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# The Past is Never Dead: Amorphous Time in Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre Musique*

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THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD: AMORPHOUS  
TIME IN JEAN- LUC GODARD'S *NOTRE*  
*MUSIQUE*

by

ANTHONY DOMINGUEZ

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The  
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2019

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## ABSTRACT

THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD:

AMORPHOUS TIME IN JEAN-LUC

GODARD'S *NOTRE MUSIQUE*

ANTHONY DOMINGUEZ

Advisor: William Boddy

Jean-Luc Godard is undoubtedly one of the most central figures to cinema. A pioneer of the French New Wave, Godard's style would go on to influence all realms of the artform. Despite continuing to make films beyond the French New Wave, however, Godard would eventually succumb to his own myth. Godard studies have largely remained focused on these early portions of his career that are so well remembered, ranging from 1960 to 1968. While in more recent times, Godard's post-68 filmography has received more scholarly notice, there still exists a discrepancy of attention between Godard's latest films and his earlier period. Specifically, I refer to Godard's films of the new millennium following his landmark video-essay epic *History of Cinema* (1998). These films, beginning with *In Praise of Love* (2001), offer new and radical examples of film aesthetics. My goal here is, thus, two-fold. I first want to address the scholarly studies surrounding Godard to point towards why Godard has seemed to fall out of favor in relation to his development as a filmmaker. I second want to discuss what Godard's films of the new millennium can offer us. Namely, how Godard employs, within cinema, Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze's theories on time. Subsequently, I'll be analyzing Godard's *Our Music* to show how Godard uses these theories to discuss concepts surrounding cinema, history, memory, trauma, and language.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dedicated to Kir Kuiken for introducing me to the works of Jean-Luc Godard when I was only an undergraduate student, and to my graduate professors, who taught me so there's so much more to writing. Without your guidance, I could have never made it this far. Thank you.

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## 1. Preface

Despite a career now lasting over half a century, much of critical and public attention on the work of Jean-Luc Godard has remained focused on the beginning portions of his career, spanning from his debut film *Breathless* (1960) to his last studio-film shortly before his collaborations with Jean-Pierre Gorin, *Week End* (1967).<sup>1</sup> Yet, Godard's later filmography is just as, if not even more, rich than his early work. These films following the dawn of the new millennium offer new and radical examples of film aesthetics. In this essay, I will be analyzing Godard's *Our Music* to show how Godard employs Henri Bergson's and Gilles Deleuze's theories on time and cinema to develop a new way of viewing cinema. Subsequently, through these theories, I argue that Godard uses cinema as form of essay to discuss issues surrounding cinema, history, memory, trauma, and language.

Why *is* there a discrepancy in attention between Godard's early career and his later period? In his essay, "Eight Obstacles to the Appreciation of Godard in the United States," Jonathan Rosenbaum traces various factors for the relative unpopularity of Godard's later films. Rosenbaum points towards several issues, including but not limited to: release schedule stateside, the unappealing didacticism of Godard's communist films, the difficulty of analyzing the films which followed thereafter,<sup>2</sup> and a removal from the context of the French New Wave once Godard returned to Switzerland in the late 70s. On a concluding note, however, Rosenbaum references Peter Wollen's two essays, "The Two Avant-Gardes," and "Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent*

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1 It is by no coincidence then that out of the thirteen Godard films Criterion Collection—arguably the foremost home distributor of art-house cinema—only two fall outside this category: *Every Man for Himself* (1980) and *Tout Va Bien* (1972), the latter, however, representing Godard's return to mainstream cinema evident by the combination of pop-culture (Jane Fonda and Yves Montand) with more heady subjects (May 1968).

2 *Here and Elsewhere* (1976), *Number Two* (1975), and *Six Fois Deux/Sur et Sous La Communication* (1976).

*d'est*,” to outline how Godard has remained popular with academics becoming a “kind of Aristotelian model of theoretically informed counter-cinema (202).”

If there's a fault to point out in Rosenbaum's essay, it doesn't lie in his argument, which is sound, but rather, in its age. Written in 1992, Rosenbaum of course couldn't have accounted for two factors that would largely affect cinema studies<sup>3</sup>: the invention of the DVD/Blu-ray and the internet, all which have re-invigorated interest in the post-68 films of Godard. The most recent example is Arrow Academy's Blu-ray release, *Jean-Luc Godard + Jean-Pierre Gorin: Five Films, 1968-1971*, which made available films that were previously otherwise. And yet, underlying Rosenbaum's essay and even Arrow Academy's Blu-ray release is a third issue still pertaining towards studies on Godard. That is, Godard's oeuvre since the publication of *Son + Image* has only increased, and it's towards these more recent films of the past decade that I take interest in because relatively little has been published on them. Specifically, I refer to the films Godard would go on to make after his video-essay epic, *History of Cinema* (1998). It is here that the culmination of Godard's various experimentation with film and video come to a cohesive fruition, seemingly combining the last fifty years of his work. For organizational purposes, it's then convenient to mark the films following *History of Cinema* as a new phase, the same way in which Godard's earlier periods are grouped as “French New Wave,” “Dziga Vertov,” “Sonimage,” and so on.

Perhaps the best term for this would be “Post-History.” Not only because the films being referenced here were made after *History of Cinema*, but also because of the creative influence *History of Cinema* bears on these films. Godard's films of the new millennium are ones

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3 Ever on the forefront, Godard seems to have been in tune to this shift in film studies. In 1978, he delivered a series of lectures on film history at the University of Montreal. As Colin MacCabe details in his biography of Godard, “Godard's teaching method was to show extracts of one of his own films with other relevant films: *Contempt* with *Man with a Movie Camera*, *The Bad and The Beautiful* and *Day for Night*... (294).”

preoccupied with the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, and the role of cinema within it. Colin MacCabe describes the possibilities of Godard's *History of Cinema* the following way: "He could now undertake a montage of the twentieth century which juxtaposed the personal, the fictional, and the documentary in a way which simply ignored the usual assumptions of priority or importance of one element over another (295)." The same can be said of these "Post-History" films.

With the establishment of why film studies have placed an emphasis on Godard's earlier films, I want to next discuss *contemporary* film studies in relation to Godard's Post-History films. Picking up the same through-line as Rosenbaum, with reference towards Godard's later work, Richard Brody asserts in *Everything is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard*, "Godard has been a victim of his own artistic success (xiii)." Brody continues:

...his work became far too allusive and intricate for the wide range of moviegoers. In the earlier films, splashy borrowings from American movies and the presence of pop culture icons and iconography of the day went a long way to keep Godard in fashion...Yet in his later work, Godard became even more intensely serious and demanding.

To further Brody's argument, I'd like to offer the examples of *Breathless* and *New Wave* (1990).

### **1.1 The New Wave and New Wave**

In *Breathless*, the template of the noir film genre, the use of jazz, and the swaggering Jean-Paul Belmondo in the role of Michel lent the film an air of sexiness. In turn, existential discussions regarding death, sex, and ennui became cool and hip. It's not that *Breathless* isn't a challenging film to watch, but the film's story, characters, world, and soundtrack ease the audience into the jump-cuts for a more accessible viewing. Of course, while *Breathless* certainly had its detractors upon release, the film has now become canonized and widely hailed as a masterpiece.

On the other hand, Godard's *New Wave*, belonging to the films which are more "intensely

serious and demanding,” has become relegated to material for academic essays, such as this one. To refer to Brody once again, “Disappointing those who hoped Godard would tell the story of his formative years alongside his *Cahiers* comrades, *New Wave* was set not in the world of filmmaking but in the world of big business... (522).” While Godard has always been one to subvert audience expectations,<sup>4</sup> *New Wave* fits into this tradition quite radically by playing upon the waxed nostalgia over his early career. The name, of course, references the period of the same name which *Breathless* helped launch, but it’s no biopic. Rather, *New Wave* is an allegory for Godard’s own cinematic career.

The story of *New Wave* centers on Richard Lennox (Alain Delon), a drifter who is taken in and taken care of by Elena Torlato-Favrini (Domiziana Giordano). Halfway through the film, the two set out on a boating trip, Richard falls into the water, and Elena simply watches on as he drowns. Soon thereafter, a man identical to Richard shows up and identifies himself as Roger (also Delon), Richard’s brother. Towards the end of the film, Roger and Elena set out on the same boat trip taken earlier, but this time, Elena is the one who begins to drown. At the last minute, however, Roger saves her.

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4 This recalls Godard’s infamous quote with an interviewer during the 1960 Cannes Film Festival: “I have the impression of loving the cinema less than I did a year ago—simply because I have made a film, and the film was well received, and so forth. So I hope that my second film will be received very badly and that this will make me want to make films again (Brody, “An Exile in Paradise”).



*Figure 1 Roger Saves Elena from Drowning (1:19:14).*

The metaphor of the film itself isn't too subtle. As Douglas Morrey points out in *Jean-Luc Godard*, "The imagery of resurrection that proliferates in Godard's cinema from the mid-1980s onwards, although it may frequently borrow from Christian iconography, has, first and foremost, a *cinematic* meaning (191)." Brody picks up on this exact thread, writing:

The first man is the Old Wave, the second is the New Wave, and the woman is the producer, the industry.<sup>5</sup> In a subsequent draft of the synopsis, Godard made the biblical analogy explicit, calling the story's two parts the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament depicts the classic era of cinema in its industrial-age dynamism...The New Testament is the story of the New Wave,

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5 *New Wave* is certainly not Godard's first film pertaining towards the relationship between films/directors and their producers. *Contempt* (1963) would mirror Godard's own negative relationship and feelings towards producers through a wide array of characters involved in a filmic adaption of Homer's *Odyssey*.

Godard's own story (523).

Rather than, the complexity of *New Wave* would come in Godard's aesthetics—how a story of cinematic rebirth would be shown. Diametrically opposed to *Breathless*, *New Wave* employs long-takes, static shots, asynchronous montage, and a subtler film score composed by Manfred Eicher. The script itself is composed of literary quotes gathered by Antoine Duhamel, and although Godard has always been one to employ quotations—visually, auditory, and verbally—*New Wave*'s quotes differ in that the film does not provide a primer for its own material.

Consider, however, the hotel scene in *Breathless*. There, Godard employed other forms of media to comment on the role of women within the noir genre, specifically, their reduction to sexual objects. At one point, Patricia (Jean Seberg) poses next to Auguste Renoir's *Portrait of Mademoiselle Irene Cahen D'anvers* (Figure 2, below) and asks Michel which of the two is prettier (38:00). It's through the Renoir painting, and the other forms of media—the radio, Faulkner's *Wild Palms*, the couple's reference towards *Romeo and Juliet*—that *Breathless* provides tools through which the audience can parse the film's themes—tools which are either absent in *New Wave* or presented more obliquely.



*Figure 2 Patricia Poses Next to the Renoir Painting (36:00).*

Perhaps therefore upon its debut at the New York Film Festival, *New Wave* was infamously panned by Vincent Canby in a New York Times review. In less than 400 words, Canby completely dismisses *New Wave* in a series of ad-hominem attacks:

If you can't get to Vermont, you may want to see "Nouvelle Vague" just to admire its autumn foliage. There's not much else to occupy either the mind or the eye...Mr. Godard's passion for Cinema now seems perfunctory, as do his tracking shots, his use of pretty actresses (often seen reading books) and the chapter headings (in French, Italian, English and German) that divide the movie (Canby).

Canby makes no effort to grapple with *New Wave*. One can point towards the nature of capsule reviews as being too short for this to be possible, especially with consideration of the movie'

breadth, but even then, the review's snarky tone shows no interest whatsoever in critical-thinking. The issue I take with Canby's review isn't that it's negative, but rather that his arguments aren't developed. This, with the cultural power that writing for the New York Times, provides would go on to deal a great blow to Godard. The New York Film Festival, which was previously home to many of Godard's stateside debuts. wouldn't see another of his films until a decade later with *In Praise of Love* (2001).<sup>6</sup>

What I find to be the most interesting aspect of Canby's review is a line which highlights the nostalgia that dogs Godard's late career: "Only people who despise the great Godard films, everything from "Breathless" (A Bout de Souffle) (1959) through "Every Man for Himself" (Sauve Qui Peut la Vie) (1979), could be anything but saddened by this one. The party's over." There's a sense of irony at play here. Godard would only increasingly become bolder as his career aged, but it seems that for Canby, Godard's boldness after 1979 would be too much; or as Brody would put it, "too demanding." To signify "the party's over" implies two things: the negative aspect, of course, that Godard is no longer worth paying attention, but the more positive element that Canby obviously didn't mean: that Godard isn't interested in making films for his established audience, but for rather in pushing the art form for his own personal exploration.<sup>7</sup>

If Godard *is* interested in pushing the art form, this raises the question of where his politics lie at this point in his career. The answer is that Godard's politics haven't changed. What has changed is

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6 Worth noting is the staunch defense the NYFF put up for Godard in 1985 when it screened *Hail Mary*, Godard's modern retelling of the birth of Jesus Christ. In *New York Film Festival Gold*, Joanne Koch attests to withstanding protest ranging from protestors outside of Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall to messages from the Vatican (136). The 90s then saw a shift for stateside appreciate of Godard, although there has been a resurgence within the past decade with the NYFF once again premiering his films.

7 I don't mean that Godard is above being commercial. In fact, a few years prior to *New Wave*, Godard directed *Detective* (1984), a noir comedy, to raise money. Prior to that, in 1971, he even shot a commercial for Schick After Shave.



Godard's aesthetic approach to his politics. In leaving behind Gorin and later working with Anne Wiazemsky, Godard's directing would become more subtle and nuanced. What's lost in this evolution is the pop-sensibility that attracted mainstream audiences to Godard. Characters are no longer youths traipsing through Paris or the countryside; there's no more ironic pop music; no more catch-phrases to latch on to, such as "We're the children of Marx and Coca-Cola." Instead, Godard's films became more serious and even more self-reflexive, interrogating not only the subject matters at hand, but now in his old age, Godard himself, such as in *King Lear*, *Keep Your Right Up* (1987), and most obviously, the autobiographical documentary, *JLG/JLG – Self Portrait in December* (1994). As I've argued in my analysis of *New Wave* and *Breathless*, Godard sets these later films apart through avant-garde techniques that challenged audiences to re-think the ways films can be shot, edited, and ultimately, watched.

Although Canby's review of *New Wave* was written in 1991, the sense of nostalgia for the old Godard continues to this day. In the process of aging, Godard's older films have now been contextualized among movements they belonged to and subsequently, romanticized. One needs to only look at Michel Hazanavicius' *Godard Mon Amour* (2017) for a prime and appropriately recent example.

### **1.2 '68 and the Myth of Genius**

A biopic based on Anne Wiazemsky's account of her marriage to Godard,<sup>8</sup> *Godard Mon Amour* centers on Godard's life during the late 60s when the director would begin his flirtations with communism and create leftist-oriented films before participating in the infamous May 1968 protests. Although billed as a comedy, *Godard Mon Amour* expresses little interest in using comedy as a tool to deconstruct Godard as a mythic figure, instead as using it to reinforce this

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<sup>8</sup> "Un an Apres."

notion<sup>9</sup>. In his review of the film for The Nation, Armond White concedes that while *Godard Mon Amour* is a bad film, it retains merit for its possibility of reinvigorating interest in Godard:

Readers who are unfamiliar with Godard's art may be intrigued by the actual films and discover the amplitude of his thoughtful creativity, which spun him into ever more radical experimentation before coming out the other side, refreshed. Godard, the moral and spiritual beacon, has been forgotten by critics and Millennial filmmakers in favor of his sexy, alluring surfaces (White).

In the regard of the “sexy, alluring surfaces,” there are two scenes in *Godard Mon Amour* worth discussing here.

There's a moment in the film where Godard is recording people marching in protest when suddenly, a man breaks off from the line to approach Godard. He reveals himself as a student who wrote his thesis on Godard and then spends a few minutes ambling his words, offering praise. Filmed in a conventional shot-reverse-shot, the camera switches between the man, and the bothered Godard who expresses his annoyance through sighs and eye-rolls. Godard belittles the man for being a “capitalist” and ruining his shot. As Godard walks away, he aims the camera at his head as if it were a gun and pulls the trigger, replete with a gunshot provided by the film's non-diegetic soundtrack. This scene is exemplary of how *Godard Mon Amour* works towards depicting Godard as a genius who's above everyone else. Godard's suicidal act, reinforced by the film's sound, frames the scene so. Rather than offer a critique of Godard, *Godard Mon Amour* presents a history which only bolsters the established beliefs surrounding Godard in the 60s—sexy and intelligent

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9 Godard himself would set out to do this in his fittingly bastardized *King Lear* (1987) wherein he plays Professor Pluggy. A recluse filmmaker, Pluggy wears an assortment of wires on top of a badly worn wig, all completed by Godard's signature look—sunglasses and a cigar. He speaks English in a gnarled and nearly incomprehensible voice, swings around a light-bulb, and speaks nonsense. In effect, Pluggy is Godard's act of satirizing himself.

through the same hip lens Godard used ironically in his early filmography. Even Hazanavicius' decision to create a film centered on this period of Godard's life falls in line with the wider attention placed on his early films I discussed earlier.



*Figure 3 A Student Approaches Godard to Express his Admiration (42:40).*

There is one scene, however, where Hazanavicius seems to come close to providing a critique or at least a deconstruction of the “alluring” Godard. At a communist meeting held by the college students who Godard so adored, Godard steps out of line when he grabs the microphone and compares Israel to Hitler’s Germany. The crowd begins to boo and hurl objects at Godard who embarrassingly flees the auditorium. A wide-angle shot contrasts the minute Godard—Wiazemsky in tow—against the bigger student group, and it becomes clear that Godard is at the very least, an ass. The missed opportunity of *Godard Mon Amour* reveals itself in Hazanavicius’ utter adoration for Godard. Rather than grapple with Godard the person but also Godard’s mythic image as a genius, Hazanavicius only expresses adulation with sprinkles of humor. What’s missing from *Godard Mon Amour*, and what Godard would later do himself in his own films and interviews, is a

critique of Godard's political ideology that dominated him<sup>10</sup>: namely, Godard's romanticizing of the working class, and the ways this would later appear in his aesthetics during his time with the Dziga Vertov Group.

Yet in discussing Godard's past filmography, an initial admittance must also be made that Godard's more experimental works beginning with *Every Man for Himself* up towards *In Praise of Love* (2001) have received a notable amount of attention in more recent years. Colin MacCabe's 2003 biography Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy, extensively covers Godard's collaborations with Anne-Marie Mieville, Godard's further work into the 90s, and the beginnings of *In Praise of Love* (2001). Richard Brody's 2008 biography Everything is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard, impressively runs from Godard's earliest beginnings as a critic all the way to *Our Music* (2004). Daniel Morgan's 2013 Late Godard and the Possibilities of Cinema, investigates Godard's focus on the past as "an effort of reinvention, intended to discover cinema's powers and possible future (xiii)." To that extent, Morgan devotes his book to *Keep Your Right Up* (1987), *New Wave, Germany Year 90 Nine Zero* (1991), and in the book's final chapter, *History of Cinema* (1990).

To list all the books here would be an exhaustive effort,<sup>11</sup> but one important annotation is that while critical work has been published on the post-68 films of Godard, one major common factor is their focus ending on the turn of the millennium. I am then taking the position of continuing scholarly work on Godard where others have left off, although I will be emphasizing critical

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10 In 1970, Godard and Jeanne-Pierre Gorin were commissioned to make a pro-Palestinian film focused on the war between Palestine and Israel. The film would end becoming the incomplete *Until Victory* (1970), but in 1976, Godard in collaboration with Anne-Marie Mieville remade the film into *Here and Elsewhere*. A documentary, *Here and Elsewhere* centered on a conversation between Godard and Mieville on the aesthetics of the Dziga Vertov group, and ultimately, the group's ideological and aesthetic shortcomings.

11 Of course, I have included a detailed bibliography at the end.

analysis rather than biographical detail. While my initial interest in the later films of Godard stemmed from their lack of critical attention, this isn't enough for anything more than a superficial argument. Rather, my interest in Godard's later films are similar that of Daniel Morgan's. My focus will be on showing how Godard has used avant-garde techniques within cinema to explore its possibilities as a tool of philosophy. Furthermore, like Morgan, my concern also lies in Godard's exploration of the history of cinema (pun unintended). Consequently, Godard transforms cinema into an essay-like form, where he explores arguments ranging from the effects of late-Capitalism on modern romance, to cinema's visual capability through its language for dealing with historical trauma. Unlike Godard's films under the Dziga-Vertov group, there is no one political ideology that unites Godard's later films. Rather, what unites Godard's films from the 90s and onwards is the concept of time—the resurfacing of the past into the present, and the developing of cinema as a tool of critique, especially as cinematic technology progresses. In the next chapter, I will discuss these notions of cinema and time in-depth to flesh out the specifics of my argument: why Godard's later films are so important and should be paid attention to.

## **2. Introduction**

For Godard, time and memory have always been central to his films, whether it's the personal references in *Breathless*, the historical and political references in *Here and Elsewhere*, or the mix of all three in *In Praise of Love*. It's through editing and emerging technology that Godard explores these two issues, hence his turn towards video technology and later, his use of 3D in *Goodbye to Language* (2014). Both cinema technology, but also Godard's penchant for experimentation, allowed for a comparison to be made between the past and present. Through avant-garde techniques, Godard creates new ways of watching cinema while simultaneously providing cinema as a philosophical tool for investigating concepts of time and memory. It is for this reason that I turn towards Godard's second film of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, *Our Music* (2004).

Before analyzing *Our Music*, however, I'd like to establish and discuss my theoretical framework for approaching Godard. The key philosopher whose work permeates all of Godard's films, but especially his later filmography, is Gilles Deleuze. The critical relationship between Deleuze and Godard goes as far back as 1976 when Cahiers Du Cinema interviewed Deleuze about Godard's television show *Six Fois Deux* (1976). It wasn't until Deleuze's groundbreaking *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, however, that Deleuze would delve more deeply into Godard's films, referencing them for his own ideas.

Even then, in reference towards ideas between time and the cinematic image, Deleuze has his own predecessor, whom he acknowledges: Henri Bergson. While Bergson's writings predated Godard's work, Bergson's ideas form the establishment for Deleuze, and by extension, my own critical framework. It must be said that my immediate predecessor for using Bergson and Deleuze in this regard is Douglas Morrey, who in his own writings on Godard makes frequent use of Bergson's and Deleuze's philosophical ideas. Indeed, I found even my thesis to have common ground with Morrey when he writes, "For Godard, cinema is not, first and foremost, a narrative

form, but rather, a new way of *seeing* (2).”

Yet, the similarities between my own arguments and Morrey’s end there. Morrey’s overall interest lie in providing a primer for Godard’s overall filmography, extending as far as 1998. Furthermore, Morrey’s use of Bergson and Deleuze is scattered throughout his analysis of Godard’s filmography rather than entirely focused. Whereas I’m using Bergson *and* Deleuze to analyze one film from Godard’s late period, Morrey employs an array of Deleuze’s ideas. For example, in the chapter “Love and Work: 1979-84,” from *Jean Luc Godard*, Morrey references Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* to argue that Godard’s films of this period “tends to work against anthropocentrism (158).” In his first chapter “Necessity or Contingency,” Morrey also brings up the issue of whether the reality displayed in cinema is “*essential or constructed* (4).” For Morrey, this problem gains importance because “it raises questions of the nature of time and causality and the possibility of human freedom (4).” Morrey’s introduction of this philosophical issue allows him to pivot to Bergson who argues that this problem arises “out of a confusion between time and space (5).” Bergson’s conclusion, here, is that freedom can only be gained if time is thought of as “flowing present time (5).” As I will be discussing this same issue shortly, I don’t want to spend too much time explaining it here. Rather, the point is to illustrate the similarities and differences between Morrey’s work and my own to at once give proper credit where it’s due, but to also establish how my research stands on its own. To conclude, Morrey bridges Bergson’s concepts of time to Godard’s films to ultimately introduce how his book will explore broader issues regarding “the nature of time and consciousness, the problem of language and the communication between subjects... (6).”

To begin with, certain preliminary questions are to be asked: What does Deleuze mean by “time?” What is the time-image? The crystal-image? How did these concepts arise, and why do they matter? Finally, how do these theories relate to Godard’s cinema, and how do they change our

understanding of Godard's cinema at the turn of the new millennium?

## **2.1 Time as Duration**

Deleuze's concept of time can only be understood once Bergson's own theories on the matter have been established. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson sets out to make the distinction between "time as quality and time as quantity (75)." Bergson begins by critiquing the notion of "clock time." This is to say, time which is counted. Bergson gives the example of a shepherd counting his flock of sheep and concludes that the sheep aren't counted in terms of duration, but rather in space. This is because the distinction between fifty identical sheep can only come from their location in space. Bergson then raises the possible counter-argument of thinking about the sheep as one flock rather than fifty individual sheep. Initially, this seems to resolve the problem of counting time as space. Bergson, however, argues that this cannot be the case, because to be thought of and subsequently counted, the sheep will need more space.

Bergson then applies this argument to abstract numbers. This time, he gives the example of counting to the number fifty. For this, too, Bergson once again refers to the issue of space. He writes: "For though we reach a sum by considering a succession of different terms, yet it is necessary that each of these terms should remain when we pass to the following, and should wait, so to speak, to be added to the others: how could it wait, if it were nothing but an instant duration? And where could it wait if we did not localize it in space (79)?" The numbers, like the sheep, need space to be counted, and so once again, measuring time in this manner is merely measuring volume within space. Consequently, Bergson views clock-time as false, because it measures time in space. Real-time then is time that endures; time with duration.

What does it mean, however, to think of time as duration in Bergsonian terms? To define time as duration, Bergson introduces the example of Xeno's paradox of movement. To briefly explain, Xeno's paradox of movement imagines a scenario where Achilles is pit against a tortoise; the



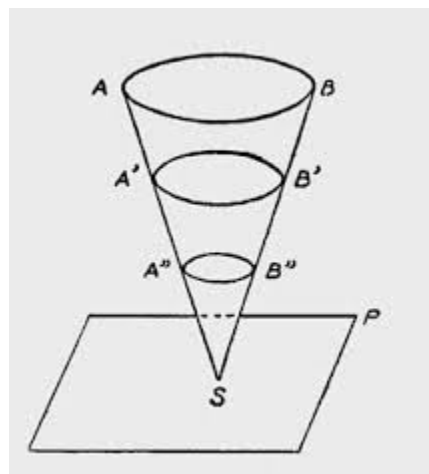
tortoise, being the slower of the two, is given a head-start. Naturally, Achilles should eventually surpass the tortoise, but Xeno argues that for Achilles to surpass the tortoise, Achilles must first traverse the halfway point between himself and the tortoise. However, because Achilles will constantly have to traverse this halfway point, he'll in fact, never reach the tortoise. Bergson, however, argues that Achilles would indeed pass the tortoise and uses this example to ultimately illustrate how we move through time. Bergson puts forth that the mistake underlying Xeno's paradox is defining Achilles' movement in relation to the *space* between Achilles and the tortoise. Instead, Bergson views each of Achilles' individual steps as indivisible, "so that addition will soon give a greater length for the space traversed by Achilles than is obtained by adding together the space traversed by the tortoise and the handicap with which it started (113)." But how does this all relate to time and duration?

In *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Bergson*, Suzanne Guerlac explains that Bergson takes issue with Xeno's paradox, because it "slices up time and movement into isolated positions...it ignores duration, the qualitative element of time, and mobility, the quantitative element of movement (68)." Using Xeno's paradox allows Bergson to establish his definition of time as being intertwined with duration. Bergson defines duration, and consequently time, as "the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states (100)." In short, time in Bergsonian terms, is defined by the act of experiencing rather than a unit of measure.

The importance for defining time in this manner stems from how Bergson views the past, present, and subsequently, memory. For Bergson, the experience of time, like a river, is split in two. There is the present in which we exist, but also the past which is preserved. In this regard, Bergson goes on to establish two different forms of memory: spontaneous memory and automatic memory. To assist in defining what each form of memory means, Bergson uses the example of

reading. Memorizing a poem, for example, is a form of spontaneous memory, because “When we think of these distinct readings, we realize that each one is unique and can be placed in time or properly contextualized (Guerlac 125).” In contrast to spontaneous memory, automatic memory is “a memory which has been learned [souvenir appris] will escape time [sortira du temps] as soon as the lesson is learned (Guerlac (125).” While these definitions establish the difference between these two forms of memory, they alone aren’t enough for a complete understanding. To go further, because spontaneous memory deals with the past, Bergson defines it as virtual. On the other hand, because automatic memory engages in habit (Guerlac offers the example of learning how to drive), it deals with the present.

In concluding his theories on time and memory, Bergson offers the example of an inverted cone, shown below. For Bergson, this cone perfectly illustrates how the past and present can co-exist. Here, AB represents memory, S represents the self, and P represents the present. It must be noted that unlike how it appears below, S is in motion, thus spinning and interacting with both automatic and spontaneous memory. Central to my argument in applying Bergson’s ideas to cinema is



*Figure 4 Bergson’s Inverted Cone (Bergsonism 60).*

Deleuze’s reading of the inverted-cone. In *Bergsonism*, a book written by Deleuze explaining and expounding on Bergson’s ideas, Deleuze writes of the inverted-cone:

The idea of a contemporaneity of the present and the past has one final consequence: Not only does the past coexist with the present that has been, but, as it preserves itself in itself (while the present passes), it is the whole, integral past; it is *all* our past, which coexists with each present (59).

Deleuze goes on to explain that in examining the inverted-cone, there exists the relation between points AB and S, but then there also exists the following sub-sections as well: A'B to S, A'' B'' to S, and so on and so forth. In this manner then, the inverted-cone represents the totality of the past, because once again, the cone is in a constant state of movement. Consequently, Deleuze concludes: “This is the precise point at which contraction Memory fits in with recollection-Memory, and, in a way, *takes over from it*. Hence this consequence: Bergsonian duration is, in the final analysis, defined less by succession than by coexistence (60).” It’s especially this last part here that’s central to my argument; the idea of Bergsonian duration being defined by coexistence rather than succession. In this way, as I will show later, Godard’s late-cinema is one which operates similarly to Bergson’s inverted-cone, where time is amorphous, and the past and present co-exist. Deleuze would go on to apply Bergson’s ideas regarding time to his own theories on cinema, resulting in *Cinema 2: Time-Image*.

## **2.2 The Time-Image**

Deleuze begins *Cinema 2* with a preface detailing why he has chosen to analyze cinema through the concept of time. He begins by discussing a revolution in philosophy where movement became subordinated to time before expressing that cinema, too, has undergone this same transition. A brief overview of what Deleuze calls the “movement-image” will help establish the definition for its successor, the time-image.

Deleuze’s definition of the movement-image arises from Bergson’s critique of “clock-time” that I discussed earlier:

On one hand, the movement-image constitutes time in its empirical form, the course of time: a successive present in an extrinsic relation of before and after, so that the past is a former present, and the future a present to come...time is no longer measured by movement but is itself the number or measure of movement (271).

Deleuze admits that while the movement-image gives rise to its own time-image, the form of time shown within the movement-image is one that's ultimately an indirect representation of time. To elaborate, if Bergson argues that time is experience rather than space (counting), then the movement-image portrays a world of clock-time rather than one of duration in Bergsonian terms. As Deleuze explains it, "Characters do not move...The world takes responsibility for the movement that the subject can no longer or cannot make...This is a virtual movement (59)."

Deleuze finds the shift from the movement-image to the time-image following World War II<sup>12</sup>, because in Europe, "the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer how to describe (xi)." Following thereafter is Hugh Tomlinson's and Robert Galeta's translator's introduction, delving further into the origin of the time-image:

The point of transition between the two volumes<sup>13</sup>, and the two images, is the crisis of the 'action-image' after Second World War. The unities of situation and action can no longer be maintained in the disjointed post-war world. This gives rise to pure

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12 Here, I find myself in slight disagreement with Deleuze. Following WWII, there were certainly several new cinemas, and subsequently new aesthetics, to emerge—French, Japanese, German and later Taiwanese New Wave, and Third (World) Cinema. The issue to be had here, however, lies in Deleuze pinpointing WWII as the birth of these new cinemas. Subsequently, Deleuze asserts that the time-image, in its crystalline form, didn't exist prior to WWII. Should this notion not be challenged and complicated? Like Godard, Deleuze's theories are grounded from a Western, and perhaps masculine, perspective. As a counter-example, Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and *At Land* (1944), not only exemplify Deleuze's time-image, but also even predate the Italian Neorealist films that serve as the origin for the time-image.

13 Preceding *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* is *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*.

optical and sound situations from which the ‘direct time-image’ emerges (xvi).

The time-image then arose in a post-war period as a method for cinema to depict a new world that reflected the one where the human atrocities of the war were possible. Deleuze finds the key-figures of the time-image in the characters of Italian Neorealism; particularly the films of Roberto Rossellini, in which the protagonists wander blasted landscapes and are unable to cope with the horrors they see:

*The Lonely Woman* [*Viaggio in Italia*] follows a female tourist struck to the core by the simple unfolding of images or visual clichés in which she discovers something unbearable, beyond the limit of what she can personally bear. This is a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent [*de voyant, non plus d’actant* (2)].

The difference between Italian Neorealist films and their predecessors before the war, and thus, the key difference between the time and movement-image, is that whereas the movement-image was defined by the external world, the time-image is defined by an interiority and self-reflection.

Deleuze’s notion of self-reflection can be understood as both referencing a character’s own self-reflection *and* cinema’s own self-reflexivity as in the films of the French New Wave.<sup>14</sup>

Two key terms for further understanding the time-image are *opsigns* and *sonsigns*. Opsigns and sonsigns are born from “pure optical and sound situations (9),<sup>15</sup>“which are further defined by opposing definitions of “objective and subjective, real and imaginary, physical and mental,” but also “where the character does not act without seeing himself acting, complicit viewer of the role

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14 Films such as Alain Resnais’ *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959), Godard’s *Breathless*, and later, Francois Truffaut’s *Day for Night* (1973) are all concerned with self-reflexive characters, but also cinema’s own meta capability.

15 Deleuze initially defines “pure optical and sound situations” in relation to, once again, the films of Italian Neorealism, and so itself arises from the notion of cinematic characters becoming viewers in their own worlds, such as the female tourist discussed earlier in *The Lonely Woman* discussed earlier.

he himself is playing (6).” Understanding the role of *opsigns* and *sonsigns* will prove greatly helpful in not only defining the crystal-image, but also in understanding the role that Deleuze’s concepts play in Godard’s films.

Moving on to the idea of the crystal-image, Deleuze defines it as: “...the most fundamental operation of time: since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past... (81).” Deleuze soon thereafter expands on this definition by referring to Bergson’s theories on time, writing: “In fact the crystal constantly exchanges the two distinct images which constitute it, the actual image of the present which passes and the virtual image of the past which is preserved. Deleuze further elaborates upon Bergson’s conclusion presented earlier:

The past does not follow the present that it is no longer, it coexists with the present it was. The present is the actual image, and *its* contemporaneous past is the virtual image, the image in a mirror. According to Bergson, “paramnesia” (the illusion of *deja-vu* or already having been there) simply makes this obvious point perceptible: there is a recollection of the present, contemporaneous with the present itself, as closely coupled as a role to an actor (79).

It’s here then that Deleuze bridges Bergson’s theories on time to cinema. Cinema, of course, is the medium which captures not only time, but time in motion—one recalls how Dziga-Vertov pioneered this play with time in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1927), where citizens and machinery were sped-up and slowed-down to Vertov’s will through editing.

Deleuze himself then establishes the connection between his own theories and the work of Godard. Deleuze begins by arguing that to understand the French New Wave within the context of the time-image, it needs to be understood that these films “retraced the path of Italian neo-realism...even if it meant going in other directions as well (9).” This meant that films of the French

New Wave shifted from being occupied with movement to being occupied with time. Of Godard, Deleuze writes:

Godard began with some extraordinary ballads, from *Breathless* to *Pierrot le fou*, and tends to draw out of them a whole world of opsigns and sonsigns...And these images...take on an ever greater autonomy after *Made in USA*; which may be summed up as follows: ‘A witness providing us with a series of reports with neither conclusion nor logical connection...This descriptive objectivism is just as critical and even didactic, sustaining a series of films...where reflection is not simply focused on the content of the image but on its form..(9-10).

The implication that arises from using Deleuze to read Godard is that in Godard’s later films, Godard creates a paradoxical cinema; it’s a cinema where the past and present co-exist; it’s a cinema that conjures Deleuze’s crystal-image, where the “virtual” and the “actual” are “exchanged.” It’s a cinema of time, and it’s through thinking about Godard’s later films through this lens that Godard’s own theories begin to emerge. That is, Godard is interested in historical trauma, and the ways it resurfaces or even linger, whether it’s the character of Richard Lennox resurrecting as the French New Wave / Godard’s specter, or Eddie Constantine as Lemmie Caution in *Germany Year Ninety Nine Zero* (1991) encountering ghosts in his wanderings through East Berlin after the fall of the wall. In grappling with the topic of time, Godard develops radical and multiple aesthetics, which can’t be singularly defined. Rather, this new “post-history” aesthetic arises in a myriad of ways: montage, long-takes, and editing. For this reason, then, I will specifically be focusing on Godard’s *Our Music* to show not only the stakes of using Deleuze to read Godard, but also how Godard’s own cinema of time develops from this argument.

I will begin my reading of *Our Music* by analyzing the film’s opening sequence through the lens of Sergei Eisenstein’s theory on montage. Doing so will allow me to discuss how Godard develops

his own ideas on the aesthetics of film in relation to not only the history of the West but the history of film. For Godard, film becomes a tableau in which to view the progress of history, and to tell this story, cinema must adopt an aspect of self-reflection to deal with the subjectivity of its images. In organizing my theoretical framework, it's important to note that the connection between Eisenstein, Godard, and Deleuze already exists. My goal in using Eisenstein isn't to have Eisenstein's theory on montage supersede Deleuze's theory on time and cinema, but to have the two mesh with one another. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, the opening of *Our Music* is a montage of film clips, most famously featuring a scene from Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Godard then brings Eisenstein into a conversation regarding the use of montage. In the same manner that Bergson is the predecessor to Deleuze, Eisenstein is the predecessor to Godard in regards to montage. When viewed through Deleuze, Eisenstein is transformed into Godard's predecessor, not just regarding montage, but also time. In bridging Eisenstein, Godard, and Deleuze, I will refer to Deleuze's chapter in *Cinema 2*, "Body, Brain, and Thought," where Deleuze argues that Eisenstein was the pioneer in representing cinematic time through montage.

Next, I will examine *Our Music*'s second section, but to fully develop my argument, it will be necessary to retread into Godard's filmography. For this purpose, I will be discussing Godard's *Contempt* and *Week End*, and how Godard began to establish cinema as a tool of philosophy through the intertwining topics of technology, capitalism, cinema, and history. I argue that Godard saw the artistic means of cinema limited by the capitalist modes of production and subsequently, with *Contempt* and *Week End*, Godard paints a rather stark portrait of how cinema can properly grapple with not only its artistic past, but also its future. *Our Music* then becomes the culmination of what Godard has been working towards since as early as 60s, and ultimately points towards the development of a new aesthetic to grapple with the issues of the new millennium.



### 3. Lost Histories in *Our Music*

Released in 2004, *Our Music* continues Godard's aesthetic tradition of thinking about history through cinema. Likewise, Godard abstracts elements of the story to discuss larger themes. In this case, Godard takes an interest in the depiction of violence in film, the effects of past colonialism on those colonized, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *Our Music* is comprised of three sections inspired by the *Divine Comedy of Dante*: "Hell," "Purgatory," and "Heaven."

The beginning of the film, titled "Realm 1: Hell," is a montage comprised of documentary and fictional footage depicting war, most famously the Odessa steps scene from Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Drawing further comparison to Eisenstein, Godard utilizes Eisenstein's theory on editing known as "rhythmic montage." In "Methods of Montage," Eisenstein describes rhythmic montage as, "Here, in determining the lengths of the pieces, the content within the frame is a factor possessing equal rights to consideration. Abstract determination of the piece-lengths gives way to a flexible relationship of the *actual* lengths (73-74)." For Eisenstein, rhythmic montage is comprised of joining images not by their duration, as in metric montage, but by their content.

Eisenstein goes on to cite the very example of the Odessa steps sequence, pointing out the asynchronous beat of the drum in relation to the action of the scene—the soldiers descending the steps. Rather, what Eisenstein seeks to highlight in the Odessa steps sequence is the *opposing* action between the soldiers on the attack and the citizens on retreat. The forms of movement presented in this scene are dictated by the screen direction. The soldiers march right, and a few citizens turn left to plead with them, only to be massacred. The citizens that do continue to run right are routed by soldiers who come from a rightward direction, marching left. It's through these opposing angles of right and left that Eisenstein creates conflict in very cinematic terms and which Godard borrows for the opening of *Our Music*. Indeed, Deleuze even remarks on the temporal

possibilities of montage, indirectly referencing how Godard would borrow from Eisenstein: “Time here is, therefore, essentially the object of an indirect representation...This grandiose conception finds its apogee in the theory and practice of Eisenstein. Now, modern cinema can communicate with the old (213).”

Godard splices the various pieces of footage to give the impression of watching one film. For example, a scene of American soldiers in Vietnam segues into another scene of colonial American soldiers loading a cannon; another scene of Roman soldiers marching is linked into Zulu soldiers storming a hill. As in the Odessa steps sequence, Godard too defines conflict through opposing angles. By choosing to open *Our Music* in a montage of films organized by Eisenstein’s rhythmic montage, Godard is not only thinking about history through cinema, but more importantly, using both cinema and cinematic techniques to think about history. Conflict can be shown through a montage of violence, but by using rhythmic montage to link disparate scenes of war, Godard expresses a more global interest in humanity, albeit one still focused on the West.

Through his technique of editing in the “Hell” section of *Our Music*, Godard partly establishes the thesis of the film. The history of humanity—from the earliest proto-men wielding bows to the American invasion of the Middle East—is defined by war. The result of conflict leads to the shaping of history by the victors which Godard resists through key-figures and locations in the film that are emphasized by their presence in the fore/background. In this second manner, Godard lays out the argument of the film: history has been forgotten through conflict, and to remember it, Godard constantly infuses the space of *Our Music* with remembrances of violence, whether it’s through the presence of Native-Americans or the destroyed Starbuck bridge. The idea here is embodied by a quote from William Faulkner’s *Requiem for a Nun*, which Godard frequently employs. “The past is never dead. It is not even past.”

The issue for Godard then becomes how to depict history through cinema in objective terms. As

Godard himself proclaims in the film, “We’ll see that, actually, truth has two faces (45:32).”

Godard’s search for truth in *Our Music* is explored not just through methods of editing, but also through language. The second segment of *Our Music*, Purgatory, centers on a myriad of characters crossing paths in Sarajevo, Bosnia. There’s the French-speaking Godard playing himself. Ramos Garcia (Rony Kramer), a nationalized French Israeli working as an interpreter. Ramos’ niece, Olga Brodsky (Nade Dieu), a French-speaking Jew of Russian descent, and finally, Judith Lerner (Sarah Adler), a journalist from Tel Aviv. Aside from these main characters, however, there are others, speaking even more languages, including a Spanish poet, Native-Americans speaking English, and Mahmoud Darwish speaking Arabic. These characters function similarly to the “seers” of Italian-Realist films. They, too, traverse the landscapes of *Our Music*, and it is through them that we experience time as duration, and through which Godard brings the past and present together.

In discussing the various use of language throughout the film, lines throughout the film will often be said by one character and repeated by another in a different language. During his cameo appearance in the film, Darwish voices the line that will be echoed by Godard later: “Truth has two voices (36:09).” Both, Darwish and Godard, however, are speaking on what appears to be different terms. Darwish is referring to language in the oral and written tradition, whereas Godard refers to language in the tradition of cinema—shot-reverse-shots, editing, and so on. Consequently, in *Our Music* the oral tradition of language functions similarly to that of cinema. As I’ve shown in my analysis of the film’s opening, Godard utilizes cinematic language to create conflict through opposing images. It would then appear that using multiple languages throughout the film, Godard is establishing a similar framework for the use of oral language. That is, through the clashing of language (rhythmic montage), the truth cannot be ascertained<sup>16</sup>. Subsequently, Godard turns

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<sup>16</sup> Godard was invited to the 2004 Cannes festival to premiere the film, but upon arrival, “Godard criticized the festival for requiring the subtitling of films in English and claimed that non-

towards cinematic language. The answer lies in the image, and while *Our Music* doesn't take the radical steps that *Film Socialisme* does—that is, misleading subtitles in another film with a variety of languages—*Our Music* functions as the establishment for Godard's ideas of the image as truth within the new millennium.

Returning to an analysis of *Our Music*'s cinematic language, the Purgatory section of the film opens on a familiar Godardian scene encompassing both transit and commerce. In a snow-covered urban landscape, two trains drive by one another—one white advertising One a Day multivitamin pills, and the other black, advertising Stella Artois beer. The camera pans to follow the movement of the train, incidentally capturing cars in traffic. The scene immediately after picks up where this image left off, showing more cars in transit, and the one thereafter shows a plane arriving on the runway, finally, concluding with the introduction of Godard and Ramos waiting in an airport.

True to its name, in the Purgatory section of *Our Music*, Godard takes an interest in the spaces of transit—the spaces of waiting. Here, using static shots with an emphasis on capturing vehicular movement or even lack of movement, Godard aligns his arguments for the progression of peace-talks with that of the end of history. Towards the end of the first section of the film, Hell, Godard began to increasingly only use images of technology in war rather than people, thus viewing battles from a more modern perspective. Fighter jets chase one another in blurring patterns, tanks storm through woods, and a camera with night-vision captures the smoke and explosion of firing missiles. In effect, Godard is showing not just the progression of history through war, but the progression of history through technology in war. If Hell is meant to show destructive technology befitting the name of the section, then Purgatory continues this tradition by not only showing history as culminating with capitalism via advertisements embedded within technology, but also its own

Francophones would only be able to grasp “five or six percent” of *Notre Musique* (Brody, 623).”

history of technology as culminating in these spaces of waiting. A digression here into Godard's previous work is needed to better understand how these ideas of history and technology are playing out in *Our Music*. The intertwining subjects of history, technology, and cinema within Godard's filmography can be traced back to *Contempt* (1963) and *Week End* (1967).

### **3.1 Towards 'Silence'**

Based on Albert Moravia's novel, *A Ghost at Noon*, *Contempt* centers on Paul Javal (Michel Piccoli), a young French playwright who accepts an offer to rework the script for Fritz Lang's (playing himself) filmic adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey*. The drama of the film arises from Javal's deteriorating relationship with his wife Camille (Brigitte Bardot) who presumably doesn't agree with Javal's taking of the job. Instead, we learn, Camille wishes for Javal to continue writing work that held artistic meaning for him rather than capital gain. Godard subsequently devotes an ample amount of time examining the history of cinema in *Contempt*, largely through the characters of Javal, Lang, the American producer Jeremy Prokosch (Jack Palance), and the setting of the film—Rome's Cinecitta studio.

It is through these elements that Godard draws a clear distinction between the past and the future. Lang, Cinecitta, and Camille, are representative of cinema's past—its glory and its wonder as an artistic medium. Lang, of course, is one of the most celebrated directors of all time. By the time of *Contempt*'s release, however, Lang hadn't made a film in three years, and in fact, *Contempt* would be his last work on a film. In effect, Lang, a member of the old guard, was slowly being forgotten. The critics of *Cahiers du cinema*, which included Godard, had championed Lang, and so by casting Lang in *Contempt*, Godard establishes this distinction between cinema's past and its future. The studio lot of Cinecitta plays a similar role in that its presence within *Contempt* evokes the Italian Neorealism films that inspired Godard and the rest of the young turks to become film directors. Prokosch's introduction to the film makes it clear that Cinecitta, however, has fallen by

the wayside as a symbol of great cinema. Stepping out of the crumbling Teatro 6, Prokosch proclaims, “Only yesterday there were kings here. Kings and queens. Princesses and lovers. All kinds of real human beings. Now, they’re going to build a 10-cent Prisunic store,” to which his interpreter proclaims, “It’s the end of the film-industry (7:39).”

Opposing the symbols of Lang and Cinecitta as cinema’s past are Prokosch and Javal as cinema’s future. For Godard, Prokosch and Javal aren’t symbolic of cinema’s potential as an artistic tool, but rather cinema as something to be packaged and sold. When Javal asks Prokosch what he would like of him, Prokosch tells him he wants “more.” At a test screening, Prokosch becomes excited at the appearance of nude women— “mermaids”—swimming. An American producer in Europe, Prokosch is the quintessential caricature of both the uncultured American, but also the film producer who impedes the director’s artistic vision. Godard himself struggled with the producers of *Contempt* who forced him to include nude scenes of Bardot in the film, who at the time was perhaps *the* European sex symbol.

The crux of *Contempt* then lies between these symbols of past and future—artistic merit versus capital gain. Godard ends *Contempt* by repeating the interpreter’s line. By this point in the film, Camille has left Javal for Prokosch. The two of them drive away in a red convertible only to be killed in a crash. The camera then cuts back to the set of the *Odyssey* where Javal is giving his goodbye to Lang, who is filming a pivotal scene for the film within film: the moment Ulysses sees Ithaca upon his return. Godard’s camera—helmed by his longtime DP Raoul Coutard—begins to track the scene being filmed before zooming past the cast and out into the sea. There, Coutard’s camera lingers, and the final words of the film are “silence.”



*Figure 5 The sea at the end of Contempt. (1:43:01).*

Richard Brody points out, “*Contempt* is an elegy for the classical heights, in which the ancient Greek era appears like a palimpsest through the vanished age of Hollywood (171).” In his own analysis of *Contempt*, Morrey delves into this idea of *Contempt* as an elegy, analyzing the final shot of the film:

This remarkable shot...ultimately seems to make a mockery of the film’s desire for a return to origins. At the moment when Ulysses is supposed to rediscover his homeland, his point of origin, it is simply *not there*, all we find is the vastness of the sea and sky, and *silence*. One can never locate an origin, Godard seems to suggest, much less return to it... (21).

The question Godard poses at the end of *Contempt* is then where does the future of cinema lie? The death of Prokosch points towards a cinema where directors are free from the tyranny of producers who only seek to gain profit, and to find an answer beyond this, I turn towards Godard’s *Week End*.

### **3.2 Towards ‘Zero’**

His final film before he broke away from studio productions,<sup>17</sup> *Week End* follows Roland (Jean Yanne) and Corinne (Mireille Darc), a bourgeois couple conspiring to murder the latter's parents for their inheritance money. Roland and Corinne's journey takes a turn for the bizarre through what appears to be a post-apocalyptic French countryside. Along the way they meet historical figures ranging from Emily Bronte (Blandine Jeanson) to Louis Antoine de Saint-Just (Jeane-Pierre Leaud). Although in films such as *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her*, Godard has critiqued capitalism, in *Week End*, his critique would take a bleaker outlook. Godard situates the desires stemming from capitalism into a world of barbarism where people only care for themselves. Throughout the film, Godard constantly introduces situations reinforcing this concept. Roland and Corinne each harbor secrets lovers and a plot to kill the other; at one point in the film, Roland allows Corinne to be raped in order that they may receive a free car-ride; at another point, the two kill passengers in another car after crashing into them, and Corinne can only lament the loss of her Hermes bag.

For Godard, the grotesqueness resulting from capitalism takes on the form of vehicular destruction. Not only are crashes frequent in the film but upturned and destroyed cars litter the film's background. Most famously, however, is a long-take towards the beginning of the film, detailing cars waiting in traffic. The camera tracks along the road, where drivers have gotten out of their cars. Some shout, some idly watch. Others even play chess. Towards the end of the track, the cause of the traffic is revealed to be another crash. Bodies are splayed between the cars and the streets, and yet no one seems in a rush to aid. Within this scene, Godard is making a two-fold argument. The first is a desensitizing of both empathy and sympathy, as shown by the desires of

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16 By the time of *Week End*'s production, Godard had become obsessed with Marxist philosophy. *Week End* is a pivotal film for understanding Godard as a whole, because it represents not just an artistic break, but like Godard's major films, a philosophical and artistic one as well.



Roland, Corinne, and the actions of other characters throughout the film. The second argument, however, is the one pivotal to bridging *Week End* and *Contempt*, and thus, the argument which helps us understand how Godard's interest in cinema, technology, and history play out in *Our Music*.

With the long-take featured in the scene described above, Godard makes the argument that history, from an anthropocentric perspective<sup>18</sup>, has stopped. In the context of *Week End*'s narrative, the stagnation of history is related to the destruction wrought by rampant capitalism. The sense of time being stopped is rendered by the stoppage of traffic. By the film's end, Godard makes this clear. Roland and Corinne have been captured by a group of roving cannibals and Roland is murdered. The final shot of the film depicts Corinne now having joined the cannibals, eating the remains of Roland. The credits begin to roll in Godard's classic red, white, and blue font, and the words they have to offer are: "End of story. End of cinema." The issue that arises in *Week End*, and the one that Godard would wrestle with his following filmography was the end of history, but also, how to film this impending doom. Godard's great interest at this time fueled by his flirtations with Marxism was the idea of "returning to zero."<sup>19</sup> In essence, Godard struggled with finding a new aesthetic approach to filming. Brody notes of *Week End*, "Imagining that the world as it was had to be destroyed and knowing that his cinematic instincts and thought processes were a part of that

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17 *Week End* is perhaps Godard's first film directly dealing with time, and how we inhabit it, thus, once again, being a key film in establishing and defining Godard's later period. At one point in the film, the characters meet Emily Bronte in a forest. Bronte holds up a pebble, and Godard cuts to a close-up of it. She begins to deliver a monologue regarding the pebble in relation to time; as Morrey points out, "since the stone...pre-dates humanity by millennia, it belongs to a mineral time that is quite unaffected by the ephemeral existence of man (77)."

18 *The Joy of Learning* (1969) would entirely be based around this idea, featuring two characters who inhabit a television studio, and directly discuss the theoretical implications of cinema—both image and sound; they pore over advertisements, magazines, television and audio recordings, to ultimately examine if such a thing as "pure" cinema exists—one unfiltered by capitalistic ideology. Arguably, *Here and Elsewhere*, *Every Man for Himself*, *King Lear*, and of course, *Our Music*, to name a few, all take up this idea of "returning to zero" as well.

world, Godard decided to leave both behind...it was apparent that a chapter in Godard's film and life had come to an end (316)."

In *Contempt*, Godard finds the answer for this new form of cinema to no longer be in the past. The directors upheld by Godard and his compatriots—Howard Hawks, Fritz Lang, Orson Welles, etc—could no longer provide cinematic answers to the problems the New Wave faced. The silence of the sea, consequently, represents a tabula rasa of sorts, or at least, the movement towards a fresh beginning. *Week End* would present just this. The world of the film was one where both history and cinema ended. Godard would leave his long-time associates behind to begin creating Marxist films with Jean-Pierre Gorin. In the opening to *Our Music*'s purgatory section then, the focus on transportation, and on history as shown by the hell section, recall Godard's ideological struggles presented in both *Contempt* and *Week End*. Where does history and cinema go from here? Titling the section Purgatory seems to mark a return to the car-wreck tragedies present in *Week End* and by presenting the opening shot as one featuring advertisements, Godard places *Our Music* within the capitalist context of both *Contempt* and *Week End*. The argument that needs to be made, here, however, is to specifically establish *how Our Music* differs from *Week End* and *Contempt*. Yes, *Our Music* is built upon the aesthetics that Godard employed and discussed in these two films, but, if *Contempt* and *Week End* marked the start of a new aesthetic beginning in a capitalist world, where does *Our Music* fit? Capitalism, of course, hasn't ended, but neither has Godard's career. The inclusion of advertisements and the places of transit in *Our Music* can consequently be read as an acknowledgment that the world hasn't changed. If Godard's post-68 films shied away from the world and audience at large by focusing on niche audiences, his late films are very much confrontations with their respective times. With *Our Music*, Godard not only establishes a new aesthetic, while simultaneously questioning it, of course, but also situates it within the world of capitalism.

### 3.2 Seers and Ghosts

It's here in the Purgatory section of the film that Deleuze's crystal-image plays such a prominent role. As discussed earlier, it's through cinematic language that Godard creates confrontation on multiple levels: a confrontation with the issues of the time (the Bosnian War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), and a confrontation between cinema as a mode of viewing history—(shot/reverse-shot and montage). These confrontations, in turn, evoke Deleuze's *opsigns* and *sonsigns*—the actual and the virtual, the past and present. Many of the images of *Our Music* work to establish the continuing presence of the past into the present. For example, the two Native-American characters of the film show up at one point dressed in traditional garb. More importantly, however, they appear in front of the Stari Most bridge, which itself is symbolic, both historically and within the film, of not just the past, but the present as it's been affected by the war. This moment in the film—the Native-Americans, the Stari Most bridge, and Judith there to observe them, are representative of Deleuze's crystal-image. The consequence of the aesthetics here aren't necessarily the result of radical avant-garde camera techniques, but rather the result of simple metaphor and shot-reverse-shot. Judith, as the seer, allows us to observe the city where time is amorphous, and in effect, we are forced to witness the consequence of war, whether it's the European decimation of the Native-Americans, or the destruction wrought upon Sarajevo during the Bosnian war. This is Godard's new aesthetic of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: remembrance of things past.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Proust, of course, plays a central role in Deleuze's development of the crystal-image. Even preceding Bergson, it was Proust's writing that showed "we are internal to time (82)."



*Figure 6 The Native-Americans against the Stari-Most Bridge (55:16).*

Within *Notre Musique*, there are many moments such as this one: a long-take of a road, where a train and cars are driving through is notable, because a burnt-out building stands in the background. A French ambassador who harbored Jews during World War II has portraits of Hannah Arendt and Franz Kafka in his office. At another point in the film, the camera shows the contemporary and ordinary life of the city, but Godard then complicates our understanding of the present, by playing the sounds of planes and bombs over the image as if to say the war continues. Even here, Godard's use of sound should not be underestimated. In elaborating on how the movement-image fails to represent time as duration, Deleuze points out that, "The only direct presentation, then, appears in music (271)." It's perhaps no coincidence then that a film centered around time then is called "Our Music." Once again, Godard displays his penchant for using the capability of cinema to its

fullest.<sup>21</sup>

But what of the film's final chapter, "Realm 3: Heaven?" Towards the end of the second section, Godard receives a phone-call from Ramos. Ramos tells Godard that he's heard about a young-woman who took a theater hostage. The woman declared she had a bomb in her bag and asked for one person to die alongside her for "Israeli-Palestinian Peace." Everyone leaves the theater, and when the police arrive, the woman is shot to death. When the police open the bag, they only discover books. Ramos is sure that the woman in question is Olga. The third chapter of the film picks up from here, following Olga wandering around a forest. Seemingly nothing of consequences happens in this final chapter. Olga makes her way through the forest and reaches a beachside, guarded by American marine soldiers. She encounters a group of young adults playing volleyball and a man reading David Goodis' *Street of No Return*. Olga makes her way to the shore and sits down on a branch; Godard cuts to a close-up of her face, and the film ends. What are we to make of this scene, especially in relation to the time-image?

As Kriss Ravetto-Biagoli points out in her essay, "Notre Musique: On the Ruins of the Divine", "Paradise is not situated on the margins of Europe in some future Sarajevo but on the banks of Lake Geneva (213)." Lake Geneva, as those familiar with Godard will know, is the site of the director's childhood home. It's also a site that the director has continuously revisited in his more reflective period—New Wave, JLG, *History of Cinema*, *Notre Musique* and *Goodbye to Language*, all situate Geneva as a site of the past. For Godard, of course, this is personal. If the first two parts of *Notre Musique* are aesthetically defined by their gray ruins of decay, and industrial noises

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<sup>21</sup> This scene further cements the stylistic similarities between *Our Music* and *Week End*. At one point in *Week End*, the characters stumble upon a farm, where a man is playing one of Mozart's sonatas. The camera, with no focus on one subject, spins around the farm as if its movements were guided by the music. The man briefly stops before starting, and so, too, does the camera, this time around, moving in the opposite direction. Here, Godard provides the time-image through the duration of experiencing the music.

produced by machinery, then the final section of the film is the obverse. The colors are saturated greens, Olga wears a bright red, and the only noise to be heard are those of the surrounding nature—chirping birds and lapping water. As in his previous films, Godard signifies Lake Geneva here as a site of paradise, because it's removed from industrial society. The director himself would retreat to Switzerland in the late 70s, thus, Brody's profile being titled *An Exile in Paradise*. But the truth may be that paradise no longer exists as evidenced by the Marine soldiers guarding the area.

Olga's only allowed entry after a soldier has stamped her wrist. Godard, of course, has always had a negative view of the American military, but what's more significant, is how Godard view's American power, be it militaristic or cultural. For Godard, Americans are the ones who control history. A significant plot point in his previous film, *In Praise of Love*, centers around Steven Spielberg (or rather, agents of "Spielberg Associates) buying the rights to the story of an elderly French couple who met while fighting within the resistance. The couple's granddaughter attempts to stop the negotiations, but ultimately fails. The plot point here echoes a line previously said in the film: "Yes, the Americans of the north. They have no memory of their own. Their machines, do, but they have none personally. So they buy the past of others (45:46)." The same line of argument that's present within *In Praise of Love* can then be applied to *Notre Musique*. That is, the Americans still control the past, and in this case, that past is seemingly paradise. Consequently, what Godard presents in the final section of *Notre Musique* is almost a negation of the time-image, where the sonsigns, are in fact, illusory. If Godard's new aesthetic for *Notre Musique* is remembering the past, then the presence of the Marines within paradise works against this. The past is guarded, Bergson's inverted-cone falls apart, and the Americans control both memory and history. Olga's sullen face, the last image of the film, reinforces this stark notion.



*Figure 7 Olga on the banks of Paradise (1:15:04)*

#### **4. Conclusion**

It's perhaps true that Godard's later films will never reach the popularity of their earlier counterparts, but what's at stake here is more than just a film's ranking on Sight & Sound or the Internet Movie Database. Rather, it's an issue of scholarly preservation. Yes, with a career lasting over fifty years, there are slumps in Godard's filmography namely the films Godard directed while working with the Dziga Vertov Group. But even certain of these works—*British Sounds* (1969) and *Until Victory* (1970)—prove their aesthetic importance in relation to Godard's maturing as a filmmaker. Godard has never been one to care about audience reception to his films. What he has cared about is retaining the ability to continue creating films, and thus, the establishment of his own production company in the late 70s, Sonimage. Godard sought complete creative control over his films, and so in further pursuing his own artistic goals, Godard further alienated the mainstream audience that were earlier fed on his ironic, pop-culture hinged films. From the late 70s, Godard would constantly experiment with film: the editing of speed, the use of asynchronous sound, dialogue pulled entirely from quotations, unconventional camera movement that privileges space rather than people, and later in the 90s, the combination of film with video and his turn towards narratives resembling essays. These techniques Godard uses bear serious discussion, because of how they yield new cinematic forms, and it's here that I argue that within Godard's late cinema there lies the perfect representation of Henri Bergson's and Gilles Deleuze's theories on time and cinema, respectively. But why is this so important?

Through these new cinematic forms, Godard creates a dialogue concerning significant issues of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. As in the Italian Neorealist films that initially influenced Godard and the rest of the Young Turks, Godard's late filmography is filled with seers inhabiting and wandering landscapes where time is amorphous. Think Lemmy Caution in *Germany Year Ninety* Zero wandering East Berlin and encountering Sigmund Freud's Dora or Miguel De Cervante's Don



Quixote, who, rather than tilting at windmills, tilts at the giant, industrial machinery that Godard uses to partly represent modernity. Think Godard himself in the autobiographical *JLG/JLG – Self Portrait in December*, wandering Lake Geneva—the site of his childhood—and ruminating on his past, present, and future. Or finally, as I have demonstrated in this essay, think Judith Lerner in *Notre Musique* who wanders Sarajevo and endows us with insight into the colonial and political violence that persists despite seemingly being in the past. Through these characters and figures, Godard displays how we embody time through a Bergsonian lens.

To reiterate, Bergson argues that there exist two forms of time, clock time and time as duration. For Bergson, clock time is a false form of time, because, it's merely space. On the other hand, time as duration is true time, because it embodies actual experience. Bergson breaks this experience down into two forms of memory. For Bergson, there exists spontaneous and automatic memory, which represent the past and present respectively, or the virtual and the actual.

Consequently, Bergson refers to an inverted cone as an example of how we inhabit time, and it's here that Deleuze argues the past and present become contemporaneous with one another. Because the inverted cone inhabits a constant state of motion, Deleuze argues, the two forms of memory become mixed. Deleuze then applies Bergson's ideas on time to cinema, resulting in the creation of the concept of the time-image.

In brief, the time-image is an evolution of the movement-image. This transition between the movement and time-image was necessary, because following WWII, cinema needed a new form to display a world in which the horrors of the war were reflected. Deleuze finds the difference between the two in how each image displays time in cinema. The movement image, Deleuze argues, can be viewed as "clock-time" and therefore, false. The time-image, on the other hand, takes on the appearance of Bergson's inverted-cone, and thus, displays time as amorphous where the past and present co-exist. Further defining the time-image is the crystal-image which is made

up of sonsigns and opsigns—the virtual and the actual, spontaneous and automatic memory, the past and present. Subsequently, I find the crystal-image in Godard's *Notre Musique*.

The crystal-image first takes on its appearance in the opening section of *Notre Musique*, where Godard utilizes montage. Bringing the past and present together through the juxtaposition of editing, Godard highlights cinema's capability as a tool to discuss and think about the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Here, Godard argues that the history of mankind is one defined by war, and that through cinema, whether fictional or documentary, that history becomes a record. The subsequent issue that arises from here becomes one of representation. By employing montage, Godard does more than bridge the past and present together, but highlights their similarities through their difference. In the second section of the film, Godard returns to the aesthetics of his previous films, but this time directly engages with the world of the present. In an ironic twist, this is done through the resurrection of the past. Judith and Olga wandering Sarajevo gives rise to the ghosts that inhabit the city, whether its people or architecture. Through their interactions that give rise to conflict, Godard infuses the space of *Our Music* with fragments of the past—remembrance of violence, and in doing so, like the opening of the film, creates a new historical record; one where trauma cannot be forgotten. In the final section of the film, Godard negates the time-image to make the historical argument that the past has been cut off, thereby threatening to make both memory and the present, virtual.

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