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Dialectical Thinking. Truth, Imagination and the Politics of Historical Memory: Godard, Benjamin and Warburg.

Abstract

Godard's assertion that the historian must "provide an accurate description of what has never happened" speaks eloquently to Benjamin's equally provocative idea (taken from Hofmannsthal) that history allows one "to read what was never written". For both – as well as for Warburg, who envisioned a "psychological history" capable of reproducing the latencies and survivals of the images of art history – historical knowledge is invaded by the irrational and the imagistic. But, for all of them, the potentiality of historical imagination is reciprocal to the requirement of truth, consubstantiated in the privilege commonly conceded to the categories of image and memory. The article examines the tripartite relationship between truth, imagination (the space of formation of dialectical images) and historical memory within a constellation of complementary philosophical references – from Proust's involuntary memory and Bergson's *durée*, to Deleuze's thought of the outside, Derrida's hauntology and Ricoeur's epistemology of history – in order to reassess Godard's documentary and political cinema. By proposing a shift in emphasis from methodological aspects to conceptual, philosophical and epistemological confluences, the article opens up the cinematography of Godard and the historiographies of both Benjamin and Warburg to new comparative analysis. The article's last sections focus on the sequence of *Histoire(s)* 1A relating Giotto's Magdalene and Elizabeth Taylor in George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun*, in order to (re)discover issues of religion, art, nymphal impulse and historical trauma, which prove to be fundamental in the analysis of the political and ethical resonances of memory in the projects of the commented *artist-historians*.

Figural writing: image and thought

In a scene from Godard's *Le Petit Soldat*, 1963, a panning shot reveals a set of pictures of war, advertisements and soft porn scattered on the wall. At the same time, the leading character, Bruno Forrestier, says: "7 am. A few snapshots taken from around the world pass by me like bad dreams. Panama… Rome… Alexandria… Budapest… Paris…". The snapshots seem to Forrestier a dream because they relate to an oneiric mode of consciousness in which the diversity of phenomena is presented in a state of disintegration.

Along the lines of Siegfried Kracauer and other Weimar intellectuals, for both Godard and Benjamin mass culture is welcomed as a mode of historical critique. As Kracauer pointed out, in Benjamin "knowledge arises out of ruins" (Kracauer 1995, 264), and the same could be said of Godard. Conceived of as ruins, historical objects and cultural fragments are liberated from the hierarchies and the homogenizing principles of instrumental reason and temporal

continuity, making for the appearance of new *texts* and legibilities. Moreover, in both Godard and Benjamin, images acquire the status of what Kracauer termed as “small material particles” that point to essentialities, or ideas (Kracauer, 1995, 263), instead of just offering a wistful and sentimental presentation of the variety of phenomena.

In his *Epistemo-Critical Prologue*, Benjamin asserted that "ideas are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete elements […]”, or constellations; He goes on by saying that ideas correspond to the “virtual arrangement” of phenomena and their “objective interpretation” through representation, and that “ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars” (Benjamin 1998, 34).

In a similar vein, for Godard, the notions of constellation and reconciliation of opposites [*rapprochement*] constitute a cornerstone for his genealogy of the cinematographic image. In *The Old Place*, 1998, in which Godard directly deals with Benjamin’s philosophy of history – functioning as a sort of extra chapter for his *magnum opus Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-98) – he says: “The concept is that of *rapprochement*. Just as stars approach one another even as they are moving away from one another […] to form a constellation, so, too, certain things and thoughts approach one another to form one or more images” (Godard cited by Witt , 183).

In both Godard and Benjamin the concept of image is therefore irreducible to a merely empirical visual representation. It essentially refers to an image of thought, an image of dialectical thinking, which justifies, respectively, the importance of montage in their cinematographic and literary theories. But one must also consider that in both authors the potential of association of the dialectical image is also a potential of interruption, resistance and discontinuity. This is why in Godard the interval between two or more images, created by the cinematic montage, is essentially understood as a topological *medium* of thought. This eloquently echoes Benjamin’s assertion that "thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well”, suddenly emerging “in a configuration pregnant with tensions” (Benjamin 1969a, 262-63).

This comprehension is paradigmatically symbolized by the black spaces that simultaneously separate and bring together the reproductions of works of art in Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924-29). It is the interval that allows Warburg to relate multiple images of art history and Western culture, enabling him to map the processes of migration, metamorphoses, and survivals of pathos-charged images across times and places (Didi-Huberman 2002, 496). Thus, also in Warburg, the image acquires the status of a movable particle, entering into variable and dialectical constellations of other images and ideas. Here and there, images are essentially malleable and movable units of thought. This is why Warburg

makes use of pins to distribute the photographic reproductions throughout the Atlas's panels. The pins function as a rudimentary but highly effective technical resource at the service of the creation of dialectical montages with potentially inexhaustible readings, just as in Godard and Benjamin montage is a method for creating analogies and for juxtaposing heterogeneous and apparently unrelated materials.

The relation between image and word is equally relevant when considering the work of these authors. In all of them, it is possible to identify the affirmation of a reciprocal relation between images and words, between the figural and the literary, which undermines the dualistic and hierarchical privilege of one element over the other.

Indeed, if in Godard's case the cinematic screen acquires the status of a blank page (Bellour 1999, 126), wherein visual and sound images and intertitles are combined in a sort of "phrasal construction", or a "paratactic syntax", as Rancière puts it (Rancière 2003, 72), Benjamin's handwritten manuscripts are paradigmatic in the way they show a singular interest for the architecture of the page and graphic figurativeness. By combining groups of words into figural relations sustained in elliptical diagrams and constellations of phrases, some of these manuscripts translate Benjamin's efforts to generate imaginal dialectical relationships that reorient thought, beyond the pre-determined geometry of the writing page and conventional grammar (Benjamin 2015). Georges Didi-Huberman established a similar correspondence between Warburg's *Mnemosyne* and the manuscripts that were contemporaneous to the elaboration of the project. Drawing from the analysis of a series of manuscripts, Didi-Huberman argues that, in Warburg, ideas are placed in the white page just as images are distributed in the black panels of the Atlas, involving the synoptic and elliptical presentation of phrases and series of words and images. This parallels with Godard's cinematic montage, which is sustained in the synoptic and heuristic intersection of a variety of disparate images and literary excerpts. Hence Godard's formulation that, in dealing with "forms that walk towards speech", cinema acquires the status of "a form that thinks", and that is made for thinking (3A).

In sum, for Godard, Benjamin and Warburg, writing is broadly understood as an intellectual and sensorial device that links the visible to ideas. For all of them, writing is subtracted from its habitual legibility and becomes what Bellour characterized, from Godard's cinema, the object of an essentially visible-legible structure (Bellour 1999, 126).

Imagination, memory and truth

Mathew Rampley accurately pointed out that both Benjamin and Warburg recognized modernity as the moment of a shift in the material and conceptual experience of

contemporary culture. Against the habitual narratives of historical development, they embraced "the idea of a cultural space", sustained in visual and textual synchronic relations reorienting the representation of historical space and time (Rampley 1999, 96-97; 113).

Consequently, for these *artist-historians*, as for Godard, the cultural space is intimately connected to the notion of memory as an alternative model of historical time. We have already seen that, in both Benjamin and Godard, dialectical thinking blasts events out of the homogeneous course of history: fragments are ripped off from their original contexts and reassembled as a new constellation of meanings and temporalities, offering new modes of historical interpretation and cultural experience. But it is equally important to note that constellations are conceived of by Benjamin as monadic formations of ideas that take place in a fold between sleep and wakefulness. It is in this sense that the term "réveil", which is used in the French version of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* (1927-40), makes some justice to a transitory and liminal space of consciousness that directly connects the historian to the constitutive failures, discontinuities and lapses of memory.

But if it is true that Benjamin's dialectical method attests to the historical situation of past objects, the fact is that it mostly focuses on the moment of their concrete and present analysis. He therefore charges memory with the meaning of an active and ongoing process that is simultaneously intellectual and affective. For Benjamin, the moment of historical knowledge involves the dialectics between the fleeting presence of the *what-has-been* and "the act of experiencing the present as a waking world" (Benjamin 1999a, 398). Things are pulled out of their past to be fully realized in the present, in the Now of the being awakened. The moment of awakening is the moment of a disruptive time in the collective experience and cultural memory. It is the moment in which humanity rubs its eyes and recognizes the significance of present and past constellations. "It is at this moment", Benjamin writes, "that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation" (AP, 464; N4,1).

Benjamin clearly refers here to Freud's *Traumdeutung*. According to Benjamin, it is up to the materialist historian to interpret the mass-cultural hieroglyphs through critical analysis, just as the analyst interprets mnemonic traces, i.e. the repressed and subterraneous contents of dreams and failed acts that surface into consciousness through a series of dislocations, intervals and symbolic reconfigurations. In the Convolute K of *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin inclusively draws on Pierre Mabille to suggest that the historical past concerns an unconscious subterraneous space made up of the mass of things, which have been spread and forgotten over the course of different eras, and that for this reason must be deciphered and reinterpreted through imaginative and critical thinking.

In the third section of *Film Socialisme*, 2010, for instance, Godard assembles a large variety of archival images and fragments of films that function as archaeological elements of historical knowledge. Example of this is the juxtaposition of Eisentein's famous scene of the Odessa stairway in *Battleship Potemkin*, 1905, with contemporary images of children in a field trip to the site; a montage relating excerpts of Malraux's *L'Espoir*, a film about the Republican resistance in Barcelona, 1937, the TV footage of a F.C. Barcelona's match (the collective alienation produced by televised spectacles), and a political demonstration in the streets; the association of Jean Genet's memoirs, narrating his encounters with Palestinian fighters, with press photos of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and images of Hitler; and, finally, the *rapprochement* of footage of WWII in Naples, 1943, and fragments of fictional films about the epic wars in classical Greece 5th century BC.

Combined through mixes, juxtapositions and transitions, these images arise as violent outbursts of historical strata flaming in the image of the present. Indeed, for both Godard and Benjamin, the historical past constitutes an underlying substratum where all revolutions, cultures and events are brought together in a sort of formless and heteroclite space of memory. In this sense, for both, memory functions as a disintegrating mechanism, as it deals with the fragments of the past that the historian must dream and reconstruct against tradition. Thus, in Benjamin, like in Godard and Warburg, there is no possible history without a metapsychology of time and memory, capable of relating and giving visibility to the multiple layers of history.

In this respect, the influence of Proust's involuntary memory is foundational for both Benjamin and Godard. For both, time relates to a Proustian dimension in which things occupy a place in time that is incommensurable with their positions in space. As mentioned by Benjamin, in Proust all attempts to evoke the past through pure reasoning are useless. Even the excursion to remembered and actual places will not help in this recovery. It is rather necessary to excavate and to penetrate what was covered by the earth. As Benjamin points out, memory is "the medium of that which is experienced, just as the earth is the medium in which ancient cities lie buried" (Benjamin 1999b, 576).

In Chapter 2B of *Histoire(s)*, Godard explicitly refers to this archaeological and mnemonic character of time and history. Godard provocatively isolates the word "trou", obtained from the syncope of (*Le Temps*) *Re-trou-vé*, the title of the last volume of Proust's monumental work, *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-27). As is already usual in his Dadaist play with language, Godard endows the word with a polysemic and overdetermined significance. Its semantic valence unfolds to signify both the puncture resulting from the metaphorical work of archaeological perforation, and, simultaneously, the opening of the camera lens, which

enables the apprehension of reality and history through a fracture in things and in time. It is not by chance that, in the same passage of *Histoire(s)*, Godard says that "cinema must exist for words stuck in the throat and for the truth to be unearthed".

Close attention must be paid to Godard's association of truth to the act of historical memory. A little further on, in the same sequence, Godard confronts the viewer with an enigmatic formulation: "Films are commodities, and films must be burned […] But be careful with the inner fire. Matter and memory. Art is like fire. It arises from what it burns". At the same time, images of Godard picking up some books from his library, whose titles he cites one by one, and a fragment of Godard's *Week-end*, 1967, in which we see a couple walking away from the flames caused by an explosion, are combined with an onscreen text in which we read: "For the sake of what prelude do we cheat ourselves of our dreams?". The phrase belongs to Benjamin's *The Metaphysics of Youth*, 1913-14, an overtly philosophical-poetical text about dreams, love, language and time.

Godard's quotation of Benjamin can be generally interpreted from the perspective of his appreciation for historical knowledge as an experience of wonder and astonishment that reveals what is most secret and intimate for the collective and individual subject. But if we focus on Godard's previously formulation, than it seems he is essentially referring to the destructive character of art and to the possibility of restoring truth as that which can reappear within the ruins of dominant traditions of interpretation and reception.

This is important in order to dismiss the idea that, in Godard, art is comprehended as an activity that results from the representation of the horrors of historical suffering. This is something that he explicitly rejects, for instance, in *The Old Place*, 1998, by criticizing an artistic display of documentary photographs portraying the tragic consequences of war and genocide.

In *Histoire(s)* 1A Godard juxtaposes the commentary "[art] is reborn from what was burned", with images of an improvised orchestra composed by Jewish prisoners in Andrzej Munk's *The Passenger*, 1963 (a scene which, in turn, is superimposed with a Rembrandt's self-portrait, 1630, distinguished by his expression of wondering and fascination), and a detail of Matthias Grünewald's religious painting *Nativity*, ca. 1510. It would be absurd to conclude that, for Godard, art is a culminating point of the catastrophe of the Holocaust, as sometimes suggested. The montage shows that just as the truth contained in the beauty of art is revealed by doing justice to its secret and ineffable dimension, so historical knowledge implies a kind of sacred dimension: One by which historical truth is revealed in an act of intimate discovery and astonishment, relating the subject to a secret and inviolable domain, and affirming art and

poetry as a paradigm of resistance against the forms of oppressive power and collective alienation.

In Godard, montage consists in an exercise of truth that is to be encountered in the connective and transformative series of images. In Godard, montage causes the decentring of narrative and subjectivity through fragmentation and bridges the gap between historical narration and the presentation of material reality. Its political and ethical urgency is therefore associated with the capacity of endowing the viewer with an active role in the construction of meaning, a meaning inextricably linked to the reality of the world. Hence Godard's splitting-up of the word Histoire, originating toi (you), right at the beginning of the project, and repeated throughout different chapters. Instead of being considered an element that would passively accept the standardized and official versions of historical narration, the viewer is rather a "creative element" endowed with an "incalculable liberty". As we hear in 4A, the agitations of the world only acquire their tangible density at the moment they are materialized in a question that is addressed to us and that compels each of us to act and to take a position.

Therefore, what is at stake for Godard is not the totalizing and binding truth of metaphysics, of course, but an act of discovery and ethical choice that is to be sought in the temporal slippages, intervals, and paradoxical survivals of historical objects. This parallels what Warburg termed as the after-life (*Nachleben*) of the images of art history. Representing the pathos of humanity through the intensity of gestures and expressions, the images of art history are revealed by Warburg in their capacity to connect multiple times and geographies by means of the representation of shared and conflicting affects, forming the ultimate meaning of Warburg's concept of Pathosformel.

As for Godard, by mixing the images of cinema with the images of painting – and by fuelling their emotional and intellectual reverberations as the ultimate possibility of restoring the truth of the historical event – he achieves a reactivation of Warburg's Pathosformel, at the same exact moment he places his cinema at the intersection of cinema, art and philosophy. And, in this way, he is also responding to yet another foundational premise of Benjamin's theory: That of philosophy as a "representation of truth", rather than a merely guide for the acquisition of coherent and stable knowledge (idem, 28).

Virtuality, oblivion, and the requirement of truth

Drawing upon Ernst Seger's *The Veiled Image of Sais*, 1897, Benjamin says that truth is not revealed "by being exposed". Truth constitutes the content of beauty and it is rather revealed in a process. Benjamin metaphorically describes it as "the burning up of the husk as it enters

the realm of ideas, that is to say", he continues, "a destruction of the work in which its external form achieves its most brilliant degree of illumination" (Benjamin 1998, 31).

Benjamin's assertion connects us to the above-mentioned commentary in *Histoire(s)* 2B, in which we hear: "Matter and memory. Art is like fire. It arises from what it burns". One cannot ignore the fact that Godard is directly alluding to Bergson's *Matière et Mémoire*, 1896. In his book, Bergson distinguishes between simple, or operative recollection, and pure memory. Whereas the former relates to the sensory motor schemes of action and reaction, before and after, the latter implicates the momentary coincidence between pure perception and memory experimented as *durée* (Bergson 1919 pp.79-89). Notwithstanding, in Bergson, memory as *durée* is not a walk in the park. It involves what he conceives of as an effort, a hesitation arising from the interruption of the habitual mechanisms of linear time, designating an impotency in remembering. This hesitation, however, which is embodied under the mark of affection, connects to a form of intellectual effort that is associated by both Bergson and Proust with the potency of creation and inventive thought. In both, the *durée* involves the materiality of memory images and the spiritual/intellectual effort of association and creation of analogies.

As noted by Ricoeur, in Bergson the survival of the remembered past is linked to the condition of the impotence of the unconscious, or oblivion (Ricoeur 2000, 570). Not the oblivion understood as the simple erasure or attenuation of mnemonic traces, but the oblivion recognized as a category of the unrealized power of the virtual. What is at stake is thus the consideration of a Bergsonian pure virtuality that concerns what is actualized in the process of becoming. In sum, it is the two-way flow of an actual-virtual circuit capable of putting in motion heterogeneous images and temporalities coexisting in duration. This is why Godard states, in 4A, that "whoever wants to remember must confide to oblivion, to this risk that is absolute oblivion, and to this beautiful chance that becomes the act of remembering".

Wasn't this also at the heart of Warburg's project? By paying homage to the Greek goddess Mnemosyne, who makes her appearance both in the title of *Mnemosyne Atlas* and at the entrance of his Library, Warburg associates the art of memory to imagination and to the process of creative thinking. According to Giordano Bruno, of whom Warburg was an attentive reader, Mnemosyne, the mother of the nine Muses, only admits to thinking the images that were previously worked by imagination. Because it is only through the summoning up of sufficiently strong and creative images that thought is granted with the possibility of restoring the truth content of the past from oblivion. This is why the ethymology of the Greek word *lethes* (λήθη), which means oblivion, or concealment, is intimately related to truth, or *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια): the prefix "an-" is at the basis of the formation of the words un-forgetfulness and

un-concealment, denoting the process of uncovering truth, just as *anamnesis* refers to the act of bringing up (*ana*) to mind (*mnesis*) what was once forgotten. Put another way, the survival of the past relates to the persistence and the duration of what was inscribed under the mark of affection, or what Warburg defined, from the psycho-biological theory of Richard Semon, as "engrams of affective experience" (Warburg 2009, 278). Drawing from Ricoeur, one could say that if a recollection survives, this is because at a certain moment it was lost and forgotten; but if, in spite of it all, the recollection is recovered and recognized as something truth and foundational for an individual or a collectivity, this is because its image has survived.

It is in this sense that Ricoeur connects both the phenomenology of memory and the epistemology of history to a requirement of truth that reveals itself through the Bergsonian effort of remembrance (Ricoeur 2000, 66). What distinguishes memory from pure fantasy and from all other intellectual processes is its specific relation to the requirement of truth. And this is something that in the commented authors would be presented in the difficulties posed by montage, which can both reveal a happy encounter of scattered fragments, as well as the fatal junction of an unwise choice (*Montage, mon beau souci*, as Godard puts it in *Histoire(s)*).

Indeed, the historiographies of both Godard and Benjamin – but also of Warburg, as I will demonstrate – are sustained in a requisite of truth wherein the event is simultaneously presented in his documentary value of proof and in the infinity of its virtual connections. For them, images are material and psychic registers that portray conscious and unconscious cultural processes (Woodfield 2001, 4). Their projects create indirect relationships with historical reality through metaphors, symbolisms, poetical allusions and allegories, allowing us to come closer to truth: That is to say, to come closer to the meaning of that which conditions us and relates to us in the present, as Benjamin puts it, invading our dreams and requiring our interpretation on awaking as an act of discover: the Now of critical and imaginative thinking (Benjamin 1999, 831). It is not a question of describing things as they really happened, to borrow Benjamin's expression; It is about knowing and feeling that something has happened and that took place, implying us as agents and as witnesses of the historical process (Ricoeur 2000, 66).

Self-reflexivity and the death of intention

Perhaps because of this, it is possible to identify an autobiographical sensibility, which, being common to the historiographies of Benjamin, Warburg and Godard, is manifested in all of them through a sort of courageous vulnerability. As pointed out by Cecilia Sayad, Godard experiments himself and constructs his own identity through film. Frequently represented meditating in front of the shelves of his personal library and seated in a work table with his

typewriting, Godard orients film to a meta-reflexive questioning about the construction of the work, the importance of writing in its intersection with image and montage, and his role as an author: he thereby provides film with a performative and confessional component that runs parallel to the construction of meanings and interpretative paths (Sayad 2013, xxii).

If Godard was once compared to the Benjaminian angel of history, helplessly staring at the catastrophes of history (Dall'Asta 2007, 352) ("This side always guilty, or cursed, as Marguerite [Duras] says; she said I was cursed", we hear in 2A), in Warburg's case, the apprehension of the dramatic conflicts and contradictions of Western culture is intimately connected to the self-awareness of his own personal history of mental illness and schizophrenia.

But Warburg's admittedly personal frailty paradoxically contained the force of an impulse that led him towards the demand for an unorthodox and non-formalistic approach to aesthetics and art history: one that embraced a "psychological history" (Warburg 2009, 277) that would enable him to perceive (by means of the extension of individual pathological sensibility to the identification of collective and social patterns) the struggles between the antithetical forces that define the core dynamics and ambiguities of Western culture. To use Warburg's expression, a culture schizophrenically divided between obscurity and reason, sacrifice and mourning, aggression and defence, orgiastic ecstasy and depression (Warburg 1923, 314).

According to him, such opposite forces of culture were imprinted in the images of art history and were paradigmatically symbolized by "the ascent with Helios towards the sun and the descent with Proserpine into the depths" (Warburg cited by Iversen 1998, 220). Warburg surrendered himself to the pathos of movement and to the chaotic dispersion of images; and, in the end, to the "the risk of a complete loss of self" (Didi-Huberman 2007, 13-14). But this principle of personal dispersion and subjective e*ffondrement* was also the cause for a flexible, embodied and decentred historical epistemology. One capable of affirming the uncertainties of the psycho-physiological self, imagined in radical opposition to the triumphant, authoritative and all-encompassing Ego sphere of historical positivism (Cf. Iversen 1998, 223).

In this respect, Godard's citation of a Virginia Woolf's quote, in which we read, "God, how I can suffer! It's terrible to have the gift of feeling everything with such intensity!" (3B), demonstrates that for him, as for Warburg, there is an irreducible pathos in the intellectual effort of memory and historical research. (Hence Warburg's coupling of the goddess Mnemosyne with the classical representations of the suffering Atlas, holding the terrible weight of the celestial sphere on his shoulders).

Along the lines of Burckhardt and Nietzsche, Warburg defined himself as an "historian-seismographer", capable of detecting and transmitting the most intense vibrations of the subterraneous movements of history. In both Godard and Warburg, the historian appears as a sort of "photosensitive surface", as Alain Michaud puts it, through which "texts and images emerge from the past and reveal themselves" in the present (Michaud, 2007, p.260).

This is precisely what informs Benjamin's definition of the "death of intention", related to the elimination of subjective intention and the prerogatives of authorship in truth historical narration. For Benjamin, "truth is an intentionless state of being, made up of ideas. The proper approach to it is not therefore one of intention and knowledge, but rather a total immersion and absorption in it. Truth is the death of intention" (Benjamin 1998, 36).

In Benjamin, the citability of the past would respond to this requirement, in the sense that the textual fragments would reflect one another in a sort of "free floating state" escaping the total control of the author (Arendt 1968, 47). Interestingly enough, in 2B, Godard quotes the Portuguese cinematographer Manoel de Oliveira to say: "That's what I like in cinema. A saturation of magnificent signs bathing in the light of their absence of explanation".

For Benjamin, the citability of the past was a method envisioned to displace the authority of tradition in the transmission of the past. As in Godard's citational approach, clearly indebted to Benjamin's method, the past acquires its objective and truth legibility through the assemblage of quotations, relating to each other through a diagrammatic and intertextual structure. These diagrammatic relations are plotted by the author, but their meanings and dynamics would be ultimately put in motion by the reader. Benjamin conceived it, notwithstanding, as an *objective* legibility of the text because it would refer to the full concreteness and tangibility of imaginal thought-fragments that appear in opposition to the habitual processes of orthodox abstract reasoning.

Inevitably, this brings to mind Benjamin's famous summary of his methodological approach for *The Arcades Project*: "Method of this project: literary montage. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" (Benjamin 1999a, 460; N1a,8).

Benjamin's fragment speaks eloquently to Godard's assertion that "Historians don't search, they find"; and the only way "to shield [the] images from language means to actually make use of them", as we hear right at the beginning of *Film Socialisme*'s third section. To shield the images from language is to cancel out the linguistic models of positivist explanation, just as in Benjamin the principle of citation and literary montage offered an alternative to the available modes of historical writing and historical experience. As in Warburg, in both Godard

and Benjamin, the task of the materialist historian is thus paralleled to the figure of the poet. Hence the importance conceded by Benjamin to the poetic method of Baudelaire, whose literary work constituted for Godard, along with Manet's modern painting (3A), one of the most important "proto-cinematic figures" of modernity (Morgan 2013, 164) (2A). By selecting the objects from multiple layers of time and reality, the poet liberates them from their functionality, integrating them anew in a fragmentary and highly suggestive form, guided by imaginal associations and analogies, or *correspondances*. The poet is thus a photosensitive surface, an expert cameraman, as Benjamin would posit, capable of prophetically revealing the images, past and future, in all their details and colourful variations.

The thought of the outside

As demonstrated by Philippe-Alain Michaud, Warburg actually borrowed the notion of the "historian-seismograph" from a lecture by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, entitled *The Poet and the Present Time*, 1906, in which he compares the poet to a seismograph that registers and transmits the convulsions of the world. It is not that poets think about all things, but, according to Hofmannsthal, things think them and govern their thoughts and actions, above the most immediate personal intentions (Hofmannsthal in Michaud 2007, 260).

What these more or less metaphorical formulations reflect is something that Bergson had already been able to discern throughout his work on time and memory. I am referring here to Bergson's conception of the temporal unconscious as an expanded subjective locus that covers the totality of the past, independently of the limits of human psychology. Consequently, for Bergson, it is not time that is in us, but we are in time. We inhabit a sort of memory-world that concerns a space of pure virtuality, that is, a space of not yet formed and not yet thought relationships that articulate the subjective and the non-subjective through a very thin and precarious line.

By the same token, each image inscribes a virtual potency, or *reserve*, which is actualized through its contact with constellations of other images. This is to say that the image involves the reciprocal exchange between the actual and the virtual, since the virtual as pure memory always differs from any concrete image that would actualize it in a stable form. Once again, the potency of the image is not to illustrate a reality, but to affect and to be affected by other images, acting as a dialectical catalyser of experiences, cognitions and affects. It is in this sense that one can affirm that images form an exteriorized subjectivity, a sort of memory-world in which time is apprehended, as posited by Bergson, as the process of actualization of what falls outside the mechanisms of cause and effect, outside the conventional criteria of spatio-temporal linearity.

Just as memory concerns an impersonal plane that speaks of an exteriorized subjectivity, thought is now apprehended from the perspective of what Gilles Deleuze described, from Foucault and Blanchot, as the "thought of the outside" (Deleuze 1986, 126-27). Thought is no longer conceived of from the perspective of exclusively subjective and psychological mechanisms of consciousness. As D.N.Rodowick points out in his analysis of Deleuze's time-image, thought as pure virtuality, or "absolute memory" (Deleuze 1986, 114), refers to an absolute horizon in relation to the act of thinking, a dissociative force that inscribes the unrealized powers of the image (Rodowick 1997, 201; 180). Hence Bergson's famous aphorism that *time is creation or is nothing at all*.

What is at stake here is the consideration of an act of thought in the process of becoming – which, for that reason, persistently remains to be fully achieved, thus confronting the subject with the unthinkable in thinking (Deleuze 1994a, 59; 1994b, 140-42; 1989, 166-67). Put another way, subjects are confronted with an impotency of thinking that forces them to think in a different manner, outside the hegemony of absolute presence and systematic speech. As Rodowick reads it, Deleuze's time-image confronts us with this absolute horizon of the outside, defined as a liminal space, a non-human and decentred space lacking the stability of geometric perspective (Rodowick 1997, 188). In sum, the Euclidian space that talks about a privileged and centred position of the subject, placed in a geometric triangulation of vision, ultimately gives place to a decentred subject capable of inhabiting a topological, or diagrammatic space, beyond the predictability of pre-determined relations and associations.

In this regard, Godard's cinema is eximious in the way it frustrates the habitual expectations constructed by cinematic vision, deflecting it to the expectations about what is there to see and to *discover* in the image. Godard's successful attempt to create a cinema-atlas in *Histoire(s)* corresponds to the necessity of constructing a mnemotechnical device capable of bringing to light the zones of chaos and intense turbulence of the images: i.e. their passages, collisions, transferals and deterritorializations across times and places, which were firstly envisioned by Warburg throughout his *Mnemosyne Atlas*. In both, the atlas is an apparatus of readability of antithetical forces of reason and emotion, ecstasy and melancholy, life and death, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. These forces form a zone of turbulence composed by the images themselves, since they inhabit a zone of the outside: An outside considered as that which remains to be thought and actualized, beyond the orthodox and binary oppositions between subjectivity and non-subjectivity.

The great, decisive move of Godard was to transfer this space of the outside to the screen of cinema, giving it the status of a saturated surface in which what counts are the reliefs, the curvatures, the velocities and the superimpositions of visual and sound fragments,

conceived of as the foundational elements of a becoming-thought. My argument is that the historiographies of both Warburg and Benjamin already incorporated this idea of an outside to thought and image, materialized in an externalized medium that reinvents traditional patterns of thought and presentation. Whereas Warburg's brilliant decision was to transfer the historical *outside* of non-formed relationships to an atlas of images, Benjamin's genius was to envision the multiplicity of cultural manifestations from the perspective of an irregular rhythm of textual fragments, subjected to multiple digressions and examinations, beyond the completeness and coherence of the book form. If, in Benjamin, Warburg and Godard, the concept of the image is the foundational element of their historiographies, this is because, for all of them, images are understood in their capacity to produce dialectical thinking: that is, in their capacity to reconcile contradictions and irregularities without ever aspiring to reach a final synthesis or an all-encompassing and stabilized truth.

But it wasn't just that. For all of them, the space of the image is also a political and ethical space, a plural, inter-subjective and heterogeneous "agency of readings and counter-readings, publics and counter-publics" (Hansen 1992, 71). For all of them, the space of the image relates to what must be redeemed from ideologically oriented forms of amnesia. Benjamin was right in affirming that there is nothing historical in Bergson's considerations on time and memory. With this he is saying that one must also consider the relevance of Bergson's model of memory in the philosophical and ethical comprehension of historical time. For Benjamin, just as for Godard and Warburg, the responsibility of what we inherit and the way we transform this heritage is the most significant expression of memory, of time, providing history with the sense of a critical position and an engaged activity that aims at fostering emancipatory and timeless values. Not by chance, Deleuze's thought of the outside is also the demand for the consideration of an act of thinking as a factor of resistance, creation and experimentation – *time is invention or is nothing at all*: because to short-circuit the monolithic schemes of memory and historicism corresponds to the act of discovering and erecting a space of alternative thinking, against the commodification and archaic aestheticization of the political and socio-cultural sphere.

This comprehension of memory as an act of resistance is paradigmatically developed by Godard in a sequence of 3A. A newsreel footage, in which we can perceive the existence of bodies lying down on the floor, filmed by a camera whose shaky and disoriented movements reflect the sense of danger experienced by the reporter, is combined with an excerpt of Marcel Carné's *Les Visiteurs du Soir*, 1942, a film about the powers of memory and love, and with television images broadcasting the celebration of the Liberation of Paris. The intertitle "You have to impress what is true, what is fair" (Faut frapper que c'est vrai, que c'est just), is

superimposed with the voice-over: “another fifty years, and we are celebrating the liberation of Paris; that is to say, that television, since all power has become a spectacle, organizes a great spectacle”. The sequence ends with a reference to the poets Claude Roy, member of the French resistance, and the Russian Ossip Mandelstam, who died in the Gulags. Both embody the idea that “poetry is first of all resistance”. It is in this context that Godard subsequently establishes a link to Italian neorealism as a true movement of cinematic resistance capable of documenting and *impressing* the memory of the catastrophe.

Historical spectrality and weak force

If this political and ethical dimension of the image is a well-known feature of both Benjamin’s and Godard’s projects, the fact is that Warburg’s panels 78 and 79 of his Atlas, to which I will return later, are there to demonstrate that such valence is equally decisive in his project. Warburg was perhaps the first one to perceive the significance and expressiveness of the historical past from the perspective of what Jacques Derrida would later conceptualize as a form of *hauntology*, by which he presented an alternative model to the ontology of metaphysics. By embracing the spectral appearances of the past, Warburg opened up the ontology of time to a politics of memory, the legacy and the generational, relating the Derridean theme of the becoming-body of the spirit with the uncertainty of images and language (Cf. Derrida 1994, 5).

By defining his Atlas as a ghost story for adults, Warburg emphasized the phantasmal survival of the repressed, thereby recovering to history the concept of phantasm in Freud’s metapsychology. The phantasm, even if connected to spiritualist practices incompatible with the scientific aspirations of psychanalysis, offered Freud an image of the mechanisms of repression and recurrence of the structural psychic *topos*; which Warburg, on his part, applied to the interpretation of historical topographies, concerning the migrations and metamorphoses of images. As observed by Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, the phantasm is a powerful metaphor for encounters with modes of alterity and alternative modes of existence, intersecting apparently unrelated temporalities and offering a resistance to the ascendency of linear time (Blanco and Peeren 2013). As in Derrida, in Warburg the phantasm invokes a zone of indiscernibility and uncertainty. Its capacity to form coherent knowledge is questioned because it refers to what is outside normal perception, outside the archive as a repository of the sanctioned past, disrupting what Benjamin often described as the empty and homogeneous time of historicism.

Indeed, spectrality as an alternative model of historical knowledge also plays an important role in both Benjamin and Godard. At the beginning of *Hélas Pour Moi*, 1993,

Godard quotes a passage from the French version of Benjamin's second thesis on the philosophy of history. The fragment is muttered by a mysterious voice-over:

> "Are not the voices of our friends sometimes haunted by the echoes of those who came before? And is not the beauty of women from another age the same as that of our friends? It is therefore to us to realize that the past requires a redemption, a small part of which happens to be within our power. There is a mysterious meeting between the defunct generations and that to which we belong. We have been awaited on earth".

Let me begin by saying that in Godard it is the structure of appearance-disappearance proper to vision and the resistance to interpretative closure that establishes the possibility of seeing and transmitting the past. Godard's tactical use of several literary excerpts from *Hélas Pour Moi*, 1993, an eminently philosophical and poetical film, at the introductory moments of Chapters 1A, 1B and 3B of *Histoire(s)*, is a substantial demonstration of Fieschi-Vivet's vital argument that, in Godard, the beauty and the sacred emerge at the intersection of the poetic and the historical (Fieschi-Vivet 2000, 190). If for Godard "the image is first of all of the order of redemption" (3B), this is because it involves a conception of time in which the past is a charged element of unsuspected realization. As Benjamin noted, "what distinguishes images from the 'essences' of phenomenology is their historical index" (Benjamin 1999a, 462, N3,1), carrying with it an effective and intrinsic potentiality "by which it is referred to redemption" (Benjamin 1968, 254).

In the final part of Benjamin's second thesis, which Godard does not cite, we read: "Like every generation that preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim" (Benjamin 1968, 254). The weak power that belongs to each generation encompasses what Benjamin describes, in the *Theological-Political Fragment*, as the "rhythm of the profane"; that is, an imperfect, fragile and limited redemptive power that would lead humanity to the most imperceptible way of approaching messianic redemption. Benjamin writes that "just as a force, by virtue of the path it is moving along, can augment another force on the opposite path, so the secular order - because of its nature as secular - promotes the coming of the Messianic Kingdom" (Benjamin 2002, 305). What is at stake here is the consideration of a sort of messianic inclination without messianism, a worldly religiosity that entrusts the past with renovated nobility, understood in Benjamin's later work from the perspective of a committed and urgent political task in the fight against fascism.

Céline Scemama (2006, 17) would argue that such Benjaminian *weak* redemptive force decisively informs Godard's *Histoire(s).* First of all, it is important to note that history is made up of forces because it refers to what is incessant and to what endures in time, including the catastrophes, the victims and the oppressed, i.e. those who are systematically consigned to

forgetfulness by the binding authority of historical tradition and the fabricated visions of a harmonious past. For Benjamin as for Godard, it is up to the materialist historian to rescue the repressed subjects and materials of the past from the dominant tradition of history. The ultimate goal would then be to offer an alternative historical temporality capable of honouring those who never had the slightest benefit from history (Scemama 2006, 14).

Now, it is in this context that Céline Scemama establishes a correspondence between Benjamin's weak messianic force [*faible force messianique*] and the weak nuclear force in physics [*force d'interaction faible*], which, she argues, decisively informs Godard's montage and political filmmaking. Also called weak interaction, the weak nuclear force is alluded to by Godard in Chapter 3B of *Histoire(s)*. Constituting one of the four fundamental forces of nature, the weak interaction is responsible for the modification of elementary particles: for instance, during a Beta particle emission, originated in the atomic nucleus, a neutron disappears and is replaced by a proton. As in Warburg's concept of dynamogram, in Godard images function like particles whose energetic charges, positive or negative, are formed in a network of interconnections, varying according to the force fields that intervene in the arrangement of visual and sound images. Thus, the meaning of the image is encountered in this flux of associations, but also in the interruption of those fluxes (Scemama 2006, 12), suspending an instant wherein the "readability" of words and images is "issued directly from the choices of montage" (Didi-Huberman 2008, 139). Retrieving Benjamin's definition, the dialectical image corresponds to this "dialectics at a standstill" (Benjamin 1999, 462; N2a,3), thus involving a movement of thinking that, in Godard, goes well beyond the mechanical movement of animated images.

It is important to note that Godard's mention to the weak force appears in the context of a reference to Henri Langlois's experimental film programming at the French Cinémathèque, as well as its influence in the emergence of the Nouvelle Vague in the late 1950's (which included Godard as one of its most illustrious representatives); and also the fact that films of important directors such as Jay Leyda, Louis Delluc and Sergei Eisenstein had to be imagined because they were banned or simply inaccessible: "The real cinema was the one that couldn't be seen [...] because it has already been forgotten, still forbidden, always invisible" (3B). What motivated Godard in his first films was, at least in part, the attempt to recover the spirit of that invisible cinema, the attempt to restore the part that had remained in obscurity, founding Godard's constant dialogue with the past and with the forms that preceded and inspired him.

In a retrospective valuation, Godard considers that the audacity of those who led the rebellious French New Wave should be nonetheless described, most accurately, not as a demonstration of courage, but rather as a form of weakness. Godard is actually conceiving of

this weakness as the positive pole of the negative brute force associated to film industry and television, metaphorically represented through a video footage of a box fighting, placed in opposition to footage of New Wave films of directors such as Truffaut and Godard himself, and portraits of Langlois mixed with holy figures of religious Renaissance paintings.

This network of references, which also brings to light the New Wave's *politique des auteurs*, implicitly contains the idea of a redemptive dimension of cinema that struggles not only with itself (that is, with the cinema of spectacle and entertainment epitomized by Hollywood), but also with the alienating power of television. "Cinema substitutes to our gaze a world in accordance to our desires" (1A); But, as Benjamin and Warburg already comprehended, the desires and utopias of mankind can be easily cheated by the archaic fantasies and myths fabricated by ideological and authoritative power.

Godard's comprehension of the history of cinema as a history of repeated grandeur and decadence includes this idea of a flawed encounter of cinema with itself; the idea that its documentary and imaginative potency was soon torn to pieces by the masculinizing and profiting themes of sex and weapons in industrial cinema: "A film is a girl and a gun"; "The world for a nickel", we hear in 1A. But this apparently schematic logic of the decline of cinema at the hands of culture industry and spectacle is in fact at the basis of a more substantial and vital argument, related to the failed *rendez-vous* of cinema with the history of the twentieth century, and, more exactly, its incapacity in documenting the tragedy of the camps during World War II.[1] As I will argue below, it is precisely the failure of the promise of cinema with the world that triggers Godard's redemptive quest to rescue not only reality and the memory of cinema through a process of continuous self-criticism and reinvention; but also the voiceless victims of the past, whose spectres irremediably haunt the present by claiming our renovated attention and accountability.

The image will come at the time of Resurrection

In a well-known sequence at the end of Chapter 1A of *Histoire(s)*, a representation of Mary Magdalene taken from Giotto's *Resurrection, Noli me tangere*, ca. 1304-1306, is rotated through 90 degrees. The figure appears as an angel sent from heaven, with her hands encircling Elizabeth Taylor, filmed in a radiant scene of George Stevens' *A Place in the Sun*, 1951. The superimposing of Elisabeth Taylor and Mary Magdalene is interpreted by Jacques Rancière as a metaphorical reference to the possibility of cinema's rebirth, after its failure in

[1] Godard sees this absence as a sort of capital sin only redeemed by the humble *films d'actualités* and the Italian neo realism.

documenting the catastrophe of the extermination camps (Rancière 2001, 235). To be sure, the voice-over sustains the meaning of this superimposition (which is also combined with footage of the camps and reproductions of Goya's *Disasters*) through the reference to George Stevens: the director who, according to Godard, could only return to Hollywood and film the scene of happiness and pacification with Elisabeth Taylor because, in 1945, he decided to use the first rolls of 16 mm colour film, entrusted by Kodak, to witness the atrocities of the camps, at the moment of their liberation by US troops.

Miriam Heywood had already demonstrated that Didi-Huberman's fierce refusal of Rancière's metaphorical description of Elisabeth Taylor as an Angel of Resurrection is an artificial quarrel. Rancière's interpretation is entirely sustained not only in the images and commentary offered by the sequence, but also in Godard's broader themes and guiding lines of *Histoire(s)* (Heywood 2009, 275-76). Nonetheless, Didi-Huberman's repudiation of the concept of resurrection raises questions in a number of levels that require close analysis.

First of all, one should recognize the importance of cinema's resurrecting powers for Godard. By intersecting the religious motif of resurrection with the Orphic classical motif (in 2A Godard affirms that cinema authorizes Orpheus to look back without killing Eurydice), Godard endows the cinematographic documentary image with the potentiality to provide us a glimpse into what is impossible to see. More specifically, cinema provides us a glimpse into historical traumatic events, which, paradigmatically, resist the conventional methods and narrative procedures of historical research. For Godard, what the cinematographic image expresses is not fully explained or exhausted by causal and rational connections, rather affirming "the ambivalence of the material apparition of an immateriality", persistently reoriented and redistributed by the voice over (Emmelhainz 2019, 15) . For that reason, it must imply, as already commented above, an active, imaginative and emancipated viewer who, in line with the critical theory of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, resists the logic of the homogenizing and totalitarian principles of culture and memory industries.

Godard's belief in the revolutionary potentialities of cinema to organize a public sphere with emancipatory and visionary intentions – and this leads me to the second issue I would like to approach here – connects his theoretical approach not only to the writings of Benjamin on the reproducibility of the work of art, but also to Adorno's speculations about the intrinsic collectivity and plurality of film. (At least if one opts to follow Miriam Hansen's suggestion for an alternative understanding of Adorno's position on film and mass culture) (Cf. Hansen, 1992). However, it is equally important to note that Godard's understanding of the history of cinema is remarkably close to what Max Pensky identified as Adorno's problematization of philosophy's "practical failure". As Pensky puts it, according to Adorno,

only insofar as philosophy missed its window of opportunity with the world, only insofar as philosophy broke its promise with historical reality, can philosophy still "live on" and carry the hope of one day arrive in time (Pensky 1997, 10). In Godard's case, this negative melancholic *telos* is reciprocal to a positive quest for the resurrection of cinema as a site of transgression and "resistance to actual forms of power" (Emmelheinz 2019, 16). The reluctance manifested by Libby Saxton regarding the ethical risk of creating "positive meaning" (i.e., the exultant resurrection of cinema) out of the catastrophe of the Holocaust (Saxton 2004: 368) is pertinent, but it fades out as soon as one realizes that, as in Adorno's commitment to philosophy, for Godard, cinema is in a state of permanent debt to historical reality and to its own past.

As soon as in *Les Enfants Jouent à la Russie*, 1993, Godard declared the end of cinema. But for Godard this art of the end and disappointment is also an art of resurrection and hope (it is unclear why Didi-Huberman opposes so categorically these two complementary categories in his analysis of Godard's sequence). Consequently, for Godard, this implies to tell "all the stories of the films that were never made" (1A); or rather, to express what the films of the *pre-Holocaust* period were looking for, but failed in effectively saying and showing – from Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be Or Not To Be*, 1942; to *Chaplin's The Great Dictator*, 1940; and Jean Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu*, 1939 (Rancière 2003).

Godard is thus the memorialist who gives himself the task of tracing the paths and the *destiny* of the images of cinema and Western culture, which are fundamentally understood as historical images that reflect the disturbances and the antinomies of an entire century (Rancière 2001, 217). As Scemama points out, for Godard, every single image of the post-Holocaust culture is, at its limit, impregnated by the memory of this unique and fracturing event. For that reason, the Holocaust must be not only redeemed from both amnesia and the logic of spectacle and horror (Scemama 2006, 16), but also interpreted and remembered from the perspective of its interdependence with other historical catastrophes. If "art is reborn from what was burned", as we hear immediately before the sequence dedicated to Magdalene and Taylor (which is yet another formulation to the aphorism "art is like fire", already examined above), this is because the images of art and the images of cinema carry within them the ability to create new contexts for apprehending the imperceptible and the unthought of history.

This is why, at the beginning of 1B, Godard appropriates a Paulinian aphorism to say that "the image will come at the time of the Resurrection". The camera lens captures the past and fixes it through death. It is up to cinema to restore it by means of the potentialities of critical montage, i.e. by the metaphorical and metonymical resonances between visual and

sound images that cinema brings into play. Godard intersects the historical and the religious themes in order to come up with an expanded dialectical montage that combines the images of cinema and the religious motifs of the images of art history, endowing cinema with the character of universality to which both religion and art aspire.

If in 1B Godard compares cinema to a manifestation of faith, this is because it is the mission of cinema to reconnect individuals with historical reality, beyond the ritualizations of institutionalized forms of memory. Like religion, cinema is for Godard a devotional practice that enables us to apprehend a glimpse of the sacred, because "the sacred is what cinema has a mission to discover and show materially in this world" (Fieschi-Vivet 2000, 203). But the sacred is not what belongs to a metaphysical sky or a transcendent world, rather referring to what is most *truth* and fundamental for the historical subject, individual and collective.

I believe that this analysis raises a third issue that is worth noticing. Didi-Huberman is right in affirming that Godard does not speak as "a theologian about the end of time" (148). But, at the same time, one cannot hastily reject the theological dimension of Godard's historical projects, which, for the rest, constitutes one of the most defining points of connection between Godard's cinema and Benjamin's historiography.

In Godard and in Benjamin, history obeys to the same premise of religion as a practice that relates us to the divine. But here the divine is not the pure, the absolute or the indivisible. What is at stake is the restoration of the link between man and the martyrdom and the difference of the other. The recurrent poetic image of hands touching each other in Godard's projects points precisely to this encounter, constituting a kind of metonymic expansion of the image where we see the hands of Mary Magdalene and Jesus touching each other without touching, in a visual evocation of the act of faith and belief. At issue here is Godard's understanding of history as a space for opening the possibility of connecting the individual to the other and to the world, against the alienation produced by the images of media and entertainment, which define what is expected in terms of standardized patterns of behaviour. Therefore, history contains the possibility of thinking critically and defining ourselves in terms of beliefs and ideals that we construct for ourselves. From a metaphorical point of view, history acquires a properly theological, religious sense, because if we look for the etymological origin of the word religion, *re-ligare*, it appears as that which reconnects us to the divine, which, once again, in Godard, is nothing but a metaphor for a certain humanist vision of justice and harmony between peoples. It is also a metaphor for the idea of cinema as a renewal of our faith in the world, since cinema is capable of creating historical meanings that nurture the processes of critical and affective thinking in a collective space of reception.

Consequently, by intersecting the responsibility of memory with the virtue of justice, the affirmation of the political in both Benjamin and Godard is reflected in a theological component that endows the dialectical image with a metaphysical, spiritual and sacred dimension. Benjamin connects the dialectical image to a potential of interruption because it introduces a disruptive time in collective experience, containing the demand for a messianic stoppage of history, which nonetheless must not be confused with any sort of teleological culmination of history. If for Benjamin the citability of the past accompanies the redemption of mankind, this is because "only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments. Each moment it has lived becomes a citation *à l'ordre du jour* – and that day is Judgment Day." (Benjamin 1969a, 254). And this is equally valid for Godard, since his citational approach to cinema is inseparable from a redemptive aspect of history, by which he tries to restore peripheral micro-events and historical actors, against the unity of history and against the authority of official narratives and ideological amnesia.

Pathosformel, or the nymphal impulse

For Godard, history is a set of plural and interrelated events, functioning as dispersed material fragments that are gathered through the mnemonic practice of montage. But whereas in Benjamin and Warburg montage is nevertheless attached to the provocative forms of surrealist and Dadaist collage, in Godard this filiation is transformed and reinvented through a sort of "anti-montage", as Rancière puts it (2001, 212; 221), sustained in the fusion and amalgamation of images and signs, enabled by his experimental use of video technology.

This is why Jacques Aumont considered that Godard's video-montage allowed him to invent a new Pathosformel, apprehended by Warburg, as already noted above, as intense formulas of pathos which were imprinted in the images of classical Antiquity, subsequently re-emerging in the art of the Renaissance and Modernity. The intensity of movements, the vibrating gestures and the emotions attached to faces, all these deeply moving and passionate agitations deployed by Warburg through embodied forms of sensation and affection, are taken by Godard from the perspective of a "purely energetic form" (Aumont 1999, 98).

In fact, one of the most important parallels to be drawn between Warburg and Godard lies in the common idea that the movement of bodies is a *symptomatic* "movement in bodies" (Didi-Huberman 2004, 15), and that their emotive formulas are an expression of broader historical convulsions and contradictions.[2]

[2] For a detailed comparative analysis of the nymphal body (i.e. the image of the woman) in Godard and Warburg, see the video essay and the accompanying article: Miguel Mesquita Duarte, "Grammatology

For instance, in Mnemosyne's plate 5, Warburg assembles a multiplicity of images in which the emotional expressions of supplication, despair, fury and affliction are paradigmatically embodied in a series of postures of mythical female figures: from the frenzied motion of Medea in Giulio Bonasone's etching *Jason and Medea* (XVIth century); and the violent outbursts of the Maenads, pulling-down and dismembering Pentheus in *Death of Pentheus* (fresco, 45-79 A.C.); to the lamented bodies of Alcestis and Laodamia, whose sacrifice for their loved husbands contrasts with the irrational violence of the murderous mother (*Dying Alcestis*, 160-170 A.C.; and *History of Protesilaus and Laodamia*, 170 A.C). The unfolding of similar themes in plate 6, with the representations of the sacrifice of Polyxena in a Etruscan stone sarcophagus, 300 B.C., and the dancing Maenad raising a cleaver in a neo-attic bas-relief from 2nd century B.C., show that for Warburg the history of the nymph is nothing but a history of images, and that her movement concerns a wider historical and cultural mobility of the images of art history.

I argue that the interest of both Warburg and Godard for a series of postures and attitudes of the body is translated in their awareness for the expression of human affections that come from the depths of time, enabling the viewer to comprehend and heuristically interpret the broader dynamics of "historical change and recurrence" (Johnson 2016).

Didi-Huberman is therefore right in identifying a nymphal impulse in the evangelic scene of *Histoire(s*) (given by the rotation of Giotto's Magdalene), and in relating it to both Benjamin's description of Andrea Pisano's *Hope* in the Baptistery of San Giovanni, 1336, and Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, famously described in Benjamin's ninth thesis as an allegory of catastrophe and destruction (Benjamin 1968a, 149). But what Didi-Huberman misapprehended in his analysis was that such nymphal impulse is most intensely represented not in the rotated figure of Magdalene, but in the ambiguous movement of Elisabeth Taylor herself. What is more, captured in a posture between rising and falling, between the sacred and the profane, her representation strikingly connects to Warburg's use of Giottos's *Hope*, ca.1305, in panel 79 of his *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a panel which I now would like to examine.

Amidst the three reproductions of paintings assembled on the left side of panel 79 – Raphael's *The Mass at Bolsena* (1512); Giotto's *Hope* (ca.1305); and *The Last Communion of St. Jerome*, by Sandro Botticelli (ca. 1490-95), – Giotto's nymph is, in my view, crucial in the organization of the panel, despite of the prevalence in size of Raphael's painting. When we look attentively, it is as if the movement initiated by the winged figure extends throughout the panel to intersect, in an almost perfect diagonal line, with two newspaper clippings placed on

the panel's top right corner. The first one shows Gustav Stresemann at the moment of the signature of the Locarno Treaty, for which he would receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926; the second one is a journal headline that makes reference to the German boxer Max Schmeling, who during the height of his career served Hitler as a boorish argument for the Aryan race supremacy.

Warburg's use of photographic registers and other non-artistic materials, along with reproductions of painting and sculpture of *high culture*, is without precedents at the time he was constructing the Atlas. Moreover, by relying in the meanings created by the dialectical montage of images, Panel 79 paradigmatically develops what one can characterize as a cinematic mode of thought. In this sense, Warburg's Atlas anticipates in many aspects the capacities of essayistic documentary cinema (of which Godard's work is exemplary) by asynchronously relating images from different sources, epochs and cultures, in order to convey the fundamental topologies and *dynamis* of Western culture.

Warburg was indelibly marked by the devastating effects of World War I. Schoell-Glass demonstrated that his diary (*Tagebuch*) repeatedly expresses serious concerns about the rise of anti-Semitism throughout Germany and Europe, alluded to by Warburg in the same panel through images of propaganda against Jews representing the desecration of the Host (Schöell-Glass 2001, 201). The plate also includes photographic documents, recorded by Warburg himself, of the Holy Eucharist in St. Peter's Square, after the signing of the Lateran Treaty by Mussolini and Pius XI (documented in detail in panel 78), with the presence of the Pontifical Guard and the Italian army, symbols of political authority.

These images show the unconditional adherence of the masses to the grandeur and monumentality of fascist rhetoric. Most importantly, however, they evoke the attraction of the masses to the belligerent speech of fascism, which from then on incorporated, with Mussolini (the man of divine providence), the transcribing of bloody narratives of religious sacrifice into the realm of politics (Querini 2015, 17). Confronted with the political and industrial developments of modernity, which were quickly destroying "the sense of distance" required for the act of thought (Warburg 1939, 292), Warburg envisaged the values of art and culture as essential aspects for an activity of critical thinking, or *Denkraum*. Just as in Godard, in Warburg the presence of the nymph in panel 79 symbolizes, therefore, the idea of an intellectual and spiritual path that allows humankind to preserve a "space for devotion and scope for reason" (*ibidem*). An image space, as Benjamin would put it, which, in Godard, is granted to cinema as an interdisciplinary practice; and, in Warburg, was envisioned through the cycles of repetition and survival of the images of art history and Western culture.

As a result, it is possible to conclude that, in Warburg's Atlas, images also acquire a conspicuous political and social resonance. Parallel to Benjamin's and Godard's historiographies, so too in Warburg are the images of low and high culture potential testimonies of the catastrophes of history and a reservoir for the construction of a public space of historical awareness. Carrying a sort of mnemonic political urgency, dialectical images are interpreted in all of them as catalysts for *resurrecting* the past in the light of historical choices and modes of ethical participation in the present world.

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