

# **The Cinema Alone**

**Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985-2000**

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## 2 Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph

*Michael Witt*

'The cinema is montage.' (J.-L. Godard)

### Introduction: Godard's theorem

Could it be that coming years will see the addition of a further 'Godard' to those currently in circulation, a 'Godard, montage artist/theoretician'? In view of the centrality and high visibility of the term 'montage' in Godard's theory and practice of recent decades, this unexpected turn of events now seems a distinct possibility. But omnipresence is accompanied by polysemy: if at first glance the equation of cinema with montage appears to suggest a bizarre alignment with early theoreticians such as Lev Kuleshov for the absolute pre-eminence of montage in cinema, then Godard's dialogue in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* with his 1956 critical article, 'Montage, mon beau souci' ('Montage, my beautiful care'), quickly reminds us that his take on the subject has always transcended any localised sense of 'editing'.<sup>2</sup> Besides setting in place a productive tension between successive 'Godards' across five decades, the presence of the 'Montage, mon beau souci' title in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* – adapted by the young Godard from a François de Malherbe love poem – marks the realisation of a belated date with a long-standing passion: montage.<sup>3</sup> There is abundant material to fuel an extended study of Godard and montage. The term provides both a convenient gateway into his later work and a highly suggestive perspective within which to situate a critical reappraisal of his wider œuvre.<sup>4</sup> This hypothetical study would certainly not lack material, and it would need to focus on conceptual and practical issues in equal measure. After all, montage's provision of a source of constant inspiration for Godard is paralleled by his accumulation of probably incomparable film and video editing skills. In view of his insistence on systematically assuming the role of editor of his own work since the 1970s, there is a real sense in which Godardian thought has been consciously channelled through a physical, sculptural engagement with his

material ('To think with ones hands', as Godard suggests through reference to Denis de Rougement in *FATALE BEAUTÉ*<sup>5</sup>). More than this, he came to cinema through editing: across the 1950s, his apprenticeship as critic and as dialogue writer for other film-makers was complemented by work as a professional editor on documentary films for Jean-Pierre Braunberger, and on silent travel films for the Arthauld company.<sup>6</sup> More generally, there is a strong sense in which his cinema has perpetually pushed found footage around on the editing table, both literally (as in his irreverent 1958 remix of material shot by Truffaut, *UNE HISTOIRE D'EAU*) and as an underlying strategic principle (the wayward semiotician's combination of people and objects as quotable material). Godard is, as he has often characterised himself, above all a 'combiner' who positions himself between disparate worlds, and 'puts Raymond Chandler in contact with Fyodor Dostoevsky in a restaurant on a particular day with well- and lesser-known actors'.<sup>7</sup> A thorough study of Godard and montage would need to address Godard's debt to antecedent montage theorists and practitioners, the intervallic conception and structure of his video work of the 1980s and 1990s, and his substantial production as a graphic photomontage artist. In particular, an examination of the evolution of his editing practice from the 1950s to the present would need to consider how the combination of ideas played out at the plastic level of shot linkage in his films of the 1960s has nourished his subsequent exploration of videographic juxtaposition and superimposition.

These issues will be set aside here in favour of an analysis of Godard's understanding and use of 'montage' in the context of his discourse on cinema, history and cinema history. A genealogy of the meanings collapsed by Godard into 'montage' in and around *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* leads us quickly to his lectures on cinema history at the Conservatoire d'Art Cinématographique in Montreal in the late 1970s.<sup>8</sup> Here, Godard took over from his mentor and friend, Henri Langlois, whose eclectic collage-based programming style at the Cinémathèque Française looms large over the montage-based conception and structure of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*. For Godard, we recall, Langlois was not just a programmer but an auteur who assembled great experimental macro-films, 'shot' through projectors rather than cameras.<sup>9</sup> In Montreal Godard expressly declared his intention to devote the remainder of his life and work to an exploration of 'the geology and geography' of montage.<sup>10</sup> As Serge Daney pointed out, in the transition from the Montreal lectures to *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*, the 'founding hypothesis' that the cinema somehow 'is' montage has been retained.<sup>11</sup> The series, as Godard himself semi-jokingly claimed in 1998, is based on a montage 'theorem':

I'm a bit upset that it's only cinema people who talk to me about it [HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA] and that the word 'history' is forgotten. I feel like a mathematician who sets out a theorem and to whom people just say 'your theorem's lovely', or 'it's lousy'... It's as if people had said to Pythagoras (and I'm not comparing myself to Pythagoras), 'your theorem's great!'... Yes, but how is it useful? [...] Freud and Feuillade recount something, and this came at more or less the same time as set theory, fluid mechanics, and Stravinsky... These rapprochements aren't made. The only thing capable of providing an account of them – not because it tried to do it, but because it was made for it – is the cinematograph. Let's call it 'cinematograph' so as to differentiate it from what's called 'cinema' today, and which only ever designates the regular weekly releases and the cinema listings in the papers. At a given moment in time, History became incarnate – or arranged itself like a tired virus – in cinema's very substance. And then the cinematograph was no longer used."

Cinema is a privileged visual witness to the past, video a fluid space in which a neo-cinematic form of montage can offer a glimpse of History. The following quotation, taken from Godard's lecture on montage at the French National Film School (the FEMIS) in 1989, indicates the diversity and opacity of ideas with which this discussion will have to engage:

The idea that I'm defending in the history of cinema that I'm preparing, QUELQUES HISTOIRES À PROPOS DU CINÉMA, is that montage is what made cinema unique and different as compared to painting and the novel. Cinema as it was originally conceived is going to disappear quite quickly, within a lifetime, and something else will take its place. But what made it original, and what will never really have existed, like a plant that has never really left the ground, is montage. The silent movie world felt it very strongly and talked about it a lot. No-one found it. Griffith was looking for something like montage, he discovered the close-up. Eisenstein naturally thought that he had found montage... But by montage I mean something much more vast [...] To return to what I said at the beginning: the idea of cinema as art or the technique of montage. Novels are something else, painting is something else, music is something else. Cinema was the art of montage, and that art was going to be born, it was popular. Mozart worked for princes, Michelangelo for the Pope... Some novelists sold in huge quantities, but even Malraux, even Proust didn't sell immediately in the same quantities as Sulitzer. Nor does Marguerite [Duras]. Suddenly, very quickly, cinema rose in popularity, much faster than Le Pen. In three years it went from thirty spectators to thirty million. Painting has never been popular. If Van Gogh were popular his paintings would go on tour. But cinema was popular, it developed a technique, a style or a way of doing things, something that I believe was essentially montage. Which for me means seeing, seeing life. You take life, you take power, but in order to revise it, and see it, and make a judgment. To see two things and to choose between them in completely good faith."

As is clear here, Godard's theorem relies on a very specific view of cinema history: cinema is reduced to the cinematograph, which in turn exemplifies a series of fairly distinct processes conflated in the term 'montage'. By thinking Godard's 'theorem' in the context of his critical discourse of the past fifty years, this chapter seeks to unpack the series of elliptical equivalences outlined here, to retrieve and position the cinematograph at the heart of Godard's discourse on cinema and history, and to throw into relief what we might understand by its 'montages'.

## **Vertov/Eisenstein/Godard**

As founding figures of the left-wing intellectual cinematic adventure, and as names that recur regularly in Godardian discourse generally, it comes as little surprise that Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov should have become key points of reference in work on Godard. The key task here is to move debates around the conjunction of these three cinematic projects beyond bygone discussions of Godard as a militant political film-maker. Taking their cue from the hostile critiques of Eisenstein inscribed in Godard's work of the late 1960s and 1970s (*VENT D'EST*, *LEÇONS DE CHOSSES* (episode 2A of *SIX FOIS DEUX*), *FRANCE/TOUR/DÉTOUR/DEUX/ENFANTS*), commentators have habitually allied Godard with Vertov. This position now requires revision, or at least moderation: the legacy of both film-maker/theorists, and of their respective mathematical and musical montage theories, is felt powerfully in Godard's recent work in terms of a broad climate of influence and of specific points of detail. Vertov's quest to perfect an extra-linguistic, visual, symphonic-cinematic form, and Eisenstein's claims for film's unique power to articulate thought outside language, pave the way for the flux and flow of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*. The adoption of the Dziga Vertov name by Godard and his collaborators in the early 1970s signalled an allegiance with a form of political cinema rooted in the present instant and the everyday, while also serving as an intervention against the widespread deification of Eisenstein as unchallenged paradigm of the revolutionary film-maker. But it is now clear that this also announced an engagement with central strands of Vertovian theory whose effects continue to resonate across Godard's current practice: an unshakeable faith in the camera as a scientific 'scope' through which to penetrate the surface of reality; the dream of a quasi-scientific research 'laboratory' in which to conduct audio-visual experiments; a deep-rooted mistrust of any semblance of literary narrative, combined with contempt for the conventional written script; the expansion of the idea of

montage to include every stage of the film-making process; and finally, the crucial theorisation and application of 'interval' theory (according to which film poems are composed around the movements and transitions between the visual stimuli carried by individual shots).<sup>14</sup> Eisenstein's favouring of stylised recreations of the past over an urgent engagement with the present once earned him disdain from Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin. Eisenstein quietly re-entered Godard's work in a far more positive light at the end of the 1970s, and by the time the early versions of the first two chapters of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* were complete in 1988, Eisenstein had come to occupy a prime position in Godard's schema.<sup>15</sup> In view of the recurrent critique of *THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN* in Godard's earlier work, the inclusion of the Odessa steps sequence in *TOUTES LES HISTOIRES* signals the closing of a circle. Similarly, the position adopted by Godard at his editing table in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* as he speeds the film back and forth through the gates of the Steenbeck self-consciously reprises Eisenstein's posture – scissors in hands, celluloid draped around his neck, scrutinising a strip of celluloid against the light in his editing studio – in the photograph frequently redeployed by Godard since the early 1980s.<sup>16</sup> This identification with Eisenstein signals a partial rapprochement with Eisensteinian theory which, as with Vertov, is most fruitfully read in terms of the appropriation of a handful of key ideas. For Godard's engagement with Eisenstein's theories has been fairly loose and avoided any elaborate dialogue with the constituent specificities of the fivefold montage typology (metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtone, intellectual). His interest lies primarily in Eisenstein's status as a philosopher of art who sought tirelessly to chart and redefine what 'montage' might mean.<sup>17</sup> Godard's long-standing critique of the 'visual' (Serge Daney), that is to say, the floods of representations generated by the media machine, draws on the Eisensteinian distinction between 'image' ('*obraz*', related in Eisensteinian theory to montage) and 'depiction' ('*izobrazhenie*', sometimes translated as 'representation' and related to the individual shot), which is mapped on to the opposition between 'image' and 'picture' in English.<sup>18</sup> But the importance of Eisenstein to late Godard runs far deeper than this, and takes the form of intellectual liberation. On the one hand, Godard and Eisenstein both pursue cinematic montage with an exceptional and almost transcendent intensity, one that is directly related to filmic materiality: montage is integral to the cinema, not just as the grammatical basis to filmic expression (the combination of shots) but also at the micro-level of the interstice separating photogrammes on the celluloid. Thus 'all cinema is montage cinema, for the simple reason that the most fundamental cinematic phenomenon – the fact that the picture moves – is a montage phenomenon'.<sup>19</sup> On the other, the respective theorisations of montage by Eisenstein

and Godard set aside 'the limited business of the gluing bits of film together'<sup>20</sup> to focus on the larger picture of montage as a productive principle accompanying the combination or juxtaposition of two or more events, facts, or objects across the arts (architecture, music, painting, theatre, the novel, poetry, and so on). The freedom with which Eisenstein's later discussions of montage range across Maupassant, Milton and Mayakovsky – he goes so far as to label both Leonardo da Vinci and Pushkin 'montage artists', and to read the painting *Deluge* and narrative poem *Poltava* as cinematic 'montage scripts' – thoroughly prepares the way for Godard's projection of the term in every direction in and around HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA.<sup>21</sup>

The importance of Eisenstein and Vertov to late Godard, and to HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA in particular, should not obscure the limits of their contribution. As Godard has consistently argued since the time of *TOUT VA BIEN*, although Eisenstein considered himself to have been on the trail of montage, hindsight reveals him to have formulated a unique means of articulating his vision through a self-reflexive fusion of cinematic and political 'angles' on contemporary events. This argument culminates in Chapter 3B of HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, *UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE*, where Godard suggests through a dissection of the sequence in which the three stone lions 'rise up' in *OCTOBER* that Eisenstein's experimentation with the combination of camera angles gives the mere *impression* of montage:

All Eisenstein ever talked about was montage, but he was a calculator rather than an editor. He discovered the angle. It's because he found extraordinary angles – like Welles a little later – that his work necessarily suggests the beginnings of montage, and you hear people say: 'It's a wonderfully edited film.' But that's still not what montage is about. It's something else. We don't know what... We don't know.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Vertov's attempts at montage are scorned as 'completely flat'; he may have had good ideas for individual rapprochements but he failed to inject cinematic life into them.<sup>23</sup> In this way, Godard is able to cut Eisenstein and Vertov down to size and recuperate them as just two of the film-makers of the silent era who were collectively feeling their way across a vast uncharted 'continent', montage. The list of favoured cinematic explorers of the silent era is usually short – Eisenstein, Vertov, Vigo, Griffith, Lang, Gance, von Stroheim, Murnau – and none is deemed to have ultimately realised montage. This apparently paradoxical treatment of Eisenstein and Vertov, whereby they are promoted and criticised in virtually the same breath, leads us to our central concern. Their theories and practices – especially in the combined form of Vertovian interval theory and Eisenstein's enlarged concept of montage – underpin Godard's project. But in the process of survey-



ing the history of cinema, Godard opens up the concept of 'montage' to areas far beyond anything envisaged by Eisenstein:

Cinema was the true art of montage that began five or six centuries B.C., in the West. It's the entire history of the West. It's not the history of the East, nor that of Mexico and the Indians. Nobody knows what the history of black Africa is, and we're not even close to knowing. It's the history of the West, the history of a view of the world, of art coming to an end, and which can be seen today through cinema. Now we're entering another history. It was montage, the relationship between things, between people, by means of a relationship to things viewed in the form of a reproduction of these things.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*, cinema is positioned and read as modern painting, inheritor and extension of a representational tradition indicative of western art. 'Montage' comes to designate the relationships internal to a given art form, as well as those established through art between the world and its inhabitants. In the domain of cinema, it comes to signify not merely a common formal idiom or singularly potent expressive tool, but the power and specificity of silent cinema as an historical force.

## **The intelligence of the cinematograph**

'Cinema projected, and people saw that the world was there.'

On what is the conflation of montage with the cinematograph based, and what critical positions in relation to film history does it generate and demarcate? More precisely, how is this equation conceptualised and played out at the micro-level of the 'montages' internal to the cinematic apparatus, and at the macro-level of the cinematograph as a whole? Godard's reading of the relationships and tensions internal to cinema as 'montage' is reasonably straightforward. The idea of montage has entered popular discussions of cinema as a byword for inter-image relationships, but theoretical work of early film semioticians such as Yuri Tynyanov in the 1920s, not to mention that of Eisenstein, reminds us that the application of 'montage' to intra-image relations also has a well-established history.<sup>25</sup> For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose ideas on cinema foresee and inspire Godard's films of the 1960s, the unique and unprecedented power of cinema lay in its astonishingly direct capacity for laying bare 'the link of the subject to the world, of the subject to others' through its ability to frame and project vast moving

images.<sup>26</sup> Malraux's claim for cinema as an art in his 1946 *Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma* is strongly reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty and Bazin, and prefigures Godard's reading of cinema and art as 'montage': 'I call art here the articulation of unknown yet suddenly convincing relationships between people, or between people and things.'<sup>27</sup> Godard's argument in 'Montage, mon beau souci' (1956) that montage and *mise-en-scène* enact identical processes in time and space respectively therefore forms part of an ongoing debate within film theory rather than a significant new insight.<sup>28</sup> In the context of Godard's recent work, it is the irreversible blurring of categorical boundaries between editing (temporality, traditionally identified with poetry) and *mise-en-scène* (spatial representation, usually allied to painting) that should be retained from his feisty riposte to Bazinian realism. In spite of superficial appearances to the contrary, Godard's essay borrows as much from Bazin as it does from Eisenstein and retrieves the dual sense of the subject-world relations caught *within* the image (for Bazin, generally those articulated through the uncut take and deep focus) and those expressed by the *combination* of shots as the basis of an already expanding concept of montage. In line with the openness implicit in the positions of Merleau-Ponty and Bazin, Godard's discourse operates on a double register and oscillates constantly. If the cinema materially fixes and foregrounds the interspace, so at the level of narrative representation it throws into relief human behaviour and social relations and makes them available for criticism:

Montage allowed one to see things and no longer to say them, that's what was new. You could see that the boss was robbing the workers, it wasn't sufficient to say it. By managing to show that the bosses were robbing the workers... it became obvious that the boss was a nasty bloke or whatever.<sup>29</sup>

From the outset, and long before it is grafted on to emergent hypotheses regarding the history of cinema, 'montage' is therefore already highly charged. Applied to both plastic and social inter- and intra-image relations, it is extended to the viewer/world relationship mediated through cinema.

Making sense of Godard's elision of the cinematograph with montage requires a detour through a number of antecedent positions inscribed in his critical discourse, and notably the theorisation of cinema as art and science. First, clarification of Godard's exploitation of the term 'cinematograph' as a vehicle for two reasonably distinct sets of meanings is required. Its use by Jean Cocteau and Robert Bresson as a gesture of defiance to the homogenising momentum of the forms and codes of the Hollywood-derived mainstream has obvious attractions for Godard.<sup>30</sup> Although forever tinged with this wider sense of cultural resistance, the term primarily designates the extension of the neo-scientific project of the Lumière brothers. One can barely

exaggerate the centrality of silent cinema to Godard's work. As films such as *VIVRE SA VIE* and *LES CARABINIERS* remind us, of all the forms fed pell-mell into the generic remix machine of his 1960s films it is often the silent cinema whose undiluted presence is most powerfully felt. He has reiterated in countless interviews over the course of preparations for *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* that a 'true' history of cinema should brush aside diversions such as box-office hit orchestration by the entertainment multi-nationals to focus on what he identifies as the true history of cinema, that of the 'invisible' films lost, disintegrating, destroyed, or seldom shown, precisely, Langlois's treasured illicit cinema, much of it silent and absorbed in awe by the emergent Nouvelle Vague during the 1950s. In this respect, the Montreal lectures provide not only a rehearsal space for the substance of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* but a structural prototype. It would clearly be an oversimplification to claim that *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* is 'about' silent cinema in any straightforward sense, not least because of the presence of chapters devoted to topics such as Hitchcock, Neorealism, and the Nouvelle Vague, the presence of enormous quantities of extracts of sound films, and the sheer sonic density of the soundtrack. In Montreal, Godard systematically projected a silent film at the beginning of each session as a benchmark against which to evaluate an assortment of sound films (his own included). If here the overarching significance of the silent era remains clearly signalled, it assumes the role of structuring subjacent armature in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*, determining the parameters of the loosely grouped subject areas into which the respective chapters are bracketed off. Despite initial appearances, Godard's histories are less 'histoire(s) du cinéma' than 'histoire(s) du cinématographe', a fact signified by the shift in intertitles in *TOUTES LES HISTOIRES*. Forays into the sound era are primarily driven by a quest to follow the residual trail – flashes of resistance on the part of a handful of figures, films and movements in the face of widespread homogenisation – of the cinematograph and 'what it became in the age of the talkies'.<sup>11</sup>

Complementing this use of the cinematograph as a point of entry into cinema history is a wider conceptual engagement on Godard's part with the films, critical discourses, and socio-cultural context of the cinematograph, an engagement that has had a powerful influence on his later practice. In Montreal, he explicitly set himself the brief of integrating a rediscovery of the cinematograph into his ongoing project: 'if I look at my own trajectory, I get the impression that I'm trying to retrace the silent era, but so as to be able to find my own form of the talkies'.<sup>12</sup> The optimism and vitality of the scientific-philosophical impetus to early intellectual cinema has provided a source of strength and inspiration for Godard and Godard/Miéville in their attempts to negotiate a post-television form of cinema. In this respect, ex-

perimentation with slow- and stop-start motion is exemplary, its use as technique and effect symptomatic of a wider conceptual solidarity with the proto-cinematographic work of pioneers such as Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard J. Muybridge. At the same time, it signals an alignment with commentators such as Walter Benjamin and Élie Faure for whom slow-motion's ability to penetrate the temporal continuum announced nothing less than a revolutionary 'deepening of apperception' and 'unconscious optics' (Benjamin), 'a whole world of hitherto unknown and even unsuspected harmonies' (Faure).<sup>33</sup> First systematically employed in *FRANCE/TOUR/DÉTOUR/DEUX/ENFANTS*, slow motion punctuates Godard and Godard/Miéville's work to the present and culminates explosively in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*. The cinema, of course, rapidly contributed to the natural sciences through the camera's role as a 'temporal microscope' (Jean Painlevé) capable of the revelation of previously invisible realities.<sup>34</sup> If Godard's early films overflow with urgent news from the 1960s, his work of the past two decades – so often dismissed as impenetrably obscure – might rather be approached as a sustained and measured combination of the inclusive address and fresh, perplexing forms characteristic of the best of the cinema of the silent era. In this perspective – and this is a reading that Godard would probably be keen for us to pursue – it is not Godard's work but the rest of cinema that has somehow lost its way and been sidelined to the margins.

Just how does Godard equate the cinematograph with art? Setting aside transitory, factional in-fighting, political affiliation, or the divisions of national boundaries, Godard identifies widespread unanimity on the part of contemporaneous commentators: the world has unexpectedly acquired an extraordinarily precise machine capable of intensifying perception, jolting us out of our routine complacencies, and reinstating a sense of astonishment at a world still poorly understood. René Clair's collation of testimonies to the power of the cinematograph (those of Pierre Albert-Birot, Jean Cocteau, Fernand Léger, Pierre Mac Orlan, Paul Valéry, and Philippe Soupault) reminds us of the vivacious enthusiasm felt by so many for a young art form being carried along on the wings of optimism and curiosity.<sup>35</sup> Godard is therefore far from being alone in viewing silent cinema in terms of its capacity for the casual generation of constant streams of highly charged, vibrant images of the present. Godard's view of the cinematograph is entirely in keeping here with his polemics of the past five decades generally, where priority is always accorded representations in any art form born of a quest for expression outside the regulatory constraints of accumulated aesthetic formulae. In other words, Godard is ultimately interested in Art, and the cinematograph is a singularly fresh art form. As Jean Epstein insisted long before, the impact of radical formal novelty far outweighs questions of

localised narratives or representations: every metre of film serves to reveal and inform, to directly communicate a savage reality 'before names and before the law of words'.<sup>36</sup> The birth of the cinematograph not only echoed that of art, but *produced* a sudden and unexpected, short-lived period of renewed childhood for art ('the childhood of art', as suggested in an intertitle in *FATALE BEAUTÉ*). Astonishingly, fresh form and technical/aesthetic innovation was matched by mass appeal, and Art was suddenly in real demand. Recognition of the significance of the cinematograph's instant and massive popularity pervades the critical work of commentators such as Clair, Cocteau and Louis Delluc in the 1910s and 1920s: the cinematograph is simply the first truly popular art form ever.<sup>37</sup> This reading of the cinematograph as Art impacts decisively on the choice of films and film-makers to be included in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*. Those who have been content to run through inherited forms and formulae are set aside, making room for those who sought to represent the world honestly and directly through a simultaneous interrogation of the technical means at their disposal. This logic provides the rationale for the unparalleled esteem for Alfred Hitchcock – 'a visionary', 'as unique as a star' – that has accompanied the evolution of the *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* project, culminating in Chapter 4A, *LE CONTRÔLE DE L'UNIVERS*.<sup>38</sup> Hitchcock achieved his immense popular success on the back of ambitious, technically difficult, formally inventive, non-formulaic and visually-driven narratives: 'Hitchcock is one of the century's great artists. He made difficult, sensitive, mysterious and successful films that didn't follow a recipe. That's extremely rare.'<sup>39</sup> Uniquely, in the moving interview he gave to Serge July at the time of Hitchcock's death, Godard goes so far as to credit Hitchcock – the exception who proves the rule – for having *achieved* 'montage'.<sup>40</sup> Here we see the slippage from 'cinematograph' to 'cinema': it is Hitchcock's *sound* films – forever rooted in a resolutely visual logic intimately linked to the cinematograph and painting – that serve as an illustrious but all too solitary example of what full-scale cinematographic montage might have become. This pervasive investment in a vision of the silent era clears the way for a potentially vast reassessment of the period, and indeed the conjunction of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* with recent scholarly interest in montage as a composite idiom and radically new, post-industrial, kaleidoscopic form of vision opens up a rich area of future research.<sup>41</sup>

Accompanying this reading of the cinematograph as art is a parallel theorisation of the image as scientific document, and cinema generally – positioned in the context of the nineteenth-century scientific project – as an immensely powerful social X-ray machine capable of the revelation of hitherto imperceptible physical realities and the injuries of social inequality. Fiction films, as Godard has suggested in a neat image, have always operated

as 'Jean Painlevé plus actors'.<sup>42</sup> If the narratives inscribed in individual films provide a reflection of the world that made them, so fiction films carry a record of the past in their form. The shifting fortunes of film 'language' provide a concise echogram of social structures: social and formal innovation go hand in hand, just as the regurgitation of pre-existing forms indicates social stagnation. At the other end of the scale, neither documentary nor news-reel footage is valued for any spurious objective truth value. On the contrary, it is fed into HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA and scrutinised for traces of rehearsal and control. In documentaries, as Godard suggested recently, it is the otherwise imperceptible processes of socio-political '*mise-en-scène*' that are recorded and revealed.<sup>43</sup> Caught in the Lumière brothers' celebrated film of workers leaving their Lyon factory are multiple layers of mediations and manipulations: not only do the workers, schooled in the process of moving images, know they are being filmed and act accordingly for the camera, but they rehearse the gestures and stage directions mapped out for them by the factory management. The documentary root and duty of cinema comes through very powerfully in HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA. Like Malraux, Godard is careful to counterbalance his reading of cinema's role as true art and purveyor of myth with an insistence on its inherently and properly *journalistic* function.<sup>44</sup> Malraux's L'ESPOIR recurs in HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA as a privileged example of cinema as real 'news' through its frantic attempt to trace the outline of an instant image worthy of the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. At the same time, the film's formal ambition and invention served simultaneously to revitalise cinema itself as an art form. No matter if any given film has presented itself as 'news' or as the height of the fantastic – all true cinema for Godard delivers up-to-the-minute news bulletins:

It's said that Lumière is documentary and Méliès the fantastic. But when we see their films today, what do we see? We see Méliès filming the reception of the King of Yugoslavia by the president of the Republic. In other words, news. And at the same time, we see Lumière filming his family playing belote in a style reminiscent of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*. In other words, fiction.<sup>45</sup>

In a position held unswervingly by Godard from the 1950s to the present, fiction films are deemed to carry an intrinsically high documentary charge. 'I think all the great films', as he put it as early as 1958, 'tend at their profoundest level towards the documentary.'<sup>46</sup> On the one hand, momentous moments of social instability and conflict are crystallised immediately in cinematic form and given an image which is then distributed and subject to criticism and discussion. Fiction films can therefore be read as the real 'news' of the century ('news of history, history of the news', as Godard formalises it in TOUTES LES HISTOIRES). On the other, in a critique that recalls

Kracauer's survey of the traces of an embryonic fascism in the German cinema of the 1920s, Godard ascribes to cinema the power to effect a visionary ethnology of imminent social mutation by *foreseeing* emergent political turbulence and social upheaval. In this perspective, the cinema is a kind of clairvoyant gossipmonger ('*colporteur*', as suggested in *LES SIGNES PARMI NOUS*), peddling rumours about what the future might hold:

I've always thought that the cinema represents today what music was in the past a little: it communicates in advance, it communicates in advance great shifts that are going to occur. And it's in this sense that it shows illnesses before they become visible. It's an external sign that shows things. It's a bit abnormal. It's something that's going to happen, like an irruption.<sup>47</sup>

*TOUTES LES HISTOIRES* and *LES SIGNES PARMI NOUS* underscore this view: Renoir's *LA GRANDE ILLUSION* and *LA RÈGLE DU JEU* foresaw the imminent disintegration of Europe into war and Murnau's *NOSFERATU* depicted a Berlin reduced to rubble in the aftermath of war from a vantage point long before the events had taken place.

Godard's entire theory and practice constitutes a sustained reflection on *vision*, a relentless critique of the homogeneities inscribed in visual imagery and subjectivity complemented by a constant search for fresh expressive forms. In the context of his theorisation of the cinema as art and science, he reads silent cinema as an eye- and mind-opening vision machine, and the silent era as an explosive moment of 'great popular cultural revolution' driven by the cinematographic revelation of the physical world and social relations.<sup>48</sup> Godard's histories are audience-based and set aside issues such as the drift towards narrativisation or the chronological intricacies of technological change. The foregrounding of the human eye and the act of looking (the magnified eye from Orson Welles's *MR. ARKADIN* in *SEUL LE CINÉMA* and *UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE*, and James Stewart wielding his telephoto lens in *REAR WINDOW* in *TOUTES LES HISTOIRES* and *UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE*) serve as a shorthand for the visual education set in motion by the cinematograph. Inherently all-inclusive in its extra-linguistic mode of address and drawing social classes together physically in the movie theatre, the popular, nascent art/science is endowed with a pedagogical function and contagious democratising effect. By simply re-presenting the physical and social world to vast numbers of individuals in instantly accessible form, it encouraged – indeed, made almost inevitable – a profound renegotiation of one's place in the world. The novelty, difference and danger of the cinematograph is located in its latent power effortlessly to unleash a mass of popular energy through the revelation of how the world might be perceived and inhabited differently. In a passage again strongly reminiscent of Malraux, Godard conflates

the successive 'montages' effected by the cinematograph (within the image, between images, between the viewer and the screen, between the subject and society, and between the individual and the world) as follows:

When people saw a film, there was something that was at least double, and since someone was watching, it became triple. In other words, there was something, something else, which in its technical form became gradually known as montage. It was something that filmed not things, but the relationships between things. In other words, people saw relationships, and first of all they saw a relationship with themselves.<sup>49</sup>

It is through this concept of 'social montage' that the cinematograph is associated closely with questions of national identity. The logical consequence of an inherently montage-based art is social and/or existential 'montage'. Less a question of adhesive than of social *cohesion*, cinema 'represented the possibility of belonging to a nation, and of being oneself within that nation'.<sup>50</sup> Although surprising in view of Godard's roots in Langlois's unconventional trans-national film education programme at the Cinémathèque, a sustained reading of film history in terms of national cinemas is thereby established in HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA.<sup>51</sup>

Godard's reading of how western society has represented and 'projected' the world around it, and of the ensuing interpretative process (of negotiation, agreement, astonishment or rejection) set in motion when audiences in turn 'project' themselves into those representations, feeds into a favoured metaphor: the cinema theatre as a popular courtroom, films as evidence, and the audience as judge and jury. To view films is to participate in a process of judicial review: 'Cinema is made for spreading things out, for flattening them. I always compare it to justice. It's a file that you open, that's cinema (*he opens a file*). And then you weigh it.'<sup>52</sup> Films representing pressing contemporary concerns are made, projected, viewed and discussed in the same way that evidence is brought into a courtroom and laid before a jury. The representation can be accepted or refused but it is there for discussion and awaits a verdict: is this a just reality represented on the screen, and does the representation itself accurately reflect one's personal experience? In this context, courtroom dramas, and films in which questions of guilt and innocence hang in the balance, inevitably acquire particular resonance (whence a further reason for the importance of Hitchcock). This identification of cinema with the scales of justice not only underscores the idea of popular empowerment, but also relates neatly and self-reflexively back to the underlying model of the rapprochement/montage of two or more photogrammes (or images, or ideas) that returns endlessly in HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA:



There's a shot before, and another one after. And between the two, there's a physical support. That's cinema. You see a rich person and a poor person and there's a rapprochement. And you say: it's not fair. Justice comes from a rapprochement. And from then weighing it in the scales. The very idea of montage is the scales of justice.<sup>53</sup>

HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA was always intended as the history not only of cinema's revelatory power but also of 'the blindness to which it gave rise'.<sup>54</sup> The series recounts a narrative of rise and fall, of splendour and poverty. Where the cinematograph is equated with the drawing together of peoples and nations, the talkies are identified with a pre-televisual process of 'démontage' (collapse or, literally, dismantling):

Montage is what had to be destroyed because it's what allowed people to *see*. The role of the talkies, supported by the publishing houses and bad writers, was to prevent people from *seeing* what montage allowed them to *see*. Control over what one saw had to be regained immediately. Moreover, that's what television is. A great lost battle.<sup>55</sup>

All that remains of the fully-fledged 'montage' that a mature cinema might have allowed are partial traces of its extraordinary emergent form, 'a blocked chrysalis that will never turn into a butterfly'.<sup>56</sup> As Godard has argued consistently since the early 1970s, the combination of economic recession and Roosevelt's 'New Deal' conspired with the coming of sound to produce an aesthetic mutation and the beginning of the end of cinema's status as popular, documentary-based art: 'Walter Benjamin said the same thing to Adorno: the industry's unconscious took fright and so the talkies were introduced.'<sup>57</sup> In the context of a century marked by the rapid proliferation of technologies, notably by television as a brief but crucial intermediary step from the chemical (photography/cinema) to the digital, cinema's capacity for 'montage' fell by the wayside. The montages of the cinematograph, taken in hand by mass production and the rhythms of consumer capital, were forever buried beneath the weight of the script-based, dialogue-ridden talkies:

The word montage has been much used. Today people talk of montage in Welles or in Eisenstein or, on the contrary, of the absence of montage in Rossellini. What fools, as Bernanos would say. Cinema never found montage. Tobis and RCA didn't allow it the time, and something was lost along the way, its language. And it's speech, words, that took the upper hand, but of course not the speech or words of the Jeromine children, nor those of Narcissus and Goldmund.<sup>58</sup>

## Conclusion

‘Bring together things that have never yet been brought together and  
did not seem predisposed to be so.’ (R. Bresson)<sup>14</sup>

‘Montage’ is the central, volatile, and essentially open-ended metaphor through which Godard has developed his evolving ideas on cinema and history, while ‘Montage, mon beau souci’ is the generative formula into which he has condensed his hypotheses. It would be easy to ignore Godard’s provocatively blunt insistence on the direct equivalence between cinema and montage cited at the head of this chapter, or to respond dismissively that ‘no, cinema is not montage’. But if we are to engage with Godard as critic and historian of cinema, we are obliged to pass through these and other ostensibly perverse and trenchant statements. If we take the time to reflect on what they might mean, and treat them as poetic formulae rather than as statements of fact, the contours of an enormously rich range of debates open up before us. Godard is, of course, not a systematic theoretician of montage, and any future ‘montage theory’ associated with his name will perhaps most likely serve as shorthand for his vision of the rise and fall of the cinematograph as Art. In its most extreme formulation, Godard’s stance leaves itself open to obvious criticism: to declare cinema the final chapter in western art comes close to the reproduction of a flimsy discourse on technological change which can easily be brushed aside. But such statements should always be viewed as strategic postures rather than as immutable opinions; there are no fixed positions in Godardian discourse, but always scope for the coexistence of a variety of conflictual points of view. His position leaves little room for optimism regarding the function of contemporary cinema as a vibrant cultural form, but it is based on a reading of the cinematograph in the context of an artistic tradition – ‘an idea of the relationship to the world, invented by white people’<sup>15</sup> – whose renewal through other forms remains open. HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA is essentially poetic, and any attempt to reduce it to a conventional historiographical narrative inevitably mutes its power of suggestion. Weaknesses in the fissures between the various critical positions Godard traverses are more than compensated for by the extraordinary wealth of ideas generated by contact with even a short extract of the series.

The emerging critical work on HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA has tended to set aside the issues around montage discussed here to focus on Godard’s videographic editing techniques. In the process, the tight self-reflexivity of

the series has passed without comment. The underlying rationale and textual form of HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA are both rooted in an appropriation and condensed videographic re-enactment of what Godard has identified as the principal novelty and power of the cinema: montage. From the Montreal lectures onwards, the meanings of 'montage' can be divided into two broad categories, although in practice, of course, these are irreversibly blurred. On the one hand, as we have seen, cinema's essential difference as a cultural form is reduced to montage: the power of revelation rooted in a unique facility for bringing disparate ideas into the same orbit as one another and holding them in dynamic tension. On the other, historical studies ('études' in the dual musical and scholarly sense) are creatively composed through videographic montage: the rapprochement of ideas vehicled through the dissolution and recombination of fragments of the century's cinematographic ultrasound.<sup>61</sup> Godard's obsessive reworking of Pierre Reverdy's poem 'L'Image' in his work since the early 1980s therefore not only signals an alignment with a combative form of cultural resistance (surrealism), but also provides the formula and conduit for these two interrelated sets of meanings of montage:

The image is a pure creation of the spirit.

It cannot be born of a comparison, but of the rapprochement of two more or less separate realities.

The more distant and just the relationships between these realities that are brought together, the stronger the image will be – and the more emotional power and poetic reality it will have.

Two realities with no relationship between them cannot be usefully brought together. No image is created.

Two contrary realities cannot be brought together. They oppose each other.

Rarely is strength obtained from this opposition.

An image is not strong because it is *brutal* or *fantastic*, but because the association of ideas is distant and just.<sup>62</sup>

As Gilles Deleuze noted, Godard's long-standing concern has been to examine how a genuine Image might be retrieved and preserved from the morass of media clichés.<sup>63</sup> But Godard's urgent drive to chart a poetics of the image in the age of neo-television has been mapped on to his parallel historiographical project: to 'do' montage is to make an Image (Eisenstein's '*obraz*') and evoke History.<sup>64</sup> Beneath the surface of Godard's vision of micro- and macro-montage hovers a singularly resonant model, that of metaphor theory. At the macro level, the definition of the cinematograph as Art serves to position it squarely *as* metaphor, the perpetually inventive *bricoleur* at the slippery juncture of reality and its representation.<sup>65</sup> At the micro-level, the

montage/*rapprochement* of the constituent elements of an Image reproduces the dynamic interplay activated by the productive conjunction of the components (what I.A. Richards terms the 'tenor' and 'vehicle' of the metaphor) in the metaphorical process.<sup>66</sup> Reverdy's model of the 'distant and just' association of ideas provides a quick shorthand for the process of conceptual 'stereoscopic vision' set in motion by the *rapprochement* of tenor and vehicle.<sup>67</sup> In visual terms, this model is carried by the economical image of the juxtaposition of two video monitors (a constant in *NUMÉRO DEUX*, *KING LEAR*, *JLG/JLG: AUTO PORTRAIT DE DÉCEMBRE*, and Chapter 3B of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*, *UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE*, usually to the melodic accompaniment of variations on the Reverdy poem on the soundtrack), which in turn serves as a schematic shorthand for the array of videographic editing processes through which worlds, ideas and realities are combined in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*. If metaphor provides a condensed model of the process of *rapprochement*/montage inherent in cinema ('One might say that there are laws of metaphor- and image-making in cinema, certain of which represent universal laws')<sup>68</sup>, *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* makes History by making metaphors, or at least by the systematic simulation of the metaphorical process: 'The simple scientific means for this series and these books is comparison and metaphor. For every image is metaphor.'<sup>69</sup> Here Godard rejoins Eisenstein. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has noted, for Eisenstein the terms 'montage', 'image', and 'metaphor' are fundamentally interchangeable.<sup>70</sup> Eisenstein and Godard therefore both leave us with a series of elliptical equations: cinema = image = montage = metaphor = art. To compose images (make metaphors) is to resurrect moments of History, or, as Godard wrote by way of a prescient subtitle to *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* in his 1958 review of Léonard Keigel's film, *MALRAUX*: 'Art, in its own way, makes History come back to life.'<sup>71</sup>

- 39 The meeting between Godard and Furet, best known for his work on the French revolution, took place in Paris in June 1997 and was based around a private screening of those chapters of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA* then available. See Antoine de Baecque, 'À la recherche d'une forme cinématographique de l'histoire', *Critique*, nos. 632-633 (2000), pp. 154-165 (pp. 164-165).
- 40 See Hayden White 'The modernist event', in: Vivian Sobchack (ed.), *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 17-38 (p. 22).
- 41 See Rosenbaum, 'Godard in the '90s', op. cit., pp. 52-53. Godard includes Pound's own voice in the last stages of Chapter 4B, *LES SIGNES PARMI NOUS*.
- 42 See text of JLG/JLC, op. cit., pp. 10-14.
- 43 See Aumont, *Amnésies*, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
- 44 Ibid., p. 13.
- 45 The voice is taken from the actual recordings of the interviews Truffaut conducted with Hitchcock in 1967.
- 46 Auriol's original phrase, 'Cinema is the art of doing pretty things to pretty girls' ('Le cinéma, c'est l'art de faire de jolies choses à de jolies filles'), is read aloud by Miéville in *2X50 ANS DE CINÉMA FRANÇAIS* and Chapter 3B of *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE*.
- 47 See 'La justification par les œuvres', in: Aumont, *Amnésies*, op. cit., pp. 101-138.
- 48 For an examination of the literary and filmic notions of the 'essay' in the French tradition, see Michael Temple, 'The Nutty Professor: teaching film with Jean-Luc Godard', *Screen*, vol. 40, no. 3, Autumn 1999, pp. 323-330 (pp. 329-330).
- 49 'Entretien', in: Bergala, *Godard par Godard I*, op. cit., pp. 215-236 (p. 215).
- 50 The original reads: 'je ne peins pas l'être, je peins le passage'. This phrase from Montaigne's epistemological essay is also, interestingly, the epigraph to Élie Faure's *L'esprit des formes*.
- 51 'Godard fait des histoires', in: Bergala, *Godard par Godard II*, op. cit., p. 163.
- 52 See *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, vol. 4, p. 254.
- 53 Cocteau's phrase, 'Le cinématographe, c'est filmer la mort au travail', is frequently cited by Godard, both verbally and in his work.
- 54 This question is addressed in the context of Malraux and the metamorphosis of artistic form in James S. Williams, 'The Signs Amongst Us: Jean-Luc Godard's *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*', *Screen*, vol. 40, no. 3, Autumn 1999, pp. 306-315 (pp. 314-315).
- 55 Speaking of the early achievements of cinema, Méliès stated: 'Mais tout ceci n'est que l'enfance de l'art'. Quoted in Georges Sadoul, *Georges Méliès*, Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1962, p. 92.

## Notes to 2: Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph

- 1 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Godard arrêt sur images: Le cinéaste commente quelques photos de *SOIGNE TA DROITE*': interview with Michèle Halberstadt, *Première*, no. 130, 1988, pp. 56-59 (p. 59).

- 2 Lev Kuleshov, 'The Principles of Montage', in: Lev Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film*, ed. and trans. Ronald Larcac, Berkeley, 1974, pp. 183-195; Jean-Luc Godard, 'Montage, mon beau souci', in: Alain Bergala (ed.), *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, vol. 1, Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile/Cahiers du Cinéma, 1985, pp. 92-93 (henceforth *Godard par Godard I*).
- 3 François de Malherbe, 'Dessein de quitter une dame qui ne le contentait que de promesse', in: François de Malherbe, *Œuvres*, ed. Antoine Adam, Paris, 1971, pp. 21-22. Godard has explicitly stated that he felt the need to revisit his earlier text, claiming barely to understand it. See 'Godard fait des histoires': interview with Serge Daney, *Libération*, 26th December 1988, pp. 24-27 (reprinted in Alain Bergala (ed.), *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, vol. 2, 1984-1998, Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1998, pp. 161-173 (p. 173) (henceforth *Godard par Godard II*)). He long planned to give this title to a separate self-contained chapter of HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA. Although accorded a semi-official role as subtitle to UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE, it recurs across the whole series.
- 4 For an indication of the implications of a projection of 'montage' back across Godard's earlier work, see Alain Bergala, 'Flash-back sur LE MÉPRIS', in: Alain Bergala, *Nul mieux que Godard*, Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1999, pp. 15-20.
- 5 Denis de Rougement, *Penser avec les mains* [1936], Paris: Gallimard, 1972.
- 6 Godard in 'L'art à partir de la vie: Nouvel entretien avec Jean-Luc Godard par Alain Bergala', in: *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 9-24 (p. 14).
- 7 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Tout ce qui est divisé m'a toujours beaucoup touché', in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 200-203 (p. 201).
- 8 Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*. Paris: Albatros, 1980.
- 9 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Se vivre, se voir': interview with Claire Devarrieux, in: *Le Monde Dimanche (Radio-Télévision)*, 30 March 1980 (reprinted in *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 404-407 (p. 405)).
- 10 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 22.
- 11 See Daney's introductory comments in 'Godard fait des histoires', op. cit., p. 24. These remarks are not reproduced in the version of this interview anthologised in *Godard par Godard II*, nor in the translation of the text as 'Godard makes (hi)stories', in: Raymond Bellour and Mary Lea Bandy (eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard: Son+Image, 1974-1991*, New York: MOMA, 1992, pp. 159-167.
- 12 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Godard fait son cinéma', in: *Le Nouvel Observateur*, no. 1773, 29 October - 1998, pp. 76-78 (pp. 76-77).
- 13 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Le montage, la solitude et la liberté', in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 242-248 (pp. 242 and 246-7). This text is the partial transcription of a lecture delivered by Godard at the FEMIS on 26 April 1989. Besides here and at numerous points in his Montreal lectures, Godard has frequently returned to and rehearsed his ideas on montage: Jean-Luc Godard, 'Se vivre, se voir' op. cit.; Jean-Luc Godard, 'Alfred Hitchcock est mort': interview with Serge July, in: *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 412-416; Jean-Luc Godard, 'Le Briquet de Capitaine Cook': interview with François Albéra and Mikhaïl Iampolski, *Les Lettres Françaises*, 19 April 1992, pp. 17-21; Jean-Luc Godard, 'À propos de cinéma et d'histoire', in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 401-405; and the first of his series of five unpublished discussions with Noël Simsolo broadcast in the framework of *À voix nue* on Radio France Culture in April 1998.
- 14 Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, Annette Michelson (ed.), trans. Kevin O'Brien, London: Pluto, 1984. Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin demonstrate ex-

- tensive knowledge of Vertovian and Eisensteinian theory in 'Angle and Reality: Godard and Gorin in America', *Sight and Sound*, 42, no.3 (1973), pp. 130-133.
- 15 STRIKE is referenced through the image of an owl in the first episode of FRANCE/TOUR/DÉTOUR/DEUX/ENFANTS (an image that recurs, this time in its original form, in TOUTES LES HISTOIRES). THE GENERAL LINE is cited in SCÉNARIO VIDÉO DE SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE) as a point of reference in the inception of SAUVE QUI PEUT (LA VIE).
  - 16 Godard first used this image in an image/text collage entitled 'Là où c'était, je serai. Là où je serai, j'ai déjà été. Là où ça ira, on sera mieux', in: *Cahiers du Cinéma*, nos. 323-324, 1981, pp. 58-59. It recurs in TOUTES LES HISTOIRES and UNE VAGUE NOUVELLE, in the latter case linked to the 'Montage, mon beau souci' title.
  - 17 Cf. Jacques Aumont's contention that Eisenstein's principal contribution is as a *thinker*, indeed one of the most important philosophers of art of the twentieth century. Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, London: BFI, 1987.
  - 18 For Eisenstein's definitions of these terms, see Sergei Eisenstein, '[Rhythm]' and 'Montage 1938', in: Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (eds.), *S. M. Eisenstein: Selected Works, Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage*, London: BFI, 1991, pp. 227-258 and pp. 296-326. For an example of Godard's use and discussion of this terminology, see Godard, 'Le Briquet de Capitaine Cook', op. cit., p. 21.
  - 19 Sergei Eisenstein, 'Laocoön', *ibid.*, pp. 109-202 (p. 109).
  - 20 Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938', op. cit., p. 311.
  - 21 Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938', *ibid.*, pp. 310 and 318. Godard refers explicitly to Eisenstein's commentaries on El Greco as a 'monteur' and his paintings as 'montages' in 'Alfred Hitchcock est mort', op. cit., pp. 414-415. The three-day debate on montage (accompanied by projections) between Jacques Rivette, Sylvie Pierre, and Jean Narboni at the Centre Dramatique du Sud-Est in Aix-en-Provence in February 1969 constitutes a further suggestive precursor to Godard's use of the term 'montage'. See 'Montage', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 210, 1969, pp. 17-34.
  - 22 Godard, 'Le montage, la solitude et la liberté', op. cit., p. 248.
  - 23 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 177.
  - 24 Godard, 'Le Briquet de Capitaine Cook', op. cit., p. 19.
  - 25 Tynyanov argued, in terms that resonate across the work of subsequent theorists, that 'the isolation of the material in the photograph leads to the unity of every photograph, to a special dynamic interrelationship of all the objects – or of all the elements of a single object – within the photograph.' See Yuri Tynyanov, 'On the foundations of cinema', in: Herbert Eagle (ed.), *Russian Formalist Film Theory*, Michigan: Slavic Publications, 1981, pp. 81-100 (p. 90).
  - 26 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Le Cinéma et la Nouvelle Psychologie', in: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et Non-Sens*. Paris: Nagel, 1966, pp. 85-106 (p. 105). Originally given as a lecture at the IDHEC (the former name of the French national film school) on 13 March 1945.
  - 27 André Malraux, *Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma*. Paris: Gallimard, 1946, p. 49. Godard reworked and filmed substantial portions of Malraux's text for HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA, but ultimately did not use the material. See 'Textes pour servir aux HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA', in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 183-184.

- 28 James Monaco perhaps overstates the case when he calls Godard's essay 'one of the most important steps in film theory'. See James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History, and Theory of Film and Media*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 332.
- 29 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 175-176.
- 30 See Jean Cocteau, *Du Cinématographe*, Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1973, and Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph* [1975], London: Quartet, 1986.
- 31 Godard, 'Se vivre, se voir', op. cit., p. 405.
- 32 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 264.
- 33 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in: Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt (ed.), London: Fontana, 1973, pp. 211-244 (p. 230); Élie Faure, 'Vocation du cinéma', in: Élie Faure, *Fonction du Cinéma*, Geneva: Gonthier, 1963, pp. 69-91 (pp. 72-73).
- 34 Jean Painlevé, 'Le cinéma au service de la science', in: Marcel L'Herbier, *Intelligence du Cinématographe*. Paris: Corrêa, 1946, pp. 403-408 (p. 405). For an enthusiastic survey of the early scientific applications of the cinematograph, see Leonard Donaldson, *The Cinematograph and Natural Science: The Achievements and Possibilities of Cinematography as an Aid to Scientific Research*, London: Ganes, 1912.
- 35 René Clair, *Cinéma d'hier, cinéma d'aujourd'hui*. Paris: Gallimard, 1970, pp. 39-44.
- 36 Jean Epstein, 'Le Monde fluide de l'écran', in: Pierre Leprohon (ed.), *Jean Epstein*. Paris: Seghers, 1964, pp. 139-140 (p. 140).
- 37 See Louis Delluc, 'Confidences d'un spectateur', in: Louis Delluc, *Cinéma et Cie*, Paris: Grasset, 1919. Anthologised in L'Herbier, *Intelligence du Cinématographe*, pp. 229-238. Cocteau's *Du Cinématographe* and Clair's *Cinéma d'hier, cinéma d'aujourd'hui* both constantly reiterate the significance of the popular appeal of the cinematograph.
- 38 Godard, 'Alfred Hitchcock est mort', op. cit., p. 412 and 414.
- 39 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Le cinéma n'a pas su remplir son rôle': interview with Jean-Pierre Lavoignat and Christophe d'Yvoire, in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 335-343 (p. 340).
- 40 Godard, 'Alfred Hitchcock est mort', op. cit., p. 414.
- 41 Matthew Teitelbaum (ed.), *Montage and Modern Life 1919-1942*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1992. See especially Annette Michelson's essay entitled 'The Wings of Hypothesis: On Montage and the Theory of the Interval' (pp. 61-81).
- 42 Godard, 'Le Briquet de Capitaine Cook', op. cit., p. 21.
- 43 Godard to Noël Simsolo, episode one of *À voix nue*.
- 44 Malraux, *Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 11.
- 45 This idea was expressed by Guillaume (Jean-Pierre Léaud) in *LA CHINOISE* and formulated in the terms cited here by Godard in his homage to Henri Langlois at the Cinémathèque in 1966, 'Grâce à Henri Langlois', in: *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 280-283, (p. 282).
- 46 Godard inserts these words into the mouth of François Reichenbach in one of his fabricated interviews for *Arts* in the 1950s: 'Jean-Luc Godard fait parler François Reichenbach', in: *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 144-146 (p. 144).
- 47 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, p. 70. Cf. Sylvia Harvey's reading of film noir as an 'echo chamber' in which the massive displacement to existing systems of values and beliefs is caught and magnified in popular narratives before finding expression elsewhere. Sylvia Harvey, 'Woman's place: the absent family of



- film noir', in: E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Women in Film Noir*. London: BFI, 1978, pp. 22-34, especially p. 22.
- 48 Godard in 'La chance de repartir pour un tour': interview with Claude-Jean Philippe, in: *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 407-412, (p. 408)).
- 49 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 175.
- 50 'Godard fait des histoires', op. cit., p. 172.
- 51 I have looked in more detail at this question in 'Qu'était-ce que le cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard? An analysis of the cinema(s) in and around Godard's HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA', in: Elizabeth Ezra and Susan Harris (eds.), *France in Focus: French Cinema and National Identity*, Oxford: Berg, forthcoming 2000.
- 52 'Godard fait des histoires', op. cit., p. 168. Godard's terminology here engages deliberately with judicial vocabulary, the term 'dossier' invoking the legal sense of a 'case' or 'file' which might be compiled during a police investigation.
- 53 Godard in 'ABCD...JLG': interview with Olivier Péretié, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 18 December 1987, pp. 50-52 (p. 52).
- 54 Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 165.
- 55 Godard, 'Alfred Hitchcock est mort', op. cit., p. 415. Godard employs the term 'démontage' in this sense in *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 177.
- 56 Godard, 'À propos de cinéma et d'histoire', op. cit., p. 403.
- 57 Godard, 'Se vivre, se voir', op. cit., p. 405. Godard's thesis is in place as early as LETTER TO JANE. See 'Enquête sur une image', in: *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 350-362 (pp. 357-358).
- 58 Godard, 'À propos de cinéma et d'histoire', op. cit., p. 403. The 'Jeromine children' refers to the novel of this title by Ernst Wiechert; 'Narcissus and Goldmund' invokes the Hermann Hesse novel.
- 59 Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematograph*, op. cit., p. 41. Cf. Godard: 'And that's what cinema is: the rapprochement of things that ought to be brought together, but which aren't predisposed to being so' ('Une boucle bouclée: Nouvel entretien avec Jean-Luc Godard par Alain Bergala', in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 9-41 (p. 20)).
- 60 Godard in 'Le cinéma meurt, vive le cinéma!': interview with Danièle Heymann, *Le Monde*, 30 December 1987, pp. 1 and 10 (p. 10).
- 61 Godard consistently employs the term rapprochement as a synonym for montage: 'That's what I call montage, simply a rapprochement' (Godard, *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*, op. cit., p. 22). He refers to the process whereby he composes historical 'études' in 'Jean-Luc Godard rencontre Régis Debray', in: *Godard par Godard II*, pp. 423-431 (p. 426).
- 62 The original French reads:  
 'L'image est une création pure de l'esprit.  
 Elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées.  
 Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l'image sera forte – plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de la réalité poétique.  
 Deux réalités qui n'ont aucun rapport ne peuvent se rapprocher utilement. Il n'y a pas de création d'image.  
 Deux réalités contraires ne se rapprochent pas. Elles s'opposent.  
 On obtient rarement une force de cette opposition.

Une image n'est pas forte parce qu'elle est *brutale* ou *fantastique* – mais parce que l'association des idées est lointaine et juste.'

(Pierre Reverdy, 'L'Image', *Nord-Sud*, no. 13, March 1918 (anthologised in Pierre Reverdy, *Œuvres Complètes*, Paris, 1975, pp. 73-75)). André Breton, we recall, framed his first surrealist manifesto with the opening lines of the poem. It is cited in *PASSION, GRANDEUR ET DÉCADENCE D'UN PETIT COMMERCE DE CINÉMA*, KING LEAR, one of the television adverts for Marithé et François Girbaud, JLG/JLG: AUTO PORTRAIT DE DÉCEMBRE, and in *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA 4B, LES SIGNES PARMI NOUS*.

- 63 See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: L'Image-Temps*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985, p. 32.
- 64 Montage is thus extended from cinema and the image to *history*: 'there's the montage, there's a moment of history, there's a moment of cinema' (Godard, 'À propos de cinéma et d'histoire', op. cit., p. 403). The term 'neo-television' is borrowed from Umberto Eco, 'A guide to the Neo-Television of the 1980s', *Framework*, no. 25, 1984, pp. 18-27.
- 65 For a discussion of art in its role as 'metaphorical bridge' between reality and its representation, see Richard Shiff, 'Art and Life: A Metaphoric Relationship', in: Sheldon Sacks (ed.), *On Metaphor*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1979, pp. 105-120.
- 66 I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1936.
- 67 The suggestive idea of 'stereoscopic vision' as a model for the interpretative challenge of metaphor is borrowed from Paul Ricoeur. See Paul Ricoeur, 'The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling', *Critical Inquiry*, no. 5, Autumn 1978, pp. 143-159 (p. 154) (reprinted in Sacks, *On Metaphor*, op. cit., pp. 141-157). See, too, Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary studies of the creation of meaning in language*, trans. Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 294.
- 68 Godard, 'Godard fait son cinéma', op. cit., p. 78.
- 69 Godard in 'Le Petit Soldat': interview with Frédéric Bonnaud and Serge Kaganski, *Les Inrockuptibles*, 27 November 1996, pp. 22-29 (p. 26).
- 70 Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, 'Eisenstein on Montage', in: Glenny and Taylor, *S. M. Eisenstein*, op. cit., pp. xiii-xvi (p. xvi).
- 71 Jean-Luc Godard, 'Malraux, mauvais Français?', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 83, May 1958 (reprinted in *Godard par Godard I*, pp. 127-128 (p. 128)).

### Notes to 3: Elizabeth Taylor at Auschwitz: JLG and the Real Object of Montage

- 1 See 'Godard Makes (Hi)Stories': interview with Serge Daney, in: Raymond Bellour and Mary Lea Bandy (eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard: Son+Image, 1974-1991*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992, pp. 159-168 (p. 165).
- 2 Gavin Smith, 'Interview: Jean-Luc Godard', *Film Comment*, vol. 32, no. 2, March-April 1996, pp. 31-41 (p. 38).
- 3 Ibid..
- 4 Jean Cocteau's hypothetical remark that the lives of Rimbaud and Marshal Pétain might have ended in the same year gives a strange twist to the history of France.