than what might be suggested by artistic formalism. In a society rapidly becoming mediatised, the significance of 'form' could also include Foucault's definition, as it related to the exercise of political power. And through re-reading Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon, Rodowick points out, we can 'understand how various concepts of space, spacing, or spatialization inform the questions Foucault has

[109] Robert Phillip Kolker, 'Angle and Reality: Godard and Gorin in America' (interview) in Sterritt, 60.

raised, or even how he attempted to think through these concepts in ways that cut across distinctions between verbal and visual signs, saying and seeing, propositions and pictures.'[110]

Form, in Foucault's analysis, is the numerous institutional permutations of expressions of power that emerge in society: a prison, a school, a hospital, in accordance with the Panopticon style. For film studies in the twenty-first century, this is particularly useful. In describing the emergence of new media, we describe the emergence of cinema from the confines of the theatre, as well as the extent to which society is now mediatised in general (conversely, political scientists discuss the emergence of the political conflict from the linear 'theatre of war', and its shift towards more complex, mediatised forms of appearance). Warwick Mules, in his review of Rodowick's *Reading the Figural*, identifies a shift to an event-al understanding of media images, orientated in space and time:

> Rodowick wants us to attend to contemporary media not as sign structures, but as temporally oriented (audio) visual events: 'we need a pedagogy of the image that critically evaluates its relations with time and history' (198). Our task in film and media analysis is not to evaluate the truth of the image as a representation of the (past) event, but to draw out pastness as a configuration of the text's potential futurity.
>
> The figural defines 'a distinct mutation in the character of contemporary forms of representation, information, communication' (49), and emerges in new media as the virtualisation of the real through digital technologies which renders time incommensurable with space…[111]

The media can be seen and understood as another Foucauldian form, another historical permutation of the expression of power: it spatializes power as it manifests in the world. Rodowick draws on Deleuze to explicate the diagrams of power that Foucault outlines, specifically in relation to visual forms of power.

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[110] Rodowick, *Reading*, 52.

[111] Warwick Mules, 'The Figural as Interface in Film and the New Media: D. N. Rodowick's *Reading the Figural*' (review), *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 7 no. 56, December 2003 http://www.film-philosophy.com/vol7-2003/n56mules Accessed 03 March 2020.

> The diagram is an "exposition" of the relations between forces that constitute power and condition knowledge. It also renders as an intelligible image the fractured space where the visible and the expressible coexist as unsettled "strata". Deleuze calls this space "the audiovisual archive". The visible and the expressible thus define two distinctive regimes that are irreducible to each other. Each has its own rhythms, forms, and history. However, whereas Deleuze understands these two strata to be incommensurable, they nonetheless organize a complex *chassé-croisé* that regulates what is made visible by processes or technologies of observation, and eloquent by procedures of expression.[112]

The crux of interpretation can be located here: the *chassé-croisé* between the articulable and the visible plays out dynamically across modern visual media. Lance Strate reminds his reader that a 'medium' is 'defined as a substance that surrounds or pervades, that goes between two points not by drawing a straight line between them, but by drawing a circle around them […] cultures are formed within media, rather than media simply being produced by cultures.'[113] Rodowick also points to the hermeneutic, deconstructive characteristics emerging from the new media society:

> …the idea of communication as a linear channel between two points – the linking of addresser and addressee through a reciprocally comprehensible message – has ceased to be valid. "Discourse" is no longer linear and reversible; it is becoming increasingly entropic and dispersed; in the language of computer programming, it is "distributed" communication.[114]

It is important to frame Godard not just in his immediate social and historical context, and to consider its role as an influence on his work, but specifically to recognise that deconstruction is not only a tool of critical analysis. It is also the state in which a media-saturated postmodern culture is available to the eye: a series of continually deferred signs with their origins obscured. Godard identifies through his work that the problem the film critic faces (that they

[112] Rodowick, 52-3.
[113] Lance Strate, 'Studying Media *as* Media: McLuhan and the Media Ecology Approach' in *Transforming McLuhan: Cultural, Critical, and Postmodern Perspectives,* ed. Paul Grosswiler (New York, NY.: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010) 74-5.
[114] Rodowick, *Reading*, 50-51.

must translate the films they study into a different language, articulating its meaning in critical discursive speech) has been answered by new media itself. It may be helpful to see this formulation from an explicitly sociological perspective, as Western society was facing a similar problem with translation at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s. It is even encapsulated in how mass media and its relationship to the real world is characterised in language: society might be said to 'see itself' in the media it produces (whether news media, advertising, etc.) or to 'see images of itself' represented in those images.

May '68 (often referred to in France metonymically as *les événements*) is often identified as the moment in history when everyday life was to become 'artistic'. Famous slogans painted on city walls by Situationist protesters read 'Art…culture…is dead' and 'Art is dead. Let us create our daily lives'. Godard would attend and protest at many of the demonstrations and assemblies, though his relationship to other protesters was complicated.[115] But he also intervened in the reportage at the time – not just by taking photographs, but in co-creating films like the *Ciné-tracts*. Godard, Chris Marker and others began the *Ciné-tract* project in order to perform revolutionary interventions into the 'ground', or contextualising frame, of the media. In particular, Godard declared, he wished to use the medium of television to provide alternative sources of information, in 'carefully prepared documents':

> Actually, if I have a secret ambition, it is to be put in charge of the French newsreel services. All my films have been reports on the state of the nation; they are newsreel documents, treated in a personal manner perhaps, but in terms of contemporary actuality… When people ask me why I talk – or have my characters talk – about Vietnam… I refer the questioner to his own newspaper. It's all there. And it's all mixed up. This is why I am so attracted by television. A televised newspaper made up of

[115] A critical 1996 article by the Situationists labelled Godard 'bourgeois', 'repetitive' and a proponent of 'pseudofreedom': see 'Le rôle de Godard', *Internationale Situationniste* #10 (Paris, March 1966). The translation by Ken Knabb appears in the *Situationist International Anthology*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Berkeley, CA.: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006) 228.

> carefully prepared documents would be extraordinary… This is why, rather than speak of cinema and television, I prefer to use the more general terms of images and sounds.[116]

When Godard characterises 'cinema and television' as 'images and sounds', this might again be understood as Foucault's definition of a form (as the institutional manifestation of power in a society) taking precedence over the traditional artistic definition of the term. But even so, in 1971, the sociologist Alfred Willener would write in *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicisation* that the force of May '68 as an event (and as 'a dialectic between action and imagination')[117] could be found in the aesthetic *form* of work such as Godard's, rather than in its content alone. Godard had, he suggested, re-arranged the relationship between the film, its viewer, and the reality manifesting around them:

> In an article on *Une femme mariée*, made in 1964, J. Doniol-Valcroze wrote (1965) that it would be possible to assemble all Godard's films to form a *film-fleuve* lasting several hours, in which each character could intervene in a story to which he did not belong, and wander in and out of the re-edited whole without any sense of incongruity. The spectator of a Godard film is in a similar situation. He wanders in and out of the film rather than observes it. He can see one sequence from the inside, another from the outside, without losing anything of the essential experience, dwell on a particular scene, and 'skip' others.[118]

On the cusp of postmodernism, Godard's *film-fleuve* can be seen as a response to the form of current events as they appear through media frames. Raymond Williams would describe the condition of 'flow' as the defining feature of broadcast television both as a technology and a

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[116] Originally in *L'Avant-Scene du Cinéma* 70 (May 1967). Reprinted as 'One Should Put Everything into a Film', in *Godard on Godard*, 239. Also quoted in Gary Elshaw, *The depiction of late 1960s counter-culture in the 1968 films of Jean-Luc Godard*, unpublished MA thesis, available online: http://elshaw.tripod.com/jlg/Cinetracts.html#_ftn1

[117] 'Review: *The Action-Image of Society*', *Kirkus Review* (Pantheon, 29 April 1971). https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/alfred-willener/the-action-image-of-society/ Accessed 20 June 2020.

[118] Alfred Willener, *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicisation* (London: Routledge, 2001) 265-6. The article Willener mentions, by Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, appeared in *Cahiers du cinéma* no. 161-162; January 1965.

cultural form – that is, as part of its logic. For McLuhan, this characteristic denoted the lack of articulation in the medium, brought about by its own (lack of) formal limitations, and its temporal continuity: 'By eliminating the dimensions of space and time, the electronic forms of communication also eliminate the presumption of cause and effect.'[119] Lewis H. Lapham adds: 'If all the world can be seen simultaneously, and if all mankind's joy and suffering is always and everywhere present (if not on CNN or Oprah, then on the "Sunday Night Movie" or MTV), nothing necessarily follows from anything else. Sequence becomes merely additive instead of causative'.[120] In this argument, these new media forms are not necessarily received as discursive, because they resist containment within a distinct form. They neither speak coherently, nor hold still for coherent analysis. This logic could be said to follow on from Derrida: as words refer to other words, media refers to other media.

By incorporating critical and discursive texts into the figural, plastic plane of the film screen, Godard offers this figural-discursive hybrid up to be 'read' by his viewers as an intermedial text not only in its representations on screen, but in its relationship as a text to the wider 'flow' of images in the world. His belief in formal reflexivity could even be characterised as a moral imperative. Robert Stam, in *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: from Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard*, labels this his 'didactic' reflexivity,[121] though Godard was careful to distance his camera from a straightforward teaching role in a 1972 interview with Penelope Gilliatt: 'He seems very much aware of the dangers of didacticism in art, though he would not call the danger aesthetic. "When you use the camera as a weapon, you become an informer", he

[119] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* ed. Lewis H. Lapham (Cambridge, MA.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999), quoted by Lapham, *xxiii*.
[120] Lewis H. Lapham, intro to McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, *xxiii*.
[121] Robert Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature,* 'Preface', *xvii*.

said.'[122] But while a didactic camera might appropriate from reality too directly, a 'didactic reflexivity' could have the potential to bring film and politics together in the same plane. Gilliatt continued, drawing out Godard's struggle with film language and the language of film: 'More than most visually gifted people, he has the verbal man's interest in distinctions. "There are films on politics and there are political films," he said. "Yes? The films on politics record activity, but they are not part of that activity."'

Godard's form of reflexivity therefore must go beyond having the film draw attention to itself as a material construct in order to be considered politically productive. He draws attention to cinema as embedded in material reality, and to elements of perception and imagination as 'fictional constructs' (or at least narratives that are influenced and formed by cinematic means). Antoine de Baecque has said of Peter Watkins that he 'covered history like a war reporter';[123] in this mode, Godard's cinema can be said to be embedded in reality like a war reporter. And Godard does not necessarily hold a role as director there, as he pointed out to Robert Kolker when they discussed *Letter to Jane: an Investigation about a Still*:

> Kolker: You criticise the expression on Jane Fonda's face. What would you rather have her do?
> Godard: I'm not the director in Hanoi. We can only direct her in Paris. We asked Jane to come to France in order to act in something staged by us, which was titled *Tout va bien*. Two months later the North Vietnamese asked her to come and play in something they staged, which was entitled 'Victory over America'. In *Letter to Jane* there are two pictures, the old Jane Fonda and the new Jane Fonda. We have to see the differences between the old and the new because we are interested in differences. In the still the old and the new are together and we don't see the differences. This is an aesthetic, this is a movie dealing with aesthetics understood as a category of politics. We prefer to speak of aesthetics and no longer of politics. We are only interested in knowing about a kind of expression. If I were in Vietnam, looking at a

[122] 'The Urgent Whisper', interview with Penelope Gilliatt (1972) in *JLG: Interviews*, ed. Sterritt, 82.
[123] Antoine de Baecque, *Camera Historica: The Century in Cinema*, 3.

> dead Vietnamese child, I would have exactly the same expression, as would Nixon or John Wayne.[124]

Even during his most radical period, Godard characterises his preferred mode of critical engagement as aesthetic, apparently because the figural-discursive language located in the image is still available to him to be controlled and potentially transformed.

The *différance* of meaning in the postmodern world thus moves between the conditions of reality and imaginative constructs; and in Derrida's description of *différance*, along with deferred meaning, it is again possible to detect hierarchical *deference*. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, as I will explain in Chapter 3, Godard takes images and sequences from documentary footage as well as from fiction films, weaving them together in a way that does not only reflect modern reality, but enacts its progression for the audience. 'But if cinema has a duty to record the real, it implies that the medium must be defined, not by montage […], but rather by the indexical relationship between the image and reality,' Douglas Morrey argues.[125] Visual representation (and the photographic or videographic lens) were becoming more and more a part of the perception of world events throughout the twentieth century, and would 'characterise' them not only in terms of moulding perceptions of them, but characterise them in the sense of forming a part of their character. I will also discuss Godard's films 'with' Fonda (*Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*, though she was an unwilling participant in the latter) in more detail in the next chapter.

The concept of double reflexivity in the postmodernism world (or in the condition of 'radical modernity') has been conceptualised in equivalent theories in other academic disciplines. As well as Alfred Willener's action-image, and Raymond Williams' concept of media flow, we can

[124] Kolker, in Sterritt, 63.
[125] Douglas Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005) 223.

look to Anthony Giddens' concept of the double hermeneutic. Giddens attempts to account for the mobility of subjective understanding and analysis in the postmodern world and identifies a reflexive subject/object relationship that is linked in a continuous feedback loop. In this way, he suggests an emerging 'subject-subject' relationship that has similarities to Lyotard's description of objects that themselves have eyes, as well as to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of the chiasmatic, self-referential structure of the body. Another sociologist, John Urry, suggests that the photographic lens is one of the key metaphors that came to represent the age of modernism:

> Pre-modern societies were often thought of metaphorically in terms of various animals, as well as different sorts of agricultural work (many are still powerful today). In modern industrial societies, dominant metaphors were those of the clock, modern machinery (train, car, assembly line) and the photographic lens. The lens provided the metaphor for modern epistemology based on the central importance of 'seeing' the world. With the camera lens there is a one-to-one relationship between each point on the object and each point on the image of the plate or film. The metaphor of the lens implied a sequence, a separation between the parts of the picture and the whole picture, and a reflexively extended process through time by which the image is generated and represented.[126]

Though Urry's description of the photograph suggests symbolic solidity by the direct correlation of object and picture, it is already a more complex image than the animals, or even the machines that stand more simply as symbols. It emphasises the importance of subjectivity, perspective and the relative position of the 'seer' in the world; but the lens still retains its literal value of being another tool that helped to progress societies, as with the others. Most of these symbols represent advances in ease of literal movement (from, for example, oxen ploughing fields and horses enabling their owners to travel long distances, to trains and cars allowing travel even more quickly, and the assembly line streamlining

[126] John Urry, *Global Complexity* (Cambridge and Malden, MA.: Polity, 2003) 50.

manufacturing processes). With the lens (and the camera and its photographs, if the plate, sensor, picture and so on are included as implied parts of this imagery), the movement becomes a sequence. It brings with it a reflexively extended process and demands a procedure of interpretation as the modern age progresses.

By taking these significant objects in human development and making them stand as images for societies themselves, they have obviously all been given a value beyond their literal worth as tools. But an important distinctive aspect of the lens as a symbol is the property of self-awareness. This symbol stands for the world as it intervenes in it, and as it organises our perception and understanding of the world; additionally, it reflexively draws attention to this state. This imagery could be said to embody the concept of the figural, taken as a site of becoming rather than as a more 'static' symbolic image.

McLuhan, meanwhile, emphasised that the postmodern age is characterised by a sort of re-unification of action and consequence:

> In the mechanical age now receding, many actions could be taken without too much concern. Slow movement insured that the reactions were delayed for considerable periods of time. Today the action and the reaction occur almost at the same time. We actually live mythically and integrally, as it were, but we continue to think in the old, fragmented space and time patterns of the pre-electric age.'[127]

Lyotard's elaboration of the figural is one of the attempts to move critical language beyond this fragmented, modernist mode of discourse, and Godard might be said to enact it by attempting to develop a 'reflexively extended process through time' in his films.

[127] McLuhan, 4.

'A fairly complete handbook for studying the extensions of man could be made up from selections from Shakespeare', McLuhan suggests in 'The Medium is the Message'.[128] He quotes selectively from Romeo and Juliet: 'But soft! what light through yonder window breaks? / It speaks, and yet says nothing'. In the play, the second line does not appear immediately after the first, and in fact reads, 'she speaks, and yet says nothing'. It may be useful to extend McLuhan's repurposing of the passage even further, comparable as it is to the processes seen in much of Godard's work. Speaking and yet saying nothing could be interpreted as babbling without meaning, or as Juliet communicating meaningfully with her eyes, but without words. But Romeo appears to have no problem with interpreting or understanding a non-verbal mode of discourse later in his soliloquy: 'Her eye discourses – I will answer it'. The object that speaks is both an image, that of an eye he can see, and something that is itself an instrument of seeing. The interpretation is paradoxical, holding two meanings simultaneously, which are attributed by the watching eye and the speech of Romeo.

The discourse of her eye identified by Romeo – articulated by him in the play – develops a sort of logical chiasmatic relationship between the play and the audience. There is also a pun linking Romeo to Juliet, as the 'I' answers the 'eye'. It suggests two subjective actors who are mutually responsive, though it is Romeo's own characterisation. By answering, he will potentially close the loop – but in his next line, he demurs, and continues to watch Juliet and to speak his soliloquy. The soliloquy is an act of speech whose intended audience is not Juliet, but the spectating audience; so instead, the loop forms with the spectators included in the mode of exchange. These rhetorical loops demonstrate the privileged position of art to move

[128] McLuhan, 9.

in and out of modes of discourse in this way, and to implicate its viewers into the events that unfold from it.

As the lens is turned on society, there are inevitably specific consequences in cinema when films take contemporary politics as their subject matter. As the lens is turned back, it uses formal reflexivity to find a point of view and to configure its representations. The audience is asked to consider the relationship of the cinematic form to historical events, and to consider their own position as audiences, not only in relation to the film, but to political events in general.

In the cultural shift from modernism to postmodernism, with the perceived relationship between cause and effect and between subject and object under disruption, complex social feedback loops can be seen to form. Godard positions himself in this difficult space – in the 'permanent crossing-point' between media texts, events, and their beholders – to consider the role of the reflexively extended camera-eye in society and politics as he uses it to film.

iii. Godard's '60s modernism: *Le petit soldat* (1963), *Les carabiniers* (1963), *La chinoise* (1968), *Le gai savoir* (1969)

As a movement, the Nouvelle Vague tasked itself with clearing a cultural space for cinema as an art form worthy of critical attention. They wished to overturn the notion that if films were to be culturally valuable, they required source material drawn from the sphere of 'high' arts such as literature and needed narratives that followed the customs of the novel, valuing theatricality and a perceived artificiality. Instead, they decided to emphasise cinema's unique capacity to embody units of narrative and to represent abstract ideas.

Alexandre Astruc and his manifesto 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: The *Caméra-Stylo*', published in *L'Ecran* in 1948, promoted the concept that a film's artistic direction should be developed and organised through the artistic intentions of the director. The film director would 'write with the camera'.[129] The Nouvelle Vague's problem can be understood as another permutation of the discursive-figural problem in modernist art. The hierarchical division of linguistic-temporal and plastic-spatial forms of expression were to be overturned, and the medium of film to be re-written.

The movement would also place its focus and draw its subjects from the contemporary reality of the auteurs. Filmmaking that was cheap and independent of studio interference, with a documentary style and an emphasis on improvisation and a search for truth, became organising principles. They required practitioners to be disruptive and questioning: to experiment with the form and explore its possibilities. However, it would be wrong to see the *caméra-stylo* as Godard deployed it as simply a tool for writing manifestoes, or at least for writing a manifesto that is unambiguously discursive.

The nature and act of praxis is considered deeply significant in Marxist theory. But in *Le petit soldat* the camera is used, somewhat ironically, to express feelings of distinctly Modernist anxiety when faced with the prospect of direct action (and its story is reversed to follow a right-wing protagonist and his 'direct action', which is continually interrupted, and to cast the left-wing supporters of Algerian independence, rather than the French authorities, as torturers). And whether glancing over a newspaper article or nodding between two characters as they have a conversation, the *caméra-stylo* is curiously embodied: it acts as though it is the moving eye – or head – of another figure in the scene, though one that is not

[129] Naomi Greene, *The French New Wave: A New Look* (London: Wallflower, 2007) 24.

named or acknowledged as present. Godard's inability to be 'settled', or '[to look] reality in the face', is here inserted quite consciously into the diegetic world of the film. The usually privileged position of the camera's point of view is destabilised, by making it materially present. In this way, the value of the lens as a framing instrument of perception, interpretation, critique, and evaluation will itself be critiqued as the narrative unfolds (fig. 9).

Le petit soldat tells the story of an 'anti-terrorist', Bruno, affiliated with extreme right-wing groups fighting against Algerian independence from France. Bruno falls in love with Veronika, who works with the *Front de Libération Nationale*, the dominant pro-independence faction in Algeria. Bruno's first line, and the opening line of the film, is heard in the form of a voiceover: 'My hands-on, active days are over. It's time for thinking'. The film immediately reverses the expected logical progression from thought to action, leading the audience instead into the opposite of an 'interventionist' mode, and more into a mode of irony and confusion, and even threatening a non-event of a film. Bruno's lines are non-diegetic, spoken over images of him driving his convertible. The viewer is taught to associate two things with narrative movement: Bruno's musings, and travel by car; the dual 'driving forces' of the film. Progress, such as it is in *Le petit soldat*, is shown to be powered less by ideology or narrative frameworks and more by style and aesthetic. The first obvious institutional force to manifest in the film is the checkpoint, at which Bruno and his car are stopped almost immediately as the film begins.

Bruno is a photojournalist, a reporter for the French Information Bureau. He is therefore someone who, like Godard, is tasked to arrange reality as he sees it into a series of visual narrative units, for audiences to receive, and the exposure to which will in turn inform their own political beliefs. The audience is reminded that Bruno's own sources for international news and opinion are images: he picks up a newspaper and is disgusted to read and see

reports on a recent leftist terror attack. When he leans out of his car to take a picture, he himself captures an 'image' of the central plot of the film: lovers on a backdrop of a divisive political situation. Simultaneously, by leaning out of the car with his camera, he gives the audience a demonstration of the realities of creating narrative units in a documentary way. The act of doing so is contingent upon the opportunities that the world presents, but is also to some extent artificial, as it is editorialised by the photographer even before the shot is taken.

Bruno's narration is not the only voiceover in the film. Critical commentaries also appear diegetically and incidentally. When Bruno and his associates, Jacques and Paul, listen to a radio broadcast in their car, they laugh as 'A Neutral Speaks' about Algeria, and they are quick to highlight the ridiculousness of the programme's title. To them, it is paradoxical. But in another permutation on 'diegetic' merging, Bruno is tasked to kill the broadcaster, the Swiss, and pro-FLN, Palivoda. Palivoda has also manifested from outside the media broadcast and into Bruno's diegetic reality, as he is in fact, Jacques tells him, the man they are following in the car.

Geneva, and Switzerland itself, is a target of derision in the film for its history of neutrality and ambivalence. The Swiss have never been terribly courageous, says Jacques, Bruno's co-conspirator.[130] And indeed, Bruno is a deserter from Switzerland, which the group use to try to force him to perform their assassinations. As Godard is French-Swiss, and was raised in Switzerland, this might be taken as self-referential criticism. Folding himself into the film, Godard identifies himself with Bruno, and the eponymous, ineffective 'little soldier'; his

[130] *Le petit soldat*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France: Les Productions Georges de Beauregard; Société Nouvelle de Cinématographie, 1963). DVD released by Optimum, 2008.18.27.

weapon, such as it is, is the camera. By placing the camera and the gun in the hands of a man like Bruno, the film implies that an ineffective Godard could serve to arm a right-winger. Jacques teaches Bruno how to aim at Palivoda from a moving car: 'Just drive along next to him, as Paul is doing now… and fire… when you get in line with him.' We are reminded of Bruno leaning out of his car earlier, shooting a couple on the street with his camera.

When Bruno tells Jacques that he has changed his mind about performing an earlier task he had been set by the group, Jacques quotes the ending of Jean Cocteau's *Thomas the Imposter* to him:

> Jacques: William flew, leapt and ran like a hare. Not having heard the gunshots, he stopped and turned, out of breath. Then he felt a sharp jab in his chest. He fell. He had become deaf and blind. "A bullet", he thought. "I'm finished… unless I pretend to be dead". For him, fiction and reality were one and the same. William Thomas was dead.[131]

Godard uses the book's final passage to combine the collapse of fact and fiction into one figure. Within that framing context, the 'movement' made is the act of dying itself. In the story, William intends only to fake his death, but reality overtakes the actor. And in turn, by importing this scene straight from the novel into his film, it is, like the newspapers and the poster images, spliced into the diegetic world of the film. The reference is not 'baked into' the narrative's scheme of representation, but directly quoted by a character personally invested in its significance to the scene. It also constitutes a barely veiled warning to Bruno.

Later, in his apartment building, Bruno catches a glimpse of himself in the elevator's mirror.[132] Afterwards, he stares at himself in his bathroom mirror: 'I'm becoming a coward. It's funny, when I look myself in the face, it's not the same idea I have in my head.' Perhaps Godard feels

[131] 15.27.
[132] 40.31.

the same way about his film. Yet, though he appears loath to use it, Bruno expresses admiration for his gun: 'It was a beautiful object… black, mysterious, incorruptible'.[133] As an instrument that can implement change in the world, and therefore help define it, the gun is to Bruno purer than the mirror, with its distortions. And while the camera might aim for such purity, it might never achieve it in such a clear way. Soon after, as the camera pans and cuts to Bruno in the car, he is depicted hiding behind a cover image of *L'Express*, with eyeholes cut out of its portrait of Hitler. The 'celebrity magazine cover' and 'terrible image of war' dovetail here into a single image, as a comic moment in the film. In the diegesis of the film, it is concealing; to the audience, it is ostentatious and potentially revealing (fig. 10).

Godard might intend to give his audience another permutation on the possibilities of combining political and artistic *décollage*. Though the magazine is almost instrumental in the assassination, Bruno is again unsuccessful, failing to act, and so to manifest the intended event. He aims at his target but does not fire. Once again, other cars are said to be the problem. They are in his line of sight, with one lingering as it struggles to merge into traffic. 'Everything in life has a right time and a wrong time', he concedes, as the film's footage speeds up slightly. He conveniently interprets all uncontrollable movements and forces as fatalistic. And in a film, of course, they are determinative: Godard, as the audience is reminded when the footage gets faster, chooses the exact speed and direction of Bruno's movements.

The inevitability of narrative logic is put into question throughout the film; Bruno resists such logic at numerous points. When he is tortured, he comments in his voiceover: 'Torture is monotonous and sad. It's not easy to talk about'.[134] The audience's gaze is temporarily

[133] 41.45.
[134] 56.10.

averted at this point: instead of framing and witnessing his torture, the camera scans the building from the outside. In describing torture as both 'monotonous' and 'sad', Bruno equates two very different reasons to turn away: the horror of seeing someone in pain, and the supposed banality of its process as a spectacle. But Bruno offers only a temporary reprieve from the scene, and soon returns the story to the room. 'I wondered what the shirts or the washbasin was for', he says. Given the danger he is in at this point, this seems a banal question to have on his mind. Bruno might, then, be questioning Godard's directorial framing decisions: why this image, why this *mise en scène*? The viewer already knows that he is concerned that the scene will play out as monotonous; the character again seems to stand in for the nervous voice of the artist. These objects, however, are to be used to torture him; and so ironically, Bruno also seems to detect or intuit his immediate fate at this point by the presence of the props. The use of electricity as their preferred technique for torture is an explicit reference to state torture by France in the Algerian independence conflict; a stark reversal of representation which contributes to the film's uncomfortable and difficult tone.

The historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in *Torture: Cancer of Democracy* (1972, known in France as *La Torture dans la République*), his book on the use of torture by France in the Algerian war, defined state torture as 'nothing other than the most direct, the most immediate form of the domination of man over man, which is the very essence of politics'.[135] It might be useful to recall Judith Butler's understanding of political frames and their ability to appear and disappear human beings, and in doing so, to decide which human beings matter politically.

[135] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, interview (part 1 of 3) with Anouk Adelmann, *Notre temps* (radio programme). First broadcast in three parts, on 03, 04 and 05 April 1972, on France Culture, Radio France.
Reproduced on France Culture (website)
https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/les-nuits-de-france-culture/notre-temps-entretien-avec-pierre-vidal-naquet-sur-la-torture-parties-1-a-33 Accessed 27 Jan 2021.

Vidal-Naquet also argued that 'for many years Muslim-Algerians were considered to be "others", to be non-existent. It was to the extent that they suddenly came to exist that they were tortured. They were shadows: to the extent that they wanted to become men, that was when the torture came.'[136] But in his narrative, Godard focuses on torture committed by leftists, rather than by the state; seemingly in conflict with how Vidal-Naquet conceptualised the issue: '…one imagines that torture was a response to terrorism, but nothing is more inaccurate and one could argue just as well the opposite: namely that terrorism is a response to terrorism, to torture.'[137] It is possible to take from this that Godard, operating in a mode of self-critical irony, is demonstrating how difficult it is to intervene definitively in the ongoing loop of torture and terror.

Bruno's captors, meanwhile, are also unable to resist combining their actions with reflexive commentary: 'Between torture sessions, we discussed politics', Bruno says sardonically. As a current is passed through him, the Maoist commentary recorded earlier is apparently played back: 'there are no easy tasks in a revolution…', it intones. The words seem to justify the torture. Combining the electricity and the aphorisms, in the 'praxis' of torture, they weave together metaphorical and literal values. The words are galvanised, and the electricity is given revolutionary import. But 'electricity is very simple', Bruno reminds the viewer. As the victim of the torture, he seems to prefer to cut through these added meanings and values, emphasising the simplicity of the instrument as a tool for inflicting pain.

Towards the end of the film, Bruno and Veronika argue over their political beliefs. He admits the arbitrary nature of his own feelings on geo-political issues. Rather than theoretical or

[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.

conceptual, he claims, his opinions are personal, biased, and often inspired by whether he has an aesthetic affinity for a given country or group of people.[138] Taking up a partisan position would seem to be morally correct, but also necessitates a loss of critical perspective and individuality; another source of artistic anxiety for Godard at this stage in his career. He articulates what could be seen as the essential conflict within him, between an existential need to self-affirm, and a need to find a belief system and assert it in the world: 'I'm trying to hold on to my own thoughts. What about words?'[139] As he stares directly into the camera, he is both confronted and confrontational; meaning has folded back on to itself. In the process of the film, Godard both asserts himself and abdicates responsibility for a single position.

Bruno's conclusion is that 'Maybe men talk incessantly, searching for truth as though digging for gold… The one single golden word is silence.'[140] This seems to recall Wittgenstein's idea of language, meaning and expression, in his preface to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*:

> The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe, that the reasons why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. The whole sense of the book might be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.[141]

Wittgenstein repeats the last clause at the book's conclusion. There is a paradox in the concept of searching for truth as though digging for gold, but through speech. As a practice and a tool for discovering information, speech shapes the world and its meaning as it explores it. Bruno seems to suggest that for human beings, meaning in life finds its expression externally as individuals try to implement their political values in society. It might also be

[138] 01.12.19.
[139] 01.18.01.
[140] 01.08.07.
[141] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* trans. David Francis Pears and Brian McGuinness (London: Routledge, 2003) 'Preface'.

useful to recall parts of Wittgenstein's definition of a language-game, outlined in the aphorisms of *Philosophical Investigations*, as the 'game' in which Bruno finds himself trapped: 'The word "language-game" is used here to emphasize the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.' 'I shall […] call the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven, a "language-game".'[142]

Like the modernist artist, Bruno struggles to commit to a single perspective, and reflects endlessly on meaning as he tries to perform a meaningful act. It would be pointless, therefore, to expect a single 'take' on the Algerian conflict to be represented in the film. Instead, the film obsesses over the increasing presence of media images and text in life, as well as the representation of life that those images are intended to hold. It engages on the plane of the cinematic landscape. *Le petit soldat's* articulation of its perspective might be understood as confused or erratic because it is interested in the topic of confusion: the confusion of the protagonist, and the confusion which exists in the fragmented, alienating modernist condition of the world. By embedding it into the form and structure of the film, the audience is forced to experience this struggle not only intellectually or verbally, but as an activity, and as an aspect of the form of life.

Godard could be said to use his *caméra-stylo* to write himself into *Le petit soldat* even as he writes himself out of it. The perspective from which the viewer expects to see the film's action unfold – embodied in its protagonist – proves to be mutable and unreliable. Godard writes himself as abdicating his position as director and as activist by not taking a stable point of view, just as Bruno abdicates the tasks he is obligated to carry out for his cause. In his earliest

[142] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th edition, revised by P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009) 15*e* and 8*e*.

political film, then, Godard negotiates the difficult relationship between discourse and figuration, between words and images, in a mode characteristic of the Modernist artist.

But with cinema, and its ontological relationship to reality that is not as separate as those of painting or literature, Godard also finds himself 'resembling' and 'referring to' the political issue he wishes to explore in his medium. He is caught between action and criticism, as two forms of expression that seem on the face of it to be mutually exclusive. A political action involves creating a political event; criticism is the commentary on the political event. An 'action', however, might be conceived at one end of the spectrum as an act of terrorism, and at the other, as the act of making a film. The film's prevarication between Godard and Bruno can be seen as calligrammatic, if seen through Foucault's understanding of *Treachery of Images*; or at least as chiasmatic. Or it could be described as terroristic in its principles and its methodology, in that it is a technique for detaching itself from the modern world in order to intervene again, and in doing so, to censure it.

In Godard's next political film, *Les carabiniers*, he takes aim at the more traditional institutional values of militarism and patriotism. Two farmers, Ulysses and Michel-Ange, are recruited into the army of an imaginary country. The film begins with a black screen, and a handwritten quotation attributed to Borges: 'More and more, I strive for simplicity. I use worn metaphors. It's what's basically eternal. For example, stars resemble eyes, or death is like sleep.' Despite the semantic insistence on banality and easily consumable meaning in this quotation, the words flicker. The instability of both mediums, the text and the film, is already made visible. The audio then makes apparent the director's input ('…Let it roll! Military march, first take!'). The film's titles appear, with a screech of feedback from a microphone. In this way, the feedback loop is established: the film is here presented as being made and projected

simultaneously; that is to say, it is apparently being created as it is screened. It could even be compared to a live news report, transmitting its message from the field. But by retaining the audio of his instructions to the crew, Godard simultaneously, and paradoxically, emphasises the artificiality of the film. The quality of realness is coming from two very different sources: from the grittiness of the film's visual aesthetic and from the reflexive insistence on emphasising its construction. Godard again combines the two qualities of art that Foucault described as mutually exclusive: resemblance and affirmation. The act of making the film (shooting) and the act of screening (projecting) also become part of the same shot, or line of sight.

He also takes advantage of these vectors in other ways. Landscapes are important throughout the film, though not as passive establishing shots, nor as beautifying aesthetic ornaments. They contain tanks and soldiers travelling across the countryside. Godard positions the long lens of his camera as an important part of the 'signal' back and forth with the guns of the film. Life on the farm is initially intruded upon by a stranger with a gun, who introduces himself to the rural scene by firing into it; by combining different qualities of reality in the film, Godard quite blatantly weaponises his camera. *Les carabiniers'* material status as a film intends to have an organising effect on its meaning, and to behave violently towards existing representational and ideological orders.

The description in the title cards evokes blood and eyes. It is cut with images of war 'from the film' (that is to say, shot by Godard), as well as archive footage of weapons and generic scenes of war. Yet the close shots of cannon are reminiscent of Eisenstein: so again, a reflexive relationship is created with reality in the film, moving its representational value back around to a cinematic reference point. A title card foregrounds the attempt to disrupt representation

again: 'always the same words: bodies, decay, rot, death, etc.'[143] The film cuts to images of dead bodies, lines of firing cannon, a plane dropping bombs, and men (back in the 'film itself') firing guns from the ground. The next card states: 'We were shipped to North Silesie to be in firing squads and to check on hangings.'[144] The title cards have transmuted into letters home. The structure of the film intervenes back into its diegetic world as a mode of interpersonal communication.

'I'm looking' says Ulysses to Michel-Ange, as he uses his gun to look up a woman's skirt.[145] Using a gun to look at something, as well as a camera to shoot something, is Godard's rhetorical logic throughout the film. The overall tone of the film is another site of reflexivity: a Brechtian alienation effect is created by its comic absurdity, so that it comes across more in the mode of a Marx brothers or Three Stooges slapstick comedy than a war film. Reality undergoes another stage of displacement when Ulysses looks at a print of a self-portrait of Rembrandt on a wall and salutes it. The artist is dead, but maintains a presence, though not his aura. And as Cleopatre brushes her hair, she holds up her mirror, but she refers to a picture of a model positioned next to it.[146] Images are thus clearly not intended to be straightforward reflections of reality even in the diegetic world of the film.

The experiences of watching films and visiting a movie theatre are also explicitly represented within the film. Ulysses struggles to contain his excitement as he sees his first movie.[147] When he walks into the theatre, the projector makes itself visible and present as a beam shooting across the film's frame. Ulysses watches a series of short films: in the first, a train screeches,

[143] *Les carabiniers*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France; Italy: Cocinor; Les Films Marceau; Rome Paris Films; Laetitia Film, 1963) DVD released by Studio Canal, 2004. 22:39.
[144] 23:14.
[145] 20:00.
[146] 20:52.
[147] 35:05.

and he flinches, in an echo of the historical audience's reported reaction to the Lumière brothers' film *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1896). That reaction was itself depicted in R.W. Paul's *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (1901), adding another stage of recursivity to Godard's frame: this time, a fictionalised version of the original event.

An erotic short film of a woman taking a bath follows. Ulysses tries to jump into the screen and touch the woman, treating another illusion as a literal reality. Frustrated, he runs back and forth in front of the picture, seeming almost trapped in or by the screen. When he tries to jump into her bath, he tears the screen down and falls forward. The woman continues to take her bath, now against the form of a rough wall instead of an imperceptible white screen. Godard again is 'tearing down the screen' that both links cinema to reality and separates it. He restates the idea that cinema is an illusion that can have a perceptible ontological significance, and one that is often poorly understood by its spectators (fig. 11).

Les carabiniers, though it affects a pose of ironic, author-less detachment, does communicate an urgent, meaningful truth about the shared cultural understanding of war. Although its displacement of images of war into a comic form seems tasteless, the film presents an inversion of how war is represented in propaganda, where it is idealised and made potentially appealing through narratives of heroism and honour. These narratives are always treated with the utmost seriousness and are often used to silence or shame political dissent. It is implied that any criticism of the narrative, as part of the war in question, undermines the sacrifices made by the soldiers. Here, the constant displacements of reality, the endless re-drawing of the lines of sight of camera and gun divest the camera-eye from its usual privileged position. Hidden from sight, the camera also tends to remain unquestioned as a creator of narratives, and so Godard uses it to speak aloud a satirical, but reflexive, form of critique.

A sense of enormity and poignancy does enter the film later, as the rebel woman, unmasked by the farmer's crew, faces the firing squad. She recites a poem by Vladimir Mayakovsky which includes the lines, 'Aren't you ashamed to live in a fable?' and 'The gas mask is but a simple toy'.[148] As the poem describes how the trenches 'embrace' the necks of cannon Godard appears to again relate his film to Eisenstein, embracing those images in order to re-appropriate them, by folding them into his own representation of war. 'Men will write home' and say 'there were no shells or mines', she continues. The poem here refers back to the film, and to the letters which the audience has seen sent back from the war. The letters have also provided the narrative's structure, with their text used as the title cards. But the poem also refers to the simple generic status of fiction that the film's narrative has, and thus builds a bridge between the fictive and real elements folded into the film. The lead characters' response to the poem is to shoot her, and then to keep on shooting, pointlessly, while insisting that she is still moving. Both the camera and the gun are thus seen to lose their power once the brave, truth-speaking rebel is dead.

Later, the men sort through their spoils: images of places and things. Gerald Peary compares these images to the role of the posters of Bogart and Renoir in *À bout de souffle*, 'fetishized commodities in lieu of the lived experience' and 'pictures of the thing instead of the thing'. He suggests that these images are Godard's signs of contempt for the behaviour of the characters.[149] They name them aloud as they go, playing them like cards as the women swap them. 'Most significantly, there is the suitcase of booty from the war: postcards with ribbons, postcards, postcards! Hundreds of them', Peary continues. But in cinema, 'pictures of the

[148] 45:47.

[149] Gerard Peary, '*Les Carabiniers*: BB Guns at War and at the Movies' in Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline (eds.), *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) 121.

thing' are not ontologically distant from the thing itself; film is made on the principles of reproduction and distribution. Peary suggests that Godard sees filmmaking as 'a kind of whoredom',[150] citing another title card: the one inserted into the film-within-a-film of the woman in the bath. It comes from the real production company with which Godard worked to make *Les carabiniers*. Godard might be suggesting that the cinema and filmmaking are contaminated with their status of reality; however, beyond the 'betrayal', Godard's use of posters, postcards, and projections allow him to exploit the paradox and bring to it an artistic coherence. Following on from the principles of *décollage* and looking towards much of his later work, he re-assembles pieces of found images into his film, placing fictions from the real world into his fiction.

At the end of the film, the war is over. Fireworks are set off, though they sound like guns; the end of a war does not, this seems to suggest, signify the end of the possibility of violence.[151] The happy ending is shown to be false, with a nihilistic suggestion that victory and defeat are interchangeable here. The lead characters run off into the desolate distance, as though unsuccessfully trying to escape the frame. Eventually, they are informed that the war is over because their side finally lost. Their leader confides: 'I have something to tell you. A secret…' and then shoots them. The gun is the last 'line' the brothers will hear, articulating the false narratives of war and of filmmaking. The film (and the war) ends like a fable, as the Mayakovsky poem had mockingly predicted. The audience is told that 'the two brothers slept forever, believing that dreams are what Paradise is made of'. As sleep is a metaphor for death in the final line, the brothers' dreams, and the paradise they were promised, are again shown to be the lies fed to populations during wars. The mythic or fairy-tale tone of the film implies

[150] Peary, in *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*, 126.
[151] 01:09:30.

circularity beyond its diegetic world, hinting that the crimes, lies and stories of war will resume in another time and place (that is to say, in the real world).

As the 1960s progressed, and left-wing political demonstrations gathered pace in France, Godard again created work that is, on the face of it, surprisingly ambivalent to political theory, political action, and the value of art and performance. In *La chinoise*, a group of students toy with Maoist discourse and terroristic action. Much of the film explores the relationship between theory and praxis in radical politics, and the idea of performing political action is given a punning relationship with theatrical or cinematic performance. The students are actors as well as activists; Jean-Pierre Léaud's character, Guillaume, performs the roles of different countries on demand. Sitting in front of a blackboard, this also appears to be part of the lesson he is teaching. He segues into his performance by telling his students 'Enough theory. Now a problem…' and uses sunglasses with flags over their lenses to represent different political perspectives.[152] Afterwards, Anna Wiazemsky's character, Veronique, acts out the role of a Maoist fighter, using stacks of the Little Red Book as a shelter (fig. 12). Her radio folds out to become a gun, and then snaps back into a radio. Again, media and political violence are folded into one representative image, one that snaps back and forth between the two as required. They are not only compared to each other but are implied to be aspects of the same machine, within the same shot and within the same physical movement within the frame.

The students are quick to critique what they see as misconceptions about cinema and politics. Guillaume expounds on cinema's historical relationship to current events:

[152] *La chinoise*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France: Anouchka Films; Les Productions de la Guéville; Athos Films; Parc Film; Simar Films, 1967) DVD released by Optimum, 2008. 32:10.

> Guillaume: There's a false idea about current events at the movies. They say Lumière invented current events. He made documentaries. But there was also Méliès who made fiction. He was a dreamer filming fantasies. I think just the opposite. [...] He made current events. They were re-enacted, alright. But they were the real current events. I'd even say Méliès was like Brecht.[153]

In *La chinoise*, a reversal of reality and fantasy is enacted throughout, and framed as the potentially difficult relationship of art to theory, and to the wider world. When Henri suggests of Véronique that 'She was confusing Marx and theatre. And that's romanticism', he poses the problem that the revolutionary has in 'performing' their theoretical investigations in the real world.[154] In the sequence on the moving train, during which Veronique debates with the philosopher and militant Francis Jeanson, the window looks like a cinema screen. The characters are shown in darkness while the outside world is illuminated.[155] Again, there are multiple layers of reality and fiction folded together in the scene: there is the illumination of the background scenery at the expense of the action, and the characters; the folding of a cinema screen image into the frame itself, which provides a window on to reality; and moreover, the characters are placed in darkness, like the film's audience in the theatre. 'OK, it's fiction, but it brings me closer to reality,' an unnamed character says at the end of the film.[156] She could be said to sum up the film's approach, but it is important to note that her observation also moves in the other direction. She speaks her line to a character played by Blandine Jeanson, Jeanson's real-life daughter; another layer of reality, if at one familial removal, is brought into the frame.

[153] 30:40.
[154] 57:50.
[155] 01:05:50.
[156] 01:31:21.

Francis Jeanson, as both a philosopher and the founder of the *Reseau Jeanson* (a network that helped FLN agents during the Algerian conflict), also represents separate planes of reality: those of philosophy and action, or linguistic and plastic forms. As he plays a role in the film, he also joins the characters in their world of fictional performance. The hierarchies of fiction and reality, or imagination and action, could also be said to break down in the film, as it moves in and out of them all. This technique of folding and unfolding could, as in *Le petit soldat's* interest in speech and action, could be said to share qualities with Wittgensteinian language-games: language does not exist independently of reality and should not therefore be used as a tool to correspond to it or to signify it neatly. But it is not necessarily meaningless as a consequence of this representational complexity. As I have pointed out, film is a fitting home for this mode of expression, with its frame for representation that is usefully literal and metaphorical in status.

A slogan written on the group's wall proclaims, 'We must confront vague ideas with clear images' (fig 13).[157] Its representational values are contradictory. On the one hand, this image takes its cue from contemporary May '68 political slogans and posters and applies them in a fictionalised film, yet it 'embeds' the text on the wall itself. At once, the image is more real and less real than the slogans manifesting in the streets. And on the other hand, it appears self-evident that 'the writing's on the wall' (or in French, *les signes sont là*: the signs are there). This image is therefore a little more fatalistic than it first appears. There is some dramatic irony here, hidden from the protagonists by the techniques of the language-game – even though the text, 'We must confront vague ideas with clear images', could itself have been the slogan for a radical interpretation of language-games. Even in his modernist works, Godard

[157] 02:10-02-15.

does not like to stay still, preferring to negotiate the flux of historical event, figuration and discourse that is able to flow through the film's frame.

Le gai savoir started shooting before the eruption of May '68 and was finished after the movement had failed. The film is made to accommodate these historical developments: Godard attempts to solve the problem of the failure of the May '68 movement by 'dissolving' it. His approach is to deconstruct language, the image, and the concept of representational values. The protagonists are two young people, presented as descendants of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Emile, the boy Rousseau uses as an example for his treatise on education, and of Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected leader of the Congo, who was executed by firing squad in 1961. As fictional descendants of a fictional and non-fictional person respectively, they already represent subtle degrees of removal from reality and from fiction. Various colonial powers have been accused of involvement in Lumumba's death, which they have denied; the inclusion of his name might be intended to allude to the fictional narratives that are created and circulated by large political powers.

Emile and Patricia meet in a TV studio, and spend the film trying to re-make both cinema and discourse, by participating in experiments with image and sound and discussing their relationships with political ideology. Almost immediately, it is revealed that a copy of *Cahiers du cinéma* protected Emile from a bullet during the protests, so that cinema, the critique of cinema, text, and political violence are again all layered on top of each other in the frame.[158] A connection to the bombings of Hanoi silk factories is triangulated. By pointing out that the trajectory of the bomb was the same as that of the American B-52 strategic bomber, and was

[158] *Le gai savoir*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France: Gaumont; Bavaria Atelier Gesellschaft, 1969) DVD released by Koch Lorber Films, 2008. 03:00.

calculated by a mathematician, the concept of a weaponised angle or line of sight is introduced. Moral responsibility is thus re-attributed to those who contribute to creating the technologies of war, but who are not necessarily visible when violence is perpetrated.

The method of dissolving language is interrogated constantly in the film. In a spontaneous interview in the TV studio, Patricia is asked about her technique, and she responds:

> Patricia: We must find the discourse of its method, and ours as well.
>
> Emile (*off-screen*): But we must not forget to criticise ourselves afterwards.
>
> [*Cuts to Emile, smoking*]
>
> Patricia: And if we find this method, it will give us the laws of fabrication.
>
> Emile: At the very least, reference points.
>
> Patricia: Therefore, maybe one day, the fabrication of images will be based off known things, as opposed to unknowns, as they are now created in Hollywood, in Moscow, in the RTF studios in Paris, at the BBC in London, at the RAI in Italy, at the Shochiku in Tokyo, etc…[159]

Godard emphasises that the fabrication of images is not confined to the realm of fiction; or rather, he emphasises again that the relationship between the fictional images of art and the documentary images of news media exists on a continuum, which is ideological as well as ontological in nature. The unusual decision to cut to Emile's face when Patricia speaks also enacts the self-criticism that Emile demands. Because the language of the film has been deconstructed, it is less affirmative of its own position, and more critical. Patricia's words function as a commentary or critique beneath the film's image. A few moments after this conversation, back in the studio, Patricia asserts: 'What we need to discover are images and

[159] 11:39.

sounds that are free.' A still image of Mack Sennett appears (fig. 14), with his camera pointed back at the viewer (or the camera).[160]

The viewer is reminded that, in their relationship to the film, they themselves are embodied only by the invisible camera, and have their own predetermined line of sight. With another camera now facing them, they are confronted with the loop they form with the film: 'within an image and sound, nothing is stable.'[161] The audience is part of this emergent filmic world as they are also the audience to other media, and therefore participate in it. Sennett is generally credited with inventing the slapstick comedy film genre, so he could therefore represent the importance of finding new methods of articulation. However, as Godard chose to represent the slapstick method, he intentionally undermines the seriousness of his own point. As he points Sennett's camera at them, he also implies that the audience is part of the 'slapstick' collisions of images and sounds.

Rather than preserving a simple subject/object relationship with the audience, Godard is interested in experimentation and dissolution as ways to provoke the audience into 'the joy of learning': that is, into 'grasping a movement', or allowing reality and fiction to jostle in the frame as they do in real life, rather than allowing the audience to choose a still image, or a single sentence, as a stable, representative icon or phrase. In their mock-interviews, Emile and Patricia repeatedly insist on the need for action and change in the form of film: 'Not a representation, but a presentation. A struggle, not a show' […] 'So it's about grasping a movement?' 'Yes'.[162]

[160] 14:09.
[161] 44:50.
[162] 50:00.

Douglas Morrey, considering the reaction of the vagrant in the studio on hearing his own voice, suggests that there is '…no natural or true relation between language and the 'real' world. Language can only signify the real by virtue of its difference to that which it represents. And the same is true of images used to represent the real.'[163] As in the sequence with Godard splicing himself into protests, and into the film's narrative, he is seen to struggle with the Derridean problem of the hierarchy of expression. As soon as the political problem is articulated artistically, it moves away from the reality of the situation with which it tries to engage. Morrey also points out the fragile status of reality in a later scene, which shows a young boy as the subject of an experiment, playing a word-association game:

> But what is perhaps most interesting about this sequence is that difficulty of deciding how genuine the experiment is. Some of these replies seem perfectly credible: 'crime-poignard', for example, or 'voyage-train'. Others seem extremely unlikely coming from the mouth of such a young boy: 'revolution-octobre' or even 'cinéma-lumiere'. But it is those associations that are undecidable that prove most interesting, since they demonstrate *our own ability* to draw inferences and make connections between apparently unrelated signifiers. For instance, when the boy responds to 'torture' with 'tortue' ('tortoise'), is this a surrealist deactivation of the violence of torture on Godard's part, or is the boy merely responding to a word he doesn't really understand with another chosen for its phonetic proximity?[164]

Godard is emphasising that everything that is filmed is in some way staged, using the reductiveness of the word-association game to dissolve the relationship between the signifier and the signified in cinema. In doing so, he does not simply reveal or defang ideological meanings within this mode of representation but reveals the potential significance of authorship itself. This quality of reality is also important later in Godard's career post-'68, in the postmodern *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. But in *Le gai savoir*, Godard reclaims this discontinuity

[163] Morrey, 87.
[164] Morrey, 88-89.

in a (pre-) fictional context: that is, in the setting of a TV studio. He appropriates its paradoxes in order to give rhetorical power to his film (and, on a partly ironic level, to give it discursive power as well).

In most of Godard's early films, there is an essentially modernist response to the issue of discourse and figure in artistic reactions to political events. But the artistic modernist response was intended to be a challenge to the modernist conception of history as a series of events, where the historian (or narrator) represents a secure and totalising vantage point from which these events can be seen impartially. Films such as *Le petit soldat* can be seen as a somewhat ironized admission of cowardice through 'neutrality' in the face of important moral and political decisions (Godard could be seen to be asking himself: does picking up a camera, rather than a gun, make me complicit in the right-wing's political power?); *Les carabiniers* is a more overtly disgusted rejection of the promises of patriotism and war. Godard's attitude to perspective, which is not only complex but mutable, can thus be seen to adapt to the emerging postmodern conditions of the event. As the twentieth century moved forward, and technological advancements continued, the artist would be obliged to negotiate their position in the context of a larger and faster flow of media images and commentary. By the end of the 1960s, theoretical discourse was manifesting concretely in Godard's films, scrawled across walls and photographs in *Le gai savoir* and *La chinoise*.

The full French title of the latter film is *La chinoise, ou plutôt à la chinoise: Un film en train de se faire* (*The Chinese Woman, or rather to the Chinese: A film in the process of being made*). In its long form, the title reminds us that both art and reality are in the process of being made with *les événements* burgeoning into May '68 and are being made with the same (artistic and political) movement. And again, Susan Sontag's French dedication *…aux vaincus!* in *Regarding*

the Pain of Others becomes salient. If the film is indeed 'to the Chinese', Godard could be said to intend to write cinematic letters from and to cinema, and with cinema; and to and from political ideology, with the medium itself being the aim and the line of sight. In this way, Godard seeks to force the images themselves to reflect, or to become theoretical objects. However, he was increasingly finding his methods for doing so to be inadequate.

CHAPTER THREE

JEAN-LUC GODARD II
CINEMA LETTERS TO THE HISTOIRECAMÉRA

i. Death of the *auteur*

> Our slogan is: No investigation, no right to speak.
> Mao Tse-tung

After the failure of the May ’68 uprisings, Godard was faced with the problem of trying to ‘grasp a movement’; in other words, to provoke significant cultural and even social events through his political-artistic acts. His response was to dramatically reject the principles of auteurism, and instead to collaborate with the young Maoist revolutionary Jean-Pierre Gorin. In 1968, Godard and Gorin co-founded a Marxist filmmaking collective: the Dziga Vertov Group. The DVG project was short-lived, beginning with *Un film comme les autres* (1968) and ending in 1972 with *Tout va bien*, a fictional film about a factory strike, and then *Letter to Jane: An Investigation about a Still*. In *Un film comme les autres*, a group of young French revolutionaries sit in grass, and their debate is heard as a voiceover. Some are students, some factory workers. Their dialogue explores the failure of the May ’68 protests, the praxis of revolution, and the limits of discourse. The film cuts between this scene and recent footage from the May ’68 uprisings. Like *Le gai savoir*, *Un film comme les autres* is a film which looks backwards; because of this, in this chapter I will discuss the DVG films that followed it (though the spectre of May ’68 is often still visible in these works).

With the Dziga Vertov Group, Godard's desire to create a frame of protest – a frame which strikes back against the Establishment – is most apparent, as is the interrelationship between the film frame and the conceptual frame. John A. Noakes and Hank Johnston define the sociological concept of the frame as one which 'at its most basic, identifies a problem that is social or political in nature, the parties responsible for causing the problem, and a solution.' They add, however, that 'most studies of framing processes' begin instead with the 'identification of the core functions of a *collective action frame* – namely, what frames must do. Collective action frames offer strategic interpretations of issues with the intention of mobilising people to act.'[165] The Dziga Vertov Group is almost a manifestation of a theoretical collective action frame, one which intends to offer strategic interpretations of issues through the filmic frame, and in doing so, to provoke their viewers to act on these interpretative frames beyond the film itself.

The DVG co-created a series of explicitly didactic, genre-defying political films. Characters in this cycle tend to be known by pronouns alone, or by the same names from film to film, particularly 'Vladimir', for Lenin, and 'Rosa', for Rosa Luxemburg; the *film-fleuve* of Godard's body of work is particularly noticeable at this point. In *Le vent d'est*, the narrator points out that all militant revolutionaries should use pseudonyms to escape the 'political police'; Godard and the DVG also use this technique to escape many of the confines of traditional narrative. As Lenin and Luxemburg were often at odds due to their respective understandings of socialism, it can be assumed that their names were chosen so that the characters could

[165] John A. Noakes and Hank Johnston, 'Frames of Protest: A Road Map to a Perspective', in Hank Johnston and John A. Noakes (eds.), *Frames of Protest: Social Movements and the Framing Perspective* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) 5. Emphasis in original.

stand for contradictory forms of Marxist thought, and to create new outcomes through dialectical conflict.

Tout va bien, made with Jane Fonda and Yves Montand, explores the relationships between revolution and love in the context of a factory strike. It is also an exploration of the contemporary understanding of history, journalism, and the problems that emerge from being a revolutionary while also, inevitably, a constituent piece of the capitalist system of production. While Godard explicitly rejected Hollywood during this period, he intentionally brought in two movie stars to headline the project, appropriating them from the star system to explore the nature of film production under the capitalist system. *Letter to Jane*, made outside the DVG collective but with Gorin, is a postscript to *Tout va bien*, and dissects a famous photograph of Fonda meeting with Vietnamese fighters. Visually, it concentrates much of the time on the photograph itself; meanwhile, Godard and Gorin consider its significance in a discursive voiceover (it is worth recalling here a slogan from anti-Vietnam War protests staged during the 1968 Democratic National Convention: *the whole world is watching*). The film's conceit is reminiscent of the famous opening scene of *Vivre sa vie*, with the camera obsessing over Anna Karina's face: it moves and cuts between various angles, constructing and deconstructing its own imagery within the same sequence. I will discuss both films in detail in this chapter.

By the mid-1970s, Godard had split completely with the DVG and Gorin and was working instead with Anne-Marie Miéville under the name Sonimage. Their full length political films were *Comment ça va?*, in which a newspaper editor and his secretary discuss making a film, and *Ici et ailleurs*, a documentary about the Israel-Palestine conflict. With *Ici et ailleurs*, this era of Godard's political filmmaking ends on a suitably reflexive note: the film is a

reconstruction of an unfinished documentary by the DVG, *Jusqu'à la Victoire*, and a critique of that unfinished work. At the same time, it is a critique of hegemonic Western perspectives on non-Western conflicts. Michael Witt points out that 'this film – which was intended to be a record of the triumphant return of the Palestinians to their homeland – became, following King Hussein's offensive against the Palestinians in Ammam in September 1970, a grim record of the dead.'[166]

As Godard sought to immerse himself in collective projects (often leaving his name off the credits altogether and choosing to screen his films in universities rather than theatres) this phase of his career has been interpreted as a period of self-imposed exile from mainstream cinema. The director Michel Hazanavicius, discussing his 2017 biopic of Godard, *Redoubtable*, describes it as a type of suicide: 'He's killing everything around him – his films, his friends, his wife. And then it's logical he kills himself. That, I think, is what he did: when he creates the Dziga Vertov Group, where he no longer directs his own movies, he's essentially killing himself.'[167] Michael Witt characterises his post-May '68 era as a 'political dead end' for Godard.[168] Richard Brody further describes most of the 1970s as part of 'Godard's defiant withdrawal – first from the movie industry, and then from Paris. He did not make another commercial film for more than a decade'.[169] He suggests that by the time of his tour of

[166] Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2013) 46.
[167] Stuart Jeffries, '"Godard is not God!" … Michel Hazanavicius on his film about France's most notorious director' *The Guardian*, 17 May 2017 https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/may/17/michel-hazanavicius-jean-luc-godard-interview-redoubtable-cannes Accessed 10 July 2017.
[168] Witt, *Cinema Historian*, 45.
[169] Richard Brody, 'An Exile in Paradise', Profiles, *The New Yorker*, 20 November 2000. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/11/20/exile-paradise

American colleges in 1968, Godard was already overwhelmed by the cultural imagery he had previously utilised in his work:

> …by that point Godard was in a crisis of self-doubt; the pace of current events was outstripping his ability to invent new forms to engage them. In the earlier films, he had joyfully embraced the images of mass culture – magazines, advertising, pop tunes, and, above all, Hollywood movies. Now he felt repulsed by the world those images signified and fostered, with its unreflective consumerism and its support for the Vietnam War.[170]

HIs frustration was thus still explicitly aesthetic as well as political. In an increasingly mediatised world, cinema as a form was being overwhelmed in the overall flow of the media 'ground'. And as Brody points out, Godard had predicted (or announced) the end of cinema in its current form in *Weekend* (1967) as two title cards flashed up in the film's final moments: END OF FILM and END OF CINEMA.

Godard's most politically strident period shows him grappling with twin existential problems: is this the end of cinema, and can a successful leftist revolutionary event ever occur in the West? Badiou suggests that Godard did not simply want his work to be relevant to the political situation, but to be a crucial aspect of it: 'After '68 the real question was: What is an art that is really contemporary with what's going on? And if what's going on involves political ideology, then: What is an art that accepts to be vitally contemporaneous with that? This is a concern you can see in Godard.'[171] It could be said that Godard attempts to 'disappear' during this period in order to earn his 'right to speak' again by conducting radical, 'vitally' political – and filmic – investigations.

[170] Ibid.
[171] Alain Badiou, *Cinema*, trans. Susan Spitzer (Cambridge: Polity, 2017) 114.

ii. Godard's post May '68 *pravda*: the Dziga Vertov Group (1968-1974)[172]

A viewer unacquainted with Godard, yet somehow in attendance at the premiere of *British Sounds* in Spring 1970, might have expected from the title a documentary about The Rolling Stones or The Beatles. The music of the latter does appear in the film – in a fashion. During the opening titles, a female voice speaks, in English: 'In a word, the bourgeoisie creates a world in their image. Comrades, we must destroy that image!' At the same time, a Union Jack appears, with the words 'BRITISH ~~IMAGES~~ SOUNDS' in its centre. On the word 'destroy', a fist punches through the flag. By combining the word 'destroy' and the fist, he performs his intention to destroy bourgeois constructs of the world. And by including the word 'images' in the title, but simultaneously crossing it out (and then subsequently damaging it), he presents his own aesthetic construct as one which is also at stake; he will destroy his own images if necessary. By its paradoxical existence as erased yet legible within the frame, the word is placed *sous rature* (a strategic device created by Heidegger in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* and developed by Derrida in *Of Grammatology*). Placing the word *sous rature* implies that the concept of 'images' (and of language as well) is inadequate for Godard's purposes but must be made to stand for the time being. Godard's focus for weaponization here is again the intermedial relationship between 'image' and 'sound', which he intends to make explicitly aggressive and 'militant' (fig. 15) in the frame.

With this objective behind it, the film is (for the most part) aesthetically mundane and repetitive, and intentionally so. The 'British sounds' of the title are manifold: the English-language voiceover and the screeching of factory equipment are heard over a slow tracking shot across a British car assembly line. This layering makes the difficulty and unpleasantness

[172] All footnotes for the films of the Dziga Vertov Group in this thesis refer to the DVD box set *Jean-Luc Godard: Politique* (France: Gaumont Video, 2012), except where stated.

of working in a factory apparent to the audience; and the screech of machinery often sounds like a woman screaming. Overlaid on this soundtrack is an excerpt from *The Communist Manifesto*, read by a male voice. The voice articulates the nature of the hierarchical power structures depicted on screen and provides a philosophical answer to the problems posed in the lengthy opening sequence, albeit one that is all but drowned out by noise from the factory. He thus poses his problem within his answer: frustratingly, ordinary workers cannot see the revolutionaries, nor hear their message, by the very nature of their obligations within the capitalist system.

The title of the film also refers to a lengthy sequence in which songs by The Beatles are deconstructed by young activists preparing a protest. In doing so, Godard drains the pleasure out of the music. He also applies this technique to visual gratification, to the point that even a protracted scene of a naked woman becomes dreary. After a long sequence in which a man describes being fired by his boss, the film cuts to its female narrator: 'To break with the Hollywood system induces a radical change of aesthetics,' she argues. To Godard, nothing should be frivolous or ornamental anymore, including aesthetics. It then cuts to the group of young revolutionaries as they try to insert revolutionary lyrics into 'Hello Goodbye', presumably for its rather dialectical, antonymic lyrics.[173] They struggle to force their ideological points into the song's metric structure; again, the 'struggle' becomes aesthetic as well as political. The audience does not, however, see it resolved on screen.

The male voiceover asks the audience: 'Seizing the revolution with one hand and production with the other, what does that mean for militant filmmakers?' [*The film cuts to an extremely*

[173] *British Sounds*, 34.03.

bloody arm on the ground][174] 'It doesn't mean bringing films to the people but making films from and through the people.'[175] The bloody arm is clearly painted red – 'from and through' means using the people to represent horror, but not necessarily realistically. This action problematizes the relationship between the camera and its subjects, and thus the relationship between fictional and documentary modes of representation.

The bloody arm starts to move. The female voiceover adds: 'But there is only one way to eliminate war, and that is to oppose war with war, to oppose counter-revolutionary war with revolutionary war…'[176] Earlier in the film, when a car factory worker shared his experiences of being fired, *Guernica* could be seen hanging on the wall in the background, facing the workers as they spoke – an artistic re-representation of war is embedded into the scene and the lives of its subjects. Art is thus seen to be present for, and even stand in witness of, counter-revolutionary behaviour (such as the firing of workers). *Guernica* famously presents an account of past wrongdoing in a visual, artistic form; here, it is physically set in opposition to wrongdoing.

Pravda (*Truth*) is an epistolary film, with Vladimir writing a film-letter to 'Comrade Rosa'. But unlike an epistolary novel, its medium does not match the one it is mimicking but seemingly stands at an angle to it. This raises questions about the nature of the collage of images and sounds the film presents: is Vladimir evoking these images for Rosa with his descriptions, or is he describing them as they play out in his own mind? The relationship between time, image, sound and words is further complicated in this way.

[174] 44.15.
[175] 44.20.
[176] 44.30.

Vladimir himself declares: 'Edit the sound and images differently. We'll judge them for what they really are.'[177] Both characters discuss reality and unreality, and how they must 'show these images on an anti-revisionist line, establishing a new, contradictory relationship.' Vladimir criticises student sit-ins for waving an anarchist black flag rather than a Communist red flag: 'their way of fighting comes from suicidal humanism, not revolutionary will', and so, he asserts, it prevents a revolutionary uprising.[178] The Dziga Vertov Group rearranges the images to be an attack on revisionism (which they consider another form of imperialism). The Soviet revisionists, they suggest, appear to present reality to the worker straightforwardly in everyday life, but in fact represent it incorrectly. The title of the Soviet revolutionary newspaper 'Pravda') is presented as ultimately ironic, and the 'truth' instead located in the collective's revolutionary *Pravda*.

Instead, the worker is surrounded by anti-revolutionary distractions: 'This worker, from whom contradictions are hidden, between making anti-aircraft parts for North Vietnam and seeing [the fictional-historical French film] *Angélique* in the evening...'[179] The film suggests that invented, revisionist versions of history are presented to the masses through the cinema for easy consumption between shifts at the factory; thus implicating the workers, without their knowledge, into the continuation of the system. Throughout *Pravda*, a red image of a gun repeats during discussions of the workers' revolution. When they describe it as a 'James Bond gun', they bring a fictional element of violence to their description of real violence, critiquing Hollywood's representational values as complicit in imperialist ideology (fig. 16).

[177] *Pravda*, 08.29.
[178] 27.08.
[179] 26.02.

One of the techniques suggested for fighting back is to re-make fictionalised images of the world: 'The petty-bourgeois slogan "Enjoy our advertisement!" must be opposed with the slogan "Advertise our enjoyment!"'.[180] At the end of the film, such chiasmic rhetorical reversals appear to go around in circles; but the film's investigative critique is posited as the weapon that will allow the collective and the viewer to break free of the trap of Soviet revisionism.

The film *Le Vent d'est* (*Wind from the East*) is disorientating even by the standards of the DVG, and there is very little context to its *mise en scène* or narrative provided for the viewer. Though much of its imagery is clearly drawn from the genre of the spaghetti Western, the audience does not necessarily know 'where they are' much of the time. The female narrator confronts this problem, though she frames it as a pressing issue for the filmmakers, rather than the audience: 'What should we do? Shoot a film, perhaps? First, one must ask, "Where are we? And what does asking where we are mean for a militant filmmaker?'. This dual temporality implicates the viewer into investigating and 'solving' the problems along with the filmmakers; *Le Vent d'est* poses questions and provides answers about its own ability to pose questions and provide answers. In an early sequence, these questions and answers are posed by the narrator with an accompanying 'revolutionary' image:

> [*A man with a shotgun patrols on a crumbling wall*]
>
> Female narrator: Today, the question of what to do must be addressed by militant filmmakers. They no longer must choose a path, they must determine, determine, what they must do practically, practically…
>
> [*The man keeps moving around, searching for the most advantageous position*]

[180] 36.50.

> …on a path that revolutionary history has taught them to know, on a path that history has taught them to know.'[181]

Her verbal repetition in this sequence forges a path ahead and enacts the forward movement; even if the film cannot literally do this, it can be witnesses pushing at reality by attempting to challenge its audience, forcing them to pose questions and to provide answers. The audience might ask how this relates to shooting a film, but this question is answered in the narrator's next lines: 'And what does asking where we are mean for a militant filmmaker? One must 'examine the history of revolutionary cinema, of revolutionary cinema.'[182] The repetition of this phrase enacts the conceptually chiasmatic relationship between the 'cinema of revolution' (cinema which takes revolution as its subject matter) and 'revolutionary cinema' (cinema which is formally revolutionary). This history is then traced by the film through filmmakers such as the group's patron saint, Dziga Vertov: 'Comrade Dziga Vertov officially stated: "We Bolshevik filmmakers know there is no cinema *per se*, cinema above the classes. We know cinema is a secondary task, thus our programme is highly simple: see and show the world in the name of the worldwide proletariat revolution."'[183]

But if there is no cinema *per se*, is cinema merely a subordinate to history? *Le Vent d'est* appears to suggest that rather than being purely instrumental, the cinema is deeply intertwined with history: it points out that Hollywood paid Eisenstein to shoot the Mexican Revolution, and that '…meanwhile in Berlin, Dr Goebbels ordered UFA to shoot a Nazi *Battleship Potemkin*'.[184] The reciprocal relationship between historical fact and historical fiction is here seen as an inescapable part of historical movement.

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[181] *Le vent d'est*, 08.43-09.05.
[182] 09.46-10.00.
[183] 10.29-10.46.
[184] 11.53.

The audience is also presented with the idea that imperialists have historically used the camera as a weapon themselves, to crush revolutionary activity.[185] The film criticises the emergent documentary genre of *cinema vérité* (which I will discuss in the next chapter) as one that shows class misery, but not class strength.[186] By presenting the workers with bourgeois images of themselves, the group suggest, the genre is not giving them the correct tools with which to fight. It thus suggests that a revolutionary film is one that loops itself back into reality, so that it can help to drive the revolution forward.

Again, the DVG represents the direction of artistic movement as a physical, literal direction when a character asks 'which way is political cinema?'[187] Abstract concepts are seen to have a material presence and directorial movement in the world, if they are brought into being correctly: 'Once theory penetrates the masses, it becomes a material force. But the ideas must be just. Think over your concrete situation. Study up on theory. Example: invention of photography. […] For whom? Against whom?'[188] The group lists examples of photography being used 'for' and 'against': '1. In 1871, police in Versailles photographed insurgents. 2. In 1871, photos of shot Communards appeared in bourgeois papers.'[189] While *cinema vérité* is seen to subsume images of working-class life into a bourgeois artistic form, the police and the media are seen to subsume images of revolutionary activity into their own bourgeois systems of production. 'Combat the bourgeois concept of performance' the film demands. 'Rip cinema, photography, television, from the claws of the dominant ideology'. A blond man is

[185] 13.50.
[186] 53.15.
[187] 59.33.
[188] 01.16.50.
[189] 01.17.51.

seen taking photos of a gun, thus demonstrating how images of revolution might be reclaimed from 'the dominant ideology' (fig. 17).[190]

'To make cinema a weapon of the revolution, think it and conceive it through revolutionary struggles,' they continue.[191] A notorious sequence follows, in which the audience is instructed on how to purchase weapons and make bombs; Richard Brody labelled it 'repugnant'.[192] It might also be considered, from a Žižekian perspective, as being artistically unproductive as well as morally objectionable in its approach to violence. In attempting to present and enact an anti-humanist perspective, it eclipses the hidden, systemic violence enacted on the workers it intends to represent. While considering the sequence in the context of aesthetics might appear trivialising, it is important to note that balance that the DVG had maintained between questions and answers in their films to this point. Their preceding rhetoric, looping and repeating as it does between the films, can certainly be characterised overall as a blunt instrument. But their work of 'investigation' is significantly damaged by this call for violence; the earlier complexity and tension in the DVG's artistic regime of weaponisation is lost.

At the end of the film, the viewer is addressed as though they were watching an instructional guide ('You shot a film. You criticised it. You made errors. You've corrected a few. You know more about sound and image.'[193]). But this scene could also be taken as the DVG talking to itself, or even as appropriating the voice of the audience, as though they followed along with the instructions and made a film (or a bomb). There is a shot of darkness, intended to represent the darkened room in which the audience presumably sits, thus folding them into

[190] 01.18.27.
[191] 01.18.35.
[192] Richard Brody, *Everything is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard* (New York, NY.: Henry Holt and Company, 2008) 349.
[193] 01.25.24.

the frame (or into a darkroom). Both the filmmakers and the audience become viewers (or critics) and filmmakers (or revolutionaries) in this reconfiguration. The action of the film is thus represented as disciplinary, as well as didactic. The audience has not simply learned, the film asserts, but has appropriated the sounds and images into their own understanding and has thus made a film along with the DVG. This slide back and forth between representational values has been a feature of much of Godard's filmmaking to this point, but here it is at its most literal and its most coarse.

The film *Lotte in Italia* (*Struggles in Italy*)[194] is somewhat less confrontational and more academic than *Le vent d'est* in tone. However, its opening line still poses a mundane yet confrontational question that is characteristic of Godard: 'what's going on?'. Early in the film, there are lengthy shots of corrections made to documents by an unnamed person in a study. There are books in the background of the shot and a book on his desk.[195] The audience is thus presented with a character's ongoing struggle with theory, as they try to 'read' the events around them as they happen.

When the film's couple appears together in the study, a blackboard is visible in the background of the shot.[196] Later, the entire screen repeatedly turns black, interrupting the audience's view of the room.[197] The screen is thus equated with the blackboard itself, and vice versa; two meanings of the word study or *étude*, in the sense of 'the activity of studying' and 'a piece of research', are conflated; again, the action and the result are embodied together through the film. By asking 'What relation is there between your reflection and this

[194] A French version of the film is available, with the Italian dialogue dubbed over in French. In this thesis I refer to the original Italian version of the film, which was subtitled rather than dubbed.
[195] *Struggles in Italy* 00.40-02.46.
[196] 05.31.
[197] 15.12.

black image?'[198] the female voiceover displaces the subjective experience of the filmmakers, of the film's subject, and its audience, in order to shift all of these and force an investigation. The male voiceover makes the relationship more explicit again: 'It was around this centre called Society that the relationship between images and black screens was organised. This relationship has a name: ideology.'[199] Various voices are heard to discuss the usefulness of dialectical thinking, and the nature of intellectual reflection.[200] But self-reflection must be transformative, they suggest, to avoid upholding a bourgeois ideology.

Vladimir et Rosa takes more directly from recent historical events to explore the impact of the apparatus of bourgeois ideology on the radical figure. The film is a (very) loose interpretation of the trial of the Chicago Eight, who were charged with conspiracy and incitement to riot after their protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. They later became the Chicago Seven when Bobby Seale, a Black Panther, was severed by the judge (and bound and gagged) in retaliation for his outbursts during the trial. There was little evidence against Seale, who was charged in place of another Black Panther, Eldridge Cleaver; Seale is represented as 'Bobby X' in the film. As Jane Rhodes points out in *Framing the Black Panthers*, Howard Brodie's courtroom drawing of Seale's suppression 'became one of the most memorable images from the case.' It was used, she points out, for the cover of Seale's biography of Huey Newton, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey Newton,* which was partly recorded on tapes while Seale was in prison.[201]

[198] 15.34.
[199] 15.50.
[200] 34.26-35.03.
[201] Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 2017) 235.

This image, in which Seale continues to write while bound and gagged, could be interpreted as the inverse of the crossed-out word '~~IMAGES~~' in *British Sounds* (fig. 18). Here, Seale's body itself is *sous rature* by the state. They have acted to remove his ability to speak and move, while simultaneously keeping him present as a symbol for that erasure and as a warning for others who might consider disobeying.

The film begins with yet another scene of formal reflexivity: two images of Lenin are shown, with descriptions of theory and practice heard over them. Images of a camera and tape recorder are cut between them. As well as Bobby X, the filmmakers 'Karl Vladimir' and 'Friedrich Rosa' are also on trial in the film, suggesting that the apparatus of theory, as well as the apparatus of the filmmaker, will be 'prosecuted' together; the filmmakers' images might be used, they suggest, as evidence against them.[202]

The struggle to force the image to acknowledge its complicity into bourgeois thought, and its role as a tool of media and state apparatuses of control, is articulated explicitly in *Vladimir et Rosa*: 'It's the whole world which produces the image, but the image… but the image does not embrace the whole world.'[203] This understanding of the image as too specific, or as too misleadingly selective to fully disclose the reality of the world, seems to be at the heart of Godard's 'defiant withdrawal' or 'suicide' in this period. But rather than symptomatic of giving up on cinema, Godard's approach might be comparable to what Huey Newton called 'revolutionary suicide' in his autobiography-manifesto of the same name.

Newton describes a reactionary suicide as an act motivated by a Dostoyevskian loss of dignity, hope, and self-respect; the revolutionary, meanwhile, uses their death instrumentally,

[202] *Vladimir et Rosa*, 33.29.
[203] 34.46.

because 'it is better to oppose the forces that would drive me to self-murder than to endure them'.[204] The negative aspect of the suicide would be thus transformed into a constructive act; the radical's own death is aimed at 'the Establishment' as the means of critical intervention. Godard's self-immersion into a filmmaking collective, seen as an instrumentalised, reflexive, cinematic 'suicide', would then be part of his militant method of weaponising the camera during this radical period. But the method might have been derived from art history as much as radical '60s politics: in 'Cézanne's Doubt', Merleau-Ponty described the painter's struggle to conform to nature in his work, rather than to abstract it:

> His painting was paradoxical: he was pursuing reality without giving up the sensuous surface, with no other guide than the immediate impression of nature, without following the contours, with no outline to enclose the colour, with no perspectival or pictorial arrangement. This is what [Émile] Bernard called Cézanne's suicide: aiming for reality while denying himself the means to attain it.[205]

This form of artistic suicide, aesthetic and paradoxical, is intriguing when considered in the context of Godard's earlier and later expressions of apparent self-doubt (as in the politically ambivalent *Le petit soldat* and, to a lesser extent, *Tout va bien* and *Ici et ailleurs*). His Maoist work might be the most blatant manifestation of a tendency to 'aim for reality while denying himself the means to attain it'. But even so, the inevitable failure of film to ever fully enclose political reality, and the simultaneous inescapable, indexical relationship to reality that political film must have, become the dual source of paradoxical tension through which Godard 'thinks' in this period. His method of suicide – abdicating his position of director to a collective and rejecting the institutional system of filmmaking as an instrument of capitalist ideology – seems to be an action designed to disembody the camera: that is, to pull apart the inevitably

[204] Huey P. Newton, with J. Herman Blake, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York, NY.: Penguin Books USA, 2009) 3.
[205] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt' (1945), in Galen A. Johnson (ed.) *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993) 63.

conflated figures of the filmmaker, camera and film, and the political circumstances they all take as their topics, in order to reveal and to critique their mutually implicated status as tools of an oppressive system (fig. 19).

'Lenin was against the idea of constructing images, images of the world that are too complete', the voice continues.[206] It follows, then, in the logic of *Vladimir and Rosa*, that the dominant system of thought is totalising and dehumanising: for example, '*un image noir*' is equated with the image of '*un noir*' (Bobby X) in the film; here, a white supremacist ideology projects guilt on to Bobby X, as the DVG have projected their discourse on to their film-blackboard.[207] Instrumentalising Bobby X's skin colour in this figurative and reflexive manner could be seen as the DVG's method of retrieving Seale from the racist, dominant mode of discourse, and a justice system which swapped Seale for Cleaver as though the two men were interchangeable. At the press conference, the media is forced to shoot Bobby X's absence; he has already been removed and has thus become a different form of 'darkness', one that should no longer be directly available to forces that would oppress him.[208]

The blackness of Bobby X is an organising metaphor throughout the film. When a character asks, 'What's this black sequence for?', it is pointed out explicitly that it represents Bobby's absence, as he was refused a defence and forced to be silent:

> So for once, the black image really does mean something: Bobby's absence. For us, it's a great victory in filmmaking. We've been carrying these black images around since May 1968. Like a gun without bullets, a knife without a blade.
>
> [*The film cuts to archive images of violence*]

[206] 35.00.
[207] 49.06.
[208] 58.55.

> Because at first these black images were images we couldn't shoot, which belong to CBS, which belong to Gaumont Actualités. We can't afford them, so we use black leader tape. Then we realised black images were shots we didn't know how to shoot. Shots of bourgeois and imperialist ideology.[209]

The power of the film is perceived to exist in its success in figuring a paradox (Bobby X is both present and absent through the image). Meanwhile, media institutions – and their privately owned, copyrighted, restricted images of political realities – are equated with the judge and jury and are thus seen as part of the enforcement of the dominant capitalist ideology. As the trial's verdict is anticipated, there is a TV screen in the *mise en scène*, and audio equipment is shown; *Vladimir and Rosa* intends to embody how the apparatus of filmmaking is used by the news media to oppress, while the DVG uses their own equipment to illuminate darkness while still emphasising its ongoing presence; blackness is used as a blackboard by the DVG.[210]

This metaphor suggests that the DVG still had confidence in their ability to radically intervene into political circumstances (into histories, into current events, and into future discourses and actions) and to investigate and change them. But by *Tout va bien*, Godard was showing signs of questioning the effectiveness of his radical, filmic, interventionist ideology, or at least of allowing expressions of doubt within the film frame. In a 1972 interview, he described the need to distinguish his political film directing from the 'directing' of the conservative President Georges Pompidou and from the overall cultural 'direction' in which France was moving:

> Often we think we're making a film to help someone, but we end up doing the opposite. We don't realise it, but in my opinion *Tout va bien*, rather than just filming women, or directing workers in a film… In the word "direct" there is a whole subtext. Because who's directing France at the moment? For the moment, to my mind, it's Pompidou and [the

[209] 01.14.36-01.15.13.
[210] 01.22.31.

conservative politician Raymond] Marcellin. So the way we direct films is an issue. I am trying to fight against Pompidou and Marcellin.[211]

Marcellin is remembered in part for restricting the sale of *Hara-Kiri Hebdo* (a precursor to the periodical *Charlie Hebdo*) in 1970, in retaliation for satirical images it published on the death of Charles de Gaulle. He therefore inserted himself not only into the political circumstances of France, but into the distribution system of their political and artistic representations, which would have been particularly troubling for the DVG. While the actions of May '68 had weakened Gaullism, the socioeconomic malaise of the 1970s was taking hold in France, and memories of the event of May '68 were fading for many of its citizens.

iii. Godard's 1970s film-blackboard: *Tout va bien* (1972) and *Letter to Jane: An Investigation about a Still* (1972)

Aspects of the opening sequence of *Tout va bien* are comparable to *Les carabiniers*. The audience can hear the film crew (a clapperboard claps rhythmically, a voice lists numbered scenes). This time, these sounds occur over the text of the credits. As the credits acknowledge the crew, the technical process of creating the film is evoked as the names and occupations flash up on screen: directors, actors, camera operators, electricians. The participants' cheques are signed and torn off, at a similar pace to the clapperboard's clap. It also resembles the rhythm of the factory machinery; it is to be found again a few moments later, when a woman can be seen and heard milking a cow at the same pace.[212] The crew and the workers are thus

[211] 'Interview with Jean-Luc Godard – 1972' Excerpted from the documentary *La politique et le bonheur: Georges Kiejman*, dir. Patrick Camus. Excerpt included on the Arrow Academy Blu-ray release of *Tout va bien*, 2017. Timestamp: 02.30-03.10.

[212] *Tout va bien*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (France: Gaumont, 1972) DVD released by Arrow Films, 2017. Timestamp: 04.17.

represented as being involved in and implicated into similar systems of economic exploitation of their labour.

The sequence of torn-off cheques highlights why the film crew and the factory workers are in attendance: their goal is their payday, rather than art or politics alone. Film is a type of factory process, then; conversely, the factory will be a filmic process in *Tout va bien*. Showing the cheques also removes the privacy of the crew, revealing their wages to the audience. Their 'value' is revealed just as the 'value' of factory workers will be laid bare through the dollhouse-style set of the film. As the film's structure is turned inside out, the creative process – how the sausage is made, so to speak, or the unpleasant truth of how money structures both artistic creation and the lives of workers – is made visible for the audience.

When the factory boss is interviewed, he is framed by the DVG's camera, as though he is being interviewed for *Tout va bien* itself (fig. 20). He is framed not only by this camera, but by the large frame of the window behind him, with the factory's name now seen from the back (and therefore backwards). The power dynamic has been reversed, and he is, for the moment, at the mercy of the anti-capitalist DVG camera. The scaffolding appears in an X shape in the *mise en scène* behind him: he is not *sous rature* from the camera's perspective but would be seen to be crossed out from an external perspective; another lesson, perhaps, for the audience in how they should perceive powerful capitalist figures. The scaffolding would, then, stand for the ongoing work of the film under construction. But the boss is also 'the director' in the factory, and so he must also be acknowledged as the filmmakers' counterpart. According to their ongoing methods of weaponisation in this period, this might give the DVG the opportunity to unseat themselves as hidden figures of political power in relation to the film,

to make their roles available for investigation and criticism, and thus to become less implicated in the 'direction' of France under Pompidou and Marcellin.

The boss speaks with contempt about the 'maladjusted' workers at his factory. This is both a revolution and a film still under construction, according to the narrative logic of the DVG, in which any framing device that would be in some way definitive or secure is rejected. The sign flashes blue behind the boss, and he declares that 'the glaring injustices of Marx and Engels' days are over!'[213] Increasingly agitated, he criticises Marxist philosophers: 'the last fifteen years have proved that Marxism and collectivism certainly don't protect you from exploitation and alienation'.[214] He adds, 'I don't think the word "revolution" has meaning anymore', but his smallness in the frame undermines his diegetic and his rhetorical power; it is implied that he is to be defeated in both realms.

The action later moves to a TV studio. Suzanne Dewitt's husband, Jacques, explains how he has come to make commercials (fig. 21).[215] He addresses the DVG's camera while standing next to his own camera. 'Well before May '68, I became tired of making art films. I was going nowhere.'[216] Jacques explains that he stopped making films for a while because he had to pay the rent. The audience might be reminded at this point of the obligations of the camera operator at work filming Montand, whose paycheque they have already seen.[217] Again, the film suggests that because the revolution of '68 failed, the film workers are still part of the conveyor belt of capitalist filmmaking and bourgeois media apparatuses.

[213] 14.15.
[214] 14.34.
[215] 53.25.
[216] 54.22.
[217] 53.53.

'I was ready for May to hit me, and that's what happened. […] Did I take part in May? Yes and no, like everyone…'[218] Jacques continues. The audience does not hear any of the questions to which Jacques is presumably responding, and it is left to assume that they (as well as the camera he addresses) are the 'interviewer' in this scenario. They are apparently interrogating a failed revolutionary and failed filmmaker. But unlike the factory boss, when subjected to the camera's gaze ambivalence is Jacques' main message: 'It was serious, and at the same time, it wasn't', he admits.[219]

Furthermore, the camera-facing-a-camera set-up of the scene, with Montand's character next to his own equipment, places Godard in the role of both interrogator and interrogated. Jacques could be said to be a mediating presence for the camera next to him, speaking on its behalf and justifying the work it does on behalf of consumerism; he is then able to both embody the movement and critique it within the same scene, and to represent himself as a failed revolutionary filmmaker. The camera filming him, meanwhile, distinguishes itself from the complicit camera in the shot, or at least problematizes its complicit relationship. In an interview on *Tout va bien*, Godard argued that 'we need a new way to tell', because 'exploiters don't tell the exploited that they're being exploited so 'we' – cameras, news, press – must tell them we are exploiting them'.[220] He positions his tools as part of the wider technical apparatus of oppression, but also as tools that can be made to illuminate the truth of this situation. While the film's bold and colourful *mise en scène* and its clapperboard countdown are reminiscent of *La chinoise* and *Les carabiniers*, and revolutionary rhetoric is still present,

[218] 54.28.
[219] 54.41.
[220] Jean-Luc Godard, interview (1972). Excerpted from the documentary *La politique et le bonheur: Georges Kiejman*, dir. Patrick Camus. Included on the Arrow DVD release of *Tout va bien*, 2017.

Godard is showing early signs of a shift into a more reflective, sombre mode of inquiry at this stage in his career.

Under Pompidou and then Giscard d'Estaing, France would seem to become more accepting of right-wing policy, and more willing to insist that 'everything's all right' instead of demanding change. 'Everything returned to normal' after May, Jacques admits in his interview.[221] But, he says, he turned down a studio offer to make a detective film after May '68, as it '…seemed like a ridiculous waste of time'. He describes his reasons for abandoning artistic filmmaking:

> Jacques: I felt it was more honest to make commercials than to make such a stupid film. I gave it some thought. I still think about what I could do, what the system would let me do. What kinds of films I could try to make. I've been planning a political film about France for about three years. It's not that easy. I'm only just starting to understand things that Brecht pointed out over forty years ago.[222]

He then recommends Brecht's notes on his own opera, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. They reveal Brecht to be negotiating, like Godard, the relationship between aesthetics and education in art:

> The opera *Mahagonny* pays conscious tribute to the irrationality of the operatic form. The irrationality of opera lies in the fact that rational elements are employed, solid reality is aimed at, but at the same time it is all washed out by the music. A dying man is real. If at the same time he sings we are translated to the sphere of the irrational. (If the audience sang at the sight of him the case would be different.)[223]

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[221] 55.23.
[222] 53.45-55.58.
[223] Bertolt Brecht, Notes on *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, in *Brecht, Collected Plays: 2*, ed. and trans. Steve Giles (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)
Accessed December 14, 2016. http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/books/brecht-collected-plays-2-iid-11887/do-9781408161418-div-00000109

The relationship between the pleasure of film aesthetics and the need to educate seems to be keenly felt by Godard at this point. Brecht describes opera as a 'culinary' art; that is, it was a means of pleasure before it was a commercial product; but the didactic aspect might be washed out by the pursuit of the aesthetic.

Though this period is usually described as part of Godard's Maoist period, as Jacques he still seems reticent to commit to it fully: 'I find the idea of re-education for intellectuals a little disturbing. Perhaps the people I know haven't explained it well.'[224] Throughout the film, the problem of misunderstanding or misrepresentation rears its head: from journalistic misrepresentation to political misrepresentation, and to the misunderstanding of complex theoretical concepts. When he is (implicitly) 'asked' about the hostage situation at the factory, Jacques describes himself as an actor who kept forgetting his lines.[225] He thus fails to perform in the broad academic sense (theatrically, and in failing to enact political change); this might be interpreted as an attempt by Godard to expurgate his self-doubting, ambivalent nature, or as an acknowledgement of its ongoing presence even in the wake of his 'suicide'.

Jacques returns to shooting the commercial for Dim tights. The two young women in bright stockings dance, visible in the background and on the camera's small display screen. The audio to the advert is read out.[226] They are selling products; Jacques is himself 'washed out', as Brecht's analysis might have it, and washed up. This protracted shot seems to sum up Godard's feelings of alienation from a culture shifting rightwards. His aesthetic power, once represented in bright colours daubed all over interior walls, becomes subservient to consumerist requirements. An arm remains in the foreground of the shot, apparently pulling

[224] 56.39.
[225] 56.59.
[226] 57.14-58.21.

focus. Though the camera's gaze is shown to have been hijacked, the culpability of the individual has not been excised from the image. This individual keeps the audience's focus on trivia, as serious political issues move further out of sight (fig. 22).

More conflict breaks out later in *Tout va bien*, as young protesters face off against a militarised police force. When two protesters bring down a policeman and kick at his shield, each kick is dramatized by a gunshot; but as in *Les carabiniers*, the violence has a farcical aspect to it. The film cuts to Jacques on a rooftop, looking out on to the scaffolding and construction works below, apparently lost in thought. He muses:

> Jacques: My problems started when I stopped doing my job as a progressive intellectual. A hasty signature for Brazil or Vietnam, a quick visit to hunger strikers, a short meeting at the union hall.
>
> [*A young man holds up a still camera for him, presumably wondering if he would like to take a photograph of the scene in front of him*]
>
> I left the party without realising that I'd borrowed from them a way of understanding my role as an intellectual
>
> [*He refuses the camera*]. [227]

His refusal to take the camera further emphasises the ongoing crisis of perspective that is dramatized in the film (it is an ongoing reality and an ongoing figural metaphor, like the construction work in front of Jacques). He characterises his role in a highly Brechtian mode: 'My job is to make films. To find new forms for new content'.[228] The corpse of a young protester is dragged out of a river; on the soundtrack, another protester eulogises him. Young

[227] 01.12.54-01.13.02.
[228] 01.13.26.

revolutionaries beyond Jacques' line of sight are still fighting, it appears, but are not equipped to win against a police force so heavily armed.

Later, a group of young people are seen running back and forth through a supermarket, while the camera slowly tracks right, then left, as it did in the factory.[229] Long aisles filled with products stretch out into the distance. Suzanne can be heard musing on writing yet another leftist article her editor will inevitably reject. At the near end of one of the aisles, a French Communist Party member has set up a stall of his books, putting them on sale at a reduced price. Suzanne plans her article, considering how a supermarket is '…a large sales outlet, and social theatre at the same time. Everybody's shouting, except the audience. They pay and pretend to keep their mouths shut. No one addresses them yet'.[230] She describes the alienation of customers in a consumerist society and hints that Brechtian alienation techniques and reflexivity – different methods of addressing them directly – will begin a proper dialogue. 'New actors' are required, she suggests. On cue, the young protesters appear in the aisle before her.

The protesters approach the Communist and start to question him on the contents of the book. In doing so, they are shown to begin the work of retrieving the discourse that has been subsumed into consumerism: 'I don't understand this part about culture,' one of them complains. [231] The group devolves into an argument when the Communist refuses to explain his book, and they criticise him for 'hawking' his books 'like vegetables'. 'Explain your politics!',[232] they insist. The protesters are then seen to take direct action: taking over the supermarket in a flurry, they declare everything to be free. Amidst the clamour, as the camera

[229] 01.18.00.
[230] 01.21.02-01.21.15.
[231] 01.25.01.
[232] 01.25.49.

moves back across the aisles, one voice asks over the intercom, 'To change everything, where do you start?'[233] As they begin to change the ideological structure surrounding them, the police appear once again, from within the aisles of consumer products, and begin to suppress the shoppers and protesters alike; they attack the whole (film-) *fleuve* of humanity within the frame.

At the end of the film, the characters of Suzanne and Jacques (She and Him) meet in a café. Multiple endings are presented, with a young female and a young male narrator describing the hypothetical dialogue. As before, the issue of trying to quantify the problems within relationships is broached. 'Some films make the audience think the pair solve one problem only to go on to the next, and that's how life is,'[234] a young female narrator says. 'But in this film, we leave She and Him looking at each other wordlessly', a young male narrator adds.[235] The two narrative voices seem to be simultaneously commenting on the scenes at hand, and possibly directing them as well. The female narrator finishes by situating the two leads in a wider framework, but without resolving their problems: 'We'll just say that She and Him have started to think of themselves in a historical context.'[236]

Though they claim that this scene is the ending, the film has not finished. There is a short epilogue, in which the camera tracks from right to left across a dreary urban landscape. It appears to be on a train. The soundtrack is once again alienated from the visual context, as a cheerful pop song blares, with lyrics about sunshine. The male voice intones his discouraging summary of the events: 'Moi, Toi. History'. The image of the French urban landscape and the sound of the cheerful music are briefly blocked off when the camera tracks across red bricks.

[233] 01.29.24.
[234] 01.32.48.
[235] 01.32.56.
[236] 01.33.04.

Another person chimes in: '…you don't need to be a leftist to think like that.'[237] The soundtrack returns, with the lyrics still inappropriately cheery: 'Let's all live life to the fullest! Nothing else matters…'. The visual and audio aspects of representation appear to betray each other and to force the audience, in a Brechtian mode, to consider the audio-visual systems of representation they encounter in the real world (and how they might contradict each other). They are ordered to question whether 'everything's all right'.

'Each his own historian', says the male voice. 'We'd be more careful about the way we live. Me you, him, her, us, all of you.'[238] The film announces that it has arrived at its terminal stop: *Terminé*. The train metaphor is fatalistic, suggesting that the film has reached its destination with the predetermined inevitability of a train on a track. A final text appears on the screen: 'This has been an account for those who don't keep them.'[239] The film has been, the filmmakers appear to suggest, a financial 'accounting' of consumerist culture, focusing on its costs to society, and a theoretical and philosophical account of Marxism in practice after the events of May '68. Overall, the film is a 'history' of failed events, from the factory takeover to the students' conflict with police, and from the protagonists' relationship to May '68 itself. Taking Jacques as a stand-in for Godard, the film stands as the end of Godard and Fonda's professional relationship. However, Godard was not finished with Fonda as a topic.

If *Tout va bien* can be seen as an account of the dismal post-May '68 landscape in France, *Letter to Jane: An Investigation about a Still* might be seen as an account that looks abroad: to another country, Vietnam, but also to another mediatised conflict (the Vietnam War) and to another method of filmmaking (the polemical film-essay). Both Godard and Gorin narrate

[237] 01.34.30.
[238] 01.35.15.
[239] 01.35.30.

the film, alternating lines between them; the voiceovers and the photo of Fonda are, when taken together, represented as a 'letter to Jane'. Perhaps Godard is beginning to see the edges of the photograph, the rectangles of the print of the film, and the rectangles of the screen's frame as types of 'letters': mediums to be filled with text and conveyed to and from distant locations. This method of communication has been increasingly apparent even in the titles of the films of this period; they seem to ask and answer questions that are common in letters between friends, but in defiance of temporal limits: '*Comment ça va?*' / '*Tout va bien*'. It is a pattern which can traced back to at least *Lotte in Italia*, where the question was posed: *what's happening?*.

But at the same time, the film is positioned as an indirect analysis of the preceding *Tout va bien*. The film-essay's central argument (or the main concern of the film-letter) is that Fonda played a journalist for the media during her time in Vietnam, similarly to how she had played a journalist for Godard and Gorin in *Tout va bien*. Her pose in the photograph is a performance for the camera, they argue (Gorin addresses Jane directly: 'You are an actress. We are all actors in this stage of history'[240]). They will therefore offer a sustained textual commentary on the photo – and to some extent a film review. Since the photograph moved through space and time around the world when it was first published and distributed, as Godard and Gorin repeatedly emphasise, they see it as having ended up as a sort of film (albeit a film that is complicit in the dominant system of representation); after all, a film consists of the rapid procession of still images. Godard appears to now see his films as part of a cybernetically networked mass communications system, which sends audio-visual 'letters' back and forth around the world, with political organisation as the message. In this frame, praxis becomes

[240] 12.33.

both the message and the medium (the question and the answer) and must be considered accordingly (fig. 23).

The photo originally appeared in *L'Express* in early August 1972 as a news item; Godard and Gorin inform the viewer that they will attempt to intervene in the situation of this image as it has been previously presented. But simultaneously, they wish to intervene in their own constructed image: the film *Tout va bien*. They explain that in the press pack for *Tout va bien*, they included this photograph instead of stills from the film itself. Godard suggests that (a) *Letter to Jane* 'will enable [them] to talk in a more concrete way about the problems raised in *Tout va bien*'.[241] This postscript film is thus a 'direct detour'[242] from the earlier film. Viewers should in turn, it is suggested, analyse the image of Fonda in Vietnam for themselves.[243]

'This photograph answers the same question that [*Tout va bien*] is asking: what part should intellectuals play in the revolution? To this question, the photograph gives a practical answer. The answer it gives is its practice.'[244] If this film answers a question that *Tout va bien* asks, it should be added that the 'letter to Jane' is also a letter to the character she plays in *Tout va bien*. The filmmakers are thus using the film as a vehicle to travel to Vietnam, but also to travel to the news media-space of the photograph and critique it, and to travel to the fictional world they created, to reflexively engage in self-critique (fig. 24).

Gorin tells the viewer that they intend to travel to Vietnam by their own means,[245] which they define as the 'technical means we work with, and the way we use them socially' in both Paris

[241] *Letter to Jane: An Investigation about a Still* (France, 1972). Included as a special feature on the DVD release of *Tout va bien* by Arrow Films, 2017. Timestamp: 00.27.
[242] 00.59.
[243] 01.21.
[244] 01.41.
[245] 06.29.

and Vietnam. 'For once, we will not be alone. The spectator will be there too. He will be a producer at the same time he is a consumer, and we will be consumers as the same time we are producers.'[246] As Gorin describes the spectator becoming a producer, the screen is blank: again, a film-blackboard manifests for the audience. The film thus seeks to enact multiple political and cinematic movements simultaneously, and to do so virtually and physically. The camera moves around in the famous photograph throughout the film, carefully and audio-visually deconstructing its meaning as a photograph and as a piece of inadvertent propaganda.

Twenty minutes into *Letter to Jane* – which is less than fifty-two minutes long – Godard and Gorin are still laying out their methodology. They will refer to Fonda not by her name, Gorin announces, but 'in the third person' as 'the actress' or 'the militant.'[247] He explains that this is to show that they are not attacking her personally. This decision has a depersonalising effect, giving her a representative value that exists apart from her celebrity sex symbol status. They elaborate on the photograph's provenance: it was taken by Joseph Kraft at the request of the North Vietnamese Government; they discuss the role of authorship for reporters of *L'Express* and note that *L'Express* has not made direct contact with Vietnamese fighters. Godard argues that 'this photograph, like any photograph, is physically mute. It talks through the mouth of the text written beneath it. This text does not emphasise, does not repeat, because a photograph speaks and says things in its own way.'[248] This is an attempt to bring nuance to the discussion of the photograph and to the textual reporting, and to the relationship between the report and the wider world it describes (as they did not speak to the

[246] 06.32-06.44.
[247] 20.39.
[248] 22.07.

Vietnamese themselves). The text accompanying the photo, they suggest, should say 'Jane Fonda listening', not 'Jane Fonda questioning'.

This is an overtly philological approach: they are correcting the textual commentary that appeared with the photograph and offering suggestions that they feel more accurately represent its historical circumstances. Later, they discuss its original source, Joseph Kraft, and Godard asks the viewer to consider his visual and ideological perspective on the scene in front of him and the assumptions he made in constructing his shot:

> What should we think, then, of the moderation of Joseph Kraft, who took a moderate view of his contradiction, set the lens opening, and measured the focal distance accordingly? It was all carefully measured, as we have seen in relation to his choice of frame, and he intentionally set the focus on the star in militant activities, in order to obtain a certain product, a certain ideological merchandise, and once more, with a deliberate aim in mind. [249]

This phrase 'deliberate aim' again conflates the camera with a gun and brings the ideological issues at stake in the creation and distribution of this 'merchandise' into focus. Godard deconstructs the photograph further by explaining the significance of its foreground and background staging, and the significance of its low angle. In the history of cinema, this angle is not innocent, he suggests; he refers the viewer back to the films of Orson Welles for more information (or instruction) on this technique.[250] The techniques associated with fictional films are seen here as potentially treacherous practices, which embed themselves as an unspoken language into the photograph and will often go unnoticed by a viewer that is used to them. He notes the significance of the photo's focus on Fonda *looking*, rather than in relation to the Vietnamese person she is *looking at*.[251] Godard argues that this is intended to

[249] 28.44-29.14.
[250] 23.54.
[251] 24.40.

emphasise Fonda's star status. He notes that the American is in focus 'sharp and clear', while the Vietnamese man in the background is not; the other Vietnamese person who stands in a significant position in the frame has their back to the camera. Fonda is thus emphasised by the camera as the important figure, the one who is looking. The Vietnamese, Gorin explains, are thus forced to take their own detour to Vietnam in this photograph, through the eyes of an American.[252]

But, Godard continues, the filmmakers have had a revelation: that the Vietnamese man in the background is 'sharply' or 'clearly out of focus'.[253] This, Godard argues, is because Vietnam wishes to emphasise the presence and perspective of the American actress in Vietnam, after spending a significant amount of time in the spotlight before her. 'The American is obliged to focus clearly on his real lack of clarity.'[254] Revolutionary music swells as he reveals their revelation, intended as a strong hint to the audience that they might be investigating correctly. They have found a contradiction in the photograph, they point out, which they are now resolving through their investigation.

But there are yet more paradoxical circumstances to discover in images of Jane Fonda. Godard compares the photo to another of her, which appeared on the cover of *L'Express*.[255]

'This cover composition is very revealing, if one is willing to see that a photograph can cover up just as much as it reveals. The photograph imposes silence as it speaks', he argues.[256] The

[252] 28.03.
[253] 30.13.
[254] 30.36.
[255] 30.38.
[256] 30.52.

image physically 'covered up' (that is, appearing on the reverse cover of *L'Express*) is of the Marlboro Man. Beneath the image of Fonda, then, is another icon from American pop mythology, a part of the country's national fiction (or the stories it tells about itself). This image, however, is usually considered part of the conservative mythos of heroic, stoic movie cowboys. They thus imply that a right-wing ideology lurks beneath the images of the American revolutionary icon (fig. 25).

Gorin expands on Godard's point: 'In our opinion, this is one of the working principles of the two-faced form, Jekyll and Hyde, principle and interest that information-deformation takes on when it is transmitted by images and sounds in our epoch – which is that of the decline of imperialism and of the general tendency toward revolution'.[257] The expression 'two-faced' is a layered pun: the two faces could refer literally to Fonda and the unnamed Vietnamese soldier, or to Fonda and the Marlboro Man; a 'two-faced' concept might also be something which conceals and reveals, and would therefore figure the paradoxical nature of American representations of the war. 'Two-faced' can also explicitly mean hypocritical and could therefore refer to the moral significance of the image. The aim of their deconstruction is to point out that the seemingly silent image can itself deconstruct reality in the process of constructing it; and the image itself could be a material part of the decline of imperialism and the rise of revolution. Godard and Gorin present dual interpretations of the significance of the cowboy: he could be the right-wing ideology lurking behind Fonda and threatening the revolution; or he could be hierarchically deferred to the back, behind Fonda, and thus be a sign of the deterioration of imperialist ideology; or he could be both at the same time.

[257] 31.03-31.23

They return to their sustained deconstruction of the photograph of Fonda in Vietnam and discuss the relative meanings of Fonda and the Vietnamese men in the frame. The soldier's face requests a reverse-shot, they argue, while Fonda's face asks to stand on its own in the frame. Godard suggests that '[Fonda's face] is a working model of [the] Cartesian thought process: I think, therefore I am. The same that inspired the statue of *The Thinker*, by Rodin'.[258] Stars are not allowed to think, Gorin adds; the photograph is a 'small screw' in the mechanism of the Vietnamese side of the war – it represents an answer to US war crimes.[259] It is possible that their reference to Rodin's *The Thinker* is inspired by Gilbert Ryle's use of the figure in the 1968 essay 'The Thinking of Thoughts: What is *le Penseur* thinking?', in which 'thick descriptions' or contextual cultural frames are deemed necessary to understand the thinking of thoughts; 'I suggest that at least part of the thick description of what *le Penseur* is trying to do in saying things to himself is that he is trying, by success/failure tests, to find out whether or not the things that he is saying would or would not be utilisable as leads or pointers.'[260] Ryle's partial summary of his argument could also summarise much of what Godard and Gorin intend for *Letter to Jane*: that it is pedagogical, open-ended, and exploratory. The sculpture is appropriated (from art and from philosophy, if we assume there is a direct reference to Ryle as well as to Rodin) to be a theoretical object speaking back within the frame.

Godard argues that, finally, Fonda is an American actress playing the part of someone helping in the Vietnamese war effort. At the end of the film, the men characterise her as a 'militant actress'. Gorin suggests that the lesson of the photograph is that we must listen to Vietnam before speaking about it. Americans should keep their mouths shut, he says, as Vietnamese

[258] 43.52.
[259] 46.43.
[260] Gilbert Ryle, 'The thinking of thoughts: what is *le Penseur* doing?' in *Collected Essays 1929-1968* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009) 508.

singing overwhelms his voice and thus, from the perspective of the filmmakers, enacts an instructive example of what he demands.[261]

It is interesting that Godard and Gorin refer to Fonda as 'Jane' when they address her directly but refer to her as 'the actress' when discussing the image. There is a feminist issue at stake here, which the two men acknowledge directly throughout the film: Fonda might be 'hurt' by the perceived attack on her 'acting'; she might feel that men are once again targeting a woman, and they hope that ultimately she will 'answer [their] letter' by viewing it when it arrives in the United States. They address her in English throughout, presumably intending to address her – and all Americans – in their own language. But even though they acknowledge the feminist issue with the film, they do not resolve or exorcise it. By returning to the wider historical and mediatic context of the photographs of Fonda in Vietnam published in the 1970s (including the most notorious one, in which Fonda sits on top of an anti-aircraft gun intended to shoot at American helicopters and planes) it might be possible to see the problem more clearly.

In Ken Burns and Lynn Nowack's documentary television series *The Vietnam War* (2017), Marine Corporal John Musgrave discusses the so-called 'Hanoi Jane' photographs and how they were received by Americans at the time. He is incisive on the reasons that Fonda's actions were considered particularly offensive: 'She was held to a different standard of conduct, for being our dream girl. It was like our dream girl betrayed us'.[262] It is difficult not to see similarities between Musgrave's perspective on Fonda and that of Godard and Gorin, even though they approach her from different points on the political spectrum. Godard is

[261] 51.41.
[262] Ken Burns and Lynn Nowack, *The Vietnam War* (series) Season 1, Episode 6, 'A Disrespectful Loyalty' 22.20.

exerting control over the representation of the desirable female form in *Letter to Jane*, just as he did to Anna Karina in *Vivre sa vie*. The titles of both films can be seen as ironic here: neither Karina nor her character are able to 'live their life' how they would wish, and the 'letter to Jane' sent by the filmmakers is in fact a set of instructions for Jane on how she should behave in the future.[263]

The directors carefully outline the power that the Vietnamese should have over representations of their actions and culture, but do not afford Fonda quite the same personal agency; instead, she is objectified (and even directly compared to a sculpture). 'I am not the director in Vietnam', Godard argued, but he does attempt it, nevertheless. This could be perceived as an inevitable consequence of a wider system that oppresses, but it emerges as a frustratingly determinist approach to understanding Fonda's position of privilege. In this reading, nothing she says can be salvaged; she is a blank space onto which Godard and Gorin can project their critique of American political interventions. She becomes a canvas without agency, or a silent object to their critical subject. Or, as Jonathan Dawson puts it, 'certainly the intensity of a film consisting of a still picture and two ideologues berating the subject of the picture has something of the feeling of a show trial about it.'[264]

Godard, as so often in the past, attempts to construct and to deconstruct images in the same filmic movement. In *Vivre sa vie*, he operates in the realm of fiction; in *Letter to Jane*, he grapples with a factual image which has borrowed, he claims, the representative language of

[263] It could be argued that Bobby Seale receives similar treatment in *Vladimir et Rosa*, as his skin becomes emblematic of the 'film-blackboard', presumably without his consent. But in this case, we could at least add that a black actor was an active participant in the film, while *Letter to Jane* was made without the participation of Jane herself.

[264] Jonathan Dawson, 'Letter to Jane', *Senses of Cinema*, February 2002 (archived) https://web.archive.org/web/20101225074939/http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/01/19/letter.html Accessed via archive 14 June 2020.

film stardom and film fiction to organise its appearance to the world. But Jonathan Rosenbaum pointed out in a contemporary review that 'the paradox of *Letter to Jane*, like so much of Godard's post-1968 work, is that it reveals a poetic sensibility attempting to divest itself of poetry with little more than poetic intuition as its guide.'[265]

It might help to return to Fonda for 'direction' on Vietnam. She criticised Burns and Novick's documentary series as overly conservative:

> "I can't stand it," Fonda said. "I can't stand it. I am so disappointed. [Burns] did not understand the role that the American antiwar movement played in the ending of the war."
>
> Fonda continued, "It was not good, and I totally respect him. I think 'The Civil War' is one of the great documentaries ever made of American history, but I thought he missed it on the Vietnam War. He did not get it. And for some reason, I don't know why -- was he trying to bend over backwards to be objective? I don't know. But he didn't talk to people."
>
> Fonda, whose antiwar activities are mentioned in the Burns/Novick documentary, said, "I didn't expect to be in the movie. I didn't want to be in the movie," but she emphasized that the Burns and Novick film didn't reflect the full story.
>
> "Ending the war was a three-legged stool," Fonda said. "The Vietnamese themselves, international opinion, and the American antiwar movement."[266]

It is interesting to note that Fonda returns to a somewhat Godardian view of the Vietnam war and representation; that is to say, that the frame that America has placed around Vietnam (Vietnam as a place and 'Vietnam' as synecdoche for the Vietnam War) has limited its ability

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[265] Jonathan Rosenbaum, 'Letter to Jane (1975 review)'. Originally printed in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (July 1975), text posted to jonathanrosenbaum.net 27 September 2019. https://www.jonathanrosenbaum.net/2019/09/letter-to-jane-1975-review/ Accessed 14 June 2020.

[266] Jane Fonda, interviewed by Kristi Turnquist. The quotation is from the article by Kristi Turnquist, 'Jane Fonda on HBO film, and Ken Burns' Vietnam War documentary: "I can't stand it"', *The Oregonian/Oregon Live*, September 19, 2018, Updated January 29, 2019. https://www.oregonlive.com/tv/2018/09/jane_fonda_talk_hbo_film_and_k.html Accessed 14 June 2020.

to disclose itself fully to the rest of the world and has therefore limited the rest of the world's understanding of it. For her part, Fonda claims never to have seen *Letter to Jane*.

iv. Expanding Cinema: the political films of Sonimage (1976)

Letter to Jane represented Godard and Gorin's final collaboration, and Godard quickly began yet another, this time with his partner, the photographer Anne-Marie Miéville. Albertine Fox has described their shift, as Sonimage, towards a focus on technology and the changing landscape of mass communications:

> The Miéville-Godard collaboration officially began in 1973 when Godard created the Sonimage studio in Paris and when Miéville was made the company's legal representative. Soon afterwards Miéville and Godard re-located to Grenoble and it was here that they conducted some of their pioneering research into video technology, tape-speed alteration and slow-motion. Setting up their own production company (likewise called Sonimage – literally 'Soundimage'), and unhooking themselves from the pull of the French capital, Miéville and Godard found a way of working freely and autonomously in a self-sustaining environment outside the mainstream film industry. Together, they set up what was in effect a workshop of sounds and images, purchasing televisions, monitors, cameras and a photocopier to experiment with.[267]

Its experimental, forward-looking intentions are obvious; but the production company's compound name also indicates a return for Godard to intermediality as a tool of intervention and critique. However, the didactic concerns of his period in the DVG have not disappeared. In *Comment ça va?* (1976), the representative value of the film-blackboard is carried forward once again, as a boss and his secretary consider how to collaborate on making a film in their newspaper plant. Their hierarchical relationship is made obvious: the male boss keeps

[267] Albertine Fox, 'Love and work differently: Anne-Marie Miéville's cinema of companionship', *Sight and Sound* (web exclusive), BFI Online, updated 20 June 2018, https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/features/love-work-differently-anne-marie-mieville-s-cinema Accessed 24 November 2020.

attempting to take charge, while the woman is expected to perform the work of a stenographer at her typewriter. The male character is clearly associated with the 'figure' and the 'message' of communication, while the female character is the 'ground', context, and 'medium' of communication. It should be noted that Godard has acted to restore a female critical perspective to this film's camera, as Miéville is his co-director as well as the actress playing the role of the secretary, Odette.

Most of *Comment ça va?* is concerned with the apparatus of media, and how verbal language might work for and against the revolutionary in this context. The typewriter – a piece of equipment declining into obsolescence – is featured prominently; it is seen at length as Miéville's character writes an article on one of Godard's now-familiar concerns: 'how things are going'.[268] But digital communication techniques also manifest onscreen, and Godard's increasing interest in cybernetics (that is, an interest in how information is communicated and controlled in an increasingly virtualised and complex technological context) becomes apparent. In fact, Godard's interest seems to be in second-order cybernetics: a recursive form of cybernetics which attempts to account for the interrelated frames between observer and observed in a system of communication. Second-order cybernetics 'completes the picture through an operational closure that includes the act of observation as part of the system being observed,' as Gene Youngblood put it in *Expanded Cinema* (1970).[269] Youngblood's book explored the emergent genre of video art, and he concluded that an expanded definition of cinema and multi-mediality would be required in the new computer age (and, it might

[268] *Comment ça va?* 12.00.
[269] Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema: 50th Anniversary Edition* (New York, NY.: Fordham University Press, 2020) Introduction to the Fiftieth Anniversary Edition, xxii.

therefore be said, a new understanding for Godard of the nature of formal reflexivity and implication in the work of his cinematic frame).

The beginning of the film shows a block cursor moving around the words on the black screen, and the text tells the audience that *Comment ça va?* is 'a film between activity and passivity'. Godard thus moves towards an even more minute and specific figuration of the nature of political and cinematic movement. Now, he intends to explore the silence and darkness that exists even in the spaces between his own words (fig. 26). Sight, blindness and darkness are significant metaphors in *Comment ça va?*; the film cuts to a close-up of the journalist's eyes as he reads the article written by Odette, and she encourages him to 'look' as she does, with the typewriter.[270] Odette describes the act of writing as though blind, and feeling her way through the darkness.[271] Darkness is represented as a space in which new meaning can be found and created (and where the old ways of looking and communicating can be escaped), if one will move forward into it. As he is also being watched by the audience as she speaks, the film also encourages the audience to feel their way through the darkness of the film screening as though blind; and thus, to both find and create meaning themselves. The concept of the film-blackboard (that is, the sustained metaphor of blackness as potentially disclosive) has not disappeared with the demise of the DVG; its interventionist quality, as a tool for writing as well as for reading, persists.

The difficulties of creating a satisfying work of art could be seen as familiarly modernist, and *Comment ça va?* does have echoes of Godard's early political works: 'Language is the place where the torturer turns the victim into another torturer'[272] Odette says, in a phrase

[270] 17.35.
[271] 17.26.
[272] 18.48.

reminiscent of *Le petit soldat* and Bruno's account of his torture at the hands of his revolutionary captors. In this film, the victim's perspective is seen to be assimilated by the torturer if the torturer is the one to give the surviving account of it later. The victim's suffering is implicated into the wider context of a brutal communications system, which includes individuals as nodes in its structure; they are not controlling it, but are part of its totalising, violent 'language'.

Sonimage appears to put the cart before the horse in their understanding of the nature of mediatised communication: 'In my opinion, there is not Portugal first then the typewriter. There is a typewriter first and then a Portugal which enters this machine', the journalist says.[273] The machine that processes the information is thus seen as nodal, but a node which also transforms the reality of that which it is used to describe, because the ideological perspective of the journalist transforms it. This new version of reality is then presented to its readers, and its language is taken as fact. Written language is taken to be an inevitable collaborator in this assessment; later in the film, the typewriter's clicks sound like the rapid fire of a machine gun.[274]

When a photo of an injured Vietnamese fighter is shown, it is addressed sardonically: 'Hi, how's it going? How is it not going? Step by step. How is it printed on my mind?'.[275] The greeting is obscene in this context, forcing the viewer to understand that the war is still 'going', beyond what appears (or does not appear) in print and in television news reports, and that it is still having consequences for unseen figures. But the question also raises the issue of what is 'working' and 'not working' politically. Rather than being passive receivers of

[273] 21.16
[274] 01.06.02.
[275] 57.59.

information on Vietnam, the viewer is encouraged to engage with how the war is being fought, and how it should be fought. At the end of the film, the opening text is seen again, but transformed: the film is now 'A film between the actor and the spectator'.[276] The viewer has been subsumed into the film's medium and into its message, and is now positioned as part of the language of the film: as a node that also receives, processes and transmits information beyond itself (and which is now self-aware, and aware of the interrelated frames between observer and observed). Finally, the block cursor moves around without any text, in darkness. The film-blackboard thus writes in darkness and silence, as the viewer is left to process what they have seen.

With the documentary *Ici et ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*, 1976), Godard and Miéville present a critique of a film which never happened: *Jusqu'a la Victoire*, which the DVG had been shooting before its dissolution. As *Ici et ailleurs* refers to a film that exists only as fragments within its own narrative, it could therefore be said to be even more reflexive than *Letters to Jane*; *Ici et ailleurs* is a film about a film within a film. The reflexive loops tighten yet again.

The film depicts the struggles of Palestinian fighters and their families, contrasting them with the everyday experiences of a French family. Unusually, Miéville translates the Arabic speakers' words herself in the first few minutes of the film, from within the voiceover. In this way, she weaves herself and the speakers together in the representational flow of images, representing herself as part of the overall struggle. She informs the audience that the speaker is saying that they will achieve peace with the gun. Godard and Miéville conflate the gun and the camera yet again by including this concept, using the paradox the fighter poses as their linguistic weapon. This film will be, they argue, the people's war '…extended. Until victory.

[276] 01.13.58.

And this is what one, what he, what I what she, what you had filmed elsewhere'.[277] 'Elsewhere' is various Middle Eastern countries, different times, and different circumstances; it is also the Dziga Vertov Group and their original intentions for the footage they collected. 'Here' is France, Godard and Miéville, the current moment, and the new edition of the film.

Ici et ailleurs, then, will confront the 'contradictions' of dealing with both here and elsewhere as a revolutionary Marxist. The film cuts rapidly between the preparations Arab militants were making for attacks and their outcomes later on (that is, to close-ups of bloodied bodies), so that the edit seems to shoot them itself.[278] These events have already occurred, the film points out, and their outcomes are known: 'almost all the actors are dead', a text screen announces.[279] Another text screen tells the audience that 'death is represented in this film by a flow of images'.[280] The words *la mort* and *images* flash in unison, linking the two through figuration in the film's form. The film adds: 'A flow of images and sounds that hide silence'. *Sons* (sounds) and *silence* flash in unison.[281] '…A silence that becomes deadly because it's prevented from getting out alive.'[282] *Silence* and *vivant* (living) both flash on the screen. The film has a fatalism imposed on it, but also allows the 'actors' and their beliefs to come back to life, on a representational level at least, through the film and its visibility to the wider world. This resurrection is represented visually, it could be suggested, through the pulsating words on the screen (and on a representational level, it is enacted by them; and by the images tied to them by the rest of the film).

[277] *Ici et ailleurs*, 06.07.
[278] 08.15.
[279] 08.45.
[280] 09.29.
[281] 09.49.
[282] 10.11.

'Maybe in a thousand and one days, Scheherazade will tell this differently',[283] the filmmakers suggest in text. The words *Scheherazade* and *autrement* (differently) flash. They admit that they have an outsider's perspective on the Middle Eastern conflict; at the same time, by mentioning Scheherazade they bring to their frame a symbol of the Arab world's literary history. The reference also includes an implicit acknowledgement that political stories can (or must) be told from multiple perspectives, as Scheherazade told a thousand stories over a thousand and one nights as part of her struggle for her life. In the following sequence, the audience hears a poem in untranslated Arabic: this perspective from 'elsewhere' becomes less accessible to the average Western viewer. The speaker is heard over the sound of gunfire and images of a bloody corpse. In this way, the filmmakers filmically enact the Palestinians taking back land, images, and their history for themselves, by reclaiming them with art and language combined with images and representations of historical events.

But Sonimage acknowledges that there has still been a failure of representation: 'What finally happened in this film happens in any US or Soviet movie.'[284] The crew is seen to place images from the movie on to a white wall. The selectivity of film narrative is (literally) highlighted: 'Here, you see all of the images together. You see them separately, one after the other. Which results in… [*The projector starts, and the lights go down, highlighting only part of the sequence of images*]'.[285] This sequence visualises the ideological nature of editing, and the narrative created by the apparent 'flow' of a film. It also highlights the formal paradox of film: a film consists of a series of still images which, when projected in rapid succession, appear to move. Godard describes the images replacing each other, and the film represents this by having the

[283] 10.28.
[284] 19.58.
[285] 20.21.

crew queueing behind each other, holding up images to a camera positioned at the front of the queue (fig. 27).[286] This could be interpreted as a deconstructed image of the collective action frame in motion, which depicts a failure of action but which also, by doing so, attempts to transform the failure and obligate it to transmit a revolutionary action beyond itself.

Godard describes how a film can be moving and yet keep and hold on to memories. The actors, as they diligently troop past the camera with the images in front of them, might be seen as a parody of how Godard and the DVG originally tried to represent the complex Palestinian conflict.[287] Time and space, it is now suggested, are not as amenable to representation in a filmic form as they might seem at first glance:

> All in all, time has replaced space and speaks for it. Or rather, space is recorded on the film in another form. Which isn't quite space, but a translation, a feeling of that space. That is, time. And the film, which is a chain of images, gives a good account, through the images, of my double identity. Space and time. Each chained to the other, like two production-line workers, where each is both the original and the copy of the other.[288]

In this instance, space represents freedom: it both represents and constitutes the capacity for positive change. Space can be occupied and can be enjoyed. Black space in Godard's political films has often been seen as blank space, full of potential to teach and to hold within itself a political event. But the people's will and creativity both require movement, which extends through time. Spaces are also chained together through time: cinema, as a chained series of photographs, moves through time; but as time runs out, its progress can thwart revolutionary ambitions (whether militant or cinematic). As the audience has been told, time has resulted in the deaths of most of the 'actors' in *Jusqu'a la Victoire*, and its failure as a revolutionary

[286] 20.56.
[287] 21.40.
[288] 21.57-23.02.

film. The revolution cannot simply be framed and captured as a movement and thus remains elusive to the filmmaker.

Godard suggests that the issue of capturing political truths is a cybernetic one; that is, how is this information to be effectively captured, processed and transmitted to others? How is a thoughtful critical faculty to be maintained in the media flow, which is overwhelming daily life? The voiceover describes how 'little by little, we're being replaced by chains of uninterrupted images. [*Cuts to a shot of multiple TVs, showing various distractions, including sport and news reports*] Enslaving one another. Each image in its place, as we are, each in his place, in the chain of events over which we have lost all control.'[289] The film cuts to the French family watching TV, clearly implicating their passive reception of sounds and images into the restrictive chain of images and viewers.

The DVG's response to these circumstances did not effectively capture the discourse within the images, Sonimage suggests. The words 'HERE AND ELSEWHERE (IMAGE AND SOUND)' appear on screen. The previous attempt to make the film is criticised further: 'We did what many do, record the image with the sound too loud. [*Voices are heard singing loudly, and a hand is seen turning up the volume*] With any image. Vietnam [*The hand turns the sound to zero*]. Prague. Montevideo [*The sound is turned back up again*] May '68, France. Italy… […] The sound so loud, it ends up drowning out the voice it wanted to draw out of the image.'[290] If the 'elsewhere' is to be brought to the 'here' effectively, they suggest, then the sound of revolutionary discourse must be brought to the image, but not overwhelm it.

[289] 36.30.
[290] 36.56-37.54.

Miéville speaks while a child is seen among ruins, shouting a resistance poem by Mahmoud Darwish. She critiques the scene, actor and set.[291] She also asks if this 'drama' is truly as innocent as it appears, pointing out that Godard directed some of the scenes filmed with Palestinians as though he were directing fiction (for example, he asked a young woman to pretend she was pregnant for one sequence). 'You always see the one who is directed, and never the one directing. The one who commands and gives orders is never seen.'[292] The director here is represented as taking the same position to the image as the capitalist (that is, as the most powerful node of transmission in a hierarchical system, as the master to those who are directed) if the director allows themselves to be subsumed into a flow of discursive, framing images.

At the end of the film, Miéville describes the Munich hostage crisis, and how it was 'directed' by terrorists for television consumption. But she is critical of their methods: 'For them as for us, it's silly to die for an image. And we're a little scared.'[293] In some ways, this statement is the culmination of Godard's period of de-radicalisation post-DVG. While Godard and Miéville still have revolutionary concerns, and still consider it important to empower the image to hold within itself useful forms of investigation, it is apparently no longer deemed necessary for the camera to incite violence. But it must, they maintain, bring the truth of political violence done to others, in distant places and times, back to Westerners 'here'.

Antoine de Baecque suggests that with *Jusqu'à la Victoire*, Godard had originally intended to make up for the 'lost time' he had spent making *Le petit soldat* instead of a film supporting

[291] 38.24.
[292] 42.31.
[293] 45.03.

the FLN.[294] The work of Godard's post-1968 'wilderness years' can be characterised as a series of film manifestoes; not simply as manifestoes that were filmed, however, but as films that sought to push at the limits of representation and which attempted to enact the ideas they described and investigated in order to create events, or at least to create conditions and contexts in which events could manifest. These films might also be understood as political demonstrations which intervene on reality in order to disrupt its usual functions (the French word for such demonstrations, *manifestations*, represents the image-related ambitions of the films more directly).

The opening of *Lotte in Italia* posed a seemingly straightforward question: 'what's going on?' It echoes, as I have suggested, the titles of later Godard films and dialogue from this period (*Comment ça va?*, *Tout va bien*). Each is a mundane phrase appropriated for political purposes; the films could be said to be incorporated into a *film-fleuve* of communications which both intrudes on a mediatised culture and incorporates it back into its system of investigation. This does not mean, however, that Godard's post-'68 radical period is remembered as successful. Hazanavicius' biopic *Redoubtable* (based on the memoirs of Godard's ex-wife, Anne Wiazemsky) depicts it as an affectation, taken up by a contrarian who had not only failed to bring about a revolution in May '68, but who, in being rejected by the young students protesting around him, had failed to even incorporate himself fully into the protests as they occurred. In March 1966, the Situationist International had dismissed 'Le rôle de Godard' as one of 'formal pseudofreedom' and 'pseudocritique' and placed him in the

[294] 'Godard semble vouloir rattraper le temps perdu dix ans auparavant, quand il réalisait *Le petit soldat* au lieu d'un film de soutien au FLN.' Antoine de Baecque, *Godard: Biographie* (Paris: Grasset and Fasquelle, 2010) 469.

same dated modernist category as '[Louis] Aragon-the-Senile'.[295] They described a Godard locked in repetitive expressions of subjective experience, which passively received and transmitted images from the mass media:

> Repetitions of the same clumsy stupidities in his films are automatically seen as breathtaking innovations. They are beyond any attempt at explanation; his admirers consume them as confusedly and arbitrarily as Godard produced them, because they recognize in them the consistent expression of a *subjectivity*. This is true, but it is a subjectivity on the level of a concierge educated by the mass media.[296]

Their critique came after *Le petit soldat*, but before *La Chinoise*; it predicts (and perhaps helped to provoke) his subsequent political and aesthetic concern: negotiating his position as a political filmmaker, and his films' positions as political films, in the increasing media 'flow' of images and sounds. For Godard, this required a symbolic murder-suicide, as he sought to divest himself of a subjective camera-pen which was implicated in the circular 'repetitions' of mass media communications. However, even in the supposedly objective, or at least disembodied position of an anonymised radical filmmaking collective, the 'role of Godard' – his formal interest in the interplay between the eyes of the filmmaker, the camera, its subjects and its audiences, and how these perspectives are implicated into a film and into the wider world – can still be discerned.

While his films of this period are often too strident and harsh, in form and in content, to be considered among the best of his oeuvre, they represent an important aspect of his development as a filmmaker. By ostensibly disembodying his own perspective from that of his camera, he positions his films as tools of investigation within the temporal and spatial

[295] 'Le rôle de Godard' originally appeared in *Internationale Situationniste* #10 (Paris, March 1966). This translation by Ken Knabb is from the *Situationist International Anthology*, Revised and Expanded Edition, (Berkeley, CA.: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006) 228.
[296] Ibid.

loops of the postmodern condition, to be grasped and utilised by a revolutionary viewer; he seemingly performs his resistance to serving as a 'concierge' of images on behalf of the system in which he is implicated (and a consequent collapse into circularity or tautology). However, as the resulting films are often sloganeering, repetitive film-statements, much of this body of work begins to resemble a Maoist 'struggle session', in which Godard tries to break out of his 'bourgeois', modernist tendency towards hyper-reflection not through effectively grasping a movement or through teaching the viewer to see, but by joylessly co-enforcing an ideological framework and by 'torturing' himself through an exaggerated act of supposed erasure.

Daniel Morgan points out that revolutionary filmmakers are often assumed to have turned away from politics after the 1960s and the perceived failure of 'revolutionary energy across international borders.'[297] But he identifies a broader cultural shift from grappling with revolutionary politics to grappling with the history of cinema:

> This shift has seemed to critics as a kind of withdrawal from politics, a refusal to engage with the world […] by contrast, I think that it amounts instead to a different way of engaging with politics, one that attempts to 'come to terms with a legacy of revolutionary violence, historical upheavals and radical transformations.' [298]

His description recalls Brody's identification of an earlier 'defiant withdrawal' by Godard post-May '68, as well as the refusal to engage with the world sensed by Marcorelles and Callenbach early in Godard's career. Here, however, Morgan recognises that the shift does not exactly constitute a withdrawal, but another change in perspective. I would further argue that this subsequent period of Godard's political filmmaking had an evaluative, as well as investigative tone. While Morgan explores Godard's 'different way of engaging' in *Allemagne 90 Neuf Zéro*,

[297] Daniel Morgan, 'On Historical Violence and Aesthetic Form: Jean-Luc Godard's *Allemagne 90 Neuf Zéro*' in *Killer Images: Documentary Film, Memory and the Performance of Violence* eds. Joram Ten Brink and Joshua Oppenheimer (London and New York, NY.: Wallflower Press, 2012) 152.
[298] Ibid.

I will explore it in the context of the lecture-series-turned-TV-series *Histoire(s) du cinema* and consider how Godard widened his focus to French history, cinema, and the Second World War. In *Histoire(s)*, Godard ambitiously aims to tell the stories of history and of cinema to demonstrate that they are temporally and spatially interrelated, even intermedial; that they are therefore mutually implicated into each other, both materially and ethically; and that this interrelationship persists in the long aftermath of the Second World War.

v. The guillotine of meaning: *Histoire(s) du cinéma*

The word 'history' holds within itself various possible definitions. It can refer to important past events ('the historical battles that took place here') or refer to the reconstruction of these events within a narrative ('the history of the Second World War'). In this way, the word encompasses both the event and the recounting of it. In English, the etymological link with 'story' is visible; in French, as Antoine de Baecque point out in *Camera Historica*, the word 'histoire' can itself have either meaning. In the scope of the word the postmodern condition of the event is apparent: the word that represents a past event can also encompass commentary on that event. Or as Godard puts it: '*De ce qui n'a jamais eu lieu est le travail de l'historien*' ('That which never happened is the work of the historian').[299]

[299] *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (TV series), dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France: Gaumont, 1988-98) DVD released by Artificial Eye, 2008. Timestamp: Episode 2a, 02.26.

Histoire(s) du cinéma hangs much of its narrative conceit on this duality: '*Histoires… avec un s*', as Godard puts it.[300] The parenthetical letter *s* gives Godard rhetorical space to evoke more ideas: it suggests the writing and re-writing of history, and the possibility that multiple narratives can describe an event. Additionally, it suggests the possibility of fallaciousness, and the illusory nature of cinematic representations of historical events that have receded into the past. It also hints at the possibility of multiple interpretations drawn from a single narrative source: that of Cinema as an institution. The intertextual relationship between cinema and history (including the 'subtle terracing of time and historical narrative' detected by De Baecque as an element of the 'cinematographic form of history') is visible from the beginning of episode 1a, 'Toutes les histoires', which deconstructs the title of the series as it constructs it in the frame (fig. 28).

This visual division is obviously meant to emphasise the etymological meaning of the word *cinématographe*, as a tool for 'writing' cinema, and to remind the viewer of cinema's significance as a historical text and as a form that can itself write histories. But the separation of the title is also reminiscent of a diagrammed sentence, visually divided so that its grammatical form can be analysed, and its parts understood in relation to each other. The paradoxical ability of cinema to reconstruct movement as it decomposes or 'graphs' it is located even at the beginning of cinema by Jean Rouch: '[Eadweard] Muybridge was able to reconstruct movement by decomposing it with a series of still images, which is to say, to "cinematograph" it'.[301] Godard announces here that he is going to break down cinematic

[300] I have occasionally drawn on 'La « partition » des *Histoire(s) du cinema* de Jean-Luc Godard' by Céline Scemama as a reference for this section of the chapter. The website lists every use of text, image and sound by Godard in the series, in the order in which they appear. From the *Centre de Recherche sur l'Image*, http://cri-image.univ-paris1.fr/celine/celinegodard.html Accessed 20 June 2020.

[301] Jean Rouch, 'The Camera and Man' (originally 'La caméra et les hommes', 1973) in Jean Rouch and Steven Feld, ed., *Ciné-ethnography* (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 30.

texts, but also that he intends to do this in a form that itself will be deconstructed as it is constructed. His methods will be didactic, as he teaches his spectators how to read his text while writing it into history; they will also be formally reflexive and confrontational, as the cinematograph looks back at the audience. He positions himself to develop a history of cinema and a cinematics of history.

His analytical tools are, as they were in his more politically strident periods, going to be at the interface of the visual and the verbal (while constituting a 'sideways glance' at history and cinema, as language is made to stand for images and as video is used to investigate cinema). In episode 1a an image from *Rear Window* appears, of James Stewart's character L. B. 'Jeff' Jefferies with his camera. A man with a magnifying glass appears after it. Vivien Leigh comes after, in a still from behind the scenes in *Gone with the Wind*, a camera behind her peering over her shoulder. Words flash up on the screen, *toi* flickering inside *histoires*. Godard not only mixes verbal and visual puns, but makes verbal puns into visual puns, by writing the critique over the image.

Again, he is performing for the audience, in an intermedial way, the postmodern condition in which cinema now exists. The apparatuses of cinema peer back at the audience in this sequence, emphasising that the subject/object relationship of a film to a viewer, and therefore the framing relationship between film and viewer, is not as simple as it appears. Godard also brings his own figure into the frame for *Histoire(s)*, just as he brings the (idea of the) *cinématographe.* Sitting at his typewriter, he seems to type '*La… Règle… du… jeu…*'. But images from that film do not appear, as the viewer might have expected. Instead, Charlie Chaplin appears – first in a still from a film, then in a short clip, then in a publicity photo. The 'rules of the game' are clearly going to differ from what might have been expected, and

cinema's own history is going to be opened to the audience's critical gaze (from its actors to its filmmakers). The fictional or real qualities of Chaplin as he appears in a film and Chaplin as he appears in a publicity photo are, it appears, not entirely ontologically separate.

The *cinématographe*, holding within itself both a camera and projector, was a self-contained machine for creating stories (and histories). The double reflexivity of postmodernism, subsequently, becomes a function of the modern film camera's development from the *cinématographe*: '…you need two reels to make cinema, as one fills up the other empties […] A movie projector is forced to remember the camera. Cinema is only an industry of escapism because it is the only place where memory is slave.' The evocation of Chaplin in this sequence is associative and dreamlike, mimicking the logic of dreams, memory, and cinema itself.

Again, the viewer is reminded that cinema and history exist on a continuum of reality and fiction, in mutually embedded narratives and perceptions of events. The words 'Every story' flash up on the screen in 1a, Godard again expressing his ambitious artistic desire to show the 'whole' of reality and the 'whole' truth, and not to throw anything away: he will include the stories that have been, will be, could be and could have been. 'Cinema substitutes', he points out, five minutes into the first episode. A clip of a 'burning' man is shown, but it is a trick of perspective, bringing a metaphorical value to the image. Images of Chaplin with a camera are cut between the words 'a gun a girl a film […] a film is a girl and a gun'. In 1b, Godard points out that a multitude of narratives can be substituted into reality: 'Cinema, like Christianity, is not founded on historical truth. It supplies us with a story and says "Now, believe!" […] You have a story here. Don't treat it like history. Give it a place of its own in your life'. Here, the word 'history' means not only the account of a significant event, but the loss of those events

through time; this version of history is distant to the audience and is not an obvious part of everyday life.

In episode 4b, the movements of historical eras are described in undeniably cinematic terms ('…As one century slowly dissolves into the next…'). But television is the medium through which history is seen to pass in the second half of the twentieth century. Godard chooses video as his medium for the *Histoire(s)*, and by doing so, puts himself at a slight remove from the cinematic form that he seeks to portray, and from the world of broadcast TV. Moving into the intimate space of the home, however, he still makes his work to be shown on a shared screen. Michael Witt records that Godard regretted not mounting accompanying exhibitions for his video series and his *Histoire(s)* books, which might have further demonstrated 'the different modes of entering and leaving what one can call History'.[302] This 'entering and leaving' allows Godard to differentiate his perspective while still acknowledging his relationship to the more general flow of 'cool' media, in McLuhan's sense, and to the 'hot' medium of cinema.

In episode 2b, Godard will tell the audience that cinema is 'neither an art not a technique… a mystery…', as he is again seen at his desk. In episode 2a, he suggested that 'It is bigger than other histories because it projects itself – the *cinématographe* – from the inception of cinema'. The word 'projection' is itself projected, metaphorically, in that sequence: Godard describes displaying an enlarged image, but also uses the same imagery to point out how cinema 'projects' itself into history. In this way, projection becomes a metaphor without losing its original signification. The movement of meaning required to make language

[302] Michael Witt, *Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema Historian* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indianapolis University Press, 2013) 6.

metaphorical is as significant as the imagery, as it emphasises how the real world is 'breached' by the imagination; this movement even takes in the director himself. In 2a, the phrase 'to describe precisely' appears over another image of Godard. 'The work of the historian is based on what never happened', he reminds us. The complex relationship of reality to fiction, of history to story, is again made present to the spectator. Appearing in the frame of his series, Godard also makes himself available under the same rules of analysis: to be written and diagrammed by the camera. By embodying himself within his narrative, he ensures that the viewer is reminded of the human perspectives that direct what is seen on screen. Like James Stewart's Jeff with his camera, Godard peers back; by incorporating the figure of Jeff in his film, he does so recursively.

Godard began his series with a dedication, or the expression of a desire: '*que chaque oeil negotie par lui meme*', or 'that every eye negotiates for itself'. In doing so, he was staking out a theoretical spot comparable to that of the *avant-garde* filmmaker Stan Brakhage, who filmed autopsies and titled the resulting documentary short 'The Act of Seeing with One's Own Eyes' (1971). The title came from a literal translation of the word *autopsy*, and the act of filming it overlaid multiple critical ideas: of visually evaluating something for oneself, of trying to reach an independent conclusion about it, and of doing so through the removed perspective of watching a film.

The title of the episode 'Toutes les Histoires', meanwhile, indicates that Godard intends to re-present cinema back to its viewer, but also to make the audience aware that the images they see have their own subjective viewpoints within them, and that this relationship should be consciously 'negotiated'. The paradoxical tension of Brakhage's title comes from its audience not being present at the autopsy they are viewing, so that despite the confrontational,

shocking nature of the images, they are reminded that even though it is visible, they are not literally seeing the event with their own eyes. In this conceit, the eye of the viewer and the apparatus of cinema are both potential tools of dissection. The eye of the viewer should, then, be a weapon that responds to the work done by the camera, projector and screen; in the act of seeing, it should be able to cut through the complex meanings bound up in representation and reality like a scalpel or a bullet cutting through flesh.

The bodies of cinema are seeing and seen, the series suggests, but they are also written and unwritten, at least from the critical perspective: 'And the *caméra-stylo*. Sartre gave the idea to Alexandre Astruc. The camera fell upon the guillotine of meaning and never got back up.' The audience is reminded that cinema has figural weapons, beyond the physical cut that makes the edit and thus the montage (which can make an image appear fast or slow and can incorporate cinema from any time period or country into a single series). Godard also cuts up the act of figuration itself, dissecting the historical *caméra-stylo* to show its inner workings to his viewers, and potentially to divest it of its former power. A woman's voice becomes more prominent in the scene: '…as if the perspective, the vanishing point, had been erased. Strangest of all, the living dead of this world are constructed on the former world'. The reel clicks and spins (fig. 29).[303]

There might be a visual-verbal pun on 'reel' (in its English form) and 'real' in this sequence. But Godard also points out that the cinema can hide realities, especially in the context of unfolding political violence: '…what there is of cinema in wartime reels says nothing, it doesn't judge. Only the erasing hand can write.' In 1a, he also suggested that 'forgetting extermination is part of extermination'. Again, Godard takes the literal act of murder, the

[303] 2b, 08:45.

'erasing hand', and folds it into the figuring act of creating a narrative history in a newsreel. He conflates the techniques of cinema and moral values: 'No close ups. Suffering is not a star,' and highlights the newsreel director's methods: 'An occasional high angle for a mother…'. Through imbuing the image and its formation with mythico-religious meanings, the image is shown to have pulled away from the original event even as it happened.

Other phrases in this sequence express how political events are folded into historical narratives and prioritised according to their visual appeal: 'Kept in its folds,' 'Worthy of entering history.' But they are also remembered by artistic means, or even supplanted by them, so that the representation wins out over the reality: 'We've forgotten the village, but we remember Picasso, that is, *Guernica*'. Godard then briefly mentions George Stevens's role as a cameraman in WWII, and his susequent Hollywood career. The eyes which see historical events first-hand and turn them into narratives, Godard points out, can be the same ones that craft imaginative visions in fictional narratives and artistic works.

Episode 3a begins with flashing images of a soldier with a gun, on the cover of a magazine. Immediately, mass media representations of political violence are set up as the episode's topic, with themselves as acts of violence done to those whose stories they distort. 'Governments accuse us of exaggerating', we are told, as an incredulous response to the glorified imagery that governments prefer. In contrast, Russian news footage was shown in 1a, with the suggestion that its heritage of Eisenstein and Vertov placed it apart from Hollywood and its system of representation: 'Newness of history. History of news. Histoire du cinéma'. The phrase 'Kino Pravda' ('Camera-truth') implies within it the recording of history and extracting stories from reality, and simultaneously existing as the evidence of it (the history of it, and the existing artefacts of what happened). But *Histoire(s)* also questions such

an idea of a 'camera-truth', instead suggesting that television un-teaches its viewers how to look for themselves:

> No stories… when I was inventing. Stories… when I invent nothing. What stories, exactly? The battle of Borodino, and the end of the French domination, as told by Tolstoy. The battle of Baghdad, as told by CNN. The triumph of American television and its groupies. […] Newspapers and television stations show only death and tears. On the other hand, people who watch television all day have no more tears to cry. They've unlearned how to look. What story do we want?[304]

After critiquing the excesses of television as a medium, Godard returns to interrogating what he perceives as the moral duty of cinema to history, and accuses it of failing, like television, to take a perspective and to 'see for itself' during the Second World War. He asks why there was no resistance cinema in France during the war (fig. 30); that is, he clarifies, cinema that resisted occupation by America. Italy, he argues, 'regained the right for a nation to look itself in the eye', referring at once to Italy earning back its dignity by producing innovative films, and Italy's recovery of its reflexive ability to perform the act of looking at itself with its own eyes. France's post-war media, he suggests, was less admirable. Godard describes his malaise when watching the commemorations of the Liberation of France on television, a *grand tralala* or 'great fuss' (fig. 31), and the complex history of collaboration (including that of actors and directors) that such a spectacle ignores (or even serves to cover up):

> Godard: I was alone that night, with my dreams. 50 years later, we celebrate the Liberation. Television, because power has become spectacle, is organising a huge show.
>
> [*Cuts to a scene from* La grande illusion *(Jean Renoir, 1937) of Jean Gabin rushing into a party, shouting 'Stop! Stop!*].

[304] 06.18-06.45.

> Godard (cont.): No decoration for Guy Debord. French cinema never shook off the Germans or Americans, so no one will be there to film Claude Roy, who is seizing the CDC, that citadel built by Vichy. The waves reconstituted by Japanese cameras will again forget to bury the dead, as the poet did.[305]

A newsreel is shown, describing French actors hosted by Germany during the War: '…Under the theme of art, cinema stars are about to leave for Germany', its narration proclaims, over shots of Danielle Darrieux leaving on a train.[306] But Godard also cuts to images of Irene Nemirovsky, the Russian novelist killed in the Holocaust, and of her books. He adds, 'Her train was leaving for Auschwitz'. Nemirovsky had been denied French citizenship, despite living in France for most of her life. Again, he cuts between and through images, using the interface of text, image, and sound to imply moral guilt.

Jacques Rancière criticised Godard's argument that cinema is guilty of having failed to film the war as it was, or of having filmed and not recognising what it filmed.[307] Douglas Morrey suggests that the contradiction shows Godard's 'quasi-religious faith' in the redemptive power of cinema, and quotes Alan Wright: 'The work of montage "is to make visible the abysmal structure at the heart of cinematic representation, the absence that haunts every film image"'; though Wright also points out that it is an impossible task.[308] Morrey continues, 'The point is that, regardless of the narrative attached, the film image is necessarily bordered by death: for if it preserves from the ravages of time on one hand, on the other it demonstrates time at work, the transformation of matter in time, the work of death.'[309] He

[305] 2b, 08:45.
[306] 3a, 15:50-16:15.
[307] Morrey, 225.
[308] Morrey, 226. Morrey quotes Alan Wright, 'Elizabeth Taylor at Auschwitz: JLG and the Real Object of Montage' in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985-2000*, eds. Michael Temple and James S. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000) 51.
[309] Morrey, 227.

emphasises that 'we are not dealing in causal logic' when Godard yokes very different images together:

> …there is no suggestion that the French stars were somehow directly responsible for Nemirovsky's deportation and murder at Auschwitz. But by bringing together two different train journeys, 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 that this rapprochement between the French cinema establishment and Nazi Germany was thus a failure to assume the necessary historical responsibility.'[310]

It could be suggested that Godard is again using the tension of paradox to transform figurative meanings. By bringing together Darrieux and Nemirovsky cinematically, he at the same time brings to the frame the ethical complicity of cinema; but it is a rhetorical and metaphysical use of the form's capabilities: 'the *cinématographe* never meant to create an event, but a vision', he suggests in 1a.

The decisions involved in how to think about the ethics of artistic creation and (film-)history required a methodological strategy: in *Histoire(s) du Cinema*, this process can be construed as in many ways museological. Antoine de Baecque describes the series as a 'museum memory of the century.'[311] He elaborates in a later chapter: 'Godard's conception of art in history – working through comparisons, parallels, projections, reproductions, inventions, embodiments, cinematisations, and, in any case, as the escape of images from the museum – was fuelled by two avowed influences: his experience of Henri Langlois' museum of cinema, and the careful and passionate reading of André Malraux's *Museum Without Walls* and *The Voices of Silence*.'[312] These two historical museum-figures, of course, themselves came into

[310] Morrey, 229.
[311] Antoine de Baecque, *Camera Historica: The Century in Cinema*, 3.
[312] De Baecque, *Camera Historica*, 222.

conflict in the 1968 'Langlois Affair': Malraux, as culture minister, attempted to fire Langlois from the *Cinémathèque Française* in retaliation for Langlois' refusal to co-operate with the government, and to scale up the cinema museum into a national institution.[313] The resulting protests at Langlois' dismissal, led by filmmakers including Godard, are considered a forerunner of the May '68 uprisings. The juxtaposition of both men as formal influences is another way for Godard to stage a meta-historical confrontation between history and cinema within the frame of *Histoire(s)*.

In the montage form of *Histoire(s)*, the fragments of film-history are seen to be divided, sliced, and scattered into pieces. It is as though WWII, as a pre-eminently extraordinary historical event, has violently blown apart cinema, art, and history itself. However, these circumstances, devastated and devastating, will at the same time allow Godard to develop a route through the remains: he curates the post-war artefacts he finds into a sort of formal Langloisian 'cinema museum'. But while the frame of the screen is an inevitable part of this representative structure, by having the tour of *Histoire(s)* play out in the 'cool' medium of television the series is also positioned as a cinema museum which is formally 'without walls' as Malraux described (in this case, without the more fixed partitions of traditional formal frames). Its excessiveness can thus play out excessively: the flow of media images through the medium of television that was problematised by Godard in *Ici et ailleurs* is at this point weaponised in a more expansive way.

Malraux's theory of the *musée imaginaire*, drawing from Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, sought to account for the changing nature of the

[313] Louis Menand, 'After the Revolution', *The New Yorker*, 12 October 2003 https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/20/after-the-revolution-4 Accessed 24 September 2019.

museum collection (including the increasing mass circulation of both original and reproduced artworks in the 20th century). This brought with it, he argued, the potential for new ways to experience art: the possibility of a 'museum without walls' with all art under one roof. Georges Didi-Huberman, explaining Malraux's theory, describes the possibilities for the re-integration of artworks across the world into one space:

> Compared to the traditional museum, the 'museum without walls' thus owes its great fecundity to its practical, technical capacity to have objects that are distant in space or time from each other to come into contact with each other. 'The museum was a statement, the museum without walls is a question' (p. 176) – an interrogation to which Malraux will not hesitate to provide all the answers – not only by writing up the textual account of his vast *experience* with universal art, but also by producing the *experimental* visual montage for the Museum Without Walls. Thus he makes use of all of photography's resources – both formal and rhetorical – in order to transform its nature as *document*, collection or record into a genuine tool for *revelation*, persuasion or certainty.
>
> To that end, what is needed is an appropriate montage. What characterizes André Malraux's albums, first of all, is a strategy for the *succession of images* – a manner, for example, of rotating around the same object, like in a film sequence with the camera moving around some artwork.[314]

It is possible to find in this description a modern version of the philological journey first described by Martianus, in *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, which also culminated in the desire to move from 'documentation' to 'revelation' – the desire to vomit up all texts and thus 'become a god'. Here, this would be achieved by including all art from all times and places, without being limited by the constraints of materiality and temporality (or mortality). Malraux's 'strategy for the succession of images', as described by Didi-Huberman, is taken up

[314] Georges Didi-Huberman, 'The Album of Images According to André Malraux', trans. Elise Woodard and Robert Harvey, *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol 14 (1): 3–20; 7. Emphases in original. The Malraux quotation is, in French, « le musée était une affirmation, le musée imaginaire une interrogation » in André Malraux (1965), *Le Musée Imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012) 176. It has also been translated more literally as 'the museum was an affirmation, the museum without walls is an interrogation', in André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price (Garden City, NY.: Doubleday, 1967) 162.

by Godard as he searches for the 'appropriate montage' for his cinematographic form of history.

In Woody Vasulka's video artwork *Art of Memory* (1987) historical images of war, including WWII, are integrated in various ways into the landscape of the American Southwest. Rancière describes Vasulka's transformation of the historical artefacts through video as the creation of a 'theatre of memory', because '[the medium] becomes a machine for transforming the represented into representative, the support into subject, the document into monument.'[315] But Godard, he argues, does not develop any sort of memory machine with *Histoire(s)*, instead creating a 'surface' on which images slide into one another:

> [Godard] defines the pensiveness of images by two key features. On the one hand, each assumes the appearance of a form, an attitude, an arrested gesture. Each of these gestures in a way retains the power Balzac conferred on his marquise – that of condensing a story into painting – but also that of triggering another story. Each of the snapshots can then be peeled off its particular support, slid into another or be coupled with another: the film shot with the painting, the photograph or the news clip. This is what Godard calls the fraternity of metaphors… [316]

The influence of Malraux on *Histoire(s)* is clear: chapter 3a, which stages a confrontation between cinema and France's role in WWII, is named 'La Monnaie de l'Absolu' (The Currency of the Absolute), a title drawn from Malraux's 1950 book on the psychology of art (itself part of the series which included *Le musée imaginaire* and *La création artistique*). But Godard, as he develops his own art of the memory of trauma images, might be said to be working at this point in a mode closer to Aby Warburg than André Malraux. Warburg developed his strategy for mapping the 'afterlife of antiquity' with the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924-1929, unfinished)

[315] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans, Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011) 128.
[316] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 129. Balzac's marquise is discussed by Rancière earlier in his book: he takes the 'pensiveness' described in the marquise as 'a sign of the modern text – that is to say, of the aesthetic regime of expression'. This regime of expression, he argues, halts action and suspends the logic of visuality (123).

with a mythopoetic mentality. Art images were to be affixed to black cloth and juxtaposed, so that viewers could trace their own paths of encounter through the works based on visual similarities. They would thus reveal, Warburg argued, the traumatic forces acting upon these images over time.

The logic of this *Pathosformel* (pathos formula) is intuitive and associative. As applied to the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, the viewer traces the development of significant, powerful historical images by following the figural gestures that manifest across different artworks through time. Didi-Huberman emphasises the importance of these symptomatic images as 'moving fossils', or memories of traumatic encounters which manifest when provoked:

> One must look […] to Freud to understand the metaphysical foundation of the 'psychohistory' asserted by Warburg. Most likely the Freudian concept of the symptom as a *moving fossil* accounts for Warburg's pathos formula and its distinct temporality of oblivion and returns from oblivion, its whirlwinds and anachronisms.[317]

For Adi Efal, the 'fixated image' of a trauma, as understood through the pathos formula, 'carries within itself traces of the traumatic encounter with the threatening external force: the image, which is the outcome of the encounter, registers the external force's excessive vitality in forms that usually express movement.'[318] She describes the simultaneous yet contradictory ability of the logic of the pathos formula to carry two types of memory as it travels:

> The 'Pathos Formula' carries with itself two kinds of memory: on the one hand, it carries the memory of the traumatic encounter with the menacing force; on the other, it remembers the defensive, fixating act that the consciousness of the recipient performs in relation to this encounter. In the course of time the 'Pathos Formula' is

[317] Georges Didi-Huberman, 'Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies)', foreword in Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2004) 7–21; 16. Also quoted in Mick Finch, 'Dead and alive: Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 15:2-3 (2016), 286-297; 287.
[318] Adi Efal, 'Warburg's Pathos Formula in Psychoanalytic and Benjaminian Contexts', *Assaph*, Vol. 5. (2000), 221-238; 222.

> fixated as a cultural product, which as history develops, is able to express different and particular contents.[319]

Mick Finch points out that Warburg considered the ability of the 'moving fossil' to include the actions of both the victims *and* the perpetrators of a traumatic encounter to constitutes a type of 'screening memory'. Warburg, he continues, describes them as such in his journals:

> The inherited consciousness of maximalised impressions stamped on the mind (engram) passes them on without taking cognizance of the direction of their emotional charge, simply as an experience of energy tensions; this unpolarized continuum can also function as continuum. The imparting of a new meaning to these energies serves as a protective screen.[320]

Rancière, describing Vasulka's film, argues that the transformative 'memory machine' of *Art of Memory* is not simply an act of metamorphic expansion: 'Even when it is made a prop or theatre of action, it continues to act as a screen, in both senses of the term. The screen is a surface of manifestations, but it is also an opaque surface that prevents identifications.'[321] The paradox of such a memory screen is that it can expansively include both oblivion and returns from oblivion.

Godard, interested in dissecting language and in the power of language to dissect, gives the dynamic operations of screen memory in *Histoire(s)* a mythopoetic, associative logic, asking the viewer to understand their own history though the telling: 'History of cinema, history of newness, history of news, with an s, with SS,' we hear in 1a. The trail of phrases continues with words flashing on the screen in quick succession: 'STABBED' 'MEMORY SCREEN' 'RADIO PARIS …ment' '…is german'. Philippe-Alain Michaud finds that in *Histoire(s)* 'film, by exiling

[319] Ibid. Also quoted in Mick Finch, 'Dead and alive: Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 15:2-3 (2016), 286-297; 288.
[320] Aby Warburg, 'Journal 7', 255 (1929), in E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg, An Intellectual Biography* (London: Phaidon, 1986). Also quoted in Mick Finch, 'Dead and alive'; 288.
[321] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator,* 128.

itself from its place of origin, becomes confused with the exploration of its own past and in which the superimpositions and juxtapositions that video makes possible serve the same purpose as the dislocation of plane in *Mnemosyne*.'[322] Perhaps this provides more evidence that Godard's fraternity of metaphors makes the screen a sliding plane.

But the 'stabbing' of cinema figured in *1a* has a paradoxical and reflexive quality, potentially referring to its betrayal both of and by the world around it; and it insists, beyond an endless operation of swapping figures back and forth for comparison, on the possibility of a brutal intervention: 'Moviegoers burn imagination to heat up reality. Now reality wants revenge. It wants real tears, real blood'. Visually, *Histoire(s)* then cuts to *La règle du jeu*, and the sequence which shows the performance of a ridiculous but disturbing play, with actors in skeleton costumes made from cut umbrellas. It is a scene in which art intrudes upon the reality of its audience, and in which the actors intrude upon the imaginative space of the audience by leaving the stage area. Godard's sequence cuts to an execution, and *Histoire(s)* can be said to have placed itself on the sharp edge of the reflexive 'guillotine of meaning' it has constructed; a figural implement that has an ancestor, Godard suggests, in the razor used as a tool by the editors of past films (whose ancestor in turn is the guillotine used to enforce and to perpetuate the French Revolution as a historical event).

vi. Conclusion: The Language of Film

The substance of film-language in Jean-Luc Godard's work has an explicitly 'cinémato-graphic' quality. Like his typewriter (*machine à écrire*), it is a machine for writing. It writes movements,

[322] Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2004) 289.

literally and figuratively. But additionally, Godard is aware that his work will move into the world as it is 'written', projecting itself into society to offer a narrative, and to contribute to a larger narrative within the cultural landscape: its framing effect. Cinema shifts between many fictions and realities, due to the unique quality of cinema as a part of the wider audio-visual cultural archive. Almost ten minutes into episode 4a of *Histoire(s)*, Godard puts forth a declaration of principles that he collages from parts of *Penser avec les Mains* (1936), by the Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont:

> True violence is the work of the spirit. Every creative act contains a real threat for the person who dares it. This is how art moves the viewer or reader. If thought refuses to do violence, it exposes itself in vain to all the brutalities which its absence released. We sometimes hope that thinking in France becomes punishable by prison. Free thinkers would be taken seriously again. The place of all creative thinking is the person. The world's agitation is no more than a question which is put to me, and which takes form only when it forces me to act. Partisans of 'we' have mistaken the person. The world's contradictions figure in the equation of all existence. *X* is a person, a creative element, an incalculable liberty. Man, as man, is a creator, but a created creator. It is in hope that we are saved. But this hope is true because time destroys the act, but the act is the judge of time.[323]

In the X is the sign of the chiasmus, standing as a figurative mark in place of an object. It is a reminder of the crossing back and forth of reflexivity, and of the postmodern condition that has emerged from the modern condition, with man as a 'created creator'. Godard, through de Rougemont, suggests that the 'world's contradictions figure in the equation of all existence' (the equation, presumably, to solve for X), since the role of paradox is a source of power in art that is critical of ideological narratives and political circumstances. Moreover, James Williams finds a 'specifically Christian dimension' to the inclusion of the chiasmatic sign

[323] 4a 9.20.

of the cross, and detects a formal chiastic structure in *Histoire(s)* more broadly, with 'the crossing of trains' figuring Godard's movements:

> …if we consider *La monnaie de l'absolu* [Chapter 3a] in its entirety, it could justifiably be argued that the four sequences constitute in themselves a (loosely defined) chiastic structure, the turning point of reversal being the crossing of trains: war/art/war/art (i.e. cinema as an art reborn after Auschwitz). Finally, Godard's joint emphasis on the physical aspect of montage and the spiritual act of incarnation accounts perhaps for his resurrection of de Rougement's essay *Penser avec les mains*, which, at a key historical juncture, preached the decisive and liberating violence of creative thought as an integral part of a universal 'dialectics of incarnation' to which even divine thought yielded with the agony of God's son on the cross.[324]

It is worth remembering that beyond its symbolic value, the arrival of cinema into the world is itself historically figured by the arrival of a train – the train that pulled into La Ciotat station – and that it was said to have been confused with reality by its audience at the time. *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* was not literally the first film to be exhibited at the Grand Café by the Lumières, and the idea that its audience was convinced that it was a real train has been questioned; but the image of cinema manifesting as a train bursting out towards its terrified, naïve audience persists.[325] It could thus be said that the train in the history of cinema is itself an event-al figure (as it was for Slavoj Žižek in his reading of Christie's *4.50 from Paddington*). The train in cinema history is a disruptive, intrusive force; it is a useful vehicle, filmic and evental, for Godard to enact his own 'crossings' into and out of history, and to attempt to re-organise the perceptions of the beholder on the subject of guilt and implication.

[324] James Williams, 'European culture and artistic resistance in *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* Chapter 3A, La Monnaie de l'Absolu', in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985-2000*, eds. Michael Temple and James S. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000) 130.

[325] 'Lumière's cinematographic locomotive and its startling effect is mentioned repeatedly as an illuminating example from the first days of cinema', Martin Loiperdinger argues in 'Cinema's Founding Myth', but he points out that there is little contemporary evidence that the spectators thought the train was literally going to hit them. See Martin Loiperdinger and Bernd Elzer, 'Cinema's Founding Myth', *The Moving Image*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (Spring 2004) 89-118.

Godard, through his appropriation of de Rougemont, emphasises his conception of art as a weapon against totalitarianism: 'Every creative act contains a real threat' (or 'poetry is resistance', as he suggested earlier: the poetic, dreamlike aspects of *Histoire(s)* contribute to its intermedial, visual and verbal form of 'resistance'). The tension of paradox also manifests overtly in this passage: the threat of prison for free thinking would make free thinking a cause worth fighting for. Jean-Paul Sartre broached the same point in his post-war essay 'The Republic of Silence'

> We were never more free than during the German occupation. […] Everywhere, on billboards, in the newspapers, on the screen, we encountered the revolting and insipid picture of ourselves that our oppressors wanted us to accept. And, because of all this, we were free. Because the Nazi venom seeped even into our thoughts, every accurate thought was a conquest.[326]

Sartre, however, focused on the propaganda texts and images that surrounded the occupied French, emphasising how they operated as an oppressive frame that restricted free expression, but also as a frame that applied pressure and forced a radical response from those who would resist.

If 'it is in hope that we are saved', then the act of creating an alternative narrative, one that challenges and subverts, offers the world the chance to experience art as well as political truth. While Godard's collage of de Rougement concedes that acts of creation or resistance are neither eternal nor perfect, the action can still allow for events to be seen from a new perspective: 'time destroys the act, but the act is the judge of time'. Cinema can be seen, then, as a moving history that also moves history. It can be experienced passively or actively and can act upon the viewer with the paradoxically powerful weight of nothingness. Godard,

[326] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Republic of Silence' (1947) in *The Republic of Silence*, ed. A.J. Liebling (Phoenix, AZ.: Simon Publications, 2003) 498.

connecting the figural and discursive modes of expression by way of reflexivity, allows himself an existential privilege: to move around in and between art and history with some rhetorical freedom. In *Histoire(s)*, the image is given the theoretical possibility of encompassing everything, even its opposite, in order to cut through the reality of the present moment and the present viewer with its gaze:

> Cinema feared nothing of others or of itself. It wasn't sheltered from time. It was the shelter of time. Yes, image is happiness. But beside it dwells nothingness. The power of the image is expressed only by invoking nothingness. Perhaps it is worth adding that the image, able to negate nothingness, is also the gaze of nothingness upon us. The image is light. Nothingness, immensely heavy. The image gleams.[327]

The purpose of reflexivity for Godard moves beyond the disruption of subject and object relationships between the viewer and the viewed, and beyond simply foregrounding the material means of the production of images. Though reflexivity often functions in film and literature as a corrective for the illusory nature of fiction, Godard's multiple layers of reflexivity allow him to frame in *Histoire(s)* the increasingly mediatised relationship between art, politics, history, and the spectator.

Yet, in blurring the boundaries between fiction and documentary, documentary and reality, and cinema and television, he identifies a reflexivity that has always been present in cinema as a medium (as seen in the body of the *cinématographe*). The cinematic image is said to gleam because it holds multiple realities, perspectives, and figural imagery: by being made of light, it also evokes the power of darkness; because it captures from life, it also holds within it an inevitable reference to death. Godard reflects this essentially paradoxical nature back in his own films, finding a way to embody a sort of mirror image of the postmodern event.

[327] 4b, 34.45.

As Godard challenges the assumption that reality, art, and cinema are ontologically separate, many of his films could be described as attempts to make cinema-events through the frame, which intervene back into reality while also critiquing it. His concept of looking is more than metaphorical; or rather, the projects and embeds the metaphor back into reality (in the camera and its lens, which is understood to not only capture or even to distort reality, but to transform it and to become part of it) as a perspective from which one might be able to see with one's own eyes (fig. 32).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARADOX OF THE EVENT: OCCURRENCES AND OUTCOMES

The films I have discussed so far in this thesis have performed, with different methodologies, acts of reflexive intervention into past and present, real and fictional political events. Through these methodologies, they start to account for and to negotiate with (and if not struggle free from, at least *act out* struggling free from) the discursive and figuring effects at work in an increasingly intermedial cultural reality. But as John Mullarkey has said, 'the philosophy of the Event (or events) has a complex genealogy'.[328] I have taken the concept of 'the event' as it relates to political film (and as political films relate to it) as a hermeneutic problem, with the combination of textuality and reality in film requiring a carefully structured but flexible approach to the issue of interpretation. I would like in this chapter, then, to outline a brief history of 'the event' as an idea, and to clarify my own perspective – hermeneutic and phenomenological – on the concept of the extraordinary political event.

Kerry E. Howell offers a succinct definition of hermeneutical phenomenology: 'Hermeneutical phenomenology argues that meaning is linked directly with time. Being is historical and systematic: it is temporal.'[329] From the perspective of the event, it is thus focused on *becoming*. However, I have not simply chosen one philosopher or theorist's definition of the event as the most convincing or credible. Rather, I have sought to set up a frame which can

[328] John Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009) 143.
[329] Kerry E. Howell, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology* (Los Angeles, CA., London and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2013) 64.

show how the filmmakers I discuss choose to frame the political event: specifically, how they have chosen to make their frames work in relation to the event and to the context around them, how they have reflexivity as their technique in common, and how they eventually negotiate their own position within the 'event' as it persists as part of a cultural and collective memory.

To set 'the event' as a concept into motion, it might be helpful to list a selection of definitions of the term. I will start with some of the OED's definitions of *event (n.)*, excluding obsolete or rare examples:

I. An outcome and related senses.

II. An occurrence and related senses.

3.a. Something that happens or takes place, esp. something significant or noteworthy; an incident, an occurrence.

b. *colloquial*. In predicative use: a particularly noteworthy or significant occurrence.[330]

c. With modifying word or phrase. Forming the names of major, typically natural occurrences having a particular importance or significance (esp. the extinction of a large number of species over a given period of time).

4.b. In plural (without article). What is happening, has happened, or will happen.

7. In various technical uses, esp. in linguistics and philosophy: something that takes place instantaneously or on a particular occasion, as opposed to a continuing state or process.

language event, mind-event, sign event, speech-event, etc.: see the first element.

8. *Physics*. A point in space-time.

9. *Particle Physics*. Originally: a highly energetic collision between subatomic particles that produces particles of types not involved in the collision. In later use also: the immediate outcome of such a collision.

10. The detonation of a nuclear weapon; a nuclear explosion.

[330] The OED suggests comparing this phrase with the French 'un veritable événement'.

11. In critical path analysis: a point in time which marks the beginning or end of a particular activity.

III. A planned or scheduled occasion.

12.a. A planned public or social occasion.

12.b. Chiefly *British*. In *plural*. The industry or profession of planning and coordinating public, social, or sporting occasions.

13.a. One of the races or competitions which make up a programme of sport; esp. (in early use) such a race or competition on which bets may be placed. Also figurative.

field event, track event, etc.: see the first element.

13.b. An equestrian competition in which riders compete in the disciplines of cross-country, dressage, and showjumping; an eventing competition. Frequently with modifying phrase specifying the type of competition, as one-day event, three-day event.

These definitions lead to diverse places: to business, to physics, to horse riding, to the detonation of a nuclear weapon. Particularly striking is the presence of contradictions, or at least the definition-resistant broadness of the definition of an 'event': it can be characterised as something that will happen in the future, something that is happening in the present, and as something that happened in the past; as an occurrence and as an outcome. In fact, two overarching meanings emerge that seem to directly contradict each other: a planned occurrence and an unplanned occurrence; something which is foreseen and thought-out, and something which is sudden and disruptive.

The academic history of planned occurrences is known in the twenty-first century as event studies, and has encompassed tourism, 'mega-events' (such as the Olympics) and consumer studies. Tomas Pernecky traces this form of event studies back to Donald Getz, a professor of

tourism, and his work on events management.[331] But navigating the wider academic history of the event is complex: in developing an interdisciplinary approach to events, Pernecky suggests, we must 'develop a more flexible reading of the field: *event studies is whatever researchers invested in the study of events do*.'[332] Pernecky's definition is tautological, but understandably so in the circumstances: the theoretical practices of the various academics working on 'events' would hopefully disclose to the researcher a productive definition of event studies.

It might be obvious that my definition of the event relies heavily on the 'technical' definition outlined in the OED (II.7). This prompts a question: is a hermeneutical phenomenology – historical, systematic – of such an excessive, instantaneous event useful? While the event might in one sense be defined as a sudden manifestation, the media images of the event as it occurred persist through time and continue to be circulated by mediums of mass communications. However, the relationship between time and space is itself significant in the intellectual history of considering what an 'event' might be.

The interconnected problems of time and space have been explored at length in twentieth and twenty-first century philosophy and theory. In Ilai Rowner's introduction to his book *The Event: Literature and Theory*, he traces the development of the modern idea of the event from the analytical school of philosophy to the continental, and from the modern to the postmodern: 'The term event, which has troubled the minds of major thinkers and scholars in very different domains (from historiography through performance art to analytical philosophy), allows us to follow the emergence of a theoretical approach that evolved in

[331] Tomas Pernecky (ed), *Approaches and Methods in Event Studies* (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2016) 3. He refers to Donald Getz, *Event Studies: Theory, research and policy for planned events* (Oxford and Burlington, MA.: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007)
[332] Pernecky, 4. Emphasis in original.

Continental thought after World War II and thus to look at the philosophical conditions of literary thinking at one of its most innovative pinnacles, at the apex of classical modernism and at its point of transition into what has since become known as postmodernism.'[333] To Alfred North Whitehead, 'the world is composed of deeply interdependent processes and events, rather than mostly independent material things or objects.'[334] This ontology of the event has been developed more recently by Leemon McHenry in the realm of physics. After Whitehead, Willard Quine took a 'coarse-grained' view of events;[335] in Dana Goswick's summary of Quine's thinking, 'events are the material contents of regions of spacetime. He, thus, takes there to be no difference between events and objects.'[336]

But much of the thinking of the historical event in twentieth century philosophy has been phenomenological: how the event manifests in the world and to the individual. As a foundational thinker in Continental philosophy, Heidegger has had a significant influence on contemporary approaches to the event, and particularly to the historical event. He argued for a phenomenological description of the event as something 'coming into view'. Heidegger described this in terms of the relationship between truth and historical *beyng* (that is, 'being' as it has been understood in Western thinking):

> The following delimitation is to make less ambiguous the otherwise still-fluctuating lexicon which must constantly maintain a transitional breadth.
>
> The event expresses the explicitly self-clearing inceptuality of the beginning. The inaugural truth of beyng preserves in itself, as inceptual unification, the inaugural unity of the appropriating and the appropriated. The word "inceptual" always means:

[333] Ilai Rowner, *The Event: Literature and Theory* (Lincoln, NE. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015) *vii*.
[334] Ronald Desmet and Andrew David Irvine, 'Alfred North Whitehead', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)
URL <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/whitehead/>.
[335] Dana Goswick, 'Events', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
URL <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/events/v-2>.
[336] Ibid.

> appropriated out of the beginning and consigned to the inceptuality. But it does not mean incipient in the sense of mere starting. Being does not start and stop, nor does it exist "perpetually" in the duration of beings. Being begins and does so essentially: it is the appropriating beginning. The event lights up the clearing of the beginning in such a way that the beginning does not merely emerge and bring to appearance along with it something inceptual, as in the first beginning, but, instead, such that the beginning, *qua* the beginning, is consigned to the truth of its inceptuality, a truth which is therefore illuminated.[337]

Looking back briefly to the understanding of causality in Ancient Greece, Heidegger finds that philosophers can only understand the occasioning of events, not their causality, as this is not disclosed by the events themselves.[338] It is possible to see at this point the emergence of the event as itself a 'phenomenon': by definition, a significant occurrence which manifests with no apparent cause. Daniela Vallega-Neu points out that in his work on the event, Heidegger approaches the concept in a way intended not simply to describe it, but to bring it into being:

> Heidegger searches for a language that would not simply speak about being but rather let a sense of being emerge in his thinking and saying. He attempts to open paths of thinking the occurrence of being in its historicality in terms of the event and to evoke a transformation of the sense of being in the West in order to prepare what he calls "the other beginning."[339]

Vallega-Neu adds: 'As in *Contributions*, Heidegger attempts to think historical *beyng* originarily and in a nonrepresentational way in a saying that (similarly to poetry) speaks out of the happening of truth (appropriated by the event) such that in the saying the event occurs'.[340] But the term *Ereignis*, like *Gestell*, has been subject to more than one translation into English, as Dominic Griffiths describes:

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[337] Martin Heidegger, *The Event* trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2013) 127.
[338] Richard Rojcewicz, *The Gods and Technology*: *A Reading of Heidegger* (New York, NY.: State University of New York Press, 2006) 33.
[339] Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger's Poietic Writings: From Contributions to Philosophy to the Event*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN.: Indiana University Press, 2018) *ix*.
[340] Daniela Vallega-Neu, 'Heidegger, Martin, The Event. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz' (review), *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 68, Iss. 1, September 2014, 165.

> Part of the narrative of Heidegger's account of Being is his attention to what he comes to call Ereignis. The direct translation of this common German word is "event," but as this does not convey Heidegger's meaning adequately, various alternatives have been proposed by translators, including "the event of appropriation" and "enownment." Like many of Heidegger's terms, Ereignis is a formal indicator, a word to point to something in the nature of existence that defies accurate description in language but which cannot be ignored. The Ereignis experience offers a chance of understanding or at least appreciating the fact that there is something, rather than nothing, and that, every so often, for no apparent reason, we are made to encounter this givenness of being in a full and genuine way.[341]

The 'givenness of being' – what is here rather than not here – is a usefully broad definition, at least as a philosophical starting point: it encapsulates the event as possibility and multiplicity, rather than in the details of its various manifestations. It is for this reason that I have resisted providing a simple definition of the 'extraordinary political event'; I argue that such an event by its nature disrupts previous categories and frames of understanding, and that it imposes through its occurrence new frames through which it must be received.

Griffiths divides the development of Heidegger's thinking on *Ereginis* into 'three discernible stages': his 'early work, from 1919 until after the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927, explores the term phenomenologically; some of the middle works, especially *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, written between 1936 and 1938, attempt an evocation of *Ereignis* in florid, ambitious, and ultimately unsuccessful pseudomystical language; and finally the later thought, which emerges about 1943, looks for the meaning of *Ereignis* in the poetry of those more poetically talented than himself.'[342] The phenomenological, the pseudomystical, and finally the artistic; the movement suggests an increasing desire to materialise something that by its nature is not immanent, leading Heidegger further afield

[341] Dominic Griffiths, 'Looking into the Heart of Light: Considering the Poetic Event in the Work of T. S. Eliot and Martin Heidegger' *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (October 2014) 352.
[342] Ibid.

from philosophical tools to find the means to transform and to disclose it formally. Andrew Benjamin interprets Heidegger's comments on poetry as a sort of defence of applied theory:

> Inauthentic technology could not be farther removed from the workings of the artwork, the *poiesis* (*Her-vor-bringen*) of truth. In many ways, 'The Question Concerning Technology' thus amplified the founding theses of the 1935 artwork essay. Revising Plato's negative valuation of the arts and of poetry's relation to philosophy, Heidegger dismissed the erroneous belief that poetry (the essence of art) amounted to a mimetic 'lie' rather than to the setting-to-work of Truth.[343]

It can be inferred that one way to grasp the event, or at least to approach it in a Heideggerian way, is to construct some sort of imitation of it. In her own consideration of the path of Heidegger's thought on the event, Vallega-Neu points out that '…in *Contributions* Heidegger stresses that the thinking and saying he attempts is ''not yet able to join the free conjuncture of the truth of beyng out of beyng itself''. This is one of the reasons why ''Of the Event'' appears only as a subtitle of the volume. 1941–1942 (in the middle of World War II) Heidegger finally writes a volume with the simple title *Das Ereignis* (*The Event*).'[344] Like Griffiths, she sees *Das Ereignis* as the culmination of Heidegger's historical event-thinking. But there are also important insights into Heidegger's understanding of the event, particularly in the context of art, in his essay and lecture 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. In 'Origin', Heidegger separates the concept of 'art' from that of the artist and the artwork; the artist, he suggests, does not exist without the artwork, and vice versa. Timothy Clark finds in the essay, however, a 'questionable' assumption of historical and national specificity in art:

> Heidegger assumes (rather than argues) that there is a close, even constitutive relation between art and the national life of a particular group. This goes beyond for example the kind of vague association made when literature is pragmatically divided up as 'English Literature', 'Canadian Literature' etc. Art for Heidegger takes place as a

[343] Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Art* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005) 85.
[344] Daniela Vallega-Neu, 'Heidegger's imageless saying of the event' *Continental Philosophical Review*, Vol. 47 (2014) 316.

> potentially disclosive event within the horizon formed by the world of a specific historical people (*Volk*).[345]

Clark suggests that Heidegger is thus 'stuck in a form of romantic nationalism'.[346] However, Heidegger does find in the work of Paul Klee a middle way between traditional and abstract artworks, as Clark points out:

> Denounced as 'degenerate' by the Nazis, for Heidegger they open a new way between traditional art and merely or fully abstract works: the objects in a Klee painting do not disappear completely as in abstract art, but their withdrawal from immediate recognition forms a kind of continuous event in a world rendered newly prominent by this withdrawal. A Klee painting also makes visible the deep structures of modern human existence.[347]

This moving, 'continuous event' is detectable in Klee's artistic theory, as well as in his practice. *Writings on form and design theory*, assembled from his Bauhaus lectures (also known simply as the *Paul Klee Notebooks*) was divided into two volumes: *Band I: Das bildnerische Denken* ('Volume I: The Creative Thinking') and *Band II: Unendliche Naturgeschichte* ('Volume II: Infinite Natural History').[348] In its English translation, Volume One is known as 'The Thinking Eye'.[349] The book's introduction describes Klee's pedagogical intentions, both in his art and his lectures, to provoke the creative 'movement' of the receiver through the shifting of pictorial forms:

> Klee's teaching activity - which was always closely bound up with his creative work helped him become aware of his own way of working. The logic of pictorial thinking is determined by the picture and goes its own specific way. To be an 'abstract' painter

[345] Timothy Clark, *Martin Heidegger* (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2011) 65.
[346] Clark, 66.
[347] Clark, 67.
[348] Jürg Spiller (ed.) *Paul Klee Notebooks* (*Schriften zur Form und Gestaltungslehre*), Band I: 'Das bildnerlsche Denken' (Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1956)
[349] Jürg Spiller (ed.) *Paul Klee Notebooks*, *Writings on form and design theory*, Volume I: 'The Thinking Eye', trans. Ralph Manheim, with Charlotte Weidler and Joyce Wittenborn (London and New York: Lund Humphries and George Wittenborn, 1961).

> meant for him to distil pure formal relations. The aim of his teaching was to promote an 'inner' movement, to encourage the creative disposition.[350]

The 'new way' between traditional and abstract works, and the promotion of an 'inner movement' that could meet the logic of pictorial thinking (which has its own agency), is also visible in Heidegger's understanding of historical writing. Eric S. Nelson argues that historiography is a disclosive event for Heidegger: 'Works of history are neither simply factual nor socially constructed for Heidegger but exhibit a hermeneutical or communicative event of disclosure – via understanding, interpretation, and appropriation – and concealment in relation to the facticity and possibilities of historical existence.'[351] A 'thinking eye' like Klee's, then, might be required to receive works of history in the event of their compound, factual-and-socially-constructed, temporal form.

In later philosophical inquiries in the Continental tradition, the 'extraordinary' aspect of the event of disclosure is emphasised. On the question of the temporal anticipation of events, Derrida was careful to distinguish between *l'avenir* (the future) and *l' à-venir* (the to-come), thus making a distinction between a predictable and an unpredictable event:

> Derrida: In general, I try to distinguish between what one calls the future [l'avenir] and 'l' à-venir.' The future is that which—tomorrow, later, next century—will be. There's a future that is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable. But there is a future, l' à-venir (to come), which refers to someone who comes whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future. That which is totally unpredictable. The Other who comes without my being able to anticipate their arrival. So if there is a real future beyond the other known future, it's l' à-venir in that it's the coming of the Other when I am completely unable to foresee their arrival.[352]

[350] Jürg Spiller (ed.) *Paul Klee Notebooks*, Volume I, 'The Thinking Eye', trans. Ralph Manheim, 'Introduction', 21.
[351] Eric S. Nelson, 'History as Decision and Event in Heidegger' *Arhe* Vol. 4 (2007) 97-115. Abstract.
[352] Jacques Derrida (interview), in *Derrida* (film), 00.01.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari defined such an Event as part of a process, and not as a thing that is ever actualised in itself:

> The virtual is no longer the chaotic virtual, but rather virtuality has become consistent, an entity forming on a plane of immanence that sections the chaos. Call this the Event, or the part that escapes its own actualisation in everything that happens. The event is not at all a state of things; it is actualised in a state of things, in a body, in a lived, but it has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency.[353]

But as with Heidegger, in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding the event is elusive as a concept. Even when it is actualised, a shadowy 'part' of it continues to move and shift. Alain Badiou has extracted four 'axioms' from Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* on the Event; it is Axiom 2 that is most useful here, dealing as it does with Deleuze's understanding of the Event and its relationship to time and history:

> *Axiom 2*: 'The event is always that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening'.

'The event is a synthesis of past and future,' Badiou adds.[354] Badiou (and by extension Deleuze) is careful here to maintain that the Event is always contained in a perceptive, interpretive frame, rather than existing as something that can be apprehended directly.

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[353] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 156.

[354] The four axioms taken up by Badiou are as follows:

> *Axiom 1*: 'Unlimited becoming becomes the event itself'. The event is the ontological realisation of the eternal truth of the One, the infinite power [puissance] of Life. It is in no way a void, or a stupor, separated from what becomes. […]
> *Axiom 2*: 'The event is always that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening'. The event is a synthesis of past and future. […]
> *Axiom 3*: 'The event is of a different regime than the actions and passions of the body, even if it results from them.' Whether thought of as the becoming of becomings, or as disjunctive eternity, the event intensifies bodies, concentrates their constitutive multiplicity. […]
> *Axiom 4*: 'A life is composed of a single and same Event, lacking all the variety of what happens to it.'
>
> Alain Badiou, 'The Event in Deleuze', trans. Jon Roffe, *Parrhesia*, No 2., (2007) 38-39.

Claude Romano has also recently offered a phenomenological explication of the event as a concept, intended to resist the 'obscurity' he has found so far in the philosophy of the event. His 'eventual hermeneutics', outlined in three books (*Event and World*, *Event and Time*, and *There Is: On the Finitude of Appearing*) critiques the work of Heidegger, suggesting that an event is rather something that disturbs the framework of the world in which it occurs. In *Event and Time*, he argues that 'events are not temporal, but temporalizing. They are "present" only as past and inscribe their temporalisation within this original suspension from themselves that consequently opens to itself the opening of the present.'[355] In *Event and World*, he argues that '…the world in an eventual sense is neither objective not subjective.'[356]

This perspective on eventuality might be compatible with Edmund Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity; his response to the problem of providing a systematic account of the Other in transcendental philosophy. John Brough points out Husserl's insistence that 'the perception (*Wahrnehmung*) of the temporal object […] "is itself a temporal object."'[357] Brough continues:

> Clearly, if an object is to be perceived in its temporal extension, then as each phase of the object appears successively as Now, there must be present a corresponding phase of the perception through which it is perceived as Now. The perception must endure or develop successively as long as the object is perceived.[358]

Henri Bergson's concepts of time, *durée* and virtuality are also significant in the history of modern understandings of temporality and the event. In *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, he argued an anti-Kantian position: that free will was

[355] Claude Romano, *Event and Time*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York, NY.: Fordham University Press, 2014) 128.
[356] Claude Romano, *Event and World*, trans. Shane Mackinlay (New York, NY.: Fordham University Press, 2009) 68.
[357] John Brough, 'The emergence of an absolute consciousness in Husserl's early writings on time-consciousness' *Man and World*, 5:3 (1972) 298-326; 232.
[358] Brough, 299.

possible within duration; in *Matter and Memory*, he argued that the understanding of duration had historically been interpreted through its spatial indexicality, and that instead, it should be understood that duration is not a 'thing' *per se*, but a progression (in contrast to Husserl's insistence that the perception of the object is itself an object). In *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Bergson suggested that the concept of 'possibility' and the event in time had been misunderstood:

> Things and events happen at certain moments; the judgment which determines the occurrence of the thing or the event can only come after them; it therefore has its date. But this date at once fades away, in virtue of the principle deep-rooted in our intellect, that all truth is eternal. If the judgment is true now, it seems to us it must always have been so. It matters not that it had never yet been formulated: it existed by right before existing in fact. To every true affirmation we attribute thus a retroactive effect; or rather, we impart to it a retrograde movement. As though a judgment could have pre-existed the terms which make it up! As though these terms did not date from the appearance of the objects they represent! As though the thing and the idea of the thing, its reality and its possibility, were not created at one stroke when a truly new form, invented by art or nature is concerned![359]

It is crucial in a Bergsonian conception of the event to understand that memories of the previous moment accrue to each new moment, thus making no two moments the same. This understanding, of course, has been taken up in film studies to explain the effects of montage, particularly by Deleuze in *Cinema II: The Time-Image* and its critique of 'clock-time' (the understanding of time as moving from one discrete stage to another).

As well as the accumulative effect of time's progression, the perception of temporal acceleration has been theorised by philosophers from Walter Benjamin to Paul Virilio and Fredric Jameson. Jameson describes it as a sort of 'loss of historical consciousness', while Benjamin characterises it as 'shock'. Will Slocombe points out that Benjamin's 'conception of

[359] Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York, NY.: Dover Publications, 2007) 18-19.

shock directly addresses the human mediation of an external environment'. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin describes how painting allows the viewer's eye to roam and settle; but film, he suggests, is violent in its insistence on change and movement. Slocombe continues:

> While Benjamin is more ambivalent about the long-term effects of cinema than his pessimistic protégé Theodor Adorno, he makes it clear that cinema decreases the audience's ability to combat shock. The new experience of watching cinema may not signal the death of culture, but it does leave the audience weakened in its battle with the external world.[360]

This is another way to consider the porous boundaries (or frames) between cinema and reality, one that is explicitly aesthetic and formal; where sensibility is weakened and allows for the traversal of barriers. Slocombe further adds that like Gilles Deleuze with the time-image, one does not have time, in Benjamin's view, to react to images upon images: 'With cinema, shock is allowed to penetrate the audience's barrier of consciousness and thus the audience's ability to mediate the world is neutralised'.[361]

Recent historiographical discussions of the event as it exists in space have also considered the possibility that the event can 'persist' in a material, perceptible form. The sociologist Maurice Halbwachs theorised that human memory inevitably functions in a collective context; one which is selective, and which varies between groups; this concept was developed further by Egyptologist Jan Assmann in 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity'[362] and 'Communicative and Cultural Memory'.[363] What emerges is the identification of artefacts and places that hold

[360] Will Slocombe, 'Shock' (entry), *Theories of Media*, University of Chicago Glossary https://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/shock.htm Accessed 14 June 2020.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies (Spring - Summer, 1995), pp. 125-133
[363] Jan Assmann, 'Communicative and Cultural Memory', in Astrid Eril and Ansgar Nünning (eds), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin and New York, NY: De Gruyter, 2008)

significance to a culture through their perceived role in historical events. Pierre Nora called such entities sites (or realms) of memory: 'A *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community'.[364] Nora would include both literal and symbolic places in his definition of historically and spatially situated memory.

With the more recent concept of *mnemohistory*, the past has been understood in the concept of its reception, as part of a given collective memory. In *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory* Marek Tamm, drawing directly from Assmann, argues that 'Mnemohistory is interested not so much in the factuality as in the actuality of the past – not in the past for its own sake, but in its later impact and reception'.[365] Or, as James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary put it, mnemohistory is focused on practices of remembrance rather than reconstruction.[366] They also highlight Jan Assmann's point in *Moses the Egyptian* that mnemohistory 'is reception theory applied to history', and is a potentially productive way to deal with the issue of cultural memory.[367]

Historical understandings of the modern event have also been critiqued recently by Sanford Kwinter and Michael Sayeau. In *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture*, Kwinter's discussion of the event focuses explicitly on its temporal nature,

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[364] Pierre Nora, 'From *Lieux de mémoire* to Realms of Memory' (Preface to the English Language Edition), in Pierre Nora (ed.) *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions,* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Columbia, NY. and West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1996) *xvii*.

[365] Marek Tamm, 'Introduction', in *Afterlife of Events: Perspectives on Mnemohistory*, ed. Marek Tamm (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) 3.

[366] James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary, *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith?: A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture* (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2012) 307.

[367] Ibid. See also Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1998) 11.

as it is accessed through philosophy and exemplified in literature: he proceeds from Bergson and uses Kafka as his primary exemplifying writer. In *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of the Modernist Narrative*, Sayeau points out that some academic discussions of modernist writing and the accelerated world described by Benjamin do not account for the surprising emergence of narratives of the mundane from this 'accelerated world'. However, this approach is not necessarily incompatible with a reading of the extraordinary political event; in emphasising the production of 'non-evental' narratives by modernist writers, Sayeau could be said to approach a slow reading of Benjaminian acceleration itself.

Several characteristics have been identified as significant aspects of the event in Continental philosophy, such as contingency (the unpredictability of an event), emergence (the process by which an event comes into being) and finitude (the possibility of limits; that is, the event's perceptible beginning and end). These concepts have been explored recently by philosophers including Romano, Jean-Luc Marion, Françoise Dastur, Quentin Meillassoux and Yuk Hui. In the context of political events in particular, philosophers have considered the event in its capacity to restructure received ideas and regimes of representation as it emerges. Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Truth of Democracy* posits democracy as an event; the book is structured around a consideration of the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the May '68 uprisings.[368] As François Raffoul points out,

> …the very title, *the truth of democracy*, already indicates that Nancy attempts to think democracy away from received representations, and indeed, away from the very regime of representation, approaching it as an event exceeding norms, laws, and established or given forms. He argues that, in its truth, democracy cannot be enframed within the horizon of the possibilities that remain 'linked to an organized if not organic action, to a planning process or prospective.[369]

[368] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Truth of Democracy*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (New York, NY.: Fordham University Press, 2010)
[369] François Raffoul, 'The Event of Democracy' in *Nancy and the Political*, ed. Sanja Dejanovic (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) 93.

In his own 2020 book *Thinking the Event*, Raffoul suggests that the concept of the event has traditionally been philosophically understood as grounded through reason. He, like Žižek and Romano, suggests that a more 'eventual' approach might be taken instead; his 'underlying hypothesis is that in the wake of the end of traditional metaphysics (the twilight of the metaphysical idols of substance, reason, causality, identity, agency, and subjectivity of which Nietzsche spoke), and the withdrawal of transcendental modes of thought, the event becomes the main motif from which to rethink traditionally philosophical problems.'[370] Raffoul rejects Sartre's understanding of the event and subjectivity which, he argues, 'posits a subjectivity as appropriation of all that happens, as appropriation of the event. Any event is immediately taken over by my freedom, and there are no events without my appropriating them and making them my own'.[371]

A question thus emerges: *whose* event is it? In *Philosophy and the Event*, Fabien Tarby situates the event in Badiou's philosophy in relation to *fidelity*:

> [Fidelity] designates the act by which we commit ourselves to the disruptive consequences of an event. Human beings assume the event and find themselves changed because of it. They become *subjects* of the event. Being faithful to the event consists in seizing this chance. It consists in living by virtue of the event and for the event. It consists in no longer being merely the animal entrusted, up to its dying day, to meaningless being; it consists in creative humanity.[372]

It is therefore important, Tarby continues, to name and recognise the trace of the event, and thus to become incorporated within it. Žižek, meanwhile, critiques Badiou's claims on the Event through his own Lacanian understanding of trauma: 'It is not only the "miracle" of a

[370] François Raffoul, *Thinking the Event* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020) 6.
[371] Raffoul, *Thinking the Event*, 30.
[372] Alain Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, with Fabien Tarby, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity, 2017) 143. Emphasis in original.

traumatic encounter with an Event which derails a human subject from its animality: its libido is already in itself derailed. One should thus turn around the usual criticism of Badiou: what is problematic is not the quasi-religious miracle of the Event, but the very "natural" order disturbed by the Event.'[373] Again, we find that the 'event' in contemporary Continental thinking is not something that is to be incorporated into known understandings of politics, but something into which those who experience it are incorporated. In turn, any approach taken to 'reading' and 'writing' the event must account for this status. Vincenzo Di Nicola has even argued recently for an 'evental psychiatry', drawn from Badiou's principles, which would understand the event as an opening and the trauma as a rupture.[374]

Cognitive and psychoanalytical theories of the Event have been outlined by psychologists and neurologists: a 'flashbulb memory' is a vivid memory that might be formed instantaneously on experiencing an extraordinary event. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, a body of work on this subject has emerged around the highly mediatised events of 9/11 and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. They tend to concentrate on the neurological process involved in the creation of a flashbulb memory and the external circumstances required for its creation. Sharot et al., to give one example, found that participants' recollection judgements for photographs of emotive events 'were associated with enhanced activity in

[373] Slavoj Žižek, 'Ecology: A New Opium of the Masses' (lecture), Jack Tilton Gallery, November 26, 2007. Text available at https://www.lacan.com/zizecology2.htm Accessed 13 June 2020.

[374] Vincenzo Di Nicola, 'Badiou, the Event, and Psychiatry' (Part I: Trauma and Event; Part II: Psychiatry of the Event), 23 November 2017. Available as a blog post on the website of the American Philosophical Association: https://blog.apaonline.org/2017/11/23/badiou-the-event-and-psychiatry-part-1-trauma-and-event Accessed 12 June 2020. Di Nicola's elaboration of an 'evental psychiatry' is based on his 2012 doctoral thesis (*Trauma and Event: A Philosophical Archaeology*, European Graduate School)

the amygdala, suggesting that subjects rely on arousal and perceptual fluency to evaluate these memories.'[375]

Another cognitive model that describes individual reactions to trauma is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The concept that nervous distress can revisit itself on the body and the psyche long after a distressing event began to be taken seriously in public discourse 'largely as a result of the anguish which was still being experienced by returned soldiers from Vietnam' in the 1970s.[376] While these explanatory models of traumatic memory are not overtly part of the conceptual framework of my thesis, they do attempt to explain the subjective relationship between the event in the moment *and* through time thereafter, and thus could be said to be compatible with my perspective. The event can be understood to persist through trauma, through memorialisation, and through the ongoing media event.

There is an extensive body of literature on the relationships between the event, trauma, and artistic expression. In modernist thinking, it was often focused on the limits of the human capacity to fully disclose the event: Primo Levi and Theodor Adorno questioned whether an event as devastating as the Holocaust is artistically representable at all. The paradoxical relationship between irrecoverability and persistence in extraordinary events has become fundamental to the discipline of trauma and memory studies. In the meta-discipline of cultural studies, Ernst van Alphen has suggested that the event from which the trauma arises is itself excessive, and cannot be transformed in the mind of the traumatised, only repeated:

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[375] Tali Sharot, Mauricio R. Delgado and Elizabeth A. Phelps, 'How emotion enhances the feeling of remembering', *Nature Neuroscience*, Vol. 7, No. 12 (Dec 2004) 1376.

[376] 'When trauma tips you over: PTSD part 1' (transcript), *All in the Mind* (radio programme), ABC Australia, 09 October 2004. https://web.archive.org/web/20080603155139/http://www.abc.net.au/rn/allinthemind/stories/2004/1214098.htm (archived) Accessed 24 April 2020.

> …a trauma arises when an event cannot be worked through, understood, within the frames of reference provided by the symbolic order. When an event makes "no sense" in terms of the culturally provided meaningful frames, it cannot be experienced or memorialised. This lack of a reference frame, which would allow a certain distance from the event, can only lead to a repetition of the event in its full, immediate directness. This repression or return of the event has nothing to do with memory; the very possibility of memory implies distance from the event. On the contrary, memory means indirectness.[377]

The event and its traumatic consequences could be said to persist in the mind of the survivor *as a frame*, as it shapes their experiences going forward (and not necessarily in a way that is obvious to the person having this experience). In *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature and Theory*, van Alphen counters the suggestion that the Holocaust should be dealt with only in historical or documentary modes, that they are formally 'unimpeachable' in dealing with such a profoundly important event.[378] Instead, he emphasises that historical representations are not situated entirely outside the realm of the imaginary;[379] and conversely, that 'figurative expressions are more precise; they are able to represent situations and experience that cannot be conveyed by literal expressions.'[380] I would argue that we should distinguish between the 'actual' logic of media flow and what artists perceive it to be – this is important in how they negotiate it. They are not trying to build an exact philosophical explication of it, but to engage with it and to reconfigure and 're-edit' it. Van Alphen's emphasis on formal aesthetics as a serious mode of engagement in extraordinary political events is shared by Antoine de Baecque, in his *Camera Historica: The Century in Cinema*.[381]

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[377] Ernst van Alphen, *Caught by History: Holocaust Effects in Contemporary Art, Literature, and Theory* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1997) 163.
[378] Van Alphen, 27.
[379] Van Alphen, 26.
[380] Van Alphen, 29, emphasis in original.
[381] Antoine de Baecque, *Camera Historica: The Century in Cinema*, 20-21.

It is the concept of the event as it occurs and as is understood from within the postmodern condition which gives rise to the mass media event. In the postmodern condition, history and historiography happen simultaneously and are thus, in a sense, part of each other. Geoffrey Bennington, in *Lyotard: Writing the Event* gives a tour of the event in Lyotard's thinking; Lyotard broadly concerns himself with how the Event can be 'written'. This gives rise various understandings of the possibility of a 'media event'; the idea of the media event, which is deeply related to (even inscribed upon) the event itself, emerges in the mid-twentieth century.

In the unrest of the late '60s in Paris, the Situationist Guy Debord developed an explicitly Marxist concept of the event in a mediatised context in *Society of the Spectacle*. In North America, philosophers such as Marshall McLuhan, Daniel Boorstin and Neil Postman – foundational figures in what would become media ecology – elaborated definitions of the event as it manifests in the context of media. Boorstin's contribution comes mostly from *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, in which he described the proliferation in the twentieth century of contrived 'pseudo-events' (planned events such as press conferences, rallies and debates, created with the main purpose of being reported). But the seeds of this issue were sewn much earlier: Postman elaborates on Boorstin's discussion of the 'sudden and massive intrusion of the photograph and other iconographs into the symbolic environment' in the nineteenth century:

> This event is what Daniel Boorstin in his pioneering book *The Image* calls "the graphic revolution". By this phrase, Boorstin means to call attention to the fierce assault on language made by forms of mechanically reproduced imagery that spread unchecked throughout American culture – photographs, prints, posters, drawings, advertisements. I chose the word "assault" deliberately here, to amplify the point implied in Boorstin's "graphic *revolution*". The new imagery, with photography at its forefront, did not merely function as a supplement to language, but bid to replace it

> as our dominant means for construing, understanding, and testing reality. What Boorstin implies about the graphic revolution, I wish to make explicit here: the new focus on the image undermined traditional definitions of information, of news, and, to a large extent, of reality itself.[382]

What Postman draws out here is that figuration can push discursive means of communication into the background of culture. He clarifies that in his own argument, he is not making a 'total assault' on television as a medium and acknowledges that there might be beneficial possibilities to television's ubiquity. In *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, however, he argues forcefully that 'a television-based epistemology pollutes public communication and its surrounding landscape' (but 'not that it pollutes everything').[383]

I used as an epigraph for my introduction a maxim drawn from Paul Virilio: 'One does not discuss a live image, one undergoes it'. Clearly, it is difficult to comment on the event as it occurs. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz have characterised media events as 'the live broadcasting of history'; they see the event aspect as ritualistic and performative in nature, and as in itself a genre of communication. Nick Couldry et al. reconsider this approach in the context of globalisation, arguing that there 'are limits to understanding media events on a global scale as the genre of integrative ritual they were originally thought to be' by Dayan and Katz.[384] They explore the constructive, performative power of the media event, and discuss the multiple power centres in which this construction occurs; which, they argue, produce a 'thickening' of transmitted events – particularly the digital power centres, such as blogs and social media, which include commentary with the emerging event.[385] 'In such a frame', the monopolising aspect of the media event described in Dayan and Katz's model is seen as 'much

[382] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness* (York: Methuen, 1987) 75. Emphasis in original.
[383] Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 29.
[384] Nick Couldry, Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Krotz, *Media Events in a Global Age* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009) 10.
[385] Couldry et al., *Media Events in A Global Age*, 11.

more a *situative* (and so not necessarily complete or total) thickening of media communication.'[386]

History can, in these various ways, be said to be written by an enormous number of contributors as it occurs, especially if we simultaneously accept that the media event is a form of commentary or interpretation, if an incontinent one (and conversely, if the camera is accepted to be for some filmmakers a type of interventionist, exploratory and sometimes corrective 'camera-pen'). Concomitantly, emergent political events have been understood through their institutional framing and their effects on audience perceptions, leading to the development of framing effects theory in media studies.[387] The event has also been understood from another phenomenological perspective: as a 'singular way of appearing' rather than a 'technique of communication', as Marie-Pascale Huglo and Johanne Villeneuve put it. Or, as Jean-Louis Déotte characterised it, when discussing the media *appareil* and memory: 'Memory is equipped like any other human faculty. Without memory, there is no event.'[388] For Déotte, museums as institutions constitute special apparatuses which suspend the artwork:

> The temporality of the museum apparatus is paradoxical: the most contemporary works will be absorbed to the extent that they have the capacity to save the past. There is a strange retroactivity, where the most contemporary discovers what was already there, in the museum stores for example, and declares it as its material cause. In fact, the museum time loop is at the heart of all history writing. In a certain way, the stake is the establishment of the "historical truth" (Freud: *Moses and monotheism,*

[386] Ibid. Emphasis in original.

[387] For examples of twenty-first century academic guides on this topic, see Sophie Lecheler and Claes H. De Vreese, *News Framing Effects* (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2019), Paul D'Angelo and Jim A. Kuypers, eds., *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives* (New York, NY.: Routledge, 2010), and Karen S. Johnson-Cartee, *News Narratives and News Framing: Constructing Political Reality* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005)

[388] Jean-Louis Déotte, in Marie-Pascale Huglo and Johanne Villeneuve, 'Introduction: Memory, Media, Art' *SubStance*, Iss. 106 (Vol. 34, No. 1), 2005, 78-80; 78. They quote Déotte in *L'Époque des appareils* (Paris: Lignes & Manifestes, 2004), 112.

> 1948) to which one cannot attest objectively, even if one were to have all the documents with which to do it ("Material truth").
>
> The museum is what separates a work from its former destination, delivering this work with aesthetics, knowing that a double disturbs contemplation like a ghost: the trace of "historical truth".[389]

In suggesting that 'the museum time loop is at the heart of all history writing', Déotte positions the historian as a museum guide. A piece of the event persists in objects contextualised and curated in the frame of the museum itself; in being a 'double', it could be said to persist in a somewhat similar manner to ongoing trauma. Political cinema, meanwhile, being abstracted from yet still materially constituted by the world, could be said to position the filmmaker as a type of cicerone guiding the audience through an event, and yet also as a sort of museum guide, guiding their audience through fragments of the world they have selected and collected within the boundaries of their film. Déotte also emphasises the significance of the cinematographic apparatus in the possible event:

> If the cinematographic device synthesizes the other devices, at the joint, it gives all its possibility to the heterogeneous and therefore to the event. If we agree to name the basic unit of a film the phrase-image (a term that I take from Rancière: *The Future of the Image*, 2003), because sound is as important as the image in a permanent conflict with it, then each sentence-image will be like a closed world having its own spatiality and its own temporality. The analogy proposed by Lyotard, who is only interested in *The Differend* in the sentence, is a technique of spectacle, of pyrotechnics: a rocket is launched, rises, separates, explodes and splashes with colour a whole surrounding world. In echo, we can hear the scene of the beach called Nausicaa in Joyce's *Ulysses*, redoubled by an erection-ejaculation without rest. This scene is self-sufficient, like any work of art. It is not the fragment of any lost or future totality, it does not belong to

[389] Or la temporalité de l'appareil muséal est paradoxale: les œuvres les plus « nouvelles » seront absorbées dans la mesure aussi où elles ont la capacité de sauver le passé. Etrange rétroactivité où le plus récent découvre ce qui était déjà-là, dans les réserves par exemple, et le déclare comme sa cause matérielle. En fait la boucle temporelle muséale est au cœur de toute écriture de l'histoire. D'une certaine manière, l'enjeu c'est l'établissement de la » vérité historique » (Freud: *Moïse et le monotheisme*, 1948) que l'on ne peut pas attester objectivement, aurait-on tous les documents pour le faire (« vérité matérielle »).
Le musée, c'est bien ce qui séparant une œuvre de son ancienne destination, livre cette œuvre à l'esthétique, sachant qu'un double perturbe comme un fantôme la contemplation: la trace de la « vérité historique ».
Jean-Louis Déotte, *Qu'est-ce qu'un appareil? Benjamin, Lyotard, Rancière* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2007) 24.

> the romantic problematic of the fragment. Except that, like any appearance, like any work, it does not have its meaning: it does not make an image. The trace must therefore be entered.[390]

The 'trace', in Derridean deconstruction, deliberately resists a simple definition, but is a contingent term for the generation of signs over time which continually defer, and thus have no straightforwardly identifiable origin. Déotte suggests here that the contradiction between the self-sufficiency of artistic works, the ability of cinema in its heterogeneity to manifest the event, and the impossibility of fully grasping the phenomenon of the event as it happens, is the point of entry for engaging with it.

Linguists have developed a more explicitly scientific conception of the event; from Donald Davidson and Jaegwon Kim to, more recently, Noel Hendrickson. But most relevant to my conception of the event is J. L. Austin's work on performativity, in which a 'speech-act' is said to bring into being a type of event. This concept has been highly influential in the humanities: Derrida asks two questions in the introduction of his book *The Truth in Painting*: 'Does speech-act theory have its counterpart in painting? Does it know its way around painting?'[391] More recently, Horst Bredekamp has applied the concept from a 'post-embodiment' perspective (that is, beyond the embodied 'I' of the postmodern spectator), in *Image-Acts: A Systematic*

[390] Si l'appareil cinématographique synthétise les autres appareils, à la jointure, il laisse toute sa chance à l'hétérogène et donc à l'événement. Si l'on accepte de nommer l'unité de base d'un film la phrase-image (terme que je reprends à Rancière, bien que détourné: *Le Destin des images*, 2003), parce que le son a autant d'importance que l'image dans un conflit permanent avec elle, alors chaque phrase-image sera comme un monde clos ayant sa propre spatialité et sa propre temporalité. L'analogie que propose Lyotard, qui ne s'intéresse dans *Le Différend* qu'à la phrase pure, c'est une technique de spectacle, la pyrotechnie: une fusée est lancée, s'élève, se divise, explose et éclabousse par la couleur tout un monde environnant. En écho, on peut entendre la scène de la plage dite de Nausicaa dans *Ulysse* de Joyce, redoublée par une érection-éjaculation sans reste. Cette scène se suffit à elle-même, comme toute œuvre d'art. Elle n'est le fragment d'aucune totalité perdue ou à venir, elle n'appartient pas à la problématique romantique du fragment. Sauf que, comme toute apparition, comme toute œuvre, elle ne dispose pas de son sens: elle ne fait pas image. La trace doit donc être inscrite.
Jean-Louis Déotte, *Qu'est-ce qu'un appareil?* 27-28.

[391] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 4.

Approach to Visual Agency.[392] It might be fruitful to contrast this theory with Alfred Willener's *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicisation*, a book developed during the protests of May '68.[393] Both Willener and Bredekamp consider images in the sense of having *agency*; in Bredekamp, this comes from art as 'counterforce', while Willener argued for the action of images as a form that politicised the culture of the streets.

Willener took a sociological approach to May '68 (embracing methods such as giving questionnaires to the protesting students) and concluded that the events constituted a dialectical relationship between action and imagination. The questionnaires revealed that the students were preoccupied with ideas of fragmentation and with ruins, which Willener compared to the concerns of Dadaism and Surrealism (and we can see an explicitly Debordian concern with spectacle and *détournement* in Willener's findings). He quoted graffiti on the walls of Paris as evidence that the series of protests formed a 'socially hallucinatory period'; that is, one in which fictions and art became embedded visually in everyday life – and in an explicitly evental way (as they were intended to provoke philosophical realisations in their viewer and to jolt them into political action). In these descriptions it is possible to see the development of what Allen Kaprow called 'happenings': performed art events which took place live in public spaces, and which were designed to disturb and recontextualise the reality around them.

The 'linguistic turn' in historiography was influential in the social sciences as well as the humanities, particularly in ethnographic theory. Britta Ohm's essay on 'The Ethnographic Moment' is one example of an understanding of ethnographic events, defined temporally:

[392] Horst Bredekamp, *Image-Acts: A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency* (Berlin and Boston, MA.: De Gruyter, 2018)
[393] Alfred Willener, *The Action-Image of Society: On Cultural Politicisation* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970)

> This article introduces the term 'the ethnographic moment', which takes up and 'plays' with the long-disputed 'ethnographic present' in anthropology, as an indicator of changing conditions and requirements for ethnography in the context of mass media and mediation. It argues that event and debate, rather than structure and practice, have become pivotal aspects in thinking and conducting fieldwork that has to deal with the ephemeral. At the same time, it tries to show that an unquestioning acceptance of technological advancement and speed of societal change immunizes us to the thinkable absence of media and obscures analysis of lasting states of injustice and inequality in whose (re-)production they have a stake.[394]

Explorations of the linguistic event have formed part of what would become the 'performative turn' in criticism in multiple fields. Part of this performative turn took place in theatrical studies: Richard Schechner's *Performance Theory* (first published 1977 as *Essays on Performance Theory*) elaborates the concept of performance beyond the traditional definition of 'theatre' to include traditional cultural acts such as rituals. In a chapter titled 'From ritual to theatre and back again: the efficacy-entertainment braid', he points out the significance of mass media in educating its critics on forms of staging:

> TV news is staged not only by the obvious editing of raw footage to suit the video format, especially the need to sell time in prescribed short units (based on how long an average viewer's attention span is held), but also because 'media events' and camera opportunities' are classes of events created for TV. Many guerrilla theatre events, terrorist acts, kidnappings, assassinations, and street demonstrations – not to mention more banal happenings such as press conferences, dedications of public buildings, parades – are theatricalized in order to catch the TV eye [...] So we are continually being educated to the histrionics of communication.[395]

He continues later: 'Efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum. The basic polarity is between efficacy and entertainment, not between ritual and theatre.'[396] Emphasising the importance of reflexivity

[394] Britta Ohm, 'The Ethnographic Moment: Event and Debate in Mediatized Fieldwork' (2017), *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 9(3), 71-96, abstract.
[395] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London and New York, NY.: Routledge, 2006) 123.
[396] Schechner, 130.

in recent theatre, he argues that 'paratheatrical events dissolve the audience-performer opposition'. Schechner argues that historically, efficacy (ritual) and entertainment (theatre) have been 'braided' in their development, with one usually dominant over the other at different historical points. By the last third of the twentieth century, the avant-garde had expanded to include 'direct political action, performance in everyday life (breaking down the art-life dichotomy), psychotherapy, and other manifestly efficacious kinds of performance.'[397]

But the theatre as an institution, and the proscenium arch as a frame, persist. Reception theory is crucial to this concept of the performance event because of this: '…the drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; the theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers (technicians, too, anyone who is there).'[398] Schechter maps out the relationships spatially in this description, yet he positions the actors and audience as equivalent; they are all 'actors' in a philosophical sense. But only one group has the relevant edition of the 'interior map' and knows the plan for its spatiotemporal manifestation (and thus a guide by which to predict the visual events to take place with overall accuracy).

Roman Jakobson, in 'Linguistics and Poetics' (1958) aimed to demonstrate that linguistics as a discipline is a useful source of understanding of the relationships between poetics and performance. His approach to the communicative abilities of language draws in detail from the structures of information theory. Discussing the performance event and the theatrical event, he approvingly cites William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley: '…there are many

[397] Schechner, 135.
[398] Ibid.

performances of the same poem differing among themselves in many ways. A performance is an event, but the poem itself, if there is any poem, must be some kind of enduring object.'[399] But by the 1980s, W. B. Worthen, in 'Drama, Performativity and Performance', is one of the academics seeking to separate such a perceived authoritative relationship between performance and texts. He points out that J. L. Austin was 'notoriously sceptical of theatrical performatives'[400] and draws from Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's discussion of speech-acts to conclude that '...it is not the text that prescribes the meanings of the performance: it is the construction of the text within the specific apparatus of the ceremony that creates performative force. The performance is not a citation of the text […] Performing reconstitutes the text; it does not echo, give voice to, or translate the text. Performance does not cite the text any more than "I do" constitutes the force of marriage.'[401] But while questioning the 'authority' of the pre-existing text over the performance has been useful, in the context of the media event that text *materially persists in the performance*, and many political filmmakers, as I have argued, are deeply interested in the relationship that persists in space and in time, and even in appropriating the viewer into the 'event' of this relationship.

It could be suggested that films – for a short space of time – function to close an open system, in the context of their reception by an audience; or at least, they invite the possibility of doing so. A permutation on this idea can be found in the concept of the theatrical event, outlined by Willmar Sauter in his book of the same name:

[399] Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics'. Originally presented at a conference on style held at Indiana University in the spring of 1958, then revised and published in *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1960) 13. Jakobson cites William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Concept of Meter: An Exercise in Abstraction', *PMLA* 74 (1959), 587.
[400] W. B. Worthen, 'Drama, Performativity and Performance', *PMLA*, Vol. 113, No. 5 (Oct. 1998), pp. 1093-1107; 1095. Worthen cites Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Introduction', in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Parker and Sedgwick (New York, NY.: Routledge, 1995) 1-18.
[401] Worthen, 'Drama, Performativity and Performance', 1097.

> Theatre is primarily a communicative event, the encounter between the actor and the spectator. In this encounter the exhibitory, encoded, and embodied actions contribute equally to the act of communication with the audience. In this situation, contact is achieved primarily through the performer, whereas the writer and the text are merely one of the sources which the actor utilises. Rather than being the writer's servant, the actor produces his or her own images, thus making the writer the servant of the actor.[402]

Vicki Ann Cremona et al., in *Theatrical Events: Borders - Dynamics – Frames*, include festivals and Carnival as examples of theatrical events.[403] Temple Hauptfleisch's essay 'Eventification' appears in Cremona's book as well as in Tomas Pernecky's book on event studies: '…the theatrical event can, and often does, serve as a framing device, able to turn what one might call an (everyday, ordinary) *event* into an (exceptional, extraordinary) *Event*. And it is this process that I have termed *eventification*'.[404] Weaponisation, in turn, is an explicitly political eventification: it functions by problematising the frame and by manipulating the figure-ground relationship the films have to the (media) events themselves; it thus attempts to make clearer the complexity of the 'frames in communication' between the event, the media event, the audio, visual and textual materials used by the film, and the audience itself.

Reception theory has also heavily influenced understandings of a literature event. Terry Eagleton suggests in *The Event of Literature* that 'Generally speaking, it is possible to distinguish between two ways of regarding literary works: as objects, and as events.'[405] Derek Attridge argues that '…to call the process whereby an inventive artifact comes into the world as an *act* is to misrepresent it; it is as much an event that happens to the inventor, and to the culture within which the invention takes place, as it is a willed action of a conscious

[402] Sauter, *The Theatrical Event*, 206.
[403] Vicki Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch (eds.), *Theatrical Events: Borders - Dynamics - Frames*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004)
[404] Hauptfleisch, 'Eventification', in Pernecky, 39, emphases in original.
[405] Terry Eagleton, *The Event of Literature* (New Haven, CT. and London: Yale University Press, 2012) 188.

individual'.[406] This approach uses reception theory to emphasise that a reader is required to create an event in literature. A more explicitly formal approach is taken by Mario Aquilina in *The Event of Style in Literature*, while for Asja Szafraniec, in *Beckett, Derrida and the event of Literature,* the question 'is not whether, or in what way, we can grasp something in its absolute singularity (we cannot) but in what way a singular event can affect us or generate a series of effects beyond itself. It is for this reason that Derrida insists on singularity never being punctual, "never closed like a point or a fist".'[407]

Ewa Kowal, in *The 'Image-Event' in the Early Post-9/11 Novel: Literary Representations of Terror After September 11, 2001*, takes the image-event concept from Baudrillard to explore how a textual medium responded to a cataclysmic event which was experienced by the world in a visual medium. She considers each book in her corpus of early post-9/11 novels in terms of its proximity to the event and argues that 'the novels addressing 9/11 and post-9/11 terror most directly are written in a kind of interlanguage, a metalanguage. They present an *attitude towards speaking* about the terrorist attacks and their consequences. For this reason they also speak about themselves and all media of expression in general […] In collapsing boundaries, they take after their "mother".'[408] Their 'mother' here is the event of 9/11; her characterisation of the event as a 'mother' is drawn from Baudrillard's own description of 9/11 as 'the ultimate event, the mother of all events' in 'The Spirit of Terrorism'. The complex inter-relationship and meta-relationship between image, text and the extraordinary event, and the significance of reflexivity as a method of approaching the 'distant' event in these

[406] Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (Oxford: Routledge, 2004) 55.
[407] Asja Szafraniec, *Beckett, Derrida, and the Event of Literature* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2007) 16. She quotes Jacques Derrida, in 'This Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida', trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 1992) 68.
[408] Ewa Kowal, *The 'Image-Event' in the Early Post-9/11 Novel: Literary Representations of Terror After September 11, 2001* (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2012) 138. Emphasis in original.

novels (or at least as a method of measuring their distance) becomes apparent in her analysis; Kowal includes a chapter on audio-visual media in the post-9/11 novel, demonstrating how the interlanguage of these novels is also intermedial.

Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, in 'Semiotics and Art History', suggest that visual art is itself, as an assemblage of signs, a type of event:

> […] insofar as works of art are works of the sign, their structure is not in fact singular, but iterative. Singular events occur at only one point in space and time: the guest at the country house party was murdered in the library; the Magna Carta was written in 1215; the painting was autographed and framed. But signs are by definition repeatable. They enter into a plurality of contexts; works of art are constituted by different viewers in different ways at different times and places.[409]

The artist Josef Albers, in the lectures collected in *Search versus Re-Search*, argued that artworks should not be understood as objects, but as processes: experiences which persist through time. Hubert Damisch, in *The Origin of Perspective*, also argued that the image would have to be understood as something more than mimetic, but instead, as a type of art-event.

Jean-Luc Nancy, in *The Ground of the Image*, distinguishes between the 'figure' (a reference point) in paintings and the less tangible yet still material 'image' (which exists in the context of the 'ground' [*fond*], and which does not simply make the invisible visible in art as an object, but 'accedes to a knowledge of it'[410]). He argues that art delivers a sense of truth through an operation it performs within itself:

> …the image never stops tightening and condensing into itself. That is why it is immobile, calm and flat in its presence, the coming-together and co-inciding of an event and an eternity. The musical, choreographic, cinematographic, or kinetic image

[409] Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, 'Semiotics and Art History' *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (June 1991) 174-208; 179.
[410] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image* trans. Jeff Fort (New York, NY.: Fordham University Press, 2005) 12.

> in general is no less immobile in this sense: it is the distension of a present of intensity, in which succession is also a simultaneity.[411]

He is careful to emphasise that this operation delivers the artwork to the beholder as they look at it, moving as a force away from its context. Paradoxically, it thus contains within itself a move towards and a move away from the 'ground' of context:

> The image does not stand before the ground like a net or a screen. We do not sink; rather, the ground rises to us in the image. The double separation of the image, its pulling away and its cutting out, form both a protection against the ground and an opening onto it. In reality, the ground is not distinct as ground except in the image: without the image, there would only be indistinct adherence. More precisely: in the image, the ground is distinguished by being doubled.[412]

Robert Hughes, in 'An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Jean-Luc Nancy (with Reflections on Estonian Landscape Images)', breaks down Nancy's artistic aesthetics into five 'theses':

> (1) The event of art involves shedding the everyday significations and conceptual framings that shut out the world and enclose the subject in solipsism, (2) Art locates the subject in the presentness of a singular sensuous event, (3) Art arouses intimations of the ground of the image as a ground of unpresented chaos, wildness, and indifference, (4) Art stages a real encounter with the world's unsignifying indifference to human existence, and (5) Art exposes the subject as other to itself in the event of art.[413]

Hughes finds in Nancy an emphasis on humanity's power to *mean* as it is expressed in artworks; the 'event' is understood as the process by which this becomes visible, a process of distinguishing from the world. In his book on the portrait, as Jeffrey S. Librett points out, Nancy 'reads the art of portrait as an ontology of the subject *while* construing the subject's being in terms of its artistic portrayal', so that '…subject and portrait are to be inscribed in

[411] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, 9.
[412] Nancy, *The Ground of the Image*, 13.
[413] Robert Hughes, 'An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Jean-Luc Nancy (with Reflections on Estonian Landscape Images)', *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture* 22.1-2, 2013, 183.

each other.'[414] This simultaneity is taken to be a significant aspect of the ontology Nancy sketches.

Robin Wagner-Pacifici, in *What is an Event?*, has recently taken on the concept of the art image. She also sees an 'event' that emerges temporally, but when it is brought about in the interpretation of the figure:

> An art historian describing a figure's posture and action in the moment before that figure brings about an event of enormous magnitude, and a semiotician trying to get a bead on the gestural relation between position and movement, flow and termination, immobility and mobility, manage to highlight the importance of the "inchoative moment" of event formation. At its apparently "terminative moment", the event appears to have been inevitable in its shapes, meanings and trajectories. It appears to have sprung forth fully formed. To understand that it was actually not inevitable and that it developed interpretively by stages is the task at hand. To think through this dilemma of seeming inexhorability, the concept of a judgement, and even more powerfully, a last judgement, is ideal.[415]

Wagner-Pacifici finds in death a '…perpetually surprising, yet certain, elemental event. And like birth, we can't know when exactly it will happen and what will be the nature of the transaction. It is shockingly both constant and episodic, hovering over everything but forcefully occluded by ongoing life.'[416] To explore this paradox in more detail, she turns to Poussin's painting *The Arcadian Shepherds* (otherwise known as 'Et in Arcadia Ego'; the painting, she argues, 'highlights the mysteries and conundrums of the relationship in political semiosis between the event of death and its ground of existence').[417] Poussin's second version of the painting differs from the first in a significantly reflexive way: one of the shepherds points at the inscription on the stone while another appears to point at that

[414] Jeffrey S. Librett, in Jean-Luc Nancy, *Portrait* (New York, NY.: Fordham University Press, 2018) 2 (my emphasis).
[415] Robin Wagner-Pacifici, *What is an Event?* (Chicago, IL. and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017) 59.
[416] Wagner-Pacifici, *What is an Event?* 39.
[417] Ibid.

shepherd's shadow, which is cast back on to the tomb. The inscription on the cenotaph reads 'Et in Arcadia ego' (fig. 33). This version, Wagner-Pacifici points out, 'has been interpreted as a memento mori (a reminder of death), the discovery of the presence of death in Arcadia (of all places), and the birth of painting.'[418] The four figures 'gaze at the tomb and at one another in a dynamic relational network of sightlines, postures, and gestures.'[419] The cenotaph is a frame within the frame, and one which is recursively looked at and engaged with by the figures within the painting's own frame.

It is assumed that the 'I' in the phrase 'I am also in Arcadia' represents Death itself. Wagner-Pacifici identifies two persistent interpretations of the phrase: 'I [Death] was here once, also in Arcadia' and 'I [Death] am even in Arcadia'. Drawing from art historians Louis Marin and Judith Bernstock, she concludes that ambiguity itself – the possibility of both readings – is the most attractive interpretation: 'in any of the readings, death is a multiply eventful surprise in Arcadia, and its time is both unknown and inexorable. The shepherds seem jolted out of their own lives by this puzzling confrontation with death in its multiplicity.'[420]

This thought could be extended by suggesting that the artwork is intended to stand as not simply representing but provoking the event itself, by making it manifest again (in a fashion). The 'break' is then the shock which takes place inside the painting's viewer, on matching the words and the picture, and on understanding and remembering that death is everywhere: even in themselves. The painting enforces the death of the viewer's ability to block out the reality of death and, if the viewer remembers it beyond the viewing, secures its own

[418] Ibid.
[419] Ibid.
[420] Wagner-Pacifici, *What is an Event?* 41.

interpretative, 'framing' afterlife. This break could be framed as, paradoxically, both disruptive and connective, within the same movement.

In 1979, Roland Barthes criticised a photographic exhibition of 'shocking images' at the Galerie d'Orsay as shuddering *for* the viewer, instead of causing the viewer to shudder:

> Most of the photographs exhibited to shock us have no effect at all, precisely because the photographer has too generously substituted himself for us in the formation of his subject: he has almost always *overconstructed* the horror he is proposing, adding to the *fact*, by contrasts or parallels, the intentional *language* of horror: one of them, for instance, places side by side a crowd of soldiers and a field of skulls; another shows us a young soldier looking at a skeleton; another catches a column of prisoners passing a flock of sheep. Now, none of these photographs, all too skilful, touches us. This is because, as we look at them, we are in each case dispossessed of our judgement: someone has shuddered for us, reflected for us, judged for us:; the photographer has left us nothing – except a simple right of intellectual acquiescence: we are linked to these images only by a technical interest; overindicated by the artist himself, for us they have no history; we can no longer *invent* our own reception of this synthetic nourishment, already perfectly assimilated by its creator.[421]

Building on Barthes' point, Susie Linfield also emphasises the political importance of a political and visual event travelling, reverberating, and accumulating meaning beyond its occurrence when it is shared beyond its immediate context as a photograph. She cites the release of the torture images from Abu Ghraib as an example:

> Every documentary photograph records an event. But the Abu Ghraib photographs were an event in themselves. In this, they joined the long, ignoble line of photographs […] that not only depict cruelty but celebrate it. The behaviour these photographs document is bad, but the disorientation they cause stems from the very fact that they were made and from the unmistakable happiness of the tormentors that they show.[422]

[421] Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1997) 71-2. Emphases in original.
[422] Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press, 2012) 151.

The photographs had (and have) a power that persists beyond the moral affront of the physical assaults: using the camera was part of the abuse that was inflicted on the prisoners. The photos entering worldwide mass media circulation paradoxically made the situation both better and worse. It enabled the possibility of consequences for the perpetrators and provided material evidence of what happened. But the photos were also inflicted on the world, becoming a visual symbol of American political sadism that would continue to speak of torture, thus organising future understandings of American motives for international political engagement.

The political theorist Mark Reinhardt has drawn attention to the need for political theorists and scientists to realise that the visual and the political are interrelated, singling out three books on the event of photography in relation to events of political violence: Linfield's *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence*, Arielle Azoulay's *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, and W. J. T. Mitchell's *Cloning Terror*.[423] Azoulay contends that 'in the contemporary era […] photography always constitutes a potential event', while Mitchell's book takes 9/11 as its starting point to explore the figure of the clone as 'an image of imaging' in discourse around the War on Terror, and as 'the master metaphor or "metapicture" of image-making itself'.[424]

Linfield, at the end of her book, quotes the photographer Gilles Peress and asks, 'How do you make the unseen seen?'.[425] This is a potentially eventful question. Peress, Linfield points out,

[423] See Mark Reinhardt, 'Theorizing the Event of Photography – The Visual Politics of Violence and Terror in Azoulay's *Civil Imagination*, Linfield's *The Cruel Radiance*, and Mitchell's *Cloning Terror*', *Theory & Event*, Vol. 16, Iss. 3 (2013).
[424] Arielle Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography,* trans. Louise Bethlehem (London and New York, NY.: Verso, 2021) 22; W.J.T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present* (Chicago, IL. and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011) Preface*, xii* and *xiv.*
[425] Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance,* 258.

includes the apparatus as well as the viewer and photographer (as well as a notion of 'reality' that exists outside of all of these) as part of the 'text' or the 'open documents' of photography:

> In Peress's view, the photograph is a democratic process that lives and changes; photographs, he has said, are open documents 'where half of the text is in the reader.' The viewer must work to complete the photograph by digging into what it suggests and endowing it with deeper insights; the photograph is 'the moment where my language finishes and yours starts.' Every image, Peress says, has four authors: the photographer, the camera, the viewer, and reality. But it is reality, he insists, that 'has a way of speaking the loudest': that speaks, in fact, 'with a vengeance.'[426]

One famous photograph that encapsulates the issue of ethical reflexivity and the event was taken by Kevin Carter in 1993 and is known as 'The Vulture and the Little Girl' (though the child was in fact a little boy, named Kong Nyong). Carter was part of the South African photographers' group known as 'The Bang Bang Club' (Linfield suggests that the name is 'at once brash and self-critical',[427] thus incorporating it into another framing paradox). His photograph could be taken to exemplify the restoration of the invisible event of symbolic violence to the frame. However, it is a problematised restoration: the implied 'vulture' of the photograph, triangulated with the child and the bird in the image, is the cameraman himself, and by reflexive extension, the viewer. Reflexive intervention is, in such ways, often the mode of engagement for artists *with*, *through* and *from* the event.

I have explored in this chapter the idea of the 'event' as it has appeared in philosophy and theory, and as it has been understood to manifest in creative works across a range of artistic mediums. There is a paucity of film studies literature that directly considers the possibility of this manner of 'film event'; however, an exception can be found in recent research by the philosopher John Mullarkey (sometimes known as John Ó Maoilearca). In 2007, he was the

[426] Linfield, 238.
[427] Linfield, 221.

principal investigator in the Arts and Humanities Research Council-supported project 'Film, Philosophy, and the Cinematic Event'.[428] Mullarkey asked in this study whether film can philosophise on its own, rather than merely serving as a prop through which to demonstrate or illustrate philosophy. His outputs included an article and a book which proposed the possibility of what he calls a 'cinematic event'.[429]

Mullarkey defines a cinematic event as a philosophical 'becoming' that 'enfolds a multiplicity of properties', and which therefore cannot be set into hierarchical ontological categories. He asks whether film 'can think for itself, by resisting and reforming our philosophical presuppositions through its social, technological, narrative, visual, and auditory structures in all their evental hybridity.'[430] He quotes Rick Altman, who concludes that cinema is 'constituted by a continuing interchange, neither beginning nor ending at any specific point [so that] 'what we refer to as "the film" is fundamentally unstable in nature'. Mullarkey concludes from this that 'there is no art object', but rather that film is a series of processes (which include its viewers).[431] Altman outlines in his introduction a wish to move away from 'cinema as text' in film theory and consider 'cinema as event'; rather marvellously, he describes such event-films as 'floating in a gravity-free world like doughnut-shaped spaceships', and posits that 'cinema events offer no clean-cut or stable separation between inside and outside or top and bottom'.[432]

[428] John Mullarkey, 'Film, Philosophy, and The Cinematic Event' (AHRC research grant), Sep 07 - Dec 07, UKRI website, https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FE004059%2F1 Accessed 20 June 2020.
[429] 'Life, Movement and the Fabulation of the Event' (Nov 2008), *Theory, Culture & Society* vol. 24(6), 53-70, and *Refractions of Reality: Philosophy and the Moving Image* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009)
[430] Mullarkey, 'Film, Philosophy, and The Cinematic Event' (AHRC research grant).
[431] Mullarkey, *Refractions of Reality*, 154-55. He quotes Rick Altman (ed.), *Sound Theory/Sound Practice* (London: Routledge, 1992), 'General Introduction: Cinema as Event', 4, 11.
[432] Altman, 12-13.

While I have sought to capture such a 'geometric' movement in cinema myself, I have preserved a 'textual' aspect by arguing that these films move in a reality that is itself mediatised and therefore to some extent textualized (and have consequently characterised the relationship as philological in nature). My own approach to the possibility of such a cinematic or film event is more explicitly concerned with understanding it in an 'applied' political and historical context, rather than in the context of a possible film-philosophy. More specifically, I have attempted to disclose the emergence of an evental film form as it pertains to formal reflexivity and ethical implication. In the films included in this study, the possibility of ethical implication into a given political event is situated in the context of film, filmmaking and wider media apparatuses and institutions (and their own assumed audiences of spectators).

Mullarkey's research, however, remains relevant to my own perspective. His argument is built partly on Bergson's concept of the *fabulation function*: a function of the imagination which produces 'voluntary hallucinations' in its subjects.[433] Fabulation creates visible, perceptible causes as a response to humanity's sense that it is being watched.[434] This might involve the development of images of gods, for example, to enforce social cohesion; this force also maintains a society's 'closed' morality, which arises as a response to specific, rigid social needs and which, Bergson suggests at various points in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, tends to be associated with war. I have extrapolated that Bergsonian fabulation is compatible with my understanding of 'film events' through these films' reflexive engagement with artistic

[433] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton, with W. Horsfall Carter (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977) 111.
[434] Bergson, *Morality and Religion*, 122.

conceptual concerns such as the cinematographic form of history, the responsive eye, and the object that stares back.

The forms of 'staring back' in the films included in this study encapsulate and deconstruct the relationships between several figures, including the filmmaker, the camera, the film itself, the viewer, and the subjects of the film. But some of the subjects of these films have, in some cases, had the status of 'object' enforced upon them through past events. A person who is murdered in the commission of a political event is 'objectified' in an obvious sense when they are killed, and their perspective is never fully recoverable. However, individuals might also become 'objects' of trauma when they survive being subjected to extraordinary acts of violence and are subsequently silenced and discouraged from seeking forms of post-conflict justice.

In some cases, the events might not have been available to be observed by anyone who was not present at their occurrence; if there was no media presence at the time of the event, there might be no photographs, films etc. to serve as evidence or to perpetuate the event in material form. Alternatively, the media apparatuses that were present might have been directly implicated in the events (structurally and ethically): materials such as photographs could have been used at the time to stand as 'proof' of wrongdoing. Furthermore, the media as an institution might be implicated long after the event by ignoring the survivors, and/or by encouraging, promoting and circulating the perpetrators' accounts of the event. In each of these situations, survivors have been unable to 'return the gaze' in any sustained way; to bring back to the wider cultural frame the possibility of *being seen* for themselves and of *seeing* for themselves.

This is an issue I will explore in the next chapter, by considering documentary filmmakers who have engaged with political events from decades in the past, and who structure their films around the fraught relationship between the event, its victims, survivors, witnesses and perpetrators, the media materials and apparatuses that engaged with it, and the implication of others into the event through the persistence of dominant narratives. In engaging with these problems, these filmmakers use their own film frames to capture, highlight and potentially transform the conflict between two other frames: the traumatic frame through which survivors might perceive their circumstances, and the cultural frames forced upon them by other individuals, groups, or institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

SCREEN MEMORIES AND THE RETURN OF REPRESENTATION

i. Introduction: artifice and artefact

In classical models of trauma, the mind distances itself from the event in question through dissociative or repressive techniques. Freud's theory of *Deckerinnerungen* (1899; translated by James Strachey in 1950 as 'screen memory') suggests that the mind tends to cover up memories of significantly traumatic childhood events with memories that are more acceptable to it. Lacan, in his essay 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud' argued that as the unconscious mind is structured like a language, it lacks a point of reference from which to reinstate itself after experiencing a particularly distressing event. In both theories, the event is not fully accessible to the victim after it occurs; it becomes 'unreadable' to the conscious mind.

Following these psychoanalytical approaches, a poststructuralist model for studying trauma emerged near the end of the twentieth century. The concept of trauma was placed in an explicitly linguistic context in an effort to bring methodological rigour to its study. The concept of 'trauma studies' started to appear in literary theory as well as in clinical, philosophical, and historical contexts; each discipline has sought to understand the narratives that emerge from events resulting in trauma. In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996) Cathy Caruth suggests that there is a duality inherent in trauma for a victim: in their experience of the incident as it occurred, and in their consequent experiences of surviving it.

These experiences are both 'incompatible and absolutely inextricable'.[435] Trauma, she explains, '…describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena'. But Caruth also adds that it through the 'bewildering encounter with trauma - both in its occurrence and in the attempt to understand it - that we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential (that is, no longer based on simple models of experience and reference)'.[436]

The subtitle of the book's introductory chapter is 'The Wound and the Voice', derived from Torquato Tasso's sixteenth century poem *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Caruth takes the reference from Freud, who used it in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a 'poetic' example of how a traumatised person is 'possessed' by the event. Its hero, Tancred, accidentally slays his beloved, Clorinda, while she is disguised. After her burial, he slashes at a tree in a forest, which begins to bleed. Clorinda's voice cries out, and Tancred realises that he has wounded her once again:

> As the repeated infliction of a wound, the act of Tancred calls up the originary meaning of trauma itself (in both English and German), the Greek *trauma*, or "wound," originally referring to an injury inflicted on a body. In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. But what seems to be suggested by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is that the wound of the mind - the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world - is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that, like Tancred's first infliction of a mortal wound on the disguised Clorinda in the duel, is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not

[435] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore, MD.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) 7.
[436] Ibid.

> available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor.[437]

Caruth takes the story as an analogy for one of the effects of trauma: the traumatised individual is doomed to repeat, perhaps uncomprehendingly, their experiences after the event itself. According to psychoanalytic theory, the experience might subsequently be suppressed, but it can still return in some form. It is therefore both inaccessible and inescapable in the victim's mind. This, of course, leads to profound difficulties in articulating the nature of the trauma. The survivor is caught in a paradox.

And so Caruth finds another, consequent duality inherent in trauma: that a person listening to an account of another's trauma cannot fully access it. She suggests that psychoanalysis, as a practice, 'listens to a voice that it cannot fully know but to which it nonetheless bears witness.'[438] Freud's theory of trauma was therefore written not only about trauma, she argues, but in the midst of it.[439] For this reason, she chose to study fictional texts that depict trauma, as well as theoretical descriptions that attempt to account for it, as case studies in *Unclaimed Experience*:

> Whether the texts I read concern, as in Freud, the theory of trauma in individual or collective history or, as in Duras and Resnais, the story of two people bonded in and around their respective catastrophic experiences, each one of these texts engages, in its own specific way, a central problem of listening, of knowing, and of representing that emerges from the actual experience of the crisis.[440]

The entanglement Caruth finds in 'the wound and the voice' seems to conflate the victim's ability to articulate their trauma (whether as abreaction or as testimony) and the academic

[437] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 3-4.
[438] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 9.
[439] Caruth, 8.
[440] Caruth, 4-5. The 'story of two people' to which Caruth refers is the French New Wave film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), dir. Alain Resnais, with a screenplay by Marguerite Duras.

or artist's ability to articulate the event they are studying (in the form of commentary). Often, in trauma studies, the two concepts appear to be elided.

There is an assumption that those who attempt to develop narratives of the past (whether they take on historical writing, filmmaking, fiction writing, etc.) struggle with an aporia comparable to that of the survivors of the event itself. The inaccessibility of the event is rounded up to a wider audience, beyond the original violent act itself:

> If traumatic experience, as Freud indicates suggestively, is an experience that is not fully assimilated as it occurs, then these texts, each in its turn, asks what it means to transmit and to theorize around a crisis that is marked, not by a simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness. Such a question, I will argue, whether it occurs within a strictly literary text or in a more deliberately theoretical one, can never be asked in a straightforward way, but must, indeed, also be spoken in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding.[441]

Caruth's methodological solution to this quandary in her book is to analyse the fictional and non-fictional texts for their rhetorical value, such as the descriptive words she finds repeated throughout them ('burning', 'awakening'). 'At the heart of these stories is thus an enigmatic testimony not only to the nature of violent events but to what, in trauma, resists simple comprehension'.[442]

Her poststructuralist analysis also suggests that history functions similarly to trauma; that is to say, it is 'referential' and 'not fully perceived as it occurs'. Roger Luckhurst points out that for Caruth, trauma is 'a crisis of representation, of history and truth, and of narrative time'.[443] The significance of aporia and the expressibility of the 'irreducible' is interesting when considered both in terms of direct responses to trauma (the testimonies of survivors), and to

[441] Caruth, 5.
[442] Caruth, 6.
[443] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2013) 5.

historical contextualisation of trauma by others (the commentaries of historians, filmmakers, etc.). We encounter once again a variation on Magritte's aporetic problem of the 'treachery of images', or the treacherous relationship between images and words: that 'this is not a pipe'.

This is another Lyotardian understanding of history, applied specifically in the context of traumatic political events. History is textual, and available to us to be 'read' as a series of referential signs; if the experience was traumatic, it also becomes difficult to 'write' or express the actual object of our discussion in language, but only to refer to it (Maurice Blanchot wrote that the disaster 'is the limit of writing. This must be repeated; the disaster de-scribes').[444] But we can detect yet another idea of duality in extraordinary events of political violence, as we shall see in this chapter. While trauma disrupts memory, and then reverberates through the victim's lived experience, collective cultural memories can be disrupted by the perpetrators of the violence. They can enforce framed and framing narratives on to the public to protect or even to exculpate themselves, and to ignore or even condemn the victims of their violence.

After Caruth, Michelle Balaev has argued that the poststructuralist understanding of trauma and referentiality has become too 'determinate'.[445] Previous models of trauma, according to this view, overemphasise the idea that trauma persists in the mind of the victim as a 'silent haunting', and that trauma is eternally inexpressible and unknowable. Balaev instead argues for a more 'pluralistic model' which, while acknowledging that agency was taken away from

[444] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, NE. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986) 7.
[445] Michelle Balaev, 'Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered' in Michelle Balaev (ed.), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 6.

the victim at the moment of trauma, also acknowledges a range of possible responses to trauma, including the possibility that trauma does not persist as a silence.[446]

Similarly, Julian Wolfreys argues against 'paradigmatic procedures' in trauma studies, and instead for careful reading or a 'grammar',[447] without entirely jettisoning the concept of aporia as an aspect of traumatised memory. Following Dominick LaCapra, he argues that this is not to demand a formalist approach *per se*, but to 'acknowledge and observe how absence is a structural part of witness'.[448] This also follows from the writings of Giorgio Agamben on memory, witnessing and the experience of Auschwitz: 'Whoever assumes the charge of bearing witness in their name knows that he or she must bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness. But this alters the value of testimony in a definitive way; it makes it necessary to look for its meaning in an unexpected area.'[449] But how does one begin to bear witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness?

The films in this chapter can all be construed as performative responses to traumatic political events. I start with two films by Jean Rouch, both considered foundational works of docufiction: *Les maîtres fous* (1955) and *Chronique d'un été* (1961, co-directed by the sociologist and philosopher of complexity Edgar Morin). I then discuss feature-length films from a later generation of filmmakers, who have drawn extensively from Rouch for their own methodologies: Rithy Panh's *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003) and Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014).

[446] Balaev, 3.
[447] Julian Wolfreys, *Occasional Deconstructions* (New York, NY.: SUNY Press, 2004) 162.
[448] Wolfreys, 162.
[449] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York, NY.: Zone Books, 1999) 34.

In *Chronique d'un été*, anthropologist-filmmaker Jean Rouch and sociologist-philosopher Edgar Morin conduct a 'sociopolitical diagnosis of the early sixties in France'.[450] They interview residents of Paris, including students, African migrants, and Holocaust survivors, who over the course of the film are seen to interact with each other, with the public, and with the filmmakers themselves. The film's narrative appears loose and somewhat improvised throughout. At the end, the filmmakers are shown screening a version of the film to some of its participants, who offer divergent interpretations of it.

Summoning the past is the explicit topic of the second Rouch film discussed in this chapter, *Les maîtres fous*. It is a short film which follows a Ghanaian 'possession cult known as Hauka' during their 'biggest ceremony of the year'. They are possessed by 'the spirits of the colonial administrators' during the ceremony, 'and enact a drama that becomes a reflection of that regime through the eyes of cult members'.[451] As the camera weaves around the site, the film's audience is encouraged to see more than a strange foreign ritual, and instead to assume the perspective of a participant.

In his essay 'The Camera and Man', Rouch characterised the 'dynamic improvisation'[452] allowed by the handheld camera as a technique that allowed filmmakers to pierce into their subjects. This is a transformational experience, he argued, for the filmmakers themselves as well as for their subjects: 'For me then, the only way to film is to walk with the camera, taking it where it is most effective and improvising another type of ballet with it, trying to make it as

[450] Uncredited synopsis, *Chronique d'un été*, included with the Criterion Collection DVD release of the film https://www.criterion.com/films/28394-chronicle-of-a-summer Accessed 19 June 2020.
[451] Description from Jean Rouch, interviewed by John Marshall and John W. Adams, '*Les maîtres fous*, *The Lion Hunters*, and *Jaguar*' (1977), in Rouch and Feld, 189.
[452] Jean Rouch, 'The Camera and Man', in Rouch and Feld, 38.

alive as the people it is filming.'[453] This process would create a sort of synthesis between the filmmaker's eye and that of the camera, which he compared to a 'possession':

> Thus instead of using the zoom, the cameraman-director can really get into the subject. Leading or following a dancer, priest, or craftsman, he is no longer himself, but a mechanical eye accompanied by an electronic ear. It is this strange state of transformation that takes place in the filmmaker that I have called, analogously to possession phenomena, "cine-trance."[454]

Rouch applies in *Les maîtres fous* a local idea of intervention in a specifically postcolonial context. Colonialism customarily frames and enforces one cultural viewpoint as superior, so Rouch utilises the Ghanaian concepts of ritual, storytelling, and re-enactment to challenge this assertion. In doing so, he obligates Western viewers to apprehend a plurality of human experiences, rather than allowing them to take an elevated, 'safe' perspective on what they see of African nations in the films. In this way, they are made to see themselves in the ritual they witness. Rouch would later see evidence of possession phenomena in the political events of his own country: in an interview in 1977, he suggested that 'the uprisings in May '68 were a kind of possession by things that were otherwise inexpressible'.[455]

Rithy Panh's *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* takes place at Tuol Sleng, a grey concrete building in Phnom Penh. Formerly a high school, it became a Khmer Rouge detention centre in the 1970s (the notorious Security Prison 21, or S21). It is now a genocide museum. Over the course of his film, Panh explores the documents left behind from the prison's bureaucratic system, shows the artistic work created by survivors that depicts their experiences, and brings former prison guards back to the detention centre so that they can describe and re-enact their actions. It is unknown exactly how many people died at Tuol Sleng, but estimates have

[453] Rouch, in Rouch and Feld, 38-9.
[454] Rouch, in Rouch and Feld, 39.
[455] Jean Rouch, interview, '*Les maîtres fous*, *The Lion Hunters*, and *Jaguar*', in Rouch and Feld, 192.

been as high as 20,000. Panh himself escaped to France in 1979 but lost his family in the Khmer Rouge labour camps. After the fall of Democratic Kampuchea in the same year, its leader, Pol Pot, fled to the Thai border area. He died in 1998, before he could be brought to an international tribunal, tried, or punished.

Joshua Oppenheimer's two films on the aftermath of the Indonesian anti-Communist massacres in the 1960s have become extremely well-known, with a Best Documentary Oscar nomination for each of them. Both films are interested in the profound psychological, cultural, and political effects of these events. In Indonesia, the killers did not merely evade justice for their murders; they have subsequently been allowed to re-write the narrative of events that took place, casting themselves as freedom-loving heroes, while the families of the victims have been obligated to remain silent. We see in *The Act of Killing* (in Indonesian, *Jagal*, 'Butcher') that the Indonesian authorities glorify the perpetrators, often in the form of celebratory TV interviews and appearances in national events.

Additionally, the gangsters interviewed in *The Act of Killing* romanticise Hollywood actors and cite American noir films as a source of inspiration. They appear to draw from cinema as a stimulant and as a justification for violence. Drawing from their sense of self-regard, Oppenheimer persuades them to re-enact some of their killings on camera. By coaxing performances from these men, he seeks to bring about the visible return of the repressed memories of political violence obscured by the authorities to his frame. The men improvise, choreograph, and perform these stories in the styles of various cinematic genres.

The Look of Silence (in Indonesian, *Senyap*, 'Silence'), *The Act of Killing*'s companion film, has a broadly more orthodox documentary conceit. Adi Rukun, whose brother Ramli was murdered by an anti-Communist gang, seeks answers from those he believes to have been

involved in the event. Oppenheimer assists him as an unseen presence in the film, often co-editing and co-interviewing with Rukun from behind the camera. Though *The Look of Silence* is more traditional in its methods, it is still highly self-reflexive and interventionist: at one point, Rukun watches scenes cut from *TAOK* (or rushes in the process of being edited to create the first film). The footage shows some of the men who killed his brother re-enacting the murder.

The 'silent screen' of memory is made present and visible in *The Look of Silence*. The film's English title even contains multiple meanings within it: a 'look of silence' might be a silencing stare that is given to someone, or an expression as it appears on the face of someone who has been silenced. More generally, it can then refer to how an entire culture of silence appears to an observer. But it can be inferred that both the person 'looking' and the person being 'looked at' are going to be made available to the gaze of the audience. The concept is itself quite knotted, and seems to invite the viewer to untangle it, by breaking the traumatic silence that has been imposed.

Garrett Stewart, in his essay 'Screen Memory in *Waltz with Bashir*' describes the camera in *Waltz* as a 'dissociative' instrument.[456] His essay's title draws directly from Freud's translated writings. But Stewart repurposes the phrase as a metaphor for the methodology used in *Waltz with Bashir* (an animated documentary which explores the Israeli filmmaker's attempt to fully remember his role in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon). A 'screen memory' in this context is one in which personal memories are presented on a cinema screen. Taking the metaphor further, Freud's original idea can be repurposed more widely, to consider the use of 'screen memories'

[456] Garrett Stewart, 'Screen Memory in *Waltz with Bashir*' in *Killer Images: Documentary Film, Memory and the Performance of Violence*, eds. Joram Ten Brink and Joshua Oppenheimer (New York, NY.: Columbia University Press, 2012) 122-3.

on a cultural level: as shared recollections and re-workings of important events that are presented on computer, TV and cinema screens.[457] These shared memories of past events are how societies choose to represent themselves to each other and to the rest of the world; they thus have a mythopoetic power.

They might also, however, simultaneously provide a 'screen' that blocks out other narratives of past events on a cultural level, particularly those of the victims of violent political actions. The screen can be characterised as a screen of silence, that supposedly protects victims from their trauma or from further harm from perpetrators, and which protects perpetrators from their own possible feelings of guilt, or from facing prosecution for their crimes. In this context, the use of a mental and cultural screen to elucidate and to conceal memories can hold a double meaning. Memories can be 'screened out' (blocked) or 'screened' (shown publically). The image of fantasy, Stewart argues, can be destroyed if it encounters the image that it masked: 'it is any remaining screen of fantasy that is exploded on contact with the approaching spectacle of pain.' He continues later: 'The shock is knowingly twofold.'[458]

The Indonesian authorities developed (and rigorously enforced) film propaganda because it was intended to become a fabricated, replacement collective memory for the nation; that is, as a screen behind which the truth could be hidden. But screening and screening out also occurs during the political event itself, and not only as a reaction to it later: for example, with the photographs and documents made and used as evidence in the Tuol Sleng interrogation

[457] It might be dangerous to create analogous relationships between individual experience and social mechanisms; however, it is important to remember that in the context of political violence, individuals often act as parts of collectives, and perpetrators and victims are both present in a specific political circumstance, and their actions and experiences stem from it and/or are subsequently attributed to it.
[458] Stewart, in *Killer Images*, 125.

and detention centre in Cambodia.[459] This aporetic paradox is difficult to untangle through discourse alone, so it is challenged by these filmmakers through alternative methods. Not coincidentally, scenes of interrogation are dramatized in both *S21* and *The Act of Killing*. In both films, techniques for inflicting trauma are repurposed: they are turned back on their earlier perpetrators by the filmmakers. This serves as a form of intervention in shared or enforced screen-memories.

Panh is particularly interested in issues of memory and materiality. One of his films, *Bophana: A Cambodian Tragedy*, tells the story of a woman killed during one of the massacres: Bophana became famous when her photograph was found, along with thousands of pages of false confessions she made, at Tuol Sleng after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. Panh's *S21* tries to capture the mechanics of the system of interrogation and incrimination that was in place in the detention centre. Enforcement relied on fabricating a stream of documentation, such as photographs and written reports, to justify the massacres that took place there.

The filmmakers intervene in political narratives by asking perpetrators to act out their crimes, and to intervene in their own narratives through formal self-reference. Rather than presenting a traditionally structured documentary account of past events, they force the past to manifest through their storytelling forms. Susan Sontag and Slavoj Žižek have both suggested that an anaesthetic effect can result from a culture's exposure to streams of images of war and political violence (Marshall McLuhan expressed a similar sentiment: 'The price of eternal vigilance is indifference'[460]); it could be argued that the multiple layers of reflexivity

[459] The photographs have been collected on the website *Tuol Sleng: Photographs from Pol Pot's Secret Prison* http://www.tuolsleng.com/photographs.php Accessed 20 June 2020.
[460] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, ed. Lewis H. Lapham (Cambridge, MA.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994) 30.

at work in these films serve to reawaken the consciousness of violence that was suppressed by the earlier images; that is, that they are film-acts designed to provoke a film-event.

If 'the wound and the voice' of trauma are located in the same place, as Caruth suggests, it makes methodological sense for the filmmakers to return to the 'source' of trauma; this source is both the victims, who retain it, and the perpetrators, who caused it. Forcing the perpetrators to speak and to act in order to articulate the traumatic past is a way to potentially resolve the aporia caused by traumatic political violence. It allows the return of representation, and for the past to manifest more truthfully than it previously has in the media, by creating images that counterpoint the image created by the regimes.

It would make some rhetorical sense for 'silent hauntings' to be responded to with a sort of possession, in which the mechanical possesses the spiritual and vice versa. The idea that a fictional performance can force the truth to manifest is not new; Hamlet had confidence in its power to reveal a previous injustice that still haunted him ('…the play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King'). The theatre is seen as a relatively safe space in which an illegitimate power (which has so far carefully controlled which versions of reality are permitted to manifest, and which must be concealed) can be indirectly challenged through performance.

Instead of trying to discursively analyse what happened in Cambodia in the 1970s or Indonesia in the 1960s, these films intend to create a new imaginative frame in which an account of the past can be articulated by the perpetrators and the victims themselves. They respond to 'silent hauntings' with 'hauntings' of their own, allowing the story to manifest once more through theatrical re-enactment. Re-enactment, in this context, takes on a ritualistic

significance; the relationships between the camera and the participants are re-figured in the experience.

The relationship between Rouch, Oppenheimer and Panh's ethnographic work is methodologically close; additionally, it is explicitly academic in nature. Jean Rouch created *Les maîtres fous* as part of his *doctorat d'État* research on the Songhay-Zarma people and their religion. Joram ten Brink edited a collection of essays on Rouch, *Building Bridges*, and is an academic and filmmaker alongside Oppenheimer at CREAM, the centre for arts and media research at the University of Westminster. Ten Brink was also a credited producer on *The Act of Killing*. Oppenheimer and Ten Brink interviewed Rithy Panh for an essay collection they co-edited, *Killer Images: Documentary Film, Memory, and the Performance of Violence*, which was published in the same year that *The Act of Killing* was released. Panh's films are also referenced by other writers throughout the collection. Panh himself co-founded the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Centre, which collects archive material on Cambodia, creates films inspired by these archives, and provides vocational audio-visual training to young Cambodians.[461]

The lines between academics, filmmakers, and actors or participants – those performing analysis and those being analysed – are blurred in each film discussed in this chapter. Defending his techniques, Jean Rouch argued that '…if ethnographic film is attacked, it is because it is in good health, and because, from now on, the camera has found its place among man'.[462] He suggested that placing the camera amongst its subjects is an ethical decision; the role of the camera in such films is, specifically, to be among man. We can also extrapolate

[461] More information about the Bophana Audiovisual Resource Centre is available at http://bophana.org/about/ Accessed 20 June 2020.
[462] Jean Rouch, 'The Camera and Man' (originally 'La caméra et les hommes', 1973) in Steven Feld, ed., *Ciné-ethnography* (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 30.

from this perspective the importance of the camera as another human tool, which exists within the world, not outside of it. It should, then, admit to its role, rather than allow for an invisible or omniscient perspective to gain supremacy (an ethnocentric position that might enforce the power structures it finds, and will potentially allow for lack of accountability. If the camera has absolute power of representation, a prescriptive implication becomes possible from out of its silence).

As with Godard, reflexivity is the mode of exploration in Oppenheimer and Panh's films. It allows them to present for analysis the techniques of the political interrogator and those of the documentary interviewer/filmmaker, and to explore the roles of repression and expression as they relate to violent political events. In her book *Theatricality, Dark Tourism and Ethical Spectatorship*, Emma Willis describes Panh's reconstructions as both 'haunting' and 'moving'.[463] William Guynn also argues that '*S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* is autobiographical in the sense that the past that Panh is conjuring up has haunted his existence'.[464] Both are speaking metaphorically, but Panh uses these emotional values to enact a return of repressed political memories: his re-enactments are constructed as hauntings, which seek to create a space where the 'spirits' of the victims might manifest. These emotional, theatrical techniques are not trivial; they are made to 'conjure' the dead in the film and to materially displace a dominant political narrative.

Rouch's device of re-enactment is connected to questions of truth and representation. He highlights the difficulty involved in trying to articulate truths about other cultures and uses interventionist methods to emphasise the constructed nature of such narratives. Panh's

[463] Emma Willis, *Theatricality, Dark Tourism and Ethical Spectatorship: Absent Others* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 12.
[464] William Guynn, *Unspeakable Histories: Film and the Experience of Catastrophe* (New York, NY.: Columbia University Press, 2016) 171.

device of re-enactment seeks to deconstruct false narratives created by the Khmer Rouge regime. Oppenheimer's device of re-enactment seeks to revisit the crimes of the past on to the perpetrators, in order to create a filmic space in which, like Panh's, a more truthful account of the past might manifest, and which will obligate the perpetrators to confront it. By making the perpetrators speak, the films obligate them to account for themselves, and to articulate the traumas they inflicted. Each film draws on theatrical modes of expression to create a space in which previously little-heard stories can be told.

In linguistics, speech that has the effect of changing social realities is known as a 'speech act'. J.L. Austin argued that a speech act was a performative utterance which had the effect of enacting what it uttered; Bronisław Malinowski, in *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, developed a sociological theory of magical language: that is, language that is uttered to directly enact a change in the utterer's environment. Through Panh and Oppenheimer's films it emerges that under brutal regimes, enforcers can claim for themselves a sort of magical language: an accusation made against someone can be made to be 'true' through the enforced frame of the accuser. But this language is visual and material as well as verbal. It manifests in documents, photographs, or written confessions obtained through torture and intimidation.

Liza Bakewell aimed to build on the work of both Austin and Malinowski in her 1998 essay 'Image Acts', for the journal *American Anthropologist*. She argues that while speech acts are descriptive, they are also 'best thought to be equally engaged in the production of actions, indeed, to be actions themselves'.[465] In 'Image Acts', she develops this to include the image

[465] Liza Bakewell, 'Image Acts' *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 100, No. 1, March 1998, 22-32. Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/682805 22.

as potentially performative, as the act of creating images has elements of construct and intention to it:

> Images, rather than re-present reality and therefore be largely descriptive, are more accurately categorized as actions. Here I understand images to mean humanmade images, and I use the term without prejudice: from body gestures to great works of art and everything in between.[466]

In collating examples of image acts, Bakewell creates an interesting elision between explicitly artistic imagery, designed to critique, and imagery that is more often taken as 'sociological'. Her examples include Pueblo dancing as well as art installations created in Mexico City, the demolition of statues of Lenin, and an art installation taken and adapted from common graffiti. Some of these examples are not only artworks, but are political interventions in pre-existing creations, which are intended to re-frame them; they are 'image acts' with obvious performative intentions.

She criticises the perceived limits of academic social studies when considering the image: 'Within the social and life sciences, illusionistic images (especially photographs and paintings) are construed all too often as artifice rather than artifact, as something apart from larger questions of truth or meaning'.[467] But in her examples it emerges that cultural artifice and artefacts are woven together; realities and fictions are not easy to separate. In academia, she points out, visual imagery has been deprioritised over verbal scholarship, 'a kind of academic iconoclasm'.[468] The 'pictorial turn', meanwhile, would require analysis not of texts or objects, but the human body (not just as objects, but through gestures): 'Its data would derive not

[466] Bakewell, 22.
[467] Bakewell, 25.
[468] Bakewell, 26.

from two separate populations, one of producers and another of consumers, or one of objects and another of spectators, but with our dual selves as the producer and consumer'.[469]

This suggests a shift in the hierarchical relationship between the spectator and the spectated, or the analyser and the analysed. It also suggests a shift in our understanding of material evidence of the past (Emma Willis notes that Panh pays 'theatrical attention to the relationship between artefacts and historical actors').[470] And, as image acts are both constructed and are part of reality, they can be incorporated into film quite readily; not only made visible as a record, but also put to work functionally. Image acts sustained across a narrative can become part of a larger 'film act'. This is a potential response to the 'aporia' that emerges from large-scale political traumas – rather than trying to translate experience to written critical language as a method of engagements with the acts, the documentarians in this chapter try to engage directly with reality and with the historical narrative itself (which includes survivors and perpetrators, as well as material artefacts and written evidence). They respond to constructed image acts in their own language, by weaving together images to create image acts that respond to them, which could be characterised as 'film acts', intended to provoke 'film events'.

Taking inspiration from Rouch's *ciné-transe*, the phrase *cinema-séance* is used by Joshua Oppenheimer and Michael Uwemedimo in the title of their contribution to *Killer Images*: 'A Cinema-Séance of Power and Violence in Sumatra's Plantation Belt'. The essay discusses a four-hour Indonesian propaganda film, *The Treachery of the September 30th Movement of the Indonesian Communist Party [Pengkhianatan G 30 S/PKI]* (Indonesia: Arifin C. Noer, 1984),

[469] Bakewell, 28.
[470] Willis, in *Theatricality, Dark Tourism and Ethical Spectatorship*, 12.

which depicts the kidnappings and killings of six generals in 1965 by the paramilitary September 30th Movement. Authorities blamed the killings on the Communist Party of Indonesia and used them as a pretext for the subsequent massacres of the 1960s. Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo describe the film as 'a curious blend of documentary exposé, political thriller and slasher movie', and point out that it was required viewing in Indonesia, with yearly cinema and TV broadcast screenings on the anniversary of the failed coup, until Suharto's retirement in 1998.[471]

The excessive, grotesque violence of the film is 'not merely designed to elicit a common outrage for the PKI [Partai Komunis Indonesia], but to create a sense of sacrificial and ritual participation.'[472] In this way, spectators are 'bound and incorporated by an enthrallment with their projected enemy.'[473] Here is a version of 'docufiction' created by the regime itself, in an act of self-justification. It does not merely present a dubious version of history to its viewers but enforces one, and by implication enforces silence on the survivors of the 1960s massacres. It exacerbates the silent trauma, and 'possesses' the survivors by forcing them to witness the false memories over and over, as Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo explore in their essay:

> We analyse how the elaborations and ellipses of the ceaselessly rehearsed histories of the period conjure terror and interact with the conjurations of previous acts – whether acts of historical account (speech acts) or historical acts (the events that constitute the past). It is less a matter of producing effective counter-representations than intervening with counter-performances, that is, interventions capable of countering the spectral powers of history as terror.[474]

[471] Joshua Oppenheimer and Michael Uwemedimo, 'Show of Force: A Cinema-Séance of Power and Violence in Sumatra's Plantation Belt' in *Killer Images,* 289.
[472] Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo, in *Killer Images*, 289.
[473] Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo, in *Killer Images*, 289.
[474] Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo, in *Killer Images*, 291.

In these 'ceaselessly rehearsed histories', a functional form of trauma is imposed on the survivors of the massacres on a social and cultural scale, even after the event itself. They are forced to live within the silences and repetitions that come with the aftermath of the event, as this is imposed on them by the regime; and though the filmmakers cannot bring back the past fully, they can stage versions of it, and then screen these rewritten histories to the rest of the world.

Each of the films in this chapter carefully re-purposes historical artefacts, including those that are themselves heavily laden with fictional elements, in order to respond to the 'docufictions' of history. Both Panh and Oppenheimer take up Rouch's methodologies to place their audiences in an ambiguous relationship with the narratives they watch unfold, destabilising their relationship to what they see. Their *mise en scène* is carefully staged to evoke the past, and to provoke responses in participants and viewers; their theatrical configurations create film acts that, if not counter-representations, are counterpoints or counter-provocations to what had previously been enforced as the truth.

Panh has evoked a similar concept in his own work. In an interview conducted by Oppenheimer, he pointed out that he was careful that the camera he brought to Tuol Sleng did not 'walk over' the imagined or reimagined prisoners.[475] The camera was made to respect the 'presence' of the victims, acting out this respect for them in a way that is comparable to how the perpetrators were made to act out respect for the victims by performing the past before a camera (and how the victims were forced to 'act out' false narratives during the Khmer Rouge's rule in order to bring them into being).[476]

[475] Rithy Panh, from an interview conducted by Oppenheimer and Joram ten Brink, 'Perpetrators' Testimony and the Restoration of Humanity: *S21*, Rithy Panh' in *Killer Images*, 245.
[476] Joshua Oppenheimer, interview with Rithy Panh, in *Killer Images*, 245.

ii. Jean Rouch: *Chronique d'un été* (1961) and *Les maîtres fous* (1955)

Chronique d'un été opens with a series of shots of Paris at night. A siren blares. The film then cuts to daytime, and people emerging from a Paris metro station. The narrator utters the first words heard on the soundtrack: 'This film was not made with actors, but was lived by men and women, who devoted a moment of their existence to an experiment in filming the truth [*cinéma vérité*]'. The audience is already somewhat disorientated, having been denied a straightforward explication of when and where the film is taking place. At this point, they might wonder how an experiment might be made with truth, and what a 'cinema-truth' or 'cinema of truth' might be. How can truth be successfully realised through cinematic means; or can truths be embodied in cinema itself?

The film then cuts to Morin and Rouch themselves, indoors, gathered around a small table. A woman sits between them. Rouch begins: 'You see, Morin, a round table discussion is an excellent idea. But I wonder if it is feasible to record a natural conversation with a camera present, and to talk normally. [*Rouch turns to the woman next to him*]. For example, will Marceline relax?' Morin responds: 'She can try' (fig. 34).[477]

There is not one turn into reflexivity in this scene, but multiple. First, with the sudden cut from a supposed establishing shot to the filmmakers discussing the film, literally around a table; and then again, within the frame of the screen, when Rouch turns his own gaze to Marceline Loridan-Ivens. The film not only turns itself inside out for the viewer in terms of its presentation, but also turns within itself to interrogate elements within its frame. Loridan-

[477] *Chronique d'un été*, 2.20.

Ivens responds that she does not feel nervous, but that she soon might. Rouch continues to press his point: 'We only want you to answer some questions. Anything you object to can always be cut.'[478] She continues: 'I'm not as nervous as I was, because you've been easier on me.' 'Yes, he's the bully!' responds Rouch. 'Get cracking, Morin!'

The staging of this scene could be interpreted in two, seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand, it appears to be a casual conversation between friends. Huddled together in a small space, smoking and drinking wine, they discuss a subject of interest to them. Rouch is on the floor, with Loridan-Ivens and Morin on a sofa, so that the filmmaker is not necessarily in a privileged position in the frame. On the other hand, the scene is still reminiscent of an interrogation. The men are dressed in apparently identical suits, as though in a uniform. They sit very close to Loridan-Ivens, surrounding her in the frame, and lean towards her for emphasis when they make a point. Rouch offers her the power to veto anything she dislikes, ostensibly a generous move by a director. But the audience might also infer that Rouch is developing a good cop/bad cop dichotomy between himself and Morin, particularly when he suggests that of the two of them, Morin is the 'bully'. The two men do not always speak directly to Loridan-Ivens during this scene, even when they are talking about her. They claim not to know what questions they will ask; Loridan-Ivens could take this as a reassuring sign that they have not come with the intention to entrap her, but to help her to expand on her experiences. But alternatively, she might feel nervous and disorientated, and could take the comment as a sign that the experiment will be unpredictable, and therefore potentially dangerous. Without a clear representation of the film's intentions, it becomes more difficult to determine where the audience's sympathies will lie than it might in most other films.

[478] 3.00.

The film's audience is thus presented with two forms of investigation in the same frame: the interrogation and the testimonial. Both are presented though the medium of the documentary interview; they are, through this method, presented as potentially equivalent. The film could be seen to be questioning itself and its own methodology, and to be making itself available for criticism. In fact, the methodology of the opening sequence is something of a hybrid of both directors' approaches, with Morin interested in deconstructing their subjects through debate, and Rouch more interested in creating his *ciné-transe* effect with a dynamic camera. This technique appears to have emerged as a result of experimentation during the shoot, rather than as a predetermined combination of approaches. Nadine Baillot, who appeared in *Chronique* and in Rouch's *La pyramide humaine*, said later that Rouch disliked the scenes set around tables: '…he thought they were a little too static'. She suggests that Morin, as an intellectual, wanted more discussion in the film, while 'Rouch, on the contrary, was someone who was constantly moving. He wanted more action. It was necessary for him to move, so it was difficult for him to sit and have a long discussion, but he played along with Morin's game.'[479] As a result of this, the film enacts a 'strange marriage' of ideologies, as Baillot puts it.[480] This camera-pen is different from Godard's: here, the paper (of the media events) could be said to be made to rise to meet the pen (of the camera).

But, of course, that scene around the coffee-table is still presented with a great deal of self-awareness. Rouch expresses interest in Morin's 'round table' approach, but also scepticism that a person can speak freely in front of a camera, while he himself sits in front of a camera. The clash of ideas and the possibility of instability in the creative process are not only

[479] Nadine Baillot, interview in 'La pyramide humaine: Nadine Baillot' by Joram ten Brink, in *Building Bridges*, 140-141.
[480] Baillot, interview with Joram ten Brink in *Building Bridges*, 140.

introduced in the process of documentary filmmaking, but into the frame itself. This instability is presented in playful and in extremely serious contexts throughout the film; Loridan-Ivens begins to talk about her experiences at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, but she also moves between discussing it in an awkward conversation with a fellow documentary subject and taking on the role of interviewer, performer, and sometimes the director of a sequence.[481] Morin and Rouch do not quite abdicate the role of directing their film, but they take care to present the concept of directing to the eye of the viewer. They turn the film's narrative into a knot of creative input, implying but never confirming that the film moved out of their control. When the focus group appears towards the end of the film, Rouch again loops the question of control over itself: the group offers their opinions on the film, and these opinions are looped into the film. But the film they are discussing has now been changed, before the eyes of the audience, as it includes footage of the other participants' input.

Such an emphasis on the relationship between truth and reality, and the desire to dramatize this relationship on film, came to be considered revolutionary. Godard, after seeing Rouch's 1959 ethnofiction film *Moi, un Noir*, called it 'the film to save our cinema'.[482] Rouch is generally credited with inventing the concept of *cinéma vérité*, while acknowledging its inheritance from the principles of Dziga Vertov and his team, particularly their Kino-Pravda ('film-truth') newsreels. They had sought to clarify and improve the relationship of the camera to its subject, so that rather than remain an invisible tool, the camera's role became to form a relationship with what it filmed. This led to a preference for handheld and not necessarily

[481] Loridan-Ivens would argue later that 'during that scene' in which she walks through the arcade, she 'became the filmmaker'. See her interview with Joram ten Brink, 'Chronique d'un été: Marceline Loridan Ivens', in *Building Bridges*, 147. She later became a filmmaker herself, collaborating frequently with her husband, the experimental filmmaker Joris Ivens.

[482] Jean-Luc Godard, 'L'Afrique vous parle de la fin et des moyens', *Cahiers du cinema 94* (1959) in Alain Bergala, ed. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard,* vol. 1, (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, Éditions de l'Étoile, 1985) 182.

stable shooting, and a focus on experimentation and encouraging spontaneous performance from its subjects (or at least performances which are not completely written, planned, blocked, and corrected by the director). Joram ten Brink argues that Rouch, through 'his affinity to Dziga Vertov's Kino-Eye, transformed *Caméra-Stylo* (camera-pen) theory into a reality for the world of documentary filmmaking.'[483]

Though often bracketed in with the genre of observational documentary, the phrase *cinéma vérité* does not fully encapsulate what observation means in *cinéma vérité* films. Rouch, with Jean-Michel Arnold, had founded an international documentary festival in 1978 known as *Cinéma du réel*. In 1980, Edgar Morin delivered a lecture on ethnographic filmmaking at the festival, in which he elaborated on his own understanding of 'the cinema of the real' and its associated 'problem of truth':

> There are two ways to conceive of the Cinema of the Real. The first is to pretend to present reality on the screen. The second is to pose the problem of reality. In the same way, there are two ways to conceive of cinéma vérité. The first was to pretend that you brought the truth to the screen. The second was to pose the problem of truth.[484]

Morin expresses an interest in the relationship between fiction and documentary, but without necessarily recognising a binary opposition of truth-documentary to fiction-performance. For Morin, posing this problem meant, at least in *Chronique*, to have the characters in the film discuss it directly. Rouch, however, favoured the dynamic camera-pen for articulating the same questions about reality.

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[483] Joram ten Brink, 'From "Caméra-Stylo" to "Caméra-Crayon" et puis après…' in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch* ed. Joram ten Brink (London and New York, NY.: Wallflower Press, 2008) 235.

[484] 'Il y a deux façons de concevoir le cinéma du réel. La première est de prétendre donner à voir le réel. La seconde est de se poser le problème du réel. De même il y avait deux façons de concevoir le cinéma-vérité. La première était de prétendre apporter la vérité. La seconde était de se poser le problème de la vérité'. Edgar Morin, 'Cinéma et vérité', presentation at the Cinéma du Réel Conference on ethnographic film at the Centre Pompidou, 1980. Quoted in Isabelle Veyrat-Masson, *Télévision et histoire, la confusion des genres: Docudramas, docufictions et fictions du réel* (Brussels: DeBoeck, 2008) 208.

Steven Feld suggests that Rouch had turned to 'more dramatic' filmmaking, such as *Les maîtres fous*, as the situation in 1950s colonial Africa became more turbulent. This allowed him to introduce elements of fantasy into the fabric of his films, and rather than lose their relationship to reality, he was able to explore realities that were previously suppressed. According to Feld, Rouch himself 'felt that the success of [*Moi, un noir*] was in its deliberate attempt to be subjective and let Africans portray their own imaginary world and their own fantasies while being filmed in the context of their actual situation.'[485] He was fascinated with conflict and with situations that emerge from conflict; we see this emerge reflexively in *Chronique*, in the conflict of styles between Morin and Rouch and the 'strange marriage' that results. In *Chronique*, according to Joram ten Brink, Morin and Rouch's '"self", either visible or obscured, is often a reference point, and inseparable from the "text" of the film'.[486] As we see in Godard's political films, the (camera-) pen is represented as inevitably a part of what it writes. Posing the problem of reality, or posing reality as a problem, provokes the viewer to look again at the political situation described and to critique it as heavily written by the hands of others.

In *La Pyramide humaine*, a group of students at the Abidjan Lyceum in the Côte d'Ivoire dramatize and analyse the film they are making with Rouch. The film, like *Chronique*, is interrogated as it is created, subjecting itself to its own rules. Reality in these films is unstable and flexible, the camera functioning as a note-taker and a performer, exploring and interrogating rather than passively recording a staged scene from a God-like position of

[485] Jean Rouch, *Ciné-Ethnography,* ed. and trans. Steven Feld (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) 6.
[486] *Building Bridges*, 241.

objectivity. Steven Feld emphasises the importance given not to finding an objective, singular truth, but on how one might express subjective, interior forms of truth:

> The films [*Moi, un noir* and *La Pyramide humaine*] attempted to overcome the technical limitations of the medium at the time in part through experiments with reflexivity and narrative realism. Continuing reflection on the question of how one films what is subjectively real about and for people and their cultural situation led to what is Rouch's best-known film [*Chronique d'un été*].[487]

It is interesting that, as with the pun of the title of the 'Cinéma du réel' festival, there is a perceived bond between the material nature of film (in English, the film reel) or 'the technical limitations' of film and the concept of the real as it relates to those in a specific 'cultural situation'. What is considered real about and for people and their cultural situation can be politically fraught, and possibly controlled by an all-encompassing power which decides what should and should not be expressible (and therefore what is made 'real' in a material context).

It is thus crucial that the concepts of reality, truth and fiction are made to overlap and blur together. Richard Brody, in a review of the Criterion release of *Chronique d'un été*, evokes the idea of 'reality theatre'. He identifies a two-part dramatic structure to the film: the before and the after of Loridan-Ivens' revelation that she is a Holocaust survivor. He points out that a journal released in 1962, *Domaine Cinéma*, 'true to the collaborative directorial partnership, includes Rouch's notes on Morin's text'.[488] As in the work of Godard, we can see mutual reflexivity in the relationship between fictions and realities, or between a document and its commentary. In terms of power, the figure of Marceline is offered up to the gaze as a participant in the film, but her experience also informs the film's own structure.

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[487] Feld, in *Deleuze*, 7.
[488] Richard Brody, 'The Extraordinary *Chronicle of a Summer*', *The New Yorker*, 21 February 2013. http://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-extraordinary-chronicle-of-a-summer Accessed 20 June 2020.

Joshua Oppenheimer expands on the original, Rouchian definition of cinema vérité as something which describes an inherent part of non-fiction filmmaking. It describes realities through re-enactment, rather than developing a discrete relationship between testimony and commentary:

> Maybe it's a legacy of how the tradition of *cinema vérité* as defined by Rouch has been hijacked by ''direct cinema'' and fly-on-the-wall observational documentary that re-enactment has come to be a tool for slick illustration of events that you cannot film. But the obvious form of re-enactment that inheres in all documentary is people playing themselves. That seems to be a great innovation in *The Act of Killing* but it's really something immanent to all nonfiction film.[489]

At the end of *Chronique*, the film suddenly cuts to a screening room. The filmmakers have just shown their film to the participants. Rouch announces to his focus group: 'Now you've seen yourselves in the film. Edgar and I want your views'.[490] The participants are the 'yourselves' on the inside and outside of the screen, as they are watching and being watched at the same time (fig. 35).

The participants critique the film. One of the children declares confidently, innocently, that 'Cameras can't lie'. The young student comments on Marceline Loridan-Ivens' performance: 'We feel embarrassed because we feel like intruders. But in the end, that's what wins us over'.[491] Loridan-Ivens herself is then given the opportunity to respond to this critique: 'these are very personal, very intimate memories for me. Maybe, in that moment, I was re-living the past, feeling it'.[492] It could be suggested that by re-living the past while being filmed, she re-embodies the past on film for the viewer. After this scene, Morin and Rouch are shown taking

[489] Joshua Oppenheimer, interview with Irene Lusztig in *Film Quarterly: Special Dossier on* The Act of Killing, ed. B. Ruby Rich, vol. 67, no. 2 (Winter 2013) 53.
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2014.67.issue-2
[490] 01.17.55.
[491] 01.21.27.
[492] 01.21.07.

their own long walk through an arcade at the end, as though they wished to re-enact Loridan-Ivens' moving sequence. The film ends with the camera and the filmmaker back out into reality, on the streets of Paris, and her interviews can be heard once again, with her gentle but potentially devastating questions ('Are you happy?'). She is disembodied but still present and still persistent. The audience's opinions, even at the end of the film, are probably as divergent as those of the focus group.

In *Building Bridges*, Brice Ahounou provides a definition of Rouch's reflexive filmmaking techniques, and points out that he was passionately didactic about his method:

> Feedback: the central notion and essential stage in Rouch's philosophy of ethnography in which he unflaggingly recommends researchers to show the images they have shot to the people filmed with the sole aim of provoking a reaction that helps advance the research. His films were made according to this method of investigation specific to "shared anthropology".[493]

Again, we can see that Rouch intended for this to be a technique both for filmmaking and for academic ethnography. The subjects of the documentary are thus presented as collaborators as much as the academics. 'His modus operandi was collective and participatory',[494] Hamid Naficy points out, and it could be inferred that Rouch's intention was not simply to try to place himself alongside his subjects, but to develop and share a critical relationship with them. He was interested in 'engaging' with the subjects of his films, which 'involved not only making manifest the invisible processes of film production but also incorporating the commentary and critique of the ethnographic subjects into the final film. It also involved the other features

[493] Brice Ahounou, 'Jean Rouch and the Great Sahelian Drought: Visual Anthropology and the Wrathful Gods at Ganghel', in *Building Bridges*, 70 *n.* 8.
[494] Hamid Naficy, 'Ethnography and African Culture: Jean Rouch on *La chasse au lion a l'arc* and *Les maîtres fous*' in *Building Bridges*, 98.

of reflexivity – self-inscription and self-referentiality – which positions the filmmaker to be both an author and subject of their films' discourse'.[495]

Rouch had yet another label for this method, referring to such participatory techniques as *ciné-dialogue*. The concept of a *ciné-dialogue* might at first glance seem very unlike a *ciné-transe*, with one implying more conscious rather than unconscious engagement (or with one figural and the other discursive). But the two ideas are not placed in binary opposition. Both phrases contain their own unmaking: the apparent contradiction between image and speech in the concept of *ciné-dialogue*, and the contradiction between reality and fiction (or the contradiction between reality and reproductions of reality) in the concept of a *ciné-transe*. Collaboration in Rouch is 'also a work of transference and counter-transference', as Elizabeth Cowie puts it.[496] She quotes Rouch's own argument, suggesting that '"the camera becomes a magic object that can unleash or accelerate the phenomena of possession", because it leads the filmmaker onto paths he would otherwise never dare to take, "guiding him to something that we scarcely understand: cinematographic creativity"'.[497]

Rouch's *Les maîtres fous*, his short film on the Songhay-Zarma migrants and their *hauka* possession rituals, has a textual opening crawl that articulates his intentions:

LE PRODUCTEUR, EN PRESENTANT
AU PUBLIC, CES DOCUMENTS
SANS CONCESSION
NI DISSIMULATION
tient a l'avertir de la violence et de la
cruaute de certaines scenes. Mais il
veut le faire participer completement
a un rituel qui est une solution parti-

[495] Naficy, 98.
[496] Elizabeth Cowie, 'Ways of Seeing: Documentary Film and the Surreal of Reality' in *Building Bridges*, 208.
[497] Cowie, 209.

culiere du probleme de la readaptation, et qui montre indirectement comment certains africains se representent notre civilisation occidentale.[498]

This paragraph is significant because it immediately re-positions the audience, shifting them from their assumed role as the film's (and the culture's) critics. The film will not only position itself as a glimpse into an aspect of African life, but also suggests that the viewer will be available to be glimpsed: the film will describe how 'some Africans see our Western civilisation'. The screen frame is characterised as a two-way mirror; Rouch emphasises that the film will only show the perspective of *certains africains*, making the gaze even more particular and less absolute. For Elizabeth Cowie, 'the interaction demonstrated in this film, and which is central to all Rouch's work, involves us as spectators in an encounter with the strangeness of ourselves and not only of the other. As in *Petit à petit*, the surreal of reality is not only that of a non-Western culture for the European, but also of the Western culture for the non-European.'[499]

Ahounou also quotes Rouch, this time suggesting that in *Les maîtres fous*, he presented the phenomenon of possession for his participants just as they did for him:

> For the Songay-Zarma, who were very much used to cinema, I changed before their eyes just as the possession-dancers changed during the "cine-trance" of the person filming the other's real trance. This is so real that I know, on looking through my viewfinder and by the reactions of the spectators, if the sequence works or not and if I've succeeded in throwing off the weight of ethnographic and cinematic theory to rediscover elemental invention.[500]

[498] 'The producer, in presenting these documents to the public, neither holding back nor hiding anything, would like to warn of the violence and cruelty of certain scenes. But he wishes to participate completely in a ritual that is a specific solution to the problem of rehabilitation, and to show, indirectly, how some Africans see our Western civilisation.' Emphasis in original.
[499] Cowie, 214. *Petit à petit* is a 1970 comedy by Rouch, in which a Nigerien man travels to Paris to learn about the construction of towers.
[500] Jean Rouch (1997) quoted in and translated by Brice Ahounou in *Building Bridges*, 66.

By making his own possession 'real', Rouch suggests, he can move past academic theorising and into truth; a truth he identifies with creative invention. Such creative invention also involves creative intervention, which Rouch identifies as a deeply significant aspect of the possession rituals themselves: 'The importance, for me, of these ceremonies is the importance of changing ritual and mythology. The origin is life, everyday life, changing the beliefs of the people!'[501]

Despite this apparent rejection of academic modes of exploration, *Les maîtres fous* was made as part of the sociological mission of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and L'Institute Français d'Afrique Noire. The film introduces the *hauka* sect, the 'Masters of Madness', and describes them as gods of the city and of technology. The documentary will cover a group of *hauka* men in Accra, and the narrator suggests it was filmed at the request of two priests of the sect, Mountyeba and Moukayla: 'No scene is hidden nor forbidden, but open to those who wish to play the game.'[502] The wishes and intentions of the narrator, filmmaker and participants in the film are already blurred at this point; 'the game' refers both to the ritual and the film. The audience is invited to play by the rules they see playing out in front of them, not by the traditional rules of witnessing (or of spectatorship).

Instead, the Western audience can, in the performances of the *hauka*, see a version of itself. Colourful sheets hanging out on a line represent Union Jacks (fig. 36), the narrator tells the viewer (one sheet will even be raised separately later in the film, on a high wooden flagpole). An image of the governor has been placed beneath them – a small statue with horsehairs for whiskers and smaller models of his guns and horses.[503] There appears to be a strict hierarchy

[501] Jean Rouch, interviewed by Naficy, 104.
[502] 'Aucune scène n'en est interdicte or secrète mais ouverte à ceux qui veulent bien jouer le jeu' (01.15).
[503] 05.50.

in this re-enactment: the narrator informs the audience that one man 'is not yet permitted to wear a pith helmet'. He has been 'behaving strangely' (apparently sleeping in a cemetery and digging up corpses). After he threatens the Elders, other people begin to show signs of possession; challenging the hierarchy is shown to be contagious. After the nominee is beaten, the ceremony is over, and a new Union Jack is raised. The audience sees the incorporation of Christian traditions into the ritual: an altar is raised so that the people confess their sins. One confesses that he sometimes feels that the *hauka* do not exist at all; an aporetic confession, internally irresolvable.[504]

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz drew upon the philosophy of Gilbert Ryle to describe the need for 'thick description' in anthropological research: the role of cultural context, or the *frame*, in shaping behaviours, and the importance of understanding the work of this frame in undertaking an anthropological study. The audience of *Les maîtres fous* might find in the ritual's progress a Geertzian parody of Western involvement in Ghana, in which their own cultural frameworks are represented back to them through a framework that is difficult to grasp from the outside.

Power and violence are represented and performed symbolically throughout: a man nominated to take part in a ritual picks up two wooden guns and bangs them together, to simulate the sound of gunfire.[505] Later, a dog is to be sacrificed, the narrator explains, *because* it is taboo to do so. Slaughtering it will therefore demonstrate the power of the *hauka* over 'black and white'. When the possession ritual begins in earnest, the guns are carried around as music plays. The performance is all consuming: the narrator points out that only the

[504] 08.20.
[505] 06.48.

possessed are allowed to dance, and one of the penitents is driven off into the bush by Muntyeba because he is not yet possessed.[506] Those who are possessed threaten those who are not with the wooden guns. The possessed begin to take on more specific colonialist roles in the ritual: one is Corporal of the Guard, another Captain of the Red Sea. They salute the others and perform a version of the parade march of the British Army. As the narrator describes the Lieutenant breaking an egg on the Governor's head ('to imitate the plumes worn by British Governors on their helmets'), the scene cuts to a real motorcade and the Trooping the Colour ceremony (fig 37, 38).

But what is the position of reality in the film, and what relationship does the concept of reality have to the ritual in the culture of the Songhay-Zarma? The exact religious significance of these ceremonies is still debated by anthropologists. James G. Ferguson has described how they have been understood as intended to mock the authority of the colonisers, as intended to drain the colonisers' life forces, or as a direct political demand for respect and rights within colonial society;[507] Elizabeth Cowie argues that 'in Songhay-Zarma philosophy, the possession ceremony is a performance in reality by a possessing spirit who is not the double of the medium, but displaces this double in order to enter the medium's body and mind, who is therefore now other to herself.'[508] It would be useful to see this sort of 'possession' in the context of Errol Morris's suggestion that there is 'madness' inherent in Oppenheimer's approach to *The Act of Killing*. The 'mad masters' in Rouch's film are the filmmakers themselves, as well as the 'mad masters' of the *hauka* who act out their strength through intimidating possession rituals, and the 'mad masters' of the British colonial system who

[506] 12.05.
[507] James G. Ferguson, 'Of Mimicry and Membership: Africans and the "New World Society"' *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (November 2002), pp. 551-569.
[508] Cowie, 213.

'possessed' the region and asserted authority there. Rouch takes some of the magical properties of the ritual for the conceit of his film, where he intends not to create anthropological documentaries with pretentions of scientific objectivity, but to bring the 'mad master' to the frame of the screen, thus invoking the political questions and struggles that are an ongoing part of the society he films. The significance of their cultural performances has been ignored or repressed by colonial forces; it has not been understood as part of a coherent system of figuration *and* as a coherent commentary on political circumstances.

iii. Rithy Panh: *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (2003)

In *Chronique d'un été*, a profoundly important moment for the film (the conversation between Marceline Loridan-Ivens and the young African men regarding the tattoo on her arm) occurs outdoors. But the participants sit outside a café, which is attached to an anthropological museum. The building, while barely visible, implies its own significance in the film; as an anthropological museum, it is a space not only dedicated to the distant past of human beings, but to reconstructions and interpretations of the past. These complex relationships (between the material remains of history and the symbolic significance given to institutional buildings) exemplify the complex framing relationship between history, records, and archives.

Tuol Sleng, as a building, is certainly a significant site of Cambodian history. From 1975 to 1979, the ruling Communist Party of Kampuchea orchestrated a genocide in the country. S21, as it was known, was one of its interrogation centres and concentration camps; the original French subtitle of Panh's film identifies S21 as *la machine de mort Khmère rouge* (*The Khmer*

Rouge Killing Machine). While the building that remains was part of the archive kept by the regime, it is now the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, dedicated to preserving the memory of those who died there. It holds the photographs and documents that were fabricated to condemn the accused. Some of these are framed on the walls of the museum, while human skulls from the site are kept in a display cabinet.[509] But Tuol Sleng has also helped to create film documentaries about the regime – Panh's own *Bophana* is screened there twice a day. This is not to say that the relationship between the survivors and the museum has been straightforwardly positive: Michelle Caswell has described how two survivors, Chum Mey and Bou Meng, had 'provoked the ire of museum administrators by accosting tourists with aggressive sales pitches.'[510]

Rithy Panh, in his interview with Joshua Oppenheimer, argues that 'memory is like a territory […] So the buildings, the location is part of the human story because it contains the memory'.[511] Panh represents all of the materials at his disposal for *S21* as part of the apparatus of memory-making: 'I was free to use all the forms, which memorialise things. The photographs, the archives, Nath's paintings, so I was completely free to use all of these different elements.'[512] The Tuol Sleng building in *S21* is utilised not only as a *lieu de mémoire* but as a frame of memory (a framing device for the film, as well as standing as a curated archive). It is shown in the film as a mostly empty frame, which has come to house the material remnants of memories; but, as the film progresses, it hosts overt performances of survivors' recollections. Deirdre Boyle argues that 'what Panh does throughout the film is to

[509] Photos of these displays are listed in this order on the museum's Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuol_Sleng_Genocide_Museum Accessed 21 October 2016.
[510] Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison, WI.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014) 41. Caswell adds that the administrators agreed to pay a $1 commission on sales from guidebooks on the site.
[511] Rithy Panh, interview with Joshua Oppenheimer and Joram ten Brink, in *Killer Images*, 253.
[512] Rithy Panh, interview with Joshua Oppenheimer and Joram ten Brink, in *Killer Images*, 253.

summon traumatic memory by exposing both perpetrators and victims to the site of trauma. By placing them in the empty rooms of S-21 amid its artifacts, he propels them to move beyond reenactment to relive the past.[513] Both victims and perpetrators take to this stage of memory, though Panh is careful to distinguish between them as the film progresses. The building and the camera, made to work together, frame these actions as forms of confession and forms of testimony.

Equating the photographs and the memories allows for the personal trauma of the victims to be made external and visible. It also inverts the damning evidentiary significance that the photographs had during the regime: *S21* records and documents their actions, to frame them for subsequent public recall in the context of human rights abuses. A promotional film made by the Bophana Centre refers to Tuol Sleng as 'the ghost building',[514] and in Panh's *S21* the trauma that has haunted the victims is made to haunt the perpetrators; they become apparitions of their own abuses as they re-enact them for the camera.

Stephanie Benzaquen, in her essay on the images found in Tuol Sleng, discusses the historical role of the camera as the executioner's eye at the camp, and how artists have repurposed these images in order to bear witness and to 'deconstruct the perpetrator's aesthetics and ideology'. She points to 'corrective captions' as one way this has been achieved by artists who have handled the photographs.[515] This form of deconstruction in the film *S21* involves de-privileging the perpetrator, by making them objects of the gaze. This, in turn, offers them up

[513] Deirdre Boyle, 'Shattering Silence: Traumatic Memory and Reenactment in Rithy Panh's *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine*' Framework', *The Journal of Cinema and Media,* Vol. 50, No. 1/2 (Spring & Fall, 2009) 95-106; 97.
[514] 'Shadow and Light', a short promotional film produced by the Bophana Audiovisual Research Project, directed by Guillaume P. Soun (2010) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKKjvlPA9xk Accessed 20 June 2020.
[515] Stephanie Benzaquen, 'Remediating Genocidal Images into Artworks: The Case of the Tuol Sleng Mugshots' in *Killer Images*, 210.

for analysis, rather than as possessors of objective control with the ability to define and 'direct' reality. It could be inferred that the act of film criticism or appreciation is given moral weight as a tool to wield against the perpetrators of massacres. If the world will not or cannot see and criticise them as killers, they might see and criticise them as the villains of a film.

Rather than cutting to archive images or panning over them in the style pioneered by Ken Burns, Panh shows photographs and paintings within the *mise en scène* of *S21*. They are attached to walls, mounted on boards, handled, passed from person to person, analysed, and in the case of one of the paintings, partly created in front of the camera. The archive is not simply referred to but included in the diegesis of the film. The effect is to work backwards: rather than constructing the documentary by reconstructing the story of the Khmer Rouge regime, Panh deconstructs the documentary narrative, and as part of this process, overthrows the narratives that were enforced under the regime by such material.

The logic of torture and abuse holds the victim to be guilty and ascribes to them an enormous amount of power. Torture is then something the victim does to the torturer and is the mechanism by which the torturer justifies themselves. With cause and effect reversed like this, the narrative's logic can move as the torturer wishes for it to move. Guilt becomes 'self-evident'. It can also become fatalistic or incorporated into a religious or ideological thought process: the tortured person suffers because they brought it on themselves; the powerful person is powerful because they are right, and therefore deserve to be so.

Panh, speaking about the dossiers compiled about the prisoners, argues that taking photos was the method the regime used to prove that a person was an enemy.[516] In the language of

[516] Rithy Panh, interview in *Killer Images*, 249.

historical or political documentary, the audience is often shown the archive photograph or the museum piece in close-up, where it is made easily available to the eye. But Panh's documentary does not simply pick up objects and collate media to tell its story. The photos and other materials were a part of the stories themselves, as they were weapons used against the regime's 'enemies'. Panh also notes the prevalence in Communist regimes of rewriting 'endlessly' the (supposedly) autobiographical confessions they take.[517] The phrase is reminiscent of the repetitive behaviours usually associated with trauma, as well as the 'ceaselessly rehearsed histories' that Oppenheimer and Uwemedimo identified in 'acts of historical account and [in] historical acts' in Indonesian culture after the massacres of the 1960s.

The storytelling relationship is thus not necessarily the same as that of holding up a photograph so that the topic can be discussed academically; the objects had a previous existence that was not incidental to their situation. They are 'implicated' in the atrocities. Stephanie Benzaquen, in 'Remediating Genocidal Images', discusses the reaction of the photographer who worked at Tuol Sleng: he said that he felt numbed, after a while, to the situations he photographed. Even within the killing machine itself, the camera was used as a sort of physical screening device. Benzaquen elaborates: 'Taking pictures supplies the perpetrators with a protective shield. Victims are objectified and circumscribed within the unreality of the camera screen. In other terms, de-humanised.'[518] She points out that the historian Bernd Hüppauf called such dehumanisation part of a trend of 'scopic regime' developed during World War II, which allowed perpetrators to turn victims into 'elements of

[517] Rithy Panh, interview in *Killer Images*, 249.
[518] Benzaquen, in *Killer Images*, 214.

electronically manipulated games of violence'.[519] Through this process, victims could be made into objects themselves, thus becoming not just victims of the killing machine, but part of its mechanism (it could be said that they become part of a material Wittgensteinian, discursive language-game of oppression, in which all participants are subject to a strictly circumscribed set of rules by which they will 'mean').

As Panh intervenes in this situation with his own camera, he uses the killing machine's own torture devices to re-humanise the victims. But besides this, Panh's technique serves to emphasise that the Khmer Rouge themselves made a 'documentary' of what they did: that is, they stitched together visual and textual material to create stories about their enemies and themselves. Together, it served to enforce and propagate their power and ideology. Panh and Oppenheimer both make documentaries that could be characterised as resistance documentaries, challenging narratives that were made with cameras but enforced with guns. The Bophana Centre, as we have seen, also focuses a great deal on the mediatized aspects of the Cambodian genocide.[520] It is at once a museum which preserves documents and film reels, and a production body which helps contemporary filmmakers to make projects about the Khmer Rouge regime. Naming the project after a victim of the genocide allows Cambodian human rights activists and archivists further emphasises their intention not just to hold perpetrators to account, but to unseat their narratives from centre stage and allow the victims to become more apparent.

They also 'unseat' another, more abstract problem: that of the stories of victims and survivors being lost to silence (enforced by authorities, being forgotten altogether) or to white noise

[519] Bernd Hüppauf, 'Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewfinder', *New German Critique* no. 72 (Duke University Press, Autumn 1997) 43-4. http://www.jstor.org/stable/488567 Quoted by Stephanie Benzaquen, in *Killer Images*, 214.
[520] Information on The Bophana Audiovisual Research Project is available at http://bophana.org

(the distractions of other stories, the overwhelming complexities of political systems), which, while important, might also dehumanise or obscure the victims by deprioritising their stories and making them minor. 'Minor Characters' was even the title Elizabeth Becker gave her review of Rithy Panh's book on Bophana for the *New York Times*. She pointed out that when historians were given access to the secret files kept in Tuol Sleng in the 1980s, they originally sought out material that was obviously historically significant, which would piece together narratives such as the rise of Pol Pot. It was only afterwards, she argued, that figures such as Bophana emerged as politically significant, in her book *When the War was Over* and in Panh's documentary.[521]

In her study on the relationship between the Tuol Sleng museum and social media sites such as YouTube and Flickr, Benzaquen suggests that 'what only a handful of leftist journalists could document in 1979 turned into a mass-mediated set of images circulated across borders'.[522] Panh and Oppenheimer can also be seen to intervene from this perspective: that is, not only as a corrective for the narratives of torturers, but to intervene in a mediatised culture that could be seen to treat the genocides in a cursory way, or at least not bringing a cohesive, involved narrative to them. Photos and video taken by travellers show some engagement on a personal level. Benzaquen does point out that these images come with a 'discursive frame' due to the comments and captions below them.[523] However, without additional, more exploratory and critical narratives, woven together with a larger intention, they might have lost their representative significance.

[521] See Elizabeth Becker, *When the War was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution* (New York, NY.: Simon and Schuster, 1986).
[522] Stephanie Benzaquen, 'Looking at the Tuol Sleng Museum of Genocidal Crimes, Cambodia, on Flickr and YouTube' *Media, Culture & Society*, 2014, Vol. 36 no. 6, 790–809; 791.
[523] Benzaquen, 'Looking at the Tuol Sleng Museum', 792.

Artists such as Binh Danh, Dinh Q Lê and Ly Daravuth have made multimedia installations that recreate some of the images made by the regime, encouraging visitors to look at and critique these images anew.[524] In the sound and photo installation *Messages*, Ly Daravuth manipulated photographs of local children to look like the Tuol Sleng mugshots. Binh Danh has reprinted the photographs taken by the regime on the chlorophyll of leaves, while Lê had strips of the photographs woven with traditional bamboo weaving techniques by women from Ho Chi Minh City; Binh and Lê have used traditional crafts such as weaving in response to 'the constellation formed by technology, violence and modernity'.[525] The metaphorical value of weaving (to weave together stories) is given an insistently material significance in this context. Its physicality makes the victims' stories less abstract and less 'circumscribed within the unreality of the camera screen' (fig. 39).

In *S21*, layer upon layer of storytelling forms combine, from painting to photography to theatrical performance. For the audience, however, all are contained within the frame of Panh's film. *S21* opens with a short summary of the actions of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, in archive footage and explanatory text. Him Houy, a former security deputy at Tuol Sleng, sits on the floor of his house with his family. As they discuss the regime, his mother suggests that they 'hold a ceremony so we never have to see that again'. Him Houy responds, 'Who wants to see that again? Why do you say that, Ma?'[526] With this early exchange, the film positions itself as a type of ceremony, as Joram ten Brink suggested; the film's re-enactments will allow the atrocities to be viewed again in a contained, symbolic, ritualistic form, without being perpetrated anew. This ceremony will perhaps mean that the atrocities of the past will

[524] see Stephanie Benzaquen, 'Remediating Genocidal Images' in *Killer Images*, 221.
[525] Stephanie Benzaquen, in *Killer Images*, 214.
[526] 04.20.

not be repeated; in Him Houy's response, the idea of repression and the return of the past are both evoked. His mother, Yeay Cheu, is measured in her attitude to apportioning blame or responsibility: 'I pity the dead and I pity my son'.[527] Though her attitude is balanced rather than explicitly defensive, she would clearly prefer a burial rather than a resurrection for the stories.

Him Houy has his own explanation for his actions as a guard: 'If we killed people, and I personally killed people, of our own free will, then that's evil. But we were terrorised by their guns, and their power. That's not evil. The evil is the leader who gave the orders.' As he explains that he is a good man, the film cuts to Vann Nath, one of the former prisoners at Tuol Sleng, with a painting in progress; already we can see the 'weaving' together of alternate perspectives in action through this overlap of image and sound. His painting shows a group of blindfolded prisoners, including Vann Nath himself. He describes how a light was shone into the truck when they were captured, and how the waiting guards 'threw a light' in their faces and laughed at them for being blinded (fig. 40).[528]

'Then they stopped and took off our blindfolds', he continues. 'We saw cameras. They took photos of us, full face and profile. Once we were all photographed, they blindfolded us again, put ropes around our necks and led us away.' In this account, those in power exercise it by giving and taking away sight, and by using light as a weapon. Though casting light is usually symbolically associated with bringing forth the truth, in this context it represents suppression and abuse. The reversal neatly demonstrates the ability of a totalitarian regime to completely transform meaning and signification. The camera, like the light, is pointed at the men to

[527] 06.28.
[528] 07.20.

subjugate them, forcing them to become part of a fabricated narrative. Immediately, the role of the camera, and the relationship between image and truth, are problematized in the frame of the film.

But another frame, that of Vann Nath's painting, brings back the return of representative signification by other means. As he tells his story, he continues to paint, the camera moving from his face to his hand as he dips the brush and moves it on the canvas. The painting describes the same event, with the men in single file and blindfolded. His story is recreated in multiple ways, in different forms and from different perspectives. When he describes men falling and being kicked, the camera moves towards the bare feet of the men in the painting, which are too close together and apparently in motion.[529] Movement is represented symbolically by the painted feet and physically by the moving camera, though the camera's movement retains symbolic value as well (that is to say, it represents the men's flailing by acting it out). This embodies an even more subtle form of weaving, and brings the painting, the memory, and the camera closer together as symbolic forms. The film then cuts to Chum Mey in a courtyard, looking at the Tuol Sleng building. He is the other Tuol Sleng survivor featured in the film. He steps back to get a better view and describes to Vann Nath how he was a prisoner there for two months, until the Khmer Rouge left Phnom Penh in 1979. It appears to be empty now. He starts to weep. The overwhelming impression is that his memories fill the empty space around him, operating as a critical commentary as well as a testimony on what happened there in the 1970s.[530]

[529] 10.50.
[530] 11.50.

The film cuts back to the interior of the building, to a room of photographs and records. Chum Mey is shown his own false testimony, gathered under duress: 'This is the notebook of your confessions. When Tith tortured you, he noted everything you said.' It notes trivial infractions as though they were of vast importance.[531] He silently leafs through pages of names, all of which represent people on whom he informed.[532] He is being reminded of the details of the atrocities, but it might occur to the viewer that they are watching him refresh not just a memory, but a false memory of culpability and guilt.

Vann Nath then brings out large wooden boards with printed mugshots each on them. He brushes away dust to reveal the last face on the board he has taken out of the pile. He then finds another print, a single photo attached to a board, apparently of someone lying dead in a cell. He then finds what appears to be a mugshot of a dead man, with a placard lying on top of the body. The photographs, revealed in this order, illustrate in an explicitly material way how guilt was placed on the prisoners by the authorities.[533]

There are small, passport-style photographs attached to the documents they find. Vann Nath finds a name he recognises and tells Chum Mey about the man: 'Seak Thap. He was arrested with me'. He sifts through the documents, with their rows of information about people processed in Tuol Sleng. These are images of their dehumanisation, with the shocking aspects (the images of apparently dead people) and the mundanity of the records shown to co-exist quite readily. The less obviously shocking images, of papers and notes, start to become more frightening and offensive.[534] These are not only images that show dehumanisation, but images that helped to enforce it. Their power is evoked again as an apparition for the viewer;

[531] 15.00.
[532] 17.55.
[533] 18.05.
[534] 19.20.

though it is powerless to hurt the viewer, it is still a fearful sight, in part because of the mundane forms in which it is seen to manifest. The audience might realise that the false narratives of the dictatorship made themselves manifest through bureaucracy at the height of the regime's power, as well as through the more obviously suppressive means of torture.

Vann Nath describes how Duch, his guard, would watch him paint. He gestures, and Panh's camera reveals a large print of a man in the corner of the room. The print appears to be new, it is neatly framed, and the subject is casually dressed. He describes his experience of painting for the regime: the brushstrokes he used had to 'be respectful' to the point of absurdity; he had to paint the skin of his captors with a pink hue 'like a young virgin'. The innocence of the regime's members had to be created visually and imaginatively. Interestingly, the regime's control over propaganda imagery was enforced on a conceptual level, not just at the superficial level of publicity. He tells Panh: 'The plaster busts from the mold cracked sometimes', and so they had to take care to bury them, and not destroy them. In this way, members of the regime were given a symbolic power that itself bordered on magical or sacred. The prisoners, meanwhile, could not be permitted to imagine (even inadvertently, and certainly not to visually figure or to act out) the destruction of their guards.[535]

Vann Nath meets two of his former captors. Dressed in suits, they greet him standing outside Tuol Sleng.[536] The guards discuss with him what makes someone a 'victim'.[537] He shows the guards a large painting of the cell in which he was held in 1978.[538] The painting is on an easel, propped up in an otherwise empty room. He elaborates what happened, using the painting

[535] 22.20. More detailed descriptions of the torture he faced and the artworks he created are included in Vann Nath's own book, *A Cambodian Prison Portrait: One Year in the Khmer Rouge's S-21*, trans. Moeun Chhean Nariddh (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998)
[536] 25.00.
[537] 27.27.
[538] 28.07.

as a visual aid for his point, as though it were one of the photographs that previously appeared on the wall behind him. The *mise en scène* is much clearer than it was when Vann Nath and Chum Mey were amidst the archives. In observational documentaries, situations are given symbolic significance or weight not only by subject matter, but by certain circumstances of filming which may or may not be incidental – for example, by the room being otherwise empty. In Panh's film, a *mise en abyme* is created as the painter frames his own experience artistically and documents his experiences through it and leads an audience through an interpretation of it. The painting becomes a recursive and discursive frame for commentary and testimony.

Him Houy then appears at a desk in another room. It is empty except for his desk, and a large pile of rags next to him. He reads out, from a document, the preferred method of the Khmer Rouge for writing one of their documents: 'Have them describe scenes from their treacherous lives. Reading it will reveal the secret story, the enlightening and perfectly clear causes of the espionage eating at us from within, according to their plan. It is best they write it themselves, in their own words'.[539] The victims are depicted not only as guilty, but self-evidently guilty, with their guilt merely requiring articulation. The total power of the regime over representation of reality makes itself felt once again. As though summoned from the past by Him Houy's reading, four more guards enter through a door at the opposite end of the room and walk towards Him Houy. They are carrying something (fig. 41).

Him Houy continues: 'There are two methods. Political pressure must be exercised constantly. Torture is a complementary procedure'. As the men reach the guard, they stop. The audience can see now that they are carrying a wooden chair. 'Judging from past experience, the

[539] 33.30.

comrades resort to it too easily, according it more emphasis than psychological pressure. It is an error we must always be aware of. The enemy doesn't confess to help us. Confession under political pressure is done at the lowest level.' Panh cuts to Him Houy in a corridor, walking. He appears to be looking for a particular cell. 'Torture is inevitable', his voice continues. He has a cell number written on his palm; he is looking for an invisible prisoner. He finds another guard, and they act out taking the prisoner from his cell.[540]

Him Houy describes how the regime insisted that torture must be conducted to get information, and not to relieve anger: 'If he dies, we lose the document.'[541] Crucially, the regime represents its intentions as pure while simultaneously dehumanising its victims as repositories of textual information (which needed to be forced to articulate their hidden truths). He continues to elaborate on the reasons for torture as the camera pans over a typewriter, and piles of Polaroid images of prisoners on the desk next to it. Him Houy describes his attitude as a guard in a straightforward manner: 'Torture was something cold and cruel. I didn't think. I was arrogant. I had power over the enemy. I never thought of his life. I saw him as an animal.'[542] The dehumanisation is obvious (the prisoner was an 'animal', Him Houy did not think of 'his life') but there is a more complex mode of discovery at work here. The combination of his words with the images we have seen represents the opposite of the testimony-with-commentary images that we see in the installations of Cambodian artists. He admits that he refused to critique the circumstances he helped create, instead enjoying his power. This was part of the mechanics of torture; he had to dehumanise himself as well. He continues: 'When I raised my hand, my heart never checked my brain, never stopped my

[540] 34.50.
[541] 36.20.
[542] 37.50.

hands and feet from striking. Torture was like that.'[543] He describes an unexamined life, where he could act simply as a body, without thought. Through his use of torture, his heart, hands and feet were all free of critical commentary.

A man who worked as a guard in his teens, Khieu Ches (known as Poeuv) describes his lock-up routine, while acting out the procedure in the nearly empty room.[544] He shouts instructions to imagined prisoners. He repeatedly acts out his harsh criticism of prisoners. It is as though his body, which previously acted with such impunity, is now possessed. He now seems compelled to act out and detail the false accusations he threw around readily.[545] The guards gather around a desk and analyse a document, discussing a case in which a guard was killed by a prisoner.[546]

At this point in the film, there is a shift to obviously non-diegetic material. The audience hears archive audio of chanting ('Long live the Kampuchea regime! Long live the Kampuchea society, without rich or poor!') as Him Houy peers from slot to slot, re-enacting an inspection.[547] He begins to speak to an imaginary prisoner in a cell: 'What are you shouting at?'. It is almost as though he is questioning the shouting of the Communists leading the chants on the soundtrack. 'Don't make me come back for a second or third time! You don't listen to the guards? We wrote this and you don't read it?' The phrase chalked on the inside of the cell door reads 'Don't be too free!' (fig. 42). He walks away from the camera, down the narrow corridor, as another Communist voice announces an 'extraordinary victory', apparently the

[543] 38.02.
[544] 38.38.
[545] 51.40.
[546] 53.00.
[547] 57.35.

greatest in the history of Kampuchea. Panh is bringing the propaganda of the regime (on the audio soundtrack) into the cells (the visual footage), demonstrating its obvious lack of truth.

Him Houy uses a photograph of a man chained in a cell as a sort of diagram, explaining how the prisoners would have been locked up, pointing to different parts as he speaks: 'The paper is for the prisoner's confession.'[548] Another photo shows a man tied up on the floor. 'The torture involves beating and smothering them with a bag. This bag is for suffocating him. These papers here… when the confessions aren't clear, the investigator crumples them up and tosses them away.' Again, the regime makes its voice heard, in the insistence that it always had a reason to arrest, and that it was never wrong: 'In Democratic Kampuchea, Angkar's [The Organisation's] line was to govern justly. When you make a revolution, you want justice for the people. And if you arrest someone, you need a reason. Angkar has eyes everywhere, it makes no mistakes, it arrests rightfully.'[549] Democratic Kampuchea is represented once more as a sort of magical place, where The Organisation's logic was never wrong, because it made its own rules of logic. It could edit and re-write confessions at will, tossing away any text in the codex that does not fit its story. It did not have to hide evidence of its violence, even cataloguing it in a 'record of prisoner ailments' which directly attributes prisoners' deaths to exhaustion and torture (fig. 43).

But this magical, performative form of thinking is undercut by the guards themselves, as they allow the truth to emerge about Democratic Kampuchea. Him Houy recalls:

> If I understand, when a document was drawn up, it was all a sham. We made up an activity of sabotage, we invented the evidence, in order to execute a prisoner. When the document was finished, he was taken to his death. Each man has his own memory, each his own history. The aim was to break down their entire memory and make an

[548] 58.30.
[549] 01.07.30.

> act of treason out of it. Friends and family became part of a network in these acts of treason. That way we had proof. So we could kill the person. Then we arrested the people in this network and put them in prison.

Individual and specific forms of testimony are now taking the place of the loud, rhythmic, bombastic propaganda statements heard on the soundtrack before. However, the guards insist that they too were trapped in the system and obligated to play along with the regime's logic. When it is pointed out to Prak Khan that the confession he forced out of a young woman in 1977 was simply not believable, he responds: 'At the time, the aim was to indoctrinate us. We had to believe in sabotage activities or we couldn't arrest the enemy.'[550] He describes his role in the regime's atrocities as though it was a form of method acting, in which he needed to get into character and believe the lies in order to be believable to the victims. Roleplay was for them a functional part of participating in the massacres. Fiction and performance are seen again to be woven into the real story of the killings, and not merely created retroactively by artists.

The men sit in a circle as one of them reads from the confession of Bouth Heng, head of the interrogation group at Bureau S21.[551] Now, the film's method of reading out victims' false confessions has been reversed, as though the regime's false logic is being set right. Descriptions of the rape and sexual abuse of female prisoners are read aloud as another man holds a photograph of one of them, with a baby next to her in the image. The camera stays on her as the description continues, and we are invited to hear the description as an inverted form of witness testimony. These are the stories of the female victims of Tuol Sleng, and Panh ensures that the audience focuses on a woman as their stories are told. However, the stories are not told from her perspective. The instability of the narrative at this point highlights the

[550] 01.13.50.
[551] 01.14.15.

basic injustice that this woman cannot give her own account, as she was silenced by the regime. She can only be made present now representatively, through imagery and through the speech of others.

Prak Khan responds to the stories: 'We were all boys… with our youthful vigour… I say this shamefully…' He confesses that he tortured a woman called Nay Nan sadistically because, he says, he was in love with her. He suggests that he was motivated by sexual frustration. According to Khan, they were aged between 13-14 and 22-23 when they were guards at Tuol Sleng.[552] Rain and thunder can be heard softly on the audio track as he speaks. After this live confession, the guards are shown sitting in silence, as the storm takes over the audio track. The camera pans to a painting on an easel in the room, showing a woman beaten by guards, with her baby being taken away from her (fig. 44). The camera pans from the baby to her anguished face and lingers there. Again, the intermediality is reminiscent of Basinski's representation of 9/11, which took the horrific visual aspect of the event and paired it with a wordless ambient track, in order to re-contextualise it and allow for a new representational space to emerge.

The painting not only stands as a *mise en abyme* image of documentation but breaks the usual logic of narrative film. It stands as evidence which corroborates the confessions it has shown, but which is evidentiary on an artistic rather than literal level. It comments on the documentary's own framing devices not only by having symbolic value, but by acting within the diegesis of the documentary. One of the men stares at the painting, and the others sit before it. They are all confronted with an alternative narrative to the one they had enforced. Non-diegetic music swells over the storm – mournful strings and ominous drums. The camera

[552] 01.16.45.

cuts to more details of the painting, and pans again from the guards to the mother, as though to silently repeat the testimony her presence brings before them. The theme of blindfolding someone, or of depriving them of light, returns once more to the film, as one of the guards describes blindfolding the women so that they couldn't see the base.[553]

Boards containing hundreds of photographs have been staged in the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum (fig. 45).[554] The camera pans across these as well, as a choir is heard softly on the soundtrack. One of the photographs the camera finds is the famous mugshot of Bophana, with another photo next to her (fig. 46). Her face is twisted in what appears to be insolence towards her photographer and captors. Her gaze stands in this sequence as a defiant response to the guards' descriptions of blindfolding the women. Again, lines of sight and light are aligned symbolically with the presence or suppression of truth. One of the guards then states a truth so simple that it is offensive at this stage in the film: 'I think that most of them were not guilty.'[555]

'You invented a law to tell people to lie, not to the interrogators like you, Khan, but to lie to ourselves. We denounced people we didn't know, confessed to acts we never did, but we had to so they'd let up a little,'[556] Vann Nath tells Prak Khan. He responds, 'For the interrogator, too. No answer? I don't believe it. True or false, you had to answer.' Vann continues: 'So there was nothing human left, was there?' Him Houy tries to defend their actions: 'We had to have a story, words and phrases.' Vann Nath responds furiously: 'You crushed all humanity. Document in hand, you left us in the cell, without food, a living corpse, neither man nor animal. And when the time came, you took them away. When you killed them, they were no

[553] 01.21.05.
[554] 01.25.45.
[555] 01.26.10.
[556] 01.26.30.

longer human'. This is the climactic moment of the film, in which the documents are once and for all denounced as fraudulent, and the guards' crimes against humanity are articulated to their faces. As Vann points out, it is particularly devastating that the victims were forced to lie to themselves, and this was an important part of their dehumanisation. They no longer had control over their own stories.

Vann Nath continues to take apart the logic of the regime, attacking the totality of its power to dehumanise: 'If men turn human beings into animals, or worse than animals, then… that's not right. It's not right. If you think about the word "destruction", it's more than cruel. In the word "kill", there still seems to be a moral aspect. In "destruction", there's nothing human left. We become dust, just particles blowing in the wind.'[557] Panh's documentary attempts to restore the stories of the killings to what they really were, and to break the spell cast by the speech-acts and by the unexamined violence of the guards. Vann Nath goes on: 'Even for animals we speak of "killing", not of "destroying". We become dust in the wind. There's no humanity left. I think that "destruction" refers to flesh, to the body, but not to the soul. Look, all this is left. All this evidence [*He leafs through some papers on the desk*] is left, all these testimonies. It's lying there, but you pay no attention.'

The documentary's purpose is to restore an acknowledgement of the soul to the 'particles' that still remain. In this context, the particles that remain are the false evidence, the objects such as photos and papers of written testimony and records. Previously used to dehumanise, they are now re-purposed and used to bring about the return of the human beings that were lost, or at least the truth about their stories. Though the victims who died cannot be returned, the film aims to make them appear again, by making the truth of their stories manifest

[557] 01.28.07.

through the materials previously used to condemn them (that is, they are made evident through the false evidence). The tragedy and trauma of the killings cannot be fully overcome, but it can be realised more completely by having the perpetrators revisit the scenes of their crimes. The film-act is two-fold: the perpetrators act within its narrative, and the narrative that is created acts as a counter-historical document.

A large poster of Choeung Ek base, one of the killing fields, is rolled out across the floor.[558] The guards hold it down with their own weight. 'I remember this place well. I remember the trees, this palm tree…' He draws another hut in the dust on the sheet, to represent where prisoners from Tuol Sleng were kept. The film cuts to the men, now in Choeung Ek, as they stand in front of the place where the pit used to be. A puddle shimmers under the description of the killings and seems to stand in for the pit.[559] Though the puddle is only a symbol or stand-in for the pit, the film could be said to represent it as an anti-symbol: an insistently 'real' thing, which still exists in this space despite what the regime's members might say. The poster, meanwhile, is reminiscent of Borges' hypothetical map, which would have to be the same size as a country in order to fully chart it. The audience might be struck by the enormity of what has happened and the impossibility of ever being able to know the event in its entirety.

Kwok Kian-Woon and Roxana Waterson, drawing on a study by Peg LeVine, have argued that part of the atrocity committed by the Khmer Rouge involved separating Cambodians from their traditional spiritual beliefs. Without their philosophy, they struggled to cope with moving from camp to camp, and with the possibility that particular spirits might emerge in

[558] 01.31.50.
[559] 01.36.00.

particular places. The film can be understood as the re-emergence of the regime's real actions, in a specific, controlled environment: 'Half of LeVine's respondents spoke of Angkar in the present tense; some said it had emerged out of the ground and might do so again.'[560]

In the final shot of the film, particles of dust blow across the floor inside Tuol Sleng (fig. 47). A memorial credit appears, but it tells the viewer only that the film is 'in memory…' and trails off with an ellipsis. The film therefore seems to be dedicated to everyone remembered in the film, rather than to a specific person or group. It is reminiscent again of Susan Sontag's dedication in *Regarding the Pain of Others*: '…to the vanquished'. It could even be seen to stand as the memory: a *cinema-séance* to visually figure the event of the camp and its victims for the viewer's contemplation.

iv. Joshua Oppenheimer: *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014)

The Act of Killing is reflexively structured; it is a film about the making of a film (that was never made). But while critiques of the film under construction are included in *The Act of Killing*, as they are in Rouch's *Chronicle of a Summer*, unlike in Rouch's film the gangsters are only critiquing the film they have been told they are making: a tribute to their 'heroic' suppression of a perceived Communist menace called *Arsan and Aminah*, which will include re-

[560] Kwok Kian-Woon and Roxana Waterson, 'Southeast Asia and the politics of contested memories', in *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies*, ed. Anna Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (London: Routledge, 2016) 336. They draw from Peg LeVine, *Love and Dread in Cambodia: Weddings and Births and Ritual Harm Under the Khmer Rouge* (Singapore and Honolulu, HI.: National University of Singapore Press and University of Hawaii Press, 2010).

enactments of their killings. This is a narrative structure familiar from Hamlet, as Errol Morris points out in his essay 'The Murders of Gonzago':

> *The Act of Killing* asks the questions – what is history? What is its purpose? Are we simply trying to uncover what really happened in the past? Trying to provide a moral lesson or a cautionary tale for the future? Both? And it tries to address these questions through re-enactments.
>
> *The Act of Killing* reminds me of the central scene in Hamlet – not the soliloquy, not the testimony of Hamlet's ghost, not the graveyard scene, but the re-enactment of the murder of Hamlet's father – the performance of the play, *The Murder of Gonzago*. Act 3, Scene 2. Or using Hamlet's more descriptive title, *The Mousetrap*. The play within the play. The scene where Hamlet attempts "to catch the conscience of the king."[561]

The reflexive knot is thus, as in Hamlet, a trap designed to ensnare an authority which has masked its brutal past. Morris suggests that 'it is like a hall of mirrors – the so-called *mise en abyme* – where real people become characters in a movie and then jump back into reality again. And it asks the central question: what is real?'.[562] This mise en abyme structure also incorporates into itself the various audiences of *The Act of Killing* from an ethical perspective, through a process of over-identification with the killers. As Oppenheimer himself points out:

> [*The Act of Killing's*] fundamental moral challenge is to ask people to see themselves somehow in the perpetrators, and that is of course why the survivors cannot be in the same film. Because the moment they are there, framing the perpetrators, we will disidentify with the perpetrators and we will cling to the survivors for dear life to have a safe space.[563]

The interlinked *Arsan and Aminah*/*The Act of Killing* produce between themselves a sensibility that is evocative and dreamlike. Bright colours and surreal images are preferred over a clearly

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[561] Errol Morris, 'The Murders of Gonzago', *Slate* (online magazine), July 10 2013. http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/history/2013/07/the_act_of_killing_essay_how_indonesia_s_mass_killings_could_have_slowed.single.html Accessed 13/12/2020.

[562] Errol Morris, quotation, *The Act of Killing* (official website), 'Reactions' section. http://theactofkilling.com/reactions-3/ Accessed 07/01/2021.

[563] Joshua Oppenheimer, interview with Irene Luzstig, 'The Fever Dream of Documentary: A Conversation with Joshua Oppenheimer', in *Film Quarterly* 52.

enunciated historical narrative. Werner Herzog praised *The Act of Killing* as 'surreal' on its poster, and explained that surrealism has previously tended to be 'superimposed' on to films by their directors, rather than directors using techniques germane to the medium of film to draw it out.[564] This aesthetic, and the space given to the perpetrators to tell their stories, was controversial on the film's release: the editor of the *Storyville* BBC documentary series, Nick Fraser, called *The Act of Killing* a 'snuff movie'.[565] Fraser was unimpressed by the film's Shakespearean narrative structure and Morris's discussion of it:

> In his bizarrely eulogistic piece defending *The Act of Killing* (of which he is an executive producer), Errol Morris, the documentary maker, compares the film to Hamlet's inspired use of theatre to reveal dirty deeds at the court of Denmark. But Hamlet doesn't really believe that theatrical gestures can stand in for reality. Nor, we must assume, did his creator. A more apt analogy than Morris's might come from Shakespeare's darkest play, Macbeth. What would we think if Macbeth and his scheming wife were written out of the action, replaced by those low-level thugs paid to do bad business on their behalf? We might conclude that putting them centre stage, in the style of *The Act of Killing*, was indeed perverse and we'd be right.[566]

But with his Rouchian conceit, Oppenheimer could be said to be approaching the gangsters on their own territory, as well as his: they were 'movie gangsters' in their day, who made money by scalping movie tickets; their base of operations for crime was the cinema in Medan; they admire American film gangster icons and supposedly modelled their violent behaviour on them; and finally, they live a fantasy – colluded in by much of the media and the political structure of Indonesia – that frames their violence as laudable and their victims as dangerous and deserving of death (when it frames them at all).

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[564] Werner Herzog, quotation, *The Act of Killing* (official website), 'Reactions' section. http://theactofkilling.com/reactions-3/ Accessed 07 Jan 2021.
[565] Nick Fraser, '*The Act of Killing*: don't give an Oscar to this snuff movie' *The Guardian* 23 Feb 2014 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/23/act-of-killing-dont-give-oscar-snuff-movie-indonesia Accessed 27 Jan 2021.
[566] ibid.

I have pointed out that Oppenheimer is both a filmmaker and an academic, and the reception of the film has been a particular point of interest in the academy. The journals *Film Quarterly* and *Critical Asian Studies* both dedicated special issues to discussions of *The Act of Killing*; the latter in particular exploring and appraising its controversial narrative conceit. Ariel Heronyo warns that the film should be understood as more complex than a straightforwardly generous reading (and, one might extrapolate, a straightforward dismissal) would allow:

> Many viewers with a strong and long-standing attachment to Indonesia have considered the film to be primarily the revelation of a serious political scandal, providing a new weapon for those seeking justice for the victims of 1965, both past and present. Such a view is not wrong, but rather, incomplete. The same film also demonstrates precisely the opposite: an obscene testimony to the absolute impunity enjoyed by politicos-cum-gangsters, who continue to run the country, nearly half a century later.[567]

Is *The Act of Killing* an interventionist work, despite its theatrical, reflexive technique of re-enactment? Can its 'testimony' be expected to act as a weapon, helping Indonesians to challenge and overcome the dominant narrative of the anti-Communist massacres? Or is its fantasy aesthetic, and its role as a stage for the gangsters' performances, simply an act of amoral indulgence by a western filmmaker? Errol Morris points out that 'there's some inherent madness in [Oppenheimer's] approach', as though the director is involved, in a distinctively Rouchian way, in the same possession as the participants; but it is thus difficult, especially for non-Indonesian audiences, to know if this film is intended to be factual. There is no voiceover, and little political context included beyond what the gangsters themselves supply, in what Leslie K. Dwyer calls their 'brutal fiction'.[568]

[567] Ariel Heryanto (2014) 'Great and Misplaced Expectations', *Critical Asian Studies*, 46:1, 162-166; 163.
[568] Leslie K. Dwyer, 'Picturing Violence: Anti-Politics and *The Act of Killing*', *Critical Asian Studies*, 2014, 46 (1), 183-88; 184.

Oki Rahadianto Sutopo would later point to Dwyer's commentary, which suggests that the film's neglect of Indonesian activists leads to the failure of its transformative agenda, and finally situates it as a highly Western, colonialist view of the Indonesia and its history.[569] Robert Cribb also argued that the Indonesian Army's role in the massacres is ignored; the film instead focuses on the gangsters, as 'civilian criminal psychopaths' and the Pancasila Youth, an Indonesian paramilitary organisation.[570] But while only the paramilitary-gangster nexus of crime and violence is pursued in detail in the film itself, the history of the PY does lead directly from Anwar Congo (credited, like other gangsters, as a founding father of the organisation) to current Indonesian government ministers.

Sylvia Tiwon warns that such aestheticization has been criticised in the past 'for creating a safe space of aesthetic distance between the atrocity and the beholder, while the victim of racial violence is transformed into an aesthetic object and, as such, a locus from which white subjectivity is generated'.[571] But here, it is perhaps intended to work in the opposite direction; not distantiating in a Brechtian manner, but bringing the audience, including foreign audiences, closer to the occluded narrative of the massacres. Despite the film's dreamlike aesthetic, there is potentially a coherent critical function to be identified.

Errol Morris traces a journey from 'dream, to nightmare, to bitter reality'; this quality of 'reality' at the end of the film is, however, more questionable than Morris' summary might suggest. In a documentary by Vice on *The Act of Killing*, Morris elaborates on the significance of Congo's final scene:

[569] Oki Rahadianto Sutopo, (2020) 'Using Bourdieu to understand perpetrators in *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*', *Continuum*, 34:2, 286-298; 289.
[570] Robert Cribb, '*The Act of Killing*', (2014) *Critical Asian Studies*, 46:1, 147-149; 147.
[571] Sylvia Tiwon, 'Lust of the Eye: *The Act of Killing* and Aesthetic Sensibility', *Critical Asian Studies*, 2014, 46 (1) 200-203; 201. Also discussed in Simon Philpott, 'Performing Mass Murder: Constructing the Perpetrator in Documentary Film' *International Political Sociology* (2017) 11, 257-272; 262.

> To me the last scene in it is one of the most powerful things I've ever seen. And I'm left with this strange question. It's a really deep question for me. Is it performance or is it real? And what does it actually mean about [Anwar Congo], or about us and about our own connection with the past? It's very powerful. And it's powerful because it is so inherently ambiguous and strange. 'What the fuck is this moment? What is actually going on here?' And I can't say that I know. I can't tell you that it's real or fabricated, acting or play-acting. I don't know. And I think for that reason it becomes an amazing moment.[572]

He is describing the moment in which Congo is seen bent over at the scene of one of his murders, retching. No reason is articulated directly in the film, but Congo is apparently overwhelmed with guilt. He might be trying to expel from his body the spirits he can sense around and in him (he had observed earlier in the film that 'many ghosts' were present at this spot, because so many people had died there). Alternatively, this scene might be entirely fabricated, with Congo's retching taken out of context and imbued with these symbolic values. The shot thus holds within itself the possibility of being interpreted as a ritualistic performance, as having representative significance, and as a fictional cinematic depiction of guilt. Through this ambiguity, the moment is a challenge to the question of what truth is, and what accountability and honesty are. But how is Morris's question to be answered? What does it mean about Congo (or what does it mean about the audience and their connection to the past)?

While he finds the scene's ultimate meaning inaccessible, Morris is frank about what it is not: 'I think we learn nothing'. He sees opacity in the scene. His observation is reminiscent of the idea previously put forward by Rouch and Morin that documentaries are not supposed to be 'adult education' but should instead challenge preconceptions and raise questions about the nature of truth. This is also similar to Werner Herzog's concept of 'ecstatic truth', the

[572] Documentary included as a special feature on the Dogwoof release of *The Act of Killing*

Romantic notion that for a documentarian, staying close to literal truth throughout their film might be pedantic, and in doing so, the filmmaker might sacrifice a larger, less easily grasped form of truth.

Though he provides some context for the retching scene, Oppenheimer echoes Morris's claim that it is ultimately opaque:

> I asked [Congo] in the final scene to take me back to where we started and tell me what he did in each place as he walked through the office. And suddenly blindsided, caught totally by surprise, his body has this reaction for which he has no words: it is the moment where the mask is off. He's trying to show me what happened on that roof, and suddenly he starts retching, choking. I think the last thing you would want to do is find words for what is happening to him there – it is a purely disruptive space. Cracks are appearing in the middle of a sentence and the rupture is traumatic.[573]

Rather than using a Godardian playfulness of film-language in order to articulate meaning, Oppenheimer seems to prefer to sublimate a discursive analysis into a disturbing, image-based film-act: 'Film is a terrible medium for words – it's a medium for subtext.'[574]

Simon Philpott points out that Oppenheimer's 'most forceful intervention' (in this context, his literal intervention in the film, when he speaks from behind the camera) comes towards the end of the film, 'when Congo claims after acting out a scene where he is tortured for being an alleged Communist, that he finally understands and has empathy for those that he himself brutalised and murdered. It is at this point that Oppenheimer expresses his disbelief that Congo can have experienced anything like the terror of his victims. It is as if at this juncture Oppenheimer is anxious not to let the viewer too readily rehabilitate Congo.'[575] Crucially,

[573] Joshua Oppenheimer, quoted in 'The Fever Dream of Documentary: A Conversation with Joshua Oppenheimer', interview with Irene Lusztig, *Film Quarterly* (Winter 2013) 67 (2): 50–56; 52.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Philpott, 268.

Philpott identifies that this is a verbal warning to the audience as well as to Congo. He continues:

> Herein lies a powerful tension in *TAOK*. On the one hand, the film proffers a psychological examination of Congo and others engaged in past killing and contemporary thuggery. However, in comparing his work to that of Jean Rouch, Oppenheimer argues that the purpose of documentary is not to attempt an objective account of particular events, but to enter into a performance with one's interlocutor(s), such that the subject of the film may say or do something that s/he may not say or do without the presence of the camera. That is, to turn on a camera is to film a performance in which the director is a collaborator. The performance is jointly owned by subject(s) and director in that rushes are shared between filmmaker and subject while, of course, overall editorial control remains with the director.[576]

In Oppenheimer's conceit, the audience is folded into this 'performance' as 'collaborators' as well (in both the sense of collaborating on a creative endeavour, and collaborating in acts of killing, at least in an imaginary way). But the rushes, rehearsals and script changes shown on screen are reminders of the constructive process behind media representations and could be an attempt to prime the audience for a more critical look at representative values beyond the bright fantasy.

By making some of the events of the past re-emerge visually through the process (or act) of filmmaking, Oppenheimer could be said to be seeking to generate a film-act: making an utterance that intervenes into the contemporary cultural memory of Indonesia, by repurposing the materials and narratives which persist. This approach even conforms to the overidentification with the subject required for a Žižekian-Lacanian, 'evental' exploration of extraordinary events. And even if the film does not fully bring into view the systemic violence that Žižek requires to be made visible, the paramilitary and gangsters' relationships with the contemporary political system are sometimes made visible, or at least hinted at: for example,

[576] Ibid.

in the scenes in which the gangster Herman Koto runs for office. Theoretically, Oppenheimer's techniques give the gangsters space to reveal their own crimes; eventually, this appears to force them into at least a partial reckoning with their past actions and seeks to provoke the possibility of further reckonings beyond the film itself.

Oppenheimer states in the press notes for the film's release that '[the film] may best be described as a documentary of the imagination'. *The Act of Killing* is thus not discursively shaped. There are no historians interviewed in the film, and no voiceover for context or guidance. Instead, asking the gangsters to act out their killings in ways that fit their fantasises of themselves allows Oppenheimer to set images against images in a way that is intended to create a new image of the past. Too indirect to be considered 'dialectical', this is a highly allusive, visual, performance-based critique. Again, this is an 'act', the filmic equivalent of an Austinian speech-act or the image-acts outlined by Bakewell and to some extent Bredekamp, which is designed to perform and thus to provoke an imaginary counter-event ('imaginary' in the academic sense of shared socio-cultural assumptions, beyond the more usual sense of 'fictional' or literally 'unreal'). The film intrudes on a shared imaginary, propagated by the media, which has accepted the gangsters' self-serving testimonies as the prevailing account of the 1965-66 killings. Instead, it brings another discourse to the screen. This approach contrasts to some extent with the textually annotative aspects of Panh's film; Oppenheimer's film-criticism is subsumed under bright colours, music, dance, and an overall more ostentatious series of performances. 'This is the true legacy of the dictatorship: the erasure of our ability to imagine anything other', suggests Oppenheimer's anonymous co-director.[577]

[577] Joshua Oppenheimer, *The Act of Killing* Press Notes (Berlin: Wolf, 2013).

Sutopo provides a review of criticisms of Oppenheimer's diptych in his essay 'Using Bourdieu to understand perpetrators in *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*', but he adds: 'Despite my strong criticism, I appreciate *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* for raising international awareness about mass killings in Indonesia'.[578] While the film's aim to reflexively intervene into Indonesian *historiographies* of the events (rather than into 'Indonesia's history' as an abstract concept) is ambitious, it is too high a standard to expect the film to achieve a profound, sustained change in human rights discourses on and within Indonesia. The film does not present itself as presenting a definitive account of the massacres. But as a a film-act, it offers an 'evental' response to Indonesian media propaganda, repurposing the near-operatic propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G30s/PKI* and contemporary TV programmes such as the talk show *Special Dialogue*, on which Congo guest stars in *TAOK*.

The massacres constitute an event that did not 'manifest' nor 'emerge' visually at the time they happened, beyond the experiences of their immediate witnesses. There was a mediatic silence, as well as the direct silencing of victims: no film footage or photographs are known to exist of the massacres.[579] The two films thus also form part of an interventionist act into ongoing silence and into ongoing silencing, with Oppenheimer attempting to bring the events back to the frame. Stefan Iversen and Henrik Skov Nielsen suggest that purpose of the re-enactments is Geertzian: 'the re-enactments come to serve as thick description, full of evidence in the form of historically accurate details.'[580] In this way, the events can be seen to

[578] Sutopo 290.
[579] See John Roosa, 'The Sites of Knowledge About An Open Secret: Indonesia's Mass Disappearances of 1965-66', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 2006, 75 (2), 281-97; 283. Also quoted in Philpott, 267.
[580] Stefan Iversen and Henrik Skov Nielsen, 'The politics of fictionality in documentary form: *The Act of Killing* and *The Ambassador*', *European Journal of English Studies* (2016) 20:3, 249-262; 257.

be re-framed as they are re-enacted. Iversen and Nielsen detect what could be described as a negative capability in the film, as part of its 'fictionality':

> The first half of the film sees Anwar smiling and dancing, while the latter part shows him plunging deeper and deeper into actual and mental darkness, haunted by nightmares and eventually possessed by the sounds of his dying victims. Oppenheimer even stages the change from light to dark with a clear nod to the opening scene of Coppola's version of Conrad's classic in *Apocalypse Now*: Anwar lying on a bed, surrounded by smoke and a loud mechanical noise leading into the actual journey, not in a helicopter but on a train. In this interpretation, one can argue that through its composition the film asks its audience to understand the fictionalised re-enactments as the main vehicle for Anwar's process of becoming more ethical and of eventually identifying with the humanity of his victims.'[581]

This description suggests the possibility of an evental movement for Anwar himself, and gives a further layer of complexity to dangerous forms of identification and empathy in the film.

While I give a defence of Oppenheimer's allusive, evocative style in *The Act of Killing*, it is difficult to refute the notion that some of the 'film-act' or the consequential 'film-event' is left too much implied to be effective. Associations become somewhat vague in parts in the film, such as the muzak playing in the dull, empty mall, perhaps intended to represent Western influence as a decadent rather than 'civilising' force. But when the Iraq War is referenced, a sharper critique emerges.

The journalist and paramilitary organiser Ibrahim Sinik insists later in the film that Guantanamo was 'right' when George W. Bush was in power: 'Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction!', he asserts confidently. The audience will note the parallel at this point with the gangsters' enforced version of the truth, and the stories that Westerners tell themselves to justify their own violent actions. Ibrahim's phrasing emphasises his belief that these stories were considered the reality of the situation (or were represented as such) and

[581] Ibid.

therefore were the reality of the situation. He asserts further: '"War crimes" are defined by the winners. I'm a winner, so I can make my own definition.' Ibrahim continues the thought, considering that others might see the situation differently: 'I am ready to go to The Hague!'.[582] The scene seems to be intended as a reminder for Western audiences that they are not above such political media fictions, and the failure to hold perpetrators to account, as the culture they are glimpsing on screen.

I have described *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence* above as a 'diptych'; obviously because they are intended to be taken as a pair; but while *TLOS* has a simpler narrative structure than *TAOK*, they are also a 'diptych' due to the more complex, reciprocal framing operation they perform when taken together. Adi Rukun, the protagonist of the latter film, is also positioned as a sort of co-director. The audience sees him watch dailies with Oppenheimer and decide on edits to the film as it plays out. Rukun is using the film as an investigatory method, to explore and uncover exactly what happened to his brother, Ramli, one of those killed during the 1960s massacres at Snake River.

As in *The Act of Killing*, *The Look of Silence* includes interviews with arrogant gangsters, eager to discuss their crimes in detail. But the monsters in *The Look of Silence* are also more general, universal threats: those of ageing and death. These are not in themselves explicitly political situations, but the film compares the pain of living with violent trauma and loss to the pain of losing one's memory of it. It then links both to the political circumstances left behind by the Indonesian anti-Communist massacres: a deliberate, national form of memory loss. Oppenheimer has elaborated on Adi Rukun's reaction to his father's memory loss (Rukun characterises it as part of the overall injustice of Ramli's killing): 'He said, "my father on that

[582] 01.09.15.

day had forgotten the son murdered that destroyed his life and destroyed in many ways our family's life, but he hasn't forgotten the fear, and now he'll never work through that fear because he can't remember what happened, and therefore he can't heal. It's too late."'[583] It is difficult not to see Indonesia's relationship with its national history represented in Rukun's father's circumstances.

The first shot of the film is both confrontational and amusing: a close-up of an elderly man in optician's glasses, staring into the camera's lens.[584] This immediately makes the film's concerns clear; it is about what it means to 'look', and about the concepts of focus or clarity. The man's gaze immediately creates a relationship between his lenses and that of the camera, reminding the viewer that their perspectives can be changed by the lens. The film has already set up different definitions of the word 'look' (the look that is given by someone, and a look that is a general sort of appearance or presentation). But the audience is not told who this man is, and so they do not know if he is a victim or perpetrator. Their sympathies are thus suspended; they are caught frozen in the man's gaze (fig. 48).

Crickets can be heard in the background. This is a pointed silence, with an additional filmic significance (the sound of crickets being cinematic shorthand for isolation and stillness in a landscape). The film cuts to shuddering jumping beans on a tabletop (fig. 49).[585] A jumping bean could be seen as a sort of possessed object, which animates itself as though by magic. The reflective surface on which the beans move establishes a reflexive space in *The Look of Silence*. The film insists on self-awareness and a 'reflective' mood, for it and for its viewers.

[583] Joshua Oppenheimer (quoting Adi Rukun), '*The Look Of Silence's* Joshua Oppenheimer: "We Had A Getaway Car And Bags Packed, Ready To Evacuate"', interview in *Deadline* (online magazine), 04 February 2016 http://deadline.com/2016/02/look-of-silence-joshua-oppenheimer-oscars-interview-1201696228/ Accessed 24 Feb 2021.
[584] 00.20.
[585] 00.30.

Its title appears in the reflective space of the table. The idea is challenging, perhaps even more so in this quiet context. What is a 'look of silence'? Is the audience seeing it now? Or are they providing it themselves, reciprocally?

After a moment, Adi Rukun appears on-screen. He is staring at something not yet visible, but which is revealed to be a man singing on TV. The television is very similar to the one Anwar Congo watched in *The Act of Killing*. Film and the process of filmmaking itself (its screens and its lenses) is an organising metaphor in the narrative.

Rukun watches an archive American news report on the same small television, on the defeat of the communists.[586] By showing this report on the small TV, Oppenheimer shrinks national memories down to the same representative space as the investigations by Rukun and Oppenheimer themselves. 'In many cases entire families were liquidated. And the purge continues to this day', the reporter points out.[587] Though this footage is from 1967, there is still an ongoing purge of memory and of accountability, through silence and a refusal to see clearly. The inability to 'see clearly', or to remember clearly, can be a conscious choice and an inevitable consequence of ageing, as we have seen.

Ted Yates, the reporter, is seen speaking to a military representative in Bali. Absurdly, the representative suggests that the communists wanted to die. He tells Yates that they insisted on being purged from their own villages.[588] He puts words in the victims' mouths: 'Let us say goodbye to our families, and then we are ready to be killed.' Later in his report, Yates points

[586] 10.47.
[587] 11.15.
[588] 11.30.

out Bali's wealth of natural resources, and cites Goodyear's Sumatra plant as an example.[589] He shows imprisoned 'communists' in a line outside the plant, forced into labour. Again, the film projects the relevance of the archive report into the economic circumstances of the present day, to present a framed reappearance of it.

The film cuts to a man cleaning a building at night, under fluorescent light.[590] A child's voice is heard over the image; we are about to see how the past is 'scrubbed' and kept clean for consumption in Indonesian schools. Children in school uniforms are sitting in a classroom.[591] Their teacher proclaims that 'Communists are cruel'. He graphically describes the killing of six military figures (the same incident depicted in *Pengkhianatan G 30 S/PKI*), and attributes them to 'communists'. The children are asked to repeat graphic descriptions of the killings in unison; they are learning their shared history or 'memories' of the events of the 1960s by rote, as propaganda. The teacher asks the students to empathise directly with the murdered generals in the story: 'would you like that?' This is an inversion of the principles of reconciliation and transitional justice, which seek to ensure that underrepresented voices are heard. Rather than 'transition' away from the events of the past, the children are encouraged to relive them vicariously (fig. 50).

Outside the classroom, Rukun speaks to a young pupil: he repeats exactly what his teacher told him as fact.[592] Rukun tells him that 'it's all lies'.[593] He gives another version of the story: 'The generals were killed by the army, not the communists'. The film cuts to a TV screen again, and an interviewee's description of frightened communists.[594] Rukun asks Oppenheimer

[589] 12.05.
[590] 12.50.
[591] 13.30.
[592] 16.30.
[593] 16.42.
[594] 17.30.

when the footage was filmed.[595] He offers reasons as to why the man acts with such bravado when he describes performing the killings, and asks his mother, 'How do you feel being surrounded by your son's killers? You see them every day.'[596] She answers: 'In the afterlife, their victims will take revenge. They will suffer later. There's no use raising it now.' Thee is clearly a persistent fear of 'raising' the issue now, with victims instead seeking comfort in the thought that justice (or reciprocal violence) will be done to perpetrators after death. There is a vacuum left by the lack of justice, or even the lack of acknowledgement of these crimes in the wider world.

The film offers another description and performance of a killing at Snake River by the leaders of the death squads, while Rukun watches.[597] But it moves on to footage of a survivor of the Snake River massacres, named as Kemat. He describes Ramli's killing to Rukun, and a more truthful narrative is seen to be beginning to manifest.[598] This is not allowed to continue for too long; the film cuts back to Rukun, as he fits the elderly man from the opening shot for glasses. He is Inong, one of the perpetrators; and he is, the film shows, still here and still watching. Rukun asks Inong if his neighbours are afraid of him: 'Most people here were communists. They know they're powerless against me. Because I'm part of a mass movement,'[599] he asserts confidently. Inong attributes his safety to the overwhelming number of people who share his beliefs and believe him to be a hero.

He describes his methods for staying sane during the purges: 'If we didn't drink human blood, we'd go crazy.'[600] Of course, it might usually be assumed that the person drinking blood is the

[595] 18.05.
[596] 19.45.
[597] 23.20.
[598] 25.40.
[599] 36.20.
[600] 36.47.

'crazy' person, rather than the other way around. But this paradox embodies the reversal of logic involved in the perpetrators' victory over its victims. Those who are so calm and secure that they can even drink human blood are deemed sane; those who are hysterical with grief, it is implied, are self-evidently insane, and thus are in the wrong. Inong describes people who killed so many 'communists' that they 'went crazy.' He insists: 'There's only one way to avoid it: drink your victims' blood or go crazy.'[601]

He goes into more details about the power he gained from his techniques: 'But if you drink blood, you can do anything!' As Adi Rukun tries to steer the conversation towards Inong's feelings, he offers horrifying, unasked-for information: 'It tastes both salty and sweet. Human blood.' Blood-drinking can be seen as a highly ritualistic method of 'staying sane' for Inong; in this context, 'staying sane' means controlling the populace around him (through violence and performance – 'the act of killing' – and through propaganda) and continuing to control the narrative in the years after the massacre. He becomes the 'sane one' if he insists that he is the sane one and if no one is permitted to disagree. It therefore appears to be crucial for Inong to continue to evoke the memories of blood-drinking, to make them present and tangible, rather than to start to contemplate his feelings or those of his victims. He starts to panic when accused of creating propaganda to justify the killings; he says that the questions are 'too deep'.[602] He orders Oppenheimer to stop filming. The metallic screeching from *The Act of Killing* can be heard on the soundtrack again, and the film cuts back to the jumping beans. This discordant, wordless sequence suggests that the spell of Inong's ritual

[601] 37.22.
[602] 42.30.

performance is beginning to break and that the false reality that has previously manifested is feeling the strain.

In another re-enactment, the audience is shown how Ramli died. The two killers at Snake River start directing the camera themselves: 'Film over there. And you squat here.'[603] They insist that 'it's historic. It's history!', as though they are contributing to historical archives with these accounts. One of them offers the observation that 'Ramli was probably a good person. But what could we do? It was a revolution.'[604] He represents himself as a slave to the movements of history.

The next scenes begin to hint at a parallel between the victims and the perpetrators' current experiences. Rukun is seen washing his father, and he asks him if he can see.[605] He gently orders him to look: 'Open your eyes, Dad.'[606] Soon after, another perpetrator describes drinking his victims' blood, like Inong, to avoid 'going crazy'. His daughter is clearly fearful and apologizes on her father's behalf; she argues that because her father is elderly, his recollections are not reliable. The parallel is emphasised further when the film cuts back to Adi Rukun's family, and Rukun's father is asked, 'Do you remember Ramli?'[607]

Another perpetrator, Amir Hasan, had apparently created a book about his participation in the massacres. He is seen in footage shot earlier, proudly showing the book to others in his village.[608] He boasts that 'Joshua asked for a copy', seemingly happy that his version of the massacres is going to be transmitted widely.[609] Hasan has since died, so Rukun talks about

[603] 58.30.
[604] 59.29.
[605] 01.16.49.
[606] 01.16.54.
[607] 01.24.05.
[608] 01.25.16.
[609] 01.25.20.

the book and its account of his brother's death to Hasan's wife and sons. She claims not to remember ever seeing it. But Oppenheimer interjects: 'Don't you remember?'; the representation of the concept of memory loss through ageing and the repression of memory through fear and convenience are being brought closer together, and the two cannot be easily distinguished at this point.

One of Hasan's sons objects to the public retelling of the story in this manner: 'Now the wound is open',[610] he claims. 'Because Joshua makes this film, and my father wrote this book, the wound is open.' The 'wound' at this point in the film could also be taken to be the similar experiences of the elderly victims and those of the perpetrators; all of them are facing death. Rukun argues in response that 'all the victims' families know who the killers are.' The camera is on the younger son, who shakes in his seat, seemingly nervous and/or frustrated. He asks if they want revenge. 'Forget the past. Let's all get along like the military dictatorship taught us.'[611] Following propagandist teachings, and burying the past, is again presented as the rational and non-violent option, in the same way that drinking blood prevented the killers from 'going crazy'.

Oppenheimer passes a laptop with footage queued up on it to Hasan's youngest son: 'Just press the space bar.' [612] Oppenheimer is visibly intervening in the narrative as it unfolds, by again bringing the archive, or evidence, into the frame of his film and making it visible. The footage shows his father with his book, discussing Ramli's death. The frame of the film, the laptop within the frame, and the picture displayed in the book within the laptop's frame together create a *mise en abyme* of testimonial evidence of political violence.

[610] 01.29.12.
[611] 01.30.10.
[612] 01.30.25.

The youngest son struggles with the images: 'This reminds me of my father. I don't want to see this. Let's just talk… I can't stand this. Turn it off!'[613] The reminder of his father could be painful due to grief, or due to being a reminder of his father's crimes. He begins to imply that this encounter might itself end violently: 'Do you want this to end well or not?' At this stage in the film, his threat could be taken metaphorically to refer to the film itself, as well as to their meeting. He then addresses Oppenheimer directly: 'I welcomed you here, Joshua, but I don't like you any more'. His sullen, and perhaps threatening pronouncement is edited over an image of Adi Rukun staring straight down the lens, as though looking simultaneously at Oppenheimer, at the perpetrator's family member, and at the viewer. This shot could be taken as another confrontation with the cinematographic form of history elaborated by De Baecque. But in this instance, with the look coming from a survivor who is making the hidden histories of the massacres more visible and audible, it can be understood as a reflexive, cinematographic form of historiography. The moment is also a counter-performance of the shot from the beginning of the film, with the old man staring out through a pair of optician's glasses; the audience is asked to consider how lenses can distort once again, and how words fraught with contextual threat can enforce silences.

v. Conclusion: performance and performativity

Both *The Look of Silence* and *S21* end with 'particles' moving around in the film's frame (*S21* with a plume of dust, *The Look of Silence* with the jumping beans). Both seem to stand for the victims who cannot be present, but only brought before the camera through representative

[613] 01.30.53.

means. Giorgio Agamben demanded that we look for the meaning of testimony in unexpected areas by looking for it in unexpected ways; or as Julian Wolfreys puts it, testimony, 'in order to be testimony and not merely an account generated according to some protocol, has to be transformative or inventive. It must take that risk'.[614] The filmmakers in this chapter could be seen to satisfy those requirements by creating spaces where the past can be reconstructed, by using surviving participants as actors and surviving archive material as props. And so rather than simply being referential and discussing historical instances of trauma and a country's political past as traditional documentaries would, they take an explicitly interventionist and theatrical approach. This allows them to bring memories of the dead back to the film frame through their stories, making them visible and audible in places where they had previously been obscured and silenced. Paradoxically, they can move reality closer to the screen by sometimes moving it further away, by using the frame of the film to merge realities and fictions.

Some Indonesian crew members had safety concerns about being named as participants in Oppenheimer's films. Instead, the roles they performed are attributed to 'ANONYMOUS', in capital letters, in the closing credits of both *TAOK* and *TLOS*. Though the individuals could not be named, Oppenheimer and the producers were careful to give a separate 'ANONYMOUS' credit to each person, rather than using the word once to stand for all the unnamed crew. This might be understood as another means of acknowledging that the silence continues to be imposed, and simultaneously as an ironic way of cutting through it (another permutation, perhaps, on being *sous rature* in the frame). The non-name of 'anonymous' thus also conceals and reveals in a single textual figure.

[614] Wolfreys, *Occasional Deconstructions*, 166.

Joram ten Brink, in his *Killer Images* essay 'Re-Enactment, the History of Violence and Documentary Film', points out that cinema, in such a Rouchian docufictional mode, becomes a piece of equipment in a methodology for intervention in social and political situations. Though Rouch and Morin had some disagreements about the use of discussion and camera movement in *Chronique*, combining their disparate techniques helped them to combine commentary and testimonial into a film-act which brought the aftermath of the Holocaust to the screen. Brice Ahounou, describing Rouch's principle of feedback from his participants, suggests the importance of another dual manoeuvre in his methodology: 'Even if the power-relations (non-egalitarian) leave the last word to the film's auteur, the only way of guaranteeing the seriousness of his work, of validating it, is this double approach, to share the risk and, for the first time in ethnology, to share the rights of the auteur.'[615] The feedback principle is obvious in *Chronique*, but might also be detected in *Les maîtres fous*: when the *hauka* act out their violent parody of the British, and the film then cuts back and forth between them and the British motorcade, this might be seen as acting out the Ghanaians' own critique of the violence of colonialism.

Rithy Panh, in his interview with Oppenheimer, objects to the term 're-enactment' to describe the theatrical techniques he uses in *S21*: 'So although I understand what you mean when you use the term re-enactment, for me it's not really that at all. It's not the right word for that.'[616] He points out that he originally did not even intend to bring the survivors and the perpetrators together in the film. But Panh also admits: 'Maybe there isn't a word for it.' This aphasia can be characterised as another aporetic moment, in which it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to

[615] Ahounou, in *Building Bridges*, 66.
[616] Rithy Panh, interview in *Killer Images*, 244.

directly articulate the topic at hand. Instead, performance and the film-act are the mythopoetic methods used to bring the past back in an imaginary form.

In the aftermath of an oppressive regime, the survivor is sometimes obligated to live in a paradoxical circumstance: the act of violence, those around them insist, did not happen or was justified; the trauma that keeps emerging them is a sort of madness. And the more that the trauma manifests, the 'madder' they are seen to be. They thus 'prove' the perpetrators' argument for them: they are self-evidently mad and therefore not reliable witnesses. They themselves become a material piece of the false narrative, and the abuse and trauma are revisited on them. As the survivor has been forced to participate in the false story and in their own abuse; this is the oxymoronic 'look of silence', the confused social reality that is the manifestation of false stories. The response, then, is to use performance methods to create manifestations of the past. This produces a dual ritual: it has the effect of both summoning a spirit and exorcising it; the false story is seen to be displaced, and the suppressed story becomes apparent. Oppenheimer and Panh in different ways 'mediate' between perpetrators and victims through film and media modes, breaking through traumatic silences, propaganda, or implied threats of further violence, by mediatising them with their image-acts. While the experience of the event cannot be fully shared, the experience of the memory can be shared through the screen.

The audience sees in Panh and Oppenheimer's films that totalitarian regimes do not 'simply' kill nor 'simply' lie. Instead, regimes create entire killing machines, in which the stories of their victims are wiped out, and killings and lies are enforced as part of the new fabric and logic of reality. History was written and re-written by the perpetrators at the time of their actions (with documents and photos, as well as weapons) and after the peak of their power (in the

films and TV appearances that continue to celebrate them). The narrative of the event that was for so long understood as one story (as is seen in Indonesia) or which was not fully articulated (as is seen in Cambodia) is rewritten in a sort of Lyotardian, postmodern form of transitional justice. Though the perpetrators might have mostly escaped punishment for their crimes, acting out their roles in the regimes meant that they acted out, symbolically at least, their own war crime trials.

The duality of trauma is met in Panh and Oppenheimer's films by the dual notions that are found in ritual performances and in linguistic performativity. The frame becomes a crucible in which these various dualities can come together and reconstitute themselves. Like a group enacting a magical ritual (exercising an ancient form of power), or an important figure issuing a formal decree (exercising a modern form of power), Oppenheimer and Panh create a political film-act, using the cultural 'magic of cinema' as a source of power and mode of speech in their documentaries.

Ten Brink, in an interview with Panh, suggests that *S21* acts as a ceremony for the perpetrators as well as the victims; Panh responds that 'Yes, it's really an invitation to speak'.[617] The performative aspects of Panh's film allow him to create a cine-dialogue between victims and perpetrators, between himself and his participants, and to set the stage for others to do so more widely. Using a docufictional methodology allows him to use fiction as a 'magical' space where participants in historical events can act out the past, while simultaneously bringing these repressed testimonies into the political landscape. This makes them visible and available for criticism, while allowing the surviving victims' recollections to

[617] Joram ten Brink, interviewing Rithy Panh (with Joshua Oppenheimer) in *Killer Images,* 252.

confront those of the perpetrators, and hopefully to begin to displace them in the eyes of the audience.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

i. A Movement through the Frame: The Arab Spring in the Heat of the Moment

'I told him, come and see with your own eyes!'
Anonymous protester, *Tahrir: Liberation Squar*e (21:45)

I have attempted in this thesis to describe the emergence of a 'weaponised' camera in political filmmaking, and to explore in detail the operations of its reflexive, dynamic, interventionist, intertextual logic. I would like to conclude by considering the weaponised camera as a functional part of the extraordinary event (or series of events) known as the Arab Spring.

The catalyst for the Arab Spring as a movement is generally understood to have been a single provocative incident: the public self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor who had been repeatedly harassed by Tunisian authorities, on 17 December 2010. My discussion here will not attempt to explain the extraordinarily complex political circumstances that led up to the Spring in each country, nor will it evaluate the successes and failures of the activists in each country in securing political changes. Instead, my point of departure is the movement's evental aspect: its seeming suddenness, its 'excessiveness', its lack of a clear context on its emergence, and its radical visibility to the rest of the world through its organised use of the camera.

Cameras and screens became a part of the movement itself as participants recorded the

uprisings as they happened; and as they did, the use of camera-phones and other recording devices became distinctly visible in the footage itself. But beyond providing illustrative context to their viewers outside the MENA region, the recordings and livestreams that resulted became part of the mechanics of the movement itself. To some extent, the uprisings of the Arab Spring gained traction *because of* the short feedback loop of footage that was taken from places like Tahrir Square and shared, almost in real time, with the rest of the world (fig. 51).

Much of this material was uploaded to the internet, hosted on video platforms, and shared through emails and social media platforms. Some of it was incorporated into news reports and broadcast globally, along with footage collected by journalists who embedded themselves within the protests. Some material, in turn, was incorporated into more long-form or ambitious films about the ongoing movements. These films were then distributed and screened at festivals and events around the world. However, many of them were made extremely quickly, so that they too could be made to participate in and comment on the event as it continued to unfold. They could be described as exigent films, or emergency films, and they came in challenging circumstances not only for their creation, but for their subsequent curation and analysis.

In Egypt, the Mosireen ('We Are Determined') Collective formed to document the uprisings and to swiftly transmit the footage; they have archived their work on the site *858: An Archive of Resistance*.[618] Their 'what is this?' page explains their initial development as a reaction to misleading propaganda images released on state television:

[618] The Mosireen Collective's archive can be found here: https://858.ma Accessed 07 March 2021. The number '858' refers to the number of hours of video held in the archive on its release in January 2018.

> When the streets of Egypt were flooded with protesters calling for the fall of the Mubarak regime the images on state television were of empty streets, a country under control. As the revolution grew in strength, so the state media scrambled to fabricate facts and to incite against the revolutionists.
>
> In the first days of the uprising a Media Tent was established in Tahrir Square. Hundreds of videos were collected by dozens of people, men and women, young and old, who had filmed key events on their cameras and cell phones and wanted to contribute to the digital memory of the moment, in particular to document police abuses and killing of protesters.
>
> […]
>
> The Mosireen Collective came together in early 2011, its members were a part of the protest movement. We filmed and collected footage from across Egypt, in factories, hospitals, unions and morgues. We held trainings in street media in Cairo and across the country. In our workspace we hosted events, discussions and film screenings. We weren't neutral observers, but actors within a wider struggle. We participated and documented at the same time.[619]

In this description, it becomes evident that 'protester' and 'journalist' are not entirely separate categories, and that there is therefore no clear demarcation between the actions and the commentary on the actions. This extract also describes not only the transmission of audio-visual materials, but the Mosireen Collective's transmission of the means of making such material, through training participants in 'street media' (also known as citizen journalism). In placing their 'events, discussions and film screenings' in the context of being 'actors in a wider struggle', the Collective emphasise their mediatised, digitally networked circumstances; they, their screened films, their participants and the raw materials all circulated (and continue to circulate) within a cybernetic system of information exchange and control.

[619] *858: An Archive of Resistance*, 'What is this?', https://858.ma. The 'What is this?' page does not have a unique URL path but appears on the home page when the link is clicked.

Mosireen's archive still stands on their website, with the footage navigable by date, month, place, topic, or by thematic or figural keyword. Such an interactive, flexible structure for presenting an audio-visual database of the Arab Spring is also visible in the website *Filming Revolution*, by the academic and filmmaker Alisa Lebow (fig. 52).[620] Lebow travelled to Egypt in the aftermath of the Spring to speak to filmmakers, journalists, and artists on 'the way in which their practices may have changed as a result of their participation in these events.'[621] Her online 'meta-documentary' collects and maps the resulting interviews along with essays, commentary, and contextual information on the films made during and about the Arab Spring. Lebow's smaller and more context-focused archive is thus more obviously 'curated' than the Mosireen Collective's; the site's official launch took place at the Whitechapel Gallery for contemporary art in London on 14 January 2016. The title of the project contains a clear play on words: it frames the participants as filming the revolution as it happened, and as revolutionising filmmaking.

There are various routes through the *Filming Revolution* project. It can be explored by topic, by person, or by project, as well as by other themes related to narrative and medium. If the user moves their cursor across a node on the home screen, lines radiate from it, linking it to other nodes on the page. The archive filter on the right of the page allows the user to explore the site in list form, by theme, people, or project, as well as by articles and their themes and associated people. Some options frame their subjects as ongoing debates, such as the link titled 'journalism vs documentary'. Each choice made by the user brings up further inter-

[620] Alisa Lebow, *Filming Revolution*, University of Stanford, 2018. https://filmingrevolution.supdigital.org/ Accessed 13 June 2020.
More information about *Filming Revolution* is available in So Mayer, 'Filming Revolution: crowd documenting the Egyptian Revolution' (article), *Sight and Sound*, 9 February 2016. https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/bytes/filming-revolution-crowd-documenting Accessed 26 September 2018.
[621] *Filming Revolution*, landing page.

relationships and meta-relationships: exploring the work of a specific individual can thus lead to a map of the relationships between fiction and documentary in Arab Spring films.

One node is labelled 'camera as weapon': clicking the link leads to a distributed map of thematically related discussions with video journalists and documentary filmmakers. A link called 'dual function of the camera: to record and to deter' then leads to an interview with the Egyptian feminist documentary filmmaker Samaher Alquadi. She considers the role of her own camera in not only recording the protests, but in deterring sexual assault as she worked in Tahrir Square; an issue she explores in the context of patriarchal Egyptian culture in *As I Want* (2021). An option called 'add to pathway' allows the user to share the routes they develop through the site on Twitter, thus feeding the project's archives back into the flow of social media with added curation. Other users' chosen pathways can also be viewed on the site, in a playlist accessible on the left of the screen.

Even the database structure of *Filming Revolution* is recursive. It incorporates parts of the Mosireen Collective's archives and commentaries, as well as other interactive projects such as the collaborative online documentary *18 Days in Egypt*.[622] The function of the *18 Days* film-website, according to its co-creator Jigar Mehta, '…is to really re-envision the documentary of the future and to get the audience closer to the storytellers'. He describes a process of closing the distance between observers and observed (while the 'observed' also take an active role as 'storytellers'), and of 'writing' the country's history by collecting the photo and video media, and the social media posts, that were created:

> In our case, the storytellers are the people that actually lived these experiences and what we want to do is collect hundreds of moments through people's social media

[622] *18 Days in Egypt* (Egypt: Yasmin Elayat and Jigar Mehta, 2011) is available at http://beta.18daysinegypt.com/. Accessed 07 March 2021.

> they created in those moments and using the photos and the videos people took on their cell phones and cameras to be the start of their own storytelling experience. We really believe that each individual media piece that someone created, whether in the 18 days or the time since, are the start of a much larger story.'[623]

Lebow's approach to the material media outputs of the Arab Spring, meanwhile, and to the 'much larger story' that can be found in the afterlife of such material, is reminiscent not only of the 'archive of resistance' made by the Mosireen Collective but also the principles of art curation laid out by Aby Warburg in the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. In both projects, the viewer is asked to navigate through a visually constructed space, creating their own pathways through artworks in time and space based on emergent themes and resonances. Each form has an indexical relationship to the circumstances it represents: Warburg's art prints to the original artworks and their contexts, and Lebow's film extracts and commentary to the original films and to the specific events from which they are taken. The interface between the user and the *Filming Revolution* site, as with Warburg's project, could be guided by the intuitive, associative pathos formula as much as a journalistic or academic approach to its content. An iconological synthesis of the film, its filmmaker, and its historic context may develop through these pathways.

When considering the corpus of Arab Spring films included on these sites, distinct figural themes and formal similarities become apparent. A defining characteristic is obviously reflexivity, with the protesters emphasising their contribution to the event and to the mediatic event within the frame itself. They can be seen to make themselves (their bodies and identities, the process of their filmmaking, their political activity, and the other protesters around them) into films. The protesters thus actively take on a formally 'filmic' nature and

[623] Jigha Mehta, interviewed by Anne Zhou, '18 Days in Egypt: Co-Creator Jigha Mehta', *POV's Documentary Blog*, 21 May 2012. Available at http://archive.pov.org/blog/news/2012/05/18-days-in-egypt-co-creator-jigar-mehta/ Accessed 07 March 2021.

incorporate their bodies into a 'filmic movement'. If cinematography is 'writing movement', the filmmaker-protesters could be seen to make the Arab Spring cinematic with their actions, seeking to write the literal and figurative movements of the protesters into cohesive texts. This is not to suggest, in a facile way, that the Arab Spring becomes 'just a film', but to say that its filmic aspect was not only visible and deeply embedded within it, and not only a means of communication with the world at large, but that it was instrumental and disclosive, helping to bring into being an extraordinary historical event.

When working on a mass scale, as part of the logic of the revolution, this could be taken to be an example of the performative, reflexive political film-act I have previously described, which is intended to provoke a large-scale film-event (as well as a permutation on Antoine de Baecque's 'cinematographic form of history'). In this case, the films are also film-manifestations, with some of their genealogical roots in the artistic-political protest actions of May '68. Existing in a short feedback loop with the rest of the world, such films could be said to claim subjectivity and agency for themselves while simultaneously positioning themselves within the digitally networked film-event.

Despite its exigent circumstances, there are more relationships to be traced between the corpus of Arab Spring films and political films beyond it. A reflexive or recursive frame in a volatile political situation is also evident in films which did not directly emerge from the revolution, but which were temporally or geographically close to it. The documentary *Fragments d'une révolution* (Ana Nyma, 2011) assembles amateur footage taken by protesters during the Iranian Green Movement uprisings of 2009, after local journalists had been silenced by authorities. It opens with a mic test, and the careful opening of a laptop in close-up. But the laptop opens only a little before the film cuts to a low-resolution video of a fire in

a street, and an unseen man shouting: 'When it gets dark, go home!'; the shot progresses into a view of the violent clashes in Tehran. It is as though this melee burst out from the laptop itself. The documentary thus immediately takes its position: it will be a route into viewing the uprisings as they unfolded, but at the same time, it will be an overwhelming task for the filmmaker-protester to unfold it and to process the distressing pieces of footage.

Fragments cuts away from the clip but does not leave it entirely: it shows it as a YouTube video in a web browser. The director (the viewer assumes) is seen cataloguing her digital archive, then typing an email to a friend. She thanks them for the video link and announces that she has the title for her documentary, which then appears on screen. This structure, moving between showing the archive footage directly and shots of Nyma selecting, processing, and researching materials, organises much of the film. The protests infringe on her life in various ways: 'The shouts of bullets, chants and slogans prevent me from sleeping', she admits to a friend.[624] Sometimes, the material seems to move beyond her control as it plays out: for example, when the sound from a violent clip continues after the film has visually cut to a quieter scene; or when YouTube clips of news reports take up innumerable web browser windows on her laptop and play simultaneously.[625] Throughout the film, a textual conversation is conducted between Nyma and unnamed friends, representing their emails and providing commentary for the film. But at the end of *Fragments* Nyma sits down and faces her own camera (we assume; the camera's frame cuts off her face).[626] Through cue cards she offers a confession: the hands that were typing at the laptop were not her own, she says; the footage which appeared to have been filmed by her from her window was not; and she used

[624] *Fragments d'une révolution*, 13:37.
[625] 39:05.
[626] 53:21.

neither her voice nor her friends' voices in the film. She had been too frightened to do so, she confesses. This self-criticism stabs at the reflexive form of the film itself; it further destabilises the representative values of visual images in the film and in the wider media flow of video materials in and from Iran.

In Merzak Allouache's Algerian (and thus Arab Spring-adjacent) docufiction film *Normal!* (2011) a fictional director, Fouzi, also struggles to construct a narrative while protests emerge around him. In a Rouchian mode, Fouzi gathers his actors to ask them how he should proceed, and screens them the unfinished film; Allouache's use of brightly coloured interior walls in his film is a direct visual allusion to the New Wave, and to the politically and filmically radical work of Godard. In *Normal!* the dilemma arises from Fouzi's struggle to finish a film while living through an unfinished, open-ended, complex political situation. His actors, in providing feedback, offer commentary and critique that applies to the film within the film, to *Normal!* itself, and to the political situation unfolding across North Africa. Reflexivity again becomes a crucial organising strategy, acting as a point of intervention into an ongoing crisis and simultaneously as a method of escaping to a more distant (and potentially safer) critical viewpoint. The subjectivities that exist in both personal memories and in news media narratives are woven together in these films, and their similarities and differences made more obvious to the spectator.

Even in the incipient work of the earliest Arab Spring documentaries, visual tropes manifest that illustrate this: over the course of both *Tahrir: Liberation Square* (Egypt: Stefano Savona, 2011) and *½ Revolution* (Egypt: Karim El Hakim and Omar Shargawi, 2011), various individual protesters are followed closely through crowds of protesters by the camera in snaking, winding shots. In *Tahrir*, the lens focuses and un-focuses on individual protesters. In this way,

the camera individuates within the tumult of activity. The frame is selective and therefore could be said to serve a humanising function; 'humanising' not just each protester it selects, but also the viewer, by embodying them as a moving presence in Tahrir Square, at least from a sensory perspective (fig. 53). The protesters in *Tahrir* move around forcefully, and they are jostled by others; the audience might lose track of where the film's participants are and even how the revolution is progressing. Increasingly disorientated, they are offered a proximal physical experience of the Spring through their implied incorporation into the frame.

Judith Butler and Mieke Bal, when considering the concept of the frame, have both pointed out the double meaning of the word: something can be 'framed', like a painting, or someone can be 'framed' for a crime they did not commit:

> When a picture is framed, any number of ways of commenting or on extending the picture may be at stake. But the frame tends to function, even in a minimalist form, as an editorial embellishment of the image, if not a self-commentary on the history of the frame itself. This sense that the frame implicitly guides the interpretation has some resonance with the idea of a frame as a false accusation. If one is 'framed', then a 'frame' is constructed around one's deed such that one's guilty status becomes the viewer's inevitable conclusion. Some way of organising and presenting the deed leads to an interpretative conclusion about the deed itself.[627]

The applicability of Butler's argument in a political context is obvious – images can be manipulated and can be manipulative. But she goes on to argue that this should not 'result in rarefied forms of reflexivity... to call the frame into question is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene […] Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality'.[628] Her suggestion is that rather than a tool with a reductive effect, the frame should

[627] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010) 8. See also the brief reference by Mieke Bal in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002) 165.
[628] Butler, *Frames of War*, 94.

be seen to be expansive. Butler argues throughout *Frames of War* that the contemporary situation of mass production and dissemination of images itself serves to 'break the frame'. In 'exigent' filmmaking, the usual approach to interpreting films, and even the understanding of the politics on screen, is disrupted by the new narrative forms. As well as a film-event and a political event, it could be becoming a distributed social media-event.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are not many traditional documentary framing devices used in this first wave of Arab Spring films. There are few voiceovers and few contextualising interviews with historians. The film *Goodbye Mubarak* (France: Katia Jarjoura, 2011) is an exception; filming began in late 2010, a few months before the beginning of the Spring, and originally intended to record the upcoming legislative elections. The documentary thus takes a more discursive route through the historical events leading to the revolutions. Its title turned out to be slightly premature, though not as premature as the title of *Syria: The Assads' Twilight* (France: Christophe Ayad and Vincent de Cointet, 2011) a similarly structured film with a voiceover and sit-down interviews. Instead, the audience of the 'exigent' Arab Spring films is often plunged into a view of Egypt's Tahrir Square mid-revolution and approximated by the camera, weaves through the crowds. Instead of traditional narrative framing devices, discursive coherence is often maintained through interviews with protesters, through their conversations about the Egyptian revolutions of 1919 and 1952, their chants and poetry, their questions, and their debates about what will come after.

I refer to these encounters with protesters as 'interviews', perhaps implying that filmmakers always approached participants and asked them questions in the usual fashion. However, the 'interview' scenes in films of the Arab Spring often imply that the filmmaker could barely escape from opinions. In *Tahrir: Liberation Square*, a man shouts into the lens, imagining it to

be Mubarak himself – so that for a moment, the audience is the direct recipient of the protest rhetoric.[629] Later, another man refuses to stop speechifying, addressing both the camera and the gathering crowd. The intent here might be to let the people of the Arab Spring speak for themselves – but do they? And even if they do, does it work? Is there coherence amidst the uncertainty and complexity of the situation? These questions are often addressed within the frame: as another protester later remarks, 'They need to face us. But who are we, exactly?'[630]

Unsurprisingly, violence towards the protesters is apparent across these films. But feelings of ambivalence are also cast back from the films themselves; one participant admits to an emotional, instinctive response to Mubarak's televised speech in the middle of the revolution: 'At first, I found Mubarak's speech touching. I reacted without thinking.'[631] The participants' own responses to the framing narratives they have experienced (their critiques of the propaganda and their criticisms of their own immediate reactions) are incorporated back into the film's frame. Many films of the Arab Spring display the ritualised power of chanting in a protest march; the effect is incantatory yet also intimidating. While watching, the viewer's perception of the protesters might shift between being captivated and being disconcerted.

Footage in various forms has been assembled in these films – in the opening scene of *Tahrir: Liberation Square*, the audience is presented with an extremely high-definition immediate foreground, with individual protesters surrounded by a dreamy bokeh effect from the lampposts. This isolates the individual concerned within the chaos of the protests (again, a humanising gesture for a large and often indistinguishable crowd of people). But this is followed immediately by a barely visible shot of blurred footage, with a small aspect ratio,

[629] *Tahrir: Liberation Square*, 34:00.
[630] 1:03:40.
[631] 58:38.

possibly taken from a camera-phone (in any case, filmed with an inferior camera to the previous shots). This footage, and footage like this, was shared and collated millions of times during the protests. From a formal perspective, it could be described as 'found footage', but found by its audience in the heat of the moment – instantaneously, contemporaneously, with a strong political intention from its creators – rather than found buried in an archive. Unlike more conventional types of found footage or archival films, this footage does not attempt to recover a lapsed historical moment, but to itself form a current one, and even to provoke a future one. With 'weaponised' films (including works such as Lebow's meta-documentary itself), the annotation of the event and the media event is incorporated into the media event itself, and thus the event/media event no longer becomes a flashbulb moment, but a part of an ongoing process and project.

An hour into *Tahrir: Liberation Square*, the camera is pointed at a man holding up a camera-phone to a scene of people chanting and making music.[632] The master camera (the one which enables the eye of the viewer) is trained on him, then moves to the makeshift band. Then it moves on, further to the left, past a woman with a Handicam, to at least seven people with camera-phones or with compact point-and-shoot cameras. Although there is a 'master camera', and thus a master perspective which the audience is made to share, everyone in the frame is also incorporated as a documentarian, an archivist and an autoethnographer. The audience understands that they will post these images to Facebook, to YouTube, to Twitter, and to other websites, and that they might then be used in news reports, or by filmmakers. But they could also be seen to contribute to a diffused documentary which is 'authored', so to speak, by a collective yet individuated 'Anonymous'. The individuals in these documentaries

[632] 01:08:21.

seek their own mastery over the framing of the narrative in which they are immersed, and to incorporate others into it.

ii. Reintegration Loops

I have discussed in this thesis the idea that the image can made to act as a memorial, though one that is neither fixed nor culturally 'well-behaved', as one might expect of a traditional memorial artwork, but which instead intervenes obtrusively into the traumatic, suppressed subject. These images often 'take positions', speaking back from out of the frame, when the dead, infirm, or intimidated cannot. The aim of such films is often to do more than 'stand for' the past or present event, but instead to find pathways and provide strategies for moving around and processing the remains of the mediatised event.

William Basinski's work could be seen to exemplify this act: *The Disintegration Loops* operates with the paradoxical, ambivalent power I have explored in previous chapters. It seems to tame the event within a single memorialising experience; at the same time, its vagueness and dreaminess provokes the feeling, and then possibly the understanding, that the event is moving away from the listener even as it persists in its afterlife. Over the course of experiencing it, numerous reactions can play out, including a complex feeling of pleasurable melancholy.

A Žižekian interpretation might conclude that *The Disintegration Loops* is somewhat anesthetising; it removes verbal commentary and could be seen to remove (or stand in for) the impulse in the audience to take political action. But if the artwork is taken at its word, so to speak – as a mediatised response to a mediatised event – it can be said to restore the

possibility of complexity to the catastrophe. It gives space and time new significance, allowing them to be perceived and experienced differently than they were on 9/11. *The Disintegration Loops* can be both watched and listened to; it is not only a piece of music nor only a video installation. Like *The Act of Killing*, it is a film-act, or a sustained figure of aporetic silence, which belies the silence through its own existence.

Hilary Lawson argues that paradoxes of reflexivity require some form of closure to have meaning, offering the example of Wittgenstein's *trompe l'oeil* sketch of a 'duck-rabbit' (a single figure which can appear to be a drawing of a duck or a rabbit, depending on the interpretation of the viewer; fig. 54):

> We can provide many closures for our drawing – duck, rabbit, black lines on a white page, tiny particles impressed on a surface, analogy, and of course drawing. Is it not ridiculous to want only one of these things to be the 'true' account? Or to imagine that one might come across the correct version? Or perhaps that we might add all the interpretations together and thereby achieve a complete account? [633]

The apparent treachery of images (which represent the world to the viewer's eye, and which can influence the viewer's perception and interpretation of it, but which cannot fully enclose the world within themselves) causes these films to remain within the paradox. However, within this situation they are both framed and framing. By confronting and implicating their audience, they position themselves to intervene into the event, as well as with the event and from the event.

By identifying this technique as 'weaponisation', I have sought to account for an object that stares back and to account for the materiality of the text, while exploring how certain films deal with the interfaces between words, pictures and sounds (that is, the process of how they

[633] Hilary Lawson, *Reflexivity: The post-modern predicament* (London: Hutchison, 1987) 128-9.

characterise them, how they engage with them, and how they demand that the audience engages with them). One danger would be that reading 'with the text' in such a way leads to a less than critical perspective that would too readily accept the film's themes as presented wholly effectively and in good faith. The assumption could be made that 'reflexive intervention' is automatically a fully effective tool for examining the topic of the film and for keeping the filmmakers and the audience equally under the critical eye. This would need to be resisted. A philological, intermedial approach to the concept of a weaponised film (which seeks to account for the accrual of meaning in media texts through time, and which seeks to highlight political filmmakers' attitudes and approaches towards 'correcting' and providing new 'editions' of these texts) should not preclude criticism of the film – a film's 'teaching' about its political topics is not necessarily correct nor done well; it might become dated or less relevant over time. But the critiques it presents should be identified, listened to, and understood on their own terms in the first instance at least.

I hope that, even with these critiques, my theoretical and methodological ideas could be productively applied to other films with political concerns which do not deal with violence: for example, to genre-defying films about other extraordinary events, such as Adam McKay's *The Big Short* (2015), which explores Wall Street's role in the 2008 financial crash. A combination of comedy and drama, and documentary and fiction, the film is annotative, reflexive, explicitly pedagogical and academic, yet simultaneously playful (it includes a cameo by the behavioural psychologist Richard Thaler and the pop star Selena Gomez, who explain to the audience how synthetic Collateralised Debt Obligations work). It makes frequent use of quotation (including self-aware quotations with non-standard attribution: '"The truth is like poetry. And most people fucking hate poetry" - *Overheard in a Washington D.C. bar*').

This approach might also be useful when applied to other films which include re-enactments of real political events, such as Maria Ramos's *The Trial* (*O Processo*, 2018), a Brazilian documentary on Dilma Rousseff, or Radu Jude's *Uppercase Print* (Tiopgrafic Majuscul, 2020), which tells the story of the Romanian teenager Mugur Calinescu, who created anti-Ceausescu graffiti until his arrest by the secret police. Jude's film explores the events through the staging of a play and the use of archive Romanian propaganda footage.

A sustained critique could be made of the essay-films of Orson Welles or Raúl Ruiz with this model, or of films which attempt to face the enormity of the Holocaust and to intervene in its historiography by drawing attention to their formal strategies. André Singer's annotative *Night Will Fall* (2014), which tells the story of an unfinished, archival film about the camps, might be compared to the much-discussed short film *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1956), made only a few years after the camps were liberated, which included camp footage in colour as well as in black and white. Both might then be compared to Claude Lantzmann's nine-hour *Shoah* (1985) which focuses on interviews with witnesses of various types and intentionally avoids archival footage. A philological, intermedial approach could also be used to explore other political films which frame the camera itself in some way, such as Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi's *Five Broken Cameras* (2011), which chronicles Burnat's attempts to film the Israel-Palestine conflict, or Jafar Panahi's *This is Not a Film* (2011), made while he was under house arrest and forbidden from making films. The recently re-discovered *About Some Meaningless Events* (*De quelques événements sans signification*; Mostafa Deraouki, 1974) was screened once on its release in Morocco, and then censored; as a Rouchian docufictional work, its framing approach to events would also fit into a corpus of 'weaponised' films.

Films such as those which emerged in, through and around the Arab Spring can be understood as a form of autoethnography, in which the filmmakers not only explore the local specificity of the uprisings, but then engage consciously with how they should be approached, explored and 'read' by the wider world. Their topics and aesthetics are varied, yet recurrently clustered around certain reflexive tropes. Emphasis is placed on the materiality of these films, despite their online destiny: the filmmaker acts as a sort of cicerone for the virtual-material visual world. These films' visual language contains within itself the tension of the political representation – a tension between words and images.

In this way, images of an uprising are visited upon the rest of the world, which might have felt even more distance from it otherwise. This is essentially the inverse of, and a response to, what Slavoj Žižek argues in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* has become a 'journalistic cliché': that 'a new form of war is now emerging: a high-tech war in which precision bombing, and so on, does the job, without any direct intervention by ground forces' and which in doing so, causes alienation from the real effects of each attack.[634]

This is a war deprived of substance, Žižek argues. It is an invisible war which creates a culture of paranoia, as devastating attacks could come from anywhere. This virtualised plane of warfare might be said to divorce the military assailant from the personal consequences of their actions, which would have remained with them after their experience in a more traditional, geometrical theatre of war. This problem in turn loops back to the ethical perspective of Susan Sontag, who argued that a person cannot truly know violent political events unless they have experienced them directly.

[634] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, (London and New York, NY.: Verso, 2012) 44.

Of course, Sontag was referring directly to the victims of violent political events: those who have experienced what it is like to be shot at. In her example, she refers to Russian soldiers in a particular photograph from the Second World War:

> 'We – this 'we' is everyone who has never experienced anything like what they went through – don't understand. We don't get it. We truly can't imagine what it was like. We can't imagine how dreadful, how terrifying war is; and how normal it becomes. Can't understand, can't imagine. That's what every soldier, and every journalist and aid worker and independent observer who has put in time under fire, and had the luck to elude the death that struck down others nearby, stubbornly feels. And they are right.[635]

It is literally true that those viewing images of the historical event will never know what it was like to be directly in danger from it unless they were there. But while it might be true that such viewers 'can't understand, can't imagine' the terror, it could be said that the media that survives the event itself tends to become part of a culture's collective memory, and then to stand in (for better or worse) for imagination and understanding. The images taken from the event, which once would have only continued to exist figured in the memories of the survivors, are an external record available for viewing by the public at large, but also an external screen which can potentially reveal and conceal at the same time.

And major, violent political events have major political consequences, which will be felt in the future by those who were not present. The experiences of the survivors are thus related to other people by this concentric ripple effect. Additionally, the survivors will only literally experience the violence once, but they will relive it imaginatively afterwards: as memories (perhaps abreacted in speech), as hallucinations or as nightmares. But they might also be forced to relive it through forced narratives imposed by hegemonic powers, and through the

[635] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 113.

repetition of the images from the event in the media afterwards. They will share this subsequent, mediatised experience with those who did not directly experience the violence.

It is difficult to translate a violent political event into words, whether due to trauma, to the threat of violence, or to political complexity. But if the audience cannot do more than 'regard' the violent political event, according to Sontag's definition, they might still be able to 'approach' the issue of the distance through these filmmakers. Everyone is becoming an eyewitness, to some extent, in an increasingly mediatised world. As Sontag points out, 'victims, grieving relatives, consumers of news – all have their own nearness to or distance from war'.[636] The long-lasting effects of a violent event on the victim after they experience it should be recognised and considered; and these effects are comparable, at least on a formal level, to those visited on the camera-eyewitness. The abstract, metaphorical, symbolic nature of violence cannot be escaped by the victim.

But the weaponised camera can potentially negotiate the virtual-yet-material plane of the Event as it happens, as it is inscribed, as it has its consequences, and/or as it is experienced imaginatively. Reflexivity challenges and adds complexity to what could be described as the chiasmic tautology of power: that is, the dictatorial assertion that 'I am powerful because I am right, and I am right because I am powerful', which is not to be questioned nor 'travelled around' as a concept. The films I have discussed in this thesis, with their interventionist-yet-reflexive principles, could be said to enact a figural, intermedial form of artistic terrorism against such authorities and their media events. Just as the images are received on and

[636] Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 55.

archived on this virtual-yet-material plane, they are expressed there as well. But the weaponised camera seeks to respond to vague ideas with clear images.

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Medium: oil on canvas
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The Weaponisation of the Camera: Accompanying Images



William Basinski, album cover, *The Disintegration Loops*

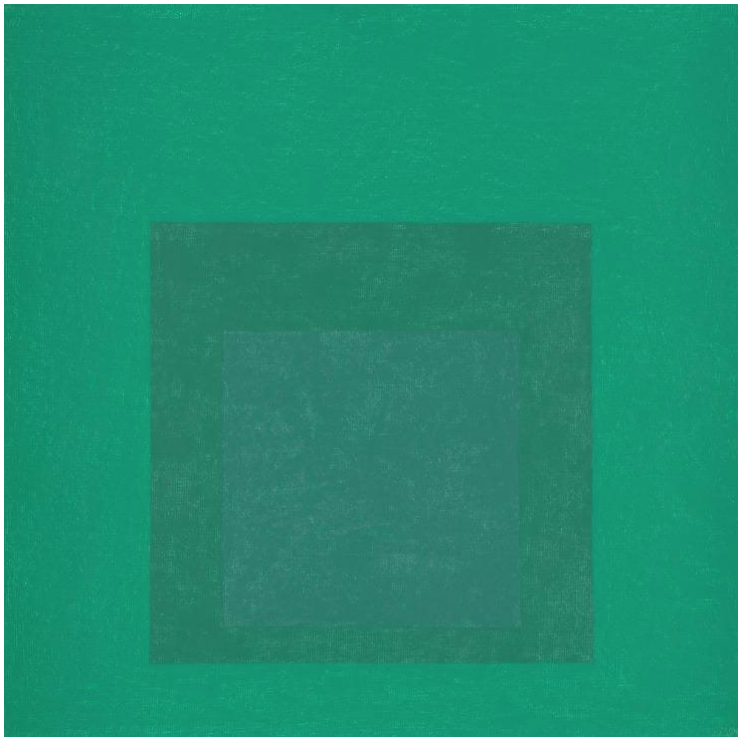
2002, still video image

fig.1, p13



102 Minutes that Changed America, 00.30.

fig.2, p31



Josef Albers, *Study for Homage to the Square*

1964, Oil paint on fibreboard

Fig. 3, p47



The ‘hermeneutic tree’ in the opening sequence of

'Non', ou A Vã Glória de Mandar (Manoel de Oliveira, 1999)

Fig. 4, p49



A still from *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, chapter 1a, ‘Toutes les histoires’, 05:10:

A dissolve between Godard at his typewriter
(with a microphone recording the sound of his typing)

and a clip from *The Rise and Fall of Legs Diamond* (Budd Bœtticher, 1960)
fig. 5, p55



René Magritte, *La trahison des images*

1929, Oil on canvas

Fig. 6, p63



Wolf Vostell, *Coca-Cola*

1961, Paper on canvas

Fig. 7, p65



Wolf Vostell, *Rue de Buci*

1960, Paper on canvas

Fig. 8, p65



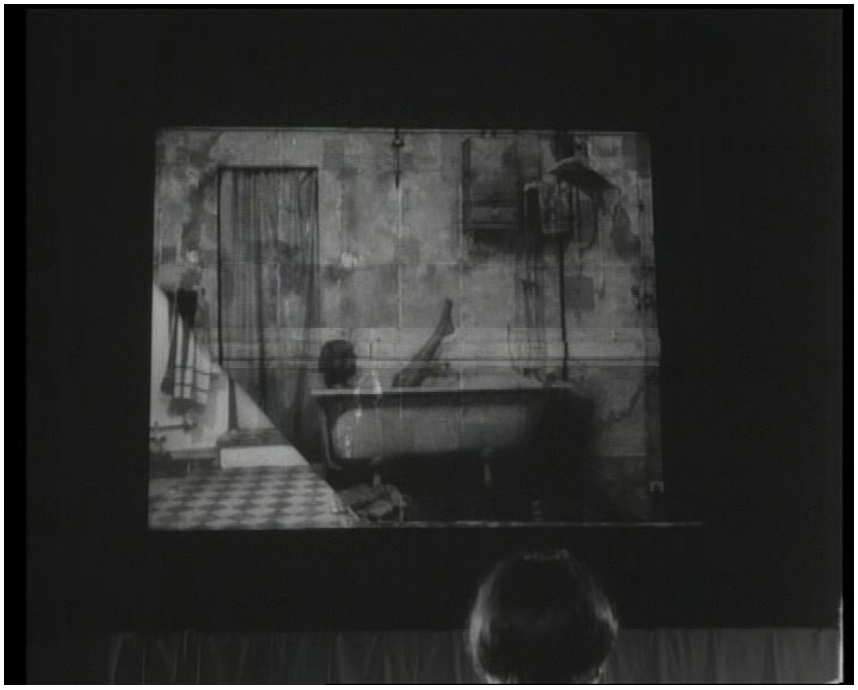

AIMEZ-VOUS
LES UNS
LES AUTRES



Bruno takes a candid drive-by photo of a couple in the street,
Le petit soldat, 02:55-02:30.
Fig. 9, p80



Bruno hides behind a news magazine cover to take aim
Le petit soldat, 42.01.
Fig 10, p83



The film-within-a-film, just as it is suddenly projected back into and on to the film-world *Les carabiniers*, 38:33.

Fig. 11, p91

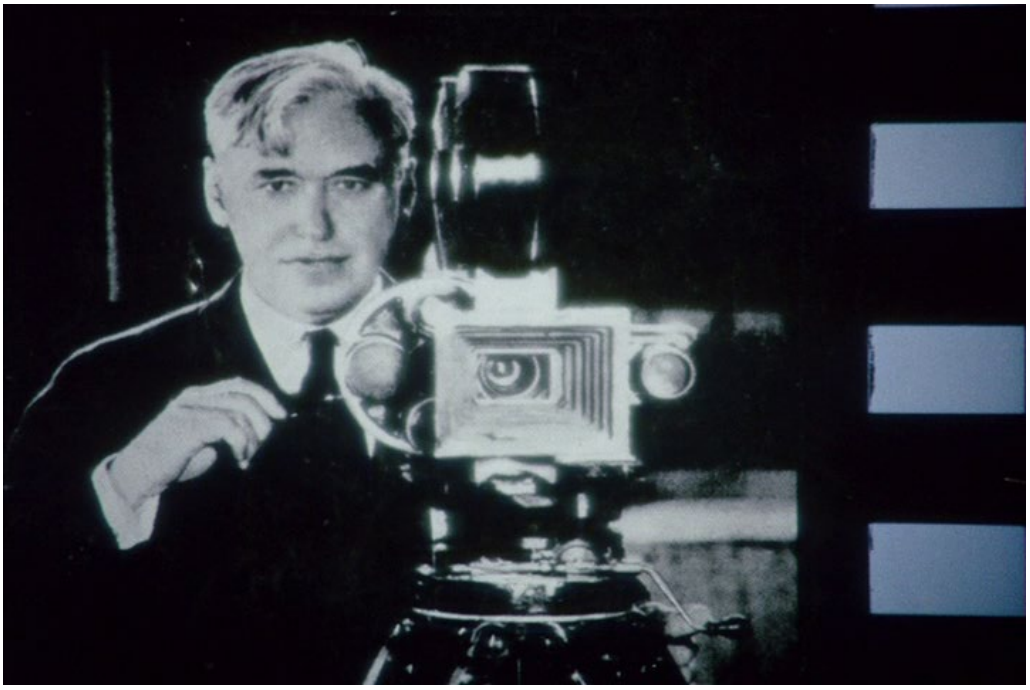




Veronique in her theoretical shelter
La chinoise, 34:08.
Fig. 12, p94



'We must confront vague ideas with clear images'
La chinoise
Fig. 13, p96



Mack Sennett, as he appears in *Le gai savoir*
Fig 14, p99



'Militant sound'
British Sounds, 12.38.
Fig. 15, p108



‘They shoot the people with their James Bond gun’
Pravda, 07.10.
Fig. 16, p111







The gun and the camera, *Le vent d'est*
01.18.05, 01.18.20, 01.18.48.

Fig. 17, p115



Howard Brodie, [Bobby Seale attempting to write notes on a legal pad while bound and gagged in the courtroom during the Chicago Eight conspiracy trial in Chicago, Illinois].

Between October 29 and November 5, 1969, colour crayon on white paper.

Image: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

Fig. 18, p118



A cut-out of Lenin in the sound studio, with Rosa brought to the frame as text
Vladimir et Rosa, 35.05.
Fig. 19, p120



The factory boss, *Tout va bien*, 13.07.
Fig. 20, p123



Jacques explains how he came to direct commercials, *Tout va bien*, 51.21.
Fig. 21, p124



Jacques' advert for tights, in the process of being made, 57.46.
Fig. 22, p128



Photograph of Jane Fonda with Viet Cong soldiers, *Letter to Jane*, 00.23.
Fig. 23, p133



Photograph of Jane Fonda with Viet Cong soldiers in its media context
Letter to Jane, 04.00.
Fig. 24, p133



The cowboy and the actress*, Letter to Jane*, 30.53.
Fig. 25, p137



Comment ça va?, A film between activity and passivity, opening shot
Fig. 26, p144



A woman holds an image of conflict up to a camera, as part of a queue
Ici et ailleurs, 21.06.
Fig. 27, p149





Text typed across the screen in 'real time'
Histoire(s) du cinéma, chapter 1a, 29:49-29:51.
Fig. 28, p156



The 'reel' of History
Chapter 2b, 08:45.
Fig. 29, p161







Images of the Resistance, cut between a scene from
Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne (Robert Bresson, 1945).
Agnes whispers, weakly, 'I'm fighting'.
Chapter 3a, 15.05-15:10.
Fig. 30, p163





'Fifty years later, we celebrate the Liberation…'
Fig. 31, p163





'A beautiful machine – – for writing'
Chapter 1a, 19:01 and 19:10.
Fig. 32, p176



Nicolas Poussin, 'The Arcadian Shepherds'

1638-40 (second version), oil on canvas

Fig. 33, p211

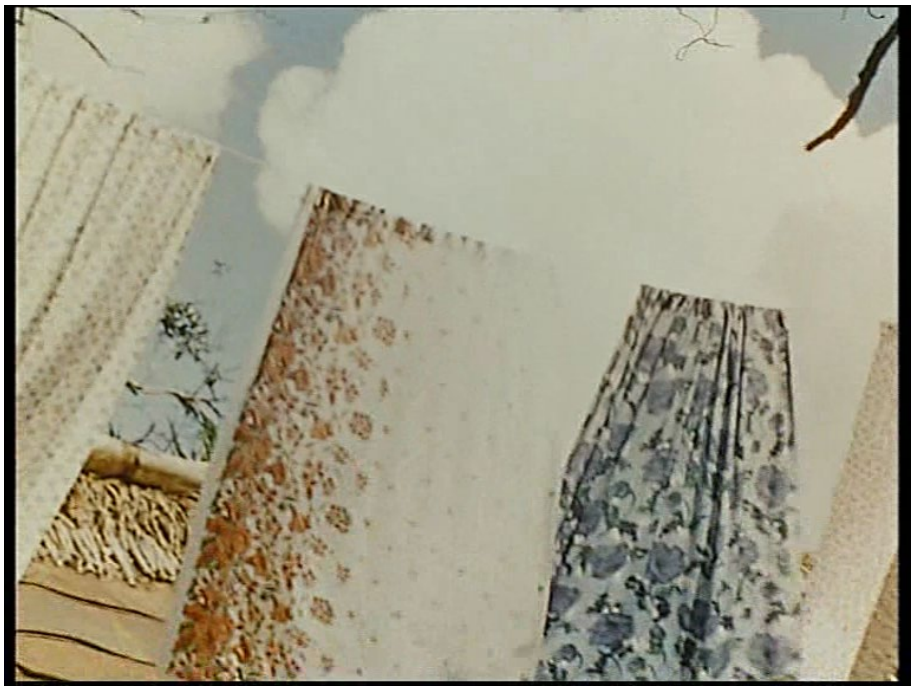


Rouch, Loridan-Ivens and Morin discuss the film, *Chronique d'un été*

Fig. 34, p239



'Some say it's real, some say it's not real'
Morin and Rouch interview their participants
Chronique d'un été, 01.18.01.
Fig. 35, p246



'Union Jacks' hanging above a roof, *Les maîtres fous*, 05.51.

Fig. 36, p250



Breaking an egg on the Governor's head, *Les maîtres fous*, 16.54.

Fig 37, p252



Trooping the Colour, *Les maîtres fous,* 16.57.

Fig. 38, p252



Binh Danh, ‘the botany of tuol sleng #12’

2006, Chlorophyll print and resin

Fig. 39, p260



‘I was arrested at Battambang’, *S21*, 08.11.

Fig. 40, p261



'Political pressure must be exercised constantly' 34.11.

Fig. 41, p265



'Don't be too free!', 58.00.

Fig. 42, p267



Record of Prisoner Ailments, 59.15.

Fig. 43, p268



Painting by Vann Nath
Image: Françoise Demulder / Roger Viollet / Getty[637]
Fig. 44, p270

[637] Image printed in 'Vann Nath: Obituary', *The Guardian*, 05 September 2011: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/05/vann-nath-obituary Accessed 09 March 2016.



Images of prisoners on walls of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, 01.25.25.

Fig. 45, p271



Bophana on the wall, 01.21.06.

Fig. 46, p271



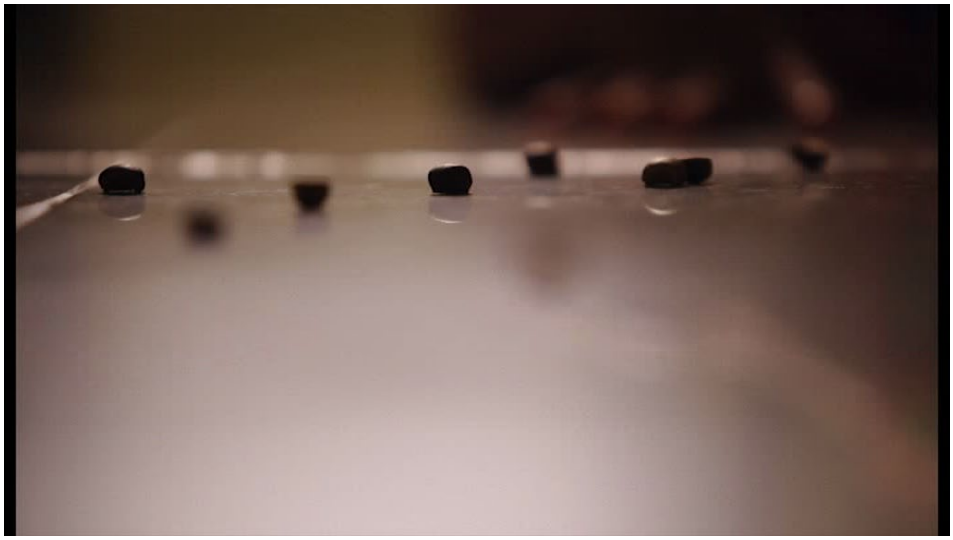
The dedication at the end of the film, 01.39.13.

Fig. 47, p274



An as yet unidentified man, TLOS, 00.20.

Fig. 48, p286



The mysterious jumping beans, TLOS, 00.30.

Fig. 49, p286



The children are seen learning selective versions of historical events, TLOS.

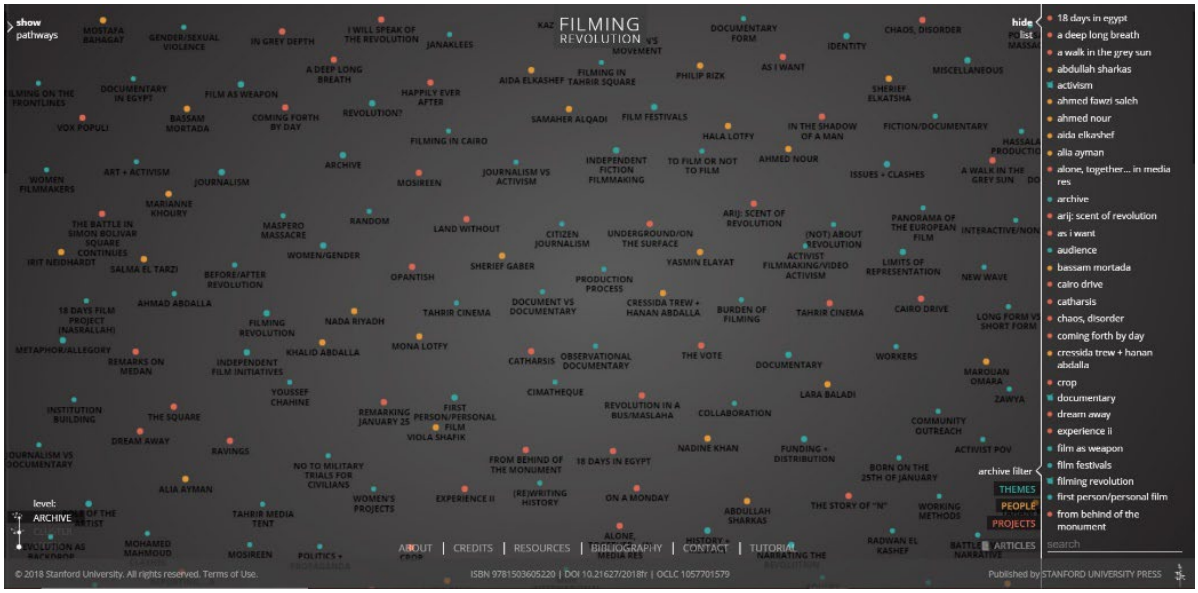
Fig. 50, p288

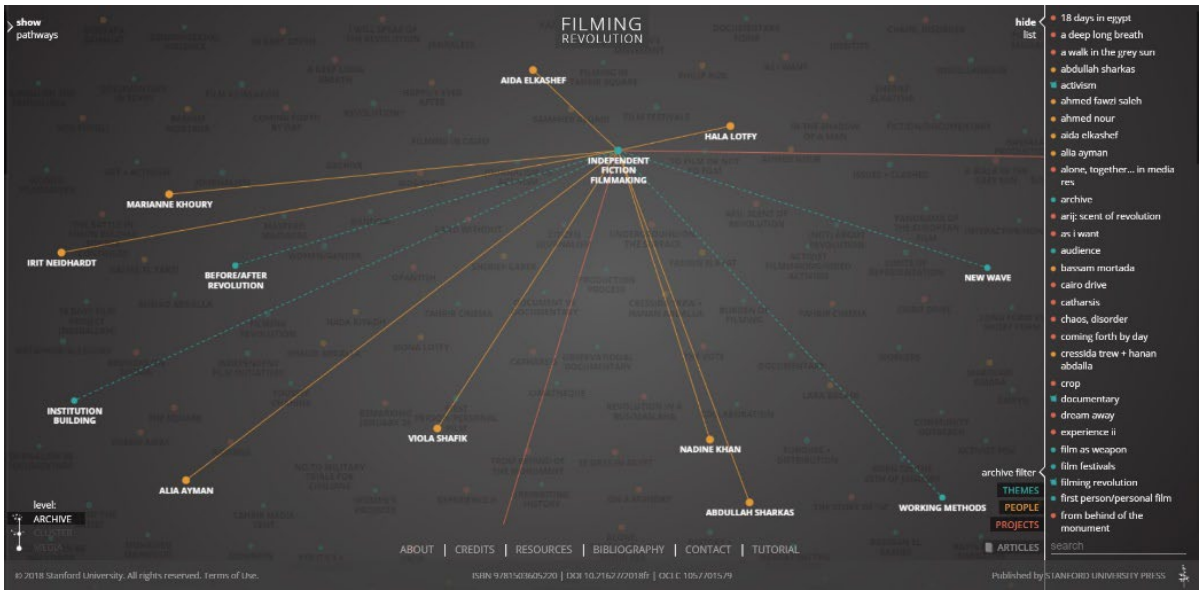


Witnesses and Initiators of the Arab Spring

Mohammed Abed / Agence France-Presse / Getty Images

Fig. 51, p300





Filming Revolution, a ‘metadocumentary’

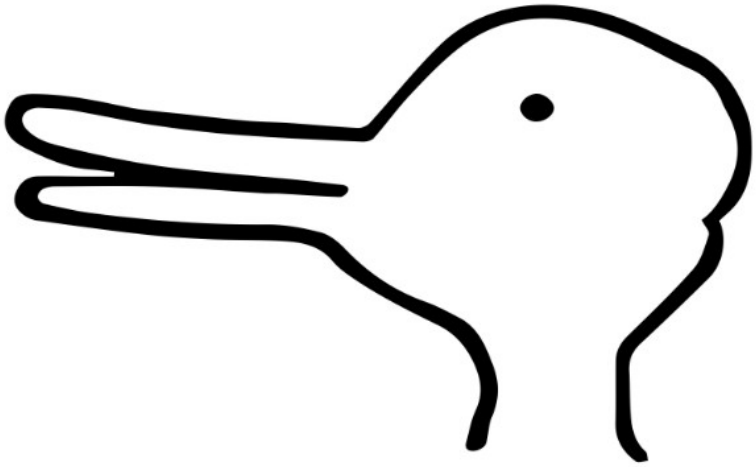
Alisa Lebow / University of Stanford, 2018, screenshots

Fig. 52, p302



A protester moves through the crowd, *Tahrir: Liberation Square*, 00:49

Fig. 53, p308



Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'the duck-rabbit'

Sketch, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953

Fig. 54, p313