

Audiovisual Thinking and the Essay Film



The Case of Francophone Europe

Amsterdam
University
Press

Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez

Audiovisual Thinking and the Essay Film

Audiovisual Thinking and the Essay Film

The Case of Francophone Europe

Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez

Amsterdam University Press



Enunciative Devices of the European Francophone Essay Film



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and Innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 896941.



Grant RYC2022-035889-I funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 and by the ESF+

Cover illustration: *Sans soleil* by Chris Marker.

© 1983 Argos Films

Photo Credit: Screen Shot of the film

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 858 4

e-ISBN 978 90 4855 691 5

DOI 10.5117/9789463728584

NUR 670



(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>)

© All authors / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2025

Some rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, any part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise).

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Introduction: Audiovisual Thinking and Enuciative Devices	11
1. The Letter	23
<i>Lettre de Sibérie</i> : Reality, Imagination, and the Subjectivity of Knowledge	24
<i>Letter to Jane</i> : Political and Cinematic Dialectics	34
<i>Lettre à Freddy Buache</i> : From Observation to Abstraction	42
<i>News from Home</i> : Exploring Female Alterity	49
<i>Sans soleil</i> : Reflecting on Postmodernity	53
Conclusions	74
2. The (Self-)Portrait	79
<i>Jane B. par Agnès V.</i> : Women's Identity, Intersubjectivity and Sisterhood	80
<i>JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre</i> : Authorial Identity and the Creative Process	84
<i>Leçons de ténèbres</i> : Exploring Gay Identity Through Pictorial Intermediality	97
Conclusions	107
3. The Dialogue	111
<i>Si j'avais quatre dromadaires</i> : From Photographic Spectatorship to Audiovisual Reflection	112
<i>Maso et Miso vont en bateau</i> : Feminist Counter-Narrative Through Irreverence and Irony	120
<i>Papa comme maman</i> : Producing Sociological Analysis	126
<i>Le Camion</i> : Fiction Fabulation as Author–Spectator Dialogue	132
Conclusions	142
4. The Diptych	145
<i>Camera-Eye</i> : Documentary vs Fiction for Political Engagement	147
<i>Ici et ailleurs</i> : Rethinking Militant Cinema	151
<i>Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)</i> : Thinking vs Fabulating	161
<i>Scénario du film Passion</i> : Rethinking Fiction Cinema	165
Conclusions	172

5. Hybridisations	177
<i>Lettres d'amour en Somalie</i> : Between Epistolary Intimacy and Diaristic Reality as Socio-Political Acknowledgement	178
<i>Du verbe aimer</i> : Between Autobiography and Self-Portrait as Identity Fracture	187
<i>Les Plages d'Agnès</i> : Between Self-Portrait and Autobiography as Identity Reconciliation	191
Conclusions	195
6. Saturation	199
<i>Level Five</i> : Hybridisations and Complexification	200
<i>Histoire(s) du cinéma</i> : Reflective Constellations and Accumulation	209
Conclusions	218
7. Autofiction	221
<i>Lettre pour L...</i> : From Autobiography to Self-Criticism	222
<i>Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil</i> : From Adaptation to Self-Knowledge	230
<i>Viaggio nella dopo-storia</i> : From Modernity to Contemporaneity Through Appropriation	237
Conclusions	243
8. The Spectator's Position	247
<i>Face aux fantômes</i> : The Mobilisation of the Gaze	248
<i>Jaurès</i> : The Immobilisation of the Gaze	256
<i>Ailleurs, partout</i> : Sharing the Non-gaze	263
Conclusions	273
Conclusion – Identity and Critical Thinking	279
Bibliography	283
Index	293

To Juana Ibáñez Ochoa,

incredibly brave and determined woman,
generous and enthusiastic, sensitive and intelligent,
of irresistible laughter and incorruptible character.

My deeply missed mother, always my inspiration.

Acknowledgements

This volume is the final output of my research project EDEF – Enunciative Devices of the European Francophone Essay Film, which was awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Individual Fellowship in its 2019 call. It was developed at the Institut ACTE, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, between September 2020 and November 2022 under the supervision of Professor José Moure. To him goes my infinite gratitude for his generous availability to establish the dialogue that would lead to my obtaining the fellowship, the firmness of his support and his confidence in my proposal. He kindly gave me his invaluable help and encouragement with all the project activities since my arrival at the institution and considered me as a colleague researcher since the first day.

I also want to thank the Institut ACTE and the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne for the administrative management of the fellowship and the project throughout its development. The project achieved the international projection it sought thanks also to the interest, support, and involvement of the researchers who participated in the two activities organised as part of the project: the international research event “The Essay Film as Critical Thinking” held in Paris on 9 and 10 June 2022, and the monographic issue *The Audiovisual Thinking Process in Contemporary Essay Films* published in *Comparative Cinema* 10(18) in July 2022. My gratitude goes to all of them, as well as to the journal and its research group CINEMA at the Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona.

I want to express my appreciation for the support of the international research events that have made the dissemination of these results possible: “From the Scenic Essay to the Essay-Exhibition: Expanding the Essay Form in the Arts after Literature and Film,” S:PAM – Studies in Performing Arts & Media, Ghent University (27 April 2022); “NECS 2022. Epistemic Media: Atlas, Archive, Network,” European Network for Cinema and Media Studies, Bucharest (22–26 June 2022); “AFECCA 2023: Collectifs, bandes et collaborations dans le cinéma et l’audiovisuel,” Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès / ENSAV (28–30 June 2023); “Visual Evidence XXIX: Documentary Ecologies,” University of Udine (6–9 September 2023); “Personal Perspective and Essayistic Form in Nonfiction Film and Art,” Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, Vilnius (22–23 September 2023); “Share/Partager: Everyday Aesthetics & Collective Gestures,” Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (25–27 January 2024); “Intermedial Connections: Impurity in the Arts,” Theatre and Film School of the Lisbon Polytechnic Institute (8–10 May 2024). I also want to

thank the rigorous and committed work of the journals that published part of the research results and generously allowed their reproduction in this volume: *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, *Studies in European Cinema*, *Comparative Cinema* and *Arte, individuo y sociedad*. My infinite gratitude to Amsterdam University Press for the patience, rigour, and interest with which it has edited and published this volume.

Immense thanks to Josep Maria Català for his unwavering support and interest before and during this project, for being the first reader of each new text and the best antidote for doubts and insecurities. A cheerful thanks also to Laura Rascaroli and Deane Williams for their generosity towards and interest in the project, for valuing my research, and for paving the way for exciting collaboration. I also want to express here my heartfelt gratitude to Àngel Quintana, for always accompanying and encouraging me on this already long research journey, also in Paris. Heartfelt thanks also to Jordi Balló for always keeping me in mind, and generously persisting on collaboration.

Eternal thanks to my beautiful people, for their crucial help and support in moving from Madrid to Paris amid the pandemic; I couldn't have done it without them. For being a constant motivation and for sharing this exciting and challenging stage of my research career. To my feline love, my gorgeous companion, for being an inexhaustible source of care, tenderness, and purring. And finally, always, and forever, to my deeply missed, wonderful parents, who are no longer here to enjoy my achievements, which are entirely theirs.

Introduction: Audiovisual Thinking and Enunciative Devices

Abstract: This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the research and describes the evolution of the European Francophone essay film, applying its methodological approach: the analysis of the audiovisual thinking that the works generate, starting from their enunciative devices. From modern cinema to contemporary cinema, from militant cinema to expanded cinema, and from analogue to digital, the European francophone essay film has evolved concerning these audiovisual practices and expressions regarding both the enunciative devices used to create its thinking process—from the clearly coded intermedial forms to the complexification and even saturation of the audiovisual discourse—and the themes addressed—expression of imagination, revolutionary action, philosophical analysis, social vindication, or intimate reflection, among others.

Keywords: essay film, critical thinking, intermedial forms, subjectivity, identity, Francophone cinema.

This monograph aims to study the European Francophone essay film, from its first materialisations in cinematic modernity to the present, based on its enunciative devices. From a semio-pragmatic perspective and through an interdisciplinary and intermedial study, I intend to analyse through which procedures the audiovisual thinking materialises, how subjectivity and identity—individual, social, political, cultural, artistic, etc.—think through cinema, generating critical thinking both from the spectator in particular and from society in general. To do so, it is necessary, first, to establish a definition of the essay film, or at least, a focus within it, which allows me to rigorously determine the most adequate corpus for the investigation. Thus, and being aware of the mobility of the definition of this filmic form, I will focus on the creations that offers an audiovisual thinking process that a

subjectivity or subjectivities generate, which implies both the hybridisation of materials—fictional, documentary, experimental, etc.—and the self-reflective nature of the result. I, therefore, consider the essay film as a filmic form born out of cinematic modernity that abandoned the canons of fiction and documentary films to explore an unknown territory defined by cinematic subjectivity and thinking, accomplishing a fascinating evolution to shape “a form which thinks”¹ using Jean-Luc Godard’s expression. The final decades of the 21st century witnessed the consolidation of the essay film, which was enabled by postmodern thought and culture, as well as by the development of video recording technology. In this way, many filmmakers developed a practice of audiovisual thinking for which Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998) could be considered the paragon, marking a turning point that also took place at the end of the century. Over the last 25 years, this essayistic practice has proliferated thanks to the digital revolution, facilitating diverse experiences of subjectivity and intimacy and multiplying the possibilities of audiovisual editing—that is, of the very thinking process that defines this filmic form.

To carry out this analysis, I have used the theoretical development of which the film essay has been the objective in the three decades of this 21st century. The most notable studies devoted to the essay film have established its key traits and specificities: the issues related to its genealogy, historical path and bond with the literary essay, allowing for the consolidation of this research area. Several collective works have been decisive in this regard: Liandrat-Guigues & Gagnebin, 2004; Weinrichter, 2007; Bacqué et al., 2015; Alter & Corrigan, 2017. Numerous authors have studied the growing corpus of essay films from various perspectives, producing key works: Rascaroli, 2009, 2017; Corrigan, 2011; Montero, 2012; Català, 2014; Alter, 2018; among others. The most recent studies already show the breadth of approaches through which contemporary practices of the essay film can be analysed: Papazian & Eades, 2016; Hollweg & Krstic, 2019; Vassilieva & Williams, 2020; Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2022b; to single out a few among a growing field.

From a theoretical perspective, my analysis takes four authors as a starting point through which to establish the characterisation of the defined audiovisual thinking process. I first use the definition of essay film expounded by José Moure—relational operation of different cultural materials; simultaneity of speech and reflection on itself; the presence of the author’s self, of the essayist; dialogic communication with the spectator—to

1 Godard (1998), *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Chapter 3A.

focus on the nature of this “thinking in act”² (2004, pp. 37–28) through two complementary procedures: the “parataxic thinking” (Català, 2014, p. 206) and the “interstitial thinking” (Rascaroli, 2017, p. 51). The former focuses on the juxtaposition of different elements:

[T]he essay film is primarily parataxic [...] It is composed of heterogeneous elements that are not organised through syntactic relationships, but, due to their hybrid quality, they generate a reflection process that is open thanks to the fact that they are not being regulated by a given syntax. (Català, 2014, p. 209)

The latter concentrates on the gaps created among the different elements: “I say that the essay film, as thinking cinema, thinks interstitially—and that, to understand how the essay film works, we must look at how it forges gaps, how it creates disjunction” (Rascaroli, 2017, p. 11). I argue that both processes materialise in the creation of “sentence-images,” using Jacques Rancière’s concept to analyse *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, which combines this dual nature of the audiovisual thinking: “The sentence is not the sayable and the image is not the visible. By sentence-image I intend the combination of two functions that are to be defined esthetically—that is, by the way in which they undo the representative relationship between text and image” (2007 [2003], p. 46). Thus, this thinking image oscillates “between two poles, dialectical and symbolic; [...] between the image that separates and the sentence which strives for continuous phrasing” (p. 58).

Furthermore, it is fundamental to consider the dialogical nature of the essay film, as analysed by Laura Rascaroli and David Montero: “The essayist allows the answers to emerge somewhere else, precisely in the position occupied by the embodied spectator. [...] The two subject positions, the ‘I’ and the ‘you,’ determine and shape one another” (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 36). An “active spectatorship” emerges, allowing the development of critical thinking: “interpellation in essayistic films is a liberating force since it encourages the viewer to develop a critical position” (Montero, 2012, p. 121), and the self-reflection about our own position as spectators: “the audience is invited actively to reconsider their role and what is expected of them in order to reflect upon their own status as spectators” (pp. 118–19). The essay film will explore and delve into the possibilities of this dialogical nature, producing different dynamics and displacements between both positions: “An important element when considering viewer positioning in

2 All translations in the book from languages other than English are mine.

essayistic filmmaking is the discursive displacement of the author towards the interpretative field of the viewer, [...] The same process can be observed from the other side, allowing the reader to actually re-experience the original process of reflection" (p. 124). Thus, the essay film materialises as a dialogue between the author and an "emancipated spectator," using Rancière's concept, which must question and complete the thinking process proposed by the filmmaker:

Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; [...] The spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages in other kind of place. She composes her own poem with the element of the poem before her. [...] They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them. (2009 [2008], p. 13)

My analysis of the enunciative devices of the essay film is generated from three levels. The first, which organises the chapters of this monograph, establishes the intermedial forms created: the letter, the (self-)portrait, the dialogue, the diary, the autobiography, etc. The second determines the audiovisual materials used: film, video, photography, animation, etc. The third includes the audiovisual procedures generated: voiceover and voice-in; sounds and music; intertitles and subtitles; new footage and found footage, freeze frame, black screen, crossfade, superimposition, image speed, colour manipulation, etc. From this structure, I aim to analyse the functions of each enunciative device in the generation of the audiovisual thinking process. To do so, it is essential to first describe the historical development of the essay film in relation to the different audiovisual movements and practices to which it is linked, in order to later delve into the analysis of the different works and their different enunciative devices.

From modern cinema to contemporary cinema, from militant cinema to expanded cinema, and from analogue to digital, the European Francophone essay film has evolved concerning these audiovisual practices and expressions regarding both the enunciative devices used to create its thinking process—from the clearly coded intermedial forms to the complexification and even saturation of the audiovisual discourse—and the themes addressed—expression of imagination, revolutionary action, philosophical analysis, social vindication, or intimate reflection, among others. I argue that the conception of an audiovisual thinking process is a highly unstable phenomenon that implies multiple vanishing points

through which it is easy to deviate but also which make the essay film evolve.

The starting point of the essay film is to be generated from the first person of the essayist in order to express their subjectivity, which is a consequence of cinematic modernity and its desire to explore the subjective experience in filmic discourse, opposing the objective and invisible narration of classical cinema. This first characteristic marks the difference between a documentary that begins to be produced from freer enunciative forms—e.g. Georges Franju, Alain Resnais, and Jean Rouch—and the essay film. Chris Marker instrumentalised the first-person enunciation in *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958). This new expression of the filmmaker's subjectivity requires a clearly encoded enunciative device that facilitates its comprehension. The letter not only becomes an intermedial form, but also an intimate expression of the filmmaker's imagination. The incipient process of audiovisual thinking cannot yet resort to the possibilities of video technology, so it is basically generated from the oscillation between documentary reality and Marker's imaginary universe: animations, advertisements, imaginary newsreels, etc. The essay film is constructed through this oscillation between reality and imagination. A few years later, Marker created *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (1966) from photographs, still images taken over ten years. The thinking process is then produced from the intermedial form of the dialogue and the shift between the three subjectivities of the three characters who look at the images shown: the author (identified with Marker) and his two friends. We verify that, taking into account the editing limitations of the analogue film, the thinking process resorts to the hybridisation of materials (photography, animated images), the shifts among enunciative subjectivities and repetition/variation.

The essay film is also linked to militant cinema practices. However, it is necessary to point out the differences between them. In the case of Marker, his experience of militant cinema materialises in documentary work, whose aim is to show the realities of revolutionary struggles around the world. It is thus associated with a practice of direct cinema that is very different from the reflection defining the essay film. I therefore argue that Marker's properly militant cinema is not produced in the form of essay films, but of direct documentaries and compilation films. For his part, Godard developed his practice of militant cinema through the Dziga Vertov Group. Again, the renunciation of authorship in search of revolutionary anonymity makes it impossible to embody the essay film following the proposed definition. Godard's militant cinema is produced as a revolutionary, ideological practice that eliminates the subjective thinking process in pursuit of political

expression. Thus, subjective concerns regarding personal revolutionary responsibility are first expounded in *Camera-Eye* (1967), a short film included in the collective film *Loin du Vietnam*, in which Godard expresses himself in the first person and appears in the image for the first time. This expression of subjectivity disappears during the group's work and only reappears at its conclusion. The filmmakers' subjectivities burst into political reflection to generate the first essay film in *Letter to Jane* (1972), Godard's last work in collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin. As in *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires*, the essay film is created from still images. In this case, it establishes the relationship between the revolutionary commitment through the fiction in *Tout va bien* (1972)—Jane Fonda as an actor—and that of reality—Jane Fonda as an activist. Like the letter, especially for Marker, the diptych is another paramount intermedial form in Godard's essay practice. In this sense, *Ici et ailleurs* (1976) is a fundamental essay film at different levels. This is the first work with video technology and the first collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville. The essay film does not materialise as a demonstration of the revolutionary struggle but as a later reflection that no longer properly belongs to militant cinema, but to a *cinéma engagé* that shows the mistakes made during the previous stage. The video then allows the juxtaposition between materials of the modern essay film to become infinite possibilities of relationship: superimpositions, crossfades, manipulation of the image in all its possibilities, insertion of the text, etc. Godard's thinking process in relation to the never-released film *Jusqu'à la victoire* expands to include dialogue and intersubjectivity, thanks to Miéville's female and feminist participation.

Miéville's presence in *Ici et ailleurs* marks the beginning of the women's presence in the essay film. They start to create works that move towards this filmic form to reflect on women's identity: women filmmakers' gaze, their identification processes, representation, and self-representation. Their cinematic reflections include the vindication of their female filmmakers' status and mainly emerge through the devices of the portrait and the self-portrait. As Agnès Varda states, "The first feminist gesture consists of saying [...] I look. The act of deciding to look [...] the world is not defined by how I am looked at, but by how I look at it." (*Filmer le désir*, Mandy, 2002). My research aims to analyse whether there is also a female gesture in relation to *how I think*. The analysis shows how women's essay films are strongly linked to self-representation and the feminist vindication of the filmmaker as the author of the images through their enunciative devices (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2023b). While male authors of the essay film consolidate the figure of the essayist as the "manipulator" of their own images and/or those of others

(Godard and Marker are the paramount examples) in a space for reflection subsequent to the filming and associated with the editing room, women filmmakers remain in the position of the creator of images that must also appear in them, documenting their activity as part of the fundamental feminist vindication. Therefore, we observe how the women's essay film is strongly linked to the camera rather than to the editing room—and to a self-representation that evolves through all its possible materialisations. This would confirm the idea that women have been delayed in reaching the position of the essayist as a manipulator of images due to the need to vindicate the figure of the female filmmaker, understood as a creator of images. This delay has meant that the female form of the essayist's position has rarely been produced in the analogue editing room. Women have owned this position in the digital age and in front of a computer to generate a reflection through the manipulation of images of which they do not need to claim authorship but rather the work made from them.

The essay film is therefore consolidated thanks to the video technology that enables the connection of different materials through which this filmic form materialises and also regarding the postmodern era from a philosophical and cultural point of view—Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, and Zygmunt Bauman theories, among many others. A dizzying evolution then takes place in just two decades, which separates *Sans soleil* (1983) from *Level Five* (1997) and *Scénario du film Passion* (1982) from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998). Thus, it is evident how the essay film is, by nature, a postmodern practice that already places the essayist in a concrete space-time: that of the viewing of audiovisual materials in an editing present after the filming. Once again, through the epistolary device, *Sans soleil* becomes a key work of the essay film, since both its form and content revolve around the postmodern era. Marker's reflection on the paradigm shift imposed by postmodernity, between past historicity and present historicism, the dissolution of history and the memory associated with it, is linked to the reflection on the evolution of the nature of images: filmic images, television images, electronic images, video games images, and their manipulation in the Zone. In his last diptych construction, *Scénario du film Passion*, Godard embodies the essayist's total self-portrait, placing him in the editing room where he not only looks and reflects on the images but also manipulates them in real time to project himself in both the before and the after of the film work.

At the end of the century, *Level Five* materialises as the maximum complexity of Marker's essay film. It offers a reflection on the memory–pain–oblivion axis in the historical and also intimate space, and on the role that different technologies and devices have in it—photography, film,

video, video games and cyberspace. Not only are the enunciative devices multiplying, hybridising, and fragmenting, but they also show a point of saturation in which the thinking process seems no longer possible. The farther and faster nature of cyberspace and digital technology provokes a condition that prevents reflection; information saturation nullifies critical thinking. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* instrumentalises the quotation—literary, philosophical, historical, pictorial, photographic and cinematic—to generate a series that becomes the epitome of this audiovisual form, offering its own definition—a form that thinks. In this case, this form reflects on cinema history and its insertion into 20th-century history. Multiple manipulation procedures create their maximum density in the visual image and the sound image, reaching the saturation of the audiovisual thinking process. Both works mark the extreme of the complexity and saturation of the essay film of both filmmakers.

This development of the essay film during the last two decades of the century is simultaneous to the so-called postmodern cinema, *hypermodernité* for Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy (2007), in which postmodern aestheticism aims at a sensation-image that moves away from the cinema of thought and, therefore, from the essay film. I argue that the essay film is one of the main connections between modern cinema and contemporary cinema. During this same period, what has come to be called expanded cinema has also developed: the movement of the filmic form to other spaces (mainly the museum) thanks to video technology. This expanded cinema constitutes the main vanishing point of the audiovisual thinking of the essay film. Even if the support is ideal for its development, expanded cinema evolves through the fragmentation of the audiovisual work in different screens, spaces, and temporalities. In this way, the audiovisual thinking process does not take place inside the filmic form but on the outside, where the spectator must reflect on the different audiovisual pieces. I argue that the thinking process proper to the essay film becomes a thinking proposal that the spectator must develop outside of the work, provoking a dispersion of the audiovisual thinking. These works, therefore, abandon the definition of the essay film proposed here since it is transformed into an installation. Marker (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2023c) and Varda are two representative examples of this displacement.

In this way, regarding the contemporary essay film of the 21st century, I argue that the digital revolution has not only dematerialised the audiovisual thinking process, but that the instantaneity of the manipulation of the materials makes the process automatically become a result. This fact has

two consequences. First, the disappearance of the process in favour of the result causes the displacement of audiovisual thinking towards narration. In addition, digital technology also causes an undeniable displacement towards the intimate space through handheld cameras and the *filmeur's* experience, which implies that the enunciative device of the diary proliferates significantly. It creates a new vanishing point towards the autobiographical documentary. Second, the strategy to remain in the audiovisual thinking process consists of slowing it down, developing slow thinking “in which a temporalised, ‘slow’ thought may take place. This slowness is a form of theory as well as a performative semiotics” generalising what Rascaroli theorised about the “essayistic border images”: “As a process, it is, ultimately, a temporalising strategy: [...] it opens temporal gaps for thought” (Rascaroli, 2022, pp. 36, 48).

Starting from these two tendencies of the contemporary essay film, I point out two relevant practices regarding its enunciative devices: autofiction as a self-reflective practice and the spectator's position as a slow-thinking practice concerning identity and spectatorship. With regard to the first one, in *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* (2002), Lætitia Masson creates an essay film by turning the adaptation of Cristine Angot's novel—*Pourquoi le Brésil* (2001)—into an autofiction about her own experience regarding the literary text and the film work in progress. Thus, three space-time coordinates converge: fiction, autofiction, and documentary, through which the filmmaker's thinking process about her own identity develops. In *Viaggio nella dopo-storia* (2015), Vincent Dieutre appropriates *Viaggio in Italia* (1954) by Roberto Rossellini to generate a contemporary experience of the couple's relationship, turned gay, from which to reflect on post-history in general, and the relationship between fiction and documentary, and appropriation as a contemporary practice in particular. Regarding the second, the spectator's position, *Face aux fânetes* (Jean-Louis Comolli and Silvie Lindeperg, 2009) offers us the embodiment of an emancipated spectator to show the possibilities of self-reflection and critical thinking from the viewing of *Nuit et brouillard* (Alain Resnais, 1956) and through the mobilisation of the spectator's gaze. *Ailleurs, partout* (Isabelle Ingold and Vivianne Perelmuter, 2020), for its part, is situated in the position of the viewer of live webcams accessible on the internet, operational images of the non-gaze, to generate a reflection about the connection between globalisation and migration.

Finally, two more vanishing points of the essay film materialise during the first two decades of the new century. First, we are faced with an enormous proliferation of the academic video essay, in which the author abandons

the linguistic text to generate an audiovisual piece in which they analyse the images while showing them. Thus, the piece usually does not reach the category of an audiovisual thinking process, since it is not produced through the images but remains in the text that the images illustrate. Second, the power of the essay film as a theoretical tool has marked a new analytical practice in which an audiovisual work is analysed “as if” it were an essay film, turning the filmic form into an analytical methodology which is applied to works that do not have to respond to its characterisation.

Therefore, if we collect all the vanishing points I mentioned, we obtain a useful description of the instability of the essay film as an audiovisual thinking process. It differs from modern cinema because it requires the possibilities of video technology. It diverges from militant cinema because it needs the author’s subjectivity and the space and time for reflection. It varies from postmodern cinema, since the latter focuses on sensation and avoids reflection. It differs from expanded cinema because it stops being a thinking process to disperse into multiple elements. It diverges from contemporary cinema because of both dematerialisation and narrativisation. It varies from the academic video essay because the reflection does not materialise through the audiovisual elements. Therefore, I finally argue that even if the essay film currently reaches its highest potential, it also suffers its maximum instability due to fragmentation, dispersion, dematerialisation, and acceleration of its thinking process.

Works Cited

- Alter, N. M. (2018). *The essay film after fact and fiction*. Columbia University Press.
- Alter, N. M., & Corrigan, T. (Eds.). (2017). *Essays on the essay film*. Columbia University Press.
- Bacqué, B., Neyrat, C., Schulmann, C., & Terrier, V. (Eds.). (2015). *Jeux sérieux. Cinéma et art contemporains transforment l'essai*. MAMCO.
- Català, J. M. (2014). *Estética del ensayo. La forma ensayo, de Montagne a Godard*. Universitat de Valencia.
- Corrigan, T. (2011). *The essay film: From Montagne, after Marker*. Oxford University Press.
- Hollweg, B., & Krtic, I. (Eds.). (2019). *World cinema and the essay film: Transnational perspectives on a global practice*. Edinburg University Press.
- Liandrat-Guigues, S., & Gagnebin, M. (Eds.). (2004). *L'essai et le cinéma*. Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2007). *L'écran global*. Éditions du Seuil.

- Montero, D. (2012). *Thinking images: The essay film as a dialogic form in European cinema*. Peter Lang.
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (Ed.). (2022b). *The audiovisual thinking process in contemporary essay films*. Monographic issue. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18). <https://raco.cat/index.php/Comparativecinema/issue/view/30599>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2023b). Women's essay film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the female audiovisual thinking process. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2023c). *Zapping Zone* and *Level Five*: Between the visitor's experience of the video installation and the filmmaker's reflection of the essay film. *Arte, individuo y sociedad*, 35(4), 1377–1395. <https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.87867>
- Moure, J. (2004). Essai de définition de l'essai au cinéma. In S. Liandrat-Guigues & M. Gagnebin, *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 25–39). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Papazian, E. A., & Eades, C. (Eds.). (2016). *The essay film: Dialogue, politics, utopia*. Wallflower Press.
- Rancière, J. (2007). *The future of the image*. Verso / (2003). *Le destin des images*. La Fabrique éditions.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *The emancipated spectator*. Verso / (2008). *Le spectateur émancipé*. La Fabrique éditions.
- Rascaroli, L. (2009). *The personal camera: Subjective cinema and the essay film*. Wallflower Press.
- Rascaroli, L. (2017). *How the essay film thinks*. Oxford University Press.
- Rascaroli, L. (2022). Unfolding borders: For a semiotics of essayistic border images. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), 32–52. <http://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.03>
- Vassilieva, J., & Williams, D. (Eds.). (2020). *Beyond the essay film: Subjectivity, textuality and technology*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Weinrichter, A. (Ed.). (2007). *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo*. Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de Navarra.

1. The Letter

Abstract: This chapter studies the use of the enunciative device of the letter in the European Francophone essay film through the analysis of five works: *Lettre de Sibérie* (Chris Marker, 1957); *Letter to Jane* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1972), *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1981), *News from Home* (Chantal Akerman, 1977) and *Sans soleil* (Chris Marker, 1983). It shows the relevance and evolution of the epistolary device as an enunciative device of the essay film, moving from the modern letter-film to the postmodern epistolary film. In these works, the epistolary device enables critical thinking about reality in different spheres and through various procedures: using imagination and subjectivity, analysing images, generating their abstraction, exploring alterity and reflecting on postmodernity.

Keywords: essay film, epistolary cinema, subjectivity, alterity, critical thinking, Francophone cinema.

Since *Lettre de Sibérie* (Chris Marker, 1957), the bond between the essay film and the epistolary device is not only a constant throughout the development of the former, but also a key element in its evolution. The letter becomes the ideal device for exploring alterity, a paradigm of postmodernity that is widely studied (Kristeva, 1988; Ricœur, 1990; Augé, 1992). The epistolary nature implies that both the addresser and the addressee must carry out a projection of themselves—the first in writing and the second in reading—that allows exploration of the three alterities proposed by Ricœur, “proper alterity, alterity of the other, alterity of conscience” (1990, p. 410), through which he describes and studies the complexity of this “ontology of alterity” (p. 373). In addition, taking into account that epistolary writing is linked to travel on many occasions, it also makes it possible to explore social and historical alterity.

The bond between the essay film and the epistolary device also evolves through the film forms that it constructs. *Lettre de Sibérie* generates the

letter-film in which the entire film becomes an audiovisual letter from the filmmaker to an anonymous recipient. *Letter to Jane* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jena-Pierre Gorin, 1972) makes this structure more complex by dealing with two senders addressing two recipients: Jane Fonda, who in turn becomes the protagonist of its content, and the spectators. *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1981) shows for the first time the epistolary sender and also problematises the time of enunciation, splitting it into the past, present, and future of the audiovisual epistolary writing. The epistolary device becomes more complex and goes from presenting a single letter to being made up of a set of them, giving rise to the *epistolary film* that Chantal Akerman creates in *News from Home* (1977) and that Marker brings to its full development in *Sans soleil* (1983). In both cases, the missives are read by the addressee. The situation of enunciation, its space-time, moves from writing to reading, evidencing the relevance of otherness. The detailed analysis of these essay films will allow us to understand how the epistolary device is used and evolves in the construction of the filmmaker's audiovisual thinking process.

Lettre de Sibérie: Reality, Imagination, and the Subjectivity of Knowledge

Lettre de Sibérie by Chris Marker, which I consider a foundational work of the essay film, is also the first letter-film of European Francophone cinematography, and opens audiovisual language to subjectivity, imagination, and thinking. This new audiovisual form uses the epistolary tool for its construction due to its ability to generate a space of subjectivity and self-reflection. Marker decides to delegate his locutionary identity to Georges Rouquier's voice. The filmmaker, aware of the importance of oral expression, the utterance of written words, and the poeticity that must emerge from its locution, gives it to another person. This delegated enunciation introduces a new level of fictionality that does not prevent the letter from having as addresser a self that we identify with the filmmaker: "Marker splits, or hides, we could say, behind various voices that vary from film to film [...] we must assume that these are projections of himself, disguises through which he presents himself and through which, at the same time, he hides" (Català, 2014, p. 371). In this way, the textual speech of this letter-film is generated from the expression of an epistolary I-voice (Chion, 1999 [1982], p. 49) that is located on the border between the integral acousmètre and the commentator (p. 21). As the author of the cinematic letter, the addresser absent in the visual image could appear in it at any time as an integral acousmètre and,

nevertheless, he decides to remain absent, without interfering with what is shown, which displaces him towards the commentator–acousmètre.

The cinematic letter is addressed to a recipient whose identity is not revealed, but whose spatial-temporal location is. Marker writes to a “you” existing at the time of writing the letter, which is in the city of Paris. Therefore, the situation of enunciation and reception is perfectly delimited, with the exception of the recipient’s anonymity. Marker writes in 1957 a cinematic missive from Siberia to a friend living in Paris. The letter starts with a literary quotation by Henri Michaux: “I am writing you this letter from a distant land” (1963, p. 71)—the title of a poem written by him in 1938 and which Marker will quote again in his letter—that we hear over images of the Siberian landscapes.

It is necessary to notice another fact made possible by the epistolary *vous* of the French language. This enunciative person, whom we interpret as “you” (singular and plural) in Marker’s text, plays with the reading of a plural “you” that becomes evident at the moment in which Marker refers to some crucial images: “Take a good look because I won’t show them to you [the addressee and the spectators] again.”¹ The intimate communication that Marker allows us to witness then moves towards the spectator, making them a participant in his dialogue, as happens again in his ironic comparison between North America and Siberia regarding the gold searching: “You expected to see Indians?” ending with a shot of the precious metal: “Disappointing, isn’t it? As I said before, there are two ways of finding gold.” In this way, the spectator goes from attending the reading of this letter as an authorised witness to being questioned by it through these displacements of the addressee’s instance at the more ironic and humorous moments, less intimate ones. The epistolary discourse, therefore, can be used as a tool to achieve the progressive involvement of the spectator in the reflection that the essay film pursues and provokes. In the article that André Bazin writes about *Lettre de Sibérie*,² the critic analyses the dialectics between image and speech associated with the field of essay cinema. Although Bazin does not take into consideration the epistolary nature of the film, I take up his analysis, understanding the achievements he presents as a consequence of the choice of the personal letter as a discursive device:

Chris Marker brings to his films an absolutely new notion of montage that I will call “horizontal,” as opposed to traditional montage that plays with the sense of duration through the relationship of shot to

1 The film’s commentary is published in Marker, *Commentaires*. Éditions du Seuil, 1961.

2 Article published in *France-Observateur*, 30 October 1958.

shot. Here, a given image does not refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said. [...] Better, it might be said that the basic element is the beauty of what is said and heard, that intelligence flows from the audio element to the visual. The montage has been forged from ear to eye. (2017 [1958], pp. 103–104)

It is the epistolary discourse and its dialogical nature that create sound beauty. It is the choice of the epistolary device that fosters the speech–image relationship and generates the horizontal montage. Their constant interaction also fosters the presence/absence of the addressee, next to which the spectator stands at the moment of reading/viewing the letter, making the cinematic practice of filming, montage, and post-production its writing. In this way, the classical cinematic montage of the movement-image, in pursuit of canonical narration, disappears so that a horizontal montage is produced in order to address an “other,” in privacy, and make the spectator participate in that personal communication. Alexandre Astruc identified this new cinema of thought with showing the relationships that link people: “Every thought, like every feeling, is a link between a human being and another human being or certain objects that are part of their universe. By explaining these links, drawing its tangible trace, cinema can truly become the place of expression of a thought” (1992, p. 327). The description precisely fits Marker’s work, which transmits his thoughts to another person thanks to the epistolary discourse and its dialogical nature.

The letter, therefore, is a powerful tool in the construction of this filmic form, an expression of thinking. To the speech–image dialectics and the writing/production–reading/viewing binomial, we must add another characteristic of this new epistolary model. It is a letter that does not expect an answer; it tells of a trip and reports what the addresser has experienced in an unknown land he is passing through. This characteristic of a travel letter prevents the conception of a response and, at the same time, fosters an open space for essayistic practice and the reverie about the addressee in the temporal simultaneity and the spatial *décalage* inherent in the letter: “It’s seven in the morning in Irkutsk, three in Bagdad, six in the afternoon in Mexico, and midnight in Paris. You are asleep. I’m looking at the Irkutsk Dam sitting on its own reflection, like a station in outer space.” The existence of a recipient enables the complicity and intimacy that the entire letter gives off, especially when the filmmaker imagines the latter sharing the experience of the trip with him. This complicity would not be possible without the existence of an intimate addressee, since it is their presence

that makes possible the extratextual load of implied understandings of which the spectator is an authorised witness:

It is not a walk through the streets of Yakutsk that will make you understand Siberia. It would require an imaginary newsreel shot all over the country. I would screen it for you in the beautiful new cinema in Yakutsk, for example. I would tell you about it with the help of those Siberian expressions that are already images in themselves.

Thus, Bazin identifies Marker's film with a new filmic form:

Letter from Siberia is an essay on the reality of Siberia past and present in the form of a filmed report. [...] I would say, an essay documented by film. The important word is "essay," understood in the same sense that it has in literature—an essay at once historical and political, written by a poet as well. (2017, p. 103)

Indeed, Marker's work is definitely far from the documentary practices known up to that moment. However, Bazin ignores its epistolary nature to define it as a "filmed report." The discursive framework of the report is not the one chosen by Marker, precisely because such a device would not have allowed him to carry out the historical, political, poetic, and intimate essay that *Lettre de Sibérie* generates. The film embodies an essay in the form of a cinematic letter about the past and contemporary Siberian reality.

This new filmic form transforms the relationship between the visual image and the sound image. I agree with Bazin regarding the difference that Marker's work imposes, but I disagree regarding the subordination of the image to the speech. I understand horizontal montage as a practice that places the sound image and the visual image at the same level. The author does not choose the discourse of direct cinema, the report, or the diary; he chooses the epistolary device. The tool used is the intimate narration to a complicit recipient in the distance because it provides the space for what we could call the intimate essay or the essay of total subjectivity. Intimacy opens the doors of poeticity, irony and a sense of humour; personality traits that can be shown thanks to trust in an accomplice, a confidant. The intimate diary does not provide these tools, since, in the absence of that complicit otherness, those characteristics linked to the need to communicate with the other are lost. Only epistolary speech makes possible the reverie of an imaginary newsreel. From that same complicity are born the filmmaker's confessions about his fascination with animals or his taste for

animations and advertisements, all of them treated from the understanding that comes from addressing a well-known, intimate addressee. As Richard Roud observes:

More than any other director, Marker seems to have fulfilled Astruc's famous prophecy of the camera-stylo, writing films as one writes a book. [...] image, text and idea seem miraculously to have been created simultaneously. [...] the result is a kind of one-man total cinema, a twentieth-century, a 1 to 1.33 Montaigne. (1963, pp. 26–27)

In 1940, Hans Richter, for his part, defined it as succinctly as possible: “to visualise thoughts on screen” (2017 [1940], p. 91). The filmic essayist is already a reality in the terms in which Astruc imagined them, since they achieve an audiovisual calligraphy made up of innumerable different elements that make it possible, and that in Marker find the perfect balance to solidify into cinematic expression. Domènec Font states:

The epistolary device is, above all, a subjective gesture, as well as an extraordinary vehicle of ideas and visions of the world. Marker needs to build interlocutors, and the letter makes it possible to establish a dialogue, share an experience, enable in a certain way a face to face, as Foucault would say. He acts through the gesture of writing on himself, which allows him to process *Lettre de Sibérie* as a self-confession. (2007, p. 200)

The personal letter becomes the ideal vehicle for the development of digression in all its possibilities, favouring the filmic form of the essay film, “transforming an aesthetic impression into an ethical reflection” (Català, 2006, pp. 180–181). The autonomy between image and textual speech establishes equality, making the egalitarian dialectic possible. Christa Blümlinger also collects some of the keys to the essay film that define Marker's work: “humour, irony, and paradox; its principle is contradiction, collision ...” “It is by imagination and reflection that Marker combines his memories in associative chains” (2004, pp. 54, 57).

Marker's letter traces an itinerary that combines the real dimension with the imaginary one, until he states that the most real thing would be an imaginary newsreel film. The narration to a complicit “other” allows for these drifts, since this imaginary film is the device that projects the narrator and narratee into the same space-time, sharing the experience of the trip. I trace here the oscillation between the real and the imaginary

as essential components of the same subjective geography. To do this, I break down the film into the different geographical spaces that mark the itinerary of the trip and the epistolary enunciation to the addressee. Therefore, I collect the real geographical displacements, the interspersed imaginary drifts, and the epistolary expression that makes them possible. This scheme will allow us to more clearly understand the relationship between the two spaces as well as the importance of the epistolary device for their interrelation.

REAL	IMAGINARY
<i>I'm writing to you from a distant land ...</i>	
<i>As I write ...</i>	
Angarsk	
The Taiga	
<i>I'm writing to you from the edge of the world... →</i>	The mammoth, the mole: Animation
The Lena	
<i>So just picture to yourself(ves) a huge lazy Seine ...</i>	
The fox	
<i>I'm writing to you from the land of childhood ...</i>	
The Trans-Siberian	
Irkutsk	
<i>midnight in Paris. You're asleep or having dinner.</i>	
The Angara	
Irkutsk	
<i>take a good look because I won't show them to you again</i>	
The Taiga, the Tundra	
Yakutsk	
The reindeer →	The reindeer: Advertising short film
The Evenks	
Mishka in Yakutsk	
France in Siberia →	Yves Montand: music video
Yakutsk	
Three versions of Yakutsk →	Imaginary newsreel: black-and-white images
	<i>A walk through the streets of Yakutsk isn't going to make you understand Siberia.</i>
	<i>I would screen it for you ...</i>
	<i>A weather balloon would take you high ...</i>
	<i>You would see silver birches ...</i>
	<i>You would see Yakutsk ...</i>
	<i>You would see a topsy-turvy world ...</i>
	<i>And then I'd show you the Yakuts...</i>

REAL	IMAGINARY
<p>Yakutsk <i>Now we can go back to Yakutsk</i> Mishka <i>I'm writing you this letter from the land of darkness</i> Siberia's origins The Low Temperature Research Institute Sport in Yakutsk Cinema in Yakutsk Sergo Ordjonikidze Aldan →</p> <p>Photos and images in black-and white Aldan at present Gold extraction <i>Disappointing, isn't it?</i> <i>As I told you before, there are two ways of finding gold</i> The Lena Yakut opera The space race, the Laika dogs <i>I am writing to you from a distant land.</i></p>	<p><i>don't get the idea they are distant cousins ...</i> <i>But most of all I would show you ...</i> I would show you the whirling dervishes ... <i>I would show you reindeer coming down ...</i></p> <p>History of the Trans-Siberian History of gold: Aldan <i>You expected to see Indians?</i></p>

After the anonymous Siberian landscapes with which the film begins, Marker shows us the city of Angarsk and later describes the taiga. This is known, among other things, for the discoveries of mammoth specimens, some of them preserved under the ice in very good condition. From this reality, so suggestive for the filmmaker, Marker's imagination is activated around the character of the mammoth to make an animation of its figure. It is in this type of imaginary drift that the filmmaker's sense of humour and irony develop more naturally. His imagination travels from the mammoth to the mole, following Marker's interest in the plant and animal world. The filmmaker then takes up the geography of Siberia to tell us about the fox and the Trans-Siberian Railway, associated through the imagination by the tunnel made by the mole, and introduces us to the city of Irkutsk, one of the two leading communities of the Siberian geography shown. The Angara River (geographically close) and the

character of the reindeer is interspersed in the description of the city. Once again, the sympathy that the latter arouses in the filmmaker leads him to make an advertising short film about the most useful animal we can imagine.

For these practices to be carried out, the essayistic writing must not be preceded by a thesis to prove, but rather, the author's subjectivity needs to be totally open to any type of impression and to the *essays* that these impressions arouse. In this way, the imagination can burst into the text when reality attracts it, as in the case of the reindeer, which Marker confesses his interest in dedicating to an advertising film; an animation that we see next. Through the reindeer, we arrive at the town of the Evenks, an ancient community that lives with the present times, and by whose hand we meet Michka, a domesticated bear that delights Marker's contemplation, through whose images the affinity for the character is revealed. Michka helps us tour the other main city, Yakutsk, the most developed city in Siberia. In it, Marker does not overlook the presence of French culture in the Siberian people and, once again, freeing his subjectivity and intimacy, evokes a great friend, Yves Montand. Thus, in the midst of the Siberian cold, the filmmaker makes a music video around a song dedicated to Montand, a sign of admiration he professes for him. The images that accompany the song are a faithful portrait, a tribute to the Lumière brothers' cinema, of the daily life of the people of Yakutsk. The dialectics between sound image and visual image embody the essence of the essay film as the natural drift of the subjectivity of the gaze. Once the sentimental tribute is over, Marker does not avoid the fruitful and inevitable confrontation between the experimental and essayistic work he is carrying out and the practices that the documentary genre has provided up to that moment. Nothing is more appropriate than the film's ending to understand the transition between real and imaginary landscapes that dominates Marker's subjective and unique vision. This relationship allows poeticity, irony, and intelligence to be embodied in both speech and images:

I am writing you this letter from a distant land. Her charred trees and empty wastelands are as dear to me as her rivers and flowers. Her name is Siberia. She lies somewhere between the Middle Ages and the 21st century, between the Earth and the moon, between humiliation and happiness. After that, it's straight ahead.

To demonstrate this first intentionality of configuring his essay film as a letter of an intimate nature, Marker returns to its heading for his farewell:

“a distant land” that takes on a very different meaning at the conclusion of the letter. The real geographical space has been transformed into the subjective and imaginary space of the filmmaker. As Luc Moullet writes, “Marker repeats to me, through his film: *Siberia is me!*” (1960, p. 57). The result of working with the imagination and the spontaneity of its associations implies that these beginnings of the essay film lead us to the notion of collage, a hybridisation of materials that is not an a priori proposal, but the consequence of working with the imagination as a source of experience. In André S. Labarthe’s words,

Through *Siberia*, Marker leads us to the depths of himself, to the heart of a mythology for whose reality, in fact, that of *Siberia* is well worth. [...] If we take each of the terms in their first meaning, we could say that this cinema is a science-fictional cinema [...] as a particular way of mixing science (documentary) and fiction. (1960, pp. 39–40)

Political criticism is linked to the ability of the film image to demonstrate the non-existence of an objective reality. The filmmaker reveals to us its multiple manipulations and our own interpretative inertia. He forces us to reinterpret the images in order to know the true nature of what is shown; tangible objects are always at the service of a subjectivity that perceives and interprets them. There is no objective truth intrinsic to the image; its only truth is that of the subjectivity of its perception. The filmmaker announces to us what should be, according to documentary film orthodoxy, the outstanding achievement of his work, the synthesis-image of the reality of *Siberia*. This symbolic image is used to create a dialectical sentence-image that reveals the former as an empty cliché under the independent perception of the filmmaker, who thus manages to destroy it:

And now here’s the shot I’ve been waiting for, the shot you’ve all been waiting for, the shot no worthwhile film about a country in the process of transformation could possibly leave out: the contrast between the old and the new. On my right: the heavy-duty truck—40 tons. On my left: the telega, two hundred forty pounds, the past and the future, tradition and progress, the Tiber and the Orontes, Philomena and Chloe.

The true image of documentary orthodoxy is questioned by Marker and, with it, any symbology or interpretation imposed from the narration and not created by the spectator. The filmmaker encourages us to overcome

narrative conditioning in order to reread the images and interpret them according to our own subjectivity, applying critical thinking.

Later, Marker shows the three audiovisual versions of the city of Yakutsk, building another dialectical sentence-image that combines ethics and aesthetics. In the same visual sequence, the filmmaker adds three different sound comments: the conformist one of socialism, the reactionary one of Western capitalism, and the supposedly objective one. The first description becomes ridiculous for its advertising manipulation; the second also generates rejection for its vain criticism of communism; and the third provides the expected and intended objective vision that then reveals itself to be as absurd as the previous two. In this way, the filmmaker proves the contribution of the essay film to cinematic thinking by questioning representation and reflecting on words and images: "But objectivity is not fair either. It does not distort Siberian reality, but it does isolate it long enough to be appraised and consequently distorts it all the same. What counts is the drive and the diversity." The conclusion is clear: nothing less real than objectivity, which shows the need for a subjective gaze to reach knowledge. The filmmaker furthers his affirmation: true knowledge is not in the subjective vision of reality either, but in the activity of the imagination that the observation of reality unleashes. The projection that the imagination makes of that subjectivity is the filmmaker's bet.

The effectiveness of the materials used responds to the fidelity to one's own subjectivity and imagination, to a theory of the essay, of the attempt at expression and communication with an "other" of the most intimate perception, without any need for justification. The intimate impulse to tell the other through the mode of expression most aligned with oneself materialises for Marker in the essay film. Through Siberia, the filmmaker leads us to the depths of himself, to the heart of an intimate mythology, as an expression of an identity strongly marked by imagination. In addition, through the continuous opposition between what is objectivised and his personal vision of that same reality, Marker achieves a constant change of perception on the part of the spectator, making the film, by its continuous questioning, an exercise in critical thinking. This is Marker's success with his particular point of view, materialised through the aforementioned horizontal montage: interrupting the spectator's interpretive inertia, due to their education in classical language, to make them look at the image as a representation, and build from it their own meanings.

The spectator must develop their own critical thinking, which emerges from understanding cinema in all its strategies and possibilities, destroying the clichés that precipitate it into a dead end. Marker thus vindicates

subjectivity as the only possibility of knowledge and thinking, inherent in the purposes of the essay film, and rejects an impossible objectifiable reality. Dedicating oneself to the expression of subjectivity means assuming the label of *auteur*, freeing oneself from the classical canons, to achieve the expression of thinking in the cinematic field. The experience of the cinematic essay finds in the epistolary discourse a propitious tool for the filmmaker's expression: poeticity, irony, sense of humour, political and social criticism, and a cultivated and splendid imagery that fosters the hybridisation between documentary and fictional materials. The film runs without being subject to any premise in order to experience the cinematic adventure of modernity.

***Letter to Jane: Political and Cinematic Dialectics*³**

At the conclusion of the Dziga Vertov Group's activity, we find the first letter-film by Godard, co-directed by Jean-Pierre Gorin, which I consider to be his first complete materialisation of the essay film after the initial experience of *Camera-Eye* (1967). *Letter to Jane* responds to the essay film definition given by Moure (2004, pp. 37–38): relational operation of different cultural materials; the revelation of a thinking in act; simultaneity of speech and reflection on itself; the presence of the author's self, the essayist; dialogic communication with the spectator. The film emerges as a reflection on the fictional film *Tout va bien* (1972), based on new material: a photograph of its protagonist, Jane Fonda. Months after the French premiere of *Tout va bien*, which was negatively received by critics and the public, *L'Express* magazine published, on 31 July 1972, a report on Jane Fonda's visit to Hanoi in support of the North Vietnamese government and against US intervention. For Godard and Gorin, the article's main photograph represented the synthesis-image of the contradiction they tried to address in *Tout va bien*. For this reason, they decided to include it in the brochure that accompanied the presentation of the film at its premiere in the Venice, New York, and San Francisco festivals. In September, they made *Letter to Jane*, a 50-minute essay film based on this famous photograph. The intention of its creators is that this work accompanies *Tout va bien* at its premiere and tour of the United States. At the end of that same year, a French version of the text,

3 The analysis of the film is included in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Jean-Luc Godard's Diptychs: Rethinking Cinema through the Essay Film," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 40(1), 2023, pp. 16–55, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2021.1981091>

voiced over in English in the film by the filmmakers, was published in the magazine *Tel Quel* under the title “Enquête sur une image” (Godard & Gorin, 1972, pp. 74–90). I will quote the original text in English.

The film title defines the cinematic object created, a letter-film addressed to Jane Fonda—the actor featured in *Tout va bien* and the militant actor featured in the report published by *L'Express*—about the photograph–testimony of her visit to Hanoi. The letter aims to reveal the contradiction that this image contains, which the filmmakers wanted to address in *Tout va bien*, and that they consider a failed attempt. They try, in the essay film, to correct the mistake made in fiction. Through the semiotic analysis of the photograph and its dialectical confrontation with stills from the fiction film and other photo materials, the filmmakers try, through the form of the essay film, to address the same question that *Tout va bien* proposed in the fictional territory and to reveal the contradiction of its practical application. What is the social function of intellectuals—a militant actor in this case—in the revolution? Does Jane Fonda contribute to the cause of the Vietnamese people with the publication of this photograph, or does she help the political manipulation by the US government? In the dialectical spirit of Godard and Gorin, the epistolary device is revealed to be the most appropriate for creating a discourse addressed to different recipients: Jane Fonda, spectators, critics, militants, and imperialism. The work aims to reveal the silenced speeches—those of the Vietnamese people represented by the civilian who appears in the image—and to destroy the imperialist discourse that underlies the photograph, thanks to its realisation and manipulation. This letter-film makes the direct appeal to the responsibility of intellectuals possible through its personification in the figure of Jane Fonda. In this way, the semiotic analysis of the photograph of the actor in Hanoi is the scientific experimentation addressed by the filmmakers to reach a political practice by confronting it with other images, especially those from the film *Tout va bien*. The dialectics between fiction and nonfiction, a constant back-and-forth between both territories, aim to formulate the thinking and embody it through the letter.

The primacy of Godard and Gorin’s voiceovers, established from the beginning of their epistolary discourse, which they make correspond to the black screen, instantly defines the autonomy of the sound image compared to the visual image. Audiovisual thinking must be built on this independence, this first gap in the audiovisual relationship. The autonomy of the sound image is produced through an utterance that moves away from the notion of reading a “textual speech” (Chion, 1994 [1991], p. 172) to approach a spontaneous oral expression, generated by a dual epistolary I-voice, which

creates its discourse through a first dialectic between both images: the first—voiceovers of the addressers—generator of the second—the visual image. In this way, the epistolary I-voice problematises the definition of “commentator–acousmètre” (Chion, 1999, p. 21) while destroying the notion of “off-screen,” exemplifying Gilles Deleuze’s theory: “The notion of voice-off tends to disappear in favour of a difference between what is seen and what is heard, and this difference is constitutive of the image. There is no more out-of-field. The outside of the image is replaced by the interstice between the two frames in the image” (1989 [1985], pp. 180–181).

The two reception levels indicated—personal–individual and public–collective—correspond to the discursive differentiation of the duality generated in the figure of Jane Fonda. While the actor–recipient will be addressed in the second person, the actor–photographic object will be invoked in the third person to create a first linguistic differentiation. This duality corresponds in turn to the opposition between subjectivisation and objectivisation: subjectivisation of the actor to whom they write in the second person and objectivisation of her photograph that they analyse in the third person. Thus, the epistolary device becomes a discursive tool capable of creating a series of interstices from which to create a new filmic form that destroys the procedures of the movement-image to give rise to the Deleuzian time-image (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2016a; 2018, pp. 89–130). The interstice is the void that allows for the questioning of both visual and sound images. This revealed gap materialises in *Letter to Jane* (and in other works by the Dziga Vertov Group), first of all, through the black screen, emptying the cinematic matter to provoke reflection:

“The absence of image,” the black screen or the white screen, have a decisive importance in contemporary cinema. For, as Noël Burch has shown, they no longer have a simple function of punctuation, as if they marked a change, but enter into a dialectical relation between the image and its absence, and assume a properly structural value [...] what is important is no longer the association of images, the way in which they associate, but the interstice between two images; [...] which belongs neither to one nor the other, and sets out to be valid for itself. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 200)

If we observe the appearance of the black screen in the film, we can determine its nature as interstice in relation to the epistolary elements and the creation of audiovisual thinking. The spectator, the reader of the letter, will produce a reflection from it. The filmmakers, as its writers, will receive the spectators’ reading in response. In this way, it is possible to generate, through

the letter, the political reflection that arises from the dialectics between fiction and nonfiction and between cinema and photography. The black screen represents the zero degree of the image from which new audiovisual thinking must emerge and be constructed, also as a metaphor for the immaculate surface of the missive to be written: “The black screen constitutes the most obvious plastic element in a non-mimetic, non-reproductive relationship of images to the world, since it is no longer a question of reproducing it but rather of changing it” (Brenez, 2018, p. 41). This filmic matter is constructed in a dialectical back-and-forth that continually refers to essential reflection. *Letter to Jane* leads us through its reading, through the process of its writing, from the cinematic form to the construction of its thinking. Thus, Godard and Gorin embody the different functions of the black screen analysed by Nicole Brenez and add another one, not only to “make time for reflection” (p. 40) but to generate it audiovisually.

The film is divided into three distinct parts. The first is delimited by the identification of Jane Fonda as the epistolary addressee, which allows for the presentation of the essay film and the explanation of its purpose. The second part focuses on the analysis of the photographic image, shifting the figure of Fonda from the addressee to the object and incorporating the spectator not only as the recipient of the letter but of the photograph, which they are invited to observe under a new perspective. The third part makes a passage from scientific analysis to revolutionary political practice based on the conclusions of the former. On the black screen, the filmmakers’ voices present the photographic image on which the cinematic reflection must be built, which in turn is followed by a still from *Tout va bien*. In this way, the dialectics between cinematic image–fiction and photographic image–nonfiction are established: “We are going to see, if one may use the expression that way, how *Tout va bien* is working in Vietnam.” The oscillation between the photograph and the film frames is the starting point of the epistolary visual image, to which new dialectics will be added during the development of the thinking process. Godard proposes the first step to analyse the photograph: “This photograph answers the same question that the film 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).” The question posed by *Tout va bien* has a practical answer in the Hanoi photograph. That is to say, while cinematic fiction has remained in the theoretical field, photographic reality has imposed its practical answer. Next, three frames from *Tout va bien* summarise the dialectics pursued by the film: the couple made up of Suzanne and Jacques in the face of the political action of the Salumi workers’ strike. The authors then discover the

first manipulation that the photographic image can perform: proposing old questions within the system that prevent the necessary reflection to generate the revolution. The creation of new questions, therefore, will be the task of the revolutionary cinematic image, and it will be the task of *Letter to Jane*. Later, the parataxis between the photograph and the film stills is produced by means of a new procedure. A frame from *Tout va bien* does not cut to Fonda's photograph, as has happened up to that moment, but instead, it is revealed as a photograph when it is moved to the right of the frame to show Fonda's photograph. A new film image enters from the left of the frame to impose itself on the photograph. The two frames of the workers' strike, along with the photograph, offer a bond between France and Vietnam. The immobility of thinking that photography represents is opposed to the mobility of reflection that cinema fosters. The spectator's reflection must focus on the social function of the cinematic medium through the dialectics between the photograph and *Tout va bien*. The filmmakers reveal the photographic nature as a built reflection of reality, which leads to its interpretation and conditions the question it proposes. *Tout va bien*, however, tries not to manipulate reality or its interpretation. While photography provides us with a pre-established designed answer, cinema enables us to reflect on the questions. Later, the reflection makes the audiovisual thinking advance through a dialectical sentence-image—a photomontage. As Godard says in *Camera-Eye*, "letting Vietnam invade us," reality contaminates fiction, and the image of the Vietnamese civilian is inserted into a film frame in which Suzanne appears at her work. It is the presence of Jane Fonda in both materials—photographic and cinematic—performing the same social function that allows the dialectics proposed by the film.

The second part is organised around the semiotic analysis of the photograph. The first section—*elements of elements*—collects the textual elements that, together with the image, make up the message conveyed by the publication of the photograph. Thus, the first dialectic between photograph and text is established. The latter describes the realisation of the former and its content. The caption omits the presence of other elements external to the photographer—Joseph Kraft—and the actor, which is the first manipulation pointed out by the detail of the Vietnamese civilian and the complete image he is a part of. The sound image referred to in the photo caption and the visual image of Fonda show the displacement of meaning that occurs between the one and the other: "In fact, the text should not describe the photograph as 'Jane Fonda questioning' but as 'Jane Fonda listening.'" The confrontation between photography and text provides a forceful conclusion: the capitalist manipulation of the message from the

Vietnamese people to the free world. The second section—*less elementary elements*—is restricted to the semiotic analysis of the photographic image in order to show how its manipulation depends on the cultural reality to which it is addressed: “So, on the one hand, the frame shows the star in a militant activity, and on the other, it focuses on the militant as a star, which is not the same thing. Or rather, which might be the same thing in Vietnam, but not in Europe or in the US.” Later, a new photo from the report portrays Fonda with two Vietnamese female actors. This image is confronted with the photomontage previously shown in which the face of the Vietnamese civilian is inserted next to Suzanne in the fiction film. In this way, the duplicity between the militant actor in Hanoi and the militant actor representing Suzanne Dewitt in the fictional film is also confronted with Vietnamese reality in both spaces: the reality of the civilian and the performance of the female actors. Godard and Gorin try to show how the message that the Vietnamese people want to convey is manipulated by US capitalism. The photographic message is thus intercepted and rewritten, which in turn destroys the work that the actor performs in other areas, such as the cinematic one in *Tout va bien*. The filmmakers finally address the actor’s performance in the photograph: “The facial expression of the militant in this photograph is, in fact, that of a tragic actress a tragic actress with a particular social and technical background. Formed and deformed by the Hollywood school of Stanislavskian show-biz.” Fonda’s expression in the photograph is compared to stills from fictional films she acted in and to performances of her father, Henry Fonda. Hence, cinematic fiction and photographic nonfiction become indiscernible. This lack of differentiation produces the new dialectical sentence-image that is generated from the black screen: film stills from silent cinema stars are opposed to the image of death in Vietnam, as if the former see the latter. Then, Vertov’s photograph introduces the importance of montage: “film = editing of I see.” The impact produced by this confrontation is a clear example of the montage ideology that its creators profess and of the cinematic thinking process of modern cinema expressed by Deleuze: “Montage is in thought ‘the intellectual process’ itself, or that which, under the shock, thinks the shock. [...] The cinematographic image must have a shock effect on thought, and force thought to think itself as much as thinking the whole. This is the very definition of the sublime” (1989, p. 158). The opposition moves to the dialectics between silent cinema actors and Hollywood actors: “Each star of the silent screen has his own individual expression, and the wide popularity of silent movies is a real fact. On the contrary, as soon as films begin to talk as a New Deal, each actor begins to speak the same thing.”

The Cartesian “I think, therefore I am” represents the homogenisation of Western thinking in all domains.

The third and last part of the letter includes the last two sections specified by the authors: *other elements of elements*; *putting together some elements*. Faced with the photograph already taken, and despite the manipulation that it has suffered, revolutionary political action is possible through its publication—a different way of making it known. This other form is the one attempted with *Tout va bien*, as opposed to the capitalist hegemonic form represented by the actor’s photograph. Through Fonda’s face, the authors return to the argument of the relationship between its expression and the Cartesian “I think, therefore I am” used by Hollywood imperialism, and they finally state the conclusion about the failure of her social role as an actor: “One must realise that stars are not allowed to think. They are only social functions: they are thought, and they make you think.” The fourth section, *other elements of elements*, focuses on the analysis of the production and distribution conditions of the photograph, which are part of the revolutionary struggle: “The North Vietnamese are right in taking the risk of publishing this picture. Or, rather, they have their reasons for doing so.” For the first time since the beginning of the analysis, Jane Fonda is again addressed in the second person. Through this direct address, Godard and Gorin recover the individuality of the actor to show that it is she personally, as a militant public figure, whom the North Vietnamese government asks for help and invites to Hanoi. The individual responsible for the revolutionary struggle in all domains is thus expounded: “As we look at the picture, here, then, we are freely obliged to ask: Does this picture help us? And above all, does it help us to help Vietnam? Vietnam forces us to ask this question.” The fifth section, *putting together some elements*, ends the letter with a compilation of the political conclusions reached by the filmmakers after reading the photographic image. The visual image takes up the key oppositions that have built the letter. The first one collects the reading–reflection duality concerning the photograph and its confrontation with the spectator’s reflective void, the black screen. The *décalage* between the revolutionary consciousness of the addresser of the photograph and that of its recipients causes the mutation between the message sent and the one received through the social function of the militant actor: “In other words, she does not consider militant activity as an actress, even though the North Vietnamese invited her precisely as a militant actress.” The second opposition, the founder of the letter, is the one established between the photograph and *Tout va bien*, representing two opposite ways of constructing an audiovisual language that helps the revolution. The third opposition, the one defined

by the confrontation between the representations of imperialism and those of revolution, is generated through the images of Richard Nixon and a Vietnamese combatant, followed by the dialectic Nixon–Fonda image. It shows the imperialist manipulation of the Vietnamese revolutionary message through, again, the social role of a militant actor. In the written text published in *Tel Quel*, which extends beyond the film sound text, Godard and Gorin conclude:

That is reality, two sounds, two images, the old and the new, and their combinations. Because the imperialist capital says that two merge into one (and only shows a photo of you) and the social and scientific revolution says that one is divided into two (and shows how the new fights against the old inside you). (1972, p. 90)

The political conception of Godard and Gorin's cinematic work is to understand the relationship between cinematic construction and reality not as a reflection of each other, but as spaces for putting an ideology into practice. The purpose of *Letter to Jane* is none other than to unmask the imperialist manipulation of a revolutionary message by creating cinematic critical thinking that generates political practice.

However, Godard and Gorin's reflection lacks a gender perspective, ignoring the vital implications of the fact that the photograph shows a woman: "A woman's face that does not reflect other women" and the meanings of Fonda's figure in the United States: "her meanings are highly contested, functioning in many different capacities: traitor, radical feminist, sex object, political activist, a symbol of the feminist awakening through the women's liberation movement" (Mauldin, 2007, p. 75). The authors thus replicate patriarchal practices. They turn this omission into a personal reaction of the protagonist "as a woman" who lacks a political dimension. They venture that the White House will argue that the actor has been manipulated: "saying that the actress has, more or less unconsciously, played into the enemy's hands and that she is just reciting a text that she has learnt by heart," when in fact Nixon's reaction was actually quite different, and Fonda was accused of treason. That is, they deny the actor–militant her political empowerment beyond her militant commitment. In addition, the filmmakers do not address the analysis of their own failure in *Tout va bien*; they do not engage in any self-criticism. The criticism of Fonda consists of two arguments: the impossibility of differentiating between her identity as a militant and the role of actor–militant that the Vietnamese government asks her to perform, and the impossibility of offering a performance outside the

imperialist coordinates of Hollywood cinema. However, the filmmakers do not address their possible mistakes as directors of *Tout va bien*. What is the social function of the filmmakers in the film? Who helps the revolution?

Lettre à Freddy Buache: From Observation to Abstraction

Jean-Luc Godard took up the epistolary device a decade after the production of *Letter to Jane* to create *Lettre à Freddy Buache*, a new epistolary essay film that makes the letter-film evolve from modernity to postmodernity. The work arose from the commission to make a short film about the city of Lausanne in commemoration of its creation on its quincentenary. The letter-film is generated from a situation of enunciation similar to that of *Letter to Jane*: Jean-Luc Godard addresses a letter to a real and publicly known character, Freddy Buache, writer, journalist, and director of the Swiss Film Archive from 1951 to 1996. The essay film states its topic in the subtitle: *apropos of a short film about the city of Lausanne*. In this way, it will generate a reflection on the capacity of cinema to carry out a truthful portrait of the city of Lausanne. It is the same subtitle that presents the epistolary paradox on which the essay film is built by bringing together the three space-times of its materialisation:

- reflection on the commission of a short film about the city of Lausanne
 - past
- the making of the short film – present
- the reception of the short film by the institution that requested it
 - future.

In other words, Godard's essay film brings together the past of reflection on the short film to be made with the present of filmmaking—making the short film itself out of the letter about a short film—and with the future of its reception by the requestors, the Lausanne authorities. Thus, to the instances of epistolary addresser and addressee, Godard adds the notion of the filmmaker as the sender of a commissioned work whose recipients are the Lausanne authorities who requested the film. In this sense, the anonymous spectator as the recipient of the work is replaced by the entity that commissions the short film and to whose wishes it should respond. These four instances are instrumentalised to create an epistolary device that combines the past, present, and future of cinematic creation in pursuit of essayistic reflection.

The epistolary addresser appears in the image for the first time, and he is located in the editing room as the audiovisual essayist, manipulating the different devices that will generate the essay film in progress. On the initial image of the letter that shows its title, *Lettre à Freddy Buache, à propos d'un court-métrage sur la ville de Lausanne*, Godard's voice appears to begin the epistolary utterance: "My dear Freddy." Then, a shot of the editing table shows the filmmaker's hands manipulating its cursors. "I'm going to try to talk to you about this short film about the city of Lausanne. *About*, always talk *about* ..." In these first sentences, the identification between the letter about the short film and the short film about the city of Lausanne itself is produced. The film becomes a letter essay film that reflects on its own making. Next, two more shots show Godard's hands manipulating a video recorder and an amplifier. That is, we are shown the instruments and the essay writing process: "I would like to try ... not even to talk about [...]. I think they will be furious; that they will be furious because they commissioned ... They gave us money for a film *about*. And this, this is a film *of*." Thus, the reflection on the cinematic objective begins: to talk *of* and not *about*, to leave the surface and delve into the depths of the reality of the city of Lausanne. Reflectivity is also transmitted through the modulation, intonation and hesitations of the filmmaker's voice, who does not perform, declaim, or read aloud a previously written text, but rather his delivery seems to correspond to the intellectual reflective act while it is taking place. That is to say, the epistolary I-voice no longer recites textual speech but identifies with a digression–speech that Michel Chion defines as the "wandering text":

Godard's voice (we're not sure whether he is reading from written notes or completely improvising) does not pronounce a "finished" text. The voice speaks as if searching for the right words; it repeats, hesitates, fumbles, and recovers, finds a phrasing that sounds right, good enough to write [...]. When tracking along, the camera, too, seems to be searching, stopping, starting up again, thinking, feeling its way. (1994, p. 175)

This epistolary practice of digression would have occurred only previously through the voiced missives from *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965). In this way, the sound image and the visual image are juxtaposed from parallel developments of the notion of digression and search. In addition, there is a second juxtaposition between the recorded images and Godard's essayistic space.

During this second shot, the sound image includes, together with Godard's voice, a discussion belonging to the images we will discover in the fourth shot. On the third, with Godard's hands on the amplifier, the utterance of

the epistolary I-voice continues, “You and I are too old, and cinema is ... it is going to die soon, very young, without giving everything it could. So we must get quickly to the bottom of things; it’s an emergency. Let’s try.” The announced death of cinema, as a consequence of the postmodern audiovisual revolution, provokes the urgency of delving into the capacities and possibilities of cinematic expression before its disappearance. With one of Godard’s manual movements comes the music from “Boléro” (1928) by Maurice Ravel that accompanies the entire film and replaces direct sound, which is eliminated in its entirety, except for the discussion that we see in the next shot and that we previously heard in the background: “The other day we were stopped on the highway. The policemen told us that we could only stop there for emergencies. We said it was an emergency. The ... the light ... it’s going to last ten seconds, so it’s an emergency. He didn’t care.” Therefore, Godard’s voice and Ravel’s music are the only two elements of the sound image, thus omitting any direct sound.

The incident with the police leads to the space of the editing room, once again, where Godard now manipulates a record on a record deck, and his voiceover begins his reflection about Lausanne: “You see, this city, I have always crossed it from Vevey to Geneva, from Geneva to Vevey, from east to west. Sometimes it went up, then came down again, because this is a city that goes up and down ...” With the first shot of the city, that of the trains at its railway station, Godard’s intellectual reflection on it is linked from the outset to the panning movement of the camera. This movement expresses his intention to investigate the reality he shows. The next shot shows Godard in front of the record deck, while his reflection returns to the idea of receiving the commissioned work. While in the second shot it was produced as a future hypothesis—“they will be furious”—now it is stated as a present reality—“when they say”—producing the epistolary paradox, unifying past, present, and future of the epistolary production, as I outlined above. It is how the issue of the filmmaker’s ethical and aesthetic commitment to the funding bodies of film production is addressed: “And then, I think, you see, when they say ... that we weren’t honest, that we didn’t fulfil their commission, but perhaps it is not very honest to make a request like that either.”

The filmmaker then shows the natural environment surrounding the city, again with a panning movement that examines what he sees and prompts reflection: “I would like to reach the centre of energy. You see, this city is ... I thought there was something between ... Well, I would have said between the sky and the water ...” He continues his reflection on the essence of Lausanne and expounds his theory on it while the panning movement continues its search, now on the aquatic element of Lake Geneva:

But while shooting, little by little, I saw it was between green and blue [laughter]. Do you remember ... it was Wittgenstein who said: "If we had made a mistake, if we called blue green?" That would be perfect for Lausanne, perfect. Change meanings, you know? After a lot of research, I realised that ... that three shots are enough.

Godard seems to have arrived at the cinematic idea of the city of Lausanne through abstraction: the transition between sky and water, which leads him, with the abstraction of colours, to the transition between green and blue. This transition must be narrated through three shots: three spaces and the transitions between them that correspond to the three types of shots that the letter-film presents:

- the fixed shot in the editing room that shows the essayist;
- the panning shot of the city of Lausanne as a technique of audiovisual reflection;
- the slowed-down image, stopped every few frames, as an audiovisual dissection technique, like an X-ray of the city's inhabitants.

These three types of shots become what Josep Maria Català calls "hermeneutic devices":

Godard is building the tools that allow him to reflect through the cinematic apparatus itself: [...] These are new rhetorical forms but that, in the essays, act with the pole reversed: they are not used as dramaturgical elements but as hermeneutic devices. However, once set in motion, this hermeneutic exudes its own aesthetic form. It is about an aesthetics of knowledge. (2014, p. 538)

Thus, the audiovisual thinking process is configured using two colours and the transition between them, three shots to narrate the transition, and three types of shots to reflect on it: "A green shot, a blue shot, and another of how you pass from green to blue. How you go down from green to blue, or how you go back up." A new panning movement over the roofs of Lausanne shows an old building, then continues its movement, descending the three floors of another building. This itinerary through the architecture of the city conveys a reflection on the relationship between the latter and its inhabitants:

Between the two is grey. There are curves and forms but no straight lines. It starts when there are no straight lines. And the city is these straight

lines. It has become straight lines; crisscrossing straight lines which have all a meaning and where we lose our lives crossing it. But losing can be a pleasure: "Who loses wins." And the residents of this city play "Who Loses Wins." And you can see it here better than anywhere else.

To transmit the essence of the city, the filmmaker evokes the achievements of great painters, linking his cinematic task to their pictorial work: "So, you see, I had thought of three shots ... The shots are difficult to do. Bonnard managed it at the end of his life. Picasso managed it at the beginning." The panning movement of the image becomes more abrupt in a shot of the Ouchy marina, where the camera stops momentarily at different points, tracing an erratic path by the elements of the marina without collecting a total image of them at any time. This movement identifies with the filmmaker's ongoing search and reflection:

Three shots would be enough [...] a shot that starts in ... well, that starts in the dark, and then there is light, and then we see that it is green. And then there would be a shot in the middle. We will call it "upper shot"; a shot from above. And then a "middle shot"; and then a middle shot is straight lines, squares, stones. And then a "lower shot." And at the bottom, we find again, under another colour, the forms; forms and colours.

In this way, we observe the itinerary from darkness to the light of the sky filtered by the green leaves of the trees, in the first shot, to the grey of the stone and the geometry of the city, in this case, through the yellow lines of a parking lot on the asphalt in the second shot, to finally reach the blue of the water of the Lake Geneva pier. Therefore, this tour from green to blue, belonging to the two natural extremes—sky/vegetation and water—goes through what is in between: the city and the human being. Through civilisation, Godard takes up the topic of the film commission, now placing its reception in the past tense—"they say ... that we have not fulfilled the commission"—which once again makes explicit the epistolary paradox between the time of epistolary writing and the time of reception of the cinematic work. This paradox is evidenced on this occasion by the images of the inhabitants of Lausanne, always shown with the camera slowed down, stopping its movement every few frames (slow and stop motion): "And when Lausanne was created, there were two Laussannes. There was a lower Lausanne near the water and an upper Lausanne near the sky and the mountains. And the two ... the two came together to form the centre." Godard now reveals a new correspondence in the green/sky–blue/water

polarity by adding the two towns that came together to form the city of Lausanne in that transition space. The descending linear concept: green → grey → blue is transformed into a centripetal conception: green → grey ← blue, where the peripheries disappear in favour of the centre: “The periphery is lost.” The city and its inhabitants no longer make up a space of transition between natural elements, but the city and its centripetal force have absorbed the natural periphery. Thus, Godard generates an abstract sentence-image as the synthesis of his reflection.

The reflection is again linked to the panoramic movement of the camera, whose wandering we identify with Godard’s reflective process, which the filmmaker also expresses through the modulation of his voice, his hesitations, and his silences. A long panning shot of the natural environment begins at the trunk of a tree, ascends its branches, and descends again through the meadow to ascend another trunk: “The periphery is lost. It was thrown body and soul into the centre. So I think ... you see? Just three shots. The three shots have to last long enough ... long enough to see the movement of ... the movement of green and blue, as it passes through ... through grey.” Two other panning shots go across the grey of the city: first, the ascending one by the façade of a building; then the one by the road, until it reaches the rocks; and finally, the water. This itinerary through the grey centre of the city serves Godard to insist on the relationship of the human being with it:

The grey is solid like ... like stone, as if it wanted to replace eternity [...]. I really liked this passage in which ... in which we seek ... to escape from ... the spirit of geometry and ... from the stone of urbanisms. We reach the stone of the rocks and ... and we have the ... and we can put our feet in the water, like ... and think of Baudelaire: “Free man, you will always cherish the sea.” So ... it would be enough to do that.

Previously symbolised by “who loses wins,” the relationship between the city and its inhabitants continues to be characterised in the philosophical field, understanding the former as the materialisation of the human being’s desire for transcendence, a creation from which, at the same time, they want to flee, turning it into their prison. The reflection on how to talk about Lausanne audiovisually continues with the image of the interior space of the editing room, where the thinking process we are witnessing is generated, and where Godard listens to the record on the tape through headphones:

Starting from ... from the documentary, from the place where we live, where we have lived. Something we have known ... and we can try to

examine it scientifically. Think of “Voyager” on Saturn. It took two pictures that took four years of work for ... for the scientists afterwards. And here I have tried ... I am interested in trying to look at things a little ... a little scientifically.

Thus, Godard generates a new approach to reflecting on how to speak of Lausanne audiovisually. While the argumentation started from the artistic perspective about the ability to capture the essence of reality, from realism to abstraction, with references to Bonnard and Picasso, now the filmmaker offers the scientific argument, which converges with the previous one. Scientific observation would be born from cinematic documentary practice by recording our known environment. In contrast with the previous search for abstraction, Godard now presents the scientific observation that, based on the documentary, can access the fiction with which he identifies the city: “Try ... try to find, in all these movements of the crowd, the rites of ... find the beginnings of fiction, because ... because the city is fiction. Green, the sky, the forest is the novel, the water is the novel. The city is fiction; it is the necessity of ... of fiction.” The spectator now identifies scientific observation with the slow and stop motion, with which the inhabitants of Lausanne have been shown throughout the film, and which again responds to Català’s analysis as a hermeneutic device:

To slow down the images [...] is to examine them in the light of this temporality. By extracting them from the temporal flow corresponding to the cinematic exposition, the images show their composition, their structure: a gesture, a look, a position not only become evident but also, through their delay by means of a denatured temporality, they visualise their own expressiveness, their expressive, communicative, conceptual content. (2014, p. 538)

The dissection of the moving image aims to discover the beginning of fiction, the necessity of fiction with which the city is identified and which is the cause of its beauty: “The city can be beautiful because of it. And those who inhabit it are ... are often magnificent and pathetic. Even in a country ... in a country as rich as ... as this one.” The scientific argument, therefore, identifies the city axis with fiction and the natural axis with the novel:

- grey – centre – city – fiction;
- green/blue – sky/water – periphery – nature – novel.

A final conceptual paradox is then generated: the opposition between the novel and fiction. The reflection of this letter essay film ends with this paradox, encouraging the spectator to continue it.

This analysis evidences how *Lettre à Freddy Buache* belongs to the evolution and deepening of the possibilities of the letter-film as an enunciative device for the essay film in the passage from modernity to postmodernity. It is characterised by the fragmentation, discontinuity and complexity of the enunciation, in this case through the epistolary paradox, and the conceptualisation and abstraction of the epistolary matter, both in its formal expression and content. If we compare this characterisation with that belonging to *Letter to Jane*, the evolution experienced by Godard's letter-film is clear.

<i>Letter to Jane</i>	<i>Lettre à Freddy Buache</i>
Clear epistolary intellection	Complexification: epistolary paradox
The letter as a vehicle for cinematic political practice:	Audiovisual specificities of the letter:
semiotic analysis	audiovisual writing
dialectical materialism	reflection in progress
absence of the addresser in the image	presence of the addresser in the image
The interstice as a source of cinematic thinking	The materiality of the audiovisual epistolary elements as a source of audiovisual thinking
Oscillation between fiction and nonfiction	Oscillation between observation and its conceptualisation and abstraction

***News from Home: Exploring Female Alterity*⁴**

Chantal Akerman instrumentalised the epistolary device in *News from Home*, starting a paramount relationship between epistolary cinema and female filmmakers (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2021a, 2022d, 2022e). The first *epistolary film* of European Francophone cinematography—composed from different epistolary texts—is generated from the reading of the letters that Akerman's mother sent to the filmmaker during her first stay in New York in 1971. It is on her second trip to the city in 1976 that Akerman shoots the cinematic material that makes up the work. Thus, the epistolary essay film

4 A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Women's Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

is constructed from the author's reading of her mother's letters—a total of 20—converting the epistolary I-voice into a you-voice, since the cinematic work is situated in the reception space of the reading. The presence and preponderance of this reception space, as opposed to that of emission and writing, is a reiterated characteristic in epistolary postmodern practice, and it implies great significance in relation to alterity as a postmodern paradigm.

In this way, Akerman generates an essay film that arises from the figure of the mother and from a new form of absence in which the filmmaker's gaze is the protagonist. The essayistic reflection on maternal–filial alterity is built from the juxtaposition of the sound image of the reading of the mother's letters—through the filmmaker's voiceover that is confused with the direct sound—and the visual image of Akerman's gaze on the city of New York. Akerman constructs “a simulacrum of communication” (Margulies, 1996, p. 151), “an irreparable divide. [...] the daughter's insurmountable difference from the mother, a difference that is at once spatial, generational, political, and sexual” (Longfellow, 1989, p. 79). The filmmaker embodies the mother–daughter bond through a maternal absence that becomes epistolary speech and situates herself in the position of the filmmaker who creates images, and her gaze identifies with them.

The first letter establishes the relationship and situation between the addresser and the addressee: the yearning mother writes from Brussels to the absent daughter, who lives in New York, asking for news while narrating family events. The visual image, therefore, develops a personal portrait of daily life in New York City based on the temporal evolution of the exterior space of the streets and a kind of timelessness in the interior space of the subway. As Janet Bergstrom notes, this everyday life becomes an experience through film capture: “The streets and the outskirts gradually acquire the significance of an everyday experience that is, however, distanced, simultaneously objective and subjective” (2004, p. 181).

Fixed shots, for the most part, with some panning shots and four very significant tracking shots in the last third of the film—always edited through hard cuts without a single fade to black or crossfade—create a photographic essence in the portrait that Raymond Bellour calls its photographic capture:

In News from Home, there are no photo(s), but something photographic. This means that each of the shots, or almost all of them, is like a fixed and often very long shot in which movement is produced, no doubt, but

a kind of open, random documentary movement, comparable to the development of what it captures, a snapshot. (2002 [1990], p. 139)

The fixed shots build the visual image from the rhythms and visual ruptures generated by their juxtaposition, which implies essential work in the conception of duration. The temporal evolution of desert streets, from day to night, during the first 15 shots, in which we listen to the first four letters, traces the parallel between the filming–subject (Akerman) and the filmed–subject (New York) (Harvey-Davvit, 2014) and the mother–daughter bond: the relationships with the absent mother and the present city. This first block gives way to the timeless space of the subway inside a carriage, where epistolary recitation disappears, and the duration of the shot seems isolated from external temporality: “The subway scenes, crucial to the structure of the film, produce, through a feeling of duration, the experience of what Michael Snow called ‘the narrative space’” (Bergstrom 2004, p. 181). The “deep hiatus” (Maupin, 1977, p. 109) between mother and daughter has its parallel in the spatial-temporal hiatus in the interior of a subway carriage through a shot in which we only see the carriage’s door opening and closing at each stop. A second block of the visual image, dedicated to the city shops and their daily lives in the New York night, during which we listen to the fifth and sixth letters, gives way to a second spatial-temporal hiatus in the interior of a subway carriage. In the absence of epistolary recitation again, the camera shows the passengers and the gaze at the camera of many of them, which underlines Akerman’s observant presence.

For its part, the sound image offers an epistolary enunciation of daily family life that, faced with the forcefulness of the sounds of the city, is hardly intelligible. This option not only implies the preponderance of the reception and reading space of the letter but also defines and characterises the perception that the filmmaker has of the text. The letters are defined by the perception of their addressee, who receives them as the worried, demanding, and constant maternal murmur; the murmur of concern for the daughter and also the insistent request for letters that sometimes becomes a sort of family ambient sound, which is not always paid attention to: “[T]he noise of the family novel: a mother’s murmur coming from afar, precisely from the mother tongue, worrying about an absent body. [...] This voice of a mother in search of her daughter is lost, disperses, withers, lives on in New York” (Bulher & Laplace, 1977, p. 54). Thus, this epistolary material is related to the Lacanian notion of *llanguage*, as indicated by Danièle Dubroux (1977, p. 41), defined as the structure of the unconscious that goes beyond the communicative notion of language to include the specificities of each

individual in relation to family learning and its idiosyncrasies (Lacan, [1975] 1988). In this way, the essay film offers another parallel element defining both experiences: the city noise and the family murmur. The maternal narratives about family, work, and small daily events become mere excuses for the reiterative and increasingly anxious demand for the daughter's responses in order to deal with the experience of her absence: "Write to me," "Please, write soon," "You write to me, but you never answer my letters, it's very annoying," "I only ask you for one thing: write as often as possible. It's all that counts for us." Epistolary writing represents, for the mother, the conservation of memory and hence of her maternal-filial bond: "Don't forget us. Write." She also wants to preserve memory through images, photographs that she sends to her daughter, and that she also demands: "Darling, write soon and send some pictures." The mother-daughter bond approaches pathological identification: "I live to the rhythm of your letters," in which the life experience of the sender depends on the epistolary production of the addressee.

The third time cycle takes place from day to night, this time portraying the urban bustle in streets full of people, which gives way to a third hiatus in the subway, where the camera position now shows the wait for the travellers on the platform and the entrance and exit of trains (through six cuts of the same shot). However, in this case, the epistolary voice breaks into this space for the first time to utter the eleventh and twelfth letters, implying the rupture of timelessness. From this moment on, the weight of both spaces is subverted, dividing the film into two parts of similar length. After four shots of the outside by day, the visual image plunges into a meticulous journey through this subterranean geography, which is revealed as a new city itself, where three more letters are recited. The spatial-temporal hiatus becomes passable geography, while the mother-daughter bond stays immutable, becoming the benchmark of Akerman's observation and exploration. The discovered geography is finally observed through a circular panoramic shot that starts the movement of Akerman's gaze.

Thus, the cut to the exterior is now realised through a first 11-minute tracking shot along a city street from a vehicle in which the soundtrack is silent for the first and only time, without any epistolary expression either. Akerman now offers a mobilised gaze to show the same city elements, enabling an exterior connected geography and reflection on the change of the point of view. Next, again inside a subway carriage, the visual image finally connects the two spaces, the exterior of the city and the subway's interior, through the carriage's exit to the outside. Then, the image cuts to the tracking shot of the city through the carriage window. This continuity cut embodies a symbolic sentence-image about the possibilities of the cinematic

gaze's observation and its mobilisation. This connection is confirmed by a second exterior tracking shot, over which the twentieth and last letter is read. The realisation of the spatial-temporal continuity between both places allows the global portrait of the city through the last tracking shot that begins in the darkness of a pier, comes out into daylight via aquatic, and moves away from it to finally be able to show its full image. It is also a complete realisation of Akerman's observation and perception regarding her *hinc et nunc*.

While Akerman's cinematic gaze evolves from fragmented and static observation to complete and mobilised perception, solving the spatial and temporal experience of the city, the mother–daughter bond, defined as an experience of alterity, remains immutable, thus becoming a benchmark of Akerman's activity. It will evolve along her films to reach its resolution almost 40 years later in *No Home Movie* (2015), in which Akerman achieves the complete image of the mother, the mobilised gaze of her figure that also includes her.

***Sans soleil*: Reflecting on Postmodernity⁵**

In *Sans soleil*, Marker creates an essay film, and its cinematic thinking process, as a materialisation of Deleuze's (1985) time-image and crystal-image. By creating different sentence-images, Marker develops a thinking process that forces the spectator to constantly transform the actual image–virtual image relationship of the film, concepts that Deleuze takes from Henri Bergson to apply to the analysis of the time-image and the crystal-image. The first offers a direct image of time: "It is no longer time that depends on movement; it is aberrant movement that depends on time. The relation, *sensory-motor situation* → *indirect image of time* is replaced by a non-localizable relation, *pure optical and sound situation* → *direct time-image*" (1989, p. 41). The second achieves the indiscernibility between the actual image and the virtual image: "the coalescence of an actual image and its virtual image, the indiscernibility of two distinct images" (p. 127). These new images emerge from the instrumentalisation of the interstice: "[A] spacing which means that each image is plucked from the void and falls back into it. [...] an operation [...] of differentiation [...] of disappearance"

5 This analysis was published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Sans soleil by Chris Marker: The Essay Film and Its Cinematic Thinking Process: Reflecting on Postmodernity," *Studies in European Cinema*, 21(2), 2024, pp. 107–127, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2022.2073173>

(p. 179). Therefore, interstices “have a disjunctive, and no longer a conjunctive, value” (p. 248), which transforms them into a “germ of the cinematic thinking” (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2018, p. 94) and allows them to “make the indiscernible, that is the frontier, visible” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 180). Chris Marker constructs *Sans soleil* generating cinematic thinking that materialises thanks to the interstices among subjectivities, to the constant shifts among the points of view of different filmic entities that the epistolary device makes possible, exploring a new paradigm of postmodernity: alterity. From the shifts among subjectivities and the consequent interstices, the three categories of alterity theorised by Paul Ricœur (1990, p. 410) emerge, and very significantly, the *alterity of consciousness*, just as the *strangeness* defined by Bauman (1991) as an existential and mental ambivalence universalised in postmodernity.

Complexification of the Epistolary Enunciation: Multiplicity of Subjectivities

Lettre de Sibérie and *Sans soleil* constitute an epistolary diptych that presents the transition between the first letter-film of modernity and the epistolary film of postmodernity (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2018). While Marker generated a cinematic epistolary writing in *Lettre de Sibérie*, in *Sans soleil*, he introduces the autonomy between literary epistolary texts and filmed images. Thus, the choice of epistolary reading as a situation of enunciation instead of epistolary writing adds a new gap. Opposite to the realisable device of the letter-film of modernity in the former, Marker now creates an epistolary film of postmodernity in which the epistolary device is unrealisable:

Sound image – Addressee	→	Diegetic reading of the epistolary literary texts
+		+
Visual image – Addresser	→	Diegetic writing of the cinematic images
=		=
Epistolary film	→	Extra-diegetic enunciation, epistolarily unrealisable

Its complexity emerges through the presence of multiple subjectivities, among which the enunciation of the essay film moves. I first analyse the complexity of this framework, expanding the categorisation identified by Bellour (1999, pp. 30–31). If we make an itinerary from the outside to the inside of the discursive progression of the film, we can distinguish three different levels and their corresponding subjectivities:

- Extra-diegetic level – Present of the filmic enunciation – Epistolary film:
 - Chris Marker as the author of the film.
- Diegetic level – Epistolary correspondence – Epistolary literary texts + Filmic images:
 - anonymous addressee of the literary letters;
 - addresser of the literary letters and cameraman of the images – identified with Marker.
- Intra-diegetic level – Past of the narration – Epistolary texts:
 - Hayao Yamaneko;
 - protagonist of the imaginary film.

Furthermore, the film's prologue with the image of the Icelandic children introduces an interpretative hypothesis on which the spectator must reflect throughout the work to solve it: Do the epistolary film we see and the imaginary film recalled turn out to be the same? As I argue, Marker instrumentalises this possibility to generate the shift between the two creative subjectivities (the diegetic of the imaginary film and the extra-diegetic of the epistolary film), and embodying through their interstices the sentence-image of his thinking in act. It is only once the film is finished, and using an intertitle, that Marker proposes a second rereading of the work, which, once again, brings a new conflict between subjectivities, forcing the spectator to transform the virtual image of the film: "The letters of Sandor Krasna [fictional character] are read by Florence Delay in the French version, Alexandra Stewart in the English version [extra-diegetic identities]." Thus, the diegetic level implodes. The author of the letters and images is fictionalised in Sandor Krasna, fictional subjectivity, while his addressee disappears. The shifts between both authors' subjectivities must now be reinterpreted, as well as those produced between the diegetic one and his addressee, absent now. If we collect all the shifts among subjectivities instrumentalised by Marker, we obtain a first cartography of the interstices he explores:

- Addresser and addressee:
 - between the sound image of the reading of the letters and the visual image filmed by the addresser;
 - between direct speech: "he wrote" and indirect speech: "he wrote to me that."
- Extra-diegetic filmmaker and diegetic cameraman:
 - between past visual images and present cinematic montage.

- Diegetic cameraman and Hayao:
 - between advocating for and against the electronic image.
- Extra-diegetic filmmaker and Hayao:
 - between filmic images and electronic images.
- Diegetic cameraman and protagonist of the imaginary film:
 - between documentary narration and fictional narration.
- Diegetic cameraman and Krasna:
 - between documentary images and fictional images.
- Addressee and female actor:
 - between documentary narration and meta-discourse.

Regarding the first shift between the addresser and the addressee, the alternation of the epistolary enunciation between direct and indirect speech, being subjected equally to the pauses of the discourse, causes the dissolution of the limits between first and third person. Thus, subjectivity, in constant shift—direct/indirect speech—seems to mutate and achieves an entity of superstructure that the spectator can possess. Marker applies the cinematic thinking process, thanks to the shifts among subjectivities, to build a reflection on the advent of postmodernity in general and the postmodern image in particular, or more precisely, on the appearance of the latter as a consequence of the former. To do so, he develops an axis image–memory–history as an itinerary through four types of images:

- filmic images and their fixation as the impossibility of the memory-image;
- television images and their mutation as excess-images of postmodernity;
- electronic images of the Zone as time-image of postmodernity;
- video game images as ludic non-images of postmodernity.

Filmic Images and Their Fixation: The Impossibility of the Memory-Image

The reflection on postmodernity that Marker generates is built through the dialectics between Africa and Asia: “He contrasted African time with European time, and also with Asian time. He said that in the 19th century mankind had come to terms with space and that the great question of the 20th century was the coexistence of different concepts of time.” The first is still situated in the time of history, and the second is already installed in the crisis of historicity and the historicism of postmodernity. Marker reflects on this transit by becoming aware of the nature of images—that is, of the impossibility of identifying them with memory. And he embodies it through an audiovisual element: the freeze frame. Its first appearance,

which is usually omitted in the film's analyses, visually formulates the issue to be discussed without enunciating it orally yet. Marker manages to generate a sentence-image as a synthesis of the issue that the film is going to address: "I will have spent my life trying to understand the function of remembering, which is not the opposite of forgetting, but rather its lining. We do not remember; we rewrite memory much as history is rewritten. How can one remember thirst?" The awareness of the impossibility of fixating the memory materialises in the first freeze frame, that of a woman on a ship whose gaze escapes the cameraman's objective. This first failed attempt to fixate the memory of a direct gaze into the camera synthesises the theme of the film. The gaze escapes the cameraman in the same way that the memory of thirst is elusive despite the aquatic images that could recall its absence. The filmic analogue image is capable of embodying the awareness that the film starts from, but this first sentence-image will only acquire its meaning later, when the second gaze into the camera takes place, and this time it is fixated in a freeze frame. That is, the thinking process of the essay film demands the spectator to constantly transform the virtual image of the film that they generate. The first failed freeze image, an audiovisual synthesis of the impossibility of fixating the memory, acquires its meaning when Marker continues the reflection: "I paid for a round in a bar in Namidabashi. It is the kind of place that allows people to stare at each other with equality; the threshold below which every man is as good as any other—and knows it." Now, Marker does freeze the gaze into the camera of a man in Namidabashi and, again, he advances elements of the thinking process not yet formulated orally. It will be the gaze into the camera, the encounter between subjectivities, the element that Marker wishes to keep in his "list of 'things that quicken the heart,'" but about which he has not yet spoken. It is the equality of the exchanged gaze, the visual encounter between subjectivities, which Marker wants to keep in memory. Thus, he endows the audiovisual element with a total ethical charge, generating cinematic thinking that unites ethics and aesthetics: "From this force of gaze, captured in the film and in the photo by the man with the camera and offered to the spectator, in *Sans soleil*, Marker made a sort of ethical and aesthetic law" (Bellour, 1999, p. 338).

The audiovisual element acquires a reflective gravity that also becomes a criticism of the film industry and, more deeply, of the movement-image of classical cinema on which it has been based, that of the compulsory invisibility of its narration, the erasure of its subjectivity: "Frankly, have you ever heard of anything stupider than to say to people, as they teach in film schools, not to look at the camera?" The movement-image has denied the equality

of the gaze between the filmmaker and reality, the encounter between subjectivities, the dialogism between the two sides of the camera, and also between the two sides of the screen. Marker offers a new symbolic sentence-image of the impossibility of the movement-image to generate cinematic thinking, of the need for the advent of cinematic modernity and its time-image so that a filmic form of thinking could materialise. And when, finally, Marker finds the *equality of the gaze*, that of the woman in the Praia market, that of African women, he shows the spectator the reality of it, its almost inapprehensible duration, its fugacity:

It was in the marketplaces of Bissau and Cape Verde that I could stare at them again with equality: I see her, she saw me, she knows that I see her, she drops me her glance, but just at an angle where it is still possible to act as though it was not addressed to me.

Marker does not freeze the image then; he presents the gazes in their real duration, and it is then that the first freeze image makes sense. It is at this moment that the spectator must transform the virtual image that he preserves to give it its meaning. He then states the fallacy that makes us identify a still image and a memory: “And at the end, the real glance, straightforward, that lasted a twenty-fourth of a second, the length of a film frame.” If the continuum of the film image can be broken down into twenty-four still images, the fleeting moment of reality could be remembered through one of them. Marker has already shown how the essence of that moment escapes the fixation of the filmic image, as indicated by Georges Steiner, whom Marker will quote in *Le Tombeau d’Alexandre* (1992): “It is not the past that dominates us; but the images of the past.” Only at the conclusion of the film, which I will analyse below as a synthesis of the thinking process developed, the freeze frame of the woman from the Praia market reappear, already transformed in the Zone, to show the assumption of this impossibility and its transformation into a poetic element already deprived of memory and history.

Television Images and Their Mutation: Excess-Image of Postmodernity

The segment dedicated to television images, enunciated through the epistolary text in direct speech, begins by defining the device as a “memory box.” Marker emphasises this dimension by showing the device frame and its screen, and not the television images directly. Once again, the filmmaker works on the different possibilities of points of view to generate reflection. The definition as a memory box recalls the birth of the television image

within the temporality of history, but the reflection will show the spectator how the television image mutates to become a postmodern image. It offers the inverse dialectics to those presented with the filmic image. While the movement of the latter was identified with reality and its need to fix it as a failed attempt to create memory, the television image is not only presented as framed by its screen, but the initial images are also frozen.

To begin his reflection, Marker applies the same immobility to television images. The spectator perceives then that the result is not the same. The freeze frame of the television images does not acquire the value of memory because of the screen frame, which defines the image as such, and detaches it from its identification with reality. In addition, another equally relevant element appears: the electronic scanning in the form of a beam of light that travels through the television image when filmed by the cinematic camera. This movement within the television image, even if it is stopped, becomes a metaphor for the mutation that the filmmaker discusses. To show the different nature of both images, Marker introduces the filmic image after the first two television images: "The willow sees the heron's image upside down." He begins his television journey through images belonging to illustrations and advertising spots. A series of 12 images of female portraits generates, once again, a sentence-image, this time dialectical, before the equality of the gaze found in Africa. The images of women offered by the television show many of them gazing into the camera, but it is no longer an egalitarian gaze. It is undoubtedly the subdued gaze of the woman turned into an object. The filmic image is introduced a second time to expound the mutation again: "In *Apocalypse Now*, Brando said a few definitive and incommunicable sentences: 'Horror has a face and a name ... you must make a friend of horror.'" The filmic image illustrates Rousseau's television presence, while the horror of Red Khmers is represented through illustrations. The television image thus becomes a prefiguration of the Zone. This first mutation deconfigures the reality of horror into its trivialised fictional representation: first, through drawings, then through the horror film genre. At this point of the showing–reflection on the evolution–mutation of the television image from history to postmodernity, as a precedent of the Zone, Marker generates a new sentence-image of this mutation: "But the more you watch Japanese television ... the more you feel it is watching you." The equality of the gaze of the African women, first transformed into the objectified female gaze of advertisements, loses its human entity to become the gaze of the device.

The film then shows another series of television gazes that are transformed by the same idea. The fear they transmit moves from the characters'

emotions to those of the television spectator, who is monitored by the device. Once again, Marker uses the shift between subjectivities (from the actors to the spectator) to achieve the revelation of the sentence-image, a synthesis-image of cinematic thinking. The spectator no longer looks at reality through the filmic image, but it is looked at by the television image. And these images remain still. While the freeze frame of the filmic image was an attempt to preserve reality in memory, the still television image is the way to analyse its mutation, its distance from reality. A new series of television images, also still, follow one another, forming a square (alternating horizontal and vertical shifts), offering a new representation of the television screen device, which generates a new idea of oppression of the image that, not being able to exceed its frame, can only accelerate its movement. Once the limit of its mutation is reached, Marker then shows its starting point, and it is at that moment when the television image takes on movement to offer its first stage, close to the filmic image, and therefore points out its transformation: "Even television newscast bears witness to the fact that the magical function of the eye is at the centre of all things." First, the image regains movement, and then the screen frame disappears to access the direct showing of its image—a documentary television image. Next, it recovers its frame momentarily to lose it again when the epistolary text recounts this transition: "That is called 'the impermanence of things.'" The opposite move then occurs. While the frame of the television screen alerted us to the mutated nature of its images, its disappearance now allows us to understand the moment in which the spectator forgets this reality. While the freeze frame is configured as a mechanism of reflection, the moving image becomes its impossibility, the process by which the spectator stops wondering about the nature of images to consume them without generating any critical thinking about them. The movement embodies the thoughtless inertia of the postmodern image that it will bring to the Zone.

Marker concludes the reflection on the television image with images of a sexual nature that, once again, objectify women and the female body. The segment concludes with a final freeze frame, that of a woman in a sex scene, with closed eyes and no longer looking at the camera: "Censorship is not the mutilation of the show, it is the show. The code is the message. It points to the absolute by hiding it. That is what religions have always done." The gaze into the camera, the encounter between subjectivities, no longer occurs because women have been stripped of the equality that the gaze represented. Thus, Marker ends an audiovisual reflection of the postmodern excess-image theorised by Lipovetsky and Serroy more than two decades later:

More and more, neocinema is, in fact, signalled by an aesthetics of excess, a search for the out-of-limits, a kind of vertiginous and exponential proliferation. It is necessary to speak of hypercinema because it is that of never enough and never too much, always more of everything: rhythm, sex, violence, speed, search for all extremes, and also the multiplication of shots, cut editing, lengthening of films, soundtrack saturation. (2007, p. 72)

In the same way, the segment dedicated to *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) embodies the distance-image, as I will discuss below, and the essay film becomes the quintessence of the multiplex-image of postmodernity. But the reflection on the television image does not end there. Later, Marker offers a new reflection on postmodernity through the description of a dream located in the shopping centres and the Tokyo subway that becomes a materialisation of the non-places theorised by Marc Augé: “If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. [...] supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places” (1995 [1992], pp. 77–78). The lack of identity of this non-place makes the protagonist wonder about the similarity between dream and reality and about the identity characteristic of the former: “I begin to wonder if those dreams are really mine, or if they are part of a totality, of a gigantic collective dream of which the entire city may be the projection.” In the postmodernity of non-places, where identity, memory, or history are not possible, the dream also becomes an identity non-place. And what are the images of that collective dream? Television images. Many of them were already shown in the previous segment, but now they are always presented in motion, most without the screen frame. In other words, the mutation of the television image has conquered the oneiric collective imaginary, which assumes those images in their unthinking flow (without the appearance of the freeze frame) and without their fictional framework. We could say that television images, the excess-image of postmodernity, also look at us through dreams: “The train inhabited by sleeping people puts together all the fragments of dreams, makes a single film of them—the ultimate film.” The ultimate film promoted by postmodernity is a non-film, since it lacks the same properties as non-places: “The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude.” “The community of human destinies is experienced in the anonymity of non-places, and in solitude” (Augé, 1995, pp. 103, 120). Later, Marker will continue the reflection, and this oneiric non-film will become a non-image—the video game images.

The Zone: Time-Image of Postmodernity

Following the transformation of the image reported by television, Marker creates a new subjectivity in order to reflect on the ambivalence generated by its virtualisation. Hayao Yamaneko emerges from the epistolary text at the same time as the Zone, embodying a doubling of Marker's subjectivity that becomes a perfect example of postmodern conceptions of alterity. This alterity of consciousness (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 393) allows him to explore the universalised existential and mental ambivalence in postmodernity (Bauman, 1991, p. 101) before the nature of a new image:

My pal Hayao Yamaneko has found a solution: if the images of the present do not change, then change the images of the past. [...] He showed me the clashes of the sixties treated by his synthesizer: pictures that are less deceptive he says—with the conviction of a fanatic—than those you see on television. At least they proclaim themselves to be what they are: images, not the portable and compact form of an already inaccessible reality. [...] If to love without illusions is still to love, I can say that I loved it.

The alterity created through Hayao's character allows Marker to express the ambivalence that this new image provokes in him. Besides the epistolary addresser's awareness about the inability of the image to preserve memory, Hayao, his alterity of consciousness, believes in finding the solution in the electronic image. Therefore, identity and alterity coincide in the diagnosis—the images do not contain reality; the television images lie—but they diverge in the solution. Hayao proposes transforming these images to make them one's own. The epistolary addresser observes in this assumption the disappointment of a defeat, the verification of the loss of historicity in favour of historicism, as Fredric Jameson later analyses:

a society bereft of all historicity, one whose own putative past is little more than a set of dust spectacles. In faithful conformity to poststructuralist linguistic theory, the past as "referent" finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts. [...] This situation evidently determines what the architecture historians call "historicism," namely, the random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion. (1991, p. 18)

Therefore, the film offers an audiovisual reflection on the Zone based on this new instrumentalisation of the shift between subjectivities, which in this case reveals the interstice between identity and alterity. In the Zone,

the analogue images of the past become a flow of forms that sometimes minimally allow us to identify their reference, to lose it later. As Marker does with the first freeze frame, he presents a new sentence-image, a synthesis of the reasoning that he will develop later. Again, the spectator creates a first virtual image of the Zone that must be transformed throughout the film. It is an electronic flow-image defined as the denial of the previous still filmic image. The flow-image of the Zone does not freeze. That is, this new image makes reflection impossible, offering the spectator the sensory, aesthetic, but unthinking inertia of its fluid. The Zone renounces the attempt to preserve memory through the freeze frame of the filmic image. It is generated from the acceptance of oblivion, of the non-existence of history, in favour of an aesthetic experience typical of postmodernity, that of the sensation-image (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2007, p. 72), which also instrumentalises colour: “[T]he colour here modifies the content of the image: not only do the details disappear completely, but the forms tend to dissolve. [...] the solarisation of the image blurs the outline of the forms which seem to clump together” (Jacques, 2018, p. 44).

While in their first appearance, the images of the Zone are contextualised by the analogue images, and therefore they are inscribed in the continuity of the epistolary text, their second instrumentalisation emerges from the dialectics since, in this case, it is not Hayao's subjectivity–alterity which reflects on them, but the epistolary addresser. The extra-diegetic filmmaker then generates the images of the Zone in a dialectical relationship with the image that precedes them. While in the segment dedicated to television images, the face of horror was represented through illustration and cinematic fiction, Marker now shows the filmic image of horror: “That’s how history advances, plugging its memory as one plugs one’s ears. [...] She doesn’t care, she understands nothing, she has only one friend, the one Brando spoke of in *Apocalypse*: horror. That has a name and a face.” Next, the film cuts to the sensation-image of the Zone in which the flow-image reduces its distortion in order to allow us to recognise the actor Arielle Dombasle singing:

I’m writing you all this from another world, a world of appearances. In a way, the two worlds communicate with each other. Memory is to one what history is to the other: an impossibility. [...] I envy Hayao in his Zone, he plays with the signs of his memory. He pins them down and decorates them like insects that would have flown beyond time, and which he could contemplate from a point outside of time: the only eternity we have left. I look at his machines. I think of a world where each memory could create its own legend.

The face of horror, that of a corpse, gives way to the electronic beauty of another woman's face who looks into the camera from the Zone. While the television images looked at us through the gaze into the camera, the images of the Zone could give us back our own gaze, deprived of memory, as a sort of postmodern mirror. Facing this second appearance of the Zone, we observe two of its characteristics: it can modify the degree of transformation into a flow-image and also the colour applied to it. That is to say, it can calibrate the distance it interposes with its reference, recognition/non-recognition, and the colour with which it filters it. It maintains the analogue reference when the images deal with aesthetic beauty, and it deforms them until their disappearance when they deal with horror. When this image leaves the Zone and recovers its filmic nature, the actor no longer looks into the camera; the equality of the gaze does not occur, which again escapes into the sphere of reality. After showing the machine capable of generating the Zone, Marker shows the spectator its power, its ability to transform the analogue image into a flow-image (now red and black) that can achieve its own demise. Marker succeeds in creating a time-image of postmodernity, that of a new image of the Zone, which shows the annihilation of the temporality of history and which is absorbed by its own black hole, without leaving behind its corpse, any trace of lost memory:

There is merely a movement of the exacerbation of reality towards paroxysm, where it involutes of its own accord and implodes, leaving no trace, not even the sign of its end. [...] The virtual is, in fact, merely the dilatation of the dead body of reality—the proliferation of an achieved universe, for which there is nothing left but to go on endlessly hyperrealising itself. (Baudrillard, 1996 [1995], pp. 46–47)

Thus, the time-image reaches the status of crystal-image, in which the void of the actual image is indiscernible from the presence of the virtual image: “The crystal-image is, then, the point of indiscernibility of the two distinct images, the actual and the virtual, while what we see in the crystal is time itself, a bit of time in the pure state” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 82). This crystal-image shows pure time, or perhaps we should say the postmodern timelessness of the impossibility of memory–history:

It is not only a question of suppressing the illusion of the presence of the past, but also of proposing a reflection on time: the evocative “vertigo of Time.” To suggest a reflection, but also to cause this vertigo. To do this,

Marker uses a poetics of blur. [...] The Zone, in its coloured fog, would be the space of the decomposition of the image in memory. (Jacques, 2018, p. 49–50)

We observe how Marker generates a powerful sentence-image that synthesises and advances the reflection that occurs later. Faced with Hayao's defence of the Zone in its first appearance, Marker now shows the argument of the epistolary addresser, who sees in the Zone a world of appearances that makes history disappear. Thus, he confronts Hayao's theory, from which he envies his renunciation of historical temporality, concentrating on its aesthetic and creative possibilities. While Africa has symbolised the failure of history, Japan has embodied the new paradigm of postmodernity. The two opposite poles of survival to which the epistolary addresser referred in the first part of the film are perfectly defined with this materialisation of the Zone. Once the ambivalence that the postmodern image produces in the human being is presented and reflected thanks to the shift between subjectivities (in this case, the identity–alterity split cameraman–Hayao, thesis–antithesis) the addresser indicates a first synthesis: the Zone can serve each memory to write its own legend.

The third appearance of the Zone provides the spectator with the alienation experience that it can produce through its sensation-image devoid of reflection. They are now the images of Okinawa in 1945 and its kamikaze pilots that are transformed into the Zone, and again Marker uses the metaphor of fire to express the memory–history disappearance: “On Hayao's machine war resembles letters being burned, shredded in a frame of fire.” After quoting Ryoji Uehara's words, and thereby, telling the origin of the images, the spectator is abandoned to a sensation-image that, even emerging from horror, imposes its aesthetic experience. The last image of the Zone, which allows us to identify a kamikaze plane crashing, gives way to a filmic image of the wing of a plane soaring in the sky. Only then is the spectator aware of how both images, the first from horror, the second from stillness and serenity, provoke, however, the same sensation: they grant a continuity of aesthetic pleasure. The flow-image of the Zone makes the spectator ignore any reference, even when it participates in the horror, to perceive it only at a sensory-aesthetic level. Marker reveals this unconscious process through a parataxis that should produce the dialectics—the plane that crashes in opposition to the plane that soars in the stillness of the sky—but that is instead perceived as an extension of the aesthetic pleasure that only then reveals the perversion of its mechanism. That is, at this point in the thinking process, Marker is able to offer the spectator the

aesthetic experience of the Zone and the awareness of its meaning solely and exclusively through images. As already indicated, only at the end of the film will all the images meet in the Zone.

Video Game Images: Ludic Non-image of Postmodernity

The analysis about the video game images is the same one already shown about the Zone, but it is necessary to notice how it reaches its limit, since they can be generated without real images, and therefore, they are constructed as its denial. This “form of non-image” allows Hayao to reaffirm his argument: “He claims that electronic texture is the only one that can deal with sentiment, memory, and imagination.” It is through this electronic material of non-image that the perfect metaphor of the human condition materialises. However, it has a ludic function, obviating, and forgetting, the historical renunciation that Marker points out: “For the moment, the inseparable philosophy of our time is contained in the Pac-Man. [...] Perhaps because it is the most perfect graphic metaphor of man’s fate.” The entry into the video game images of Marker’s favourite animals is made again through some still images that continue to allow reflection. The non-image takes on movement with the Pac-Man game, which transforms the aesthetic experience of the Zone into a ludic evasion as another objective of the new image of postmodernity. Thus, the ambivalence around the postmodern image is reiterated through the alterity of consciousness that Hayao embodies.

After the above analysis, we confirm how Marker’s audiovisual reflection, cinematic thinking, is in complete accordance with the theoretical exposition offered by Jean Baudrillard at about the same time. The literary reflection of the latter finds its audiovisual materialisation in Marker’s film. The phases of the image that Baudrillard describes find their cinematic expression in *Sans soleil*:

Such would be the successive phases of the image:

it is the reflection of a profound reality	→ filmic image
it masks and denatures a profound reality	→ television image
it masks the absence of a profound reality	→ electronic image
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever:	
it is its own pure simulacrum	→ video game image

(1994 [1981], p. 6)

This simulacrum-image embodies the crisis of historicity and the historicism of the postmodern image analysed by Jameson, which also finds in *Sans soleil* its audiovisual expression:

Yet this mesmerising new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way. It cannot therefore be said to produce this strange occultation of the present by its own formal power, but rather merely to demonstrate, through these inner contradictions, the enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience. (1991, p. 21)

Epistolary Film, Remembered Film, and Imaginary Film: The Shift Among Subjectivities

As already analysed above, since its beginning, the epistolary film that the spectator sees is linked to another film to come. This bond will also allow the shift among subjectivities: Marker's extra-diegetic subjectivity, the epistolary addresser's diegetic subjectivity, which the spectator identifies with Marker until the end of the film when he is transformed into a fictional character, and the fictional protagonist's intra-diegetic subjectivity. Therefore, the spectator creates a starting premise of interpretation in which epistolary literary writing is prior to the cinematic creation that instrumentalises that past correspondence. I will analyse how both writings and their respective subjectivities are related.

The film prologue presents a first hypothesis: that the film to come, of which the epistolary addresser speaks (time of the narration), is the same film that the spectator sees, finally made afterwards (time of the enunciation): "One day I'll have to put it all alone at the beginning of a film with a long piece of black leader; if they don't see happiness in the picture, at least they'll see the black." That is, to make an essay film, Marker filters his own past epistolary subjectivity through the addressee's subjectivity. The second time the epistolary text refers to the cinematic work to come, the proposed structure continues to function: the idea that the epistolary addresser expresses in his literary letter is later put into practice by himself in the montage of the film: "He wrote me that the pictures of Guinea-Bissau ought to be accompanied by music from the Cape Verde Islands. That would be our contribution to the unity dreamed of by Amilcar Cabral." Therefore, the identification between the film imagined in the letters and the one made later, the one that the spectator now sees, continues to take place. However, this logic is violated in the segment dedicated to Luiz Cabral. The epistolary text is no longer justified as literary and prior to the film but belonging to it, not to the past narration but to the present enunciation. That is to say, for a few moments, the past subjectivity of the epistolary

Marker shifts to the present subjectivity of the cinematic Marker: “And now, the scene moves to Cassaque: the seventeenth of February, 1980. But to understand it properly, one must move forward in time. In a year, Luiz Cabral, the president, will be in prison, and the weeping man he has just decorated, Major Nino, will have taken power.” The shift between subjectivities produces, at this moment, a sort of paradox in the epistolary enunciation of the film. The literary epistolary text refers directly to the visual image of the epistolary film. Thus, at this moment, both seem to form an impossible cinematic epistolary writing, since the diegetic literary epistolary writing is prior to the extra-diegetic cinematic creation, which is generated from its reading. This epistolary paradox identifies the moment of recognition about the impossibility of collective memory, of the encounter of subjectivities, which causes the fracture of historicity: “And beneath each of these faces a memory. And in place of what we were told had been forged into a collective memory, a thousand memories of men who parade their personal laceration in the great wound of history.” This shift between subjectivities produces a paradox sentence-image about the impossibility of the encounter of subjectivities implied in the creation of a collective memory.

The segment dedicated to *Vertigo* presents a new and interesting shift between subjectivities. Although it does not include the imaginary film, it is generated through a procedure that will be used later to narrate it, so it is now pertinent to carry out its analysis. Despite most of the epistolary texts being recited in direct speech, especially the most reflective moments, Marker offers this entire fragment through indirect speech: “He wrote to me that.” In this way, the addressee’s description of the addresser’s visit to San Francisco is combined, however, with the more subjective elements of the latter’s filming. They are much more individualised subjective images, in which the addresser films the spaces of Hitchcock’s film, trying to repeat its frames, which alternate with the original *Vertigo* shots, but these get turned into freeze frames. That is to say, Hitchcock’s images turned into an attempt at a memory-image created by the addresser–spectator and therefore already subjectified, alternate with the direct experience of that same space a quarter of a century later. Constant camera movements, and even the cameraman’s running motion, emerge from them, and his presence acquires greater power. Furthermore, the freeze frames of the film disappear in an abrupt blur that, although they warn of its failed identification with memory, also identifies with the cameraman’s subjectivity. The segment then becomes a new reflection on this shift between subjectivities. It is through the distance imposed by the addressee’s narration

that the addresser's subjectivity intensifies. Once again, it is through the shift between subjectivities, in its interstice, that their possibilities and capacities are really revealed.

The reference to *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962) also concludes the argument made out about the materialisation of the time-image. Madelaine's gesture on the redwood offers a movement-image of time, an indirect representation. The time traveller's finger from *La Jetée* points to the exterior of the causality of the previous image to the postmodern timelessness on which the essay film reflects. In the same way, the spiral of *Vertigo's* credits offered a first movement-image of time: "In the spiral of the titles, he saw time covering a field ever wider as it moved away, a cyclone whose present moment contains motionless the eye." Marker offers in *Sans soleil* its time-image, that of the Zone, and he will not bring the *Vertigo* images into it. Thus, he seems to choose the failed attempt of a memory-image that aims to preserve history in the postmodern practice of "creating your own legend." Marker uses the distance-image of postmodernity: "Cinema in cinema, cinema on cinema, auto-cinema, peri-cinema, meta-cinema [...] an art which creates its own culture and is nourished by it" (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2007, pp. 73–74), to apprehend the subjective experience of the cinematic spectator and generate through it a new reflection about the opposite nature between the movement-image and the time-image, which arises once again from the shift between subjectivities.

After this segment dedicated to *Vertigo*, the epistolary addresser takes up the idea of the film to come for the third time in order to deepen the problematisation of the identification between this project of film, now called imaginary film, and the one just analysed: "In San Francisco, I made the pilgrimage of a film I had seen nineteen times. In Iceland, I laid the first stone of an imaginary film." The volcanic landscape of Iceland in 1965 and the activities of American astronauts lead him to imagine a film about another time traveller from the year 4001. Once again, Marker then generates a shift between subjectivities. The images filmed by him become the subjective shot of the imaginary film protagonist. A cut between shots, the "connection of memories" he defines himself later, serves to transform the subjective shot of the epistolary Marker into that of his imaginary character:

I imagine him moving slowly, heavily, about the volcanic soil that sticks to the soles of his shoes. All of a sudden, he stumbles, and the next step it's a year later. He's walking on a small path near the Dutch border by a sea bird sanctuary. That's for a start. Now, why this cut in time, this connection of memories? That's just it, he can't understand.

While the protagonist's subjectivity moved outwards in the segment dedicated to *Vertigo* to delve into the nontransferable nature of subjectivity, now it moves inwards to provoke the experience of estrangement, the alterity of consciousness in its most instinctive aspect. The images change their nature by modifying their interpretation: they no longer belong to a filmmaker in 1965, but to a time traveller in 4001. They are no longer proof of the impossibility of memory but of the impossibility of forgetting. The shift between subjectivities turns them into a crystal-image in which actual image (epistolary film) and virtual image (imaginary film) reach indiscernibility:

The two modes of existence are now combined in a circuit where the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, chase after each other, exchange their roles and become indiscernible. It is here that we may speak the most precisely of crystal-image: the coalescence of an actual image and its virtual image, the indiscernibility of two distinct images. (Deleuze, 1989, p. 127)

The point of view does not transform the content of the images but their meaning. It is the shift between subjectivities that destroys the causality of the movement-image to generate the indiscernibility of the crystal-image. It previously embodied the impossibility of collective memory, and now it does so with the impossibility of apprehending the experience of others: "He wants to understand [...] that thing he didn't understand which had something to do with unhappiness and memory." The alterity of consciousness explored through Hayao's character now gives way to the alterity of the other in its aspect of greater strangerhood, and the crystal-image is achieved by identifying both subjectivities to embody it. Marker then renounces the identification of both films, although they retain the same title: "Of course, I'll never make that film. Nonetheless, I'm collecting the sets, inventing the twists, putting in my favourite creatures. I've even given it a title, indeed, the title of those Mussorgsky songs: Sunless." The imagined science-fiction film about the impossibility of forgetting has become an essay film about the impossibility of memory. However, both are linked through a shift between subjectivities that takes place in the cut between two shots and that generates a crystal-image in which imaginary film and epistolary film become indiscernible, actual image, and virtual image.

To conclude, Marker takes up the images of the Icelandic children to begin the synthesis of the reflection and the conclusion of the film. For this, he

again problematises the enunciation with the shift between subjectivities, as already happened with the images about Luiz Cabral. The past literary epistolary enunciation becomes the present cinematic one:

And that's where my three children of Iceland came and grafted themselves in. I picked up the whole shot again, adding the somewhat hazy end, the frame trembling under the force of the wind beating us down on the cliff: everything I had cut in order to tidy up, and that said better than all the rest what I saw in that moment, why I held it at arms' length, at zoom's length, until its last twenty-fourth of a second.

It is the thinking process that allows images to find their place. They come out of their isolation, surrounded by the black screen in which they appeared in the prologue, and they recover their initial duration to offer an equality of the gaze that now extends within the shot and that Marker does not try to fixate. Instead, he accepts its disappearance under the ashes that will cover Heimaey five years later. In the same way, Marker accepts their mutation by allowing the film to enter the Zone and to turn into a flow-image, showing the result the spectator has already seen: "And then, in its turn, the journey entered the Zone, and Hayao showed me my images already affected by the moss of time, freed of the lie that had prolonged the existence of those moments swallowed by the spiral." After a final reference to the epistolary unrealisation—the letters destroyed or never sent—Marker resorts to the alterity of consciousness incarnated in Hayao to understand the ambivalence that it brings up and to identify the images of the Zone as a new act of resistance:

Finally, his language touches me because he talks to that part of us which insists on drawing profiles on prison walls [...] the handwriting each one of us will use to compose his own list of 'things that quicken the heart,' to offer or to erase. In that moment, poetry will be made by everyone, and there will be emus in the Zone.

After accepting the impossibility of memory, the act of resistance lies in an audiovisual self-management, in opposing the consumption of the postmodern image embodied in television images to turn the Zone into a space of free creation available to all. Marker reaffirms for the last time the shift between subjectivities as a generator of the time-image and the crystal-image. The past of the epistolary texts is updated in the present, as the addressee turns "he wrote to me" into "he writes to me." The past of the



Figure 1. *Sans soleil* (Chis Marker, 1982) © Argos Films

literary epistolary writing has reached the present through the addressee's subjectivity, with which Marker decides to conclude the film, to project it into the future: "He writes me from Japan. He writes me from Africa. He writes that he can now summon up the look on the face of the woman from the Praia market that had lasted only the length of a film frame. Will there be a last letter?" (Figure 1) Besides, he unifies the subjectivities created by the film in a final sentence-image: the narration of the addressee, the filmic images of the epistolary addresser, the images of the Zone created by Hayao and Marker's cinematic writing are brought together in the image of the woman from the Praia market, whose fixation already renounces the referential and memory value to become poetic writing.

It is only at this moment—when the network of shifts among subjectivities has made possible the materialisations of sentence-images to achieve the time-image of the Zone and the crystal-image of subjectivity—that Marker creates one more shift by turning the diegetic character into a fictional one. In turn, his addressee disappears to make an actor who reads the letters emerge. Thus, the vertigo of time and no memory—history is again situated in a greater spiral. This final intertitle is enough to show again another abyss, that of subjectivity, into which the spectator dives. Through it, the finished film must be rethought once more to transform the actual image—virtual image circuit. Only through the exercise of the shift between subjectivities is it possible to reflect on one's own identity and the experience of reality. That is how the individual of the essay film

is forcibly displaced by the existence of a visual discursiveness that occurs outside himself, in parallel with the thinking process expressed orally. The individual represents himself, not through the identity focus that constitutes the reflective voice, but in the visual space of the images of a world turned into a mirror. [...] It is about getting to see oneself in the mirror of the world: seeing oneself as if it were someone else. (Català, 2014, p. 375)

The equality of the gaze that Marker wants to preserve, even if it is transformed into a poetic expression of the Zone, is that of the encounter between subjectivities, which in cinematic practice occurs on both sides of the camera and also on both sides of the screen. Thus, the equality of the gaze of the woman from the Praia market is also the equality of the gaze of the spectator, to whom a cinematic experience is proposed—a reflection on which he is forced to take an active part, updating the virtual image of the film that cinematic thinking process implies. This analysis shows the evolution from the modern letter-film—*Lettre de Sibérie*—in the beginning of the essay film to the epistolary film instrumentalised by the postmodern essay film. I synthesise this evolution through the comparison of the defining characteristics of both films:

<i>Lettre de Sibérie</i>	<i>Sans soleil</i>
<i>Letter-film of modernity</i>	<i>Epistolary film of postmodernity</i>
Diegetic filmic missive	Literary missives + addressee's reading: Unrealisable extra-diegetic epistolary enunciation
Epistolary writing: I-voice enunciation	Enunciation complexification Epistolary reading: you-voice enunciation
Addresser identified with the filmmaker	Selection and reconstruction of epistolary texts: Direct and indirect speech Anonymous addresser – Sandor Krasna The filmmaker as extra-diegetic epistolary creator
Identity – subjectivity	Alterity – memory
Oscillation between real and imagined: collage	Oscillation between real and virtualised: pastiche
Real image and animation: hybridisation	Real image and virtual image: virtualisation
Historicity	Conflict historicity and historicism
Questioning of the representation	Falseness of representation: world of appearances

Faced with the clear intellection of the letter-film through the enunciation of the addresser's I-voice, in the epistolary film, the complexity of the letter is produced through the you-voice of the addressee. This change in the instance responsible for the epistolary enunciation implies a change in the epistemological paradigm, with which identity and its subjectivity are abandoned as means of knowledge to displace them to the concept of alterity and the conflicted postmodern memory. A mutation that also occurs in the nature of the images and in the oscillation procedure typical of the essay film: from the hybridisation between the real image and the animated image (of the imagination) of the letter-film of modern cinema that gives rise to collage audiovisual to the back and forth between the real image and its virtualisation, to generate the postmodern pastiche, consequence of the hegemony of historicism. In this way, while the letter-film proposed the questioning of cinematic representation to vindicate subjective perception and the place of imagination in it, the epistolary film affirms the inability of the image to represent reality, which can only offer a world of appearances. Thus, the evolution that occurs in the field of essay film is evidenced, in which *the form that thinks*, the letter-film of modernity, has mutated into the epistolary film of postmodernity in the construction of its enunciation—complexity of epistolary intellection—as in the nature of its images—from hybridisation to virtualisation—as in the nature of its self-reflection—from subjectivity and imagination to alterity and conflicted memory. The epistolary film, therefore, becomes a postmodern form that thinks, which continues to consolidate a set “of diverse elements that give a face to the concept and transform an aesthetic impression into an ethical reflection” (Català, 2014, p. 384).

Conclusions

The analyses show the relevance and evolution of the epistolary device as an enunciative element of the essay film. The letter-film enables the existence of a complicit addressee and allows intimate expression on the part of the addresser to develop the displacement between reality and imagination and enable critical thinking about the former. Epistolary dialogism can also become more complex and incorporate different recipients, private and public, to generate political and social reflection. This complexity of the epistolary instances is also transferred to the temporal coordinate, and the letter can be constructed in the paradox between the past, the present, and the future of its creation at the same time as it transitions from

modernity to postmodernity, characterised by fragmentation, discontinuity, and abstraction of the epistolary event. The epistolary film, as a result of the paramount presence of alterity in postmodernity, shows the importance of the addressee and the space of epistolary reception. The essay film can thus be constructed from the reading of letters, real or fictional, developing parataxic structures between the epistolary reading and the visual display, which can belong to both the recipient and the sender. Furthermore, the epistolary device also makes possible the shifts between subjectivities. Regarding the materials used, we observe how the expression of imagination materialises exceptionally through animated creation in *Lettre de Sibérie*. Photography and fictional films are introduced as material to analyse and reflect on, and the former is also instrumentalised as an element of thought through photomontage in *Letter to Jane* and *Sans soleil*. Finally, in *Sans soleil*, television images and their mutation embody the excess-image of postmodernity, electronic images turn into the time-image of postmodernity, and video game images represent the ludic non-image of postmodernity.

The analyses also reveal a crucial set of procedures through which to generate the sentence-images that build and develop the audiovisual thinking process. In *Lettre de Sibérie*, the repetition of the image creates a dialectical sentence-image that questions the objectivity of images and vindicates subjectivity as the only form of knowledge. In *Letter to Jane*, the black screen embodies the interstice of the essay film, the space from which audiovisual thinking must emerge. In addition, the photomontage becomes a sentence-image that reflects on the reality–fiction and revolution–imperialism dialectics, and the fragmentation of the image makes a detailed analysis of its different elements possible. In *Lettre à Freddy Buache*, the panoramic movement of the camera becomes a practice of essayistic research, and slow and stop motion becomes an audiovisual dissection technique of reality. In *News from Home*, the circular panning and the tracking shot embody a symbolic sentence-image about the possibilities of the cinematic gaze and its mobilisation, allowing for solving the spatial and temporal dimensions. In *Sans soleil*, the freeze frame becomes a symbolic sentence-image that evidences the impossibility of the memory-image and the gaze into the camera embodies the encounter between subjectivities, the equality of the gaze, generating the dialogism between the two sides of the camera, and also between the two sides of the screen. The essayist's voice–image binomial also evolves through the epistolary device. The voiceover of the addresser, associated with the utterance of a written text, evolves towards the essayist's presence in the image and a digressive expression that moves away from the recited text and also shifts from the addresser to the addressee.

In this way, the epistolary device, the materials used and the audiovisual elements generated enable critical thinking about reality in different spheres and through various procedures: using imagination and subjectivity, analysing images, producing their abstraction, exploring alterity and reflecting on postmodernity. The essayistic identity explores social and political identity in the transition from modernity to the new paradigm of postmodernity: from the historicity of communist regimes and revolutionary struggles to the historicism of the electronic and virtual images of the postmodern simulacrum.

Works Cited

- Astruc, A. (1992). *Du stylo à la caméra... et de la caméra au stylo. Écrits (1942–1984)*. L'Archipel.
- Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. Verso / (1992). *Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation*. The University of Michigan Press / (1981). *Simulacres et simulations*. Éditions Galilée.
- Baudrillard, J. (1996). *The perfect crime*. Verso / (1995). *Le crime parfait*. Éditions Galilée.
- Bauman, Z. (1991). *Modernity and ambivalence*. Polity Press, Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Bazin, A. (2017). Bazin on Marker (1958). In N. M. Alter & T. Corrigan (Eds.), *Essays on the essay film* (pp. 102–105). Columbia University Press / (1958) “Lettre de Sibérie” France-Observateur, October 30, 1958.
- Bellour, R. (1999). *L'Entre-Images 2. Mots, Images*. POL.
- Bellour, R. (2002). *L'Entre-Images. Photo. Cinéma. Vidéo*. Éditions de la Différence [1990].
- Bergstrom, J. (2004). News from Home. In C. Paquot (Ed.), *Chantal Akerman. Autoportrait en cinéaste* (p. 181). Cahiers du cinéma, Centre Georges Pompidou.
- Blümlinger, C. (2004). Lire entre les images. In S. Liandrat-Guigues and M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 49–66). Editions Champ Vallon.
- Bulher, J. M., & Laplace, Y. (1977). Locarno 77: l'espace du leurre. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 281, 54.
- Català, J. M. (2006). La forma ensayo en Marker. In M. L. Ortega & A. Weinrichter (Eds.), *Mystère Marker. Pasajes en la obra de Chris Marker* (pp. 149–164). T&B.
- Català, J. M. (2014). *Estética del ensayo. La forma ensayo, de Montagne a Godard*. Universitat de Valencia.

- Chion, M. (1994). *Audio-vision: Sound on screen*. Columbia University Press / (1991) *L'audio-vision. Son et image au cinéma*. Armand Colin.
- Chion, M. (1999). *The voice in cinema*. Columbia University Press / (1982). *La voix au cinéma*. Editions de l'Etoile, Cahiers du cinéma
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. University of Minnesota Press / (1985) *L'image-temps*. Éditions de Minuit.
- Dubroux, D. (1977). Il n'y aurait plus qu'une seule image. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 279–280, 38–43.
- Font, D. (2007). Un epílogo que podría ser un prólogo: en el maremagnum de la no ficción. In A. Weinrichter (Ed.), *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo* (pp. 192–201). Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de Navarra.
- Godard, J.-L., & Gorin, J.-P. (1972). Enquête sur une image. *Tel Quel*, 52, 74–90.
- Harvey-Davvit, J. (2014). The subject of Chantal Akerman's *News from Home* (1977): On the political potential of the cinematic flâneur. In R. Wrigley (Ed.), *The flâneur abroad: Historical and international perspectives* (pp. 342–356). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Jacques, V. (2018). *Chris Marker, les médias et le XXe siècle. Le revers de l'histoire contemporaine*. Creaphis Éditions.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1988). *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. Librairie Arthème Fayard.
- Labarthe, A. S. (1960). *Essai sur le jeune cinéma français*. Le Terrain Vague.
- Lacan, J. (1988). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 20*. Norton & Company.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2007). *L'écran global*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Longfellow, B. (1989). Love letters to the mother: The work of Chantal Akerman. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale*, 13(1–2), 73–90.
- Margulies, I. (1996). *Nothing happens: Chantal Akerman's hyperrealist everyday*. Duke University Press.
- Marker, C. (1961). *Commentaires*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Mauldin, J. E. (2007). *Negotiating the nation after May '68: Narratives of America and France in French film, 1968–1972*. Doctoral Thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Maupin, F. (1977). News from home. *La revue du cinéma*, 319, 109.
- Michaux, H. (1963). Je vous écris d'un pays lointain. In *Plume précédé de Lointain intérieur* (pp. 71–80). Gallimard.
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2018). *De un cine epistolar. La presencia de la misiva en el cine francés moderno y contemporáneo*. Shangrila Ediciones.
<https://shangrilaediciones.com/producto/de-un-cine-epistolar/>

- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2021a). *Correspondências* by Rita Azevedo Gomes: The complex hybrid image of contemporary epistolary cinema and contemporary essay film. *Visual Studies*, 36(4–5), 435–449.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2020.1771202>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2022a). *Sans soleil* by Chris Marker: The essay film and its cinematic thinking process: Reflecting on postmodernity. *Studies in European Cinema*, 21(2), 107–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2022.2073173>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2022d). Women's epistolary cinema: Exploring female alterities: Epistolary films and epistolary essay films. *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(7), 1781–1800. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1900313>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2022e). Women's epistolary cinema. Exploring female alterity and intersubjectivity: Letter-films and filmic correspondences. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 39(7), 1488–1514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2021.1944014>
- Moure, J. (2004). Essai de définition de l'essai au cinéma. In S. Liandrat-Guigues & M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 25–39). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Richter, H. (2017). The essay film: A new type of documentary. In N. M. Alter & T. Corrigan (Eds.), *Essays on the essay film* (pp. 89–92). Columbia University Press.
- Ricœur, P. (1990). *Soi-même comme un autre*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Roud, R. (1963). The Left Bank. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 32(1), 24–27.

2. The (Self-)Portrait

Abstract: This chapter studies the use of the enunciative device of the (self-)portrait through the analysis of three works. *Jane B. par Agnès V.* (Agnès Varda, 1987) creates different female portraits, documentary and fictional, to reflect on women's identity and develop a practice of female intersubjectivity and artistic sisterhood, producing critical thinking about female stereotypes. *JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1994) generates a philosophical identity self-portrait of the author to reflect on his ethical and aesthetic demands, exploring the dialectic between cinematic image and videographic image. *Leçons de ténèbres* (Vincent Dieutre, 1999) creates the self-portrait regarding gay identity as a vindication of the need to make its reality visible, confronting the self-portrait in Super 8 mm with the videographic image of paintings.

Keywords: essay film, audiovisual thinking, identity, critical thinking, authorship, Francophone cinema.

The evolution of the self-portrait in the European Francophone film essay during the 20th century was led by Jean-Luc Godard as a fundamental element of the self-reflective character of this filmic form. His first self-portrait arises from the work that inaugurates this new form of thinking: *Camera-Eye* (1968). The film is generated from the juxtaposition between the images of the filmmaker behind the camera and different film materials, among them images from *La Chinoise* (1968). However, Godard quickly considers that the position of the audiovisual essayist is not that of the filmmaker who creates images, but essentially that of the filmmaker who manipulates them in the editing room. Thus, *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (1982) already offers us this self-portrait in this space of the audiovisual reflection after the creation of the images. As I will analyse in Chapter 4, in *Scénario du film Passion* (1982), the audiovisual thinking process is moreover produced in real time, and the images we contemplate respond to the manipulation the filmmaker makes of them. Women filmmakers mostly generate their self-portraits as

creators of images linked to feminist vindication. This implies that their positioning as manipulators of images in the editing room has been delayed and that the audiovisual thinking processes materialise in juxtapositions in which rhetorical elements are minimal (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2023b). Focusing on the self-portrait as an enunciative device of the essay film, three works allow us to analyse the use of this device as a discursive tool. *Jane B. par Agnès V.* (Agnès Varda, 1987) offers us the self-portrait of the filmmaker through the portrait of the actor in order to reflect on female identity. *JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1994) creates the self-portrait of the author and his creative process. *Leçons de ténèbres* (Vincent Dieutre, 1999) uses the self-portrait to generate a reflection on gay identity. The analysis of these three works will allow me to offer some conclusions about the self-portrait as a generator of audiovisual thinking.

***Jane B. par Agnès V.: Women's Identity, Intersubjectivity and Sisterhood*¹**

In *Jane B. par Agnès V.*, Agnès Varda creates Birkin's portrait through intersubjective work from her identity as a filmmaker. At the beginning of the film, Varda explains her theory to the actor:

It's as if I were filming your self-portrait. But you won't always be alone in the mirror. There will be the camera, which is a little bit me, and never mind if I sometimes appear in the mirror or the background. [...] You just have to follow the rules of the game, and look at the camera as often as possible. Look into it. Otherwise, you won't be looking at me.

The filmmaker creates this sentence-image as the premise of the essay film that begins in a single shot. A panning shot shows Birkin looking at Varda through a mirror, then Varda's reflection in it, and finally, the actor looking at the camera through it (Figure 2). Thus, the filmmaker affirms how the portrait and the self-portrait will be produced by their relationship with each other through a filmic device that becomes a mirror in which one must look at oneself. A shot of the camera and Varda behind it expresses the need to include the vindication of the filmmaker's figure. The spectator

¹ A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Women's Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>



Figure 2. *Jane B. par Agnès V.* (Agnès Varda, 1987) © Ciné-Tamaris

then meets with the creation of a space of intersubjectivity: “It’s as if I were filming your self-portrait,” as Dominique Bluher notes, “the ‘true’ portrait has to encounter the other” (2019, p. 68). Therefore, the essay film is created from the position of the filmmaker in front of and behind the camera through a succession of both “documentary” and “fictional” portraits and self-portraits of the actor and the filmmaker in her capacity as such. The audiovisual thinking process is built within the images and by means of the filmmaker’s voiceover.

The various fictional portraits of the actor will serve to generate, through humour and irony, a reflection on female stereotypes in general—the classical portrait, the romantic muse, the housewife, the widow, the tragic lover, etc.—and the strictly cinematic stereotypes—the presence of women in romantic, suspense, or Nouvelle Vague cinema. In these fictional portraits, Birkin’s gaze into the camera becomes a denunciation of the gaze of patriarchy, of the objectification of women and their bodies. It is brought to the point of subversion by generating female portraits of male stereotypes—Laurel and Hardy in comedy, and those of Westerns through the female figure of Calamity Jane. In addition, these fictional portraits also represent the stereotype to which Birkin is subjected as a movie star and celebrity, especially about her gender role in her relationship with Serge Gainsbourg: “[T]he film explores the constant, reversible oscillation of public and private contained in Birkin’s status as a media star” (Flitterman-Lewis, 1996, p. 348).

To these two fictional levels, Varda opposes the documentary portrait, outside any stereotype, of Jane Birkin in her different facets: woman, actor,

mother, etc. Birkin recounts her family story situated in front of a screen on which slides are projected, which then emerge directly from the screen to return to the projection. The documentary portrait of the actor takes place in her house, revealing the contradiction between the desire for popularity and anonymity:

Varda: Do you care about what the papers say? [...]

Birkin: Yes, it matters. I want everyone to like me. I want to be nice, natural. I like being loved, popular ...

Birkin: I'd like to be filmed as if I were transparent, anonymous, like everyone else.

Varda: You are the queen of paradox. You want stardom and its perks [...] and at the same time you want to be filmed like everyday people [...] You dream of being a famous nobody.

At this moment, Varda appears for the first time, speaking to the camera, alone, with the cinematic elements behind her, to present a theory about the portrait: "Sometimes I wonder if the only true portrait is the death mask. A frontal view of a motionless face. That's all that remains of someone. A motionless face." The image then shows the materialisation of that essential self-portrait of Birkin's motionless face, who adds, "I am Jane B. I was born British. My height is now 5 feet 7 inches. No distinguishing marks. No exceptional talents, but I am here. You are watching me. And time is passing." Then, Varda appears a second time, speaking to the camera to explain the reasons that led her to make the film: precisely Birkin's contradictory desire between anonymity and popularity: "Your desire to be both known and unknown makes you a public fantasy. Maybe that's what fascinated me. Made me want to make this film." The film is also a portrait and reflection on that duality as a starting point for the deconstruction of gender. Marilyn Monroe, who died when Birkin was 15 years old, then emerges as Birkin's particular muse, while Birkin's portrait is serially multiplied by the mirrors: "She was a kind of naive inspiration of our dreams of pleasing. We want to move like her, we want to be graceful, pretty, lively, funny," to understand how the need to be liked—the approval-seeking behaviour inculcated into women—is the cause of both the presented duality and the relationship with one's own appearance. The complex: "When I was 16, I was flat. I was very upset [...] I had a complex [...] I thought only breasts could make you appealing," is overcome when male approval is achieved, in this case from her partner, Serge Gainsbourg: "I realised I was a sort of criterion, of something

to be desired by him. So it was okay.” The film shows Birkin’s naked body at the beginning, as a pictorial model, and turned into the *Venus of Urbino* (Titian, ca. 1534) as a liberated exercise of female emancipation, faced with the male gaze of the photographs from *Lui* magazine, also in opposition to the later nude in a kind of playful nudist casino. In the denouement, Birkin offers a final reflection on her appearance and self-perception of gender while characterised as Tarzan’s Jane: “I’d like to play Mowgli, the little jungle boy, the wild child [...]. I’ve never really seen myself as a girl. I see myself in roles of girls disguised as boys. Tomboys, amazons [...]. As brave as men. That’s how I imagine it. Like Calamity Jane, with her shotgun.” Thus, two female models—Marilyn Monroe and Calamity Jane—embody the conflict between a first no-gendered desire and a second gendered construction imposed by patriarchy. The documentary portrait offers a relevant reflection on the need for the deconstruction of gender that liberates women from men’s desire and approval.

The articulation of this space of intersubjectivity through the device of the (self-) portrait evolves to transform the dialogue between the filmmaker and actor through the camera into a conversation in front of it. On the first occasion, both talk about how to continue the film. After the images of Birkin rehearsing “Le moi et le je,” (1987) she explains that it was the first time she sang in front of an audience and the first time she showed someone something written by her. The reader is Varda: “You showed it to me. I read it. I liked it, so we will put it in the film.” She creates a second panning shot in correspondence with the initial one: a symbolic sentence-image of artistic sisterhood turned into creative empowerment. In her house’s bathroom, Birkin looks at the camera before it pans across the room while we hear her voiceover recounting the story: “The story is about a woman like me, in fact, she is me. She falls in love with a very young man [...]. It might begin like this.” The panning shot then reaches Birkin again, now characterised as the character of the story, who looks at the camera through the mirror, to do it then directly, while we continue listening to her voiceover, now as the author of the text and protagonist of the story: “I remember how I loved him. [...] I could not care less what people think or say about us. It was our story. I remember it all, especially him.” While the first panning shot synthesises the audiovisual thinking process of the essay film, this one synthesises the process of sisterhood and empowerment that turn Birkin into a literary author and fictional character through the same elements: the movement of the camera, the mirror, and the gaze. Furthermore, the fictional character created by Birkin escapes patriarchal stereotypes to address a taboo topic for women. The second conversation in front of the camera

now takes place on the stairs of Birkin's house, discussing how to carry out the story. Their images alternate with images from the already-finished film *Kung-Fu Master!* (1988) made that same year. Thus, feminist criticism becomes artistic sisterhood first, and creative empowerment afterwards: "I wrote something that was actually seen by me. It was the absence of love. It was the life of a woman who no longer had love. And this freshness that this little boy comes to give in his life turns his life upside down." Next, the intersubjective work is also materialised in a joint fictional self-portrait, placing both in a casino (Birkin as a croupier) where Varda would try to win the necessary money to finance the film: "Your teenager's love story is not for this film. It would take time to tell it right. And time is money. We would have to finance it, take risks."

It is this intersubjective and sororal work, "the passion for female authorship" (Flitterman-Lewis, 1996, p. 342), that allows the creation of the crucial (self-)portraits of the two women artists and also making and featuring the final portrait of Jeanne d'Arc dying at the stake, now freed from stereotypes and patriarchal impositions: "Through the body of the director and her subject and an assertion of their artistic authority, they both use a general reflection on artistic creation to reveal their own involvement and open up a new space for the female subject" (McFadden, 2011, p. 322).

***JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre*: Authorial Identity and the Creative Process**

A decade after *Lettre à Freddy Buache*, Jean-Luc Godard turned the enunciative device of the self-portrait into a source of creation of the essay in *JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre*, but on this occasion, the self-portrait is not dedicated to the audiovisual essayist who manipulates the images in the editing room, but to the previous stage in which the author reflects on his creative activity and the future work. To do this, he instrumentalises different disciplines: literature, theatre, painting and finally, cinema. Godard generates this self-portrait from the juxtaposition that is already defined in the title by a slash. Using the mirror image associated with the self-portrait, he presents the stage of reflection prior to the filmic work. In addition, he chooses the analogue support of 35 mm, evidencing the premise of being outside the audiovisual essay space (video) to reflect on the device of the self-portrait in the phase prior to production. While, as I will analyse in Chapter 4, *Ici et ailleurs* (1976) concentrated on the interstice between the two terms of the association "and," *JLG/JLG* offers us different juxtapositions

that generate the thinking process. First, the temporary juxtaposition between the current identity self-portrait and the child portrait. Second, the space between the interior landscape of the *chambre noire* and the exterior landscape of the encounter with the world. From them, Godard adds others: art/culture, individual/universal, person/character, self-portrait/self-representation, etc.

The first consequence of this proposal is the absence of rhetorical procedures associated with the manipulation of visual images in pursuit of the creation of the symbolic sentence-image: crossfades, superimpositions, and manipulation of the image speed and colour. In this way, the self-portrait shows the space-time, physical and mental, prior to the manipulation of the essayist—a kind of *mise en place* of the elements of reflection prior to it. Therefore, the thinking process arises from the juxtaposition between the visual image and the sound image, and from what I call *mise-en-scène of the audiovisual thinking process*. First, the filmmaker creates a new dialect between the visual image of the literary quotation in the voice of Godard himself and the absence of the visual image in the cinematic quotations. Among both, the pictorial quotation, in relation to the self-portrait, is the only one that materialises directly on screen. This absence of visual materiality, in juxtaposition with the author's image, becomes itself a representation of the mental stage at the beginning of the thinking process in which the quotations remain suspended in the author's subjectivity.

The essay film begins with the first juxtaposition of this self-portrait: between the child's photographic portrait and the current filmic self-portrait. The first is accompanied by a sound image from childhood—the sound evoked by a schoolyard—and by the melody “Solo Cello” (1980) by David Darling. The shadow of the adult author that the child has become is projected onto the child's portrait, together with the cinema camera. Thus, in this first image of the film, Godard generates a symbolic sentence-image not through the manipulation of different materials but through the *mise-en-scène*. Next, the self-portrait of the filmic author, shown through his own shadow on the portrait, moves to the words he pronounces in voiceover. Meanwhile, the appearance of the textual inscription on the notebook offers a new element of this beginning of the thinking process: not the writing of a text, but the presence of some annotations that show the different axes of reflection. The temporal reflection is inscribed through the revolutionary calendar presented to us only through the autumn and winter months, in both cases, in reverse order. In this way, the author's self-portrait is situated in the last stretch of existence. The autumn annotations describe the authorial identity: “darkroom,” “magic lantern,” “being and time,” and

“making visible.”² The winter annotations show us the place reached as such—placing the child behind the names of recognised authors: Roberto, Jacques, Boris, Nicholas, Jeannot—and the essentiality of the author’s status, as well as its inevitable failures, through multiple literary titles and quotations.

The visual and sound portrait of the boy: “Hope belonged to him, but then the lad did not know that what counted was knowing who he belonged to, that the dark power could lay claim to him” gives way to the second dialectics between the exterior landscape of Lake Geneva and the interior of his house in Rolle, through which Godard expresses a kind of existential being-in-the-world: “It usually starts this way: Death shows up, then the Dark begins mourning. I don’t know why but I do the opposite [darkroom]. I began mourning first. But Death came neither to the streets of Paris [magic lantern] nor the banks of Lake Geneva.” This existential statement is determined, first, by two textual annotations: “darkroom” and “magic lantern,” and immediately after by the abrupt insert of the first cinematic quotation of the sound image, belonging to *Les Dernières Vacances* (Roger Leenhardt, 1948). The dialogue between the child protagonists offers a sound image of Godard’s childhood. The cinematic quotation becomes a sort of representation of one’s own identity memory that is confused with the current reflection:

I was a bit downcast in that little photo. It wasn’t due to getting slapped or a sprain, or even from bending the rules or the Judgement Day. Determining why should not be this film’s goal. No, I was already in mourning for myself, my sole companion [Tracking shot towards the video camera]. And I suspected that my soul had tripped over my body and had left without reaching out to him.

During this reflection, Godard offers a new dialectics between the child portrait and the solitary camera that is shown to us through a tracking shot, accompanied by the song “Trauermusik” (Paul Hindemith, 1936). In this way, the filmmaker expresses a childhood trauma, an identity split—also the title’s slash—which would define an adult loneliness associated with the camera, with cinematic creation. A new annotation, “sein und zeit” [being and time], offers the essence of this self-portrait in the form of a title, that of the work of the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1927), a fundamental text of existentialism. The filmmaker, therefore, shows us his objective: to make

2 The texts are published in Godard, *JLG/JLG: Phrases*, POL, 1996.

an existential self-portrait, an identity reflection on his task as a creator at the end of his life. The annotation is followed by a new, hardly recognisable film quotation in German, again situated in the inner space of the author and his creation, and accompanied by a pictorial image. The dialectics between cinematic absence and pictorial presence evidence the unknown territory that Godard wishes to explore: “A self-portrait has no ‘me.’ It has meaning only in painting, nowhere else. I was interested in finding out if it could exist in [motion] pictures and not only in paintings.”

After this statement of principles, the film is already situated in the creative experience through a new annotation: “making visible.” A voiceover phone call and a second image from the outdoors by the lake lead to the filmmaker’s first appearance directly on the screen. He sits in front of a desk to present the third dialectics of the film between art and culture: “Right, then. There is the rule. Fine. There is the exception. Fine. The rule is culture. Culture springs from the rule. Belongs to the rule. There is the exception which belongs to art.” The reflection is interrupted by a new image of the exterior landscape. The identification of exterior landscape–culture/interior landscape–art is produced. This is followed by a new transition between pictorial visual image, off-screen literary quotation—*Dialogues de Carmélites* (Georges Bernanos, 1949)—and cinematic sound image—*Madame de ...* (Max Ophüls, 1953). Bernanos’s quotation about fear outlines the concerns of the existential self-portrait in relation to religion:

You see, in a sense, Fear is also a daughter of the Lord redeemed on the night of Good Friday. She is not good-looking, no! She is either ridiculed or cursed, everyone renounces her ... And yet—do not deceive yourself: she stands at the head of every agony. She intercedes for men.

Godard continues the reflection through his voice-in: “In applying the rule, one wants exception’s death. It is the rule to want the exception’s death. It is, therefore, the rule in the Europe of Culture to plan the death of the art of living still flourishing at our feet.” Thus, the hitherto dialectics becomes exclusion; an impossibility of connection between both elements, and also between the previous juxtapositions: childhood/adulthood; interior/exterior. Once again, the reflection gives way to a new literary quotation, this time from *Le Nouveau Crève-cœur* (Louis Aragon, 1948): “Once it is time to close the book, there will be no regrets. I have seen so many live so poorly, and so many die so well.” In this way, one of the themes of the film is evidenced: the author’s reflection on the end of existence.

Next, Godard achieves a new symbolic sentence-image through the *mise-en-scène*. His self-portrait from behind shows him in front of the video camera, which in turn is connected to the television screen, but does not display any image. We find ourselves again in the moment prior to proper cinematic work. During the recitation of the definition that Pierre Reverdy gave of *L'Image* (1918), Godard changes the television channels and, therefore, the image varies on both screens:

The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot be born of a comparison but only of the bringing together of two more or less distant realities [fourth cinematic quotation in French]. The more the relations of the two realities brought together are distant and fitting, the stronger the image. [...] An image is not strong because it is brutal or fantastic—but because the association of ideas is distant and fitting [exterior landscape].

This definition of the audiovisual thinking process materialises on the two screens, television and video. The randomness of the television image through the change of channel carried out by the filmmaker, and the duplication of it in the video camera embody the useless juxtaposition: “Two realities without any relation cannot be usefully brought together. Then there is no creation of an image. Two contrary realities will not come together, they are opposed,” while they are inscribed in the previous dialectical axes: *exterior landscape–culture–television / interior landscape–art–video*.

After a new image of the exterior landscape, the shot continues, as Godard's voice quotes, with minor modifications, Henri Atlan's *Entre le cristal et la fumée* (1979), while the image on both screens disappears again. Atlan's quotation offers two new elements of the previous axes: crystal in the exterior, smoke in the interior.

Oh, how moving is the progress of the subconscious. When we realise that both forms of existence that we sail between, crystal and smoke, designate the tragedy of the dead, who, in the parents' time, actually slaughtered individuals, vehicles of this tradition: Kristallnacht and the haze of the smoke.

Next, the self-portrait continues with the reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein's posthumous work, *On Certainty* (1969) and Denis Diderot's *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749). Both quotations warn of the unquestionability attributed to vision. In the same way that the reflection on the opposition between art and culture will give rise to a representation with the inspectors of the Centre du Cinéma,

the philosophical texts by Wittgenstein and Diderot offer reflections on blindness that, at the end of the film, Godard will transform into a masterful representation with the sequence of the assistant editor. In addition, the filmmaker offers the justification for the visual absence of cinematic quotations: to experiment with their deprivation in order to discover its consequences. Before them, Jeannot/Godard presents his own reflection, this time through drawing, around the stereo, to show the process of reception and reflection: “I am in this geometrical situation. This figure is the stereo.” Then, Godard creates a materialisation of Reverdy’s previous definition, generating a distant and fair association of ideas between the schema of the stereo and history: “Because stereo goes back in history”; a sentence-image through the *mise-en-scène*, that of his hands drawing: “There was Germany, which projected Israel. Israel reflected this projection, and Israel found its cross. And the law of stereo continues. Israel projected the Palestinians and the Palestinians, in turn, carried their cross. That is the true legend of stereo.” Godard offers us a new image for Denis de Rougemont’s “to think with the hands” (1936, p. 147), which he will also use in Chapter 4A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and in the prologue of *Le Livre d’image* (2018). In this way, the filmmaker generates a complete phenomenology of the preliminary work of the essay film, an itinerary that goes from the reception of the different materials—literary and philosophical readings; pictorial contemplations; cinematic viewings—that inhabit his memory to the progressive materialisation of reflection: written, drawn, staged and finally represented.

Reading again, in this case, a fragment from *The House that Still Stood* (A.E. van Vogt, 1950) on Alfred Koezibsky’s semantic postulates, Godard continues the reflection on the language–thought–representation axis, that is, the axis that should also follow the audiovisual thinking process: “One thing is not what you claim it is. It is far more. It is an ensemble in the widest sense.” Next, and for the first time, the natural exterior landscape includes the presence of the filmmaker and the presence of sound film quotations, this time identified by noting the name of its author, each of them turned into a new notebook. Thus, Godard can navigate the exterior landscape thanks to the company of the admired filmmakers who preceded him. This *solitary walker* [Rousseau] shows his cinematic *reveries*, through which he will reflect on cinema history, which is produced from Godard’s subjective mental space through quotations from *Païsa* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946), *Adieu Philippine* (Jacques Rozier, 1963), *Au bord de la mer bleue* (Boris Barnet, 1936), and *Johnny Guitar* (Nicholas Ray, 1954). In this way, Godard is drawing a philosophical constellation—Heidegger, Atlan, Wittgenstein, Diderot—that now continues with a quotation from *The Phenomenology*

of *Spirit* (Hegel, 1807) he notes down: “Spirit is the power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it.” Then, and also for the first time, Godard inscribes his own work in the cinematic tradition drawn by means of a quotation from *Allemagne 90 neufzéro* (1991), in which we hear Eddie Constantine: “Ah, my homeland; is it true? I have imagined you this way for a long time. Happy country, magic and dazzling—o beloved land, where are you?” In this way, Godard reproduces a recent film, on which he still reflects, and to which the present essay film is linked, as will happen next with *Les enfants jouent à la Russie* (1993) and *Hélas pour moi* (1993).

A tracking shot of the shelves of literary works is first accompanied by “Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92” by Beethoven (1812), a quotation by Hegel from *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837): “Philosophy begins with the ruins of a real world,” and film quotations in different languages—Russian, German, and French—among which we distinguish some dialogue from *Les Anges du péché* (Robert Bresson, 1943), a film with a script by Jean Giraudoux. The tracking shot across the books continues with the song “Slow Return” (David Darling, 1980) to move on to various selected pictorial works on a table. In between, a new notebook title appears, this time Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz’s “the signs among us” (1919), and another by Heidegger at the end: “paths that lead nowhere” (1950). Godard strengthens the notion of essay film creation as a kind of philosophical practice.

The succession of pictorial quotations (Rubens, Greuze) and literary quotations—these times about the dying moment through Julien Green’s *Adrienne Mesurat* (1927) and on politics through Alexis de Tocqueville’s *De la démocratie en Amérique* (1835)—are now generated in the interaction with the otherness, within the interior space, in the form of an assistant. This interaction between creative reflection and external presence can only produce comedy, as a Godardian gesture inherent in the author’s self-representation. The impossibility of sharing that space, the inherence of loneliness, is then embodied through a series of quotations that already show the relationship among them: the generation of thought. The quotation from *Sous le soleil de Satan* (Georges Bernanos, 1949), in which Paul-Jean Toulet appears, is a definition of the poet that offers the same elements on which Godard works in his cinematic self-portrait—twilight, solitude and silence:

Here is the evening hour the poet Toulet loved. Here is the horizon losing its sharpness—a great ivory cloud in the west and, from the earth to the top of the heavens, a twilight sky, a vast loneliness, already chilling-full of a liquid silence ... Here is the poet’s hour, as he distilled life within his heart, in order to extract from it its essence, hidden, embalmed, baneful. (1949, p. 3)

Bernanos's quotation gives way to the film quotation from *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (1951), Bresson's adaptation of Bernanos's literary work. The theme of the author's identity is followed by the religious topic:

I entered her room for the last time. The recollection of the struggle we both faced came back to me so strongly that I thought I might faint. I gently pulled back her muslin veil and caressed her forehead. I told her, "Peace be with youm" and, on bended knee, she received this peace. Oh, the wonder! I can give what I have not. Oh, miracle of life!

Godard ends this literary–cinematic intertextuality with a quotation from a poem by Toulet published posthumously in *Vers inédits* (1936): "While the band pours out its rather old-fashioned sound, amid an ordinary crowd, in the distance, I see you. And you divine, silent, a finger beneath your chin, eyes half-closed, lost in thought, dare I hope of me" (p. 37), and a succinct quotation from *Les Anges du péché*, "I am Anne-Marie," followed by a new exterior shot. Thus, literary–cinematic intermediality–intertextuality has materialised in the following way:

Bernanos (Toulet) → Creation	Bresson (Bernanos) → Religion	Toulet → Love	Bresson (Giraudoux) Religion
---------------------------------	----------------------------------	------------------	---------------------------------

This link between creation, religion, and love will be developed at the end of the film from a philosophical perspective based on Jean-Paul Sartre's reflections.

The essay film now begins a second part, in which the filmmaker's self-portrait gives way to the representation of the thinking process produced previously. The reflection on the art/culture opposition materialises next in a sequence in which the Centre du Cinéma sends inspectors to search Godard's books and films. The filmmaker abandons the self-portrait to generate a self-representation linked to autofiction and inevitably to comedy and irony. Images from *La Chinoise* (1967) on a television lead to an ironic formulation, by an inspector, of the failure of militant cinema that Godard and Miéville reflected on in *Ici et ailleurs*: "That idiot JLG should have known that in creating two, three Vietnams, automatically, he would create two, three Americas." In this way, the figure of the author becomes his own caricature through the gaze of a culture dedicated to quantifying production and its benefits. Godard's filmic self-portrait becomes a kind of biographical story produced by his assistant, which shows its ineffectiveness. The filmmaker,

however, generates his statement on culture: “Films are merchandise. We must burn films. That’s what I told Langlois. But, I mean, with the fire within! Art is like a fire: born for what it burns.” While the assistant provides scattered historical data, one of the inspectors sees *L’Espoir* (André Malraux, 1940) and *Bob le flambeur* (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1956). The assistant then reproduces Godard’s words in *Les enfants jouent à la Russie* (1993), which are repeated through their sound reproduction in Godard’s hands: “In 1877, a Russian [Dostoevsky] who was skinny, short, poor and ill, asserted that Europe was doomed. But what is Europe dying from?” After stopping it, Godard adds, “Dostoevsky, born in autumn, died in winter. But why was he interested in the brutal murder of an innocent child?” It is the assistant who responds through a literary quotation from *Dostoevsky* by André Suarès (1911), ending this first performance:

Because the Russian people must be kept tethered. These political slaves must be admirable in moral freedom. These brutes, in their hell of drunkenness and massacres, must nonetheless be richly ignorant like no one else in Europe. This nation, capable of anything, with childlike cruelty, slumbering in horrible powerlessness, must nonetheless be the only people in Europe that still has a God.

A new annotation resumes the reflection on artistic creation: “blank paper is the true mirror of man,” followed by a snowy exterior landscape that evokes the blank page on which Godard is going to formulate the definition of the self-portrait that we contemplate:

Landscape crossed by whom? By what? If *J.L.G. by J.L.G.* exists, what does this “by J.L.G. mean?” It would mean landscapes seen as a child, and at other times, empty of any other person. But more recent landscapes, too, where we shot film. There is “land” in landscape. Two different notions of homeland might come forth. An inherited homeland [self-portrait], then a conquered homeland [black screen]. Like this negative that Kafka mentioned [clapperboard], which had to be crafted, the positive had been given to us at birth.

The dialectics on which the essay film reflects now materialise between the childhood self-portrait as a solitary given homeland and film creation as a conquered homeland that the author gives shape to.

Next, Godard offers the second representation, generated from the reflection on the unquestionability of vision and the possibilities of blindness.

Two entries titled “Notebooks for an ethics,” again a posthumous work, in this case by Sartre (1983), and “A murky business,” a book by Honoré de Balzac belonging to *La Comédie humaine* (1841), initiate another comic and ironic Godard’s self-representation in which he explains to a blind editing assistant where to cut the footage of a film, *Hélas pour moi* (1993), which we can identify thanks to, once again, its sound reproduction. Instead of viewing it on the editing monitor, Godard moves his hands through the film, as if touch could replace sight; thinking with the hands becomes seeing with the hands: “‘To see’ comes to signify ‘to touch,’ and ‘to touch’ ‘to see’” (Silverman, 2001, p. 31). Besides, the film’s sound image is superimposed on Godard’s explanation, and on the note from Pessoa in *The Book of Disquiet* (1982), also published posthumously, “Everything was sleeping as if the universe were a mistake,” that Godard also pronounces twice. This note also appears in *Hélas pour moi* in the form of an intertitle. In turn, the assistant repeats Godard’s actions while she moves her fingers through an imagined film, and reproduces its dialogues. Godard thus generates a beautiful symbolic sentence-image for aesthetic experience and emotion, and its undecidability. In addition, an off-screen voice talks about business issues.

After a new annotation, “The I don’t know what and the almost nothing,” the title of the book by Vladimir Jankélévitch (1980), it is the hands of the assistant that cut a frame of the footage while repeating Pessoa’s quotation. After another annotation, “choice of the elected,” the book title by Jean Giraudoux, *Choix des élus* (1939), the assistant generates the idea of the essentiality of the mental image: “– But where do you see that? – In my mind, like you.” In the next scene, the sound image from *Hélas pour moi* comes from the editing table, from which Godard removes the cloth that protects it. The annotation, “the temptation to exist,” the title of the book by Emil Cioran (1956), gives way to the assistant’s face, “looking” at the monitor: “– It is a movie that has never been made. – Oh, how true it is, miss. It is a film nobody has seen.” The assistant’s hands touch a film cutter as she recites a new quotation, this time from Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Le visible et l’invisible* (1968), once again an unfinished work, published posthumously:

If my left hand can touch my right [...] can touch it touching [...] touching the hand of another [...] why, when touching the hand of another, would I not touch in it the same power to espouse the things that I have touched in my own? (p. 141).

Thus, the domain, one rapidly realises, is unlimited. If we can show that the flesh is an ultimate notion, that it isn’t the union or compound of

two substances, but thinkable by itself, if there is a relation [editing table] of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer, this circle which I do not form, [black screen], which form me, this coiling over of the visible upon the visible, can traverse, animate other bodies [exterior landscape] as well as my own. And if I was able to understand how this wave arises within me, how the visible which is yonder is simultaneously my landscape [the temptation to exist (Cioran)] / I am a legend (Matheson)], I can understand a fortiori that elsewhere it also closes over upon itself and that there are other landscapes besides my own [exterior landscape]. (p. 140)

Therefore, Godard embodies the passage from the subjective reflection of the essay film to its fictional materialisation through its character. He generates the dialectical sentence-image synthesis of the parataxic thinking of the film, the materialisation of the title's slash: the dialectics between the hand that thinks, manipulating the montage, and the exterior landscape, and all the meanings attributed to both images throughout the film. The hand is a representation of all intellectual and artistic activity, of individual identity and subjectivity, of the conquered homeland in opposition to the exterior landscape of childhood solitude, of the given homeland, of culture and universality. The dialectics between both universes embody a form of identity self-portrait of the artist and the film essayist. And between both images, there is the black screen, the audiovisual author's blank page, and the abyss between both dimensions, as he explains in the following quotation. Once again, the reflective task of writing, now simultaneously lit by the candle: "How many times did he have to light the candle to glimpse before ...," gives way to the exterior landscape in which Godard quotes Brice Parain:

When we express ourselves, we always say more than we mean to because we think we are expressing the individual, whereas we are actually saying the universal. I am cold. It is I who says, "I am cold," but it is not me that is heard: I have disappeared between these two instants of my speech. All that remains of me is the man who is cold, and this man belongs to everyone. (1942, p. 172)

It is necessary to point out here that the two notations, "I am legend" and "the house that stood still," belong to two titles of science fiction works by Richard Matheson (1954) and van Vogt (1950), respectively, that imagine the end of humanity. Through a new juxtaposition, Godard now illuminates

a pictorial image, *Le Nouveau-né* (1645–1648) by Georges de la Tour, while addressing the passage between both dimensions, from interior subjectivity to exterior universality. Again, he creates a *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process. After illuminating the painting and answering his own question, “Where do you live? In language,” Godard now pronounces the words from Sartre’s *Situations I*: “I cannot be silent. In speaking, I cast myself into this unknown and foreign order, and I suddenly become responsible for it. I must *become* universal” (1962 [1947], p. 163). The exterior landscape emerges again by naming universality: “To realise with humility and caution, by means of my own flesh,” and Godard takes up the interior space where now the pictorial image is reproduced by the video image, while Godard continues to manipulate its visibility through the candle, continuing Sartre’s quotation: “the universality into which I first cast myself heedlessly. That is my only possibility, the sole commandment. I have said that I love; that is the promise.” The exterior landscape reappears, and then the filmmaker turns the camera to produce now the videographic self-portrait itself, in which Godard’s voice splits between political identity,

What have you lost? What is this obscurity? Ask rather, what is a government? A group of persons are presently governing. No, I am incapable of a smile. A government is your acceptance of being governed. Yes, it is ridiculous. Or it means there is nothing up there. Nothing, really nothing. True. Obscurity is simple. Exactly.

And intimate identity, through the continuation of Sartre’s quotation,

I have said that I love; that is the promise. Now I must sacrifice myself so that through me the word “love” may take on meaning [...]. At the end of this long enterprise, I shall be rewarded by becoming he who loves, that is, I shall finally deserve the name I have given myself. (1962, p. 163)

Thus, both discourses coincide on the videographic self-portrait, offering a sentence-image synthesis of the reflection by resolving the slash of its title and the dialectics on which it has been built. The purpose of the essay film of generating a self-portrait and not an autobiography has been achieved, as now confirmed by the voiceover “self-portrait, not autobiography.” Next, a brief tennis sketch allows him to introduce a new annotation: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” belonging to *Requiem for a Nun* (William Faulkner, 1951), which already appeared as a subtitle in *Hélas pour moi*. It gives way to the exterior landscape where—while listening to “Slow

Return”—the filmmaker appears for the second time, now accompanied by a woman reciting a fragment of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses – Book XV* in Latin, changing the term “Roman” for “American” about the artist’s aspiration of transcendence. Meanwhile, Godard translates a fragment: “Whatever the unbounded American power obeys, all lands and nations shall record my praise: If poets be allowed to divine, a slice of eternity shall be mine. If I am to believe ... If there is truth in poets’ prophecies, I shall live.” This is the statement Godard wants to make to the world, to the universal represented by the landscape. Accompanied by “Sonate vom rauhen Leben” (Werner Pirchner, 1973), the author turns the blank pages of creation, the notebook, to leave a legacy—political and emotional—that belongs to the people. Once again, the promise is inserted as an intimate and loving action towards universality, repeating Sartre’s quotation. Godard concludes the self-portrait by paraphrasing *Les Mots* (Sartre, 1964): “A man, nothing but a man. No better than any other, but no other better than him.”

In this way, Godard creates an identity self-portrait, that of the essayist at work prior to audiovisual realisation, based on the juxtaposition between different concepts on which he reflects through a complex constellation of literary, pictorial, and cinematic quotations, which will also trace the progression of the audiovisual thinking: reading – writing – drawing – filming – representation. This identity self-portrait of the creator in the final stretch of existence is generated from parataxic thinking between different oppositions that line up on either side of the slash of the title:

- Child portrait – exterior – culture – universal – television – smoke – character – self-representation – given homeland.
- Self-portrait – interior – art – individual – video – crystal – person – self-fiction – conquered homeland.

In the interior space of creation, Godard creates various *mise-en-scènes* of the audiovisual thinking process. First, the trauma is embodied through the superimposition of a child’s portrait and a filmic self-portrait. Later, through drawing, “the hands that think,” Godard creates a new *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking around the historical and political processes. Finally, thanks to the video camera—the indispensable tool in the evolution of the essay film—the filmmaker generates the *mise-en-scène* of the definition of audiovisual thinking, based on Reverdy’s quotation, to show both its failure and its success. The former through the random image, when there is no association of ideas “distant and fitting”—the sentence-image. The latter, at the end of the work, through the passage between interior and exterior,

between the two sides of the title slash, materialised in the videographic self-portrait that Godard generates by turning the screen of the camcorder, a gesture with which he bonds the social and political identity with the intimate, as a materialisation of the loving dedication that means offering one's own creation to the world.

Finally, the *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process becomes representation itself in the second part of the essay film. The reflection on the opposition art/culture is represented by the scene of the inspectors of the Centre du Cinéma. Next, the reflection on the absence of vision that Godard has offered us through the sound quotation of cinematic works, as well as through the philosophical quotations of Wittgenstein and Diderot, has its fictionalisation in the scene of the assistant editor. It is also necessary to notice the relevance of the posthumous quotations, the filmmaker's intention to show the authors' reflection at the end of their existence, as occurs with Wittgenstein, Sartre, Pessoa, and Merleau-Ponty. Godard offers us the fractured self-portrait of the author, whose trauma is overcome thanks to the passage from the interior to the exterior as an act of love offered to the other.

***Leçons de ténèbres*: Exploring Gay Identity Through Pictorial Intermediality**

Vincent Dieutre builds *Leçons de ténèbres* from the relationship between the Baroque painting of the 17th century and the self-portrait around the filmmaker's gay identity. Both are linked by the notion of light through the *Tenebrae Lessons* defined in an initial text: "In the 17th and 18th centuries, musicians composed 'Tenebrae Lessons' after Jeremiah's *Book of Lamentations*. These songs were sung on Holy Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. During these 'Tenebrae Services' candles were put out one by one, until total darkness was reached, as a symbol of worldly ignorance." With this text, Dieutre establishes the semantic system that he is going to develop in the essay film that begins: the tenebrism of the Baroque, the chiaroscuro lighting on the human figure (portrait and self-portrait) as a symbol of the dialectics between pleasure and suffering: sexual, emotional, and aesthetic. The representation of the bodies in the paintings shown, as well as the religious themes they offer, are now reinterpreted as an "exploration of gay sexuality": "Dieutre [...] brings the affective and erotic dimensions of Caravaggism into dialogue with his own ever-shifting situation, whether sexual, emotional, or geographical" (O'Dwyer, 2018, pp. 58, 61).

In the film's prologue scene, Dieutre stands before the painting *Christ at the Column* (Caravaggio, ca. 1607). The camera is positioned behind him to show his spectatorship, which then materialises in a detailed shot that runs through the painting and represents the gaze. Dieutre's hand moves across the surface of the painting, generating a haptic interpretation of the image (Beugnet, 2007). Next, the filmmaker faints as a result of the aesthetic emotion experienced. After the title, always on detailed shots of paintings, some of which we will see throughout the work, a quotation by Louis-René des Forêts introduces the second part of the reflection: "Confining oneself to see only the world's beauty is an imposture which even the most clairvoyant fall into." On his journey, Dieutre will face this conflict between pleasure and pain: aesthetic, sexual, and emotional.

The film then begins by establishing the basic parataxis. Facing the pictorial chiaroscuro of Caravaggio's painting, Dieutre reproduces it in Super 8 mm through a first self-portrait of his equally naked torso. The reflection around the self-portrait is generated as extra-diegetic, in opposition to the diegesis that is built mainly with video images, and some 35 mm footage. The filmmaker evidences the filmic reflection by including in the image the hands that hold and move the light that illuminates him. Accompanied by his words, always through the voiceover, the self-portrait concludes with a gaze into the camera. Thus, the filmmaker establishes the circuit of reflection he proposes—from pictorial spectator to filmic object to audiovisual essayist—and the existential situation that motivates the film:

The nineties got off to a rather bad start. Returning to life all you did was test others, and things. Like them, you learned to play. This now seems to you like a long night of watching over, of waiting. No battle can hold you back any more. Emotions, sensations, it all became the same to you. It is time to establish a few certitudes, to remind yourself once again of what and who you really love. You know it: This journey won't be like any other ...

In this way, Dieutre reflects on the gay experiences in the 1990s that are concluding when he makes the film, marked by mistrust. The reflection is born from the need for personal balance that he hopes will transform his life. Next, the first intertitle of the three that will divide the film appears, delimiting the visits to three European cities: Utrecht, Naples, and Rome. The diegetic contemplation of some pictorial works throughout the trip allows Dieutre to introduce many others who do not belong to it. That is, the diegetic aesthetic experience gives way to subsequent reflection, which implies the

inclusion of other pictorial works related to the theme of the essay film. The filmmaker's emotional and sexual experiences are therefore confronted with religious-themed Baroque painting, generating links between religious myths and gay identity. In this way, each visit is identified with a "lesson" with which to reflect on two overlapping thematic axes: religious themes versus gay themes; suffering versus pleasure—both aesthetic, sexual, and emotional. The visual image is created from the juxtaposition between the images of the trip, mainly exteriors at night, which serve as a space for reflection from which Dieutre's voiceover emerges, and the dynamics between pictorial work and filmic (self-)portrait.

In the first lesson, Utrecht, the filmmaker relates his current sentimental situation with Tadeusz, of whom we are also offered a portrait (the second), while Dieutre's hands touch his lover's face. The filmic (self-)portrait, always in Super 8 mm, will be totally linked to the sensory experience of touch among its protagonists:

You miss Tadeusz. Yet you left Paris without warning him. [...] His absence makes you realise how much your existence depends on him. [...] This realisation no doubt scares you, but, with the help of pills, it is also exalting. [...] What you miss, isn't it the constant tension his presence gives to your life? No, it's him, his shoulders, his torso.

The second painting, *The Denial of Saint Peter* (Rembrandt, 1660), accompanied by the music of *La Calisto* (Cavalli and Faustini, 1651), is already inserted in the film in an extra-diegetic way, adding thematic density: the death of Christ and the betrayal of Saint Peter. Next, Dieutre explicitly recounts a sexual relationship in a sauna, where the notions of power and suffering appear: "You have complete control over him—you could turn him inside out like a glove and his infinite confidence moves you immensely, [...] Upon leaving the sauna, you regain the distant tolerance of the outside [...] the blind neutrality of a world where you have no place." Faced with emotions and sensations around sexual relations, everyday reality represents a neutrality over which the filmmaker experiences non-belonging. Opposed to images of a gay venue, the image of *Saint Sebastian* (Gerrit van Honthorst, 1623) links sexual pleasure and suffering again—in this case, that of Saint Sebastian's martyrdom as punishment for his conversion to Christianity. Thus, Dieutre weaves the double relationship between the representation of pain and the pleasure of the aesthetic experience and the pleasure and pain of the sexual and emotional relationships, both from the visual motive of nudity and flesh: "[T]he erotic charge is also manifested through the

contrast between suffering and pleasure, both located in the physicality of the body” (Monteiro, 2018, p. 140).

After reflecting on loneliness: “The isolation and the solitude that scare you sometimes, but which, day by day, grow more opaque,” Dietre meets Tadeusz at the train station. The encounter is followed by a new representation of *The Denial of Saint Peter* (Gerrit van Honthorst, 1623). In this way, the relationship between the lovers is associated with betrayal. Later on, the showing of *Crowning with Thorns* (Dirck van Baburen, 1623) is inscribed for the second time within the diegesis of the film, since both characters contemplate the painting in the museum. For the first time, the diegetic display of the pictorial work is accompanied by the ekphrasis generated by the filmmaker in order to explain the emotional bond he feels, compassion:

They lean their weight upon the circle of thorns which dig deeper into the temples and the forehead of the Innocent One. Two massive bodies expressing no particular mood or cruelty. The white body of the Innocent One shows only the slightest reaction. The weary expression on his face could pass for a smile, almost acquiescent. How this show attracts you and how little you resist compassion.

The contemplation of the following painting, *Joel, Deborah and Barak* (Salomon de Bray, 1635), a portrait of a scene prior to a murder, generates a second ekphrasis and Dietre’s reflection on the possibility of sharing the aesthetic experience:

You would like emotions to bring you closer, in common experience, but far from that, it separates you even more. So as you observe Tadeusz standing before the next painting, you sense it’s you he’s trying to understand. But the issue in painting has never been the sharing of emotions—it’s an issue of possession.

Dietre identifies the inevitability of the imminent murder with the love relationship they maintain. Then, both gazes contemplate a third painting, *The Calling of Saint Matthew* (Jan van Bylert, 1671), to move on to the filmic self-portrait of the preliminaries of a sexual relationship. After a discussion on the street, Dietre again shows the space of the previous self-portrait, this time from the pre-filmic perspective of the shooting set. That is to say, both the pictorial and the filmic spectatorship experiences split between diegesis and extra-diegesis. The first is linked to emotion (aesthetic and sexual-emotional) and the second to reflection on the former. Dietre then

offers some new information about the relationship, while we observe a close-up of Tadeusz's foreshortening:

You wanted to believe that the illness would make him detached, patient, and devoted—but no, Tadeusz is defending himself. His suffering is a burden on you. So, you account for things, you look back at the images: What you are seeking is not here. Beyond the paintings, between you and these brick walls, there is a thin impassable layer that sterilises everything, makes everything interchangeable—that same barrier you feel when, night after night, you dress Tadeusz's member with a shining condom.

This is how real suffering appears, which we can now identify with the suffering of pictorial portraits. While Dieutre feels compassion for the second ones, he once again expresses the asepsis that the first generates in him—the lack of emotion before the physical pain of the disease—while we listen to *La Calisto*. Later on, the image of *Prometheus Being Chained by Vulcan* (Dirck van Baburen, 1623) offers a new metaphor for the relationship: the punishment imposed in the form of chaining and the suffering it produces. The lesson concludes with a brief fragment of a conversation between Dieutre and Leo Bersani, author of reflections on the relationship between queer theory and cinema and painting, and co-author of *Caravaggio's Secrets* (Bersani & Dutoit, 1998). His two interventions become a kind of intermission among the three lessons. In this first one, Bersani reflects on spectatorship in front of the work of art:

For those of us who confront this kind of confusion and all these appeals to our attention, we don't really know where to look, where to think, what to think, in what terms to think. I believe one can see this in Caravaggio and the others, in an obviously visual, aesthetic form, yet which stems directly from the same issues. It's not really that during Caravaggio's epoch, there was as much media confusion, but the situation is the same: It's what I would call an attention disorder.

Before the aesthetic emotion that Dieutre translates as compassion and a sense of belonging that the filmmaker does not perceive in the real world, Bersani adds the idea of attention disorder as a result of the multiplicity of stimuli that the works present.

The second lesson, in Naples, offers the opposition between the already exhausted loving relationship with Tadeusz and the ephemeral relationship with Werner, an occasional lover during his stay in the city, associated with

desire. On a new pictorial image, Dieutre recounts sensations opposed to the lack of emotion experienced in Utrecht: “At your feet, real life bursts all over, and a new hope submerges you. An unheard-of intense emotion. Colours, sounds, bodies, everything becomes readable, awakens forgotten desires in you, desires from before. You’re willing now to approach the fire.” On this occasion, the intra-diegetic contemplation of the paintings in the Quadreria dei Girolamini—*Saint Andrew* (Jusepe de Ribera, 1625) and *The Baptism of Christ* (Giovanni Battista Caracciolo, 1615)—does not cause ekphrasis. The absence of loving suffering would thus make possible an aesthetic experience that is not linked to personal experience. The ekphrasis becomes a materialisation of the identification between the work and its spectator. Through the sexual encounter narrated next, which takes place in a cinema, Dieutre finds in Naples “the reassuring feeling of belonging.” After this statement, a pictorial image gives way to the encounter with Werner, of whom he makes the filmic portrait while we listen to his voiceover: “He is not from here. The first evening, Werner brought you to his place. [...] You knew only the strict minimum about him: He’ll do.” Then, accompanied by a shot that rotates 360° outside at night, Dieutre evokes fleeting relationships and names various painters while trying to define the link that unites him with them: “In what secret world did you meet them? [...] Their mystery protects you. You take them as witnesses because you know they cannot answer you, except through the open enigma of their images. Now you must compose with this large available body, the providential accomplice from which you expect nothing.” The mentioned painters, authors of the “enigmas” shown, are “accomplices” of the filmmaker, “witnesses” who speak to him through their images, placing themselves in a non-real dimension that allows the absence of expectations. The initial quotation by des Forêts finds its intimate application here for Dieutre, who chooses the indirect experience of pain through the aesthetic emotion that allows him compassion and empathy, as opposed to direct experience in the real world that produces in him indifference and non-belonging.

After a new pictorial image, Dieutre presents an intimate sexual portrait together with Werner. Next, the image of the lovers strolling through the night city includes the diegetic contemplation of *David with the Head of Goliath* (Guido Reni, 1605), which appears at the end of the sequence in the extra-diegetic space. Once again, the violence of religious painting is associated with sexual/love relationships, of which Dieutre next shows the self-portrait with Werner in the shower, followed by *The Flagellation of Christ* (Caravaggio, 1610). The passion and death of Christ are juxtaposed with Dieutre’s sexual and emotional experiences. The night walk continues,

as does the filmmaker's reflection on the violence of their relationships and the transience of the shared moment, the aesthetic experience, which is also what isolates the characters:

Every time you make love, he hurts you. And every time, you avoid telling him. [...] His music and his paintings are what he really loves—there is no room for anybody. In that he is like you [...] But at this very instant, the two of you are heading directly toward the Palm Theatre, and you both feel closer to each other than ever in the fragile truce of a shared moment.

While, until this moment, the shared moments have been those of the pictorial aesthetic experience, now it is about the musical one, the concert of *Tarantella per la nascita del Verbo* (Cristofaro Caresana, 1670), which extends to the images of the city. Then, a new pictorial image, *San Giuseppe e Gesù Bambino* (Giovanni Battista Caracciolo, 1620–1630) generates a new ekphrasis, but this time it is not realised in the diegetic space of the trip and experience, but in the extra-diegetic space of the essay film and reflection: “The old man with a grey beard, though almost asleep, holds the young child in his arms. In shadow, the numb vehemence of tenderness takes on the body without sufferance. Does the man in his sleep want to retain his meagre warm life that is already escaping him?” Pictorial ekphrasis gives way to identification with the filmic self-portrait between the old man's embrace of the child and that of Dieutre and Werner: “When you felt then the weight of Werner's arms, still heavy with the balminess of sleep, they seemed to be your only refuge, your only possibility. You would like to stay there, to fix the reassuring image for all times. [...] We must help each other go on believing.” Dieutre's urban portrait in the absence of Werner is followed by a pictorial image of a severed head, once again linking disappointment in love with religious martyrdom. The lesson concludes with the second and last intervention by Leo Bersani. In this case, the pictorial image he evokes—*Saint Jerome Writing* (Caravaggio, 1605–1606)—does not appear in the image. Bersani offers an explanation of the link between life and death that would give a new meaning to Dieutre's work, between life-filmic portraits and death-pictorial works:

In the painting of Saint Jerome, showing the passage of energy between life and death suggests that the presence of death in the body gives a form to all activities in life, it informs life. That is to say that all one does in life is inflected by the writing “death” which is inscribed in our body from the moment we are born ... And we forget that ... like a promise and

also like a form: Each person has their own death which informs the acts of his life. And death is not merely an event that arrives at the end, but something that defines the form of energy ... and so death is something that aestheticises life.

In his text, Bersani also relates this life–death axis to sensuality: “Is the remarkable sensuousness of St. Jerome’s arm also meant to suggest that the death inscribed in the living body’s movements can also be a source of its sensual appeal?” (Bersani & Dutoit, 1998, p. 35).

The third and last lesson, located in Rome, recounts the reunion with Tadeusz as a new emotional attempt, linked to the search for light, represented next by a new filmic self-portrait of both dancing to the song “Incontro” (Francesco Guccini, 1972):

Tadeusz has already been there since last evening, and you’re ready to relive the abandonment of being together, of being tender again, of lightness. Try to be happy, for once, try to experience the moment, easily, tenderly. There will be no abrupt gesture. Let yourself go a bit, you’ll see how easy it is. The shadows will wait.

However, this fleeting portrait gives way to a new image of *Peter’s Denial* (Bartolomeo Manfredi, ca. 1622), exposing betrayal as an inseparable notion of sentimental relationships. Next, the visit to the church of Saint Cecilia generates a new intra-diegetic ekphrasis on Stefano Maderno’s sculpture of the same name (1600), which the filmmaker contemplates and identifies with his childhood. Once again, the artistic work and its aesthetic experience are linked to his own autobiography:

You come to see her each time. She calms you, reassures you. Her endless, mineral rest, her pose both twisted and languid, her dead silence ... Her bones were supposedly found arranged that way. Petrified in the clear marble, alone, the gaping neck wound, the folds of the undone tunic and turban, the infantile roundness of the hands, re-establish a time when palpitating flesh inhabited the frail bone structure. Before you, life shudders, traverses, disturbs the sickly body of stone. In a more stable world, Cecilia could be your child. For now, she merely represents your childhood, frozen.

Next, Dieutre shows *The Crowning with Thorns* (Caravaggio, ca. 1607), followed by Tadeusz reading, accompanied by the sound image of Orson

Welles in *La ricotta* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1963), reciting the poem written by Pasolini one year earlier (1962):

I am a force of the Past. My love lies only in tradition. I come from the ruins, the churches, the altarpieces, the villages abandoned. [...] Or I see the twilight, the mornings over Rome, the Ciociaria, the world, as the first acts of post-history to which I bear witness, for the privilege of recording them from the outer edge of some buried age. Monstrous is the man born of a dead woman's womb. And I, a foetus now grown, roam about more modern than any modern man, in search of brothers no longer alive.

Thus, *Dieutre* includes Pasolini in the identity self-portrait, identifying himself with the idea of not belonging to the present, but to a past that the filmmaker identifies with Baroque painting. The quotation gives way to a new filmic portrait of the lovers, now accompanied by the sound image of a radio emission about Caravaggio, another possible gay character, both also linked by a—supposed in the case of Caravaggio—violent death. The portrait produces a progressive fragmentation and speed of the shots until it shows the camera that is filming, hence translating the vertigo of the filmic task in the face of death.

The circular shot of the second lesson, in which *Dieutre* reflects on the link that bonds him with past painters, is now repeated in Piazza do Popolo, travelling the diameter of the square by means of a circular tracking shot, to reflect on “his people,” the men who shape his sexual-emotional history: “You often wonder who your people are. In the end, you know them well, the small, imprecise people who, for a minute, a week, or a year, wanted you, loved you, gave you life. As you loved them too. And as you miss them now.” It is necessary to point out here that while the pictorial “accomplices” and “witnesses” were mentioned through a 360° shot that rotated on itself, the names of the real relationships emerge now from a circular shot around the space. The first is a “mental” movement, interior and aesthetic; the second is a “physical” movement, exterior and real. Both movements generate a dialectical sentence-image synthesis of the abyss between both experiences and of the incompatibility that makes their sharing impossible. The long list of male names gives way to the materialisation of both dimensions: on the one hand, a new filmic self-portrait of “reality,” now belonging to the extra-diegesis of filming, and, on the other, the painting *Re David* (ca. 1627) by Valentin de Boulogne, a French Caravaggist painter, as an example of “aesthetic accomplices.”

The walk through the city leads to a new intra-diegetic aesthetic experience, contemplating *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (Caravaggio, 1600) and a new portrait of Tadeusz. While Dieutre places his face in front of the light, Tadeusz cries. This generates a symbolic sentence-image of the impossibility of separating both dimensions, both identities, in Dieutre's life experience: lover and filmmaker at the same time, in the same gesture. Once again, Dieutre describes the decline of the relationship: "The love he offered you is gently falling apart. You distinguish only your two solitudes intermingling, yet not filling one another. In the space of a breath, you will have been two, but tomorrow, the eyes of Tadeusz will no longer watch over you with their affection nor even their pity." Another pictorial image accompanies the last sentence, which resonates in a sort of echo: "You'll have nothing left then to contemplate yourself but a dead mirror." The absence of the other makes it impossible to look at oneself.

Some images from a screening of his film *Rome désolée* (1995) precede Dieutre's voice recounting Tadeusz's departure: "The future no longer scares you. There where you're going, you'll be rich, immensely rich. But the treasure cannot be shared. You are alone now. Only for you—the dark gazes, the tension of the attitudes, the shoulders, the shadow on the shoulders, the bodies stopped in their movements." The self-portrait gives way to four pictorial images with which Dieutre, through a now displaced ekphrasis, describes the aesthetic experience that cannot be shared: "the stifled cry of pain, of pleasure, the sensual offering of the muscles, the dark splendour of the faces, the tragedy of the light, the glacial, metallic flash of the knives." The description of the breakup gives way to its filmic portrait, the definitive symbolic sentence-image of the film:

You would like to take back the cutting words, erase the irreversible gestures, the tears, but it's too late. [...] Tadeusz is already far away, so far away ... You'll be able to pass through to the other side of the images, finally traverse them. If you were more attentive, you would hear a cry of warning. But you hear nothing. You know what is left for you to do, you always have ...

The real pain of the rupture would turn Dieutre, the spectator of the painting, into Dieutre, the protagonist of a suffering that, in turn, can become an aesthetic experience offered to others. After buying drugs and showing a detail from *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* again, Dieutre's final self-portrait shows him *transfigured into* Saint Cecilia after injecting himself (his arm still tied off), thus passing "to the other side of the images," while we

listen again to *La Calisto*: “This gesture comes across as a way of projecting himself in the future, as a prefiguration of his own death, perhaps” (Monteiro, 2018, p. 84).

We can conclude that Dieutre uses the self-portrait around gay identity to generate a reflection on the concepts of pleasure and suffering—sexual, emotional, and aesthetic—through the positions of the pictorial spectator, film object, and audiovisual essayist, based on the parataxis between diegesis—travel and pictorial spectatorship—and extra-diegesis—filmic self-portrait and pictorial reflection. In this way, religious martyrdom is identified with loving suffering to explore the relationships between life, death, and sensuality. Ekphrasis becomes, then, a materialisation of the identification with the contemplated image, and is linked to the idea of possession and not partage. However, the absence of the other makes the gaze on oneself impossible. Finally, identification leads to transfiguration, through which Dieutre can *pass* to the other side of the images, leave the world of his “real people,” and reach a sort of aesthetic universe of his timeless “witnesses” and “accomplices.” It is, therefore, a matter of two irreconcilable dimensions, and Dieutre sacrifices the first in order to reach the second.

Conclusions

After the above analyses, we can conclude that the self-portrait device is instrumentalised as a tool for identity exploration. With this objective, *Jane B. par Agnès V.* creates different female portraits, documentary and fictional, to reflect on women’s identity and develop a practice of female intersubjectivity and artistic sisterhood, producing critical thinking about female stereotypes. For its part, *JLG/JLG* creates a philosophical identity self-portrait of the condition of the filmmaker to reflect on its ethical and aesthetic demands. Finally, *Leçons de ténèbres* creates the self-portrait regarding gay identity as a vindication of the need to make its reality visible in all spaces. Regarding the materials used, painting is evident as an unavoidable reference, present in all three works. Furthermore, the different supports also acquire relevance when generating parataxic thinking. *JLG/JLG* explores the dialectic between cinematic image and videographic image, and *Leçons de ténèbres* confronts the self-portrait in Super 8 mm with the videographic image of paintings and, to a lesser extent, the cinematic image of urban landscapes.

When addressing the procedures created to generate the audiovisual thinking process, the dynamics between the image and the essayist’s

voice become crucial. In *Jane B. par Agnès V.*, Varda generates a symbolic sentence-image, combining the panoramic movement and the gaze into the camera in a *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process. The transition of the off-screen voice into the voice-in through a mirror defines the dynamics of the reflection between the placement of the protagonists on both sides of the camera and its evolution towards joint presence in the image: from the gaze into the camera that continues to represent the equality between interlocutors that already appeared in *Sans soleil* to the conversation in front of it that embodies the exercise in female intersubjectivity first and artistic sisterhood later, which materialise through a second panoramic movement. The slash in the title of *JLG/JLG* symbolises the dialectics that are established between the two sides of the identity mirror, which Godard develops through juxtaposition: child portrait/self-portrait, exterior/interior, culture/art, universal/individual, television/video, smoke/crystal, character/person, self-representation/self-fiction, given homeland/conquered homeland. Godard uses various elements in its development. The literary and cinematic quotations draw an identity memory on which to reflect, and the philosophical quotations constitute the existential constellation in which reflection occurs. The intertitles, for their part, in the form of annotations, embody the digressive nature of the essayistic work. The *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process, with which the cinematic–videographic self-portrait is finally created, gives way to its fictional representation with which to represent the “thinking with the hands” defining the Godardian essay film. In *Leçons de ténèbres*, Vincent Dieutre establishes the dialectic between baroque painting and the representation of gay identity to generate reflection on the pleasure-suffering dynamics in the sexual, emotional, and aesthetic spheres. The evolution of the author as a pictorial spectator first, a cinematic object later, and an audiovisual essayist after that, produces ekphrasis as a symbolic sentence-image of the identification between the spectator and the pictorial work to finally reach the transfiguration of the former into the latter. In addition, the filmmaker creates a dialectical sentence-image between the circular panning as a mental movement, interior and aesthetic, and the circular tracking shot as a physical movement, exterior and real. Both movements thus generate a synthesis of the abyss between both experiences and the incompatibility that makes their sharing impossible. This identity essence of the self-portrait device, therefore, entails two clear consequences. First, a deep political and social reflection on identity space is addressed. Second, it is a deep existential reflection on the bond between identity reality and audiovisual authorship.

Works Cited

- Bersani, L., & Dutoit, U. (1998). *Caravaggio's secrets*. MIT Press.
- Bluher, D. (2019). The other portrait: Agnès Varda's self-portraiture. In M. Tinel-Temple, L. Busetta, & M. Monteiro (Eds.), *From self-portrait to selfie: Representing the self in moving images* (pp. 47–76). Peter Lang.
- de Rougemont, D. (1936). *Penser avec les mains*. Éditions Albin Michel.
- Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1996). *To desire differently. Feminism and the French cinema*. Columbia University Press.
- Godard, J.-L. (1996). *JLG/JLG. Phrases*. POL.
- McFadden, C. H. (2011). Reflected reflexivity in 'Jane B. par Agnès V.'" *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 28(4), 307–324. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509200902820324?journalCode=gqrfo>
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Northwestern University Press.
- Monteiro, M. (2018). Vincent Dieutre: The self-portrait as suspended gesture. In M. Tinel-Temple & M. Monteiro (Eds.), *From self-portrait to selfie: Representing the self in the moving image* (pp. 77–93). Peter Lang.
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2023b). Women's essay film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the female audiovisual thinking process. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>
- O'Dwyer, J. (2018). Histoire(s) de l'art: The queer curation of Vincent Dieutre. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 16, 53–66. www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue16/ArticleODwyer.pdf
- Parain, B. (1942). *Recherches sur la nature et les fonctions du langage*. Gallimard.
- Pasolini, P. P. (1962). *Mamma Roma*. Rizzoli.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1962). *Literary and philosophical essays*. Collier Books.
- Silverman, K. (2001). The author as receiver. *October*, 96, 24–25.
- Toulet, P.-J. (1936). *Vers inédits*. Le Divan.

3. The Dialogue

Abstract: This chapter studies the use of the enunciative device of the dialogue through the analysis of four works: *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (Chris Marker, 1967), *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* (Nadja Ringart, Carole Roussopoulos, Delphine Seyrig, Ioana Wieder, 1975), *Papa comme maman* (Anne-Marie Miéville, 1975), and *Le Camion* (Marguerite Duras, 1977). It shows how the dialogue draws a very relevant range of possibilities of audiovisual thinking. Marker generates reflection from the subjectivisation and mobilisation of the gaze on the photographic images, turning his characters into cinematic essayists. The works of the three female filmmakers develop feminist critical thinking through the analysis of reality, intersubjective and intergenerational practice, and identification, using humour, irony, and poeticity as subversive counter-narratives against patriarchy.

Keywords: essay film, audiovisual thinking, intersubjectivity, feminism, critical thinking, Francophone cinema.

While the dialogical nature between author and spectator is inherent in the essay film, as I have already expounded in the introduction, the dialogue also becomes its enunciative device, drawing a very relevant range of possibilities of audiovisual thinking that I will study based on the analysis of the following works. *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* (1967) is generated as the dialogue of three fictional characters, located only in the sound image of the film, who talk about the photographic images taken by one of them that we contemplate in the visual image. In *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* (Nadja Ringart, Carole Roussopoulos, Delphine Seyrig, Ioana Wieder, 1975), a key work of the collective Les Insoumuses, the dialogue is transferred to the television visual image—Gérard Pivot's interview with Françoise Giroud, the Secretary of State for Women's Affairs, on the occasion of the end of the Women's Year 1975—to be criticised by the authors through their manipulation, in order to articulate the necessary feminist reflection. That

same year, Anne-Marie Miéville made her first solo essay film, *Papa comme maman* (1975), which has as its starting point Miéville's interview with Olivia, a young woman who has grown up without the presence of a maternal figure, in order to develop a feminist reflection about the oppression of women around motherhood. Finally, in *Le Camion* (1977), Margerite Duras creates a cinematic reflection based on the previously written dialogue between the filmmaker and the actor Gérard Depardieu about a future fiction film to be made. Therefore, we find different materialisations of dialogue and conversation—between fictional characters off-screen, between real characters on-screen on which to carry out the analysis, between the filmmaker and a real character, and between actor and filmmaker—to generate the diverse audiovisual thinking processes I will analyse below.

Si j'avais quatre dromadaires: From Photographic Spectatorship to Audiovisual Reflection

After *Lettre de Sibérie*, in *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires*, Marker instrumentalises the dialogue as an enunciative device that allows the shift between subjectivities. An intertitle describes it: "An amateur photographer and two of his friends comment on a selection of photos from around the world." The visual image of the essay film is thus composed of around 750 photographs taken by Marker in 26 countries between 1955 and 1965. The sound image is constructed with the voiceovers of the three anonymous characters, who correspond to the author of the photographs—the voice of Pierre Vaneck—and two friends, a woman and a man—the voices of Catherine Couey and Nicolas Yumatov.¹ In this way, the announced device would establish a predetermined order of the images on which its three spectators offer their comments. However, from the beginning, we observe that this supposed priority of the image that would give rise to the comment is not the case, and that Marker instrumentalises the device of dialogue to create an audiovisual digression between different subjectivities. These are not oral comments on the photographs shown, but actually audiovisual reflections that move from the conversation to the interior monologue and the diary: "The most remarkable subterfuge consists of reversing the modality of the commentary: the commentators begin to follow their own thoughts or memories, to philosophise freely, to ramble,

1 A longer version of the film's dialogues is published in Marker, *Commentaires 2*. Éditions du Seuil, 1967.

and it is then no longer their words that comment on the photographs, but the photographs that co-realise their thoughts" (Caille, 2019). The sound image is completed with musical passages by the Barney Wilen Trio and various sound effects.

After the first intertitle about the photographic nature of the work, a series of them indicates the origin of the title: a verse from the poem "Le Dromadaire" from *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée* (1911) by Guillaume Apollinaire, reproduced by the voice of the protagonist photographer: "With his four camels / Don Pedro d'Alfaroubeira / toured the world and admired it / He did what I'd like to do / If I had four camels." Marker formulates the longing for an existence dedicated to travelling the world and enjoying its particularities. A third intertitle reveals the first part of a diptych structure of the same duration: "First part. The Castle." The second will be titled "The Garden." The filmmaker thus advances the reflective axis of the essay film: the dialectics between the castle as a metaphor for the capitalist reality in which we live and the garden as a utopian society to pursue:

The castle refers here to a dominant trope running through the film, which is divided into two parts: the "castle" and the "garden." The former stands for those structures of power that exclude the disenfranchised poor; the latter represents the utopian space where various possibilities of social justice can be imagined. (Alter, 2006, p. 100)

If we analyse the enunciative structure of this first part, we find the displacement of the conversation between the three anonymous characters to their respective interior monologues, which, in the case of the photographer protagonist, also moves to the diary. The oscillation between both enunciations also modifies their interrelation: the conversation gives way to two interior monologues first, and the final two interior monologues are momentarily interrupted by brief fragments of conversation. Regarding the structure of the second part, "The Garden," the oscillation between conversation and interior monologue continues its evolution. After the first fragment of conversation, the monologues of Pierre and Catherine follow one another, and the conversation becomes a brief thematic hinge between monologue and monologue to conclude with a final conversation as an epilogue:

The presence of three separate voices in the commentary, although presented in this casual and familiar form, effectively distils the insights of Marker's interview-based films by building a lively and innovative

three-way dialogue that incorporates conflict and argument between the different speakers, and opens Marker's erudite globetrotter persona up to searching criticism. (Lupton, 2005, p. 105)

In this way, from the point of view of the structure, Marker develops the essay film from the complex interrelation between photography, the three subjective gazes that contemplate them—one authorial and two spectatorial—and the movements between the conversation as intersubjective space and the interior monologue as an intimate reflection. The conversation begins with the definition of photography that Pierre offers, establishing the essentiality of the game of gazes:

The photo is the hunt. It's the instinct of hunting without the desire to kill. It's the hunt of angels ... You track, you aim, you fire and—click!—instead of killing a man, you make him eternal. And here is something more ... a sculpture organises a certain face with a certain gaze whose photo eternalises you with your own gaze ... a circle.

This first excerpt already shows the different visual elements used—zoom in and crossfade—before Nicolas offers the exact definition of the game of gazes that photography offers: “And I look at myself from out of the photo that looks.” The conversation moves to Pierre's interior monologue and reflection, including the panning on the photograph as another element of the visual image:

There is life, and there is its double, and the photo belongs to the world of the double ... eh! Moreover, it is there that there is a trap. By approaching some faces, you have the impression of sharing in the lives and deaths of their faces—of human faces. It's not true: if you participate in something, it's in the life and death of their images.

Marker then offers a series of portraits whose subjects look into the camera, evidencing the dialectics between the intellectual reasoning expounded and the emotional experience of the ontological capacity of the photographic image that Bazin theorised. The zooms and panning are also at a faster speed. A new intertitle with a quotation from Jean Cocteau's libretto *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* (1921) defines the trap of photographic art, the illusion of organising the world through the organisation of its images, exactly what Marker does in this essay film: “Since these mysteries are beyond me, let's pretend we are organising

them.” The essentiality of the essay film is to generate reflection from the organisation of the images:

And then, I don't know, this feeling of gathering up the world, reconciling it, of flattening out all the time zones ... It must be the nostalgia for Eden. It's the same time everywhere [...] it is six o'clock on Earth, six o'clock at Saint-Martin Canal, six o'clock at the Göta Canal in Sweden. Six o'clock in Havana. Six o'clock in the Forbidden City of Beijing.

In this way, Marker resumes the commentary from *Lettre de Sibérie*. However, while the letter-film preserved the present experience of the simultaneity of time diversity—“It's seven in the morning in Irkutsk, three in Bagdad, six in the afternoon in Mexico, midnight in Paris”—photographic matter implies an organised fabulation of the past that ignores present experience. From the images of common elements in different parts of the world—pavements, squares, train stations, underground stations, dogs, lotteries—social and political reflection emerges. Two images of priests and gendarmes photographed from behind accompany the comment: “In all these twists, there are some who are different from others. They are distinguished by their dress, and from the balconies on high in the cities, they hear an untiring voice by their uniform that says: ‘One day, all of you will belong ...’”

After concluding each fragment of the interior monologue, the conversation is usually resumed through the direct reference to the image shown, without connection with the previous reflection. In this case, the Industrial Exhibition in Moscow in 1959 encourages a brief conversation, always in a humorous tone, about the differences between aviation and space development. Marker's imagination brings together disparate elements that allow us to move on to the following reflection: the Laika dog takes us to an animal market in Moscow—while we hear Russian voiceovers—to encourage Pierre's interior monologue about his love for the Russian people. Marker then reflects, through his fictional persona, on the subjectivity of this feeling, exemplified through two events experienced and photographed: the 6th World Festival of Youth in Moscow in 1957, and the American National Exhibition in Moscow in 1959. To describe the former, Marker uses the long life of the cruiser Molotov; for the latter, the publication of *La Question* by Henri Alleg (1958)—a work on the Algerian War—to allude to the colonial nature of the exhibition as an expression of capitalism. Marker then shows a part of it: the Contemporary Art Exhibition. Its images give way to a brief conversational hiatus about La Coubre, a French cargo ship that exploded in the port of Havana in 1960, to continue and conclude the

monologue about his love for the Russian people and the existence of a class gaze that will be developed in *Sans soleil*, as I have already analysed in Chapter 1:

I could launch into a great eulogy for the Russian gaze but if I say everything I think, I will sound like a racist. It is true, however, that there is a line of sight as there is a lifeline. There is not an American gaze, nor a Scandinavian gaze, nor a Black gaze, a Jewish gaze, a Russian gaze ... If I say that it's a light that shines in the poor and dies in the rich, I'll be roasted by the Russians.

Artistic creation is also subjected to this class gaze through the conversation about the works housed in the Tretyakov Gallery and the sculptures made by peasants in Cuba in a school directed by the painter Samuel Feijóo. Pierre's observations about painting give way to Nicolas's interior monologue, the first belonging to the photographic spectators, from a spectatorial, and non-authorial, perspective. It is then evident how the interior monologue occurs as a disconnection with the ongoing conversation to produce critical thinking about the photographic work generated, about the author's gaze, causing its mobilisation:

He chats, he chats ... but what would he say if he was born Russian, like me? [...] When he photographed a cosmetics ad, an extravagant shirt with Brigitte Bardot, Lucia Bosé and Marina Vlady. [...] he truly raved about the Russian gaze and the Slavic soul. He thinks like a European. [...] we find ourselves there, we, the sons of immigrants. We have learned other countries, we have learned other languages, and despite all of that, in our hearts, there is an imaginary homeland for which we are hard to please ... punctilious, unjust ...

Marker thus generates, using the displacement between subjectivities, self-criticism of his own gaze and discourse through the gaze of a descendant of Russian migrants. Nicolas shows how the images created contain the bias of the European gaze. Photography is not reality, but an image of it biased by the photographer's gaze. While in *Lettre de Sibérie* Marker repeated the same image three times with different comments to show the impossibility of objectivity and the subjectivity of knowledge, here he offers critical thinking about photography in general and his work in particular through the gaze of another spectator, the gaze of another culture and life experience. After Nicolas's interior monologue, Pierre resumes the

conversation through the same strategy, reestablishing the situation of enunciation—the viewing of the photographs. The conversation between Pierre and Catherine revolves around his love for Moscow, and the images show the reasons for this inclination. The conversation then serves to move the theme to St Panteleimon, the Russian monastery on Mount Athos in Greece, whose images make Pierre invoke the memory in the diary of the experience lived there. Next, a new conversational hinge gives way to Catherine's interior monologue, which shifts the theme from religion to politics through a quotation from Fidel Castro—"To betray the poor is to betray Christ"—to establish the identification between the "castle" of the title and the capitalism that imposes inequality between human beings:

We live in the Castle. There are worse things than tyranny, than silence. The distance between those who have power and those who don't. The impossibility of communicating. The only race line ... is the Castle. The poor live in its shadow. They grow there. And when they open their eyes, how will they close them again?

Once again, Pierre's photographs become part of Catherine's reflection; it is her subjectivity that selects and orders them as part of her thinking process. Pierre then continues by exemplifying Catherine's reflection through the independence of Algeria in March 1962, and the images taken in Nanterre on the occasion of its proclamation. After a long series of faces from the celebration, Catherine generates reflection using images of people who survive on the streets: "They were happy. One instant of happiness paid for with seven years of war and one million deaths. And the following day, the Castle was still there. And the poor are still there, day after day. And day after day, we continue to betray them." Catherine's reflection shows the indestructibility of the capitalist Castle, despite the victories of the Cuban Revolution and the Algerian independence. The second part of the essay film, "The Garden," seeks to present, despite everything, the utopian alternative. The structure of the enunciation means that the initial conversation has become a succession of interior monologues of the characters (mostly Pierre), which are linked through small fragments of dialogue. The initial conversation focuses on animals and children, based on the technique of Vladimir Durov—animal trainer and zoologist, founder of The Durov Animal Theater in Moscow—who understood that the best way to achieve docility in animals was through trust rather than punishment. In opposition to the law of the Jungle—"The Jungle is the Castle of the animals"—Pierre believes that there is also a "law of the

Garden” which “could equally be our model,” embodied in the tenderness that the images of children and animals transmit. Catherine makes the images of children around the world the starting point of her political and social reflection:

Nothing can explain both the kids of the rich and the kids of the poor [...] There is no more a United Children than there are United Nations. Children are first what they eat, and what they are taught second. It would be reassuring if there was a children’s-land under the fatherlands, a class of children beneath the classes, or beyond, and if it relied on trust, truly. But children are not a country.

She explains how a utopian society would be born from a “kingdom of childhood” that is unfortunately unrealisable. Then, for the first time in the film, a fade to black breaks the enunciative proposal of the essay film by interrupting the succession of images without any justification. After this break, Pierre’s interior monologue follows—the longest in the film—which begins with the description of the Korean people after the 1950–1953 war and moves to the protests against the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961 to reflect on the revolutions of the 20th century and the militants who have lived through them, personified in the face of an older woman:

One day, however, it was necessary to see the crimes of Stalinism and the schisms of Mao. [...] For the enemy has not changed. Here, in Europe, and elsewhere, the struggle continues, the same against the same. [...] Thus I imagined the drama lived by this woman, the drama lived by millions of militants across the world, who had given all they could give to something that, they believed, was greater than them—and which, ultimately, drew its grandeur from them.

Once again, the conversation between the characters is resumed through direct allusion to the image shown and their brief and humorous interpellation. Catherine’s question about the origin of a photograph—“And there? What is that? – Demo in Oslo”—gives way to a new reflection by Pierre on Scandinavian society and its disconnection with class struggle:

One needs to look closely at this Scandinavian man. He has everything, truly everything that the nine-tenths of humanity doesn’t dare to imagine, even in their wildest dreams. It’s for his standard of living that the Black,

the Arab, the Greek, the Siberian and even the Cuban militiaman are striving. He has everything the revolutions promised.

After Nicolas's question—"Then, what do they lack?"—Pierre continues his reflection to conclude: "In my opinion, one thing, but it's not important ... Immortality. [...] their happiness doesn't outweigh an eternal absence. [...] Scandinavian perfection offers a passionless happiness—not a human happiness."

Next, Nicolas's enunciation of the different cemeteries and tombs that appear in the image demonstrates once again Marker's enunciative strategy of the essay film: the images are not previously ordered and the characters comment on them, but the visual image is the expression of the reflective subjectivity of the character speaking. Pierre delves into the topic with the commentary on the murder of the musician Anton Webern and the survival of a Hungarian soldier. Catherine, through the reference to *Comédie* (1963) by Samuel Beckett, makes a gender reflection on death, which takes her to the artistic work and the museum space:

Woman maintains a particular relation with death. [...] It's perhaps because she knows that she holds—without pride, oh, without pride—one possible response. In the museums' corridors, in the rooms, light and dark, of the museums, beneath all pretext, beneath all the hypocrisies, beneath all of the divergent forms, men seek only one thing, the response to a single question: all of the desire of the world.

Once again, Pierre's photographs become an element of the critical thinking generated by another character. The museum images give way to female portraits, and the reflection concludes with a second fade to black that gives way to a kind of epilogue. Next comes a montage of various posters and advertisements in the street, as a kind of popular museum while we listen to the screams of a primate. The final conversation is resumed again through concrete reference to the image that we contemplate, in this case, with two written messages on a wall—"life is ugly," and "I don't love anybody"—as a polar opposite to the utopia of the garden with which the second part began. However, Pierre clings to utopia in the final reflection of the essay film:

There is indeed a Law of the Garden. It expresses itself by very simple gestures, by the most simple gestures. It isn't the Golden Age, it's not the Lost Paradise [...]. It's true that, when one looks around, there are horrors and monsters, there's madness ... But there's already ... an underground,

a clandestinity of happiness, a Sierra Maestra of tenderness ... something that advances ... towards us, despite us, thanks to us, when we have ... the grace ... and that announces, for we do not know when, the survival of the most beloved ...

As in *Lettre de Sibérie* through epistolary enunciation, the conversation in *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* has as its starting point the shared understanding of the personal relationship between friends and the shared knowledge of the reality of the time. Marker does not intend to explain the photographic contents to the spectator of the essay film in relation to the historical events that he captures; rather, this information becomes the necessary substrate for subjective reflection and the mobilisation of the gaze. The audiovisual elements used—zooms, crossfades, panning, etc.—are instrumentalised to subjectivise the gaze on the images and thus mobilise it. Therefore, we do not find specific audiovisual elements associated with dialogue or interior monologue, nor with the transition between one enunciation and another, but rather, they respond to processes of subjectivisation of the spectatorial gaze. If we compare *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* to *Letter to Jane*, the two essay films created exclusively with still images, we observe that both audiovisual thinking processes are created from opposite premises. *Letter to Jane* pursues a scientific analysis of the photographic image and the various dialectics that are produced around it. *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* generates reflection from the subjectivisation and mobilisation of the gaze on the photographic images. Marker turns his characters into cinematic essayists, mobilising the gaze between author and spectators.

***Maso et Miso vont en bateau: Feminist Counter-Narrative Through Irreverence and Irony*²**

Maso et Miso vont en bateau is a film created by the collective “Les Insoumuses” (Jeanjean, 2011; Murray, 2016; An, 2019) that embodies the transition from women’s militant cinema to essay film, in which feminist activism begins to manipulate documentary materials to generate critical thinking. Although it cannot be considered an audiovisual thinking process as defined

2 A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, “Women’s Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

in the research, it becomes a fundamental precursor for women's essay films. The filmmakers take fragments from Bernard Pivot's television programme, entitled "Encore un jour et l'année de la femme – Ouf! – c'est fini!" [Just One More Day to Go and the Year of the Woman—Oof!—It's Over!] (Antenne 2, 1975), in which he interviews Françoise Giroud, the first Secretary of State for Women's Affairs, on the occasion of the United Nations' International Women's Year (1975), in order to criticise its content by manipulating and commenting on it: "Video, in its feminist practice as in any militant practice, serves indeed to analyse and highlight conflicts, contradictions, with a view to a radical transformation of society" (Fleckinger, 2010, p. 36). In this way, the filmmakers analyse the male–female interview—a supposedly egalitarian device—to denounce the dynamics of male chauvinism and misogyny and to reveal non-feminist responses, offering their own emancipated replies: Giroud as Maso (masochistic) and Pivot and the other men as Miso (misogynistic), parodying the title of Jacques Rivette's film *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* (1974), which premiered the previous year. Thus, from the title, the filmmakers use irreverence, irony, and humour to subvert the patriarchal discourse and denounce and criticise both the intervention of Françoise Giroud concerning the various controversies of which she is an object and the misogynistic and sexist comments of several male guests. The film is undoubtedly the most revealing example of the use of irreverence, irony, and humour as feminist tools: "Demystifying laughter and collective play are indeed exercised in an impertinent and caustic way: humour becomes a political operator of formidable efficiency, like what the radical current of the MLF has practised since its beginnings" (Fleckinger, 2011, p. 597). The transition from militant tactics to film practice allows for, in this case, a new emancipated position, a new relationship between female spectators and television, and between non-feminist and feminist women, as the filmmakers indicate in relation to Giroud: "[H]er discourse as a woman minister in a society in the hands of men, a dominant discourse typical of the collaborationist discourse."

To do so, the film is generated from the juxtaposition between the images of the television programme and handwritten intertitles through which the filmmakers reveal the different misogynistic and male chauvinist elements and give feminist answers to them. They insert the feminist gaze and critique, instrumentalising humour and irony through interjections, drawings, comments, multiple-choice questions, and other elements. The first intertitle shows the film's objective: "We have always thought that the Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs and the Women's Year were a MYSTIFICATION. And here is an OFFICIAL PROOF."

In addition, they manipulate the images by repeating fragments, freezing the image, and removing the sound image to emphasise the meaning and relevance of what is denounced. They also include other materials through which to explain the opposition between the television programme and the feminist struggle. First, a fragment of an interview with Simone de Beauvoir, remembering the criticisms of *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949), contradicting Giroud's statement about male–female equality in literature. Second, images from the video *8 March 1975* showing the feminist demonstration in Paris that same year, filmed by the collective Vidéa, replying to Giroud's argument that women opposing the Women's Year evidenced the "attitude of the persecuted." The images are preceded by the intertitle "March against the Women's Year." With the slogan "Neither Giroud nor the UN will speak for us," women sing: "Men do not know what to do / to get us back on track / Now they set us free / we missed more than that! / They talk about us in the forums / They are preparing small reforms for us." Third, the cover of the September issue of *L'Express* "Le choc d'*Histoire d'O*," featuring a topless photo of Corinne Clery from the film (*Just Jaeckin*, 1975) that premiered that same year.

Music is instrumentalised as well as a comic and subversive element. The first and main one is to turn the opera *The Tales of Hoffmann* (Jacques Offenbach, 1881)—a victimised male gaze and narration about female identity—into a leitmotif of the inexhaustible sexist and misogynistic narrative, transformed into an endless succession of novel chapters inserted through intertitles. A sort of symbolic sentence-image is then created through humour:

Chapter X, where Maso LEARNS to SAIL or also THE GALLEY

Chapter XXI Where the MLF constrained, forced, violated, humiliated by F. Giroud IS HIDING BEHIND B. Pivot.

Chapter XXVI Where it is shown that when Miso and Maso go boating, it is Maso who falls into the water.

Chapter XXXI Where Maso takes a culture broth ...

Chapter XXXV Dip your bread, Maso ... Dip your bread in the soup.

Finally, the collective creation materialises to free the audiovisual practice from the imposed schemes of television, generating a new spatial, aesthetic, ethical, and political position by placing the women filmmakers, for the first time, in the position of essayists—manipulators of images in the editing room. They show the space and time for reflection—the editing room, where a former material is manipulated—which is thereafter evoked through their

voiceovers. In their first appearance (at minute 22), the camera portrays the four filmmakers from behind while they work in a rudimentary editing room, and they react to the images just shown by singing. In these images, faced with Pivot's demand for a reaction to Louis Feraud's misogynistic statements, Giraud defends them by saying: "I think it is the language of a man who loves women," to which Pivot responds, "Really? So everything is fine?" The filmmakers repeat the fragment several times and add different subtitles: "like the man who loves fucks women," "like the man who gropes us on the underground," "like the man who rapes us in the suburbs," and "like the clients of prostitutes." Next, a zoom-out from the editing room monitor shows the filmmakers singing, "Everything is going very well, Madam Minister, everything is going very well." Their second visual appearance in the film (at minute 39) shows them applauding while exclaiming "bravo" after a new response from Giroud. On this occasion, faced with the misogynistic statements of the food critic Christian Guy, Giroud replies, "You are right. Women do not think. They let the meal burn every day. Then you sit down for dinner; it is never good! It is well known." Before the answer, the filmmakers express the feminist denunciation in an intertitle: "MEN do the PROFITABLE cooking, WOMEN do the FREE cooking," and a 500-franc banknote falls in front of it, generating one of the first rostrum camera effects in women's documentary. The filmmakers not only find themselves in the cinematic work through the collective "Les Insoumuses" but also place themselves for the first time in the position of the essayist who manipulates the images, and show themselves in it. It is necessary to remember here that this self-portrait of the essayist in the editing room, extensively developed by Godard, began for him that same year with *Numéro deux* (Godard and Miéville, 1975). The appearance of the filmmakers in the editing room allows us to identify their voiceovers with it. They are ironic and irreverent about the images, instrumentalising the misunderstanding about what is said.

Two segments allow us to understand the richness of the montage generated by the film. In the first, before the song "Mon homme" [My man] (Albert Willemetz and Jacques Charles, 1920) performed on set, Pivot stops the performance after these lyrics: "He hits me / He takes my money / I am exhausted / But despite everything / What do you want" to ask Giroud about her reasonable indignation at hearing them. After her reply: "It is a love song. [...] there are different ways to express love," the filmmakers insert the topless image from *Histoire d'O* and the song "Where Does Love Go" (Don & Dick Addrissi, 1965): "Love, love, what is this feeling / Why is it born if only to die / And when it leaves you, what stays inside / To make a

heart glow and leave tears in your eyes” while repeating Giroud’s sentence, and finally insert a intertitle with a new multiple-choice question: “Is she: sincerely masochistic?; Hypocritically masochistic? Frankly sold? (If so, at what price?).” In this way, the filmmakers denounce cultural products about romantic love which justify violence against women. Giroud proposes to exchange gender in the song, becoming “Ma môme” [My Girl], arguing that it only needs some little modifications. The filmmakers show them adding intertitles, evidencing the falsity of this supposed equality. After the new lyrics “*She* hits me / *She* takes my money,” an intertitle adds, “SOS Beaten men.” However, the lyric “but I am only a woman” becomes “that sacred good woman,” and an intertitle adds: “version excluded by the secretary: ‘but I am only a ma-a-am.’” Finally, the lyric “when a woman gives herself” is followed by the intertitle “Giroud’s version? There is none!” With this fragment, the filmmakers demonstrate the reasons for their opposition to the Women’s Year, adding intertitles showing a heart shape that surrounds the message, “You just heard ‘My Girl’, the Women’s Year version of ‘My Man.’” Thus, the mystification they enounced at the beginning of the film is proved once more.

In another segment, the interview with the politician Alexandre Sanguinetti, the filmmakers stop the image after each statement by Sanguinetti to add the lyric “C’est vrai” [It is true] from the song of the same title (Albert Willemetz and Casimir Oberfeld, 1933), performed by Mistinguett, to later add intertitles in the form of comic strips, following the argument of the interviewed about the mistake of women when supposedly trying to be rivals to men: “killings, church, porn, army, violence, finance,” or about the supposed professional equality: “priest, bombardier, psychiatrist, butcher, president, banker, assassin, pope, cop, husband.” They also generate the photomontage between the faces of Sanguinetti and Giroud as a symbolic sentence-image of the identity of their misogynistic and male chauvinist discourses. The comment of the latter about the words of the former is emphasised with the previous appearance of the music from “Also sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30” (Richard Strauss, 1896), used in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), and the intertitle “SO MANY ANSWERS WERE POSSIBLE... Will their Secretary REACT?” Her answer is: “There are very fair things [...] I can also be very unpleasant with him but not on this ground.” Giroud’s image stops, and an intertitle approaches the screen while we listen to Strauss’s music again to finally discover the text “Adieu, Berthe,” the title of the novel by Jeanne Faure-Cousin published in 1966, which revolves around the seduction of a woman following the misogynistic male gaze on her. The filmmakers’

voiceovers intervene again to add an ironic comment on the number of “enormities” pronounced by Giroud.

In their last two appearances, at the end of the film, we hear the filmmakers singing again. In the last one, they offer an alternative version of the song “La femme est l’avenir de l’homme” [Woman is the future of man] that Jean Ferrat performs on set. Opposing Giroud’s previous gender exchange, they reformulate each verse, and its title becomes “Les femmes ont rencontré les femmes” [Women have met women]. The film concludes with a final intertitle that shows, first, their feminist struggle against the institutional representation of “the female condition”:

Our purpose is not to comment on the person of Françoise Giroud nor to know if another woman would have done better or less well in her place. Our purpose is to show that no woman can represent other women within a patriarchal government, whatever it may be. She can only EMBODY THE FEMALE CONDITION, oscillating between the need to please (feminisation–Masochism) and the desire to gain power (masculinisation–Misogyny). As for the reforms proposed by F. Giroud, they can be proposed DIRECTLY by the ministers concerned (Labour, Health, Justice, etc.).

and then claim the video as the tool for freeing the filmic practice, since it is the tool that allows new spatial, ethical, aesthetic and political positions: “No television image wants to or can reflect us. It is with VIDEO THAT WE WILL TELL OUR OWN STORIES.”

The interview, as an enunciative device, allows for developing the critical thinking of feminist activism through the analysis of different dialectics. First, a false men–women dialectics is generated as a misogynistic–masochistic dialogue. Second, there is a television–spectator dialectic as an active–passive dynamic. Third, the real male chauvinist–feminist dialectic created by the filmmakers opposes the previous ones: critical thinking regarding misogyny and male chauvinism executed through the videographic practice as a feminist response to patriarchal television, controlled by the male gaze. To do so, and applying great intelligence, the filmmakers use humour as a subversive tool against patriarchy, misogyny, and male chauvinism, generating it through the different elements: intertitles, manipulation of the image, music and their voiceovers and presences in the editing room. Through humour, they evidence patriarchy and male chauvinism and dearticulate their discourses regarding every feminist concern: work, culture, love, sexuality, violence, etc. They demonstrate how humour can be a subversive political tool and a strategy for the audiovisual thinking process of the essay film.

*Papa comme maman: Producing Sociological Analysis*³

After her first works with Jean-Luc Godard, *Ici et Ailleurs* (1976), *Numéro deux* (1976), *Comment ça va ?* (1976), and *Six fois deux* (1976), Annie-Marie Miéville creates her first solo essay film, *Papa comme maman. Libres propos sur la fonction de mère*. Starting from the devices of the interview and through the hybridisation of different elements, Miéville generates a female and feminist reflection on motherhood through the experience of Olivia Piguet, a nineteen-year-old young woman who was raised by her father alone after her mother died when she was three years old.

The piece begins with the title and subtitle inscribed on the screen, placed between a black-and-white photograph of a woman and a young female voice calling “Dad? Dad?,” and another voiceover answered, “Yes.” Next, Miéville offers us a prologue, showing several photographs of affective representations of motherhood in various cultures accompanied by the song “Cara madre mia” by Gabriella Ferri (1973), a love song to the mother:

You are the only spring of my life / And nothing, nothing is more important than you. [...] You are my life itself / There is no one in the world like you / You are the most precious gem / The warmest sun, the clearest sky for me / And I love you so much.

This expression of filial devotion ends with the first photograph of an abused child and Miéville’s voiceover, followed by many others:

Here, this one is all alone. We don’t see his mother. Must say that he is beaten and that the images of mothers beating their children we never see, we find them nowhere. Yet, in an otherwise civilised country, parental violence kills more children than diseases, such as tuberculosis, polio, chickenpox, diabetes, appendicitis. Children are beaten, shaken, choked, starved, bitten, burned, strangled, broken, and often killed by their parents. Not far from here, at home, in Europe. According to the statistics, it is not social or emotional misery that particularly produces abusive parents, nor any disposition to sadism in mothers or to provocation in babies, but rather an inadequacy, a discrepancy, an

3 A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, “Women’s Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

enormous chasm between the sublime image of the role of the mother imposed by society and the daily reality of the work of a mother. Well, well ... this is not about investigating battered children. It was just a matter of pointing out a little summarily that each medal has its reverse, although I think it is a bit simple to want to reassure yourself by thinking, as for the land before Colón, that things are flat and not two-sided. Here, it is a question of trying something else, of studying certain aspects of the function of mother and of doing it not starting from a mother, from her presence, but rather from an absence, because as seen sometimes, to study something, to find out more, perhaps we do it better, we see better what is happening, when this something is not there.

Miéville thus establishes the dialectical structure of her analysis: between the images of maternal love and those of child abuse, between the idealised image of the mother's role and the daily reality of the mother's work, and between the presence and the absence of the mother figure.

Next, the depiction of Olivia and her father's experience embodies the idea of the "absence of the mother" that takes on a male form:

Let's examine aspects of motherhood when Mum isn't around; it presents itself in another form, a male form. Here is Olivia, Olivia Piguet, who has no mother and lives alone with her father. Let's take a look at their daily lives without a mum, with a dad as the mum.

The essay film then shows its case study, a documentary portrait of the everyday relationship between father and daughter and their respective domestic tasks, to give way to a black-and-white photograph of Olivia's parents—the complete image of the one shown at the beginning between title and subtitle—accompanied again by Miéville's voiceover:

At the beginning, for Olivia, there was this dad and this mum. Very early on, the death of this mother changed the family game, and with the main character having disappeared, the story was no longer the same.

The third section, "The story," shows Miéville and Olivia sitting on the grass in the countryside in a general shot. At the same time, we listen to Olivia narrating her father's decision to raise her alone, her anecdotes, and the social attitudes she encountered in her environment. Next, the story told by the father, through a close-up this time, is framed with an intertitle

that gives the film its title, “Dad as Mum,” describing the replacement of the maternal absence by the paternal presence. “As Mum” is inserted three times in the father’s statement when he alludes to crucial questions about gendered work–life balance and tasks usually associated with motherhood. The second fragment of Olivia’s interview, now in a close-up that contrasts with the general shot of the first one, is preceded by the intertitle “The lack.” She expresses her feelings and ideas while growing up with the maternal lack, and the intertitles are also repeated twice, pointing out the creation of an idealised mother:

I needed to have a concrete example in front of me. And I would also have liked to take an interest in my mother, for herself as a living character [...] and also to know if I had become ... if she liked me. [...] She herself seemed so foreign to me ... And I was looking everywhere at that time ... the condition of women at that time, the change in women, the evolution of women interested me enormously. I would have really liked to know her [...] A mother is like a woman who guesses [...] from a completely different point of view from a man, who sees other things, who cannot replace us, and who ultimately remains a man ... And me at that moment ... to fulfil myself, to try to become a woman [...] I needed someone who could tell me ... or look at me, someone who could look at me, and someone to whom I can go and tell her: you see how I have become ... [...] and talking to her mother is really a bit of replacing her. [...] I would have liked to know her own experience of life. The experience of a woman with whom I should have a lot in common ... A woman from whom I descend [...]. With her, it would be easier to discuss my life experiences, the way of seeing the world [...]. I would have liked to be able to talk to a woman like that; to a friend but even to a mother.

This sort of flow of consciousness forges Miéville’s audiovisual reflection: the mother’s absence causes Olivia to create an idealised image of her, which moves from motherhood to “femininity,” to the gender model. From the material shown, Miéville can then present her reflection, which is introduced by the manipulation of the image. We stop listening to its sound to give way to the filmmaker’s voiceover while Olivia continues speaking without being heard: “We have seen and heard that Olivia creates a certain image of her mother; that she creates another image of another mother. Maybe she is correcting herself the traditional image we create of a mother.” The manipulation of the image then continues with repetition. After a new intertitle, “Mum as a model,” Miéville shows us again three fragments of

Olivia's reflection, preceded by the filmmaker's words "We have seen this," and followed by new images that she again introduces: "We have seen this, but we haven't heard this."

1. We have seen this: "A terrible need to have someone not exactly to copy but to have an example to go on in life." We have seen this, but we haven't heard this [Images showing hands washing dishes]
2. We have seen this: "A mother is like a woman who guesses that for a moment ... who guesses what will happen to her children." We have seen this, but we haven't heard this [Images showing hands peeling carrots]
3. We have seen this: "With her, it would be easier to discuss my life experiences, the way of seeing the world." We have seen this, but we haven't heard this [Images showing hands washing clothes]

The different tasks of domestic work are shown in close-ups, in which we only see women's hands. In this way, Miéville conveys patriarchy's dehumanisation of women's domestic work and offers another absence–presence dialectic: between Godard's male "hands that think" and female anonymous hands doing non-salaried work. As I will analyse in Chapter 4, *Ici et ailleurs* just offered an egalitarian image of male and female "thinking hands." Here Miéville's reflection juxtaposes the images of that work with its absence in Olivia's life experience, showing how patriarchy manages to generate distortion in the reading of audiovisual materials through the paradox between "seeing," associated with words, and "hearing," associated with images. Any allusion to the mother figure is intimately linked to the gestures of non-salaried work fused with the notion of maternal love.

This juxtaposition between Olivia's image and domestic work is followed by six more detailed shots of the latter—women's hands kneading dough, ironing, topping and tailing beans, cleaning a window, sewing, and washing dishes—while Miéville's voice analyses Olivia's words, revealing the images her words concealed. The filmmaker presents the convenience of the distortion between the words we see and the gestures we hear created by patriarchy:

Olivia did not have a mother [hands kneading dough]. Olivia missed a mother, but what lack is she talking about? What she says is interesting. She says she lacked love; she lacked warmth; she lacked female tenderness. She says she missed communication with someone of the same gender, closer than a friend or cousin [hands ironing]. She does not say that she lacked a mother to learn how to sew on a button or do the windows. What

is wrong is that all of this is mixed up in the current code [hands topping and tailing beans]. Under the name “maternal love” we cram everything together into many headings that have nothing to do with each other. And especially not to pretend to be maternal love [hands cleaning a window]. There are a number of tasks that constitute immense and unpaid work that the mother generally performs. And to support this monotonous and repetitive work, not recognised as such, we mix it with love [hands sewing]. It is perhaps, with prostitution, the only place where love and work are so intimately intertwined, to end up not being called work, but love. And women, consciously or not, participate in this mixture. This is why when we see the word “Mum” [hands washing dishes] we actually understand by that all the gestures that are performed by the mother, and the image of this sum of gestures replaces the image of a woman capable of other things than endlessly reproducing trifles. Olivia does not make this mixture. Not having had a mother allowed her to rectify these images a little in her own way; allowed her no longer to confuse love and dishes in any case.

Four more fragments from Olivia’s interview, separated by the repeated intertitle, “Mum as a model,” evidence the maternal model Olivia has created in her mother’s absence, which is not linked to the gestures of women’s unpaid work, since she has not experienced them. In the second one, we listen to Miéville’s off-screen question for the first time, evidencing the evolution of the intersubjective work reached through the interview:

Do you have the impression, I ask you at the level of all the gestures, not only what is cooking for as they say, but everything that goes with it: sweeping, cleaning, mopping the floor, doing the dishes ... things like that, that you have the impression that the fact of not having had, well, a female model to observe for years, a model of female hands doing that, do you have the impression that it allows you to have, let’s say at this age, a little looser bond, little more flexible than someone who would have seen him every day for twenty years, fifteen years, twenty years, his mother’s hands ...?

Olivia’s last words synthesise the disconnection between motherhood and domestic work in her experience:

Maybe because I didn’t have a mother, I had such a vis-à-vis ... such a detachment that I don’t feel at all concerned with housework. Even if I

do it, even if I do it perhaps more than my friends who are my age, I feel much more detached from these gestures.

Showing a television with the test card, Miéville's final reflection links feminist progress to the transformation of the associations of images the essay film has analysed:

That's it. There were 40 minutes to do for television. It's not often, it's not easy. You feel forced to give a speech, and I, I don't have a message. I just wanted to say two or three things from the situations that necessarily interest me since they are part of me; since the condition of mother is mine too and that I encounter all these problems every day. In Olivia's case, there is something new, something novel. And she paid the price, that's for sure. She suits herself. She tried to say it a little. We have seen her, we have listened to her. She has also gained other means of associating images differently. When there will be a little more of this newness, this novelty.

With the last sentence, the image cuts to moving images of mothers and children, outdoors, in caring and affective situations, far from the domestic work, while we listen to Barbra Streisand's "Mother" (1971), which says goodbye to an unloving mother, and Miéville: "Perhaps the function of the mother will no longer be only this gigantic scam which consists of reproducing gestures we are never paid for."

From the loving mother of Ferri's song to the unloving one of Streisand's song, from maternal images of devotion to the horror of child abuse pictures, Miéville creates an essential reflection on how patriarchy has used the idealised image of motherhood to invisibilise and dehumanise women's domestic work. Miéville's essay film instrumentalises the interview to develop a case study creating a dialectical sentence-image of enormous potential: the self-interested distortion by patriarchy regarding the function of the mother figure, which manages to link the discourses of maternal love with the images of unpaid domestic work carried out by women. Through the absence of such a figure in Olivia's life experience, Miéville shows the need for a feminist "newness": to destroy this association in order to create new ones. Miéville carries out the analysis from female subjectivity, feminist activism, and crucial intergenerational intersubjectivity, manipulating images to generate thought and embodying the vindication in an audiovisual way.

Le Camion: Fiction Fabulation as Author–Spectator Dialogue⁴

Marguerite Duras created the only film in which she appears on screen, *Le Camion*, to generate an essay film using dialogue as an enunciative device to embody the dialogical nature of this filmic form between author and spectator and reflect on artistic creation and political criticism. Duras and Gérard Depardieu, sitting face to face in a room—Duras’s *chambre noire*—read an unrehearsed multi-layered dialogue between filmmaker and actor, author and spectator, and actors, a digression that fabulates the film they could make in a conditional past and present that multiplies the possibilities of Duras’s artistic creation and narrative deconstruction. The first exchange between Duras and Depardieu summarises the proposal: “– Is it a film? – It would have been a film. It is a film, yes.” That is to say, the potentiality of the work, the fabulation about its creation, is its own realisation, a step further in the narrative deconstruction pursued by Duras through a literary–cinematic coalescence of non-representation (Monterrubbio Ibáñez, 2013; 2017; 2018, pp. 136–146).

The film is built through the juxtaposition between the filmmaker and the actor’s dialogue and the journey of the imagined truck through “the fluctuation between the actual and the virtual” (Beaulieu, 2015, p. 122); the actual image of the filmmaker and the actor, the virtual image of the fabled film. As Duras notes, “Yes, this truck is a mental image: your mental image of the truck that is seen continuing on its way” (1977, p. 89). In this manner, Duras unifies gaze and self-portrait: “The filmmaker’s self-portrait produced during the creative act expresses her cinematic thinking through a filmic gaze that causes narrative deconstruction” (Monterrubbio Ibáñez, 2016b, p. 65). The filmmaker’s voice, dialogical voice-in in the first space and narrative voiceover in the second, is the key interstitial element for the audiovisual thinking process.

The route of the truck, a virtual image with which the film begins, accompanied by Duras’s voiceover, is captured through a new alternation: shots from the outside of the truck, primarily panoramic, and shots from the inside, while it moves, producing tracking shots of the road and the landscapes covered. This dual gaze becomes a symbolic sentence-image of the characters’ dialogue in the actual interior space. At minute 35, the midpoint of the footage, a single shot shows the vehicle’s interior while it is

4 A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterubbio Ibáñez, “Women’s Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

stopped to generate the fusion between actual and virtual spaces, as I will analyse below. The situation created by Duras, a dialogue about a future film, makes both presences embody different entities from which the audiovisual thinking develops. Duras contains the literary author of the dialogue, the filmmaker of the film, and finally, as I will also analyse, the character of the woman in the truck. Depardieu embodies the spontaneous reader of the dialogue—without previous rehearsals—the spectator of the film and, indirectly, the driver of the truck. The dialogue is also filmed from another double perspective: the alternating shot/countershot of the characters during the reading and the joint shot of both as a sort of displacement into the extra-diegetic space of the film, which occurs in three vital moments of reflection (minutes 20–35, 60, 103–104), as I will also discuss below. The triple function of both dialogical presences enables different interactions between them. Duras—literary author reads the dialogue, Duras—filmmaker questions Depardieu about the virtual image: “You see?” and Duras—character embodies the woman in the truck at certain key moments by reciting her words. In addition, she challenges Depardieu in his displacement into extra-diegetic space. With regard to Depardieu, his displacements between the different instances build a fundamental reflection on the nature of the spectator of the essay film as an integral part of the audiovisual thinking process. By reading the dialogue, Depardieu embodies the spontaneous reader of the text and the potential spectator of the film whose participation in the work evolves: he asks questions, offers information, generates reflections, comes to create the narration, and momentarily embodies the truck driver. As Duras notes:

We are in an identical place, strictly identical. The closed space of the cabin is the film’s first confinement; it is where the writing takes place. The second confinement, that of the dark room where I am with Depardieu, is where this writing is read to you, revealed to the public, if you like. (1977, p. 104)

After the first two images of the truck from the outside and with direct sound, starting the trip, the third, from the inside, shows the landscape in motion, without direct sound any more, thus entering the audiovisual creation. At the same time, Duras’s voiceover describes the space-time coordinate, using the defining past conditional: “It would have been a road by the sea. It would have crossed a large bare plateau. And then, a truck would have arrived. He would have passed slowly through the landscape. There is a white winter sky.” Next, we hear the music that will become the

leitmotif of the work, Beethoven's "Diabelli Variations." Once the virtual exterior space of the film is presented, the filmmaker shows the actual interior space of the reading of the dialogue through a shot/countershot: Duras on the left and Depardieu on the right, in the dark of night, illuminated by a table lamp. After the aforementioned question and answer, Duras continues the narration with the woman's appearance: "And then, at the side of the road, a woman would have been waiting. [...] She is a woman of a certain age. Dressed like in the city [...]. She is carrying a suitcase. She gets into the truck. The truck leaves," and interpellating Depardieu for the first time about the vision of the virtual image, the imagined film: "– You see? – Yes." Depardieu–reader moves to the instance of the spectator through his questions: "What landscape are we in?" Thus, it is the spectator's questions that allow the narrative to advance in a critical sense, giving it greater density. Duras goes from "indifference" to a clear political and social concretion: "Indifferent: La Beauce, perhaps, towards Chartres. Or in the emigrant cities of Les Yvelines." As the filmmaker states, "Everything was filmed between Trappes and Plaisir, that is to say, in short, the capital of immigration in France" (1977, p. 108).

In the virtual space, Duras's voiceover, accompanied by the music, narrates the action in a minimal way: "That is when she would have started to look at [...] the diversity of things. And then she sings." Back in the room, Duras describes the two characters, already inside the truck—and the second driver who sleeps in the back seat—and asks Depardieu again, twice: "– You see? – Yes, I see." It is again Depardieu's question that provokes the political and social characterisation of the woman: "– Who is she? – Déclassée." At the beginning of the reproduction of the dialogues of the woman in the truck, Depardieu's question is transferred to Duras's opinion: "What do you think?" The second time, Duras replies, "Like you, any revolution is impossible." Duras turns Depardieu into a complicit spectator with whom she shares a socio-political background. The eclectic digression of the woman in the truck contrasts with the silence of the driver, who only intervenes occasionally. Before her third intervention, she links the emptiness of the planet Mars with the political situation, and he asks, "– Related to God? – Yes, related to emptiness." Next, Duras and Depardieu appear for the first time in a joint shot located in the inverse position to the previous one and in front of the window through which the light enters. The exchange of positions is the metaphor for the dialogical nature of the essay film. Then, there is a displacement from reading to shared reflection and its temporality. With the first dialogue, the conditional of the possible future film also becomes the present of the essay film in progress, whose conclusion has not been previously decided:

Depardieu: How do you think it will end?

Duras: It may be ended.

We then hear the musical leitmotiv for the first time in the interior space of the room while both presences reflect in silence. Next, the reading becomes a kind of spontaneous conversation in which both characters recapitulate the development of the narrative up to that moment, and the figure of the spectator emerges with greater force. The showing of the joint reflection between filmmaker and spectator materialises in the last dialogue:

Depardieu: What does she say, the woman who came up?

Duras: She says: Let the world go to its ruin, that is the only form of politics.

Both characters repeat the sentence and add, in unison, "That is it," evidencing the relevance of the phrase as a joint reflective conclusion of the work up to that moment. Next, the shot from the truck is accompanied for the first time by Depardieu's voiceover, offering a symbolic sentence-image of the spectator's participation in the film, in the reflection of the essay film:

Depardieu: What else is she saying, the woman?

Duras: She says: everything is in everything. Everywhere. All the time.

At the same time.

In this way, virtual music contaminates the actual space, and the actual reader breaks into the virtual space as a spectator-creator. Both transfers become symbolic sentence-images of the dialogical nature of the essay film. In the second shared shot of the room, the displacement from reading to shared reflection and extra-diegetic space occurs again. It is Duras who asks Depardieu his opinion:

Duras: Do you agree? Never ...?

Depardieu: That is to say ... maybe you are right ...

Author and reader, filmmaker and spectator, question each other, advance together through narration and reflection, and also stop it, making the extra-diegetic space emerge:

Duras: Would you like a cigarette?

Depardieu: It depends on which brand ...

The third joint shot, now a general shot, repeats the already established pattern: it is Depardieu who asks a question that provokes political reflection, who also continues it, participates in its development:

Depardieu: What does the woman say?

Duras: She says the words: proletariat ... working class ... She says: now they know how to name their exploiters ... their oppressors ... read ... write ...

Depardieu: Before, they could neither read nor write. Now they can read and write. Their knowledge concerning their fate is considerable.

Duras: Yes, their knowledge of themselves is considerable ...

Then he also does this regarding narration after the tracking shot that converts the general shot into the previous medium shot:

Duras: Ah, how young I was once ...

Depardieu: Hiroshima ... Hiroshima ...

Duras: Yes. She wanted to die of love.

Depardieu: She died of love.

A new advance in Depardieu's participation in the narration takes place: not only does he add information, but now the question is about information not given by Duras but generated by Depardieu: "Why is she crying?," provoking the narrative about the love life of the woman, while the light from the window fades, as a metaphor for what is recited at that moment:

Duras: We could not yet know what was behind the clarity of the words: revolution, class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat.

Depardieu: The clarity has darkened.

Duras: Yes. We do not read anything anymore. We cannot see anything anymore.

This evolution of the reader-spectator's presence is confirmed by Depardieu's presence through an individual shot, for the first time without being accompanied by Duras's countershot. In the fourth and last joint shot, Duras shows the lack of interest of the driver, most of the time in silence, in front of the woman in the truck: "[A] woman of a certain age is not interesting." The essay film's reflection continues. Between two shots of the truck, the first from the outside and the second from the inside, Duras inserts the only shot that shows the inside of the truck, empty and stopped. Depardieu's voiceover then appears for the second time in the virtual space, and both

presences now embody the characters, reproducing the dialogue in direct speech. In this way, Duras creates a sentence-image synthesis of the fusion between the actual and virtual images.

Duras: She is still talking. She says: What are you carrying?

Depardieu: I don't know. Ready-made packages. It is to be embarked.

Duras: For where?

Depardieu: I don't know.

Duras: She's still talking. She says: What are you carrying?

Thus, the second block of the essay film concludes in the middle of its length, confirming the complete itinerary described above: Duras's narration provokes Depardieu's questions, which in turn give way to joint reflection first, to Depardieu's participation in the narration afterwards, and finally to the embodiment of the virtual characters and the possibility of identification with them. In the third block, the interior space recovers the shot/countershot between the interlocutors in their initial positions, although the space shown has varied again. The dialogue in this fragment concludes again with a shared reflection:

Depardieu: It would have been a film about ... love?

Duras: Yes. About everything. It would have been a film about everything.

About everything at the same time: About love.

The virtual space of the truck now undergoes a new variation; it appears on screen without the presence of Duras's voiceover for the first time. While previously the time for reflection materialised in the silence of the protagonists in the actual space, now it is produced through the silence of the narration in the virtual space, a symbolic sentence-image of the autonomy achieved by the virtual creation, which already belongs to the spectators of the essay film. Next, the dialogue in the interior space changes direction. Duras reflects on their own actual identities from the fabulated virtual ones:

Duras: I see them locked in the cabin, as if threatened by the outside light. I have the impression that you and I, too, are as if threatened by this same light of which they are afraid: the fear that, all of a sudden, a flood will rush into the cabin of the truck, into the dark room of light, see ... Fear of catastrophe: Political intelligence.

Depardieu: An activist is someone who has no doubts.

Duras: That's it. Mobilised by specific demands that are supposed to better his lot, all of a material nature.

Depardieu: Material ...

Duras: Yes ... better housing ... easier transportation ... cheaper holidays: that's the main goal of his struggle.

Duras generates a new sentence-image of the audiovisual thinking process of the essay film through its dialogical nature. The object of reflection becomes a mirror on which to carry out self-reflection, thus producing critical thinking. The previous incarnation of the characters now allows reflection on the possible identification with them. Next, Duras creates total identification with the woman in the truck by giving her her own critique of communism. After describing political conviction as religion, lacking critical thinking:

The last avatar of the supreme Saviour, the proletariat. She had believed it. A sacred God: the proletariat. She had believed it. No one has the right to question the proletariat's responsibility. She had believed it. The activist's responsibility should never be questioned again—that would mean risking blasphemy against the working class. She had believed it.

Duras expresses the lie of the proletariat and its class struggle: "And then one day she saw: the complicity between the owners and the workers. Their identical fear. Their identical goal. Their identical politics: the infinite delay of any free revolution. Killing the other man in each man, robbing him of his fundamental nature: his own contradiction." The filmmaker instrumentalises the juxtaposition between the essayistic digression and the poetic image to generate a new non-representation of "the absence of revolutionary possibility" (Ishaghpour, 1982, p. 246). The identification between author and character is described by Youssef Ishaghpour: "[T] his irreducible identity and duality of Duras and the woman in the truck" (p. 263), and by Duras herself:

It's me [the woman in the truck] as well, of course, as I can be all women. [...] Anyway, I have reached this point: talking about myself as if about someone else, getting interested in myself as someone else would interest me. To talk with myself, perhaps, I don't know. (1977, p. 132)

The film's fabulation and the character of the woman in the truck allow Duras to make a political and social reflection on the times that places her

in a space of intellectuality: “In fact, it was a political story. It was also my story with politics. How much it counted, how decisive it was for everything else, I see it now that the film is finished. I had never understood it this much before” (1977, p. 112). At the same time, she identified with a particularly invisible female condition and motherhood, which seems to justify the trip: “Entirely turned towards the outside, she entered into a process of identity disappearance” (p. 80).

After another fragment of the virtual image of the truck, the following segment in the room reproduces the dialogue between both virtual characters, now indirectly, to finally be Depardieu, the spectator, who describes the scene:

Depardieu: He is looking at her ...

Duras: Yes ... it's true.

Depardieu: For the first time.

The reading of the dialogue, carried out up to now by Duras, and embodied only during the shot of the interior of the truck, is now generated by both actual presences. From this moment on, Depardieu also participates in the reading of the dialogues belonging to the truck driver, displacing the position of reader–spectator to that of actor–character.

Duras: He says: I get it. You are a reactionary. [...]

Duras: Then, he says: I get it. You have escaped from the psychiatric asylum of Gouchy [...]

Depardieu: He asks: Are you involved in politics?

The following virtual fragment of the truck is shown for the second and last time without voiceover, evidencing the independence of the virtual work created by the author–filmmaker and reader–spectator. Back in the room, Duras's performance of a long monologue by the woman in the truck takes place based on the narration of the motivation for the trip, the birth of a grandson, to which Depardieu only listens. At the end, the music begins in the room, once again denoting the communication between spaces, now caused by Duras's performance, turned into a new form of identification.

After three more exterior–interior–exterior fragments, in which again the speech of the woman in the truck becomes a new possible unreal fable, the third block concludes with a new joint shot in the interior space, which generates a new displacement to the extra-diegetic space and the pause for reflection.

Depardieu: Do you want a cigarette?

Duras: No. You are tired?

Depardieu: No.

Duras: No? We are almost done reading. Let's start again.

Depardieu: Yes.

The fourth block, the conclusion of the film, then begins with a change of perspective: from the joint shot to the shot/countershot, to now reproduce the final dialogues between the virtual characters, in which the truck driver discredits the woman's narration and also questions her identity and her purpose. Once again, Duras and Depardieu exchange the roles of narrator–narratee on different occasions. However, Depardieu never reproduces a dialogue from the woman in the truck. Duras–woman in the truck identification is also evidenced by this exclusivity, which I also understand as the vindication of the feminist perspective, in dialectic with the male chauvinist contempt of the driver character: “He says: I get it. You are a reactionary.” “Then, he says: I get it. You have escaped from the psychiatric asylum of Gouchy.” “He says: you lie.”

The filmmaker then uses a new last element: the actual–virtual duplication of the narration. Duras relates its conclusion, the woman's descent from the truck, and describes her when Depardieu asks: “Small. Thin. Flock. Banal. She has this nobility of banality. She is invisible.” The description given by anonymous characters of the woman is repeated in the virtual space and, at that moment, as will happen in *Aurélia Steiner* (*Melbourne*) (1979), the character seems to be embodied in the image for a brief moment, and we see a small female silhouette walking away from the road.

After consummating the Durasian destruction—“We do not read anything anymore. We cannot see anything anymore. Nothing. Revolution. Class struggle. Dictatorship of the proletariat. Nothing”—the last two interior shots take up the joint framing of shared reflection, in which the positions of the characters appear again exchanged, repeating the shot shown in the first block. While they remain silent, the virtual music that has continued from the previous shot accompanies a tracking shot towards the illuminated window, a sort of blank page and cinematic screen (Figure 3). The last shot, another tracking shot now taking up the second nocturnal space, with the positions alternated again, addresses Duras first and then pans into the night darkness of the window, passing through Depardieu's figure. Meanwhile, the filmmaker concludes the essay film with a new element that fixes the actual–virtual circular structure: Duras's voiceover



Figure 3. *Le Camion* (Marguerite Duras, 1977) © Gaumont

appears for the first time in the actual space, turning it into a virtual space for another Durasian creation:

It is a hill. A gentle slope. The forest. Above, the sky is clear. Naked. Summer. [...] It is summer. Very slowly, a truck crosses the whole thing. And then it disappears. It leaves behind it a rustling of thorn bushes. It is the force of the wind stirred up by the passage of the truck's mass that makes the dead summer plants squeal.

The winter of the imagined film now becomes summer. The image of the window–page–screen now becomes the darkness of the night–artistic creation and destruction from which a spotlight illuminates the scene we are contemplating. Duras's voiceover concludes the story on the black screen: "We are waiting for the accident that will populate the forest. It is the sound of a passage. We don't know who or what. And then it stops."

Le Camion could be considered one of the first female essay films that instrumentalise lyricism as "a counternarrative mode," "an undoing that is essential to the disjunctive textuality of the essay" (Rascaroli 2017, pp. 144, 163), to take it to the limit of narrative destruction and Durasian non-representation, evidencing their reflective potential. As Ishaghpour observes, "Essay and lyricism each limit the other's claim to unambiguousness: speech and questioning make and unmake the film as it progresses, so the image is not reduced to what exists since it is only there as the absence of an impossible" (1982, p. 266). The virtual image, the truck's move, also becomes a sentence-image for the essay film's itinerary, for the digression's uncertainty.

Conclusions

After these analyses, we can conclude the enormous potential of dialogue as an enunciative device of the essay film and its link with the creations made by women as a tool of intersubjectivity and sisterhood inherent in feminist vindications. *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* is Marker's first attempt to create an essay film from the exchange between different subjectivities that dialogue makes possible. The viewing of the photographs allows the oral comments to become audiovisual reflections of the three characters, providing two different perspectives: that of the author and that of the spectators of the images shown. In this way, a clear expression of critical thinking materialises by generating reflection on the author's images. The essay film thus focuses on the oscillation between different points of view and the transition from conversation to reflection and interior monologue. The audiovisual elements used—zooms, crossfades, panning, etc.—are instrumentalised to subjectivise the gaze on the images and mobilise it. Therefore, we do not find specific audiovisual elements associated with the dialogue or the interior monologue, nor with the transition between one enunciation and another, but rather, they respond to processes of subjectivisation of the spectatorial gaze. Marker's gaze, through the images made over ten years, becomes an expression of the author's own reflection and the spectators' reflection from their viewing. Through the device of the dialogue, Marker turns his characters into cinematic essayists, mobilising the gaze between author and spectators.

Whereas Godard examined Jane Fonda's photography in *Letter to Jane*, Les Insoumuses analyse Pivot's interview with Giroud to reveal, in this case, the patriarchal and sexist discourse, instrumentalising irreverence, irony, and humour as a feminist counter-narrative. Furthermore, they offer us the first self-portrait of women filmmakers in the position of the essayist–image manipulator. *Papa comme maman*, for its part, analyses Olivia's and her father's interviews to build an audiovisual thinking process about motherhood as a space of patriarchal oppression, placing Miéville in the first complete experience of the female essayist. Finally, Duras constructs a multi-layered dialogue based on the fabrication of a future film with which to generate reflection on the different instances—author–filmmaker–actor–character and reader–spectator–actor–character—and the political and social reality in which it is produced, with a crucial presence of the female experience. Whereas *Sans soleil* uses television images to show the dangers of the postmodern image, *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* analyses the television interview to reveal its patriarchal, misogynistic, and sexist

nature and vindicates video technology as the emancipatory tool of the feminist struggle. *Papa comme maman*, an essay film commissioned and broadcast by the Radio Télévision Suisse, implies the presence of feminist criticism in that space, based on the interview experience. In both films, photographs and archival film images are used to confirm the reality that women filmmakers want to denounce, criticise, and reflect on.

Maso et Miso vont en bateau uses multiple procedures to manipulate the interview's images, always in pursuit of irreverence, humour, and irony as tools for the denunciation and dismantling of patriarchal reality and sexist and misogynistic practices: the freeze frame, the repetition, the elimination of the sound image, etc. Furthermore, the filmmakers articulate their critical analysis through handwritten intertitles that also evolve from text to drawing, through numerous variations, to once again achieve criticism through humour and irony, converting, for example, the male chauvinism and misogyny of the interview into an endless novel. We observe the same mechanism with music, which also instrumentalises the cultural load of the chosen pieces. *Papa comme maman* uses the freeze frame, the repetition, and the substitution of the sound image by the filmmaker's voiceover as elements of the analysis that allow for the creation of an enormously powerful dialectical sentence-image: the patriarchal manipulation creating the paradox between "the words we see" and "the images we hear" about motherhood, to convert unpaid domestic work into maternal care and affection. Duras, for her part, develops all the dialogical levels of *Le Camion* from multiple juxtapositions—interior of reality and exterior of fiction; narrativity and poeticity; panoramic views of the truck and tracking shots from its inside; shot/countershot and joint shot inside the room—and the filmmaker's voice as an interstitial key element for the audiovisual thinking process. The works of these three female filmmakers demonstrate the development of feminist critical thinking through the various dynamics that dialogue makes possible—the analysis of reality, intersubjective and intergenerational practice, and identification—using humour, irony, and poeticity as subversive counter-narratives against patriarchy.

Works Cited

- Alter, N. M. (2006). *Chris Marker*. University of Illinois Press.
- An, G. (2019). From muse to Insoumise: Delphine Seyrig, Vidéaste. In M. Atack, A. S. Fell, D. Holmes, & I. Long (Eds.), *Making Waves: French feminisms and their legacies 1975–2015* (pp. 55–70). Liverpool University Press.

- Beaulieu, J. (2015). Virtualités à l'œuvre dans le cinéma de Marguerite Duras. In C. Proulx & S. Santini (Eds.), *Le cinéma de Marguerite Duras: l'autre scène du littéraire ?* (pp. 115–124). Peter Lang.
- Caille, A. C. (2019). Temporaliser la photographie : Marker, Varda, Wenders–Salgado. *Intermédialités / Intermediality*, 33. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065013ar>
- Duras, M. (1977). *Le Camion* suivi de *Entretien avec Michelle Porte*. Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Fleckinger, H. (2010). Une caméra à soi. Quand les féministes s'emparent de la vidéo. In H. Fleckinger (Ed.), *Caméra militante. Luttes de libération des années 1970* (pp. 29–46). MétisPresses.
- Fleckinger, H. (2011). *Cinéma et vidéo saisis par le féminisme (France, 1968–1981)*. Doctoral Thesis. Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3.
- Ishaghpour, Y. (1982). *D'une image à l'autre. La représentation dans le cinéma d'aujourd'hui*. Éditions Denoël, Gonthier.
- Jeanjean, S. (2011). Disobedient video in France in the 1970s: Video production by women's collectives. *Afterall*, 27, 119–125.
- Lupton, C. (2005). *Chris Marker: Memories of the future*. Reaktion Books.
- Marker, C. (1967). *Commentaires 2*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2013). La coalescencia literario-cinematográfica en la obra de Marguerite Duras. In L. Carriedo, M. D. Picazo, & M. L. Guerrero (Eds.), *Entre escritura e imagen. Lecturas de narrativa contemporánea* (pp. 245–258). Peter Lang. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0352-6392-3>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2016b). Identity self-portraits of a filmic gaze: From absence to (multi)presence: Duras, Akerman, Varda. *Comparative Cinema*, 8, 63–73. <https://raco.cat/index.php/Comparativecinema/article/view/316123>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2017). *Agatha and the limitless readings* by Marguerite Duras: The literary text and its filmic (irre)presentation. *Communication & Society*, 30(3), 41–60. <http://doi.org/10.15581/003.30.3.41-60>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2018). *De un cine epistolar. La presencia de la misiva en el cine francés moderno y contemporáneo*. Shangrila Ediciones. <https://shangrilae-diciones.com/producto/de-un-cine-epistolar/>
- Murray, R. (2016). Raised fists: Politics, technology, and embodiment in 1970 French feminist video collectives. *Camera Obscura*, 31(1(91)), 93–121. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-3454441>
- Rascaroli, L. (2017). *How the essay film thinks*. Oxford University Press.

4. The Diptych¹

Abstract: This chapter studies the use of the enunciative device of the diptych in four Godard's works: *Camera-Eye* (1967), *Ici et ailleurs* (1976), co-directed by Anne-Marie Miéville, *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1980), and *Scénario du film Passion* (1980). It shows how the Godardian essay film is born, evolves, and consolidates from this device. The reflection on audiovisual creation progresses through the works based on the method of scientific experimentation: to observe the mistakes revealed by a film in order to correct them in the next piece. Thus, the audiovisual thinking that rethinks cinematic creation evolves, progressively facing the conflicts that this filmic form imposes, showing its organic nature through the oscillation between emotion and reflection.

Keywords: essay film, audiovisual thinking, critical thinking, militant cinema, Jean-Luc Godard, authorship.

This chapter aims to analyse how the beginning of Godard's essay film creation is intimately linked to the diptych device, an enunciative device rarely used but of extreme interest, in which the essay film is generated from the reflection on previous work. While *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967) and *La Chinoise* (1967) are situated in the space of fiction, although they contain essayistic elements, Godard begins the filmic form with the short film *Camera-Eye*, belonging to the collective film *Loin du Vietnam* (1967). For the first time, his voice and his self-portrait offer a subjective reflection that aims to be developed in an audiovisual way. This first, incipient exercise of audiovisual thinking is completely linked to *La Chinoise*, the film he had just completed and on which he wanted to reflect. However, this exercise of

¹ This analysis was published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Jean-Luc Godard's Diptychs: Rethinking Cinema through the Essay Film," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 40(1), 2023, pp. 16–55, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2021.1981091>

subjective reflection is interrupted by his experience of militant cinema as part of the Dziga Vertov Group, in which authorial subjectivity is removed in pursuit of an ideological expression and revolutionary cinematic practice. The group activity ends, and Godard's second essay film, *Letter to Jane* (1972), co-directed by Jean-Pierre Gorin, is born again from the reflection caused by the creation of *Tout va bien* (1972). As analysed in Chapter 1, a finished fiction film generates the need for an essay film that reflects on it due to the feeling of failure about its result. As Godard himself explains in *Voyage à travers un film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1981): "I find the truth from the mistake [...] the image is interesting because it does not show you the truth, it shows you the mistake. And that it is necessary to build another afterwards, and that it is the whole that will restore justice." The beginning of the new stage in Godard's creation is completely determined by two facts: the collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville and the use of video technology. Due to the possibilities of manipulation in editing, the video becomes the suitable support for the essay film since it allows the filmmaker to use different materials and manipulate them as well as enabling all kinds of interactions with the written text. *Ici et ailleurs* (1976) inaugurates this stage. Godard's third essay film in diptych, on this occasion co-directed by Miéville, is created, once again, as the analysis of a previous film experience: the film *Jusqu'à la victoire* by the Dziga Vertov Group. The piece was never released, but multiple montages were made, and it represented a kind of trauma for Godard. Then, the filmmakers define the essence of the diptych device regarding the essay film: "rethinking about that." Later, Godard explores the device as an exercise of audiovisual reflection prior to film creation. *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (1979) aims to explore the objectives of the future fictional work. This same exercise is repeated with *Passion, le travail et l'amour. Introduction à un scénario* (1981) and *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue, Marie* (1983). I will argue that these three essay exercises, prior to the fictional films on which they want to reflect, lack the materiality needed to create the audiovisual thinking process defining Godard's essay work. Thus, the filmmaker cannot *rethink about that* as in the previous pieces, since the *elsewhere* defining the essay film does not exist yet. This fact implies that the thinking process loses its audiovisual features. This necessary differentiation between essay films made before and after the work they reflect on finds confirmation in *Scénario du film Passion* (1982). Once again, the essay film generated as the reflection on an already completed film finds the essential materiality for its realisation in the latter, showing the key differences between the prior and subsequent pieces. In this

way, I will analyse the works cited in order to conclude the characteristics of this enunciative device, the diptych, which by its nature—created in reference to another work—is revealed as an almost inherent component of the essay film, as indicated by Jean-Louis Leutat: “I think the form of the diptych is perfectly suited to the essay ‘about’ cinema. Why? Because it reveals something about the functioning of cinema, at least as we project it imaginatively: the principle of communicating vessels (one reel becomes empty while the other gets filled, the vampirism of cinema ...)” (2004, p. 242).

Camera-Eye: Documentary vs Fiction for Political Engagement

Godard uses the first-person enunciation for the first time in *Camera-Eye*, his participation in the collective feature film *Loin du Vietnam*. As Jacqueline Meppiel, editor of the film, recounts in the interview collected by Laurent Véray (2015, p. 105), and confirmed by Sébastien Layerle (2008, 2016) and David Faroult: “He made [...] some shots for his contribution to the collective film *Loin du Vietnam*, accompanied by a recorded text, with rushes from *La Chinoise*. He provides these few shots in which he films around his camera or films some details, and he entrusts the whole to Jacqueline Meppiel and Chris Marker, who will ensure the editing for him” (Faroult, 2018, p. 111–112). These facts raise two questions of enormous interest to the analysis. First, Godard’s contribution is based on the diptych: fictional material from *La Chinoise* and documentary material from a voice-recorded reflection that can undoubtedly be referenced to the previous creation. Second, the person in charge of the editing, including material filmed in France and Vietnam and other archival materials, is Chris Marker. Therefore, Godard’s first first-person cinematic expression, and also the first materialisation of his self-portrait, which will become the prefiguration of the Godardian essay film, owes its montage to the other great name of the Francophone essay film, who, in turn, at this time, has already made two essay films: *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958) and *Si j’avais quatre dromadaires* (1966). Thus, the piece includes both the expression of the filmmaker’s subjectivity and the hybridisation of fiction, nonfiction, and archival materials. The question then is whether the short film manages to embody an audiovisual thinking process, which in this case would belong to both authors: Marker as editor of the film, and Godard in the relationship between the recorded audio and two materials: the self-portrait and the rushes from *La Chinoise*. It is crucial to point out the understanding that

Marker shows of Godard's material regarding the criticisms of narcissism received:

He had the lucidity to comment on this examination of conscience [...]. The franker and more modest he was in describing his internal conflicts, the more he was accused of being conceited. In my opinion, in the film he achieved a very high degree of frankness and openness. He says, here I am, and submits to his own judgment as an artist rarely does. (Ritterbusch, 1967, p. 67)

The first-person enunciation is produced on- and off-screen, offering the first self-portrait of the filmmaker who stands behind the camera, looking through it and manipulating its elements. Godard stands in the position of the *filmeur*, which will be the position of the militant filmmaker in the cinematic practice he will subsequently engage in through the Dziga Vertov Group. However, after the militant cinema experience, when he takes up subjective expression and the first-person enunciation defining the essay film, he shows that the place of the essayist is not behind the camera, but in the editing room. The essayist's work is not capturing the present images but their subsequent review, a present moment of reflection that can only be subsequent to the past filming. In *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (1982) and *Scénario du film Passion* (1982), Godard already occupies that position, in which the essay film creation takes place in the editing room—a reflection that emerges from the viewing of the audiovisual material. It is also essential to notice the innovation of Godard's oral enunciation, which materialises as if it were a spontaneous reflection, radically differentiated from the written and recited text, as a flow of consciousness—hesitations, interruptions, reformulations—that is, undoubtedly, another of the defining elements of his essay films. In this way, and still from the *filmeur*'s position, Godard begins his reflection by generating a kind of intellectual shot/countershot between his image and that of the cinematic apparatus, between the filmmaker's subjectivity and the device that enables its audiovisual creation. This shot/countershot already embodies the social isolation of the intellectual, the break that is the object of the reflection. During this self-referential beginning, Godard recounts his ideas about filming in Vietnam and the refusal of the Vietnamese government to allow his visit, as he will explain later (Brenez & Faroult, 2006, pp. 398–399). The break he reflects on has three realisations: between Godard and the Vietnamese people, between Vietnam and France, and between the French society and Godard. These three breaks materialise in the simple and rational parataxis among the

images belonging to the three spaces, which only alters at the end of the piece. It is the account of the rejection by the North Vietnamese government that moves the film towards the images of its people, more specifically those of a school, the scene of Godard's script idea. According to the filmmaker, it would be the rejection from Hanoi that triggered the filming of *La Chinoise* and in turn the appearance of its images in the short film: "This refusal from Hanoi proved to me that since I was living in Paris, there was no reason not to make films in Paris. So, I decided that in every film I made, I would talk about Vietnam, in one way or another, but rather *through* it." A total of nine shots from *La Chinoise* appear in the piece. The first four, at this moment, establish the opposition in addition to the archival images. They correspond to the moment in the fictional film in which the war conflict in Vietnam is addressed through a metaphor, as analysed by Jacques Aumont (1982). Besides the documentary image, the montage opposes the fictional image, the metaphor, in which Vietnam is embodied by Juliet Berto. She asks Alexei Kosygin—Soviet Union—for help while being attacked by the United States, incarnated as an armed tiger—in allusion to Mao's description of American capitalism as a paper tiger. We also see him speaking on the phone with Kosygin: "Hello, Kosygin, how are you?" In alternation with this fictional space, Jean-Pierre Léaud offers the reflection that explains the metaphor: Soviet communism has become complicit in the revisionism of American imperialism in its fight against true communism, that of China and Vietnam.

Godard's words become the critical argument from which to analyse *La Chinoise*: "So, what I can do best for Vietnam is, I believe, rather than trying to invade Vietnam with a kind of generosity which necessarily makes things unnatural, it is, on the contrary, letting Vietnam invade us. And we are made to realise what place it takes in our everyday life, wherever we are." Thus, *La Chinoise* is the materialisation of the reflection he makes in *Camera-Eye*: not to show the images from Vietnam, but to offer one's own experience of what happens there, the impact on one's own life. This differentiation between the experience of revolutionary protagonists and committed intellectuals materialises in the parataxis between Juliet Berto's incarnation of Vietnam and the real Vietnamese soldier, around whom the documentary shot makes a 360° movement, between the intellectual creation of metaphor and reality.

The reflection continues on the second break, between Vietnam and France, through the Rhodiaceta workers on strike. In this case, current images were filmed by Bruno Muel (Layerle, 2008, p. 81): "For a Rhodiaceta worker, the struggle in North Vietnam should be on his mind when he is

fighting with his union. He should draw lessons from it.” Finally, the third break, between the French people and Godard, is generated again through the parataxis between the self-portrait material, another four shots from *La Chinoise*—repeating the different characters of the metaphor—and the documentary material, both from France and Vietnam: “Me, as a filmmaker working in France, I am completely isolated from the majority part of the population, and most of all, from the working class [...]. The working class doesn’t see my films. Between them and me, there’s the same break as I have with Vietnam.” It is fundamental to note that the notion of the materiality of thinking already appears: the association between cinematic thinking and its materiality through the filmmaker’s hands, regarding Rougemont’s expression that Godard will repeatedly use, as in *JLG/JLG autoportrait de décembre*, Chapter 4A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and the prologue of *Le Livre d’image* (2018): “the true condition of man is to think with his hands” (Rougemont, 1936, p. 147). Marker’s montage repeats Michel Deguy’s photograph from *La Chinoise* through a close-up of his hands, followed by Godard’s manipulating the camera. It is precisely at that moment in *La Chinoise* that Anne Wiazemsky recognises the same break regarding the working class. Fiction and nonfiction continue to hybridise with a colour shot from a demonstration in which we can recognise the protagonist of Alain Resnais’s short film. Thus, Marker introduces a new variation of the reflection; a sort of insertion of the intellectual in reality while Godard says: “We don’t know each other. I am in a sort of cultural prison, and the Rhodiacta workers are in a sort of economic prison. Vietnam today is a stronger symbol of resistance than others. So, we must constantly talk about it.”

The short film is already in its denouement, and Godard’s thinking process has not truly materialised in a specific audiovisual way yet. To conclude, he introduces a new idea that Marker’s montage tries to *make audiovisual*. The filmmaker recites a quotation from André Breton, in which the cry would symbolise the need for revolution. Godard’s digression has been accompanied by the self-referential shot of the camera, which this time ends with an abrupt zoom-in to emphasise that cry. The montage abandons the sobriety of the previous parataxis to show the distance between the developed rational reflection and the cry that is intended to be retransmitted: “We, in France, are not in a revolutionary situation. So, we must cry even louder. Maybe the others can cry less. Régis Debray doesn’t cry; neither does Che Guevara. They are true revolutionaries. We are no longer, or can’t be yet. So, we must listen to these cries and retransmit them as often as possible. Cut.” The break materialised through parataxis until this moment tries to become interstice, transmitting the abyss that encloses the coexistence

of the distinct realities shown. The zoom-in on the camera is followed by a dizzying montage of close-ups in which all the previous materials are mixed—including the ninth shot from *La Chinoise*—and archival images take on a greater rawness. The verb “cry” appears again along with a zoom-in on the camera, the element with which the piece concludes since the role of cinematic creation concerning revolutionary struggles is the object of the reflection. Godard wonders about the cinematic nature of that cry that must be retransmitted. Is the fiction of *La Chinoise* the ethical–aesthetic way of giving voice to the revolutionary cry? The militant cinema of the Dziga Vertov Group will give a different answer, abandoning a subjectivity that will only be taken up again four years later in *Letter to Jane* (1972), together with Jean-Pierre Gorin. The importance of Godard’s first enunciation in the first person is confirmed by its inclusion in Chapter 3B of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in which the filmmaker’s self-portrait behind the camera is superimposed on the text “TOI,” and then crossfaded to an image of Charlie Chaplin and Godard’s own words: “our mistake was to think it was a beginning.” Thus, the filmmaker shows the relevance of that first self-portrait, symbolising the beginning of the essay film three decades earlier, which reaches its epitome with *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

Ici et ailleurs: Rethinking Militant Cinema

After the militant experience and the epilogue analysed together with Gorin, *Ici et ailleurs* marks the beginning of the collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville and the video practice: “The first film of this association, *Ici et ailleurs*, marks the beginning of a period of 5 years of innovative experiments in audiovisual communication (1974–1979) from their common base, the company Sonimage” (Brenez & Faroult, 2006, p. 190). As already happened with *Letter to Jane*, the essay film emerges as the need to rethink a previously failed project, which in this case was never released. In 1970, Godard and Gorin travelled twice to the Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria), in February and July, to shoot a film about the Palestinian liberation struggle, financed by the Arab League and entitled *Jusqu’à la victoire*. Just weeks after the second trip, most of the people filmed died in the Black September massacre. Faced with this traumatic event, the film, which according to Gorin’s statements existed in several edited versions, was never released, and four years later it was taken up by Godard and Miéville to create an essay film that, since its genesis, embodies the audiovisual interstice from which the thinking process will emerge. *Ici et ailleurs* defines

different *décalages* in addition to the spatial—France and Palestine—and the temporal—1970 and 1974. Interstices between the past documentary image and the present essay film, between actors and spectators, between the ongoing revolution and its defeat, between the capitalist visual image and the revolutionary sound image. Deleuze himself indicates the relevance of the film regarding the use of the interstice:

Ici et ailleurs marks a first peak in this reflection, [...] in Godard's method, it is not a question of association. Given one image, another image has to be chosen, which will induce an interstice between the two. This is not an operation of association, but of differentiation, [...] It is the method of BETWEEN, "between two images", [...] Between two actions, between two affections, between two perceptions, between two visual images, between two sound images, between the sound and the visual: make the indiscernible, that is the frontier, visible. (1989, pp. 179–180)

First, it is vital to analyse the innovation that involves the presence of two subjectivities, through which a totally new interstice is generated. While the two epistolary subjectivities from *Letter to Jane* were located in the same place, enunciating a shared reflection, the enunciative device generated by Godard and Miéville is much more sophisticated and of enormous interest for the possibilities of inscribing subjectivities and developing intersubjectivity. However, it has not been analysed in depth and described as a simple dialogue. I argue that the film is not built in any case on the exchange of considerations of both filmmakers. Their analysis leads to conclusions of higher complexity and interest.

The film begins with Godard's enunciation, which Miéville repeats: "In 1970, this film was called *Victory*. In 1974, this film is called *Here and Elsewhere*, and elsewhere, and." Both subjectivities agree on this starting point, a sort of reference point for scientific analysis from which the work develops. And both voices already establish their differentiation in relation to their later development. Godard's is accompanied by an electronic intertitle—the first of the new video possibilities—"my, your, their image" and a material "and," while Miéville's presents the space-time parataxis. That is to say, Godard is situated in the space of the imminent reflection, while Miéville does so in a sort of objective reference system, of a scientific method with which to check on Godard's subjectivity and thinking process. This objectivity then makes her the translator of two characters filmed in Palestine—a man and a woman—while interspersing the five intertitles on which the previous practice of militant cinema would have been built.

Thus, Miéville introduces the gender dimension absent in *Letter to Jane*, not as part of Godard's reflection, but as an examination of it, to expound its patriarchal and male chauvinist aspects. Therefore, it is paramount to notice the differentiation between the electronic intertitles belonging to Godard's subjective reflection and the five printed and translated intertitles that also make up the objective reference system by Miéville: "The people's will / Armed struggle / Political work / The extended war / Until victory."

The filmmaker begins his reflection with the first *video collage* of the Godardian essay film: a photograph of Golda Meir and a drawing of the Palestinian revolution, which are hybridised thanks to the possibilities of the video until the former disappears to reveal the latter. This controversial *collage* exemplifies the shock produced by the Deleuzian differentiation defining the essay film: "It is a question of attributing, to a given image, a new image, to create a between-two that transports the thinking to the heart of the image. In this empty space, the image can be radically called into question" (Blümlinger, 2004, p. 65). Then, the Godardian intertitle appears for the first time, which could define all his diptych practice: "Rethinking about it." It will reappear up to nine times, embodying the recurrence of the experienced trauma. The use of this electronic intertitle will take forward the reflection throughout the film. While Godard recounts the subjective experience of the trip made in 1970, Miéville continues to translate the protagonists' words. Only in the conclusion will we understand the importance of this sort of scientific method procedure. Miéville's voice disappears (minute 5) and will not reappear until the ending (except for a small comment at minute 17) to demonstrate her presence as an objective witness to Godard's reflection, which she will *test*. Godard's voice, however, continues the subjective expression by taking up the five sentences shown in the intertitles and including them in his first-person account, in the reflection that has already begun, as a summation that explains the revolutionary thesis: "All the sounds, all the images, in that order. Saying: this is what was new in the Middle East. Five images and five sounds that hadn't been heard or seen on Arab soil." On this result stated by Godard, "until victory," the previous video collage appears again, now with an inscribed and inverted text, both horizontally and vertically: "If I die, / don't be / sad, / pick up my gun." Godard embodies a symbolic sentence-image of the traumatic experience that causes reflection: the problematisation of the inscription, its unintelligibility, as a realisation of the trauma that will only be revealed at the end of the film.

In opposition to the portrait of the French family sitting on the couch in the living room that we observed, along with Miéville's voice, the mother

appears accompanied by Godard's words in an unfocused foreground that becomes focused as she approaches the camera. The same procedure is repeated with the father. Again, facing the objective reference point conveyed by Miéville, Godard begins his subjective perception about the return to France with the filmed material: "In France, you soon don't know what to make of the film. The contradictions soon explode, taking you with them [...] The contradictions soon break out, affecting you. I begin to see it affected me [...] when this [...] became that." In this way, the interstice between *this*—images of the Palestinian people in the struggle—and *that*—images of Black September corpses—is pointed out. Godard repeats this structure twice, inscribing the inverted electronic text again, a materialisation of the trauma that gives rise to the contradiction:

A silence / that / becomes / deadly / because it's / prevented / from /
being / alive

A flood / of images / and / of sounds / that / hide / silence

The filmmaker uses the text in all its possibilities: "It also implies the ability to treat written texts as images, an image, and the screen as a page. It implies removing writing itself from its own readability in order to turn it into the object of a 'seeable/readable,' which its plasticity *in vivo* guarantees in the time of inscription and unfolding" (Bellour, 1992, p. 222). Both texts, difficult to read at this moment, later appear alone on the black screen. The reflection of the essay film, therefore, is confirmed as the subjective process needed to overcome the trauma, to make the incomprehensible understandable.

The filmmaker then introduces a new element of the Godardian essay film that is taking shape. While in *Camera-Eye* and *Letter to Jane* the audiovisual thinking was born exclusively from the parataxis between images and their photomontage, Godard now develops the *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process. In the first place, his hand on a calculator embodies the reflection on the evolution of the revolutionary struggle in the space of representation by embodying it in a summation of revolutions through their dates, in which mistakes could have been made: "1789 + 1885 + 1968 = 5642 - 1936 = 3706 + 1917." Godard shows the interstices already addressed as additions, first, between the image of a Palestinian revolutionary woman and the newspaper headlines, and as subtraction later, between the image of the French children in front of television and newspaper clippings. Both parataxes are modified by the interstice inserted between them: "and," "or"; between the possibilities of the Palestinian struggle as an addition, utopian

materialisation, and the denial of capitalism as a choice and condemnatory subtraction. Perhaps the simplicity of the dialectics is the cause of the traumatic mistake: “Too easy and too simple to simply divide the world in two.” Godard performs a second *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process. On this occasion, his hand writes a series of zeros on a blackboard that represent how the poverty of some supposes the wealth of others, offering a new sentence-image that we could define as a synthesis of the functioning of capitalism: “That’s how capital works. Something like that.” It is necessary to notice here the importance of his hands, once again to think with the hands, as a metaphor for the materiality of the thinking process. The hands that manipulated the camera in *Camera-Eye* are now the protagonists of this *mise-en-scène*.

Godard then offers a new advance on his reflection. Capitalism translates into the inability to see, showing the image of a charred corpse followed by the intertitle “Learn to see not to read,” and the image of mother and daughter looking through both cinema and photo cameras. It offers a new synthesis-image of the necessary transformation between the image of the two watching television passively and their representation as creators of images, regaining the ability to be their own historians, as stated in *Tout va bien*. The thinking process continues, as well as its *mise-en-scène*. The summation of revolutions now becomes the summation of the images of revolutions: the image of 1917 + image of 1936 = image of 1968. Godard manipulates the video collage of an image of Lenin and another of the Front Populaire, onto which an image of Hitler is finally imposed. He again makes the summation that results in the image of the Palestinian revolution already shown, of its defeat, with the image of the corpse. To the compositions of the three previous images, the one of Golda Meir is added, showing Godard’s position regarding the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. He presents the confrontation between the Palestinian combatant and the French family, transferring the opposition capitalism–revolution to the realm of images: “Poor revolutionary fool. Millionaire in images of revolution. Poor revolutionary fool. Millionaire in images.” It is one more step in the thinking process that leads him to audiovisually enunciate the ethical–ideological conflict that provokes reflection.

The *mise-en-scène* of the thinking process reaches maximum relevance when Godard is able to stage the functioning of the chain of images of capitalism (American or Soviet), a reflection present in all the Dziga Vertov Group works that now reaches its peak. The five sentences of the initial intertitles are embodied in the five images previously referred to by the filmmaker, which are now carried by five characters: the married couple,

a man, a woman, and a young man. The chain of images is first presented from the spectator's point of view, and then its materialisation is staged. The five images carried by the characters pass in front of the camera in succession without the possibility of stopping, as brilliantly shown by Godard, making each character draw the attention of the previous one with a tap on the shoulder, asking to keep moving. Next, the characters-images pass for the second time in front of the camera, now accompanied by their direct sound, showing the autonomy of both elements. A third movement shows the characters enunciating their respective sentences both in front of and behind the image. The previous direct sound is now replaced by the voices of the characters. In front of the camera, they first add the word "space"; behind it, they add "time," generating the sentence-image as a synthesis of the cinematic transformation: "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, each of whom is both the original and the copy of the other." As Català indicates, it is thus possible to make "the external space for showing the interior of the images with the true interior of them." In other words, it is not reflection that leads to images, but rather "images that distil thoughts." This decomposition gives rise to "conceptualisations from which rhetorical forms emerge that allow a type of reflection different from the one that supported the origin of the entire process" (2014, pp. 523, 524, 531). Once the functioning of the chain of image has materialised, and is therefore assimilated, it is possible to ask questions about it: "First question: How do you organise a chain?"; "Second question: But how do you find your own image in the order or disorder of others, with the agreement or disagreement of others? And how do you go about making your own image? Your brand image, in other words, an image that brands. An image that leaves traces." Next, the functioning of the chain of images that we have just witnessed, in its three variants, has its evolution through three slide devices in which the hand, again, embodies the *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking, changing the three images that are opposed. The direct sound appears and disappears as the slide in question lights up and goes out: "It's likely that a chain consists of arranging memories. Chaining them in a certain order. So that each can find its place in the chain. In other words, each finds their own image." Intellectual and ideological emancipation is synthesised in the ability of each individual to create, with their hands, their own images.

The opposition between the present French *ici* and the past Palestinian *ailleurs* continues by generating four scenes around the French family

Godard now identifies with. The filmmaker acknowledges the mistake made in the past, and presented in *Letter to Jane*, about the question-and-answer system of dialectical materialism that should reveal the contraction in order to overcome it: "It's not the answers that are wrong, it's the questions. Maybe we should abandon this system of questions and answers and find something else. Yes, we should find something else." The film gradually defines itself as a final reflection on the militant cinema to which Godard bids farewell. In this way, the reflection continues to reach its core: the filmmaker's individual responsibility regarding the image created and the mistake made. That is, the theme from *Letter to Jane* reaches the first-person enunciation. Godard generates a new *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process, a symbolic sentence-image, giving a new meaning to the phrase "turn up the sound": "When you turn up the sound, how does it happen? Something like this [man at bar, pinball machine]. And something like that [woman at home, radio] or like that [man in traffic jam, radio]." Then, a new procedure takes place. While we had previously witnessed the *mise-en-scène* of the thinking process, the latter is now produced by analysing the former. While in the first case the *mise-en-scène* is the materialisation of reflection, in the second, it becomes its starting point. Godard takes different scenes about the alienation of capitalism to analyse its functioning: "Two noises that move in relation to one another [...]. Always a movement at a point in time, where one sound takes power over the other. [...] How did that sound take power? It took power because, at a given time, it was represented by an image." Capitalist power—sound—is imposed by creating an image that represents it, which in turn is represented by another sound. The thinking process then occurs when analysing different *mise-en-scènes* taken from reality: silencing one sound by means of another through the instrumentalisation of an image. In addition, this procedure occurs both in the international political space (Salem Bart, Henry Kissinger, and Richard Nixon) and in the most private and everyday spaces. Godard advances, in an impersonal way, the mechanism that led him to the mistake that provoked the essay film and that only Miéville will explain in the conclusion. Therefore, the organic nature of the thinking process is revealed, on this occasion, through its bond with trauma. It cannot be produced in a univocal and direct way, but in an oscillating manner, moving closer and further from the painful fact that causes it: "There is no essay that does not include the wandering of thinking [...] what we call digression and which is the first and last condition of thinking" (Ménil, 2004, p. 101). This same nature is what differentiates the subjective thinking process of the essay film from the ideological practice of militant cinema, which precisely eliminates this component.

While the materialisation of the thinking process as the creation of its own chain of images had previously been realised through the three slide projectors that Godard's hand manipulated, now that device is replaced by four television monitors that broadcast different images. Some images already shown during the reflection are now mixed with others representative of capitalism. In this way, the manual control of the filmmaker disappears; that is, we become manipulated victims of a chain of images over which we no longer have control; we can no longer manipulate them manually: "Little by little we are replaced by uninterrupted chains of images, enslaving one another. Each image in its place, as are we, each in their place, in the chain of events over which we have lost all control." While the television images of capitalism are already produced in the continuity of the chain to which they belong, and with their corresponding volume, the images of the film, those of the revolution of the *ailleurs*, flicker mutely on a monitor, embodying the difference in power between the two systems.

The different interstices created between the *ici* and the *ailleurs* now converge in a new sentence-image that contains all the previous ones, expressed in an intertitle: "Here (image) and elsewhere (sound)," the power of the image of the *ici* against the silenced sound of the *ailleurs*. Godard finally comes to the description of militant action in the cinematic field: the retransmission of the revolutionary cry he talked about in *Camera-Eye* and developed in *Letter to Jane* concerning the dissemination and manipulation of the images of revolution. However, this time, the analysis addresses his own practice: "We did what many do, record the images with the sound too loud. With any image. Vietnam. Always the same sound, always too loud. [...] The sound so loud, it ends up drowning the voice it wanted to draw out of the image." It is Godard's and Miéville's hands, alternately, that raise and lower the volume of the sound image twice each. The appearance of Méville's hand embodies the intersubjectivity that follows, confirming the device proposed by the film. Thanks to her presence, a reference point outside the filmmaker's subjectivity, Godard's thinking process can cope with trauma. While he announces the abstract and impersonal account of what happened, it will be Miéville who can refer to the concrete facts. Godard's thinking process, materialised through his hands, is now shared with another subjectivity, with other hands. Thus, reflection can develop through intersubjectivity, between the subjective vision of the lived experience and the objective pondering, between the unpronounceable intimate trauma and the external subjectivity that can narrate it. The analysis becomes self-criticism to conclude the reflection when finally detecting

the mistake made: the sound of that retransmission of the revolutionary cry was so loud that it drowned out the voice that wanted to be amplified. Hence, the mistake and the defeat of the cinematic practice are accepted. While *Camera-Eye* concluded with the purpose of giving cinematic form to the revolutionary cry, *Ici et ailleurs* concludes with the acceptance of defeat in that attempt.

Godard's reflection, the subjective audiovisual thinking process that he has carried out, concludes here. Then Miéville's voice reappears to confront Godard's subjective reflection with the objectivity of her analysis as its witness: Godard drowned out the Palestinian voice while trying to amplify it. We observe the confrontation between the filmmaker's subjective description and Miéville's objective analysis. Godard describes the images shown; Miéville reveals their manipulation afterward. The semiotic analysis of *Letter to Jane* is reproduced, but it is now Godard's practice that is analysed and criticised by Miéville. It is now a female subjectivity that questions male actions, reversing *Letter to Jane's* structure. Up to eight images are subjected to this double system in which Miéville points out the manipulation present in all of them and clearly reveals the gender dimension of her criticism: before the theatrical performance of a girl, the learned speech of a woman, and the manipulation of a young one, whom Godard asks to play the role of a pregnant woman, proud to give a child to the revolution. Miéville's analysis reveals the unshown footage of the filmmaker's manipulation: "It's a short step from secrets of this kind to fascism." Godard is accused of the manipulative practices denounced in *Letter to Jane*, recognising this same male chauvinist practice towards the female actor. It is enlightening to hear Godard making the same kind of indications about the position of the young woman's face that he criticised in Fonda's photograph. After each description-analysis, an image of the French family sitting in front of the television is opposed, embodying the film's purpose: to communicate the reflection to French society.

To conclude, the image that undoubtedly provoked the making of this essay film is taken up, that of the Fedayeen's small group, preceded by its linguistic expression of the intertitle: "Rethinking about it: Here and elsewhere." Godard reformulates the question about the images filmed by himself: "So, what are they saying?" The revelation then comes with the objective action of Miéville's translation, thanks to which the spectator knows their fear of being discovered by the Israelis, since they always cross the river in the same place. Godard and Miéville push this enlightening dialogue to the limit, generating a direct and indisputable accusation about the filmmaker's action. It is thanks to the presence of another subjectivity,

to the materialisation of intersubjectivity, that the filmmaker can finally address the specific episode that caused the trauma:

Godard: What's tragic, in fact, is that here, they are talking about their own death. But nobody said that.

Miéville: No, because it was up to you to say it. And the tragic thing is, you didn't. They are simple revolutionaries; they talk about simple things. Incredibly simple.

Miéville continues the translation, and Godard finally formulates the mistake made:

Godard: It's true that we never listened in silence to silence. We wanted to crow victory right away, instead of them.

Miéville: We wanted to make the revolution for them because, at that time, we didn't want to make it where we are. Rather, where we are not.

In this way, Miéville reveals how Godard betrayed the purpose expressed in *Camera-Eye*, guilty of the accusations made against Jane Fonda. Unfortunately, “retransmit the revolutionary cry” has become “crow victory,” thereby appropriating the revolutionary struggle. Finally, Godard is quiet and listens, and the film concludes with the men's voices from the Fedayeen group, affirming that they are willing to carry out a suicide mission and die for the cause of their people. At last, the sound is turned up so that we are able to listen to the protagonists whom Godard, by pretending to give them a voice, had silenced. Recognising the mistake, the damage, the essay film ends with Miéville's conclusion, keeping the confrontation between the images of the French *ici* and the Palestinian *ailleurs*, reiterating the intertitle: “In 1970 this film was called *Victory*. In 1975, it is called *Here and Elsewhere*. [...] We're incapable of seeing or listening to these very simple images. How come? We have, like everyone, said something else about them. Something other than what they were saying. That we cannot see or hear, no doubt. Or that sound is too loud and covers reality.” Miéville thus situates the film in a one-year production period and generates the objective conclusions extracted from Godard's subjective thinking process. Thanks to the external and objective examination, the truth that caused the trauma can be revealed in order to then produce the objectivity that should guide future practice. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand the importance of being a female and feminist subjectivity that accomplishes this, revealing and acknowledging the mistakes made concerning the

gender dimension in *Letter to Jane*: “Learn to see here, in order to hear elsewhere. Learn to hear yourself speak to see what others do. Others are the ‘elsewhere’ to our ‘here.’”

Ici et ailleurs adds a performative dimension to the audiovisual thinking process: “Godard’s cinema is a painful meditation on the theme of restitution, or better, of reparation. Reparation would mean returning images and sounds to those from whom they were taken. It also commits them to producing their own images and sounds. And all the better if that production obliges the filmmaker to change his own way of working” (Daney, 1976, p. 38). Like *Camera-Eye*, *Ici et ailleurs* also appears in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in Chapter 4B. The image of the young revolutionary woman is retaken while we hear: “Bring together things that don’t seem willing to be.” Hence, Godard himself confirms the relevance of the film and recognises the female role. As Faroult notes, “making political films politically” would become “thinking politics cinematically” (2018, p. 365). This motto transformation precisely expresses the difference between militant cinema and essay film: subjectivity makes it possible to transform the making of ideology into the thinking of reflection. Godard-Mieville’s committed cinema is bonded to the subjectivity that enables individual responsibility in the face of mistakes, as shown in *Ici et ailleurs* concerning the previous diptychs. In addition, and not less importantly, this transformation takes place thanks to the participation of another subjectivity, a female subjectivity, which implies a new gender perspective in relation to previous practices: “*ici et ailleurs* frees this dually voiced idiom from the drawbacks of an ideology-first approach” (Warner, 2018, p. 87). It is possible to rethink the militant practice from a new perspective that McCabe describes as “classic feminist work.” (MacCabe, 2003, pp. 245).

Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie): Thinking vs Fabulating

With *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* Godard begins a new practice consisting of making diptych pieces prior to the film in preparation, in order to reflect on its purposes and aspirations. These a priori pieces emerge as a need to develop the script in an audiovisual way and become a documentation element presented to obtain financing (Witt, 2006, p. 303). Therefore, this practice differs entirely from the three previous diptychs, since it is not a matter of rethinking the work already done, but of fabulating the film to be made. From this point of view, Godard’s reflective exercise lacks the materiality of the *elsewhere*. By not counting

on the materiality of the finished work, the thinking process finds it difficult to be produced audiovisually and becomes a sort of audiovisual illustration of a mostly linguistic reflection. The diptych is no longer constructed in relation to the materiality of a mistake wanting to be corrected, but regarding the fabulation of audiovisual possibilities. Thus, we observe how, on many occasions, the images illustrate the thinking process—follow it—while in the previous essay films the images create and develop it. Therefore, this piece becomes the perfect example for understanding the limits or vanishing points of the audiovisual thinking process. Michael Witt also relates Godard's purpose in completing this itinerary with a piece following the fiction *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*. At various conferences after the film, he presented a montage called *Sauve la vie (qui peut)*, in which he edits several fragments of the film along with scenes from other films by different directors; unfortunately, it is not preserved (Witt, 2013, pp. 30–31). It is with the making of *Passion* that the diptych becomes a triptych, with both previous and subsequent pieces to the fiction film.

Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie) begins with a powerful sentence-image, a synthesis of the writing conflict Godard intends to address. As defined in *Ici et ailleurs*, he offers a new mise-en-scène of the audiovisual thinking process. It is not the linguistic writing that emerges from the typewriter, but an image, a portrait of Isabelle Huppert, one of the film's protagonists. While we listen to Godard's voice, he writes "Sauve" next to the actor's face, a text which in turn is duplicated on the screen. In this way, the opposition between linguistic and audiovisual writing is double: between the text and the image on the typewriter and between both texts on the typewriter and on the screen. This same operation is performed with the images of the other two protagonists (Nathalie Baye and Jacques Dutronc) to complete the film title "Sauve qui peut." Godard states this opposition between horizontal–literary and vertical–audiovisual writings, offering a key example of the audiovisual thinking process:

I was working on the typewriter, and then there was something that surprised me. [...] I worked horizontally, as we work in Western writing [...]. I realised that it was the emergence of the image under the text [...]. I continued to write, and I was intrigued by this vertical surge of the image, like a rise to the surface [...]. I said to myself: this is how I should be able to write: vertically or horizontally, but not always horizontally first [...]. Write upright, so to speak, with the words following the image, which dive into it with both feet.

The audiovisual thinking process does not arise from the project of the film itself, but from the reflection on cinematic writing: As Català indicates, “It offers us a written image and an imagined text.” (2014, p. 535) However, this first thinking image does not find audiovisual continuity, since Godard’s reflection goes on in an oral way, in which the image becomes a kind of illustration of the words. This is the case when he expresses the idea of the opposite directions of the characters, which is *illustrated* by two panning movements in opposite directions. Next, Godard addresses an exciting dissertation on crossfades and superimpositions, slow-motion and panning movements, which, again, is not *materialised audiovisually* but *illustrated*. I argue here that the difference between both creations is caused precisely by the difference in the images used. Since they do not belong to previous work, they do not contain their own meaning to add to the new one proposed by the filmmaker. Thus, the differentiation between the meaning of the image and the one proposed by the filmmaker does not occur, and we can only see in it what the filmmaker orally explains concerning the various rhetorical elements. Godard’s words about the purpose of the piece notice this same consideration: “I am rather trying to show you how I would organise them [...] which system will set the shapes [...] so as to show you the relationships of images [...] if there is something to see and how I see.” If we select the most relevant parts of Godard’s reflection, this notion of accompanying the image as an illustration, but not as part of the thinking process, is confirmed. It is not produced audiovisually except for the initial image, as analysed in the previous works.

Godard expresses essential ideas about crossfades and superimpositions that, however, are not materialised through the image. The sentence remains a sentence; it does not become a sentence-image: “A crossfade as a moment of the succession of events that we are going to make. A crossfade as an idea for a script.” The crossfade between the close-up images of the three actors does not add any content to Godard’s thinking process; it only illustrates it. The images do not contain a prior meaning of their own that can add meaning to that “idea of the script.” The same happens when enunciating another idea of enormous importance in the future Godardian essay film, giving a definition of the Deleuzian time-image: “We make superimpositions or crossfades to express time, and I think it should be imprinted instead. Time cannot be expressed; it can be imprinted.” This idea will materialise as a thinking process in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, for example, when the element used is the quotation—images from other films with relevant temporal content. However, Godard inserts a series of crossfades and curtain transitions into rehearsal images of Baye that, again, lack temporary content that can be

imprinted. It is necessary to point out that the explanation about these four elements cannot be related to the film either. *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* only includes one crossfade at the beginning of the film, and it does not use the panning movement discussed here, but resorts to shot changes to relate the secondary actions he talks about. From what is described in the piece, only the work on slow motion remains in the fiction film. That is to say, the diptych does not refer to the fiction film, either in the case of crossfades, superimpositions, or panning movements. On the slow-motion images, which are used in the film and in a masterly way, Godard notes, "Often it is said that events are moving too fast. Impossible to see the beginning of illness or happiness. So slow down to see. Seeing, not necessarily seeing this or that but already seeing if there is something to see." At this moment, the image of a female soccer player slows down, showing another consequence of this *illustration procedure*. The image used replaces the images of the future film, and in this way, the images of *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, that would generate a sentence-image when put in relation to Godard's words, are replaced by other empty images concerning the fiction film. Thus, it is not possible to think of the *elsewhere* of the latter. The *illustration-image* does not possess the capacity to produce thinking, as demonstrated by its comparison with the complex slow-motion image system that Godard creates in the fiction film concerning the three main characters.

Godard creates two more a priori pieces in diptych of fictional works: *Passion, le travail et l'amour. Introduction à un scénario* (1981) and *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue, Marie* (1983). Both pieces present the same impossibility of generating an audiovisual thinking process, of becoming an essay film, because of the material absence of the elsewhere—the fictional work—on which they would reflect. While *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* begins with an undoubted sentence-image that it is not possible to develop, the two mentioned works no longer arise from the premise of a reflection. Both pieces offer different examples of the work with the actors, in which the filmmaker's voice disappears, to be replaced in the second case by short annotations or descriptions by the actors' voices. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate these works, which are often classified and analysed as a homogeneous set. The practice of creating a diptych a priori, before the cinematic creation, is revealed as contrary to the essayistic practice itself, since its premise implies the disappearance of the materiality of the thinking process in order to turn the latter into fabulation. The three pieces created prior to the fiction films do not reach the status of the essay film as a process of audiovisual thinking, and quite the contrary, this practice rapidly weakens, as confirmed by the fact that it does not have continuity

in the Godardian essay film. The filmmaker's hands do not then have materiality to work on: the *elsewhere* necessary to produce parataxic and interstitial thinking does not exist yet; the sentence-image that undoes the representative relationships cannot be generated, because the image does not possess prior content. Rethinking becomes fabulating. Therefore, I conclude that the diptych structure creates an essay film, an audiovisual thinking process, when it rethinks cinema by addressing a previous film through its materiality. This structure causes not only the emergence of the Godardian essay film but also its evolution: from rethinking his own works to rethinking other's works, the cinema history in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

Scénario du film Passion: Rethinking Fiction Cinema

With *Scénario du film Passion* Godard creates his last essay film in diptych form, produced precisely on the oscillation between the before and the after of the fiction film. Thus, once again, the filmmaker "corrects the mistake" of the a priori pieces by generating the work as a script that, however, is created after the fiction film. This purpose determines the structure of the piece, since it is created from two almost opposite camera positions that embody the two time periods addressed in the previous works: the before and the after of the creation. Godard stands in the editing room facing the white screen. The camera is positioned in front of him (first and third parts) when Godard approaches the finished fiction film. However, the camera is placed behind him, showing the screen (second and fourth parts) when the filmmaker reflects on the preparation of the film. In this way, Godard solves the impossibility of the a priori pieces by approaching the fabulation of fiction, but from its images. The reflection offered in *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* on superimposition, which did not reach the form of audiovisual thinking there, materialises here in all its power. The piece begins with the emblematic image of the essayist's self-portrait, during the credit titles, already located in the editing room as the place of his activity, as also occurs in *Lettre à Freddy Buache* the same year. The essayist stands in front of the images and generates his thinking process from them: "There is no better self-portrait of Godard than in this device. [...] He thinks, in image and in sound, aloud. He monologues, and he monofilms. It's a Mabuse upside down [...] *Deus in machina*" (Dubois, 1988, p. 158). The crossfade and the superimposition then relate the space-time of the essayist with the film made: "Godard gave the conflict between word and image its densest expression at the beginning of *Scénario du film Passion*, doubtless"

(Bellour, 1992, p. 221). In addition, we see the essayist creating this process in real time, since Godard generates the crossfades and superimpositions on the editing table while the camera is filming him: “We see the artist seeing himself as an image, seeing and showing this image as he renders it. And we see him seeing—from a position within the image—what we concurrently see from the ‘outside,’ on what we might term the master screen, the screen that includes the others” (Warner, 2018, p. 159). While in *Camera-Eye* he manipulated the camera, in *Letter to Jane* he moved the photographs in front of it, and in *Ici et ailleurs* he made the mise-en-scène of the audiovisual thinking process through his hands, now Godard’s hands manipulate the editing table while filming “the thought at work” (Dubois, 2011, p. 236). Hence, he reaches the full materialisation of that *thinking with the hands* and its materialist meaning:

And it is all done spontaneously, immediately in images and sounds, giving the extraordinary impression of witnessing live the very movements of thought by and in images. [...] I see at the same time as I do. In video (and, according to him, nowhere else, especially not in the written word), seeing is thinking and thinking is seeing, both in one, and completely simultaneously. (Dubois, 1992, p. 178)

The contradiction shown in *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* between literary and audiovisual writing through the typewriter is now overcome thanks to the direct writing of the montage table. With this first superimposition, Godard offers a magnificent materialisation of that *imprint the time* he expressed before, becoming now an audiovisual thinking process (Figure 4). As Català explains: “[S]uperimpositions stop, freeze temporality in a visual balance. [...] in filmic superimpositions, time feeds the image, makes us aware of the border moment in which the visual conjunction occurs: [...] It confronts us, in short, with the poetic force of metaphor, taken to the extreme to which it can be carried in the image” (2014, pp. 537–538). Once this sentence-image about the essayist’s space-time and practice is shown, the essay film is structured in four parts. As already indicated, the first and third ones show Godard looking into the camera to generate a space-time for the finished work. The second and the fourth capture him from behind and show the white screen, the space-time of the fabulation prior to the film creation. The continuity between both camera positions insists, therefore, on the present essayist’s temporality of his audiovisual thinking process development: “a consubstantial merger with his work in progress” (Warner, 2018, p. 160). Godard speaks to the camera for the first



Figure 4. *Scénario du film Passion* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1982) © Gaumont

time to reveal the same aim as in *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)*: “See the script,” “I didn’t want to write the script. I wanted to see it,” but now from the aftermath of its realisation, when the thinking process can turn to the materiality of the film already made. The first introductory fragment in front of the camera is produced in a single shot, introducing the reflection that will be developed next: “It is necessary to create the possibility of a world [...] the camera will make this possible probable or this probable possible rather [...] then, create this probable, see the invisible [...] if the invisible were visible, what we could see. See a script.”

The second part gives way to the image of Godard with his back turned, showing the white screen in front of him, a space for the reverie prior to the film made. He identifies that still empty screen with the blank page on which he makes the gesture of writing: “You find yourself in front of the invisible,” “It’s funny to have a blank and a memory hole, you find everything deep down in your memory.” The writing, however, composed of nonsense uppercase characters, appears inscribed in the film image and not on the white screen, opposing both spaces again, as was already the case in the initial image of *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)*: “but you don’t want to write [...] you want to see, you want to receive” [re-ce-voir/re-see]. In this way, he generates the identification between *reseeing* the image and

rethinking it. The identification between *page* and *plage* [beach] gives rise to the metaphor of the *vague* [wave] as an idea: “you invent a wave,” and with it arises the first superimposition of an image from the fiction film, of the character Hannah. Godard manipulates the image we see simultaneously to show us the spectrum that goes from the superimposition to the crossfade and its reversibility, until it reaches the flickering effect. Hence, the speed and gradation of the superimposition/crossfade embody the difference between the *nascent idea-wave* (slight superimposition, beginning of the spectrum) and its *realisation-storm* (image of the film, end of the spectrum). It is precisely this realisation of thinking that was not feasible in the a priori pieces, since here the imagined image possesses materiality. The slight superimposition embodies the creation process of the image, not filmed yet, solving the question of materiality and giving it to the image not yet realised. The gradation of the superimposition represents the proximity to the image creation.

The superimposition between the image of the filmmaker and the image created is, therefore, a dialectical sentence-image on creation: “It’s a work of seeing, of seeing the passage from the invisible to the visible.” Then, a second superimposition emerges, this time of Isabelle’s image and its purpose in the script: “find a movement.” The third superimposition appears with a moving image on video, that of a film crew meeting, to whom the filmmaker must transmit the idea of the image to be created. Thus, through the spectrum that goes from the superimposition to the crossfade, Godard relates his own image in the space-time of reflection with materials of different natures that describe the work prior to shooting: still images of the film, video images of the film crew, and pictorial images. The interstice between them reaches its maximum expression when Godard transforms the superimposition/crossfade into flickering, showing at the same time the proximity and the abyss between the creative process and its final realisation, the indiscernibility between the parataxic and the interstitial thinking, and between the dialectical and the symbolic sentence-image. The thinking process advances, as does the film creation, and the materials merge to produce that process. While, until this moment, the superimposition started from the filmmaker’s image, Godard now generates it between the pictorial image and the fictional one, embodying the author’s disappearance in favour of the appearance of the fiction. This second stage of the thinking process is again underlined by the flickering effect. The character of Isabelle is situated between the representation of love from Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1523) and the representation of work from Goya’s *The Third of May 1808* (1814). The process of film realisation

continues, and the still image is set in motion, thanks to the music, with the appearance of the third character, Jerzy. The superimposition continues between Godard and the next step of the film production, the shooting, in which the relationship between the pictorial image and the two sides of the film is repeated: the representation of love from El Greco's *The Immaculate Conception* (1613) and the representation of work from Delacroix's *Entry of the Crusaders in Constantinople* (1840).

Next, Godard inserts the image of Jerzy listening to "L'amour n'a pas d'âge" by Léo Ferré (1962), the same that initiates the prior piece *Passion, le travail et l'amour*. The highest materialisation of the thinking process is then reached. While in the previous piece only a short segment, starting it, was shown, here it is inserted into the core of the thinking process. The superimposition between Godard and Jerzy highlights the identification between the two: "exile or foreigner like me," and allows Godard to interact again with the fictional character, whose projection he embraces, as he kissed Isabelle before. The shot, which in the prior piece remained emptied of audiovisual thinking, now acquires maximum density. Through superimposition and crossfade, the filmmaker links his creative act to the materialisation of the idea, the bond between love and work, through the pictorial images from El Greco and Delacroix, and the words and music from Ferré. Godard says, "The words are the words and the images are the images. Forbid words, forbid images. Both are linked, as love could be linked to work. This is pretty much the main theme of the film: work and love." As Albertine Fox observes, music is the key element of the emotional experience of the filmmaker's reflection: "Godard spoke of 'composing an image' and 'composing a movement,' which is here a communal and musical movement that causes the film to shudder. We are made to traverse and go through an experience that helps us make sense of the making, unmaking and remaking anew of multiple and fragmentary meanings" (2016, p. 197).

Godard takes up the reflection on the white screen, "Seeing a script is work," to address the relationship between reality and the fiction to be created. The fictional image of Isabelle in the factory cuts to a documentary image of the latter while remaining superimposed on the filmmaker's image. Thus, Godard inserts himself into the interstice between reality and fiction to express, once again, the love–work bond through the Titian painting: "The gesture of a working woman, couldn't this gesture have something to do [...] with the gesture of love [...] love, work and something between the two [...] and love, and work, and the work of love, and the love of work, and the hatred of work, the hatred of cinema, the love of cinema."

The filmmaker offers a dialectical sentence-image of how fiction tries to reveal reality: “the passage from invisible to visible,” as he has previously stated.

While the first part, with Godard speaking to the camera, consisted of a single shot, the third develops the temporality of the concluded film, opposed to the previous temporality of its creation. Godard's image (medium shot and close-up) is now combined with shots from the film, but edited by hard cut, without crossfades, while he reflects on the film's attempt to show movement, the transition between the spaces of work and love. After three hard cuts between the filmmaker and the film images, Godard's fourth visual image maintains the sound image of the film, offering the sound version of the visual superimposition shown in the previous part. Hence, the simultaneity between the finished film and Godard's reflection stands out, moving the essayist to the spectator's position. The filmmaker takes up the crossfade and the superimposition between his image and the film, but without the white screen—that is, outside the space-time of the previous fabulation. The reflection on the finished work is generated with the moving image of the film, no longer still images, no longer other materials, only Godard and the film created. Then the white screen reappears, but without the figure of the filmmaker. In this way, the blank screen of the fabulation prior to the work is transformed into the projection screen for the spectator. For the first time, the fictional image is projected exclusively on that screen, embodying the projection to the public (minute 35). Therefore, Godard reverses these positions:

- Second part: The image of Godard and the white screen + superimposition.
- Third part: The image of Godard + film image projected on the screen.

While Godard has already established two different positions of the camera to show two different temporalities of reflection, before and after creation, he now gives the screen two different meanings in both space-time dimensions: the blank screen of the filmmaker's creation and the projected screen of the finished creation, in front of which the filmmaker becomes a spectator. Besides, he adds a double projection: the film image both on the blank screen and on the screen that the spectators see, a sentence-image of the image duplicity he reflects on: “There is a kind of double image there [...] there is the sound, and there is the image. The two go together [...] the whole film is made of double images: the passion, the factory; home, work; love, work.” Godard's final shot in this segment takes up a medium shot to show us how he generates the fade to black that we see simultaneously.

The fourth and last part, the second segment in front of the blank screen, takes up the temporality prior to the film's creation: "See a script, see the movements and gestures that are looking for each other"; continuing the way back started in the previous fragment:

- First and second segments: from reality to fiction; from cinema to the factory.
- Third and fourth segments: from fiction to reality; from the factory to cinema.

Godard superimposes on his image the images of a rehearsal with the actors, on which he comments simultaneously, as he did in the previous fragment, but returning again to the temporality prior to the film: that of the narrative and aesthetic search. It continues with another shot of the film set and the crane movement. He introduces images of the film, reaching the full materiality of the fabulated, in which Goya's painting achieves its fictional representation. It is then that the reality–fiction itinerary reverses its direction, and the image already made provokes the reflection on its bond with reality: "This infinity will end, and it will end when the metaphor meets the real [...] at the intersection of the real and its metaphor, of documentary and fiction. It was elsewhere, and fiction brought you back to documentary." Godard thus formulates the reflection provoked by the realisation of the diptych. The elsewhere of fiction already materialised provokes the reflection on its bond with reality. The white screen he contemplates becomes a blank image of the film to shift its meaning from the blank page on which fiction is written to the absence of the image as a thinking escape, establishing the inverse rhetorical element to that formulated through the black screen in *Letter to Jane*. While the black screen created the space for reflection there, the blank image refers to its complement here: to the need to escape from this same process. After the last superimposition through which Godard inserts himself back into the fictional image to embrace the character, the piece concludes with his close-up, no longer looking at the screen, formulating the most intimate expression:

And here is the adventure, and here is the fiction, and here is the real and here is the documentary, and here is the movement, and here is the cinema, and here is the image, and here is the sound, and here is the cinema, here is the cinema, here is the cinema ... here is the work.

Then he inserts the last image of an aeroplane, taking off with the sunlight shining through the clouds, which we must undoubtedly associate with the

one shown at the beginning of *Passion*. The plane that glides through the fictional sky managed to take off thanks to the reflection the essay film testifies to.

It is essential to point out that, as in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, superimposition and crossfade do not appear in the fiction film *Passion*. Therefore, this rhetorical feature is defined as an element of the Godardian essay film but not of the fictional construction, which shows the different nature of both spaces. While *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* focuses on slow-motion, *Passion* does so on the desynchronisation between image and sound. Superimposition and crossfade are *essayistic reflective elements* that must find their aesthetic translation in the fictional creation, but that are not transferred to it. “Imprinting time” must find its own forms of materialisation in fiction.

Conclusions

The analysis carried out allows us to conclude how Godard's films constructed through the diptych device constitute a series of enormous importance. The Godardian essay film is born, evolves, and consolidates from this device. The reflection on audiovisual creation progresses through the works based on the method of scientific experimentation: to observe the mistakes revealed by the film in order to correct them in the next piece. Thus, the audiovisual thinking that rethinks cinematic creation evolves, progressively facing the conflicts that this filmic form imposes. *Camera-Eye* establishes the premise of the essay film, the subjective reflection of the essayist, to apply it to the social function of the filmmaker in his cinematic practice. In this way, fiction cinema is rethought as the appropriate space to retransmit the revolutionary cry through metaphor. However, the experience of militant cinema is produced in the opposite direction in both senses: fiction and subjectivity are abandoned. Hence, *Letter to Jane* is a new step in the evolution of the essay film, which can now reflect on the mistakes of the created fiction and on its relationship with reality. *Camera-Eye's* theoretical discussion becomes a practical exercise to show the causes of failure in the performance of the social function of intellectuals in revolution. *Ici et ailleurs* then uses the experience of trauma to address the previous issue in the first person, correcting the mistakes previously made: restoring the voice to the silenced combatants and introducing the gender perspective previously ignored. The development of the essayistic diptych concerning the political practice of the filmmaker ends here, assuming the mistakes made when “making political cinema politically” in order to try to “think cinema politically.”

This first stage shows a clear evolution in the Godardian audiovisual thinking. *Camera-Eye* establishes the paramount parataxis of the essay film and the need to explore its interstices. *Letter to Jane* embodies the essentiality of the interstice through the black screen as a space from which reflection, the audiovisual thinking process, must emerge. Black screen and photomontage advance in this interstitial evolution, as does subjectivity, through the epistolary device, to also find its dialogical nature. *Ici et ailleurs* shows and demonstrates how video technology is an indispensable element to develop the audiovisual thinking. The photomontage becomes a video collage that announces the future superimposition. The text inscribed on the screen reaches the status of the image, and the *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process emerges as a key procedure of the Godardian essay film, which also generates the inverse process, producing reflection from the analysis of the *mise-en-scène*. Finally, while *Letter to Jane* develops the expression of subjectivity and the dialogical essence of the essay film, *Ici et ailleurs* enables the experience of intersubjectivity. The opposition between the subjective thinking process and an external reference point allows the essayists, in this case, not only to face past trauma, but also to introduce the gender perspective ignored before.

Godard then addresses a different starting point for the diptych device; he produces it from the a priori of the film to be made in order to reflect on cinematic writing. *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* shows the limits of this proposal. The filmmaker's thinking process, deeply associated with physical manipulation, the analysed *thinking with the hands*, does not find the necessary materiality to be produced. The non-materiality of the *elsewhere*, the film to be made, implies that *rethinking* is not possible. Thus, reflection becomes fabulation, and the audiovisual thinking turns into an oral reflection *audiovisually illustrated*. Once again, Godard understands the mistake the images reveal, and he manages to overcome the non-materiality of the film to be made in *Scénario du film Passion*, embodying the two temporalities: before and after the film's completion. In this way, he creates a device that can generate the audiovisual thinking process through the elements theoretically discussed in *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)*. The crossfade and the superimposition become the highest expressions of interstitial thinking to reflect on cinematic creation. In addition, Godard also reaches the highest representation of the figure of the essayist and their thinking in act, a self-portrait that is able to reflect on itself through two camera positions and their two corresponding temporalities.

This series of diptych works reveals a hypertextual audiovisual thinking that aims to rethink cinematic practice, also defining the essay film, placing

it in an *after the images* inherent in video technology: “Video ergo cogito ergo sum, [...] in which images are the raw material of the reflection and in which the video literally inscribes and reflects on cinema” (Dubois, 2011, p. 237). The Godardian audiovisual thinking also presents a crucial materiality component that is revealed in the rhetorical elements analysed. Black screen, photomontage, video collage, crossfade, superimposition, and *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process manage to embody all the possibilities of the audiovisual interstice from which the thinking process emerges: “The logical operations of a process of reflection become aesthetic forms” (Brenez, 2019, p. 35). These rhetorical elements, characteristic of the Godardian essay film, are not used in the corresponding fiction films, revealing their reflective nature in the filmmaker’s conception. The audiovisual thinking process also evolves from the dialectical to the symbolic sentence-image, showing its organic nature through the oscillation, the back and forth between the rational and the emotional, between the trauma, the emotional impact, and the need for its reflection. Rethinking his own cinema through the device of the diptych is the starting point of the Godardian essay film, vital to later rethinking cinema as a whole through the device of the quotation in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and thus reaching the epitome for a *form that thinks*.

Works Cited

- Aumont, J. (1982). This is not a textual analysis: Godard’s *La Chinoise*. *Camera Obscura*, 3–4(2–3–1 (8–9–10)), 131–160. https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-3-4-2-3-1_8-9-10-131
- Bellour, R. (1992). (Not) just another filmmaker. In R. Bellour & M. L. Bandy (Eds.), *Godard: Son + image* (pp. 215–231). Museum of Modern Art.
- Blümlinger, C. (2004). Lire entre les images. In S. Liandrat-Guigues and M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L’essai et le cinéma* (pp. 49–66). Editions Champ Vallon.
- Brenez, N. (2019). Jean-Luc Godard expérimental. Remarques formulées ou rêvées en Suisse et ailleurs, que raison nous garde de généraliser. *Trafic*, 112, 35–43.
- Brenez, N., & Faroult, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents*. Éditions du Centre Pompidou.
- Català, J. M. (2014). *Estética del ensayo. La forma ensayo, de Montagne a Godard*. Universitat de Valencia.
- Daney, S. (1976). Le thérrorisé (pédagogie godardienne). *Cahiers du cinéma*, 262–263, 32–40.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. University of Minnesota Press / (1985) *L’image-temps*. Éditions de Minuit.

- de Rougemont, D. (1936). *Penser avec les mains*. Éditions Albin Michel.
- Dubois, P. (1988). Le ventre à l'écran ou Le désir d'origine et le chemin vers la grâce dans le cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard. *Revue belge du cinéma*, 22–23, 151–160.
- Dubois, P. (1992). Video thinks what cinema creates: Notes on Jean-Luc Godard's work in video and television. In R. Bellour & M. L. Bandy (Eds.), *Godard: Son + image* (pp. 169–186). Museum of Modern Art.
- Dubois, P. (2011). *La question vidéo. Entre cinéma et art contemporain*. Yellow Now, Côté Cinéma.
- Faroult, D. (2018). *Godard. Inventions d'un cinéma politique*. Les Prairies Ordinaires.
- Fox, A. (2016). *Godard and sound: Acoustic innovation in the late films of Jean-Luc Godard*. I. B. Tauris.
- Layerle, S. (2008). *Caméras en lutte en Mai 68*. Nouveau Monde éditions.
- Layerle, S. (2016). À la redécouverte de *Loin du Vietnam*. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 32, 153–156. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44113032>
- Leutrat, J.-L. (2004). Un essai transformé. In S. Liandrat-Guigues & M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 237–249). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- MacCabe, C. (2003). *Godard: A portrait of the artist at 70*. Bloomsbury.
- Ménil, A. (2004). Entre utopie et hérésie. Quelques remarques à propos de la notion d'essai. In S. Liandrat-Guigues & M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 87–126). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Ritterbusch, R. (1967). Entretien avec Chris Marker. *Image et son*, 213, 66–69.
- Véray, L. (2015). *Loin du Vietnam*. ARTE France Développement.
- Warner, R. (2018). *Godard and the essay film: A form that thinks*. Northwestern University Press.
- Witt, M. (2006). *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* œuvre multimédia. In N. Brenez, D. Faroult et al. (Eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents* (pp. 302–306). Éditions du Centre Pompidou.
- Witt, M. (2013). *Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema historian*. Indiana University Press.

5. Hybridisations

Abstract: This chapter studies the use of the hybridisation of different enunciation through the analysis of three works. *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* (Frédéric Mitterrand, 1982) is created from the hybridisation between the epistolary intimacy and the diaristic social and political reality to produce critical thinking about the need to make the political question a personal cause. *Du verbe aimer* (Mary Jiménez, 1985) generates reflection on identity trauma, and the cinematic possibilities for overcoming it, through the dialectics between past autobiography and the present self-portrait. *Les Plages d'Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2008) presents the dissolution of that dialectics through the destruction of temporality. Autobiography is updated through present self-portraits (installation, performance and recreation) that generate reflection on creation, time and memory.

Keywords: essay film, enunciative devices, identity, diary, autobiography, self-portrait, Francophone cinema.

Although the hybridisation of materials constitutes one of the defining characteristics of the essay film, and even if this hybridisation also occurs in its enunciative devices—the letter and the diptych in *Letter to Jane*, the self-portrait and the interview in *Jane B. par Agnès V.*, to cite two examples—I argue that, in some cases, and as an element of evolution of the essay film, the latter is built precisely from the dialectics between two or more devices. *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* (Frédéric Mitterrand, 1982) is created from the confrontation between the love letter after the breakup and the travelogue made on the journey to Somalia to deal with the romantic loss. *Du verbe aimer* (Mary Jiménez, 1985) is generated from the fracture between the present self-portrait and the past autobiography in order to explore identity trauma. *Les Plages d'Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2008) hybridises autobiography and self-portrait—through recreation, installation, and performance—to reflect on one's own existential experience and overcome the losses suffered.

The analyses of these three works will allow me to conclude the relevance of these enunciative hybridisations in the audiovisual thinking processes they produce.

Lettres d'amour en Somalie: Between Epistolary Intimacy and Diaristic Reality as Socio-Political Acknowledgement

Lettres d'amour en Somalie by Frédéric Mitterrand is an essay film built through the hybridisation of the diaristic and epistolary devices. In this way, through the experience of the filmmaker's journey to Somalia in 1981 after a devastating love breakup, the film generates a reflection on the intimacy–history polarity. Thus, the work bears witness to the dramatic situation of a country, about which Frédéric Mitterrand himself adds, before the film, an introductory note on its DVD edition, ten years after its filming: “However, I don't think anything fundamental has really changed. Everything was in place for the sinking, whether it's what I saw of this country or what I thought I understood about myself.” A quotation from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Citadelle* (1948) at the bottom of the screen, “Therefore, having bowed down, I retraced my steps,”¹ accompanied by music that will be defined as a kind of leitmotif of the subsequent epistolary intimacy, gives way to the title of this diaristic–epistolary essay film, which prioritises the epistolary writing of this parataxic diary–missive structure. It is the filmmaker's heartbreak that provokes the journey to Somalia, and it is the journey that allows for the necessary distance for this epistolary writing. The diary–letter juxtaposition is punctuated visually by fading to black, except in rare exceptions in which the writing slips from one instance to the other without this division, as I will analyse below.

After the title, a static shot shows us a bedroom, while in the sound image, Mitterrand's voiceover bursts over the music to recite the first letter, in which he recounts the end of his relationship, while the image presents the space where the story happened: “That was the first night I finally learned that I was alone, like a new lesson. A quiet night, in sum. Sometimes despair is a calm feeling.” The epistolary–diaristic I-voice is established as a common element of both filmic enunciations generated during the journey to Somalia, showing the emotional situation of the author. This is confirmed by a quotation from *Aden Arabie* (1931) by Paul Nizan that, after the first fade

1 The text was published a year later in Mitterrand, *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*. Éditions du Regard, 1983.

to black, appears superimposed on the first image of the journey, an aerial shot: “I am trembling with anxiety. The door opens. Around me people are talking about the departure and giving me advice, I draw breath in a state of giddiness that was supposed to be agreeable. They bid me farewell, I slip away like a dead man” (Nizan, 1968, p. 78). Then, the filmmaker’s voice appears again to start the diaristic expression. The arrival in Somalia and the presentation of the country conclude with a personal reflection: “And I, without bond nor place from now on, that have the impression of walking as long as they have.” While the image continues to show the Mogadishu airport, the voiceover moves from the diary to the letter in order to remember the airports shared in the past with its recipient and to express the feeling of absence. This displacement in the enunciation causes the letter to be pronounced over the direct sound and without the musical leitmotiv as an exceptional occasion, since this will only happen two more times. After the second fade to black, the epistolary expression continues, while the visual image shows again, through static shots, an empty room, now already in Somalia: “I don’t even have to get through the bars of the room to follow you as you wander away.” Thus, the following basic dynamic of the enunciative juxtaposition is established:

- Diaristic enunciation: Images from Somalia + Voiceover + Direct sound
 - Historical space
- Juxtaposition through fade to black – Scission between both spaces
- Epistolary enunciation: Timeless images + Voiceover + No direct sound
 - Mental space

The writing of the travelogue combines the expression of Mitterrand’s subjectivity in voiceover and the documentary images of Somalia with the corresponding direct sound filmed by him. Starting from this basic structure, the diaristic enunciation will gradually add elements to its visual image that bring it closer to the idea of collage: interviews, archival images, extracts from other films, and even a home movie build up a heterogeneous travelogue. Epistolary writing, however, starts with images that I have called timeless. These images, even belonging to Somalia, are generated as a space of epistolary intimacy that escapes the documentary representation of the here and now of Somalia in 1981. These static images of interiors, of poetic inspiration, prefigure the space of absence, loneliness, and heartbreak, as Roger Odin notes:

These long shots, obsessively fixed, stubborn in their insistence on giving us nothing to see (or very little), are not so much images of objects or

places than images of mental spaces, or more exactly sentimental: [...] they refer to something other than what they represent: to inner images. [...] images which appear to be drawn in Somalia, but which are not quite images “of” Somalia: images which, in Somalia, bear witness to the presence of the lack created by the absence of the loved one. (1994, pp. 89–92)

The sound image of this visual image of emotional intimacy generates that same timelessness through Mitterrand's enunciation, the erasure of any direct sound, and the presence of the same piano melody in all the letters. This epistolary writing will also evolve throughout the film, as I will discuss below. Following this dilaectic scheme, in which the present diary and timeless epistolarity are completely disconnected, the images of the city of Mogadishu accompany the second entry in the diary, dedicated to its weather, which concludes with the fade to black that gives way to another letter, with music and without direct sound, showing a new timeless image. The epistolary expression continues to be dedicated to the evocation of the lost, loving past—on this occasion, that of the awakening of the couple in the same bed. The next two entries of the diary, this time consecutive, with images from Mogadishu and Berbera, respectively, are dedicated to the country's history, narrated from the Western perspective, and filtered by the author's sensitivity. After the evocative epistolary description of the couple's first trip, new cinematic material appears in the diary: the archival images of Mussolini's announcement of the capture of Addis Ababa become part of it, strengthening the idea of a discursive collage, an expression of subjectivity, corroborated by the imminent inclusion of images from other cinematic works. A summer memory, a caress between lovers, is the motif of the following letter. In this way, diaristic collage and epistolary timelessness continue an alternation through which both enunciations gradually contaminate each other. Epistolary writing will abandon its isolation to allow itself to be influenced by the present reality. Next, images from *Uccellacci e uccellini* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966) begin a new diary entry dedicated to religious colonisation: the sequence in which the protagonists find, for the first time, the hawks they must preach to. Therefore, both archival images and cinematic works embody the mental correspondences established by the author's subjectivity through his memories and his imagination, caused by the present experience of the journey. Pasolini's protagonists lead to the colonial religious institution represented by the Bishop of Mogadishu, bringing a new element to this diaristic collage, the interview, in which the portrayed characters speak

to the camera. Religious reflection provokes a loving memory regarding the topic, and the epistolary expression then breaks into the documentary image of a church. It is the reality of the journey and its experiences that now provoke the loving memory and, therefore, an epistolary writing that, for the first time, refers to the present: "Religion bores you and I myself don't understand much about it. I only know that you are for me, this evening, at the heart of this naïve liturgy and this dream that brings them back to their lost homeland, their Italy before the Republic." Using archival images again, the diaristic writing dedicated to Umberto of Italy, whose visit to Somalia is still remembered in the country, now gives way to a concise letter that once again evokes an instant from the lost loving past, stated in the present. After the previous displacement in the space of the church, the letter leaves the interior and moves to the exterior: "You come home. It is certainly very late. Kisses from an infinite tenderness tear me from sleep. You like that we fall asleep together. Before it was nothing. Now the night begins."

The diary now addresses the country's main problem, its poverty: "[T]hose excluded from a miserable society are no longer there because they are simply dead." Images of misery precede another very brief letter that, for the first time, recounts the addresser's present loneliness and not the couple's past. Thus, the contamination process of reality in the epistolary space continues, while the contrast between the most tragic social reality and the most intimate personal expression is produced. The diaristic description of the situation in the hospitals: "For women, sexual mutilation is the rule; they drag frightful physical and moral bruises, interminable infection," with the testimonies of a doctor and a religious nurse, and of the daily misery of the street, alternate with short letters that evoke the moment of awareness of the heartbreak first, and the breakup after. In the following letter, a symbolic sentence-image of the first identification between both spaces emerges. The geography of Somalia and the journey through it are identified with the itinerary of the heartbreak. Different shots of the roads through which the filmmaker travels, filmed from inside the car, follow one another, showing the different geographies as materialisations of the landscapes of heartbreak. In this way, the reality of the journey builds a link with the reality of the filmmaker's emotional state:

[W]ith a glance I then embraced an immense territory, the territory of my pain. It still drags to the shores where I thought to run away from you. Further, I go further, inland. The journey is difficult because there are

no more roads. It takes me whole days to cover tiny distances. I would so like to be able to exchange this Atlas for another.

As Odin indicates, “A series of report shots made up of very long tracking shots in cars thus come to signify the long interior journey of F. Mitterrand, a journey where everything is blurred (like what is given to us to see through the windscreen of the car.” (1994, pp. 92–93). Therefore, the epistolary account begins to be linked to the present time of the journey, a bond that will allow the managing of the suffering of the breakup, absence and heartbreak. These emotions are inscribed in the geography and temporality of Somalia through epistolary images that begin to shed the trait of timelessness and isolation to continue feeding on the reality of the journey.

The scarcity of water, the drought, and the construction of wells to combat it give way to romantic memories through the figure of the camel. On this occasion, the displacement occurs from epistolary to diaristic writing, without fading to black to separate them, in the opposite direction that occurred previously in the church space. The poeticity of the expression of love—“naïve illustrations separated the camels from the dromedaries”—now faces the cruelty of reality: “When they are going to die, and the wealth goes away [...], they are slaughtered on the spot, in Somalia, at dawn, before the first heat.” Then, the diary–missive alternation continues: from the fishing in Somalia and the problems in this sector to the epistolary account of the eve of the journey; from the Ogaden conflict to the memory of the romantic detail. Archival images from a newsreel about the country’s colonial war past precede Mitterrand’s narration about the current situation of the armed conflicts: “In Somalia, war is the others [...]. I travel through a country completely ravaged by belligerence.” The alternation between the images of the journey and archival images once again accompanies Mitterrand’s narration about the refugees: “Refugees are Somalia’s wealth [...]. Life in the camps boils down to simple ideas: thousands of people continue to flee to their brothers from the genocide imposed by the Ethiopians; their distress is appalling; in its extreme poverty, the country itself is in solidarity with their calls for revenge.” As already happened with the letter about the geography of Somalia, the historical–social tragedy of the country finds its secret link with the intimate suffering of the subjectivity of the epistolary addresser, generating a second symbolic sentence-image of the identification intimacy–history. The present reality of sick refugees provokes reflection and reverie about their own death: “And then, when the hour of our death comes, will we

still be separated from each other? [...] I want that the last look of one is only for the other.”

The diary then adds a new element to its collage proposal. After archival images, film excerpts, and interviews, the filmmaker now includes the reading of a letter found on a plantation; an Italian woman writes to her sister. The author accompanies the reading of this foreign epistolarity, a testimony of colonialism, with images from a home movie in Super 8 mm. Thus, the epistolary element also becomes part of the diaristic collage. Next, the epistolary writing dreams the beloved in literature, music, and cinema, mainly through the figure of Marguerite Duras and her literary and cinematic characters. In this way, and thanks to the distance imposed by the journey, the protagonist can lucidly express the construction of the alterity of the beloved:

However, I have other names that could also be yours. [...] I myself have other places that could also be yours. [...] I myself have other places that could also be yours. [...] I myself have other gestures that could also be yours. [...] But you see, I often only have you, when I'm far away and alone. And these other names, these other places, these other gestures that could be you, that I make yours.

The diaristic writing about the stay in the coastal shifts again to epistolary writing. The images of an open-air screening accompany the epistolary expression of the memory of the shared films to describe Somali open-air cinemas to the addressee. The addresser tells her about his present for the first time, which becomes the third and last displacement from the diary to the letter, after those that occurred first at the airport and later at the church: “I go to the cinema in each new town. I'm always a little hesitant when it's one of our films that's being programmed, and I've felt my hand shake several times as I handed out my three shillings.” A new missive is then generated in opposition to the previous one. As opposed to the referentiality and narrativity of the present of the former, the emotional lyrical abstraction now emerges again, accompanied by the presence of the musical leitmotif. This opposition shows the itinerary made by the epistolary enunciation throughout the journey, from the poetic and emotional timelessness of the love experience to the present referentiality and narrativity. Once again, archival images accompany the diaristic narration of the filmmaker: “Self-sufficiency is dogma. International aid, succeeding colonial charity, this is the reality [...]. Somalia is alone since its war disturbs everyone [...]. The country is slowly sinking into a hopeless

dependence.” As previously with Pasolini’s film, a fragment from *The Road to Life* (Nikolai Ekk, 1931) embodies the subjective link that the author establishes between cinematic fiction and real experience. In this case, between the Russian orphans and their redemption journey in Ekk’s fiction, and the Somali orphans that Mitterrand meets: between Soviet propaganda he criticises—“How many have been lost on other roads, those that led to the Siberian camps, to the machine guns of the Red Army?”—and the present reality he describes—“We never see the real children of the father: he prefers those whom the war gives him.” The filmmaker then shows the conclusion of Ekk’s film, the corpse of one of its protagonists, Mustafa, turned into a hero, evidencing the propaganda use of narration. In contrast, women’s reality concerning genital mutilation is narrated, accompanied by naked documentary images of the journey:

To express themselves, these women of Somalia have the right only to the words of men [...]. By mutilating them atrociously in the heart of their childhood, the male universe imposes an absolute domination, at the same time as it satisfies on each of its victims the darkest and most pitiless of vengeance.

While the two previous fictions were linked to diaristic reflection, the third does so to epistolary emotion. After recounting the new relationship of his ex-partner—“You live with another man, and I’m barely a memory. However, I still prefer my wound to all those that the words of comfort covered so badly”—a musical fragment from *Immortal Song* (Henry Barakat, 1952) expresses the intimate emotion identified with that of the singer protagonist of the film: “I call you, and you hear me in advance. I miss you; every moment of my life demands you.”

The journey concludes in its diaristic expression with an interview with the president of Somalia, Mohammed Siad Barre, who explains the current situation in the country after the description Mitterrand makes of him: “The revolution, the Russian alliance, the betrayals of peers, the protracted war and the deadlock of enthusiasm: he went through everything. Outbursts of deaf anger mobilise, in disorder, a people that exhausts the errors and defects of the regime: they still spare him.” The resolution of the intimacy–history polarity then occurs in the epistolary enunciation, through the letter Mitterrand addresses to Somalia. Thus, the country toured by the filmmaker obtains the category of historical–social alterity with which to dialogue. While the epistolary writing, up to now addressed to the beloved, has revealed conflicts with the alterity of love, the letter



Figure 5. *Lettre d'amour en Somalie* (Frédéric Mitterrand, 1983) © Les films du Losange

addressed to Somalia defines it as a historical–social alterity made possible by the experience of the journey and its diaristic writing. The intimacy–history polarity is resolved by identifying both poles with identities of alterity: the alterity of love in the intimate space and social alterity in the historical space.

The letter to Somalia is visually constructed with black-and-white archival images of the country, revealing, at a visual level, the bond between the letter and the diary, that is, the intimacy–history bond that destroys its polarity (Figure 5):

Somalia, it's time for me to go. [...] Somalia, I loved you even though you were neither the most beautiful nor the most lovable. [...] I understood you better than anyone would like to explain to you, you welcomed me better than one would think. [...] You were just as I expected you and I entrust it to you knowing that you will never be able to know it: if I loved you so much, it is that our trials were the same."

Once Somalia is converted into an interlocutory alterity, the two identifications that describe the bond between the journey to Somalia and

the protagonists of the epistolary writing emerge from Mitterrand's letter: the identification of the sender with the fatigue of Somalia and the identification of the recipient with the Somali indifference. The experience of the journey as knowledge of the historical–social alterity has consisted of sharing the suffering: that caused by the love break in the addresser; that of the social suffering of the country in the addressee. The intimacy–missive/history–diary polarity on which the essay film has been built is thus resolved by revealing the bond that unites both spaces: the common experience of suffering: “What *Lettres d’amour en Somalie* tells us is that between a love breakup and the tragedy of a country, there is no difference of nature” (Odin, 1994, p. 98). The essay film concludes with the return to Paris, related through a letter visually built with two defining images of the city: the plan of the underground and the nocturnal ascent of the Eiffel Tower. This last letter, addressed to the beloved, serves to finally say goodbye and express the pain of the heartbreak and also its overcoming. This overcoming of suffering in the intimate space presents the same elements that Siad Barre spoke about with regard to Somalia in the historical space: “Look at me: I return you to innocence. Learn its other name: loneliness.”

The hybrid structure of this diaristic–epistolary essay film, the diary–letter juxtaposition, is presented as the dialectics between the space of intimacy and the space of history, which I have called the intimacy–history polarity. This alternation, in both cases, has alterity as its central object. While epistolary writing seeks to overcome the alterity of love and its absence, diaristic writing discovers, along the journey, what I have called Somalia's historical–social alterity. The scission between the two spaces, materialised in the fade to black, weakens as a consequence of the progressive contamination between the two. Timeless epistolary writing evolves from interior to exterior spaces and from past to present narration until it slips into diaristic writing in the camel scene. The diaristic writing constructed through the collage of different materials shifts to epistolary writing in the places where reality evokes the memory of the beloved (airport, church, cinema). In this way, two symbolic sentence-images of the bond that is being developed emerge: the geography of Somalia as a geography of heartbreak and the social suffering of the country as a common experience to the suffering of the protagonist. Finally, the sentence-image synthesis of the film materialises in the letter addressed to Somalia, in which the complete construction of its historical alterity allows the filmmaker to turn the country into an epistolary addressee as a result of the exploration of the interstice between the letter and the travelogue.

***Du verbe aimer*: Between Autobiography and Self-Portrait as Identity Fracture²**

In *Du verbe aimer*, Mary Jiménez generates the confrontation between autobiography and self-portrait from, once again, maternal absence. The film becomes a “pretext for a way back”: that of her return to her native Peru, in 1983, ten years after her departure and five years after the death of her mother in a gas explosion. The filmmaker begins the essay film with a relevant reflection on its cinematic nature and its construction. The definition of film already configures the link with the experience of psychoanalysis, crucial in Jiménez’s life:

A film is never the film you want to make. [...] What you want to do serves to make the film. But the finished film becomes a different quality of matter, and this matter, like the child in their mother’s womb, cuts themselves off from her definitively. And the mother fades away, she dies. When you make a film, there is nothing left of what you wanted to do. What you wanted to do was masked by the film.

The work is defined as the pretext for a return: “To return to Peru I hid behind the alibi of a film,” which masks the filmmaker’s purpose, starting from a recorded text: “To make this film, before leaving, I gave myself a text; it is this text that you hear in the sound. The sound of my voice, now.” The essay film starts from the juxtaposition between a previous sound text and the creation of images during the trip, and is also confronted with the family’s photographic archive. The basic autobiographical chronology is then stated: Born in 1948, Jiménez left Peru at the age of 24 to study cinema in Belgium; she is now 34. Next, the filmmaker instrumentalises a first device that embodies the problematisation between autobiography and self-portrait: the interview, which she performs in black-and-white images. The introduction of the father is generated through an interview filmed through a mirror, which allows us to observe both the daughter and the father, as well as the filmic elements of the work. The same exercise is repeated with her mother’s friend. Jiménez’s reflection on the nature of filmic material now extends to the position of the spectator: “To make a film is to mask; hide a part of oneself, so that it emerges for others, on those

² A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, “Women’s Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

who see, listen to. When you want to make a film, you talk about what you want to do, and what you want to do changes.”

The autobiographical account then begins with her first childhood memories in the Andes, where Jiménez lived until she was six years old. The current visit to those same places informs us of a new mutation, that of memory: “From now on, when I think of my first memory in the Andes, it will be the images of this film that I will have in my mind.” Her first memory of her father is linked to reading: a moment of emancipation, experiencing freedom and also loneliness, still unconscious of death: “I still do not know I am going to die.” It is in this moment, when naming death, that Jiménez looks at the camera for the first time. Thus, the essentiality of the self-portrait—the presence of the gaze into the camera—is linked to disappearance.

This early childhood memory of Lima is then associated with the memory of her mother. This is how the central device of the film begins: the revisiting of the physical spaces of her memories and, in some cases, the recreation of the experiences lived in them. The earliest memory she has of her mother, the taxi ride to the ballet, is narrated from the present physical position in this space. The daughter hands her mother her school reports: “I know that if I am number 1 instead of 37, my mother will love me again. I’m going to try. But I don’t know why this idea hurts me.” The film turns the autobiographical memory into a filmic revisitation and also into a kind of psychoanalytic regression in which the child character takes the floor. Jiménez confirms the transformative capacity of these recreations: “From now on, when I think of my pain at the absence of my mother’s love, it will be the images of this film that will come to mind.” The recreation of memory continues in the theatre, a new space that Jiménez now runs through as an adult, while we hear her voiceover describing the moment when she managed to be the first in the class: “Happiness at my mother’s arms on my skin [...]. I have to work to be loved.” The essay film establishes a parataxic structure between the documentary images of the adult reflection belonging to the autobiography and the images of the revisitations/recreations from which childhood reflection and the fracture of the self-portrait arise. The mother’s death is mentioned for the first time—“my mother is dead”—during a sunset screening with the image accelerated: “But I keep making films to be loved.” A third reflection on filmic nature occurs later: “And when I make a film, I would like other people’s ears to become the ears I had. The eyes of others, my eyes.” Faced with the impossibility of identification between the past and the present self, the film would have the capacity to convert the spectators into that past self that does not allow identification. In addition, the symbolic value of the different spaces is configured. The

Andes are identified with an explosion from the mine filmed by Jiménez that we will see at the end of the film.

Later, the third fragment of the interview with the father links the recreation exercise that the film embodies with the unwrapping of the mummies he worked with, which will give rise to a ritualisation around the mother's objects. Jiménez recounts the beginning of her psychoanalysis at the age of 12 (and until she was 21) at the request of her mother. The first discovery of the therapy is narrated over images of Jesus Christ crucified: the fear of the mother's death—"because I wanted her death." Thus, psychoanalysis becomes trauma: "Me, about me, I wonder. I learn the evil of the permanent interrogation, of the continual question [...] me, about me, I don't trust [...]. I become psychoanalysis." Then, the religious images give way to the father unwrapping a mummy, while the filmmaker describes the damage she suffered because of the psychoanalysis initiated in childhood. The father finishes the unwrapping at the moment when Jiménez pronounces the word "scission": "[B]etween myself for my mother, myself for my father and me [...]. I am looking for my mother in this film, in all my films." Jiménez achieves the symbolic sentence-image of the identity fracture on which the film is built: the split between the past autobiography and the current self-portrait. The unwrapping of the mummy is followed again by the images of the mine and finally its explosion, with which Jiménez relates the trauma: the death of her mother five years earlier in a gas explosion, when the filmmaker was already living in Brussels. She did not attend the funeral. This is her first return in the ten years of her stay in Europe. Then, the third reflection on the identification of the spectator with the past self is repeated again as the only possible solution to the splitting shown; only the spectator can recompose the fracture between autobiography and self-portrait.

The images of the mother's tomb, "And for this grave alone, I made this film," visited by father and daughter, give way to a new device; the letter, again in black-and-white images, that Jiménez addresses to her absent mother, to in turn carry out the ritual that would justify the trip: "Mother, when my sister came from Peru to bring me your rings, I could not look at them [...]. I brought them with me on this trip [...]. I will look at your rings, your hands, your fingers, which will never be there again." Two female characters, first the mother's friend, then another woman, stand in front of Jiménez at the same interview table and show the objects belonging to the deceased mother that they have kept. Finally, Jiménez shows the mother's rings and looks at the camera again. The scene concludes with the final clapperboard. Once again, the ritual is self-conscious of its audiovisual nature. Jiménez continues the story about the "mad people" in Lima and her

architecture studies. The identification between the images of people with mental health problems and the filmmaker, which has been progressing throughout the film, now occurs with a woman from the street: "The images of the madwoman make me feel good." The image of the woman is followed by one of Jiménez herself manipulating a polaroid camera with which now, and for the first time, she executes her own photographic self-portrait using her hands: "I feel left out. Another me develops [...]. I remain as if on the sidelines. As away from these deaths. Neither alive nor dead." The journey through the poor neighbourhoods of Lima gives way to a flow of consciousness whose evolution gives the film its title: "He said that, the psychoanalyst: that I could never love," "I am not without you," "I am, without you, a corpse of words, words that no longer name me."

The autobiographical account continues with her admission to a clinic where Jiménez was subjected to electroshocks, attempted suicide, and received nine months of treatment before being discharged. Once again, the revisiting of that space takes place. In a room that could have been hers, a new *dédoublement* is now generated. We do not listen to the narration in voiceover, but through a recorder that Jiménez holds, which we see in the image. Thus, the fracture between autobiography (voiceover story) and self-portrait (Jiménez's current presence in those spaces) manages to find an element of transition, inserting the sound narration materially into the image. Jiménez narrates how she finished her architecture studies to gift her mother the diploma and finally managed to move to Belgium to study cinema: "When she sees my films my mother will love me again." In a final excerpt from the interview with her father, this time in colour, in contrast to the previous ones in black and white, Jiménez asks him about the moments after her mother's death. Later, Jiménez appears in that same interview space, but this time alone, while her voiceover describes how she found out about her mother's death through a telegram from her uncle. On images of the beach and the sea, Jiménez's voice recreates the lack of understanding of that moment, once again returning to the past experience: "Her death makes me as crazy as her life. She will never see my films."

The film concludes with the recreation of the wake that Jiménez did not attend, and that she herself defines as a simulacrum: "In the same house, in the same room, with the same people. A simulacrum. The vigil I was absent for. The objects placed on the coffin are the same ones I received in plastic bags." Once again, in these recreations/rituals/simulations of greater intimacy, Jiménez includes the film clapperboard and the technical crew, since it is crucial to keep in mind their cinematic nature. The essay film ends with the repetition of the initial reflection, along with the images of

the filmmaker next to her mother's grave, now also in colour compared to the previous black-and-white ones: "When you make a film, nothing remains of what you wanted to make. What you wanted to do has been masked by the film."

Thus, the essay film is built on the fracture between autobiography and self-portrait as a filmic nature that embodies the trauma: the past mother–daughter relationship and its present absence. The fracture is then transited through different devices—the interview, the letter—and strategies—the revisiting of spaces, the recreation of past experience, and its ritualisation. The interview with the living and the letter with the disappeared are materialised in black-and-white images, as are the multiple portraits of the mentally ill and the visit to the mother's grave. Both the interview and the tomb finally gain colour to convey the transformation of the lived experience, of the film. The cinematic experience turns the filmed images into memories and enables the spectator to become the past protagonist that the present author can no longer embody. The incarnation of the protagonist as a filmmaker, the author of the images, is the experience capable of facing trauma. The vindication of the figure of the filmmaker becomes an essential identity practice for overcoming it.

***Les Plages d'Agnès: Between Self-Portrait and Autobiography as Identity Reconciliation*³**

Whereas in *Jane B. par Agnès V. Varda* reflected on the intersubjective space between portrait and self-portrait, in *Les Plages d'Agnès* the essay film is generated around the interstice between autobiography and self-portrait: "[A] new postmodern hybrid between autobiography and self-portrait" (Bluher, 2013, p. 63). It is built like a kaleidoscopic collage, where Varda, in addition to being the author and the narrator, is now the main character:

[T]he subtle sliding toward self-portrait manages to temper and metamorphose the impasses of the autobiography, by opening all kinds of intermediate paths [...] equally successfully, it achieves autobiography through the medium of the self-portrait and vice-versa, thus creating by herself, like a hapax, a unique form of use. (Bellour, 2009, p. 17)

3 A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Women's Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

While in *Jane B. par Agnès V.* Varda reflected on the relationship between portrait and self-portrait through the gaze of the actor towards the filmmaker, *Les Plages d'Agnès* reflects on the relationship between self-portrait and autobiography through the filmmaker's gaze into the camera that is now directed to the spectators: "If you want to look at the spectators, you have to look into the camera." While Jiménez reflects on the conflict between both devices through the present revisitation of past spaces, Varda presents a kind of dissolution of that conflict through the destruction of temporality. The past narrative of the autobiography is updated through three devices, three "intermediate paths" that instrumentalise the self-portrait, generating "performative self-portraits" (Bluher, 2013, p. 59): installation, performance, and recreation.

Varda creates the autobiography from a premise of thematic installation, "les plages d'Agnès," which will present different materialisations throughout the film: "If we opened people up we would find landscapes. If we opened me up, we would find beaches." The film begins with this original beach, a symbolic sentence-image of the relationship between autobiography and self-portrait, in which the installation materialises through multiple mirrors that offer infinite portraits and self-portraits (Moure, 2020). In this way, autobiography is defined by this conjunction: "We find ourselves in a subtle, strange, in-between, where cinema acts as contemporary art" (Bellour, 2009, p. 19). Later, the beach moves to Daguerre Street to create a *mise-en-scène* for her production company, Ciné-Tamaris. It is a new sentence-image that transforms a symbol of autobiography into cinematic creation. Finally, the film concludes by showing the installation *Ma cabane de l'échec* (2006), a space that is covered with the photochemical film of the projection copies of *Les créatures* (1966), where Varda's presence generates a new self-portrait that also gives the installation a new and powerful meaning: "When I am here, I have the feeling that I inhabit cinema, which is my home. I feel that I have always inhabited it." The beach has completed its transformation, just as the filmmaker's autobiography has narrated it.

Varda includes in the first image of the film another symbolic sentence-image, in this case belonging to the performance: walking backwards and forwards (Moure, 2020, p. 29). The first gesture is associated with autobiography, with the memory journey into the past: "Memories are like flies swarming through the air, bits of memory, jumbled up." The second is linked to the self-portrait and is converted into a dialogue with the spectator. Thus, performance is another intermediate path, another space of interstitial thinking between autobiography and self-portrait with

which she updates the past experience, celebrates it, and gives it a new meaning. In *Sète*, Varda creates a performance as a tribute to her friend Pierre with the participation of his sons Blaise and Vincent. Pierre and his wife Suzou played the couple in *La Pointe courte* (1955) in the rehearsals Varda shot on 16 mm, and he died of cancer before finishing editing the film. We listen to Varda's voiceover while contemplating the performance turned into a ceremony: "I invited them to share in a little ceremony with a handcart from the film. A setup to show them the test footage they had never seen: "They had seen their father in photos but never in motion. A little nocturnal voyage with Pierrot." The autobiographical and cinematic material is updated not only as a tribute to the disappeared person but also as a present life experience for his sons. Once again, Varda transforms autobiography into a present symbolic experience of great significance. The memory of Charles Biscamano, a fisherman who taught Varda to repair the nets, also becomes a performance-tribute through his children, who reassemble their father's fishing tent with the original objects and organise a trolling fishing. The objects of the autobiographical memory become once again an artistic performance and a present life experience of its participants, always as interaction with alterity.

Next, the beaches become a river current, and Varda's performance of the boat trip allows her to travel autobiographically from the canals of *Sète* to Paris, and travel through her Parisian autobiography through the Seine. Once again, the performance updates memory through a symbolic sentence-image. When recalling her years at the *École du Louvre*, Varda makes performance and recreation coincide: the present Varda travels the Seine by boat, while the past Varda contemplates an art book on the quay. The figure of the former is out of focus in the shot that portrays them both, and the figure of the latter is out of focus in a shot that embodies the actualisation of the memory. Varda generates a new symbolic sentence-image of her subjective experience of time: the past memory is actualised through the present artistic gesture. Even autobiographical memories with a comic purpose, such as the episodes about the coal and the parking in Varda's home, are transformed into performances. The autobiographical memory is used and actualised as raw material for artistic creation and the audiovisual thinking process. In the same way as the installation, the performance reaches a final materialisation that synthesises the filmmaker's vision. Her family members, gathered together and dressed in white, are inserted into a country setting first and finally the beach, while Varda walks towards them. In this way, autobiography and self-portrait merge into a single gesture: "Together, they are the sum of my happiness. But I

don't know if I know them or understand them, I just go towards them [...]. Family is a somewhat compact concept. We mentally group everyone together and imagine them as a peaceful island."

Finally, the filmmaker recreates old autobiographical scenes, sometimes including herself in them, generating the *mise-en-abyme* of the self-portrait in its creative and playful sense: "She constantly emphasises her self-invention [...]. It is as if Varda created herself, *sui generis*" (Conway, 2010, p. 133). In her childhood recreation on the Belgian beach, Varda puts herself next to her fictional child self-portraits to declare, "I don't know what recreating a scene like this means. Do we relive the moment? For me, it is cinema, it is a game." It is necessary to point out here that the sequence begins with the account of her name change: from Arlette—written on the sand and erased by the waves—to Agnès, insisting on the idea of identity as dynamic and unstable, on which we can operate. Later, she recreates the family environment at Sète, her photographic activity, and the writing of her first screenplay, *La Pointe courte*. In the latter, the *mise-en-abyme* of the self-portrait is produced for the second time through the conjunction of recreation and performance. The reproduction of the same action in the same space by both presences in the same clothes—the past and fictional, and the real, present one, accompanied by the image of the film—embodies a sort of therapeutic experience of subjective time, making the fusion between past and present possible.

Varda's autobiography and self-portrait are defined by the filmmaker's multi-presence through different positions in simultaneous devices: in front of and behind the camera; reflected in multiple mirrors; as an artistic creation that synthesises autobiography in the space of the installation; as a ritual that turns past memories into present life experiences in the performance; and as a fictional recreation, a product of self-invention that allows the embodiment of subjective time. Autobiography and self-portrait are defined as a collage–puzzle, constantly transforming and being updated, thanks to the mirror of alterity: colleagues, friends, family, and her partner, Jacques Demy. Even his absence, the loss of the loved one, is transformed by Varda into a moving self-portrait. She appears transformed into a lonely version of René Magritte's *Les Amants* (1928)—as opposed to the previous portrait of two naked lovers—sitting in her house court, with her back to the camera and her head wrapped up as a Magritte's lover but alone. Loss and absence are also an alterity experience from which creation emerges. Varda's autobiography and self-portrait are therefore configured as the narration and portrait of her creative experience, of her process of cinematic reflection:

Varda's (self-)portraits give us a sense of a personal identity and an experience of otherness integral of the modern subject. Their composition moves to and fro between revelation and concealment, fixing and deferral. These (self-)portraits look at us and we look at them. They speak to us because they yield the possibility to be invested with our pensiveness. To see the other in a (self-)portrait we have to delve into our mirrored selves. (Blucher, 2019, p. 75)

Installation, performance, and recreation emerge from the interstice between autobiography and self-portrait to embody interstitial thinking, through symbolic sentence-images, that reflects on autobiography and creation, time and memory, offering a therapeutical experience of subjective time and the reconciliation between autobiography and self-portrait, past and present.

Conclusions

The analyses of these essay films allow us to conclude the relevance of the hybridisation of the enunciative devices as a starting point of the audiovisual thinking process. In *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*, Mitterrand creates the essay film based on the dialectic between the epistolary enunciation of love and the diaristic enunciation of the social and historical reality of Somalia, generating the intimacy–missive/history–diary polarity. The travel experience causes mutual contamination of both spaces and devices, and the intimacy–history polarity is solved through their hybridisation by exploring the interstice between the letter and the travelogue: the letter Mitterrand addresses to Somalia. Thus, the complete construction of its historical alterity, the social and political reflection, allows the filmmaker to turn the country into an epistolary addressee, merging the personal and the socio-political, the ethics, and the aesthetics. In *Du verbe aimer*, Jiménez generates reflection on trauma through the dialectics between past autobiography and the present self-portrait. The essay film establishes a parataxic structure between the documentary images of the adult reflection belonging to the autobiography and the images of the revisitations/recreations from which childhood reflection and the fracture of the self-portrait arise. Finally, simulacra become rituals with which to overcome grief and trauma. While Jiménez reflects on the conflict between both devices through the present revisitation of past spaces, in *Les Plages d'Agnès* Varda presents its dissolution through the destruction of temporality. The past narrative of the autobiography is updated through the present self-portrait using

three devices: installation, performance and recreation. They generate interstitial thinking through symbolic sentence-images that reflect on autobiography and creation, time and memory, offering a therapeutical experience of subjective time and the reconciliation between autobiography and self-portrait, past and present.

Regarding the materials used, *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* builds the travelogue based on the idea of collage—own images, archival images, interviews, fragments of fiction films—while the epistolary enunciation is created as an intimate space consisting of a timeless image and the filmmaker's voiceover. *Du verbe aimer* uses the personal photographic archive to build the autobiographical narrative, and *Les Plages d'Agnès* uses the filmmaker's past creations, both photographic and filmic, with the same purpose. Concerning the procedures created, *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* instrumentalises the fade to black as the dialectical border between the two enunciations, and their progressive contamination of each other provokes different transgressions of this border. *Du verbe aimer* turns the self-portrait's gaze into the camera into a symbolic sentence-image of the trauma with which to address the missing mother. Furthermore, the presence of the cinematic elements of the filming demonstrates the work's self-reflective consciousness as part of the rituals that seek to overcome the trauma. In *Les Plages d'Agnès*, the gaze into the camera of the self-portrait embodies direct communication with the spectator. In addition, the *mise-en-scène* of the audiovisual thinking process is produced through another symbolic sentence-image: walking backwards and forwards. The first gesture is associated with autobiography, with the memory journey into the past, and the second is linked to the self-portrait and converted into a dialogue with the spectator.

The hybridisation of enunciative devices allows *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* to establish an initial opposition between intimate experience and social and political reality to generate an audiovisual thinking process about the nature of both spaces and critical thinking about the need to combat their dialectics, making the political question a personal cause and experience. In *Du verbe aimer*, the hybridisation between autobiography and self-portrait generates the audiovisual thinking process that reflects on trauma and the cinematic possibilities for overcoming it, turning the filmed images into memories and enabling the spectator to become the past protagonist that the present author can no longer embody. The incarnation of the protagonist as a filmmaker, the author of the images, is the experience capable of facing trauma. In *Les Plages d'Agnès*, Varda's autobiography and self-portrait are defined by the filmmaker's multi-presence through different positions in simultaneous devices: in front of and behind the camera; reflected in

multiple mirrors; as an artistic creation that synthesises autobiography in the space of the installation; as a ritual that turns past memories into present life experiences in the performance; and as a fictional recreation, product of self-invention, that allows the embodiment of subjective time. Autobiography and self-portrait are defined as a collage–puzzle, constantly transforming and being updated, thanks to the mirror of alterity.

Works Cited

- Bellour, R. (2009). Varda ou l'art contemporain. Notes sur 'Les Plages d'Agnès.' *Trafic*, 69, 16–19.
- Bluher, D. (2013). Autobiography, (re-)enactment and the performative self- portrait in Varda's *Les Plages d'Agnès / The Beaches of Agnès* (2008). *Studies in European Cinema*, 10(1), 59–69. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1386/seci.10.1.59_1
- Bluher, D. (2019). The other portrait: Agnès Varda's self-portraiture. In M. Tinel-Temple, L. Busetta, & M. Monteiro (Eds.), *From self-portrait to selfie: Representing the self in moving images* (pp. 47–76). Peter Lang.
- Conway, K. (2010). Varda at work: 'Les Plages d'Agnès.' *Studies in French Cinema*, 10(2), 125–139. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1386/sfc.10.2.125_1
- Mitterrand, F. (1983). *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*. Éditions du Regard.
- Moure, J. (2020). The incipit of Beaches of Agnès (Les Plages d'Agnès). In J. Moure & D. Chateau (Eds.), *Post-cinema: Cinema in the post-art era* (pp. 27–41). Amsterdam University Press.
- Nizan, P. (1968). *Aden Arabie*. Monthly Review Press.
- Odin, R. (1994). Le Documentaire intérieur. Travail du JE et mise en phase dans *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*. *Cinemas*, 4(2), 82–100. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1001024ar>

6. Saturation

Abstract: This chapter analyses two essay films that establish the saturation point of the audiovisual thinking that defines this filmic form: its maximum complexification as a result of the evolution of technology and the essayistic practice itself. In *Level Five* (Chris Marker, 1996), the enunciative devices multiply, hybridise, and fragment, showing a point of saturation in which the thinking process seems no longer possible. Cyberspace and digital technology provoke a condition that prevents reflection: information saturation nullifies critical thinking. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1988–1998) instrumentalises the quotation—literary, philosophical, pictorial, photographic, and cinematic—to create reflective constellations—defined by the absence of a previously codified enunciative device—that reach the saturation of the audiovisual thinking.

Keywords: essay film, audiovisual thinking, history, memory, Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, at the end of the 20th century, we find two essay films that establish the saturation point of the audiovisual thinking process that defines this filmic form: its maximum complexification as a result of the evolution of technology and also of the essayistic practice itself. *Level Five* (Marker, 1996) materialises as the maximum complexity of Marker's essay films. It offers a reflection on the memory–pain–oblivion axis, regarding the Battle of Okinawa in the historical and intimate space, and on the role different technologies and devices have in it—photography, film, video, video games, and cyberspace. Not only are the enunciative devices multiplying, hybridising, and fragmenting, but they also show a point of saturation in which the audiovisual thinking seems no longer possible. The farther and faster nature of cyberspace and digital technology provokes a condition that prevents reflection; information saturation nullifies critical thinking. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Godard, 1988–1998) instrumentalises the

quotation—literary, philosophical, historical, pictorial, photographic, and cinematic—to create a piece that becomes the paragon of this audiovisual form, offering its own definition—a form that thinks. In this case, this form reflects on cinema history and its insertion into 20th-century history. Multiple manipulation procedures create their maximum density in the visual image and the sound image, reaching the saturation of the audiovisual thinking. The analysis of both films will allow us to understand why they mark the limit of complexity of the essay film by both filmmakers, as well as a turning point for this filmic form concerning its materialisations in the 21st century.

***Level Five: Hybridisations and Complexification*¹**

Level Five's audiovisual thinking is generated from the subjectivity of the essayist character Chris, through Marker's own voice, for the second time after *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965). This implies the total identification between the character and the filmmaker. Laura's character asks him to order all the material she has around the video game about the Battle of Okinawa on which her partner was working before he died. The essay film that we contemplate is the materialisation of that task: "One day I'll give Chris all this material for him to try to do something: a game that won't work, a woman going in circles ... We'll see what he can do, the ace of montage." Chris's voiceover appears for the first time to explain the reasons that led him to accept it: "That's where I came into the story. At that point in my life, other people's images interested me more than my own. I took Laura's commission as a fun challenge." Thus, the essay film generates a reflection on the Battle of Okinawa and the collective suicide of more than a third of its population (150,000 people) to avoid surrendering to the American army. It offers a reflection on the memory–pain–oblivion axis in the historical and intimate space and on the role that different technologies and devices have in it: "how one might use electronic memory to relate to the suffering of others" (Cooper, 2008, p. 161). The essayistic reflection is made up of the following:

1 This analysis is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Zapping Zone and *Level Five*: Between the Visitor's Experience of the Video Installation and the Filmmaker's Reflection of the Essay Film," *Arte, individuo y sociedad*, 35(4), pp. 1377–1395, available at <https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.87867>

- Laura’s epistolary video diary addressed to her dead lover.
- Chris’s voiceover narration on Okinawa images from Laura and his lover’s journey.
- Laura’s lover’s video game of the Battle of Okinawa.
- The *Optional World Link* as a fictional representation of cyberspace.
- Interviews, archival images, documentary films, fiction films, and literary elements.

Therefore, we find three subjectivities and three authorships, and these materials are ordered as a kind of figurative dialogue between Chris and Laura as users of both the video game and cyberspace, as evidenced by the first images of the film, in which both hands manipulate the computer mouse. How do these three concepts—memory, pain, and oblivion—materialise and interrelate in the different spaces and devices—documentary, fiction, video game, and cyberspace? Laura says, “Could an angel scan my memory and find the clue which distinguishes remembrance from oblivion?” “Do you too hover between remembrance and oblivion?” Once again, as in Marker’s previous essay films, the reflection is about rethinking images and their devices.

Laura produces an epistolary video diary, since she joins both devices in an indiscernible way. The video diary, which recounts her daily experience, both in her work with the video game and in the experience of mourning the death of her lover, is filmed by herself with a camera that she manipulates using a remote control. It becomes epistolary when confirming that all its content is addressed to an unequivocal “you”: the deceased lover. Chris underlines its diaristic nature by including the dating of its entries on the black screen on different occasions. The 19 entries of this epistolary video diary account for the psychological and emotional evolution of the character. As Catherine Lupton points out, Laura is “the first fictional character to appear and speak directly” in one of Marker’s films; a character who becomes a “point of identification for the audience” (2005, p. 204) thanks to the epistolary device. As Rascaroli notes, “His form of interpellation, the confessional or love letter, is warm, passionate, intense and in the present tense; we stare into her eyes and we are asked to share her pain with her” (2009, p. 80). Laura’s intimate epistolary expression, through her gaze into the camera, establishes the most direct relationship possible between the film work and its spectator.

The film then develops from Laura’s personal experience of two intrinsically linked episodes for her: the historical events that occurred in Okinawa in 1945 and the recent death of her lover: “Rather than focusing on what

happened, such an approach favours a multiplicity of perspectives which understand historical truth as inevitably mediated by their own personal experiences" (Montero, 2012, p. 102). Historical and personal mourning are linked by the video game of the Battle of Okinawa, which Laura tries to conclude: "I can recognise myself on this small island, because my suffering, the only one, the most intimate, is also the most banal, the easiest to name. So, better give it a name that sounds like a song, like a movie, *Okinawa, mon amour*." Once again, the cinematic intertext serves to generate the perfect metaphor for the intimate emotion of the character. First, *Laura* (1944) by Otto Preminger in the sphere of love—Laura is the affectionate nickname that her partner gave the protagonist. Second, Alain Resnais's work regarding the intimacy–history link that I have already analysed in *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*, and that corresponds to the same hybridisation between the diary and the letter. As Blümlinger notes, "With this reference to Alain Resnais's film on Hiroshima (1959), Marker indicates the constructive principle behind *Level Five*: the linkage of a fictional, subjective history (Laura) with the real yet finally indescribable history of a collective annihilation (Okinawa)" (2010, p. 8).

In the eleventh entry of the epistolary diary, we observe how Laura adjusts the frame of her own image through the remote control of the camera, a symbolic sentence-image of audiovisual writing in the first person since it shows the specificities of its realisation. This manipulation of one's own image will gain all its meaning in the last epistolary diary entry. The reflection on the image provoked by this action is developed in the following segment: "I have the impression that you left me in a huge puzzle, and the discouraging idea that, in the end, there is no image," in which Laura turns her gaze away from the camera as she loses herself in the digression, distancing herself to a certain extent from her addressee. The seventeenth entry once again becomes a materialisation of the specificities and possibilities of the first-person audiovisual device, showing us its author looking at the images of Kinjo Shigeaki's tragic testimony, narrating the mass suicide in Okinawa. In her epistolary video diary, Laura portrays herself viewing the images, thus directly offering her own experience as a spectator, which the viewer contemplates on the monitor located behind her:

[A]nd others began to kill the people they loved most. They began with children, with the weak and the old, with those who lacked the strength to take their own lives. So husbands killed wives, parents killed children, brothers killed sisters. They killed them because they loved them. Such was the tragedy of those mass suicides.

Laura's crisis is already an evident reality in the following fragment, dated almost three months after the first one. The last entry offers a letter addressed to the missed loved one. He then uses the remote control of the camera to close the shot on her face and blur it, a new symbolic sentence-image of the vital circumstance, of the intimate suffering that she experiences.

In addition, Chris manipulates the epistolary video diary progressively throughout the film: inserting shots from the video game; adding representations of the cyberspace; introducing documentary images. It is through Laura's speech that Marker introduces a reflection on the possibilities of the documentary image to manipulate reality. First, the suicide of a woman from Saipan shows the consequences of being filmed and, therefore, publicly exposed. Marker then manipulates the image: he repeats the fall, enlarges the image to focus on its protagonist, slows it down, and finally stops it when the woman detects the camera filming her: "In slow motion you can see this woman turn back and spot the camera. Do we know she would have jumped if, at the last minute, she hadn't known she was watched?" Laura then relates the woman from Saipan to the man who jumped from the Eiffel Tower in 1900 with the intention of flying. Marker links both moments by means of a superimposition between the freeze image of the former and the moving image of the latter until it is also frozen to unify both moments of awareness of death, which coincides with the look at the cameras that capture them (Figure 6). The second image takes on movement again to show us the fall of the man, and then that of the woman is repeated:

The woman from Saipan saw the camera. She understood that this foreign demon not only stalked her but was able to show everyone that she had not had the courage to jump. She jumped. And whoever held the camera, and who aimed at her like a hunter, through the rifle scope, shot her, like a hunter.

Thus, the manipulation of the image becomes a search for the proof-image of the responsibility of filming. The freeze image that in *Sans soleil* captured the equality of the gaze registers here the awareness of death and the responsibility of the person filming. Superimposition and crossfade become a symbolic sentence-image that identifies the historical pattern of this responsibility, which is repeated from 1900 to 1945. Second, the manipulation of the images of the man from Borneo serves as a reflection on war propaganda. Marker shows the electronically processed image first and stops it when the burning man falls to the ground. Laura explains how



Figure 6. *Level 5* (Chris Marker, 1996) © Argos Films

the image has been located in different war conflicts throughout history. Marker then shows the continuation of the shot, now in its original version, in which we see the man getting up and continuing walking, and then he stops the image again:

The interesting thing is that, at the end of the original shot, you can tell he doesn't die. He gets up again. You feel he'll get over it. Like the napalm girl in Saigon. The ending has always been cut in all documentaries. A born symbol doesn't get out of it so easily! [...] Truth? What is truth? The truth is, most didn't get up.

The electronic treatment of the image then becomes a mark of the manipulation of the image, and the freeze frame then turns into a proof-image that now demonstrates the manipulation. Finally, the fake flag-raising on Iwo Jima insists on the battle of images. The moving image of the false hoist is frozen again, to be compared with the photographic image of the real one: "It wasn't much. Just a setup. There'd be more like it. The original was uninspiring anyway. [...] The picture has become an icon. It was used in Sarajevo in 1994, but not to hail the US Marines." Once again, the still image offers the proof-image of the manipulation of documentary images throughout history.

The enunciation of Chris's voiceover is associated with the current images of Japan coming from Laura and her partner's journey to the country. His 16 fragments move from the recent story of the couple to the historical events that took place in the different spaces shown. This passage materialises in his fifth expression, in which the images of present-day Okinawa are superimposed with archival images of the embarkation of thousands of children in 1944 to save them from the conflict on a ship that sank: "More than 1000 deaths. Even before the battle had started." The superimposition of the current image of a dancer and the archival images of the embarkation now embodies the temporary gap of the 50 years that separate us from those events. This superimposition gives way to the images of *Les morts sont toujours jeunes* (1977) by Nagisa Oshima, according to the credits of the film, in which, ten years later, the relatives of those children can pay tribute to their disappeared. These documentary images are shown without manipulation, as is the case with the interviews, as a materialisation of the true memory to be preserved. The same happens with his next expression, in which Chris shows the documentary image of a girl who survived the collective suicide, waving a white flag with which to protect the remaining Japanese army, as it is exhibited in the local museum. The journey of different historical enclaves is interrupted by the ninth fragment, which begins with a documentary film from the time that was censored for 35 years for offering a critical look at the war and its consequences: *Let There Be Light* (1944) by John Huston. After it, a fiction of the time is shown, that one surrendered to the propaganda purposes of the North American government: *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) by Allan Dwan. The conflict around the veracity of the discourse is transferred to the fictional space. While the spectator sees an original scene from the former, the latter is only referred to through a short close-up of John Wayne's face that is blurred and frozen.

Chris's account of the history of Okinawa concludes with Nagisa Oshima's images from *Cimetières marins*, again according to the work's credits, on which Chris states:

Without Okinawa's resistance, Hiroshima would not have occurred, and all the history of the century would have been different. Which means that even in the minor detail, our lives were fashioned by the events that took place on that little island, between the moment when Kinjo killed his parents, and that when General Ushijima committed suicide.

In his penultimate oral expression, Chris offers his opinion on Laura's condition. To do this, Marker shows the black-and-white portrait of the

character, her naked face, now without any mask, another materialisation of a documentary non-manipulated image: “She talked now of it with detachment, as if she had reached a limit beyond it the game no longer belonged to her, nor history.” Therefore, Chris’s enunciation is associated with the current documentary image of Japan to move from the protagonists’ journey in the present to the history of Okinawa 50 years earlier. The different registered spaces serve as a trigger for the narration of what happened there. Thus, Chris’s voice is instrumentalised to generate the historical account of Okinawa as one more element of the audiovisual thinking process of the essay film of which it is a part.

Created with the Hyperstudio programme, the video game offers two different experiences: the strategy game and the ordering of historical information at different levels. The strategy game embodies the impossibility of changing history through system errors, denial of access, and failure of any attempt at modification:

Strategy games are made to win back lost battles, aren’t they? Did you really believe a player would be capable of spending his nights watching history repeating itself? [...] I tried the *Marienbad* game. After a few moves, the computer said: “I won already, but we may go on if you like.” Death could say that.

The orderly storage of information—US Command, Witnesses, Media Coverage, Bibliography, etc.—is interpreted by Chris as another defeat to history: “Now Laura had understood the game could never change history. It would just repeat it, in a loop, with meritorious and probably useless obstinacy. Memorise the past in order not to relive it was an illusion of the 20th century.” Although not explicit, the conclusion is drawn. The storage of information in itself is of no use. It is essential to ask, to question, and to reflect on it. The failure of both possibilities is synthesised in the “Level Five,” which gives the title to the essay film, as an unattainable aspiration: the impossibility of changing the past, the impossibility of giving “meaning” to history. However, the documentary material stored allows us to learn from it. The testimonies from Kinjo and Nagisa Oshima evidence the only value of the non-manipulated expressions, as well as the different museums’ contents shown.

Finally, cyberspace, the network, is presented as the hegemonic space of “knowledge,” information that, however, is defined by saturation and concealment to become a kind of emotional and psychological black hole in which to disappear. Marker creates an electronic voice for the OWL that embodies the depersonalisation process it provokes:

Welcome to OWL, Optional World Link. This terminal will give you access to all available networks; radio, television, news networks, whether they exist or not, present or future. Bits have replaced savings. Gold and dollar belong in the past. Right here, feel the beating of the heart of the future. The Knowledge-standard!

Marker represents saturation through multiple random superimpositions of images that do not produce meaning. It is necessary to point out the difference between the superimpositions that Marker uses to generate his thinking process and therefore produce meaning and the random and cumulative superimpositions that only produce saturation in order to describe cyberspace. In the same way, the psychological and emotional abyss that it represents materialises into the figure of the spiral in virtual images, the evolution of the one that appears in *Sans soleil* concerning electronic images as a symbolic sentence-image of oblivion, now transformed into a symbolic sentence-image of identity loss. The Zone from *Sans soleil's* has become *Level Five's* cyberspace. Access to it requires the configuration of a mask that prefigures a kind of splitting of the personality, of the first identity fracture: "Pick up your mask." Marker instrumentalises the electronic voice assigned to the network to explain its failure as a project of the 20th century:

The Knowledge-standard. When you saw the kind of knowledge that was circulating on the net, you could smile. But that was exactly their game: make information circulate even further and further, faster and faster. In past times, to lend weight to money, they sought dense, rare material to act as a pledge inside coffers. They chose gold. Now money became invisible and volatile, so the new power needed a pledge that was invisible and volatile, too. They found knowledge. Atoms of knowledge came through our screens. It was into knowledge's black holes that this century's dreams of power fell, this unending century. Sometimes, the screen tore into black shapes reminiscent of other forms, those where the century had made the blueprints for its own suicide, engraving images in our minds. Images of ruins: The ruins of Coventry and Berlin, of Dresden and Stalingrad. The ruins of Okinawa.

It is the network that is responsible for Laura's disappearance. The abyss of this cyberspace causes the splitting of the personality through the mask to become the loss of self-recognition. Laura comes to speak with her own mask so as to finally not be recognised by the network itself, which denies her access. Following Laura's final entry of her epistolary diary, Chris's speech

concludes the film by recounting Laura's disappearance, without prior notice, leaving her home and workplace without a trace of her departure while the computers remain on. His hands write her name on the computer's keyboard to get a new error message: "I don't know how to Laura."

In the triple axis that the essay film presents—the thematic (memory, pain and oblivion) and the formal ones around the different types of images (documentary and fictional; analogue and electronic) and their devices (epistolary video diary, video game and cyberspace)—Marker's reflection advocates personal experience as the only fertile link to analyse historical facts and draw conclusions. Laura's personal suffering, expressed in a very intimate first person—the self-filming addressed to her loved one—is what allows her to empathise with the pain suffered in Okinawa, and the personal and individualised testimonies and documentary materials of what happened there allow for understanding the magnitude of the catastrophe. By leaving the sphere of the personal and concrete, the link with history gradually fades. The video game offers two stages of this disconnection. First, the storage of information generates a first distance from the event. Second, the strategy game converts personal experience into data devoid of emotion and reflection. The constant error produced by the video game from the beginning of the film evidences the failure of merely quantitative and strategic description. Finally, cyberspace offers the disorganised saturation of information that the individual cannot assimilate, and in which identity can only get lost. The documentary–fiction axis shows the danger of manipulating the documentary image. As opposed to the freeze frame as a search for the proof-image that ratifies the veracity of what happened, the manipulation of the image—its electronic conversion—shows the altered accounts of history. The crossfade and the superimposition become a materialisation of critical thinking since they are capable of linking events far apart in time: the woman from Saipan and the man from Paris, the present and the past from Okinawa. Its random and meaningless use in cyberspace shows how information saturation nullifies such critical thinking.

Having concluded the analysis of Chris Marker's essay films here, it is now important to address the evolution of his essayistic practice, which, through a progressive hybridisation and complexification of its enunciation, accomplishes its limit-experience in *Level Five*, reaching the saturation point of the Markerian audiovisual thinking. *Lettre de Sibérie*, the foundational work of the European Francophone essay film, used the epistolary device to convey the expression of subjectivity and imagination. To do so, the letter-film instrumentalised in its interior the collage of different

materials and devices: animation, music clip, advertisements, etc. *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires* utilised the conversation around the spectatorship of photographic images, enabling the shift among subjectivities. *Sans soleil* complexified the possibilities of the epistolary device, as well as the displacement among subjectivities, to offer a reflection on postmodernity and its images. The freeze cinematic image served as a starting point for reflection on memory and the equality of the gaze to later go through the evolution of the television, electronic, and virtual images. Finally, *Level Five* reaches the maximum complexity of the Markerian audiovisual thinking process. Not only are the enunciative devices multiplying, hybridising, and fragmenting—diary, letter, video game, cyberspace—but they also show a point of saturation in which the thinking process seems no longer possible. The further and faster nature of cyberspace, and digital technology in general, provokes a condition that avoids reflection. As Bellour expounds, Marker's audiovisual thinking revolves around alterity as the crucial element of the dialogical nature of the essay film:

Marker's formula is exchange, in the elective modes of conversation and correspondence [...] he knows that the only real exchange resides in the *address*, the way the person who speaks to us situates himself in what he says with respect to what he shows. [...] This fluidity implies knowing how to address oneself in order to move towards others, and knowing how to touch the other of each one who becomes involved. Beyond humanism, it is a gift of alterity, guaranteed perhaps by an ethic of reserve. (1997, pp. 110–111)

Histoire(s) du cinéma: Reflective Constellations and Accumulation

Histoire(s) du cinéma is generated as an episodic structure, composed of four double chapters whose titles provide us with a first approximation to its theme: 1A All the (Hi)stories, 1B A Single (hi)story, 2A Only Cinema, 2B Deadly Beauty, 3A The Coin of the Absolute, 3B A New Wave, 4A The Control of the Universe, and 4B The Signs Among Us. As already happened with the “et” in *Ici et ailleurs* and the slash in *JLG/JLG*, the plural in brackets synthesises the reflection that the essay film proposes between human history and the different histories it encompasses, as Godard himself indicates: “For me, history is the work of works, if you like; it encompasses them all. History is the name of the family; there are parents and children, there is

literature, painting, philosophy ..., History, let's say, it is all together" (Godard & Ishaghpour, 2000, pp. 24–25). Therefore, the series becomes "memory of cinema and of the century, as memory of time within time" (p. 18), generated as the filmmaker's soliloquy, his flow of thought, that there is no need to codify through an enunciative device as the ones previously analysed, confirming that the form of the essay film has achieved total autonomy. In the dialogue between Godard and Ishaghpour, the latter defines the work as "an Idea of cinema [...] in the form of a constellation" (p. 9), and Godard reformulates the term, applying it to each chapter:

Yes, eight constellations, or four times two ..., the visible and the invisible, and then within that, it was a matter of finding, through the traces that exist, other constellations ..., to resume Benjamin's sentence which says that the stars, at a given moment, form constellations and that the present and the past enter into resonance. (p. 9)

He thus returns to Walter Benjamin's reflection from *The Arcades Project*:

It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: it's not progression but image, suddenly emergent. —Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. Awakening. (1999 [1982], p. 462)

Benjamin's constellation-image, therefore, would be identified with the dialectical sentence-image, which Godard also defines: "What is rather the basis is always two, always presenting initially two images rather than one, this is what I call the image, this image made of two, that is to say the third image" (Godard & Ishaghpour, 2000, p. 27). This reflection on cinema and history, in the form of constellations, therefore, tries to find the relationships between the visible and the invisible and between the present and the past. In this way, both Godard's form of enunciation, the soliloquy, and the description of the result in the form of constellations, already speak of an audiovisual thinking process that has achieved its total independence thanks to the possibilities offered by video technology, evidencing the essay film belongs to postmodernity:

JLG: I would say that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is the result of thirty years of video [...] it is paracinema usable in a certain way to do what cinema could not do while maintaining the quality [...] she is a child, a natural daughter of cinema.

YI: She is a natural daughter of cinema, which, in the way you use it, has encompassed cinema, which has given you the possibility of a sort of totalisation of cinema. (pp. 29–30)

In this way, video is converted, in Ishaghpour's account, into a second potency of cinema:

But so that cinema can make this return on itself, in this sort of reflection on itself and its history, which involves the whole of this century and its history, therefore so that this can be done and that it becomes at the same time a writing, a cinema of the second potency, a work, the existence of the video, it seems to me, was necessary. (p. 25)

For Dubois, the work becomes the inflexion point of the use of video:

With *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, we reach a complete tipping point in the relationship between cinema and video: the autonomy taken by video is not only total [...] but it goes much further than anything we could have seen so far. [...] It is a question of encompassing cinema itself, of taking it head-on in all its dimensions. (2011, p. 259)

The elements used in both the visual image and the sound image delve into the idea of constellations through which, I argue, the saturation of the audiovisual thinking occurs. In the visual image, we find images from films, photographs, and paintings, as well as original filmed material and texts inscribed on the screen. In the sound image, we find, in addition to Godard's voice, sound fragments from cinematic, literary, and philosophical quotations in the filmmaker's voice or other presences, as well as music and sounds. Rancière describes this saturation as follows:

Godard produces another form of the "poem of the poem" by using the resources of videographic writing to render the power of the blackboard and the power of pictorial montage identical on the screen. He sends the machine devoted to information into shock with his method of saturating images or zigzagging through them; he superimposes in the same "audio-visual" unit an image from one film, an image from a second film,

the music from a third, a voice from a fourth, and words from a fifth; he complicates this intertwining further by using images from painting and by punctuating the whole thing with a commentary in the present. Each of his images and conjunctions of images is a treasure hunt: they open onto multiple paths and create a virtual space of indefinite connections and resonances. (2006 [2001], p. 167)

Considering all of these elements, it is also necessary to point out the progression of the work itself in terms of the saturation of the audiovisual thinking. The first two chapters, made in 1988, have as their essential characteristic this search for the limit, the border from which viewing the work hinders the spectator from following its discursive and reflective line. From the third chapter—the project was resumed in 1993—the saturation is substantially reduced, especially in the sound image. In *Moments choisis des Histoire(s) du cinéma* (2001), the feature-length version of the series, in which each chapter is reduced to ten minutes, the first two chapters are similar to the rest, reducing their saturation. If we consider the filmmaker's later essay films in which he continues to work in this same line—*The Old Place* (Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville, 1999), *Le Livre d'image* (Jean-Luc Godard, 2018)—we confirm that this experience of maximum saturation is not repeated. The reflection through the different constellations and this search for the limit in relation to the intelligibility of the audiovisual thinking process have consequences for the dialogical nature of the proposed essay film. The spectator no longer must complete it but must generate their own from the infinite possibilities offered by the reflective constellations drawn. As Godard notes in Chapter 1A, “each eye negotiates by itself” to create its “HisTOIre du cinéma” from the “Histoire du cinéMOI” he proposes.

The saturation that video makes possible raises other questions about the nature of the audiovisual thinking process. Godard continues to identify it with materiality: “to think with your hands” is a recurring quotation and idea in his essay films, associated with analogue film and its tools, in this case, the editing table. Saturation, generated in its multiple possibilities, shows the dematerialisation of the reflective task and its acceleration. The latter provokes that the audiovisual thinking process disappears in favour of its result. I argue that this chain of dematerialisation–acceleration–saturation causes, in the digital reality of the 21st century, the audiovisual thinking to be linked precisely with slow thinking, that is, with the deceleration of digital procedures. It is this experience of saturation that marks the turning point of the essay film for its practice in the 21st

century, defined by slow thinking as a strategy of opposition to the saturation–acceleration that Godard evidences in *Histoire(s)*. As I indicated in the Introduction, it will be necessary to develop a slow thinking “in which a temporalised, ‘slow’ thought may take place. This slowness is a form of theory as well as a performative semiotics.” “As a process, it is, ultimately, a temporalising strategy: [...] it opens temporal gaps for thought” (Rascaroli, 2022, pp. 36, 48). Finally, it is worth highlighting one more consequence of this saturation: the feeling of inapprehension regarding the reflection of a thought always in flight, which needs the film to be reviewed in order to be completed.

Returning to the elements used in this essay film, it is evident how the quotation, in all its possible forms, becomes the leading element of the work and reveals the possibilities of its audiovisual specificity, as Ishaghpour observes:

Through the work that cinema makes possible on itself thanks to video, you can both give the quotation as it is, and at the same time rework this quotation to make it your own and make it an element of your film. [...]] The quotation is extracted from its context, torn from the continuity of which it was part, and thus takes on a much stronger and at the same time different meaning, because it enters in resonance with others in order to create an image, a spark born from the encounter of discontinuous and heterogeneous elements. (Godard & Ishaghpour, 2000, pp. 33–34)

The manipulation of both images, sound and visual, occurs through numerous procedures. In the visual image, we find the black screen, the crossfade, the superimposition and its flickering, the photomontage, transition effects, as well as the repetition, slow and stop motion, and freezing of the image. In the sound image, we also find several equivalents of the visual procedures: the sound fade, the superposition of sounds, the slowdown, the echo, and different types of distortion. The saturation of the audiovisual thinking is generated from the accumulation of materials and procedures.

If we try to analyse the specificity of each of them, we find equally clear differences in their use compared to the filmmaker’s previous works. Regarding the black screen, although Godard associates it with the creation of rhythm—“for the rhythm I used the black screen” (Godard & Ishaghpour, 2000, p. 21)—I argue that the black screen in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, more specifically its first two episodes, has the goal of pausing the audiovisual thinking process to make it comprehensible for the spectator. Therefore, it is

about controlling its saturation by pausing it. It is necessary to highlight here the evolution of the essay film from *Letter to Jane*, in which, as I analysed in Chapter 1, the audiovisual thinking process emerges from the black screen to *Histoire(s)*, less than thirty years later, in which the evolution of the thinking reaches its saturation, and then the black screen serves to pause it and make its viewing possible.

We also observe the evolution of the audiovisual procedure of slow and stop motion. In *Lettre à Freddy Buache*, these procedures embody a sort of scientific observation of the documentary image. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, its use is linked, however, and first of all, to an evocative function of the fictional image, a kind of memory interstice with which to enable voluntary and involuntary memories to emerge around the image used, at the same time that it is configured as an image-container of this said memory in the continuation of the work, also associated with repetition. Furthermore, in most cases, both procedures are related to music in search of their aesthetic experience.

We can place the rest of the visual procedures in a progression regarding the creation of the sentence-image, the third image that Godard spoke of. This progression goes from crossfade to superimposition to the flickering of the two images. Godard uses the crossfade as a discursive element that provides continuity to the heterogeneity of the images. The superimposition is the basis of the dialectical, and also symbolic, sentence-image so widely used by Godard previously, and which Rancière links with the “fraternity of metaphors” mentioned by the filmmaker in Chapter 3B:

This is what Godard calls the fraternity of metaphors: the possibility that a face drawn by Goya’s pencil can be associated with the composition of a shot or with the form of a body tortured in the Nazi camp captured by the photographic lens; the possibility of writing the history of the century in many ways by virtue of the dual power of each image—that of condensing a multiplicity of gestures signifying a time and that of being combined with all those images endowed with the same power. (2009, p. 129)

For his part, Aumont analyses the emotional aspects of this procedure, defining “the beating of the images”:

The beating is the rapid alternation of two images, whether they entirely overlap or sometimes pierce or tear each other: a mixture of ultra-short editing, superimposition and transition effects produced with the help

of the video control system invented for the television. An eminently emotional form (because of its own dynamics and the effect of astonishment to which it lends by the insertion of one image into another), it is also an explanatory or demonstrative form [...]. With this form, Godard has somehow found the new *Pathosformel*, the new pathic formula, which [...] captures pure energy. Pure emotion because pure rhythm; pure form because pure movement: not beautiful but pure and energetic. (1999, p. 98)

In this way, the sentence-image is triggered by a sensation-emotion—“The image beats, it is too obvious, like a heart, by diastole–systole [...] the beating of the image is the apogee of the pathic montage (p. 132)” —as the detonator of the audiovisual thinking process:

Substitution by blinking images is also a method of research: from an intuition of rapprochement, the filmmaker/historian puts this in place of that to see what the substitution says. The connections are audiovisual hypotheses from which counterpoints, objections, contradictions, reasoning, and theses are born. (Scemama, 2006, p. 189)

From what Aumont calls “aithesis” (1999, p. 122), the process described by Català then takes place: “The emotion leads to the thought, and the thought prolongs the emotion beyond the first sensation. The images have a duration that allows sensations to become emotions capable of driving thought” (2022, p. 27).

Given the impossibility of carrying out here a detailed analysis of the work, as several authors have completed (Aumont, 1999; Scemama, 2006; Hardouin, 2007; Ruiz, 2009; among others), I will limit myself to analysing the use of a specific quotation, the film *Roma città aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), to deepen the analysis of the concept of constellation. The images of Rossellini’s film appear in four chapters: 2B, 3A, 4A and 4B. In 2B, the image of Pina’s death, slow and stop motion, is part of a montage of female cinematic deaths, “Deadly Beauty,” that, in turn, appear superimposed on Godard’s image. Rossellini’s work is, first, part of one of Godard’s intimate constellations. The slow and stop motion of the image is meant to retain the emotion. The sequence concludes with Marina, the informer, fainting in front of Giorgio’s tortured and now lifeless face, an image that occupies the entire screen. However, Godard creates his own montage here, since in Rossellini’s film, the image of Giorgio’s face corresponds to the moment he is shown to Don Pietro and not to Marina, of whom we only see the reaction.

Godard removes from his quotation any reference to the religious aspect of the original work.

In Chapter 3A, the same image of Giorgio's tortured and lifeless face appears again, now also slowed down, and the text "What is cinema" is added. After the black screen, the answer emerges from the documentary image of corpses lined up: "Nothing." Godard thus begins the process of fraternity between fiction and reality regarding Rossellini's film, which he explains in this chapter. Later, the film is the object of Godard's reflection while seeing an image from *Pierrot le fou* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965) first, and another from *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) after: "Why is that from '40 to '45 there was no resistance in cinema? There were resistance films. Left and right, here and there. But the only film, in the true sense, to resist America's occupation of cinema and a uniform way of making films, was an Italian film." After the black screen, the image of Pina's death emerges again, now without manipulation. Another black screen gives way to the image of Giorgio's tortured face and Marina's reaction (again Godard's montage) while he concludes the reflection: "It suffered greatly. But having betrayed twice, it suffered to have lost his identity. It found it with *Roma, città aperta* because the film was made by men without uniform. It was the only time." Godard defines the film as a flagship work in cinema history and also in the history of humanity.

In Chapter 4A, a new freeze image of Giorgio, now during torture with a blowtorch, is combined by flickering with a slowed-down image from *Strike* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) in which the strikers are subdued with water from hoses (Figure 7). In the sound image, we hear Alain Cuny reciting an original text by Élie Faure dedicated to Rembrandt (Faure, 1921, p. 65), which Godard converts into an expression about cinema: "Following our march toward death on the trace of its blood, cinema does not cry, does not cry over us. It does not comfort us, because it is with us, because it is us." Godard generates a symbolic sentence-image linking the oppression of pre-revolutionary Russia—the strikers in the film are finally massacred—with the Nazi occupation during the Second World War, through the cinematic images that have narrated both historical moments, to reflect on the function of cinema through Faure's quotation. According to Aumont, this beating between both images "ideally plays according to these two dimensions: terror, horror, at the same time didacticism (repression always equal, always atrocious)" (1999, p. 98).

In Chapter 4B, after the black screen, a slowed image of the detainees escaping from the trucks, including Francesco, appears, while the sound image shows the recording of André Malraux's speech on the occasion of



Figure 7. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1988–1998) © Gaumont

the entry into the Panthéon of the remains of the resistance hero, Jean Moulin, on 19 December 1964: “The time when, in the countryside, we were alert to dogs barking in the deep night. When many-coloured parachutes bearing weapons and cigarettes fell from the sky to clearings amid the glow of firelight.” Another black screen gives way again to the two images of Giorgio’s torture, and his scream, coinciding with Malraux’s words: “A time of basements and the desperate cries of torture victims with children’s voices. The struggle of the shadows had begun.” On the black screen appears the text: “The answer of darkness” to end the quotation while we see an image of Lon Chaney in *The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925), a film premiered the same year as Eisenstein’s, which fades into the image of some sinister corridors depicting those basements of horror: “Enter, here, Jean Moulin, with his terrible cortege of those who died in basements without having talked, like you, and perhaps even worse, after having talked.” Godard again embodies the fraternity between fiction and reality, in this case, through the link between Rossellini’s cinematic character and the historical character of Jean Moulin.

Thus, Rossellini’s film is first essentialised in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* through five of its images, two of which are manipulated to generate a new editing. This essentialisation is part of different constellations: the intimate one of

the filmmaker developed in “Deadly Beauty,” the cinematic itself and its links with other moments in cinema history, and its inscription in history as an exercise in resistance during the Second World War. The constellations of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* allow Rossellini’s work to be part of intimate, artistic, socio-political, and also historical reflections. What in *JLG/JLG* was portrayed as the author’s mental space, in *Histoire(s)* materialises as reflective constellations through which to venture.

Ishaghpour defines the work as a “legend” that allows us to identify *Histoire(s)* as the materialisation, at the end of the 20th century, of the Zone that Marker defined in *Sans soleil*: “I think of a world where each memory could create its own legend,” “the handwriting each one of us will use to compose his own list of ‘things that quicken the heart,’ to offer or to erase. In that moment, poetry will be made by everyone,” In Godard’s case, it is his audiovisual thinking on cinema history, choosing memory between the two options Marker gave. Ishaghpour proposes:

[A]n operatic and reflective form, lyrical and melancholic at the same time, like “the legend” of the twentieth century produced by the effect of cinema and reproduced by it. Cinema in the century and the century in cinema where, in this interstice of the fiction and the document, the image of reality and the reality of the image meet, between the historical and the poetic, the immeasurable horror and the magical and demonic “deadly beauty” of cinema ... and also the need for their redemption. (Godard & Ishaghpour, 2000, p. 112)

While *Sans soleil* made the electronic image implode through its emptying, *Histoire(s)* explodes the videographic image through its saturation. Both works reflect on time, memory, and history: the former from the documentary image, the latter from the artistic image.

Conclusions

After these analyses, we can conclude how both essay films reflect on a common topic—the relationship between memory and history—and explore the saturation of the audiovisual thinking through several strategies. *Level Five* focuses on the hybridisation of the devices—epistolary video diary, video game, cyberspace—and the complexity of the enunciation, which in turn draws a double progression—of emotional disconnection and acceleration and saturation of information—that prevents reflection

and provokes identity fracture. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is created from the construction of reflective constellations that explore the saturation of the audiovisual thinking through the accumulation of elements from enunciative autonomy. In *Level Five*, the slowing down and freezing of the documentary image are hermeneutical tools for seeking historical “truth,” and the crossfade becomes a symbolic sentence-image of the reflection carried out. However, given the acceleration imposed by cyberspace, the crossfade loses its critical capacity and becomes a random combination as a consequence of the impossibility of reflection. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, slow and stop motion generates a memory interstice through which to recover the voluntary and involuntary memory associated with the image while at the same time investing it with an aesthetic-poetic charge. While the crossfade allows the narrative linking of the elements that draw the constellation, the alternative beating of two images generates the dialectical or symbolic sentence-image that provokes reflection based on the first sensation from the proposed juxtaposition. While Marker focuses his attention on the accumulation and acceleration of new audiovisual materials of digital reality that avoid reflection through the hybridisation and complexity of devices, Godard produce the saturation of the audiovisual thinking through the accumulation of elements and procedures with which he constructs his reflective constellations, defined precisely by the absence of a previously codified enunciative device. Furthermore, both essay films claim the essential participation of the sensation–emotion–feeling axis as part of the audiovisual thinking process, which opposes mere accumulation and requires the deceleration of the audiovisual flow. In this way, both works, at the gates of the 21st century and its vertiginous digital possibilities for image and sound, demonstrate the need to redefine the audiovisual thinking process as slow thinking that slows down the audiovisual speed of postmodern reality.

Works Cited

- Aumont, J. (1999). *Amnésies. Fictions du cinéma d'après Jean-Luc Godard*. POL.
- Bellour, R. (1997). The book, back and forth. In C. van Assche & Y. Gevaert (Eds.), *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine?* (pp. 109–154). Centre Georges Pompidou.
- Benjamin, W. (1999). *The arcades project*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Blümlinger, C. (2010). The imaginary in the documentary image: Chris Marker's *Level Five*. *Image & Narrative*, 11(1), 1–15. <http://ojs.arts.kuleuven.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/51>

- Català, J. M. (2022). News of the end of the world: The essay film as mentality. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.02>
- Cooper, S. (2008). *Chris Marker*. Manchester University Press.
- Dubois, P. (2011). *La question vidéo. Entre cinéma et art contemporain*. Yellow Now, Côté Cinéma.
- Faure, É. (1921). *Histoire de l'art. L'Art moderne*. Les Éditions G Crès et Cie.
- Godard, J.-L., & Ishaghpour, Y. (2000) *Archéologie du cinéma et mémoire du siècle. Dialogue*. Farnago.
- Lupton, C. (2005). *Chris Marker: Memories of the future*. Reaktion Books.
- Montero, D. (2012) *Thinking images: The essay film as a dialogic form in European cinema*. Peter Lang.
- Rancière, J. (2006). *Film fables*. Bloomsbury Academic / (2001). *La fable cinématographique*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *The emancipated spectator*. Verso / (2008). *Le Spectateur émancipé*. La Fabrique éditions.
- Rascaroli, L. (2022). Unfolding borders: For a semiotics of essayistic border images. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), 32–52. <http://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.03>
- Scemama, C. (2006). *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard. La force faible d'un art*. L'Harmattan.

7. Autofiction

Abstract: This chapter studies the use of autofiction as enunciative device through the analysis of three works. *Lettre pour L...* (Roman Goupil, 1992) instrumentalises autofiction to generate an audiovisual thinking process that reflects on the love–cinema–politics dialectics through the collage of different enunciations, genres, materials and enunciative positions. *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* (Lætitia Masson, 2004) creates autofiction from the adaptation of Christine Angot's *Pourquoi le Brésil* (2002), developing its audiovisual thinking through a double juxtaposition: between nonfiction and autofiction, and between nonfiction and fiction. *Viaggio nella dopo-storia* (Vincent Dieutre, 2015) is an autofiction that appropriates Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (1954) to create a *mise-en-post-history*, an audiovisual thinking process on the evolution and divergences between cinematic modernity and audiovisual postmodernity.

Keywords: essay film, audiovisual thinking, autobiography, adaptation, appropriation, Francophone cinema.

While in Chapter 5 I analysed how autobiography is hybridised with self-portraiture to reflect on trauma in *Du verbe aimer* and to experience the subjective time that reconciles present and past in *Les Plages d'Agnès*, in this chapter I aim to analyse how autofiction, as “the postmodern form of autobiography” (Doubrovsky, 2007, pp. 64–65) in which the author does not narrate their past but rather fabulates their present (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2021b), becomes another enunciative device for the essay film with very relevant possibilities. In *Lettre pour L...* (Roman Goupil, 1992), a pioneering work of cinematic autofiction, Goupil creates an epistolary autofiction of his experience of the Balkans War to generate reflection on the value of the film work and the intellectuals' political commitment. In *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* (Lætitia Masson, 2004), the filmmaker turns the adaptation of the novel *Porquoi le Brésil* (Christine Angot, 2002) into an autofiction to generate an audiovisual thinking process about artistic creation in the first

person and the gender issues involved. In *Viaggio nella dopo-storia* (Vincent Dieutre, 2015), the filmmaker places himself on the border between the adaptation and appropriation of the film *Viaggio in Italia* (Roberto Rossellini, 1954) to generate reflection on the distances that separate the modern and postmodern experiences, both in the political-social dimension, based on gay identity, and in the cinematic sphere, including the adaptation–appropriation dialectics. The analyses of these works will allow me to conclude how the self-representation forms and the self-fabulation discourses that define autofiction serve as an enunciative device for the essay film to generate audiovisual thinking around the identity–creation binomial.

Lettre pour L...: From Autobiography to Self-Criticism

Romain Goupil's *Lettre pour L...* is one of the first materialisations of cinematic autofiction, which fits perfectly with the literary parameters that define this practice (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2021b) and is enunciated in the form of a letter-film (Monterrubio Ibáñez, 2018). From this double device, epistolary and autofictional, the filmmaker creates an essay film that reflects on the bond between political militancy and personal experience concerning audiovisual creation. The letter is addressed to L—played by Françoise Prenant—who has recently been diagnosed with a serious illness. Goupil explains it on the black screen that precedes the title: “In July 91 in Paris L tells me the news of this disease that threatens her ... DO NOT die!” The news provokes the creation of this epistolary autofictional essay film, generated during Goupil's stays in Moscow, Gaza, Germany, Belgrade, and Sarajevo in 1992 and early 1993. Therefore, the enunciation begins from Goupil's present, through his voiceover, in Moscow, waiting for news from L—“I spend every hour hoping for a letter from you, a message, a word, a photo”—while filming with a handheld camera. A nude female figure is then superimposed, which we will later identify with L. Goupil's voice is not only limited to the off-screen, but is also produced in the image, in which he addresses L on different occasions looking at the camera. In analysing its autofictional realisation, I differentiate among three practices: autofictional reconstructions of the past; parodic autofiction in the form of short pieces or sketches; autofiction in the present.

The essay film is built through the hybridisation of these three practices, which are organised in relation to two clearly defined spaces. The first part, corresponding to Goupil's stay in Moscow, is created from the loving past of the protagonists as a couple through documentary material, with which to generate autofictional reconstructions of what they experienced. In its

intimate aspect, the narration of the past is closely linked to the commitment and political activism of those same years. From this reflection on the intimate and the political, and from a question by L about cinematic practice, as I will analyse below, the different parodic sketches mainly included in this first part of the work arise. Later, Goupil's stay in Gaza in the dramatic urgency of the present of the Palestinian people provokes that, after a vital intimate confession, the essay film minimises the past narration to focus on showing the present and its autofiction: the reality of Germany, Belgrade, and Sarajevo at a key moment in our recent history. Having analysed the general structure of the film, I can now approach a detailed study of it.

After the first images of the Moscow hotel where he is staying, filmed with a handheld camera by Goupil, the filmmaker recalls the first encounter between the two and their first night together, while the visual image of the present of the enunciation in Moscow changes to that of L at the time evoked: "You were seventeen years old; it was late '68 or early '69. Annie, your best friend, had taken you to a meeting. I only remember you, your dark hair, your rebellious appearance, your huge eyes lost in that room." Next, the oral expression occurs for the first time in the image and in black and white, with Goupil addressing the camera to recount the arrival of a letter from L to which he now responds, wondering about the question she asks him: "When are you going to make a good film? [...] But what is a good film? A good story? Was our story good?" From this moment on, the audiovisual thinking process of the essay film generates reflection on the definition of "a good film": Is a good film a good story? Would their story then be a good film? Goupil resumes the autofiction of the past in black and white, in which, with L's return to Paris in September 1969, after her stay in Algeria, the protagonists decide to live together: "We loved each other, you painted, I filmed." Goupil's own subjective camera shows a fight with a neighbour, in a comic tone, for which he is taken to the police station.

Next, the first autofictional sketch appears, a silent film parody entitled *Les petits amants*, which represents the discovery by the male character of the infidelity of the female character. The film continues with the reconstruction of a fight between the couple in the sound image, which is completed in the visual image with a montage of blurred photographs by means of crossfades and cuts. It concludes with the sound of a slap, to continue the autofictional narration now in motion, in which Goupil's voiceover reappears:

I was screwed. It was the only blow exchanged, well, not exchanged, given, during our entire history. True, it was inexcusable. But what to do. Twenty minutes of silence at least. I thought it was regrettable but

that, all in all, it was better to forget. Not you, you approached silently and all of a sudden, I got a stool on my head. As usual, it turned into a film.

In this way, Goupil realises the passage from personal experience to cinematic creation. The couple's conflict makes him reflect on the culture of patriarchy in order to criticise it through a new parody, this time a colour piece entitled *Le pauvre causette*, in which Goupil creates the male version of Cinderella. On a table, he shows the essay *Du côté des petites filles* (Elena Gianini Belotta, 1973), which analysed the sexist and patriarchal education that children received at the time: "Cinderella, if the condom I kept fits perfectly on your penis, you are my king. Let's explore the world together." The essay film uses all the tones and registers—parody, criticism, confession—and contrasts them to generate audiovisual thinking, as happens next with documentary images of L with friends, first in black and white and later in colour, on which we heard Goupil's voice:

You put the accent, without ceasing, on what I did not want to understand. On the difference between my revolutionary speeches and my daily behaviour. My taste for power, for force, establishing elitist, contemptuous relationships with others. I started to have doubts. You had won, it was late. I stopped my militancy, disgusted by this image I had of myself: harsh, intransigent, intolerant. I lost you. I met drugs. I got lost, I turned and returned to you. I clung to the camera, you walked away.

Goupil illustrates the breakup with L through Prenant's participation in Raymond Depardon's *Une femme en Afrique* (1985): "You went to other princes, other kingdoms, you stayed in Africa." Thus, the identities of L and Depardon's character are confused, and the voiceover attributable to L repeats the dialogue of Depardon's character shown in the image: "I can't imagine myself going back to Paris. I don't feel like it. Here is not life; it is not organised. That's what I like. Well, I understand myself. I imagine things have not changed in Paris. Anyway, I don't feel like going back."

In this way, a symbolic sentence-image is generated between the fictional image by Depardon and the autofictional sound image by Goupil. Someone else's fictional creation becomes an expression of personal experience, embodying reflection on autofiction. The film then returns to the present, in which Goupil films himself through two cameras with different positions, to reflect on his revolutionary aspirations and the

current politics of the world order: “We wanted to change the world. [...] Is this the realised utopia? The ultimate goal? The culmination of progress? Was it for that? For the advertisement film? Good film, very good film, perfect film. Ideal propaganda for this society under construction, for the new world order.” The digression gives way to documentary images of the Muscovite inhabitants, followed by a musical piece in black and white, *En avant vers le marché*, in which we observe the interior of the subway and the travellers moving down the escalators. Next, again showing the documentary image of the city, Goupil reflects on the essence of cinema and its relationship to history:

And what if cinema was not to see but to believe? Believe in the meaning of a story, in the meaning of history; mass instrument that develops an epic awareness of the world that unfolds this story. Past history, cinematheques, festivals and museums. And we only owe a flattering imposture, our self-proclamation as a seventh art.

Thus, he takes up L's question: “But what is a good film?” The image shows a second superimposition of L's naked body on the images of Moscow, which gives way to a new parodic fiction, entitled *Un film bien*, about militant cinema. In it, Goupil plays a caricature of Jean-Luc Godard. He descends from a helicopter carrying a statue of the Franco-Swiss filmmaker and assigns to his brigade “Une image juste” the mission of finding “an Arab, a real one, a worker, a real one.” The task becomes the reification of the working class, and the workers addressed refuse to be used. Next, we contemplate a second version of *Un film bien*, this time followed by the subtitle “Le paradis c'est ici ...” [Paradise is here], a quotation previously attributed to Mikhail Gorbachev. The sketch begins with the same set of the previous scene in black and white of the neighbours of Goupil and L in their past as a couple, but now in colour. The previous critical parody of militant cinema now becomes a naïve social utopia, in which an intertitle appears, now attributed to Godard: “A good film. But is it really a film?” L reads *Empedocle d'Agrigente* (Jean Zafiropulo, 1953) in a coffee shop while a violinist plays behind her, and all the customers read the *France Soir* in which there is a photograph of the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, headlined “Le bonheur,” and a second piece of news about the Auriol massacre, which also took place in July of that year. Later, a cashier calls her on the street and gives her money. Finally, in a metro station, she meets Goupil, who, after launching a speech to the users about his situation—“I am 40 years old. I was an activist. I took drugs. I was in prison. My wife left me. [...] I buy *Libération*.

I work in the audiovisual field. I have a car. I want to get married and have children”—returns their money to them. This past autofiction of the couple after the breakup becomes a new space for political and social criticism first and for awareness of the love experience later, with a quotation from William Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (1602): “This is the monstrosity in love [...] that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit.”

Goupil then imagines a trip to Italy with L, which begins with photographs to continue with the staging of what he imagined: “You see, that’s a good film. Do everything so that the spectator feels the same thing at the same moment: fear, desire, laughter, with a beginning, a middle and an end.” The imagined trip would have prevented the breakup of the couple and L’s subsequent relationship with an actor, whom Goupil would have eliminated and whom he imagines using fictional images by other authors, only referenced in the final credits. Therefore, Goupil’s autofiction is not only built with his own material, but also using various other people’s images that are never referenced as such within the work. The reflection on the links between love, cinema, and politics continues:

That’s a good film: feeling the same thing at the same time. Reading leaves you free. No one reads the same passage the same way. You go back, you dream, you start again, you stop, you are free. The cinema imposes on you, at the rate of 24 frames per second, what you must feel. It is the opposite of freedom. It’s closer to politics, to manipulation.

Next, a new autofictional sketch presents Goupil as the director of the film *Fermeture pour travaux* [*Closed for Business*], interviewed for television on the occasion of its premiere, a new caricature of the achievements of the political commitment of French intellectuals, and the role of the media within the film industry. This autofictional parody concludes with the same question, now asked in anger: “But fuck, what’s a good film?” The present of the enunciation then moves to the Gaza Strip to begin the second part of the essay film. A shot of Goupil from behind, leaning out the window, gives way to documentary images of the city while he recounts his last visit to Palestine:

I arrived in Gaza yesterday afternoon. I thought about you all night. Look, I’m in the small room I occupied when I came to shoot the film against torture for Amnesty International. It was a year ago. You said that torture and attacks against human rights existed everywhere. I had chosen Israel

because it is a democracy, because there are still exceptional laws and torture is committed, because there are also people who fight against injustice, because you thought exactly the same.

Goupil now shows the discarded images of the three-minute short film he made a year earlier in Gaza for the collective film *Contre l'oubli* (1991), produced by Amnesty International, in which 30 filmmakers showed 30 true stories of violation of human rights for political reasons around the world. One year after the shooting, Goupil reflects now on the reasons why the images he recorded to show the testimony of Abd al-Ra'uf Ghabin, arrested by the Israeli army in Shati, were not part of the final cut:

It was a fair film, but not a good film. Why did I frame his speech in a commentary that says what to think about it? I know that this plan was not good: illustrative, touristic. This plan did not respect the sacred silence of those who cannot tell themselves. I didn't edit it. [...] Those three minutes were nothing.

A year later, the filmmaker returns to Palestine with the intention of locating the interviewee, from whom he never heard after he was arrested again. The images then show the present encounter and the tragic reality of Gaza and the Palestinian people, provoking Goupil's intimate reflection, questioning himself about political and personal and intimate commitment while we contemplate a close-up of his face:

I'm thinking of us. I only understand here, now, why you didn't want me to use the words "efficiency," "decision," "action." These are their words. For us, it must be "soft," "slow," "attentive." How many nights have I wasted? How many forgotten caresses, looks, simple looks that I haven't laid on the nakedness of your desired body. Only the desire to possess, to dominate. Only the idea of demanding, of snatching, of stealing. I did not understand that you are my history. I did not understand anything.

The filmmaker abandons the documentary image of Gaza to insert again an extract from *Une femme en Afrique* that shows Françoise Prenant/L in the desert and with which Goupil wonders the reason for their breakup: "Why didn't we stay together?" Next, a last sketch titled *Ça va*, understanding this expression as "the terrible echo, the last sentence of our lobotomised generation, satisfied with the happiness of our commodity society," puts an end to the parodic fictional contents. From here on, the essay film concentrates

on the narration of Goupil's present in his stays in Berlin, Belgrade, and Sarajevo, in which the reconstruction of the past is significantly reduced. In the present time of armed conflicts in the Balkans, the filmmaker continues to ask himself, and others, about the meaning of "a good film." Already in Berlin—"I dread your omissions, your lies, that you regularly come to your examinations at the hospital. How do you feel? I have only one desire today: to be with you in Paris"—the essay film enunciation materialises through a new procedure. While until now the present narration has been produced through either documentary images and the epistolary voiceover or Goupil's speech on screen addressing the camera, from this moment on, the filmmaker splits as a character. Thus, Goupil–author and Goupil–character coexist in the essay film as subject and object respectively. Goupil–author—who meets Regine in Berlin and films her while asking her about the city—becomes Goupil–character, who proposes that she accompany him on his trip to Sarajevo as his assistant. In this way, the filmmaker generates a present autofiction in which the appearances of L in the image—autofictional reconstruction, past real images, and fictions by other authors—become memories of Goupil–character. The expressions of the epistolary voice are then produced on the visual image of the present autofiction of the trip to Belgrade: "I want to see if there is any opposition to the project of Serbian domination over the whole ex-Yugoslavia. See if there is a knot against the extreme-right association with the former leaders of the League of Communists." Already in the Serbian city, the documentary image and the voiceover alternate with the present autofiction in which Goupil–character meets the actor Milena Vuskovic (played by Anita Mancic), with whom he talks throughout one day.

In December 1992, Goupil arrives in Sarajevo intending to film everything he sees in order to capture the reality of the besieged city. There, he meets the filmmaker Ademir Kenovic, who guides him and offers his valuable testimony about the horror suffered by the inhabitants of Sarajevo. He translates a poster pasted on the façade of an attacked building: "Sarajevo, a fairytale full of death." The documentary images of Goupil–author now replace any autofiction to show the reality of the city, as Stéphane Bouquet points out:

The film allows itself to be invaded by urgency, it literally breaks down, it abandons its heterogeneous structure that wisely weaves together the intimate and the world, the true/false amateur film, the humorous farce and the documentary image, to film, as if stunned, everything that sees [...] in order to give testimony; it seems as giving cinema back the role that its inventors gave it: a simple means of registration. (1994, p. 71)

The filmmaker joins the day-to-day images of the survival of the inhabitants of Sarajevo to the voice of the Bosnian writer Abdulah Sidran reciting his poem *Testament du merveilleux* [Testament of the marvellous], subtitled on the screen. After this hybridisation between reality and poetry, Goupil also films the shooting that Kenovic is working on at the time and in which Sidran is taking part. The question “What is a good film?” could not be more pertinent than in this cinematic action in the middle of a war. On the images of the shooting, showing Sidran’s character hanged, dead, we hear Kenovic’s answer:

I think making a good film is practically impossible. Something happens sometimes, and it makes for a good film. No, I do not know. The only thing I know is that I don’t want to make a well-made film, that is to say beautiful, clean, correct. The film that we are trying to make at this moment tries to highlight the situation, to reveal the feelings, the thoughts we have, what we feel here together, every day, for nine months. A good film? I don’t know. It’s probably impossible.

The news of L’s hospitalisation then provokes Goupil’s return to Paris. The visit to the hospital does not show the epistolary addressee but is limited to some detailed shots of the filmmaker’s waiting and the nurse’s refusal, given his intention to show L the essay film in progress. Goupil’s voiceover narrates the encounter, while the visual image shows the protagonists turned into some kind of playful troglodytes:

She told me she was furious that I came back to Paris. She asked me if by chance she wasn’t the pretext and the alibi for all my cowardice. If I hadn’t come back with the secret hope of filming her funeral. She screamed; she said I hadn’t understood anything about this disease. How terrible it was, as if everywhere in Europe we no longer had any immune defence against fascism. As if we had become so weak and so cowardly that we thought it were enough to protect ourselves. She was smiling and furious. She demanded I leave as soon as possible. [...] On January 8, 1993, I left.

With the filmmaker’s return to Sarajevo, the documentary images of the warfare bring the essay film to an end, while Goupil’s voiceover recites Sidran’s poem again, as if by enunciating it he could better capture the reality he is filming and get closer to the longed for good film. The image of a woman against the light, who affirms, “They have ruined my past, my present, my future,” concludes the film, as her image fades to black.

Lettre pour L... becomes an exemplary cinematic materialisation of Philippe Gasparini's definition of literary autofiction as an "autobiographical and literary [or cinematic] text presenting many features of orality, formal innovation, narrative complexity, fragmentation, alterity, contrast and self-commentary which tend to problematise the relationship between writing [cinematic creation] and experience" (2008, p. 311). It shows the infinite possibilities of autofiction as an enunciative device of the essay film. Using the multiplexity-image and the distance-image of postmodernity (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2007), the author-character's autofictional instance allows the hybridisation of the most dramatic documentary reality with the most absurd ironic and parodic fiction to reflect on the ambivalences and uncertainties of the human being at the crossroads between intimate experience and political and social commitment, continuing the itinerary traced by *Sans soleil* and *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* and their reflection on the crisis of historicity and cinematic reproduction.

***Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil: From Adaptation to Self-Knowledge*¹**

In *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil*, Lætitia Masson creates an essay film based on Christine Angot's literary autofiction, *Pourquoi le Brésil ?* (2002), turning the adaptation of a literary work into a parallel work of cinematic autofiction. The friendship between the two, who had already collaborated three years earlier in the short film *Emmenez-la* (2001), directed by Masson and based on Angot's story *La Peur du lendemain* (2001), also determines the level of intimacy and interest in their respective works. In *Pourquoi le Brésil ?*, Masson appears on various occasions, and Angot expresses the emotional impact that the viewing of the short film caused her: "I liked the film, but I was at the bottom of the hole, again, like for months" (Angot, 2002, p. 44). As explained in the film, Masson's husband, Jean-Marc Roberts, is Angot's publisher.

The filmmaker builds an autofictional and metadiscursive essay film in which three dimensions coexist: nonfiction in her work as a filmmaker behind and in front of the camera, in which the writer also appears; the fictionalisation of Masson's own life, and the fiction of Angot's novel. The duplication of the filmmaker's first-person enunciation is established in

¹ A shorter analysis of this film is published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "Women's Essay Film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the Female Audiovisual Thinking Process," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 15 July 2023, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>

the second scene of the film. Masson, in front of the camera, introduces herself and describes the economic circumstances that led her to accept the project. That same shot is repeated, but now the filmmaker is played by actor Elsa Zylberstein, who also plays Angot in the adaptation of the novel. From that moment on, the filmmaker uses nonfiction to reflect on the process of creating the film and the space of fictionalisation to fabulate her personal and professional experience during its creation; all these dimensions are based on the reflections Angot's novel and its adaptation provoke in her. The essay film develops its audiovisual thinking process through a double juxtaposition: between nonfiction and autofiction regarding the conflict about using the narration in the first person, and between nonfiction and fiction concerning the conflict about how to represent what is alien to the filmmaker's experience.

After the initial sequence described, the space of nonfiction is constructed by means of two approaches: Masson's self-filming in her solitary personal space and the exteriorised filming of her encounters with other people. In addition, both are overlaid with the filmmaker's voiceover, which also moves between nonfiction and fiction, thus becoming the first level of reflection. Masson portrays herself in a revealing progression. First, she places the camera in fixed positions that capture her on the screen, occasionally looking at the camera. Next, she takes the camera in hand to film herself in the mirror, while her voiceover expresses the personal conflict that the project has caused: "No producer, no money, no more actors ... Nearly no husband; he is sick of my shit." As Julia Dobson indicates, these shots "articulate a deeper ambivalence about the relationship between lived experience and creative agency" (2012, p. 150). Later, she films her surroundings through succinct panorama shots while continuing her musing on the creative conflict she is facing: "I can't do it either. The book resists me. Their story resists me. How to show the complexity of their relationship? I'm not sure I understand it." However, except for the initial scene described, we never hear her voice on-screen or off-screen in this first intimate space. Expressed in voiceover, her reflection carries over into the other two spaces. As Kate Ince notes, these tactics imply "a feminist phenomenological approach to embodied female subjectivity, by allowing a female director's self-reflexive approach to her own subjectivity to be explored as it is performed" (2017, p. 129). Masson demonstrates that her reflections are not only the result of intellectual activity but also of the physical environments she inhabits and her behaviour therein.

Angot's literary narration implies total exposure of her private life and the experience of the romantic encounter. Masson, in a stable relationship,

married and the mother of two children, decides to explore this reality through her attraction to her children's paediatrician. Thus, in opposition to the instability of the camera over the shoulder to represent Angot's fiction about passion, Masson uses the fixed camera to create her own fictionalisation, which shows the couple's routine. Masson's conflict with adaptation has two aspects: the distance between the experience narrated by Angot and Masson's reality gives rise to the second, the first-person narration. It is crucial to notice that the autofictional space shows Masson's inability to play herself, to perform her experiences in the first person: "I could never say I love you, like that, in a film. Like Christine does in her book. I film other people's love, because I can't film my own."

After agreeing to make the film with producer Maurice Rey in the autofictional space, Masson begins to reflect on the nonfiction space (sitting in the kitchen peeling carrots), from which the first episode of the fiction emerges. A fade to black and the intertitle "Alone" (the first of nine throughout the film) lead us to the third space generated by the essay film: the adaptation of Angot's text, in which Zylberstein also plays the writer. Similarly, Marc Barbé plays both Masson's husband and Angot's partner in the novel, the journalist Pierre-Louis Rozynès. In this space, Masson's voiceover becomes the narrator of the story, which on various occasions reads passages from the literary work. The fictional images of Christine in solitude—I will use the first names for the autofictional and fictional characters—upon her arrival in Paris remain inserted in Masson's reflection. The fiction materialises as a reverie caused by the filmmaker's reflection on the adaptation task. Resuming the nonfiction shot, Masson looks at the camera while her voiceover explains her "scientific" purpose about the passion narrated by Angot: "Searching, waiting for love, we know, I knew. But I don't remember. First step: finding it again."

After an unsuccessful session of speed dating related from the nonfiction, the first meeting with the paediatrician—Jewish like Angot's partner—who will become Lætitia's object of desire is recounted from the autofiction, just like the subsequent dinner with the husband. Masson describes her purpose with the film: "The problem with filming this book is putting myself in Christine's place." Then, the nonfiction image of Masson typing on the computer in the bathroom merges with that of the autofictional character in the same situation: "For me, the true fidelity to Christine's book is to do the same as her, to seek the truth of emotions." In this way, the crossfade embodies the transfer that Masson makes of the emotional experience to her autofictional character, which is confirmed by the following scene of Lætitia, again with the paediatrician, followed by Masson lying on the

floor next to the computer, once again wondering whether to live a loving experience with him.

In a later autofictional sequence, Lætitia talks with her husband about the actors who could play the characters, who are still conceived of as independent in two different couples. Jean-Marc wants to read the script, but she is not ready to show it to him. He then offers to play himself, and Lætitia's response is revealing: "I can't. I should but I can't." The conflict of autofictional creation then arises: "I'm a monster. An ogre who needs fresh flesh." Lætitia sees the autofictional narrative as feeding off "human blood." The autofiction continues to show the third meeting with the paediatrician, in which they kiss. It embodies the fantasy not experienced in real life. Again, Masson's reflection occurs in the nonfiction: "The scene when she kisses him, he would find it pathetic. He would be right. It is pathetic." Jean-Marc finally reads the script and asks Lætitia about the paediatrician, who becomes a source of conflict in the relationship.

In the nonfictional meeting with Daniel Auteuil, in which she offers him the lead role, Masson explains, "It's more like the book that adapts the film ... and not the film that adapts the book." The sentence expresses the reflection proposed by the essay film: how the confrontation of one's own creative activity with the work of others generates reflection on the former, in this case, concerning autofictional creation. Auteuil and other actors reject the roles, and Masson meets with Francis Huster to offer him the role of Pierre-Louis. He hates the script but agrees to do the film. The autofiction shows us Lætitia's telephone discussion with her producer, who rejects the proposal. It is then that Masson films herself for the first time in front of the mirror with a handheld camera: "No producer. No money. No more actors. Nearly no husband. He's sick of my stuff." The filmmaker now feels close to Angot at the beginning of the literary narrative: "I had risked everything, now I was alone. Like Christine at the beginning of her book. This time, I could feel her emotions." Thus, the previously expressed proposal materialises: the literary work has transformed Masson's personal and creative experience, reflected and revered through autofiction. It is then that fiction can finally be conceived. Masson takes up the fictional sequence to continue it, citing the literary work for the first time: "I felt ready to love. But I still had to meet THE person in the world" (Angot, 2002, p. 18). Masson resumes her nonfiction image in front of the mirror, as she did with the first fictional attempt, confirming fiction as a reverie space belonging to reflection. The fiction then continues with its second chapter, "The encounter," which narrates the encounter between Christine and Pierre-Louis, and

its continuation: “Second encounter” and “The day after.” Masson shows herself brushing her teeth in front of the mirror in the nonfiction as Christine prepares for “The first date” with Pierre-Louis. The filmmaker then alternates the fictional sexual encounter between the latter with the autofictional one between Lætitia and Jean-Marc, passion versus love, to quote the literary text:

Then we go to my room. We don't talk much. We go to the eyes. And to smiles. Constant, and we say almost nothing. I think to myself: maybe it's him. It's him, maybe it's him. [...] Not that I'm alternating or changing my mind, but was a swing of the two sentences. [...] The next day he came over to my house, he said: I am the only Jew who hides in peace times. He was a Jew. And it was erotic too, of course, the race. (pp. 71–72)

Masson then reflects on the link between Jewish origin and love experience—“The origins. Everything was linked. I was right. But how to show that in a film?”—while filming himself in front of the mirror for the second time, now with a zoom-out: “I told the producer I'd played Christine and my husband Pierre. We had no choice. It would be indecent, crazy, without interest, far below the book. But it was that the true adaptation.” The producer agrees, and while we observe a close-up of Masson's eyes, her voiceover adds: “The problem is I didn't dare ask my husband if he'd do it.” The proposal occurs again in the autofictional space, and Jean-Marc rejects it: “– The film or war. – War.” The autofictional space stops in this sequence and will not reappear until the last third of the essay film. Once reflection on how to represent fiction has begun, the film alternates Masson's digressive nonfiction with Angot's fiction as a reverie generated from it.

We then see Masson working on the novel while quoting it: “Then on Sunday, we started having problems. I didn't know them yet. Now, I could explain. At that time, I suffered without understanding. The pace was wrong.” A new fictional chapter, “War,” shows the disagreement between the couple, and then “Love” narrates the beginning of the relationship, with interruptions by Masson reflecting on it. Christine and Pierre-Louis go to live together, and Masson then shows the first nonfictional encounter with Angot, who shows her her home, the couple's apartment. Angot's father, the protagonist of *L'Inceste* (1999), is mentioned. Masson then shows in the fiction Christine's reading of one of her father's letters that we listen to in a male voiceover. The filmmaker takes fragments from three different letters included in the novel (pp. 122–128), written in 1972, when Angot was 13 years old. It includes the literary title: “Why Brazil? Maybe because it's a

country whose whole wealth is in the future, like you for whom the globe was intended" (p 123).

The narration of the daily life of the couple when they live together makes Masson's identification with it possible. Christine's relationship crisis is accompanied by her writing block, and the filmmaker also identifies with it, while a panoramic shot shows her kitchen: "I can't do it either. The book resists me. Their story resists me." The couple's crisis is described through three trips: "Love," "Alone," and "Love (suite)," which narrate the dynamics of crisis and subsequent reconciliation, based on literary quotations from the literary text Masson quotes with the corresponding page (pp. 129, 138, 149). The third trip is a key moment in the novel: Jean-Pierre's rape of Christine. Then, a love letter from Christine to Pierre-Louis explains the reconciliation. Again, Masson chooses different fragments of the two letters that appear in the novel (pp. 185–188). It is important to note here that Masson places the letter as an element of reconciliation after the rape episode, even if the latter occurs after them in the novel. Concerning the "I love you" written by Angot, Masson, while ironing, adds, "I could never say 'I love you' in a film."

In the encounter between Masson and Angot in a café, Angot says, "I find this story of Jewishness ... One has the impression it's the equilibrium of their encounter, and of the book, it becomes the equilibrium of the film." Thus, the element of union and balance of both works is underlined: the Jewishness of Rozynès and Angot's mother and grandfather, and the Jewishness of the paediatrician and the guilt about collaborationism embodied by Masson's grandmother, as we will see in the denouement. In the continuation of the scene, Masson expounds to Angot the conflict she is going through and is trying to overcome: how to succeed in "exposing myself but protecting the others." Angot's response is resounding: "It's impossible." Her writing stems from what she calls a "hatred of secrecy." Her literary experience of "disclosure of oneself and unmasking of others" (Dubois, 2011, p. 8) is inaccessible to the filmmaker.

Masson's nonfiction takes her to visit a location for the film: the Parisian Austerlitz train station, which would replace the Nancy station, where the novel concludes, and the city where Masson lived for 18 years. It is then that the autofiction—absent since Jean-Marc's refusal to feature in the film—reappears to show Lætitia in the cafeteria of the Nancy station. She asks a woman to play the role of Angot's grandmother. Later, we will see two more scenes from the autofiction, but in the absence of Masson. We then confirm how the autofictional space has essentially materialised in the first half of the film, linked to the fabulation of intimate space and professional activity. In other words, reflection occurs dually, first between

nonfiction and autofiction and then between nonfiction and fiction. In Nancy, where Masson interviews her grandmother, a key instance of self-filming then occurs, and for the first time, another camera captures the filmmaker while she films herself: "Hotel room, Nancy. Christine, you say there are no secrets, no shame. You say you write everything in the book. I don't film everything. There are secrets, my secrets, and my shame too. Maybe your book led me here. To Nancy, to the heart of shame." Confronted with Angot's love story, Masson discovers that her artistic experience consists of neither adapting the literary work nor filming her private life. Only two images justify her creative research, those of the real characters of the paediatrician and her grandmother. When asked about Jewish acquaintances during the war, the latter defends herself in distracted silence: "Did I know about the camps? Let me think ..." Masson then creates a powerful symbolic sentence-image that synthesises her conflict. Some old photographs of the grandmother merge by crossfade with the image of Masson from behind, reflected in a windowpane: "I'm her. The rest is fake. Husband, filmmaker, reality. It's crap. A cover-up. If I was up to the truth, up to adapting this book, I would visit the paediatrician ... the real one." By means of a superimposition, from the figure of Masson emerges that of the real paediatrician, who slowly advances (slow motion) towards a door until reaching (another crossfade) a second figure of Masson, also from behind (Figure 8):

I would go, a married woman, with no reason to be there, and I would film: exposing myself to my husband while moved by another man. And dragging the paediatrician into something non-professional, intimate and public. Expose myself as a vampire to film the one real encounter in the film. Would I say I love his name and the fact he is Jewish?

The real paediatrician emerges from the figure of Masson. The real character moves through the nebulous space (superimpositions and crossfades), from autofiction to nonfiction, to give way to the interview with a close-up of the paediatrician with Masson's foreshortening: "Could you fall in love with a Goy?," "Does being Jewish determine your relationships? With the world, with others?" The paediatrician pronounces his name himself, Haim Cohen, and reformulates Masson's questions: "What makes us love?" Following this real encounter, Masson adds:

I did this adaptation to film two people: the grandmother and the paediatrician. Not Jews necessarily, foreigners. Their faces show me what unites



Figure 8. *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* (Laetitia Masson, 2004) © Arcadès

and separates. I understand where we are from and where we are going. That's what interests me. Not adapting the book [fiction] or filming my life [autofiction]. I don't adapt. I don't adapt myself.

After two brief autofictional sequences of the producer with Laetitia's assistant and Jean-Marc, the film ends with Masson's departure after having decided to abandon the project, offering a thoughtful reflection on what this autofiction work has led her to: "That vampire thing is crap. I don't experience things to make films. I make films because I can't experience things. That's it, mostly." The modification of the film title, as opposed to the literary title, synthesises the research carried out and the conclusion reached. Masson builds an intersubjective space between the writer and the filmmaker, generating an experience of artistic sisterhood in which the spectator is situated to develop a critical reflection on the creation in the first person. In this way, the theoretical reflection on autofiction: "[T]o know the other of myself, through the autofictional narrative; to know myself in the other, through the transpersonal narrative" (Blanckeman, 2000, p. 21) materialises in the audiovisual thinking process of the essay film.

Viaggio nella dopo-storia: From Modernity to Contemporaneity Through Appropriation

In *Viaggio nella dopo-storia*, Vincent Dieutre shifts autofiction to appropriation based on Pasolini's quotation—also used in *Leçons de ténèbres*—with the purpose of reflecting on the concept of *dopo-storia* (post-history) in the cinematic space:

I wander on Turcolana like a madman, on the Appaia like a dog without a master. Oh, look at the twilights, the dawns over Rome, over Ciociaria, over the world, like the first acts of post-history, at which I am present thanks to the year of my birth, at the extreme age of some buried age.

After this quotation, and accompanied by the Neapolitan song “Passione” (1934) by Roberto Murolo, the opening credits from Roberto Rossellini’s *Viaggio in Italia* (1953) appear projected through the bodies of the protagonists, Tom and Alex, played by Dieutre and his real-life partner, Simon Versnel, as the first symbolic sentence-image of the essay film: the reflection on filtering the modern film through the autofictional and contemporary experience. The first two images of the road in Rossellini’s film are followed by Dieutre’s “adaptation”: a road from the 21st century also in black and white. From this moment on, the essay film reproduces all the sequences from Rossellini’s film in an abbreviated form, adapting them to the reality of a contemporary gay couple. The adaptation unfolds in juxtaposition with Dieutre’s nonfictional space during the preparation of the film, in which he reflects on the different elements of creation that we contemplate.

The contemporary filter introduces several modifications to the narration of the gay couple’s trip to Italy. In the emblematic scene on the terrace, Kate remembers her lost love, the poet Charles Lewington, who died two years earlier from an illness contracted during the war, and narrates a romantic anecdote before her wedding: “And there he stood. He was shivering with cold. He was so strange and romantic. Maybe he wanted to prove to me that despite the high fever, he had braved the rain to see me.” Dieutre turns him into Steven Cohen, an HIV-positive poet friend of Tom’s who died of AIDS, through whom the filmmaker represents gay promiscuity: “We fucked a few times. We got along well.” The lines of the poet from the ’40s pronounced by Kate: “Temple of the Spirit / No longer bodies / But pure ascetic images” become those from the ’90s:

I enter your museums through the smallest cracks in the stones that keep you feeling comfortable and elegant. No more art, no more culture. [...] In my dreams, I crawl across freshly restored temples, pass statues, masterpieces and colons. No more art, no more culture. I will wake you up and welcome you to your bad dreams.

It is a poem by Dieutre, freely inspired by *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration* (1991) by David Wojnarowicz, a multidisciplinary artist

and AIDS activist who died of the disease in 1992. In addition, the car's relevance in the autonomy of Rossellini's couple is replaced by an iPad; Alex's heterosexual affair becomes gay with Dieutre; and Alex's conversation with a prostitute turns the narrative of a single mother into a transgender mother. The scene of the discussion between the employees of the mansion is transformed into the violence of a street murder through the insertion of internet images as a practical exercise of the different relationship between fiction and documentary regarding the modernity of the 20th century and the contemporary audiovisual practice in the 21st century, which will be one of the themes of reflection, as I will discuss below. The clash between the documentary and fictional images becomes a dialectical sentence-image of an audiovisual post-history.

After the first scene of this *mise-en-post-history*, Dieutre's voiceover initiates the alternate space of nonfiction. As we see images from Rossellini's film on his computer over the internet, the filmmaker expresses the intention of the film: "Appropriate *Viaggio in Italia*," exemplifying the definition of the process of appropriation: "taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests and talents" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 18). In the second insertion of the nonfictional space, Dieutre underlines the relevance of the film in cinema history and in his own autobiography: "It made me. I feel more like settling a debt, actually, than writing something." Later, again accompanied by images from Rossellini's film on the computer, Dieutre defines the purpose of his film:

Everything has to be adapted [...] everything has changed radically. So my idea of resuming *Viaggio in Italia* is to put this film back into play in the context of the *dopo-storia* of which Pasolini speaks, which is not precisely the famous end of history but rather the difficulty that we now have to inscribe ourselves in a historical continuity, whereas for Rossellini there is always the inscription of the film in a historical reading of the world.

The images of Dieutre's visit to the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, accompanied by the musical leitmotif of the film, "Hammers" (2013) by Nils Frahm, demonstrate its enormous transformation from the one shown by Rossellini's film 60 years earlier, including the guided visit, thanks to the museum's online application. It testifies the transformation of the aesthetic experience and its spaces, which implies the necessity of generating a contemporary correspondence that embodies the essence of the lost aesthetic experience: "So, Pompeii, I give up, I think it has no interest for the film ... It is not there. It is like Capri, I think Capri is over

[...] so I have to think.” While the initial symbolic sentence-image of Rossellini’s film, projected through the bodies of Tom–Dieutre and Alex–Versnel, embodied the practice of contemporary appropriation on which the film will reflect, Dieutre’s reflected image on the images from *Viaggio in Italia* on the computer symbolises the sterility of the copy, of the “remake,” which can no longer apprehend the emotions generated by a lost bond. This reflection leads Dieutre to modify the spaces shown by the appropriation: Alex’s trip to Capri shifts to Prosida; Kate’s visit to the Cave of the Sibyl, the Temple of Apollo and the Vesuvius becomes Tom’s visit to the Ex-Asilo Filangieri, a building occupied by Neapolitan cultural activists; Kate’s view of the catacombs becomes Tom’s view of Anime del Purgatorio; and finally, the couple’s visit to Pompeii is replaced by that of an excavation in the city, abandoned by the institutions, despite having received money from European funds to carry it out. Dieutre generates the reflection through the voiceover while on screen he plays himself “Hammers” on the piano:

I remember Godard said that what he loved about Italian cinema in the 1950s was precisely its perfect connection with the people; it was the people’s voice. I think the film touched me a lot because of that. The history, the people, all that, they are lost things. And so Naples, the eternal Naples, can no longer be a revelation as it was for Kate; it is the loss that must be restored, celebrated.

The impossibility of historical continuity with which Dieutre defines post-history is thus exemplified: the bond with history and the people is no longer possible, and therefore the revelation that Kate experiences cannot take place. Later, Dieutre introduces Gilles Deleuze’s voice—“I can hear Deleuze’s voice talking about Rossellini. And it is crazy how that ... reassures me, carries me”—to let us hear the keyword that defines what is lost: “grasp something intolerable,” as a definition of “a purely optical and sound situation [time-image] [...] which henceforth outstrips our sensory-motor capacities [movement-image]” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 18). It remains for us to reflect on this loss of the experience of the intolerable. A few minutes earlier, Dieutre also invokes Guy Debord on creation in the contemporary world: “As Debord says, the world is already over, so what we can do is superimpose, re-edit, mix” Therefore, appropriation becomes a creative conception of contemporary artistic practice, differentiating it from adaptation: “[A]ppropriation frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain, often through the actions of interpolation and critique as much as through the movement

from one genre to others” (Sanders, 2016, p. 35). In the audiovisual space, Dieutre identifies this loss in the fiction–documentary bond:

I think that the fiction–documentary relationship is what marked the New Wave [...] the fiction–documentary relationship is almost naïve. There are incredible editing things, when she looks out the window, this kind of documentary shots ... and everything works very well. You have to find a candour ... try to see what remains of this innocence without trying to feign it. So, go find things may be a little more hybrid but ... rediscovering the emotion, that is what counts.

Dieutre rediscovers this emotion in his visit to the catacombs of the Anime del Purgatorio, where the cult of the dead is still alive. The hybridisation emerges from the images—those that show Tom and those taken by Tom through his iPad—and the sound image, in which the song “Von Der Klippe Fallen” (Mark Cooper and Tom Hodge, 2013) includes the distortion of the melody and we also listen to the iPad bip. Kate’s vision of the dead is transformed into Tom’s vision of the cult of the dead. Dieutre updates Rossellini’s purpose in *Viaggio in Italia*: “The film itself is the final layer in the process which extends the materiality of the index into its relation with time, the preservation of the past and the image of the living after death” (Mulvey, 2001, p. 108).

In the nonfiction space, Dieutre inserts four segments of the conversation with a lawyer to discuss the issues of adaptation and copyright regarding Rossellini’s film: “Studies of adaptation and appropriation invariably abut with questions of ownership and attendant legal discourses of intellectual property and copyright” (Sanders, 2016, pp. 5–6). The lawyer explains the legislation regarding the conflict between the copyright of the artistic work and the universal right to cultural heritage: the definitions and practices allowed and prohibited regarding the quotation, the copy, the adaptation, the image rights, etc. The contemporary reality of this legislation is transferred to the materiality of the work through the appearance of the original only over the internet on the computer screen, the pixelation of some faces to safeguard image rights, as well as an image of Alex (George Sanders) equally pixelated, revealing the difference between the copyright of the work (belonging to Isabella Rossellini) and the image right of the person portrayed.

As a logical consequence of the reflection generated, the sequence of the visit to Pompeii in Rossellini’s film becomes a visit to some excavations in the city, and, after it, Dieutre reads the email from Isabella Rossellini, in

which she declines the invitation to participate in the film, but authorises him to use her parents' work: "You are welcome to do the film you wish, and I am glad my parents' work inspired you. [...] I wish you best luck with your project, and thank you for honouring my parents," while we see the protagonists of the appropriation move away in the image. After a brief excerpt from the conversation with the lawyer about the confrontation between copyright and the public domain and cultural heritage, the essay film denouement synthesises Dieutre's reflection.

Two current documentary images of some riots in connection with a football match give way to the initial device of the essay film: the final scene of Alex and Kate in the car is projected through the bodies of Tom–Dieutre and Alex–Versnel, placed in the positions of the character they have appropriated, and now read their dialogues in the scene we are contemplating. However, this time the sound from the contemporary documentary images stays in the whole sequence. Thus, the images of the religious procession—in which some faces appear pixelated, once again embodying a reflection on the commodification of cultural heritage—are accompanied by the sound of the football riots, connecting the modern presence of religion to the contemporary presence of football as mass phenomenon. Dieutre inserts two different types of images into this scene. Isabella Rossellini's image, also placed in a car, then becomes a mediating figure of the appropriation synthesised through the symbolic sentence-image we contemplate. As Dieutre has previously stated, "In this reappropriation project of the film, the only thing that matters to me is the life of their daughter, Isabella." She becomes the element that makes reflection on the audiovisual post-history possible. The child that Rossellini's characters did not have becomes the daughter that the director and the actor did have, now in charge of managing the artistic legacy of both. The other seven contemporary documentary shots that Dieutre introduces throughout the scene, pertaining to the same football match riots, embody the mutation of the fiction–documentary bond achieved by *Viaggio in Italia*. While the documentary images were inserted into the fiction in Rossellini's film, as part of the narrative, Dieutre evidences the transformation of that bond in our reality, materialised through its abrupt and decontextualised juxtaposition.

At the end of the scene, after saying "I love you" to each other, Tom–Dieutre and Alex–Versnel embrace while we contemplate the image of the policemen on the screen, as a final vindication of the LGBTIQ+ rights conquered in the 60 years that separate both images, and before seeing the word "Fine" [The End] projected on their bodies. We can conclude the contemporary

relationship between appropriation and essay film: “Appropriation clearly extends far beyond the adaptation of other texts into new literary creations, assimilating both historical lives and events [...] and companion art forms [...] into the process” (Sanders, 2016, p. 148). When approaching reflection using other people’s audiovisual creations, the essayist must appropriate the material in order to be able to manipulate it and create their own audiovisual thinking process. Using Ferreira-Meyers’s words, Dietre uses the passage from appropriation to autofiction to explore “the ontological instability of the postmodern era (Ferreira-Meyers, 2015, p. 206).

Conclusions

These three essay films instrumentalise autofiction as an enunciative device regarding three different stating points: autobiography, adaptation and appropriation. *Lettre pour L...* offers us the first cinematic autofiction to generate an audiovisual thinking process that reflects on the love–cinema–politics dialectics—between personal experience, professional activity and political and social commitment—through the collage of different enunciations (autofictional reconstructions of the past, autofiction in the form of short pieces or sketches, autofiction in the present), genres (parody, comedy, melodrama, drama and tragedy), materials (photographic and documentary images, fictions by other filmmakers) and enunciative positions (epistolary addressee, author, character). Interstitial thinking thus emerges as multiple and diverse, problematising all spheres of our life experiences and evidencing the potential of autofiction as an enunciative device of the essay film. *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* generates autofiction from the adaptation of a literary work to multiply and unfold its protagonists: the actor plays both the literary and the cinematic characters—the filmmaker herself. The essay film develops its audiovisual thinking through a double juxtaposition: between nonfiction and autofiction regarding the conflict about using the narration in the first person, and between nonfiction and fiction concerning the conflict about how to represent what is alien to the filmmaker’s experience. In *Viaggio nella dopo-storia*, Dietre creates the essay film from an autofiction that appropriates Rossellini’s film to create a *mise-en-post-history*, an audiovisual thinking process on the evolution and divergences between cinematic modernity and audiovisual postmodernity, and its relationship with appropriation practices. As in *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil*, a double juxtaposition occurs: the actual between autofiction and nonfiction and the virtual between autofiction and Rossellini’s film.

Given the preponderance of juxtapositions—between fiction, autofiction, and nonfiction—the use of other audiovisual procedures is scarce. In *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil* the crossfade embodies the transfer of the emotional experience from the filmmaker to the autofictional character, and the panning shot embodies intimate self-reflection. The mise-en-scène of the audiovisual thinking process occurs through two procedures. First, the zoom-out realises the transition from self-portrait to portrait, resolving the dialectics between nonfiction and autofiction. Later, superimposition and crossfade embody the link between self-fabulation and reality. *Viaggio nella dopo-storia*, for its part, offers us a very powerful mise-en-scène of the audiovisual thinking process. The projection of Rossellini's film through the bodies of Versnel and Dieutre constitutes a symbolic sentence-image of contemporary processes of appropriation, of how past creation crosses the creative process of the present filmmaker, including all his identity dimensions.

The sort of identity *dédoublements* that the works propose has, as its theme, its own creation process and the reflection on the need and relevance of the results achieved. It is essential to point out the importance of the documentary image, which in Goupil's and Masson's cases is finally revealed as the necessary image that would make up a "good film": the image of the present reality of the Balkans during the war conflict and the image of the real characters and their link to the Jewish Holocaust. In Dieutre's case, the nature of the present documentary image conditions audiovisual contemporaneity as a whole. Autofiction becomes a relevant enunciative device for the essay film due to its problematisation of the I:

The problem posed by the nature of the I in autofiction is one of the most pressing questions [...] posed to ontology in general. It touches on the definition of what we call the real, the cognitive experience we make of it daily and the epistemological lessons we keep in mind. (Schmitt, 2010, p. 16)

Works Cited

- Angot, C. (2002). *Pourquoi le Brésil ?* Stock.
- Arasse, D. (2006). *Histoires de peintures*. Gallimard.
- Blanckeman, B. (2000). *Les récits indécidables*. Jean Echenoz, Hervé Guibert, Pascal Quignard. Presses Universitaires du Septentrion.
- Bouquet S. (1994). L et lui. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 476, 70–71.

- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. University of Minnesota Press / (1985) *L'image-temps*. Éditions de Minuit.
- Dobson, J. (2012). *Negotiating the auteur: Cabrera, Lvovsky, Masson and Vernoux*. Manchester University Press.
- Doubrovsky, S. (2007). Les points sur les 'i'. In J.-L. Jeannelle & C. Viollet (Eds.), *Genèse et autofiction* (pp. 53–65). Academia-Bruylant.
- Dubois, J. (2011). Christine Angot: l'enjeu du hors-jeu. *CONTEXTES*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.4000/contextes.4789>
- Ferreira-Meyers, K. (2015). Autobiography and autofiction: No need to fight for a place in the limelight, there is space enough for both of these concepts. In K. W. Shands, G. Grillo Mikrut, D. R. Pattanaik, & K. Ferreira-Meyers (Eds.), *Writing the self: Essays on autobiography and autofiction* (pp. 203–201). Södertörns högskola.
- Ince, K. (2017). *The body and the screen: Female subjectivities in contemporary women's cinema*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2007). *L'écran global*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2021b). The filmmaker's presence in French contemporary autofiction: From *filmeur/filmeuse* to *acteur/actrice*. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 19(4) 533–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2021.2007713>
- Mulvey, L. (2001). Vesuvian topographies: The eruption of the past in *Journey to Italy*. In G. Nowell-Smith, S. Lutton, & D. Forgacs (Eds.), *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the realm* (pp. 95–111). The British Film Institute.
- Sanders, J. (2016). *Adaptation and appropriation*. Routledge. [2006].
- Schmitt, A. (2010). *Je réel / Je fictif. Au-delà d'une confusion postmoderne*. Presse Universitaires du Mirail.

8. The Spectator's Position

Abstract: This chapter studies the instrumentalisation of the spectator's position as enunciative device through the analysis of three works. *Face aux fantômes* (Jean-Louis Comolli and Sylvie Lindeperg, 2009) offers us the embodiment of an emancipated spectator to show us the possibilities of self-reflection and critical thinking from the viewing of *Nuit et brouillard* (Alain, Resnais, 1956). *Jaurès* (Vincent Dieutre, 2012) offers the immobilisation of the gaze through the daily spectatorship of refugees' reality. Dieutre generates parataxic thinking consisting of fixing the gaze, imposing cohabitation, and preventing its mobilisation. *Ailleurs, partout* (Isabelle Ingold, Vivianne Perelmuter, 2020) interpellates the emancipated spectator by sharing the non-gaze of the operational images. It creates a mediated encounter between the filmmakers and their protagonist defining globalised communication.

Keywords: essay film, spectatorship, gaze, critical thinking, migration, Francophone cinema.

As I have expounded in the Introduction, the essay film presents, as one of its defining characteristics, its dialogical nature between author and spectator and, consequently, the role of the latter in the construction of the film. In general, we can say that the essayist's position has moved from being the author of the images behind the camera—*Lettre de Sibérie* (1958)—to being the editor of both their own images and those of others in the editing room—*Scénario du film Passion* (1982)—until the progressive dematerialisation of this position associated with digital technology in contemporary essay films. It also implies a progressive approach from the filmmaker to the spectator's position. The essay films are then generated precisely from the identification between filmmaker and spectator, since the former decides to place themselves in the position of the latter. It is a practice that we rarely find in the Francophone European essay film previously, which would be confirmed as an epistemological space

for the contemporary essay film. *Face aux fantômes* (Jean-Louis Comolli and Sylvie Lindeperg, 2009) *Jaurès* (Vincent Dieutre, 2012) and *Ailleurs et partout* (Isabelle Ingold, Vivianne Perelmuter, 2020) are created from the premise of placing the authors in the physical position of the spectator, of bringing the approach–distance dynamics of that relationship I–you to identification, from where to generate an audiovisual thinking process. *Face aux fantômes* proposes the mobilisation of the gaze through the viewing and analysis of *Nuit et brouillard* (Alain Resnais, 1956). *Jaurès* offers the immobilisation of the gaze through the daily spectatorship of refugees' reality. *Ailleurs, partout* shares the non-gaze of live webcams to reflect on the links between migration and globalisation. My analysis aims to determine the elements, strategies, and results of converting the spectator's position into the epistemological space for the essay film, of bringing the filmmaker–spectator dialogism to identification.

***Face aux fantômes*: The Mobilisation of the Gaze¹**

Comolli and Lindeperg's film emerges as an audiovisual reflection of the latter's literary essay, *Nuit et brouillard: un film dans l'histoire* (2007). Thus, the reflection on the memory–history–art axis from the film by Alain Resnais (1956) and its author become protagonists of an essay film that places the historian as a spectator, accompanied by the filmmaker. Reflection aims to expand its territory to convert the literary spectator–historian into a filmic one through a thinking process that the filmmaker transforms into an audiovisual process. To do this, both interlocutors are located in a kind of laboratory–projection room that will allow multiple reflections on the position of the spectator as an epistemological space: "Together, the filmmaker and the historian put themselves in front of the ghosts to consider the status of these images of the experienced bodies," "[E]ach film situates the spectator differently and singularly in front of the ghosts" (Blümlinger, 2014, pp. 81, 82).

The first image of the film presents the synthesis of its purpose. In a fixed shot of the tracking shot rails in an interior space yet to be discovered, we hear Comolli's voice indicating the start of the shot. The camera then begins

1 This analysis was published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "The Spectator's Position as a Thinking Space for the Contemporary Essay Film: *Face aux fantômes* (2009) and *Jaurès* (2012)," *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), pp. 53–75, Spanish version: pp. 139–156, available at <https://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.04>

to move along the track. Finally, the superimposition of a close-up of the filmmaker's hands leafing through his co-director's book is produced. In this way, a sentence-image is generated, a synthesis of the thinking process that begins. First, a crucial shot and camera movement from Resnais's film is revisited—the shot of the abandoned railroad tracks in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp and the tracking shot he used to shoot the film's colour images—and they are moved to an interior space that we will discover is that of the spectator. Not only is the reflection on Resnais's film evident, but also the self-reflection on the spectator's position. Second, the superimposition of the hands leafing through the book shows how both reflections are going to bring together two perspectives from which intersubjectivity will emerge: that of the historian and literary essayist, and that of the filmmaker and audiovisual essayist.

Starting from this synthesis sentence-image, the film builds a historical reflection on Resnais's film through the materialisation and mobilisation of the spectator's position, where we find both subjectivities conversing in the same frame. Lindeperg speaking and Comolli listening, surrounded by the different devices that will provide the spectatorial experience: television monitors, projection screens, slide projectors, sound recording players, etc. The first archival image shown in the film, the one of the return of French deportees in 1945 that Lindeperg is explaining, is shown reproduced on a monitor, including the device and its sound. Thus, a fundamental question of the film is established, offering the documentary images through a kind of second spectatorial level, both visual and sonorous. In this way, materiality elements of the spectator's position are accumulated, characterising a space that evidences the mediation of the device as the spectator's first element of self-reflection. Lindeperg's explanations continue in an already individual medium shot that moves to show Comolli listening. An itinerary of the spectators' gaze is established, showing Lindeperg as a spectator of *Nuit et brouillard* and Comolli as a spectator of Lindeperg. Next, the camera follows her through a tracking shot while she approaches the projector with which she will show archival documents. This second tracking shot is already configured as a key element of the film. The tracking shot that revealed the actuality of the concentration camps in *Nuit et brouillard* is used here to reflect on the spectator's position, in this case a historian, as a materialisation of the mobilisation of her gaze. Next, the documents shown again include the materiality and sonority of their reproduction device, confirming that second level that causes self-reflection. There is then a second tracking shot on Lindeperg, which now surrounds her as she speaks. In this way, the camera movement

evidences the spectatorial subjectivity of the historian. Her testimony is emphasised not as an irrefutable truth, but as an individual reflection to which different perspectives can be applied.

A new rhetorical element emerges when referring to the key to Resnais's film: the relationship between the concentration system and the extermination of Nazism. This abyss materialises by means of a zoom-in on a photographic image. Therefore, the analytical search of the spectator—the scrutiny of the image as an epistemological search—is encrypted in this element. Then, the first sound recording appears, to reveal the conception of the film that would finally become *Nuit et brouillard*. Henri Michel and Olga Wormser's statements about the historical value of films culminate in the former's proposal to make a film about the concentration system. Once again, we listen to the archival document while looking at its device first, to include its listener later. We continue in that second self-reflective level of the spectatorial experience. After hearing about the origin of *Nuit et brouillard*, the film takes up the tracking shot through a series of three shots:

- the tracking shot on its own tracks in the first shot of the film;
- a tracking shot through the filming elements of the space, which again finds its correspondence in the interior tracking shots through the barracks of the camps in Resnais's film;
- the end of a tracking shot on Lindeperg.

A second sentence-image synthesis of the essay film is produced. The mobilisation of the gaze that Resnais executed in *Nuit et brouillard* in the historical space is taken up by Comolli in the spectatorial space to show Lindeperg's mobilised gaze. It is then that the historian states the key element of her reflection. Anatole Dauman accepted the commission for a film about the concentration system on the condition that it was "equally defined by a high artistic ambition." In Lindeperg's words: "It is truly the moment of the transition to art." By introducing this *passage à l'art* into the reflection, the tracking shot around Lindeperg undergoes a key change: it now moves behind Comolli, thereby including him in the image. Thus, a new materialisation of a symbolic sentence-image is produced. The *passage à l'art* of Resnais's film, besides historical facts, moves to the transition to the essayistic reflection: from Lindeperg's literary work to the audiovisual work filmed by Comolli, which implies the inclusion of the filmmaker's subjectivity and authorship. In this way, the intersubjective construction between the spectator–historian and the filmmaker who films her is

revealed, embodying her thinking process in an audiovisual way, which we also observe as spectators.

By introducing the documentary material from *Les camps de la mort* (*Les actualités françaises*, 1945), we see Lindeperg, for the first time, in the spectator's position, included in the image. Her body partially covers the screen, hiding the most graphic parts of the images. Thus, a new symbolic sentence-image is produced, in this case, about the spectator's need for a critical gaze, who can "develop a critical position not only in relation to authorial discourse, but also to the screened images and other discourses which compose the essay" (Montero, 2012, p. 121). In other words, Comolli creates a symbolic sentence-image that embodies Lindeperg's critical gaze. It then crystallises the complete cartography of the spectator's position as epistemological space, showing its three levels: Lindeperg's position as spectator, Comolli's position as Lindeperg's filmmaker–spectator, and our position as spectators of the essay film. The configuration of this cartography enables both critical thinking about the images shown and self-reflection on the spectator's own position. The reflection developed by the essay film can address the film in question, *Nuit et brouillard*, from both perspectives: "Alain Resnais is not part of a narrative of proof by image [...] to build the right distance with them [the images] to both report on the event but build his film around the will of critical distancing of these images." Lindeperg then raises the nuclear question of the spectator's position: "What is the relationship between seeing, believing and knowing?" and expresses Resnais and Jean Cayrol's starting point: not to use the question of the proof-image, but to consider that, on the contrary, "they are not able to allow us to apprehend the event."

Therefore, the first third of the essay film has constructed the cartography of the spectator's position, of the different spectators and their possibilities, to give them the tools of reflection with which to contemplate *Nuit et brouillard*. Its images are shown to us for the first time from a first spectatorial level at minute 25, without device mediation, in order to now be able to apply critical distance and self-awareness in its viewing. The spectators of the essay film now face the images on the first level after having reflected on our position as such. Therefore, this first level is reserved for *Nuit et brouillard*. The first fragment corresponds with the colour tracking shots filmed at Auschwitz-Birkenau; the second with archival images in black and white; and the third with a combination of both. It is then that Lindeperg's words, addressing again the idea of the film's *passage à l'art*, are shown to us with a second tracking shot behind Comolli, in the opposite direction to the previous one. While Resnais made this transition through the filming

of colour images through tracking shots, Comolli transfers this element to embody the mobilisation of the spectator's gaze, identified with Lindeperg, to ask themselves whether "art itself has potency of truth."

The second sound document, the words of Resnais himself, takes up the representation of the first, with Lindeperg listening to it, to then create a second superimposition that now also includes sound. Resnais's words evoke some images found in Amsterdam of German officers on the platform of a deportation convoy, shown to us superimposed on the sound reel from which the audio comes. Resnais is also characterised as a spectator of the documentary images on which he worked. While previously we saw Lindeperg as a spectator of the images from *Les camps de la mort* on a monitor that she partially hid, now we observe her contemplating the only moving images that show a deportation convoy in Westerbork. This confirms the critical position of the spectators in addition to the images. While before she hindered the viewing of "the intolerable image" that "prevented any critical distance" (Rancière, 2009, p. 89), tracing "a straight line from the unbearable spectacle" (p. 103), she now gives way to silent images without manipulation (we can see the time code on them).

Next, the *passage à l'art* of these images materialises audiovisually. Resnais decided to show them in his film together in a single block and in the absence of Cayrol's commentary, only accompanied by Hanns Eisler's music. However, he included three shots of an old man with two children from material found in Warsaw. This double viewing exemplifies the *passage à l'art* on which they reflect, and the spectator is interpellated to reflect. The tracking shot on Lindeperg when recounting the relevance of the only shot of a person looking at the camera evidences, once again, the mobilisation of the spectator's gaze, of the critical thinking that must question that *passage à l'art*. The image, which shows a young girl, Anna Maria (Settela) Steinbach, who was discovered in 1997 to be Roma, will become an icon of the Shoah, and the essay film freezes it as such. Addressing hitherto unknown photographic images of Himmler's 1942 visit to the IG Farben factory in Monowitz, which prove how concentration camp prisoners became the workforce of the Third Reich, Lindeperg shows how these allowed "adjustment of the viewing to the knowledge" while a new tracking shot associates this capacity with the critical position of the spectator. A second visit to Birkenau to attend the gassing of Dutch Jews links the concentration system with the extermination of the Jewish and Roma populations. The emergence of *the final solution* in the film script and its suppression in its final commentary is then represented with a second zoom-in on an image and the subsequent tracking shot on Lindeperg. Thus,

the filmmaker spectator of the archival images identifies with the spectator of the created film. It is at this moment that the film shows again, in the first level, the conclusion of *Nuit et brouillard*, ending the second part of the essay film.

The third and last part focuses on Lindeperg's subjectivity as a spectator–historian of the film, based on her study of Olga Wormser's work. The camera now covers the distance between the screen and its spectator, the space that embodies the mobilisation of the spectator's gaze in front of the work. Thus, it is Wormser's encounter with the film that allows Lindeperg to understand the necessity of reversing the perspective: *Nuit et brouillard* creates a "circle of knowledge" between history and art in the process of its construction. Only 20 years later, Wormser will conclude her investigation of the "history in the making." Lindeperg also decided to abandon the historian's distance and enter Wormser's atelier.

The third sound document of the film, again Resnais's statements, in this case about the writing of Cayrol's commentary and Marker's participation in it, is shown again with Lindeperg's figure listening to it in front of the device. The reverse itinerary to the previous one, of the space of the film, now generates the third superimposition, with the image of Annette Wieviorka's book: *Déportation et génocide : entre la mémoire et l'oubli* (2003). Next comes the conversation between Lindeperg and Wieviorka, the latter becoming a third spectator, also a historian. Once again, the tracking shot generates intersubjectivity, the exchange between both spectatorial gazes, whose nature is emphasised by placing them, again, in the spectator's space, with the screen behind them on which projected images appear at times. Their conversation about how Resnais's film became the definitive film on genocide, at the same time that it began to be criticised for the perception of the Shoah it conveys, finds its reflection in the paradox that implies that historians, until the 1980s, worked on it without having seen it, reducing their study to Cayrol's commentary, ignoring its images. Wieviorka addresses the evocative power of Birkenau's colour images, even though they do not show the evoked object.

The conversation between both historians gives way to the fourth sound document, again by Resnais, explaining the decision, and the experience, of shooting in colour and with tracking shots. A new sentence-image synthesis of the film and of the reflection it has developed is then produced. On the sound image of Resnais, we see, on the first level, a black-and-white photograph of the shooting, assembling the tracking shot rails. Next, the images from the beginning of the film, with the unique vertical tracking shot with which we are situated in the present of the film, are silent,



Figure 9. *Face aux fantômes* (Jean-Louis Comolli and Sylvie Lindeperg) © INA

accompanied by the sound of the audio reel. Resnais's words re-emerge when the film appears projected on the screen Lindeperg contemplates: first the documentary photography of the shooting, then the images of the film, and finally a new photographic image of the shooting. Now it is not the camera that moves on Lindeperg but the historian who moves from one side of the screen to the other, as it shows the colour tracking shot from *Nuit et brouillard* (Figure 9). Thus, the *passage à l'art* materialises through the convergence of the four spaces:

- that of Resnais as a creator through the convergence of his sound testimony, the black-and-white archival photographs of the shooting, and the colour images of the film;
- that of Lindeperg as a spectator in front of these images, displacing her position as a spectator at the same time as Resnais's tracking shot moves;
- that of Comolli as the essayist who creates this convergence;
- the spectator who must generate their own reflection of what is perceived.

Resnais's fifth sound document, again with Lindeperg listening, offers us the filmmaker's determination: "I don't want to make a monument to the dead." Doing so would mean not articulating critical thinking. Resnais, with whom the spectator can identify at this moment of the reflection, explains his need for it. The censorship of one's own work is analysed with the question of the "unwanted body" of the gendarme, as a testimony of the collaboration of the French state in the arrests of the Jewish population.

The external censorship on the projection in Cannes, with the sixth sound document, in this case by Dauman, evidences the present value of the film in relation to the Algerian War. To conclude, Lindeperg addresses the issue of the translation of the film commentary as a new stage in which critical thinking can materialise, and therefore exercise it when viewing the film. The translation of Cayrol's text into German was carried out by Paul Celan, who knew how to *transfer* the work to the critical needs of the German people, displacing some of its meanings. "I am not responsible" becomes "I am not guilty"; "the old concentrationary monster" turns into "racial madness." Thus, Celan also contributes his critical thinking, confirming that it can be applied from any position.

The reflection is coming to an end. The two previous zoom-ins on archival images are now completed with two other zooms on Resnais's film: a zoom-out on the image of the film that evoked the first image of the essay film—the colour image of the Birkenau rails—and a zoom-in on the black-and-white image of the yard at the entrance to Auschwitz. Once again, the mobilisation of the gaze finds a final materialisation, as the search for the critical distance through the movements of distance and approach. In her final digression, Lindeperg evokes the figure of Wormser to conclude the work with its core, confirming "a sort of duplication with the figure of the historian Olga Wormser on whose steps she continues to advance in her quest for truth" (Véray, 2011, p. 187). By taking up Daniel Arasse's reflection (2006), the historian delves into the emotion–knowledge dialectics regarding the work of art: "There are two forms of emotion in front of the work of art [...] there is the one that springs from the visual shock of the first viewing, and then there is something else that can put the work of time, the learning of the gaze." Lindeperg recognises how Olga Wormser made this journey: mobilising her gaze, changing her point of view, transforming emotion into reflection. A final tracking shot from the projection screen to the figure of Lindeperg synthesises the itinerary from the work of art to the spectator's position from which the essay film has been made, showing the distance to be covered, the need for the gaze displacement: "Displace our gaze on this film *Nuit et brouillard* that we thought we knew, that we thought we had seen, but at the same time that we had lost sight of [...] that we re-learn to see it differently," Lindeperg presents her final conclusion as a spectator of the film, as an example of any spectator, which generates the self-reflection of her experience as such:

By positioning my gaze following Olga Wormser's gaze, by placing my steps in her footsteps, it is also a reflection that I wanted to pursue regarding my own relationship to this film *Nuit et brouillard*, on which I had started to

work in '87. And, as Olga, it had finally taken me twenty years to achieve it. [...] I had the impression that I had not been able to see it.

***Jaurès: The Immobilisation of the Gaze*²**

Jaurès is also generated from the position of the spectator, who, on this occasion, does not face the images of history but those of contemporary reality. In this case, the filmmaker, Vincent Dieutre, is in the editing and recording room to show a film to his friend Eva Truffaut; they talk about the images while contemplating them. The initial shots of the editing table, the projected images, and the characters who observe them present this new space of enunciation from the spectator's position. The projected film, made by Dieutre, consists of the images captured from the window of his lover Simon's apartment in the Parisian neighbourhood of Jaurès, over several months, from the winter to the summer of 2010. From the window, we see the metro station of the same name and the Saint-Martin canal where an Afghan refugee settlement has been established, which will be the theme of the images shown. Dieutre and Truffaut, in their capacity as the characters Vincent and Eva, contemplate the images, unknown to the latter, with headphones and in front of microphones that record their words to be included in the film. Therefore, in this case, Eva identifies with the spectator who sees the work for the first time. Based on the questions that the images raise for Eva, Vincent will narrate two parallel existences: that of the refugees outside, captured in the visual image, and that of the couple's relationship inside, which remains offscreen and materialises only through the sound image. Thus, finally, there is a third space, that of the experience of both as spectators of the images.

While *Face aux fantômes* focused on the space of that second spectator level that led reflection through its mobilisation, *Jaurès* focuses on the first level accompanied by the sound image of its spectator's comments. Therefore, two simultaneous off-screen images are generated: that of Vincent and Simon in the projected images and that of Eva and Vincent as their spectators. The spectator's gaze is fixed to a position, to the images taken from a window. The frame changes between shots, but the camera always remains fixed.

2 This analysis was published in Monterrubio Ibáñez, "The Spectator's Position as a Thinking Space for the Contemporary Essay Film: *Face aux fantômes* (2009) and *Jaurès* (2012)," *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), pp. 53–75, Spanish version: pp. 139–156, available at <https://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.04>

There is no movement in the frame, either. The spectator's self-reflection and critical thinking are generated through this immobilisation, through the cohabitation and dialectics between the inside and outside of the images shown and between the spectatorial experiences of the internal characters, with which to confront their own. The interpellation is therefore double, facing the images and facing the different spectatorial experiences of Eva and Vincent: she viewing the images for the first time, he explaining them in response to her questions. The parallelism between the visual image of the outside of the refugees' reality and the sound image of the inside of the couple's reality is established through a sort of clandestine love. Simon did not want to make their relationship public, and Vincent never had access to his lover's apartment in his absence. The refugees from the canal and Dieutre share the same temporality. Just as the refugees take shelter beside the canal at night and pack up the camp in the morning, to return to it at the end of the day, Dieutre only shares with his lover the nights after work and the mornings before starting the day. This generates the structure of the projected film, alternating mornings and nights in which actions and characters will be repeated. Outside, the daily life of refugees; inside, that of the lovers.

The images follow each other while Eva asks about the beginning of the relationship, while at the same time a piano melody emerges from the sound image, played by Simon, practising a piece by Reynaldo Hahn, *À Chloïris* (1913), with which the film begins. It will become the leitmotif of the film and a symbolic sentence-image of the *passage à l'art* of contemporary reality through a kind of progressive recreation: Simon's clumsy rehearsals on the piano, the real melody, the fragmented recitation of part of its lyrics by Eva and Vincent—substituting the name of Simon for Chloïris—until they finally sing the piece together. Eva's first questions deal with the biography of Simon, an activist and social worker in different parts of the world who, back in Paris, has retired and now collaborates as a legal adviser for an association that helps refugees with their asylum applications. Simon's working life is a direct witness of the reality faced by the refugees who appear in the image and to the dialectic/coexistence offered by the film: "He would let go of all the pain, while down there in front of his eyes were these refugees. They were very young and might need his help the next day, or the day after." The first transition between both spectatorial levels then takes place, from the first to the second, through the connection of the projected images, always from Vincent's position, also emphasising his status as their author. Thus, a first strategy is produced that aims to strengthen the idea of simultaneity while cancelling the distance between both levels. The second procedure

consists of showing the faces of the spectators, accompanied or not by a shot of the editing room and its editor. Both strategies reinforce parataxis and annul the gap as a space for mobilising the gaze.

The images deploy the parallel routines of the inside and the outside. In the case of the refugees, their morning ablutions, the gathering up of the settlement, the police controls, the visits of the NGOs offering breakfast or providing hygiene products, the reestablishment of the camp at night, and the prayers. In Vincent's case, breakfasts, dinners, minimal fragments of dialogue, and the sound of everyday actions. It is this fixation of the spectator's position and the separation between the inside and the outside that becomes an interpellation for the spectator to generate self-reflection and critical thinking about the immobility to which the work subjects them. However, this separation is destroyed in three moments, all of which are essential for reflection. In the first, the contact is only evoked when Eva asks Vincent whether there had been any interaction with the refugees:

That winter they camped under the bridge, the canal froze over. We brought them blankets. We called out from the bridge and dropped them down. I knew that Simon was spending his days trying to help them to obtain a secure status, and it reassured me. I felt a connection with them. I really admired Simon. [...] To him, each of them had a story that had to be hold.

For Vincent, the inevitable link between the refugees' situation and his relationship with his partner, his point of view, is one of the elements that interpellates the spectator. Does the love experience anesthetise the social conscience? Is there a romanticisation of social conflict and commitment? In the second moment of contact (minute 24), Dieutre goes down to the street during the demonstrations in support of the refugees, and this is the only time we are shown the images of that contact, as I will analyse below. In the third (minute 49), the filmmaker recounts how the situation of the immigrants leads some of them to prostitution. Thus, the activist who helps them is interpellated to objectify them: "These kids were reduced to that."

The sound image later offers us Simon's voice, giving his opinion on the situation: "My work is so depressing. It gets worse every day. The State Council's rulings are hard to accept. The court contradicts itself, there is no consistent policy. It's highly political and badly run." The image of an artist in the opposite building, working with some neon lights, gives rise to the narration of Simon's position about the social value of art, now through Vincent: "Only useful things matter to him. Worthwhile things, like his

activism. I struggled to explain to him that, to me, art served a purpose. That art also affected the world.” The same discussion about the value of the work of art discussed in *Face aux fantômes* is already generated. While Lindeperg reflected on it in relation to history—the transformation of aesthetic emotion into knowledge—Dieutre focuses on the present: Does the artistic work that we witness as spectators transform the social reality that it shows us? The conflict between emotion and knowledge is generated in this case through the dialectics between Vincent’s love feelings and the social reality he observes. The spectator is interpellated to generate self-reflection: Is social reflection possible and/or effective through a love experience? The spectators’ self-reflection about identifying or not with both characters is constant: in relation to Vincent for his emotional point of view, in relation to Eva for the elements that interest her and about which she asks. What questions would we spectators ask if we were in her position? The sound image then offers us a radio fragment that outlines the social reality of the refugee situation: “Hundreds protested yesterday in Paris against ‘disposable immigration’ [...] including the Greens, the Communist Party, the RESF, and the League of Human Rights. Socialist M.P.s joined the march but were not organisers.”

The film places the spectator in front of a mirror in relation to the dialectics between the private and the social. The immobility of the gaze imposed on us by the images becomes once again a symbolic image of social passivity, besides the immigration issue. Those dialectics are reinforced by Vincent’s words about this point of view from the window: “Simon called the view his ‘little theatre’. Because you see the metro up high, people and cars below, and further down, the hidden world of the Afghans. A world in cross-section with its various strata.” A fictionalisation of the outside is already suggested, which will next materialise in the progressive appearance of animation elements in the image. In the first place, two policemen’s jackets and the figure of a refugee wrapped in a blanket that has been shown to us previously. It is therefore configured as a new strategy of the *passage à l’art* already in process through Hahn’s song. This generates a reflection on the transition from the documentary image to fiction.

Later, the sound image offers us a joint reflection by the couple on the reality they inhabit as they contemplate the passers-by: “This is national identity ... that deconstructs and reconstructs itself each morning ... That’s what revolution is!” The spectator is doomed to self-reflection and critical thinking caused by this immobility: In what direction would we like to mobilise our gaze? Approaching the exterior space of the refugees? Turning the camera towards the interior space of the lovers? In this way, the different,

separate realities on which the essay film reflects are configured. Vincent explains in the image that “Jaurès was, to me, the threshold, the place where our two worlds met”: Simon’s world of social activism, Vincent’s art world, mediated by the reality of refugees.

As I mentioned before, Dieutre shows the night mobilisations in support of the refugees, first from the position of spectator, second level, then through the continuity to the first level and finally from the canal, passing through it in images for the first and only time. We could say that it is the only moment of mobilisation of the filmmaker’s gaze. Therefore, it is social mobilisation that causes the mobilisation of his gaze, showing the reverse path, where social action generates the artistic gesture. Thus, this mobilisation allows us to hear the sound image of the outside for the first and only time: “In response to this scandal, we are taking matters in hand. Yesterday we offered shelter to 150 homeless Afghans. [...] We will now end this first protest rally. Unfortunately, it will not be our last.” At that moment, the editing table, once again, not only reminds us of the position of Eva and Vincent as spectators and commentators in the film, but also of the previous montage made with the images. Vincent’s reflection evidences the consequences of this mobilisation of the gaze as a recognition of the outside shown, as a vindication of its status as reality: “They were part of the neighbourhood [...]. We know their country is at war since our soldiers are there. But they must constantly prove their suffering [...]. They were living on borrowed time, borrowed time.” It is this explicit acknowledgement of the other that allows the comparison of both clandestine activities, the social and political outside, the romantic one, “clandestine lover,” inside.

In this second part, and from the mobilisation of the gaze in the night demonstration, both Eva and Vincent delve into the reality of the refugees. Regarding some images of police control, Dieutre states, “There were never any clashes or arrests. Just constant harassment. A combination of assistance and control. It was always ambiguous. [...] They didn’t speak French and were extremely vulnerable.” The same thing happens in Eva’s reflection, which now introduces the gender issue: “What strikes me is that it’s a world without women. Both in your apartment and down at the canal with the refugees. [...] It shocks me that women are like ghosts.” Eva offers us the first emotion in front of the work of art: the visual shock that Lindeperg speaks of. Spectatorial passivity is linked to the first moment of the aesthetic emotion. Vincent recognises the reality of the absence of women, but immediately returns to the gay theme to highlight that third moment of contact already alluded to around prostitution. The female gender, therefore,

stands almost exclusively as a spectator of the film. The external spectator must then question themselves about their identification with Eva. In her capacity as spectator–character, the filmmaker's friend does not question Vincent's story, she does not problematise it, she limits herself to serving as a catalyst for it. In the same way that Dieutre fixes the spectator's gaze on the window, he offers us a passive spectatorial presence, once again provoking self-reflection and critical thinking through its absence in the performance.

Accompanying the images that show the arrival of spring, Vincent concludes the lyrics of the song. Owing to the shift in the season, the refugees now sleep in the open air. While Vincent continues the story of his romantic relationship, the images show the presence of the police assistance unit, BAPSA (Brigade d'assistance aux personnes sans abri). First, we hear Simon as an inside spectator of the images: "That's outrageous. Are policemen allowed to smoke?" Vincent then summarises for Eva the nature of those visits: "They came to check on their health and dental problems. It was also a way to keep an eye on the camp." After reciting the first part of the song together again, the intimate account of Vincent's emotion—"He was sleeping like a child. It made me cry"—accompanies the image of a young refugee dancing by the canal. The *passage à l'art* is then produced by connecting the emotions of the inhabitants of both realities. The appearance of a dove in the image sparks the same poetic revelation that reality offers and also marks the *passage à l'art*: "It just appeared one morning from nowhere. It was like a vision." This revelation evokes the issue of the narrative becoming fiction, now included in the same shot, as before with the rain and a car, an animated dove. The animation is then continued on a mattress carried by the refugees, after which the real dove appears again. This creates a new reflection that challenges the spectator. Dieutre reflects on the *passage à l'art* of the coexistence of the intimate story and the social reality, and also on its fictionalisation.

Again, in the early hours of the day, two women help the refugees. This second appearance of the female gender leads, once again, to gay identity: "Simon said they went there to pick up the young guys, but he was being cynical. Like Simon, they gave these people their time." It is necessary to point out that this trait of cynicism in Simon's character emerges exclusively at this moment, in relation to the only appearance of women in the images. The film would then offer Eva the opportunity to exercise a critical position in this regard. The spectatorial passivity of the character who asks but does not question is confirmed, completing the scheme of immobility designed by Dieutre, and thus urgently interpellating the spectator. Next, Vincent

makes the only direct reference to the political reality to which the images belong by naming Minister of Home Affairs Brice Hortefeux. And in this present context, he evokes the failure of both practices, activism and artistic creation: “To him [Simon], cinema and art had no purpose. But now, his activism was also useless.”

The parallelism between the presence of Vincent and the refugees in Jaurès continues in its denouement. The latter were expelled from the canal in the summer of 2010, as reported by the institutional statement that Dieutre includes before the credits. The former also became permanently absent from Jaurès that summer: “There were no more refugee camps. But I never saw him again.” These two sentences, on the image of two refugees in the settlement, complete the parallel itinerary of both intimate and social realities. The following images are progressively overtaken by animated elements (a buoy in the river, the tops of the trees, a car in the canal), now linking the *passage à l'art* with the transformation of reality into memory. Dieutre offers his reflection on the connection between both realities:

Nowadays, it seems that notions of attachment and love are very difficult to define. Just as we have trouble defining our relationship with politics, or even with the idea of justice. However, it turned out, I have no regrets at all about those years at Jaurès.

In this way, he relates both spaces through the absence of commitment, both in the romantic sphere and in the political and social domain. For the first and only time, it is Vincent who asks Eva, and again, it is important to notice that the question refers exclusively to the love sphere: “How about you? How do you know if you love someone, or if you will love them?” The spectatorial passivity in which Dieutre places Eva is confirmed again. All this intensifies the interpellation of the spectator, of their critical thinking and self-reflection. Next, the images of the editing table and those of both spectators' positions evidence the essayistic nature of the piece, on which Dieutre concludes his reflection:

I'm not going to compare my situation to theirs. [...] I was up in the apartment; they were down below. They taught me that you can start from zero, the energy of existence will triumph. To me, that was very important to give life some depth, for it to be worthwhile. [...] I know that moment in time existed, and that in some small way, the world was transformed. Not a great deal, but everything changed slightly.

Thus, Dieutre claims the capacity for transformation of the intimate–social dialectics, and of its *passage à l'art*, bringing together the two elements that have engendered it throughout the work on the image of the prayer of refugees: the small animations that are appropriating the image and the song that Eva and Vincent finally sing, after having recited it several times. On this final image, and by way of credits, the institutional statement that reported the eviction of the refugees from the Saint-Martin canal in July 2010, by order of Immigration Minister Éric Besson, is presented. Dieutre confirms the relevance of the social reality on which he has built his story; he proves the need for the spectator's reflection on the work that concludes.

The theoretical analyses of the film prove the potency of the interpellation it generates; its capacity to produce diverse reflections. While Tom Cuthbertson (2017) focuses on the intimate story of the film in order to reflect on the fictionalisation of autobiography, without problematising its device, the texts by James S. Williams (2020) and Comolli (2012) embody the dialectics that the film provides. Williams criticises the chosen spectatorial position regarding the refugees and the coexistence of both realities, since it “objectifies the migrant figure” (2020, p. 172). Comolli defends the point of view of the film, analysing the difference between the spectator and the *voyeur*, reflecting on the spectatorial limits and the “*passage à l'acte*,” which he has previously theorised (2009).

Ailleurs, partout: Sharing the Non-gaze

The essay film *Ailleurs, partout* (2020), directed by Isabelle Ingold and Vivianne Perelmuter, creates a mediated and hybridised encounter as an audiovisual reflection on the ethics and politics of globalisation, since the film is located precisely in the paradox between the interaction and the isolation inherent in the forms of globalised communication of our present: “loners in constant touch” (Bauman, 2016, p. 110). Whereas *Ici et ailleurs* reflected on audiovisual ethics and politics of the encounter concerning conflicting geographies, and *Sans soleil* did so on the encounter with the other through the equality of the gaze in the passage between two realities, *Ailleurs, partout* is located in the space of globalised images of the 21st century, where geographic identity disappears, and the mediated encounter allows us to reflect on the fragility of subjectivities. The story of Shahin, a 21-year-old young man who left Iran in 2016 to request asylum in Europe, on a year-and-a-half journey that took him through Turkey, Serbia,

Greece—where he met the filmmakers—and the United Kingdom, embodies the terrible paradox of the connected isolation suffered by an illegal migrant:

[W]e now reside, unprecedentedly, in two different worlds—one “online” one “offline” [...] inside the offline world I am *under control* [...] whereas inside the online world I am, on the contrary, in charge and *in control* [...] *I belong* to the offline world—while the online world *belongs to me*. (Bauman, 2016, pp. 102–104)

As the film’s synopsis succinctly indicates, “On the net, Shahin crosses borders in one click, but the reality experienced by this young Iranian fleeing his country alone for Europe turns out to be very different.”

The filmmakers build the essay film by hybridising different audio-textual elements that are accompanied by a visual image alien to them. Thus, this audio-textual narration is developed through the fragmentation and hybridisation of these elements, creating a meditated balance among them: Perelmutter’s voiceover; Shahin’s voiceover reading the transcriptions of the interviews for his asylum application in the United Kingdom, both his answers and the interviewer’s questions; Shahin’s telephone conversations with his mother, in which we also listen to his sister and his aunt; the text messages Perelmutter and Shahin exchange, inscribed on the screen; and finally a single phone call between Shahin and the filmmaker. Therefore, the filmmakers decide to embody their subjectivities into a single one, to single out their point of view and their expression, strengthening their role as alterity concerning Shahin’s identity.

As Bauman explains, “Refugees, the displaced, asylum seekers, migrants, the sans papiers, they are the waste of globalisation” (2003, p. 58). Illegal immigrants are perceived as “wasted humans,” divided into “asylum seekers,” also associated with terrorism, and “economic immigrants”:

[T]he “asylum seeker,” once prompting human compassion and spurring an urge to help, has been sullied and defiled, while the very idea of ‘asylum’, once a matter of civil and civilised pride, has been reclassified as a dreadful concoction of shameful naivety and criminal irresponsibility. As to the “economic migrants” who have retreated from the headlines to give room for the sinister, poison-brewing and disease-carrying “asylum seekers,” it did not help their image that they embody [...] everything that the dominant neoliberal creed holds sacred and promotes as the precepts that should rule everyone’s conduct (that is, “the desire for progress and prosperity, individual responsibility, readiness to take risks, etc.”). (p. 57)

In this way, Shahin's story is completed from the information he provides to his different interlocutors—family, authorities, and the filmmakers—which causes reflection on the nature of the “veracity” of his testimony as asylum seeker. The filmmakers state, “The story must be logical, clear, unambiguous, monolithic, and verifiable. But life is not like that. We wanted to offer another story, a ‘counter-story’” (Flass, 2021, p. 8). Shahin's counter-story problematises the biased duality between the “true” asylum seeker and the economic migrant who lies. The essay film offers a reflection that fosters critical thinking about the ethics and politics of globalisation and its migratory policies. Critical thinking is generated once again through an exercise in intersubjectivity between alterities, whose encounter in turn is mediated by globalised communication.

The described polyphony provides not only the expression of different subjectivities but also of different registers and devices that draw an itinerary from direct to indirect style, from emotion to reason, and from subjectivity to its objectivisation. The direct telephone conversation occurs in the intimate field; the chat conversation is indirectly registered on the screen. The interviews for the asylum application are transformed into the reading of their transcripts devoid of their actual experience. Shahin's identity thus materialises as fragmented and mediated by different devices of globalised communication. The perception of identity is transformed by the devices through which it is expressed. The crucial relevance of mediation is synthesised in one element: the text messages written on the screen reproduce the writing of their interlocutors. In a message from Shahin in which he recounts his journey from Greece to London, the text of the message corrects its writing: “I travelled on *a fake*” becomes: “I travelled on *a genuine* passport but not my own.” This impossible element—Shahin modifying his writing in real time, as if it were possible to visualise it—breaks the mediated encounter and its deferred nature for a few moments to make us understand the abyss that separates it from that suggested subjective expression in real time.

Along with this audio-textual narrative puzzle, the essay film is completed with a visual image consisting of images from live webcams—surveillance and sightseeing cameras—from all over the world and accessible on the internet. We can consider them “operational images” using Harun Farocki's definition: “Images without a social goal, not for edification, not for reflection” (Pantenburg, 2016, p. 49), or the version offered by Volker Pantenburg as “working images” (p. 51), images that “perform work” (p. 55). These images force the filmmaker who uses them to create a “counter-operational strategy” (p. 50), whose objective would be “to deal with things that escape the

visible realm to an ever-greater extent [...] to extract images from processes that are no longer destined to be watched" (p. 55). It is precisely the task that the filmmakers set themselves: to generate an audiovisual thinking process with images that lack this dimension "to inject a sense of agency that the images in themselves would not have" (p. 58). Pantenburg poses a final question: "From which position is it possible to envision strategies of counter-operationality?" (p. 58). The answer in the case of *Ailleurs, partout* is to place oneself in the position of spectator of "the operational images of surveillance," sharing the gaze with the alterity with which one wishes to reflect, and with the spectator. As I will analyse below, through the parataxic montage between images and between image and audio-textual elements, the essay film manages to give meaning to these wasted images and turns them into elements of the audiovisual thinking.

Through these images, the filmmakers first offer a lucid representation of the non-places of postmodernity, where the human being seems to lose all identity notion: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. [...] supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places" (Augé, 1995, pp. 77–78). Exterior images from nocturnal streets, roads and ring roads, parking lots and industrial parks, and interior images of lonely workers (fast-food restaurants, bars, hotels, laundries, factories, etc.) offer another of the characteristics of non-places, vital in the experience of illegal migration: "The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude," "The community of human destinies is experienced in the anonymity of non-places, and in solitude" (Augé, 1995, pp. 103, 120). To these non-places of solitude, the essay film adds a new element to its characterisation to reflect on: the nature of the images offered by live webcams. Thus, we become spectators of a non-gaze, stripping the spectatorial position of any relational aspect. As defined by Paul Virilio, "The production of sightless vision is itself merely the reproduction of an intense blindness that will become the latest and last form of industrialisation: the industrialisation of the non-gaze" (1994 [1988], p. 73). These images of the non-gaze come from two activities that define our globalised reality and its voracious capitalism: the surveillance cameras of the global society of control and the sightseeing cameras of the consumer society. In this way, the images embody the two axes that determine Shahin's life experience: the control that prevents his free circulation and the consumption that marginalises and isolates him. Besides, this non-gaze also represents the dematerialisation of the spectator's

gaze in globalisation, which loses its bond with the space-time it takes place and, therefore, with subjectivity and identity. Can the spectator's gaze on globalisation also become a non-gaze?

From these *operational images of the non-gaze*, the filmmakers build a visual image that generates different developments. First, there is a progression of the images: from black and white to colour; from night to daytime; from exterior to interior; and from deserted landscapes to human presence. Second, these images are also considered artistic raw material, which the filmmakers select but do not manipulate to achieve an aesthetic beauty that embodies a secondary "counter-operational strategy" of this essay film: the *passage à l'art* of the non-gaze. Third, the visual image is accompanied by a sound atmosphere created with electronic elements that insist on the aesthetic manipulation of the visual reading of the spectator. The audiovisual thinking process, the main "counter-operational strategy," is generated through the parataxis between the different elements of the audio-textual narration and the audiovisual aesthetic creation. This parataxic thinking generates the reflection on our globalised reality with two simultaneous perspectives: the conflict between the infinite possibilities of communication and the loneliness, even isolation from which they materialise, generated from the non-presence of the mediated encounter and the conflict between the unlimited access to the globalised reality and migratory policies that oppose human rights on many occasions. Thus, the human gaze converts the operational images of the non-gaze into the raw material of an aesthetic-emotional creation, lyricism also "as counter-narrative [...] that produce meaning associated not to story or rational discourse, but to affect" (Rascaroli, 2017, p. 144–145), "as a counter-narrative strategy [...] to create a dialectical tension and, as a result, textual interstices within which new audiovisual thinking can emerge" (Rascaroli, 2020, p. 81). I argue that the parataxic montage between the audio-textual elements and the operational images of the non-gaze creates both critical emotion and reflection, opening up interstitial thinking between the two.

The first minutes of the film present the four audio-textual elements, while the visual image shows us black-and-white night images of those deserted non-places. After the already mentioned text message, which is corrected on the screen, it finishes with "I would like to see the whole world" on the black screen. Next, the colour image appears almost for the first time, initiating the problematisation of the globalised perception of that "whole world." Through the restitution of the subjective and critical gaze in the operational images of the non-gaze, the contemplation of the globalised world becomes a reflection on its nature and a symbolic sentence-image

of Shahin's experience of migration. In her third voiceover's appearance, Perelmutter recounts Shahin's stay in a town in the north of England to which he was transferred by the authorities from London, pending his second interview for the asylum application:

For five months, he's been waiting in this little northern town, an old mining town where rents are cheap. So, they send refugees there in mass. He wasn't expecting the town to be so poor. In a brief message, he wrote to me: "I don't know when I'll have my second interview. I'm preparing for it. They want a story, but life is messy. They want the truth, but if you tell the truth, it turns against you. Because the truth doesn't always come with proof. Lying all the time, that's hell.

The black-and-white images of a factory become a representation of the hell experienced by Shahin as a kind of prison. Perelmutter notes, "It was a factory, an industrial zone, but there was something in its construction, in this black and white, which made me think of, I realised it later, a concentration camp barracks" (Lefevre, 2021, p. 31). The interrupted movement of the image embodies the anomaly, the obstruction of free circulation, the psychic confinement that Shahin suffers and from which he can only escape through a lie that conforms to the parameters created by the authorities. Ethical and political reflection then arises from the parataxis between his current personal experience and a visual image that invokes the past historical narrative. In this way, the dialectic between the Holocaust, the persecution of the Jewish people and their exodus, and the exodus by migrant populations, considered illegal, arises.

After a fragment of the interview about Shahin's arrival in Istanbul, the daytime image emerges on which a text by Shahin is inscribed, again around his perception of the world: "The world is huge but sometimes it's strange, it rains everywhere. Now I understand the importance of light. Light in its pure state is the state you are in." It again insists on the consequences of the mediated perception of the world that globalisation imposes. Next, Perelmutter's narration of Shahin's anger at his situation, when they visited him in London, concludes, "He felt betrayed by a world that he wanted to admire but where, to survive, he had to let go of a bit of himself. The world, he watches it on the internet." At that moment, the first interior image appears, with a human presence. A woman leans on the counter of the street food stall where she works. While the appearance of the colour image problematises the perception of a world until this moment, exterior and desert, nocturnal and in black and white, its observation now includes the

human being and problematises their presence in it. We become observers and observed objects of the same non-gaze. The parataxis thus opens the abyssal interstice of the identity question in the globalised world. Ingold indicates, "These are moments when suddenly you capture something in someone's life. The gestures tell of the working conditions, the loneliness today, the fatigue ... People seemed extremely tired to us" (Lefevre, 2021, p. 34).

The whole world Shahin wanted to discover has first become a threat that imposes the renunciation of his identity and then a mere image on the screen that reveals our status as passive subjects and objects of globalisation. In this way, the alterity experience created concerning Shahin and Perelmutter is now doubled with the people appearing in the images and the spectators of the essay film. This is confirmed in Perelmutter's fifth voiceover fragment, in which she continues the account of Shahin's psychological state to finally generate identification among alterities inside the globalised operational image:

So he hardly goes anywhere. He stays shut up in his room. He says that ideas spin through his head, and he feels like he's going crazy. He says that if we look closely everyone, at one point or another, seems crazy. He says he often recognises himself in people's movements. Someone stops all of a sudden. Someone stands still.

Therefore, Shahin, turned into a spectator of the mediated image of the globalised world, is capable of identifying the work alienation typical of this reality, dedicated to the service sector—images of bars, restaurants and hotels—far removed from any notion of creativity.

Later, two images from infrared cameras appear in the film, the first in colour and the second in black and white, as Shahin narrates to his mother for the first time some of the hardships of his migration journey from Iran to Serbia on foot, including two months in prison. In this case, both operational images come from a subjective view: the first from an infrared surveillance camera coupled to a drone that follows the movements of two people, and the second from a conventional camera operated directly by a person who captures the movements of migrants crossing a border. The total identification between Shahin and the operational image is then produced, which generates the dialectical sentence-image to become symbolic by materialising two reflections. First, it evidences that identification with illegal immigrants is produced through an operational image in which their figure is completely indiscernible. Migrant identities

are reified and reduced to indeterminate figures that are only of interest as illegal elements of globalisation. Second, it reveals the difference between the passive surveillance of the non-gaze all citizens are subjected to, and the active surveillance from governmental authorities, and even anonymous citizens, that illegal migrants suffer. The argument presented by Bauman about “wasted humans” is embodied here: “[T]hey provide governments with an ideal ‘deviant other’” in order “to reinforce (salvage? build anew?) the mouldy and decaying walls meant to guard the hallowed distinction between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’ in a globalizing world that pays it little if any respect and routinely violates it” (2003, pp. 56, 58). It is essential to point out the difference between the alterity that can recognise itself in the other (Shahin and the filmmakers) to make intersubjectivity possible, and the otherness that only recognises strangeness in the other, resulting in “a blunt refusal of social acceptance and a forceful alienation of people branded as anomalous” (Bauman, 2016, p. 41) as the consequence of “the policy of securitization” (p. 35).

While these infrared images mark the maximum expression of the operational image concerning illegal migration, later, we contemplate what could be understood as its polar opposite in the film: an image of Earth captured by a satellite that represents the potential of globalisation at the same time as its ambivalence. As Perelmuter notes, “[It] brings to its extreme limit the visibilisation, the overexposure of the world, of distant countries. It is the planet itself that can be observed in real time” (Lefevre, 2021, p. 30). This image is accompanied by Shahin’s texts on it, talking first about his mother and then about his situation before migrating: “Young people in Iran grow up in a place cut off from the world. They can’t be successful. Everything’s planned in advance.” Once again, the perception of that globalised, interconnected “world” to which Iran would not belong, is problematised. Thus, the non-critical vision that Shahin received from that globalised world that he wanted to know is beginning to be evidenced. From this image of the planet, the film cuts to the image of some workers sleeping in a rest area, while Perelmuter finishes presenting the argument about the world perceived by Shahin from Iran:

In Iran, when he watched images of the rest of the world online, he found everything was so different: cars, buildings, people, their way of dressing ... especially women. He realises now that images never convey the atmosphere, while atmosphere is what one experiences. In England, the cold atmosphere is not just due to the weather. He says: A cold life. Maybe it is because since he’s been there, he feels he’s in a movie. As if he

is walking alongside his own life, as if he were dead. He stays awake all night at the computer and sleeps all day, so he won't see it go by, so it goes by faster. Now, when he watches images online, he feels he knows more, and that there is more he doesn't know. So he observes, he navigates. He says that the differences and similarities don't lie where we think. The big differences are found in little things.

Later, before Shahin's emotional state, Perelmuter proposes to talk on the phone. Shahin's words, for the first time expressed with his own voice to the filmmaker, explain his critique of the legal globalised alterity Perelmuter represents. Shahin's unmediated expression conveys his critical thinking:

You talk about philosophy and feelings that really matter to you. You could concentrate on what you want. But for me, it is like moneywise. It really matters to me to support myself, to get where I want. If I had someone to support me, you know my passion: I like boxing, I like fighting sports and I am fucking good at it, but if I had an injury, what would happen to me? I would end up living on the streets. I mean, I should think logically, I can't do many things. If things happen, and I cannot get anywhere, I'd be destroyed, literally destroyed. Literally, I don't really live the thing I always wanted. It's like ... maybe ... It doesn't belong to me ... or I can't really connect to it. I mean, maybe it just takes time or ... I don't know. I have no idea what's going on. It's just feeling so unreal.

The globalised world he visualised from Iran, and to which he did not belong, now becomes an unreal experience when he is part of it, considered an illegal existence. The image then shows anonymous people walking through an undetermined non-place that is finally empty; one more way of embodying the absence of the idea of community to which to associate their own identity form. Shahin describes his lack of belonging to the globalised world he longed for.

Next, the conversation with his mother about Shahin's chances of accessing the university provokes an association with an image that conveys the expression of emotion. A woman who works in a kitchen, of whom we only see the torso, remains standing still. When she moves, her face enters the camera frame, and we see her crying while we hear the sobs of Shahin's mother. The operational image thus reveals her contradictory potential: its capacity to capture a maximum intimacy that it does not seek. It is this unintended capacity that makes it possible for this product of globalisation—the surveillance image—to become, in turn, an element

to fight it by showing the impossibility of completely eliminating human emotion from the operational image.

A message from Shahin is later inscribed on images of interior non-places, deserted at night: "The truth ... Can you tell me what is it good for? If not to make people freer?" The question leads to a fragment of the interview in which Shahin explains why the Iranian government would persecute him: "Because I have converted to Bahai," and the punishment he would receive if he returned: "[A]t least, a minimal punishment or the sentence, is to be in prison for a long, unknown future time. And there is a possibility to be executed." Still images from an overhead shot of another interior non-place embody the scrutiny, the examination, the judgement asylum seekers are subjected to, as a figurative surveillance camera on their past. Images of hijab-wearing women in an interior hallway evoke the religious side of the Iranian migrant population. Later, while Shahin's aunt tells him of her dream, the encounter between Shahin and his mother, the visual image shows the sun, "the pure light" with which Shahin defined previously the state of mind. The "good state of mind" lies in the identity encounter, that of Shahin with his family.

Later on, Shahin's text shows how the situation into which illegal immigrants are forced leads them to perpetuate the actions of the globalised world, to become its new defenders–victims: "I started my studies. I bought an online course given by a young Iranian man my age. He lives in the US and, thanks to his stock market investments, he's already almost a millionaire." The images then show us the luxurious non-places of capitalism: a high-end resort. In contrast to the dead times of the alienating work of the working class, the filmmakers now show us the dead times of leisure of the upper class. The Caucasian bodies are measured in the waves of a pool, inert: "You just need to know how to enter and exit the market at the right time." Thus, it is evident how globalisation makes victims of migrants who seek to access it, using its defining practice of speculation, in this case, stock market speculation.

In the conclusion, we see on the screen the only image from the filmmakers' subjective gaze, recorded from the ferry that took them to the United Kingdom when they visited Shahin. Perelmuter's voice says:

He sent me a message on Facebook: "The English granted me my papers. It's the happiest day of my life. I didn't do all that for nothing. Anything will be possible soon. Soon. A normal life. I'll bring my mother over. We'll go to the beach. I'll be there among the other people. Who will know then that I used to be a refugee? I'll look off into the distance. Maybe I'll have forgotten. I'll order an ice cream. It'll be pistachio."

The irruption of *the non-operational image of the subjective gaze* of the filmmakers, the sentence-image synthesis of the film, accompanied by music, Mercedes Sosa's song "Gracias a la vida" [Thanks to life], embodies the need for the critical thinking generated by the filmmakers for the personal encounter that reverses the automatisms of globalisation and its consequences:

[I]t was like the culmination of our approach: if all the work with images from live webcams, including surveillance cameras, consisted in making another use of them, diverting them from their initial function, investing them with a point of view, then we could, in the end, include an image that we would have filmed ourselves. [...] We were attached to this shot as to the reality of this trip. [...] The image was placed very early in the editing, and it guided us like a horizon (Lefevre, 2021, p. 36)

Thus, the non-gaze of the live webcams and the globalised society they represent can be refuted through the recovery of the subjective gaze that problematises the mediated encounter in order to reveal real alterities that help to restore identity fractures.

Taking into account all the above, we can conclude that the essay film *Ailleurs, partout*, generated through the parataxis between operational images of the non-gaze and the polyphony of subjectivities, between the poetics created from the non-place images and immigration and asylum policies, creates a mediated encounter as an audiovisual thinking process that allows us to reflect on the consequences of globalisation concerning identity, subjectivity, and gaze, through a process of restoration of the subjective gaze. In doing so, the film addresses capital issues: the reflection on the perception of illegal migrants as "wasted humans" of globalisation; the questioning of the division between asylum seekers and economic migrants; the problematisation of the migrant's voice and their empowerment through the mediated encounter. *Ailleurs, partout* creates an audiovisual thinking process that reflects on the necessity of the real encounter between alterities in our globalised reality, in which identity and subjectivity can be asserted and exchanged.

Conclusions

The decision of the filmmakers to place themselves in the spectator's position, in very different ways, opposed in various senses, makes their

comparative study raise very relevant questions about the nature, capacities, and possibilities of Rancière's "emancipated spectator" cited in the Introduction, when applied to the contemporary essay film. They are both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them (2009, p. 13). The emancipated spectator questions both the equivalences between "gaze and passivity, exteriority and separation, mediation and simulacrum" and the oppositions "between the collective and the individual, the image and living reality, activity and passivity, self-ownership and alienation" (p. 7). They mobilise their gaze and carry out the operations of association and dissociation: "It is in this power of associating and dissociating that the emancipation of the spectator consists—that is to say, the emancipation of each of us as spectator" (p. 17). Therefore, the emancipated spectator, who performs self-reflection on the distance that separates them from the work and its variation to generate critical thinking that will establish both consensus and dissent regarding what is shown, finds in the analysed films three proposals that interpellate them from different premises, which makes it possible to reflect on the aforementioned equivalences and oppositions. The accomplished analyses offer us the following synthesis as a materialisation of relevance about the tensions described by Rancière.

The films are therefore situated in the spectatorial position to provide different experiences that allow mapping and reflecting on the possibilities of the emancipated spectator. *Face aux fantômes* offers us the embodiment of an emancipated spectator to show us the possibilities of self-reflection and critical thinking from the viewing of *Nuit et brouillard*. Comolli transforms this discourse into an audiovisual thinking process using tracking shots as a materialisation of the mobilisation of the spectator's gaze. Thus, the film offers a "pedagogical model" (Rancière, 2008, p. 59) in which the emancipated spectator would identify with Lindeperg in her viewing and research on Resnais's film, and with Comolli regarding the audiovisual materialisation of the thinking process of the protagonist. Self-reflection and critical thinking then arise from a mobilisation of the gaze that aims to cover the different distances, the interstitial spaces at distinct levels: between the diverse materials of *Nuit et brouillard*, between the film and Lindeperg, between Lindeperg and Comolli, and between them and the spectator of the essay film. The identification of the pedagogical model means that this last distance has been practically abolished. The spectator shares the self-reflection and critical thinking around the *passage à l'art* of the historical material, about how the transition from emotion to knowledge is inserted in the believe–know–see axis.

Considering the interstitial thinking the previous film develops, Dieutre generates parataxic thinking consisting of fixing the gaze, imposing cohabitation, and preventing its mobilisation, annulling the interstices and the variation of distance. The only point of view facing the exterior space of the refugees and the interior space of the lovers, and their simultaneity, annuls the mobilisation of the gazes in the filmed images. The simultaneity and continuity between these images and the spectator space of Vincent and Eva also annuls their interstice. Finally, the represented spectator, Eva's character, does not materialise into an active spectator who questions the images, but in a spectatorial passivity that serves as a catalyst for Vincent's story. However, she offers us a relevant experience of the first viewing by showing us the first aesthetic emotion, especially regarding the absence of women. The visual shock of the internal spectator also provokes the reflection of the external spectator of the film. Thus, the emancipated spectator of the essay film would not experience the identification that occurred in *Face aux fantômes*, but rather they are questioned through its denial to reflect on the position in which they are placed, without the possibility of mobilisation within the film. This spectator's self-reflection is also linked to critical thinking about the *passage à l'art*, on this occasion about the coexistence of and dialectics between intimate emotion and social knowledge of the present reality, and finally, about the fictionalisation of this experience and its transformation into memory.

Ailleurs, partout interpellates the emancipated spectator by sharing the non-gaze of the operational images. It creates a mediated encounter between the filmmakers and their protagonist, combining parataxic and interstitial thinking and instrumentalising the disappearance of distances and the dematerialisation of the spectator's position that defines globalised communication. The juxtaposition between the *passage à l'art* of the operational images and the polyphony of subjectivities generates critical thinking about migration and asylum policies and the consequences of globalisation concerning identity, subjectivity, and gaze. In this way, the essay film offers the necessary transformation from the passive to the active spectator, from the non-gaze deprived of emotion and thought to the subjective gaze that allows for feeling and critical thinking. The re-subjectivisation of the image is possible thanks to the intersubjective experience that transforms the operational images of the non-gaze into the critical images of the subjective gaze.

Face aux fantômes interpellates the emancipated spectator by offering them the audiovisual materialisation of their self-reflection and critical thinking, instrumentalising identification. *Jaurès* does so by the denial of the previous possibilities, seeing them doomed to reflect on the mobilisation

of a fixed gaze, on the possibilities of an active spectator facing a representation of their passivity. *Ailleurs, partout* interpellates the emancipated spectator by sharing the non-gaze in order to reintroduce subjectivity and critical thinking thanks to the intersubjective experience with the other. As Rancière indicates: “Pensiveness thus refers to a condition that is indeterminately between the active and the passive. [...] It is to speak of a zone of indeterminacy between thought and non-thought, activity and passivity, but also between art and non-art” (2009, p. 107). The analysis of these works reveals the fertile extension of this zone of indeterminacy in the essay film, which is still to be explored, where it is possible to reflect on the tensions between the active and the passive, thought and non-thought, emotion and reflection.

Works Cited

- Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. Verso / (1992). *Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Wasted lives: Modernity and its outcasts*. Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2016). *Strangers at our door*. Polity Press.
- Blümlinger, C. (2014). L'attrait des plans retrouvés. *Cinémas*, 24(2–3), 69–96.
- Comolli, J.-L. (2009). *Cinéma contre spectacle*. Éditions Verdier.
- Comolli, J.-L. (2012). Mots et images. *Ces films à part qu'on nomme “documentaires”*. <https://cesfilmsapart.wordpress.com/2012/10/05/mots-et-images/>
- Cuthbertson, T. (2017). In/out: Fictionalising autobiography in Vincent Dieutre's *Jaurès*. *Studies in French Cinema*, 17(3), 265–282. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14715880.2017.1281037>
- Flass, Y. (2021). Entretien avec Isabelle Ingold & Vivianne Perelmuter. Press Kit *Ailleurs, partout*.
- Lefevre, R. (2021). Retenir l'image, voir le monde. À propos d'*Ailleurs, partout*. *Débordements*, 8, 27–42.
- Lindeperg, S. (2007). *Nuit et Brouillard : un film dans l'histoire*. Odile Jacob.
- Montero, D. (2012). *Thinking images: The essay film as a dialogic form in European cinema*. Peter Lang.
- Pantenburg, V. (2016). Working images: Harun Farocki and the operational image. In C. Klonk & J. Eder (Eds.), *Image operations: Visual media and political conflict* (pp. 49–62). Manchester University Press.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *The emancipated spectator*. Verso / (2008). *Le spectateur émancipé*. La Fabrique éditions.

- Rascaroli, L. (2017). *How the essay film thinks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rascaroli, L. (2020). Compounding the lyric essay film: Towards a theory of poetic counter-narrative. In J. Vassilieva & D. Williams (Eds.), *Beyond the essay film: Subjectivity, textuality and technology* (pp. 75–94). Amsterdam University Press.
- Véray, L. (2011). *Les Images d'archives face à l'histoire. De la conservation à la création*. Scérén, cndp-crdp.
- Virilio, P. (1994). *The vision machine*. British Film Institute, Indiana University Press / (1988). *La Machine de vision*. Éditions Galilée.
- Wieviorka, A. (2003). *Déportation et génocide: entre la mémoire et l'oubli*. Gallimard.
- Williams, J. S. (2020). From migration to drift: Forging queer migrant spaces and transborder relations in contemporary French cinema. In James S. Williams (Ed.), *Queering the migrant in contemporary European cinema* (pp. 171–81). Routledge.

Conclusion – Identity and Critical Thinking

Abstract: The conclusion of this volume reflects on the link between the different levels of identity—intimate, artistic, and collective—and the critical thinking that filmmakers generate in relation to the themes addressed and aims to outline a characterisation of the European Francophone essay film considering these two axes. The essay film becomes a suitable practice to foster the reciprocity between the development and vindication of identities and the expansion and evolution of critical thinking. The former gives rise to the latter, which in turn operates on the former, creating continuous interaction. The critical thinking of the European Francophone essay films evolves through the different identities to reflect on past and present, social and political realities.

Keywords: essay film, enunciative devices, audiovisual thinking, history, social and political reflection, Francophone cinema.

The analyses of the selected essay films have allowed us to understand the different functions of each enunciative device and the audiovisual procedures they deploy, as I have explained in the conclusions of each chapter. I summarise here, very briefly, the different axes of the conclusions already presented. The letter becomes the first enunciative device of the essay film due to its possibilities for projecting internal dialogue as a deferred dialogue with various forms of alterity, addressing topics that can combine the individual and the collective, the intimate and the socio-political. The (self-)portrait turns out to be an accurate tool for identity exploration, creating both critical thinking concerning oppression and marginalisation and existential reflection on its connection with audiovisual authorship. The dialogue demonstrates its enormous potential for developing feminist critical thinking, thanks to its capacity for intersubjectivity and sisterhood, instrumentalising irreverence and irony as subversive counter-narratives

against patriarchy. The diptych enables reflection on audiovisual creation processes based on the method of scientific experimentation: to observe the mistakes revealed by the film in order to correct them in the next piece, applied to both documentary and fiction creation and their contents. The hybridisations between enunciative devices allow the presentation of dialectics on which the audiovisual thinking process reflects. The development of digital technology shows the materialisation of its saturation, from which the essay film is redefined as a practice of slow thinking that needs to slow down postmodern reality and its audiovisual procedures. The autofictional paradigm enables identity splits that explore the identity–alterity binomial from new spaces, such as fictionalisation, adaptation, or appropriation. Finally, the focus of the enunciation on the spectator's space makes it possible to generate the essay film from various experiences of the spectator's gaze, such as its mobilisation, its immobilisation or its transformation into the non-gaze of globalisation.

I wish to conclude this study with a final reflection on the link between the different levels of identity and the critical thinking that filmmakers generate in relation to the themes addressed, and try to outline a characterisation of the European Francophone essay film considering these two axes. As Richard Jenkins expounds, “Identity can only be understood as a process of ‘being’ or ‘becoming’. One’s identity—one’s identities, indeed, for who we are is always multi-dimensional, singular, and plural—is never a final or settled matter” (2014, p. 18). The essay film becomes a suitable practice to foster the reciprocity between the development and vindication of identities and the expansion and evolution of critical thinking. The former gives rise to the latter, which in turn operates on the former, creating continuous interaction.

Intimate identity is the starting point of several works on gender, sexual orientation, romantic love, and family. *News from Home* moves away from the latter to explore the mother–daughter relationship, and *Du verbe aimer* returns to it to understand from adulthood the trauma suffered in childhood and adolescence, again concerning the maternal figure. A link is thus evidenced between female reflection and the family institution that we do not find in male authorship. While gender reflection is crucial in works by women, male intimacy is considered in the exploration of gay identity in Dieutre's pieces. Critical thinking then seeks to make visible and connect gay reality with several historical and artistic spaces: the pictorial in *Leçons de ténèbres* and the cinematic in *Viaggio nella dopo-storia*. Lost love is the intimate space that male authors address as a starting point for social and political reflection: *Lettres d'amour en Somalie* regarding the situation of

the African country and *Lettre pour L...* on the Balkans War as a present reality of the socio-political conflicts that have crossed Goupil's biography. It is also possible to conclude a greater intellectualisation of male intimate identity, of which *JLG/JLG* is the best example, compared to the greater emotionality of female identity, as exemplified by *Les Plages d'Agnès* and *Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil*. The analysed corpus also shows the deep connection between intimate and authorial identities, which we find in almost all of the works. Audiovisual practice is part of their intimate identity, and reflection also arises from their exploration and questioning. Some works have focused mainly on this aspect. *Le Camion* addresses fictional creation as the dialogue between the author and the spectator in which female identity also produces socio-political critical thinking. *Lettre à Freddy Buache* studies the possibilities of an audiovisual analysis of Lausanne, generating reflection on city life. *Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and *Scénario du film Passion* reflect on the fictional creation before and after its production, respectively, to analyse the creator's ethical and aesthetic commitment to their work.

We also observe how the passage from intimate and artistic identity to collective identity is carried out through two main axes: political and social reflection as a legacy of militant cinema, which is marked by the absence of the race/ethnicity perspective and in which the discourse of class comes from privileged positions, and gender and feminist reflection carried out by women filmmakers. Regarding the former, travel experience becomes essential to develop political and social critical thinking that starts to denounce the colonialist gaze. Marker is its most significant representative. In *Lettre de Sibérie*, the trip through Siberia allows him to establish the essence of essayistic reflection as an oscillation between the real and the imaginary to dismantle the commonplaces of Western capitalism on the reality of the Soviet Union. In *Si j'avais quatre dromadaires*, the photographic images taken around the world allow the critical reflection of its spectators on the realities captured. In *Sans soleil*, the experience of the journey in Asia and Africa, between Japan and Cape Verde, allows Marker to reflect on the relationship between past and present, history and postmodernity. For his part, Godard reflects in *Camera-Eye* on the necessity or harmfulness of the journey as an exercise of political commitment. *Letter to Jane* addresses the same topic, generating private and public communication by combining the cinematic experience itself with a semio-pragmatic analysis of a photograph. *Ici et ailleurs* comes to admit the errors of militant cinema and creates an essential conjunction between critical thinking regarding the situation of the Palestinian people and feminist reflection regarding the

male gaze. Thus, feminist criticism is transferred from the intimate space to the collective space. *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* confirms this evolution, becoming a paragon of feminist reflection on its multiple themes, and *Papa comme maman* takes up the topic of motherhood but now generates feminist criticism from a broader sociological perspective. *Jane B. par Agnès V.* moves from the individual female (self)-portrait to the collective one, evidencing the multiple stereotypes women are subjected to. *Level Five* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* then become saturated reflections on the link between intimate, artistic, and collective identities regarding history and audiovisual developments. Finally, the three works with which this study concludes offer male–female dialogues to address political and social issues from different identity perspectives. *Face aux fantômes* analyses the cinematic account of the Second World War from the professional perspective of the historian. *Jaurès* juxtaposes the intimate love experience with the social reality of the Afghan refugees in Paris. *Ailleurs, partout* offers us the mediated encounter between the filmmaker's *legal identity* and the *illegal identity* of a migrant seeking asylum to reflect on the reality of our globalised world.

The critical thinking of the European Francophone essay films I have analysed here evolves through the different identities—intimate, artistic, and collective—to reflect on past and present social and political realities. The corpus shows the concerns and reflections of a kind of European Francophone identity in relation to its own history and reality throughout the 20th and 21st centuries: gender, sexual orientation, family, militant cinema, feminist documentary, modernity, and contemporaneity, the Second World War and the Holocaust, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Algerian War, the Palestinian struggle, the Balkans War, capitalism and communism, Western and Eastern societies, colonialism and African countries' independence, migration, and globalisation. The essay film fosters both the spectator's and society's critical thinking and their different identities and makes them evolve.

Works Cited

Jenkins, R. (2014). *Social Identity*. Routledge.

Bibliography

- Alter, N. M. (2006). *Chris Marker*. University of Illinois Press.
- Alter, N. M. (2018). *The essay film after fact and fiction*. Columbia University Press.
- Alter, N. M., & Corrigan, T. (Eds.) (2017). *Essays on the essay film*. Columbia University Press.
- An, G. (2019). From muse to Insoumuse: Delphine Seyrig, vidéaste. In M. Atack, A. S. Fell, D. Holmes, and I. Long (Eds.), *Making waves: French feminisms and their legacies 1975–2015* (pp. 55–70). Liverpool University Press.
- Angot, C. (2002). *Pourquoi le Brésil ?* Stock.
- Arasse, D. (2006). *Histoires de peintures*. Gallimard.
- Astruc, A. (1992). *Du stylo à la caméra... et de la caméra au stylo. Écrits (1942–1984)*. L'Archipel.
- Augé, M. (1995). *Non-places: Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*. Verso / (1992). *Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Aumont, J. (1982). This is not a textual analysis: Godard's *La Chinoise*. *Camera Obscura*, 3–4(2–3–1 (8–9–10)), 131–160.
https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-3-4-2-3-1_8-9-10-131
- Aumont, J. (1999). *Amnésies. Fictions du cinéma d'après Jean-Luc Godard*. POL.
- Bacqué, B., Neyrat, C., Schulmann, C., & Terrier, V. (Eds.) (2015). *Jeux sérieux. Cinéma et art contemporains transforment l'essai*. MAMCO.
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press / (1981) *Simulacres et simulations*. Éditions Galilée.
- Baudrillard, J. (1996) *The perfect crime*. Verso / (1995). *Le crime parfait*. Éditions Galilée.
- Bauman, Z. (1991). *Modernity and ambivalence*. Polity Press, Blackwell Publishing Limited.
- Bauman, Z. (2003). *Wasted lives: Modernity and its outcasts*. Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2016). *Strangers at our door*. Polity Press.
- Bazin, A. (2017). Bazin on Marker (1958). In N. M. Alter & T. Corrigan (Eds.). *Essays on the essay film* (pp. 102–105). Columbia University Press / (1958) "Lettre de Sibérie" *France-Observateur*, October 30, 1958.
- Beaulieu, J. (2015). Virtualités à l'œuvre dans le cinéma de Marguerite Duras. In C. Proulx & S. Santini (Eds.), *Le cinéma de Marguerite Duras: l'autre scène du littéraire ?* (pp. 115–124). Peter Lang.
- Bellour, R. (1992). (Not) just another filmmaker. In R. Bellour & M. L. Bandy (Eds.), *Godard: Son + image* (pp. 215–231). Museum of Modern Art.
- Bellour, R. (1997). The book, back and forth. In C. van Assche & Y. Gevaert (Eds.), *Qu'est-ce qu'une madeleine ?* (pp. 109–154). Centre Georges Pompidou.

- Bellour, R. (1999). *L'Entre-Images 2. Mots, Images*. POL.
- Bellour, R. (2002). *L'Entre-Images. Photo. Cinéma. Vidéo*. Éditions de la Différence [1990].
- Bellour, R. (2009). Varda ou l'art contemporain. Notes sur 'Les Plages d'Agnès.' *Trafic*, 69, 16–19.
- Benjamin, W. (1999). *The arcades project*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bergstrom, J. (2004). News from Home. In C. Paquot (Ed.), *Chantal Akerman. Autoportrait en cinéaste* (p. 181). Cahiers du cinéma, Centre Georges Pompidou.
- Bernanos, G. (1949). *Under the sun of Satan*. Pantheon Books.
- Bersani, L., & Dutoit, U. (1998). *Caravaggio's secrets*. MIT Press.
- Beugnet, M. (2007). *Cinema and sensation: French film and the art of transgression*. Edinburg University Press.
- Blanckeman, B. (2000). *Les récits indécidables. Jean Echenoz, Hervé Guibert, Pascal Quignard*. Presses Universitaires du Septentrion.
- Bluher, D. (2013). Autobiography, (re-)enactment and the performative self-portrait in Varda's *Les Plages d'Agnès / The Beaches of Agnès* (2008). *Studies in European Cinema*, 10(1), 59–69. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1386/seci.10.1.59_1
- Bluher, D. (2019). The other portrait: Agnès Varda's self-portraiture. In M. Tinel-Temple, L. Busetta, & M. Monteiro (Eds.), *From self-portrait to selfie: Representating the self in moving images* (pp. 47–76). Peter Lang.
- Blümlinger, C. (2004). Lire entre les images. In S. Liandrát-Guigues and M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 49–66). Editions Champ Vallon.
- Blümlinger, C. (2010). The imaginary in the documentary image: Chris Marker's *Level Five*. *Image & Narrative*, 11(1), 1–15.
<http://ojs.arts.kuleuven.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/51>
- Blümlinger, C. (2014). L'attrait des plans retrouvés. *Cinemas*, 24(2–3), 69–96.
- Bouquet S. (1994). L et lui. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 476, 70–71.
- Brenez, N. (2018). *Manifestations. Écrits politiques sur le cinéma et autres arts filmiques*. De l'incidence éditeur.
- Brenez, N. (2019). Jean-Luc Godard expérimental. Remarques formulées ou rêvées en Suisse et ailleurs, que raison nous garde de généraliser. *Trafic*, 112, 35–43.
- Brenez, N., & Faroult, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents*. Éditions du Centre Pompidou.
- Bulher, J. M., & Laplace, Y. (1977). Locarno 77: l'espace du leurre. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 281, 54.
- Caille, A. C. (2019). Temporaliser la photographie : Marker, Varda, Wenders–Salgado. *Intermédialités / Intermediality*, 33. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065013ar>
- Català, J. M. (2006). La forma ensayo en Marker. In M. L. Ortega & A. Weinrichter (Eds.), *Mystère Marker. Pasajes en la obra de Chris Marker* (pp. 149–164). T&B.

- Català, J. M. (2014). *Estética del ensayo. La forma ensayo, de Montagne a Godard*. Universitat de Valencia.
- Català, J. M. (2022). News of the end of the world: The essay film as mentality. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.02>
- Chion, M. (1994). *Audio-Vison: Sound on screen*. Columbia University Press / (1991) *L'audio-vision. Son et image au cinéma*. Armand Colin.
- Chion, M. (1999). *The voice in cinema*. Columbia University Press / (1982) *La voix au cinéma*. Editions de l'Etoile, Cahiers du Cinéma.
- Comolli, J.-L. (2009). *Cinéma contre spectacle*. Éditions Verdier.
- Comolli, J.-L. (2012). Mots et images. *Ces films à part qu'on nomme "documentaires"*. <https://cesfilmsapart.wordpress.com/2012/10/05/mots-et-images/>
- Conway, K. (2010). Varda at work: 'Les Plages d'Agnès.' *Studies in French Cinema*, 10(2), 125–139. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1386/sfc.10.2.125_1
- Cooper, S. (2008). *Chris Marker*. Manchester University Press.
- Corrigan, T. (2011). *The essay film: From Montagne, after Marker*. Oxford University Press.
- Cuthbertson, T. (2017). In/out: Fictionalising autobiography in Vincent Dieutre's *Jaurès*. *Studies in French Cinema*, 17(3), 265–282. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14715880.2017.1281037>
- Daney, S. (1976). Le thérorrisé (pédagogie godardienne). *Cahiers du cinéma*, 262–263, 32–40.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. University of Minnesota Press / (1985) *L'image-temps*. Éditions de Minuit.
- de Rougemont, D. (1936). *Penser avec les mains*. Éditions Albin Michel.
- Dobson, J. (2012). *Negotiating the auteur: Cabrera, Lvovsky, Masson and Vernoux*. Manchester University Press.
- Doubrovsky, S. (2007). Les points sur les 'i'. In J.-L. Jeannelle & C. Viollet (Eds.), *Genèse et autofiction* (pp. 53–65). Academia-Bruylant.
- Dubois, J. (2011). Christine Angot: l'enjeu du hors-jeu. *CONTEXTES*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.4000/contextes.4789>
- Dubois, P. (1988). Le ventre à l'écran ou Le désir d'origine et le chemin vers la grâce dans le cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard. *Revue belge du cinéma*, 22–23, 151–160.
- Dubois, P. (1992). Video thinks what cinema creates: Notes on Jean-Luc Godard's work in video and television. In R. Bellour & M. L. Bandy (Eds.), *Godard: Son + image* (pp. 169–186). Museum of Modern Art.
- Dubois, P. (2011). *La question video. Entre cinéma et art contemporain*. Yellow Now, Côté Cinéma.
- Dubroux, D. (1977). Il n'y aurait plus qu'une seule image. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 279–280, 38–43.
- Duras, M. (1977). *Le Camion suivi de Entretien avec Michelle Porte*. Les Éditions de Minuit.

- Faroult, D. (2018). *Godard. Inventions d'un cinéma politique*. Les Prairies Ordinaires.
- Faure, É. (1921). *Histoire de l'art. L'Art moderne*. Les Éditions G Crès et Cie.
- Ferreira-Meyers, K. (2015). Autobiography and autofiction: No need to fight for a place in the limelight, there is space enough for both of these concepts. In K. W. Shands, G. Grillo Mikrut, D. R. Pattanaik, & K. Ferreira-Meyers (Eds.), *Writing the self: Essays on autobiography and autofiction* (pp. 203–201). Södertörns högskola.
- Flass, Y. (2021). Entretien avec Isabelle Ingold & Vivianne Perelmuter. Press Kit *Ailleurs, partout*.
- Fleckinger, H. (2010). Une caméra à soi. Quand les féministes s'emparent de la vidéo. In H. Fleckinger (Ed.), *Caméra militante. Lutttes de libération des années 1970* (pp. 29–46). MétisPresses.
- Fleckinger, H. (2011). *Cinéma et vidéo saisis par le féminisme (France, 1968–1981)*. Doctoral Thesis. Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3.
- Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1996). *To desire differently: Feminism and the French cinema*. Columbia University Press.
- Font, D. (2007). Un epilogo que podría ser un prólogo: en el maremagnum de la no ficción. In A. Weinrichter (Ed.), *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo* (pp. 192–201). Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de Navarra.
- Fox, A. (2016). *Godard and sound: Acoustic innovation in the late films of Jean-Luc Godard*. I. B. Tauris.
- Gasparini, P. (2008). *Autofiction. Une aventure du langage*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Godard, J.-L. (1996). *JLG/JLG. Phrases*. POL.
- Godard, J.-L., & Gorin, J.-P. (1972). Enquête sur une image. *Tel Quel*, 52, 74–90.
- Godard, J.-L., & Ishaghpour, Y. (2000). *Archéologie du cinéma et mémoire du siècle. Dialogue*. Farnago.
- Hardouin, F. (2007). *Le cinématographe selon Godard. Introduction aux Histoire(s) du cinéma ou réflexion sur le temps des arts*. L'Harmattan.
- Harvey-Davvit, J. (2014). The subject of Chantal Akerman's *News from Home* (1977): On the political potential of the cinematic flâneur. In R. Wrigley (Ed.), *The flâneur abroad: Historical and international perspectives* (pp. 342–356). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hollweg, B., & Krtic, I. (Eds.). (2019). *World cinema and the essay film: Transnational perspectives on a global practice*. Edinburg University Press.
- Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A theory of adaptation*. Routledge.
- Ince, K. (2017). *The body and the screen: Female subjectivities in contemporary women's cinema*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ishaghpour, Y. (1982). *D'une image à l'autre. La représentation dans le cinéma d'aujourd'hui*. Éditions Denoël, Gonthier.
- Jacques, V. (2018). *Chris Marker, les médias et le XXe siècle. Le revers de l'histoire contemporaine*. Creaphis Éditions.

- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press.
- Jeanjean, S. (2011). Disobedient video in France in the 1970s: Video production by women's collectives. *Afterall*, 27, 119–125.
- Jenkins, R. (2014). *Social identity*. Routledge.
- Kristeva, J. (1988). *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. Librairie Arthème Fayard.
- Labarthe, A. S. (1960). *Essai sur le Jeune Cinéma Français*. Le Terrain Vague.
- Lacan, J. (1988). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 20*. Norton & Company.
- Layerle, S. (2008). *Caméras en lutte en Mai 68*. Nouveau Monde éditions.
- Layerle, S. (2016). À la redécouverte de *Loin du Vietnam*. *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, (132), 153–156. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44113032>
- Lefevre, R. (2021). Retenir l'image, voir le monde. À propos d'*Ailleurs, partout*. *Débordements*, 8, 27–42.
- Leutrat, J.-L. (2004). Un essai transformé. In S. Liandrat-Guigues & M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 237–249). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Liandrat-Guigues, S., & Gagnebin, M. (Eds.). (2004). *L'essai et le cinéma*. Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Lindeperg, S. (2007). *Nuit et brouillard: un film dans l'histoire*. Odile Jacob.
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2007). *L'écran global*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Longfellow, B. (1989). Love letters to the mother: The work of Chantal Akerman. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale*, 13(1–2), 73–90.
- Lupton, C. (2005). *Chris Marker: Memories of the future*. Reaktion Books.
- MacCabe, C. (2003). *Godard: A portrait of the artist at 70*. Bloomsbury.
- Margulies, I. (1996). *Nothing happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrealist everyday*. Duke University Press.
- Marker, C. (1961). *Commentaires*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Marker, C. (1967). *Commentaires 2*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Mauldin, J. E. (2007). *Negotiating the nation after May '68: Narratives of America and France in French film, 1968–1972*. Doctoral Thesis. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Maupin, F. (1977). News from home. *La revue du cinéma*, 319, 109.
- McFadden, C. H. (2011). Reflected reflexivity in 'Jane B. par Agnès V'. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 28(4), 307–324. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509200902820324?journalCode=gqrf>
- Ménil, A. (2004). Entre utopie et hérésie. Quelques remarques à propos de la notion d'essai. In S. Liandrat-Guigues & M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 87–126). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible*. Northwestern University Press.

- Michaux, H. (1963). Je vous écris d'un pays lointain. In *Plume précédé de Lointain intérieur* (pp. 71–80). Gallimard.
- Mitterrand, F. (1983). *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*. Éditions du Regard.
- Monteiro, M. (2018). Vincent Dieutre: The self-portrait as suspended gesture. In M. Tinel-Temple & M. Monteiro (Eds.), *From self-portrait to selfie: Representing the self in the moving image* (pp. 77–93). Peter Lang.
- Montero, D. (2012). *Thinking images: The essay film as a dialogic form in European cinema*. Peter Lang.
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2013). La coalescencia literario-cinematográfica en la obra de Marguerite Duras. In L. Carriedo, M. D. Picazo, & M. L. Guerrero (Eds.), *Entre escritura e imagen. Lecturas de narrativa contemporánea* (pp. 245–258). Peter Lang. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0352-6392-3>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2016a). From militant cinema to essay film: *Letter to Jane* by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 22, 55–66. <http://www.revistaatalante.com/index.php?journal=atalante&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=332>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2016b). Identity self-portraits of a filmic gaze: From absence to (multi)presence: Duras, Akerman, Varda. *Comparative Cinema*, 8, 63–73. <https://raco.cat/index.php/Comparativecinema/article/view/316123>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2017). *Agatha and the limitless readings* by Marguerite Duras: The literary text and its filmic (irre)presentation. *Communication & Society*, 30(3), 41–60. <http://doi.org/10.15581/003.30.3.41-60>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2018). *De un cine epistolar. La presencia de la misiva en el cine francés moderno y contemporáneo*. Shangrila Ediciones. <https://shangrilaediciones.com/producto/de-un-cine-epistolar/>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2021a). *Correspondências* by Rita Azevedo Gomes: The complex hybrid image of contemporary epistolary cinema and contemporary essay film. *Visual Studies*, 36(4–5), 435–449. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586X.2020.1771202>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2021b). The filmmaker's presence in French contemporary autofiction: From *filmeur/filmeuse* to *acteur/actrice*. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 19(4) pp. 533–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2021.2007713>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (2022a). *Sans soleil* by Chris Marker: The essay film and its cinematic thinking process: Reflecting on postmodernity. *Studies in European Cinema*, 21(2), 107–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2022.2073173>
- Monterrubio Ibáñez, L. (Ed.). (2022b). *The audiovisual thinking process in contemporary essay films*. Monographic issue. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18). <https://raco.cat/index.php/Comparativecinema/issue/view/30599>

- Monterrubbio Ibáñez, L. (2022c). The spectator's position as a thinking space for the contemporary essay film: *Face aux fantômes* (2009) and *Jaurès* (2012). *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), 53–75. Spanish version: 139–156.
<https://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.04>
- Monterrubbio Ibáñez, L. (2022d). Women's epistolary cinema: Exploring female alterities: Epistolary films and epistolary essay films. *Feminist Media Studies*, 22(7), 1781–1800. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1900313>
- Monterrubbio Ibáñez, L. (2022e). Women's epistolary cinema: Exploring female alterity and intersubjectivity: Letter-films and filmic correspondences. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 39(7), 1488–1514. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2021.1944014>
- Monterrubbio Ibáñez, L. (2023a). Jean-Luc Godard's diptychs: Rethinking cinema through the essay film. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 40(1), 16–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2021.1981091>
- Monterrubbio Ibáñez, L. (2023b). Women's essay film in Francophone Europe: Exploring the female audiovisual thinking process. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2229910>
- Monterrubbio Ibáñez, L. (2023c). *Zapping Zone* and *Level Five*: Between the visitor's experience of the video installation and the filmmaker's reflection of the essay film. *Arte, individuo y sociedad*, 35(4), 1377–1395.
<https://doi.org/10.5209/aris.87867>
- Moulet, L. (1960). Pellicules au marbre. *Cahiers du cinéma*, 104, 51–57.
- Moure, J. (2004). Essai de définition de l'essai au cinéma. In S. Liandrât-Guigues & M. Gagnebin (Eds.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 25–39). Éditions Champ Vallon.
- Moure, J. (2020). The incipit of Beaches of Agnès (Les Plages d'Agnès). In J. Moure & D. Chateau (Eds.), *Post-cinema: Cinema in the post-art era* (pp. 27–41). Amsterdam University Press.
- Mulvey, L. (2001). Vesuvian topographies: The eruption of the past in *Journey to Italy*. In G. Nowell-Smith, S. Lutton, & D. Forgacs (Eds.), *Roberto Rossellini: Magician of the realm* (pp. 95–111). The British Film Institute.
- Murray, R. (2016). Raised fists: Politics, technology, and embodiment in 1970 French feminist video collectives. *Camera Obscura*, 31(1(91)), 93–121.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-3454441>
- Nizan, P. (1968.) *Aden Arabie*. Monthly Review Press
- Odin, R. (1994). Le Documentaire intérieur. Travail du JE et mise en phase dans *Lettres d'amour en Somalie*. *Cinemas*, 4(2), 82–100. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1001024ar>
- O'Dwyer, J. (2018). Histoire(s) de l'art: The queer curation of Vincent Dieutre. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 16, 53–66.
www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue16/ArticleODwyer.pdf

- Pantenburg, V. (2016). Working images: Harun Farocki and the operational image. In C. Klonk & J. Eder (Eds.), *Image operations: Visual media and political conflict* (pp. 49–62). Manchester University Press.
- Papazian, E. A., & Eades, C. (Eds.). (2016). *The essay film: Dialogue, politics, utopia*. Wallflower Press.
- Parain, B. (1942). *Recherches sur la nature et les fonctions du langage*. Gallimard.
- Pasolini, P. P. (1962). *Mamma Roma*. Rizzoli.
- Rancière, J. (2006). *Film fables*. Bloomsbury Academic / (2001) *La fable cinématographique*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Rancière, J. (2007). *The future of the image*. Verso / (2003). *Le destin des images*. La Fabrique éditions.
- Rancière, J. (2009). *The emancipated spectator*. Verso / (2008). *Le spectateur émancipé*. La Fabrique éditions.
- Rascaroli, L. (2009). *The personal camera: Subjective cinema and the essay film*. Wallflower Press.
- Rascaroli, L. (2017). *How the essay film thinks*. Oxford University Press.
- Rascaroli, L. (2020). Compounding the lyric essay film: Towards a theory of poetic counter-narrative. In J. Vassilieva & D. Williams (Eds.), *Beyond the essay film: Subjectivity, textuality and technology* (pp. 75–94). Amsterdam University Press.
- Rascaroli, L. (2022). Unfolding borders: For a semiotics of essayistic border images. *Comparative Cinema*, 10(18), 32–52. <http://doi.org/10.31009/cc.2022.v10.i18.03>
- Richter, H. (2017). The essay film: A new type of documentary. In N. M. Alter & T. Corrigan (Eds.), *Essays on the essay film* (pp. 89–92). Columbia University Press.
- Ricœur, P. (1990). *Soi-même comme un autre*. Éditions du Seuil.
- Ritterbusch, R. (1967). Entretien avec Chris Marker. *Image et son*, 213, 66–69.
- Roud, R. (1963). The Left Bank. *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 32(1), 24–27.
- Ruiz, N. (2009). *En busca del cine perdido. Histoire(s) du cinéma, de Jean-Luc Godard*. Universidad del País Vasco.
- Sanders, J. (2016). *Adaptation and appropriation*. Routledge. [2006]
- Sartre, J.-P. (1962). *Literary and philosophical essays*. New York: Collier Books.
- Scemama, C. (2006). *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard. La force faible d'un art*. L'Harmattan.
- Schmitt, A. (2010). *Je réel / Je fictif. Au-delà d'une confusion postmoderne*. Presse Universitaires du Mirail.
- Silverman, K. (2001). The author as receiver. *October*, 96, 24–25.
- Toulet, P.-J. (1936). *Vers inédits*. Le Divan.
- Vassilieva, J., & Williams, D. (Eds.). (2020). *Beyond the essay film: Subjectivity, textuality and technology*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Véray, L. (2011). *Les Images d'archives face à l'histoire. De la conservation à la création*. Chasseneuil-du-Poitou, Scérén, cndp-crdp.

- Véray, L. (2015). *Loin du Vietnam*. ARTE France Développement.
- Virilio, P. (1994). *The vision machine*. British Film Institute, Indiana University Press / (1988) *La machine de vision*. Éditions Galilée.
- Warner, R. (2018). *Godard and the essay film: A form that thinks*. Northwestern University Press.
- Weinrichter, A. (Ed.). (2007). *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo*. Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de Navarra.
- Wieviorka, A. (2003). *Déportation et génocide: entre la mémoire et l'oubli*. Gallimard.
- Williams, J. S. (2020). From migration to drift: Forging queer migrant spaces and transborder relations in contemporary French cinema. In James S. Williams (Ed.), *Queering the migrant in contemporary European cinema* (pp. 171–181). Routledge.
- Witt, M. (2006). *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* œuvre multimédia. In N. Brenez, D. Faroult et al. (Eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents* (pp. 302–306). Éditions du Centre Pompidou.
- Witt, M. (2013). *Jean-Luc Godard: Cinema historian*. Indiana University Press.

Index

- 2001: *A Space Odyssey* 124
8 *Mars* 1975 122
- À *Chloris* 257
- abstraction 23, 42, 45, 48, 49, 75, 76, 183
acousmètre 24, 25, 36
actual image 53, 64, 70, 72, 132
adaptation 19, 91, 221, 222, 230, 231, 232, 234, 236, 238, 240, 241, 243, 280
Addis Ababa 180
Aden Arabie 178
Adieu, Berthe 124
Adieu Philippine 89
Addrissi, Don & Dick 123
Adrienne Mesurat 90
advertisements 15, 28, 29, 31, 33, 59, 109, 209, 225
Africa 56, 58, 59, 65, 72, 224, 281, 282
Ailleurs, partout 19, 247, 248, 263–273, 275, 276, 282
Akerman, Chantal 23, 24, 49–54
Algeria 117, 223
Algerian War 115, 255, 282
Alleg, Henri 115
Allemagne 90 heufzero 90
Also sprach Zarathustra, Op.30 124
alterity 23, 49, 50, 53, 54, 62, 63, 65, 66, 70, 71, 73–76, 183–186, 193–195, 197, 209, 230, 264, 266, 269–271, 279, 280
alterity of consciousness, 23, 54, 62, 66, 70–71, 183–186
Amants, Les 194
ambivalence 54, 62, 65, 66, 71, 230, 231, 270
America 25, 34, 35, 39, 41, 69, 91, 96, 115, 116, 149, 155, 200, 205, 216, 272
Amnesty International 226, 227
amour n'a pas d'âge, L' 169
Andes, The 188, 189
Angarsk 29, 30
Anges du péché, Les 90, 91
Angot, Christine 19, 221, 230–236
animated / animation images 14, 15, 28–31, 73, 209, 259, 261–263
annotations 85, 86, 87, 92, 93, 95, 108, 164,
Apocalypse Now 59, 63
Apollinaire, Guillaume 113
appropriation 19, 221, 222, 237, 239–243, 244, 280
archival materials 143, 147, 149, 151, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 187, 196, 201, 205, 249, 250, 251, 253, 254, 255
Arasse, Daniel 255
Asia 56, 281
Atlan, Henri 88, 89
Au bord de la mer bleue 89
audiovisual procedures 11, 13, 14, 18, 23, 36, 75, 76, 85, 107, 143, 196, 200, 212–214, 219, 244, 279, 280
Aurélia Steiner (Melbourne) 140
Auriol massacre, The 225
Auschwitz 249, 251, 255
Auteuil, Daniel 233
authorship 15, 17, 79, 84, 108, 145, 201, 250, 279, 280
autobiography 14, 95, 104, 177, 187–197 221, 222, 239, 243, 263
autofiction 19, 91, 221–244, 280
- Baburen, Dirck van 100, 101
Bacchus and Adriana 168
Bagdad 26, 115
Balkans War 221, 228, 244, 281, 282
Balzac, Honoré de 93
Baptism of Christ, The 102
Barakat, Henry 184
Barbé, Marc 232
Bardot, Brigitte 116
Barnet, Boris 86, 89
Barney Wilen Trio 113
Bart, Salem 157
Bay of the Pigs Invasion 118
Baye, Nathalie 162, 163
beating of the image 214, 215, 216, 219
Beauce, La 134
Beauvoir, Simone de 122
Beckett, Samuel 119
Beethoven, Ludwig van 90, 134
Beijing 115
Belgium 187, 190
Belgrade 222, 223, 228
Berbera 180
Berlin 207, 228
Bernanos, Georges 87, 90, 91
Bersani, Leo 101, 103, 104
Berto, Juliet 149
Besson, Éric 263
Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée, Le 113
Birkeneau 249, 251, 252, 253, 255
black screen 14, 35, 35–37, 39, 40, 71, 75, 92, 94, 141, 154, 171, 173, 174, 201, 213–214, 216–217, 222, 267
Black September 151, 154
Biacamano, Charles 193
Birkin, Jane 80–84
Bob le flambeur 92
Bonnard, Pierre 46, 48
Book of Disquiet, The 93
Book of Lamentations: p. 97
Borneo 203
Bosé, Lucia 116

- Boulogne, Valentin de 105
 Bray, Salomon de 100
 Breton, André 150
 Brussels 50, 189
 Buache, Freddy 42
 Bylert, Jan van 100

C'est vrai 124
 Cabral, Luiz 67, 68, 71
 Calamity Jane 81, 83
Calisto, La 99, 101, 107
Calling of Saint Mathew, The 100
Camera-Eye 16, 34, 38, 79, 145, 147-151, 154, 155,
 158, 159, 160, 166, 172, 173, 281
Camion, Le 111, 112, 132-141, 143, 281
camps de la mort, Les 251, 252
 Cape Verde 58, 67, 281
 capitalism 33, 39, 115, 117, 149, 155, 157, 158,
 266, 272, 281, 282
 Capri 239, 240
Cara madre mia 126
 Caracciolo, Giovanni Battista 102, 103
 Caravaggio 98, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106
Caravaggio's Secrets 101
 Caresana, Guido 103
 Cassaque 68
 Castro, Fidel 117
 Cavalli, Pierre Francesco 99
 Cayrol, Jean 251, 252, 253, 255
 Celan, Paul 255
Céline et Julie vont en bateau 121
 Chaney, Lon 217
 Chaplin, Charlie 150
 Charles, Jacques 123
 Chartres 134
 Che Guevara 150
 China 149
Chinoise, La 79, 91, 145, 147, 149, 150, 151
Choix des élus 93
Christ at the Column 98
Cimetières marins 205
Cinderella 224
 Cioran, Emil 93, 94
 circular panoramic / panning / tracking
 shot 52, 65, 105, 108, 140
Citadelle 178
 class 116, 118, 134, 136, 138, 140, 150, 225, 272, 281
 classical cinema 15, 26, 33, 34, 57
 Clery, Corinne 122
*Close to the Knives: A Memoir of
 Disintegration* 238
 close-up 101, 127, 128, 129, 150, 151, 163, 170, 171,
 205, 227, 234, 236, 249
 Cocteau, Jean 114
 Cohen, Haïm 236
 collage 32, 73, 74, 153, 155, 173, 174, 179, 180,
 183, 186, 191, 194, 196, 197, 208, 221, 243
 colonialism 115, 180, 182, 183, 281, 282
Comédie 119
Comédie humaine, La 93

Comment ça va? 126
 Comolli, Jean-Louis 19, 247-248-256, 263, 274
 complexification 11, 14, 54, 73, 199, 200, 208
 concentration system 248-256
 consciousness 40, 196
 flow of consciousness 128, 148, 190
 Constantine, Eddie 90
 constellation 89, 96, 108, 199, 209-212, 215,
 217-219
 contemplation 31, 89, 98, 100, 102, 267
 contemporary cinema 11, 14, 18, 20, 36
Contre l'oubli 227
 Cooper, Mark 241
 Couey, Catherine 112-120
 Coventry 207
Créatures, Les 192
 critical thinking 11, 13, 18, 19, 23, 33, 41, 60, 74,
 76, 79, 107, 111, 116, 119, 120, 125, 138, 142, 143,
 145, 177, 196, 199, 208, 247, 251, 252, 254, 255,
 257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 265, 271, 273, 274, 275,
 276, 279-282
 criticism 32, 33, 34, 41, 57, 84, 114, 116, 122, 132,
 143, 148, 158, 159, 222, 224, 226, 282
 crossfade 14, 16, 50, 85, 114, 120, 142, 151, 163,
 164, 165, 166, 168, 169, 170, 172, 173, 174, 203,
 208, 213, 214, 219, 223, 232, 236, 244
Crowning with Thorns 100
Crowning with Thorns, The 104
 crystal-image 53, 64, 70, 71, 72
 Cuba 116, 117, 119
 Cuban Revolution 117
 Cuny, Alain 216
 cyberspace 18, 199, 201, 203, 206-209, 218, 219

 Darling, David 85, 90
David with the Head of Goliath 102
 Dauman, Anatole 250
De la démocratie en Amérique 9
 Debourd, Guy 240
 Debray, Régis 150
Deuxième Sexe, Le 122
 Deguy, Michel 150
 Delacroix, Eugène 169
 Delay, Florence 55
 Demy, Jacques 194
Denial of Saint Peter, The 99
 Depardieu, Gerard 112, 132-141
 Depardon, Raymond 224
*Déportation et genocide: entre lamémoire et
 l'oubli* 253
Dernières Vacances, Les 86
Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle 145
Diabelli Variations 134
 dialogical nature 13, 26, 111, 132, 134, 135, 138,
 143, 173, 209, 212, 247
 dialogism 58, 74, 75, 248
 dialogue 14, 15, 16, 25, 28, 83, 86, 87, 90, 93, 97,
 111-143, 152, 159, 184, 192, 196, 201, 210, 224,
 242, 258, 279, 281, 282
Dialogues de Carmélites, 87

- diary 14, 19, 27, 91, 112, 113, 117, 177, 178-186, 195, 200-209, 218
- Diderot, Denis 88, 89, 97
- Dieutre, Vincent 19, 79, 80, 97-107, 108, 121, 122, 137-243, 244, 247, 248, 256-263, 275, 280
- digital technology 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 199, 209, 212, 219, 247, 280
- digression 28, 43, 112, 132, 134, 138, 141, 150, 157, 202, 225, 255
- diptych 16, 17, 34, 54, 113, 144-175, 177, 280
- direct cinema 15, 27
- distance-image 61, 69, 230
- Dombasle, Arielle 63
- domestic work 126-131, 143
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor 92
- Dresden 207
- Du côté des petites filles* 224
- Du verbe aimer* 177, 187-191, 195, 196, 221, 280
- Duras, Marguerite 111, 112, 132-141, 142, 143, 183
- Durov, Vladimir 117
- Dutronic, Jacques 162
- Dwan, Allan 205
- Dziga Vertov Group 15, 34, 146, 148, 151, 155
- Eisler, Hanns; 252
- Eisenstein, Sergei 216
- Ekk, Nikolai 184
- ekphrasis 100, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 108
- El Greco 169
- electronic images 17, 56, 62, 66, 75, 207, 218
- Emmenez-la* 230
- Empedocle d'Agrigente* 225
- empowerment 41, 83, 84 273
- enfants jouent à la Russie, Les* 90, 92
- England 268
- Entre le cristal et la fumée*, 88
- Entry of the Crusaders in Constantinople* 169
- enunciative device 11-20, 23, 49, 79, 80, 84, 111, 112, 125, 132, 142, 145, 147, 152, 177, 195, 196, 199, 209, 210, 219, 221, 222, 230, 243, 244, 247, 279, 280
- epistolary device *see* letter
- epistolary film *see* letter
- Espoir, L'* 92
- essayist 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 28, 34, 43, 45, 75, 79, 84, 85, 94, 96, 98, 107, 108, 112, 120, 122, 123, 142, 145, 148, 164, 165, 166, 170, 172, 173, 199, 200, 243, 247, 249, 254
- Europe 39, 87, 92, 118, 126, 189, 229, 263, 264
- excess-image 56, 58, 60, 61, 75
- expanded cinema 11, 14, 18, 20
- Express, L'* 34, 35, 122
- Face aux fantômes* 19, 247, 248-256, 259, 274, 275, 282
- fade to black 50, 118, 119, 170, 178, 179, 180, 186, 196, 229, 232
- Faulkner, William 95
- Faure, Élie 216
- Faure-Cousin, Jeanne 124
- Faustini, Giovanni 99
- Feijóo, Samuel 116
- feminism 16, 17, 41, 59, 80-84, 111, 112, 120-131, 140, 142-143, 160-161, 231, 279, 281-282
- femme en Afrique, Une* 224, 227
- femme est l'avenir de l'homme, La* 125
- Feraud, Louis 123
- Ferrat, Jean 125
- Ferré, Léo 169
- Ferri, Gabriella 126, 131
- filmic images 17, 55, 56, 58, 59, 60, 63, 65, 66, 72
- Flagellation of Christ, The* 102
- flickering image 168, 213, 214, 216
- flow-image 63, 64, 65, 71
- flow of consciousness *see* consciousness
- Fonda, Henry 39
- Fonda, Jane 16, 24, 34-42, 142, 159
- Ford, John 216
- Forêts, Louis-René des 98, 102
- fragmentation 18, 20, 49, 75, 105, 230, 264
- France 38, 134, 147, 148, 149, 150, 152, 154
- France Soir* 225
- Franhm, Nils 239
- Franju, Georges 15
- freeze frame 14, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 68, 75, 143, 203, 204, 208, 209, 216
- Gainsbourg, Serge 81, 82
- Gaza 222, 223, 226, 227
- gaze
- egalitarian gaze 58, 59, 71, 73, 263
 - gaze into the camera 51, 57, 60, 64, 75, 81, 98, 108, 188, 192, 196, 201
 - immobilisation of the gaze 247, 248, 256-261, 275, 280
 - mobilisation of the gaze 19, 53, 75, 111, 116, 120, 247, 248, 249, 250, 252, 253, 255, 260, 274, 275, 280
- gender 41, 81-83, 119, 120-131, 153, 159, 161, 172, 173, 222, 239, 237-243, 260-261, 280, 281, 282
- Geneva 44
- Germany 89, 222, 223
- Ghabin, Abd al-Ra'uf 227
- Gianini Belotta, Elena 224
- Giraudeau, Jean 90, 91, 93
- Giroud, Françoise 111, 121-125
- globalisation 19, 248, 263-273, 275, 280, 282
- Godard, Jean Luc 12, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24, 34-42, 79, 80, 84-97, 108, 123, 126, 129, 142, 145-175, 199, 209-218, 219, 225, 240, 281
- Gorin, Jean-Pierre 16, 23, 34-49, 146, 151
- Goupil, Romain 221, 222-230, 244, 281
- Goya, Francisco de 168, 171, 214
- Greece 117, 264, 265
- Green, Julien 90
- Greuze, Jean-Baptiste 90
- Guccini, Giovanni Battista 104
- Guinea-Bissau 58, 67
- Guy, Christian 123

- Hahn, Reynaldo 257
Hammers 239
Hanoi 34, 35, 37, 39, 40, 149
Havana 115
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 90
Heidegger, Martin 86, 89, 90
Hélas pour moi, 90, 93, 95
Himmler, Heinrich 252
Hindemith, Paul 86
Hiroshima 136, 202, 205
Hiroshima, mon amour 202
Histoire d'O 122
Histoire(s) du cinéma 12, 13, 17, 18, 89, 150, 151, 161, 163, 165, 174, 199, 209-218, 219, 282
historicity 17, 56, 62, 66, 67, 68, 73, 76, 230
historicism 17, 56, 62, 66, 73, 74, 76
Hitchcock, Alfred 61, 68
Hodge, Tom 241
Hollywood 39, 40, 42
Holocaust 248-256, 268, 282
Honthorst, Gerrit van 99
horizontal montage 26, 27, 33
Hortefeux, Brice 262
House that Still Stood, The 89
humour 27, 28, 30, 34, 81, 111, 121, 122, 125, 142, 143
Huppert, Isabelle 162
Huster, Francis 233
Huston, John 205
hybridisations 12, 15, 32, 34, 73, 74, 126, 147, 177-197, 200, 202, 208, 218, 219, 222, 229, 230, 241, 264, 280
 Ici et ailleurs 16, 84, 91, 126, 129, 146, 151-161, 162, 166, 172, 173, 209, 263, 281
I-voice 24, 25, 36, 43, 44, 50, 73, 74, 178
identity 279-282
 authorial / artistic identity 84, 85, 91, 281
 female / women's identity 16, 79, 80-84, 107, 120-131, 142-143, 160-161, 281
 see also feminism
 gay identity 79, 97-107, 222, 237-243, 261, 280, 282
 intimate identity 95, 280, 281
 philosophical identity 107, 108
 political identity 76, 95, 97
 social identity 76, 97
Image, L 88
imaginary film 55, 56, 67-70
imagination 11, 14, 15, 23, 24, 27-33, 61, 66, 74, 75, 76, 115, 116, 180, 208, 281
Immaculate Conception, The 169
immobilisation of the gaze see gaze
Immortal Song 184
imperialism 35, 40-42, 75, 149
Inceste, L' 234
Incontro 104
Ingold, Isabelle 19, 247, 248, 263-273
Insoumuses, Les 111, 120, 123, 142
intermedial forms 11, 14, 15, 16
internet images 19, 239, 241, 265, 268
intersubjectivity 16, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 107, 108, 111, 114, 130, 131, 142, 143, 152, 158, 160, 173, 191, 237, 249, 250, 265, 270, 275, 276, 279
interior monologue 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 142
interstice 36, 49, 53, 54, 55, 62, 69, 75, 84, 150, 151, 152, 154, 158, 168, 169, 173, 174, 186, 191, 195, 214, 218, 219, 267, 269, 275
interstitial thinking 13, 132, 143, 165, 168, 173, 192, 195, 196, 243, 267, 274, 275
interview 111, 112, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 128, 130, 131, 142, 143, 147, 177, 179, 187, 189, 190, 180, 183, 184, 191, 196, 201, 205, 226, 227, 236, 264, 265, 268, 272
installation 18, 177, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197
intertitles 14, 55, 72, 93, 98, 108, 112, 113, 114, 121-125, 127, 128, 130, 143, 152, 153, 155, 158, 159, 160, 225, 232
intimacy 12, 26, 27, 31, 177, 178, 179, 180, 182, 184, 185, 186, 190, 195, 202, 230, 271, 280
Iran 263, 264, 269, 270, 271, 272
Irkutsk 26, 29, 30, 115
irony 27, 28, 30, 31, 34, 81, 91, 111, 120, 121, 142, 143, 279
Israel 8, 155, 159, 226, 227
Istanbul 268
Italy 181, 226
Iwo Jima 204
Jaeckin, Just 122
Jane B. par Agnès V. 79, 80-84, 107, 108, 177, 191, 192, 282
Jankélévitch, Vladimir 93
Jaurès 247, 248, 256-263, 275, 282
Jetée, La 69
Jiménez, Mary 177, 187-191, 192, 195
JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre 79, 80, 84-97, 209, 218, 281
Joel, Deborah, and Barak 100
Johnny Guitar 89
Jordan 151
Journal d'un curé de champagne 91
Jusqu'à la victoire 16, 146, 151
juxtaposition 13, 16, 43, 50, 51, 79, 80, 84, 85, 87, 88, 94, 96, 99, 108, 121, 129, 132, 138, 143, 178, 179, 186, 187, 219, 221, 231, 238, 242, 243, 244, 275
Kenovic, Ademir 228-229
Kissinger, Henry 157
Koezibsky, Alfred 89
Korean War 118
Kosygin, Alexei 149
Kraft, Joseph 38
Kubrick, Stanley 124
Langlois, Henri 92
Laura 202
Laurel and Hardy 81

- Lausanne 42-49, 281
 Léaud, Jean-Pierre 149
 Lebanon 151
Leçons de ténèbres 79, 80, 97-107, 108, 237, 280
Lectures on the Philosophy of History 90
Let There Be Light 205
 letter 14, 15, 16, 23-78, 115, 177, 178-186, 189, 191, 195, 201, 202, 203, 208, 209, 222, 223, 234, 235, 279
 epistolary device 17, 23, 24-29, 35-36, 42, 49, 54, 74-76, 173, 178, 201, 208, 209
 epistolary film 23, 24, 54, 55, 67, 68, 70, 73, 74, 75
 letter-film 23, 24, 34, 35, 42, 45, 49, 54, 73, 74, 115, 208, 222
 missive 24, 25, 37, 39, 43, 73, 178, 182, 183, 186, 195
Letter to Jane 16, 23, 24, 34-42, 49, 75, 120, 142, 146, 151, 152, 153, 154, 157, 158, 159, 161, 166, 171, 172, 173, 177, 214, 281
Lettre à Freddy Buache 23, 24, 42-49, 75, 79, 84, 148, 165, 214, 281
Lettre de Sibérie 15, 23, 24-34, 54, 73, 75, 112, 115, 116, 120, 147, 208, 247, 281
Lettre pour L... 221, 222-230, 243, 281
Lettres d'amour en Somalie 177, 178-186, 230, 280
Lettre sur les aveugles 88
Level Five 17, 199, 200-209, 218, 219, 282
Libération 225
 Lima 188, 189, 190
 Lindeperg, Sylvie 19, 247, 248-256, 259, 260, 274
Livre d'image, Le 89, 150, 212
Loin du Vietnam 16, 145, 147
 London 265, 268
 lyricism *see* poeticity

 Mao Zedong 118, 149
Ma cabane de l'échec 192
Madame de ... 87
 Maderno, Stefano 104
 Magritte, René 194
 male chauvinism 81-83, 120-131, 140, 143, 153, 159
 Malraux, André 92, 216, 217
 Mancic, Anita 228
 Manfredi, Bartolomeo 104
Mariés de la Tour Eiffel, Les 114
 Marker, Chris 15, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24-34, 53-74, 75-76, 111, 112-120, 142, 147, 148, 150, 199, 200-209, 218, 219, 253, 281
Martyrdom of Saint Matthew, The 106
Maso et Miso vont en bateau 111, 120-125, 142, 143, 282
 Masson, Lætitia 19, 221, 230-237, 244
 materiality 49, 85, 146, 150, 155, 161, 162, 164, 165, 167, 168, 171, 173, 174, 212, 241, 249
 Matheson, Richard 94
 memory-image 56, 68, 69, 75

 Meppiel, Jacqueline 147
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 93, 97
Metamorphoses 96
 Mexico 26, 115
 Michaux, Henri 25
 Michel, Henri 250
 Middle East 151, 153
 Miéville, Anne-Marie 16, 91, 111, 112, 123, 126-131, 142, 145, 146, 151-161, 212
 migration 19, 134, 247, 248, 253-273, 275, 282
 militant cinema 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 91, 120, 145, 146, 148, 151, 152, 157, 161, 172, 225, 281, 282
 mise-en-scène of the audiovisual thinking 85, 88, 89, 95, 96, 97, 108, 154, 155, 156, 157, 162, 166, 173, 174, 196, 244
 misogyny 120-125, 142, 143
 missive *see* letter
Mystère Koumiko, Le 43, 200
 Mitterrand, Frédéric 177, 178-186, 196
 mobilisation of the gaze *see* gaze
 modern cinema 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 39, 58, 74, 221, 243
 modernity 11, 12, 15, 34, 42, 49, 54, 73, 74, 75, 76, 237, 239, 243, 282
 Mogadishu 179, 180
Moment choisis des Histoire(s) du cinéma 212
Mon homme 123
 Monowitz 252
 Monroe, Marilyn 82, 83
 Montand, Yves 29, 31
morts sont toujours jeunes, Les 205
Mots, Les 96
 Moscow 115, 117, 222, 223, 225
Mother 131
 motherhood 49-53, 82, 112, 126-131, 139, 142, 143, 187-191, 282
 Moulin, Jean 217
 movement-image 26, 36, 57, 58, 69, 70, 240
 Muel, Bruno 149
 multiplex-image 61, 230
 Murolo, Roberto 238
 Mussolini, Benito 180

 Namidabashi 57
 Nancy 235, 236
 Naples 98, 101, 102, 240
 Nazism 214, 216, 248-256
 New York 34, 49-53
News from Home 23, 24, 49-53, 75, 280
 Nixon, Richard 41, 157
 Nizan, Paul 178
No Home Movie 53
 non-gaze 19, 263, 266, 267, 269, 270, 273, 275, 276, 280
 non-image 56, 61, 66, 75
 non-place 61, 76, 266, 267, 271, 272, 273
 notebook 85, 89, 90, 93, 96
Nouveau Crève-cœur, Le 87
Nouveau-né, Le 95
 Nouvelle Vague 81

- Nuit et brouillard* 19, 247, 248-256, 274
Nuit et brouillard : un film dans l'histoire 248
Numéro deux 123
- Oberfeld, Casimir 123
 Offenbach, Jacques 122
 Okinawa 65, 199, 200-209
Old Place, The 212
 operational images 19, 247, 265-267, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 275
On Certainty 88
 oscillation 15, 28, 37, 74, 81, 113, 142, 145, 165, 174, 281
 Oshima, Nagisa 205, 206
 Oslo 118
 otherness 24, 27, 90, 195, 270
 Ovid 96
- Paisa* 89
 Palestine 89, 151-161, 223, 226, 227, 281, 282
 panning shot / panoramic movement 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, 52, 75, 80, 83, 108, 114, 120, 132, 142, 143, 163, 164, 235, 244
Papa comme maman 111, 112, 126-131, 142, 143, 282
 paradox 28, 42, 44, 46, 49, 68, 74, 82, 129, 143, 253, 263, 264
 Parain, Brice 94
 parataxic thinking 13, 75, 94, 96, 107, 165, 168, 178, 195, 247, 266, 267, 275
 parataxis 38, 65, 98, 107, 148, 149, 150, 152, 154, 173, 258, 267, 268, 269, 273
 Paris 25, 26, 29, 86, 99, 115, 122, 149, 186, 193, 208, 222, 223, 224, 228, 229, 232, 257, 259, 282
 Pasolini, Pier Paolo 105, 180, 184, 237, 239
 passage à l'art 250, 251, 252, 254, 257, 259, 261, 262, 263, 267, 274, 275
Passion, le travail et l'amour 136
Passione 238
 pastiche 73, 74
 patriarchy 41, 81, 83, 84, 111, 120-131, 142, 143, 153, 224, 280
 Perelmutter, Vivianne 19, 247, 248, 263-273
 performance 177, 192, 193-195, 196, 197
 Peru 187-191
 Pessoa, Fernando 93, 97
Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue, Marie 136
Petter's Denial 104
Phantom of the Opera, The 217
Phenomenology of Spirit, The 89
 photographic images 14, 15, 17, 18, 34-42, 50, 52, 57, 75, 83, 85, 86, 111, 112-120, 122, 124, 126, 127, 142, 143, 150, 153, 154, 155, 159, 166, 187, 190, 192, 193, 194, 196, 199, 200, 204, 209, 211, 213, 214, 222, 223, 225, 226, 236, 243, 250-254, 281
 photomontage 38, 39, 75, 124, 154, 173, 174, 213
 Picasso, Pablo 46, 48
- Pierrot le fou* 216
 Piguët, Olivia 126-131
 Pirschner, Werner 96
 Pivot, Gérard 111, 121, 122, 123, 142
 Plaisir 134
Plages d'Agnès, Les 177, 191-195, 196, 221, 281
 poeticity 24, 27, 31, 34, 58, 65, 72, 73, 111, 138, 141, 143, 166, 179, 182, 183, 218, 219, 261, 263, 267, 273
Pointe courte, La 193, 194
 Pompeii 239, 240, 241
 post-history 19, 105, 221, 237, 238, 239, 240, 242, 243
 postmodern cinema 18, 20
 postmodern image 56, 59, 60, 65, 66, 71, 142
Pourquoi le Brésil 19, 221, 230-237
Pourquoi (pas) le Brésil 19, 221, 230-237
 Praia 58, 72, 73
 Preminger, Otto 202
 Prenant, Françoise 222-230
Prometheus Being Chained by Vulcan 101
 Prosidia 240
 proof-image 203, 204, 208, 251
 puzzle 194, 197, 202, 265
- Question, La* 115
- Ramuz, Charles-Ferdinand 90
 Ravel, Maurice 44
 Ray, Nicholas 86, 89
Re David 105
 Reception 25, 36, 42, 46, 50, 51, 75, 89
 recreation 177, 188, 189, 190-197, 257
 reconstruction 73, 222, 223, 228, 243, 259
 Red Khmers 59
 refugees 182, 247, 248, 253-273, 275, 282
 religion 60, 87, 91, 117, 138, 181, 242
 Rembrandt 99, 216
 Reni, Guido 102
Requiem for a Nun 95
 Resnais, Alain 15, 19, 150, 202, 247, 248-256, 274
 rhetorical element / form / feature / procedures 45, 80, 85, 156, 163, 171, 172, 174, 250
 Reverdy, Pierre 88, 89
 reverie 26, 27, 89, 167, 182, 232, 233, 234
 revisitation 188, 190, 191, 192, 195, 249
 revolution 12, 14, 15, 16, 35, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 75, 76, 117, 118, 119, 134, 136, 138, 140, 146, 149-155, 158, 159, 160, 172, 184, 224, 259
ricotta, La 105
 Ribera, Jusepe de 102
 Ringart, Nadja 111, 120-125
 Rivette, Jacques 121
Road to Life, The 184
 Roberts, Jean-Marc
Roma, città aperta 215-218
 Rome 98, 101, 103, 104, 105, 238
Rome désolée 106

- Rossellini, Isabella 241, 242
 Rossellini, Roberto 19, 86, 89, 215, 216, 217, 218, 221, 222, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244
 Rouch, Jean 15
 Rouquier, Georges 24
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 59, 89
 Roussopoulos, Carole 111, 120-125
 Rozier, Jacques 86, 89
 Rozinès, Pierre-Louis 232, 235
 Rubens, Peter Paul 90
 Rupert, Julian 217
 Russia 90, 92, 115, 116, 117, 184, 216
 Ryoji Uehara 65
- Saint Andrew* 102
Saint Cecilia 104, 106
 Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de 178
Saint Jerome Writing 103
Saint Sebastian 99
 Saipan 203, 208
 San Francisco 68, 69
San Giuseppe e Gesù Bambino 103
 Sanders, George 241
Sands of Iwojima 205
 Sanguinetti, Alexandre 124
Sans soleil 17, 23, 24, 53-74, 75, 108, 116, 142, 203, 207, 209, 218, 230, 263, 281,
 Sarajevo 204, 222, 223, 228, 229
 Sartre, Jean Paul
 saturation 11, 14, 18, 61, 199-220, 280
Scénario du film Passion 17, 79, 145, 146, 148, 165-172, 173, 247, 281
Scénario du film Sauve qui peut (la vie) 145, 146, 161-165, 166, 167, 173, 281
Searchers, The 216
 Second World War 216, 218, 282
 sentence-image 13, 47, 53, 55, 57, 59, 60, 63, 65, 68, 72, 75, 80, 89, 95, 96, 137, 138, 141, 155, 156, 158, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 170, 186, 192, 214, 249, 250, 251, 273
 dialectical sentence-image 13, 32, 33, 38, 39, 59, 75, 94, 105, 108, 131, 143, 168, 170, 210, 214, 219, 239, 269
 symbolic sentence-image 13, 52, 58, 75, 83, 85, 88, 93, 106, 108, 122, 124, 132, 135, 137, 153, 157, 168, 174, 181, 182, 186, 189, 192, 193, 195, 196, 202, 203, 207, 214, 216, 219, 224, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 250, 251, 257, 267, 269
 sentence-image synthesis 94, 95, 105, 137, 186, 249, 250, 253, 273
 (self-)portrait 14, 16, 17, 31, 42, 50, 53, 59, 79-109, 114, 119, 123, 127, 132, 142, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 153, 162, 165, 173, 177, 187-197, 205, 221, 244, 279, 282
 self-reflection 13, 19, 24, 34, 138, 244, 247, 249, 251, 255, 257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 274, 275
 sensation-image 18, 63, 65
 Serbia 228, 263, 269
 Sète 193, 194
- Seyrig, Delphine 111, 120-125
 Shakespeare, William 226
 Shati 227
 shift between subjectivities 15, 54-56, 60, 62, 65, 67-72, 75, 112, 209
 Shigeaki, Kinjo 202
 shot/countershot 133, 134, 137, 140, 143, 148
Si j'avais quatre dromadaires 15, 16, 111, 112-120, 142, 147, 209, 281
 Siad Barre, Mohammed 184, 186
 Siberia 24-42, 119, 184, 281
 Sidran, Abdulah 229
 simulacrum 50, 66, 76, 190, 195
 simulacrum-image 66
 sisterhood 79, 80, 83, 84, 107, 108, 142, 237, 279
Six fois deux 126
Slow Return 90
 slow-down 48, 164, 280
 slow motion 163, 164, 172, 203, 236
Solo Cello, 85
 Somalia 177, 178-186, 196
Sonate vom rauhen Leben 96
Sous le soleil de Satan 90
 Soviet Union 149, 155, 184, 281
 spectator
 emancipated spectator 14, 19, 247, 274, 275, 276
 spectator's / spectatorial gaze 19, 120, 142, 249, 252, 253, 256, 261, 267, 274
 spectator's position 19, 170, 247-277
 spectatorship 13, 19, 98, 100, 102, 107, 112, 209, 247, 248
 Stalingrad 207
 Steinbach, Anna Maria (Settela) 252
 Steiner, Georges 58
 Stewart, Alexandra 55
 stop-motion 46, 48, 75, 213, 214, 215, 219
 Strauss, Richard 124
 Streisand, Barbra 131
Strike 216
 Suarès, André 92
 superimposition 14, 16, 85, 96, 163-172, 173, 174, 203, 205, 207, 208, 213, 214, 225, 236, 244, 249, 252, 253
 surveillance images 265, 266, 269-273
 Symphony No. 7 in A Major, Op. 92 90
 synthesis-image 32, 34, 40, 155
 Sweden 115
 Switzerland 143
 Syria 151
- Tales of Hoffmann, The* 122
Tarantella per la nascita del Verbo 103
 Tarzan 83
 television images 17, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 71, 75, 88, 125, 142, 158
Testament du merveilleux 229
 thinking in act 13, 34, 55, 173

- think with the hands 89, 96, 108, 129, 150, 155,
156, 158, 165, 166, 173, 212
Third of May 1808, The 168
time-image 36, 56, 58, 62, 64, 69, 71, 73, 75,
163, 240
Titian 83, 168, 169
Tocqueville, Alexis de 90
Tokyo 61
Toulet, Paul-Jean 90, 91
Tour, Georges de la 95
Tout va bien 16, 34-42, 146, 155
tracking shot 50, 52, 53, 75, 86, 90, 105, 108,
132, 136, 140, 143, 182, 248-255, 274
transition 31, 45, 47, 54, 60, 74, 76, 87, 108, 120,
121, 142, 163, 170, 190, 213, 214, 244, 250, 251,
257, 259, 274
Trappes 134
Trauermusic, 86
trauma 86, 96-97, 151-161, 177, 187-191, 195, 196,
221, 280
travelogue 177, 179, 186, 195, 196
Troilus and Cressida 226
Truffaut, Eva 256-263, 275
Turkey 263

Uccellacci e uccellini 180
Umberto of Italy 181
United Kingdom 264, 272
United States *see* America
Ushijima, Mitsuru 205
utopia 112-120, 154, 225
Utretch 98, 102

Vaneck, Pierre 1112-120
Varda, Agnès 16, 18, 80-84, 108, 177, 191-195, 196
Venus of Urbino 83
Vers inédits 91
Versnel, Simon 238, 240, 242, 244
Vertigo 61, 68, 69, 70
Vertov, Dziga 39
Vevey 44

Viaggio in Italia 19, 221, 222, 237-243
Viaggio nella dopo-storia 19, 221, 222, 237-243,
244, 280
Vidéa 122
videogame images 17, 18, 56, 61, 66, 75, 199,
200, 201, 202, 203, 206, 208, 209, 218
video collage 153, 155, 173, 174
video essay 19, 20
video technology 15, 20, 143, 173, 174, 210
Vietnam 34-42, 91, 147-151, 158, 282
virtual image 53, 55, 57, 58, 63, 64, 70, 72, 73,
76, 132, 133, 134, 137, 139, 141, 207, 209
visible et l'invisible, Le 93
Vlady, Marina 116
Vogt, Alfred Elton van 89, 94
Von Der Klippe Fallen 241
*Voyage à travers un film Sauve qui peut (la
vie)* 146

Warsaw 252
Wayne, John 205
Webern, Anton 119
Welles, Orson 105
Westerbork 252
Where does love go 123
Wieder, Iona 111, 120-125
Wieviorka, Annette 253
Willemetz, Albert 123, 124
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 45, 88, 89, 97
Wormser, Olga 250, 253, 255
Wojnarowicz, David 238

Yakutsk 27, 29, 30, 31, 33
you-voice 50, 73, 74
Yvelines, Les 134
Yumatov, Nicolas 112-120

Zafiropulo, Jean 225
Zylberstein, Elsa 231, 232
zoom 71, 114, 120, 123, 142, 150, 151, 234, 244,
250, 252, 255

From a semio-pragmatic perspective and drawing on an interdisciplinary and intermedial approach, *Audiovisual Thinking and the Essay Film: The Case of Francophone Europe* analyses how the audiovisual thinking process manifests itself in essay films. It explores how issues of subjectivity and identity, whether individual, social, political or cultural, prompt thought through the medium of cinema. The volume discusses the European Francophone essay film from its first appearance in cinematic modernity to the present. The study is developed in three stages. The first analyses the intermedial forms that are used: the letter, the (self-)portrait, the dialogue, the diptych, etc. The second examines the audiovisual materials that are mobilised. The third addresses the audiovisual procedures that are generated. In its analysis of works by Marker, Godard, Akerman, Varda and others, this book offers a new and detailed understanding of the production, evolution and achievements of the essay film in Francophone Europe.

Lourdes Monterrubio Ibáñez is currently a Ramón y Cajal Senior Research Fellow at Pompeu Fabra University. Previously, she was awarded a MSCA-IF to develop the research project EDEF – Enunciative Devices of the European Francophone Essay Film at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University, of which this monograph is the final output.

