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PROGRAMMING / MONTAGE

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Cover image: *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (Jonas Mekas, 2000).

Introduction

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema is a biannual publication founded in 2012. It is edited by Colectivo de Investigación Estética de los Medios Audiovisuales (CINEMA) at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), and focuses on comparative cinema and the reception and interpretation of film in different social and political contexts. Each issue investigates the conceptual and formal relationships between films, material processes and production and exhibition practices, the history of ideas and film criticism.

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema addresses an original area of research, developing a series of methodologies for a comparative study of cinema. With this aim, it also explores the relationship between cinema and comparative literature as well as other contemporary arts such as painting, photography, music or dance, and audio-visual media.

Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema is published in three languages: Catalan, Spanish and English. The issues come out in June and December. At least half of the articles included in the journal are original texts, of which at least 50% are written by authors external to the publishing organisation. The journal is peer-reviewed and uses internal and external evaluation committees.

Finally, each issue of the journal is complemented by documentary materials and texts published online, which facilitate and enrich the topics studied in each volume, thus establishing links between longer research projects and monographic focuses throughout this process.

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Editorial

Gonzalo de Lucas

When thinking about the possibilities of comparative cinema, it may be worth stopping on the word ‘comparison’ before thinking about ‘cinema’. If a peasant is able to foresee the storm only by looking at the bark of a tree, and if an Eskimo can name three hundred different shades of white, what can film spectators see in the expression of the filmed eyes? After seeing so many close shots, do we learn to compare and recognise in a face what we couldn’t have seen before? Do we acquire, through cinema – and through the camera’s function as both a telescope and a microscope, as Vertov would have it – a plus of sensibility that enables us to see an emotion in disguise? If it wasn’t this way, cinema would only be a decorative medium, but never a form of thought, or a way to connect distant images, to bring together the images of cinema and the images of the world.

Comparative cinema would then consist in tracing that connection, those secret threads that connect cinematic images and project them onto the images of our own lives; for instance, the way cinema enables us to see and think about politics and love.

In this first issue we wanted to take as a point of departure the experience of the spectator and of the projection, after Langlois’s ideas on programming as a germ or possible form of montage. Our first interpretation of a film is marked by the space and context in which it is programmed. Some film curators apply a critical sense and think thoroughly about that space,

with an essayistic perspective, if you will: they are interested in the associations and comparisons that may emerge, often unexpectedly, between different films, as in a test of sorts where one looks through the microscope expecting something to become visible.

We have addressed this question in two different ways: some of the articles in this issue study the work of certain film curators – such as Nicole Brenez, Alexander Horwath, Carlos Muguiro, Ricardo Matos Cabo or Federico Rossin – which establishes formal links within a certain period or historical question – such as Russian cinema post-Vertov, French avant-garde cinema or collective cinema; while other articles examine the way certain journals have made visible their politics and their elective affinities via film programmes, thus moving from text to image. We have decided to use as a conceptual basis for this issue a conference given by Jean-Luc Godard at the Cinémathèque Suisse in 1979, where he discussed preliminary ideas that would later materialise in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1988–98).

Digital tools have enabled us to work with images, films and sounds extracted from cinema using one and the same tool as for writing – the computer. Furthermore, the digital archive is increasingly varied (no one fairly used to navigating through the internet will be surprised when moving from a Hollywood film to a music video and an avant-garde piece) and hence new constellations are constantly being created that

importantly differ from canonical histories. This seems to be the appropriate time to launch a publication on comparative cinema, or at least a time when we have the adequate media to test the *godardian* idea – ‘to see is to compare’.

I

‘We have to explain what montage is. Let’s think of an image, let’s say “Mnemosyne”, and then in another one, a painting, “Melancholy”. In the middle, since it is impossible to unite the images, there is an empty space, and in that gap emerges a third, invisible image, the real. I strongly believe in invisible images. Aby Warburg wouldn’t disagree, and if Godard was listening, he would praise me and say, “this is what montage is!”. Montage doesn’t have anything to do with the union, or fusion of images. Because images are autonomous as Leibniz’s monads. Between them, there are abysses: above and below, to the sides, we can see horizons. The goodness of a public medium is that spectators fill those empty spaces and realise the montage. The bigger the contrast between images, the easier it is for a third element to emerge: epiphany.’

Alexander Kluge
(KLUGE, 2010: 299-300)

II

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Domènec Font. ●

‘It was in 1973 during the Rossellini retrospective. The opening night, in the packed Gran Auditorio de la Fundação, with Rossellini and Langlois amongst the audience, we projected *Rome, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945), which was forbidden at the time and at the end, I listened to the biggest demonstration that I have ever experienced in a cinema space. When discussing the event, Langlois said: “Very soon something will happen in your country.” I thought he was being naïve and, tired of listening to this sort of prophecies, I didn’t give him much credit. A few months later, the 25th April happened. Later on, I asked him why he had said so. “Oh, you know, silent cinema has taught me many things.”

João Bénard da Costa
(DA COSTA, 1986: 35)

KLUGE, ALEXANDER (2010). *120 historias del cine*. Buenos Aires. Caja Negra.

DA COSTA, JOÃO BÉNARD (1986). *50 Anos da Cinemateca Francesa 1936-1986* (p35). Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa.

The Cinémathèques and the History of Cinema

Jean-Luc Godard

After twenty years of cinema, around 1967/68, and due to the social movements taking place around me, I realised that I didn't quite know how to make movies anymore... Even how I believed it to be, I didn't know it. I asked myself too many questions: 'But, what should I show after this shot? And, after all, why does one shot need to follow from the previous one? Why does it have to be this way?' In the last instance, I asked myself quite natural questions, but there wasn't a natural answer. And it has taken me ten or fifteen years, I don't know, to try to relive... One sooner or later goes back to his or her homeland: I have decided to go back to my homeland, cinema, since I need images to live and to show them to others, perhaps I need it more than anyone else. And in a very extreme form, because I was in a certain moment of film history and, little by little, I have grown to become interested in the history of cinema. But I am interested in it as a film-maker, not as in the texts I have read by Bardèche or Brasillach, Mitry or Sadoul (that is: Griffith was born that year, invented this or that thing, four years later, he did something else), but rather in asking about how the forms he used were created and in thinking about how this knowledge could help me. And three or four years ago I had an idea for a project: to begin what I would call a 'visual history', seen as certain aspects in general invisible, a visual history of cinema and of television. At the same time, I tried to get hold of my own technical equipment, just as a painter tries to have his or her own colour tubes and, during the courses in Montreal, I realised that this was almost impossible.

In my view, films are almost not seen because, for me, to see films implies having the option to compare them. But to compare two things, not to compare one thing with the memory one has thereof; to compare two images and, in the moment when these are seen, to indicate certain relations. Now, to make this possible, a certain technical structure (which currently exists) is needed. In fact, before, one could say: 'OK, one would need to project the film.' If one says: 'In that film Eisenstein takes the parallel editing theoretically inaugurated by Griffith', then one should screen Griffith and Eisenstein at the same time, one next to the other. Then one could certainly see, just as justice can see all of a sudden when something is true or false. And in this way it could be debated. However it is obvious that placing one film theatre next to the other is rather difficult. But now there is video. Films can be placed one next to the other, and be compared. One could think this should be the first task of the Cinémathèques and of film schools. Unfortunately it seems the last thing to be done, and this is precisely why, the only history that could be written, that of cinema, is not being written and there is no difference between making cinema and writing the history of cinema. Cinema writes its own history as it is being made. It could even give some indications as to 'how history, should be made, the history of mankind, of women, of children, of cultures, of social classes', because cinema is in itself its own historical matter and it could give good indications. The Cinémathèque is the only place where something like this could take place and I think that the fact that this is not happening is not

something innocent in the context of the current trend of society, in which it is virtually almost forbidden. In theory, people say: ‘Yes, this is such a good idea!’ but in practice it’s not possible.

This is something I realised in Montreal, because I had as a principle to locate myself in the history of cinema to know where I found myself: it was a psychoanalysis of sorts said out loud. We programmed two days of screenings twice a month, on Fridays and Saturdays: on the morning, three or four film extracts and, in the afternoon, one of my films. Depending on each case, we selected fragments of films with sound or silent, which in my view related to the film screened in the afternoon. Now, once or twice – once in particular – something happened. Spectators saw (or at least they remembered they had seen – as the memory of a lightning – and could not see it anew; if there had been video players, they could have seen and kept the proof), I was saying that people saw something. It was a Friday or a Saturday. Out of my films, we were going to screen *Week-End* in the afternoon. I said to myself: ‘What extracts can I select? *Week-End* is a rather barbarian film, monstrous, and so I’m going to select monster films for the morning.’ I asked Losique to select a fragment from *Freaks* by Browning (for the simple reason that I had never seen it); a fragment of *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (which, in my view, is the arrival of the monsters, the barbarians, against those who call themselves civilised); *Germania anno zero* (that is, a territory after the downfall, the end of the monster). I also had Hitchcock’s *The Birds* (that is, humans attacked by other beings) and after that, weirdly, because to begin with Losique couldn’t find *Freaks*, I had a first *Dracula* and a short excerpt from Feuillade’s *Les Vampires*. And the fact of seeing a full fragment of *Germania anno zero* in-between other excerpts... [...] and weirdly, the fact of seeing *Germania anno zero* in-between *Dracula* and *The Birds*... strangely enough, it seemed as if *Dracula* the vampire wasn’t the monster, but rather all the people around him: the bankers and the high society of London at the time the story is taking place...

In my view, the history of cinema would be the history of two complots. The first one: the complot of the talkies against silent cinema, since its beginnings. Second complot: words, which could have helped silent cinema... A complot against the fact that history will not be written... they will find a way to prevent history from being told – otherwise it would be too much, because if one knows how to tell one’s own history, then... oh, I don’t know... the world changes!

And I ask myself if the personnel working at Cinémathèques may have any interest in asking themselves... if other people think in the same way about this, about the production of films related to conservation. Preservation, well, it is better or worse, but one asks oneself what is the interest in preserving impeccably if one sees that... what is being preserved? An image. What is interesting to preserve is the relationship between one image and another. It is not so dramatic to preserve a film as long as three photographs of a film by Vertov and three others of a film by Eisenstein are preserved, this way we can know what was happening: this would be the task that journals should face. And if we have a film, so much better, because in that way it can be seen and it is a pleasure, but it is not absolutely necessary. It is so much better to make them, and this was, as I see it, one of Langlois’s great ideas: certainly films should be screened, but they also should be made. It was primarily an incitation to make films.

I would rather consider the Cinémathèque as a place of production and not only of mere presentation. Because if it is a place of presentation and circulation, it does the same as the other places of presentation and circulation. ●

Dialogue in the Framework of the symposium held at the Annual Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives (FLAF), celebrated from 30 May until 1 June 1979 at the Cinémathèque Suisse, Lausanne. BRENEZ, Nicole (ed.) (2006). Jean-Luc Godard: Documents. Paris. Éditions du Centre Pompidou.

On a Screening of Ozu

Henri Langlois

There are a great many films which attract only a small minority of people. The tragedy of all cinémathèques is that they are trapped between public taste and the need to mould that taste. Most of them are therefore forced to – how shall we put it – to trail after a public taste instead of blazing a way for it.

Take Ozu, for instance. It took time for people in Paris to realise that he deserved the reputation he enjoyed in Japan. Only a couple of years ago the prevailing opinion was ‘Mizoguchi and Kurosawa are geniuses, but Ozu, yes, well...’ Every time an Ozu film was shown, there were only ten or twenty people in the audience. Thanks to some persistence in screening his films, and the retrospective we devoted to his work, realisation that he was an extraordinary film-maker finally dawned.

I was conquered by his genius while lecturing on the contemporary cinema. I was speaking about Japanese cinema and as usual had taken along some reels of film to illustrate what I was saying. And suddenly I realised that what I was saying no longer bore any relation to what I was seeing. In showing extracts from Mizoguchi and Kurosawa and Ozu I was praising the first two at the expense of the third, whereas I discovered that Ozu virtually demolished the other two. Sandwiched between Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, a reel of Ozu revealed his genius, a genius not instantly accessible, however, for Ozu is full of delicate nuance and his films comprise a great deal of talk. Five years ago audiences found this Japanese intimist oppressive because

he had neither the brilliance nor the charm of Mizoguchi, and by the charm I mean the true, mythological charm of the Fates, not the charm of a pretty woman. Ozu, however, is life. His films possess that extraordinary quality inherent in the American cinema: the purity of life.

In Mizoguchi there is an aesthetic element, though the arabesque it traces is so consummate that it succeeds in serving the theme, so that when one is drawn into the world of the film one does not at first realise how consciously skilful it is. Then comes the flash of illumination and one realises the extent to which a Mizoguchi film is composed. A Kurosawa film is also composed, though differently. Either way, all composition involves artifice. Except with Ozu. His characters are perfectly distilled, yet living beings. ●

Excerpt from Nogueira, Rui and Zalaffi, Nicoletta, 'The Seventh Heaven: An Interview with Henri Langlois', Sight and Sound, 41:4, Autumn 1972, p. 182–193

Interview with Alexander Horwath: On Programming and Comparative Cinema

Álvaro Arroba (in collaboration with Olaf Möller)

ABSTRACT

In this interview (realised in collaboration with Olaf Möller), Alexander Horwath takes Jean-Luc Godard's text 'Les Cinémathèques et l'histoire du cinéma' (1979) and his film *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98) as a point of departure to discuss: programming as a form of comparative cinema; the Cinémathèques as a place of production; different forms of criticism and writing on film; spatial vs. temporal (or consecutive) comparison; video as a tool to create a form different to cinema itself; programming as a form of historiography in the context of a Cinémathèque; and different programming methods (examples discussed include Peter Kubelka's programme 'Was ist Film' ['What is Film?'] or Horwath's own programme for *documenta 12* in Kassel in 2007). Finally, Horwath discusses the 1984 Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), celebrated in Vienna and dedicated to 'non-industrial' films; the existence of an 'ethical-realist' critical tradition in France vis-à-vis the 'experimental' tradition; the role of the most important film-makers of the Austrian avant-garde in relation to the Austrian Film Museum in 1968; the work of film curator Nicole Brenez; and the so-called 'expanded cinema', which he distinguishes from current museum practices or the new digital formats that prevail today.

KEYWORDS

Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, programming, Austrian Film Museum, Peter Kubelka, 'Was Ist Film', *documenta 12*, comparative cinema, Austrian avant-garde, expanded cinema, Nicole Brenez.

For this first issue of the journal *Comparative Cinema* we have decided to take Godard's text as a point of departure for a series of discussions with film curators on their task as programmers. We would like to start this conversation by asking you whether you share Godard's view on the role of the cinematheques. Was there a similar impulse behind your directorship of the Austrian Film Museum?

AH: I should start by saying that I don't think I fully understand this text by Godard. But one of the things that he highlights and that I *do* understand is that meaning is created through the comparison of two things. Bringing together two films also produces something new, and this is obviously meaningful for every type of programming. However, I believe it would be wrong to reduce it to the meeting of two; a meeting of ten or twenty – in a programme of short films or in a longer series – can be equally productive, and in a different way.

I also share the view that a cinematheque or film museum, any museum actually, should understand itself as a place of production, which is what Godard's text comes down to. But there are two specific aspects of his notion of history-writing and criticism that I find worthy of closer inspection because they seem to be at odds with each other – his historiographical ideal and his idea of comparison.

His implicit model for history-writing and criticism seems to be literary criticism and the historiography of literature. Because there we use the same form of expression as the works that we are critically engaging with, i.e. written language. Judging from Godard's disinterest in written histories of film and his interest in film production as film historiography, it is evident that he strives for this model in film as well. The 'regular' types of criticism and history-writing – writing about music, painting,

film, etc. – *do not* use the same medium as the works they are engaging with. This hasn't stopped them from turning into important intellectual traditions, but they've always had to deal with the nagging problem of trying to convey a certain medium in terms of another. Thus, there are people who say that "writing about music" or "writing about film" is just as limited or just as impossible as "dancing about architecture". Nicole Brenez once said that the best criticism of a film is another film, which means that the best film critics and historians would be the film-makers themselves – at least those who place their film-making in relation to cinema as such. And this is also how Godard sees it when he says that "there is no difference between making cinema and writing the history of cinema", that „cinema writes its own history as it is being made“.

On the issue of comparison, however, he uses a different model – one that is based on painting and art history, more or less. When he discusses the comparison of films, he thinks of two images next to each other, like in an exhibition of paintings, in order "to indicate certain relations in the moment when they are seen". He thinks that in cinema we need to arrive at the same type of comparison – for instance, to have an image by Sergej Eisenstein and one by D.W. Griffith next to each other. He does admit that "placing one film theatre next to the other is rather difficult", but we're in the late 1970s and Godard has just discovered a new medium, video, where films can now be placed next to one another „and be compared.“ What he doesn't see, as far as I can tell, is that a temporal medium such as cinema produces its own and completely different form of comparison. If we accept the integrity of works, the only way of comparing cinematic works is *consecutively* – not "next to each other", but *after* one another. We need to compare "in time", not in space. And that's why memory simply cannot be dismissed; it's the basis for comparing one thing *after* the

other. When he gives examples from his courses in Montreal, it's exactly that – one film after the other. But he finds it somehow limiting, so video becomes a sort of saviour without being acknowledged as a very different form of expression and *dispositif* than cinema...

Also, the example of “Eisenstein image next to Griffith image” reduces cinema to the aspect of images, and static images at that. Issues of temporality, rhythm or sound would have to be omitted; and we'd arrive exactly where those who “write about music” or “dance about architecture” are located. If you think of music and how two musical works can be critically compared, it's immediately evident that this can only happen consecutively and not by putting them “next to each other” – maybe excepting those few works where different “musics” really run parallel or against each other, as in contemporary mash-up practices or in some works by the American composer Charles Ives in the early 20th century. Two works of music cannot really be co-present, and it's the same with cinema. The tiniest fraction of music or cinema becomes memory as soon as it passes, and to me that is one of the essential things to consider when thinking about a “comparative historiography” that really wants to remain true to the medium it deals with.

Personally I'm also OK with all the other, non-cinematic, ways of comparing and of “writing about”... *Of course* we can productively present films side by side on two monitors or create useful written texts about cinema. And *of course* we can use the video medium or the internet to discuss cinema, even very poetically. Godard's own *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998), which he developed out of his Montreal experiences, are a perfect case in point. And we see many websites or multiscreen installations today where several moving images are co-present. I'm just trying to point out that this is not cinema, it is another form of expression.

So you would argue that the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are not cinema in themselves...

A.H.: *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has cinema as its subject, but it is a video work. A truly fantastic video work, I might add. A lot of what Godard does here became possible for him through specific means and working methods that are directly related to video. Even if his ideas about confronting and reworking a multiplicity of film excerpts, words, still images, writings, etc., are much older, they only became a concrete practice for him through this new medium – he could have pondered the options of experimental, found-footage film, too, of course, but he never did. The mere existence of video as a set of tools made him think that way. Certain ways of bringing together images, overlaying different sources and mutating them, blending one into the other. Interestingly, in the *Histoire(s)* he doesn't use the “images side-by-side” approach as often as one would think after reading the 1979 text. It is all mostly argued consecutively, as far as the images are concerned.

OM: But everything he does could have been done using cinema as well.

AH: I don't think so. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is full of specific aesthetic moves that only the video machine allows him to do, certain types of colouring, for instance, playing with colour.

OM. But we've seen it in avant-garde films! I mean, it's more complicated to do it on film, it's much more time consuming.

AH: Yes, but if you think of a Len Lye film, for instance, it always “talks about” its own specific methods of creation; the colour play in Len Lye is also a discourse about printing with analogue film. And it's the same with *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, only in a different medium. On a thematic level, this work may speak about cinema, but like any self-aware work of art it also speaks about its

own tools, its own being-created-by-these tools. In the end, this means that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* speaks about the transformation or remediation of film/cinema into another set of media. The image of Godard sitting at the electronic typewriter, which is relatively prominent at the beginning, together with the specific sound it makes, seems to me like an allegory of this remediation. For Godard, the ‘video method’ takes over from the cumbersome work on the analogue editing table. Video for him becomes something like the modern-day ‘caméra stylo’ – a pretty flexible electronic writing-machine that is at the author’s command in a much more direct manner than he ever thought possible with film.

There is a wide range of misunderstandings and lack of knowledge today when people see experimental works. Certain film-makers like Peter Tscherkassky, for instance, very specifically use the properties of analogue film – and only those – in their works. Nevertheless, Tscherkassky’s audiences today often ask him which digital tools, which software, he uses for the effects he achieves. Today, it is taken for granted that one would work with digital means. I think a lot of this has to do with the fact that we are not learning the history of cinema and other moving image media in nearly the same thorough fashion as we learn the history of art. There is still almost no materialist history of moving images, except in some cinematheques, because we are still fixated on notions of “content” and transparency when we think of film. In painting and art history, it is very common to discuss the *dispositif* and the material properties of the work as a central aspect of its theme. We are taught about the ways in which the production process imprints itself on the product, how an understanding of the product is inseparable from the materials and ‘machines’ that brought it into being. And this is not taught at all in relation to moving images. But I am digressing...

OM: I think in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* you have Godard looking at video through the eyes of cinema. Rather than going through the particularities of video to watch cinema.

AH: Let’s just say that we’re in the middle of a remediation phase, and according to Bolter and Grusin who wrote a book about this, there is always a lot of mimicry going on when one medium stages its slow ‘split’ from older media, just like cinema did during its own beginnings. Digital Cinema today, apart from its self-promotional claims of being “better” than analogue film, obviously strives to imitate the basic shapes and effects of film. It would risk losing an inbuilt global cinema audience if it staged the much more forceful split that it is potentially capable of. I think, though, that with Godard it’s a different issue. He wants to look at the history of cinema but, as he makes clear in the 1979 text, he felt he did not yet have the right tools. He was not satisfied with how it worked in Montreal. Whereas I actually think that the situation he had there was pretty ideal, in terms of the basic elements necessary to speak *about* cinema *with* cinema. I see the whole Montreal project as an important example for the educational or historiographical capacities of a film museum or film archive. But it seems that he didn’t fully believe in what these institutions can do – or are willing to do. With video, he no longer needs an institution; he assumes the role of the individual poet-history writer of moving images. It is what he wanted to do in the first place; the institution was only a necessary evil for him, and only for a brief moment.

I partly agree with Olaf that, in the *Histoire(s)*, Godard is not *that* interested in turning the unique capacities of video into a theme of its own – not explicitly at least; he is much too occupied with cinema and its relation to the classical arts and the history of the 20th century. The new medium becomes one of the main subjects only implicitly. That’s why it’s a

melancholic or 'late' work: its main energies are directed towards revisiting the traces of his lifetime, his cinephilic socialisation, his understanding of half a century of cinema. The fact that he uses a 'post-cinematic' technology and a 'para-cinematic' approach to do so, may be more of a practical thing for him. But for me, as a viewer, it is still one of the most fascinating aspects of the work.

OM: I think he did this with video because it was a less intensive and an easier task than doing it using cinema itself and because for him this is closer to an immediate form of writing. It's not only a matter of texture but also a matter of labour.

AH: In my own practice, I think I found out that programming as film historiography, as an 'enactment' of film historical reflection, can definitely be done in a cinemathèque context. As I said, it may even be the *only* place where this can be done – as long as you look for a discourse that articulates itself in the same 'language' as the thing that you're engaging with. For this, you need a certain number of elements, including a number of film prints but also technology, a certain type of space and a certain amount of time. With such a working system you can create something that is not just a *simulation* or an indirect *reference*, but an actual *example* of cinematic articulation. You may show complete works, but also, for purposes of concentration, you can present an excerpt or one reel of a film. You can structure the terms of the discourse by either presenting several films in a row, film after film, or alternate excerpts and films, or you can break it up and speak or sing in-between... The space of this experience is mostly fixed, but temporally the experience is up the curator. Of course, each individual film has its own fixed time, too, but the comparison or argument that you want to make leads you to very different temporal solutions. I feel that this is the basis of my work, and if I understand

him correctly it's also the basis of how Godard wanted to approach film history before he fell in love with video.

OM: We should say that film history likes to articulate itself through dichotomies: Méliès versus Lumière, Eisenstein versus Vertov, etc, etc. But I think it's quite a limited idea to say the least. The idea of doing double features is extremely attractive, but what I find even more attractive is building a whole programme of ten double features. So that not only two films can reflect upon each other; I'm more interested in force fields creating intellectual spaces. Not really just one film and the other, that's too limited. I am interested in everything that has some kind of storytelling, since I'm interested in history and reflecting on that history. This is something that you cannot do properly with only two films, as it will lead you to a simplified observation.

AH: Which is probably the reason why the short film programme has become the preferred medium of expression for film curators. There is not a lot of literature out there about film programming, but in most instances when programmers attempt to reflect on their own practice, they talk about the model of 90-minute or two-hour-programming – with not just two but eight or ten or fifteen short works that come into play and create a discourse between them. What is generally not considered in regard to the challenges, and the attraction, of film programming is that the same discursive potential applies to a series of longer films – it's only that audiences and curators need to be fully aware of the amounts of time involved. We usually think in blocks of 90' or 120' of leisure time – it's more or less the same 'time format' that structures your visit to an art museum, a concert or a film screening. So in order to seriously do what Olaf says, with films of all lengths, one has to consider the massively different time demands that are involved. If

we think of eight or ten double features, we must also think of roughly 30 hours of film viewing... This is the unspoken and dark secret of all these comparisons between different art forms and curatorial practices. It may sound trivial, but it explains why a full film series or retrospective will never have the type of 'blockbuster' attendance that an art museum exhibition can have.

OM: It actually takes much more time – you have to consider not only the screening time, but also the time that it takes to go to the screening room and then go back home, and then – hopefully – the time to think about it, so it's a massive memory work to basically look at a programme focus for weeks. In the end you even have to be able to remember the first film you saw, as it connects to the last one. So to a certain degree you have to keep intellectually active for three weeks for one programme only – it's quite demanding, which is a good thing.

AH: You're starting to address a totally different type of audience when you formulate needs like these. It's the opposite of the way many art institutions function today. They like to address a mass, and often tourist, audience by announcing that in a matter of only two hours you'll get the full load of French Impressionism or the works of Vermeer...

So there is obviously a different logic to the exhibition of film history. But as we said before, there are also other, more concentrated ways of experiencing a film historical argument – educational formats that work with excerpts, or programmes of short works, or the model of simply having two films speak to each other. We showed *La Jetée* (Chris Marker, 1962) and *Deja vu* (Tony Scott, 2006) yesterday, in one screening. One could say that the aesthetic and intellectual surplus gained from this meeting of two works is pretty limited. On the other hand, focused programmes like this one may

also be essential for an understanding of larger and more ambitious ones. If you only have the large 'programmes of comparison', without a smaller, focused 'nucleus' programme, you will have a much harder time in making yourself understood to more than a few people.

There is also the case of Peter Kubelka's cycle 'Was ist Film' which consists of 63 programmes and runs for a year and a half, one programme each week. The most talked-about of these 63 programmes is Kubelka's combination of Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935) and Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963). It is the most extreme case in his cycle of two works 'hitting' each other so hard that sparks may fly and new, unexpected thoughts may arise. It's a very visible example of how Kubelka likes to look at the film medium, so it could function as a somewhat easy nucleus. At the same time, it is not at all typical of the cycle in general. It may work quite well on its own, but it doesn't represent the whole project. Our five screenings of films by Tony Scott and Chris Marker, representing one chapter in the «Utopie Film» series, are a much simpler case. We wanted to pay tribute to two very interesting filmmakers who had both passed away this summer. The idea was not to say that their works are similar, but that it might be productive to pick up on a sad coincidence and look at these two filmmakers 'side by side', with three films each, even though general movie talk places them at different ends of the cinema spectrum. And I felt lucky – or supported – by the fact that *La Jetée* and *Deja vu* actually cross paths in their thematic interests, namely time travel or the vertigo of time. Which is already enough. So our work is often like an interplay between smaller and larger programming cells. And then there is also the educational work which addresses a different, more specified public than our evening programmes do – for instance, while we speak, there is a program for school kids dealing with *anime*. I like to see

these elements as another parallel track which, over time, might connect viewers with what we do in our ‘regular’ programmes. I guess that’s the idealistic hope of anyone who is active in an educational context – that some 14- or 16-year-old who, during such a morning school screening, is first introduced to the concept of consecutively comparing different films in projection, might return and study other elements of the programme. Or that they might even begin to study film seriously when they’re 18 or 20, either as makers or critics. It will always be only very few of these pupils, of course, but after eleven years of working here, I think I can say that each year there are some who are really ‘infected’ by cinema through these school or university programmes and turn out to become professional members of the film cultural scene in Vienna.

This leads us to another text that functions as the conceptual basis for the first issue of the journal, where Langlois explains how he reconsidered his views on Ozu and discovered new values in his work, upon screening his films Turing his classes next to those of Mizoguchi and Kurosawa: thanks to that contrast he could better appreciate the style and reach of Ozu’s films.

OM: Yes, we should also remember that this happened upon a time when there was a lesser knowledge about cinema; we should not forget that there was a false dichotomy between Mizoguchi and Kurosawa and the appreciation of Japanese cinema was burdened by clichés such as this one. So again you put Ozu in the middle and something fundamental changes; however I’m sure this observation would only really work in certain historical contexts.

AH: I also think it’s important to keep in mind that that was a particular historical moment. Cinematheques and museums should try out different models such as the one you

mention, but at the same time it’s important to understand that around 1961 – which is probably when this ‘Langlois scene’ plays out – cinematheques were almost the only place of actually experiencing film history, in addition to reading books and magazines. One cannot disregard the fact that today we are confronted with a completely different situation. There is the notion, even among a wider audience, that we are now surrounded by all the materials and knowledge of film history. This is not necessarily accurate, but there is the feeling that after television, video, DVD, and now the internet, we really have everything at our fingertips... If I want to see ‘what a Mizoguchi film looks like’ I need just a few seconds; I’ll go to Youtube and will find several excerpts to choose from. You see a certain camera movement, you read that this is a ‘Mizoguchi shot’, and you feel informed; that’s the belief that you get from the internet. So what about, let’s say, the 1971 generation? What did they have at their disposal in the German-speaking world? There were a few more institutions than in 1961, but not that many: the Austrian Film Museum for instance, the Arsenal in Berlin, the Munich Film Museum, that’s about it. But you also had German Television, which offered an amazing range of curated film historical programmes, especially the third channels, in the regions – so that’s where most opportunities for comparison and information came from. Another ten years later, another ‘channel’ became available. I might be a good example for this generation because I was 16 in 1981, and I learned about film history not only in places like this, the Austrian Film Museum, and not only through TV broadcasts, but also – to a major degree – through video tapes, recording stuff myself, exchanging and copying tapes with my friends, finding and renting rare video releases, etc. Which means that these ‘Langlois-type experiences’ cannot be directly transcribed into current experiences with film history. The audiences, curators, writers, teachers who are active today come

from completely different positions in terms of their practical cinephilia. The idea of a consecutive ‘meeting’ of Mizoguchi, Ozu and Kurosawa produces meaning, yes; but it would work very differently today since everyone already brings their own idea of M., O., K. to the table, a ‘knowledge’ received during each individual’s cinephile socialisation, through multiple moving-image sources other than the actual cinema screening.

In a way, people are now aware of what Film History is, of what a certain director’s work is, which relations one era or stylistic movement has to another. And to disregard that makes no sense. But as Olaf said, one also shouldn’t stop doing it the way they did it. Let’s keep in mind what Langlois did, but let’s not assume that in 2012 the results will be the same.

OM: Television didn’t only show the films. Actually they really related Film History. They didn’t just – to put one example – a Jack Arnold retrospective. They actually made films with and about Jack Arnold to accompany each and film, plus a documentary only about him. So to give a really big arch so to speak they used to do this and also with a lot of directors.

AH: I’m not sure exactly what the French situation was like, but I guess the *Cinéastes de notre temps* model played an important role. I like this series a lot, but it’s less analytical. They invited contemporary filmmakers to create film portraits of older directors, and they were always based on interviews with those artists. What Olaf just described about Germany was a different direction – maybe it was very “Germanic”, but from the 60s to the early 90s they did understand public television as a mass education institution. It was their widely accepted role. Today this approach has been almost forgotten, because in order to compete with private television, which was introduced in the late 1980s, the whole model of public

TV changed. Before, television was seen as a school for the nation – and at some point the subject of cinema and its history entered this ‘school’, because there were so few film cultural institutions around. Institutions such as cinematheques and the tradition of repertory screenings of classical films in regular theaters were not nearly as widespread in Germany than in France. So Germany belatedly caught up with this via television – at least to a certain degree. Even today, the difference is quite big. The Berlin Film Museum Berlin for instance is a place that focuses on exhibitions of objects and artifacts, they publish books and so on, but they don’t have a real film program, except for one retrospective a year, during the Berlinale. There is another institution in Berlin called “Arsenal, Institut für Film und Videokunst” which takes up some of the job that you would expect from a cinematheque. And there is the Munich Film Museum. But not many other institutions that you could compare to a typical French cinematheque.

OM: *Cinéastes de notre temps* and *Cinéma de notre temps* gained celebrity thanks to the connection to the Nouvelle Vague and *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Our model would be more like the *Cinéma Cinémas* (1982-1990) the stuff that Claude Ventura did, something more related to famous names. The other thing is that, of course, Germans have an extremely neurotic relationship to cinema. Due to very clear historical reasons, plus in contrast to the *froggies*, we’re not centralized. If you think about Germany you’ve got all these five major cities. France, you’ve got Paris. That’s it. Politically speaking and in a cultural way it’s much trickier. Germany functions all through this decentralized thing, we’re really a Federation. And every state, for better or worse has to take care of itself in a lot of ways. So television is a strange mix of federal and national. While the big educational stuff was done on a federal level, these programs wandered around. For example for me a very important

thing was a Giuseppe de Santis program that was originated in Bavaria but then it started to go through the different regional channels and ended up in North Rhine-Westphalia, my state. So that's how it worked. Television could function as an intermediate in ways that the rest of institutions, due to different problems were not really able to function. Back in my younger days my "film cultural teacher", so to speak, actually went more often to Luxemburg, or to Brussels to watch films than anywhere else. Because actually they are closer to Koln. Even Frankfurt, not to mention Hamburg, or specially Berlin which back there was fucking pressure...

There's another wide subject to comment on with plenty branches (as we sit and talk in the office of the head of the Austrian Film Museum). Something related to its history in the late 60's, and the radical movements that led this institution to be occupied in January 1969 by the second generation of avant-garde filmmakers, those of the so called "Expanded Cinema". Apparently the co-director of the Film Museum, Peter Kubelka, refused to program their films at the expense of American avant-garde programs, as Peter Tscherkassky's wrote in *Film Unframed. A History of Austrian Avant-Garde Cinema* (TSCHERKASSY, 2012: 24-25). Almost thirty later Kubelka did eventually include their films in his *Was ist Film* program, a particular narration of the whole history of cinema. And also, on the other hand these reconciled avant-garde filmmakers of the so called "Expanded Cinema" shine proudly being compared with, say, Dreyer, Siodmak or Buñuel. But there's also the obvious absence of any Hollywood film in the *Was ist Film* cycle. So we would also like you to comment on this. We wonder if Kubelka's is a radical gesture that you can understand. We saw your program for the dOCUMENTA Kassel

and there the history of cinema can also convey Hollywood, experimental and popular works...

The «Was ist Film» cycle still looks like it did 16 years ago when it started. It was a conscious choice on my part to continue presenting it like this – as a specific historical statement. And Kubelka would not have wanted to change it anyway. The cycle was realized in 1995/96, at the centenary of cinema, because on this occasion the Film Museum received some special government funding, so new prints could be acquired and preservations could be made of prints that were already in the collection. Kubelka's selection began its first run at the end of 1996. Since then, there have only been two small additions. The first one was a program he added in 2005, because he became interested in Fassbinder as an 'untrained', un-deformed narrative filmmaker. I told Kubelka which Fassbinder films we had in the collection, and he chose *Katzelmacher* (1969). And he combined it with *Outer Space* (1999), because he also wanted to represent Peter Tscherkassky's work in the cycle, as one of the important positions in the Austrian avant-garde tradition. I don't know the specific reasons why he combined these two films. The second addition, in 2009, was made with the aim of highlighting 8mm film, small-gauge filmmaking, as a specific art form. For this, Kubelka chose the work of one of his former students in Frankfurt, Günter Zehetner, whose 8mm work is quite unique and which he admires a lot. Zehetner also works with video and 16 mm, but his primary focus is Super-8 film. The choice was to honor both a younger filmmaker, a specific film author, *and* the specific potentials of 8mm-filmmaking. Apart from these two additions, he consciously wanted to keep the cycle as it was from the start – and I took up this notion: that it's a historical position and a personal statement, based on a lifetime of thinking through film. It is two things at once: I would always recommend it to every student of

the film medium as a very worthwhile way of pondering the essential capacities of film over the course of 63 programmes. But the cycle is also already a subject for history-writing, meaning the history of film canons, of film curatorship, of the various modernist attempts to define cinema through a film selection. For this reason we also edited a book about the cycle, including an extended conversation with Peter Kubelka. It is clearly a poetic-curatorial position tied to this man, and I didn't want it to assume the role of a 'dogma' as proposed by this institution. There is no single 'cinema truth', so I tried to set the cycle in some kind of relation to another series. This other series, «Utopie Film», is much simpler, more flexible and not as 'crystalline' a thing as *Was ist Film*. I didn't want to produce a 'counter-list' of 200 works that is set in stone and that would structurally be the same as Kubelka's program; that's why the «Utopie Film» is 'lighter on its feet', and organized in chapters, with each month bringing a new constellation of films. Both series are showing each Tuesday, so you have two ongoing 'exhibitions' which look at film history in general, and they work quite differently. I can see why Kubelka wanted the strict regularity of the cyclical model, and why today it is even more of a gesture of resistance to say that one should follow the cycle on a weekly basis. Considering how our society and the 'economy of attention' function today, such a committed behavior on the part of the audience is definitely rare. But those who do follow the cycle in a continuous fashion certainly receive a rich antidote to the consumption-oriented idea of 'sampling film history' as it is common today – and also a rich antidote to the conventional wisdom as far as the 'canon of cinema' is concerned. This is one of the reasons why we need cinematheques.

This brings me to the dOCUMENTA program I did in 2007. It's a very different thing, of course, than structuring a long-term museum program, but there are similarities. Both models

are about creating a sort of 'spiderweb', and about the sparks that can fly when two lines or energies in this web meet head-on. On the most basic level, this idea is not only present in the parallelism of *Was ist Film* and «Utopie Film», but also sometimes in the way I set up the 'headlines' of one monthly program, or the 'starring' artists that define one calendar, like the month when we had retrospectives of Val Lewton, Andrej Tarkovskij and Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and they became so connected for me that I added the line "Ghost Stories" as an arc that would encompass all three... The dOCUMENTA program was a dream, or hope, or attempt, to do a lot of these things over one summer, in a big arc of 100 days and 50 programs – many of which, in themselves, would be smaller arcs, leading to echoes on various levels. Like in the case of the *Was ist Film* cycle, I sometimes played with the crazy assumption that in order to completely 'get' the program you'd need to see all 50 shows. You would more or less have to live in Kassel and go to the Gloria cinema each second evening, for more than three months. As far as I know, several people from Kassel actually went a lot, but I fear that the number of those who saw *everything* was between 0 and 3. Most people visit the Documenta for two or three days, of course, so you also have to think of those who can only see one or two or three programs. Which is why I tried to look at each individual program as a potential 'messenger' of the whole. That was not really possible, of course...

As opposed to Peter Kubelka, I do feel that the 'commodity form' of cinema, its industrial side, is as valid as its 'high art form' when it comes to defining or describing the medium. But it's important to see that Kubelka is not solely interested in the 'high art form' aspect either; he often talks about – and shows – things like advertising film, home movies, newsreels, etc. ... He did a great thing, for instance, at the 1984 FIAF Congress in Vienna.

FIAF is the International Federation of Film Archives, *Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film* – and all FIAF members meet once a year, in a different city each time, for a congress, including a two-day symposium on a specific topic. As the host archive in 1984, Kubelka and the Austrian Film Museum decided on the topic of “non-industrial film”. This was the first time that things like amateur film, scientific film, or film used in sports, as a training tool, became the subject of a FIAF congress; avant-garde films, diary films, personal filmmaking were also part of this idea of “non-industrial cinema”. So you had all these film archive and film museum people from around the world and their hegemonic notion of what constitutes ‘our film heritage’ listening to doctors and athletics coaches and Jonas Mekas about the incredibly wide-ranging uses of film, its manifold social functions, etc. – except the one function that these archivists and curators usually identify cinema with: commercial, feature-length films for ‘entertainment’.

But whenever Kubelka was invited to curate or co-curate large programmes, the main force of his argument was always in the direction of personal and avant-garde film; that’s what I mean with the notion of film as ‘high art’ which he mostly goes for when representing the ‘essence’ of film. It is an obvious characteristic in all three of his major programs – the 1970-75 «Essential Cinema» project for Anthology Film Archives, where he was one in a small group of curators; his mid-1970s commission to create the basic film collection for the Centre Pompidou when it opened; and the 1995/96 «Was ist Film» cycle in Vienna. In the interview for our book on «Was ist Film», he says that there were some elements he would have liked to include, but because of certain rights issues this was impossible. He mentions, for instance, that *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925) should have been included, and maybe he would also have

wanted to include some of the American silent comedies. In general, however, it was always a very clear choice to stay away from so-called commercial cinema.

To say that the cinema should be viewed as a ‘fine art’ is not necessarily wrong or bad. But I think it limits our understanding of this medium if we reduce it to this one function. Just as it seriously limits cinema to reduce it – as 99 % of the population do – to its entertainment industry function. In some small way, that was what I hoped to illustrate in the DOCUMENTA program. The special place of cinema in cultural history, its richness and its strange newness, has a lot to do with its multiple force fields. And the one hegemonic understanding – cinema as an evening’s entertainment – is only that: one of many. It’s also not enough to define film by its capacity to serve as our historical witness and to focus on cinema’s ‘bond with the real’. This idea of cinema is very dominant in the French cinephile tradition, from Bazin to Daney and beyond. In the *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, this is a highly visible mode of reflection, and importantly so, because in the wider social arena there is far too little awareness of the important ‘inter-spaces’ between history and film. But because of this strong ‘ethical-realist’ tradition in French criticism and filmmaking, it also seems that French film culture has a massive problem with the opposing tradition – a cinema that starts by looking at its own material reality, that is skeptical of all ‘realisms’, and that belongs more to the genealogy of modern art. I’m speaking of a tradition that is usually termed ‘experimental’ or ‘avant-garde’ film. There are exceptions, of course, if you think of Nicole Brenez or Raymond Bellour. But if you read Christian Metz, for instance, avant-garde filmmaking is anathema to him. And Godard was never much interested in this rich field either. The canons of French cinephilia can seem oppressive if you look at what they exclude.

For me, there is a horizon – maybe a ‘utopian’ one – where all these things actually have to do with each other and are not split up into separate discourses and cinephile ‘lifestyles’. I am imagining a viewer who comes to watch the «Was ist Film» cycle each Tuesday and other avant-garde film presentations, and who is also interested in following a William Wellman show, just to pick an example; plus a presentation of amateur films in the context of urbanism; and so on. Basically, this full horizon is my vis-a-vis when I think of a larger program, or a programmatic. And some aspects of this approach were hopefully represented in the DOCUMENTA selection. The first two evenings consisted of *The Sun Shines Bright* (1953, John Ford), *Jazz Dance* (1954, Roger Tilton), *Lights* (1966, Marie Menken) and *Viaggio in Italia* (1953, Roberto Rossellini). So there was, on the one hand, the idea of beginning roughly where Documenta began, the early-to-mid-Fifties – which is also the beginning of ‘the second half of cinema’ and, in tendency, the ‘time-image’ as theorized by Deleuze. And secondly, to represent cinema – right from the start of the show – through a confrontation of four ‘lines’ that are equally valid for me. Another program, just to give an example, brought together David Cronenberg’s *eXistenZ* (1999) and Stan Brakhage’s *The Act of Seeing with One’s Own Eyes* (1971). I think that my work, to a certain degree, is really dedicated to that, but not because of some overarching abstract mission, but because that has been my own ‘bodily’ experience of what the medium can do. It’s the result of watching films pretty intensely for more than 30 years, of discovering new types of film and being blind to them at first, then starting to see something in them, and so on. It’s the experience of falling in love with filmic expression, no matter if it’s ‘Hollywood storytelling’ or a ‘destructionist’ exchange with the medium like Ernst Schmidt Jr. ripping away at the film strip in 1965, or being incredibly touched by anonymous documents from a century ago, like a 3-minute Phantom Ride shot

from a tram that goes around the Ringstrasse in Vienna, in 1906. Nobody knows the individuals that were involved in this, so it’s the sheer act of filming, or the expressive act, or the ‘witnessing act’ that I identify with. It has to do with participating in events of recording and replay that are not as prescribed and pre-structured as the dominant, business side of moving-image media usually is. A younger person today would maybe see this impulse realized in the online world – traversing the jungle of moving images online and discovering echoes and surprises all along the way. For me, it’s the cinema itself and its history than does that; I didn’t grow up with the internet, I created my own ‘internet’ through film-watching.

Now, to return to the moment of 1968 that you originally asked about... It was still a confrontational moment, and confrontational modes were developed all the time. Maybe it’s a weakness of today’s film culture that we have such an accepting view of everything, and that there are very few ‘battles’ being fought in this field. We have thousands of film festivals, large and small, and everything seems to have a place to shine *somewhere*. It’s more like a constant affirmation than a questioning of the basic economic and cultural model... Anyway, in the text about 1960s Expanded Cinema that you referred to, in Peter Tscherkassky’s recent book, he reconstructs the main challenges articulated by the protagonists of this movement in Austria. On the one hand, he writes about a highly local aspect – the interesting, if short-lived confrontation between a group of avant-garde filmmakers and the Austrian Film Museum in 1969. When they staged their demonstration in front of the Film Museum, they argued that Peter Kubelka treated the Film Museum as a ‘private museum’ for the works of his New American Cinema friends and for his own works. And that he would not show the other Austrian avant-garde films, like those by Kurt Kren, Ernst Schmidt Jr., Peter Weibel,

Valie Export, Hans Scheufl, etc. This was a confrontation that had to do with inclusion and exclusion; they wanted to achieve an ‘expansion’ of the Film Museum program so that their own works would also be represented. And starting in the early 1970s this soon came to pass. The Film Museum would acquire works by these filmmakers and also show them. On the other hand, there was a larger challenge of course – attacking the hegemonic model of cinema, the ‘apparatus’ as it was later called, the relatively fixed constellation of projection-viewer-screen that exists in regular cinema and which was seen as ‘ideologically dubious’. Calling for an *Expanded* cinema was a means to participate in the general movement of attacking the Fordist post-war consensus, both in the field of politics and the economy and in the field of culture. The imperialist state, the factory as work space and the cinema as leisure space were equally addressed by this “expansionist” energy.

The group around Export, Weibel, Scheufl etc. played an important part in this international movement, as far as cinema and the arts were concerned. Politically speaking, the traditional cinema setting was seen as part of an oppressive ideological apparatus which aimed at distraction, at keeping citizens in a state of obedience and passivity – the Fordist leisure time equivalent of the way the factory, the workspace, the social state were organized. So for these ‘expansionists’, the cinema space as such, the relation of the viewer to the spectacle, and the whole notion of filmic illusion, filmic representation became a terrain for contestation: «Let us expand or explode these relations, let’s involve the viewer, let’s replace the projected illusion with real activity, let’s play with projection machinery and introduce ‘un-filmic’ elements, let us run a thread of cloth through the projector instead of a film strip», etc.

It is quite ironic, though, that this was also the historical moment when the Fordist

system itself had begun to understand that it needed to change and “expand” and become more flexible in order to survive. And it was the moment, therefore, when television took over – from the cinema – the role of the dominant cultural and leisure time apparatus, later to be supplanted or superseded by digital culture. So in a way, the fight for an Expanded Cinema quickly lost its main opponent, and many of its practitioners like Weibel and Export, for instance, turned towards a critical engagement with television and the new leisure time economies. The 70s and 80s were a time when cinema, ‘un-expanded cinema’, quickly – and happily, I think – shed its role as the main ‘apparatus of oppression’. It doesn’t really matter that today we still have ‘Hollywood’ and the global cultural industry, what’s important is that, at least since 2000, the cinema space, the cinema experience, no longer conform so easily to the dominant modes of social behavior and social control as they may have done at mid-century; Post-Fordist subjectivities and ‘governmentalities’ are no longer mirrored so much in the cinema setting, but in the flexibilized regimes of electronic or digital moving images that define our social and cultural present. And for me, the art world, the world of corporate museums and Biennials, with their relatively recent but very intense interest in moving images, has to a large degree become part of this regime. Which is why I’m always quite amused when art curators, in order to point out their ‘critical stance’ towards dominant society, tell us that moving-image museum installations today fulfill the Expanded Cinema utopia of the ‘liberated viewer’ – as if the political opponent was still the ‘fixed and passive viewer’ of traditional cinema or the Fordist economic model. For me, it’s almost the other way round: the ‘liberated’ museum flaneur, passing from one moving-image screen or installation to the next, is a perfect expression of what we undergo day in, day out anyway:

we, the ‘flexible’, ‘creative’, ‘active’ and super-‘individualized citizens of today – no longer workers, but ‘co-workers’, participants in our company’s economic strategies – are perfectly represented by and, of course, attracted by, the now-dominant, flexibilized and dispersed system of moving images. Our media habits, fluidly following the images from iPhone to iPad to public screens to the computer and maybe television now and then (but not a lot anymore) are the perfect expression of our complicit behaviour. *This* is the ‘expanded cinema’ of today – and it has nothing to do anymore with its namesake in 1968, nor with the critical impetus that energized the artists of the era.

We are no longer forced to be at the office at eight o’clock in the morning or sit there in the assembly line. We are no longer the Chaplin of *Modern Times* (1936). We work wherever we ‘please’. And we are no longer forced to sit ‘passively’ in a darkened auditorium to be part of the spectacle. No, the spectacle has expanded and it now comes to us, to the shopping malls, to our homes, to the workspace, wherever we carry our screens or displays. So, if anything, the cinema, ‘traditional, un-expanded cinema’, has potentially become a critical tool vis-a-vis this regime. I’m very interested in observing the ways in which people watch moving images, and I very often encounter this sort of ‘stress’ – at shopping malls, in museums, or if you’re on the internet – of people feeling that they cannot or should not focus on one image only, there’s always another image, and another; always something else, potentially more interesting. “Does it grab me in the first thirty seconds? No, it doesn’t really. The pulsating red thing over there looks pretty intense: let’s go there...”. I’m aware, of course, that this is a widely accepted sensibility, and I don’t want to moralize about it at all, but it has nothing to do with film or cinema.

Memory has no part in it...

AH: Exactly; it’s hard to leave a trace that way. When we talk about film as a witness, which is about leaving traces, then the memory of really having seen something, and then seeing another thing, as a real confrontation, is an important factor in this process. If the aim is to produce an ‘active memory’, I don’t think the experience of passing by moving images in an exhibition or at the shopping mall, is especially useful.

Well as Daney summarizes, it’s the Audiovisual in relation to (and probably against) Cinema.

AH: Yes. It’s interesting that Catherine David, in the 1997 Documenta, already printed all these Daney texts, and she also included Frieda Grafe and the *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*. But there, Daney’s ‘audiovisual’ would still mainly refer to television, of course. He died in 1992, so he’s not talking about the Internet or art world developments. Today, 15 years later, a Documenta curator who deals with Daney’s writings would also have to address the way the ‘audiovisual’ has entered the art world.

I’d like you to comment on another two models of programming that seems an alternative (maybe a complement) to the comparative cinema curating practice we’ve been developing on (for instance Kubelka’s or yours). I mean the thematic kind of programming (grouping films by themes, you speak about it in the interview included in the *Film Curatorship* book the FilmMuseum published), and even the kind of «Permanent History of Cinema» model practiced by other cinemateques as Lisbon, Paris or even Madrid.

AH: The institutions that you mention do both, actually. No cinemateque today presents its screenings *only* under the general heading of

«Permanent History of Cinema». Maybe in Lisbon and Paris this part occupies a larger segment of the complete program than in most other cinemateques I know. But every cinemateque highlights a number of thematic or monographical shows each month or each quarter – as headliners of the program. In our case, at the Austrian Film Museum, this notion of the “permanent collection” being on view, is represented by the Tuesday programs, «Was ist Film» and «Utopie Film». They make up about 10 to 15% percent of the total. If you switch from the temporal mode of a film museum to the spatial mode of a traditional museum. I see certain similarities: Most art museums also have a permanent collection on view, which is surrounded by various exhibitions that change regularly. A film museum, like an art museum, should have a way of representing its own collection, and make transparent its focuses and strengths. There’s a real beauty in making the collections speak, even if it may be a comparatively small collection – as in our case. That’s an essential part of film curatorship. And then you complement the collection with loans and with ways of placing certain themes or oeuvres under a different light each time you show them. Jack Smith, for instance, has been a fixture at the Austrian Film Museum for decades, but for this show now, in November 2012, we created a strongly expanded framework, through loans, through the newly available unfinished works that have now been preserved, and through Jim Hoberman’s curatorial approach, describing a ‘Smith cosmos’ which goes far beyond Smith’s own films.

I actually believe that – far from any nationalistic point-of-view – that there are specific Histories of Cinema connected to specific places, cities, film cultures. And it’s part of our job, in thinking about cinema, to become aware of these specific differences. That’s why we compare French and German relations towards cinephilia, including television. These differences have

a lot to do with individual institutions and their collections, as well as local cultures of criticism and the activities of individual people at certain points in time. So, for instance, I do see something like a ‘Vienna point of view’ towards cinema that has developed over the decades, including the work of filmmakers, of course, but also criticism and scholarship, festivals like the Viennale, institutions such as Sixpack film, the Film Museum, and so on. A certain heightened interest in the genealogies of avant-garde cinema is definitely a characteristic of Vienna film culture. But all this is usually put in relation to other, international points of view; and since Austria is a small country and Viennese film culture is a smaller “player” on the international scene, there is barely the danger of chauvinism. Some of my criticism of French cinephilia would relate to that: the issue of local genealogies, specific critical interests, etc., is just as applicable for Paris or France as it is if for Vienna or Berlin or Buenos Aires, but the insularity is actually much greater in Paris because our colleagues there are not so used to reflect on the constructedness and limits of their idea of cinema. Since it was quite ‘successful’ in terms of its global reach, at least for a certain period of time, French cinephilia has lost – or maybe it never had it – the ability to put its own ‘self-evident truths’ into perspective. Smaller countries or film cultures with a lesser ‘global force’ have this by necessity, there is less ‘self-assuredness’, if you like. And, of course, their positions, their critical traditions, their film cultures have been marginalized in the process. It also has a lot to do with the perceived importance and volume of a country’s film production, of course, which is an important reason why France and the U.S. were so dominant for a long time.

If you read Richard Roud’s *Cinema, a Critical Dictionary* (Viking Adult, 1980), in the introduction he says something like «let’s not kid ourselves, the important cinephile and

critical discourse produced today stems either from Paris, London or New York». In this case, the basic assumptions are very directly verbalized. Often it's not as direct, but you feel it everywhere between the lines. I'm not saying that there is no basis for this large role played by Paris or New York in the 'global picture', but it can definitely lead to the insular perspective I mentioned. And I think that today we should really be able to transcend it. I think today, with so much internationalization in the world of criticism and online publishing, for instance, no one would dare to write a sentence like Richard Roud's in the late 70's, because we know it's not true. Nevertheless, an important film critic such as Frieda Grafe, one of the great critics in the history of the medium, is still a more or less unknown figure on an international level, whereas Serge Daney is not. And I'm sure there are similar cases in the Spanish speaking world that I have never heard of. So it's not like we're already in an ideal situation, but maybe in a better position than 20 or 30 years ago. And in the process, the 'world standard centers' of cinephilia and their discourses have simply become less interesting, less useful, less applicable. They can even become strangely provincial.

Don't you think that those world standard centers, as you call them, have in a way *conquered* the local ones with strong ideological ideas that outlive for generations. The most obvious one is Paris, "Cahiers du Cinéma" and their notion of *politique des auteurs* they managed to define. There's an Edgardo Cozarinsky documentary about Cahiers in which Fieschi said: «Cahiers won the battle». Quintín, the former director of BAFICI likes to quote it. Do you agree?

AH: If we talk about which critical paradigm became hegemonic for the second half of the 20th century, I agree. The dominant prism by which film culture has looked at cinema is very

much an 'auteurist' one, even if film studies have strengthened other approaches, too. But these have not yet become as influential on a wider scale as auteurism has. On TV, they will now announce "John Ford's *Seven Women*" – and they didn't say it like that during the 60's or 70's. But it's not in any way related to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* of today; it comes from a historical moment when it was also not just the *Cahiers* but a larger confluence of critical traditions, including many other – sometimes much older – strands, that led to this canonical view. The view of all this as a 'battle' is pretty childish, though – it's like saying 'modern art' won the battle against the academic painters of 1870. So what. And if we talk about the "*Cahiers* taste" and its legacy, in regard to specific filmmakers or filmmaking ideologies, I don't think I agree with the above statement. This taste has become pretty irrelevant, actually.

To finish, please develop your ideas about mutant colleague French critic Nicole Brenez and her «Jeune, Dure et Pure!» extremely personal retrospective on history of cinema. She is based in Paris and teaches there but is not centralized, is she? What would be the contrasts between yours and her programs of experimental and avant-garde cinema?

AH: If you look at the work of Nicole, but also that of Raymond Bellour, for instance, you see interests that differ from the norm, at least in France. Nicole is a great example of someone who is highly critical with certain 'Parisian genealogies'. And she promotes different kinds of cinema. She's very interested in militant cinema, but she also engages with certain auteurs of narrative filmmaking that are usually left aside, like Abel Ferrara. She's not working monolithically. But it's hard for me to compare her work with what I do here, not only because we're friends. We work in very different constellations. First of all, she is a university

teacher, plus: she's a super-active writer; and the programs she organizes take place in very different institutions and cities. Whereas I am much more bound to this one institution, the Film Museum, and really bound-up in all its details, including many administrative ones. I think she structures her activities according to a 'counterpoint' ideal, which is something that I don't feel capable of doing in my present job. Maybe Nicole's interests shifted somewhat between the time I got to know her, the mid-90s, and today. But Godard for instance remained an important baseline for her all through these years. What she focused on more and more, however – and I admire her for that – are all the film practices that run counter to the cinephile standard, such as the militant, experimental, underground practices which have almost no place in the general film culture. She does it much more forcefully than I do. Again, maybe that's a weakness on my part, but whenever I'm in a position of 'public responsibility' or accountability – as director of the Film Museum, for instance, or when I ran the Viennale [1992-97] – I first try to find out which basic obligations this institution is meant to fulfill. These institutions exist because civil society, cultural politics, tax-payers have – more or less willingly – come to the conclusion that it serves a common good to finance them. Now, of course it always needs activists to bring such institutions into being in the first place – and they will prove (or not) that the institution they founded serves a common purpose for society; that it is not just a "private museum", but a place where certain legitimate cultural and educational aims are met for various groups in society. If these institutions survive their establishing phase, they become more than a personal or group activity, because they have already involved society on several levels. Which is how a general 'mission' comes to be formed. So when you start your work in such place, I think it's important to analyze what this mission has been, what the general understanding of

the institution's role in society is, what your predecessors did and how they did it, which aspects they focused on and which other aspects they did not care about so much. And then to implement the changes that you feel are necessary – but you always do this on the basis of an existing model, not out of thin air.

In the field of film preservation and archival work, for instance, many things didn't happen at the Film Museum during the 1990s – for budgetary reasons. So one of the main issues we tried to deal with here in the last eleven years was to strengthen that area. To expand the staff in the archive, to work more on the collections, to bring the great Vertov collection to fruition, because it is a real treasure in the Film Museum collections, and to initiate related research projects. In addition, book publications were re-started again, and we also began to publish DVDs. In terms of 'content' and approach, this was all strongly based on what the Film Museum had started in the past, what had been achieved by my predecessors. Another ongoing part of the responsibilities of such an institution is to give the people in this country – via exhibition, retrospectives, etc. – a substantial historical overview of what the medium could and can do. And you have to develop a relation to what is supposed to be 'important' in film history and what is not – for the students-viewers of today. I usually think of generations here, meaning that each person who starts to seriously study the medium should have the chance, in a framework of 10 to 15 years, to experience all relevant aspects of cinema, including the major artists, forms of expression, genres etc. This is also the rough timeframe that I think a chief curator or director of such an institution should be responsible. You can really put your notions of the medium on the map over such a period, hopefully in the service of those who want to learn as intensely as possible. So this already means that my outlook needs to be somewhat different than Nicole's, for instance. Maybe the

films of Santiago Álvarez are a good example of this: I'm pretty sure that Nicole works with his oeuvre – in the framework of her projects on revolutionary or militant cinema, but maybe she would not think of Robert Mitchum in this context! And why should she... Whereas in our case, I put Álvarez next to Mitchum on our program headline last December because, as I explained earlier, these types of tension seem fitting to me for a film museum that has to take an “all-over” point of view. Now, we very rarely present shows on actors, but as I recently became more interested in the idea of the actor as *auteur*, I thought Mitchum would be a great example; in many ways his career and his deep-down approach to cinema show clear signs of authorship via acting. The fact that both he and Álvarez are from the same generation, and more importantly, that they both spent their formative years travelling around the U.S. during the Depression and working in odd jobs, with one ending up as a member of the Cuban Communist Party and the other signing up to Hollywood (both at almost the same time) made it easy for me to see them as two sides of one ‘LP’ that we offered to our audiences in December 2011.

There is something else: Today, the chief curators of cinemathèques are mostly not identical anymore with the directors/administrators. I think I'm one of the few exceptions. Haden Guest at the Harvard Film Archive also comes to mind, he's one the great director-curators who ever ran a film archive or cinemathèque. I *do* like the fact that there are still these few people left who have both responsibilities, administrative and programmatic. It's becoming rarer by the day. As these types of institutions grew, over the 1970s, 80s and 90s, they also often became more bureaucratic. The ‘cultural management’ model is now the dominant ‘directorial’ one, and there is a separate program department, often on the same level as ‘marketing’ or “communication” – sometimes even lower in hierarchy than those.

Whereas I feel closer to an ‘author model’ – typically, of course, because I come from that background, from writing and curatorship, and not from a classical managerial background.

Returning to your question about Nicole, I guess there are also differences in how one has ‘grown up with the cinema’. I am simply too enamoured with too many sides of cinema to be capable of focusing only one one or a few of those; I think I need these multiple relationships with cinema for my own well-being... As much as I love the traditions of radical filmmaking, be it formal or political, from Robert Kramer and Straub/Huillet to Owen Land or Santiago Álvarez, it would be too much of an intellectual or emotional loss, personally, if I had stop engaging with the ‘dirty commercialism’ side of the movies, for instance.

But it wouldn't exist without the *other* cinema, or it wouldn't be like it is.

AH: Exactly! Neither can really exist without the other. Certain crazy and radical things can exist because some uneducated immigrant entrepreneurs decided to go west, to Hollywood, in 1910. Because of the stupidity, greed and the probably not very humane ways in which “cinema” came to exist as a global force; and even because of the way religion and propaganda and the dictatorial State played their major roles in all this, because of all these ‘impurities’... So I guess I'll have to complement Nicole's title with another: «Jeune, impure et dure!». And ‘soft’ is also OK, of course, as is ‘old’ or even ‘very old’! I know, of course, what Nicole meant with her title, in relation to the French experimental tradition – it's a super title. And I should say that I always love it when I can speak with her about films, because she is easily as ‘wild’ as I am in connecting things that are usually kept separate – I couldn't believe it when I met her, 15 or 20 years ago, that there is another person who, without any irony, can voice a sequence of

words such as «Brakhage-Mizoguchi-amateurs-terrorists-Epstein-DePalma» in one and the same sentence. So she's easily as 'impure' as I am!

These relations you make are a kind of *montage* again, to go back to the Godard text. So you said you try to make an contribution as an author in a way to this institution, so what you make in a way is creating new thoughts.

AH I hope so, but it's on a very simple level only. I'm not enough of a theorist of film to be capable of developing such thoughts much further. There is a real difference between a great curator and a great theorist of cinema. I also wouldn't say – as some conceive of it in the fine art world – that curators and artists are more or less the same. I think they're quite different, even though I also don't think that one is 'better' than the other. I see these kinds of activity as different practices or professions, with different aims, but with enough 'authorial' overlap that it makes sense – as you did at the beginning of our talk – to say: “OK, let's see how Godard the filmmaker-philosopher talks

about the idea of montage and comparison and programming, and then let's see how curators relate to that.” You will find some similarities and still you won't be able to say it's the same. There is a film I like very much, Gustav Deutsch's *Welt Spiegel Kino* (2005), and I show it often in our 'Film Curatorship' courses for university students, because there is an interesting element of curatorship in it. As there is in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. At the same time, it is something else entirely. If I wanted to speak about Lisbon in 1929 or Vienna in the 1910's like Deutsch does in *Welt Spiegel Kino*, I would also pick some of the films that he chose as excerpts, but I would definitely not treat them the way he does. He thinks of music, of 'composition', of playing with temporality and parts of the image, etc., in other ways than I would do as a curator. I like this field of difference *and* overlap. And if I gave the impression at the beginning that I'm against what Godard says in the text you showed me, I'm not at all against it. I see a shared basic preoccupation, but it's in the details that he goes into – what and how films should be compared and how cinema should do it – where the interesting differences begin. ●

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History of a Journal: the *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1981 Through a Programme at the Cinémathèque. Interview with Jean Narboni

Fernando Ganzo

ABSTRACT

Jean Narboni considers a film programme that took place at the Cinémathèque Française in 1981 and which commemorated the 30th anniversary of the film journal *Cahiers du cinéma*, of which he was editor-in-chief from 1964 to 1972. The programme enables him to trace the history of the journal in relation to the social and political context in France: the creation of the Auteur theory, the increasing political radicalisation of the 1960s and 70s, and the progressive end of this era, marked by the film programme here discussed. In the programme, Narboni identifies the main ideological and critical tendencies that characterised the journal and the changes in critical value and interpretation throughout this period. The author discusses the critical interpretation of Antonioni, Eisenstein or Chaplin in the programme, as well as the confluence of new cinemas, the politicisation of cinema, and the late films by classical directors. According to Narboni, who was also the editor of Langlois's writings, thanks to this project the film critics associated with the journal discovered that programming is a form of montage based on these conceptual or formal associations established between films.

KEYWORDS

Cahiers du cinéma, film criticism, Auteur theory, programming, montage, Henri Langlois, political cinema, Jean-Luc Godard, new cinemas, Cinémathèque Française.

In 1964 Jean Narboni joins, together with Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean-André Fieschi, the editorial team of *Cahiers du cinéma*, then led by Jacques Rivette. Later on, he will become, together with Comolli, co-editor in chief of the journal. In the early 1970s the political radicalisation of the journal leads to what has been called ‘the years Mao’. During this period, images are no longer used, the reviews of invisible films abound and the amount of theory and political commitment multiply. Narboni’s tenure coincides with the most agitated and changing period of the journal since its foundation in 1951. Later on, Narboni would also have a key role in the history of the journal via the edition of books. Many of them are compilations of texts of former members of the editorial team (from André Bazin to Jean-Claude Biette and Éric Rohmer). Amongst the many books edited by Narboni, there is a compilation of writings by Henri Langlois, *Trois cent ans de cinéma*. Over the next pages, Narboni traces a precise itinerary about the evolution of the journal, and the impact of Langlois therein, taking as a point of departure a programme organised by *Cahiers*, and led by Narboni, that took place at the Cinémathèque Française in 1981.

In 1981 you organised the programme ‘30 ans d’une revue : les Cahiers du Cinéma’ (‘30 Years of a Journal: Cahiers du Cinéma’). We are very interested in the fact that this is conceived as a collective programme since it’s not attributed, even if you were in fact the only person behind the programme. We also find it surprising that the first part of the programme, screened in April 1981, focused on the 1950s and the films shown were mostly desperate, passionate and bitter films... It is not by chance that the programme opens with *Anatohan* (Josef von Sternberg, 1953).

Please allow me to go back to the genesis of the project. *Cahiers du cinéma* was born in 1951. In 1981, it was its 30th anniversary. I chose the films for that programme totally alone, and I proposed this programme to the Cinémathèque Française

in my role as a representative of the journal. Several factors had a key role in the selection of films. The first and most important was the taste of *Cahiers*. Regardless of the succession of editorial teams, the changes in direction, political orientation, there has always been a permanent thread in *Cahiers* that imposed itself over and above everything else. Therefore I couldn’t allow myself not to include a film by Jean Renoir, Roberto Rossellini, Howard Hawks, Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock... To mention the classical filmmakers. The first aspect, so to speak, had to do with Auteur theory. That is the thread of *Cahiers*’s taste. On the other hand, the second factor was to select films that weren’t necessarily the most well-known, celebrated or seen by these authors. For instance, I decided to show *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, 1942) instead of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), but I could also have chosen *The Lady from Shanghai* (Orson Welles, 1947). The third factor had to do with a personal view. I selected the films I felt personally inclined towards.

The case of Michelangelo Antonioni is very singular. He was a film-maker who had so far been left aside *Cahiers*’s Auteur theory, even detested by important members of the journal, such as Jean Douchet or Luc Moullet. The articles on Antonioni were often written by writers who didn’t mark the main editorial line of the journal. Before Rivette’s arrival to the journal – since I arrived with him – Antonioni wasn’t part of those selected few. It was often André S. Labarthe, and others like him, who used to write about him. With Rivette’s directorship there was a turn, a change in direction in relation to Antonioni; he gained a more prominent role. Godard said he detested Antonioni but then he had a sudden revelation, akin to the one Paul Claudel felt when visiting the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris: he saw *Red Desert* (*Il deserto rosso*, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1964) in Venice and entered in a state of *shock*. He even interviewed Antonioni. Therefore he went on from having very little interest in Antonioni to becoming completely fascinated by him – and I would also add by his persona. The position of the

journal vis-à-vis Antonioni is therefore fluctuating, but I wanted to include a film by him because, in any case I consider him an important film-maker, also for *Cahiers*. However, instead of selecting *L'avventura* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960) or *La notte* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1961), I chose to include *Il grido* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1957), because it is a film that I always liked very much. It was one of the first I saw by Antonioni, and hence in this case there is a personal component. I believe it to be a magnificent film. The actor, Steve Cochran, was also extraordinary. It has often been said that Antonioni only made films about great bourgeois ladies at leisure, unable to choose amongst their lovers, but *Il grido* is a film about a proletarian, which grants it a very interesting aspect about the spaces where it was filmed, so grey and foggy. On the other hand, this film had received very sectarian attacks, guided by questions of social class. The leftist Italian critique, of communist leanings, had decided that the film was bad, roughly because a proletarian could not have a nervous depression due to a love affair; it just wasn't politically correct. However I found it very beautiful that Antonioni showed a man abandoned by his wife, travelling across different zones in Italy without knowing where to settle – he meets different women and thinks to settle with each of them, but never succeeds. Finally he returns to the place where he met the first woman and finds her with another man and a child. There seems to be no other escape but to let himself fall from the top of the factory where he used to work at the beginning of the film. For me, he is a melancholic character, unable to cope with the mourning. This is why I was so terrorised by the sectarian critiques coming from Italy, reproaching that nervous depression was something exclusive of the bourgeois world, as if a worker had to be able to get over something like this. These are the reasons that led me to chose *Il grido*.

In relation to the other question, I insist that I assume the responsibility for all the decisions made in the programme, since I conceived it on my own. But we decided not to state any names

– the same goes for the introduction text, which I also wrote – because at that time we were at the end of the political period of the journal. At that time of transition we were still working with that idea of the collective, of the 'we'. We were at the end of the 1970s. Names had to be deleted.

This programme took place at the Cinémathèque Française, the place where your vocation was born, watching and desiring to show films. It is also the place where many of the members of the editorial board of *Cahiers* would perceive a series of ideas that would later influence the journal. All of this could be perhaps summed up in one fact: Langlois generated, with his programmes, cinematographic thought.

Yes, hence my contribution to the publication of the book later on, which I organised in close collaboration with Bernard Eisenschitz and Catherine Ficat, *Trois cent ans de cinéma*. For me, Langlois was not only a great film curator of tremendous wit, a great preservationist or pioneer, as it is so often repeated, but also an excellent critic. The texts he produced – or presented – often concise but always robust, were often admirable critical texts. I said to myself that the texts already available we could make a book. At the Cinémathèque everyone told me that we had to wait, since more texts would appear later on. I wouldn't say there was an opposition to my proposal, but it didn't provoke great enthusiasm. They always said we had to wait, but in my opinion there was no need to wait for 20 years: we already had enough texts to publish a book. And the fact is that there haven't been many compilations of articles by Langlois discovered after the publication of our book. I was very aware that the book was being edited in a provisional state in relation to his writings, but Bernard and I preferred to do it anyway rather than wait to be tempted with youth poems, novels or laundry notes in the form of poetry signed by his sublime had...

The fluency of your programme also brings Langlois to mind. And, to a certain extent, one could argue that it could have been conceived, at least partially, within other periods of *Cahiers*.

The fourth fundamental aspect, which I failed to mention before, was the movements within the journal itself. These movements provoked that not all the members of the editorial team could completely identify with each of the periods of the journal. The first ten films of the programme, for instance, find a perfect equivalence in the chronology of the 1950s at *Cahiers*, that is, with the establishment of the Auteur theory. And this is valid for André Bazin as well as for Éric Rohmer, for instance. *Stromboli, Terra di Dio* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950) is one of the films discussed by Rohmer in an interview that I did with him for *Le Goût de la beauté* (ROHMER, 1984: 15). It is needless to justify Hitchcock or Renoir's presence. Orson Welles was also one of the film-makers that was most written about under Rohmer's tenure. The case of Marcel Pagnol is different, since he was considered a bad film-maker for a long time, as was the case with Sacha Guitry. In the mid-1960s when Jean-Louis Comolli and myself took over the editorial leadership at *Cahiers*, we conceived the special issue 'Sacha Guitry et Marcel Pagnol' (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 173, December 1965), which claimed the currency of Pagnol. That is, since his films are included in the programme, we are already contradicting the claim that the first part of the programme could have been made by the members of *Cahiers* of the 1950s. *The Big Sky* (Howard Hawks, 1952) obviously referred to the 'hitchcock-hawksism' of Rohmer and others. Likewise, Otto Preminger's *Angel Face* (1952), is related to Rivette, as much as *Lola Montes* (Max Ophüls, 1955) is mainly related to François Truffaut. Lubitsch is also a particular case, since it was only in the 1960s when *Cahiers* realised a special issue on his work ('Ernest Lubitsch', *Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 198, February 1968), which I then reedited and completed together with Eisenschitz in 1985. But if Lubitsch could be seen in relation to Truffaut, this was also a contribution of the team at *Cahiers* during my time. With regards to *Bitter*

Victory (Nicholas Ray, 1957), it can be considered par of the common ground of the journal: both Godard and I count it amongst our favourite films of all times.

As for *Limelight* (Charles Chaplin, 1952) it wasn't an obvious decision. It could respond to Bazin's criteria, the great *Chaplinist*, but I would also like to remind that Rohmer – as opposed to Godard – didn't value his feature-length films, except for *A Countess from Hong Kong* (Charles Chaplin, 1962). He certainly liked Charlot, but he rather leaned towards Buster Keaton. If I finally decided to include Chaplin instead of Keaton – whom I also consider a genius – is because he is not as well known as one would think. I confirmed this intuition a couple of years ago, when I decided to write a book on *The Great Dictator* (Charles Chaplin, 1940). However, there is a great continuity in the programme in contrast with the different editorial lines. Even during the period when Comolli and I directed *Cahiers* (1964–73), regardless of our political position, including the Maoist vertigo of the last years, Lang, Renoir or Hitchcock were always untouchable film-makers, so to speak. There was never an attack against their work in the name of militant film-making.

What seems moving about the programme is to see how from that continuity, frictions included, that characterised the programme for the first month could emerge, almost as an ejaculation, the films of the Nouvelle Vague, screened over the second month.

Yes, it is evident that the first month of the programme traces the history of *Cahiers*, but if we pay attention to the end, we find *The Hole* (*Le Trou*, 1960), by Jacques Becker, who was like an older brother for the Nouvelle Vague, and with *The Testament of Orpheus* (*Le Testament d'Orphée*, 1959), by Jean Cocteau, a father or a guardian angel to them. From there, we go directly to *La Pointe Courte* (1955), by Agnès Varda, whose work was written up by Bazin (BAZIN, 1955: 36), so that we can then go straight into the films by Pierre Kast, Rivette or Doniol-Valcroze.

I would like to hear about the exceptions over this second month. In my view, even if the radicalisation of *Cahiers* enabled the entrance of a more avant-gardist cinema, I have the impression that, from then onwards, it became more difficult to write in depth about classical film-makers.

Luis Buñuel was not appreciated by certain people at *Cahiers*, such as Rohmer or Douchet, but they completely changed their minds, to the point that Rohmer (ROHMER, 1984: 157-158) wrote on *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruz* (*Ensayo de un crimen*, Luis Buñuel, 1955). He was a bit like Antonioni: he was defended by the writers who didn't decide on the main editorial line of the journal, in this case Labarthe and, most importantly, Moulet, who wrote an article (MOULLET, 1961: 55-58) on *The Young One* (Luis Buñuel, 1960), a film shown within the programme amongst films of the Nouvelle Vague.

As for Jerry Lewis, whose film *The Ladies Man* (1961) was also included in the programme, he was a very important film-maker for our period. We also edited a special issue on his work (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 197, December 1967/January 1968), in the midst of the Nouvelle Vague. This is why it was important to introduce his work amongst these films. But perhaps the most interesting inclusion of the programme was John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939). His work had been excluded from *Cahiers's* pantheon for a long time. Roger Leenhardt, Bazin's mentor, proclaimed: 'Down with Ford, up with Wyler!' Bazin, in a famous article, placed Wyler at the same level as Welles, but he was wrong with Wyler. He had a certain idea about his films, about the sequence shot or the depth of field, but we now know that in his place there should have been Kenji Mizoguchi, for instance. Labarthe, Moulet or Louis Marcorelles defended him, even though, again, they didn't decide on the main editorial line of the journal. Truffaut had reserves about Ford for a long time. The turnaround arrives when Rivette took over *Cahiers*. It was during a John Ford retrospective at the Cinémathèque we realised that we realised

that he was extraordinary, whilst up to that point, in the editorial team we preferred Howard Hawks. However, and in contrast to Buñuel, I decided not to show his films together with those of the Nouvelle Vague. Instead, I situated him later in the programme, and also in the chronology. In the midst of the marxist and 'hyper-theoretical' period at the journal, we wrote a long collective text on *Young Mr. Lincoln*, unattributed (*Cahiers du cinéma*, no.223, August 1970). This is why it is placed between *The Grim Reaper* (*La commare secca*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1962) and *Sotto il segno dello scorpione* (Paolo Taviani and Vittorio Taviani, 1969).

Things are intertwined. In the mid- and end 1960s we lived a unique moment in the history of cinema. Something like this will never happen again. I don't mean to say that the past is always better, but rather that this is a historical question. During those years, if it was possible to make a cut in time, as one does in geology, one would find diverse temporal layers. It was then when were premiered the last great films by the classical film-makers, often marvellous: *Gertrud* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1965), *A Distant Trumpet* (Raoul Walsh, 1964) or *Seven Women* (John Ford, 1966), which was only defended by *Cahiers*, even though it is one of the most beautiful films ever made. We published two articles, one by Comolli (COMOLLI, 1966: 16-20) and the other written by me (NARBONI, 1966: 20-25). Not even Ford's fans supported the film.

It was around that same time when the third and fourth films by the film-makers of the Nouvelle Vague were made. For instance, *Les Carabiniers* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963), or *L'Amour fou* (Jacques Rivette, 1969). The first works by the film-makers of the New Cinemas – such as Jerzy Skolimowski, Marco Bellocchio or Bernardo Bertolucci – and the latest works by *postclassical* film-makers such as Luis Buñuel or Michelangelo Antonioni, were also made at the same time. Within the same month, one could see a film by Skolimowski, Pasolini, Bertolucci, Godard and the most recent Ford. This will never happen again, because the first of

the layers, that of the great classics, is over, they passed away. And, thanks to a historical chance, we found ourselves in a place where the fourth dimensions had to be kept at the same time. In one and the same issue, we had to defend *Seven Women*, *Uccellacci e uccellini* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966), *Walkover* (Jerzy Skolimowski, 1965) or *Les Carabiniers...* This is why a lineal succession can't be established. It happened just as in music, we had to find a counterpoint or a fugue in which two voices entered, then three, later four... We were very lucky to live in a period in which this fugue counted five different voices.

It can be argued that that generation found a 'montage' between the different films at the cinemas themselves. The programme seems to preserve those clashes; for instance, when we go from *La Concentration* (Philippe Garrel, 1968) to *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967), and then to the film by Jerry Lewis.

This is exact. And, at the same time, we preserve the chronological correspondence. At the same time that we were discovering the first films by Garrel, we could suddenly see *Playtime*, a film that had a huge impact on us. I remember that André Fieschi and I called Jacques Tati. He invited us to his house – he lived in the outskirts of Paris – and organised a long interview with him (FIESCHI and NARBONI, 1968: 6-21). We dedicated an important part of that issue to *Playtime* (*Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 199, March 1968). It was a poorly received film. It even ruined him, since after that he was no longer able to make a film like the previous ones. But for us it was evident, as it happened with *Seven Women* or *Gertrud*; when we saw it we had no doubts: we had to interview him and write several texts on the film.

If we analyse the situation in musical terms, we can notice something very contemporary going on between that film and *La Concentration*. There was no problem to go from *Walkover* to *L'Amour fou* or *Play Time*, it was like a pentagram. Music seems to be the most adequate comparison to speak about these different strata. The motives follow each

other, creating links and illuminations between them. It is like Godard's idea, mentioned during his conference on Cinémathèques (GODARD, 1979: 286-291).

Since you mention Godard, I'd like to add that the relationship between *Vent d'Est* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Gérard Martin, Grupo Dziga Vertov, 1970) and *Enthusiasm* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniya Donbassa*, Dziga Vertov, 1931) may seem evident, but not so much the fact that the latter is followed by *The Old and the New* (*Staroye i novoye*, Serguei M. Eisenstein y Grigori Aleksandrov, 1929).

From *La comare secca* onwards, the programme clearly relates to the political period in *Cahiers*. We had very much liked the first films by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, which I haven't seen since. At that time, we start watching the cinema of Robert Kramer. *Ice* (Robert Kramer, 1970) was the leftist film at the time – dealing with urban guerrillas, terrorism. He is the film-maker of the moment. From that film we move on to the Group Dziga Vertov, with *Vent de l'Est*, and so I obviously programmed it alongside a film by Vertov. But at that time we had prepared two great special issues in *Cahiers*, with the great collaboration of Bernard Eisenschitz, mainly on Soviet film. One of them focused on Russia during the 1920s (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 220–221, May–June 1970); the other, which in fact extended across several issues, was solely focused on Eisenstein (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 208–226/227, January 1969–January/February 1971). Thus for us both Vertov and Eisenstein went alongside each other. The selection of *The Old and the New* was a very personal one. This film was screened again in cinemas in Paris in the 1970s, and I wrote a text about it (NARBONI, 1976: 14-21), as did Pascal Bonitzer (BONITZER, 1976: 22-25), even if we didn't at all develop the same position on the film. François Albera, a Marxist and specialist on the avant-gardes, had written a reply in the form of a letter to the journal (ALBERA, 1978: 10-16), where he discussed our respective positions. Therefore it was a very

relevant film at the time. Bonitzer developed the idea of the artist against power, but that wasn't my position: *The Old and the New* seemed interesting because it was uber-revolutionary and I think this was precisely why it was seen so fearfully from the people in power, to go too far away – and too madly – into that direction with a sort of political eroticism – hence the sprinkling of milk – whereas they were kolkozoes who liked their tractor. It was a Deleuze/Guattari of sorts *avant la lettre*.

Since you mention Deleuze, we are in the same period when Deleuze was preparing his books on cinema, *L'image-mouvement* and *L'image-temps*. Soon before that, he had been invited to write for *Cahiers*, where he published «Trois questions sur *Six fois deux*» (*Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 271, November 1976). As far as we know, you were the ones sending him the films and this may therefore be understood as a form of personal programming for a philosopher.

Yes, he wrote on *Six fois deux / Sur et sous la communication* (Jean-Luc Godard and Anne Marie Miéville, 1976), with a counterfeit and fascinating interview with himself (DELEUZE, 1976: 5-12). We both worked at the University of Vincennes and often chatted together. Later on, Carmelo Bene brought us together – we could also talk about those who were absent from the programme, such as Bene or Otar Iosseliani. Once Deleuze had conceived this project in his mind, I helped him with the list of films and indications in the texts, but he also had many other people around him who advised him, such as Claire Parnet, someone very close to Caroline Champetier. In fact, I didn't need to wait to send him the films, but I was part of a group of people who talked with him a lot about cinema over that couple of years.

Even so, that need to send him films is interesting. In a certain way, and in the case

of *Cahiers* in particular, it seems obvious that selecting the films was a form of critique, even of a form of making cinema, of creating a way of thinking based on associations and confrontations, which is what the Auteur theory was based on. In fact this continued to be Godard's creative process as a film-maker. Didn't Langlois fulfil a similarly fundamental role in this critical dispositif?

The way I started watching films was very wild. I didn't live in Paris as a teenager; I grew up in Algolia, and only came to Paris every once on a while. Later on, the Cinémathèque Française, triggered my voracious appetite to discover cinema. For instance, all that which I had heard about in the cine-clubs of Argel. In any case, we very soon realised that Langlois was a great editor, as well as Godard would also become one. The idea of montage is similar in both instances: to bring together two or more films without an apparent relationship, hoping that something new will emerge from that clash. This idea was taken rather literally – and this is something up for discussion – from Eisenstein, that is, that from the clash between two images a third one will be created in the spectator's mind. This notion of montage is part of the 'golden thread' of all those who became close to Langlois. His screenings could play in all directions, at times based on national or chronological relationship, others just on a word from the title, or much more subtle associations. The principle of montage was constantly mutable, but the foundational idea was a constant throughout his work. This is also how it was taken up again by Godard: montage never ceased being his *beau souci*¹ – one only needs to watch his most recent *Film Socialisme* (Jean-Luc Godard, 2010). And this not only affects images but also his texts, up to the point that throughout these last years he has stopped writing at all in his films. In *Film Socialisme* he edits texts by Hölderlin with others by Rilke or Marx. Some such as Dominique

du cinéma, n° 65, December 1956.

1. This is a reference to the well-known article 'Montage, mon beau souci', by Jean-Luc Godard, published in *Cahiers*

Païni have taken up again and developed that theory using the idea of the ‘exhibited cinema’. But all who had their rites of initiation at the Cinémathèque were very much influenced by Langlois’s idea on montage. Godard is the most pure inheritor.

How was the 1968 period and the momentarily destitution of Langlois as director of the Cinémathèque, experienced at the journal?

Leaving aside any modesty at all, I will say that I believe it has been one of the richest periods in the history of *Cahiers*. From 1966 to 1968 not only did we achieve to keep the different temporalities I mentioned – we didn’t miss the films of Skolimowski, Bellocchio, Glauber Rocha or Gilles Groulx. We had all the national cinemas. We had both Garrel and Eustache... In my opinion, we did a good job in that sense. Even if we did miss certain things, we achieved our mission. But we were also in the fire lines of other episodes, in a very concrete way. The first was the ban of *La Religieuse* (Jacques Rivette, 1966), which triggered a very acute fight. After that came the ‘case Langlois’, wherein the offices of *Cahiers* became the general quarter where everyone met, from within and without the journal, to discuss the issue. Then arrived the États Généraux du Cinéma, pushed by *Cahiers*, in May 68. And, most importantly, the ‘Conseil des Dix’ (‘Board of Ten’)² was suppressed. At that time, we had the chance to see in many different places films that didn’t arrive to Paris. The ‘Conseil des Dix’ only considered Parisian premieres, which we thought was not enough, and which we replaced with the title ‘A voir absolument (si possible)’ (‘To See Absolutely [If Possible]’). In that section we considered any film that we thought was interesting, regardless of whether it had premiered in Paris or not. With this gesture, we were trying to tell readers and spectators that they had to try to see – and also make – the films themselves. That ‘if possible’ needed to be made real.

2. Traditionally the issues of *Cahiers du cinéma* finished with a page where, under the title ‘Conseil des dix’ (‘Council of

For a period of time, the theoretical and practical articulation in *Cahiers* was very direct. The banning of *La Religieuse* meant a true struggle in reality rather than in writing. The ‘affaire Langlois’ was also a real fight; as was to get readers ‘to act’ in order to be able to see *La Concentration*, or any other Canadian or Czech film. In my view, those two years were the most active period in the history of the journal as far as the articulation between real and aesthetic struggles is concerned. And this is not about us being better, but about Langlois being dismissed at that moment, and May 68 also happening then. It wasn’t invented by us. And the same happened with the banning of Rivette’s film.

As far as aesthetics are concerned, it was obvious that something was happening at the time. And all of this was related to the political movements of the 1960s and 70s, and the revolts that were taking place across the globe. All the uprisings, which gave currency to the idea of revolution, were for us related to the question ‘what could be a free cinema’, independent from what Godard called to the pair Hollywood/Mosfilm. What would facilitate that form of independent cinema? Our answer was the creation of its own conditions of production and dissemination, escaping the influence of the major and monumental institutions of the time. We knew very well that that was the end of a certain cinema made in Hollywood: *Cleopatra* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963) itself set the alarm bells ringing (even if a part of American cinema was reborn in the 1970s). All of this was part of a period when, given the relationship between those new ‘national’ cinemas and the global revolutionary and protest movements, there was a hope in the tenuous and capillary dissemination of cinema, enabled by a series of subterranean links. For instance, the Festival of Young Cinema in Pesaro was very important because there one could see films by Eustache, Garrel, Straub and Huillet, Moullet... The axis Italy/Brazil/France also had

Ten’), ten of its critics voted, with stars, on the films on view at the cinemas.

an important weight... This was very much in the air at the time: the wind from the East carries the wind from the West. The articulation of aesthetics and politics marked *Cahiers's* editorials at the time; it was also then that the 'Semaine des *Cahiers du cinéma*' was created. I remember this because we went back to it in the film that I have recently made with Jean-Louis Comolli and Ginette Lavigne, *À voir absolument (si possible). Dix ans aux Cahiers du cinéma, 1963-1973* (Jean-Louis Comolli, Ginette Lavigne y Jean Narboni, 2011). The first 'Semaine' wasn't bad at all: the programme included *Le Chat dans le sac* (Gilles Groulx, 1964), *Not Reconciled (Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt wo Gewalt herrscht*, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1965), *Brigitte et Brigitte* (Luc Moullet, 1966), *Skolimowski's first film* (Rysopis, 1965), *Before the Revolution (Prima della rivoluzione*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1964), *The Death (A falecida*, Leon Hirszman, 1965) and *Fists in the Pocket (I pugni in tasca*, Marco Bellocchio, 1965). I find it a very appropriate programme for the first 'Semaine des Cahiers'.

How did it work? Did a different editor take responsibly for the programme each time? Was there any relationship between some of the 'Semaines'?

No, we were very much in dialogue with each other when we conceived them. But what we did have in mind was the need of a continuity and of a link between various 'Semaines'. This is why we were close to certain national cinematographies. I remember well the Office National du Film del Quebec; Pierre Perrault, for instance, was very close to *Cahiers*, as were Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, Michel Brault, Groulx... The 'Semaines' were linked to the work that we developed in *Cahiers*, they were *active* events, with the goal of showing unseen films. As in the other examples, it was a work realised 'in reality' not only within the frame of the journal – I won't say that it wasn't related to writing because writing is part of reality. It was about being militant, not so much politically as aesthetically. We fought to show the films that were difficult to see.

Where do you think that motivation to 'go into action' came from?

I don't know. Before, in *Cahiers*, there were other forms of being militant: being committed to the Auteur theory was one of them. But I don't know where the idea to organise the 'Semaine des Cahiers' came from exactly. We simply wanted to show a series of films out of distribution. We got in touch with distributors, got hold of the copies and screened them.

Langlois also helped young film-makers. He could programme a film by the Lumière and then one by Garrel or by a film-maker from another country that had arrived with the films under the arm. In a way, he made 'The Year of the Cinémathèque' every year. But he never locked himself up in the past, Garrel speaks very eloquently about this. In any case, we didn't expect his dismissal, we were very surprised. Perhaps it was less of a surprise to the people who were closer to the institution. He always said that the fact of being alone 'against everyone' entailed a certain idea of danger, of threat, of a besieged fortress. And we got used to it, so that by the time his dismissal arrived we were really taken by surprise. Even so, the response was immediate.

Just before this season, you published the lists of best films of the 1970s according to *Cahiers*. We are very interested in this turning point from a decade to the next in relation to these groupings of films, because we have the impression that it anticipates an idea of a hinge.

In that list, it is obvious that Godard and Kramer hold a central position. We discovered *Two-Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971), which occupies the second position, with a certain delay. Marguerite Duras, who holds the sixth position, had already been interviewed by Rivette and myself (NARBONI and RIVETTE, 1969: 45-57) at the time of *La Música* (Marguerite Duras and Paul Sabin, 1967). However, even if Rainer Werner Fassbinder was on that list, he is

a film-maker that completely escaped us, I must admit it. We ignored him for too long. As far as Adolpho Arrietta or Garrel are concerned, they were defended in *Cahiers* before than in any other place.

Regarding the idea of the hinge, for me the 1981 programme marked the end of a cycle. At that time I was unaware of this, but it signalled the end of something. When the season began, Giscard d'Estaing still ruled France, and by the end, the Left and François Mitterrand seize power. *Cahiers's* 30 years close a period. The 1980s bring in an institutional left, defined by the interests of the parties, of the government, that doesn't have anything to do with May 68 and its aftermath. In contrast, the programme included all the periods of *Cahiers*, including May 68. This is the beginning of a decade that I hate. In the cinema, we lived the great movement of restauration and the attempt to bury the Nouvelle Vague. We also witnessed the return of the cinema made by film studios, of the beautiful image. I don't have anything against him –either personally or as a human being – but this is what Luc Besson symbolises. We felt like Walter Benjamin's angel of history: we looked back. We didn't know what would happen politically but we were witnessing the end of the Left, the end of revolutionary ideas, of the great discourses about identification, as well as the arrival of another left (everyone was, of course, very happy). As I said, it was the arrival of party politics and a left that opened things up for a couple of years and then closed them back straight away. And with it, money arrived. We had a social-democracy and the left that we had known completely disappeared; perhaps it had been dead since the mid-1970s.

That programme was a the end of the party. Hence perhaps the gloomy character that you mentioned at the beginning of the conversation. *Le Pont du nord* (Jacques Rivette, 1981) shows very well that

3. Jean Narboni makes a pun around the film *Wind from the East*, the foundational manifesto of the Group Dziga Vertov. Alongside counting on the collaboration of

moment. The film was shot very soon before Mitterrand's arrival to power. The relationship between the mother and the daughter in real life (between Bulle and Pascale Ogier) marks the split between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s.

The programme took into account each period of *Cahiers*, from the 1950s until the present, but mainly the part when we were most *active*, the end of the 1960s. Even if there had existed differences and political changes, the 'red thread' of taste was pretty much the same, as the programme shows, and we were even attacked by rank-and-file leftists because we defended *Othon, Les yeux ne veulent pas en tout temps se fermer, ou Peut-être qu'un jour Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour* (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1970), or *Wind from the East*³. For them, what counted were the 'factory films', the films about the struggles, whereas for us *Othon* was a revolutionary/materialist cinema, not to mention *The Young Lincoln...* The leftist movement was aesthetically hostile or alien to the taste of *Cahiers*. If there was ever a rapprochement to the Communist Party, it was through the members of the Communist party-founded journal *La Nouvelle Critique*, where two members of *Cahiers* also participated: Fieschi and Eisenschitz. The journal was similar to *Les Lettres Françaises* when it was directed by Louis Aragon, because they liked Godard. The only journals that published anything positive at all about *Othon* were *Cahiers* and *La Nouvelle Critique*. At that time, there was a rapprochement at a cultural level. But for the rest, all the movements from the left were populist, in aesthetic terms. They no interest whatsoever on the cinema of Straub and Huillet.

At the end of the day, your programme is about how *Cahiers* understand cinema and about *Cahiers* itself. In order to reflect on this, a film programme is perhaps more illustrative, fertile, generous and pertinent than writing.

Brazilian film-maker Glauber Rocha, any of the members of the technical and artistic team of the film were Italian.

Of course, because taste remains. However, regarding the lists of the 1970s one must distinguish the claims in the present tense from the ones that were picked up later on. *Number Two* (*Numéro deux*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1975) was defended when it was made, but not *The Merchant of Four Seasons* (*Händler der vier Jahreszeiten*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1971): it is a later 'reconstruction' because the film was defended

afterwards, not during its own time. In fact, Daney published very mitigated articles at the time. The list reflects some of the films that were defended contemporarily, but they appear next to later embellishments, such as is the case with Fassbinder. By way of contrast, the programme I organised in 1981 tried to reflect the films to which *Cahiers* arrived on time. ●

«30 ans d'une revue : les *Cahiers du Cinéma*». April-May, 1981. Cinémathèque Française.

April, 1981

- 7 April. *Anataban* (Josef von Sternberg, 1953)
- 8 April. *Stromboli, Terra di Dio* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950)
- 9 April. *The Wrong Man* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956)
- 10 April. *The Woman on The Beach* (Jean Renoir, 1947)
- 10 April. *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Orson Welles, 1942)
- 11 April. *Manon of the Spring* (*Manon des sources*, Marcel Pagnol, 1952)
- 12 April. *The Scream* (*Il grido*, Michelangelo Antonioni, 1957)
- 13 April. *The Big Sky* (Howard Hawks, 1952)
- 14 April. *Angel Face* (Otto Preminger, 1952)
- 15 April. *Lola Montes* (Max Ophuls, 1955)
- 16 April. *Design for Living* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1933)
- 17 April. *While the City Sleeps* (Fritz Lang, 1956)
- 17 April. *Bitter Victory* (Nicholas Ray, 1957)
- 18 April. *Limelight* (Charles Chaplin, 1952)
- 19 April. *Utamaro and the Five Women* (*Utamaro o meguru gonin no onna*, Kenji Mizoguchi, 1946)
- 19 April. *Towards Happiness* (*Till Gladje*, Ingmar Bergman, 1950)
- 20 April. *The Quiet American* (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1958)
- 22 April. *The Fighter and the Clown* (*Borets i kloun*, Boris Barnet, 1957)
- 23 April. *A Time For Dying* (Budd Boetticher, 1969)
- 23 April. *Pickup on South Street* (Samuel Fuller, 1953)
- 25 April. *Moi, un noir* (Jean Rouch, 1958)
- 26 April. *La Tête contre les murs* (Georges Franju, 1959)
- 26 April. *The Passion of Jean of Arck* (*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Carl Th. Dreyer, 1928)
- 28 April. *The Nightwatch* (*Le Trou*, Jacques Becker, 1960)
- 29 April. *The Testament of Orpheus* (*Le Testament d'Orphée*, Jean Cocteau, 1960)
- 30 April. *La Pointe-courte* (Agnès Varda, 1955)

May, 1981

- 1 May. *Le Bel age* (Pierre Kast, 1960)
- 2 May. *Paris Belongs to Us* (*Paris nous appartient*, Jacques Rivette, 1961)

- 2 May. *L'Eau à la bouche* (Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, 1960)
- 3 May. *Tirez sur le pianiste* (François Truffaut, 1960)
- 3 May. *Le signe du lion* (Eric Rohmer, 1959)
- 4 May. *Ophelia* (*Ophélie*, Claude Chabrol, 1963)
- 5 May. *Muriel* (*Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*, Alain Resnais, 1963)
- 6 May. *Adieu Philippine* (Jacques Rozier, 1962)
- 7 May. *Lola* (Jacques Demy, 1961)
- 8 May. *A Woman is a Woman* (*Une femme est une femme*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1961)
- 9 May. *Not Reconciled* (*Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt wo Gewalt herrscht*, Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1965)
- 9 May. *Le père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1969)
- 10 May. *The Young one* (Luis Buñuel, 1960)
- 10 May. *The Barrier* (*Barriera*, Jerzy Skolimowski, 1966)
- 11 May. *Hawks and Sparrows* (*Uccellacci e ucellini*, Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1966)
- 12 May. *La Concentration* (Philippe Garrel, 1968)
- 13 May. *Playtime* (Jacques Tati, 1967)
- 14 May. *The Ladies Man* (Jerry Lewis, 1961)
- 15 May. *The Grim Reaper* (*La commare secca*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1961)
- 16 May. *Young Mr. Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939)
- 16 May. *Sotto il segno dello scorpione* (Vittorio Taviani and Paolo Taviani, 1969)
- 17 May. *Ice* (Robert Kramer, 1970)
- 17 May. *Wind from the East* (*Vent d'Est*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1970)
- 18 May. *Enthusiasm* (*Entuzjazm: Simfoniya Donbassa*, Dziga Vertov, 1930)
- 18 May. *The Old and the New* (*Staroye i novoye*, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1929)
- 19 May. *Safrana ou Le Droit à la parole* (Sydney Sokhona, 1978)
- 19 May. *Anatomie d'un rapport* (Luc Mollet, 1975)
- 20 May. *Détruire, dit elle* (Marguerite Duras, 1969)
- 20 May. *The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting & Dogs' Dialogue* (*L'Hypothèse du tableau volé & Dialogue de chiens*, Raoul Ruiz, 1979 & 1977)

List of best films of the 1970s according to *Cahiers du cinéma* (n° 308, February, 1980):

1. *Numéro deux* (Jean-Luc Godard & Anne-Marie Miéville, 1975)
2. *Milestones* (Robert Kramer & John Douglas, 1975)
3. *Tristana* (Luis Buñuel, 1970)
4. *Two-Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman, 1971)
5. *Nous ne vieillirons pas ensemble* (Maurice Pialat, 1972)
6. *Des journées entières dans les arbres* (Marguerite Duras, 1976)
7. *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1975)
8. *Professione: Reporter* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1975)
9. *Händler - ein Film aus Deutschland* (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1977)
10. *Deux fois* (Jackie Raynal, 1968)
11. *Dodeskaden* (Akira Kurosawa, 1970)
12. *Ici et ailleurs* (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Anne-Marie Miéville, 1976)
13. *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* (Paul Newman, 1972)
14. *Femmes femmes* (Paul Vecchiali, 1974)
15. *Trafic* (Jacques Tati, 1971)
16. *Film About a Woman Who...* (Yvonne Rainer, 1974)
17. *Anatomie d'un rapport* (Luc Moullet, Antonietta Pizzorno, 1976)
18. *Dalla nube alla resistenza* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1979)
19. *Geschichtsunterricht* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1972)
20. *Out 1: Spectre* (Jacques Rivette, 1974)
21. *Quatre nuits d'un rêveur* (Robert Bresson, 1971)
22. *Amarcord* (Federico Fellini, 1973)
23. *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1973)
24. *Cet obscur objet du désir* (Luis Buñuel, 1977)
25. *Hindered* (Stephen Dwoskin, 1974)
26. *Parade* (Jacques Tati, 1974)
27. *L'ultima donna* (Marco Ferreri, 1976)
28. *Nationalité immigré* (Sidney Sokhona, 1975)
29. *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (John Cassavetes, 1976)
30. *Händler der vier Jahreszeiten* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1971)
31. *Le Théâtre des matières* (Jean-Claude Biette, 1977)
32. *Six fois deux / Sur et sous la communication* (Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville, 1976)
33. *Im Lauf der Zeit* (Wim Wenders, 1976)
34. *L'innocente* (Luchino Visconti, 1976)
35. *Avanti!* (Billy Wilder, 1972)
36. *Husbands* (John Cassavetes, 1970)
37. *Einleitung zu Arnold Schoenbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1973)
38. *Eugénie de Franval* (Louis Skorecki, 1974)
39. *Nathalie Granger* (Marguerite Duras, 1972)
40. *Amor de Perdição* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1979)
41. *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972)
42. *Les Intrigues de Sylvia Coskei* (Adolfo Arrieta, 1974)
43. *Petit à petit* (Jean Rouch, 1970)
44. *Video 50* (Robert Wilson, 1978)
45. *Chromaticité I* (Patrice Kirchner, 1977)
46. *Coatti* (Stavros Tornes, 1977)
47. *Déjeuner du matin* (Patrick Bokanowski, 1974)
48. *Je, tu, il, elle* (Chantal Akerman, 1976)
49. *Morte a Venezia* (Luchino Visconti, 1971)
50. *Człowiek z marmuru* (Andrzej Wajda, 1977)
51. *La Marquise d'O* (Éric Rohmer, 1976)
52. *Perceval le Gallois* (Éric Rohmer, 1978)
53. *Mean Streets* (Martin Scorsese, 1973)
54. *Le Diable, probablement* (Robert Bresson, 1977)
55. *Ludwig - Requiem für einen jungfräulichen König* (Hans-Jürgen Syberberg, 1972)
56. *Moses und Aron* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1975)
57. *Shonen* (Nagisa Ôshima, 1969)
58. *New York, New York* (Martin Scorsese, 1977)
59. *India Song* (Marguerite Duras, 1975)
60. *Ai-no corrida* (Nagisa Ôshima, 1976)
61. *Gruppo di famiglia in un interno* (Luchino Visconti, 1974)
62. *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977)
63. *L'Hypothèse du tableau volé* (Raoul Ruiz, 1979)
64. *La Région centrale* (Michael Snow, 1971)
65. *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (Martin Scorsese, 1974)
66. *Fortini / Cani* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1976)
67. *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (Luigi Comencini, 1972)
68. *Sinai Field Mission* (Frederick Wiseman, 1978)
69. *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)
70. *Alice in den Städten* (Wim Wenders, 1974)
71. *Lancelot du lac* (Robert Bresson, 1974)
72. *Monsieur Klein* (Joseph Losey, 1976)

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Godard's Science

Jean Douchet

ABSTRACT

In a lecture held at the Cinémathèque Suisse, Jean-Luc Godard reflects on the relationship between the Cinémathèques and his own work on the history of cinema. In this way, the question regarding programming may be formulated as follows: what images to compare? In his quest to continue the work initiated by André Bazin on the ontology of cinema, Godard seems to have opted for a 'de-structuring' principle, or a breaking down the mechanism of cinema into atoms, a principle derived from previous enquiries found in the theories of montage of film-makers such as Dziga Vertov or Sergei Eisenstein. For Godard, it is the succession of discontinuous instants that creates cinema. The novelty resides in the fact that this method would lead Godard to work on the physics of cinema, replacing the concept of 'evolution' for that of 'fractioning', and the 'instant' for the relativity of space and time. This way of finding a form appropriate to the study of the history of cinema through montage finds a parallel in the practice of film programming as a form of comparative cinema.

KEYWORDS

Jean-Luc Godard, Cinémathèque Suisse, Soviet montage, comparative cinema, discontinuous montage, film physics, space-time relativity, principle of fragmentation of images.

What I find most striking about Jean-Luc Godard's 1979 lecture at the Cinémathèque Suisse de Lausanne¹, Switzerland on film programming, is not only his focus on the comparison between images but the images he compares. The interest resides in juxtaposing, as he puts it, an image of an immortal work of the history of cinema with another image of a less well-known film, perhaps even a film that Godard has not even seen himself. Why this relationship in particular? Godard wanted to continue André Bazin's enquiry on the question 'What is cinema?'. How so? By making all the well-codified structures of cinema explode and, from the resulting elements, from those atoms, finding all the possibilities of cinema.

In a certain way, Jean-Luc Godard is someone who can only create by destroying, or 'de-structuring', if you like. His enquiry departs from well formed elements, belonging to the greatest films as well as the tiniest nullities. He was as interested in the construction of a shot or a *raccord* in Serguéi Eisenstein or Dziga Vertov – two film-makers that obsessed him – as in the professional abilities of a bad film-maker. Why bringing together two absurd shots? Simply because why shouldn't we get something out of them? Certain things are so bad that they can give place to something else.

Godard's strength is to have taken apart the whole cinematographic system and, in particular – in spirit, mind and, finally, in acts – the constitution of cinema itself: to take cinema as an optical and photographic device, which registers changes in light on a strip of film. Consider *The Little Soldier* (*Le Petit soldat*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1963): photography is truth; film, truth 24-times per second. Film is celluloid – it is onto a strip

of film that those 24 images per second are photographed. Once set in motion by a motor, the still images will generate another movement, that is, the illusion of movement. But the film itself is composed of 24 still images per second, each of them separated from the previous and the next one by a small barrier, a small band. Such observation brings Godard to state that montage is the most fundamental element within the whole cinematographic apparatus; it is the nucleus of the constitution of cinema itself. Cinema is not about continuity, or the illusion created by the mechanical construction of a continuous movement; it is the succession of discontinuous moments and instants that creates cinema.

This concept radically changes the whole conception of cinema. It's not that it hadn't been thought of before. From D. W. Griffith to Soviet film-makers, many had previously thought about this question before Godard. But they didn't come up with a concrete idea on what to do with this knowledge. How to arrive to a purely physical phenomenon, how to work with the physicality of cinema – how to work on the physical through physics. If Godard is such an important figure, it is because he was the first film-maker to become aware of his own time: the twentieth-century. Other art forms had previously acquired that consciousness. Painting, literature, even music, had rapidly taken on board the theories of modern scientific knowledge. Film, on the other hand, perpetuated what it had learned over the last years of the previous century. Its conception of continuity, dramaturgy, narrative, etc. all come from the nineteenth-century. To remain oblivious to the fact that cinema belonged to the same age as the theory of relativity and quantum physics

1. This lecture stemmed out from the invitation that Freddy Buache extended to Jean-Luc Godard to participate in a debate held at the Cinémathèque Suisse, alongside Buache himself, Ivor Montagu and Jean Mitry. The subject that Godard was asked to address was the relationship between the work being done by the Cinémathèques and Godard's own conception of the formal *mise en scène* of the history of cinema. This symposium took place at the end of the Annual Congress of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du

Film (FIAF), held from 30 May until 1 June 1979 at the Cinémathèque Suisse de Lausanne on the occasion of the anniversary of the congress at La Sarranz in 1929. Shortly after, the Cinémathèque Suisse published a transcription of the lecture – unsigned and interrupted before its conclusion – in its magazine *Travelling* (Lausanne), n° 56-57, 1980, pp. 119-136. However, the version of the transcription that I refer to is the one quoted in the bibliography below.

was to make a huge mistake on what we could do with cinema and what cinema could contribute to the twentieth century. From that point onwards, cinema will only work with discontinuity and permanent rupture. Through montage, and under this directing principle, all the elements of cinema begin to play a role in his work.

Since continuity does no longer exist, there can no longer be a dominant discourse. Just as in quantum physics, all the elements become disperse, and no idea of perseverance ensues, but rather the idea of the lack thereof. What emerges is the consciousness of a world that no longer has a single line. It is necessary to work on diverse and diverging lines. This is precisely what Godard has done, on the basis of cinema itself as he understands it, that is, of montage. The first line is the image band; the second, the words; the third, sounds and noise; the fourth, the music, etc. When these are constant lines, they progress at the same time and they develop in a parallel and synchronised manner; however, after realising that these are separate lines, there is no reason – and this is another theory, what we could call ‘the perseverance theory’ – why sound should be used to qualify the image, as it had been the case for so long.

Hence a new conception of cinema is born, one that can only understand the relationship amongst these lines as one of independence: each line has its freedom and is considered on equal terms in relation to the others. We may ‘play’ with them, allow one to suddenly dominate the other one... Multiple facets that prevent a progressive construction. Evolution no longer exists, only the fractioning of a series of instants. Not even instants: the relativity of time and space can also be contested. Godard said: ‘I am not an artist, it is the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (National Centre of Scientific Research) that should pay me.’ Godard is a scientist. He is an artist, certainly, but a fabulous artist who applies the current situation of science to an instrument, cinema, more propitious to his eyes than any other to be fully modern.

To a great extent, this shift in mentality places all previous cinema in a bubble. Even if classical cinema continued and perpetuated the nineteenth-century – and hence its power since it enabled the development, from a passed century, of a number of things that hadn’t had the opportunity to be yet developed – when looking at classical cinema under a new lens, that is, modern science, one cannot work with it in the same way. And yet, cinema was itself the bearer of its fundamental truth – those 24 elements per second.

Cinema, or the way of conceiving of cinema, radically changed from this point onwards and, even after Godard, it will continue to change. No one can dare to do what Godard does – he is unique – but one may talk about an expansive wave. Even if only at the level of the research on space and time, it is unstoppable. Cinema works in an identical and permanent space – a frame, a canvas with a certain format that remains unchanged from the first to the last image that in it acquires a form. But it is an identical being without continuity. An aleatory distribution that doesn’t bear benefits, but spells. Hence its interest and its potential.

Given the exploitation of a completely fragmented world, one can no longer make classical cinema or see it in the same way, and one ends up by putting everything into an envelope. It may still be admired, just as the Parthenon or Diego Velázquez’s paintings may still be admired. There is no reason to stop doing so. But such perfect works were perfect in relation to their own time, they have expressed their era and are linked to the philosophical and scientific thought of their own time, but they do not correspond to the present. Today we must break away from them. But in fact we are going even further. We are breaking with the acquired conception of the universe at large, and contesting civilisation itself. Godard is a great film-maker of the decadence. For him, one civilisation died, and another one needs to be born. And this new civilisation must feed itself from the preceding one, but without reproducing it: it must transform it into something else.

Godard is not wrong about the journals in his lecture either². Film criticism has not even tried to do that job, satisfied as it is to work on the 'I like it/I don't' dichotomy, which never had any interest at all. Even when confronted to classical cinema, there were many few of us who worked on really thinking through that cinema. At that time, there was a criticism: at a small-scale, the task was done. But very few critics may rise at the occasion of the work that this would require now, of the reflection that it would require. This is what Godard himself

says. Given its basic de-structuring, today cinema is reduced to an image, and not only a succession of images – since this is still the case – but to a confrontation of images, both visual and aural. What will his 3-D work, *Adieu au langage* (Jean-Luc Godard, *Farewell to Language*, 2013)? If the sense of smell existed in cinema, Godard would have used it. To explore the dialogue amongst the plots of cinema. Image's nature is under constant transformation. An image that doesn't bear in itself another image is only an image, alone. ●

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JEAN DOUCHET

Jean Douchet studied Philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he specialised in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Daniel Lagache and Étienne Souriau. He is a film critic and historian and has been a professor at the Université de Vincennes since 1969. Later, he also taught at the Université de Jussieu and Université de Nantes. Between 1976 and 79 he was Director of Studies at the Institute des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC), a professor of film history, script and film analysis at La Femis (École Nationale Supérieure des Métiers de l'Image et du Son) and former President of the

Collège d'Histoire de l'Art Cinématographique, all in Paris. In 1957 he begins to write for *Cahiers du cinéma* and the magazine *Art* (until 1962). Amongst many other books, he has published *Alfred Hitchcock* (*Cahiers du cinéma*, 1967), *L'Art d'aimer* (*Cahiers du cinéma*, 1987), *Gertrud de Carl Th. Dreyer* (Yellow Now, 1988), *La Modernité cinématographique en question. Le Cinéma muet des années parlantes* (Cinémathèque Française, 1992), *Nouvelle vague* (Cinémathèque Française/Hazan, 1998) and *La DVDéothèque de Jean Douchet* (*Cahiers du cinéma*, 2006).

2. I quote below some excerpts from the lecture, not compiled according to a chronological order but to my own 'montage', hoping that the words brought here together acquire a new meaning: 'For me, the history of cinema will be the history of two conspiracies. The first one: the conspiracy of the talkie against silent film, since the birth of the latter. Second conspiracy: the words, that could have helped silent film to... A plot against the fact that no history will be written... we will find a means of preventing history to be told – otherwise it would be too powerful, also, since when one learns to tell one's own history, then, there is... I don't know... the world changes! And I ask myself whether people working at the

Cinémathèques are at all interested in asking..., if there are other people who are also concerned with this aspect, the aspect of film production related to its conservation. Conservations, well, things are more or less conserved, but what is the interest in conserving impeccably since we see that, after all, what is it that is conserved? An image! What is interesting is to conserve the relationship between two images. It is not so important to conserve a film, as long as we conserve three stills of a film by Vertov and three stills of a film by Eisenstein, we would know what happened: that would be the role of magazines.'

Russian Film Archives and Roy Batty's Syndrome: On the Three Programming Criteria for 'Ver sin Vertov'

Carlos Muguero

ABSTRACT

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the death of Dziga Vertov, in 2005–06 La Casa Encendida in Madrid programmed "Ver sin Vertov", a retrospective season on non-fiction film in Russia and the USSR since Vertov's death until the present time. In this essay the film programmer reflects on the three programming criteria for that season. Firstly, he was interested in applying a negative methodology on the history of Russian and Soviet cinema, as it had previously been suggested by Naum Kleijman and used in the programme "Lignes d'ombre" that took place at the Locarno Festival in 2000. Secondly, the programme aimed to reflect the need to physically locate the experience of the spectator, conceiving of the screening as a film-event. And thirdly, the programme sought to foreground the questions and paradoxes presented by the works themselves, taking them as models or arguments for the programme itself. Taking as a point of departure the particular circumstances of Vertov's death – 37 years after the October Revolution; 37 years before the fall of the USSR in 1991 – this programme performed a historical and biographical reading of Dziga Vertov's *Theory of the Cinematographic Interval*, and was an invitation to understand programming as an exercise in montage.

KEYWORDS

Dziga Vertov, Russia, Soviet Union, non-fiction, negative methodology, film-event, place, space.

1 On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Dziga Vertov, the 2004 edition of the Giornate del Cinema Muto de Pordenone, Italy programmed the most exhaustive retrospective ever made of the Soviet film-maker. Accompanied by the publication of a volume of texts by Vertov (*Lines of Resistance*, ed. Yuri Tsivian, 2004), the programme literally presented the complete man with the movie camera, so to speak; undoubtedly, it was one of the most remarkable projects attempting to map Soviet cinema since the fall of the USSR in 1991.

By way of contrast the programme ‘Ver sin Vertov’ (‘To See Without Vertov’) that I programmed for La Casa Encendida, Madrid from 9 October 2004 to 5 January 2005 on the occasion of the same anniversary, didn’t contain a single film by the Soviet film-maker. The programme looked forward from the same standpoint – Vertov’s death in 1954 – but instead of retrospectively reconstructing his legacy, it attempted to reflect his absence in Soviet and Russian film-making throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The void left by Vertov, also reflected in the title of the retrospective, shed light on the orphanhood from which, I believe, one always programmes: hoisting the paradox of *seeing without seeing*, the film season claimed that disorientation, blindness and silence can often be productive experiences from where to programme, and vindicated the pleasure of drifting or getting lost in a filmic territory not yet parcelled up or systematically organised by history. It aimed to make evident that one does not programme because one knows, but because one wants to know. One could say that, in its most honest dimension, each film programme reveals a trail – that of the programmer’s filmic family tree.

Applying a certain negative methodology, ‘Ver sin Vertov’ took as a point of departure Patricia Zimmerman’s enigmatic hypothesis of Vertov’s non-influence. Let’s recall her argument here: following the 1990 Robert Flaherty Film

Seminar, held in Riga, Latvia under the title ‘Vertov and Flaherty’s Legacy in Soviet and American Documentary Film’, Zimmerman notes Vertov’s paradoxical absence in Soviet documentary film-making from the 1950s onwards, and most particularly during Mikhail Gorbachev’s Perestroika (1985–91). Referring to the academics and film-makers who had attended the seminar, Zimmerman wrote: ‘The Soviet [participants] continually evoked Flaherty’s legacy as one of the motors of the new documentary in the USSR. (...) We have discovered that our Soviet colleagues are influenced by Flaherty, whereas we, Americans, are fascinated by Dziga Vertov.’ (ZIMMERMAN, 1992: 5) Putting aside any clarifications that Zimmerman’s argument might call for, her hypothesis of the non-influence of Vertov figured as one of the fascinating mysteries that prompted the programme ‘Ver sin Vertov’. In fact, the programme gauged the lack of Vertov’s influence as a defining characteristic of Russian and Soviet film, considered its own aesthetic density and value, recognisable and reiterated over time – that is, as an incarnated and visible sign of absence.

2 I believe it was Naum Klejman, Director of the Film Museum in Moscow, from whom I first heard of the need apply a negative methodology to reconstruct the history of twentieth-century Russian film. The visitor to the Russian film archives, he implied, should consider on an equal basis the films that were actually made and those that were never shot due to a range of reasons, mostly of an ideological nature. He or she should take stock of what films said and what they left unsaid. And always have in mind the films that were never taken out of their cans, as well as those whose first cuts remained intact (in spite of having been released in re-edited versions) and which had perhaps been awaiting a change of context, or perhaps a political swing that altered the criteria of the censors. The General Director of Gosfilmofond (Russian Cinematographic Archive), Vladimir Dmitriev, explains that ‘even if it may seem paradoxical, most prohibited

films in the USSR were not destroyed. Not even those that had been fiercely criticised. (...) An interesting phenomenon was at play, linked to our national psychology and perhaps also to the particular nature of our film-makers. They were all aware that the situation could change any given day. And so just in case, one had to conserve everything.' (EISENSCHITZ, 2000: 188).

It is not surprising then that Kleijman was one of the people behind the first project that, to my knowledge, dared to manifestly propose a journey through Soviet Russian cinema based on absence¹: the 2000 Locarno Festival, then directed by Marco Müller, reconstructed the territory of the unsaid, censored, silenced or mutilated in Soviet Russian cinema in the period 1926–68. Curated by Bernard Eisenschitz, the ensuing retrospective, 'Lignes d'ombre: Une autre histoire du cinéma soviétique' ('Shadow Lines: Another History of Soviet Cinema'), not only discovered non-canonical film-makers such as Vladimir Vengerov or Mikhail Schweitser – Eisenstein's first pupils at the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) – but also shed a new light on the ones that already occupied a central position in the Soviet pantheon. In contrast to the stereotypes that had casted a stereotypical image of Soviet Russian cinema, organised according to historical and political periods, *Lignes d'ombre* took down the *trompe l'oeils* and painted backdrops of traditional historiography and, behind the scenographic machinery, opened the doors to the immensity of an unreachable horizon.

3 Anyone who had methodically followed the retrospective in Locarno would have easily reached two conclusions. The first one, can be summed up

1. In Russian cinema there are notable examples of unexistent films (and thus invisible films), which nevertheless have had a ghostly presence, even more significant than that of other classical films that are regularly screened. For instance, in 2012 we have celebrated the 75th anniversary of a fundamental film, which was however only ever seen by its director and censors. A film that, judging from the conclusions of the researchers, no one will ever see again. I am referring to *Bezhin Meadow* (*Bezhin Lug*,

borrowing Nikolái Berdiayev's words, according to whom, also in the cinema, 'Russians ignore the pleasure of form'. [please give a source] With the redefinition of its borders brought forth in 'Lignes d'ombres', Russian cinema seemed to go beyond the controllable limits of knowledge, becoming a veritable filmic atopia. In the last instance, the imaginary geography of the filmic territory – expansive and undefinable – could only be compared to the real territory, that is, to the mythical, unending Russian space: a formless cinematographic *prostor*, or horizonless space. To come back from that non-space, symbolically represented by the Gosfilmofond archives – the largest film collection in the world, containing over 60,000 titles – produces an agonistic anxiety that we could denominate 'syndrome of Roy Batty', after the replicant from *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), veritable astonished spectator who claimed to 'have seen things you people wouldn't believe'. And he fairly died evoking the list of such incomparable visions: 'I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched c-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate.' Without a doubt, Roy Batty's syndrome threatens anyone who dares to penetrate the galleries of Gosfilmofond.

The second of the conclusions of *Lignes d'ombre* ensues from such atopian immensity: more than in any other cinematography, or at least in a way more palpable than in any other, [could we cut this out? It doesn't seem to work in this sentence and it is repeated more or less below] each screening laid bare the geographic and spatial dimension that is co-substantial to any act of not only making, but also viewing films. Perhaps due

Sergei Eisenstein, 1937). The film was harshly criticised by the Soviet authorities, in particular by Boris Shumyatsky, director of the GUFK, who considered that instead of being based on the class struggle, the film was based on the battle between natural forces, in the battle between 'Good and Evil'. The film was never shown and its negative and copies were destroyed during the II World War. Based on this model, it doesn't seem unreasonable to imagine a big film retrospective without any films to screen.

to the impossibility of inhabiting this space for real, due to the real infinity of the filmic Russian *prostor*, or space, each screening defined a place, provided a provisional shelter, a fragile territory rescued from immensity: for the duration of the screening, each session made real the space of the spectator, held the power to create a home— just as each of the hills from which nomads stop to watch and, for an instant, found a place. Only the absolute atopia of Russian cinema could make so strikingly palpable the topographic experience that each screening signifies. Alongside Klejman's negative method, this is the second programming criteria that I extracted from 'Lignes d'ombre'.

4 In his recent essay *Zona*, Geoff Dyer suggests a meta-cinematographic reading of *Stalker* (Andréi Tarkovski, 1979) that abounds in the geographic paradox that I have just described. Dyer proposes to see Tarkovski's film as the history of a journey towards a dark room, the place of the promise, where vision is indissolubly united to a particular place. At the very heart of that muddy maze, the experience of vision is associated to the place where contemplation occurs, to the soil where one's feet stop: the Zone is, in this context, the site of vision. Just as the first cinema spectators of the Cinémathèque Française at *rue Messine* had to walk across the corridors avoiding the many film objects accumulated by Langlois until finally arriving to the projection room — open as a natural concavity at the heart of the building — so did the three characters in *Stalker* approach Tarkovski's Zone: not to dominate it with old settlers or conquerers, but to deserve it, as new believers.

Such a close link between site and vision will may come across as slightly exotic, or purely anachronic, today. In the panoptic universe that we inhabit everything has been made not only visible but also globally traceable — I have heard on some occasion that it is no longer important to have seen a film, but to know where to find it on the net. Paradoxically, however, the experience of the spectator has become progressively delocalised, to

the point that it is no longer related to a particular place. Now cinema, or the art of the present, as Serge Daney once wrote, is also the art of *making present* or, perhaps better, of *making oneself present*, of being a presence. Here we have to agree with Dyer: not many films are as capable as *Stalker* to clearly establish the relationship between a vision and the place where the image is presented — in fact, where it is made present. In contrast to an absolutely delocalised image, as it is experienced in the no-space of the internet, *Stalker's* task is to relocate cinema, that is, in making it happen in one place, in *a dark room*, insofar as the memory constructed by the film is founded in a similar topographic exercise and conceived as a personal and collective transit: 'But watching a film like *Stalker*', argues Dyer recalling his first encounter with Tarkovski's work, 'always happened in very precise locations and times. For me, those little cinemas in Paris where I saw many art films for the first time meant that cinema became a kind of pilgrimage site.' (JELLY-SCHAPIRO, 2012: 3).

Following on from Dyer's words, it is not difficult to imagine Müller, Eisenschitz and Klejman penetrating the zone of Russian cinema in search of those invisible images that 'no one would believe'. Eisenschitz the *Writer*, Klejman the *Philosopher* and Müller, of course, the authentic *Stalker*.

5 Together with a negative aesthetics and the need to physically relocate the spectator's gaze (the film-event), the third principle behind 'Ver sin Vertov' corresponds to the need that, on certain occasions, cinema generates of itself. I will conclude with a brief description thereof.

When Dziga Vertov announced his theory of the intervals, as it appears in the text *Us: Variant of a Manifest*, published in 1919, not only was he advancing a way of thinking montage based on the distance between two shots or the movement between two images. He was also marking the place where he would die. Vertov passed away on 12 February 1954, that is, 37 years after the

October Revolution and 37 years before the fall of the USSR in 1991. He died in the interval: let's say, in the space between both images, in the precise juncture where cinema thinks itself. Just a few years before, Stalin's death created the conditions for the great cinematographic regeneration of the Thaw, when four different generations of Soviet film-makers co-existed in almost a decade. At this time, Vertov signalled the editing cut. On hindsight, fifty years later, his obituary doubled as the rib of the negative separating two perfectly symmetrical, inverted shots – an effect of specular estrangement similar to the ones Artavazd Pelechian liked to make in his films, of course taking on the principles of Vertov's montage.

There are certain enigmas proposed in the films that can only be resolved through cinema itself. Questions that, at times, remain

suggested in absent counter-shots, in haunting gazes, in express promises or never completed encounters. Often the dilemma arises from the historical account that they themselves suggest based on the iconographic memory kept in their interior, perhaps inadvertently. In this instance, to programme is not only an exercise of *mise en scène*, that is, of a certain continuity or articulation between images, but of a *mise en abîme*, an abysmal and disorienting narration that leads to other films, perhaps unexpected, but also to other visual and cultural forms, previous to the cinematographic Babel. In this sense, Vertov's interval, embodied to a paradoxical extreme in the film-maker's biography, was too capricious not to assume it as a model to assemble and programme films. Ultimately it was an invitation to navigate the space of Soviet cinema departing from a shot that wasn't there, but which nonetheless kept on being evoked. ●

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silencio en el cine documental post-soviético' ('Silence in Post-Soviet Documentary Film') [where and when]. He founded the Festival Punto de Vista, and was its Artistic Director until 2009. He has participated in numerous collective publications, such as *Una diagonale baltica. Ciquant'anni di produzione documentaria in Letonia, Lituania ed Estonia*, and edited the books *Ver sin Vertov. Cincuenta años de no ficción en Rusia y la URSS (1955-2005)*; *El cine de los mil años, Una aproximación al cine documental japonés*; *Ermanno Olmi, Seis encuentros y otros instantes*; and *The Man Without the Movie Camera: the cinema of Alan Berliner*.

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Discrete Monuments of an Infinite Film

Celeste Araújo

ABSTRACT

Taking as a point of departure the suspicion that the history of film can only be written through film itself, Ricardo Matos Cabo brings together heterogeneous filmic materials and disposes them in such a way that the relationships amongst them emerges organically: it is a task that has at its centre the matter projected by films themselves. In this way, the cross-dissolve that takes place during a screening – since in the cinema images are shown one after the other, rather than one next to the other – is not of a visible order, but rather operates in an intangible manner, producing correlations between images and sounds, through which film speaks about itself. This essay aims to give an account of some of the analogies produced between the films selected by the Portuguese curator in different contexts: ‘To See: Listening, the Experience of Sound in the Cinema’ (Culturgest, 2009), ‘Histories of Film by Film Itself’ (Culturgest, 2008) or ‘Residues’ (Portuguese Cinematheque, 2011). To speak about the histories that these programmes project is, to a certain extent, to trace paths across the different points of the *infinite film* of which Hollis Frampton speaks.

KEYWORDS

Film history, infinite film, projection, programming, programmer-*passer*, discrete monuments, analogies, invisible cross-dissolve, film-factory.

Constituted of all the films ever made, including 'pedagogical and amateur films, endoscopic cinematography and many more things' (FRAMPTON, 2007: 26-27), the history of cinema is an unknown territory. Given that 'one can't see all the films at the same time and at the same cinema' (KLUGE, 2010, 304), that sort of *infinite film* that 'contains an infinity of endless passages of which not a single photogram resembles any other in the slightest, and an infinity of passages whose photograms are even more identical than what we would imagine' (FRAMPTON, 2007: 26-27) can only be partially sketched in each screening, in the unexpected relationships established between the films, their images and their sounds. The history of cinema, then, coincides with the particular history of each of its screenings: the places where cinema tells and writes itself.

One wouldn't need much more to glimpse that narration, a projector in a room would suffice to see some of the 'geological layers, of cultural landslides' (GODARD, 1980: 25) that remain invisible amongst its matter. One would also have to select a few films to show them under the light of the projector – a medium of vision and analysis that allows to make out these hidden geographies. Such a task would require a discretion, a waning, of the person carrying out, so as to give priority to the matter that the cinema itself projects. In this way, those who bring together films and align them to be projected onto a screen are a sort of *passseurs* (to use Serge Daney's expression), middlemen of that historical tale, whose screenings configure itineraries crossing different points of the *infinite film* of which Hollis Frampton talks. Amongst these screenings, there are many programmed by Ricardo Matos Cabo in different venues. In this article, we will revise some of them in order to discern the 'discrete monuments' (FRAMPTON, 2007: 27) that they project.

Although films are autonomous, as Leibniz's monads, and there exist abysses between them¹, when projected across the beam of light of the project – a machine of analogies – they produce resonances, invisible elements that are generated when films are aligned one after the other. Let's consider some of the correspondences created, for instance, when watching *What the Water Said*, n° 4-6 (David Gatten, 2007) followed by *Le Tempestaire* (Jean Epstein, 1947) and *Looking at the Sea* (Peter Hutton, 2000–01), a screening that Ricardo Matos Cabo organised as part of the programme 'To See: Listening, the Experience of Sound in Film' (Culturgest, Lisbon, 2009). The three films use very different strategies to evoke the sea and make of it a true protagonist, while at the same time attempting to account for the relationships of sound and image in film. Attempting to speak of the analogies between these three films necessarily implies to situate oneself in the place configured by their projection: an unnamable space, full of epiphanies, where to appear is also to subtract.

As if in a magic trick or exchange, at the end of Epstein's *Le Tempestaire*, the sea, which has been present throughout the whole film, appears immersed at the interior of a crystal ball. Spurred on by a woman's concern while waiting for her fisherman boyfriend's return on a stormy day, an old man, known in the fishermen's village as the 'master of the storms', manages to lock up the swell in an spherical object and to ease the wind and the waves with a sigh. The magnificent images boiling inside this crystal ball have the ability to reveal cinema itself, its magical capacity to fall back movement. In a way, the maritime bad weather was already in the making in *What the Water Said*, whose images and sounds, ensuing from the action of the ocean in the film strip, also reveal cinema itself, the different layers of the film scivated by the waters of the southern coast of California.

1. See KLUGE, Alexander (2010).

The actions in *Le Tempestaire* are minimal and the few that occur are almost silent, constantly interrupted by the physical presence of the sea, in front of the village that remains quiet. In Hutton's silent film, the ocean is also observed from stillness, from a point of view already literally announced in the first shots of *Le Tempestaire*: a group of old fishermen gazes, from the shore, at the incomprehensible presence of the sea. Hutton explains that when he shot 'the material at the end of *Looking at the Sea*, I found myself un those cliffs of the west coast of Ireland, looking at the West towards the sin and thinking in those immigrants who wanted to abandon Ireland due to hunger and remained confronted with the same perspective. They would have seen the sea as this complicated obstacle' (MACDONALD, 2009, p. 225). But it is only possible to contemplate the sea from the shore once the wind and the swell ease.

The moment the 'master of storms' manages to calm the sea, the crystal ball that he holds in his hands falls to the ground and breaks down. Epstein shows us how it tears apart in silence – a treatment characteristic of sound films that announces Hutton's silent shots – as if we were just waking up from a dream, of that daydreaming state that characterises *Looking at the Sea*; as if the images and sounds of the previous films had been mere mirages produced by observing too closely the light of the sea shot by Hutton, with the serenity of the filmed landscape. But, at the same time, *Looking at the Sea* could be the silent contemplation of those bits of crystal scattered on the floor of *Le Tempestaire*, of all those smithereens that, as happened in the emulsion of Gatten's film, enclosed in side the cyclical movement of the waves.

Even though we have tried to note some of the correspondences produced by the screening of these films, their cross-fade is not of a visible order, but rather, as the sigh of the

'master of the storms', operates in an intangible manner, producing correlations between images and sounds in which film speaks of itself. The concrete tasks of the Portuguese film curator resides behind these immaterial aspects of the projection. Ricardo Matos Cabo brought together these three films – usually linked to different fields of cinema: experimental, fiction and documentary, borders that don't exist in his programmes – without attempting to harmonise them nor establishing hierarchies or relations of dependence between them. He neither tries to justify questions external to the films themselves, but instead, taking into account their formats and material characteristics, disposes them in a way that their relationships emerge for themselves. Furthermore, conceived in the context of the programme 'To See: To Listen', this screening also accounted for the different ways of working with sound in film: the direct inscription onto the optical band in Gatten's film, the use of slow motion sound in *Le Tempestaire* (Epstein works with the expressive possibilities of slow motion sound in order to discover the infinite parts that compose the sound of a door opening and closing or the rumour of a waning storm) or the imaginary of silence in Hutton's film².

Let's see other examples, since even if certain elements of his work remain constant, such as the discretion and respect for formats, the Portuguese curator has also experimented with other forms of cross-dissolve of different films that this screening doesn't represent. We will now consider a programme dedicated to the variations of one of the first motives of the history of cinema: the workers leaving the factory, which included *Motion Picture: La sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (Peter Tscherkassky, 1984), *Arbeiter verlassen der Fabrik* (Harun Farocki, 1995) and a selection of the *Factory Gate Films* (Mitchell & Kenyon, 1900–13). Part of a large programme of films that aimed to think cinema and its history from cinema itself, 'Histories of Cinema by

2. Some of these questions were also addressed in other screenings of the programme 'To See: To Listen' such as,

for example, the sense of silence in film through a session dedicated to Stan Brakhage.

Itself' (Culturgest, 2008), this screening departs from one of the first images shot by the Lumière brothers in order to compare their images and compile some of their replicas.

Peter Tscherkassky states such analytical work by choosing one photogram of the film *La sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon*, just when the workers cross the factory entrance, in order to create a new film that frames them in this exit space. His images, resulting from the impression of the photogram depicting the workers' community onto strips of unexposed film, are constituted by imperceptible and abstract elements that reveal the materiality of the film itself. Hence by penetrating into this still image, Tscherkassky deals with the material produced by the same workers of the Lumière factory in Lyon: the photographic plaques and the nitrate film, trying to offer an index of that which, according to Farocki, is missing from those takes: labour. 'The first camera of the history of cinema pointed at a factory, but [...] the factory never attracted cinema, rather it inspired rejection. Most narrative films take place after work [...] Almost all the words, gazes or gestures exchanges in factories throughout the last hundred years escaped the filmic record.' (FAROCKI, p.35)

Taking as a point of departure the take by the brothers Lumière and excerpts from films by Fritz Lang, D. W. Griffith, Charlie Chaplin, Vsevolod Pudovkin or Michelangelo Antonioni, Farocki examines this image so tenaciously repeated throughout the history of film. By editing them together, it seems as if cinema had not represented any other subject, as if there was something irreducible in the first film. Many of the first cinematographic companies, such as the British Mitchell & Kenyon, shot a few films à la Lumière depicting the workers entering and leaving several factories. Their cameras documented the interminable movement of the workers congregating at the entrance of mines, factories or shipyard, also showing some kids joining the workers' ranks. Further to being authentic social and historical documents, these takes refer to cinema, not only because of the

reference to Lumière, but also because in them we can perceive what led the first cinematographic cameras to point at the factories. In this multitude of workers leaving the factory, the first camera operating saw the opportunity to attract viewers for their films, hoping that they would attend the projections that they offered in fairgrounds or other places and identify themselves. In this way, in Matos Cabo's screening we can glimpse at a strange tautology between cinema and factory, present in both Lumière's film and its variations: whereas the first inaugurates cinema showing the workers that produced the nitrate films themselves, as shown in Tscherkassky's film, the later replicas portray the first cinema spectators, which the camera operators scrutinized amongst the masses of workers leaving the factory.

Ricardo Matos Cabo returns to, and further develops, the relationship between cinema and factory processes in 'Residues' (Portuguese Cinématèque, Experimenta Design, 2011), a programme of films on industrial labour and the waste that it generates. One of the screenings, which brought together the films *Fabrication de l'acier* (Gaumont Productions, 1910), *Hands Scraping* (Richard Serra, 1971), *Poussières* (Georges Franju, 1979), *Steelmill/Stahlwerk* (Richard Serra, 1979) and *Winter Solstice [Solariumagelani]* (Hollis Frampton, 1974), weaves together industrial residues, sparks, filings and dust, with the workers' labour, presenting the consequences of these invisible particles on their own body. If *Hands Scraping* literally exposes the relationship between the gestures of the workers and the waste – four hands pick up and clean the metal filings from the asphalt – Franju's documentary lists the labour health and safety risks of workers exposed to industrial dust. At times even hand-colouring the images of fire in order to show the intensity of the smelting process (Gaumont film) or to capture the abstract movement of the sparks (Frampton), cinema thus shows its ability to scrutinise industrial production and the working conditions in factories, presenting the processes missing in those first takes shot at the factory entrance.

To speak of the work of Ricardo Matos Cabo necessarily implies speaking of the films that he brings together and of the relationships that they generate in the screenings, and at the same time of perceiving the histories projected by some of the screenings that he has organised. But it is also worth noting that his way of bringing films together in a screening, of exposing through the beam of light of the projector – a machine that doesn't allow two films to show simultaneously, but one after the other – has no pre-established rules, but only infinite variations and possibilities: the screenings that we here list only account for a few of them. The Portuguese curator has also shown the same film in different contexts, such as, for instance, *Mourir pour des images* (René Vautier, 1971), included in the programme 'Histories of Cinema by Itself' and in a *carte blanche* at the Portuguese Cinémathèque (2011), or some of the films by Raymonde Carasco presented in different occasions: 'Figures of Dance in the Cinema I' (Culturgest, 2005), 'To Count Time' (Portuguese Cinémathèque, 2010) and 'Residues'. He even projected the same film twice within the same screening: *Quad I + II* (Samuel Beckett, 1981), in order to link the geometric figure exposed in the ballet and the repetition of fixed structures in dance and the rectangular form of the screen ('Figures of Dance in the Cinema II', Culturgest, 2006)³.

There are film-makers who return time and again in his programmes, such as Peter Nestler,

3. This screening, titled 'Configurations', brought together the following sequence of films: *Quad I + II* (Samuel Beckett, 1981), *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (Square Dance)* (Bruce Nauman, 1967-68), *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square* (Bruce Nauman, 1967-68), *Structured Pieces III* (registro de Trisha Brown, 1975), documents of traditional dance compiled by Francine Lancelot between 1966 and 1984 (Aubrac (Aveyron), 5 October 1964; Sud-Ouest, Réunion à Menjoulic, Leucouacq, Lourdes, 31 July 1977), *Quad I + II* (Samuel Beckett, repetition), *Rhythmus 21* (Hans Richter, 1922-24), *Color Sequence* (Dwinnel Grant, 1943) and *Ray Gun Virus* (Paul Sharits, 1966).

4. The original programme included the following films, although some of them were not screened in the end:

of whom he has recently curated a retrospective (Goethe-Institut and Tate Modern, London, 2012), Raymonde Carasco or Hollis Frampton. Theme also often return, many of his screenings revolving around dance, its common genealogy with cinema, the plasticity of movement, like 'Figures of Dance in the Cinema I and II' (Culturgest 2005 and 2006) or the programmes around Babette Mongolte, Eliane Summers and Judson Dance Theatre (all Serralves, 2011). Some of the programmes were conceived having in mind the spaces where they were later shown: not only those presented at Serralves in relation to exhibitions or other museum activities, but, chiefly, in the ones that the Portuguese curator prepared for the botanical garden of Coimbra (2011), and which brought together films on scientific observation and studies on movement of the early twentieth century with more recent works⁴. When invited by the Portuguese Cinémathèque to curate a *carte blanche* as part of the cycle 'What is to Programme a Cinémathèque Today?' (2011), Matos Cabo presented a selection of films reflectioning on his own work⁵. The films selected were not so much an answer to this question, but rather presented different forms of interrogating the fact of programming cinema itself. However, all of his programmes find a common thread in the desire to present the history of cinema, albeit taking into account that this history can only be written by cinema itself⁶. ●

Préambules au cinématographe: Étienne-Jules Marey (recreation by Claudine Kaufman and Jean Dominique-Jaloux, 1996), *Éducation Physique étudiée au ralentisseur* (unknown film-maker, 1915), *Incunables du cinéma scientifique* (compilation by Jean-Michel Arnold, 1984), *L'Hippocampe* (Jean Painlevé, 1934), *Observando El Cielo* (Jeanne Liotta, 2007), *Journal and Remarks* (David Gatten, 2009), amongst others.

5. *Hapax Legomena I – VII* (Hollis Frampton, 1971-72), *Routine Pleasures* (Jean-Pierre Gorin, 1986), *Destruction des archives* (Yann Le Masson, 1985), *Mourir pour des images* (R. Vautier, 1971), *La mer et les jours* (Raymond Vogel and Alain Kaminker, 1958) and *Delluc & Cie (La première vague, 1ère partie)* (Noël Burch and Jean-André Fieschi, 1968) were the films brought together by Ricardo Matos Cabo for this *carte blanche*, films on films, which question cinema and its spaces

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of projection and preservation.

6. Although this question is present in all of his programmes, it is literally asked in 'Histories of Cinema by Cinema Itself' (Culturgest, 2008), a programme where Matos Cabo traced a few itineraries through the history of cinema, not in a chronological manner, but an archaeological one. Using excerpts from other films and appropriating images from other films, the films included – films such as *Eadweard*

Muybridge, Zoopraxographer (1974) by Thom Andersen, *Public Domain* (1972) by Hollis Frampton, *Standard Gauge* (1984) by Morgan Fisher, *Moments Choisis des Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (2000) by Jean-Luc Godard or *Elementare Filmgeschichte (1971-2007)* by Klaus Wyborny, amongst others – aimed to show how certain movements of cinematographic forms have been produced, how certain structures and themes keep on being repeated or how the history of these forms is entangled with the personal histories of the authors.

Reflections on ‘Rivette in Context’

Jonathan Rosenbaum

ABSTRACT

The author discusses two programmes that he curated under the title ‘Rivette in Context’, which took place at the National Film Theatre in London in August 1977 and at the Bleecker Street Cinema in New York in February 1979. Composed of 15 thematic programmes, the latter sets the films of Jacques Rivette in relation to other films, mostly from the US (including films by Mark Robson, Alfred Hitchcock, Jacques Tourneur, Fritz Lang, Otto Preminger). The essay notes and comments on the reactions of the US film critics to this programme, and also elaborates on the motivations that led him to the selection of films, which took as a reference the critical corpus elaborated by Rivette in *Cahiers du cinéma* alongside the influences that he had previously acknowledged in several interviews. Finally the article considers the impact of Henri Langlois’s programming method in the work of film-makers such as Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais or Luc Moullet, concluding that it generated a new critical space for writers, programmers and film-makers, based on the comparisons and rhymes between films.

KEYWORDS

Jacques Rivette, double programmes, American cinema, National Film Theatre, Bleecker Street Cinema, Henri Langlois, film criticism, thematic programmes, comparative cinema, montage.

«Rivette in Context» had two separate incarnations, occurring a year and a half apart. The first consisted of 28 programs presented at London's National Film Theatre in August 1977, to accompany the publication of *Rivette: Texts and Interviews*¹ –a 101-page book I had edited for the British Film Institute while still working on the staffs of two of its magazines, *Monthly Film Bulletin* and *Sight and Sound*, in 1976–².

The programs at the National Film Theatre, shown over the entire month of August, were *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*, Roberto Rossellini, 1954); *Kiss Me, Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955); *Bonjour Tristesse* (Otto Preminger, 1958); *Gertrud* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1964); *Paris Belongs to Us* (*Paris nous appartient*, Jacques Rivette, 1961); *L'Amour fou* (Jacques Rivette, 1969); *Machorka-Muff* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1963) & *Othon* (Jean-Marie Straub & Danièle Huillet, 1969); *Made in U.S.A.* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1966); Tashlin's *Artists and Models* (1955); *Spies* (*Spione*, Fritz Lang, 1928); *The General Line* (*Staroye i novoye*, Grigori Aleksandrov, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1929); *The Nun* (*La Religieuse*, Jacques Rivette, 1966); *The Life of Oharu* (*Saikaku ichidai onna*, Kenji Mizoguchi, 1952); *Out 1: Spectre* (Jacques Rivette, 1974); *Céline and Julie Go Boating* (*Céline et Julie vont en bateau*, Jacques Rivette, 1974); *The Seventh Victim* (Mark Robson, 1943); *House of Bamboo* (Samuel

Fuller, 1955); *Hawks' Monkey Business* (1952); *The Connection* (Shirley Clarke, 1962); *Red Psalm* (*Még kér a nép*, Miklós Jancsó, 1972); Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (1956); *Daisies* (1966); *Duelle* (*une quarantaine*) (Jacques Rivette, 1976); *Trafic* (Jacques Tati, 1971); *Moonfleet* (Fritz Lang, 1955); *French Cancan* (Jean Renoir, 1954); Fellini's *Roma* (*Roma*, 1972); *Noroît* (1976). (The world premiere of the latter film –immediately after a screening of *Duelle*, with Rivette in attendance– had already been held at the National Film Theatre in late 1976). I selected the films and wrote notes for the series, but was unable to attend any part of it because I was living at the time in San Diego, having moved there from London earlier that year.

The second incarnation of «Rivette in Context», which I *was* able to attend –at New York's Bleecker Street Cinema, in February 1979– was more ambitious, largely because it lacked the institutional muscle of the British Film Institute and therefore required much more improvisation. Although an effort was made to sell copies of *Rivette: Texts and Interviews* at some of the screenings, in the Bleecker Street Cinema's lobby, this second series was designed more than the first as a critical and polemical intervention rather than as a simple accompaniment to the book.

1. This book included a polemical introduction by me and translations –most of them by my London flat mate, Tom Milne– of two lengthy interviews with Rivette (one in 1968 that was centered on *L'Amour fou*, the other in 1973 that was centered on the two separate versions of *Out 1*), three key critical texts by him («Letter on Rossellini», 1955; «The Hand» [on Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*], 1957, and «Montage» [with Jean Narboni and Sylvie Pierre], 1969), and a brief, undated proposal of his from the mid-1970s («For the Shooting of *Les Filles du Feu*» –the latter was the working title for a projected series of four features, never completed, that was subsequently retitled *Scènes de la vie parallèle*–). The book concluded with a detailed “biofilmography” and a virtually complete bibliography of Rivette's critical texts published between 1950 and 1977 and his major interviews (two dozen in all).

2. During the final portion of my five years of living in Paris (1969-74), before I moved to London to work at the BFI,

I had become friends with Eduardo de Gregorio (1942-2012), Rivette's principal screenwriter during this period, and thanks to our friendship, I had attended many private screenings of *Céline and Julie Go Boating* when it was still a work print (albeit in its final edited form). I had subsequently interviewed Rivette, along with Gilbert Adair and Lauren Sedofsky, in my Paris apartment for the September-October 1974 issue of *Film Comment* (available in <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=28298>). Then, after my move to London, I had organized an elaborate reportage on the shooting of Rivette's *Duelle* and *Noroît* in Paris and Brittany, respectively –carried out by myself, Gilbert Adair (a mutual friend of de Gregorio and myself at the time, as was Sedofsky) and Michael Graham (de Gregorio's partner)– which appeared in *Sight and Sound's* Autumn 1975 issue. (Available online in <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=24458> and in <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=28300>).

In this case, the 15 separate programs, listed here in order, all had thematic titles. «Masterplots»: *Out 1: Spectre*; «Critical Touchstones (Myth & History)»: *The Miracle* (Irving Rapper, 1959), *Contempt (Le Mépris)*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1963), *Not Reconciled (Nicht versöhnt oder Es hilft nur Gewalt wo Gewalt herrscht)*, Jean-Marie Straub, Danièle Huillet, 1965), *Méditerranée* (Jean-Daniel Pollet, Volker Schlöndorff, 1963); «Critical Touchstones (Documentary & Fiction)»: *Something Different (O necem jinem)*, Vera Chytilová, 1964), *The Edge* (Robert Kramer, 1968), *Le Horla* (Jean-Daniel Pollet, 1966); «The City as Labyrinth»: *Orpheus (Orphée)*, Jean Cocteau, 1950), *Paris Belongs to Us*; «Women & Confinement»: *Angel Face* (Otto Preminger, 1952) & *The Nun*; «Theatre»: *L'Amour fou*; «Clarke & Rouch»: *The Lion Hunters* (Ford Beebe, 1951), *The Mad Masters (Les Maîtres fous)*, 1955), *The Connection*; «Movie Doubles»: *Party Girl* (Nicholas Ray, 1958) & *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953); «Dizzy Doubles»: *Céline and Julie Go Boating*; «A Plunge into Horror»: *The Seventh Victim, Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942), *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur, 1943); «Menace & Mise en scène»: *Duelle*; «Fantasy & Conspiracy»: *Moonfleet & House of Bamboo*; «Treachery & Mise en scène»: *Noroît*; «I am a Camera»: *Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) & *Dark Passage* (Delmer Daves, 1947); and, finally, a «Special Preview Screening» (projected but later canceled) of *Merry-Go-Round* (1981), Rivette's latest feature, which eventually surfaced much later at the Museum of Modern Art, with Rivette in attendance (as he had been at the NFT's *Noroît* premiere, but not at either of the incarnations of «Rivette in Context»).

I can't guess how much this second program might have affected the reception of Rivette's work in the U.S., apart from four extended press reviews it received; these were by Roger Greenspun, Andrew Sarris, David Sterritt and Amy Taubin. The first two were mostly skeptical about Rivette but gave more mixed reviews to the programming concept behind the series. (Sarris devoted an entire page of the *Village Voice* to his misgivings about Rivette, coupled with his overall

support for the program; the prominence of his column undoubtedly helped the series from the standpoint of publicity far more than the other three articles). Sterritt, writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, mainly supported both Rivette and the series, although he had misgivings about the quality of some of the films (e.g., *Lady in the Lake*, *The Edge*) and some of the prints of the Hollywood features, plus the fact that the two Pollet films (both U.S. premieres) were unsubtitled. Taubin in the *Soho News* was largely skeptical about both the program and the concept behind it: «Rivette is an interesting director, a director for whom I have more sympathy than any one of his films deserve, but why should he be the first director chosen by Bleecker St. for this kind of examination. Why not “Bresson in Context”?». She went on to complain, «Rosenbaum simply scheduled 20 of the films Rivette mentions as having influenced him», and then criticized both Rivette and me for minimizing the importance of Feuillade on Rivette's work by excluding him from the series. (Although I had considered including *Juve contre Fantômas*—an hour-long section of *Fantômas* that was at that time the only work by Feuillade available in the U.S.—I decided against it after concluding that *Les Vampires*, which remained inaccessible at the time, would have been far more relevant. I should add that I responded to Taubin's remarks with an angry letter that was published, along with an equally angry rebuttal from Taubin).

I can no longer recall whether or not Jackie Raynal actually succeeded in acquiring a print of Jean-Daniel Pollet's *Le Horla* from France for our series, but I do vividly recall her doing just that for Pollet's *Méditerranée*—which was the first film she had ever worked on as an editor and therefore had a particular personal importance for her—. In this case, I had included the film specifically because of Rivette's reference to it in his interview about *Out 1*, which appeared in *Rivette: Texts and Interviews*; and I would also concede to Taubin's charge that the inclusions of *The Seventh Victim*, *Moonfleet* and *Lady in the Lake* had been prompted by Rivette having used these films as explicit reference points for *Duelle*,

Noroît, and *Merry-Go-Round*, respectively, even to the point (if memory serves) of screening prints of each film for members of his cast and crew.

But the main inspiration for the series, even I hadn't fully realized this at the time, was undoubtedly Henri Langlois and the eclectic mixes of his programs and schedules at the Cinémathèque Française, which I firmly believe eventually inspired the eclectic on-film film criticism of Godard, Resnais, Rivette, Truffaut, and Moullet –not so much the referential “homages” of their American disciples (e.g., Woody Allen or Brian De Palma alluding to the Odessa Steps sequence in Eisenstein's *Potemkin* [*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, 1929])– which add nothing to our critical understandings, as the ways that these filmmakers' own directorial styles critically alter our perceptions of the films and aesthetics they absorbed: how Godard treats German Expressionist cinema in *Alphaville* (1965), how Resnais savors the looks and atmospheres of 50s MGM Technicolor musicals in *Not on the Lips* (*Pas sur la bouche*, 2003) (to cite a much later example of this practice) and other forms of Hollywood glamour and suspense in the much earlier *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, 1961), how Rivette applies Truffaut's analysis of the doubling of shots and characters in *Shadow of a Doubt* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1943) in the narrative construction of *Céline and Julie*, how Truffaut autocritiques his own *politique des auteurs* in *The Green Room* (*La chambre verte*, 1978), or how Moullet lovingly parodies *Duel in the Sun* (King Vidor, 1946) in *A Girl Is a Gun* (*Une aventure de Billy le Kid*, 1971), to cite a few examples among many others. (I hasten to add that Resnais is not usually accorded any status as a film critic because he never published reviews, but I would argue that his filmmaking practice reflects precise critical readings of other films that are quite distinct from his jokey “homages” (such as blown-up-images of Alfred Hitchcock inserted unobtrusively, almost secretly, *Marienbad*

and *Muriel* [1963]), which are much closer to the cinephiliac references of Allen, Bogdanovich, De Palma, Scorsese, et al.

No less crucial was Langlois creating particular critical contexts in which, for example, Preminger could “converse” with Mizoguchi and the German Lang could interact with the American Hitchcock, another trait that marked the films of the Nouvelle Vague creations, one might say, of a previously nonexistent critical “space” in which such disparate figures could mingle and instruct one another. Above all, it was these critical “contexts”, created specifically through programming choices, that had inspired my own. The perception, for instance, that the improvisational and freewheeling shooting methods of *Out 1*, suggested in certain ways by those of Renoir and/or Rossellini, had been dialectically countered by the more rigorous editing principles of Lang or Hitchcock, was a critical concept derived directly from Rivette's own discourse in his interviews.

From today's perspective, I believe that the principal limitation of my allusions to this discourse through my programming selections was that they were in effect abbreviations of broader arguments that needed entire written texts as well as films in order to be clearly expounded and illustrated. If I were organizing such an event today, I would try to find some way of incorporating all of the following texts in order to illustrate the principle of rhyming shots: Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*, *The Wrong Man* (1956), and *Family Plot* (1976); Truffaut's «Un trousseau de fausses clés»³; Godard's «Le cinéma et son double» and Chapter 4a of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998); and Rivette's *Céline and Julie Go Boating*. Postulating such a combination of texts and screenings may seem as utopian now as it was over three decades ago, but a utopian concept of what criticism could and should be was central to «Rivette in Context». ●

3. For a gloss on this key text and the possible reasons why it isn't better known, see my remarks in <http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=22833>.

[jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=22833](http://www.jonathanrosenbaum.com/?p=22833).

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‘Le Trafic du cinéma’: On the Relationship between Criticism and Collective Programming Through a Publication; the Case of *Trafic* and the Jeu de Paume

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ABSTRACT

This essay studies the relationship between the critical task of a publication (*Trafic*) and its transposition into a film programme (the season organised by the journal for the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 1998). The author suggests that the dialogue established between the films included in the programme enabled both the critical discourse and the editorial line of the publication to move forward. The essay focuses on the films selected by Jean-Claude Biette (co-founder of the journal, together with Serge Daney) for this programme, and in particular on Biette’s capacity to bring together recent and historical works, at times in a comparative manner. In this programme in particular, Biette sets the films of Adolpho Arrietta in relation to the work of Jacques Tourneur, an association which extends across the rest of the films selected (and which included works by Manoel de Oliveira, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet and Jacques Davila).

KEYWORDS

Film criticism, programming, museum, film journal, montage, *Cahiers du cinéma*, *Trafic*, Jean-Claude Biette, Adolpho Arrietta, Jacques Tourneur.

‘Our politics is Auteur theory.’ This sentence, perhaps never read, perhaps never said, was nevertheless ever present for the readers aiming to understand the ideological location of *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s. The first critical conclusion would be: the true authorial claim didn’t so much lie on the film-maker as in the critic him- or herself, insofar as he (or she) had the power to establish hierarchies and relationships between the works.¹ The second: a collective project, the project of a journal, could be defined by the films defended throughout its pages² and by the decision to show them in the form of a film programme; in other words, by the impulse to translate writing into dissemination. The trace of that gesture can be followed up until the birth of a new publication, many years later, in 1992, founded by two former *Cahiers* critics, Serge Daney and Jean-Claude Biette: *Trafic*. With the arrival of the journal came the rupture with a number of *Cahiers* principles, and the adaptation to a quarterly publication: absence of images, rather longer texts, independence from the agenda of film premieres. But, perhaps most importantly, *Trafic* implied a strong gesture: criticism was no longer in monthly journals, in cinephilia, but rather it was sheltered in a different exercise: writing and the naked and atemporal return of the works themselves. Such double gesture was framed by the forewords and afterwords that bookended the first issues: the ‘Journal de l’an présent’ (‘Diary of the Current Year’), where Daney took as much distance as necessary from cinema itself, and «À

piéd d’oeuvre», where Biette return to the surface of the films themselves, be them recent or not.

A more intimate and less urgent criticism, more reflexive and isolated, implied that it was up to the films themselves – and the relationships traced between them in the pages of the journal – to define a collective project. *Trafic* continued then the model of the old *Cahiers*, defined by the strict selection of a series of film-makers or of a certain kind of cinema, but it had got rid of the need to go through the Auteur theory, or any other theoretical instrument to achieve this. On the way there, a certain transit was necessary – through the newspaper *Libération*, in the case of Daney, and through a critical silence in that of Biette.³ Daily writing forced Daney to a critical exercise just at the moment when, in his view, cinema had obtained its death certificate, sealed by the beginning of the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1988), which Godard had began three years before the birth *Trafic*, in an almost perfect communion with Daney’s thought. To continue walking in uncertain grounds entails an opening up to reflection, the unfulfilled need to feed oneself off images, to make them speak. The development at work can be observed by comparing the list of best films of the 1970s selected by the *Cahiers du cinéma*,⁴ when Daney and Biette were part of the editorial team, with the programme ‘Le Cinéma de *Trafic*’, organised by the Jeu de Paume in Paris from 17 March until 12 April 1998.⁵

1. On the long run, such authority forms part of the same gesture that draw these critics to become film-makers. Jean-Luc Godard was the one who best understood such initiative, since he literally continued it in his film work (SKORECKI, 2001: 18-19).

2. At this point please allow me to make a personal reference. Anyone who has participated in a similar project can perfectly understand the idea. In my case, this was during the founding of the journal *Lumière*, reflected in its first editorial, which was but the films about which we were writing (ALGARÍN, Francisco, GANZO, Fernando, GRANDA, Moisés (Abril de 2009). *El sonido y la furia*. Last accessed in November 2012. Asociación *Lumière*. Available at: www.elumiere.net/numero1/num01_issuu.php).

3. For the first, the situation was more crucial than for the second one; after all Biette was already a film-maker before becoming a critic, therefore a brief lapse of time focused on his own film-making doesn’t signify a drastic change in his evolution.

4. The complete list of the editorial team of *Cahiers du cinéma* is available at the end of the interview with Jean Narboni. (First published in *Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 308, February 1980).

5. We could understand the recent issue 80 (accompanied by a film programme) as an intermediate step, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of *Trafic*. It is also telling that the programme also took place at an arts centre, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris.

Even if most of the names in *Trafic's* 1998 programme continue in line with the trail opened by *Cahiers's* list of the 1970s, the irruption of two names – Bruce Baillie and Jonas Mekas –⁶ signifies a violent clash. In 1977 Daney programmed the 'Cahiers Week' at the Bleecker St. Cinema in New York, directed by Jackie Raynal, and when he was interviewed by Bill Krohn, reflected on the absence of writing on avant-garde film (using Stephen Dwoskin or Jackie Raynal as examples) thus: 'Probably the position of the critic is no longer justified in the case of these films, because they no longer require mediation, insofar as most of the films act directly upon primary processes. There is a great difference between these films and the new European avant-garde (the one we are interested in: Godard and Straub) where any intervention upon primary processes (on perception) only has a true impact on us if it also implies an action upon the elements of thought, of what is signified.'⁷ Hence it is particularly telling that the film by Jonas Mekas included in the programme was precisely *Birth of a Nation* (1997), which is almost a form of reconciliation with all the aesthetic arguments that this form of cinema may generate within critical discourse. Baillie or Mekas, whom in the 1970s were part of this cinema in response to which, according to Daney, it was not possible to generate an interesting critical position, gain a place within the critical discourse and editorial policy of the journal – helped by the relationship to an art centre, the Jeu de Paume, to which Mekas had always been close, and indeed it can be argued that

his work gained a certain visibility and relevance within the French film scene thanks to his 1992 retrospective at that institution. The Lithuanian film-maker proofed top the right when he said: 'We are invisible, but we constitute an essential nation of cinema. We are the cinema.'⁸

Within this evolution, the task of translating ideas from writing into programming might have been, in the case of *Trafic*, a necessary step to prevent this more intimate work from being isolated, and to enable it to continue to develop conceptually. The case of Jean-Claude Biette is particularly interesting and effective in this sense, given his consistent critical approach, consisting in speaking of old films as if they were premieres, and of new films as if they were classic. In order to transform his critical method into a useful programming tool in the framework of 'Le Cinéma de *Trafic*', Biette decides on two criteria: closeness and cohesion. All the film-makers included (i.e. Adolpho Arrietta, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, Manoel de Oliveira and Jacques Davila) have a more or less direct relationship with Biette: Arrietta, the film-maker he invited in the only introduced screening,⁹ not only had been in Biette's milieu for some time, but he had even filmed Biette's ear in his *Le Château de Pointilly* (Adolpho Arrietta, 1972). Jacques Davila, as Biette, participated in the collective film by the production company Diagonale (directed by Paul Vecchiali),¹⁰ which was also responsible for *Le Théâtre des matières*, the first film Biette made in 1977.¹¹ Jean-Marie Straub used Biette as an actor

6. Jonas Mekas is only mentioned once throughout the three volumes of *La maison cinéma et le monde*, the compilation of Daney's writings published both at *Cahiers du Cinéma* and the newspaper *Libération*. DANEY, Serge (2001, 2002, 2012). *La maison cinéma et le monde*. Vol. I, II y III. Paris. P.O.L. Éditeurs.

7. This interview was published at *The Thousand Eyes*, a magazine edited by Bleecker St. Cinema in 1977, and was afterwards partially republished in: KROHN, Bill (unknown publishing date). *Les Cahiers du cinéma*. 1968-1977. Last accessed in November 2012. Earthlink. Available at: home.earthlink.net/~steevee/Daney_1977.html

8. These words by Jonas Mekas, of uncertain origin, were

supposedly transcribed in the *pressbook* of the film, and have been published in, amongst other places: the programme notes of Peter Kubelka's «Was ist Film» («Filmprogramm Zyklus 'Was ist Film'», Österreichisches Filmmuseum, Viena, 1995).

9. The film was *Merlín* (Adolfo Arrietta, 1998).

10. *L'Archipel des Amours* (Jean-Claude Biette, Cécile Clairval, Jacques Davila, Michel Delahaye, Jacques Frenais, Gérard Frot-Coutaz, Jean-Claude Guiguet, Marie-Claude Treilhou and Paul Vecchiali, 1983).

11. Vecchiali himself is the editor of the Davila film shown as part of *Trafic's* programme.

in *Othon*, *Les yeux ne veulent pas en tout temps se fermer, ou Peut-être qu'un jour Rome se permettra de choisir à son tour* (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1970), and finally, *Party*, by Manoel de Oliveira (1998), is produced by Paulo Branco, as are *Loin de Manhattan* (1982), *Trois ponts sur la rivière* (1999) and *Saltimbank* (2003), all by Jean-Claude Biette. Indeed Oliveira, and Portugal itself, are decisive influences in Biette's aesthetic evolution, which would culminate in the shooting in Lisbon and Oporto of *Trois ponts sur la rivière*. The discovery of Portuguese cinema (defended by Daney at *Cahiers* and became increasingly important in *Trafic*) meant for Biette the encounter of a more ludic relationship with words, a more equivocal urban landscape, labyrinthine, decadent and mysterious, and a way to take even further his interpretative style and its relationship to theatre (Biette's only theatre play, *Barbe bleue*, was staged in Portugal, with a performance by Luis Miguel Cintra). Portugal and Oliveira are a personal journey for Biette, an self-discovery that affects his cinema and his writing. If to show films is to present oneself, in the case of Biette this is more true than ever.

The first criteria is then, the family, so to speak. A criteria reinforced by the space where the programme takes place. The opening of the screening room of the Jeu de Paume is not only coetaneous to the birth of *Trafic* (which was marked by a round-table discussion in precisely that room), but also the programming criteria of the curator, Danièle Hibon, often coincide with the editorial criteria of the journal.¹² (It is worth noting that a few months beforehand *Trafic* had programmed a shorter season, where Jean-Claude Biette had precisely included two films by Manoel de Oliveira.¹³) The notion of a 'collective project' should then be understood in its most literal sense, as the construction of a

physical space (in the pages of a journal or inside a screening room) where films could coexist. Let's not forget that one of Jeu de Paume's trademarks is its close relationship to a number of film-makers (within and without the avant-garde), who are often invited to present their new works, or even at times their works in progress. As much as the usual film programme at the Jeu de Paume helps the journal to define a territory where it can programme films, *Trafic* also enables the institution to expand its agenda and enrich its position. To return, in this space, to the work of a number of film-makers of reference for the journal (for instance, to Oliveira) lays bare the permeability of certain films, their evolution in time, their own vitality. In short, to see film as a living body, and not as an inert object within an audio-visual society, which reserves for herself the right to change.

Second criteria, or second detail that calls the attention in this selection: even if the programme is not circumscribed to a geographical or temporal context – it ranges from *Sherlock Junior* (Buster Keaton, 1924) to *La Vallée Close* (Jean-Claude Rousseau, 1996) and *Uirá, Um Índio em Busca de Deus* (Gustavo Dahl, 1973) – Biette decides to show, over a six-day period, films from a relatively limited geography (Portugal, France and Germany) and time period (1956–90, although only one film from the 1950s is shown, jumping then to 1966). It may be argued that such time laps is, in fact, not so brief. But it's important to have in mind that Biette's critical trajectory at *Cahiers du cinéma* (later recovered in *Poétique des auteurs*), stands out for the large number of texts he dedicated to classical American film-makers such as Fritz Lang, Jacques Tourneur, Samuel Fuller, Allan Dwan or Frank Borzage. In fact, the idea behind his column 'Les fantômes du permanent' (dedicated to the films programmed

12. Other French publications were also invited to programme or to collaborate in the screenings of the Jeu de Paume, such as the quarterly journal *Vertigo*, which participated in the retrospective of James Benning, or *Cinéma*, which is no longer published. As much as *Trafic*,

the Jeu de Paume seemed to realise that criticism no longer resides in monthly magazines.

13. *Rite of Spring* (Acto de Primavera, Manoel de Oliveira, 1963) and *The Box (A Caixa)*, Manoel de Oliveira, 1994).

in television, and which can be found in the issues of the late 1970s and early 80s) was, precisely to use television as an instrument to understand these films beyond the mantle that covered them at the time of their premiere (a mantle woven with advertising, critical reception, social context, the temporary and ephemeral notoriety of the people involved; in short, a mantle offering little shelter). It was a time of regeneration at the journal: the Maoist period seemed an insurmountable gap, and very few believed at the time that cinema could be spoken of in the same terms (Skorecki is the one to more precisely speak of the death of cinema 'as we knew it' with *Río Bravo* [Howard Hawks, 1959]¹⁴). What was at stake was overcoming this gap and being able to preserve a direct relationship to the film since a whole world could be evoked through the film itself.

It is true that since Biette founded *Trafic* together with Serge Daney, in 1991, the presence of classical film-makers goes down in his texts, but it never fully disappears. We may recognise a relatively higher theoretical weight in his texts (albeit in a ludic manner), even though theory could be said to define his trajectory at *Cahiers*: for instance, the reference to 'rhetorics' (a term used to define certain codes that would prevent a film from making 'noise' in its own context) in his article 'Qu'est-ce qu'un cinéaste' (BIETTE:

1996: 5-15) allow us to understand the critical implications of his column «Les fantômes du permanent». We may roughly sum up these references as follows: one should never consider a *cinéaste*, or film-maker, a director who accepts the rhetoric of his own work and its discursive code as part of something given universally and naturally, and whose analysis is forbidden. That is, where the perception of reality of a film comes from 'the sensibility of a period and not from a single man', using as an example *Bicycle Thieves* (*Ladri di biciclette*, Vittorio de Sica, 1948).¹⁵ The idea used by Biette to define a film-maker (to be able to question the rhetoric of one's time), may also be applied to his own initiative as a film-maker, attempting to understand classical films beyond their common rhetoric, and which may fall down as dead leaves when ones comes closer to these films as if for the first time.

The other great theoretical text published by Biette in *Trafic*, 'Le Gouvernement des Films' (BIETTE, 1998: 5-14), argues that in every film there is a struggle between three elements: drama, narrative and formal project,¹⁶ so that in order to understand the reality at play in a film one only needs to resolve this rule of three. Biette uses this (theoretical) method in later texts on a classical film-maker such as Raoul Walsh – one of Biette's favourites since his time at *Cahiers* –¹⁷ as well as on a modern film-maker such as Stanley Kubrick,

14. This idea has been formulated in a number of texts and occasions. For the sake of concision, we will only mention one: 'As it is well-known, *Río Bravo* closes down, both symbolically and materially, the classical era of the great cinema of the monochrome deception; cinema.' (SKORECKI, 2001: 10).

15. Biette formulates the definition of the film-maker as follows: 'A film-maker is the person who expresses a point of view on the world and on cinema itself, and whom in the act of making the film itself, achieves a double operation of attempting to present a particular perception of reality (through a particular story, particular actors, a particular space and time) and to express it based on a general conception of the fabrication of a film, which is itself unique and singular, and which ensues from the perception and the assimilation of the films that precede it, and which allows

him or her, through a long succession of underground movements that the film-maker can choose to ignore or let do, or alternatively to completely think through, to find personal and singular solutions as to how should the story, the actors, the space and the time be, with always a bit more of world than cinema.' (BIETTE, 1996: 5-15).

16. Although it is easy to understand what Biette means by project, form and narration, the meaning of 'dramaturgy' is more particular and complex. It refers to that something that emerges when filming an actor giving life to a character, something immediately dramatic, insofar as it is a raw material on which any film relies without being able to completely control it.

17. In another text, 'La barbe de Kubrick', Biette applies this same method to a film-maker, whom is not amongst

in his analysis of *Eyes Wide Shut* (Stanley Kubrick, 1999). Biette's critical process from the period of the *Cahiers* remains thus unchanged when writing for *Trafic*.

In short, the choices Biette makes in the programme are not due to an alleged and violent critical evolution, but rather to the conception of the programme as part of a collective project, of a collective idea of cinema which implies taking part (as a critic and film-maker) of a certain conception of cinema and of the world. A notion of cinema as a variable and mysterious universe, in which to plunge one time and another without thus exhausting its meaning; or, to paraphrase Oliveira, it is about accepting cinema as 'a saturation of magnificent signs bathed in the light of their lack of explanation' (GODARD and OLIVEIRA, 1993). A collective, or family, that is much more solid insofar as it comes from the social and geographical margins of cinema. With the exception of a film by Davila (though he was born in Argelia and is a film-maker who can be said to perfectly respond to an idea of marginality or exception), all the films chosen are marked by the idea of alien: in *Flammes* (Adolpho Arrietta, 1978), Spanish film-maker Arrietta films a young woman who plays with the idea of being saved by a Spanish fireman (Xavier Grandès, with an unconcealed accent) from the castle where she lives in isolation with her father; in *Party* (Manoel de Oliveira, 1996), brings together a French actor and a Greek actress at the Açores (Michel Piccoli and Irene Papas) in order to speak French with Leonor Silveira and Rogério Samora; and finally in the *History Lessons* (*Geschichtsunterricht*, Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1972), French film-makers Straub and Huillet film in Italy with German actors who perform the text by Bertolt Brecht *Die geschäfte des herrn Julius Caesar*. From these

Biette's favourites. It is true that this method can hardly be said to be a theoretical one, it is rather the thought-process of a film-maker who seeks to penetrate the mechanism of the film, but Biette's texts prove its interest nonetheless, as does that fact that later critics such as Serge Bozon or

encounters emerges the idea of eliminating any patriotic and approach to language.¹⁸ It provides languages – since the four films screened are about the effect of words in the image) of an alienated sonority. The words pronounced by an alien soul immediately become matter, they are *interpreted* in the pure musical sense of the term, violently adhered to the film strip itself, which is modified, RETTORCIDA, forced to and thus manages to become the ineffable (Biette was a great film-maker of the ineffable, a concept expressed in his cinema not only through the use of foreign language, but also through the magical power of puns in his films).

Hence *Flammes* becomes the most malleable film in the programme, and the one that most affects the rest of the screenings. Cocteau's influence is notorious (the other feature film he made, *Merlin*, is a direct adaptation of the French author), but it would be absurd to deny the atmosphere of American B-movie permeating the film (BOZON, 2012: 92): from the first shot (a moon covered by clouds that become black due to the smoke) to the last one (the 'heroes' surfing the skies in a close-up shot of an airplane, next to which pass the clouds again, ever more black, with the cheapest of artifices).

It cannot be denied either that, given the artisanal value of the *arriettian* inventive of the scene, the film almost becomes an *object*, and once could even imagine that, only by changing its soundtrack, it could be part of a museum installation.

Such malleability is so powerful that it in fact makes Arrietta the film-maker that it is more difficult to write about among the ones included in the programme. It is not by chance that despite Arrietta's prominence in Biette's

myself, have attempted to apply the same method.

18. In this sense, see Biette's brief text on the relationship between Josef von Sternberg, Robert Bresson and Jean-Marie Straub (BIETTE, 2001: 115-117).

programme, he hardly ever wrote about his work (BIETTE, 1978a: 53),¹⁹ and during his presentation of *Merlin* he only formulated the basic idea: 'I will show you the work of a film-maker who makes one want to make films'. A cinema that is not easily translated into works, then, but which is open to programming, as if it was the most essential piece of a montage, or the critical cut of a film. Because after visiting the space far-away from all reality, such as the family mansion in *Flammes*, the garden in *Party* also becomes a mythical space, close to the elements of nature. The mechanical gestures of Arrietta's actors (the card games and the balancing acts) flood the thighs of Oliveira's women, highlighting the relationship between gesture and words, and highlighting, in the last instance, the presence of desire and Oliveira's old age. Similarly after the statism of the other two films, Straub's dialogues are all about the mobility of the actor. But the relationship is even more powerful in the case of *Qui embrasse trop...*, which opens, furthermore, with an almost identical establishing shot to *Flammes*. Between these self-reflective dialogues and Arrietta's fantastic territory, the silences and distances prompted by the evidence of the fugacity of desire, make Davila's lovers creatures marked by a fatal atavism, as if they were characters from *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1941). In short, the programme puts forward the monstrosity of the couple, insofar as both elements are unable to escape an evil mark that would prevent them from remaining together, or simply being normal. It is not by chance that Biette was literally obsessed by *Freaks* (Tod Browning, 1932) (BIETTE, 1978b: 23-26), or that his own film *Trois ponts sur la rivière* – where Jeanne Balibar and Mathieu Amalric are subjected to the sign of an ill restlessness

that starts to germinate when they meet back together – completely changes under the light of this programme. Let's remind ourselves of Tourneur's working method, marked by discretion, silence and the almost murmured address to the spectator (SKORECKI, 1978: 39-43). The presence of the invisible, of a spiritual world, in reality, can only be perceived if we approach it precociously, almost tiptoed. A film-maker characterised by a discrete but omnipresent editing, dialectic and open to the entrance of dissonant elements, intimate, shy and ludic (the famous shot of the squirrel in *Le complexe de Toulon* [1996]), Biette obtains from the union of similar but different elements, a time, a light and a voice that illuminates each of the films selected and, at the same time, as if in a film by Tourneur, allows reality to coexist with its spell: the work of the great film-makers are often characterised by their ability to illustrate the work of other film-makers and to understand it, no matter how distant or different they are. Arrietta, a film-maker who has been shown, but whose work is ineffable (wasn't it perhaps because of this ineffable character that Biette saw Arrietta as 'a film-maker who wants to make films', that is, a film-maker that makes emerge what is secret, in this instance, a relationship to Tourneur?) acts in this programme almost as the main characters of a Shakespeare play, who have more influence in the work when they are not present in the film than when they are.²⁰ By invoking Tourneur without even mentioning him – even making him become an underground murmur in Straub's film – Arrietta's films become the wizards of the programme. In the faint *tourneurian* light invoked by Arrietta and Oliveira's mansions, the spiritual and mystical character of Straub's films, and in the streets across which the main character travels, it is

19. In this article, Biette foregrounds the ingraspable character of Arrietta's cinema: 'It suggests a multitude of fascinating shadows, which nonetheless defy any attempt at grasping them as objects.'

20. With this Biette also achieved a critical assessment of

Arrietta's work, in spite of having hardly written about it, given its pregnant capacity within the programme, since it enabled the interpretation and assessment of the work of the other film-makers, which is a common characteristic of all great film-makers.

not only the weight of history that we perceive, but also his gaze materialised in a thousand invisible eyes.²¹

Such silent and intimate encounters help *Trafic* to evolve through the programme,²² to

incorporate violent and generous evolutions; a possible rediscovery of cinema that allows the entrance of increasingly diverse works. Cinema contemplated as a body in movement, subjected to the force of montage and time, which operate in the conception of a film programme. ●

**Programme 'Le cinéma de Trafic', Jeu de Paume,
17 March - 12 April 1998**

Films selected by Jean-Claude Biette:

Le Crime de la toupie (Adolpho Arrietta, 1966)
Flammes (Adolpho Arrietta, 1978)
L'imitation de l'ange (Adolpho Arrietta, 1967)
Merlín (Adolpho Arrietta, 1990)
Qui trop embrasse... (Jacques Davila, 1986)
Party (Manoel de Oliveira, 1996)
O Pintor e a Cidade (Manoel de Oliveira, 1956)
Geschichtsunterricht (Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, 1972)

Films selected by Patrice Rollet:

In the Street (James Agee, Helen Levitt and Janice Loeb, 1952)
All my Life (Bruce Baillie, 1966)
Castro Street (Bruce Baillie, 1966)
Little Girl (Bruce Baillie, 1994-1995)
Quixote (Bruce Baillie, 1964-1965)
Roslyn Romance (Is it really trae?) (Bruce Baillie, 1977)
Valentin de las Sierras (Bruce Baillie, 1968)
Cockfighter (Monte Hellman, 1974)

Birth of a Nation (Jonas Mekas, 1996)
Sayat Nova (Serguei Paradjanov, 1968-1969)
La Vallée close (Jean-Claude Rousseau, 1995)
Leave me Alone (Gehrad Theuring, 1975)

Films selected by Raymond Bellour:

Saute ma ville (Chantal Akerman, 1963)
Charlotte et son Jules (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959)
Sherlock Jr. (Buster Keaton, 1924)
Time Indefinite (Ross Mc Elwee, 1992)
How I Learned to Overcome my Fear and Love Arik Sharon
 (Avi Mograbi, 1997)
Le Bassin de J.W. (João Cesar Monteiro, 1997)
Rock Hudson's Home Movies (Mark Rappaport, 1992)
Archives de performances (Roman Signer, 1982-1997)
L'Enfant sauvage (François Truffaut, 1970)

Films selected by Sylvie Pierre:

Maiçol (Mario Brenta, 1988-1989)
Uirá, Um Índio em Busca de Deus (Gustavo Dahl, 1973)
Ke tu qiu hen (Ann Hui, 1989)
A Ilba de Moraes (Paulo Rocha, 1984)
Rentrée des classes (Jacques Rozier, 1955)
Les Sacrifiés (Okacha Touita, 1982)

21. 'Anyone who has filmed landscapes, when immobilised, has sown them with eyes. Exactly as if they were characters.' (BREWSTER, 1983: 3).

22. The aforementioned special issue of the journal and the programme at the Centre Georges Pompidou, both 2011, continue such invisible task of the critical off screen. Twenty critics of the journal had to choose a film made after the foundation of the journal. It was a way of getting up to date with current times, but also a way of presenting its crop: the avant-garde, which was deemed beyond the territory of the journal in the past, is included in the programme through the work of Tacita Dean or Mekas, but the way is also complemented in the other direction, inclu-

ding directors such as Steven Spielberg or Woody Allen, while the 'official' American cinema had been ignored in the aforementioned list of best films of 1970s, with the exception of Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas. In order to grasp the point of development at which *Trafic* finds itself today, it should suffice to imagine the poetic weight that a film such as *Craneway Event* (Tacita Dean, 2009) may bring to the futurist universe of *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* (Steven Spielberg, 2001) and the empty melancholy that the latter can give back, or how the speech on idealism in *Palombella rossa* (Nanni Moretti, 1989) may breath political content to the characters in *Crash* (David Cronenberg, 1996).

Films selected for the 20th anniversary of the journal *Trafic*:

- A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001), introduced by Jonathan Rosenbaum
Le Bassin de J.W. (João César Monteiro, 1997), introduced by Marcos Uzal
La Belle Journée (Ginette Lavigne, 2010), introduced by Jean-Louis Comolli
Café Lumière (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 2003), introduced by Frédéric Sabouraud
Craneway Event (Tacita Dean, 2009), introduced by Hervé Gauville
Crash (David Cronenberg, 1996), introduced by Mark Rappaport
Encontros (Pierre-Marie Goulet, 2006), introduced by Bernard Eisenschitz
Film Socialisme (Jean-Luc Godard, 2010), introduced by Jean Narboni
Mies vailla menneisyttö (Aki Kaurismäki), introduced by Leslie Kaplan
Inland (Gabbia, Tariq Tegua, 2008), introduced by Jacques Rancière

- Loin* (André Téchiné, 2001), introduced by Jacques Bontemps
Mistérios de Lisboa (Raoul Ruiz), introduced by Jean Louis Schefer
Palombella rossa (Nanni Moretti, 1989), introduced by Fabrice Revault
Cassandra's Dream (Woody Allen, 2007), introduced by Marie Anne Guerin
Saraband (Ingmar Bergman, 2003), introduced by Raymond Bellour
Soy Cuba, O Mamute Siberiano (Vicente Ferraz, 2005), introduced by Sylvie Pierre
36 vies du pic Saint-Loup (Jacques Rivette, 2009), introduced by Pierre Léon
Vale Abraão (Manoel de Oliveira), introduced by Youssef Ishaghpour
Hat Wolff von Amerongen Konkursdelikte begangen? (Gerhard Benedikt Friedl, 2004), introduced by Christa Blümlinger
Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas (Fluxus) (Jonas Mekas, 1992), introduced by Patrice Rollet

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Memories of a Retired Film Programmer

Eduardo Antín, *Quintín*

ABSTRACT

Based on his experience as artistic director of the Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Film (BAFICI) from 2001 until 2004, Quintín reflects on the editorial criteria and programming politics of the festival during this period. These aimed at creating a series of complementary sections, that would potentiate each other and avoid unbalanced hierarchies, so that the festival didn't turn around an expected centre and an ignored periphery, but was rather organised as a diversity as compact as possible. The core idea of the festival was to showcase 'genre and avant-garde' film, as a way to exclude what was most common in this context: the films produced for the festivals. Furthermore the essay also elaborates on the changes produced by digital access to films over that period, and the ensuing transformations in international festivals and film criticism. Finally, the article focuses on Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998), as a perfect example of comparative cinema, and of a philosophy or thought on the relationship between cinema and the world.

KEYWORDS

Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Film (BAFICI), film festivals, programming criteria, spectator, comparative cinema, new Argentinian cinema, digital technology, Júlio Bressane, Jonas Mekas, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

From 2001 to 2004 I was the director of the Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema (Bafici). It wasn't a difficult task. Our main problem since 2002 was one of funding, since Argentina was facing an extremely difficult financial situation. What was most complicated was to get international agents to grant us rights to screen their films for just a few dollars. Thankfully, however, from 1999 – when the festival was founded – until 2001 the voice was spread that it was an interesting venue and the covetous international agents looked at us sympathetically. So it was only a question of selecting the films and screening them there. We had a great advantage: there were a lot of film-makers whose work had never before been screened in Argentina. For instance, only one film by the Straub had been screened before that, which says it all. But the public was also eager, a bit tired of commercial premieres and nostalgic of original and more varied menus, as the ones that were common a few years back in Buenos Aires. To give an example: prior to my first edition as director of the festival, I had seen at the 'Quinzaine des Réalisateurs' in Cannes the *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák*, Béla Tarr, 2000), which had interested me a great deal. A Dutch friend, critic Peter Van Bueren, had always told me about Tarr and I was very curious to see a film by him. Later on I discovered that Tarr had made a 7-hour film titled *Sátántangó* (Béla Tarr, 1994). I immediately realised that a film with such title, in black and white and with unending sequence-shots could not fail in a city like Buenos Aires. We programmed both the *Werckmeister Harmonies* and *Sátántangó* and they were a great success. *Sátántangó* was screened in a full house twice, spectators fought to get tickets and everyone left the screening completely mesmerised. Except for my mother, who was mysterious mistrust of hungarians. Until the day of her death, she reproached me for having shown that film. I can't refute it because I never saw *Sátántangó*, but I thought Béla was a charming chap.

As I say, that was very easy. It sufficed with a little intuition, being ready to run risks (which weren't too great) and use snobbery (without

which cultural endeavours are impossible) in our favour. What we had to offer was new, fresh, exotic. And was renewed every year. We had good international advisors, such as Mark Peranson, who is now the Programming Director at Locarno, or Olaf Möller, who always knew a lot of rare Filipino film-makers. It all went so well, that the local press asked us what was the next unknown genius we would introduce, rather than asking to bring certain celebrity film-makers. At that time, there weren't any internet downloads yet, nor classic and rare DVD editions, and to know the novelties one had to travel or wait until the next Bafici.

It is true that glamour always helps: in 2001 Jim Jarmusch came, which almost as having Mick Jagger. And Oliver Assayas came together with Maggie Cheung, his wife at the time. I remember all the staff, starting by the director, queuing to get their photo taken with Maggie. But we also had a Korean film showcase, just at the time when Korean film was coming back at its best. Lee Chan-dong was a member of the jury and we showed his films alongside those by Hong Sang-soo, Bong Jung-ho or Jang Sun-woo, which together with some of their films shown in previous occasions produced a few lovers of Korean cinema in Buenos Aires. Let me say that the winner of that year was Jia Zhangke with *Platform* (2001). Jia had already come to Buenos Aires in 1999 with *Xiao Wu* (1998), a film that dazzled me but wasn't awarded any prizes that year (it was shown in 16mm!); I was determined to repair that mistake and achieved to do so. We invited Jonathan Rosenbaum to be part of the jury, and thus do the job. The other members of the jury were Beatriz Sarlo, a prestigious Argentinian intellectual, Simon Field, director of the Rotterdam Film Festival and, although he cancelled his trip at the last minute, Roberto Bolaño also figures in the catalogue. Glamour, but glamour for connoisseurs.

And in case this wasn't enough, there was the 'nuevo cine', or Argentinian independent cinema, which was very trendy at the time. In

1999 Pablo Trapero had presented *Mundo grúa* (1999) at the Bafici, and went on to have great international exposure. From then onwards many programmers from international film festivals decided to come to Buenos Aires to try to catch something. This placed us in a complicated position, and the production that year wasn't particularly interesting, although it included *Sábado* (Juan Villegas, 2001) and *Balnearios* (Mariano Llinás, 2001). Until one day appeared a shy young man with long hair and a VCR. It was Lisandro Alonso, who came to ask if we might be interested in *La libertad* (*Freedom*, 2001). We were mesmerised and hugged each other as if we had signed Messi for the local football team, but in a few days he had been invited to Cannes. In the end, Thierry Frémaux allowed us to screen the film outside the competitive section. We got a draw of sorts. It was very difficult at the time to discover anything from Buenos Aires. Not even Lisandro Alonso. In the coming years, the colonialism of the festivals would become even more exacerbated thanks to the laboratories and grants to develop projects, the workshops at Sundance, the residency at Cannes: the film-makers of the future had their training centres in the *Masías* of the First World.¹

However programming is more than achieving worldwide premieres – a game played by all the major festivals but for peripheral venues such as the Bafici is completely absurd and also leads to lower the quality of the selection. If an Argentinian film-maker achieves to get some interest from Berlin or Locarno, let alone Cannes, he or she will very rarely present it at Buenos Aires. To get it right with a new discovery is a question of luck. And to seduce the audience is mostly to do with being astute. But even so there is a margin for inspiration and trade, and that margin is expanded when one understands that putting together a catalogue is not only about selecting a series of films based upon the personal taste of

the organisers. Anyone with a minimum degree of taste and experience as spectator can say yes or no with certain efficiency. I have some relatives who enjoy going to the cinema regularly and who wouldn't do a worst job than some of the film programmers I have known over the years, even if they are certain to have an exquisite taste and that they have to show it with each election.

Over recent years, even if the Bafici has remained a more than respectable festival, programmers' votations became the norm to decide on the selection of films. What a nonsense. This is not an activity that can benefit in any way from such democratic attitudes. I believe that this method was derogated only this years, under the directorship of Marcelo Panozzo – who was a programmer during my tenure. What did we do at the time then, since it is impossible for a team of four, as we were at the time, to agree in every decision? In the first instance, it is important to build an architecture, a series of sections that complement and strengthen each other, and that avoid creating unequal hierarchies so that the festival doesn't have an expected centre and an ignored periphery but rather a diversity which is as compact as possible (amongst the festivals that I have visited, only the one in Marseille came anywhere close to such compactness and coherence, even if not all the titles were worthwhile; but the programme is much smaller than the one at Bafici; Locarno, under Olivier Père also had something of that). The unknown film-makers and odd sections need to be sold more than anyone anything else, so that they become at least as attractive to the spectators as the competitive section, if not more – which should in any case be eliminated altogether, as the Viennale has managed to do. (Another merit of the Viennale is that it avoids being invaded by producers and film-makers looking for money in the work in progress sessions and other young talents competitions that I contributed to implement, alas, in Buenos Aires.)

1. Translator's note: The author establishes a comparison here with the training centre of the Football Club Barcelona, where Messi amongst other players was trained

since a young age and which is popularly known as 'la Masía' because its headquarters are in a traditional Catalan farmhouse.

Then there is the important problem of the editorial line. There must be one, even if provisional, because the ones looking for films must have a fixed direction and not wander around festivals going to any screening room, when we now know that the probability that a film picked up randomly in Toronto, Rotterdam or San Sebastián is any good is extremely low. One knows that the programming criteria of most festivals are so aberrant that one can only trust the selection in an inverted mode (if they included that film, it means that something must be wrong with it). If there is anything I feel proud of from my tenure at Bafici is that from the second year the team of programmers (my companion, Flavia de la Fuente, Panozzo and Luciano Monteagudo) knew what we were looking for. And what were we looking for? Films that were alive and that were as removed as possible from the festival *mainstream*, characterised by academicism, youthfulness, gruesomeness and exoticism. We even had certain secret rules, such as not showing films about terminal illness, or too much scriptwriting, or too much production. We preferred genre films or sloppy attempts and we even realised that we had to flee from the ‘creative documentaries’, those monstrosities created for European television, and that it was much more worthwhile to show films than to inform about something. What we chose might have been difficult or demanding, but not in a predictable manner. Our aim was that nothing shown tasted like old, mellow wine. If spectators enjoyed those years of the Bafici is because they entered in the spiderweb that we weaved for them without even realising it. Once we showed a film titled *Chicken Rice War* (Chee Kong Cheah, 2000), a Romeo and Juliette of sorts set in Singapur. A charming jerk, just like the one about a gay Thai volley team, whose title I have forgotten. Such films were considered unworthy of the most prestigious festivals, and that made them the more interesting. It was a great pleasure to combine a retrospective of Hou Hsiao-Hsien with a melodrama set amongst clandestine racing car drivers in Rome, of which a high-brow jury even asked if we were forced to show it because of a commercial commitment. I still laugh today.

Panozzo seems to remember that the motto we used at the time as ‘genre and avant-garde’, as a way of excluding what was in the middle: those films made to wander from one festival to the next. We didn’t always get it right, we didn’t always have the courage to reject questionable or dishonest films. And we were (naturally) concessive with Argentinian films. But in some way we managed to make films dialogue with each other, and we managed to make a festival that was interesting because of the selection of films and their relationship with each other. Or, at least, I would like to think so. If something characterises programming for festivals is that they don’t leave tangible traces. It is all gone once produced and it one doesn’t get much out of conducting an autopsy to the catalogue: as years go by, many films become unknown and is not possible either to detect the omissions of the programmers or the reasons of certain presences and absences.

But it all changed a lot from 2004 until the present time. Over these years digital technology has made possible another way of circulating films. To the internet downloads – legal and illegal – one must add DVD launches that allow the work of more or less hidden film-makers to be recuperated. Festivals have lost their charisma because they are no longer the exclusive heart of cinephilia. I have just read a tweet which reads: ‘Yûzô Kawashima’s *Bakumatsu taiyôden* (1957) will be soon released in Blu-ray! One of Japanese cinema’s hidden gems!’ I am not sure what this man is talking about, but in 2001 Twitter didn’t exist, nor did Blu-ray, and there weren’t as many films available in circulation so that this man could say something like this. These changes have brought about an increasing number of film experts across the world, and the festivals lose symbolic power and charisma. To be deeply surprised is less usual nowadays – and surprises seem to be increasingly isolated. Let me give some examples. I remember seeing a retrospective of Pere Portabella at a recent Bafici (after my tenure), a film-maker relatively unknown, even in Spain. Almost by chance, a few of us were dazzled by the first film screened, and we ended up carrying

more and more spectators to the next ones. But I am not sure with which contemporary cinema do Portabella's films dialogue, even if they are themselves very current. Another instance was the exceptional film *Mafrouza* (Emmanuelle Demoris, 2007), which I had the chance to award as a member of the jury of Locarno in 2010. That film anticipated in some way the Egyptian revolution, or rather visualised its breeding ground. No one thought about that film in historical terms, the importance and depth of its perspective weren't evident either. *Mafrouza* doesn't dialogue with the 'political cinema' made today, so full of certainty and evidence as it was fifty years back. It is another isolated film, which had a lot of trouble to circulate in festivals and didn't find there a great audience either. A third example is that of Júlio Bressane, one of the most atypical film-makers, whose aesthetic project seems to go against the grain of anything else being made today. I saw the first film by Bressane in Turin (*Days of Nietzsche in Turin* [Júlio Bressane, 2001], precisely). I didn't understand it. Years later, in 2010, I bumped into Bressane and some of his films in Valdivia. Only there did I begin to understand that I was in front of a film-maker who was not only very valuable but also unique. This year the Bafici has announced a Bressane retrospective. Perhaps he will manage to dazzle a few spectators, and this would be enough of a reward for the festival. But I don't think that Bressane's cinema resonates with the films shown at the festivals nowadays, nor that there are many critics interested in giving him the attention he deserves. Although there is always a PhD student looking for an understudied topic.

The main reason of the isolation I perceive in these examples is that, in my opinion, a paradigm of cinema for festivals has been established, a paradigm that unifies at the same time that excludes, and that brings together a couple of recent trends in contemporary cinema: on the one hand, there is an increasing search for young talent, whose films are overseen by the funders that co-produce them. These films are mostly based on the script, and are very premeditated in their length, effects

and folkloric colour. On the other hand, there are the new masters, those belonging to the generation that has emerged over recent years, increasingly veering towards fine art formats and undertaking installations and curated projects for museums. Add to this the films made with the big awards in mind. Cannes can award an academic and wighty film-maker such as Haneke, as much as a light and inspired one such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul, but in the end there is not much difference between one and the other, because they are both part of the establishment, of the glamour. Eventhough there are more and more films being made, the invisibility of the great majority is incerasingly exacerbated. The festivals and their relatives, the cinémathèques, are more and more professionalised, critics are more savvy, but this only reverberates in a small minority of initiated, those who are able to manage large volumes of information.

I will end by discussing Godard and Jonas Mekas. Whom can one otherwise mention in relation to these subjects? Mekas always defended the small forms in cinema, the films made for one's friends, and outside the history of art. Those films are decidedly not in the festivals, and until they are not there, cinema will get lost in the frivolity of its huge apparatus, an apparatus that is not only industrial but also mediatic and academic, and which only professionals can decodify and use. The films made by the people for which Mekas sings require an audience made of people and not experts. Godard speaks instead of the dialogue between films, of criticising a film with another one, of the possibility of comparing shots, photograms and structures, something that the digital era has made accessible to everyone. At the times of Henri Langlois, this was only made possible by spending one's days at the Cinémathèque and even so, one ran the risk of producing accurate impressions. Godard spoke of comparing films many years back and gave us the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1988–98), the greatest lecture of comparative cinema ever. But even if Godard might have founded an academic discipline, his aim was never to ask

questions that could be answered by the students in an exam, such as: How many shots does Fritz Land use in comparison to Murnau? What does Godard compare then? Let me please make a last detour.

A few years back, and shortly before his death, I met critic and film-maker Jean-André Fieschi in Viena and asked him about his years at *Cahiers du cinéma*, in the early 60s. We commented upon passing a film about the *Cahiers* made by Edgardo Cozarinsky and which has the particularity of having irritated both the *cahierists* and their enemies (Fieschi didn't like it either). Frédéric Bonnaud appears at some point in the film and pronounces a simple but conclusive sentence: 'The *Cahiers* won'. I reminded this to Fieschi and he answered: 'If the *Cahiers* had won, we wouldn't be as we are.' Fieschi didn't refer to the journal here, or to film criticism, but to the state of the world in general. Now I go back to Godard. There is a moment in the *Histoire(s) du cinéma* that

I deem extremely important. It is when Jean-Paul Sartre appears speaking of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) and we hear him saying: 'This is not our path.' *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is, amongst many other things, a refutation of that sentence. Or, in other words, a way of saying that during a certain period of time, a group of young critics, later film-makers – drawing on the work of a crazy film programmer (Langlois), a catholic intellectual (Bazin) and the work of a handful of European and American film-makers – understood that the *philosophie indépassable de notre temps* was not marxism, but cinema. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is, in my opinion, the history of that moment, the only one when cinema truly worked as a medium through which to look beyond cinema in a convincing and revolutionary way. Thus the comparison that comparative cinema was able to make then – and that Godard has been making all along – was not amongst films, but between the cinema and the world. This is also missing nowadays. ●

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Transmission at the Cinémathèques

Antonio Rodrigues

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Henri Langlois and João Bénard da Costa is at the heart of the influence that the Cinémathèque Française exerted over the Portuguese Cinematheque, as well as of the transmission and circulation of ideas and programming models at play between both institutions. Commenting on some of the characteristic traits of both Langlois and da Costa, this essay also traces the evolution of the Portuguese Cinematheque, founded in 1958. Langlois's support was key during a period of great economic hardship, under the directorship of Manuel Félix Ribeiro, and further extended since da Costa became a regular collaborator. In particular, the article mentions the important retrospective dedicated to Roberto Rossellini in 1973, just before the Carnation Revolution that overthrew the dictatorship in Portugal in 25 April 1974. Furthermore, the author elaborates on the similarities and differences between both film programmers, and in particular analyses programmes based on the relationships or 'secret links' between films, from the early programmes created by Langlois in the 1930s to da Costa's later programmes, such as 'Lang in America' (1983) and 'Variations on Oz' (1992).

KEYWORDS

Henri Langlois, João Bénard da Costa, Portuguese Cinematheque, programming criteria, Auteur theory, film seasons, Roberto Rossellini, spectator.

—What is your dearest dream?
 —To die during a screening.
 Dialogue from *Brigitte et Brigitte* (1966),
 by Luc Moullet

Henri Langlois (1914–77) was the real inventor of the profession of film programming and can also be considered the greatest film programmer, or at least the most influential. This probably has to do with the fact that he was also the greatest cinephile of all times. Langlois transformed his passion for cinema in a way of living and knew, better than anyone else, how to transmit it. This is why he wrote part of the history of cinema: he taught to see because he enabled to see. Thanks to his programmes, the films mentioned in books, in the histories of cinema and in the filmographies acquired a form of reality. Langlois, who awoke so many vocations (for cinephiles, programmers, filmmakers) was a self-taught man, as so many generations of cinephiles who succeeded him – even those who held institutional positions as programmers had often undertaken studies in other fields at university. One of his adversaries, MoMA's Richard Griffith, criticised him in privately saying, 'he is not an archivist, or a historian, he is only... an enthusiast!' When he found out about the comment, Langlois found very funny that enthusiasm was considered a negative quality and saw in this argument a justification of his own despise for his colleague at MoMa (ROUD, 1983: 133). Langlois wasn't someone to prompt consensus, he rather stirred up unconditional friendships or lethal hatred. And Langlois himself divided the world up between friends and enemies, people with whom he shared affinities, and whom he trusted and others that he mistrusted. Naturally it was

possible for a friend to become an enemy, but the opposite was more unlikely. With some, he could be very generous, but he would not give anything in to others, 'with his extraordinary mix of inspiration and preconceived ideas, generosity and envy', as Jacques Ledoux, from the Belgian Cinémathèque, would say after his death, adding: 'he was at the origin of many Cinémathèques (even the one I run), and this I shall never forget' (ROUD 1983: 205)¹. The Portuguese Cinémathèque is amongst the many small and poor institutions with which Langlois was extremely generous, and upon which he still casts a shadow today. Founded in 1958, thanks to the passion and efforts of Manuel Félix Ribeiro (1906–82), who was its director until his death, this Cinémathèque only started to work in decent conditions in the 1980s, when it ceased being poor and started to cease being small. Between 1958 and 1980, the Portuguese Cinémathèque didn't enjoy the conditions to show regular programmes, and could only afford to show two or three seasons per year. Henri Langlois, for pure cinephilic friendship with Félix Ribeiro, created three filmic and cultural events in Lisboa in the first half of the 1960s. Three big silent cinema seasons, one dedicated to French cinema (1962), another one to German cinema (1963) and the third to American cinema (1965). These seasons, programmed by Langlois with his own films copies, brought together films that he regularly showed in Paris, but which had never been shown in Lisboa in that way, brought together under a historical and cinephilic perspective.

1. Roud also cites the testimony of Françoise Jaubert (daughter of Maurice Jaubert), to whom Ledoux said:

'Langlois was also my father, as well as he was yours.'

Amongst the people involved in the Portuguese Cinémathèque, Langlois's had a particularly strong relationship with João Bénard da Costa (1935–09), who granted the institution with a prestige and international projection unknown before his time. Cinephile and strongly influenced by French culture, Bénard didn't have the opportunity to see the great classics during his formative years, because they were absolutely inaccessible in Lisboa during the 1950s and 60s, due to political censorship, poverty and the country's isolation more generally. For instance, in 1958, when he was 23 and made his first trip to Paris, Bénard ran to 'Langlois's Cinémathèque to kill the thirst of years': he could finally see *The Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925). In other visits to Paris, alongside new films that he knew he would never be able to see in Portugal, he saw many classics at the Cinémathèque Française, which thus ceased being imagined films and became real films. He observed: 'how to explain (...) the emotion that filled you once you entered the room (...) knowing that you would finally see *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Birth of a Nation* (David W. Griffith, 1915), *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (Friedrich W. Murnau, 1927) or *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (*La passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1928), on which we had so much read, seen dozens of photographs, and now they were there before our eyes, on a cinema screen? That can only be lived, not told' (DA COSTA 1986: 30). Eleven years after that first visit as a spectator to the Cinémathèque Française, João Bénard joined the film department at the Foundation Calouste Gulbenkian, which he started to programme in 1971. But his true debut as a film programmer took place in November 1973, with a Roberto Rossellini retrospective, organised with the help of Henri Langlois, who may well have been the real programmer of the season. Langlois came to Lisboa for the opening screening, together with Rossellini, who was his personal friend, and a usual suspect in Paris but it was an extraordinary

luxury to see him in Lisboa. Even if the fact that the programme took place at the well-funded Gulbenkian Foundation had probably sharpen Langlois's interest, whose Cinémathèque lived under a permanent state of crisis over the last years, it can still be seen as an example of the generosity of which he was capable. However, something transformed the opening of this Rossellini season into an exceptional event. Four months before the Carnation Revolution that overthrew Salazar's regime, the opening screening became a small political demonstration: at the end of *Roma, Open City* (*Roma, città aperta*, 1945), the audience stood up, enthusiastic, and amongst the applauses to Rossellini, one could hear people shouting 'hall freedom!' and 'down with fascism'. The ministers attending the screening left the room immediately. This was the first professional contact between Henri Langlois and João Bénard da Costa.

From then onwards, João Bénard developed a personal and professional friendship with Langlois and his wife, Mary Meerson, and he identified himself with the founder of the Cinémathèque Française to the point that until the end of his days he would always have a framed photograph of himself and Langlois in his office. It is true that both men shared similar traits (a liking of secrets, a certain dose of paranoia, perhaps more theatrical in Langlois and more spontaneous in Bénard), but they also had important differences. Langlois was chaotic and behaved himself as an eccentric outcast, whereas Bénard didn't turn up his nose at formalisms and protocol. Even if he could be authoritarian at times, Langlois had a democratic temperament and even says in the *Anticours*²: 'None of my collaborators has to call me 'Monsieur le Directeur'. They can call me "shit"'. In this respect, João Bénard was completely different. From a certain moment, his form of programming acquired precise Langlois-like contours. But this only happened from 1980 onwards, when he started programming at the

2. *Les Anti-cours d'Henri Langlois (1976–77)*, by Harry Fischbach, four hours and fifteen minutes of interviews

with Langlois, produced by the television of Ontario (Canada).

Portuguese Cinémathèque. Throughout the first nine years at the Gulbenkian Foundation, João Bénard didn't programme on a regular basis, which obliged him to be very imaginative. At the Foundation, he programmed solid, integral monographic seasons: Mizoguchi, Rivette, Bresson, Truffaut. Langlois also programmed monographic seasons, but alternated them with other programmes. Most importantly, he didn't feel the need to organise the screenings in seasons. He would make the most unlikely pairings, since what was most important for him was to see films, as many as possible. His method consisted in lacking one and in rejecting criteria of 'good taste' or 'low' or 'high' culture. In the 1970s, Bénard organised three great seasons of American cinema (1930s, 40s and 50s), but programmed them in a didactic and chronological manner, showing only the great titles. Such a programme is no way Langlois-like but was very much needed in the Lisboa of the 1970s in order to produce an audience, whereas in Paris Langlois had the most cinephile audience worldwide, due to the exceptional offer in the cinemas across the city. In the 1970s, Bénard offered audiences in Lisboa films that had never been seen there before, or which had not been screened over the last twenty or thirty years, in order to offer a basic film education and be able to leap on a less conventional territory later on. Another crucial difference was that Bénard was an orthodox Auteurist, taking to its last consequences the Auteur Theory of the *Cahiers du cinéma* of the 1950s: for him, there were the elected few filmmakers, who formed part of a family, who could not commit any errors or make films that weren't great; and the damned ones, without hope. Langlois, on the other hand, was more of a *filmist* than an *Auteurist*. Furthermore, he played a key role in the formation of the first generation of critics at *Cahiers*, who had so crucially influenced Bénard himself: their position in relationship to critics and criticism was completely opposed.

However there is an important aspect in the conception of Langlois's programme that found a lasting echo in the activity of Joao Bénard:

the ludic aspect, the pleasure of composing the menu of films included in the programme. Langlois enjoyed programming for an imaginary spectator that would attend all the screenings in a day (and in 1950s and 60s Paris, this spectator did indeed exist). He thus imagined secret bridges between the most disparate films. The poetic intuition that led Langlois to programme for an imaginary spectator is already manifest in the first programme he organised, even before founding the Cinémathèque Française. In 1934 he rented a small room in the Champs Elysées that he called 'Le Cinéma Fantastique', and where he screened three feature films in a row and without any breaks: *The Fall of the House of Usher* (*La chute de la maison Usher*, Jean Epstein, 1928), *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1920) and *The Last Warning* (Paul Leni, 1929). Still in the 1930s, he screened double bills such as *Shoulder Arms* (Charles Chaplin, 1918) and *An Italian Straw Hat* (*Un chapeau de paille d'Italie*, René Clair, 1928). Eric Rhode observed that the influence that Langlois exerted on the members of the future Nouvelle Vague during their formative years, in the second half of the 1940s, was not only due to the amount of films that he showed, but also to how he showed them. 'Langlois showed three films per day, creating unexpected but revealing juxtapositions, such as screening an Eisenstein before a Walsh or a Hitchcock after a Mizoguchi. His regular spectators were the first ones to have their sensibility immersed in the history of cinema since its very beginning.' (*A History of Cinema*, 1969, quoted in ROUD, 1983). In 1963 Langlois brought to the New York Film Festival the then very rare *L'Âge d'or* (Luis Buñuel, 1930), but preceded its screening with something very different: a selection of films by the Lumière brothers. The audience didn't like the mix very much and was impatient during the screening. Langlois then said to Richard Roud, the director of the festival: 'don't ever forget that one programmes for a 10 per cent of the public. Nothing matters, as long as that per cent is happy'. (ROUD, 1983: 130)

João Bénard also appreciated this sort of programme, he also enjoyed proposing clues that only he knew and which could sometimes become private jokes. It wasn't a form of imitation but of filiation, one of the marks of the relationship between those two men, born twenty years apart and who nevertheless had a very intense relationship between six brief years. When Bénard took a certain distance from the monographic season, which were his main passion, he established imaginary bridges between the films, just as Langlois would also do. In the 1983 season 'Fritz Lang in America', he didn't present the films in a chronological order, but rather in chapters, an ordering that required that spectators followed the whole programme in order to perceive its meaning: nine films on guilt, five on absolute evil, four on adventure, to finish with 'four works *sui generis* that will articulate these circumstances: *Secret Beyond the Door* (1947), *Clash by Night* (1952), *The Blue Gardenia* (1953), *Human Desire* (1954). This we begin with guilt and finish with desire.' In 1992 he organised a programme titled 'Variations on Oz', since he considered *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming et al, 1939) 'a superb metaphor of cinema, its Ovidian metamorphosis, one of the most subtle "films on

films" of the history of cinema' (DA COSTA, 2008). This 1992 season was programmed for the imaginary spectator who would leave a screening only to enter into another diptych or triptych: *The Wizard of Oz* and *From the Life of the Marionettes* (*Aus dem Leben der Marionetten*, Ingmar Bergman, 1980); *Belle de Jour* (Luis Buñuel, 1967) and *The Night of the Iguana* (John Huston, 1964); *Moonfleet* (Fritz Lang, 1955), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) and *Mouchette* (Robert Bresson, 1967). In this context, a film gained meaning – or another meaning – when placed next to another one.

If all spectators and film programmers are Henri Langlois's children, many are unaware of this because, as François Truffaut said, 'Langlois only believed in education by osmosis' (and he added: 'And so do I.'). João Bénard da Costa was completely aware that he was a cinephile and a son of Langlois via *cinephilia*, a *ciné-fils* (to use Serge Daney's expression). He had a very strong character and this is precisely why instead of hiding the influence Langlois had on him, He knew that this situated him amongst those who programme films as their passion and want to communicate that passion because they are *enthusiasts*.

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He contributed to the *Dictionnaire du Cinéma Mondial* (Éditions du Rocher), *Dictionnaire – 900 Cinéastes Français* (Éditions Bordas) and *Journeys of Desire* (British Film Institute). In 2008 he sobre las representaciones de Rio de Janeiro in cinema, and in 2010 *João Bénard da Costa – Um Programador de Cinema*. Since 2011 he is a programming adviser of Cinecoa, a cinema festival in Vila Nova da Foz Côa (Portugal).

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14/09/1968, a Programme by Henri Langlois

Pablo García Canga

ABSTRACT

Henri Langlois's programmes are well-known for tracing secret relationships between the films that were screened throughout a day, tracing conceptual and aesthetic links for an ideal spectator that could watch all of them. This essay analyses Langlois's film programme for 14 September 1968, which included *Blind Husbands* (Eric von Stroheim, 1919), *The Big Sky* (Howard Hawks, 1952), *Bonjour Tristesse* (Otto Preminger, 1958) and *Bande à part* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964). The author looks for approximations and relationships of different nature, as if the four films – belonging to different historical periods and modes of production – were part of a montage that enabled us to perceive, or discover, new aspects of each of the films. The article proposes relations of two and three amongst the films, in search of links that could bring together the four films. It also suggests that it is precisely triangular relationships – the difficulty or impossibility to include three in a couple – that emerges as the common ground of all four films. Programming becomes thus an interpretative game.

KEYWORDS

Henri Langlois, Cinémathèque Française, *L'affaire Langlois*, Eric von Stroheim, Howard Hawks, Otto Preminger, Jean-Luc Godard, programming strategies, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

I have understood, Capitan!
I have understood!

1 Imagine you are twenty years old that year.

1968, not one more or one less.

Imagine you arrive to Paris that September. September, with its end-of-holiday flavour, the time of going back to school or to work. A September just like any other, yes, but exacerbated, because that year hasn't been like any other and it is not only the return after the summer holidays, but also the return from May'68, from the exceptional. In June the right had won the elections and this September is more September than any other.

2

Imagine that it is any afternoon, the afternoon of Saturday 14, for example, and that around two thirty you leave your small bedroom and walk across Paris to attend the first session of the Cinémathèque at the Palace de Chaillot.

Imagine that that is what you have been doing every afternoon for two weeks, since you arrived to Paris. To go to the Cinémathèque, and attend the screenings organised by Henri Langlois. This is why you've come to Paris. This is what distinguishes it from other cities: a screen that is not like any other. Because the one who decides what to screen is unlike any other.

3

Even so you were almost too late. Because in February the Ministry of Culture, led by André Malraux, had been about to replace Langlois. The film-makers of the Nouvelle Vague, and later

the old masters and the new contemporary film-makers, from France and across the world, had stood up together, had organised demonstrations, had banned the screening of their films at the Cinémathèque unless Langlois was readmitted.

Langlois had come back. Cinephilia had triumphed. And it had inadvertently rehearsed what would come later on, in May.

4

You walk across Paris and you know what you are going to watch. Four films.

(Four, they are four, the four evangelists, goes a song that you don't know at the time. One musn't exaggerate, they could also be three, then it would be a trinity, with the primary colours. Each number is, when studied carefully, the most important one.)

At three *Blind Husbands* (Eric von Stroheim, 1919).

At half past six *The Big Sky* (Howard Hawks, 1952).

At half past eight *Bonjour Tristesse* (Otto Preminger, 1958).

(At half past eight? Probably later. Someone didn't notice the duration of *The Big Sky*. Hawks makes long films, even if he doesn't seem to.)

At half past ten *Bande à part* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964).

From 1919 to 1964, 45 years of cinema, of one cinema only, beyond categories, periods, movements and countries.

5 You already know one of the films. *Bonjour Tristesse*. Or perhaps not. Because you have seen it but can hardly remember it. You didn't know how to watch it. An adaptation of a best-seller. A film for the wealthy. But you know that today you'll watch it otherwise.

You know that Langlois's programmes don't leave anything open to chance.

Or perhaps they leave everything open to chance, but to a chance that doesn't exist. It is like playing cards. From chance, the inevitable is born. If one wants to believe in it. You don't know it already, but Langlois believes in fortune tellers and often asks them for advice

His programmes are born from an intuition, of unexpected kinships between films that seemed distant one from the others. Between them passages are weaved, symetries, familiarities, at times evident, at others remote.

This is why you know that you won't watch *Bonjour Tristesse* in the same way, that it will be as if you had never watched it before. Because of the magic of programming. You trust Langlois. He believes in fortune tellers. You believe in his intuition.

6 Langlois – whom you have seen a couple of time between screenings, but to whom you have never dares to get close – reminds you of someone. You are nit sure of whom. You search in your memory, in the people that you have met throughout your life, but you can't find the likeness. It is only normal that you don't remember, because he doesn't remind you of someone real, but rather of a character from a novel, of a novel that you read years ago, in your early teenage years.

Langlois reminds you, even if you don't know

it, of the image that years ago you had created for yourself of Long John Silver. The imposing presence. The charisma. The untidy aspect, as if he was a Parisian pirate. But also the secret, the secret of the treasure.

You could think that, you could think that the four films of his programmes are like pieces of paper taht are meaningless on their own but which together, overlaid one top of the other, might give the coordinates of the treasure. What treasure? Perhaps to the old question: 'what is cinema?'

Imagine you are young and that such question worries you, that you take it seriously, convinced that there is a secret, the secret of a sect as it were, and that the day you understand it, then the world and the films will look otherwise, bathed in a new clarity.

7 What could possibly link these films together then?

During the screening you have felt that familiarity, and still you find it difficult to pin it down now. You calculate, add up and subtract, but you can't quite figure out how the four films work together. Two by two, at the most. Or three by three, perhaps.

8 *Blind Husbands* and *Bonjour Tristesse* are two holiday films. It makes sense. After all, it is September. The time to remember the summer that just went away.

Each film in its own terms is a story about holidays, as the compositions that one had to write at school. What did you do this summer? Well, we went away – my father and I, or my husband and I – and then a third person appeared, who was also spending the holidays there, and used to spend time with us and, well, the truth is that that person is now dead, yes, the truth is that that person didn't survive the summer, or the holidays for that matter.

As you think that, you oddly envy their tragic holidays. Would yours do for a film? No, no way. You are envious of those who live stories worth telling.

Then you perceive another point in common. They are also films about seduction. About an expert of seduction. Von Stroheim in one of them, David Niven in the other. On the lightness of seduction, but also its gravity. Or about its danger. After all, we have already said, one of the characters is dead in each film. The one who doesn't belong to the initial pair.

The lightness of seduction and of the summer; its tragic conclusion.

You also think about the parallel between two German and bold film-makers, with a Hollywood carrier, and how by coincidence they were both Billy Wilder's actors embodying German officials. You think about that but perhaps it is better to leave it here.

9 *The Big Sky* and *Bande à Part*: there are two men. Two men doing as they please. Two men that spend their days playing to hit and shoot each other, playing truant, going to the edge of the river or the canal. All of this at the margin of civilisation, a margin that is for some the great North West and which has been reduced for others to the periphery of the big city.

There are two men and the possibility to win a lot of money. But they need a woman for this. A young Indian girl, the daughter of a chief who is the key to negotiating in the territory of the Blackfeet. Or a young woman who can let them into a house where there are a lot of dollar notes from a doubtful source.

They need the young woman but, at the same time, once she appears things can't remain the same. They do tricks and push each other to be able to seat next to her at the bar. There is always one too many. And she, well, she seems to prefer

one of them. Or maybe the other?

And all of this is told by a friendly voice over, which nevertheless never gets too close to them. Or with the lightness of the episodes that follow, and which diverge from the main story and return to it, perhaps because the story is so simple that both film-makers have the freedom to explore the margins themselves, to smuggle life in the film.

10 *Blind Husbands* and *Bonjour Tristesse*.

The Big Sky and *Bande à part*.

Is it a coincidence? The first with the third and the second with the fourth, As if it were a quatrain with an alternate rhyme.

A-B-A-B.

Perhaps that is one of the secrets of the programme, hidden verses and rhymes in what looks like a text in prose.

Another day the verses will be:

A: *The Avenging Conscience* (1914), by Griffith

B: *Destiny* (*Der müde Tod*, 1921) by Lang

A: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945), by Lewin

B: *Spellbound* (1945) de Hitchcock

The Avenging Conscience and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: an adaptation of *The Tell-Tale Heart* the first, of Oscar Wilde's novel the second, both are stories about hidden crimes behind a wall or a closed door, stories where the conscience of crime takes a physical and fantastical form.

Destiny and *Spellbound*: or a woman trying to rescue the man she loves from death (Lang) or from the morbid (Hitchcock).

Another day the films that will rhyme will be *Olympia* (1938) by Riefenstahl and *Passenger* (*Pasażerka*, 1963) by Munk (rhyme, as you can see, can also be based upon oppositions); *What Price Glory* (1952) by Ford and *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* (*Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach*, 1968), by Straub and Huillet. And so many others...

11 A-B-A-B: you wouldn't be able to know back then, but this is how Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98) will be organised, a project that was initially going to be realised in collaboration with Langlois.

A-B-A-B, but it is difficult to foresee whether *Histoire(s)* also has an alternate rhyme, or if perhaps all of this is to penetrate in a territory as trustworthy as the predictions of the clairvoyants. Or perhaps it is something that may only be clarified by a clairvoyant.

12 Already in 1937 Langlois had imagined the following programme for a 'Ghost Gala' (MANNONI, 2006: 63-64):

'1: *The Indian Tumbstone* (*Das indische Grabmal*, Joe May, 1921) (2 reels of film). The Raha unearths Goetzke and, having returned him to life, orders him to serve him. Goetzke stands up and disappears...

2: *Goetzke* (2 reels of film). A crossroad in Germany. Goetzke appears, stops his stagecoach and kidnaps Lil Dagover's fiancé. She leaves to look for him and arrives in front of a wall. He obtains the life of his fiancé from Death, in exchange for three human lives.

3: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1920) (1 reel of film). Lil Dagover arrives to Caligari's caravan, who introduces him to Cesare. Cesare kidnaps the young woman and then, persecuted, falls off on the highway. In darkness, a few seconds after the

last image, we hear the story of Pigeon-Terreur... then Barrault appears and performs a mime act.

4: The scene with Barrault finishes. For a second, nothing happens. Then we hear a corrosive music and on the screen we can see *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (*Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, Fritz Lang, 1933) (2 reels of film), music and a terrible noise, a man is frightened in a room, escapes, but there is an explosion. The man on the phone asks for help... The night...

5: *Kiss of Death* (*Dödskysssen*, Victor Sjöström, 1916). A window seen from the inside of a room, at night time, opens slightly, a tube snakes in and a gas fills the room; then a masked man crosses the room. Two men, hidden in the room and wearing gas masks follow him.

6: An American film: the bottom of the sea, two divers are fighting to death and over that time, instead of hearing the noise of the scene, we either hear the waltz of *Extraordinary Histories* (*Histoires extraordinaires*, Federico Fellini, Louis Malle and Roger Vadim, 1968), or the fight in the cabinet of wax figures of the same film (*Waxworks* [*Das Wachsfigurenkabinett*, Leo Birinsky and Paul Leni, 1924]). Fade to black. Agnès Capri appears on scene and sings. Intermission.

7: *Nosferatu* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, F.W. Murnau, 1922) (1 reel of film): Arrival to Nosferatu's country, the fantastic coachman, the dinner, the blood, the night, Nosferatu enters the room.

8: *The Fall of the House of Usher* (*La chute de la maison Usher*, Jean Epstein, 1928) (2 reels of film). The funeral or the end, I can hear her, she arrives, without the last images.

9: *Vampyr* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1932). The characters splits into two. A funeral seen from the point of view of the dead.

10: *The Student from Prague* (*Der Student von Prag*, Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener, 1913). The student

from Prague is in the guest house, and then his double appears, he flees away, the double follows him, the student only finds solace in death, mirror effect.

11: Music and Lilliom climbs to the sky'.

In its own terms: an episode from *Histoire(s)*. Chapter 0a: *Ghost Gala*.

13 But you don't know any of this that 14 September 1968, and it doesn't make much sense to speak about it.

The only thing you know then is that a secret thread ties the four films that you have just seen together. A thread that you can't seem to find.

Blind Husbands and *Bonjour Tristesse*: two films about holidays. But isn't *The Big Sky* a film about holidays too, in its own terms? It is true that the journey is not one of pleasure but, after all, it is a journey that lasts a summer time, until the cold weather announces that the winter is coming soon, that they must return to the South, to the city, to 'civilisation'. What matters then is not the holidays but the summer, which allows one to go far away, climb a mountain, go up the river or, at least, go to the beach.

In *Bonjour Tristesse*, Jean Seberg says, before the weather changes, 'let's breathe in the air'. These were the holidays, a time when one could simply breathe in the air, when that was enough. That was the journey in *The Big Sky*, in an even purest way, a time when it was unnecessary to say it, when one simply lived this way, breathing in the air.

(Langlois had said: 'in fact, a great film is one where we can feel the air between the characters' [ROHMER y MARDONE, 1962: 80]. Perhaps that was the secret of cone,a. The key element that had to enter in the composition: the air.)

And *Bande à part*? Is *Bande à part* a film about

holidays? It is not even a film about the summer and the characters go to school, but one could argue that it is a film about improvised holidays, those that one awards oneself. It is a film, we said, in which the characters live as school kids playing truant, and whom in fact seek excuses to miss their English lessons, as if they needed any at their age. It is summertime in the midst of winter, a rather sad, strenuous summer snatched from the cold and the grey, a summer for three in a world they don't care about and where the air they breathe is quickly transformed into their own breath.

14 Holiday films, yes, but all this is a bit of a stretch.

Try again with another clue. *The Big Sky* and *Bande à part*, the story of two men who live free and happy, as if they were kids, but then a woman crosses their way or, better said, they put a woman in their way and then nothing will ever remain the same between them, the harmony is forever broken.

And *Bonjour Tristesse*? They are father and daughter, true, but do they not live like children free to do as they please, without nothing interrupting their complicity until a woman, a woman-woman, crosses their way? Yes, it seems that the three films have to do with freedom and eternal adolescence, with freedom and its end.

Three films where there is dance and songs in the prime of life. *Oh Whiskey leave me alone* in *The Big Sky*, the madison in *Bande à part*, the dance of a whole bar expanding across the port in *Bonjour Tristesse*.

But in *Bande à part* they don't dance really together, they can never dance entirely together, the voice over doesn't tell us differently when it speaks out loud what is happening inside their heads: no matter what one does, no matter one what feels, there is an insurmountable loneliness.

And in the second dance of *The Big Sky*, aboard the ship, an arrow from nowhere is stuck in one of the dancers' neck and breaks in an instant of happiness.

Finally in *Bonjour Tristesse* the time of happiness is remembered from a present of disenchantment which is nevertheless a danced present. Jean Seberg and David Niven dance from party to party. But dance is not enough to make one happy. 'If I am happy when I dance, will dance not make me happy?' someone said in *Royal Wedding* (1951), by Stanley Donen. The answer in *Bonjour Tristesse* is clear: no, the phrase is not reversible.

15 And *Blind Husbands*? It doesn't seem to match with the other three. What is the time of innocence lost here? The film starts with the disenchantment, with a married couple where love no longer flows as it used to, and it concludes with the recovery of that love. A couple that is reconciled through the death of a third person.

The death of a third that also brings together a father and a daughter in *Bonjour Tristesse*, and which decides the final couple in that musical chairs game that is *Bande à part*.

But whereas in *Blind Husbands* the death of the other allows the recovery of happiness, in *Bonjour Tristesse* it only brings the melancholy of a shared guilt. It is no longer common freedom, but sadness, it is not a new idyll that starts, but rather they live with the awareness that that will no longer be possible. Life without turning back.

And in *Bande à part*? It is difficult to know how the death of the third will affect the recently formed couple. There doesn't seem to be an idyll there, but they don't seem to be under the weight of guilt for being the survivors, the bitterness of being the couple by default.

(Death in *Bande à part*: Arthur dies as he plays, just the way he falls pretending to have been shot when he has actually been shot for real. And in

Bonjour Tristesse it all begins with the child-like complot, until the game and its lightness become a tragedy).

In *The Big Sky*, in any case, none of them dies and the characters have become adults, without bitterness. The time of a shared childhood is over, yes, but it is seen as something positive, to leave behind certain pleasures, but also certain obsessions. To grow up is pleasurable. To grow up is simply possible.

16 The four films don't seem to match. Except, perhaps, now that you think about it, in the fact that they don't match. That might be what they have in common, in that they don't add up.

As the say doesn't say: there are not two with three.

It is in that impossibility of the number three where the four films meet each other.

They are different answers to the same question: what do we do with the number three? From this point they all go their different ways, paths that sometimes cross with the other three, and others radically diverge from them.

You then ask yourself another question: would then *Bande à part* be Godard's *Jules et Jim* (François Truffaut, 1962), with its black and white, its two men, its wife and voice over? Yes, it is his *Jules et Jim* precisely because departing from the same number, they finish by not being alike, it is because they don't have much in common in the end.

17 Could you then remember, or could you imagine that you remember, the other reason that brought you to Paris? It wasn't only cinema. Or cinema as a refuge, as a flight forward. A flight from the reminiscence of another 'there are no two with three', the reminiscence of other musical chairs that left you along the way. Without deaths, that is true, without tragedy,

only a certain sadness, and like the voice over read by Anna Karina in *Bande à part* says: ‘What to do then to kill the time that drags on?’ To go away. To visit the Louvre, or rather run across the Louvre. Or perhaps not, to visit it slowly perhaps, to get lost in the paintings, to get lost in the films at the Cinémathèque.

18 You could imagine Langlois, poor and wasteful, in his office, organising the programme as one that does the pools. 1X2. Looking for the infallible programme, where all variants fit. At the end, the big prize, cinema as a completely visible mystery.

But this pool won’t resolve anything because in cinema, in programming, there is no end. The only thing that matters is to end with the possibility of going back to the beginning, cinema doesn’t stop, there are always new possible combinations.

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You could also imagine him attending a screening at the Cinémathèque, amongst real and imaginary enemies, the order of the screen silencing the disorder of his own life, casting a spell upon it.

You could imagine him leaving the screening calmed down. His image then becomes confused with your own, also calmer, ready to live in a time that doesn’t drag on, a time that deserves to be lived, both walking in silence in the streets of Paris, at night.

Tomorrow afternoon you will come back.

Sunday 15 September 1968: *Golem (Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam*, Carl Boese and Paul Wegener, 1920), *Une vie* (Alexandre Astruc, 1958), *Wild Strawberries (Smultronstället*, Ingmar Bergman, 1957), *Marie pour mémoire* (Philippe Garrel, 1967).

1X2. Back to the beginning. ●

HENRY, JABELY, JEAN, SIGNORET, SIMONE & CARNÉ, MARCEL (1968). *Conférence de presse. Cahiers du cinéma*, n° 199, March, pp.34-44.

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‘Jeune, Dure et Pure ! Une histoire du cinéma d’avant-garde et expérimental en France’. Programming as a Montage of Films and Thinking about Film: a Gaie Audiovisual Science

Emilie Vergé

ABSTRACT

This essay discusses the retrospective of experimental and avant-garde French film ‘Jeune, Dure et Pure !’ (Cinémathèque Française, 2000) as an example of pragmatic thought on film. Film programming is here considered as a way of producing thought on filmic forms and the history of film that uses repetition and variations of images with reflexive and meta-historical ends, as well as aesthetic ones. The forms and procedures of this form of thought on film deserve to be analysed and questioned: is it even possible to speak of an act of theory? What is most striking about this programme is the reevaluation of a theoretically, but also socio-economically problematic term such as ‘experimental film’. The relationships between the use of this term in film and in science have not been sufficiently studied so far. The programme introduces the distinction between ‘experimental’ and ‘avant-garde’ film, thus suggesting different forms of subversion. This form of comparison implies an underlying filmic thought based on the precise relationships established between the films programmed.

KEYWORDS

Programming, montage, aesthetics, experimental cinema, science, technique, invention, avant-garde, French cinema.

The film programme analysed here announces with significant vigour its ambition by using the title of a film radical film-maker and provocateur Maurice Lemaître : from 3 May until 2 July 2000 'Jeune, Dure et Pure !' offered to the spectators of the Cinémathèque Française, Paris a total of 82 screenings that composed a strong and beautiful experience of *gaie* audio-visual science. Comparable to a gigantic found footage film, the programme re-actualised the cognitive and aesthetic capacities of film montage – such as the selection and arrangement of the films – in order to rethink the history of experimental and avant-garde film in France. In addition to such pragmatic heuristics, the programme fulfilled a fundamental patrimonial role: to make visible films rarely seen and, at times, never before screened in public. A crucial task of the project, which extended over the two years preceding the screenings, consisted in locating, or re-locating, the films themselves.

'Jeune, Dure et Pure !' was conceived by film professor, writer and programmer Nicole Brenez and film-maker and editor Christian Lebrat, both actively involved in valorising experimental cinema.¹ The project was initiated by Dominique Païni, then director of the Cinémathèque Française, who had wished to consecrate a great retrospective to experimental cinema in France for some time. The fact that the institutional director of the project was a writer and exhibitions curator so committed to finding new and original ways to present film, was undoubtedly a favourable condition for this audacious corpus of film and thinking on film. The catalogue of the retrospective opens with an essay by each of the three contributors to the programme, followed by a discussion of the contents outline by Brenez, of a great value both in terms of film curating and thinking about film, since she defines and explains the lines of

thought that structure the programme, implicit in the selection and organisation of the films. This 600-pages publication, chiefly composed of texts and a few images (stills from some of the films included in the programme), brings together numerous texts of different nature such as essays commissioned from critics and theoreticians or reprints of writings by, and interviews with, film-makers. Given its volume and ambition, this book is one of the fundamental references on experimental and avant-garde film – too often and unfairly considered as marginal – alongside the writings of Dominique Noguez, such as *Éloge du cinéma expérimental*. However, the latter is not focused on French cinema as much as US underground cinema, an area to which Noguez also consecrated his *Une Renaissance du cinéma* and that has been profusely studied by US academics such as P. Adams Sitney in *Visionary Film*, or Annette Michelson in *New Forms in Film*.

It is instructive to compare the catalogue *Jeune, Dure et Pure !* To the catalogue of the experimental film collection of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, founded by Jean-Michel Bouhours and Peter Kubelka, which presents a panorama of international experimental film comparable in scope. The latter is presented as an inventory, classified alphabetically by the film-makers' names, whose films are selected and mostly screened in monographic and autonomous screenings. In contrast, I would like to argue that both the programme and the catalogue *Jeune, Dure et Pure !* articulate a form of thinking about, and through, film.

The singularity and strength of this project lies, on the one hand, on the effort and exhaustivity of its selection, which aims to represent the diversity of experimental and avant-garde film in France, from its origins up to the present time; and, on the other, on the theoretical propositions

1. Nicole Brenez is a professor at Université de Paris-3 and has written and coordinated a number of publications on experimental cinema; she also programmes the screening series 'Cinéma d'avant-garde' at the Cinémathèque

Française, Paris. Christian Lebrat is a film-maker and responsible for the book series Paris Experimental; three of his films were included in the programme.

that sustain the construction of the programme, founded on their planning and cohesion, either through a thought put into practice or a theorisation in action. In fact, a historical logic organises the programme in its whole, as indicated in the subtitle of the programme: 'Une histoire du cinéma expérimental et d'avant-garde français'. Hence the first screenings showed historical films, moving further chronologically up until the contemporary films, which were screened in the last events. However, this principle is not set in stone, since the journey allows for certain and significant turns; consider, for instance, the last screening, which brought together *Visa de censure* (Pierre Clémenti, 1968) and *Le Lit de la vierge* (Philippe Garrel, 1969) – hence altering the the chronological progression of the preceding sessions, including films from the 1990s and 2000s, in an attempt perhaps to bring the programme to an end with a beautiful historical leap. This 'histoire du cinéma expérimental et d'avant-garde français' claims as well its singularity, 'Une histoire'. It may be aiming to set a dialogue, an echo, a corrective figure or a discrete homage to the godardian ambition of the 'histoires du cinéma'. In any case, it is not a matter of agreed humbleness; it is rather an affirmative endeavour. What are, then, the challenges of this gaie audio-visual science, of this significant re-montage of the history of cinema? An alaysis of the programme may allow us to clarify certain principles and glimpse at certain sparks of thought produced by the encounter of the films.

The global composition of the corpus, described as 'cinéma expérimental et d'avant-garde français', already implies a thesis on the representation of cinema. The use of both terms, rather than one or the other (Nicole Brenez is also the author of a monograph titled *Cinemas d'avant-garde*), identifies not only what distinguishes certain films within the programme, but also what brings them together and distinguishes from other films, exterior to this corpus – and which can be called as 'Industrial-Narrative-Representational (I.N.R)', as does the film-maker Claudine Eizykman, also featured in the programme, or Mode of

Institutional Representation (M.R.I.), as does the film scholar Noël Burch in his book *La Lucarne de l'infini*. In any case, when the filmic form transgresses or denaturalises the representative norm of dominant cinema in a socio-economical level, also surpasses or reveals, at the same time, its limitation, either with or without a critical intention (or simply creative or inventive in this case). This is why the programme brings together a range of different kinds of films whose common feature is their ability to surprise, even though, or perhaps because, they don't belong to the world of mainstream representation. A programme, for example, brings together the phantasmagories by Georges Méliès and Émile Cohl with Jean Comandon and Lucien Bull's scientific observations: imaginative or analytical, they both surpass ordinary representational realism, exploring the possibilities of the medium (tricks, painting on film, slow motion, fast-forward, etc.). Surrealism and naturalism both oppose the effect(s) of realism. The faculties of human perception are amplified (*Expanded Cinema*, per Gene Youngblood's definition in his homonymous essay) in relation to the capacities of the cinematographic medium. Furthermore, as an epigraph to the screening, a quote by the 'visionary' film-maker Stan Brakhage enables us to think about the dialectic resolution of the apparent contradiction between the different films. Such use of a quotation-epigraph-dialectic tool, is used throughout the whole programme, with the merit of producing thought, or at least an agreement between the filmic forms and the operative text in the mind of the spectator. That is, without closing down meaning or reducing it to a rigid theoretical label, especially taking into account that most of the quotations come from film-makers – albeit some of them also theoreticians, such as Brakhage.

The opening up of the works, as shown in the examples above, reactivates the original meaning of the term 'experimental cinema', too often used as a comfortable but generic label, which doesn't address the use of the term in the context of Claude Bernard or Émile Zola,

for instance. This decompartmentalisation also implies bringing together, in the same or nearby programmes, scientific, militant or artists' films. The distinction between 'experimental' and 'avant-garde' is what is at stake here. This can no longer be reduced to the opposition between the two tendencies usually dividing the (aesthetic and political) avant-garde, as if one had to decide between being an aesthete or a militant; furthermore a third pole is added: the technical tendency, in the case of 'the inventors (even the industrial medium is represented via the vistas by the Lumière brothers). One would be tempted to conclude that there are then as many fields, with their respective borders, as juxtapositions of films able to dynamite them. The radical critique of (spectacular) images of Situationist and Lettrist cinema – so present in the programme via Isidore Isou, Guy Debord, Maurice Lemaître and Gil J. Wolman – would suffice in its own to transgress these categories. But its juxtaposition with aesthetic and political avant-garde films is even more eloquent. Maurice Lemaître's films, for instance, are situated next to Marguerite Duras's as well as to those by the Grupo Medvedkine. Iconoclasm (Lemaître), the beautiful aspect of the literary image (in the relationship between images and voice-over in Duras) or the images of political struggles (Medvedkine and other collectives), share one and the same critical front, fighting for a new order of image-making. Their meeting in the projection room offers us the opportunity to encounter a series of complete, thoughtful and deeply felt aesthetic appreciations; and the revelation of their affinities, beyond the differences that meet the eye. And even something more surprising: the juxtaposition of explicitly militant films with scientific ones. Something never seen before? The same programme includes a selection of films committed to the political and social struggle and films such as *Formation de cristaux aux dépens d'un précipité amorphe* (Dr. Jean Comandon and M. De Fonbrune, 1937) (even

if we may perceive there an echo of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub's *From the Clouds to the Resistance* [*Dalla nube alla resistenza*, 1979]) or *L'Hippocampe* (Jean Painlevé, 1934). We can identify here a common thread in the mastery of conquered visibilities: from making images censored by power structures to surpassing limitations of the 'unarmed' human eye (as Dziga Vertov would write, of the naked eye) thanks to the power of the scientific instruments and that of the 'cinema-eye'. Not satisfied with creating a happy *melting pot*, or simple effects of contrast, the programme, then, went on to suggest more profound and unexpected affinities, at times perplexing and always productive in the creation of a subversive thought on representation and image-making. In this sense, we may compare the montage of films conceived by the programmer and theoretician Nicole Brenez with the montage of images in the journal *Documents* by Georges Bataille: a pragmatic thought, produced by the clash of different forms.

Such an aesthetic thought is often incredibly precise – perhaps because of its pragmatic mode. Furthermore it leans towards a stylistic thought. By bringing together different works by very different film-makers, the programme reveals their style through effects of analogy and contrast. Such associations are at times due to the initiative of the programmer, and at others to the groupings of the film-makers themselves, as in the case of the Group Zanzibar². Consider, for example, the grouping of *Vite* (1969) by Daniel Pommereulle with *Deux fois* (1969) by Jackie Raynal. Whereas *Le Révéléateur* (1968) by Philippe Garrel, related to the same group, is screened together with *L'Homme qui tousse* (1969) and *L'Homme qui lèche* (1969) by Christian Boltanski, and preceded by a screening of the *ciné-tracts* made by a collective of film-makers in 1968, which gave place to a revealing montage, conceived by Brenez. The aesthetic question of figuration (as a model and

2. See LEBRAT, Christian (ed., 2007). *Zanzibar. Les films Zanzibar et les dandys de mai 1968*. Éditions de Paris

Experimenta. Paris.

allegory) and the historical contexts of May 68 and the Shoah, mildly suggested in Garrel's film, are enlightened by this context. Programming may thus be considered as a form of film criticism or analysis. Similarly, the screening of Garrel's *Athanor* (1973) with *Tristan et Iseult* (1972), by Yves Lagrange, suggests an iconographic set of relations. These eloquent raccords of the montage-programme seem to imply a precise idea, or perhaps even constitute an equivalent of Eisenstein's intellectual montage: for example, the screening of the abstract painted film *Ere Erera Baleibu Icik Subua Arnaren* (1970) by José Antonio Sistiaga after *Le Pain quotidien* (1970) by Philippe Bordier, finds a common thread in the idea of transubstantiation, thus qualifying the materialist and mystic process of the Basque artist. But the raccords tend to be more versatile: they produce a multiplication of meanings rather than one single wave of signification. When seeing Jean Painlevé's *La Pieuvre* (1928) followed by *La Marche des machines* (1928) by Eugène Deslaw, one is first struck by the formal and thematic contrast between the organic and the manual; as one takes on the reflective character of Deslaw's film, however, such opposition is mitigated, since the filmic procedures of the blow-up and the slow motion are so present in Painlevé; finally, both are united by avant-garde film (surrealism, in Painlevé). In short, we are invited to meditate, and we could extend much further on these relations, as it happens with most of the programme, given

its originality, at times perplexing, which enables viewers to renovate or reinvigorate our gaze even when looking at well-known films such as *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, Alain Resnais, 1955), screened together with Robert Breer's graphic experimentations on the film strip, the naturalist observations of *Locomotion chez Cyclostoma Elegans* (1954) by Jean Dragesco, or the ethnography of Jean Rouch's *The Mad Masters* (*Les Maîtres fous*, 1954) and the pop film-poem *Défense d'afficher* (1958) by Hy Hirsh, all screened in the same session. The clash between all of these films, so different in their forms and modes, may suggest complex thoughts on representation, but these are in no case imposed upon the viewer, since it is in any case justified by the heterodox relationships at the base of the history of cinema. In any case, 'Jeune, Dure et Pure !' encouraged an active experience as a viewer, giving place to an original thought around images, beyond its function as an anthology or a mere spectacular entertainment. We may thus compare this programme with filmmaker and curator Peter Kubelka's periodical programmes at the Filmmuseum in Vienna, which aimed to ask «Was ist Film», which used unprecedented relationships between films to put into play a subversive thought on history and filmic forms. Aesthetic thought, in its core sense of the word aesthesis ('to feel, to perceive') finds in the montage of the filmic forms themselves its ideal medium of expression. ●

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A Brief History of Radical Film Collectives from the 1960s to the 80s: Interview with Federico Rossin on the Retrospective ‘United We Stand, Divided We Fall’

David Phelps

ABSTRACT

Taking as a point of departure the film programme ‘United We Stand, Divided We Fall’ (curated by Federico Rossin, Doclisboa, 2012), this essay addresses collective film-making. In a conversation, the author and the film curator argue that the history of collective film-making is understudied at the moment and that it is a broad field of research that should be more extensively considered by film historians and researchers. Rossin suggests that collective film-making usually emerges in periods of economic and social crisis, and comments on some of its particularities, such as the ideological relationships established between the people in front and behind the camera. According to Rossin, collective film-making can enable us to recuperate a strong and profound belief in the real, since film is not only a machine to produce dreams, but also a strong medium to comprehend and analyse reality through enquiry. Furthermore the author analyses some of the theoretical concepts of collective film-making, focusing on the work of Jean Rouch and his way of filming rituals, and identifying two poles of collective film-making: exorcism and possession films. The author also distinguishes between two kinds of collective film-making: one that aims to erase the differences between its participants in favour of a common position and a propagandistic tone, and another one that seeks to promote and make visible the differences amongst its participants, facilitating discussion and debate.

KEYWORDS

Collective film, political film, Auteur theory, documentary, camera, ritual, ideology, Jean Rouch, possession film, exorcism film.

I wonder if we could start by sketching out a rough history of collective cinema.

Most of these films are now almost orphan films: I mean that very few people have studied the collective cinema phenomenon deeply. There's not a canon, there's a virgin landscape for film historians and researchers. So we have to draw this history as archaeologists and archivists. But this is only the first step. If we study the case, we find that there's a completely hidden history, and its roots are placed at the very beginning of XX century: there's the recently rediscovered case of Armand Guerra and his *Cinéma du Peuple* (1913-14). Between the twenties and the thirties we find the Prokino collective in Japan (Proletarian Film League of Japan, 1929-34), and later we have the experience of *Film-train* conducted by Aleksandr Medvedkin (1933-34) in Soviet Union and Workers Film and Photo League (1930-34), *Nykino* (1935-37) and *Frontier Film Group* (1936-42) in US. I see so many connections between the films I put in the selection and these experiences of collectivist cinema. First of all we must notice that all these collectives were born during an economic and social crisis; then we understand that these films have been made and so must be considered both as aesthetic objects and political tools; finally we must consider this history as an open path still living: in this very moment and in the last decade, collectivist cinema is born from its ashes, in Argentina, Spain, Greece, etc.

More generally, how would these films fit into a history of cinema, particularly in wake of auteur theory and many of its proponents—Godard, Rivette, Rohmer—declaring themselves anti-auteurs in the 70s?

It's a very delicate topic. I think that the death of the auteur theory is just simply the reverse of the auteur theory: it's just narcissism in denial, a broken mirror which hide the face, though the face is still there. I love the Dziga Vertov Group's films but they are very different films from the ones made by Newsreel or Cinema Action. I don't see a clear link between this act

of declaring him/herself anti-auteur and the act of founding a film collective. Every group and collective has its own history: and we must not be naïf. In every collective the question of power was the core. It's the human being. These young filmmakers renounced their immediate *jouissance* in order to serve a political ideal, but their desire to make personal films was strong, and many of them made personal films after their collectivist experience. Almost every film has a different story: in a case there was a desire coming from one member, in another case it was another who found the story and the way to tell it, etc. For me it's not important to find out now who made that particular film and who was hidden behind a collective name. It's the gesture of putting together their skills, thoughts, hopes, all of which touches me a lot. And it's not only a refusal of auteur theory: it's a positive act.

More particularly, I wonder if we can posit a relationship of the actors to the filmmakers particular to collective cinema—and maybe a kind of defining feature. Throughout so many of these movies, the actors seem to take over the movie not only by determining how they act, but often by being the filmmakers themselves...

For some of the films this is true: I think that making a collective film sometimes makes the film structure much open to the reality. Sometimes the actors just used the filmmakers to have a stronger political mean, a powerful film-weapon: on the other hand the filmmakers wanted to serve an ideal. But I think that in the best cases there has been always an exchange between actors and filmmakers. The burning life of both is the very core of collectivist cinema: they wanted to change their life, the present, the cinema itself.

But is there a danger, in collectivist cinema, that as much as the movies might promote local voices, normally suppressed by mainstream paradigms, they might also stifle these individual voices for the sake of a collective message?

If we take the example of *El Pueblo se levanta - The Young Lords Film* (The Newsreel Collective, 1971) and *Finally Got the News* (Stewart Bird, Peter Gessner, Rene Lichtman y John Louis Jr., 1970) we can say that the exchange between the filmmakers and the actors was subtle and multi-level: there's an authoritative voice-over trying to direct the dialogue, but there's a sort of resistance of the actors which used their accents and personal voices. I have tried to put in the selection collectivist films made by people who were able to bear responsibility for both the propaganda message and the people they worked with. The more the film was considered as a weapon, the less it would concern real people: the political imagery is then taking over. We must not idealize collectivist cinema: I have seen many really bad movies, absolutely not interesting from a formal and political point of view. I feel that this problem you underline it's true for the first phase of post May 68 collectivist cinema: in the 70s the films became more and more portraits of singular people, *So that You Can Live* (Cinema Action, 1982) and *A Pas Lentas* (Collectif Cinélutte, 1979) are the best examples.

I guess it comes down to the age-old question of political documentary, whether collective cinema can offer any sort of propaganda cure, when it has only the tools of reality to work with. So many of the films feature

traditional ceremonies and rituals, almost Rouch-like, as if, in these movies, the actors were not only capturing the problems of reality, but offering a performance that is a cure of sorts.

Ideology is a kind of collective ritual and performance: the more the collectives were capable of absorbing the reality in a dialectical way, the more their films are living objects for us today. The comparison with Rouch is very interesting: the problem is belief. I mean that Rouch really believed in the rituals he was filming, and you can feel this kind of magic in his films. He was not distant from his actors, he was trying to see the invisible with his mechanized eye. It's the same case with the best collectives I have chosen for the retrospective. The post-modern ideology has pushed us to refuse belief, faith, ideals, putting all this in the "old way of thinking". The trap of post-modernism is the end of the reality itself. So the cure we can take from collectivist cinema can be a coming back to a strong and deep belief in the real, in the world, in the people. Cinema is not just a dream machine: it can be a strong mean to understand, analyze and change reality: the formal researches of these films is an open factory in which we can find old but perfectly functioning tools. We have just to polish them, and to adapt them to our present situation.

This interview was held over email and edited by David Phelps on 23–24 November 2012.

Afterword. On Collective Cinema

Le seul film intéressant sur les événements, le seul vraiment fort que j'ai vu (je ne les ai évidemment pas tous vus), c'est celui sur la rentrée des usines WONDER, tourné par des étudiants de l'IDHEC, parce que c'est un film terrifiant, qui fait mal. C'est le seul qui soit un film vraiment révolutionnaire. Peut-être parce que c'est un moment où la réalité se transfigure à tel point qu'elle se met à condenser toute une situation politique en dix minutes d'intensité dramatique folle.

C'est un film fascinant, mais on ne peut dire qu'il soit du tout mobilisateur, ou alors par le réflexe d'horreur et de refus qu'il provoque. Vraiment, je crois que le seul

rôle du cinéma, c'est de déranger, de contredire les idées toutes faites, toutes les idées toutes faites, et plus encore les schémas mentaux qui préexistent à ces idées : faire que le cinéma ne soit plus confortable.

J'aurais de plus en plus tendance à diviser les films en deux : ceux qui sont confortables et ceux qui ne le sont pas ; les premiers sont tous abjects, les autres plus ou moins positifs. Certains films que j'ai vus, sur Flins ou Saint-Nazaire, sont d'un confort désolant : non seulement ils ne changent rien, mais ils rendent le public qui les voit content de lui ; c'est les meetings de "l'Humanité."

Jacques Rivette

Les Cahiers du Cinéma, no. 204, September, 1968

A tangle of contradictions, to be traced if not untied:

Since "collective cinema" might designate any collaboration between a man and his camera, stock, and subject from the Lumières on, the term might yield meaning less as a type of cinema than a type of lens for seeing cinema: a distillation of one component, collectivity, inherent in any movie's grab-bag of hybrid elements, which only becomes refined into a genre of its own when amateur movies turn their perspectives onto themselves—and make their own collective production the subject in front of the camera. In other words, when the lens becomes the subject: but a description that might as well apply to Stan Brakhage or Chuck Jones. For though the "collective film" or "collectivist film" shares with so many "underground" films this sense of attempting to crystallize a single facet of cinematic praxis—the fact of collaborative film production, alternately a microcosm of society and alternative to it—the very term supposes the kind of hybridity that makes nonsense of a pure genre, or of critic's concentrated attempts to slot these movies into preset terms.

So instead the terms and origins have to be invented as if out of thin air. Appropriately, too, since the collective film might just as much engage in an exorcism of historical facts as in a speculative history. One that counts on a reality of discontents, even between the filmmakers, to be mobilized by propaganda into a new utopia.

This Great White Man's notion of history, marshaled to happy heights by the farsighted ideas of progressive individuals, might even seem to double as a view of cinema for the Great White Man who, one could argue, marshaled collective cinema into the era of Rivette and Godard: Jean Rouch. Impulsively, one hopes, Rouch would despise such claims: he did not originate "collective cinema" (the critics, if not the Lumières, would do that); he would evince little concern for The Great White Man except as His Image was to be refracted into the self-images of so many countrymen; and he would develop a cinema of rites and rituals in direct opposition to all notions of individual agency, on the part of subject and filmmaker both, to determine any part of the action other than its articulation. And yet that articulation is everything in Rouch—the ability of the camera to weave its subjects

into the unified choreography of a conjuring dance, and in doing so, to seem to conjure the characters' motions even as it follows them. And here, a type of modern cinema, belonging as much to Cassavetes as to Rivette and as to the collectivist film, is articulated as well: one in which the film's production is openly inscribed on-screen (documentary time, located within the shot) against the story being staged as a rite and ritual (narrative time, located as much in the montage). Tradition, in Rouch, bridges these two timeframes, as we watch one articulation of an eternal rite. But Rouch's films are also last records of traditions about to be destroyed.

The flip-flops continue. For the collective films programmed by Federico Rossin in «United We Stand, Divided We Fall»² are so outwardly opposed to the status quo of society's ceremonies of violence that they might at first seem like Rouch inverted—films that are alternately revolutionary or militant (incompatible terms), but in any case devoted to challenging the traditions of the age. Yet as Rivette suggests of Jacques Villemont's *La reprise du travail aux usines Wonder (The Resumption of Work at the Wonder Factories*, Jacques Villemont, 1968), it is the workers' own enactment of their *mise-en-scène* in a 10-minute, single-shot debate in the middle of the street, that makes the film so revolutionary. In other words, it's the workers' own efforts to stage the hierarchies and traditions of their workplace they despise in the street, which is revolutionary: not only because they fail in fully grafting workplace politics onto the road, but also because they partly succeed, and the film enables them to stage this demonstration of the same politics they all agree they oppose. This is revolutionary *mise-en-scène* because one just glimpses, in this hardening crystallization of a decade's politics into ten minutes of open-air improvisations, the possibilities for how history might be staged—or rather, how history might have been staged instead. A speculative history, like Rouch's after all, whose politics is not that of its subjects but of the *mise-en-scène* of the ways they might come into contact, discussion, and debate with each other.

Rossin, below, talks about Rouch trying to tap into the invisible through his ceremonies, to believe in the action as a force of its own of which the camera is only the final performer: a beautiful thing. But Rouch is no formalist, and neither his ceremonies nor his filmmaking is remotely ossified—for both are responses to the energy at a particular time and place, both ceremonial forms for finding the chaos of nature and civilization alike. For all their treatments of traditions, their violence is an act of the here-and-now, a vortex warping historical energies into the madness of a moment at which all relations become undone. And the same might be said of so many collectivist films. In some sense, the concerns of Rouch's cinema, possession and exorcism both, provide the terms of his filmmaking as well, the ability to give life to physical vessels like his camera-eye, even through his camera-eye—and just as quickly to take it away. Possession: Rouch's eye is one that can possess the people on-screen not simply by leading them on in a dance, but also by performing the dance alongside them for a viewer to live vicariously decades later; not simply their acts, but the entire vision of the film is conjured by Rouch's eye (traces of Brakhage). Exorcism: yet it's also an eye that exorcise some deeper, violent force within whatever it encounters on-screen (and this only by imposing a steady ritual). The important thing, of course, is that the camera must be possessed by these rituals as much as it “possesses” the people by having them enact the most modern ritual: making a movie.

For Rouch, perhaps more than any other filmmaker, understand the singular power of the collectivist cinema to mediate, quite beautifully, two dangerous poles: the ossification of a social ritual on one hand (possession), and the release of a mob's energy against it on the other (exorcism). And we live in an age now in which these two poles must constantly be opposed: the desperate violence of Haneke, Breillat, or suburban teens on *Jackass* (Johnny Knoxville, Spike Jonze, Jeff Tremaine, 2000-2002), vying for the attention of shock-value across youtube and the media, videotaping themselves constantly,

seems a logical response to the NSA's bland, invisible surveillance, designed to make its citizens conform to the protocol of politically correct rituals with the unconscious knowledge that they're being filmed at all moments. For, as another collectivist film, *Red Squad* (Howard Blatt, Steven Fischler, Joel Sucher, 1972) makes clear, citizens will always be expected to conform to the image, to reenact the images they've seen for the camera, so that the NSA can ensure that citizens are following the "correct," operational image. Each action becomes protocol for the next; the NSA insists that everything can be seen except the NSA itself.

Red Squad turns this total possession into a kind of exorcism with an empty center: the amateur filmmakers decide to film the law-enforcers who are filming them, and, as in Oshima's *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (*Tôkyô sensô sengo hima*, 1970), the only transgressive act being caught by the camera is of course the filmmaking itself. A fascinating movie, since the Red Squad's fear of being filmed only reveals the utter violence of what they're doing in the first place: filmmaking is a way to ensure that subjects act "properly," and of course this is why the Red Squad doesn't want to be filmed—ensuring that everyone else acts according to a code of behavior would excuse them from having to follow one as well. The comedy is of the amateur communists, with zero resources, who end up parodying the entire "home movie" operation of the police in an attempt to inhibit the inhibitors. The Rouchian model already seems impossible in this calculus of operations to be eternally-repeated: for while Rouch insists on participating in the action, the Red Squad's cameras are necessarily invisible in order to leave its subjects—any activist in New York, and possibly anyone at all—in constant paranoia.

Here we can ask if the collectivist film might risk stifling individual voices as much as promote them. And we might, perhaps, make a distinction between two types of collectivist films, without any idea which side *Red Squad*, as a kind of

surveillance state *Duck Amuck* (*Looney Tunes' Merrie Melodies: Duck Amuck*, Chuck Jones, 1953), might fall on: 1) one that seeks to erase the differences between its members in favor of a propagandistic position and pitch, and 2) one that seeks to promote differences by facilitating discussion and debate among members. This isn't quite as simple a distinction as "cinema of the cure" vs "cinema of the diagnosis," since both are critical against the status quo. *Winter Soldier* (Winterfilm Collective, 1972), for example, takes an obvious stance against the abuse of soldiers in Vietnam, until that stance comes under question in a hallway debate near the end of the film: suddenly it's not enough to get evidence without offering criticism of why things have happened and how they have to be improved. So the film starts from a point of collective agreement before turning into a collective debate about what the film should be about.

The important point is that both types of collective film—"possession" and "exorcism" if one likes—assume the camera's position to stage the action. The suggestion here—both in the films and Rossin's programming—is that the collectivist documentary might entail a collapse not only of individual authorship, but authorship altogether, so that the subjects of the film, whether or not they're holding the camera, obligate and determine the filmmaking. Regional films like *Finally Got the News* (Stewart Bird, Peter Gessner, Rene Lichtman and John Louis Jr., 1970) and *El Pueblo Se Levanta* (The Newsreel Collective, 1971) entangle themselves between these modes: both seem to want to be propaganda bulletins about local problems that would erase the participation of individuals in the project. But the authorial, authoritative voice-over is always written in a kind of street dialect, and told by members with local accents: sometimes the testimony of locals within the film becomes the voice-over of the film itself. So a much more interesting process is enabled—instead of a standardized, correct authorial position, the films only offer us the voices of individuals from a precise circumstance, place and time.

Let's articulate one more fault line along which this simplified distinction of the cinema of possession and the cinema of exorcism operates: the blurry line between collective films regulating action according to a party line, and enabling actions that might not have been possible without the camera, against the system of oppression. Some of the later, grassroots films, like *So That You Can Live*, (Cinema Action, 1982), seem even to have retreated to some kind of left-wing conservatism: attempts to work within the system to reform it and recover the home values that capitalism has sold them but rarely provided.

Ultimately, almost all the collectivist films leave us with a sense of History far beyond the local politics they meant to engage: of course it's history, like Rouch's camera, that inscribes roles and registers them, and one goes nowhere with the philosophical truism that men write history and history writes the place of men. The collective film itself becomes a phenomenon, symptomatic of its time even as it meant to provide a revolutionary exception to the rule. The positioning of the collectivist film as a historical

product of the 60s-80s seems obvious enough politically: the era of radicalism and splinter cells, now incorporated into arthouse iconography by Olivier Assayas, in which collaborative politics could be seen as a reaction (and action) against a hopelessly hegemonic state, rather than a miniature attempt to mirror and work within the democratic system (the kind of attempts seen, sometimes disastrously, in the films of Frederick Wiseman).

But it's another question how the collectivist film would fit in a history of cinema. We could obviously draw a parallel history: that this was the point at which the collaborative, democratic movements of the Lumieres, French avant-gardists, Soviet activists, etc, had given way to a kind of Hollywood hegemony, which could only be opposed by amateurs and regional filmmakers. But it's also the point when auteur theory has taken hold among many of the same critics opposed to flavorless, factory-made Hollywood items, and "authorship" has become the surest standard of quality that individual voices can speak against the status quo (as well as through it).

And here I'd rather give way to Rossin as another voice. ●

Films included in the programme 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall', curated by Federico Rossin (Dolisboa, October, 2012):

La Reprise du Travail aux Usines Wonder (Jacques Villemont, 1968)
Classe de Lutte (Groupe Medvedkine de Besançon, 1969)
À pas lentes (Collectif Cinélutte, 1979)
Vladimir et Rosa (Groupe Dziga Vertov, 1970)
Winter Soldier (Winterfilm Collective, 1972)
Off the Pig (San Francisco Newsreel, 1968)
Finally got the News (Stewart Bird, Peter Gessner, Rene Lichtman and John Louis Jr., 1970)
El pueblo se levanta (The Newsreel Collective, 1971)
Red Squad (Howard Blatt, Steven Fischler, Joel Sucher, 1972)

Un peuple en marche (Colectivo cinematográfico de alumnos argelinos, 1963)
Caminhos da Liberdade (Cinequipa, 1974)
L'Aggettivo Donna (Collettivo Femminista di Cinema di Roma, 1971)
Women of the Rhondda (London Women's Film Group, 1973)
Maso et Miso vont en Bateau (Nadja Ringart, Carole Rousopoulos, Delphine Seyrig and Ioana Wieder, 1976)
Night Cleaners Part 1 (Berwick Street Collective, 1972-1975)
So that you can Live (Cinema Action, 1982)
The Year of the Beaver: a Film about the Modern 'Civilised' State (Poster Film Collective, 1982)
Territoires (Isaac Julien, 1984)
Handsworth Songs (John Akomfrah, 1986)
Vai Viegli Būt Jaunam? (Juris Podnieks, 1987)

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Nathaniel Dorsky. *Devotional Cinema*

Tuumba Press, Berkeley, 2005, 54 pp.

Miguel García

One of art's greatest challenges has always been how to transmit the ineffable, all we cannot describe or apprehend through the language, all we cannot reach using words. Sometimes those words can be used as a springboard – as in Benjamin Péret's question remembered by Buñuel in his memoirs:

«“Is it really not true that mortadella is made by the blind?” For me, this statement in the form of question, is as true as a truth from the Gospel. Of course, some might find the relationship between blindness and mortadella somewhat absurd, but for me is the magical example of a completely irrational sentence which gets sharply and mysteriously bathed under the glimmer of truth.» (BUÑUEL, 1982: 190)

His whole work seems to be contained in that landscape of relations – enlightened by a question without answer – which opens in front of each reader. Its force comes from the impossibility to explain or describe it. But you can also suppress any relation with language. The cinema of Nathaniel Dorsky will *talk* like that, with images and time, without language or sound, about ineffable truths to which nobody would have thought there was an access and, because of that, would have never been able to be shared. Near the beginning of *Devotional Cinema*, Dorsky tells an anecdote which could sound familiar and is quickly empowered by its conceptual bond with religiousness: upon exiting a screening of *Viaggio in Italia* (Roberto Rosellini, 1954) all the members of the audience left the room in total silence, and in the elevator which brought them to the street the

awkwardness of sharing the space with strangers had disappeared completely. The film had acted as a kind of secular communion by showing that certain intimate and inexpressible truths had been seen and communicated, and finally shared, by a filmmaker.

In this way of explaining a spiritual connection through the behaviours seen in an elevator, and even in the book's writing style, we also see how Dorsky is participating deeply in a purely American form of thought, perhaps started by R.W. Emerson in the mid-nineteenth century when he was a godfather to Transcendentalism, which focused in the familiar and simple matters. And just as *Devotional Cinema's* prose does not hide at any moment its oral source (it is a revision of a John Sacret Young Lecture at Princeton University) and handles high concepts using that casual tone, its author considers that the search of a spiritual sensibility must always take place in the terms of the close and the common things. These elements cannot be just materials to build something – all the theoretic structure should be built to throw light upon, or protect, that matter.

In this way in his cinema everything he films becomes sacred. A shirt, a glass or a handful of sand, objects that may have lost their value, worn out by the social pressures about what must seem important to us. In another one of the most memorable passages of the book we are invited to look at our hands and think about the complexity and variety of the actions they can perform, in all the particularities of this versatile tool, in its aesthetic beauty too. The reader suddenly

reconfigures the relationship with the hands that held unconsciously the book a moment before, just as Dorsky is trying, through his cinema, to give back the real value to the things registered by his camera, obviating the exchange value which accompanies and adulterates them (in economic terms within a capitalist society, but also cinematographically when we are dealing with those objects placed in front of the camera without being really observed, merely as a background to a plausible narrative). What is sacred is always untouchable, immense for itself. The need to underline it, staining it with ideas, would be a violation. To turn it into a symbol of other thing would be to despise it; to use it as a material for an alien discourse, to impose an external sense would be to take advantage of it, reducing it to a poor position of contrivance for a greater end.

In the introduction of his excellent interview with Nathaniel Dorsky, Scott MacDonald reminds us of an interesting controversy:

«Several years ago, Stephen Holden claimed that for *American Beauty* (1999) Sam Mendes had borrowed “an image (and an entire aesthetic of beauty) from Nathaniel Dorsky’s *Variations*, in which the camera admired a plastic shopping bag being blown about by the wind”(New York Times, October 9,1999). Dorsky remembers receiving a call from someone on the production of *American Beauty*, asking how Mendes might see the film, though he is not convinced that his shot was “borrowed”.» (MACDONALD,2006:79-80)

Rather than having yet another discussion about commercial cinema’s debts towards the American avant-garde, it would perhaps be more interesting to focus in how this shot looks like in this new life. The scene quickly attracted a great deal of attention and became the most commented image of the film: the plastic bag shot (whose movements, of course, were much more

distinct and spectacular than those of Dorsky’s bag: it goes up and down and turns somersaults) is introduced by a character with the question: “Do you want to see the most beautiful thing I’ve ever filmed?” and is accompanied by an evocative piano song by Thomas Newman. The character goes on, explaining what a special moment it was and specifying what it meant for him: “That’s the day I realized there was this entire life behind things...”

So in the surface it is the same shot, but only there, there is no more relation – perhaps that is why Dorsky quickly denied a direct filiation. Throughout his text, Dorsky keeps invoking other images which do share, in all the levels we have discussed, those same principles in the context of narrative cinema. The hat of an office worker filmed by Ozu, or the handkerchief of a wife filmed by Ford, are not sublimated nor they are the symbol of something that could transfigure them; those objects would be in any case the ones who are so powerful to be able to change something, to get to awaken emotions.

His ideas are so clear and firm that, just with a list of the films mentioned in his book, the reader could imagine both the ideas he defends and the kind of cinema he makes; perhaps with the same kind of unexplainable, slippery certitude that Buñuel did applaud. By putting together and associating these films, Dorsky shows the coordinates of a devotional cinema to which his films also belong. In the final step of editing, the sacred objects of his cinema are connected while preserving that mystery of an inexpressible relation (and perhaps, in order to be able to explicit his message, Mendes decided to leave alone that plastic bag shot), which however allows to feel its effect with the same power of the change of verse of a poem, or the brush-stroke and a certain colour in an abstract painting. Ozu films a mother embracing his song, then he cuts to a chimney expelling black smoke. We have understood. ●

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Cinema Comparat/ive Cinema accepts unpublished articles on comparative cinema. Articles that are not original will not be accepted. The maximum number of authors per article will be three.

The main research strands of the journal are:

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- The history of interpretation and cinematographic ideas, and the analysis of critical and political contexts.
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The research articles will have a minimum length of 2,000 words and a maximum of 6,000 words, including footnotes. They will be related to thematic questions that will be published in the section Call for Papers of the website.

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The length of the reviews will be 800–1,000 words.

The information of the reviewed book shall include: full name of the author, publisher, city of publication, year of publication and number of pages.

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Typeset and font size: Articles must be submitted using Times New Roman, 12 points. Paragraphs must be justified; indents won't be used. Titles and subtitles must be indicated in bold.

Word processor tools: Please refrain from using tools such as tables, numbering, columns, headings, hyperlinks, footnotes, etc. Any numbering must be made manually.

Bibliography: The sources of both texts and ideas by other authors must be clearly identified. Sources must be indicated in the body of the text using the HARVARD style (LAST NAME, Year: Page number). Please list all the bibliography used at the end of the text.

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