Godard Counts

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> Once we know the number 1, we believe we know the number 2, because 1 plus 1 makes 2. But we have forgotten that firstly we have to know the meaning of "plus."
>
> —JEAN-LUC GODARD, *Alphaville*[1]

1. Ordering Evidence

Over a span of some twenty years, from the late 1970s to 1998, Jean-Luc Godard conceived and produced a 4-½ hour video essay called *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[2] Much discussed, it has rarely been shown publicly in America but has circulated on pirated DVDs; a book version, with some key variations, long out of print, has been reissued by Gallimard.[3] *Histoire(s)* comprises four episodes, each subdivided into two parts. They consist of clips from old movies and newsreels, photographs, stills, reproductions of paintings, new footage, music, superimposed titles, and spoken accompaniment, all combined through superimposition, wipes, dissolves, irises, crosscuts, and every other editing device imaginable. Topics include the relation of

1. Jean-Luc Godard, *"Alphaville," a Film by Jean-Luc Godard,* trans. and ed. Peter Whitehead (New York, 1966), p. 37.

2. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has its origins in a lecture series that Godard presented in Montréal in the late 1970s; see Godard, *Introduction à une veritable histoire du cinéma* (Paris, 1980); hereafter abbreviated *I.* On the production history, see Michael Witt, "Genèse d'une véritable histoire du cinéma," trans. Franck Le Gac, in *Jean-Luc Godard Documents,* trans. Nicole Brenez et al., ed. Brenez et al. (Paris, 2006), pp. 265–80.

3. See *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (dir. Godard, 1998, 2007). While this article was in press, authorized DVDs (with English subtitles) finally became available under the imprimatur of *Cahiers du cinéma.*

film and politics, genocide, globalization, fantasies of omnipotence, European integration, art, sexuality, and God. The result is both dazzling and bewildering. It is also an inquiry into the very idea of a history of art or film.

Histoire(s) makes many assertions but few real arguments: its claim to history takes the form of demonstration, not discourse. Hour after hour, images combine and recombine in such a way that formal and thematic interconnections become fleetingly apparent. This montage constitutes, in and of itself, Godard's historical exercise. In the context of the present number, itself a compendium of specimens, *Histoire(s)* is a case among others: an instance of nondiscursive historiography. But it is a special case insofar as its reduction of historiography to montage presses the question of what (if anything) counts as evidence in a history of, or from, images. What justifies the conceit that a picture or a clip of film can *instance* historical or cultural processes?

Historians of art and film routinely work from this conceit. They work from cases, making broad claims on the basis of stipulatively unique artifacts or sets of artifacts: paintings, prints, movies, and so on. They do so by adducing evidence to produce readings, which in turn give rise to historical generalizations. Rebecca Zorach's article in this number describes how this method operated at the University of Chicago after the Second World War, with a painting by Botticelli as the case and neo-Platonism as the general category (hence with Chicago as the case and iconology as the category, and with the article itself as a case and posticonological art history as the category). The method is aggregative, juxtaposing various artifacts according to some established principle of combination or "theory." It is reasonably clear, in such situations, what counts as the case and what counts as the evidence to justify its status as such. The format of most art history and film studies articles makes the distinction unavoidable: the cases take the form of illustrations plus ekphrastic descriptions; the evidence takes the form of footnoted citations of primary sources; the scholarly commentary sutures up the two and draws conclusions. The present article adheres to just this format. But Godard does not.

Instead, *Histoire(s)* replaces academic history's hierarchy of evidence with an ensemble of artifacts. Although it works from cases in the manner of orthodox historiography, still it puts the relation of particular instances to general categories constantly at issue. The very title of the series, with its parenthetical plural, leaves it uncertain whether the assembled histories

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make a single whole or remain distinct: Is it simple or composite? It is a real question as to how, or whether, the images and sounds that constitute *Histoire(s)* might add up to anything. Syntax and synthesis, the rules of combination and sequence, even the very idea of universals and particulars, *langues* and *paroles,* undergo strain throughout *Histoire(s).* Exactly for this reason, Godard's project amounts to a sustained investigation into the constitution of artifacts as evidence for broader historical claims. What makes an artifact into an instance?

For this assertion to be persuasive, it is necessary to cite evidence (to make the case). The present paper is itself about two sequences from *Histoire(s)*—two cases from the broader array—along with shots from two more recent films, *Éloge de l'amour* (2001) and *Notre Musique* (2004). Starting from the premise that *Histoire(s)* investigates the juxtaposition of artifacts in historiography, it makes three basic claims.

First, that Godard articulates such juxtaposition through devices of montage and enumeration. Putting together pieces of evidence in historiography, he asserts, is equivalent to putting together pieces of film in the editing room. Both constitute sequences: the one a sequence of events, the other a sequence of cells and shots. However, such constitution entails a rule of combination, a rule for what does or does not *count.* Enumeration, 1 2 3 4, is for Godard the paradigm of a rule-bound sequence, counting out what counts. Thus the rules of enumeration model the rules of montage.

Second, that *Histoire(s)* is an investigation of rules in their historiographic application: it tells what counts. Godard finds the rules of sequence to be something other than arbitrary. We cannot choose them at pleasure, even though *Histoire(s)* breaks all the rules of normal science. On the contrary, it emerges that the rules of enumeration and montage are the ligaments of any sort of community and the condition of being in a body.

Third, that Godard's analysis is therapeutic for more overtly disciplined histories of art and film. On the one hand, it poses an implicit challenge to accepted patterns of combination, specifically the hierarchical distinction between cases and their contexts. On the other, it reveals these disciplines as practices of ethics: as ongoing examinations of, challenges to, and debasements of the rules of combination. While *Histoire(s)* contains many historical claims that are far from convincing (to me at any rate), still it clarifies essentially what might constitute conviction in historiographies of art and film.

2. Dirty Hands
The first example comes from episode 2B, "Fatale Beauté." Godard himself appears on-screen, sitting at his typewriter. He mutters, "dirty hands" (*Les Mains Sales,* after Sartre's play) and holds his hands before his face,

flexing his fingers into claws. "Do you see them, or not?" he asks.[4] We cut to a still shot of open hands, then to one from *Un Chien andalou* showing a man grasping a woman, and finally to one from *The Hands of Orlac,* in which the title character stares at his own hands, much as Godard himself has just done (in *The Hands of Orlac,* they are evil hands that have been grafted to his arms). There follows a brief sequence in which Godard suggests that the framing devices of classical cinema tended to accentuate breasts and phalluses: "in the depths of every love story there always lurks a story of nursing" (*H,* 2:41/65; trans. mod.).

The two themes—hands and infantile sexuality—coincide in a final series of images. It begins with a grainy close-up of Louise Brooks in three-quarters view, her skin brilliantly white, her black hair merging with the background, a dark bar of shadow running down the near side of her face (fig. 1). On the soundtrack is Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum.* As the voices harmonize, the silhouette of a boy, seen from behind, emerges to occupy the left third of the screen. Crisp and black against Brooks's skin, the boy raises one hand as though to touch her; the path of his arm corresponds with fantastic precision to the shadow on her face (fig. 2). Then Brooks's face dissolves into that of another woman, and the whole shot is suddenly recognizable: it is from the opening of Ingmar Bergman's *Persona,* and the silhouetted boy is reaching for the projected image of his mother (fig. 3). Another slow dissolve leads to a world of color: the elderly Godard sitting at a typewriter (plate 1). More fantastic affinities emerge as the dissolve lingers. The contour of the boy's upper arm corresponds to the inclined surface of the typewriter; the line of his jaw catches the lower edge of a lamp in the foreground; his lower arm rhymes with a power cord; the arc from wrist to little finger mimes Godard's profile. The blue shadow of Godard's eyeshade, cast on the wall behind, falls with miraculous precision on the ghostly mother's right eye; her iris turns a vivid blue, then fades away.[5]

The progression from Brooks to Godard lasts only a few seconds. Nothing much happens beyond the revelation of congruences between images.[6]

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4. Godard, transcript accompanying *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* trans. John Howe, ECM Records 1706–10, 4 vols., 1999, 2:41/65; hereafter abbreviated *H.* The first page reference for this bilingual source refers to its French text, the second, to its English.

Clearly audible on the soundtrack, the line "*On les voit, ou pas?*" is not included in the published transcript. However, unless otherwise noted, all citations and translations of spoken dialogue in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are from the four-volume transcript. These transcriptions are more accurate than those in the Gallimard edition.

5. Thanks to Miriam Hansen for pointing out the eyeshade's shadow.

6. On cinephilia's fetishization of the detail, see Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or the Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington, Ind., 2005). Thanks to Daniel Morgan for this reference.

FIGURE 1.   Episode 2B: Louise Brooks

FIGURE 2.   Episode 2B: Brooks + boy

F I G U R E 3.   Episode 2B: From Bergman's *Persona*

It is, in this regard, typical of *Histoire(s).* The interplay of Brooks, Bergman, and Godard himself is the sort of thing we are asked, repeatedly, to accept as historical evidence. Fantastic and singular though it may be, its congruence of multiple images is said to betoken something about the world. In this case, as we shall see, the claim has to do with an alleged relation between developmental psychology, human embodiment, and the techniques of twentieth-century cinema. Even without going into details, however, it is clear that this is going to be a big pill to swallow. In evaluating the claim, the issue will be whether a procedure that looks suspiciously like formalism—the articulation of patterned relationships between images—might actually constitute historiography.[7] Godard claims that it does. He claims, in fact, that such relationships instance historical processes.

In his "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough,*" Wittgenstein addresses the problem of what he calls the "connecting links" between artifacts and events in historiography.

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7. Such questions are not without precedent. In interviews Godard makes frequent reference to André Malraux and Walter Benjamin, two proponents of the metonymic in historiography. But it would be exactly wrong to take *Histoire(s)* as the transcription of a textual or discursive argument. Indeed, Godard has made a video, *Scénario du film "Passion"* (1982), about the impossibility of such an enterprise.

> But an hypothetical connecting link should in this case do nothing but
> direct the attention to the similarity, the relatedness, of the *facts*. As one
> might illustrate an internal relation of a circle to an ellipse by gradually
> converting an ellipse into a circle; *but not in order to assert that a certain
> ellipse actually, historically, had originated from a circle* (evolutionary hy-
> pothesis), but only in order to sharpen our eye for a formal connection.
> But I can also see the evolutionary hypothesis as nothing more, as the
> clothing of a formal connection.[8]

Histoire(s) works to just this end. It directs attention to the facts and re-
peatedly stages the gradual conversion of one figure into another, showing
"the similarity, the relatedness" of images, as between Brooks and Bergman
and Godard himself. Wittgenstein finds that the resulting historical or "evo-
lutionary" hypothesis can be seen as nothing more than "the clothing of a
formal connection." Godard, too, produces an evolutionary hypothesis: the
romance, in this case, of childhood sexuality as bodied forth in cinematic
convention. We will get to the details of that hypothesis in a moment. At
this stage, however, the formal connection remains unclear. What justifies
gradual conversion?

3. Counting on Your Fingers, Thinking with Your Hands

For Godard, the archetypical "connecting link" has always been the prin-
ciple of numerical sequence. Counting has been a favored way of concep-
tualizing cinema in general and montage in particular. Film involves the
production of strips or sequences of images; montage is the arrangement
of these frames in succession or sequence, hence counting them out and
adding them together. This equation is particularly clear in *One Plus One*
(1968): "In *One Plus One,* there was simultaneously the image of someone's
ass, and a text by Hitler: one plus one" (*I*, p. 308; my trans.).[9] But the concept
of enumeration is pervasive in Godard's films, as their very titles reveal: *Two
or Three Things I Know about Her* (1966), *Numéro Deux* (1975), *Six fois deux
(Sur et sous la communication)* (1976), *Allemagne année 90 neuf-zéro* (1991),
2 x 50 ans de cinéma français (1995), *Plus Oh!* (1996), not to mention the
general preoccupation with sequence and priority in the titles of *Alphaville*
(1965), *Prénom, Carmen* (1982), *On s'est tous défilé* (1988), *Le Dernier Mot*
(1988), and *Nouvelle Vague* (1990).[10] Or take the opening line of *Scénario du*

8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough,*" trans. John Beversluis,
Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951, trans. Elisabeth Leinfellner et al., ed. James Klagge and Alfred
Nordmann (Indianapolis, 1993), p. 133.

9. See also Robert MacLean, "Opening the Private Eye: Wittgenstein and Godard's *Alphaville,*"
Sight and Sound 47 (Winter 1977–78): 46–49.

10. See the useful discussion in ibid., as well as Godard, *The Future(s) of Film: Three Interviews
2000/01,* trans. John O'Toole (Berne, 2002), pp. 47–48; hereafter abbreviated *F*. For a somewhat

film "Passion" (1982), immediately following a sequence of superimpositions: "1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4 5 6, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4 5 6, 1 2 3 4, 1 2 3 4." Or the article "My Approach in Four Movements" with its claim that "1 + 2 + 3 = 4."[11] Such analogies present montage as an arithmetic procedure. Each cell, each notation of the real, is as systematically meaningful as a number is, while counting them exemplifies a rule, like one plus one. Yet, as *Alphaville* puts it, "firstly we have to know the meaning of 'plus.'"[12] We have yet to know what rules govern the determination of what counts in and through juxtaposition.

Histoire(s) poses this dilemma as one of historiography. The past is understood as a sequence of events (in cinema, it comes twenty-four frames per second); the determination of what will count as an event, and how to arrange events in series, is an exercise of counting. The point emerges in a conversation between Godard and Serge Daney at the opening of episode 2A. Daney asserts the fundamental importance of an available chronology. In order to write history, he says, one must be able to state "*grosso modo* before/after, and to know one has arrived at a moment that is before and after: we are before something and then we are after something" (*H,* 2:6/30). But the availability of such a chronological sequence will be a function of one's historical position. The New Wave was fortunate in this regard: "We know that Griffith comes before Rossellini, that Renoir comes before Visconti and the exact moment of your appearance in a history that could already be recounted, that could still be recounted" (*H,* 2:5/29). Nowadays, however, there are too many films for anyone to know what comes when. For Daney, sequence has become impossible, and historical consciousness is evaporating into de facto sublimity.

Godard, for his part, accepts the necessity of chronological sequence. "Yes, I believe that's it: the only way to make history" (*H,* 2:7/31). Or, as he puts it elsewhere, "What comes first? What comes second? I'm very concerned by these things (*F,* p. 48).[13] This concern with sequential progression registers in *Histoire(s)* though a recurring close-up of film spooling through

related discussion, see Jacques Rancière, "Arithmétiques du peuple (Rohmer, Godard, Straub)," *Trafic* 42 (Summer 2002): 65–69.

11. Godard, "My Approach in Four Movements," *Godard on Godard,* trans. Tom Milne, ed. Jean Narboni and Milne (New York, 1972), p. 242.

12. The meaning of *plus,* as an instance of a rule that we have forgotten we have yet to learn, is the starting point for Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982). For an important discussion of Kripke, see Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago, 1990), pp. 64–100.

13. Compare Godard, *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard,* ed. Alain Bergala, 2 vols. (Paris, 1998), 2:161; hereafter abbreviated *GG.* For related issues, see Roland-François Lack, "The Point in Time: Precise Chronology in Early Godard," *Studies in French Cinema* 3, no. 2 (2003): 101–9.

a flatbed editor. The cells whir one way, then the other, then stop. This presentation of film as a series of cells, or *défilement,* makes an analogue to Daney's idea of history as a series of discrete events in the historical past.[14] By this logic, historiography will be a version of montage. It will be the work of counting out, selecting, and arranging cells.[15] Hence the format of *Histoire(s),* a work of historiography that is nothing but montage.

But Godard rejects Daney's notion that the past has become uncountable. "It's not because there were too many films," he replies, "there are fewer and fewer all the time. . . . I'd say ten films: we've got ten fingers, there are ten films" (*H,* 2:7/31). Enumeration is not impossible: it's a simple matter of using your fingers. The raw material of historiography—in this case, a sequence of films, Griffith - Rossellini - Renoir - Visconti—emerges in and through the act of counting out the instances. Enumeration, moreover, is not an office of pure reason but the work of the hands. The number of fingers determines the number of films. The remark seems offhand, but it carries weight. To be sure, as Godard observes elsewhere, *Histoire(s)* contains shots from more than ten films; "hundreds and hundreds," in fact (*GG,* 2:16). But this discrepancy suggests only that the specific number is not directly to the point. Whether we stop counting at "ten" or "hundreds and hundreds," we will make *some* selection, and the resulting number will be a function of the tools we have at our disposal, our "fingers." Counting is a function of the body's constraints, which are not quite arbitrary.

Fingers, or rather hands, figure prominently in the *Persona* sequence, and Godard has acknowledged that they are probably the most important leitmotif in *Histoire(s)* overall (see *GG,* 2:30).[16] One set of images clusters around Wittgenstein's discussion of hands in *On Certainty.* Episode 1A, for instance, closes with a sequence from Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero:* haunted by patricide, the boy Edmund Köhler buries his face in his hands and hurls himself from an upper story. In the soundtrack, Godard reads from *On Certainty:*

14. On figures of sequence or seriation and their metaphorical association with filmstrips in Godard, see Christa Blümlinger, "Procession and Projection: Notes on a Figure in the Work of Jean-Luc Godard," in *Forever Godard,* ed. Michael Temple, James S. Williams, and Witt (London, 2004), pp. 178–87. Blümlinger in turn relies on a 1989 article by Serge Daney, "From Projector to Parade," trans. Alice Lovejoy, *Film Comment* 38, no. 4 (2002): 36–39.

15. The ideal of history as montage *(connaissance par le montage)* is expounded in Georges Didi-Hubermann, *Images malgré tout* (Paris, 2003), pp. 45–56 and, with particular reference to Godard, pp. 151–87.

16. The importance of hands is noted as well in Kaja Silverman, "The Dream of the Nineteenth Century," *Camera Obscura* 17, no. 3 (2002): 1–29. See also Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking about Godard* (New York, 1998), pp. 201–3. On related figures of "the human body as a basis for cinematic renewal," see Witt, "Altered Motion and Corporeal Resistance in *France/tour/détour/deux/enfants,*" in *Forever Godard,* p. 202.

> Have you got two hands? the blind man asks. But it isn't by looking that I make sure of them. [Yes.] Why trust my eyes if I am in doubt? [Yes.] Why shouldn't it be my eyes that I am going to test by checking whether I see both my hands?[17]

Coming as it does on the heels of a juxtaposition of George Stevens's footage of the Ravensbrück death camp with *A Place in the Sun* and Giotto's Arena Chapel, this sequence compares perceptual psychology to historical (and existential) knowledge. We know the past as well, and as poorly, as we know our own hands (or our own death). Episode 3A recurs to this moment, as Godard's hands open, close, open, and finally come to rest upon a copy of *On Certainty*.[18] Wittgenstein's argument, in that book, is that a whole metaphysic coheres in the suggestion that our hands are objects of knowledge. On the contrary, Wittgenstein argues, the concept of knowledge does not pertain in this case. We do not *know* our hands at all. The relation is more intimate, for the body is a ground, not an object, of knowledge. For the concept of knowledge in matters of hands we should substitute a grammar of use that, in itself, does the work of certainty in this form of life.

Episode 4A likewise combines numerous shots of hands with a lengthy passage from Denis de Rougemont's *Penser avec les mains* (To Think with Your Hands). (The passage appears as well in episode 2A.) De Rougemont insists that work in film—or in stone or paint—generates thoughts in and as practice. "The mind is only real when it manifests its presence, and in the word *manifest* there is *main* [hand]. . . . They say that some think and others act, but the true human condition is to think with your hands" (*H*, 4:5/37, 6–7/38–39; trans. mod.).[19] De Rougemont anticipates by more than a decade Heidegger's assertion that thinking is a handicraft.[20] Yet where Hei-

17. The passage comes from Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, ed. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (New York, 1969), §125. On this sequence, see Rancière, "Godard, Hitchcock, and the Cinematographic Image," in *Forever Godard,* pp. 226–27. Surprisingly, given that Rancière's topic is the relation of image to word in Godard, this article makes no mention of the Wittgenstein passage. On Godard and Wittgenstein, see MacLean, "Opening the Private Eye," and Sally Shafto, "Retour sur 'L'ontologie de l'image photographique,' ou les maîtres du flou: Les Oeuvres de jeunesse de Jean-Luc Godard et Gerhard Richter," trans. Le Gac, in *Godard et le métier d'artiste: Actes du colloque de Cerisy,* ed. Gilles Delavaud, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, and Marie-Françoise Grange (Paris, 2001), pp. 169–86.

18. The identical shot reappears in *JLG/JLG* as part of a longer sequence discussing Pascal's mystic hexagram.

19. De Rougemont's French reads, "L'esprit n'est vrai que lorsqu'il manifeste sa présence et dans le mot manifester il y a main" (Denis de Rougemont, *Penser avec les mains* [1936; Paris, 1972]). See *GG,* 2:360–61. That de Rougemont was a member of the postwar Congress for Cultural Freedom, and hence worked for the CIA (if only unwittingly), is one of the ironies Godard chooses to ignore.

20. See Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York, 1968), pp. 16–17. See also Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome,* pp. 36–41, and Jacques Derrida,

degger emphasized the uniquely human character of the hand—as opposed
to claws or paws—he also emphasized its capacity for violence, for grasping
and holding on. Its opposite is therefore drawing in, absorption, as when
Robert Bresson reminds himself to "*draw* the attention of the public (as we
say that a chimney draws)."[21] De Rougemont, equally, takes the hand as
distinctively human, but he is more concerned with its capacity to fumble
or drop things (only hands can be ham-fisted or have butterfingers). He
calls this quality the hand's *faiblesse,* or weakness.

> I will not speak ill of our tools but I should like them to be usable. If it is
> true, in general, that the danger lies not in our tools but in the weakness
> of our hands, it is no less urgent to specify that a thought which aban-
> dons itself to the rhythm of its mechanisms is, properly speaking, prole-
> tarizing itself, and that such a thought will not outlive its creation. [*H,*
> 4:7/39; trans. mod.][22]

These are the risks of thinking with the hands, acknowledgment of which
in no way denies the potential violence of hands, as if to wash them. Where
Wittgenstein investigates the grammar of knowledge and embodiment, de
Rougemont insists on the *drastic* nature of both art and ethics.[23] What mat-
ters is the doing. In each case, however, the emphasis is on the act: words
as meaningful in use, thoughts as extant only within a grammar of behavior.
Each, in their various ways, insists that the human form of life is incarnate.

It follows that with "ten fingers, ten films," Godard is not improvising a
theory (say, of genres). The question of what will count as a film is, exactly,
not to be theorized in advance. It is a question of use, that is, of "thinking
with the hands." The connection is explicit in a 1996 interview, in which
Godard links the classification and selection of shots for the *Histoire(s)* with
de Rougemont's dictum.

"*Geschlect* II: Heidegger's Hand," in *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida,*
ed. John Sallis (Chicago, 1987), pp. 161–96. For a related discussion, see Françoise Meltzer, "The
Hands of Simone Weil," *Critical Inquiry* 27 (Summer 2001): 611–28.

21. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer,* trans. Jonathan Griffin (Copenhagen, 1997),
p. 49; hereafter abbreviated *NC.* Bresson, of course, made a film in which hands play a special
role—*Pickpocket.* It figures importantly in Godard's *Éloge de l'amour.* See Brian Price, "The End of
Transcendence, the Mourning of Crime: Bresson's Hands," *Studies in French Cinema* 2, no. 3
(2002): 127–34.

22. Compare Montaigne, in a line quoted by Bresson: "the hand often takes itself where we do
not send it" (*NC,* p. 131; trans. mod.).

23. For *drastic* in this sense see Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable,* trans. Carolyn
Abbate (Princeton, N.J., 2003), and Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?" *Critical Inquiry* 30
(Spring 2004): 505–36. Jankélévitch's *Le je-ne-sais-quoi et le presque-rien* is named in an on-screen
title at the very end of the last episode of the *Histoire(s),* as well as in *JLG/JLG.*

> Denis de Rougemont . . . says: I would not like to criticize our tools but I would like that they should work; what's important is the weakness *[faiblesse]* of our hands. The weakness of our hands is that of the father running while holding a child in a newsreel shot from the war in Spain [episode 4A]. Another shot wouldn't have worked, as we discovered while working. . . . It's a physical labor closer to painting or music. [*GG,* 2:360][24]

The shot in question illustrates de Rougemont's dictum twice over. On the one hand, the sheer precariousness of the father's embrace instances *faiblesse;* on the other, the selection of this shot, the only one that would have worked, exemplifies the "physical labor" of thinking with your hands. The selection is not predetermined; the criterion is that the shot should "work." Films are in this sense like tools or hands or words: they effect something, well or poorly, hence can be useful or get in the way.

In sum: counting one through ten is a basic way of using our hands, of thinking with them; the formula "ten fingers, ten films" declares that such counting should also determine what counts (as a film). It does so not because there are literally only ten films or ten genres but because declaring that something counts, in the sense of mattering, involves assigning it a place within an open sequence, hundreds and hundreds.

The trouble is that the task of counting films is not surefire. It is not self-evident how to continue in the series, or even if continuity is possible.[25] Episode 2B ends with the question, "But for every fifty Cecil B. DeMilles, how many Dreyers?" (*H,* 2:49/73). In context this is a pessimistic remark about cinema's future. But it is also a pun: the name *DeMille* sounds like *deux milles,* 2000, the impending millennial year, while *Dreyer* contains the German *drei,* three. At issue is not just the ratio of DeMilles to Dreyers, bad films to good.[26] It is also the continuity of the historical sequence in the new millennium—whether we are still able to proceed from two to three (or

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24. See also Godard and Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema: The Archaeology of Film and the Memory of a Century,* trans. Howe (New York, 2005), p. 12, hereafter abbreviated *C;* and *GG,* 2:360–61. On Godard's working method, see also Bernard Eisenschitz, "'Une Machine à montrer l'invisible': Conversation à propos des *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" *Cahiers du cinéma* 529 (Nov. 1998): 52–56. On the theme of film as labor, see the essays in *Godard et le métier d'artiste.* See also Alain Bergala, *Nul mieux que Godard* (Paris, 1999), pp. 243–47, on deeds and gestures.

25. Contrast Jean-Pierre Melville in *Breathless,* running through his fingers and saying, *"Plus que ça";* the character's self-regard and misogyny suggest the perils of boundless confidence in open-ended sequences. Or contrast *Alphaville:* "I will calculate . . . so that failure . . . is impossible," says the Alpha 60 computer, to which Lemmy Caution replies, "I'll fight until failure *does* become possible" (Godard, *"Alphaville,"* p. 70).

26. Ratios, though, are important to Godard's late work; see James Quandt, "Here and Elsewhere: Projecting Godard," in *Forever Godard,* pp. 134–37.

even from episode 2 to episode 3), that is, whether three/*drei*/Dreyer remains a possibility for the future.[27] We need to learn how we might go about continuing ("what 'plus' means") and what criteria might discern success from failure. Counting, as mattering, is not simply or straightforwardly an arithmetic procedure. It is, on the contrary, the *constitution of a sequence as such.* As Stanley Cavell puts it,

> We do not, intuitively, within the ordinary, know in advance . . . a right first instance, or the correct order of instances, or the set interval of their succession. And sometimes we will not know whether to say an instance counts as falling under a concept or to say that it does not count.[28]

The *Histoire(s)* finds itself in this predicament. If the opening of 2A defines its task to be counting films (with the hands), then the closing of 2B suggests that we no longer know in advance how to do so. We have to feel our way, as Jean-Luc has been doing in his study.

4. The History of Oneself

The *Persona* sequence thinks with the hands, both procedurally (as montage) and thematically (in foregrounding the hand). Of his own "dirty hands," Godard asks, "Do you see them, or not?" Wittgenstein asks the same thing. The very question is a clue to the sort of certainty that the *Histoire(s)* might provide. It suggests that the beholder's relation to what transpires on-screen is like the relation to hands in *On Certainty.* The relation is similar because of the affinity between montage and handiwork: montage is "thinking with the hands," that is, "handling in both hands the present, the future, the past."[29] So the question, "Do you see them, or not?" carries weight beyond the local context of an old man at his desk. It questions the possibility of montage and of the fantastic affinities montage reveals. It does so by saying that we know these things as much, or as little, as we know our own hands. Wittgenstein's point had been that this relation is not one of knowledge. Unless we are Orlac (a monster), we do not *decipher* our own hands; the relation is not a matter of hidden meanings or secret messages.[30] Rather,

27. There is a good comparandum for the pun in the title of *Allemagne année 90 neuf-zéro,* in which a calendar year (1990) is transformed into "nine zero," which in French sounds like "new zero." Is it going too far to hear as well, in this question, an echo of Godard's early article, "Trois Mille Heures de cinéma"? See *GG,* 2:291–95.

28. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome,* pp. 89–90.

29. The source is identified as Hollis Frampton by Trond Lundemo in "The Index and Erasure: Godard's Approach to Film History," in *Forever Godard,* p. 395.

30. Godard describes Edmund Köhler, the boy in *Germany Year Zero,* as someone who "does not want to be a monster" (*I,* p. 238); see also Godard, "Les Cinémathèques et l'histoire du cinéma," in *Jean-Luc Godard Documents,* p. 288.

hands (that is, flesh in general) are preconditions of living in a body. And this is the answer to Godard's question. There is nothing hidden in montage. Everything is visible and on the surface: when Godard discovers affinities between Brooks and *Persona,* or between *Persona* and himself, there is nothing to interpret or unveil.[31] The affinities are astonishing, but they are astonishing exactly because they are self-evident. "You can see the connections plainly," Godard tells *Le Monde,* "the breaks, too" (*GG,* 2:291). They are what our eyes give us.

In the *Persona* sequence, such facts comprise an "evolutionary history," the passage from childhood fantasy to adulthood. On the one hand, Godard explicitly states the vulgar Freudian thesis that all love stories are nursing stories. On the other, the sequence stands in a filial relation to *Persona* itself, even as the final dissolve equates the director in his study with Bergman's dead child reaching for its mother.[32] In this way, the sequence assimilates three sets of relations: the *epistemological* relation of hand to eyes, the *genetic* relation of parent to child, and the *historical* relation of past precedent to current practice. Each of these relations is a form of atavism. Certainty is atavistic in that its determination occurs as one more element in a series, an instantiation of the rules comprising a form of life. Fantasy is atavistic as the retrojection and revision, in *Nachträglichkeit,* of a prior intuition.[33] *Histoire(s)* is atavistic in its ongoing articulation of found clips and original shots. But each of these atavisms may be seen as the clothing of a formal connection, that is, as a version of the projection of rules into new, emergent circumstances—a projection exemplified in serial enumeration.

Crucially, this atavism is lived, enacted. The invocation of *Persona* establishes that the relation to the artifacts of the past is thoroughly cathected. That is why the discovery of fantastic affinities between Bergman and Godard may be called a form of handiwork, a "thinking with the hands." Like holding your hand to your face, it reveals what counts as knowledge; like counting on your fingers, it shows what counts. To say that Godard superimposes these concepts would be no idle metaphor because his literalism is such that to superimpose images just *is* to superimpose concepts (whether the superimposition will be lucid is another matter). The effect of this superimposition is that fantasy comes to be the way in which criteria (of cer-

31. Is it helpful to know that, in a series of lectures leading up to *Histoire(s),* Godard involved *Persona* in a parapraxis? He planned to give a lecture on the film, only to discover when it arrived that he had never actually seen it and had been thinking of a different film entirely. See *I,* p. 124.

32. Bergman is likewise a *leitmotif* of episode 1B. Earlier in Godard's oeuvre, *Weekend* contains a scene of erotic confession that clearly relates to *Persona.*

33. On *Nachträglichkeit,* see the superb discussion in Whitney Davis, *Drawing the Dream of the Wolves: Homosexuality, Interpretation, and Freud's "Wolf Man"* (Bloomington, Ind., 1995).

tainty, or of counting, sequencing, enumeration, exemplification) are lived out. It is not that certainty is merely fantastic but that the fantastic has all the efficacy of what we call certainty. The determination of what counts—the ongoing projection of rules, the enumeration of instances—is uncanny.[34]

5. Public Aesthetics

But Godard also insists that cinema actually constitutes history as it is and remains for us. "For me, *la grande histoire* is the history of cinema" (*H,* 2:29/33; see also *GG,* 2:161). "I'd say that in films there's the spectacle of History, living History almost, really that's what cinema does, it's a living image of the unfolding of History and the tempo of History" (*C*, p. 50).[35] This identification of cinema with history is perhaps the most provocative assertion of Godard's late work. It emerges in a contrast with still photography. A photograph—or *"fauxtograph,"* as the *Histoire(s)* calls it—lacks the "unfolding" or "tempo" of history. It is still and therefore does not register the passage of time except in purely private investments or Barthesian puncta.[36] A photograph can say that time passes—by showing a clock, for instance—but it cannot show temporality: it has no "tempo," no time.[37] Film, on this view, differs from photography in two crucial ways. First, in the technology of the moving image, that is, camera work and projection. Film gives a sequence of images in a specific apparatus of registration and display, and sequence implies duration. Second, in the act of montage—the selection, cutting, joining, overlapping, or otherwise editing of sequential frames. Only as montage does sequence become history.

34. The idea comes from Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 1962), pp. 233–35. Cavell explores a related theme in *Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 153–78. Compare *H,* 2:7–8, pp. 31–32.

35. On tempo and rhythm in Godard, see Temple, "Big Rhythm and the Power of Metamorphosis: Some Models and Precursors for *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard 1985–2000,* ed. Temple and Williams (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 77–95.

36. As when, in *Éloge de l'amour,* the art dealer Rosenthal tells how Edouard Boubat's *Lella, Bretagne, 1947,* reminds him of a girl he loved when he was young; see Godard, *Éloge de l'amour: Phrases (sorties d'un film)* (Paris, 2001), p. 18; hereafter abbreviated *É.* The photo itself reappears in episode 3B. The specific opposition of tempo and stillness seems to derive from Élie Faure, "De la cinéplastique," in *Fonction du cinéma: De la cinéplastique à son destin social* (Paris, 1953), pp. 16–36. On Faure, see Margaret C. Flinn, "The Prescience of Élie Faure," *Substance* 34, no. 3 (2005): 47–61. On stillness and movement in Godard, see also Daney, "From Projector to Parade."

37. The musical metaphor is consistent: "Can one narrate *[raconter]* time, time in itself, as such and in itself? No, in truth that would be a mad enterprise—a narrative in which it would be stated, 'Time was passing, it was running out, time was following its course,' and so on. No one of sound mind would ever bother with it as a narrative. It would be almost as if someone had the idea of holding a single note or a single chord for an hour, and wanted to pass that off as music" (*H,* 2:44/68; trans. mod.). This passage occurs also in *Allemagne année 90 neuf-zéro* (dir. Godard, 1991).

> You have physically a moment, like an object, like this ashtray. You have past, present and future. Mothers do not have this relation to their children, lovers don't have it in relation to their love, and politicians, you can see it from their faces, are truly a long way from having it. No one has it, I don't have it in relation to my own life. But in montage I have an object, which has a beginning, middle, and an end, which is there, in front of me. [*GG,* 2:242]

The object is the sequence of frames that comprises a strip of film. Godard is enough of a Bazinian to take this raw succession as an analogue to the real. What André Bazin says of *Umberto D.* could go for *Histoire(s)* as well: "The narrative unit is not the episode, the event, the sudden turn of events, or the character of its protagonists; it is *the succession of concrete instants of life,* no one of which can be said to be more important than another, for their ontological equality destroys drama at its very basis."[38] For Godard, however, the analogy is structural, not a matter of any intrinsic realism of the photographic image. What matters is "succession" ("What comes first? What comes second?"). Film can preserve the real because of what you *do* with it. On the editing table, past and present and future can be combined and recombined. "And history is nowhere else but there. It is *rapprochement.* It is montage" (*GG,* 2:402; see also *GG,* 2:163).[39] This can be done well or badly; it is not surefire that cutting and splicing will produce a recognizable account.

The reward will be the visibility of history as it is and remains for us. A passage from Charles Péguy's *Clio,* which appears toward the end of episode 4B (and also in *JLG par JLG* and *Éloge de l'amour*), states the ambition.[40] The Muse of History asks what the discipline might have been, "if it had had nothing at all to do with a text, but with an actual movement of an idea, of reality, of life—and you know I don't like to misuse these words—or simply if it had had something to do with a text after all, but had not involved in any way fixing texts on a word, but on an idea, for example, or an intention, on a movement, on a use, or on a kinship?" (*H,* 4:61–62/93–94; trans. mod.; see *F,* p. 54).[41] The ambition is to evade words and render an "actual

38. André Bazin, "*Umberto D.:* A Great Work," *What is Cinema?* trans. and ed. Hugh Grey (Berkeley, 1971), 2:81; my italics.

39. The line echoes a dictum of Bresson that appears onscreen at the end of episode 4B: "Bring together *[rapprocher]* things that have as yet never been brought together and did not seem predisposed to be so" (*NC,* p. 51). Godard again defines montage as *rapprochement* in Godard, "ABCD . . . JLG," in *Jean-Luc Godard Documents,* p. 330.

40. See Charles Péguy, *Clio: Dialogue de l'histoire et de l'âme païenne,* vol. 3 of *Oeuvres complètes de Charles Péguy* (Paris, 1917). Part of this volume is translated in Péguy, *Temporal and Eternal,* trans. Alexander Dru (Indianapolis, 2001). On Godard and Péguy, see Lundemo, "The Index and Erasure," pp. 380–95; and Temple, "Big Rhythm," pp. 93–95.

41. On Godard's often overstated opposition of words to images, see Rancière, "Godard, Hitchcock, and the Cinematographic Image."

movement," a "use" *(usage),* a "kinship" *(parenté).* Montage is the means to that end. Words can only state historical relations, state that "time passed," or trope the passage of time ("the imperfect tense makes a present image," as *Éloge de l'amour* has it [*É,* p. 122]). Montage, by contrast, gives us "physically a moment" in and through an apparatus of shared perception, a form of life. It realizes the Muse's dream: "History not spoken, but seen" (*GG,* 2:402).

Godard's theory owes much to Vertov and Eisenstein, but its roots are deeper.[42] On offer here is a version of, hence a departure from, Kantianism. The *Critique of Judgment* describes the synthesis of the manifold in perception as a two-stage process.[43] It calls the first stage *apprehension.* Apprehension involves an initial schematization of the manifold into quanta of information.[44] This process is by definition preconscious; schematization represents a structural limitation on our perceptual capacities. For Kant, however, this seeming limitation is in fact integral to human freedom itself. It is integral because apprehension is, exactly, preconceptual; the faculty of understanding imposes no *concept* upon it.[45] Indeed, as the raw or "wild" intake of quanta, apprehension can proceed infinitely; it is mere seriation, a *défilément.* But "reason," says Kant, "requires totality" (*CJ,* §26, p. 115). We can think the infinite logically, but we cannot grasp it perceptually. In order to make sense of the manifold, the streaming quanta must be subject to synthesis by the faculty of the understanding. "Reason consequently desires comprehension in *one* intuition, and so the [joint] *presentation* of all these members of a progressively increasing series" (*CJ,* §26, p. 115). Kant calls this second stage *aesthetic comprehension.* It occurs in conformity to rules: the dictates of reason itself. Aesthetic comprehension names the application of rules to the apprehended quanta in order to produce a synthesis. Consciously or no, Godard has simply identified the work of the camera with apprehension and the work of montage with aesthetic comprehension. What he calls *rapprochement* is literally the joint presentation of the members of a progressively increasing series (of frames). It is superimposition. But there is a crucial distinction between Godard's *rapprochement* and most versions of Kantian comprehension. The multiple images never synthesize

42. For an important overview of Godard and montage, arguing for a positive reappraisal of Eisenstein in Godard's work since the late 1970s, see Witt, "Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph," in *The Cinema Alone,* pp. 33–50.

43. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. J. H. Bernard (1790; London, 1892), §26, p. 15; hereafter abbreviated *CJ.*

44. A phenomenon, for Kant, is by definition a quantum: "Whatever we present in intuition according to the precept of the Judgment (and thus represent aesthetically) is always a phenomenon, and thus a quantum" (*CJ,* §25, p. 109).

45. "The freedom of the Imagination consists in the fact that it schematizes *without any concept*" (*CJ,* §35, pp. 161–62; my italics).

completely; the moments never attain to totality. On the contrary, the sequence is always open, its summation never more than provisional. The case remains particular.

Aesthetic judgment, in Kant, lays claim to a universal agreement that it knows it will never attain (see *CJ,* §22, p. 94).[46] Its justification for doing so is an appeal to standing patterns of agreement and disagreement; it amounts, therefore, to a test of the viability of those patterns. Godard, accordingly, insists upon the *sharedness* of cinema, its appeal to those modes of agreement that constitute even the smallest community. But the normative power that Kant ascribes to sovereign reason, Godard gives to modes of sociability—of which the institution of the cinema is the supreme instance.

> Scientists are better than others because they talk among themselves about something they have in common. You can also do that with film. It's a representation of the world. If you shoot a flower, people say, "Ah, that's a flower." There is a consensus. Several people can see it together. That thing we share ought to allow us to speak "of" or "from" and not "about." [*F,* p. 20]

Since *Histoire(s)* ends with a shot of a rose, this statement is programmatic of its viewing. What matters in the scenario is not the putatively indexical nature of the photographic image. It is, rather, the fact of shared perception: "Several people can see it together." The experience is public by definition. The extent to which such sharing depends upon a further set of institutions—movie theaters as opposed to living rooms, say, or projection as opposed to broadcast, or United Artists as opposed to Canal+—is one of the topics under investigation in the *Histoire(s).* Those institutions constitute an apparatus of public display, chief among which, once upon a time, was projection. Godard's concept of projection is exceptionally complex, as Dan Morgan shows in a dissertation underway at the University of Chicago. But one element of it is the simple fact that it typically occurred before the general public. "It's only at the movies that everybody sees more or less the same thing. They darkened the theaters and widened the screen for that, so that everybody is on an equal footing" (*F,* p. 73). The big screen implies a potential community of viewers. But the definition of that community is procedural, not metaphysical: the community is that which attains to shared perception in this way.[47] It is the name for "seeing more or less the same thing." If not at the movies, then nowhere.

46. See also Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 73–96.

47. On communities of cinema in Godard, see Witt, "'Qu'était-ce que le cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard?' An Analysis of the Cinema(s) at Work in and around Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" in *France in Focus: Film and National Identity,* ed. Elizabeth Ezra and Sue Harris (New York, 2000), pp. 23–42. On theatrical space, see Raymond Bellour, "(Not) Just an Other Filmmaker," in *Jean-*

The resulting departure from Kant is significant. The *Critique of Pure Reason* argues famously that "the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are at the same time the conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience.*"[48] In episode 1B, Godard reformulates this thesis in terms of the apparatus of cinema, the conditions of the possibility of film: "The cinema projected and men saw that *the world was there*" (*H,* 1:47/71; my italics). As though they couldn't quite see it before; or, when they did see it, were not sure of their eyes ("Do you see them, or not?"). Cinema establishes the presence of the world, which is to say that it retrieves the world from doubt. It does so, we are told, because it projects, which, here, means that it establishes a community of "men," a democracy of spectatorship in which "everybody is on an equal footing." Projection represents the very condition of the possibility of agreement in perception—what Kant calls "experience in general"—for that community; hence, for Godard, the very condition of the possibility of that community as such. In effect, and without much argument, Godard displaces Kant's schematism of concepts from the cognitive to the social. The conditions of the possibility of cinema are the institutions of public display and, most importantly, "that thing we share," that thing which "ought to allow us to speak 'of' and 'from.'" That possible "thing" can only be a lived conviction that we can see together. Such conditions, Godard goes on to say, are disappearing. "There are fewer and fewer all the time," he tells Daney; films are vanishing, and that means that the potential for communities of perception is vanishing with them. In this sense, the project overall may be taken as an inquiry into historical emergence and disappearance of particular conditions of sharing (what Godard will, elsewhere, call love).

As a fragment of the past that persists by virtue of being filmed (in a camera), projected (for an audience), and edited (in montage), cinema is the very stuff of *la grande histoire.* What counts as cinema is what counts as History *because "cinema" is another name for the criteria of what counted, in a particular historical period, as the real.* It names what was agreed, what was shared, under specific historical conditions. Wittgenstein might say that it names a form of life.

6. "Envoi 1"

The *Persona* sequence investigates the handiwork of historiography in terms of childhood development and fantasy: counting plays out cathexis.

Luc Godard: Son + Image, 1974–1991, ed. Bellour and Mary Lea Bandy (exhibition catalog, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 30 Oct.–30 Nov. 1992), pp. 215–30.

48. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, 1998), A 158, B 197, p. 283.

But its terms apply as well to *la grande histoire,* indeed to the specific emergence of cinema as a medium. For Godard, as for Malraux, Bazin, and many others, cinema stands to painting as child to mother. *Scénario du film Passion* makes this point explicit by alluding in its own way to *Persona* (fig. 4). Godard sits in silhouette, occupying the place of Bergman's boy; Tintoretto's *Bacchus, Ariadne, and Venus* (1576) plays the maternal role. A sequence from episode 2A develops this theme.

At the beginning the screen is black, except for a title reading "Envoi"; Webern's string quartet plays on the soundtrack. The window of a projection booth appears, a technician lights the machine. Beneath "Envoi" appears the number "1," announcing this farewell to be the first in a series: counting is at issue. Cut to a close-up of Julie Delpy reading (fig. 5).[49] She tosses her head, and a painting emerges to fill the frame: Turner's *Peace (Burial at Sea)* (plate 2). It shows a ship, black against the sky, swathed in smoke, with a golden sunpath running over its decks and down the middle of the screen. Ship and girl dissolve into one another, as Delpy reads aloud Baudelaire's "Le Voyage." The music continues, and it emerges that Turner's sunlight corresponds *exactly* to an illuminated lock of Delpy's hair, the black fumes in the painting run *exactly* along her cheekbone and jaw, the prow cleaves *exactly* to her profile. Delpy's blue collar fades into Turner's sky; canvas sails screen her eye. It is a brief but hallucinatory moment, lasting perhaps five seconds. The Turner stands clear for an instant (fig. 6) before fading into an oil sketch by Seurat: men and bathers by a riverbank. When Delpy's face returns, the curve of her brow follows the rounded shoulder of a bather; a white shirtsleeve mirrors her nose; a nude man stands in the light of her hair; a smudge of blue paint takes the place of her collar (plate 3). Now shots of Delpy interweave with Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter.* Robert Mitchum pursues two children into a river, but they escape in a boat. The children drift downstream for fully a minute; Turner's ship and Seurat's riverbank combine in a moving image.[50] As another dissolve superimposes Delpy's face, fantastic affinities emerge once again: the children emerge first from her mouth, then from her blue eyes; for one split second, the boy's dark head eclipses her iris (fig. 7 and plate 4).[51] A moment later, Delpy's hair has merged with Laughton's weeping willows, her upper lip with the prow

49. On the prominence of radiant feminine faces in the *Histoire(s),* see the important discussion in Silverman, "The Dream of the Nineteenth Century."

50. From Delpy's costume it is clear that she is herself playing a child. Godard calls her character a "schoolgirl" (*C,* p. 9).

51. In a letter to Delpy, Godard actually compares her to a river and the institutions of the theater to a riverbank; see *GG,* 2:71.

FIGURE 4.   *Scénario du film Passion:* Godard's silhouette + Tintoretto's *Bacchus, Ariadne, and Venus* (1576)

FIGURE 5.   Episode 2A: Julie Delpy

F I G U R E 6.   Episode 2A: J. M. W. Turner, *Peace (Burial at Sea)*, 1842

F I G U R E 7.   Episode 2A: *Night of the Hunter*

of the boat (fig. 8). Then the screen goes black. The whole thing takes about three minutes.

Like the *Persona* sequence, "Envoi 1" plays on the inner associations of images. At issue, however, are not uncanny survivals of childhood into old age but of painting into cinema, the nineteenth century into the twentieth—the history of media, not developmental psychology. To some extent these two stories are the same: for the nineteenth century represents, here, the childhood of the art of film. But the pairing is in fact programmatic. Godard has asserted that

> The two things that were least liked in the 20th century are history and psychoanalysis, the history of everyone and the history of oneself. They are venerated yet loathed. . . . The relationship between these two types of history is very rarely shown. [*F,* pp. 18–19]

Histoire(s) essays this relationship. If the *Persona* sequence shows "the history of oneself" as a history of thinking with the hands, then "Envoi 1" is a case study in "the history of everyone." That is, if cinema names the criteria of the real at a particular historical juncture, then "Envoi 1" investigates those criteria by narrating a particular historical process: the growth of cinema. Hence the title. It is an envoi because the criteria it investigates are

FIGURE 8.   Episode 2A: Delpy + *Night of the Hunter* (boat for mouth, willows for hair)

historical, of the past; it is number one, first in a series because counting is a degree-zero test of whether criteria have any purchase ("We have to know the meaning of 'plus'").

For the archaic fantasies of the *Persona* sequence, "Envoi 1" substitutes straightforward anachronism or hysteron proteron. The sequence follows immediately on the story of Jean-Victor Poncelet, a Frenchman imprisoned in Russia during the Napoleonic Wars, who passed the time by figuring out the geometry of projecting figures onto walls. Godard takes Poncelet's treatise on the topic as a prefiguration of cinema.[52] Baudelaire's "Le Voyage" is similarly prophetic.

> I understood that Baudelaire, in fact, did not write that poem at that time by chance, and that it described cinema. . . . Even finally on the level of the text . . . at one point it says, *"run across our minds stretched like canvases, your memories in the horizon's frame,"* that's certainly a cinema screen as well, he'd never seen one but he foresaw it, as it were. [*C,* p. 56][53]

Baudelaire's poem investigates the distinctively modern condition of boredom and, with it, escapism. His stretched canvases, over which memories pass, stand in for the sails of a ship; the French reads, "nous voulons voyager sans vapeur et sans voile / passer sur nos ésprits tendus comme une toile / vos souvenirs avec leur cadre d'horizon" (*H,* 2:11/35). The miracle of the poem, for Godard at any rate, is that the material conditions of ennui—a familiar congeries of urbanism, imperialism, finance capital, bourgeois leisure, and tourism—produce the concept of cinema even when the technology does not yet exist.

"Envoi 1" makes this anachronism visible in and through palimpsest. The fantastic affinities of Julie Delpy's eye and Turner's canvas sail, her hair and his sunlight, her brow and Seurat's bather, her eye and Laughton's boat— these affinities *just are,* concretely, montage doing the work of history. It is *rapprochement* in action, "physically a moment." To be sure, "Envoi 1" has a thematic resonance as well—this is not a mere formalism. Laughton staged a scene in *Night of the Hunter* to mimic Seurat's *La Grande Jatte;* so the lightning bugs that spangle the screen as the children float downstream are the inheritors of *pointillisme* (fig. 7). The children themselves embody *l'enfance de l'art*—two Baudelairean *enfants* on a voyage from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, still pictures to moving, mimesis to diegesis.[54] Or one can invoke context: Turner's painting dates to 1842, the year

52. "It thus took a French prisoner pacing before a Russian wall for the mechanical application of the idea and the wish to project shapes on a screen to take practical flight with the invention of cinematographic projection" (*H,* 2:10/34; trans. mod.). See also *C,* p. 55.

53. Michel Piccoli reads the poem as well in *2 x 50 ans de cinéma français* (dir. Godard, 1998).

54. See Bergala, *Nul mieux que Godard,* p. 170.

Baudelaire returned from a voyage to India, so by juxtaposing the two Godard might be claiming that cinema can make simultaneously visible events disparate not just in time but in space as well (England and France, painting and verse, cohere in a image). But any such extrapolation will depend upon the efficacy of the visible affinities that emerge on-screen. Those affinities provide whatever it is we, and the film, are saying farewell *to.* Doubting such affinities—hence doubting history—is doubting one's eyes and hands. As its title suggests, "Envoi 1" *counts.* It is a paradigm case (Cavell's "first instance") of *la grande histoire.*

7. The Art of Living

To recap thus far. Godard makes the banal point that the identification of evidence is crucial to any historiographic project. He makes the further, less banal claim that such identification is a form of counting. Evidence is what you can enumerate as instances or cases; counting determines what counts. Godard identifies counting with montage, which cuts and splices cells from an available sequence. He characterizes this practice as "thinking with the hands," which leads in turn to a concept of historiography that is not banal at all. As "thinking with the hands," counting amounts to an ongoing investigation of the criteria that govern both the identification of particular cases and their arrangement into general series. The test of counting lies in the projection of the spooling reels before a public. This projection issues, ideally, in a certain sharedness of perception ("several people see the same thing"), which is structurally analogous to Kantian aesthetic comprehension. *Histoire(s)* elevates the stakes of this project by counting out instances of historical fact, so that what is shared, or not shared, is the very history of the last century. In so doing, it comes to the radical conclusion that historical knowledge is not really *knowledge* at all but a reflex of embodied being.

Still, the question of criteria remains open. It is unclear what, or who, determines what counts or how to count at all. The *Persona* sequence identifies these criteria with childhood fantasy, a reflex of embodiment. "Envoi 1" trades on a similar mode of *Nachträglichkeit,* discovering formal affinities between painting and film ex post facto. More disturbingly still, the moment of sharing, of aesthetic comprehension, alleged to occur in the scene of projection remains unmotivated. It is this very point that leads some critics—notably Jacques Rancière—to suspect Godard of indulging in cheap communitarianism, a phony nostalgia for wholeness.[55]

55. See Rancière, "Godard, Hitchock, and the Cinematographic Image," p. 225. See also Rancière, "The Saint and the Heiress: A propos of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" trans. T. S. Murphy, *Discourse* 24 (Winter 2002): 113–19 (I am grateful to Daniel Morgan for this reference); Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Paris, 2004); and Rancière, *Film Fables,* trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford, 2006), pp. 171–87. On Rancière, Godard, and film, see Aimée Israel-Pelletier,

The issue boils down to who, or what, is responsible for the primary data of *Histoire(s):* the fantastic affinities it reveals between images. Earlier films had *narrated* such affinities in the form of what Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit call "inescapable mnemonic contiguity," as between Odysseus and Penelope and Paul and Camille in *Contempt.*[56] But *Histoire(s)* does not proceed in this manner: it has neither plot nor characters. Instead, Godard presents these affinities as *discoveries,* not confections; they differ from mere pattern work in that he uses them to make claims of historical fact (for example, that Baudelaire anticipated cinema).[57] Yet the affinities do not yield scientific data. They are not attributable to natural causes like, say, morphological similarities between specimens in a fossil record. They are artifacts of intentionalities, and their producing causes are not deduced experimentally. All of which is to say that the claims on offer are aesthetic judgments in the traditional, Kantian sense: they are subjective, but they ask for the assent accorded an objective fact (see *CJ,* §6, pp. 45–46). The word *discovery* might be used here in its legal sense of a preliminary judgment of what counts as evidence. The *monteur* bears responsibility for this discovery or finding; the audience, for accepting or rejecting it.

We might compare Wittgenstein's effort to get his interlocutor to imagine the possibility that something might go wrong in writing the numbers zero through nine in decimal notation:

> I should like you to say: "Yes, it's true, that can be imagined, that may even have happened!" . . . I wanted to put this picture before your eyes, and your *acceptance* of this picture consists in your being inclined to regard a given case differently; that is, to compare it with *this* series of pictures. I have changed your *way of seeing.*[58]

Wittgenstein insists that sequence is not surefire. The acceptance of a given sequence and, more specifically, the recognition that the sequence is some-

"Godard, Rohmer, and Rancière's *Phrase-Image,*" *Substance* 34, no. 3 (2005): 33–46, and Tom Conley, "Cinema and Its Discontents: Jacques Rancière and Film Theory," *Substance* 34, no. 3 (2005): 96–106. For Godard as formalist, effecting "a general virtualisation of images," see, among others, Brenez, "The Forms of the Question," in *Forever Godard,* p. 177. For a direct contradiction of the principle of virtualization, see Godard's remarks in *F,* pp. 36–37. On Godard and community, see Marc Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris, 1989), pp. 141–94.

56. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity* (London, 2004), p. 66.

57. It is useful to know, here, that the sequence with Delpy was filmed in the mid-1980s for another purpose; it was not designed to fit with the Turner, the Seurat, or *Night of the Hunter.* See Witt, "Genèse d'une véritable histoire du cinéma," p. 268.

58. Wittgenstein, *Zettel,* trans. Anscombe, ed. Anscombe and von Wright (Berkeley, 1967), §461, p. 82e. Compare Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. Anscombe (1953; New York, 1998), §§143–44.

thing one must either accept or reject entails a sort of gradual conversion on the part of his interlocutor. It is a metanoia that, crucially, entails a new sharing. Wittgenstein imagines himself becoming newly attuned with his interlocutor: they see the same way, they agree on what counts. Such conversion—to regard a given case differently by regarding it in juxtaposition with a series of pictures—is Godard's ambition precisely.

The responsibility for a given "way of seeing" is personal. As Godard tells Daney at the beginning of episode 2A:

> It was the only way to make, to recount, to take account of myself—that I have a history by virtue of being myself *[en tant que moi],* but that if there were no cinema I wouldn't know that I had a history. It was the only way and the one that was needed personally, I owed it that, if you will, like a Calvinist or a Lutheran who has a side that's always guilty or accursed. [*H,* 2:8/32; trans. mod.]

Elsewhere Godard states this aspect of the project in terms derived from the "dark Christianity" of Georges Bernanos and Bresson.[59] Speaking of the *Histoire(s),* for instance, he declares, "It's my mission to recount it. It's my country priest side, if you like—I'm the country priest of all that" (*GG,* 2:173).[60] Episode 1B is even more explicit:

> Cinema, like Christianity, is not founded on an historical truth. It gives us a narrative, an *histoire,* and it tells us: believe. Not: Grant this narrative, this *histoire,* the faith appropriate to this *histoire,* but believe come what may. *And this can only be the result of an entire life.* [*H,* 1:51–52/75–76; trans. mod.; my italics]

The religiosity here is procedural; Godard is a secularist ("a crusade without a cross" is how episode 4B puts it), but continuity in the absence of assurance amounts to an act of faith and a justification by works. The faith in question is not "the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1) but faith in seeing. "This is what should be the daily prayer," says episode 3B of a litany of auteurs (*H,* 3:42/63). It is not the names that are sacred but the enumeration of them. Godard's *2 x 50 ans de cinéma français* (1995) opens with him giving Michel Piccoli a hard time for organizing a centenary celebration of the first public showing of a Lumière film. True celebration, he argues, occurs daily, not once a century, just as the way to celebrate the liberation of Paris is to live in a certain way. He finally comes around when Piccoli an-

59. Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables,* trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, 1997), p. 172.
60. Bresson's definition of the director's task is quoted in *Éloge de l'amour:* "The point is not to direct someone, but to direct oneself" (*NC,* p. 14; Godard, *É,* p. 114).

nounces his intention to broadcast each of the 1,400 surviving Lumière clips over 365 days. "*That's* what I call celebrating!" he says, and *2 x 50 ans de cinéma français* represents his own discipline of commemoration to the tune of Gabriel Fauré's *Élégie.*[61] In *The Old Place,* an ancillary to the *Histoire(s),* Godard goes so far as to call such acts "exercises" and "object lessons," like something an ancient Stoic would perform.[62] The entire film consists of what the screen text calls "vingt trois exercises de pensée artistique," in homage to Hannah Arendt's *exercises de pensée politique.*[63] The words appear alongside a shot from Bresson's *Trial of Joan of Arc,* but it is Bresson's austere craft that justifies the religiosity of this narrative, hence the film's inclusion.

The link with ancient practices of the self can be quite explicit, as when Godard compares his own work to that of Socrates or Diogenes (via Rossellini):

> Socrates was a guy just like Roberto. . . . He pissed everyone off, just by simply expanding on things, by going a little further. He had nothing of his own: he took from others and adapted things. *One plus One*—that went a lot further and people said to him, We want to stay at one, we don't want to add plus one. [*I,* p. 310; see also *GG,* 2:245][64]

One plus One is Godard's film about the Rolling Stones; here he insinuates it into the story of Socrates. Some ten years before the *Histoire(s)*, in other words, Godard identifies his work as a mode of counting, even as he asserts that it is analogous to Socratic practice. Along the way he lays out a program for the *Histoire(s)* to come. Socrates's techniques of taking from others, transforming, and enumerating are elements of Godard's own project, retrojected in order to characterize them as a form of ethical life.

In *Histoire(s),* this emphasis on the care of the self is most apparent in Godard's constant presence on screen or in the soundtrack. Grating and amusing by turns, the device at least has the virtue of acknowledging responsibility for the claims on offer; confession is a first-person discourse.[65] To discover fantastic affinities and to be responsible both *to* them and *for*

61. Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, *2 x 50 ans de cinéma français: Phrases (sorties d'un film)* (Paris, 1998), p. 15.

62. Godard and Miéville, *Four Short Films,* trans. John Tittensor (ECM 5001, 2006), pp. 33/53. On *The Old Place,* see Antoine de Baecque, "Godard in the Museum," in *Forever Godard,* p. 125.

63. See Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York, 1961); two further exercises were added for the 1968 edition. The book appeared in France as *La Crise de la culture: Huit exercises de pensée politique* (Paris, 1972).

64. Quoted in Brenez, "The Form of the Question," p. 160; trans. mod. The French reads, "*One plus one,* ça allait beaucoup plus loin et les gens lui disaient: on veut rester à One, on ne veut même pas mettre plus One."

65. Godard verges on kitsch in this regard, casting himself a *poète maudit;* see *H,* 4:174.

them by presenting them before a public is an exercise of the self. That is why montage is, in Godard's famous phrase, *un beau souci,* "a beautiful care."⁶⁶ Such exercises result in confession, or profession: the task in montage being "to see two things and to choose between them *in completely good faith*" (*GG,* 2:247; my italics).

Socrates, however, speaks to the Athenians, the country priest has a flock, and films exist to be shown. The enterprise is intrinsically public. In the case of cinema, the institutions of projection constitute this generic public. They do so by virtue of the sharedness of what is on-screen ("Several people can see it together"; "everybody sees more or less the same thing"; "the thing we share ought to allow us to speak 'of' or 'from'"). The public is, by definition, whatever shares in this way. Or whatever is lost when sharing fails to occur, which in politics is catastrophe. In *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (1993), over a shot of brutality from the Bosnian war, Godard describes "art" as a Schmitt-like state of exception and then adds, "It isn't spoken, it's written: Flaubert, Dostoevsky, it's composed: Gershwin, Mozart, it's painted: Cézanne, Vermeer, it's filmed: Antonioni, Vigo, or it's lived, and then it's the art of living: Srebrenica, Mostar, Sarajevo."⁶⁷ The phrase "art of living," *l'art de vivre,* is ironic. It connotes bourgeois comfort in French (it is the name of a foodie magazine, for instance), but here it names Bosnian tactics of survival, even as it translates literally the Stoic *tekhnê tou biou* or philosophical way of life.⁶⁸ If montage is an exercise of the self, it is equally an investigation into the ligaments of a community.

Put differently, if montage, and Godard's historical project generally, are attempts to determine what counts, and why, and how to proceed in a sequence, then the point of such an undertaking can only be that the resulting sequence or corpus is not merely capricious. It is "not merely one of Jean-Luc's conceits," as *Scénario du film "Passion"* has it, "it really exists, you can see it." The extent to which viewers do not condemn montage as a formalist bagatelle is also the extent to which a given community is willing to invest images with all the stakes of a profession of faith. It follows that a work like the *Histoire(s),* by putting such questions, investigates the shared criteria by which a community instantiates itself. That is, it investigates what counts. Again, this is not surefire; both Socrates and the country priest come to bad

66. See Godard, "Montage My Fine Care *[Montage mon beau souci],*" *Godard on Godard,* pp. 39–41.

67. Godard, *Four Short Films,* pp. 89/92; trans. mod. The same passage reappears in *JLG/JLG.* See Godard, *JLG/JLG: Phrases* (Paris, 1996), pp. 16–18. See also *H,* 4:60/92. On states of exception, see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception,* trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago, 2005).

68. For the *tekhnê tou biou,* see Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, 1998).

ends, and the very comparison is dangerously close to kitsch. But the affin-
ities appear on-screen, and it is up to the audience to recognize them, as
one might recognize credentials.

> There is, I think, a need for identity, a need for *recognition [reconnais-
> sance]*. Simply put, if I see an image of you, I don't say it's an image of
> Toubiana, and in this fact of "recognizing" there is at once the point of
> view of the scout engaged in reconnaissance . . . and a feeling of recogni-
> tion *[reconnaissance],* in the sense of gratitude. We are grateful to the
> world for recognizing us and for allowing us to recognize ourselves.
> [*GG,* 2:172]

Such recognition would entail, as well, a recognition of the *monteur* as
counting, in the sense of exemplifying the community or speaking for it.
The opposite of this communal recognition is its institutionalization and
reification in the form of what Godard rather vaguely names "the State" (or
"America").[69] State power effectively arrogates to itself the quotidian ex-
ercise of recognition and sharing. The act of counting is therefore a matter
of ethics and politics both—a matter of *êthos,* or character, and *polis,* or
community. The one who undertakes such an enterprise is called to account
before the city (that is ethics), even as he or she calls the city to account
(that is politics). That Godard engages (some would say indulges) in the
latter has long been recognized; that he undergoes the former as well has
not been so widely noted.

8. The Stakes of Style

The ethical charge to the *monteur* and spectator alike is to investigate the
extent to which a community does or does not exist. Such investigation
consists in testing agreement in aesthetic judgments: subjective judgments,
that is, which request the status of facts. Herein lies the special relevance of
Histoire(s) to historical disciplines like art history. Because these disciplines
endeavor constantly to move from particular cases to general theses while
lacking fixed criteria for doing so, *Histoire(s)* ought to be a paradigm case.

Two of Godard's most recent films actually narrate such judgments and
tests: *Éloge de l'amour* and *Notre Musique.* These films narrate, in effect,
what it would be like to take seriously, to act upon, Godard's claims on
behalf of montage. They do so by thinking such claims in relation to the
attribution of paintings: the discernment of authorial "hands." Such work,

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69. The role of state power is discussed more explicitly in *Éloge de l'amour* than in *Histoire(s).*
See Douglas Morrey, "History of Resistance/Resistance of History: Godard's *Éloge de l'amour*
(2001)," *Studies in French Cinema* 3, no. 2 (2003): 128–29.

known as connoisseurship, is a degree zero of Godard's enterprise; it involves making substantive historical claims about images on the basis of their style or morphology.[70] It is, moreover, an exercise of classification: attributing a work to a particular style involves subsuming it under a category. Élie Faure and Malraux are paradigms of connoisseurship in *Histoire(s)*. But these later films actually show connoisseurship in action. They recount it by telling it as a tale, *une histoire.*

In *Éloge de l'amour,* the art dealer Rosenthal is reassembling a collection of paintings dispersed during the war—an act of montage, if only metaphorically, and of telling off items on a list. We see his assistant holding two small canvases, moving them slowly back and forth so that Rosenthal (offscreen) may compare them (fig. 9). His lawyer, Forlani, inquires, "Who's that—Delacroix?" Rosenthal replies, "I believe Matisse *[Je crois Matisse]*" (*É,* p. 15). This attribution does not appear as showy expertise but as an offhanded *credo* ("I believe").[71] Rosenthal illustrates Godard's imperative to the *monteur,* "to see two things and to choose between them *in completely good faith.*" Some years later, in *Notre Musique,* a very similar shot appears

F I G U R E 9.   *Eloge de l'amour:* Rosenthal (offscreen lower left) attributes a painting.

70. On connoisseurship, see my "Connoisseurship and the Stakes of Style," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Autumn 2005): 1–26, with further bibliography.
71. As if to emphasize something like humility, Rosenthal later complains about curators who consider themselves *auteurs* "on the same level as Pheidias" (*É,* p. 16).

(fig. 10). Once again, two images move back and forth, one before the other in comparison. This time, however, they are stills from *His Girl Friday,* and the person holding them is a student. Godard himself is lecturing in Sarajevo, expounding his theory that art-historical comparison—the dual slide projection that shaped the field until the advent of PowerPoint—is the origin of the shot/reverse shot in film editing. The visual echo between the two shots declares an internal relation between montage and connoisseurship. *Notre Musique* finds Godard's montage to be a version of art history. It follows that Godard's project of historical montage, *Histoire(s),* is to be understood as a paradigm case for the history of art.

Connoisseurship—the determination of an authorial hand—is like montage in two respects. First, it provides a method for grouping particulars into general classes (Rembrandt, School of Rembrandt, Old Master, Dutch, and so on). It tells off instances, counts them out. Second, it is an aesthetic judgment in the hoary Kantian sense of being subjective while yet asking to be treated as fact.[72] Rosenthal, for instance, believes the picture to be by Henri Matisse, and this belief entails a provenance history (the painting once belonged to a particular collection). The connoisseur is in this sense

F I G U R E 10.   *Notre Musique:* Godard (in background) lectures on montage. The stills are from *His Girl Friday.*

72. See Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* §6, pp. 45–46.

a historian, not just of art but of the Second World War. Lest this point be unclear, another character in *Éloge de l'amour* treats two books on the Holocaust by Ruth Klüger and Vladimir Jankélévitch much as Rosenthal does paintings or the student does stills: moving them back and forth, juxtaposing them, superimposing them (fig. 11). Only the hand is visible (as though reading were also handiwork). Offscreen a journalist talks about the Kosovo crisis; the juxtaposition with books on an earlier genocide links past and present just as surely as the affinity between Delpy and Turner. In short, Godard presents the comparative method of connoisseurship as a way of making statements about the world. It is the constitution of the basic materials of historical inquiry.

Notre Musique discovers an affinity—fantastic in its own way—between the working method of the connoisseur and that of the *monteur*. The similarity between the two is not difficult to discern. It lies in the nature of the claim and in the nature of the evidence. The claim is historical and taxonomic: this painting counts as Matisse, hence counts as part of a lost collection. Just so, the work of montage produces something that counts as cinema and therefore takes its place within a history of that medium. The significance of this claim bears emphasis. Connoisseurship *produces* not just authorial hands but historical facts: when Rosenthal attributes the Matisse, he makes a claim for both the history of art and the history of France in the
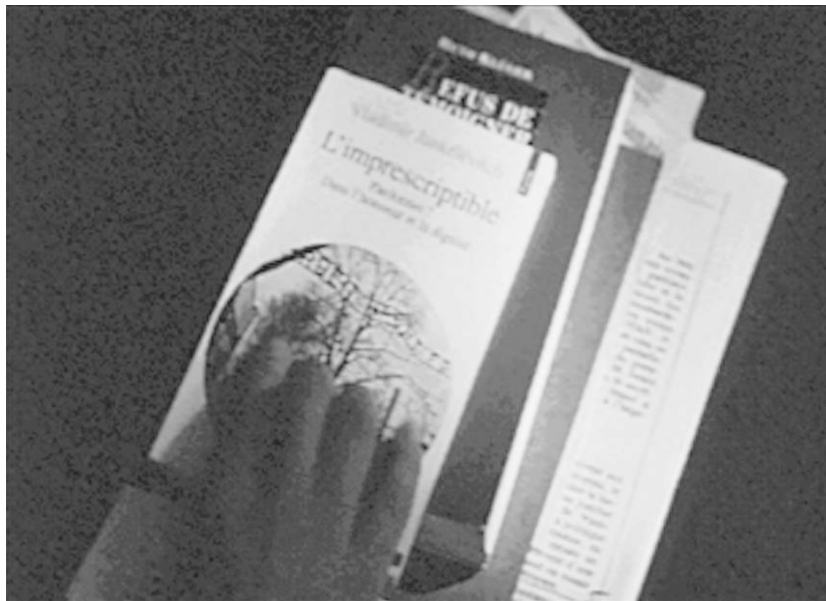

FIGURE 11. *Éloge de l'amour:* Jankélévitch + Klüger

Second World War. The evidence for this claim is that of the eyes, and it manifests itself in a credo, but such professions depend upon the assent of a polis or flock (the first-person plural of *Notre Musique [Our Music]).* Montage functions analogously. In *Notre Musique,* we see stills in the process of being conjoined—the constitution of a sequence as such, "one plus one." Herein lies the true radicalism of Godard's historiography. Montage, as a form of connoisseurship and of counting, is not just the manipulation of a given sequence of film. It is what makes sequence in the first place. It produces, as "one plus one" frames make a sequence, whatever it is that is going to count as history for a particular group of people. That this account is perennially open to rejection only raises the stakes.

Godard has always been a connoisseur in this sense. As a critic at *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s, he was one of the inventors of the very concept of an authorial hand in film. As Jacques Aumont observes, the *politique des auteurs* began as a list of the directors who counted as cinéastes for Godard, François Truffaut, Éric Rohmer & Co.[73] It began, that is, in enumeration, one plus one: *these ones count.* It was consolidated in Godard's annual Top Ten lists for *Cahiers du Cinéma* or in articles like "Bergmanorama" (1958): "There are five or six films in the history of the cinema which one wants to review simply by saying, 'It is the most beautiful of films'. . . . Five or six films, I said, +1, for *Summer Interlude* is the most beautiful of films."[74] There could be no clearer statement of Godard's identification of judging, counting, and addition.

When it came to auteurs, procedure and the critical act of selection were what mattered, not authorial immanence. As Godard puts it in an interview, "What was interesting was the word *politique. Auteur* isn't important" (*GG,* 2:162). It is exactly this emphasis on the pragmatics of authorship that justified the term *politique,* "policy" or a "politics." So far from being an intuition of genius, *la politique* teased out the radical potential of connoisseurship: its seeming reversal of cause and effect, transforming producers into products. Authors are effects of style in the scene of projection and beholding. As Godard insists in episode 3B, *la politique* signified "not *auteurs* [but] works. . . . The works first, then the men" (*H,* 3:47/69). We know artists in and through the artifacts they leave behind; their hands, hence their very identities, are extrapolations from artifacts. Godard endorses Buffon's famous dictum, *le style c'est l'homme même,* "style is the man

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73. On *la politique des auteurs* and the *Histoire(s),* including a brief mention of connoisseurship, see Jacques Aumont, *Amnésies: Fictions du cinéma d'après Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris, 1999), pp. 109–13. On cinephilia and connoisseurship, see Keathley, *Cinephilia and History,* pp. 13–18.

74. Godard, "Bergmanorama," *Godard on Godard,* pp. 75–76.

himself," as being literally true: there is nothing to Rembrandt, to Pheidias, to Bergman, but a recognizable style (see *GG,* 2:438). This seeming reversal is what happens when authors are defined procedurally, as those things that count by virtue of being counted. Part of Godard's claim, in *Histoire(s)* and in these more recent films, is that such definitions represent the way history actually gets written.

The supreme authorial figure in the *Histoire(s)* is Alfred Hitchcock, whose power over the medium of cinema is the topic of episode 4A. Even he, however, does not escape the procedural economy of *la politique.* Godard introduces him as follows: "And it's forms that tell us finally what's at the bottom of things. Now, what is art if not that through which forms become style? And what is style if not the man?" (*H,* 4:11/43). Hitchcock, the master of death, becomes the specimen case of Buffon's dictum. He exemplifies, if not quite the death of the author, at least his or her absorption into the work. As goes Hitchcock, moreover, so goes the world—the history of oneself, the history of everyone. Such is Godard's radicalism: a formalism so overweening as to become history itself, hence to be no formalism at all. Form tells us what is "at the bottom" of things, *au fond,* as a story of nursing is "in the depths," *au fond,* of every love story. Hitchcock is an effect of style *and, for just that reason, he counts.* This argument is not intrinsically skeptical: on the contrary, montage and counting are, with projection, procedures by which we can see that "the world is there."

9. Perfectibility and Debasement

Or could see, maybe, once upon a time. One of Godard's more surprising assertions is that montage "has never really existed. . . . No one has found it" (*GG,* 2:242).[75] It awaits discovery, a perpetual New World: "Montage is a continent that hasn't existed and that, I think, will not exist" (*GG,* 2:248). Finding it requires reconnaissance, as by a scout. That this claim is connected to the idea of montage as a "practical exercise" is clear from its association with Bernanos: "People use the word montage a lot. Today they talk about montage in Welles or in Eisenstein or, on the contrary, the absence of montage in Rossellini. *'Ah, what fools!'* as Bernanos would say. Cinema never found montage" (*GG,* 2:403). The affinity with connoisseurship and art criticism generally brings out why montage should remain undiscovered country. We have seen how Godard's historical aesthetic descends from Kant. Where the Kantian account appeals to a sovereign reason for criteria of what counts, the Godardian relies upon the potential sharedness

75. See also the pages of an early draft of the *Histoire(s)* in *Jean-Luc Godard Documents,* pp. 284–85.

of perception within a given apparatus of production, projection, and spectatorship. Kant stresses that the claim to universal comprehensibility in aesthetic judgment—and, by extension, universal assent—will not be realized. The claim is "a mere ideal norm," a statement of what ought to occur. "It does not say that everyone *will* agree with my judgment, but that he *ought*" (*CJ,* §22, p. 94). Connoisseurship makes no greater claim. Still the pronouncements of connoisseurs like Rosenthal do constitute historical facts (the painting is by Matisse and has a specific provenance history). The same holds for montage. Kant's *ought* is Godard's as well: the cinema produces something "we *ought* to share." Which is not to say that we invariably will do so. Because montage instantiates community in and through agreement in what counts—seeing the same thing—and because that agreement is never universal, montage, and community, remain mere ideal norms. They can only be mourned, as in *Éloge de l'amour,* or repeatedly reworked, as in *Histoire(s).*

The danger here is of overestimating, or misconceiving, the power of montage. In *Éloge de l'amour,* Rosenthal exemplifies this risk. He eventually hires a prostitute for the lawyer Forlani on the basis of her resemblance to a character in Balzac (it is particularly sexy that she is "a Jewess *[une Juive]*" [*É,* p. 58]). This is how he pays his friend; although he would have preferred to present him with an 1844 edition of *Splendeurs et misères des courtesans,* a woman is the next best thing. It is a scene of casual debasement, exemplifying an impoverished relation to the past ("get ready to turn Right," he tells the cabbie as they approach the rendezvous [*É,* p. 57]). Out of friendship, the art dealer reduces everything—pictures, books, friends, women— to commodities. He does so in the belief that the woman he hires will be "better than the original, better than the original, a living copy" (*É,* p. 56). The gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, literature and life, will vanish. The scene neatly encapsulates everyone's worst suspicions regarding the category of the aesthetic and the judgment of beauty. Between Rosenthal and Forlani, there is the most wonderful *consensus.* They are in complete agreement in both criteria and judgment about what counts as wages and what counts as gift, about what counts as literature and the love of art. The woman's assent is of a different nature entirely.

Such failure is exactly what the *Histoire(s)* seeks to avoid through its acknowledgment of the ethical responsibility of *reconnaissance,* recognition. But it is telling that Edgar, the main character of *Éloge de l'amour,* fails to write his cantata for Simone Weil or even to do anything useful whatsoever. Midway through the film's running time, but at the very end of its narrative, a final verdict is passed upon him: "It's you who are disappointing" (*É,* p. 77). Neither retrieving the past nor leaving it alone, but merely repeating it

as under compulsion, the *Histoire(s)* does not make clear whether any of its hallucinatory sequences actually counts (for) anything at all. That is its *faiblesse*—a condition of not knowing what "plus" might turn out to mean while continuing to tell the cases nonetheless.

Histoire(s) du cinéma does not reduce to propositions. Yet its investigation does discover at least three points. The first is the *visibility of history* in the artifactual record. History is visible in exactly the way that cinema is: in and through shared perception, mutual attunements between *monteur* and audience, connoisseur and community. There are no hidden discourses or ideologies or *Zeitgeister.* On the contrary, this mode of knowledge is no less (and no more) intimate than your relation to your own hands. The second point is the *priority of montage* to any historical project. Technical procedures of combination regulate knowledge of the past, an assertion that does not entail skepticism about the world but the open-ended possibility of its rediscovery. Against the case method of historical criticism, with its arrangement of artifacts into objects of study and supporting evidence, Godard insists that the principle of combination always awaits fresh finding, as a continent, a world, forever new: "Firstly we have to know the meaning of 'plus.'" The most neglected aspects of historiography—connoisseurship and other technologies of evidence—are, precisely, the ones that count most. The third point is the *ethical implication* of *monteur* and audience. Exactly because montage asks for universal assent, exactly because the audience will not give it, asking, giving, and withholding come to constitute either community or catastrophe. Testing these rules of agreement is the essence of what Godard calls a *politique.*

P L A T E 1. Episode 2B: *Persona* + Godard (note blue eye at upper left)

P L A T E 2. Episode 2A: Delpy + Turner

PLATE 3.   Episode 2A: Delpy + Seurat

PLATE 4.   Episode 2A: Delpy + *Night of the Hunter* (boy's head as iris)