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Hoc est enim corpus meum: Christian art and Passion iconography in the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean-Luc Godard

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the
National University of Ireland, Cork

Research conducted in the Department of Italian, School of Languages, Literature and Culture, University College Cork

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Head of Department: Dr. Mark Chu

July 2012

This is to state that the thesis submitted is my own work and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

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Jill Murphy

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"*Peut-être la sainteté, depuis l'avenèment du moderne, a-t-elle trouvé refuge (asile) dans l'art: dans l'*acte *de l'art*".

"Perhaps holiness, since the event of modernity, can be found sheltering (seeking asylum) in art: in the *act* of art".

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (1995, 9)

Introduction

My purpose in this thesis is to survey the presence of Passion iconography and Christian art in the filmic work of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean-Luc Godard, identifying recurrent motifs in this respect that occur both in their individual work and between their two bodies of work. I also seek to provide an explanation as to why the Christian figuration of the sacred is so prevalent in the work of these two directors, neither of whom subscribed to any conventional religious belief.

Both Pasolini and Godard are frequently referenced in relation to Christian art and the sacred in cinema, specifically as regards *La ricotta* (1963) and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*The Gospel according to St. Matthew,* 1964), and *Passion* (1982) and *Je vous salue Marie* (*Hail Mary,* 1984), respectively: *La ricotta* and *Passion* both using *tableaux vivants* of paintings from the canon of western art, and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Je vous salue Marie* both based on gospel narratives, albeit with radically contrasting presentations. There is, however, a marked and rather surprising absence of comparative analysis on the work of Pasolini and Godard—indeed, generally—but specifically in relation to their mediation of the sacred through the agency of the art-historical image and their shared areligious approach. The lack of analysis in the literature on this common aspect of the two directors' respective bodies of work consequently suggests both a fertile area for research and a need to close a gap, as it were, with respect to the more general presence of art and the sacred in the individual work of the two directors and the interaction between their two bodies of work in this regard. Indeed, given that the Christian-art image and Passion iconography not only persist in film but have also transferred to the newer screen-based art forms of digital video and installation art, it seems particularly timely to establish the roles that both Pasolini and Godard play in the intermedial transposition of such imagery from painting to film, the different strategies they use to incorporate it into the filmic image, and their reasons for doing so.[1]

[1] Bill Viola and Sam Taylor-Wood, for example, both interpret gospel narrative in digital format through the agency of art history in their work. Examples of Viola's video work in this regard include *Emergence* (2002), the *Quintet* series (2000), and *The Greeting* (1995), based on Pontormo's *Visitation* (c. 1528), which will be discussed in the thesis. Taylor-Wood's video and

In drawing on the similarities in their work as regards the sacred and art-history, I do not intend to intimate that the intellectual projects Godard and Pasolini pursue are identical; indeed, this is so clearly not the case that it has perhaps been the reason why similarities in their work as regards the aesthetic and cultural influence of Christian art have not been subjected to greater analysis. In addition, although they followed similar trajectories as regards politics (engagement with Marxism and then a distancing or adoption of a highly personalised form of left-wing ideology), their vociferous disagreements over semiotics contributed to a critical distancing between the two directors in the literature.[2] It should also be borne in mind that they would have often come into contact and indeed been in competition with each other; for example, both had films in competition at the Venice Film Festival in 1962, 1964 and 1967: *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962), *Une femme mariée* (1964) and *La Chinoise* (1967); and *Mamma Roma* (1962), *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Edipo Re* (*Oedipus Rex,* 1967), respectively. In addition, they both were participants at the Pesaro Film Festival between 1965 and 1968, during which impassioned debates on semiotics in cinema took place, which gave rise to their disagreements in this area. The two directors were also the products of very different national cinemas and cultural contexts, within which each occupied contrasting positions: Pasolini was somewhat isolated, by distancing himself from the neorealist directors and by his own stylistic, theoretical and political idiosyncrasies, whereas Godard had an indissociable connection with the nouvelle vague group, although as time went on, he too would become an equally isolated figure.[3]

Pasolini is typically seen as engaging in a mimetic practice in his use of art history, and Christian and classical themes generally; whereas Godard's

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photographic work citing Christian art includes *Pietà* (2001), *Sleep* (2002) and *Soliloquy VII* (1999), based on Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (c.1490).

[2] Pasolini's highly personalised semiotic approach was neither accepted by semioticians such as Metz and Eco nor by less rigid practitioners such as Godard. For an example of the standoff between the two directors in this regard, see Pasolini's "Godard" (1981), originally published as the preface to *Il cinéma è il cinema* (1971), the Italian version of *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, in which he responds to Godard's classification of him as a "bureaucrat" and "creator of norms" (1981, 28). Pasolini's theory has since gained in currency, particularly with Deleuze's validation of his "highly complex thesis" (2005, 27). Indeed, Godard nearly twenty years later proposes a not dissimilar semiotic theory of cinema as language in *Scénario du film Passion* (1982).

[3] See Pasolini's 1965 interview with Bernardo Bertolucci and Jean-Louis Comolli for his assessment of the differences between French and Italian culture and the effect they exerted on filmmakers such as Antonioni and Godard (Bertolucci and Comolli 1981).

approach is viewed more as collagist: a magpie and general re-cycler of literary, visual and aural texts. Equally, while Pasolini moved from painting and literature towards cinema as the "written language of reality", which gave optimum form to his mythical and epic view of the real, Godard's perspective is always and consistently from the cinema out.[4] In this respect, while Pasolini was influenced by art historian Roberto Longhi's views on painting, particularly the work of Piero della Francesca and Masaccio, Godard was similarly influenced by André Malraux and Élie Faure, who, as art historians, embraced cinema as a new chapter in the history of art, wrote about it accordingly, and were, no doubt, instrumental in Godard's own estimation that cinema was the last chapter in the history of art (quoted in Daney 1992, 162).[5] Naomi Greene sums up the similarities and differences between the two directors quite aptly in her observation that Godard tended to "strew his films with bits and pieces—quotes, titles, and snips of music—torn from the vast body of Western culture", while Pasolini instead evoked similar references "in filigree, in the mode of 'contamination'" (1990, 47). However, despite their stylistic differences, I aim to highlight through the films selected for discussion in the thesis that the filmic images of both Pasolini and Godard contain the absent presence of older forms of art, particularly painting. As Greene maintains, one of their shared traits was: "a tremendous preoccupation with past culture" (1990, 47); using that shared preoccupation—specifically in relation to visual culture—as a starting point, I seek to examine the differences and similarities in the two directors' respective approaches and thereby go some way towards reconciling the collagist/mimetic divide and establishing the potential for a *rapprochement* between the work of the two directors in this regard.

The task of tackling two *auteurs*, of whom so much has already been written, in addition to the equally large-scale themes of Christianity and art history, is a daunting one; however, in order to ground my research in a coherent

[4] The English title of his 1966 essay on cinema, which is included in *Heretical Empiricism* (2005. First published 1972), and the cornerstone of Pasolini's film theory.

[5] Faure's posthumous collection of essays on film is called *Fonction du cinéma: l'art de la société industrielle* (1953). In that collection he coins the term "cineplastics" in the essay "De la cinéplastique" by which he contends that cinema is essentially a plastic medium. André Malraux's book dealing specifically with the cinema is *Esquisse d'une psychologie du cinéma* (1946). Malraux's role in Godard's thinking on the relationship between the art-historical image and the filmic image is considered in Chapter Four of this thesis.

approach, I will seek to apply the thinking of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy on the sacred in a post-Christian context, the image, the body and art. Nancy is a prolific writer and his ideas on art and the sacred are threaded through his numerous books, always expressed in a lyrical, poetic style, which recalls Deleuze's comment that Jean Louis Schefer, writing on cinema, sets theory in "a kind of great poem" (2005, 35). Indeed, there is a quicksilver aspect to Nancy's writings that can render them difficult to apply on occasion. Nonetheless, my aim here is to show, with respect to the cinema of Pasolini and Godard, the potential inherent in his ability to look anew at the centuries-old themes of art history and the Christian image, identifying their relevance to and placing them within the contemporary world. While Nancy has engaged directly with film in relation to the work of Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami and French director Claire Denis, here, in order to establish the importance of his work in relation to Pasolini and Godard and the specific themes of the thesis, I will predominantly refer to his later works on art and the sacred: the collected essays in *The Ground of the Image* (2005), his short book *Noli me tangere* (2008a), *The Deconstruction of Christianity* (2008b) and *Corpus* (2008c).[6]

From the outset, I should clarify my use of the term "sacred". Nancy differentiates between the terms "religious" and "sacred", asserting that they differ from each other in that the religious is the observance of a rite that forms and maintains a bond, whereas the sacred is the separate, or what he terms as "the distinct" (2005, 1).[7] On the grounds of this differentiation, he identifies that art has always begun in the sacred, not in religion, regardless of whether it is associated with the latter or not (2005, 2). Accordingly, he categorises the image as sacred in that it is set apart.[8] In this respect, it is the sacred according to

[6] Nancy's book on the films of Kiarostami is entitled *The Evidence of Film* (2001); his work has interacted with that of Claire Denis on many levels, including his appearance as himself in her short film *Vers Nancy* (2002), his essays on her work, and her eponymous adaptation (2004) of his book *L'Intrus* (2000).

[7] Raymond Bellour expresses a similar belief in the sacral nature of the image arising from its "distinct"-ness and relates it very directly to a Christian heritage. He conjectures that, in general, filmmakers are protected by images that "keep their distance: such an image...comes from churches, where it floats in space, stops on walls, freezes into immense tableaux that are so many screens for reflecting and capturing the mental light that the interior image of the divine inscribes in each of us" (Bellour 1992, 215).

[8] I am aware that it is against prevailing trends in film scholarship and, indeed, art history generally to refer to the image as sacred: see Rosalind Galt (2011) for a survey of iconophobia in post-war film studies, James Elkins on the same topic in relation to current art-history scholarship

Nancy's definition that I set out to consider in the work of Pasolini and Godard, distinguishing that term from the "divine", which I use to indicate the commonly understood transcendent and spiritual form of God, and from the "religious", which, also using Nancy's understanding of the term, is viewed as a community activity. Furthermore, I investigate how Nancy's description of the image as having been "worked over by our Christian history, been set to work and unworked, visited and abandoned" applies to the deployment of the Christian art image by Pasolini and Godard in their respective bodies of work, whether through mimesis or excision. (2005, 125)[9]

In addition to Nancy's thinking on the image and the post-Christian, I will also consider the work of Walter Benjamin, principally in relation to the connections he draws between past and present, specifically his identification of the relevance of the past for the present outside historical time, and will examine how the auratic nature of the art-historical image might be legitimately claimed to have passed on to the cinematic image in a post-cinematic era. I will also consider how this proposition relates to Pasolini and Godard's attempt to achieve the cinematic image they desire.

One of my core aims in the thesis is to resolve the issue of why Christian iconography is so pervasive in the work of two directors who professed no conventional religious belief by reconfiguring the question in the form why does Christian *art* pervade the work of Pasolini and Godard. In answering this latter question, I hope to strengthen the linkage that exists between art and film, but also to establish how the work of the two directors interconnects on the basis of that linkage and how each has been fundamental in seeding art-historical Passion iconography in what we might call post-Christian cinema. The importance of highlighting these inter- and intra-medial relationships lies, I suggest, in the need to continue tracking the passage of the Christian image along the continuum of visual culture. Godard and Pasolini, I submit, are particularly relevant in the cinematic branch of this continuum and their individual and combined contribution in this regard is a worthy topic of research.

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and Boris Groys (2002) for a relatively recent example that argues for the inherent iconoclasm of cinema.

[9] Here Nancy's concept of the image is a broad one: he specifies that he means not only the painted image, but the image in cinema, photography and video and in music and dance.

For hundreds of years, the Gospel narrative dominated Western art. Indeed the majority of visual art took as its narrative source the life of Christ and the lives of the saints, with iconography serving as a method for demarcating the particular episode that was being depicted. Thus, in addition to the Annunciation and the Nativity—representing the announcement of Christ's coming and His arrival in the world—the various episodes of the Passion including the Crucifixion, the Deposition and the Resurrection are the most powerful and salient visual narratives in art history. This holds true from first manifestations in early Christian art, when belief was unquestioning, to Byzantine icons, to the transition from *Christus triumphans* to *Christus patiens* in the early thirteenth century, paving the way for the proto-renaissance painters, who began to consider the human aspect of Christ, and heralding the gradual shift to a focus on the human rather than the divine. There then followed the apotheosis of human figuration in the Renaissance and the classic images of Christian art that it produced, followed by a questioning of these idealised classical figures, the dawn of the modern age and hence what might be termed the pre-cinematic painters such as Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Goya and Delacroix, followed by Manet and Cézanne. Even despite the death of God as postulated by Nietzsche (Nancy points out that the phrase predates Nietzsche and has a Christian provenance, being originally from Luther (2008b, 147)), this iconography persisted in art. As a result of this predominance in Western culture, any visual reference to the sacred is normally a reference to a Christian-art image, given that as Aumont, quoting Schefer, explains: "we have no other culture" (2002, 70).

With the advent of cinema, the appeal of the Passion persisted; early films often took the form of Passion Plays, as the episodic nature of the narrative and the limited technological capability of early film were well suited; in addition the evangelical narrative conferred a gravitas on the nascent art form. In twentieth-century film, it was not only the potency of the narrative itself: the sacred incarnated in the body of a man who is then crucified to redeem the sins of humanity and is resurrected, but also the history of its representation that adds to its appeal to artists.

The incarnation and figuration of the sacred in the work of both directors directly engages with the notion of the Christian symbolism of the Word made flesh, which is particularly relevant given that both Pasolini and Godard began their

respective careers as writers and continued to write while filmmaking. For Pasolini, one might say that *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (*Location Hunting in Palestine,* 1963–64) represents his most intense cinematic engagement with the tension between word and image in direct relation to the Gospel, in that he searches for a place in which, he can visualise the literary text, although, as is true for Godard, this tension exists throughout his work. Godard, on the other hand, gives the "densest expression" to the conflict between word and image in *Scénario du film Passion* (1982) (Bellour 1992, 221). In this regard, Bellour suggests that *Passion* represents an unconscious movement towards Christianity's central mystery: "the conception of Christ as both God and man, man-God in the image of the Father, inscribed in the body of the Mother by the breath and Verb of the Father" (1992, 221). Hence the Word (or "Verb") made flesh, becomes the Word made visual, or, indeed, the Word made image. I will explore this connection with the figuration of the body and the body as image in various guises in the thesis, recalling, in this regard, Nancy's reading of image and text as limiting cases of each other, or each as the "horizon of interpretation" of the other (2005, 69).

The late 1980s and 1990s saw an intensive period of scholarship focussing on cinema and painting; work by Pascal Bonitzer (1985), Jacques Aumont (1989) and Angela Dalle Vacche (1996), in addition to Raymond Bellour's edited collection of conference proceedings, *Cinéma et peinture: approches* (1990), Thomas Elsaesser's essay "Around Painting and 'The End of Cinema'" (1992) and, more generally, the edited collection *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film since 1945* (1996) based on an exhibition of the same name at the Museum of Modern Art, Los Angeles, analysed in depth the relationship between the two forms. This intensive period of analysis has subsequently waned somewhat, as the debate shifted to include contemporary art, digital video and installation art, and the development of an understanding of the relationship between painting and cinema was somewhat displaced. Perhaps because of that displacement and refocusing on the *arrivant* digital forms, there has been a certain lack of continued analysis, particularly as regards individual works, which may account for the lack of comparative literature on the work of Pasolini and Godard in this regard.

While a large quantity of work has been carried out on some of the films I consider in the thesis: for example, *Passion*, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998), *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Accattone* (1961), there is a relative scarcity of work connecting the different films, particularly as related to the thesis's themes, even within the respective oeuvres of each filmmaker. In addition, as I have already mentioned, comparative analysis as regards the reading of the sacred through Christian art in Pasolini and Godard has been somewhat neglected in the literature to date. Alessia Ricciardi (2003) examines both directors from the psychoanalytical viewpoint of mourning and spectrality, using Freud and Benjamin; however, she only considers *Teorema* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in her analysis. Steven Jacobs devotes a chapter to the *tableau vivant* in *Passion* and *La ricotta* in his recent book *Framing Film: Cinema and the Visual Arts* (2011). John Orr (1998) considers Godard in relation to Pasolini's "cinema of poetry". However, to my knowledge, no monograph has been published to date on the interaction between their work in this regard.

Specific works on the individual directors that have been of assistance in preparing the thesis include Noa Steimatsky's chapter on the influence of Renaissance landscape and the acheiropoietic icon in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (2008); Maurizio Viano's lucid account of Pasolini's films (1993); the *Son+Image* edited collection on the later work of Jean-Luc Godard (1992), Angela Dalle Vacche's *Cinema and Painting* (1996), as an invaluable guide to the different guises in which painting can be absorbed into cinema and the myriad reasons why it might be deployed; Alain Bergala's perceptive *Nul mieux que Godard* (1999), particularly on *Je vous salue Marie*; and Michael Temple and James S. Williams's edited collection *The Cinema Alone* on Godard's later work (2000). Of course, the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, particularly the books I have listed above, will be fundamental to the development of my ideas on the relevance of the sacred and the art historical in the work of the two directors; while Jacques Derrida's *On Touching* (2005) is, in turn, of assistance in understanding Nancy's philosophy.

Rather than attempting to situate Pasolini and Godard's deployment of the pictorial and the sacred within semiotics or deal with issues specific to film theory, thereby running the risk of closing down a more expansive consideration of the thesis themes, I choose instead to concentrate on the textual analysis of

individual films and how they interact stylistically and culturally with their art-historical and cinematic predecessors. I specifically attempt to identify, without overstating the similarities, common threads between the impetus behind the creation of the original artwork and the filmic work in which it is quoted, in order to emphasise how the artistic impulse to create an image underpinned by centuries of representation of Christian themes is common not just to Godard and Pasolini, but to their artistic and cinematic predecessors.

The themes of art history and the sacred in *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* have been covered quite extensively in the literature already; indeed, Pasolini discusses in detail his art-historical influences in those films, for example, in his interviews with Oswald Stack (1969). Consequently, in Chapter One, I choose not to enter into a prolonged analysis of these two films, and instead will briefly situate them with regards to Passion iconography and the proto-Renaissance painters, particularly Masaccio, before proceeding to a more comprehensive analysis of *La ricotta* and *Il Vangelo* in order to draw out aspects of Pasolini's use of the art historical in relation to the sacred that have been the subject of less scholarship. Likewise, I will first examine *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in order to more fully consider Pasolini's motives in regard to the less analysed *La ricotta*, even though in doing so I reverse the chronological order of the two films.

I will begin Chapter Two with an analysis of Passion iconography and the devotional image in *Vivre sa vie*. Then, moving forward to Godard's films of the 1980s, when the sacred and the art-historical come to the fore in his work through a profound engagement with the image, I will analyse *Passion* in terms of some of the specific art works it references and the Passion iconography that pervades it. I will also consider *Scénario du film Passion, Passion*'s accompanying video essay, in which Godard describes the process of attempting to create a film on the basis of a single originating image. As perhaps the most acknowledged of Godard's films in relation to the sacred and art history, *Passion* will serve as a useful reference point for his subsequent films that I examine here, which have been the subject of less analysis as regards the thesis's themes.

In Chapter Three I will consider *Je vous salue Marie* as the clearest example of Christian narrative in Godard's work; in tandem, I also consider *Nouvelle vague* (1990) and *Hélas pour moi* (*O Woe is Me*, 1993), on the basis that they centre around the arrival of a stranger possessing divine characteristics,

in keeping with a Christological narrative. In addition, I will consider how the themes of *Passion* transfer to these later films.

In Chapter Four, I will return to Pasolini's work to analyse *Teorema* (*Theorem*, 1967), which also deals with the arrival of a mysterious visitor delineated in markedly Christological terms, and will compare it to Godard's three films discussed in Chapter Three. To my knowledge, no comparative analysis had been previously carried out in this regard (although Yosefa Loshitzky does make a summary association between *Nouvelle vague* and Pasolini's film (1995, 98)). Likewise, I am not aware of any previous scholarship that connects *La rabbia* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Here, I set out to analyse both films in relation to art-history and Passion iconography and their application to events of the twentieth century.

Through the consideration, as outlined above, of the presence of Passion iconography and Christian art in the work of Pasolini and Godard, both individually and jointly, my objective is to go some way towards filling what seems like a rather obvious gap in the literature. In addition, I hope that this research will contribute both to a better understanding of how the image, whether art-historical or filmic, possesses an intrinsic relationship with Christian iconography that exists independently of religious belief and orthodoxy, and to a greater awareness of the significant position the two directors occupy as regards the cinematic image in this respect.

Chapter 1

Sacred, pictorial, corporeal: the aesthetics of Pasolini's early films[10]

In a lecture entitled "The Sacred World", given at the European Graduate School in January 2010, Jean-Luc Nancy describes the concept of holiness in a contemporary post-Christian world as "taking the force of the sacred no longer from a temple, but from everyday life".[11] This holiness, he suggests, is the capacity to find a blessing no longer from God, but located within the secular world, which loses its profanity through this meaning, in what Nancy terms "the heritage of the sacred" or a relationship to the sacred. Crucially, he deems this relationship to be only possible through art; in this context he defines art as that which is the possibility of opening forms, which are not already given or useful forms; in other words, forms that form themselves. Art is essential to think of the world as something else other than the world of usefulness, or what Nancy terms the "*immonde*" (setting up a binary between the Latin "*mundus*" that is, the purity or the holiness of the world; and the "*immundus*" or impurity of the world). To give place to this holiness is to allow that something can be open or can be an opening, not to another world, but to the world itself. In his lecture, Nancy suggests that art is the desire to pay attention to the possibility of this openness. As an example, he chooses Pier Paolo Pasolini (referring specifically to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Teorema*), because of "an extraordinary openness to practising a different way of art...or, more importantly, a different way of making sense, opening himself to a different way of sense".[12]

The use of Pasolini by Nancy to illustrate his definition of post-Christian "holiness" is appropriate. Pasolini's early films serve as an illustration of how, in the wake of Christianity, art has come to occupy the site of the sacred (2005, 1–14); equally, his films provide cinematic support to Nancy's argument that the subject of Christian art is not religion but rather art itself (2005, 124–125).

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[10] Part of this chapter appears under the title "Aesthetics of the Passion: Art-Historical Readings of the Sacred in the Early Films of Pier Paolo Pasolini" in *Faith and Spirituality in Masters of World Cinema. Vol. II* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011).

[11] The lecture is available online at http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/videos/sacred-world/; all quotations in this paragraph are from Nancy's lecture.

[12] In his writing Nancy uses the word "sense" as similar to signification, and "presentation" as similar to representation. He argues that art is the presentation of presentation in that it relates to itself and not to the presentation of a subject and puts forward a similar argument in "Visitation: Of Christian Painting" (2005), which I will consider in further detail in Chapter Three (1994, 34).

Pasolini emphasises the art historical as a node of the sacred and detaches Christian iconography from its original Christological origins to relocate it instead in such secular and profane figures as Accattone in the eponymous film, while his presentation of Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* as a desacralised, *cinema-verité* semi-Marxist figure points to a relocation of the sacred within the art historical. In this chapter, I will examine the distribution of the sacred and the art-historical image in Pasolini's early films, on the basis of Nancy's premise, also referencing Walter Benjamin's theories on allegory and non-chronological time in relation to Pasolini's use of classical and sacred themes and to his citation of both Mannerist and proto-Renaissance artists.

Accattone, Mamma Roma, La ricotta and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* represent four of Pasolini's first seven films—the other three of which are documentaries: *La rabbia*, a found-footage documentary of newsreels and photographic stills with a poetic narration written by Pasolini, which I shall consider in Chapter Four in tandem with Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*; *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, a short documentary film that records his unsuccessful search, in the company of Don Andrea Carraro of the *Pro Civitate Christiana* organisation, to find a suitable location in the Holy Land to shoot *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo,* which is of interest, as we shall see later in this chapter, in its positioning of Pasolini in a Christological landscape; and *Comizi d'amore* (1964), an investigation of the sexual mores of Italians.[13] Thus, his early films form a kernel around which an analysis of Pasolini's relationship with—and interweaving of—the sacred, the corporeal, the pictorial and the subjective can be constructed.

1.1 Art-historical influences and the sacral tendency in *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*

To discuss the pictorial in Pasolini's cinematic oeuvre, one must inevitably start with Roberto Longhi, renowned art historian and Chair of Art History at the University of Bologna, where Pasolini attended his lectures on Masolino, Piero della Francesca, Masaccio and Caravaggio from 1939 to 1943.

[13] In Chapter Four, I shall argue that *La rabbia* prefigures by more than thirty years Godard's interspersion of art-historical images and documentary footage voiced over by a poetic narration in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

Pasolini himself directly acknowledged the enormous influence that Longhi exerted on his visual education, calling him his "real master" and dedicating *Mamma Roma* to him (quoted in Iovino 2003, 76).[14]

In 1927, Longhi had published a seminal monograph on Piero della Francesca that established Piero as one of the great Quattrocento artists; he was also an authority on Masaccio and Caravaggio (the latter's interest in marginalised subjects and tumultuous personal life foreshadow Pasolini's own).[15] However, Longhi also introduced Pasolini to the work of the Italian futurists and the Italian still-life painter Giorgio Morandi.[16] Ironically, Longhi's preferencing of "pure painting", which he claimed Piero della Francesca created, was to be a major influence on Pasolini's "impure cinema" and his *contaminazione* technique in general (Agosti 1996, 638).[17] Rather than a stressing of intermediality, it was perhaps Longhi's ability to move between the classical and modernity that so marked Pasolini's own approach. In addition, Longhi's style of lecturing and displaying slides, which involved the sequential projection of slides of the work of Piero della Francesca, Giotto, Masaccio et al. in his lectures for his students to view, profoundly influenced Pasolini's cinematographic technique. Although Pasolini had written scripts for several films before directing *Accattone*, by his own admission he was a neophyte as regards cinematography.[18] Longhi's sequential mode of visualising the work of the Trecento and Quattrocento painters twenty years previously acted as an aesthetic touchstone for him in his cinematographic approach. The landscape and close-up portrait-style shots in his early films typify Trecento and Quattrocento aesthetics, while the sequential, spatial juxtaposition of the images that Pasolini deploys recalls how the images would have first been presented to him in Longhi's lectures.

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[14] The dedication in the opening credits reads: "To whom I owe my figurative epiphany" (Author's translation).

[15] For a more thorough discussion of the similarities between Caravaggio and Pasolini, see Jill Murphy (2010).

[16] Pasolini had originally planned to write his thesis on contemporary Italian painting under the supervision of Longhi, but lost the draft when he spent a brief period in the army in 1943 prior to the armistice being called in September of that year. When he eventually returned to write his thesis, he wrote it on the Italian poet Pascoli instead.

[17] Steimatsky suggests that Pasolini's cinema is a special instance of Bazin's term "impure cinema", while *contaminazione* is the description Pasolini employs for his practice of using dissonant linguistic and visual elements as an anti-naturalistic device (2008, 117).

[18] See Pasolini, "Confessioni tecniche" (2001, 2768).

The impetus of the pictorial, particularly in his early films, is not only rooted in Pasolini's art-historical education in the University of Bologna. Giuseppe Zigaina contends that Pasolini possessed a vocation for painting, which inevitably drove him to stressing the visual, and sees Pasolini's art-historical culture and painterly sense as two distinct aspects in his work, the separation of which is most evident in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1991, 31).[19] Combined, however, they result in a synergistic effect that strongly preferences the visual and, specifically, the pictorial. While cinema's function as the "written language of reality" attracted Pasolini to filmmaking, aesthetically he approached film with a language that was both art-historical and painterly, as Zigaina identifies. Pasolini often commented on the painterly origins of his cinema and was aware of the "heresy" inherent in his imposition of pictorial stasis on the moving image:

> my cinematographic taste does not have a cinematographic origin but a figurative one…I am unable to conceive images, whether landscapes or figure compositions outside of this initial pictorial passion…Hence when my images are in motion, it is rather as if the lens were moving over them as over a painting. (Quoted in Zigaina 1991, 30)

Elsewhere, he describes his view of the cinema "as a fluid reproduction of reality which, translated into expressive terms, fixes me before various aspects of reality (a face, a landscape, a gesture, an object) as if they were motionless and isolated in the flow of time" (quoted in Zigaina 1991, 30).

Like Longhi, and not unrelated to his influence, Pasolini's aesthetic preference is for the early Renaissance artists, particularly Masaccio and Giotto. While I will examine later the more visceral engagement he appeared to experience before the work of the Mannerist painters Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino, his theory and technique—what we might term the rational aspect of his approach—is grounded in the work of the proto-Renaissance painters, particularly Masaccio. This is most evident in *Accattone*, in which Pasolini translates the pictorial frontality of Masaccio into a cinematographic equivalent. *Accattone*, like his novel *Ragazzi di vita (The Ragazzi,* 1955), is set in the Roman

[19] For examples of Pasolini's own artwork, see *Pier Paolo Pasolini and Death* (Schwenk and Semff, eds. 2006).

borgate, which refers, as John David Rhodes notes, both to the fascist-era mass housing projects built on the outskirts of Rome and to the shanty towns built by new immigrants to Rome on the periphery of the city; Rhodes differentiates these two interpretations as official *borgate* and unofficial *borgate*, respectively (2005, xi and 2).[20] It is predominantly the second version of the term that is depicted in *Accattone*. The film's storyline centres on the eponymous character (Franco Citti) who works as a pimp for a prostitute named Maddalena (Silvana Corsini). When Maddalena is jailed, Accattone returns to his ex-wife Ascenza (Paola Guidi), who eventually throws him out. Accattone then meets Stella (Franca Pasut), a naïve young girl, whom he decides to convert into a new prostitute whom he can pimp. Accattone, feeling remorseful, reverses his decision and takes a job himself instead. However, he finds physical labour so taxing that he turns instead to theft. He and two of his friends are caught stealing meat from a truck; Accattone escapes from the crime scene on a stolen motorbike, but crashes into a car and dies on the street.

While Masaccio's subjects were, by and large, sacred ones, the reverse is true with *Accattone*, whose marginalised subjects engage in theft, prostitution and pimping with an equanimity that indicates to the spectator how routine and unremarkable these activities are within their environment. Inherent in this unquestioning acceptance of vice is the altered morality that directly results from it, which is made plain in Accattone's respective relationships with both Stella and Maddalena, in which he functions as both lover and pimp—emotional engagement inevitably leads to sexual economics. However, as several commentators note (for example, Viano and Rohdie), regardless of his moral standing, and, to a certain extent, as a result of it, the character of Accattone is visually consecrated by Pasolini through his use of Masaccio's figurative and compositional techniques (Viano 1993, 72 and Rohdie 1995, 31–32). This mix of sacrality and realism that Pasolini achieves in *Accattone* mirrors Masaccio's approach to his frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel in Florence (1424–1428). At the time, these were seen as highly innovative in their use of linear perspective, foreshortening, unified light source and *contrapposto*, the objective of which was

[20] Rhodes observes that Pasolini "calibrates" his first novel, *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), with *Accattone* and his second novel, *Una vita violenta* (1959), with *Mamma Roma*, not only thematically, but also geographically, in that the first pair is situated in the unofficial *borgate* whereas the second pair takes place in the official *borgate* (2007, 30).

to make the images more immediate to the viewer.[21] Barbara Deimling, describing *Pagamento del tributo* (*The Tribute Money,* c.1425), comments on the realism with which Masaccio painted his divine characters and "their expressive emotionality", seeing it as "evidence that the thoughts of the painter were naturally coloured by this world" (2005, 240).[22] Masaccio's visualisation of the sacred in a more realistic form than its previous iconic representation by the International Gothic movement and, previously again, by Byzantine art facilitates Pasolini with a mid-point where, in a similar manner to Masaccio's pushing of the sacred towards realism, Pasolini can shift realism towards the sacred.

In *Accattone*, the horizontal grouping in the Brancacci Chapel frescos, such as *The Tribute Money* and *Resurrezione del figlio di Teofilo e san Pietro in cattedra* (*The Raising of the Son of Theophilus and St. Peter Enthroned*, 1427), is replicated in several instances. Pasolini presents faithful representations of Masaccio's groupings most notably in his presentation of Accattone and his friends. However, he also experiments with the composition, which allows him to extend the space around Accattone, framing him in the landscape in such a way that his isolation and disconnection from normal life is symbolised. A variation of this style of shot shows Accattone in the foreground with the group formed in a horizontal group behind him, again accentuating how his actions are constantly distancing him further from his peers.



Fig. 1. Masaccio. *The Tribute Money*. (c.1425)

[21] *Contrapposto* positions the body so that its vertical axis is twisted, with the result that hips, shoulders, and head turn in different directions

[22] Masaccio's frescos in the Brancacci Chapel are arranged one on top of another around the walls of the chapel, an arrangement to which the horizontal compositions would have been conducive.



Fig. 2. Masaccio. *The Raising of the Son of Theophilus and St. Peter Enthroned* (1427)









Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6. *Accattone.* Horizontal compositions.

Pasolini's early filmmaking practice is dominated by the use of elements of form, composition, frontality and a perspectival flatness that turns landscape into a backdrop onto which the human figure is projected. He described the resulting style as "*sacralità tecnica*", or technical sacredness, the influence of which is traceable from Byzantine painting through Duccio, Giotto, Masaccio and Piero della Francesca (quoted in Faldini and Fofi 1981, 47). However, he used Masaccio as his "prime pictorial referent", particularly as regards frontality of composition and flattening of space (Steimatsky 1998, 249). In a 1964 interview with students and faculty at the *Centro Sperimentale della Cinematografia* in Rome, Pasolini expounded on his aesthetical affinity to the work of Masaccio:

> I try to reduce my own exiguousness to one object only because my inspiration…is above all else painting and, specifically, the painting of Masaccio, an exceedingly visual painter in that the matter he presents us has a *chiaroscuro* violence of shocking plasticity, while other painters more visual…are more ornamental and hence flatter, they remain more attached to the wall or to the canvas or they don't come out at all… my aesthetic idea is one of a frontal, massive, romantic chiaroscuro-like world, a statuary, well-rounded world. (1965, 42)

Pasolini's proto-Renaissance aesthetic is at its most pure in *Accattone*, the film's debt to the work of Masaccio being pointedly acknowledged. While all of his early work is similarly imbued, in *Accattone* it achieves its most successful incarnation. Pasolini was aware of this: in the same *Centro Sperimentale della*

Cinematografia interview he comments that, between *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, the former is the more successful of the two and attributes this to "its fixity" (1965, 32).

Elsewhere, when discussing Masaccio as an influence in *Accattone*, Pasolini comments: "I believe for *Accattone* I often was thinking of Masaccio. Not to imitate him in certain frames, but thinking of the very substance of his work as a way of looking at certain faces, at the gravity of matter" (quoted in Ricciardi 2003, 125). "Looking at certain faces" refers here to the "physiognomic realism" that Pasolini propounded, a concept based on the belief that external reality is marked on people's faces (Viano 1993, 130). Thus, he was able to claim in *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* that one could see in the Arab children surveyed by the camera that "Christ's preaching has not passed across their faces". As regards *Accattone*'s amateur actors, we can see in them the traces of their external realities in the same way as Masaccio's figures betray origins far more humble—what Longhi refers to as a "violent humanity"—than that which can be attributed to the ethereal figures portrayed in the work of High Renaissance artists such as Leonardo and Raphael (1980, 14. First published 1963.). This simple, sculptural solidity not only in the figuration, but also in the physiognomies of Masaccio's models appealed to Pasolini. Furthermore, his cinematographic mimesis of the painter's pictorial figuration and physiognomy, achieved through the use of 50- and 75-millimetre lenses, created an image reminiscent of a Roman death mask or imago that stressed the themes of death and sacrality so central to his *œuvre*. Pasolini describes how the effect of these lenses:

> makes the materials heavy, heightens the modelling, the *chiaroscuro*, gives weight and often an unpleasantness of rotten wood or porous stone to the figures, etc. Especially when one uses them with "stained" lighting, backlighting...that hollows out the orbits of the eyes, the shadows under the nose and around the mouth, which widens and grains the

> images...Thus was born, within the film, in its figurative machinery, that "grave aestheticism of death". (2001, 2769)[23]

Pasolini's description of the cinematographic style he hoped to achieve and its successful execution is illustrated by a comparison of another fresco from the Brancacci Chapel, *Cacciata dei progenitori dall'Eden* (*Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, c. 1425), particularly the detail of the face of Eve, with a film still of Accattone walking through the *borgate*. The image of Accattone clearly shows the hollowed orbits of the eyes and shadows under the eyes and mouth that Pasolini discusses and, indeed, how accurately Pasolini has described the "grave aestheticism" of Masaccio's rendering of the original image.[24]

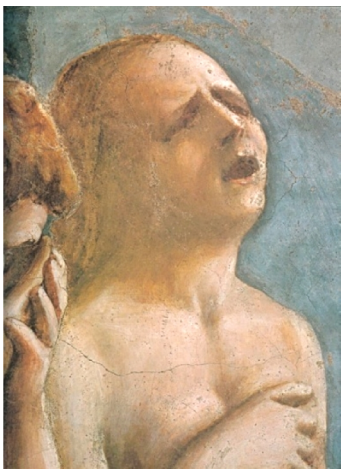


Fig. 7. Detail from the Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (c.1425)



Fig. 8. *Accattone*: "the grave aestheticism of death"

[23] In his reference to the "grave aestheticism of death", Pasolini is quoting a comment that the critic Pietro Citati made about his filmic style.

[24] Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* will resurface in the closing chapter of the thesis as a conjoining image in Pasolini and Godard's deployment of art history as an image-making device in film.

Steimatsky comments:

> In *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, *borgate* inhabitants, often sub-proletarian southern immigrants or their descendants—who in Pasolini's mythicising view, still bear traces of pre-modern physiognomies and cultural forms—could enact hagiographic narratives of martyrdom in the conflicted intersection of the archaic and the modern. (2008, 119)

Likewise, Robert Gordon observes Pasolini's "fascination with faces", particularly in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, is similar to the juxtapositions in *Accattone* in that, rather than being psychological, they are instead "aesthetically formal, but also material" (Gordon 1996, 208). Pasolini's practice in this respect is underpinned by a deep-rooted sense of the pictorial that, while at its height, as regards portraiture, in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo,* and, as regards incongruity, in *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, is prevalent throughout his filmic oeuvre.

While acknowledging the profound debt that *Accattone* owes to art-historical sources, I should also point out an important cinematic influence on its style, one which will act as a recurrent motif throughout the thesis in relation to both Pasolini and Godard. When Pasolini named Carl Theodor Dreyer as one of the few directors he admires; he is probably specifically referring to Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (*The Passion of Joan of Arc*, 1928) (quoted in Stack 1969, 43). In fact, according to Bernardo Bertolucci, the only film Pasolini liked was *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Bertolucci in Gerard 2000, 109). While *Accattone* is not stylistically similar to Dreyer's film, P. Adams Sitney argues that, although Pasolini may have overlooked the intricate camera movements that inscribe a circle with Joan at its centre, he embraced Dreyer's film as a "skewered hagiographical model", particularly the use of "monumental close-ups" of selected types of faces, and the accompanying necessity to resolve the space they inhabit in his own *sacralità tecnica* style (1994, 173–174). He also suggests that the frontality of shot-countershot and the panning movements between speakers in *Accattone* is a "distillation and abstraction" of Dreyer's style in the earlier film, although stripped of any linkage to the original (1994, 173). Furthermore, the eventual death of Accattone, figured as a Christological martyrdom in the company of two thieves, might also be associated to Joan's

analogous female martyrdom, which will be discussed further in Chapter Two in relation to the character of Nana in Godard's *Vivre sa vie.*

Like *Accattone,* the narrative of *Mamma Roma* centres on prostitution and pimping. The eponymous Mamma Roma (Anna Magnani) gives up prostitution when her pimp Carmine (Franco Citti, who also plays Accattone) marries. She decides to start selling vegetables at a market stall and, in an effort to gain some social respectability and mobility, moves into a flat in a suburban housing project with her son Ettore (Ettore Garofolo). She also gets Ettore a job as a waiter in a restaurant. However, Carmine returns to force Mamma Roma back into prostitution. Ettore, having discovered his mother's profession, gives up his job and turns to casual thieving. He is caught and jailed after stealing a portable radio from a hospital patient. While in jail, he suffers a fit. He is restrained by being strapped to a table in solitary confinement, where he dies, much to the devastation of Mamma Roma, whose dreams of social improvement are rendered worthless.

The narrative arc of *Mamma Roma* ends in Ettore's death, signalled by his weeping mother, a fundamental image of Christian iconography, albeit here in a spatially dislocated format. The film's final scenes depict Ettore's death in prison followed by Mamma Roma's distress on hearing the news of her son's death. Ettore is tied to a stone slab alone in a cell; in his dying moments, he is stretched out on the slab in a horizontal cruciform. The camera focuses on his face and then travels down his body to look back up towards his face from a point just below his feet. The next shot then shows him in a medium shot. This sequence is problematic in that commentators, at the time of the film's release, interpreted this as a citation of Andrea Mantegna's painting *Cristo morto* (*Lamentation over the Dead Christ,* c.1490).[25] However, Pasolini vigorously refuted this and used it as an opportunity to denigrate his critics:

> since, at the end, the figure of Ettore is seen from an angle, then everybody, in chorus, has said it's in the style of Mantegna, whereas Mantegna has absolutely nothing to do with it at all. Ah, Longhi, enter into this, explain, how putting a figure viewed from an angle with the

[25] Nancy describes the composition of Mantegna's painting as "atheological", given its feet-first presentation (1996, 97).

> soles of the feet in the foreground is not enough to talk of the influence of Mantegna. Do they not have eyes these critics? Do they not see that black and white like that fundamentally and determinedly chiaroscurist…recalls painters who were living and working many decades before Mantegna? Or that, if need be, we could speak of an absurd exquisite mixture between Masaccio and Caravaggio (Pasolini 1962b, author's translation).

Notwithstanding, while the shot displays a use of chiaroscuro light that might be attributed to the influence of either Caravaggio or Masaccio, no specific work of Masaccio's or Caravaggio's corresponds as directly to the shot as Mantegna's painting does, leading Hervé Joubert-Laurencin to suggest that in this instance Pasolini might be engaging in what he calls a "deliberate miscitation", possibly in frustration at the citation being so easily read (1997, 37).

If, however, the scene is considered in conjunction with the one that follows it, in which Mamma Roma learns of Ettore's death, Pasolini's indignation is perhaps understandable. After Mamma Roma's discovery of her son's death, she runs up to his bedroom in their apartment, followed by her neighbours and friends who try to comfort her. The penultimate shot in the film—the final one is a long reverse shot of the official *borgate*—shows Mamma Roma looking out on that view, framed by the bedroom window and surrounded by what is effectively a Lamentation group. Pasolini stays remarkably faithful to the traditional iconography of this scene, in that, although a large group follow Mamma Roma into the apartment, the penultimate shot shows only two women and a man surrounding her. Conventionally, in art-historical terms, the five figures present in Lamentation scenes, in addition to the Christ figure, were the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleophas (collectively known as the three Marys), the apostle John, and Nicodemus. Although these figures can vary, the three Marys and John are normally present. Thus, in Pasolini's image, we can read Mamma Roma as representing the Virgin Mary, the two female figures as being the other two Marys and the male figure as John. The lamentation that Pasolini represents cannot be immediately equated with any of the better known Lamentation paintings, particularly in its framing of the figures in mid-shot. However, one source of the highly pictorialised shot may be the *mortorio,* a grouping of life-size terracotta figures depicting the Lamentation that was

particularly popular in Northern Italy. Given Pasolini's upbringing in Friuli and his time spent at university in Bologna, it seems plausible that he may have seen such a grouping and may have based the lamentation image in *Mamma Roma* on it. A famous *mortorio* by Niccolò dell'Arca is in the Church of Santa Maria dalla Vita in Bologna, which Pasolini would probably have known given that it is accessed through the Portico della Morte, described by Pasolini in a 1971 interview with Enzo Biagi as "*il più bel ricordo di Bologna*" (my most beautiful memory of Bologna).[26] The physical separation of the Lamentation figures from Christ and the presentation of Christ's body supine on a board support this argument.



Fig. 9. *Mamma Roma.* "Lamentation" group



Fig. 10. Niccolò dell'Arca. *Compianto sul cristo morto,* Santa Maria dalla Vita, Bologna (c.1463–90)

[26](http://www.bibliotecasalaborsa.it/content/bolognadeifumetti/cittafumetti.php?current=22381. Accessed 7/10/2011)

In his separation of Ettore from the Lamentation group of *Mamma Roma*, Pasolini has separated the key figures in this Passion episode and may have sought to present a kind of latent lamentation that was not immediately obvious to the spectator. There is no equivalent in the shot of Ettore to the lamenting figures present in Mantegna's painting, those figures being removed to the setting of Mamma Roma's apartment; nonetheless, commentators were able to detect the iconography at play, hence, perhaps, giving rise to Pasolini's ire at his coded iconography being so easily read.



Fig. 11. Ettore, *Mamma Roma*



Fig. 12. Andrea Mantegna. *Lamentation over the dead Christ* (c.1490)

1.2 Location and redistribution of the sacred in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*

As is well documented, Pasolini was equally attracted by Christianity and Marxism, while quarrelling with both. In 1949, he was expelled from the Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI) due to his arrest for sexual

misconduct, and, in 1963, was tried for insulting the religion of the State after *La ricotta* was screened in Italy, which makes it surprising that *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* was so well received by the Vatican and even received assistance from *Pro Civitate Christiana*, an Italian Catholic organization.[27]

The dynamic tension between the sacred and the profane in Pasolini's early narrative films dealing with Christian myth thus reflects the ideological crisis that he was undergoing at the time. In the early 1960s, following his expulsion from the PCI, the rationalist-Marxist ideology to which he had subscribed was no longer satisfactory to him. He began to espouse the unorthodox idea of a *rapprochement* between Marxism and Christianity. In discussing the link between *Edipo Re* and the writings of Ernst Bloch, who was part of the Frankfurt School, Cesare Casarino points out that:

> while Bloch was writing from the midst of a still-unfinished process of modernization…Pasolini operates from the other end of this process at a point when the mission of modernization has been accomplished and the new and far more dangerous "fascism of consumer society" seems to have entirely homogenized and obliterated the remnants of earlier times. (1992, 35)

Pasolini believed that the combined forces of Christianity and Marxism could create a synergy capable of overcoming the worst excesses of neo-capitalism. He comments that:

> the great enemy of Christianity is not communist materialism but bourgeois materialism…Marxism [too] must face the religious moment of humanity. There will always be an irrational, religious moment. (Quoted in Greene 1990, 71)

He also saw his unique religiosity as a result of nationality, family influence and specific character traits, as he explains in this extended quote:

[27] Pasolini was charged with violating Italian Penal Code, Section 402: Insulting the Religion of the State, and sentenced to four months in prison; however, the conviction was appealed and the charges were dropped.

> My father was not a religious man and he didn't believe in God. But as he was a nationalist and a fascist he was, naturally, conventional and so he used to take us to Mass on Sunday for "social" reasons. My mother…belongs to a Friulian peasant family, consequently, a family with a religious tradition, but one which is absolutely natural and has nothing conformist or bigoted about it, never goes to church or communion: her religion is purely poetic and natural … So my childhood was completely lacking in religious education, I think I am the least Catholic of all the Italians I know…On the other hand I feel it would be rhetorical to declare myself a Christian—although, as Croce said, no Italian can say he is not a Christian, culturally…In reality my religion is probably only a form of psychological aberration with a tendency towards mysticism: there is a very particular psychological factor involved—my way of seeing the world, which is perhaps too respectful, too reverential, too childlike: I see everything in the world, objects as well as people and nature with a certain veneration, but this is to do with my character, not with my education and upbringing. (Stack 1969, 14)

In both *Accattone* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini makes "a point of contact...[between himself and] the ordinary believer who visualizes his or her faith in iconographical terms" through the medium of Christian art (Baranski 1999, 285). However, in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini's original *contaminazione* aesthetic undergoes a metamorphosis in which art-historical styles are mixed. The use of Masaccio as sole pictorial referent in his first film changes in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* to an intertextual approach that, in addition to the "never forgotten road of Masaccio" takes into account the work of Giotto, Piero della Francesca, El Greco, Byzantine art and the work of Georges Rouault, the French Fauvist and Expressionist painter, together with a musical score that combined Bach, American Gospel and African sung mass, in what is effectively a palimpsest of the visual and aural representation of the

Passion over the centuries (1962a, 45–49).[28] This change to what he described as a "magma technique" was due to the dramatic change in narrative content between the two films (quoted in Bertolucci and Comolli 1981, 40). Pasolini felt that the *sacralità tecnica* applied to *Accattone* was "gilding the lily" with respect to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo,* in that it was the application of a reverential style and technique to a sacred text (quoted in Stack 1969, 83).[29]

Pasolini describes how he began to experiment with camera movements, zoom and new frames, "which were not reverential, but almost documentary" (1969, 84). He comments:

> the style in the Gospel is very varied: it combines the reverential with almost documentary moments, an almost classic severity with moments that are almost Godardian—e.g., the two trials of Christ shot like *cinéma vérité*. The same contrast between the styles of *Accattone* and *The Gospel* comes out in the references to painting; in *Accattone* there is only one figurative element—Masaccio, perhaps deep down Giotto and Romanesque sculpture as well, but anyway only one *type* of reference; whereas in *The Gospel* there are numerous different sources. (1969, 83–4)

His juxtaposition of the stylistic and technical contrasts of *Accattone* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, without reference to any of the other films he made during this period, suggests that the stylistic and technical decisions he made in these two films held greatest import for him—recalling also that, out of the group of films he made between 1961 and 1964, *Mamma Roma* is the only other feature-length film.

The "magma technique" applied in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* facilitated the transition to a sacred text via the route of the art historical, various musical

[28] Enrique Irazoqui, the Spanish student who played the part of Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, was chosen by Pasolini because his face resembled an El Greco Christ, "human and detached". "I didn't want a Christ with soft features with a sweet gaze as in Renaissance iconography", Pasolini told Luigi Cardone; "I wanted a Christ whose face also expressed strength, decision, a face like that of the Christs of medieval painters" (quoted in Marcus 1993, 121). This recalls the image of Christ Pantocrator or the all-powerful Christ who is stern but compassionate, which is an apt description of Pasolini's Christ in this film.

[29] Although in this quotation and in "Confessioni tecniche" Pasolini claims to have rejected the *sacralità tecnica* aesthetic that visually defined *Accattone*, Steimatsky comments that "he recognized retroactively the resolution and crystallization of this visual style in *The Gospel*" (2008, 212). However, she does not refer to where this retroactive recognition is recorded.

and film genres, and Matthew's text. This led to "a point of contact" with the ordinary believer, insofar as the representation of Christ in Western art is a familiar touchstone to any Christian believer. It is through artistic representation that Pasolini finds common ground between his intellectual self and "the humble Italian", through whose eyes he claimed he saw Christ (quoted in Testa 1994, 184). Like Masaccio's attempts to distance his art from the spatial and temporal abstraction of the International Gothic movement and Byzantine art, in order to visualise Christ in a more realistic form, Pasolini seeks to reduce Christ's divinity and instead emphasise his "lofty and ideal" humanity (quoted in Siciliano 1982, 270). Thus, a mid-point is again attained where Pasolini can admit the sacred into the material; although, in contrast to *Accattone*, here Pasolini allows sacrality to seep from the figure of Christ into the surrounding characters, who are subject to an iconographic representation, while, he imposes an almost anti-iconographic approach in his visualisation of the central figure of Christ. In doing so, he redistributes the sense of veneration to the narrative as a whole, staying faithful to his idea of maintaining the epic religiosity inherent in the two-thousand-year-old story, while diluting the specific focus of sacrality on the individual figure of Christ.

In the instinctive urge to consecrate the marginalised, amoral figure of Accattone and the oppositional impulse to desacralise Christ, Pasolini finely balances degrees of humanity and divinity. In his Brancacci Chapel frescoes, Masaccio maintains a sense of the devotional image, particularly through his use of frontality, while investing them with a greater sense of realism; the balance he attains between veneration and realism can be compared with that to which Pasolini aspires. Noa Steimatsky cites Sixten Ringbom's assertion that a sacred portrait may be isolated or extracted from narrative and, conversely, "the static formal character of a holy figure can be 'softened' by the introduction of additional figures" (2008, 142); in his treatment of the contrapuntal figures of Accattone and Christ, Pasolini employs this device. Accattone is often framed in isolated, devotional-style shots; while this is also true of Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini is more democratic in his use of this style, in that he also frames the apostles, the soldiers, the Virgin Mary, the Pharisees and soldiers in a similar style, thereby lessening the sense of veneration associated with the figure of Christ, rendering him instead as a *primus inter pares*. Steimatsky

contends that the repeated close-ups of “a radiant Christ” looking directly out toward the camera in the Last Supper sequence are a re-enactment of the devotional image that persists in Masaccio’s work, particularly when contrasted with the apostles’ movements, which remain firmly within the diegesis (2008, 149). However, while Pasolini visually preferences the figure of Christ (Enrique Irazoqui) and his direct engagement with the camera in this section of the Last Supper, which occurs directly after the transubstantiation of the bread and wine, the prior shots of both Christ and the apostles at the Last Supper are far more egalitarian in their visual attribution of the devotional image, affording the apostles a degree of veneration similar to that conferred on Christ. Zygmunt Baranksi, whose reading of this scene contrasts with Steimatsky’s, contends that this presentation is anti-iconographic in its eschewal of the iconic group image that is most familiar in the visual rendering of the Last Supper (1999, 313). Pasolini’s approach certainly distances the scene from its traditional representation in Western art, in which Christ is seen as presiding over the grouping, and instead highlights each of the apostles, along with Christ, as individuals, simultaneously stressing both their humanity and their inherent sacrality.



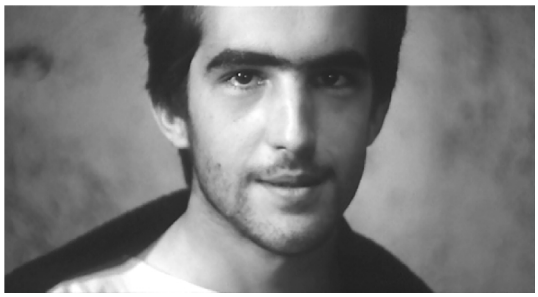


Fig. 13. *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* Portrait images at the Last Supper

A comparison of Pasolini's visual presentation of the Last Supper to the opening scene of *Mamma Roma*, which presents a very deliberate pastiche of Renaissance Last Supper compositions, is instructive in the examination of Pasolini's redistribution of sacrality. The Last Supper scene in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* follows immediately after the scene depicting Judas negotiating his betrayal of Christ with the Pharisees. No establishing shot precedes the scene; instead, the opening image of the Last Supper consists of a tightly-framed hand dipping bread into a bowl of stew. When the camera pulls back slightly, we see that the hand belongs to Judas. This tight framing persists throughout the two-and-a-half minute scene. The camera focuses on Christ and the apostles individually. Only two shots reveal more than one individual: the first when Christ turns to the group of apostles on his right and offers them bread, and the second when he repeats the same gesture to the group on the left. However, the mise-en-scène of each of these shots eschews the iconographic frontal composition with the apostles grouped in a linear formation that we associate with Renaissance compositions of this scene.

In Pasolini's version of the Last Supper, the groups to Christ's right and left are arranged in a circular form that fills the frame and are shot from a side angle that stands in marked contrast to the flat, frontal close-ups elsewhere in the film. However, the iconographic image of the Last Supper lacking in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* is present in the opening wedding banquet scene of *Mamma Roma*, in which Mamma Roma's pimp, Carmine, is the bridegroom, therefore occupying the place at the centre of the table occupied by Christ in a traditional

Last Supper painting.[30] Pasolini revels in the transgression of a pimp's wedding presented in a style reminiscent of Renaissance Last Supper scenes, into which he adds a herd of piglets, the drunken Mamma Roma singing and joking about how she will be free of prostitution now that Carmine is marrying and, lest the allegory is somehow lost, Pasolini finishes off by having Carmine bless Mamma Roma and a little boy with whom she is playing, saying: "I bless you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. One pimp dies and another is born". The scene, in contrast with *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, comprises several long shots, in which the art-historical references are clearly evidenced, interspersed with medium close-ups that typify Pasolini's physiognomical leanings, while lacking the intensity of the "obsessive" close-ups of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (Gordon 1996, 208). The two contrasting presentations—one with its citation of art-historical renderings of the scene as a counterpoint to the bawdy, carnivalesque words and actions of the protagonists, the other Pasolini's own visual interpretation of the original Gospel text—recall his contention to Oswald Stack that in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* he was telling the Gospel story through the eyes of a believer, whereas in his earlier films it his first-person interpretation of the sacred inherent in the profane that is presented (1969, 86). Looking at the sequence in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, the viewer may feel that, rather than Pasolini imagining how it might feel to believe in these events, he instead places himself within the scene, attempting to figure the occurrences from there, contrary to what he says to Oswald Stack, as if he was void of any prior knowledge of the scene's presentation in the canon of Christian art.

[30] Bruno, Rohdie, Landy et al. have likened the scene specifically to Leonardo da Vinci's depiction of the Last Supper, although the scene, in its framing, bears more resemblance to Ghirlandaio's *Last Supper* (1480). (I am indebted with regard to this observation to a non-academic source: a video posted on YouTube identifying Renaissance images of the Passion in Pasolini's early films http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXC8EfrJRZI.)



Fig. 14. *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. Last Supper



Fig. 15. *Mamma Roma.* Wedding Banquet

Pasolini claimed that the use of a 300-mm lens in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* rendered the filmic images flatter and more pictorial, but also endowed them "with the casualness and immediacy of a news documentary", further highlighted by the use of handheld cameras, film stock normally used for newsreels and non-professional actors (1966, 44).[31] Using news events of the recent past as a template for the film's mise-en-scène, Pasolini simultaneously renders the Gospel narrative contemporary and fragments historical continuity:

[31] Sitney remarks that in his use of non-professional actors, Pasolini mirrors the approach of Dreyer, and, of course, the Italian neorealist directors (1994, 174–5).

> I couldn't shoot certain scenes without there being a moment of sincerity in these scenes, at least in terms of recent events…And so how could I fashion Herod's soldiers? I dressed them a bit like Fascists and imagined them to be like Fascist gangs or like the Fascists who used to kill Slav babies by throwing them up in the air. How did I imagine Joseph and Mary's flight into Egypt? I imagined it remembering certain flights, certain evacuations of Spanish refugees across the Pyrenees. (Quoted in Baranski 1999, 287)

The application of newsreel and documentary aesthetics to the film transposes the figure of Christ away from the sacred towards the secular, while also heightening the sense of realism in the narrative. However, this sense of realism is not reflected in his choice of location. Pasolini travelled to Palestine with members of the *Pro Civitate Christiana* movement to investigate the possible use of the original Gospel locations, a journey recorded in his documentary film *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo (Location Hunting in Palestine)* (1963–64). In Palestine, Pasolini found no analogy to the past in a landscape that was, in his eyes, modern and non-epic. His failure to locate or identify the presence of a mythical past in Palestine forced him to look elsewhere. On his return to Italy, he found the biblical landscape he sought in Calabria in the south of the country, situating his Jerusalem in the ancient town of Matera, where people in the Sassi area had lived in caves in the hillsides since prehistoric times. This had resonance for Pasolini as a place where his film of the Gospel might take place. As stated, Pasolini felt that the Palestinian children he met on his trip to the Holy Land could not be used in the film because their faces did not show the teachings of Christ. Conversely, he explains elsewhere that he was interested in "creating an equivalent of the popular stratum, of the ordinary people, among whom Christ lived. And it seemed to me that the Southerners, the inhabitants of Puglia, Calabria, Lucania, were the most suitable" (quoted in Baranski 1999, 287). John David Rhodes remarks that, in Pasolini's cinematic work, "there is no allegorical transparency: rather the bodies, buildings and places are posed as *this* body, *this* building, *this* place" (2007, 137. Emphasis in original). In this regard, Walter Benjamin's observation that "to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it

'the way it really was', it means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" takes on particular relevance in that, for Pasolini, the revolutionary message of the Gospel, when stripped of allusion to the transcendent, had a renewed import in the Italy of the 1960s (1999, 247). Observing that Matera is evoked in Carlo Levi's 1945 book *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*), which borrows its title from a local saying that even Christ would not venture as far as Matera, Rhodes contends that Pasolini is demonstrating that his Christ will make it to Matera and will not shrink from the sight of abject poverty.[32] For Pasolini, the ruins of Matera are analogous to the landscape within which the Gospel narrative took place but, again, as Rhodes points out in relation to Pasolini's Roman films, the landscape also functions as allegory for the socio-cultural elements whose absence and rejection Pasolini laments in the onslaught of consumerist society. In doing so, they form a coalescence of Benjamin's contention that "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things", being simultaneously ruin and allegory (2008, 180).

Given his immersion in the genre prior to the filming of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini's focus on documentary is unsurprising. Furthermore, by shifting his focus away from the Roman *borgate*, travel becomes more central in his filmmaking: from travel throughout Italy in *Comizi d'amore* to the Middle East in *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. This was the beginning of a journey, both physical and metaphorical, to locate the primitive, the *bon sauvage,* the prelapsarian; a search which began with the subproletariat in the Roman *borgate*, progressed to southern Italy and, in his later films, to the Middle East, Africa and India. His failure to locate or identify the presence of a mythical past in Palestine led him to his discovery of a biblical landscape in Italy, which, as Sam Rohdie points out, "provided a better analogy being further away from a historical biblical reality" (1995, 63). Pasolini himself comments: "Southern Italy enabled me to make the transposition from the ancient to the modern world without having to reconstruct it either archaeologically or philologically" (quoted in Stack 1969, 82).

[32] Rhodes also comments that there was an extremely progressive social housing project, La Maretella, built at the time for the residents of the Sassi so, in this respect, we must acknowledge a certain political selectivity on in Pasolini's choice of location (2007, 141).

An element of the pictorial is present within the necessity to find an analogous landscape in Europe, in that Pasolini identifies this need as being similar to that of the Renaissance painters who would have had no choice but to re-imagine biblical settings in their own environments: "I'm thinking of the great Italian artists of the past centuries, of the painters, of Pollaiuolo, of the others who depicted the Baptism of Christ, who had to imagine it, the Jordan River" (Narration in *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*).[33] Thus, Pasolini uses the precedent of the early Italian Renaissance painters, whose work underpins his own cinematographic work, to justify the location of the Gospel narrative within the familiar setting of Southern Italy. There is a fitting logic to this decision and its art-historical support. Pasolini's aim was to interpret Matthew's text in a way that would present a transformed reading of the Christic figure by placing him in a familiar location and portraying him in a way that would resonate with the social and political context of contemporary Italy. Landscape painting first appeared in Western art in the early Renaissance and, as such, the location of the episodes from the Gospel narrative within the Italian landscape formed, at the time, an entirely new visual presentation of Christian iconography, drawing a parallel with Pasolini's radical envisioning of Christ in the Calabrian landscape, beyond geographical similarities. Millicent Marcus and other commentators note the resemblance between the rendering of landscape in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and such landscape-based early Renaissance paintings as *The Cavalcata dei Magi* (*Procession of the Magi*,1459) by Benozzo Gozzoli (1993, 119). Pasolini presents the visual field of the cinema screen as a pictorial surface, but his presentation of the Italian landscape as an analogy for Gospel locations is even more closely allied than this to painters such as Gozzoli. Steimatsky's reference to "archaic, ceremonial frontality" in relation to the work of Piero della Francesca, also applies to Gozzoli's frontal convergence of figures and landscape in an almost tapestry-style image, which Pasolini replicates in the long shots set in the physical landscape (2008, 146). Along with these similarities in composition, some striking contrasts also exist in regard to the figures depicted in *The Procession of the Magi* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* The

[33] The mention of Pollaiuolo here is curious as, to this author's knowledge, Pollaiuolo, most famous for his painting *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (1475), did not address the subject of The Baptism of Christ. Pasolini is perhaps thinking of Ghirlandaio's or Verrocchio's *Baptism of Christ* (1473 and 1475, respectively), both of which depict the Jordan river.

painting's celebration of the lavish wealth of the Medici family, who commissioned it, stands in stark contrast to Pasolini's veneration of the simple peasant population of rural Southern Italy. One need only compare the strikingly simple materials and textures of the costumes in the film to the "gleaming materials woven with gold thread, various brocades, pearl-embroidered garments and velvet and silk cloths, jewel-studded belts and gilded richly decorated bridles" of the painting to understand that Pasolini's magmatic technique is at work, borrowing from the landscape tradition of the early Italian Renaissance, while simultaneously grounding the film in his own unique style of realism (Deimling 2005, 253). [34]

Pasolini's use of early Renaissance landscape also tallies with his choice of the hillside landscape of Calabria for the location of the film. Whether in the long shots filmed in the style of Gozzoli, Giotto and Piero della Francesca or the mid-shots that owe a debt to the Brancacci frescoes of Masaccio, Pasolini's art-historical influences contain a similar hilly landscape to the one he has chosen as his location. Steimatsky comments on the verticality of these steep backdrops, the effect of which is to flatten the image, however, she also identifies Pasolini's mimesis of these pictorial sources as being more than "morphological or iconographical allusion" but rather "an affinity in the deeper structure, in the foundation of the image" (2008, 158–160). Here, I refer back to Longhi's description of della Francesca's work as "pure painting". Although Longhi's term refers to the use of light in della Francesca's paintings, we may usefully consider the term as applying to the holistic visual approach of the Renaissance painters, which incorporated all aspects of the image, whether colour, composition, figuration, light or background. Steimatsky's Bazinian description

[34] The relocation of the Gospel narrative to Calabria confers additional elements, both sacral and personal, on the making of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, less immediately obvious than Pasolini's initial desire to present a cinematic interpretation of the epic two-thousand-year-old narrative. Initial early Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land were replaced by the worship of relics, often transported from their original locations, at local European sites (Steimatsky 2008, 130–131). Although he was disappointed with what he saw there, in travelling to the Holy Land and then returning to Europe to locate *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini mirrors this displacement and re-siting of the sacred. By travelling to the Holy Land, he inscribed his own body in the "sacred topography" and carried within him a sufficient trace of the epic-mythical narrative he sought to allow him to locate *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in southern Italian sites, and "endow them with an authentic sacral value personally *translated*…from the *Terra Sancta*" (Steimatsky 2008, 131). Through this process, Pasolini literally incorporates a central tenet of both Christianity (the incarnation of the divine in the material) and his own work (that transcendence is achieved through the immanence of the body).

of Pasolini's style of cinema as being "impure", while valid in its reference to his intermedial and intertextual sources, seems a misnomer in that the images he obtains through his citation of Renaissance landscape painting, in its comprehension of how the pictorial, two-dimensional image can be rendered in the medium of film, seems a cinematic equivalent to Longhi's "pure painting" and therefore might be considered as "pure cinema".

The analogy between southern Italy and the original location of the Gospel narrative is further strengthened in the scene of Christ's trial by Caiaphas. The camera records Christ from a distance, adopting the perspective of Peter (Settimio di Porto). Millicent Marcus refers to the adoption of Peter's perspective coinciding with the introduction of a *cinéma vérité* style at the same juncture, which she describes as "deliberately poor reportage, newsreel footage shot with an eyewitness authenticity that borders on the amateur" (1993, 133). This "eyewitness authenticity" may be seen as Pasolini's location of the "humble Italian", the believer through whom Pasolini sees Christ as the Son of God, within the character of Peter, in a privileging of the latter's flawed, but benign human nature (Testa 1994, 184). Given Pasolini's relocation of the Gospel narrative to Italy, the re-imagining of Peter as an Italian believer, cast in the mould of a simple peasant, akin to the *borgatari* of his Roman films, seems inherently plausible given his situating of the sacred in both early and late Renaissance readings and his adoption of the Italian landscape as a backdrop for the sacred text.[35]

Text and image

Zygmunt Baranski's textual analysis of Pasolini's transcription of Matthew's Gospel examines both the published screenplay and the words actually spoken in the diegesis. Pasolini claimed: "I haven't changed a single word of the holy text"; Baranski, however, contends that Pasolini shapes his subjective reading of Matthew's Gospel through the omitted text (quoted in Baranski 1999, 284). He provides a comprehensive account of these omissions, also pointing out further significant differences between the screenplay and the actual film as regards narrative structure and *mise-en-scène*, which are designed

[35] A *borgataro* is an inhabitant of the *borgate*, the Roman slums.

to render the filmic text of the Gospel even more relevant to 1960s Italy as Pasolini perceived it. Of particular interest here is Baranski's highlighting of how Pasolini only shows six of the twenty miracles contained in Matthew's Gospel and how the ones he shows are downplayed, making them, as Baranski describes, "marginal to Pasolini's view of Jesus" (1999, 298). Likewise, Baranski points out that all speeches on the Kingdom of Heaven, a salient feature of Matthew's Gospel, are omitted, together with speeches on the Last Judgement and salvation. By virtually eliminating the eschatological element of Matthew's Gospel, Pasolini subtly alters the Gospel message. The alteration of the word in the form of the Gospel text, as presented in tandem with the iconographical image, and the equivalent adjustment and redistribution of its sacrality, is as radical as the far more controversial *La ricotta.* In this respect, Pasolini's drawing of attention to his transgressive tendencies in the short film, whether intentional or not, seems an inspired move that allows him to engage in the delicate but no less subversive revisions of the Christian message to a more humanistic one in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.

Pasolini tells Stack that his preferred Gospel is John's, but that he chose Matthew's text to film because he deemed Matthew "the most earthly of all the evangelists", which as Baranski points out does not tally with Pasolini's own description of the film as lyric-epic-mythical, but rather places it quite firmly in a realist vein (1969, 94). However, his choice of Matthew, can be viewed as being in keeping with his desire not to apply an excessive reverence to the Gospel narrative, something which may have proved more difficult in the transposition of the more mystical text of the Gospel of St. John, particularly given the problematic issue of the representation of the miracles that he chose to include in the film. As divine events that defy earthly explanation, the miracles proved most challenging as regards Pasolini remaining constant in his depiction of Christ as Son of Man, rather than Son of God, while being faithful to Matthew's text, as he had pledged to be.[36] Oswald Stack puts it to Pasolini that "there is an insoluble contradiction between what you are doing and what Matthew was doing", which

[36] Viano describes the film's rendering of the miracles as "unbearable", seeing a failure on Pasolini's part to "offer a viable analogy for such events" (1993, 139). Pasolini in his interview with Stack describes the representation of Christ walking on water and the miracle of the loaves and fishes as "disgusting pietism" (1969, 87)

becomes most obvious in the representation of the miracles (1969, 91). Pasolini replies:

> Perhaps I should have tried to invent completely new miracles, miracles which are not miracles...I should have tried to convey the sense of miraculousness each of us can experience watching the dawn…: nothing happens, the sun rises, trees are lit up by the sun. Perhaps for us this is what a miracle is. (1969, 91)

This response is a simple illustration of Pasolini's belief that the miraculous is located in the earthly rather than the celestial.[37] It also highlights how Pasolini's deployment of the art-historical is a necessary device in that the representation of the divine in such a blatant form as a miracle, without recourse to art history—and given his foreswearing of an excess of reverentiality—proves a struggle to him. The rebalancing of sacrality from the figure of Christ to the ancillary figures in the narrative, through the blending of documentary/*cinéma verité* techniques and art-historical tropes to represent the sacred and the secular respectively, breaks down in the representation of what prove to be the intractable rendering of miracles, as Stack suggests.

A further consequence of the omission of numerous events that take place in Matthew's Gospel is the fragmentation of the narrative. In this regard, Millicent Marcus references Erich Auerbach's observations that "the episodic, disjointed nature of Scriptural narrative itself forces us to seek unity not in the horizontal progression of events but in their vertical connection to an overarching idea", a characteristic, she suggests, that is equally applicable to Pasolini's film, which "forces us outside the story line to extranarrative principles of order" (1993, 113). This ruptures the linearity of the narrative and, in keeping with what will be discussed later in the chapter as regards fragmentation and the stressing of horizontality and the descendant vertical, highlights the verticality of the text rather than any horizontal narrative continuity. In addition, and unremarked by Marcus, the appropriateness of Pasolini's filmic style for the presentation of the

[37] Steimatsky comments that "the miraculous is inserted into the ordinary succession of events via editing, while the humble and mundane is thereby lifted out of its 'flow' by virtue of such sudden cuts to otherworldly silence" (2008, 214).

vertical character of the Gospel narrative owes much, again, to Roberto Longhi's sequential projection of still images of slides of proto-Renaissance painting, in what is effectively a continuum formed by the Gospel text itself, its visual presentation by Renaissance artists and Pasolini's adoption of Longhi's articulation of these art-historical images of sacred themes.

In keeping with his tendency towards paradox and despite his wish to present Christ as Son of Man rather than Son of God, Pasolini did not shy away from the sacred/epic/mythic style he propounded:

> I am not interested in de-consecrating; this is a fashion I hate; it is petit bourgeois. I want to re-consecrate things as much as possible, I want to re-mythicize them. I did not want to reconstruct the life of Christ as it really was, I wanted to do the story of Christ plus two thousand years of Christian translation, because it is the two thousand years of Christian history which have mythicized this biography, which would otherwise be an almost insignificant biography as such. My film is the life of Christ plus two thousand years of story-telling about the life of Christ. That was my intention. (1969, 83)

In response to Stack questioning whether he "loaded too much on to Matthew's text", he goes further, saying "for an Italian like me painting has had an enormous importance in these two thousand years, indeed it is the major element in the Christological tradition" (1969, 91). This comment is central not just to my analysis of Pasolini's conflation of the sacred, pictorial and corporeal, but, indeed, to the dissertation as a whole, in that I seek to prove that Pasolini and Godard, both transgressors, in their respective ways, of Christian religion, particularly in its Catholic form, experience a reverentiality towards the canon of Christian art. Pasolini's comment that "painting is the major element in the Christological tradition" and his use of Passion iconography both as a stylistic device in his *borgate* films and, eventually, to present his reading of Matthew's life of Christ, situates not just his films but indeed early films of the Passion and the work of Dreyer, Bresson et al. on a continuum with the Passion narrative, its interpretation in Western art and subsequent cinematic re-interpretation.

As regards Christological identification, a topic that I shall discuss further in relation to *La ricotta,* commentators such as Robert Gordon identify the casting of Pasolini's mother, Susanna Colussi, in the role of the older Madonna as indicative of an identification between Christ and self. However, the subjectivity displayed by this casting decision was not so straightforward, being strongly influenced by the death of Pasolini's brother Guido in 1945 at the hands of fellow Communist partisans.[38] Pasolini relates Guido and his premature violent death to a far more representative Christ, than, for instance, Stracci or Accattone. In a *New York Times* interview with Guy Flatley in 1969, Pasolini comments about his mother's role as the older Madonna in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*: "she was extraordinary because when she saw Christ on the Cross she felt the same pain that she felt when my brother, a partisan, was killed during the war". However, Zigaina contends that Pasolini, in his play *I Turcs tal Friul* (1944), not only foresaw his brother's death but also overlapped their respective characters, with the result that, in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, the self-representation we see is at one remove, or, more accurately stated, has a double register.[39]

Pasolini's identification with Christ as mediated by his brother Guido suggests that subjective Christological representation does not exist as such in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. It also serves to outline that the presence of self is less manifest than elsewhere in his filmic and poetic oeuvre, precisely because, I contend, he had engaged in a kind of reverse *kenosis,* by emptying his subjectivity into both *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and, as I shall outline, in *La ricotta*.[40] In addition, Pasolini's subjective identification with the figure of St. Matthew as a documentarist of contemporary

[38] Guido was Pasolini's beloved younger brother. While engaged in combat between warring partisan groups, he was killed by an opposing group who were attempting to have Friuli annexed to communist Yugoslavia. Pasolini felt that he was somehow to blame for Guido's death because he had advised him to join the Resistance groups fighting on the border. (See Greene 1990, 8).

[39] The plays concerns two brothers, whom Zigaina contends refer to the Pasolini brothers and whom "overlap and sometimes merge only to split apart again as in a play of mirrors" (1991, 17). Meni, who represents Guido, is killed trying to alert the neighbouring village to the advancing Turkish troops. The villagers promise to build a church if they are protected from the Turks. The Turks are held back by a dust storm and the villagers build the church of Santa Croce (this is based on factual events that took place in the fifteenth century). The real church of Santa Croce is where Susanna Colussi buried first her son Guido and, subsequently, Pier Paolo Pasolini.

[40] *Comizi d'amore* should also perhaps be included in the evolutionary process that preceded *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in that, in this survey of attitudes to love and sex in Italy, Pasolini presents the profane while, as Steimatsky notes, engaging in a "covert *sopralluogo*" prior to the production of his Gospel film (2008, 128).

events should be considered. Rather than solely envisage that Pasolini reimagines himself as a vector of action by casting himself in the role of Christ, it is also pertinent to address the possibility of Pasolini's subjective identification with the role of radical evangelist in his reshaping of the narrative to comply with his contention that what Marxism required at the time was "the religious moment" (Greene 1990, 71). I submit that Pasolini experiences a Benjaminian now-time or *jetztzeit* that not only refers to the presence of Christ on the earth, but also to the recording of his presence on it.[41] It is not Christ whom Pasolini sees as having failed in delivering the message of what is effectively an equivalent of the Marxist classless society, but the modern interpretation of, or the failure to interpret, that message. Thus, Pasolini the Marxist evangelist presents us with a Christ who is, as Laura Rascaroli describes, "a symbol of protest, of violent rejection of the norm of iniquity and evilness" (2009, 158).

Werner Hamacher, discussing Walter Benjamin's "Theses for the Philosophy of History", comments that historical time is:

> an excess of the unactualized, the unfinished, failed, thwarted, which leaps beyond its particular now and demands from another now its settlement, correction and fulfilment…Every possibility and *a fortiori* every missed possibility survives as the time to fulfil this possibility. Time—historical time—is nothing but the capability of the possible to find satisfaction in the actual. (2005, 41)

For Benjamin, each generation's coming was expected by previous generations and is thus possessed of what he calls a *weak* messianic power. Inherent in this is the redemption of unfulfilled possibility, a seizing of missed opportunities, and concurrently an unsettled debt to past generations rather than future ones. In *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini inscribes himself, most subtly, through omission rather than addition, in the role of evangelist and presents the possibility of the redemption of the unactualised, a settlement of the unredeemed, in the form of his reframing of the Gospel narrative and his reimagined Christ

[41] A temporal concept put forward by Walter Benjamin which views the present as a discontinuous heterogeneity in which corresponding past can appear to disrupt inert historical continuum. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

who is filled "with the presence of the now" (Benjamin 1999, 252–253). I shall return to Benjamin's now-time later in this chapter in relation to *La ricotta.*

The Sacred Body

As I have discussed Pasolini's treatment of the original text is fundamental in his cinematic presentation of Matthew's Gospel; however, the pictorial element in his cinematographic work drives Pasolini's assimilation of the sacred into the corporeal, serving as a catalyst that allows Pasolini to process and depict his deep-seated belief in what might be termed the transcendence of flesh, or a "transimmanence" as Nancy describes it (1996, 35). Noa Steimatsky touches upon the interweaving of the pictorial, cinematographic, corporeal and sacred in her discussion of the rhetoric of the icon in relation to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, particularly the *acheiropoietic* icon—the image "made without hands"—such as the Veronica, or *vera icona*.[42] This image was thought to bear the imprint of Christ's face on the veil that Veronica had offered him on the road to Calvary.[43] Steimatsky discusses how these images are emblematic of the sacral presence sustained, "the moment of contact, of identity, between represented and representation: whence its claim of causal, indexical link between the image and its referent" (2008, 139). Extending this association to photographic and cinematographic images, she comments that the *acheiropoietic* icon resembles a mechanical reproduction and "like the 'original' contact of body and image, is seen as retrospective proof of the first image's origin, endowing the copy, too, with miraculous power" (2008, 140). It is true to Pasolini's inveterate combination of the subjective, the sacred and the corporeal that, in a collaborative piece with Italian installation artist Fabio Mauri in 1975, he would literally incorporate the *acheiropoietic* form by having *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* projected onto his body by Mauri in what Laura Rascaroli refers to as being simultaneously suggestive of "the corporality of Pasolini's cinema and of its inscription in the authorial body, which 'bears' the film like a cross" (2009, 158). Rascaroli's reference to Pasolini's body physically carrying the film, which

[42] In contrast, Jean Louis Schefer rather than describing the *acheiropoietic* image as icon instead attributes to it the qualities of the Roman imago or death mask, describing it as "the image of death" (1998, 12).
[43] The etymology of the *vera icona* ("true image") is half-Latin and half-Greek; these images are thought to date back to the early thirteenth century.

recounts the life of Christ, recalls the *vera icona*; Christ is projected onto Pasolini in the same way as His face is inscribed into the Shroud, a sacred image on a material substrate, in a similar form to the manner in which Pasolini envisages both Crucifixion and Deposition.[44]

A further subtle aspect of sacrality in the relationship between *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* also requires some consideration. In her discussion of *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Laura Rascaroli points out that "if the body of Christ on the cross…becomes a visible and narcissistic figuration of the self, here Christ—the true goal of the search of Pasolini's journey—is only present as absence", representing what Rascaroli calls "the ultimate lack", which she associates not just to the self but also to cinema, in that it also represents the film that cannot be made (2009, 167 and 168). This analysis, in its presentation of Christ as absence—and absent to cinema, is reminiscent of John Orr's analysis of the sustained presence of Pasolini's "cinema of poetry" in contemporary film. Orr quotes Nietzsche's contention that twentieth-century art would "sacrifice God for nothingness", commenting that:

> The Pasolinian aesthetic explores its own exchange of the sacred for the profane, and in so doing rediscovers sacrifice at the heart of nothingness. In other words, it explores Nietzsche's "paradoxical mystery" only to find nothingness in the place of rational progress and within that nothingness the uncanny presence of sacrificial remains. (1998, 33)

Developing this idea, Orr introduces a link to the art historical and the emphasis on visuality in Christianity (as Godard does in relation to cinema and Christianity), claiming that: the Passion in its stressing of sacrifice is "one of the incubators of the modern visual icon" (1998, 34). Orr refers to Slavoj Žižek's contention that the Crucifixion is the enduring visual moment of sacrifice visually implanted in the collective memory" (1998, 35). For Žižek, this becomes an image that "cancels all other images", which Orr sees as being reflected in what he calls the sacrificial unconscious of modern cinema (1998, 34–35). Thus

[44] In Chapter Two, I will discuss how Jean-Luc Godard directly equates the *vera icona* with the cinematic image and the cinema screen with the material substrate.

Pasolini's work, in which the iconic Christological figure is always absent, although substituted by both sacred and profane analogues, acts as a precursor to the absent presence of the Passion narrative which frequently occurs in contemporary cinema.[45] We can reconfigure this argument according to Nancean thinking, which also sees the Christological image as being one of touch and separation and, invoking Merleau-Ponty, visibility and invisibility, or what Nancy asserts in relation to *hoc est enim corpus meum* (the Communion rite of "this is my body") is "the presentified 'this' of the Absentee par excellence" (2008c, 3). Identifying the anxiety that exists around this embodiment throughout the history of Western culture, and the assurances sought in relation to it, Nancy asserts that we can never get past "the vast tangle of images" surrounding the Christic narrative, because of our anxiety over the certitude of the body, concluding that "the body is always sacrificed: eucharist" (2008c, 5). Thus, Orr's assertion that the Pasolinian image discovers the trace of the sacrificial even in the face of irredeemable absence, not only tallies with Nancy's thinking on the body and the sacrificial as articulated here, but also returns us to Nancy claim as previously stated, which perhaps is a more positive presentation of Orr's argument, that Pasolini's "holiness" arises out of his ability to take the force of the sacred, not from the temple but from everyday life.

1.3 Exorcising the art historical and the subjective in *La ricotta*

Fragmentation and consumption

Both Sam Rohdie and Laura Rascaroli identify that *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* is a prelude to a film that will never be made; "but, perhaps, as a result…and, without notes taken, Pasolini made a real film, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*" (Rohdie 163). Pasolini's dissatisfaction with the Palestinian landscape and, indeed, with the documentary film, which he distances himself from in his interviews with Oswald Stack, sets up the transference of the sacral to the filmed *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. However, the profundity of the resulting film is not only due to the contribution of *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, but also to the other short film that precedes it, *La ricotta,* which, as shall be discussed, allowed

[45] See Aumont (2002) for an analysis of the absent presence of the Annunciation in contemporary film.

Pasolini to rid himself of what he felt might be an excessive art-historical tendency before proceeding to the filming of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.*

In *La ricotta*, the narrative centres on Stracci (Mario Cipriani, also Accattone's accomplice Barilla in *Accattone*), who has a role as the Good Thief in a film that re-enacts the Passion entirely through *tableaux vivants* of paintings from the canon of Christian art. After passing the lunch given to him on the set to his wife and numerous children, he disguises himself as a woman to obtain a second lunch. However, while he is shooting a scene, the dog belonging to the film's star eats it. Elsewhere on the set, a local reporter interviews the imposing, isolated figure of the film director (Orson Welles). After the interview, the reporter offers Stracci money for the dog. Stracci accepts and uses it to buy a huge ricotta cheese from a roadside stall. He returns to eat it in an underground cave, watched by a group of crew members. When he is nailed up on the cross shortly afterward for the shooting of the Calvary scene, in front of a visiting group of Roman dignitaries, he dies of indigestion. The film, shot in black and white, is interspersed with "meta-representational interludes" depicting colour *tableaux vivants* of Mannerist depictions of the Deposition, which often turn out to be chaotic and unintentionally comic, much to the annoyance of the diegetic film director (Rhodes 2007, 139).

The bracketing of the *tableaux vivants* in *La ricotta* by the moving images before and after them, some of which, particularly those depicting Stracci, are speeded-up in the style of early film, confers a sense of exteriority on them. This effect is heightened by Pasolini's first use of a zoom lens in his films, as well as his use of colour stock to further separate the *tableaux-vivants* scenes. The zoom technique highlights the isolation of the diegetic director on the film set and within his crew, drawing back from Welles to always reveal him physically detached and in splendid isolation from the rest of the diegetic film personnel, but it is markedly not deployed in any of the *tableau vivant* scenes; instead, as Céline Parant describes, "[Pasolini] begins with an ensemble shot then suggests by montage a continual to and fro between this general shot, mid-shots as well as close ups of a character or a group of characters at a time. The shot always stays fixed" (2005, author's translation). This approach, which again echoes Longhi's presentation in his lectures, further emphasises the stasis of the *tableaux vivants* and points to Gotthold Lessing's view of *tableau vivant* or

history painting, a style of painting prevalent from the mid-sixteenth to mid-eighteenth century, as the "pregnant moment" when all hangs in the balance. Indeed, in the *tableaux vivants* of the Deposition, Christ's body literally hangs in the balance. However, while the Passion narrative is so familiar to the viewer that the pregnant moment is virtually negated—in this "whole contained under a single view" to use Diderot's description of the *tableau vivant* (quoted in Langford 2006, 104)—what Pasolini reveals through these re-enactments is actually a prophecy of Stracci's death and Deposition.[46] Thus, it is Stracci's life that hangs in the balance in the short film, although both the film crew as diegetic spectators and we, the non-diegetic spectators, are too caught up with the comedy of Stracci's predicament to realise the tragic aspect of the narrative.

The fragmentary nature of the *tableaux vivants* emphasises how the images are "outside" of the narrative fiction, but also their quality as images and the Mannerist language that they cite (Rohdie 1995, 22). As such, they are an example of Pascal Bonitzer's contention that the *tableau vivant* in cinema always represents a blockage in the flow of the film and can never be integrated into the narrative rhythms (Bonitzer 1985, 31). It can be argued that this is exactly Pasolini's intention: his tendency in almost all respects—linguistically, stylistically, technically, even subjectively—is to fragment.[47] Pasolini's stressing of the "outsideness" of the *tableau vivant* is indicative of a fragmentation that is extant throughout his work, some examples of which are his choppy editing techniques in all his films, his several "notebook" films with their incomplete and disjointed style, and his *contaminazione* technique, as shown, for example, in the use of radically disparate musical and art-historical sources in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. It is not only in a technical sense that the fragment is favoured by Pasolini, but also in his fascination with crucifixion and cannibalism in his poetic and filmic work, both representative of a breaking or fragmentation of the body.[48]

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[46] We do not see Stracci's body removed from the cross—the film ends with the director proclaiming as he looks up to Stracci's dead body on the cross: "Poor Stracci. He had to die to show us he was alive".

[47] This characteristic has much in common with Godard's work, as I will contend in Chapter Four.

[48] See Brigitte Peucker (2007) for an analysis of the relationship between cannibalism and the *tableau vivant,* particularly in the work of Hitchcock and Fassbinder.

The consumption of the divine by the material is inherently present in Catholicism's concept of the sacrament of Communion, which as Nancy observes is "the most visible repletion of an obstinate or sublimated paganism: bread and wine, other bodies of other gods, mysteries of sensory certitude" (2008c, 3). In addition to the notion of the flesh's ability to consume the divine, this primitivism, with its implicit suggestion of cannibalism, attracts Pasolini to the overarching concept of Communion. Pasolini recounts to Oswald Stack that his first experience of cinema was seeing a publicity shot for a film of a man being eaten by a tiger and recalls his fascination with the image which, he comments, "certainly had an erotic-sexual facet to it" (Stack 1969, 30).[49] Sam Rohdie links the consumption of the divine by the flesh, Pasolini's erotic attraction to cannibalism, and the consumption of Holy Communion to the notion of film as editing:

> [Pasolini's] idea of film was that it was an imposition of sense upon life achieved by a cutting into it, at once sad and exciting. Cutting and dismemberment were part of Pasolini's erotic and sadistic joy: slicing into it, consuming it, acts simultaneously sacred and sacrilegious, akin to the ambivalent consumption of the Host at Holy Communion. (1996, 41)

Pasolini goes even further in his interview with Stack and draws Marxism into the cannibalistic relationship in his discussion of the behaviour of Totò and Ninetto as regards Togliatti's funeral in *Uccellacci e uccellini* (*The Hawks and the Sparrows*, 1966):

> In fact the story of Togliatti does not end there, because after they have been off with the woman there is the crow again. They perform an act of cannibalism, what Catholics call communion; they swallow the body of Togliatti (or of the Marxists) and assimilate it; after they have assimilated it they carry on along the road, so that even though you don't know where

[49] The sense of rapture felt before cannibalism will become more specific and literal in *Porcile* (*Pigsty*, 1969), with the young man pronouncing before execution: "I killed my father, I ate human flesh, and I quiver with joy!". Also, in *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (*Arabian Nights*, 1974), when the prince meets the lion in the desert, he says: "If you want to rip me apart, go ahead...kill me, devour me, then my pain will end".

> the road is going, it is obvious that they have assimilated Marxism…Just before the crow is eaten he says "Teachers are made to be eaten in *salsa piccante*". They must be eaten and transcended, but if their teaching is of any value it remains inside us. (Stack 1996, 106–7)[50]

The above quotation presents a forceful example of the extent of Pasolini's emphasis on the fragmented corporeal—in order to assimilate knowledge the purveyor of knowledge must be physically consumed and, again, transcendence is achieved through physical process. Furthermore, it highlights how Pasolini's monistic approach is so pervasive that he can integrate Marxist and Catholic thought within his own erotics; thus, Totò and Ninetto learn to be good Marxists by partaking in a cannibalistic version of the Communion sacrament.[51]

From a self-representational perspective, Pasolini's approach is entirely fragmentary throughout his oeuvre. He engages in self-representative forms that morph from his appearances as himself in his documentary films, to the talking crow in *Uccellacci e uccellini*, to his acting roles as the high priest in *Edipo Re*, through to his portrayal of Chaucer and of Giotto's pupil in *Trilogia dalla vita* (*The Trilogy of Life*) series.[52] His planned transposition of the life of St. Paul to a modern day context, a project that was unrealised as a result of his death but that contained quasi-autobiographical aspects, also contributes further to his self-representation.[53] However, of all these self-representative glimpses, it is in *La ricotta* that he truly attempts a representation of his fragmentary self.

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[50] Echoing Nancy's contention that *hoc est enim corpus meum* (this is my body) is the body "served up as a meal" (2008, 5).

[51] P. Adams Sitney observes that the Father, Son, Bird triad in *Uccellacci e Uccellini* is a "parodic trinity" (1994, 177).

[52] *La trilogia della vita* comprises three separate feature films: *Il decameron* (*The Decameron*, 1971), *I racconti di Canterbury* (*The Canterbury Tales*, 1972), and *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*. See Viano (1993, 263–93) for a comprehensive analysis of the problematic aspects of this trilogy, which Pasolini conceived as a kind of new form of realism and a rebuttal to the omnipresence of television. He later published a repudiation of all three films.

[53] The scenes in which Pasolini portrays "Giotto's best pupil" in *Il Decameron* (Bocaccio's original text refers simply to Giotto) are of further interest in that they depict him painting a fresco in a monastery. In a dream sequence, he envisages the fresco as an enormous *tableau vivant* within which Pasolini, as director, conflates two paintings, Giotto's *Last Judgment* with Christ replaced by Duccio's *Maestà* (Madonna and all the saints) (1308–11) in which Silvana Magnano is depicted as the Madonna. Magnano plays the role of Oedipus's mother in *Oedipus Rex* and the mother in *Teorema*.

Stracci, the diegetic film director, and Christ form what might be termed a "Trinity of Subjectivity" in *La ricotta*, within which different facets of Pasolini are represented: Orson Welles as the director represents his intellectualism and his sense of isolation; Stracci represents his humanism, his affinity for the lumpenproletariat of the *borgate* and his identification with this group as purveyor of a "real language"; and Christ represents the carnal, the sacred evacuated into the flesh. In its division of subjectivity, I suggest that *La ricotta* acts as a visual imagining of Pasolini's impending shoot of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* into which he empties the various aspects of his personality in order to rid himself of the subjective and thus approach the Gospel with an objective, rational eye or, more accurately, to see with the eyes of a believer, as discussed in relation to *Il Vangelo second Matteo*. In *La ricotta, h*e envisions filming a life of Christ in the most literal form of the pictorial that is possible in a filmic context, that is, entirely in static re-enactments of art-historical images. He parodies his art-historical tendencies in the instructions the director gives to the cast and in the frustration expressed by the assistant director at the actors' inability to follow these instructions; he even quotes from his own poetry and gives voice to his political and social opinions. While Pasolini denied the self-representational aspect of the film, the figure of the diegetic film's director citing Pasolini's poetry discredits this.[54] In a further example of self-parody, he mocks his admiration of pictorial stasis in the Pontormo *tableau vivant* scene, when the assistant director shouts, "The director wants you all to keep absolutely still". He then shouts at one of the actresses, "I told you to keep still. Stop waving those arms around. You're a figure on an altarpiece". This is an apparent reference to Pasolini's difficult relationship with the actress Anna Magnani on the set of *Mamma Roma*; Tonino del Colli, Pasolini's cinematographer, refers to how Pasolini hated her extensive hand movement while she was being filmed, and framed her in tight shots to conceal it.[55]

Benjaminian Past and Present

The theme of the *RoGoPaG* portmanteau film, of which *La ricotta* formed a part, was "the beginning of the end of the world", which in Pasolini's

[54] See Faldini and Fofi (1981, 240).
[55] Interview, *Mamma Roma* DVD, (The Criterion Collection, 1995).

interpretation is depicted as the advent of the middle classes in Italian society, an elemental factor in his ideological crisis experienced around that time. His transgressive use of the traditional narrative device of the Passion, so widely recognisable, was a forceful statement in the Italy of the Economic Miracle, polarised by Catholicism and Marxism, Right and Left.[56]

In the film, the director quotes Pasolini's poem "Poesie mundane", written during the shooting of *Mamma Roma,* to a reporter (Vittorio La Paglia) visiting the film set. As he reads, the cover of the screenplay of *Mamma Roma* is clearly visible, unmistakably identifying its author:

> I am a force of the Past
> Tradition is my only love
> I come from ruins, from the churches,
> From the altarpieces, from villages
> Forgotten on the Apennines and the Pre-Alps
> Where my brothers lived …
> An adult foetus, more modern than all the moderns
> I roam in search of brothers that are no more.[57]

In response to the reporter's questions, the director describes the Italian masses as "the most illiterate" in Europe and the Italian bourgeoisie as "the most ignorant". Through the fictional director, Pasolini gives voice to his moral outrage with respect to Italian society. Through Stracci, conversely, Pasolini portrays the mistreated *bon sauvage* who, while not representative of Pasolini, does represent something almost aspirational for him: a life lived in the flesh, untainted by bourgeois ambitions or perhaps even intellectual ones. Finally, the figure of Christ as depicted by the Mannerists at the moment of His most mortal incarnation, represents a monistic amalgamation of the body and the mind: Pasolini's profound engagement with art history allows him an aesthetic appreciation of the original Mannerist images and, indeed, the value of re-enacting them; however, the images also trigger in him an erotic charge that speaks to a far more fundamental and immanent subjectivity.

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[56] Pasolini himself, in some respects, reflected these contradictory leanings in Italian society in his capacity as an atheist Marxist entirely seduced by Christian iconography.

[57] Translation by Alessia Ricciardi (2003, 153). Italian version in Pasolini (1992, 474–5). Originally published in *Le Poesie.* 1975. Milan: Garzanti.

The fragmentary identities present in *La ricotta* are very deliberately separated from each other by the adoption of a different stylistic approach for each. Welles, as the director, is almost never shown in a shot with another actor, save for the reporter and some children; however, the scenes in which he appears are filmed in what might be termed a standard style. The Deposition *tableaux vivants* are represented in colour, simultaneously highlighting the importance of Mannerist colours for Pasolini and further fragmenting the *tableaux-vivants* scenes, already separated from the film by their stasis. Furthermore, the *tableaux vivants* also serve to heighten the stylistic approach used to represent Stracci, who is presented in the accelerated rhythms of silent film.[58] Pasolini's portrayal of Stracci privileges the latter, given that the director's preference was for early filmmakers—Carl Theodor Dreyer, Charles Chaplin and Kenji Mizoguchi were the only cinematic influences he acknowledged.[59] Thus, speeding up Stracci's movements until he becomes a Chaplinesque figure represents a stressing of Pasolini's affinity for the character (in contrast to the film's cast, crew and visitors who are presented in large groups in conventional format). Pasolini's strategy of separating out his fragmented identities and presenting them in *La ricotta* according to the style of different eras—Mannerist, early film and contemporaneous film—represents a vivid example of his *contaminazione* technique and leads to an understanding of how he views the relationship of the past to the present.

Pasolini's painstaking fragmentation of the past and present, together with his disgust at the Economic Miracle, arguably bears an equivalence to Walter Benjamin's view of history. Pasolini and Benjamin both foreground the relationship of the past to the present, the debt that the present owes to the past rather than to the future, and the way in which allegory, history, and memory influence and can be used to read the modernising tendencies of twentieth-century Europe. In addition, both subscribe to an approach in which their theological leanings are juxtaposed with their unorthodox Marxist thinking. Benjamin blended Marxist ideology with a Judaic Messianism and saw Marxism as a secularised form of the latter. In this secularising of the sacred, Benjamin

[58] Pasolini conflates the music of the classical era and early film by speeding up the *Dies Irae* so that it resembles early film musical accompaniments, in an aural analogy to the visual treatment of Stracci.
[59] See, for example, Stack (1969, 43), and Pasolini (1965, 42).

establishes a dialectic between the two, the relationship moving in both directions creating a dynamic tension between the sacred and the profane, similar to Pasolini's literary and filmic work, whether it is the sacred in the profane as in *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* or the profane in the sacred as in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. Likewise, Benjamin's thinking possesses an undercurrent of Judaic mysticism, while Pasolini's reveals a residual Christian mysticism as evidenced by his comment to Oswald Stack that any impulse towards Christianity he might have possessed was a result of cultural conditioning and his "tendency towards mysticism" (1969, 14)

Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" was written in 1940 towards the end of his life and published posthumously in 1942. The theses contain some of Benjamin's most significant thinking as regards the relationship of the past to the present and the different modalities of time and history that he establishes. The ideas put forward in the theses can be usefully applied to Pasolini's *La ricotta* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and, equally, to his films of the late 1960s dealing with classical myth.[60]

For Benjamin, historical time (what is ordinarily considered as time) is a linear progression of historical events that occur in an empty homogeneous continuum. Benjamin equates historical time with the notion of eternal repetition or myth in that "man stands under the domination of mythical fate when his powers of remembrance fail him; that is, he is condemned to repeat" (Wolin 1994, 51). Now-time, or *jetztzeit*, is a view of the present moment as a discontinuous heterogeneity in which corresponding past can appear to disrupt inert historical continuum. Now-time rejects the notion of evolutionary progress and the museum approach to history in which the sequentiality of historical events is ordered "like the beads of a rosary" (Benjamin 1999, 255). Peter Osborne synopsises Benjamin's conception of now-time as follows:

> It is the moment of awakening which rescues history for the present and which ignites the explosives that lie in the past and blasts the epoch out of the reified continuity of homogeneous time…In it the past is said to attain

[60] Cesare Casarino has identified the presence of Benjamin's concept of now-time in *Edipo Re*, particularly in its disjunctive temporal structure, which moves from the recent modern to the ancient back to the modern (1992).

> a higher degree of actuality than in the moment of its existence. (Osborne 1994, 86)

The role of myth in Benjamin's temporal concepts and Pasolini's filmic work should also be considered. To Benjamin, mythic compulsion is in opposition to human self-determination; it is resignation to the forces of fate rather than resolute action in the face of danger (Benjamin was writing at the time of World War II). This concept of the mythical differs remarkably from what Pasolini understands as myth, which put simply is the past vivified in the present. Giuseppe Zigaina observes that Pasolini's perception was that "the very idiosyncrasy of myth lies in its unveiling as reality, not as a fable or narration of the impossible", and Pasolini himself comments that "the mythical is simply the other face of realism" (n.d. and 1991, 156). This interpretation seems to have more in common with Benjamin's now-time than with his notion of the enslaving, inescapable mythic, and here I will apply that assumption.

Using the description of now-time as a kind of temporal stasis in conjunction with the notion of fragmentation inherent in Benjamin's work, we can draw an equivalence with the *tableau vivant* re-enactments of *La ricotta* that return to Mannerism and perhaps confer on the originals "a higher degree of actuality than in the moment of [their] existence" (Benjamin quoted in Osborne 1994, 86).[61] Pasolini's *contaminazione* fragments history, permitting him to return to the archaic, the classical, even the era of silent film, at will, and thus is contained in the temporal discontinuity propounded by Benjamin. Indeed, in the temporal disjunction present in his work, Pasolini places himself simultaneously in the past and at the vanguard of the present in a manner that recalls Habermas's description of Benjamin twisting "the radical future-orientedness characteristic of modern times…so far back around the axis of the now-time that it gets transposed in a yet more radical orientation toward the past" (1990, 12).

[61] In *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (*The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 1928), Benjamin describes the temporality of allegory with the evocative dialectical image of petrified unrest. He writes, "Allegory establishes itself most permanently where transitoriness and eternity confronted each other most closely" (2009, 224).

Corporeality and the Immanent

The corporeal, the quality of being physical, is a driving force throughout Pasolini's films. From the physicalities of *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma*, through the celebration of the sexual in the *Trilogia dalla vita,* to the corporeal transgressions of *Porcile* (*Pigsty,* 1969) and *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (*Salò, or the 120 days of Sodom,* 1975), Pasolini is guided by a deep-rooted sense of the physical in different guises. Indeed, his affinity for Masaccio and the Mannerists relates to those artists' ability to convey a sense of the physical, albeit in radically distinct ways. From the perspective of this analysis, the immanent and corporeal are central to several strands in Pasolini's work: his profound affinity to the Passion, particularly the Crucifixion; the narrative of *La ricotta*, specifically as regards the character of Stracci; and the presentation of death (doubly represented in *La ricotta* by the death of both Stracci and Christ on the cross) as a counterpoint and definitive punctuation mark to life.

Stracci's mundane corporeality seems almost the converse of the "divine exposure of the flesh" that is identified in Christ's body (Hardt 2005, 82). This relationship between the primitive, as represented by Stracci, and the divine, as represented by Mannerist painting, is not dissimilar to the transition from carnival to passion play in the Middle Ages. However, Sam Rohdie also identifies a relevant similarity between Mannerism and the primitive as originally argued by Carlo Ginzburg (1995, 145). Mannerism's move from the classical values of the High Renaissance towards artificiality implied a rejection of the rational composition and logical order so prized by the High-Renaissance masters. The Mannerist emphasis on emotion and religiosity, Ginzburg argues, connects to the magical and the sacred. Building on this, Rohdie draws a connection between the Mannerists and the carnivalesque and, of course, Pasolini, as both a mannerist and a purveyor of the carnivalesque, contending that Bakhtin's study of the Rabelaisian carnivalesque and Ginzburg's study can both be applied to Pasolini.

The relationship between the carnivalesque and Pasolini's reading of the corporeal and the sacred can be further developed in terms of Bakhtin's interpretation of the carnivalesque. Bakhtin defines the carnivalesque as a force of opposition to a dominant world view, rather than the representation of the carnival itself, one that gives "voices to languages that are excluded by official

(and monologic) discourse" and celebrates "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order" (Bakhtin 1984, 121). Bakhtin defines carnivalesque as the combination of the sacred with the profane and the high with the low, relating it to the permeation of the boundary between the self and world. This boundary takes the form of bodily orifices. Functions that involve a crossing of this boundary such as eating, drinking, excretion and sexual activity act to detract from the sacred and abstract by re-siting them in the real or material world. In Pasolini's early films eating and drinking are frequently depicted, particularly in a social context, a detail that Bakhtin sees as fundamental to the carnivalesque. In particular, Bakhtin sees the banquet as representative of a celebration of triumph over social mores and hierarchy by freely blending the sacred and the profane, high culture and low culture, and the spiritual and the material. Christopher Fuller points out that while Bakhtin does not significantly engage with the presence of the carnivalesque in the Bible, he observes that the bodily nature of the banquet allows a renewal of the Biblical narrative (2009, 144). Furthermore, Fuller identifies the carnivalesque as being notably present in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, not only in its communality of eating, the presentation of the Last Supper and the contrapuntal coincidence of sacred and profane, but in the physiognomic close-ups that denote Pasolini's affection for the body in his cinema. The figure of Christ is also identified by Fuller, in a Bakhtinian reading, as "the carnivalesque made flesh", a reading reinforced by the presentation of Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* as "a rogue Messiah of the material world whose presence overturns the official authority of Herod and the Jewish leaders" (2009, 145).

The parallel of the sacred and the carnivalesque, particularly in the form of the banquet, is also present in *La ricotta.* A recurrent motif in the film is the banquet-style trestle table laden with food, reminiscent of a Dutch seventeenth-century still-life painting. Indeed, although no specific memento mori is present, the array of ripe fruit may be read as a vanitas, indicating Pasolini's view of the meaninglessness of (bourgeois) life.[62] The desire for consumption associated with the Crucifixion translates, in the form of Stracci, into the more prosaic needs of eating and providing food. Stracci's frenetic eating, mirroring the film's

[62] These were common from medieval art onwards as a reminder of life's fleetingness; although the skull was the most common motif, ripe fruit was often used as a similar sign.

acceleration of his movement, and his eventual death through overeating and indigestion, also recalls Accattone's jump into the Tiber after eating a full meal and, later, his plan to ensure that only he and one other of his friends will get to eat pasta that they have stolen. The interlinking of thievery to food, sacrality and death is a recurrent motif in Pasolini's first three films as is the amalgamation of primal human needs with sacrality. Accattone, Ettore and Stracci all engage in acts of theft that lead to their subsequent deaths. For Accattone and Stracci, the stolen object is food; in all three cases, the ensuing death is conferred with Christological overtones.[63]

Pasolini's obsession with morbidity springs from the power of death to interrupt life in all its physical meaning. Conversely, we must consider that the double register of death that exists in *La ricotta* is complemented by multiple registers of life, as in the carnivalesque. Stracci is representative of the most primal and vital human instincts: he eats, he sleeps, he has fathered a clutch of children; even his costume of a sports jacket worn only with a loincloth and shoes speaks of his baser needs. The table laid in the style of a medieval banquet piled high with food signifies growth, harvest and the changing of the seasons, again a sign of the life force. The rather clumsy striptease that takes place as the crew eat their lunch speaks to both the sexual and the alimentary.

Stracci's odyssey from a Rabelaisian figure to a Christological one begins with a Christian gesture—he gives his lunch basket to his wife and family. After he has purchased the ricotta cheese, he goes to a cave to consume it, egged on by the actors who previously composed the *tableaux vivants*—now reformed in a sort of spontaneous *tableau vivant* underground—and who throw to him the food from the banquet table whose colour image, is as stated, indicative of the pictorial. Stracci, conversely, is isolated from the pictoriality of *La ricotta*, he does not appear in any of the colour sequences and is very deliberately placed in a filmic opposition to the characters who compose the *tableaux-vivants* scenes: in the cave scene, the equivalent of Stracci's Last Supper, he is shown in the accelerated rhythms of silent film, allying him, as Maurizio Viano points out, to Chaplin (1993, 101).

[63] Maurizio Viano, while not linking the thievery in *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* to the Passion, contends that it is, in part, symptomatic of Pasolini's homosexuality, which, in turn, serves as a support to my contention that the Passion is intricately linked in Pasolini's work with the erotic and the visceral (1993, 79)

Stracci's journey to buy the cheese—comparable, to extend the Christological analogy, to Christ's *via dolorosa*—is stressed by the long shots of Stracci's accelerated walk to his family in a nearby field and then a further journey from the cave and back to buy the ricotta.[64] However, while horizontal motion is stressed in these scenes, there is also a vertical component to this odyssey. When we first see him, Stracci is stretched on the ground; in a further stressing of the corporeality at play, his efforts to find food to eat are situated primarily in a subterranean cave: he is contained within the body of the earth.[65] After Stracci has consumed the entire cheese in addition to the food thrown to him—in a further stressing of his bestiality, Stracci is bound to the cross lying on the ground. Finally, as he dies, he is raised up on the cross, with the great and good of the city of Rome, who have arrived for a PR event, looking upwards towards him. John David Rhodes comments how the crucifixion of Stracci, a *borgataro*, presents an allegory of the position of the Roman subproletariat, "whose lives and deaths exist beneath and beyond the notice of bourgeois culture" (1995, 140). In the final scene of his last "Roman" film, Pasolini cannot be any clearer: his *borgate* characters, who form a chain from the novels *Ragazzi di vita (The Ragazzi,* 1955) and *Una vita violenta (A Violent Life,* 1959) through *Accattone* and *Mamma Roma* on to Stracci, are to be venerated and raised up, liked Christ, in their humanity, in their assimilation of the divine into the flesh, in their incarnation or "emptying out" of the transcendental into the immanent. In doing so, Pasolini injects the now-time of the Passion narrative, stripped of its religiosity, into Italy's Economic Miracle.

The theme of ascendant and descendant in relation to the sacred and the profane, as discussed with regard to Stracci's subterranean last supper and his raising on the cross, is recurrent in Pasolini's films of the early 1960s and may be read as an echo of Christianity's denotation of Heaven (as representative of the

[64] Pasolini himself undertakes a far more literal version of the Passion journey in *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.

[65] See Viano (1991, 102–3) for further exploration of the surface/underground dialectic in *La ricotta*. The earth-bound associations that Pasolini draws in relation to Stracci as representative of the lumpenproletariat are echoed in his depiction of Emilia, the maid in *Teorema*, who buries herself in the loose earth of a building site in what Robert Gordon identifies as an effort to purify the ground of the capitalist and bourgeois tendencies associated with construction and urban development (Commentary on *Theorem* DVD, BFI, 2007). Emilia's levitation in which she is raised aloft in a cruciform shape also echoes Stracci's death raised up on the cross. The earth/sky binary will also reoccur in the analysis of Godard's *Nouvelle vague.*

sacred, the sublime and the transcendent) as ascendant and Hell (as representative of the corporeal, the profane and the immanent) as descendant. However, in Pasolini's work these vertical elements are complemented by a similar distinguishing of the horizontal, to the extent that Pasolini seems to use the horizontal and the descendant vertical as counterpoint to the ascendant. In *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma* and *La ricotta*, the cruciform image appears in both ascendant and descendant forms: in the opening scene in *Accattone,* Accattone dives into the Tiber after a heavy meal to prove to his friends that he is not afraid of death.[66] The initial shot, in which we see Accattone flanked by the statue of a Bernini angel on the Ponte Sant'Angelo holding a cross, is taken from below so that we are raising our eyes upwards to the figure of Accattone. As his body moves and turns through the air, we see it become an inverted cruciform in contrast to the upright form of the statue. In the final scene of the film as Accattone lies dying on the ground, having been knocked off a motorbike in his unsuccessful getaway from the robbery they have committed, Balilla (Mario Cipriani, who also plays the role of Stracci in *La ricotta*) performs an inverted sign of the cross over him, thereby reprising Accattone's dive and stressing again the descendant vector. In *Mamma Roma*, Ettore is stretched out on a table, so that the camera is looking down on him, bound to the earth as it were, in a symbolic counterpoint to the physical height of his mother's new home in the public-housing project and to her metaphorically upwardly mobile pretensions.[67] In *La ricotta*, the opening shot of Stracci's head on the ground will be repeated when he is laid out on the cross. Contact with the ground is depicted several times during the three films as if Pasolini sought to provide in visual form a literal denotation of the protagonists' attachment to the earth.[68] Pasolini's horizontal representation of the Crucifixion is also present in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in the close-up shots of Christ's face on the cross that rotate the image by ninety degrees so that the head appears to be lying sideways. In this rotation to the

[66] Thus the scene bookends neatly with the final scene of the film in which Accattone dies.

[67] P. Adams Sitney remarks that, in Pasolini's early films, "upward mobility is a descent into hell" (1994, 179).

[68] The horizontal motif, rooted in the compositional techniques of the proto-Renaissance painters, is seen in the long walk scenes in the three films and in the horizontal group compositions recalling the horizontal compositions of Masaccio, as discussed earlier, such as the cast watching Stracci eat in the cave scene in *La ricotta*, the mourning group at the end of *Mamma Roma*, and a variety of group scenes in *Accattone*. It is also a prominent element of *Uccellacci e uccellini.*

horizontal axis, Pasolini equates his humanist hermeneutic of Christ to his portrayal of the subproletariat from the *borgate* in the forms of Accattone, Ettore and Stracci.

The motif of the inverted cruciform has further resonance that expands both the Christian and art-historical associations present in Pasolini's early films in that Peter requested to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy of being crucified in the same manner as Christ, a scene that Masaccio painted in *La Crocifissione di san Pietro* (*The Crucifixion of St. Peter*, 1426) (scenes from the life of St. Peter also figure prominently in Masaccio's Brancacci Chapel frescoes). Peter's humility and his stressing of his earth-bound condition, of which the upside-down crucifixion is seen as symbolic, mirror Pasolini's stressing of the immanent, with the inverted cross acting as a subtle motif.

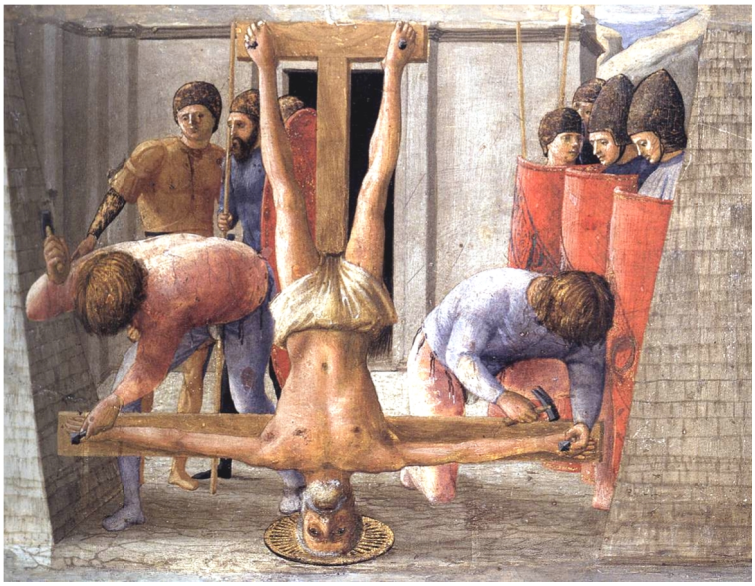


Fig. 16. Masaccio. *Crucifixion of St. Peter* (1426)



Fig. 17. *Accattone.* Accattone's dive

The association of the inverted cross to St. Peter also suggests a relationship between Pasolini's *contaminazione* technique and Erich Auerbach's analysis in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* of the Passion narrative as containing both elements of *sermo humilis* (low style) and *sermo sublimis* (high tragic style).[69] The depiction of a human being of the humblest origins, who suffers the most ignominious of deaths, being exalted to the most divine status was the first instance in Western literature of a mixture of both high and low styles, which had previously remained separate. Auerbach, in his analysis, particularly focuses on the figure of Peter. As he notes, Peter, a fisherman, was, like Christ, "of humblest background and humblest education", but the story of his denial of Christ together with his bravery, albeit compromised, to remain at the scene during the arrest of Christ is "replete with problem and tragedy" (1953, 41). Auerbach describes how, viewed in the context of the Roman Empire, the advent and arrest of Christ is "nothing but a provincial incident, an insignificant local occurrence", but for Peter it is tremendous. Auerbach's description of Peter as a "hero of much weakness" also evokes the figure of Accattone and, of course, Stracci and Ettore (1953, 42). In addition, his suggestion that Peter's narrative is "too serious for comedy, too contemporary and everyday for tragedy, politically too insignificant for history" rings true to the situation of Pasolini's three *borgatari* (1953, 45). Auerbach's analysis presents a coherent explanation of Pasolini's use of the inverted cross, whose form is indelibly associated with Peter and his flawed humanity, and, in turn, of the religiosity that Pasolini invests in his characters.

Expurgation in *La ricotta*

In *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Pasolini rids himself of the desire to locate a gospel-based film in its original landscape by visiting that landscape. One is therefore led to ask what purpose does *La ricotta*

[69] Maurizio Viano (1993, 75 and N.330) and Noa Steimatsky (2008, 126–127) identify this relationship, although neither specifically relates Auerbach's discussion of St. Peter, based on the Gospel of St. Mark, to Pasolini's use of the inverted Cross motif.

serve in the prologue to the filming of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* John David Rhodes provides a response to this question at a formal level:

> Perhaps Pasolini sensed some danger in turning his lens away from the misery of contemporary existence and training it on, instead, the representation of the life of Christ. *La ricotta* might therefore be seen to function as a pre-emptive exculpation of his own practice activated through the admission of his awareness of the dangers inherent in the mode of the historical epic. Understood thus, *La ricotta* functions as a type of meta-discursive and autobiographical allegory. (2007, 140)

Rhodes refers to *La ricotta* as "a purgative rite", suggesting that Pasolini wished to protect *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* from his cinematographic excesses (2007, 140). Similarly, I suggest that, through the making of *La ricotta*, Pasolini empties himself of the desire to invest his Gospel film with the personal, or certainly the intimately personal, by engaging in this "rite". Pasolini's own description of the film provides further evidence of his objectives in this respect:

> I have recreated [Rosso Fiorentino and Pontormo's] pictures in detail. Not because they share my point of view or because I love them—it is not about my representation in the first person—but rather just to show the inner state of the protagonist, a director conceiving a film about the Passion. This conception is the exact opposite of the one I used to make *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. The quotations also have something exorcistic about them; they are reconstructions of extreme precision, sophistication and formality: precisely what I did not want to do in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, and what I therefore foisted polemically onto the character of the director…It was not a polemic against bad taste, but rather against an excess of good taste. (Quoted in Bertolucci and Comolli 1981, 40. Author's translation.)

In the reference to the "exorcistic", I suggest that Pasolini is not only referring to art-historical tendencies, but also to a more visceral response that finds the physical trauma of the Crucifixion compelling. I will further argue that the humorous tone of *La ricotta* conceals an attempt to rid himself of the underlying

attraction to the notion of sacrifice. While the tone of the *tableaux-vivants* scenes is always humorous, I submit that the use of Mannerist depictions of the Deposition permits Pasolini to "exorcise" a response to the Crucifixion that would have complicated his aim to film *Il Vangelo second Matteo* as if through the eyes of a true believer. Just as *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* presented the director with an opportunity to resolve the problematic question of a sacred location for his forthcoming film, by choosing the re-enactment of Mannerist interpretations of the Deposition of Christ as the site for his allegorical crucifixion of Stracci, Pasolini empties himself of the homoerotic feelings he experienced as regards the Crucifixion in order to present a cooler, more reasoned reading of Matthew's Gospel in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. Furthermore, I argue that, in *La ricotta,* Mannerism enables him to process his more carnal responses to the Crucifixion in a way that the work of Masaccio, Giotto and della Francesca could not facilitate.

In the diegetic film being shot in *La ricotta,* the Passion of Christ is represented through re-enactments of Christian art. However, as viewers of Pasolini's film, we only see two of the diegetic film's *tableaux vivants.* These are two Mannerist paintings on the same theme: *La Deposizione* (*Deposition,* c. 1523–25) by Jacopo da Pontormo, also known as *Carriage to the Sepulchre*, and *Deposizione dalla Croce* (*Deposition* or *Descent from the Cross,* 1521) by Rosso Fiorentino. Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino were both pupils of the Florentine painter Andrea del Sarto (1486–1530) and studied under him at the same time. Together the two artists are credited as being the instigators of Florentine Mannerism.




Figs. 18 and 19.

Pontormo *Deposition* (1523–25); Rosso Fiorentino *Deposition* (1521)

Mannerism is almost the antithesis of the Trecento and Quattrocento aesthetics that Pasolini duplicates in his first two films. The proto-Renaissance painters' simplicity and symmetry of composition is in stark contrast to the elongated artificiality and complex composition of the later art-historical style, which surfaced in the declining years of the Renaissance and is viewed primarily as a transition between High Renaissance and Baroque, rather than as an actual movement. This aesthetic sea-change for Pasolini can be, in part, elucidated by a consideration of the advent of Mannerism, which, in reality, was a crisis of forms. The artists of the High Renaissance had conquered problems of draughtsmanship, composition, proportion and perspective and were deemed to have equalled or surpassed the classicism of their Greek and Roman predecessors. Thus, the artists of the next generation were perhaps the first of many to consider *quo vadis* in the wake of the artistic achievements of the High Renaissance. Many imitated the style or *maniera* of the great masters while trying to push beyond what they had achieved with increasingly complex poses and compositions. The younger artists' imitation of their predecessor's style was art imitating art, rather than nature. Formally, this was expressed in the distortion of the ideal proportions of the human body, highly complex poses, garish, dreamlike colour, what Alexander Rauch calls "a symphonic scale of chromatic

hues" and the disruption of the harmonious, symmetrical compositions characteristic of the High Renaissance (2005, 344).



Fig. 20. *La ricotta: tableau vivant* of Rosso Fiorentino's *Deposition*

Mannerism's distancing itself from the classicism of the High Renaissance and its deliberate attempts to distort the proportions of the human body to attain a denatured realism resemble the conscious artificiality of Pasolini's *contaminazione* technique.[70] Pasolini identifies himself with his "brothers that are no more", as he describes in "Poesie mundane", in their struggle to find a new formal language through citation.

Notwithstanding the above, Pasolini's use of the Mannerists to represent the stasis of an altarpiece is paradoxical. How can his citation of the hysteria of Mannerist movement be reconciled with his self-professed love for pictorial stasis? In the screenplay for *Mamma Roma* he remarks, with a comment that is striking for a filmmaker: "One can't think of an altar-piece with figures in movement. I hate the fact that figures move" (145–9, 1962a). Bearing this aversion to movement in mind, a chiastic equivalence exists between the Mannerists' striving to instil movement into the stasis of painting and Pasolini's attempts in his earlier films to impose stasis on the moving image. Pasolini's awareness of the problematical nature of both attempts arguably led him to the

[70] Steven Jacobs makes the interesting assertion that Pasolini's struggle with the heritage of neorealism equates to the Mannerist's similar challenge in relation to classical Renaissance models. (2011, 102)

challenge of recreating the writhing delirium of Mannerism in *tableau-vivant* form, thereby creating a tension between stasis and a motion that can barely be contained.

The aesthetic emphasis in Pasolini's cinema prior to *La ricotta* is on an almost sculptural form. *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma* and, subsequently, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* are all filmed in black and white, reflecting Pasolini's attempt to duplicate the chiaroscuro solidity of the proto-Renaissance figurative painters. When Pasolini speaks of figuration in Masaccio, he refers to it as "black and white", although the paintings are in colour (1962a, 145–9). For Pasolini, the relevance of the work lies in its figurative, almost Romanesque sculptural quality. However, in the shifting of his aesthetic focus to Mannerism, the issue of colour moves into focus. Colour is an essential aspect of the artifice inherent in the Mannerist style and, therefore, as we shall see, given Pasolini's visceral response to the colours in Pontormo's *Deposition*, its use in the *tableau-vivant* scenes of *La ricotta* was equally important.

La ricotta is the first instance of colour in Pasolini's films and it is used in a very deliberate way, being restricted to the *tableaux-vivants* scenes and the opening and closing shots. In his interviews with Oswald Stack, Pasolini states:

> to do a really good colour film you'd need a year or a year and a half to choose the right colours for every image, the ones you really need and not the twenty or thirty colours you always find in the cinema. So *La ricotta* was easy; I just reproduced exactly the colours used by Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino. (1969, 63)

Robert Gordon describes Pasolini's fascination with extracting colour from plants for his own painting practice as "almost fetishistic, synaesthetic", using the example from the poem "La ricerca di casa":

> I could
> also go back to the marvellous phase
> of painting…
> I can already feel my five or six beloved colours
> giving off their sharp perfumes (1996, 148).

However, Pasolini's synaesthesia as regards Pontormo's colour is more haptic than olfactory. His rapturous lyricism both describes the colours of Pontormo's original *Deposition* and how he envisages the translation of these colours to the screen. He renders the colours by imagining a narrative for each one. For instance, his description of Pontormo's red is as follows:

> Take some poppies that have been left in the sunlight of a melancholy afternoon when all is still, as in the scorching heat of a cemetery (for no woman ever sang at three o'clock in the afternoon). Then pound them until a juice comes out which dries immediately; dilute this with a little water upon a spotlessly white canvas, and ask a child to draw a damp finger over the resultant liquid. At the centre of his finger mark a pale, pale red will appear, almost a pink but made radiant by the brilliant white underneath it; at the edges of the finger mark a thin streak of strong and precious red will form, only very slightly faded. This will dry immediately, becoming opaque as if it were laid on top of a layer of lime…Yet in that papery fading away its vivid redness will be preserved, dead. (1992, 480. Author's translation.)

Pasolini proceeds to describe Pontormo's green as the green of the uniform of soldiers "who fill the ossuaries of the world with the memory of this colour cloth" and provides further detailed descriptions of a second green, a second red, a brown, a white, a pink and a yellow (1992, 481). Giuseppe Zigaina likens the description to an alchemical text: "in Pasolini's description, the atmosphere of expectation and magic, which is precisely that of early alchemical practices, itself becomes an indispensable element for capturing the uniqueness, the fleeting, ghost-like, apparition of those colours" (1991, 40). Pasolini's description may also be compared to a similarly dramatic description of Rosso Fiorentino's *Deposition* by Linda Murray:

> The light is not a normal illumination nor even a poetic evocation: the scene is lit as if by lightning, and in the blinding flash the figures are frozen in their attitudes and even in their thoughts, while the great limp body of the dead Christ, livid green with reddish hair and beard, dangles

> perilously as His dead weight almost slips from the grasp of the men straining on the ladders. (2003, 158)

Considering how similarly the two *tableaux vivants* are presented in the film, with little distinction being made between the two re-enactments, Murray's description, read in conjunction with Pasolini's description of Pontormo's colours, illustrates the stylistic similarities between the two paintings, particularly as regards the lurid colours and corporeal emphasis, which leads me to suggest that Pasolini works almost interchangeably between the two paintings.

The ecstatic, poetic narratives that Pasolini attributes to Pontormo's colours are reflective of the note of exquisite suffering in the Deposition. This tenor is heightened by the painting's composition, which differs enormously from that of Masaccio's work and other early Renaissance painters. The sculptural solidity and stillness that Pasolini had faithfully imitated is replaced by a delirium of movement, which creates a vortex with nothing at its centre but a white cloth. Surrounding this vortex is an extraordinary level of physical contact between the figures portrayed. The bodies overlap and touch, so that there is hardly any space unfilled by cloth or figure. This is mirrored in Pasolini's haptic, sensual description of the painting. However, Pasolini re-enactments add extra figures to both paintings: young men clad in white on either side of each painting, a reflection of the compositional difficulties of re-enacting "portrait"-format paintings on film. As Derek Jarman remarks, with respect to re-enacting Caravaggio's work for his eponymous film (1986), "Michele Caravaggio lacked foresight. Painting his major works without attention to the vital dimensions of the cinema screen 1:1.75, he made certain that he would fall foul of the capricious whims of film directors" (1986, 34).

In his choice of two paintings with the Deposition as their subject, Pasolini is perhaps influenced by an erotic fantasy he once described, in which he imagines himself being crucified in the place of Christ:

> In my fantasies there was expressly the desire to imitate Christ in his sacrifice for others, to be condemned to death and killed although innocent. I saw myself hanging from the cross, nailed to it. My thighs were scantily covered by a light piece of cloth and a huge crowd was

> looking at me. That public martyrdom became for me something voluptuous and sometimes I was nailed to the cross completely nude…With my arms spread out, my hands and feet nailed, I was utterly defenceless, lost. (1986, xx)

Although Pasolini's fantasies refer to a Crucifixion, the theme of the Deposition lends itself more easily to the notion of a crowd encircling Christ, as we see in both the *Deposition* paintings, than does the more minimalist composition of a Crucifixion.[71] In the rapture and delirium of the Mannerists' portrayal of the Deposition, and particularly the large groups in both depictions, I suggest that Pasolini sees the visual realisation of his erotic fantasies. The lack of a supporting structure in the Deposition scene, with the exception of other bodies, highlights the sense of the descendant and the notion of flesh rather than bone. Indeed, the conjunction of Mannerist aesthetics, particularly heightened colour and contorted figuration, with the theme of the Deposition leads Pasolini into what Michael Hardt terms the "potentiality of the flesh" (2001, 82). Thus, the re-enactment of two Deposition paintings highlights the incarnation of Christ, which, in its most literal sense, is God made flesh. In contrast to Maurizio Viano, who claims that the choice of two paintings on the same subject suggests that the subject matter itself is not important, I argue that the Deposition was of great import for Pasolini, particularly in the light of his own erotic crucifixion fantasies and his admiration for the ecstatic style of Mannerist painting (1993, 107).

The scene of the Deposition portrays Christ at his most mortal, no longer even aloft and supported by the cross for his followers and family to raise their eyes up to him.[72] The iconographic image of the Crucifixion is replaced at the Deposition by Christ as truly mortal, in that he is not living and not resurrected, the true relevance of the mortality that death confers becomes apparent, as Pasolini is fully aware: "*it is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves*" (2005, 237. Emphasis in original). For Pasolini, both the Crucifixion and the Deposition are representative of a monist form of being in which immanence and transcendence become one, or more clearly stated, the

[71] It also dispenses with the heavily iconicised symbol of the Cross, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4 in relation to Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.
[72] In this regard, it is of interest to note that, while the Deposition refers to the physical descent of Christ's body from the cross, a synonym for deposition is deconsecration.

transcendent is contained within the immanent and the divine becomes human. This theme is pervasive throughout Pasolini's oeuvre, which forms a melting pot in which transcendence and divinity are blended with carnality and the corporeal resulting in a uniquely Pasolinian mixture. For Pasolini, Christ not only represented the incarnation of the divine but, crucially, the incarnation of his own belief that the transcendental is contained in the material. Michael Hardt, in his essay "Exposure: Pasolini in the Flesh", deals comprehensively with this theme. His analysis is based on Pasolini's poem "La crocifissione" ("The Crucifixion") in which his crucifixion fantasies and his subjective identification with Christ are clearly evidenced.[73]

Hardt speaks of the self-emptying or *kenosis* of Christ wherein the transcendental form is emptied into the material, resulting in essence and existence being one and the same, contained in the flesh. The figure of Christ is often seen as a mediator of the external relationship between divine essence and worldly existence; however, Hardt contends that the incarnation or self-emptying of Christ disallows any exteriority and hence the need for mediation. He comments:

> Incarnation is the claim that there is no opposition and no mediation necessary between the transcendent and the immanent, but an intimate

[73] "All His wounds are open to the sun/And He dies under the eyes/Of everyone: even His mother /
Under His breast, belly and knees,/Watches His body suffer./Dawn and dusk cast light/on His open arms and April/softens His exhibition of death/to gazes that burn Him.

Why was Christ EXPOSED on the cross?/Oh, the heart shudders at the naked/Body of the youth… atrocious/Offence to its raw modesty…/The sun and the gazes! The ultimate voice asked God forgiveness/With a sob of red shame/In a sky without sound,/Between His fresh and weary/ Pupils; death, sex and pillory./You must expose yourself (is this what the/Poor nailed-up Christ teaches?), /The clarity of the heart is worthy/Of every sneer, every sin/Every more naked passion…
(is this what the Crucifix means?/Sacrifice every day the gift/Renounce every day forgiveness.
Cast yourself ingenuous over the abyss).

We will be offered on the cross, /On the pillory, between the pupils/Limpid with ferocious joy,
Leaving open to irony the drops of blood from the breast to the knees,/Gentle and ridiculous, trembling
With intellect and passion in the play/Of the heart burning from its fire,/Testifying to the scandal." (Translation Michael Hardt 2002, 77–78)

> complementarity. This immanent transcendence is the innermost exteriority of being, the potentiality of the flesh. (2001, 581–582)

The conjoining of the immanent and transcendent in the flesh of Christ is fundamental to the affinity Pasolini feels, particularly to the Christ figure in its crucified and deposed form. Hardt suggests that, rather than the formality of incarnation at birth, the real incarnation of Christ occurs on the cross, where Christ is "abandoned to the divinity of the flesh" (2001, 79). This exposure of the flesh holds an erotic charge for Pasolini, which in its very morbidity is life affirming ("offered on the cross…pupils limpid with ferocious joy").

In the *Noli me tangere* episode in the Gospel of St. John, Christ forbids Mary Magdalene to touch him, when she at first mistakes him for a gardener in the Garden of Gethsemane after his Resurrection. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, in relation to Godard's *Je vous salue Marie*. Jean-Luc Nancy, in his reading of art-historical paintings depicting this event, reflects on the possible causes for Christ's instruction, describing His post-Crucifixion, post-Resurrection state as a place of the impossible:

> Holding oneself in the place of the impossible comes down to holding oneself to where man is at his limit, that of his violence and his death. At this limit, he collapses or exposes himself and, in one way or another, necessarily loses his bearings. That is why this place can only be a place of vertigo or scandal, the place of the intolerable at the same time as that of the impossible. This violent paradox is not to be resolved; it remains the place of gap that is as intimate as it is irreducible: "Don't touch me". (2008a, 52)

In this description, referring to the still incarnate stage subsequent to Crucifixion and Resurrection, Pasolini's paradoxical yearning for a similar physical martyrdom to Christ also finds explanation, containing as it does the elements of *jouissance* that so appeal to him: collapse, scandal, violence and physical limits,

which again return us to the notion of an immanent transcendence or to use Nancy's term, a "transimmanence".[74]

Bacon's Fragmented Crucifixions

The paintings of Francis Bacon and Gilles Deleuze's reading of the same, provide a constructive parallel to Pasolini's stressing, via the Mannerists, of the fetishistic elements of the Deposition, the carnal and the fragmented. Returning to Hardt and his Deleuzian reading of Pasolini's "Crucifixion" poem:

> Even the term "body" often seems insufficient for Pasolini. It is too caught in the discontinuous and hierarchical functions of various organs…Pasolini prefers to think of "members" and "limbs" [membra] or simply "flesh" [carne]. Flesh is the vital materiality of existence. Flesh certainly refers to matter, a passionately charged, intense matter, but it is always equally intellectual. It is not opposed to or excluded from thought or consciousness. Rather, the paths of thought and existence are all traced on the flesh. Flesh subtends existence; it is its very potentiality. (2001, 82)

Compare this with Deleuze's analysis of the "becoming-animal" in Bacon's paintings:

> The body is the Figure, not the structure…This objective zone of the indiscernible was to start with the whole body, but the body in terms of flesh or meat. Without any doubt the body also has bones, but bones are only spatial structure. Distinctions have often been made between flesh and bones, and even between relationships of flesh and bone. The body only reveals itself when it ceases to be supported by the bones. (2005, 15–16)

The distinction between flesh and bone in Bacon and Pasolini is equally present in the Mannerists, particularly in the work of Pontormo, El Greco and

[74] Nancy uses this term in relation to art being the transcendence of immanence: "the transcendence of an immanence that does not go outside itself in transcending" (1996, 35).

Parmigianino, in which the figuration is disassociated from the skeletal structure and a certain autonomy is conferred on the body's flesh.[75] Bacon's figuration and coloration, what Cohen describes as "his stylistic distortions of body or visage—the mangled, lacerated features, the radical contortions or mutilation of limbs" recalls the style of the Mannerists (1997). Furthermore, in his well-known representation of the face, particularly the mouth open in a scream, a radical re-working can be seen of what Linda Murray describes in Pontormo's faces and their open mouths as "a screen upon which the emotions, chiefly of griefs and anxiety, are reflected" (2003, 152).[76] The similarities inherent in the triad formed by the Mannerists, Pasolini and Bacon are also extended by a cursory analysis of the composition of Bacon's *Fragment of a Crucifixion* (1950) and Rosso Fiorentino's *Deposition*, which, in its intensity, almost prefigures Bacon's radicalised crucifixions.[77] Murray describes the latter painting's "violent and emotional expressiveness, which overrides everything else, and seeks only to provoke in the spectator a thrill of horror and grief comparable with that which shattered the men and women who helped to lift Christ from the cross and bury Him", while Paoletti and Radke describe Pontormo's Deposition as "a spasm of emotional reaction to Christ's death"—both descriptions being appropriate to the internalised, tortured images in Bacon's painting (Murray 2003, 158; Paoletti and Radke 2005, 446). In *Fragment of a Crucifixion*, Bacon almost seems to engage in a literal reproduction of the central "fragment" of Rosso's painting in the *crux commissa* (the tau or T-shaped cross) and central figures of Christ and the elderly figure leaning over the cross above him.[78] However, in Bacon's version, the elderly man in the original painting and Pasolini's somewhat comic interpretation

[75] Paoletti and Radke refer to the "liquid figure of Christ" in Pontormo's *Deposition* (2005, 446).
[76] Bacon attributed this trope to an intermedial mimesis of the nurse's scream from the Odessa Steps sequence in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). He also acknowledged that it was influenced by the mother's scream in Poussin's *Massacre des Innocents* (*Massacre of the Innocents*, 1625–1629) (Peppiatt 2006, 35).
[77] In *Teorema*, Pasolini directly cites *Three Studies for Figures at the Base on a Crucifixion* (1944); I will return to a more detailed discussion of this citation in Chapter Four.
[78] "The Crux Commissa is a cross of crucifixion in which the upright shaft (the *Stipes*) does not extend higher than the transverse beam (the *Patibulum*). In Crucifixion scenes artists used this form for the two thieves who were crucified with Christ in order to differentiate clearly between him and them. In the west, it became widespread to show the thieves tied, not nailed" (Earls 1987, 75). In Pasolini's *tableau vivant* the *crux commissa* is not replicated for reasons that are not clear, given that the painting is otherwise so faithfully re-enacted.

of this figure are transformed into a far more primal entity, a savage dog-like creature.

The interwoven themes of violence, subjectivity and sexuality in the Crucifixion are equally present in the Mannerist painters and are examined by Rebecca Zorach in relation to Rosso's *Deposition* (2005, 79–80). While this thesis is not oriented towards a gender-studies perspective, in discussing Zorach's gendered reading of the painting, I should acknowledge that the homoerotic element evident in Pasolini and Bacon's work also exists in the work of Rosso Fiorentino and Pontormo. Sixteenth-century attitudes to homoeroticism preclude the possibility of decisively declaring these two artists as homosexual, however, a marked element of homoeroticism exists in the work of both the Mannerist painters considered here. Zorach remarks that Rosso's oeuvre is "replete with sensually broken bodies, mainly Christ figures depicted with near ecstatic facial expressions and limp poses" (2005, 78). In relation to his Volterra *Deposition*, she comments that "Christ's green body is literally de-incarnated, as if stripped of the pinkish flesh colour or *incarnato* that normally would have covered the layer of greenish ground with which painters typically began human figures", a description reminiscent of Deleuze's text relating to the separation of flesh from body in Bacon's *Fragment of a Crucifixion* and Hardt's identification of the favouring of flesh in Pasolini's poem "Crucifixion" (2005, 72). As regards subjective identification with Christ, Zorach points out that a personal *imitatio Christi* is evident in Rosso's depiction of Christ with red hair, as Rosso was a redhead himself (his real name being Giovanni Batista di Jacopo, "Rosso" and "Fiorentino" denoting his colouring and origin, respectively). As with Pasolini, Rosso's subjective identification with the Christ figure is entwined with desire: "Christ, as religious object of devotion, might well serve as a pretext for entertaining more carnal kinds of grief and desire" (2005, 79). Finally, while Zorach acknowledges that sixteenth-century sexuality cannot be read in the same way as contemporary sexuality, she argues that in his identification with the "physical torments…[of] the broken body of Christ and the grief-stricken ones that are left behind…a sense of his sensual identification with the anguish of Christ's sacrifice can be derived" (2005, 80).

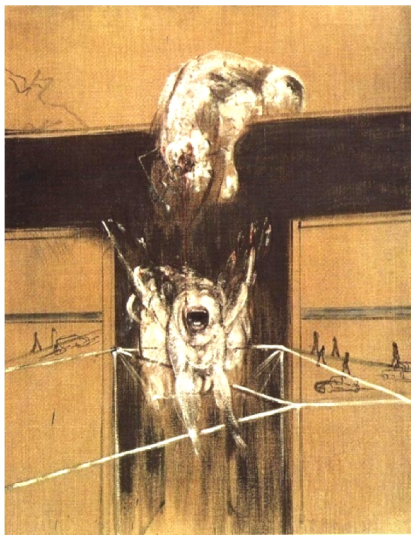


Fig. 21. Francis Bacon. *Fragment of a Crucifixion* (1950)

Returning to Nancy's reading of Christ's experience of the *Noli me tangere,* we find a parallel in the notion of the sensual, but here felt in the aftermath of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, as if any further physical contact, even the slightest physical touch, would be unbearable to endure, given the trauma undergone previously:

> Or else, [instead of as a violent threat] the phrase resonates less as an order than as a plea made in an excess of pain or pleasure [*jouissance*]. Don't touch me, for I cannot bear this pain on my wounds any longer—or this intense pleasure, aggravated to the point of becoming intolerable....It is the explosion in which suffering can enjoy and enjoying can suffer. Don't wish it, don't even try to touch this point of rupture, for indeed, I would be shattered by it. (2005a, 3)

Nancy's interpretation of the *Noli me tangere*, detached from the overly iconised Crucifixion, reconfigures the *jouissance* identified by the Mannerists and Pasolini in the death of Christ, thus giving it further depth and a basis on which this desire to be at the limit of physical experience, whether in pain or pleasure, can be better understood. Returning to the descendant motif discussed previously, the immanent emphasis on flesh is visually reflected in the downward motion of Bacon's crucifixions and Pontormo and Rosso's Depositions both in the original and in their cinematic re-enactment—indeed Pasolini's version tends

to emphasise the gravity and downward motion further, particularly with respect to Pontormo. In Pontormo's original, the group of figures seem to hover just above the ground, while, in Pasolini's diegetic film, the earth's gravitational pull is more prominent: the extras cannot sustain the weight of Christ's dead body and fall in a combined heap on the ground.[79] Bacon's abstract figuration allows him to stretch the crucifixion theme into a carnal descent; however, it is necessary for the Mannerists to focus on the deposed Christ to evince the notion of human flesh, unsupported and earth-bound.

Deleuze remarks as regards Bacon's crucifixions:

> Already in the crucifixions, what interests Bacon is the descent and the inverted head that reveals the flesh. In the crucifixions of 1962 and 1965, we can see the flesh literally descending from the bones, framed by an armchair-cross and a bone-lined ring…Meat is the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility; it is a "fact" a state where the painter identifies with the object of his horror and his compassion. The painter is certainly a butcher, but he goes to the butcher's shop as if it were a church, with the meat as the crucified victim. Bacon is a religious painter only in butchers' shops. (Deleuze 2005, 17)

Deleuze sees Bacon's compassion for the butchered meat that represents the body as being centred on the mouth: "the howl through which the entire body escapes, and from which the flesh descends…(t)his is what Bacon calls the Scream, in the immense pity that the meat evokes" (2005, 19).[80] Pasolini also stresses the descendant as previously discussed, but his emphasis on descent, like Bacon and his compassion for flesh, is not self-righteous or moralistic, rather it is compassionate and sympathetic and, as seen in his poetry, subjective:

> In the faint stench of a slaughterhouse
> I see the image of my body:

[79] Paoletti and Radke point out that it is unlikely that the "balletically positioned" kneeling male figure, who is balancing on his toes, would be able to support a dead body (2005, 446).

[80] In relation to Passion iconography in the slaughterhouse scenes in Fassbinder's *In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden* (*In a Year of Thirteen Moons,* 1978), Brigitte Peucker refers to Bataille's comment: "The slaughterhouse emerges from religion insofar as the temples of time past…had a dual purpose, being used both for supplication and for slaughter" (quoted in Peucker 2007, 123).

half-naked, forgotten, almost dead.
This is how I want to be crucified,
With a flash of tender horror,
Since childhood, already an automaton
of my love.
("L'ex vita". Translation Michael Hardt (2002, 81))[81]

Along with a fixation on the flesh, Bacon also shares with Pasolini—and the Mannerists—a "contamination" tendency that is rooted in the sacred and the classical. He borrows from Poussin, Velazquez, and Ingres, leading David Cohen to compare his approach to the Mannerists: "[J]ust as the 16th century Mannerists subverted the classical perfection of Raphael so Bacon repeatedly took up artists of calm and measure in seeming contrast to his own sensibility" (Cohen 1997). Indeed, an overlap exists in the classical and mythical subjects that appealed to Pasolini and Bacon, perhaps due to a common element of sado-masochism in their work. Alongside the Crucifixion, the two also produced work based on Aeschylus' *Orestes*. Pasolini had hoped to film his *Orestes* in Africa, whose recent history Pasolini saw as synthesised in the story of the Oresteia, with that continent forming the basis for his second "sopralluogho" *Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana* (*Notes towards an African Orestes,* 1970)—which is, once again, what Laura Rascaroli terms a "notebook film" for a film that will never be made (2009, 146–169). Bacon's *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* also takes *Orestes* as its inspiration, particularly as regards the figures of the Furies. In a further parallel that reflects the fragmentary discussed in Pasolini's work, Bacon never completed the Crucifixion painting for which these studies were carried out, although he did return to the subject of the Furies in his 1975 *Triptych*.[82]

In Aeschylus' story, Orestes kills his mother Clytemnestra in revenge for her murder of his father Agamemnon, who, in turn, killed his daughter Iphighenia. The Erinyes or Furies, three infernal deities who torment those who

[81] Published in *Bestemmia*. 1991. Milan: Garzanti.
[82] Michael Peppiatt claims that *Painting 1946* represents the Crucifixion painting that is the rightful altarpiece to the "predella" of the three panels of the Eumenides. His description of this piece is reminiscent of Pasolini's self-representation as the crucified Christ in his poetry: "a crucifixion at once as grand as an Old Master and as profane as a street hoarding, an image that tore away the false comfort of religion and exposed once more the human condition as it always will be: no more grand or meaningful when crucified than an animal carcass hung in a butcher's shop" (2006, 17).

commit crimes against blood relatives, pursue Orestes. Athena, the goddess of Reason, suggests that Orestes be judged by trial, in which she defends him. Orestes receives an acquittal and the Erinyes transform into the Eumenides, who are representative of the presence of the dark, irrational underworld in the world of Reason. Pasolini's idea for an African Oresteia was based on the idea that pre-colonial African culture should be transformed like the Erinyes into Eumenides—Western reason taking the place of Athena, an idea that most commentators see as rife with ethnocentricity and cultural colonialism. However, what is of interest here is how the idea that the primal and pre-rational, in the form of the Erinyes, transformed into the Eumenides in the new world of Reason, holds such sway over both Pasolini and Bacon. The latter described himself as obsessed with the line from the Oresteia "the reek of human blood smiles out at me", as spoken by the Furies in relation to their unrest at an unavenged murder (quoted in Peppiatt 2008, 34). Pasolini's reading of the transformation of the Erinyes is as follows:

> The Furies are the Gods of a tradition—a savage tradition, grounded in blood and pervaded by terror—who in the end are not destroyed by the Goddess of Reason (Athena), but transformed: they remain as irrational, archaic divinities, but rather than presiding over horrible, obsessive, degrading dreams, they preside instead over works of poetry, of fantasy, of feeling. (Quoted in Rohdie 1995, 87)

In this regard, a rather ambitious analogy might be drawn between the relationship of *La ricotta* to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and the relationship of the Erinyes to Eumenides. Setting aside *La ricotta*'s superficially comedic aspect, its tone is darker and closer to the themes that tormented Pasolini: man's inhumanity to man, hunger, injustice, ignorance and, on a more sensual level, as I have discussed, the carnal nature of the Crucifixion. I suggest that *La ricotta* acts as Pasolini's dreamed version of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, not entirely the "horrible, obsessive, degrading dreams" of the Erinyes but analogous nonetheless, in contrast with the work presented in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, in which the rational predominates alongside the archaic that resides in the landscape and the faces of the Southern Italian extras.

Pasolini's—and, indeed, Bacon's—oeuvre incarnate this very idea of the savage "grounded in blood and pervaded by terror" translated, though not wholly altered, into a creative impetus. This creativity tainted by darkness and the savage gives rise to a fascination with cannibalism, sadomasochism, crucifixion and "irrational, archaic divinities" such as the Furies. Hardt notes that "to live the violence of experience in the flesh, make our pain a mode of intensity and joy. This is the miracle that Pasolini sees in the crucifixion" (2001, 81).

As determined above, this is the attraction of death, not as an end in itself but "as a negative limit that highlights, in contrast, life's affirmation" (Hardt 2001, 80). The embracing of pain as life-affirming is a common element between carnality and a certain form of asceticism. The distinction between these two approaches, which are superficially quite opposed, can be unclear, particularly in a Christological sense, thereby introducing into the notion of the divine the undercurrent of primeval suffering and torment, as depicted by the Furies. Pasolini's willingness to incorporate the archaic into the modern and the infernal into the sacred allows the mediation of these anachronistic elements in his work, which finds analogy in both Bacon's translation of the Furies, netherworld deities, to the foot of the cross and the Mannerists' ecstatically carnal reworking of classical themes.

Pasolini's work attempts to re-site the sacred in the human and thus in the myriad possibilities that the term "human" suggests. This is evident from his treatment of the marginalised figures of the Economic Miracle to his fantasies of the crucified erotic self that is located in Mannerist imagery and finds analogy in Francis's Bacon's depictions of tortured flesh. In doing so, he reflects Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the sacred taken from the temple in a post-religious world and being present in the world. This presence in the world is akin to Christ's entry into human flesh in the Gospel narratives and His being present in that flesh. Nancy contends that the obsession to make the absent present through the incarnation of that which has no body or substance is fundamental to the Christian tradition (2008c, 3–5,), while elsewhere, he contends that, in its emphasis on origin, Christianity sews the seeds of its own end and deconstruction (2008b, 149). Pasolini prefigures these two arguments in filmic form, deploying the art-historical, particularly the proto-renaissance and Mannerist artists as a source around which he could base his location of the

sacred within the corporeal, while, as a non-Christian, albeit seduced by Christian iconography, applying the notion of the sacred in the flesh to a world from which God has withdrawn. The Christian notion of the divine incarnate for Pasolini becomes the incarnate as sacred, the two melded in a state of immanence, thus prefiguring Nancy's work in this regard.[83] In "Visitation: Of Christian Painting", Nancy comments that:

> "a being-there of the beyond" provides a summation of Christianity, and perhaps also the point of departure, within itself, for its own deconstruction, that is, its own stripping away of its religious character, opening at once, in a formidable ambivalence, that which structures the twofold possibility of the world insofar as it begins in the West: nihilism…and…eternity. (Nancy 2005, 124)

Pasolini's fascination with death, which I shall examine further in Chapter Four in my analysis of *La rabbia*, and the sacred and classical worlds, encapsulates these two possibilities of nihilism and eternity, while also reinforcing the many paradoxes at the heart of his work.

[83] Jean-Luc Nancy observes this in some respects in his "Sacred World" lecture to the EGS when he comments on the "holiness" of the work of Pasolini, while acknowledging him as a non-believer.

Chapter 2
Godard's passion for the image

'I recall Christianity as the first film; it's there in all painting, it is something literature hasn't done.' (Godard in Godard and Ishaghpour 2005, 98)

While the films in Pasolini's oeuvre relating to art history and Christianity mostly occur in a group in the early 1960s, the films in which art and the sacred coincide in Jean-Luc Godard's far longer career predominantly occur in the period that commences on his return to feature-film making in the 1980s, and, from which, in this chapter I shall consider *Passion*, and its video essay *Scénario du film Passion*. However, first, I propose to return to the early 1960s, to *Vivre sa vie*, a film made only a year after Pasolini's *Accattone* and, as I shall show, one that bears much resemblance, within the parameters considered, to that directorial debut.

In Godard's films examined in this chapter and the next, while the viewer is acutely aware of the presence, or certainly the trace of a Christological tone, it can prove elusive to analyse. This is normal in Godard's work: certain themes are defined by their absence and often their substitution. An example of this, albeit unrelated to the sacred, is provided in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* (*Slow Motion*, 1979). Godard had asked the writer Marguerite Duras to appear in the film as herself, but she had refused, allowing only that a taped interview between Godard and herself be used in the film. The repercussions of this are seen in two consecutive scenes. In the first scene, Paul Godard (Jacques Dutronc), the film's protagonist, tells a class of film students, who have apparently just watched Duras's *Le Camion* (*The Truck,* 1977), that Duras is in the building but will not come into the class. Paul, when asked to say a few words instead, chooses to read some lines from the screenplay of *Le Camion* in which Duras talks about her work. He then says to the class, as a truck passes by outside, "Whenever you see a truck passing by, think of it as the passing word of a woman". In the following scene, Paul is in the car, having ostensibly just dropped Duras to the airport. We hear a taped recording of Duras's voice, saying, "Writing is almost like disappearing, it's being behind something". Godard later claimed that Duras was right not to have appeared in the film and that she "had contributed something

through her non-presence, she had contributed more than presence" (Godard 1980, 17. Author's translation). The idea of non-presence contributing more than presence pervades Godard's work. In *Vivre sa vie*, the only explicit reference to Christianity in the film is the clip of Carl Theodor Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, which is discussed below, and yet the allusion to Christian martyrdom and the *via dolorosa* that Nana, the film's protagonist, travels is unmistakable. While the reference to art and the act of artistic creation is made clear in "The Oval Portrait" scene in the film, the relationship between the film and the sacred requires a more concerted delving into its constitutive elements.[84] Thus, the feminine in relation to the sacred and, to use Godard's own term, the "non-presence" of the Christological, will act as supports in my analysis of Passion iconography and the pictorial in *Vivre sa vie.*

2.1 *Vivre sa vie* and the devotional image.

In *Vivre sa vie*, Nana (Anna Karina) works in a record store and struggles to earn sufficient money to pay her rent. She wants to become an actress, but instead turns to prostitution. Her pimp, Raoul (Sady Rebbot), treats her harshly. She then becomes involved with another man and attempts to end her relationship with Raoul; however, he trades her to other pimps. During the handover of Nana, fighting breaks out and she is shot. In the final scene of the film, she lies dead in the middle of the road, like Accattone, as the various cars drive off.

The similarities between the characters of Nana and Accattone and the way in which the respective directors set their all-too-human protagonists out as Christian martyrs, using Passion iconography as support, deserves consideration. The transference of a sacred aesthetic to a profane, morally transgressive protagonist is common to both films. In her essay on *Vivre sa vie,* Susan Sontag comments that the film is "an exhibit…that exposes the inexorability of an event" (2001, 199). This inexorability, reminiscent of the narrative of *Accattone*, connects the two young protagonists of both films and the fate that they will

[84] In Godard's later films the Christological becomes far more visible as his allegory of the cinema as church gains momentum. As will be discussed, the culmination of this thought is seen in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* when, for the first time, Godard directly cites art-historical images of the Passion, albeit mediated through excision and superimposition, but in what nevertheless might be viewed as a return to the source of the image (both art-historical and cinematic).

suffer within their respective diegeses. The two films not only relate to a Christological martyrdom, but also to Joan of Arc as martyr, specifically as figured by Dreyer in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. The associations between *Accattone* and that film have been considered in Chapter One; likewise, in *Vivre sa vie* the associations are unmistakably legible, as Godard effectively collages that film into his film.

Unlike Pasolini, who sought to maintain a direct, traceable link to his pictorial referents, Godard's influences are multi-nodal, demanding that any analysis undergo a process of uncovering intricate layers as if dealing with a palimpsest, until the originating image or influence is located. In this respect, the influences brought to bear in the films discussed in this chapter are almost all mediated through silent film. Like Pasolini, Godard idealised the silent film form, seeing it as exemplifying film at its most visual, when words were secondary to image. The influence of silent film is present in *Vivre sa vie* as is evidenced not only by the direct citation of Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* but also, as Harun Farocki comments, by the episode in Tableau Twelve in which the young man and Nana converse with each other in intertitles; in doing so, Harun Farocki, referring back to Dreyer's film, suggests that *Vivre sa vie*'s "aspiration to become a silent film is finally realized" (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 12).[85]

Vivre sa vie's unlikely relationship to art history is established through various channels, the most obvious of which are the static close-ups of Nana, which, as I shall discuss, resemble devotional images; also, the film is divided into twelve tableaux, giving the impression of both book chapters and pictorial tableaux.[86] Tableau Twelve, particularly, is an intermedial tour-de-force in which Godard connects his film to both painting and literature. The young man (Peter Kassowitz) with whom Nana has entered into a relationship reads a passage from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oval Portrait" (1845), in which the narrator tells the story of an artist who becomes obsessed with the painted image of his wife; this image eventually "lives" through her death, an event which the artist hardly

[85] Silent film is also suggested in the black bobbed wig that Karina wears, reminiscent of both Louise Brooks and, to a certain extent, Falconetti's short hairstyle before her head is shaved in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*.

[86] Godard's structure of the film is a kind of pun in itself: "Since it's a 'tableau' [painting] of somebody, I had to do it with [theatrical] 'tableaux' (Godard quoted in Brody 2008, 132).

notices, so engrossed is he in attempting to confer life on his painting. As Silverman and Farocki observe, the autobiographical tone in this scene is marked, particularly as Godard reads the passage by Poe (1998, 27). The image of Anna Karina dominates while the young man is completely excluded almost throughout the scene, although the words spoken are ostensibly his. Godard intones to Karina's image: "it's our story: a painter portraying his love". The two were married at the time of filming *Vivre sa vie*, but were experiencing severe difficulties in their relationship. The scene is interpreted by Douglas Morrey as an apologia to Karina from Godard for his treatment of her and for his obsession with cinema and the image (2005, 44). However, with respect to the thesis, the scene is of interest in that it underscores Godard's sacralising of the image and the double register he obtains by simultaneously presenting Nana's narrative together with the non-diegetic narrative relating to his marriage.

In the opening sequence, prior to Tableau One, we see a long, almost static close-up of Nana first in left profile, then full face for a similar amount of time and then in right profile. The lighting is subdued and the background is dark. While in "The Oval Portrait" scene in Tableau Twelve, Godard will use Poe's text to describe his portraiture of Anna Karina/Nana (the distinction between the two is deliberately ambiguous on the director's part) as being similar to that of the American nineteenth-century portrait painter Thomas Sully, the solidity and minimal simplicity of the cinematic portrait studies that Godard employs in this opening sequence are closer to Quattrocento portraiture than to the three-quarter head-and-shoulder views of nineteenth-century portraitists such as Sully. The resemblance to Renaissance, specifically Florentine, portraiture in the opening sequence is particularly emphatic in the two side-profile shots. However, because cinematic form is fundamental in Godard's study, the portrait becomes a moving image through Karina's tiny movements. We see her almost still, but moving slightly and betraying a perceptible unease: she blinks her eyes, swallows, and shifts her head. A notable feature of the two shots in profile is that the face is backlit and in shadow, almost a silhouette. There is a tension at play that reflects the tensions in their marriage and that gives rise to the cinematographic choices Godard makes in this short sequence. He wants to gaze on Karina, but does not want her subjectivity to interfere in his gaze, and so keeps her face dimly lit. He begins with a profile view, recalling how profile

portraiture persisted much longer in Renaissance art for female subjects than for males because the representation of the female was for the purpose of the male gaze (Simons 1992, 41).[87] Male portraiture served to reflect a man's wealth and power: thus, the subject could engage the viewer's gaze, whereas female subjects were presented as "an averted eye and a face available to scrutiny" (Simons 1992, 41). However, Godard interrupts his scopophilia as regards Karina by intercepting the two profiles with a face-on view, in which Nana/Karina looks directly and unflinchingly at the camera, in a shot in which the engagement of the subject's gaze with the camera is reminiscent of Pasolini's Christ in the Last Supper scene in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, as discussed in the previous chapter. This shot allows Nana/Karina's subjectivity to surface and disengages her from solely being an "object of display within male discourse" (Simons 1992, 42). Godard's cinematic portraiture of Nana/Karina in the opening sequence of the film forms a kind of temporal triptych, but it also contains three different subjects: Nana, Karina and the problematic marriage between the latter and Godard.

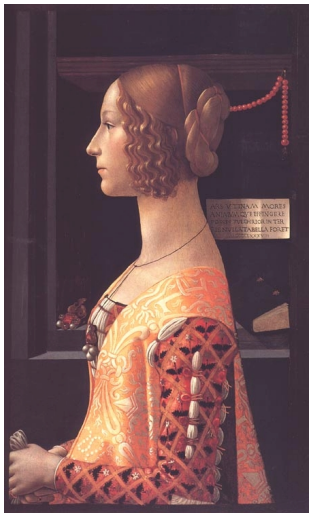


Fig. 22. Ghirlandaio. *Portrait of Giovanna Tornabouni* (c.1490)

[87] Simons observes that while there is almost no male profile portraiture in Florentine painting after 1450, female profile portraiture persists until much later.



Fig. 23. *Vivre sa vie.* Opening shot of Nana in left profile



Fig. 24. *Vivre sa vie.* Nana face-on

The emphasis on physiognomy that Pasolini so admired in the Trecento and Quattrocento painters and in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, and which he used as a means to sacralise his *borgataro* protagonist and his companions, is employed by Godard in his quasi-devotional documenting of Nana/Karina's face. Godard mediates the devotional close-up both through Dreyer and his referencing of the nineteenth-century portrait painter Sully through Poe's "The Oval Portrait". As regards Dreyer, Laura Mulvey comments that "when…Anna Karina as Nana weeps as she watches Falconetti's face in Joan of Arc, Godard is making a tribute to Dreyer's image, in which the spirituality of the soul is

indistinguishable from the spirituality of the cinema" (Mulvey 1993, 44). Mulvey also cites Peter Woolen's Bazinian reading on the same subject:

> The exterior, through the transparence of images stripped of all inessentials, reveals the interior. Bazin emphasised the importance of the physiognomy, upon which—as in the films of Dreyer—the interior spiritual life was etched and printed. (Quoted in Mulvey 1993, 44)[88]

David Bordwell interprets Godard's filtering of the devotional image through Dreyer as follows:

> Thus the famous excerpt from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in *Vivre sa vie* functions not simply to compare Joan with Nana. Neither homage nor imitation, the sequence cites Dreyer's film as a *locus classicus* of how the face and the glance can fragment cinematic space, offering a point of departure for Godard's own stylistic work. (Bordwell 1981, 199)

In addition to Bordwell's claim for Godard's work, the static close-up also has the effect of rendering the body as image. The "between-ness" or interstice that Deleuze identifies between sound and image and, further, between image and image in Godard's use of montage is also present as regards body and image (1989, 174).[89] Indeed, the liminal space that exists between body and image is an area within which Godard fervently works throughout his later period; it is in this transitional space, between what is represented and its representation, that Godard seems most content.[90]

Godard's canonical work, beginning in the 1980s, saw him turn to the question of Christianity and the sacred, particularly as regards spirituality and the

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[88] This can be compared with Pasolini's rendering of physiognomy as discussed in Chapter One.
[89] Deleuze comments that Godard applies "the method of the between" to visual images, sound images or visual and sound images (1989, 174). Elsewhere, denoting the method of the "between" in Godard as analogous to the conjunction "and", Deleuze comments that this method is "always between the two, it is the boundary" (1992, 41).
[90] Silverman and Farocki contend, a "going toward" and "coming from" exist in Godard's work (1998, 188). Alain Bergala describes the sense of "between-ness" in Godard's work as there never being "purity without obstruction, the sublime without the trivial" (1999, 24, author's translation). Godard himself comments in a 1980 interview with Jonathan Rosenbaum: "to me what exists is mainly between. And I try to put this between in my films" (Sterritt 1998, 104).

body.[91] His analogy of the church and cinema is well known and, in tandem, as he has grown older he has begun to identify his own lifetime with that of cinema.[92] However, I suggest that, in *Vivre sa vie*, Godard positions himself in filmic terms as the creator in a subjective way that is far more intricately related to his personal relationship with Anna Karina than to any religious metanarrative on his part. While the impulse towards a narrative with biblical undertones differs here from his more overtly religious works of the 1980s and 1990s, it is instructive nonetheless to consider it in relation to that later group.[93] The position of creative power Godard occupies as director allows him to impose a dreadful fate on Karina's character, which, by extension, seems a fantasy that Godard acts out to make her (Karina) suffer for what he perceives as her wrongdoings, whether real or imagined, in their married life. The transformation of body into image allows the base, human feelings of jealousy and revenge to be transformed into awe in the face of the sacred, which for Godard is the representation of Karina as cinematic image. In this respect, Pasolini's raising of the figure of Accattone in veneration and Accattone's subsequent martyrdom differ greatly from Godard's intentions in *Vivre sa vie*. Two contrasting impulses drives Godard's depiction of Nana/Karina: the first an artistic one that frames her in the style of a devotional painting to obtain a similar cinematic image, and the second is best described as a wish to subject Karina to martyrdom and abjection, using as a template the allegory of Christian martyrdom.[94]

The division of the film into twelve tableaux is conventionally interpreted as a Brechtian device or distancing effect, with each filmic section being equivalent to a theatrical tableau. However, Susan Sontag, Siew Hwa Beh (1976), and Douglas Morrey interpret the division of the film as referring to the Stations of the Cross. This reading is a very attractive one, particularly given the fragmented nature of the film and the temporal ellipses that occur between each

[91] See Douglas Morrey's detailed analysis of the influence of Simone Weil and her concept of grace in this regard (2005, 142–144).
[92] See Michael Witt on Godard's use of his own body as a metaphor for cinema, particularly, the exploitation of its ageing as "exemplary of the winding-down of cinema as an art form" (1999, 332).
[93] Yosefa Loshitzky comments that, in his attraction to biblical narrative, Godard is like Brecht, who saw the bible as a "reservoir of moral stories" (1995, 96).
[94] Godard inflicts humiliation and disaster on Anna Karina as a matter of course, whether through prostitution in *Anticipation, ou l'amour en l'an* 2000 (*Anticipation, or the Year 2000*, 1966), murder in *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965) or both in *Vivre sa vie*.

section; however, in Catholic tradition there are actually fourteen Stations of the Cross. This is not to suggest that this approach should be discarded entirely as its validity still holds in other respects (and the possibility of Godard also being unaware of the correct number of Stations should also be allowed).[95] Notwithstanding, the analogy of the twelve tableaux to Stations of the Cross on a personal *via crucis* for Nana highlights a further link to the Passion narrative. In the restriction of the number of tableaux to twelve, the last depicting Nana's death at the hands of others, Godard, whether unwittingly or otherwise, mimics the Stations of the Cross in that the twelfth station represents Christ's death on the cross.[96] It is somewhat apt that the final tableau containing Nana's death coincides with the station that represents Christ's death and, furthermore, that the film's narrative does not proceed any further to any form of resurrection, the possibility of which has been rejected in the previous tableau in the film. Nana comments at various points, "the more we say, the less we mean". However, in Tableau Eleven, Nana is in a café and enters into a conversation with the philosopher Brice Parain (as himself); he tells her that resurrection can be achieved by learning to speak again after a period of imposed silence. When considered against this observation, her refrain of "more said, less meant" seems to imply that for her there is no possibility of resurrection: either because she cannot return to a period of silence or because, having already done that, there is no resurrection for her in speech.

While Nana's death is not announced on the intertitle for Tableau Twelve, as Morrey points out, her death is flagged within the tableaux; for example, in the citation of Poe's "The Oval Portrait", in which the heroine dies, and, most specifically, in Tableau Three, in the cinema scene when the intertitles of Dreyer's *Le Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* show the following exchange between Joan of Arc and her inquisitor (which represents the entirety of the dialogue in the clip) (2005, 42):

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[95] Godard came from a long line of Protestant ministers, so it is difficult to know how familiar he would have been with the Stations of the Cross. Traditionally, the Protestant churches did not observe the Stations of the Cross, as they were associated with the acquirement of indulgences. Latterly, the Stations have become more common in Protestant churches, but often only eight of them are present, based on the Stations that have their basis in the Gospels.

[96] Richard Brody observes that in the original script outline Godard had planned thirteen tableaux, citing the style of Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928). The thirteenth tableau depicted Nana, now a successful prostitute, blessing herself as she drives by Notre Dame in her American car. However, Godard decided to dispense with this last section. (2008, 132)

Inquisitor: We are to prepare you for your death.
Joan of Arc: So soon?
(Inquisitor nods assent.)
Joan of Arc: What death?
Inquisitor: At the stake. How can you still believe you were sent by God?
Joan of Arc: God knows where he leads us but we know not the path of our journey.
(Inquisitor nods)
Joan of Arc: Yes. I am his child.
Inquisitor: And the great victory?
Joan of Arc: It will be my martyrdom
Inquisitor: And the deliverance?
Joan of Arc: Death.

At this juncture, the camera cuts back to the image of Nana with tears streaming down her face, mirroring the anguished face of Joan of Arc (Maria Falconetti) on the screen.[97] Godard bookends this image first with Falconetti's face and the word "*la mort*" ("death") superimposed at the bottom of the screen and then, subsequently, a white screen with the word "*la mort*" printed in black on it. As Silverman points out, in Dreyer's original film only the second reference to death appears; Godard's insertion of an additional reference ensures that the first mention of death is addressed to Joan of Arc, while the second, which "is only available to us [the spectators]", addresses Nana (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 11. Brackets inserted.).

The blurring of identity between character and actress and their respective fates is extended as Godard's fictitious tale of Nana, an actress turned prostitute, had a factual precedent in Maria Falconetti, who, subsequent to *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, suffered a nervous breakdown and turned to prostitution.[98] Godard has thematised prostitution throughout his work and, likewise, the sacred in his

[97] Ironically, both these images are now iconic of cinema: Falconetti's tearful face as she learns her fate and Nana's face empathising with the on-screen heroine's dilemma. This shall be discussed further in Chapter Four in relation to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and Godard's citation of Pasolini's Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.

[98] In this regard, Tom Conley adds Renoir's cinematic treatment of Zola's *Nana* into the equation: "that…Godard uses the reference [Falconetti's prostitution] to 'script' the end of his own marriage to Karina, through allusion to Catherine Hessling in Renoir's *Nana* (of 1925), effectively complicates the quotation. It makes the sensuous close-ups of Anna (the anagram of Nana) all the more powerful in the ambivalent rapport of allusion, self-consciousness, and film history in Godard's long autobiography of cinema." (1978)

later work, as shall be examined later in the chapter.[99] However, the two interlink most closely in *Vivre sa vie*. This is evidenced in an interesting association that Laura Mulvey makes between Nana and Marie (Myriem Roussel) in *Je vous salue Marie*, in addition to Marianne (Anna Karina) in *Pierrot le fou* (1964):

> As the Virgin Mary in *Je vous salue Marie,* [Myriem] Roussel transforms perfidy into purity, transforming Marianne (*Pierrot le fou*) into a Nana (*Vivre sa vie*) whose sexuality has been erased. The beauty of her body can still transfix the camera, but it acts as a conduit towards a new kind of cinema which can transcend materiality. (1996, 86)

From this, we deduce that, while Mulvey sees nothing of the sacred in Marianne's character, in Nana she identifies the coexistence of sexuality and sacredness, if we understand the term purity as a synonym of sanctity and, therefore, sacredness.

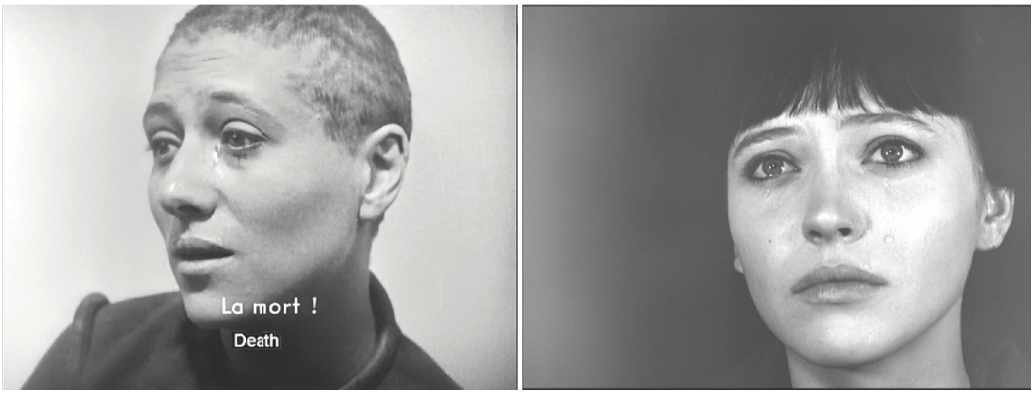


Fig. 25. *Vivre sa vie*. Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc and Anna Karina as Nana

In the association of Maria Falconetti to Anna Karina, the actress, as opposed to Nana, the character she plays, Godard sets up an interesting network of interaction between female figures that covers the sacred, prostitution and acting.[100] Godard both implicitly and explicitly attempts to conjoin the professions of actress and prostitute, again in what seems like an attempt,

[99] On Godard and prostitution, see, for example, Laura Mulvey's "The Hole and the Zero: the Janus Face of the Feminine in Godard" (1992, 75–88).
[100] The association of the actress to the prostitute is not new. See Angela Dalle Vacche (2008, 31–34) for an account of perceived links between the two professions in early Italian cinema.

whether unconscious or otherwise, to besmirch his actress wife Karina. Nana mentions in several conversations that she has been in a film "with Eddie Constantine". While this might suggest a possible foretelling of Karina and Constantine's collaboration in *Alphaville* (1965), both had acted in *Les fiancés du pont MacDonald ou (mefiéz-vous de lunettes noires)*, a short silent film by Agnès Varda, which is incorporated into *Cleo de 5 à 7* (1961), and in which Godard plays Karina's boyfriend.[101] Associating Karina's career to Nana's, which ends in prostitution, implicitly reinforces the connection he makes between Falconetti, Nana/Karina and actress/prostitute. Furthermore, as identified by Richard Brody, Nana's brutal end acts as a warning from Godard to Karina of the "moral price" of adultery, which, as Brody suggests, becomes an implicit element in most of the films Godard would make with Karina over the next five years (2008, 139).

For a film that is so squarely based on the theme of prostitution, the physical contact between Anna and her customers in *Vivre sa vie* is curiously sterile and remote.[102] In Nana's interaction with her clients, we see her smoking, looking outwards over the client's shoulder in an attitude of disengaged reverie. This remoteness is emphasised by the static, almost pictorial nature of the scenes. In the bedroom where Anna brings her customers, the prevailing sense is one of a business transaction, rather than eroticism. This sense is emphasised further by Nana's dress, which resembles that of an office worker more than a prostitute, and her matter-of-fact, everyday use of language, which holds no trace of the erotic either.[103] The desexualisation of traded sex is highlighted further again through the recitation of a sociological text on prostitution, *Où en est la prostitution* (1959) by Judge Marcel Sacotte. Passages from this text are read out in response to Nana's questions to her prospective pimp about the trade. The bland, analytical language used to describe the circumstances and legislation surrounding prostitution are an early instance of a fascination with its

[101] The film, played in the style of silent film, illustrates Godard's love for that era, both Godard and Karina proving they were adept at silent comedy. Varda, in a lecture given in University College Cork on March 7, 2011, commented that the parenthetical title *Mefiéz-vous de lunettes noires* (Never trust dark glasses), which is at the heart of the storyline, is a reference to Godard's insistence on always wearing dark glasses.

[102] The lack of eroticism in Godard's depiction of sex is prevalent throughout his oeuvre—possibly the most famous example being the abstraction of Brigitte Bardot's naked body in *Le Mépris*.

[103] Sontag comments, "prostitution, as *Vivre sa vie* allows us to see it, has entirely the character of an ordeal" (2001, 206).

transactional nature that will be given full expression by Godard in the "mechanised" prostitution scene in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*.[104]

The pictorial abstraction that Godard applies to the prostitution scenes in *Vivre sa vie*—analogous to Dreyer's approach to the sacred in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*—is exemplified in the scene where Nana passes through the brothel opening bedroom doors looking for another prostitute to join her and her client. As she opens the doors, the scene inside each bedroom, framed by the doorway, is shown to the viewer. Of the five doors that she opens, three reveal a naked woman with a clothed man. In each of the three, there is minimal physical contact and little or no movement, which has the effect of making each of the scenes look like a painting, particularly as the women are positioned in poses reminiscent of life drawing. This sequence culminates in Nana returning to her room with one of the other girls. The client tells Nana "not to bother" getting involved. We do not see the physical interaction between the second girl and the client, instead we see Nana in silhouetted profile, framed by the window, still except for the cigarette that she smokes. The overall effect of these brothel sequences, which one might expect to stress the carnal, is instead more akin to a devotional painting, in which the image is extracted from the narrative to promote contemplation.



Fig. 26. *Vivre sa vie*. Pictorial scenes

[104] In this much-discussed scene, Godard sets up what can be described as an assembly line between two prostitutes and their clients, a businessman and his assistant, in which each person in turn stimulates and is sexually stimulated by the person on either side of them. Again, as with *Vivre sa vie,* many commentators have noted the sterile nature of the scene, seeing it as Godard's reading of prostitution as a commercial activity similar to any other. See, for example, Mulvey (1996, 80) and Stam (1981, 198–199).

The devotional association introduced alongside the actress/prostitute binary through Falconetti's portrayal of Joan of Arc and the Christian iconography that is subtly presented in *Vivre sa vie* leads me to introduce into my analysis the Gospel figure of Mary Magdalene. Firstly, in relation to Anna Karina, a similarity exists between the two women, insofar as the notion of prostitution was imputed to both without evidence. In Karina's case, this imputation is accounted for by Godard's jealousy.[105] In the case of Mary Magdalene, while in some Christian-based belief systems she is believed to be the first apostle, the imputation of prostitution lies in a general religious historiographic view of the Magdalene as a fallen woman whom Christ had saved in what is, effectively, a reversal of Nana's situation. The Magdalene also has a place as regards Auerbach's identification of gospel narrative as the first in which the sacred and the human coexist or the *sermo humilis* (low style) and *sermo sublimis* (high tragic style) were incorporated. In her human portrayal, or in her presentation as a sinful or flawed saint who is redeemed, we see a kind of a female version of Peter (the first apostle in the eyes of the Catholic Church), just as in Nana we see a female analogue of Accattone and, by association, Christ. In this regard, Mary Magdalene seems like a characteristically Godardian female figure.[106] According to the Gospels, she was the only individual to be present at both the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, and was the first person to see the resurrected Christ, a meeting that is depicted frequently in art history as the *Noli me tangere*, as previously discussed in Chapter One. The significance of the art-historical representation of this event, particularly in regard to touch and the relationship between the divine and the human, is comprehensively explored by Nancy in his essay "*Noli me tangere:* On the raising of the body" (2008a). The import of this essay as regards Godard's engagement with the corporeal and Christian art will be explored in greater detail in the analysis of *Je vous salue Marie.* However*,* given that Giotto's painting of the scene is also directly cited in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, I contend that the later evocation of Mary Magdalene and the *Noli me tangere* is anticipated in the presentation of Nana in *Vivre sa vie* and

[105] See Brody (2008) for a myriad of examples of Godard's jealousy in relation to his first wife.
[106] Yosefa Loshitzky also identifies the similarities between the prostitute/saint duality of Mary Magdalene and Isabelle Huppert's characters in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and *Passion*, respectively (1995, 156).

the relationships that Godard attempts to draw between the figures of Nana, Anna Karina, Maria Falconetti, Joan of Arc and the prostitute—a relationship which, I suggest, can be aptly summarised by the introduction of the figure of the Magdalene.

The *Noli me tangere* sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has been examined from the point of view of montage (Alan Wright and James S. Williams in Temple and Williams 2000), of the juxtaposition of George Stevens's footage of Auschwitz and Elizabeth Taylor (Rancière, 2002), and of its connection to Auschwitz and the image (Georges Didi Hubermann, 2008). However, in relation to the present analysis of *Vivre sa vie*, I consider the short sequence from the aspect of the overlaid figures of actress and saint and the implications of this piece of montage when referred back to *Vivre sa vie*'s juxtaposition of Falconetti and Karina. The sequence shows a lakeside scene from the George Stevens's film *A Place in the Sun* (1957), in which Elizabeth Taylor bends over Montgomery Clift to kiss him. In a most striking example of Auerbach's *humilitas-sublimitas* antithesis, Godard introduces the figure of Mary Magdalene, incised from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (1304–1306), superimposing it just above Elizabeth Taylor's head in the film footage. Godard rotates the original painting through a ninety-degree angle with the result that Mary Magdalene is reaching down towards both Montgomery Clift (whose body is almost concealed as he lies stretched on the ground below Elizabeth Taylor, with whom the camera is at eye level) and towards the outstretched hand of Christ, which is still visible in the cropped image of the painting. While Rancière sees this, particularly as regards the rotation of the figures, as an image of resurrection, Didi-Hubermann instead argues that it is one of hope (Rancière 2002, 116 and Didi-Hubermann 2008, 147–149). Notwithstanding, as far as the figure of Mary Magdalene is concerned, her saintliness is reinforced by her positioning as if descending from heaven, again in a stressing of the *humilitas-sublimitas* antithesis.[107] As discussed above, the Magdalene's portrayal in the Christian Church has been traditionally that of the fallen woman who is redeemed by God. In this visual superimposing of the sinful saint over the

[107] With a concurrent stressing of Christ's humanity, as He would take an equivalent position to the supine Montgomery Clift, if the viewer were able to see him in Godard's rotation of the original painting.

actress, we see a reprise of the conceptual collage that Godard attempts to elaborate in *Vivre sa vie* almost thirty years previously: the link between prostitution and acting having been previously suggested in the form of Falconetti, this time presented in the melded figures of Taylor and the Magdalene, with the concurrent suggestion of sainthood that Godard appears to attribute to the fallen figure of Nana in *Vivre sa vie* through the allusion to Joan of Arc. Rancière associates the above sequence to the *vera icona* (true icon) or Veronica commenting that this image speaks to the virtue of cinema:

> The image here in question is something other than reproduction, it is the mark of the true, the face on Veronica's veil, the face of the Word, of our savior the Son of God, the very imprint of the prototype. The virtue of cinema according to Godard is not that of the camera that decides, but that of the screen, the veil stretched out so that the world imprints itself there. (2002, 116)[108]

The voiceover during this sequence proclaims: "Thirty-nine, forty the martyrdom and resurrection of documentary", and then proceeds: "Oh, how marvellous to be able to look at what we cannot see. What a miracle for our blind eyes".[109] In these words, again, if we focus on Godard's personal history rather than the collective history he attempts to encapsulate within the project of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the echo of Poe's description of "The Oval Portrait" resounds, in that Godard seems to suggest that his "blind eyes" are only granted vision through the miracle of cinema and, returning to *Vivre sa vie*, that he was only able to "see" Karina through the camera lens. Douglas Morrey suggests that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* contains "a discreet implication of [Godard's] neglect of Karina *via* cinema" (2005, 45. Emphasis in original). He does not specifically state where this implication occurs but one feels, although images of Karina are seen elsewhere in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* that this sequence may be described as such. In "The Oval Portrait" sequence in the earlier film, as the camera lingers

[108] In *Le Petit Soldat* (1963), made just before *Vivre sa vie*, Karina's character is named Veronica Dreyer. In *La Chinoise* (1967), the character played by Anna Wiazemsky, Godard's second wife, is named Véronique. Godard's sister is also called Véronique.

[109] These words are adapted from *Un Journal d'un curé de champagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*, 1951), where the reference is to hands rather than eyes.

exclusively on Karina, the only other element in the shot is a photograph of Elizabeth Taylor on the wall behind the actress.[110] The filmed image of Godard's former wife juxtaposed with the photographic image of one of cinema's most recognisable stars sets out visually the tension that exists within Godard between the cinematic form and his personal life.



Fig. 27. *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: Giotto's Mary Magdalene and Elizabeth Taylor



Fig. 28. *Vivre sa vie.* Nana (Anna Karina) and Elizabeth Taylor

[110] This is identified by Roland François Lack in his *Senses of Cinema* article on *Vivre sa vie* (http://www.sensesofcinema.com/2008/48/vivre-sa-vie-a-to-z/ Accessed 30/09/11.)

The identification with Mary Magdalene as depicted by Giotto in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* also stresses the devotional image. Rancière observes that in the Western pictorial tradition:

> Giotto is the painter who drew the sacred figures, inherited from the Byzantine icon, out of their solitude, the one who brought them together to make them into characters in a drama who occupy a common space. (2002, 117)

In isolating Mary Magdalene from the rest of the painting's narrative, Godard both returns to the devotional image and relocates the Magdalene in a different narrative that incorporates *A Place in the Sun*, Auschwitz and the failures and responsibilities of cinema in its role, as Godard perceives it, as the last chapter in the history of art. Rancière reads this as follows:

> In place of the *Noli me tangere* stands the absolute image, the promise that descends from the heavens, raising the rich heiress (Taylor)—and with her the cinema—from the tomb, like the speech of the visionary Johannes brought the young mother of *Ordet* back to life. (2002, 117)

This devotional image, rediscovered in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and beginning life, in Godardian terms, in *Vivre sa vie* is rooted in physiognomy, which links Godard not only to Dreyer, but also back to Florentine Renaissance portraiture, as discussed earlier, to the portrait painting of Sully, as referenced by Poe, and, indeed, to Pasolini's cinematic portraiture as discussed in the previous chapter.

In a rather beautiful passage from his essay "*Noli me tangere*: On the Raising of the Body" that is worth quoting in full, Jean-Luc Nancy comments:

> The painter painting Mary's outstretched hands, thus painting his own hands stretched out toward his picture—toward the right touch. Made up of patience and chance, made up of a living withdrawal of the hand that sets it down—holds his image out to us, not for us to touch it or retain it in a perception but, to the contrary, so that we will step back to the point of putting back into play the entire presence of and within the image. This

> painter puts the truth of "resurrection" to work: the approach of the parting, in the ground of the image [*au fond de l'image*], of the singular truth. It is thus that he *paints* (but here the verb can unfold its meanings to the point of touching on all other modes of art), which is primarily to say that he "represents" in the proper sense of the word: "to intensify the presence of an absence as absence". (2005, 51)

Using Nancy's contention that the term "paints" extends to art in all its forms, I suggest that Godard paints, whether through his own camera in *Vivre sa vie*, or the direct quotation of Giotto's art-historical image in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. He tenders the constructed image so that we as viewers can behold its presence, while within it are numerous levels of present absences including cinema itself, art history, and, in the case of the latter film, the existence of meaningful images of the Holocaust within the cinematic canon.

2.2 *Passion*: The image stilled

The interaction of the themes considered in the previous section—the cinematic and art-historical image, particularly as regards figuration; Mary Magdalene, depicted as the sinner-saint in Christian literature and her metaphorical resurrection; the depiction of sex, specifically purchased sex, as a sterile physical activity—moves the discussion forward almost twenty years to Godard's canonical films of the 1980s that began with *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, which Godard described as his "second first film" (Sterritt 1998, 92).[111]

At the end of the 1960s, Godard went into self-imposed exile from commercial filmmaking, first making Marxist-Leninist films with the Dziga-Vertov group and, subsequently, films and videos with his partner Anne-Marie Miéville, under the "Sonimage" name. This experimental work in which he explored the potential of both television and analogue video was at once a continuation of his ongoing analysis of the intermedial nature of the filmic medium in the 1960s and the precursor of his canonical work that began at the start of the 1980s, forming a temporal and conceptual bridge between these two periods. When he returned to feature films at the end of the 1970s, his

[111] He explains this description as wanting to "enter an unknown country...to see what is not seen" (quoted in Sterritt 1998, 92).

collaborative and audiovisual experience earlier in the decade allowed him to move further towards a greater intermediality in his filmmaking, underpinned by a concern for the image and its relationship to both sound and text, particularly, as Fredric Jameson has identified, through the classical canon (1995, 162). This unstinting investigation of the image, which will carry through to his twenty-first century films such as *Éloge d'amour* (2001) and short films such as *De l'origine du XXIe siècle* (2000) and *The Old Place* (2000), considers the cinematic image in the light of the pictorial image in the same way as *Vivre sa vie* did twenty years previously.[112]

Godard's underlying thematic concerns in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* are image and movement and, significantly, what occurs when the image is slowed down.[113] In the film, approximately fifteen sequences are shot in stop-motion, prompting Raymond Bellour to observe that it is analogous to "a road [that] constantly teeters over the abyss of a spontaneous perversion of the mechanised illusion of movement" (1982, 116). He describes the stop-motion sequences as "the rebirth of the image, this move from the fiction of cinema toward a writing-painting freed from the deceptive imaginary plenitude prescribed by the forward movement of the machine" (1982, 122). Again, as discussed with regard to *Vivre sa vie*, in this slowing down of the moving image Godard examines a different kind of interstice, the one that divides movement and stasis, the boundary of which is almost impossible to determine. When does a slowed image become completely static, and for how long does an infinitesimal, residual movement remain? This deceleration of the image to investigate its ontology is further developed in his juxtaposition of moving and static—or imperceptibly moving—image as represented by the *tableau vivant,* in his next feature film, *Passion*.

Passion is a highly metacinematic and self-reflexive film that centres on Jerzy (Jerzy Radziwilowicz), a Polish director who is making a film that restages works by Delacroix, Ingres, Rembrandt, Goya and El Greco. The paintings are represented in the form of *tableaux vivants* in which film extras re-enact the mise-en-scène of each image. Jerzy's film, as Godard's, is called *Passion* and seeks to be a "story of the image", which is how Godard describes his aim in

[112] The pictorial is also foregrounded in *Pierrot Le Fou* (1964), *Le Mépris* (1965) and *La Chinoise* (1967) but in a disjointed, collaged style, distinct to the manner in which it is integrated into the narrative in *Vivre sa vie*.
[113] The film's English title is *Slow Motion.*

making *Passion.*[114] Jerzy is involved with two different women: Hana (Hanna Schygulla), who runs the hotel where the film crew is staying and is married to Michel (Michel Piccoli), the factory owner, and Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert), a virginal young woman with a stammer, who was working in the factory but has been sacked and is seeking reinstatement.

One of the central themes of *Passion* is the creative process that lies behind both the art-historical and filmic image; in this respect, the film's own creative evolution is of interest. Initially, a collaged scenario entitled *Passion: Introduction à un scénario*, in which "a series of paintings and ideas provided a loose framework for the overall project", was first produced (Godard quoted in Ranvaud and Farassino 1983, 8). In this initial scenario, Godard juxtaposes photos of the film's principal actors with images of paintings from the canon of European painting. The accompanying text synopsises the film's narrative.[115] Subsequently, the assemblage of video footage shot by Godard as part of the film's narrative development formed the film's initial video scenario entitled *Troisième état du Scénario du Film Passion* or *Le Travail et L'Amour: Introduction à un Scénario* (1982). Godard spent almost half of *Passion*'s twelve-million-franc budget—which he had obtained on the basis of the cast he had assembled to appear in the film—on what he called the "production of the visual screenplay", which involved travelling to Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope studios with a cameraman and sound recordist to carry out a visual study of the cast and crew involved in the production of a film (quoted in Brody 2008, 435). Later, Godard used Coppola's studio, sets and crew to film some initial *tableaux vivants*, including Georges de la Tour's *Le nouveau-né* (*The Newborn Christ,* c. 1645) and Rubens's *Fall of the Damned* (c. 1620). While these specific *tableaux vivants* are not included in the final version of the film, or in the final version of *Scénario du film Passion* (1982), the experience of filming these pictorial re-enactments in a high-tech film studio is faithfully translated into the central narrative of *Passion.*[116] The initial version of *Passion*'s video

[114] From Godard's narration in *Scénario du film Passion* (abbreviated to *SdfP* in subsequent use).
[115] An audiocassette that similarly experimented with musical themes and motifs was also produced.
[116] Original footage filmed in Zoetrope of a cameraman moving through the air on a crane is included in *Scénario du film Passion* and the shot is also recreated in *Passion* where we see Jerzy, the director moving across the set in a similar fashion. The original shot also appears in Chapter 1(a) of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1998).

scenario was remade, after the feature film was completed, as *Scénario du film Passion*.[117] The resulting video, "a reflection upon the creative processes of film-making itself, on screenwriting and the making of imagery", thus provides a retrospective view of the creation of a screenplay, affording Godard the opportunity to show the viewer both the images in which the narrative originated and the final images as they appear in the film (Bandy 1992, 7).[118]

Passion addresses grand metanarratives such as love, labour, power, religion and art within its metacinematic device of a film within a film. As such, it lends itself to analysis on a multitude of levels.[119] Of particular thematic relevance to this thesis are Alain Bergala's reading of composition and attack in the *tableaux vivants* sequences in "The Other Side of the Bouquet" and Bellour's references to Christianity in "(Not) Just Another Filmmaker" (both in Bellour and Bandy, 1992).

The first *tableau vivant* presented in *Passion* is a recreation of Rembrandt Van Rijn's *De compagnie van Frans Banning Cocq en Willem van Ruytenburch* (*The Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch*, 1642), commonly known as *The Night Watch*. While the theme of this painting—a group portrait of a division of the civil guard—is an entirely secular one, it is of interest in several respects. Alongside Caravaggio and Goya, Rembrandt is one of the most cinematic of painters.[120] Through his use of chiaroscuro lighting and a propensity for both narrative and movement in his paintings, he is often seen as one of the artistic forerunners of film, for instance by Rudolph Arnheim (1997, 60; 61; 87)—or, indeed, by Godard himself in Chapter 4(a) of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in which French actor Alain Cuny reads a text by Élie Faure in which all

[117] Godard explains in his interview with Ranvaud and Farassino that the reason for remaking the video was because Television Suisse Romande, the co-producer, felt that the loosely collated assemblage of video footage could not be shown without further explanation, "so we synthesized it more and made something that could be more readily shown" (1983, 8).

[118] For a more extensive discussion on this aspect of Godard's filmmaking, see Jill Murphy (2011b).

[119] *Passion*, along with *Scénario du film Passion*, has been analysed in phenomenological and Deleuzian terms (Del Río 2005), in terms of history and creation (Leutrat 1986) and in terms of the blurring of the binaries of labour and love (Klein 2007). Fredric Jameson (1992) has considered the film as both a modernist and post-modernist text, while Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki (1998) analyse the notion of "between-ness" in the film.

[120] Peter Greenaway's film *Nightwatching* (2007), which was borne out of a digital projection based around the painting in the *Rijksmuseum* in Amsterdam, also engages with the interaction between art history and film through the use of *tableaux vivants*.

references to "Rembrandt" are replaced by the term "cinema".[121] In this respect, the multi-voice narration that analyses the lighting of the *tableau vivant* may be seen as relating both to the re-enactment of the painting and to film itself, which Godard envisages as a search for light and, in *Passion*, as a preferencing of the image over scripted narrative.



Fig. 29. Rembrandt *The Night Watch* (1642)

Jerzy, Godard's diegetic counterpart, searches for what he calls "the centre", which is obtained through achieving the correct lighting in the studio. Godard equates light and image and, while the "story of the image" is sought, stories in the traditional sense are rejected. Pictorial narrative, as so expertly evidenced in Rembrandt's painting, concerns only the visual, which is what Godard ostensibly seeks. The *tableaux vivants* themselves are also representative of pure image. Godard comments how the paintings deal with the great themes of humanity (*SdfP*); this is achieved through gesture and image, not words. In this respect, *The Night Watch*, the most formally presented of all the *tableaux vivants* in *Passion*—although tellingly none of them are ever shown in their entirety—sets up Godard's arguments that he will visually develop in the filming of the subsequent *tableaux vivants*. *The Night Watch* serves as a striking example of image, pictorial narrative, light and pre-cinema. Godard sets out his re-enactment

[121] For a comprehensive analysis of this passage in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, see Michael Temple (2000, 77–81). Temple contends that neither Malraux nor Faure would have seen the analogy of Rembrandt to cinema as problematic.

and then propounds his theories on the recording of the image, both cinematic and pictorial, as the camera explores the re-enactment presented on the screen.[122]

The theme of light, introduced by the *tableau vivant* of *The Night Watch*, predominates both in *Passion* and *Scénario du film Passion* and has varying values: the cinema as a function of light; the light that a painter must correctly capture to represent the scene he/she paints; light as a metaphor for creative inspiration; and light as a symbol of the sacred.

In *Scénario du film Passion*, Godard extends the theme of light so that it melds with the colour white, a permissible expansion given that absolute white reflects all light. Encapsulating his almost obsessive interest in the relationship of cinema to both literature and painting, Godard uses the white page and the white canvas as metonyms for light. With respect to analogue cinema, the projection of light is, of course, the physical premise on which the medium of film is based. Godard equates the white screen to purity, and extends the analogy further by likening the screen to Veronica's handkerchief in the Passion Cycle, contending that the body of the film is like Christ's body. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Veronica, or *vera icona,* is thought to be the veil with which Veronica wiped Christ's face on the way to Calvary, a fact of which Godard is doubtlessly aware when he evokes the Gospel figure of Veronica. The analogy of film to Christ's body likens the imprinting of his face on the white cloth to the imprinting of the image on the blank film stock and again suggests a similar, perhaps stronger link, as the one Noa Steimatsky establishes for *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.

When his original imagined image has been transferred from mind to screen, Godard comments: "no more need for it to be graven in memory, the white screen like Veronica's handkerchief, Christ's body like the body of the film" (*SdfP*). Several times during *Scénario du film Passion* Godard comments as regards the image "*Je l'inscrit dans le mémoire*" ("I have graven it in my memory"). Then, just before the reference to Veronica and Christ, he says that the image is no longer graven in memory, because it's all there "in white…on the white screen, the white canvas, the white cloth like Veronica's" (*SdfP*). In the film's subtitles, "*Inscrire*" is translated as graven, but if we consider the

[122] Jean-Louis Leutrat sets out in detail how Eisenstein is also quoted in the *Night Watch* sequence and indeed throughout *Passion* (1986, 42–43).

alternative translation of "inscribe", then, in the reverse operation, when the film/the image is transferred to the screen, it is "exscribed". This tallies with Jean-Luc Nancy's description of writing as exscribing the body and the body as "being-exscribed": "exscription is produced in the loosening of unsignifying spacing: it detaches words from their senses always again and again abandoning them to their extension. A word…*remains* essentially extended *between* other words, stretching to touch them, though not merging with them: and that's language as *body*" (2008c, 57).[123] This is rendered particularly relevant as Godard immediately proceeds to compare the film to "the body of Christ", thus, if we follow Godard's thinking, transforming it into a sacred text.[124]

Godard's aim is "to see a script" or, put differently, to write through images.[125] He constructs a visual grammar wherein the screen becomes the page, the still image is the word and the resulting movement is the articulated sentence, which, rather ironically, given his disdain for Pasolini's semiotic approach, is not unlike the latter's idea of cinema as a metalanguage composed of *im-signs* (*im-segne* or image-signs).[126] As other images are added, Godard's filmic narrative comes into existence in an alternative articulation of narrative to the script. To begin, there is "a vast white surface like Mallarmé's blank page, a beach in a blinding sun. All is white no trace of anything…like finding a gap in your memory. You have a writer's job to do" (*SdfP*).[127] Godard makes the gesture of writing on the screen, confusing the idea of the screen and page further and literally "screenwriting", short-circuiting the script, so that the words go directly on the screen. Godard, characteristically, is visually and verbally punning, playing on the ambiguities between white canvas, blank screen and blank page. The French word *scénario* refers to a script or a screenplay; however, inherent in its etymology (both in French and in its English equivalent) is its relation to the

[123] Also see Jacques Derrida (2005, 275).
[124] "le linge blanc comme le linge de *Véronique*, le corps du film on *disait* comme *le corps du Christ" (the white cloth like Veronica's cloth, the body of the film like the body of Christ) (SdfP).*
[125] See Angela Dalle Vacche on Godard's attempts "to write the image" in *Pierrot le fou* (1996, 130).
[126] "The first operation of the filmmaker would be to invent...a hypothetical vocabulary I call *image-signs*: a possible vocabulary for people who wish to communicate through images... the filmmaker then invents his images, his language, his "word": his poetic language" (Pasolini quoted in Bertolucci and Comolli 1981, 36. Author's translation).
[127] In *Éloge de l'amour* (*In Praise of Love*, 2001), Godard returns to the image of Mallarmé's blank white page in the form of the empty pages of the protagonist Edgar's notebook as he searches for ideas for his "media project".

word “scene” and that word’s visual connotations in both theatre and landscape painting. Godard’s punning unintentionally extends further in its English translation in that the term “screenplay” reflects his “playing” with the images he will later bring to the screen. In more wordplay, the words *plage* (beach) and *page* (page) become almost interchangeable in their reference to empty space: “there is no sea, so you invent waves, you imagine a wave”. We see Godard standing in his video-editing suite making the gestures of writing, the capabilities of video facilitating the kind of “screenwriting” to which he aspires; filmed from behind, his hand moves over the screen, as if writing on it. Thus, returning to Nancy’s concept of writing as exscribing the body, Godard’s writing of images becomes the (sacred) body exscribed on the screen, in the same way as the *acheiropoietic* image is exscribed on Veronica’s white cloth, both effected without the human hand.

The drawing of a direct relationship between his original image for the narrative of *Passion* to the original image of Christ, links into Godard’s association, elsewhere, of Christianity being “the first film” and his interest in its foregrounding of visuality in contrast with other religions (Godard and Ishaghpour 2005, 98 and 100). Raymond Bellour also observes this relationship between Christianity and cinema:

> The movie theatre is...closer to a church than to a theater, in the sense that its power derives above all from the image, which early on played so dominant a role in the spread of Christianity. (1992, 215)

Indeed, this equation of cinema to Christianity and church by means of the image, frequently employed by Godard, is prevalent in French film scholarship: along with Bellour, Schefer and Aumont, amongst others, read the Christian sacred in the cinematic, which most likely originates in André Bazin’s quasi-religious presentation of the cinematic image and his association of the sacred image with the cinematic. Godard will develop this relationship to a much greater extent in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.



Fig. 30. *Passion.* Approaching the pictorial surface of *The Night Watch*

Pictorial surfaces

In *The Night Watch* sequence, Godard's approach to the (virtual) pictorial surface is respectful, bordering on reverential, "becoming an almost respectful disciple" of the painter (Bergala 1992, 60).[128] Bergala outlines how Godard narrows the camera angle until the *tableau vivant* is seen almost from an angle perpendicular to the surface of the picture.[129] However, the respect for the pictorial boundary is maintained in this first instance:

> Godard never crosses behind the imaginary window that separates the space of the viewer from that of the painting, where his camera could see from the back what the painter portrayed from the front. He had just discovered the pleasures of flirting with the transgression of separating bit by bit the attack from the compositions, but still obeyed the greatest taboo that against passing to the other side of the window into the space inhabited by the figures. (1992, 61)

This respectfulness for pictorial surfaces slackens over the course of the film and a sense of boldness begins to affect the camera's investigation of the *tableaux*

[128] Compare this with Pasolini's portrayal of himself as "Giotto's follower" in *The Decameron* (1971), even though he is effectively depicted as Giotto painting *The Last Judgement* fresco and, indeed, in Bocaccio's original text the character is Giotto.

[129] This technique of narrowing the angle as if to enter into the pictorial surface is also seen in Alexandr Sokurov's *Elegy of a Voyage* (2001) filmed among the artworks in the Museum of Art in Rotterdam.

vivants, as is seen directly after *The Night Watch* scenes in the *tableau vivant* sequence that follows. This sequence in fact incorporates three paintings by Goya: *La maja desnuda* (*The Naked Maja*, c.1797–1800), *El quitasol* (*The Parasol,* 1777) and, most significantly, the *tableau vivant* around which the other two orbit, *El tres de mayo 1808* (*The Third of May 1808)*, a painting that, like *The Night Watch*, incorporates highly cinematic elements and is seen as "a startlingly modern work that exploded the conventions of the form" (Hustvedt 2006, 94). The subject matter of *El tres de mayo 1808* is the execution of Spanish citizens who had rebelled against Napoleon's invading army. Like *The Night Watch*, it is a secular image, but in this case replete with Passion iconography. The central figure in the painting is a man in a white shirt and yellow trousers upon whom the French soldiers are just about to fire. The corpses of his compatriots lie scattered around him, while those still alive look on in horror and anguish. The man in white radiates light, whose source is a large, square lantern between the soldiers and him; the lantern is both strikingly large and very modern and would not look out of place as a light on a film set. Indeed, it mirrors the huge arc light that we see descending towards the *tableau vivant* at the beginning of the *El tres de mayo 1808* sequence. The figure in the painting serves the same purpose as the dwarf woman in *The Night Watch* in that they both catch all the available light and reflect it. The man's hands are raised in what is effectively a Crucifixion pose; the Passion iconography being further emphasised by clearly visible stigmata on the man's hand, leading André Malraux to describe the scene as "a lay crucifixion" (quoted by Janet Perez 1990, 30). Godard, who was strongly influenced by Malraux's work, may have taken his inspiration from this comment. Robert Hughes also links the figure to Christ; however, as in Pasolini's reading of the Crucifixion, Hughes makes the point that nothing lies beyond this martyrdom: "there is no higher design: only tyranny replicating itself in the night" (2003, 316).

In his reflective brilliance and his Christological association, the central figure doubly represents the sacred for Godard, both in his position as innocent suffering victim and source of light, particularly given that Goya does not shrink in his representation from portraying the body in crisis through physical torment; as Siri Husvedt comments about the original painting, echoing Hughes: "In Goya's canvas there is no possibility of a redeemed body because there is

nothing whole about his vision of death—it is a fragmented state. His corpses are going to pieces" (2006, 104). Like Rembrandt, Goya's art was pre-cinematic in its focus on realism, the body, motion and pictorial narrative, particularly in his role as a documentarist of events of the time. However, in contrast to this ability to render human suffering with such conviction in paintings such as *El tres de mayo 1808* and the *Los desastres de la guerra* (*Disasters of War* 1810–1820) print series, Robert Hughes describes Goya's *Cristo crucificado* (*Crucified Christ* 1780) as "without much doubt the worst painting he ever did", enquiring as to how "the most powerful reporter of human anguish in all of Western art" could have produced such a "ladylike body, unmarked by torment; the absence of any kind of empathy with what real bodies underwent in the course of flogging and crucifixion" (2003, 99). Given the perspective of this analysis is the persistence of Christian iconography in a post-religious world (or what Nancy terms "post-Christian iconography"), Goya's successful transposition of Passion iconography and the suffering associated with it to a secular context, in contrast with his less able portrayal of a Crucifixion scene without deconstruction is noteworthy (2008a, 3). Goya's deconstructive approach to Christian iconography and its underpinning of Godard's citation of his work will be further developed in Chapter Four.



Fig. 31. Goya *El tres de mayo 1808* (1814)

Godard, like Goya, locates transcendence in the immanent and, like Pasolini, sees the power of death not in its link to resurrection, but rather in its power to end life, which is the true gift. As Michael Hardt observes:

> The birth of Christ is merely a formal incarnation, a nominal abandonment to this world. The real incarnation takes place on Calvary. Only hanging on the Cross does Christ realize the flesh. (2001, 79)

The coded citation of the Crucifixion in the *tableau vivant* of *El tres de mayo 1808* typifies Godard's approach to Passion iconography throughout the film: both present and absent, suggested but not visible. The dialectics of the visible and the invisible and the present and the absent underpin Godard's work as does the presence of absence, as discussed for the *Noli me tangere* sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. In *Passion* and *Scénario du film Passion*, Godard, straddling word and image and teasing out the dichotomy between the two, shows the viewer visual Passion iconography without verbal allusion or, alternatively, verbally quotes from the Passion narrative without any visual reference or, as is most notable in the *El tres de mayo 1808* sequence, makes coded visual allusions to the Passion so that the viewer must engage in some investigative work to find the reference. As Bergala comments: "Of all filmmakers now working, Godard is undeniably the most incapable of shooting a scene only for its given subject…without something else, unrelated to the content of the scene, triggering his desire to shoot" (1992, 63).[130]

Most commentators on Goya's original work comment on the fact that Goya chooses not to show the soldiers' faces, thereby heightening the emphasis on the suffering of the Spaniards; however, in his re-enactment Godard transgresses Goya's creative decision, entering the pictorial space to look the soldiers in the eye. Robert Hughes, in his analysis of the original, refers to Plate 26 in Goya's *Los desastres de la guerra* entitled *No se puede mirar* (*One cannot look,* 1863), which he views as a precursor for the composition of *El tres de mayo 1808*.[131] In this plate, which also refers to the execution of Spanish citizens by Napoleonic troops, the soldiers are not shown at all and only the bayonets at the end of their guns can be seen in a cluster at the edge of the picture. Hughes

[130] As I shall discuss in Chapter Four, Godard will return to this work by Goya and others in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, more fully depicting the relationship between the artist and Passion iconography, particularly in relation to the experience of war in the twentieth century.

[131] Apart from some proofs that Goya made as he worked, the *Desastres de la guerra* series was not printed until1863, after Goya's death, hence the discrepancy between the dates of the prints and *El tres de mayo 1808*.

comments that this has "an astonishingly cinematic effect" (2003, 318). However, when Godard re-enacts *El tres de mayo 1808*, he adopts a diametrically opposite tactic by revealing more, rather than less, of the soldiers. In his "lay crucifixion", he has decided that those culpable must show their faces, lingering on each face, both victim and executioner, in the same way as Pasolini portrays not just the face of Christ, but his apostles, the crowds and Herod's soldiers in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.

One of the binaries at play in *Passion* is the subordinate and the figure of authority, whether in the form of Michel, the factory owner, the police, whom he trades favours with and who assist him in removing Isabelle from the factory after he has sacked her, or the diegetic film's financiers, who are seen as being oppressively demanding, albeit in a slapstick fashion, in their constant requests to Jerzy for the storyline of the film. In this respect, the soldiers in the *tableau vivant* of *El tres de mayo 1808* can be viewed as another group that wields authority. Godard also places himself in this group. He speaks of Isabelle Huppert seeing no relation between herself and the oppressed in Goya's picture, but he describes himself as her "boss" and boss of the entire film crew, directly comparing himself with Michel, the factory owner (*SdfP*). In contrast, he does not attribute a similarly oppressive role to Jerzy, even though, as director, he is in a position of authority; instead his role is depicted as that of the artist struggling to achieve his creative desires. In this contrast between Jerzy and his struggle to achieve the right light and the oppressive figures of the police, financiers, factory owners and himself, Godard engenders a binary between the creative and administrative/bureaucratic aspects of filmmaking, the latter presented as a cinematic equivalent of the wealthy artist's patron of the past. Godard and Jerzy are both under the control of their respective studios and, of course, their budgets. However, the artist has creative power. Godard's plays on this in *Scènario du film Passion* when he describes what he will be able to portray on screen. Using the French verb *pouvoir* (to be able), he move his hands expansively in front of the screen but, while continuing to repeat the word, his gestures change to a Popeye-style display of muscles, so that the meaning of the word *pouvoir* transforms to its alternative meaning: power.



Fig. 32. *Passion*. Soldier's face in *tableau vivant* of *El tres de Mayo 1808*

In place of the soldiers in Goya's *El tres de mayo 1808*, the crusaders in the re-enactment of Delacroix's *Entrée des croisés à Constantinople* (*Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople,* 1840) represent the oppressor. In *Scénario du film Passion*, the "arrogant knight" in Delacroix's picture is equated to the boss and, therefore, by virtue of the previous comparison, to Godard. Godard draws an equivalence between his film crew, the diegetic crew, extras and factory workers in *Passion* and, significantly, the original models in the paintings. These groups are representative of the collective, who labour for the oppressor, in contrast with the artist whose labour is a labour of love (or passion). These groups also relate in Godard's mind to Delacroix and Goya's oppressed and to Rembrandt's group in *The Night Watch*. Leutrat cites Godard's assertion that: "The knights are metaphors of the managers, the men shot down in Goya, metaphors of the girls going to the factory" (1986, 43). This connection to the film extras is succinctly made in *Scénario du film Passion*, when Godard comments that the extras in *Passion* are "the cannon-fodder of cinema, who will be the image or even the echo of the image of factory labour", a phrase which intricately links them to those portrayed in Goya's and Delacroix's paintings and the models portraying them. Indeed, Godard's metanarrative of love, labour and oppression is not just casting back to the historical events portrayed in the paintings — they also reflect back onto the original models in the paintings and the artists themselves. Raul Ruiz in his book *Poetics of Cinema* describes this link:

But we know that the original painters used live models too. The tableau

> vivant models inevitably make slight almost imperceptible movements. They must continually strain to maintain the pose. They constantly circle around this pose, which calls out to them but escapes them. A certain physical tension results from this, the same that the original models must have felt. This shared intensity is like a bridge between the two groups of models. The timely movements of the first group, frozen in the painting, are in a sense reincarnated—or at least the tension is reincarnated. Certain philosophers, like Nietzsche and Klossowski, have seen an illustration or perhaps even a proof of the eternal return in such reincarnated gestures. (2005, 51)

Jean-Louis Leutrat, in his analysis of *Passion*, similarly quotes Nietzsche ("All the names in History are, in fact, me") to make the point that history blends our reality in reappearing identities, tying in with the notion that Godard and Jerzy are analogues of the great painters, in their creative struggle to achieve the correct light, the pure image (1986, 49). In addition to the analogy between Godard and such artists as Rembrandt and Goya, a further relationship can be drawn between Godard and Pasolini, in that both directors look to the past to understand their own creativity. Although both are intently intermedial in their approach, the art-historical image underpins their search for the integral filmic image that, in turn, will render the sacred within their understanding of the term.

The physical constraint that the models must undergo is also indicative of the oppression that the artist forces his models (or actors) to undergo in order to achieve his desires. So the artist is positioned somewhere between the figure of the oppressor and the oppressed: he suffers for his art, he forces others to suffer, and has to suffer the burden of financial constraint and the demands of his patrons. This is unchanged from Goya to Godard; in the same way as the suffering of the worker or the collective is unchanged. By establishing this form of eternal return, Godard succeeds in tracing a continuum from the canon of European painting through film and on to video by suggesting that the gestures, movement, image and driving forces of creativity are unchanging. Godard re-enacts not the historical moment, but the original re-enactment of that moment. He comments that "while seeking the reality of image, we stumble on the image of reality", reflecting the fact that the faces in the paintings that are engraved in

memory are real people whose stories were equally as real as the historical events represented in the painting (*SdfP*). This reality of re-enactment, both in the original and the filmic, becomes as powerful as that of the historical scene that is recreated, denoting that Godard's empathy lies not just with the artist but also with the travails of the actor/model/worker.

To return to the *El tres de mayo 1808* sequence in *Passion*, the two other Goya paintings depicted in this sequence may be read as further stressing the binary of authority/subordinate or leisure and working classes. The female figure from *The Parasol* is "emphatically a woman of higher class" and "her clothes are of the utmost elegance" (Hughes 2003, 88). She is released from the physical constrictions inherent in the stasis of the *tableaux vivants* and moves freely around the set. She stops at one of the prostrate corpses from the re-enactment of *El tres de mayo 1808*, looking with disinterest and detachment. As she moves on, the hem of her skirt trails over the body of the blood-soaked corpse, a movement that suggests immense disdain. In contrast, the naked female figure in the *tableau vivant* of the *Naked Maja* merely looks on and does not interact. What function should the viewer ascribe to this last *tableau vivant,* which, as in *The Night Watch*, complies with the demands imposed on it by the original pictorial narrative? The maja, in contrast to the female figure of *The Parasol*, is not nobility in any way.[132] Perhaps it is sufficient to return to Robert Hughes for his description of the maja's attitude looking out from her pictorial space as "defiantly herself" and possessing an "essential *marcialidad* (freedom) and modernity" (Hughes 2003, 242–3). In this respect, I suggest that the maja does not need to be released from the constriction of the pictorial space, as she has already released herself though her modern attitude, which again places the painting alongside *The Night Watch* and *El tres de mayo 1808* in its incipient modernity.

The opening up of the pictorial space in *El tres de mayo 1808* to enable the camera to enter or, perhaps more accurately, the intrusion of the camera into the pictorial space, has the effect of seeming to profane the hallowed space of the image that has existed intact for centuries. It is in marked contrast to the re-enactment of *The Parasol*: in the first case, the camera enters into the domain of

[132] The terms *majo* and *maja* historically referred to the Spanish lower classes, particularly in Madrid.

the painting; in the second, the figure from the painting is released from the confines of the pictorial space to wander as desired outside the (diegetic) pro-filmic spaces of the studio. This will be further emphasised in the final *tableau vivant* depicting Jean-Antoine Watteau's *L'embarquement pour Cythère* (*Pilgrimage to Cythera,* 1717), which depicts the aristocracy surrounding the court of Louis XV landing on the Island of Cythera, supposedly the birthplace of Venus. In the re-enacted examples of *The Parasol* and *Pilgrimage to Cythera*, the figures depart from the pictorial space, whereas in the *tableaux vivants* with sacred subject matter, whether real or symbolised, the camera penetrates the pictorial space, bringing into focus Nancy's thinking on touch and its significance—if we can attribute a metaphorical sense of touch to the camera. Of course, the penetrated space is filmic and only a representation of the original pictorial space; notwithstanding, the re-enactment of the original artwork in *El tres de mayo 1808*, although fragmented, is so convincing that the viewer has the sensation of being led by the camera into a space that is prohibited to him/her. Nancy describes the reaching out toward the painted image in his analysis of pictorial representations of the *Noli me tangere* meeting between Mary Magdalene and Christ after his Resurrection, as being "towards the darkness that shares with the light its concealment from representation, toward a canvas and a motif that repeats…'Do not touch me'"; adding that "it is essential that painting not be touched. It is essential that the image in general not be touched" (2008a, 49). The taboo of touching the image is of enormous relevance to Godard's interlinking of body and image and will be developed to a much greater degree in *Je vous salue Marie* in which the dichotomy of Virgin as sacred image, not to be touched, and, simultaneously, physical flesh becomes the central theme of the film. However, it is in *Passion* that his investigation of the relationship between the image and the Virgin begins.

The Virgin and the angel

In *Passion*, as I have observed, the Passion narrative is occluded, despite numerous references to Christological themes in *Scénario du film Passion*, and, of course, the film's title. Notwithstanding these references, the majority of the *tableaux vivants* do not specifically refer to Christian themes. There are two exceptions to this: the first being a beautifully fluid re-enactment of the *La*

inmaculada concepción (*Virgin of the Immaculate Conception,* 1608–1614) by El Greco and the second a fleeting and almost indiscernible re-enactment of *La lutte de Jacob avec l'Ange (Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*, 1857–61) by Delacroix, that does not form part of the diegetic film's *tableaux vivants.* Silverman and Farocki (1998), Morrey (2005), Loshitzky (1995) and J.R. McBean (1984) all refer to the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* painting as *The Assumption.*[133] This seems to come, certainly in the case of Silverman and Farocki, who are the only ones to cite an art-historical text (1998, 194), from Leo Bronstein's 1950 reading of the painting as an Assumption, which, as Jose Alvarez Lopera observes, was normal art-historical practice in the first half of the twentieth century; however, it has been proven more recently through references in the effects of El Greco and his son to be a representation of the Immaculate Conception (1999, 431). Indeed, various iconographic elements traditionally related to the Immaculate Conception are present in the original work, for instance, the moon under Mary's feet, the golden light emanating from the Holy Spirit, the cherubim and the inclusion of lilies and roses.[134]



Fig. 33. El Greco. *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* (1608–1614)

[133]Amanda Klein accurately identifies the ambiguity in the subject matter and cites Leo Bronstein on the lack of Assumption iconography in the original painting (2007, 49).
[134] The Immaculate Conception is often mistaken for the incarnation of Christ through the Virgin Birth, but actually refers to the Catholic belief of the incarnation of Mary without sin.

Inevitably, the classification of the original painting as an Assumption gives rise to some misunderstanding in reading its re-enactment and Godard's motives in choosing it. Silverman comments, again citing Bronstein, that the painting might also be read as an Annunciation giving rise to an "undecidability in the original about whether the celestial is approaching the terrestrial, or the terrestrial the celestial", which she claims Godard exploits (1998, 194). Farocki comments that "the topic of the painting is also immediately germane to Godard's purposes, and already implies feminine movement: Mary's ascent into heaven" (1998, 194). Taking the change of subject matter into consideration, the movement is still present regardless, but it is, as Silverman suggests it would be if the painting were depicting the Annunciation, a movement of the celestial toward the terrestrial in that it represents Mary's descent to earth in a pure state, a movement of far more interest to Godard in that it stresses the divine in the immanent. The contrast of ascending and descending vectors also refers back to Pasolini and his stressing of both the horizontal and the descendant vertical to emphasise the earth-bound nature of the sacrality that he sought to depict in contrast with the more conventional celestial sacrality of the great monotheistic religions. In addition, a further relationship can be drawn to Godard's later *Noli me tangere* image in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in which he transposes the figure of Giotto's Mary Magdalene through a ninety-degree angle so that she descends from heaven towards an earth-bound Christ figure and, as shall be discussed, to the stressing of the verticality of earth and sky in *Nouvelle vague*.

Alain Bergala also refers to the *tableau vivant* under discussion as the Assumption of the Virgin, but concedes that some art historians think it is an Immaculate Conception and that Godard treats it as such (1999, 160). In fact, if we assume that Godard knows the painting he quotes is the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, by cutting between the *tableau vivant* and what Bergala refers to as "the impossible sexual act" between Jerzy and the virginal Isabelle, when he visits her at her house, then he is not being in any way ambiguous in his intentions; rather, he is suggesting a very definite association between the two scenes (Bergala 1999, 160. Author's translation).

The *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* facilitates the emphasis that Godard seeks to place on the binary of divine and human and the interstice where the two meet, as Robert Havard describes:

> Toledo's presence at the base of *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* (1608–1613), for example, not only sanctifies the imperial city but grounds the work's transcendent theme in the daily world of those who saw it in San Vicente church. The Alcántara Bridge gives a naturalistic gravitational pull to the soaring topic…The link between the real and sublime is also made by flowers at the bottom of the canvas which would have appeared to continue the altar flowers in Oballe chapel, providing another *trompe de l'oeil* stepping stone. (2007, 17)

The Immaculate Conception, the Annunciation and the Assumption all depict what effectively constitutes the boundary between the divine and the human. The Immaculate Conception, representing as it does a state of grace rather than an event, is perhaps more problematic as regards its representation than the other themes. The pictorial narrative of the Assumption invariably shows Mary between Earth and Heaven, a perfect visualisation of the interstice between the divine and the human, but less satisfactory from Godard's point of view as it is the celestial in the terrestrial, to paraphrase Silverman, that most interests him. The Annunciation is perhaps the most literal instance of the divine in contact with the human, where the angel, representing the sacred, speaks to Mary "caught in her last moment of profane humanity" (Bergala 1999, 155. Author's translation).[135] Mary conceives Christ through the spoken word of the angel Gabriel, her body transformed into the site of the "touching" between divine and human, as Godard will fully explore in *Je vous salue Marie* and, again, in a not dissimilar way, in *Hélas pour moi*. Just as Pasolini identifies the Deposition as a moment that constitutes an interstice of vulnerability between divine and human, Godard, whose emphasis in this regard is consistently more focused on the female than the male, identifies similar interstices in the Marian-focussed episodes of the Gospel narrative, such as the Annunciation and Virgin Birth. The figure of the angel is also representative of the same binary. As Nicholas Mirzoeff comments: "like the angel, whose body was neither wholly human nor

[135] In Godard's later work, the angel, particularly as represented in Western art, is a recurrent motif and features in various guises in *Je vous salue Marie*, *Passion*, *Hélas pour moi* and particularly prominently as an art-historical motif in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

wholly divine the figure of the Madonna was a pictorial icon representing a body that was both real and unreal" (1995, 16). The immanence that Godard will aim to instil in this "pictorial icon" in *Je vous Salue Marie* is also present in his introduction of carnality into the painting itself in the form of the naked woman—who is not in the original—and in his intercutting of the sequence with the scene of Jerzy and Isabelle in the bedroom. However, as Kaja Silverman observes, the weight of the carnality lies in the *tableau vivant* as, once again, similarly to *Vivre sa vie*, the sex scene is lacking in any erotic impulse, and the emphasis is on the sacred rather than the carnal. This exchange between the divine and the profane in the intertwined scenes results in what Silverman terms "sacred carnality", a term that might be applied not only to the juxtaposition of these two scenes, but to a broad sweep of Godard's films including *Je vous salue Marie*, *Nouvelle Vague* and *Hélas pour moi* (1993) (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 192).

In a beautifully filmed and choreographed sequence just prior to the *tableau vivant* of the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, in which the actress who plays the figure of the virgin in the *tableau vivant* walks up a set of stairs, aided by Patrick (Patrick Bonnel). The lighting is markedly chiaroscuro. Once she has ascended the stairs, the naked actress walks across the dais, through the marble columns, stopping to stroke a lamb, which Patrick then bends down to hold. The actress continues across the set and then ascends a second set of stairs towards where the tableau sequence will take place. What is the purpose of this simple but beautiful sequence, with no dialogue and only a boy soprano's rendering of Fauré's *Pie Jesu* as soundtrack? This prelude to the actual *tableau vivant* of the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* acts as Godard's own simple but stunning deconstructed vision of the Immaculate Conception. The Virgin is unclothed because the body is sacred.[136] In fact, the only elements in Godard's iconography are a man, a woman, a lamb and a series of ascents. This is mirrored in the scene between Jerzy and Isabelle: a man and a woman, who recite the *Agnus Dei* separately, and are shown in the previous scene ascending the stairs to the bedroom. In fact, the bedroom scene, the *tableau vivant* and the prelude to it

[136] See Leo Steinberg (1983) for the lack of shame in divine nudity.

act as echoes of each other, each dealing with the interface between secular and sacred.



Fig. 34. *Passion.* Godard's deconstructed Immaculate Conception.

If the angel and the Virgin are both representative of the border between the divine and the human, Godard differentiates between them through the gendering of each: the Virgin fulfilling this function between the female and the divine, and the angel fulfilling the same function between the male and the divine.[137] It is therefore interesting to note the presence of the angel both in the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* sequence and the non-diegetic *tableau vivant* of Delacroix's *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*. The latter painting, as in Godard's quotation of Rembrandt and Goya, is once again located on the border of modernity. Nicholas Mirzoeff discusses how the original fresco in the Church of Saint Sulpice, Paris, was the first representation of this scene in the history of Christian art:

> Delacroix created an image of the Biblical story to very modern ends…what does it mean to fight an angel? Contemporary critics saw a number of possible meanings. For the pseudonymous Pharés, the *Jacob* was "the combat of matter against the spirit". Others saw it as an allegory of social conflict, of man against his fate, or of Delacroix's own life. In all of these interpretations, the angel represents something more than just another body, and we are left with Jacob's struggle with himself, interpreted in various ways. (1995, 13–16)

[137] Of course, the male human/divine boundary is most obviously fulfilled by the Christ figure.



Fig. 35. Delacroix *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (1857–61)

Mirzoeff explains that the painting was created during France's Second Republic (1848–52), which had deposed the monarchy through popular insurrection in 1848 only to proceed to the violent suppression of an uprising by the Parisian working classes months later. This situation led to artistic inquiry as to how best to represent the state. Therefore, as Mirzoeff points out, Jacob and the angel are representative of secular and divine power, which renders the painting a very apt inclusion in *Passion,* in which secular power is represented in the form of the factory owner, the police and the financiers, while divine power is represented in the form of the re-enacted paintings.



Fig. 36. *Passion*. Fighting with the angel

This loosely formed re-enactment is an interesting example of how Godard translates pictorial composition into his cinematic work. While the other re-enactments tend to observe faithfully the costumes and objects of the original mise-en-scène, Godard allows himself much more freedom here, translating the compositional elements of the original into objects that maintain the original framework of the mise-en-scène, while adapting the painting irreducibly into the physical world of filmmaking.[138] He also plays with some of the compositional elements in the original, while staying faithful to the overall composition as regards lighting and mise-en-scène, considering that he has translated the expansive landscape in the original into the confines of a film studio. The luminous open space in the painting is replaced by a mobile white screen being moved by two studio hands who loosely represent Jacob's servants—they are the same scale but are placed on either side of the principal figures, whereas in the original they are depicted running away to the right of the composition. In addition, the height of the arching trees, beneath which Jacob and the angel struggle, is reproduced by false Doric columns and various ladders, all positioned to mimic the vertical composition produced in the original—there is even a dummy of a horse. While these elements point to a very loose translation on Godard's part of the original, the angel is very faithfully reproduced. The colour and design of his costume exactly match that of Delacroix's angel, and his stature is equivalent. He also has long locks in the style of the painted angel, although his wings are positioned quite differently to those in the original painting.

These details are of interest precisely because of their subtlety. They suggest that this *tableau vivant* is especially subjective. Godard may not deem it necessary for the spectator to understand the art-historical allusion, as he appears to have reproduced this particular painting for his own purposes. Even considering the metacinematic nature and self-reflexivity of the entire film, this is a step further towards a personal narrative, particularly given the voiceover that accompanies this scene in *Scénario du film Passion,* which seems to refer to Godard's travails in its allusion to the duality of Jerzy, his problems with work

[138] In *Scénario du film Passion,* Godard describes the scene as representative of Jerzy's inner turmoil as regards work and love: "Since Jerzy is looking for himself, there is in fact a duality throughout…At grips with himself, he wrestles, and to wrestle with oneself, is to wrestle with the angel."

and love, the demands made on the director by the cast and crew, and the very Godardian fact that "the girl always loves the boss".[139] Indeed, the visual citation of this sequence in the video essay is equally telling. The predominant videographic technique in *Scénario du film Passion* is the superimposed shot: film, painting, video and photography are all overlaid on each other. However, when Godard discusses the *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* sequence, he superimposes a half-scale version of the same sequence over the original, yielding the impression of a frame within a frame or a visual mise-en-abyme. In voiceover, he comments, "*Comme Jerzy se cherche lui-même, il est double. Tout le film est fait d'images doubles*" ("As Jerzy seeks himself, he is doubled. The whole film is constructed of double images". Author's translation).[140] The visual doubling may be read on several different levels: the duality of painting and film, the duality of Jerzy and Godard, the duality of Jerzy's film as a simultaneously creative and corporate object—something with which Godard himself has constantly struggled. There is further dualism at play in Godard himself, which is pertinent to highlight. The self-reflexive trope of the fight with the angel contained in the frame-within-the frame emphasises Godard's consciousness that he is turning the lens on himself. He remarks, "he wrestles with oneself, and to wrestle with oneself is to wrestle with the angel".

Passion's binaries and their "between-ness" have been comprehensively discussed elsewhere, but more personal binaries with regard to Godard, particularly in relation to art history and Christianity, should be considered.[141] From a formidable line of Swiss Protestants but, like Pasolini, entirely seduced by Catholic imagery, he is a proclaimed non-believer who displays an unswayable attraction to the sacred, again, particularly in its Catholic forms, in a curious mix of transgression and belief. He is also a *cinéaste par excellence,* always pondering the Bazinian question of what is cinema and, adding his own coda, what is its future; however, his intermedial engagement with other art

[139] This is narrated over an image of Myriem Roussel—who plays the mute extra and will subsequently play Marie in *Je vous salue Marie*—attempting to put her arms around Jerzy. Roussel and Godard had a close personal relationship during the period they were making films together.

[140] The subtitles in *Scénario du film Passion* translate these remarks more freely, thereby losing some of the relevance: "And, in fact, since Jerzy is looking for himself, there is in fact a duality throughout..."

[141] See Silverman and Farocki (1998), Murphy (2011), etc.

forms such as music, art, video, literature, is virtually unsurpassed by any other filmmaker. Jean-Luc Nancy's observation that Christianity is the only one of the three great monotheisms to incorporate the idea of incarnation allied with Catholicism's stressing of the image in contrast to the iconoclastic origins of Protestantism, which sought to deny the image, perhaps provide a key to the director's engagement with the Catholic image and what we might call his personal trinity of the body, the sacred and the image (Nancy 2008b, 37–8).

The *tableaux vivants* of *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* and *Jacob wrestling with the Angel*, re-enacted in stylistically contrasting ways, indicate a forking in Godard's use of Christian art to represent Silverman's "sacred carnality". On the one hand, there is the Virgin as presented in the Immaculate Conception and Annunciation, who represents a female form of sacrality, as Godard shall further elucidate in *Je vous salue Marie;* on the other, there is a strand of male sacrality that Godard locates in both the Resurrection and the angel, which resurfaces in *Nouvelle vague, Hélas pour moi* and as a predominant motif in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. This will be further explored in Chapter Three.

To conclude my discussion of *Passion,* I will briefly consider the role of the actress Isabelle Huppert and her characters in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and *Passion* as an adjunct to Godard's deployment of the sacred through the art historical. In both films, her character's name is Isabelle, thereby establishing a linkage between the two characters and the actress herself that bears some further analysis, certainly as regards how they are associated from the perspective of Christian iconography. In *Sauve qui peut (la vie),* Huppert's character is a prostitute who is looking to escape her profession; in *Passion,* her character is a militant virgin with a speech defect. In this regard, Yosefa Loshitzky suggests that, instead of viewing this as irony on Godard's part, the two characters should be taken as a whole, representing "the Christian dialectics of sin/redemption epitomized by Saint Mary Magdalene, the prostitute/saint" (1995, 156). Huppert's two characters, along with Myriem Roussel's Marie and the mute extra Roussel plays in *Passion* form an arc that stretches over *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, *Passion* and *Je vous salue Marie*, and examines the image of woman in motion, the image as sacred, and the image of woman as sacred. In *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, Godard centres his slow-motion sequences around women playing

football, cycling and generally in motion. He comments, "when you analyse the movements of a woman, movements as simple as buying a loaf of bread, for example, you notice that there are entire worlds contained within the woman's movement—corpuscles, galaxies, different each time—and that you can travel from one to another in a series of explosions. Slow motion is much less interesting with a man, where there is always the same directing line" (quoted in Bellour 1992, 179). In the second film, *Passion*, he releases these female figures from the canon of Western art into movement, while simultaneously investigating the movements of Hannah Schygulla on video; and in *Je vous salue Marie*, he releases the body of the virgin from its static Christian iconography and re-installs it in a petrol station in contemporary France, with the ensuing clamour that relocation provoked in the reception of the film.[142]

As Loshitzky identifies, there is the unifying figure of Mary Magdalene as the penitent sinner between the two Isabelles. Isabelle, the prostitute in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, is resurrected as a virgin in *Passion*. This bears a resemblance to Jean-Luc Nancy's identification of the ambiguity between the two Marys, Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, particularly as regards Caravaggio's *Morte della Vergine* (*Death of the Virgin,* 1605–6) (which I shall also discuss in relation to *Je vous salue Marie*): "Mary is the model of Mary, but no figure is common to them both. Doubtless they together refer to a third, who, however, is not or is barely a figure" (1996, 65).[143] Considered together, the two Isabelles fused together by Huppert as actress, all three sharing the same name, also form a composite in the manner that Nancy suggests of the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, and perhaps point to a "third…who is barely a figure". Of course, the third could be taken to be Huppert herself, in which case, if she is unknowable between the two images of her as saint and prostitute, respectively, we are returned to the similar context of *Vivre sa vie* and the primacy of the image.

There are other palimpsests at work between Huppert's roles in the two films that further emphasise the iconography of sinner/saint. As discussed earlier in the chapter, in *Vivre sa vie,* Godard associates Nana to both Maria Falconetti

[142] Considering the controversy that was caused throughout Europe when *Je vous salue Marie* was released, it is interesting to note that the far more transgressive equation of the Virgin Birth with anal sex (which will not "leave a trace", as Isabelle comments to Jerzy) in *Passion* seemed to go unremarked at the time.

[143] Caravaggio was purported to have used a well-known prostitute as a model for the Virgin Mary.

and Joan of Arc. In *Sauve qui peut la vie*, Huppert as Isabelle the prostitute has long (red) hair, that might be, albeit tenuously, associated to the long red hair of Mary Magdalene, which is used to symbolise her in Christian art. In the bible (Luke 7:36–50), Mary Magdalene anoints Christ's feet with expensive perfume and then wipes them dry with her long hair. She is often presented in Christian art as naked and penitent in the desert with only her hair to conceal her. In contrast, Isabelle the virgin in *Passion* has short, cropped hair, much more in the style of Falconetti in Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and Nana in *Vivre sa vie*. Here again an ambiguity exists, this hairstyle can be read either as Nana's prostitution combined with Falconetti's alleged prostitution or the martyrdom of Joan of Arc.[144] I suggest that the latter carries the strongest resonance, particularly as the entire bedroom scene is replete with a sense of melancholic inevitability that suggests Isabelle is sacrificing herself. This is given added import by her recitation of the *Agnus Dei*: "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, pray for us". The marked emphasis on Isabelle's virginity inevitably leads to the association of the character to the Virgin Mary; likewise, the association, through Huppert, to the character of Isabelle in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* points to an iconography of the Magdalene, the penitent sinner, an amorphous presence in the Gospel, as Nancy describes ("Flesh, death and love together composing being-in-the-world-outside-of-the-world: that is the cipher of Mary Magdalene" 2008a, N.62 116).[145] However, the privileging of the symbolism of the lamb of God, both as regards the recitation of the *Agnus Dei*, the use of Fauré's *Agnus Dei* (1887–1890) as soundtrack during the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception* sequence and, indeed, the presence of a real lamb in the prelude to that *tableau vivant*, also points to Godard equating the character of Isabelle with Christ, given that the Lamb of God in Christian iconography

[144] In a further enlacing of these different characters, Godard references *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in *Scénario vidéo de Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and superimposes a still of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc over Isabelle Huppert.

[145] Nancy continues: "It is also one of the ciphers of the Gospels in which prostitutes are together with the poor and, according to a tradition begun in the Old Testament are nearest to the 'Kingdom of God'". This is reminiscent of both Erich Auerbach's description of the Passion narrative as the first example of the mixture of elements of *sermo humilis* (low style) and *sermo sublimis* (high tragic style) and of Pasolini's view of the "epical-religious nature...[of] misery-ridden characters, characters who live outside of a historical consciousness" (1965, 32).

represents Christ and his perfect sacrifice.[146] The Christological link is present from the very outset of *Passion*: the first words that Isabelle speaks as she operates a machine in the factory are "My God, why have you forsaken me?", Christ's dying words on the cross. Here Godard's conflation of the militant worker and the sacred in Isabelle is reminiscent of a similar trope in Pasolini's semi-Marxist presentation of Christ.

While the role of sound lies outside the scope of this thesis, it should be briefly mentioned in relation to the portrayal of Isabelle. Isabelle's words, "why have you forsaken me?" are drowned out by factory noise. This is in keeping with the stressing of sound as a disjunctive element in the film, as shown by out-of-synch tracking and the lack of coherency between the on-screen characters and the character whose voice the audience hears. Furthermore, Michel's persistent cough, the constant shouting of various characters and Isabelle's stammer all point to sound as an unsatisfactory means of communication. Music, however, is excluded from this: as Godard states in *Scénario du film Passion,* "I am blind and music is my Antigone". In this respect, there is a further, perhaps tenuous, art-historical link that can be drawn. Returning to an earlier scene in the film, during the Workers' Syndicate meeting, the image of Isabelle against a grey wall is reminiscent in composition and colour of Manet's *Le fifre* (*The Little Fife Player,* 1866), a painting of a little boy playing a fife. While this seems improbable, the colours that Isabelle wears mirror the colours the fife player wears, and the backgrounds are strikingly similar in their neutral colours. The high collar of Isabelle's top also matches the military-style jacket that the little boy wears. Various factors lend support to this argument: the fife player mirrors Isabelle in that he makes himself heard through music as does she, with her harmonica (which we see her playing later in this scene); in addition, Godard, who sees Manet as giving rise to the cinematograph, includes in Chapter 3(a) in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* a group of images of Manet's female subjects; at the end of this group he includes an image of *The Little Fife Player*, suggesting that Godard does indeed equate the musician figured in the painting with the feminine

[146] See for instance Saint Augustine in this regard: "Why a Lamb in his passion? Because he underwent death without being guilty of any iniquity…Why a lamb in his resurrection? Because his innocence is everlasting." (Sermons 341–400; Volume 10 p. 330). Augustine also cites the reference in the Book of Revelations to the eternal glory of virgins: "They follow the lamb, wherever he goes." (Rv 12:4)

(quoted in Temple and Williams 2000, 121). In addition, in this sequence, Godard makes a direct claim for Manet to be considered as the originator of cinema, proclaiming: "with Manet begins modern painting, that is, the cinematograph".



Fig. 37. Isabelle and Manet's *Le fifre* (1866)

In *Passion*, the character of Isabelle acts as a fulcrum around which the film's central themes are articulated. Within her, labour, love, purity, sacrality, sacrifice and art are embodied. Godard achieves this through a complex layering and overlapping in which he references, amongst others, Goya, Christ, the Virgin Mary, the symbolism of the Lamb of God, and Manet. Isabelle, the virgin worker, also occupies her own place among the female characters within his oeuvre: Nana, Isabelle the prostitute in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, and Marie in *Je vous salue Marie.* In addition, Isabelle is linked to the other female characters in Passion—particularly in her binary association to Hana: "one is closed, one is open", Godard comments in *Scénario du film Passion.* Here, one presumes that Godard is referring to the virgin Isabelle, in the first case, and to the sexually active Hana in the second. In this regard, Nancy's description of the virgin body provides a reversal of Godard's rather stereotypical view of the virgin as closed: "Bodies are absolutely inviolable. Each is a virgin, a vestal on its bend: and virginal not because she is closed, but because she is open. 'The open' is the virginal and will always remain so". (2005, 57). In addition, through her speech difficulty, Isabelle is related to the mute female figure who works in the factory with her and, through her virginity, to Marie, the Virgin, in *Je vous salue Marie*, both played by Roussel.

In Huppert and Roussel's characters in *Passion*, one with a stammer and one mute, we see sound and verbalisation as problematised. Alain Bergala examines this in relation to the *Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*, commenting that the introduction of the naked woman who lifts her finger to her lips in a hushing gesture is indicative of Godard's contention that the sacred can be visualised but not heard, which of course reverts back to the art-historical image as contrasted with the filmic image and its problematic relationship to sound, as Godard perceives it.[147]



Fig. 38. *Passion*. The nude figure inserted into *The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception*

The purity of image incarnated in Isabelle's virginity, her association to light, and her innocence are also reflected in her "pure" approach to work and the dignity of labour. Although outside the scope of this thesis, the themes of love/work and lovers/workers in *Passion* are particularly emphatic.[148] However, work viewed as being sacred or a form of grace, in the way that Godard presents it as regards Isabelle, is most closely related to Simone Weil, as Douglas Morrey points out and, as stated, to Pasolini's semi-Marxist Christ (2005, 143). Weil, whom Morrey describes as a "key influence over Godard's religious thinking", was a passionate believer in the sanctity of physical labour who gave up her job as an academic to work in the Renault factory in Billancourt (2005, 143). Morrey

[147] See Jill Murphy (2011) for a discussion of how Godard uses the myth that Sennett and the Keystone Studios never used scripts to suit his own purposes. In this regard, Jean-Louis Leutrat points to a further connection with silent film in the form of early films of the Passion, which were composed of a series of *tableaux vivants* (1986).
[148] See Amanda Klein (2001) for a comprehensive analysis of these themes.

cites Weil's assertion that we only experience grace at the lowest point of misery, because that is when we experience what is real in the world. Again, this recalls Pasolini's epical-religious view of the poor. Morrey also highlights the relationship between Weil's notion of grace and Godard's association of that grace to the idea of light. Weil's vision and personal history seem inherent in the character of Isabelle.

The associated imagery of light, whiteness, purity and grace in *Passion*, as previously discussed, is corporeally reflected in the figure of Isabelle. In several scenes, we see her framed by light, including in the bedroom scene in which a bedside lamp provides backlighting to her body on the bed, and may also be considered to function as a halo of light. Also, in the meeting of the Workers' Syndicate, Godard shows Isabelle adjusting and lowering the central light in the room where the meeting takes place and then segues into a shot of the arc light being lowered for the *tableau vivant* of *El tres de mayo 1808.* Once again, this overlapping of themes: light, purity, art, the sacred, and sacrifice leads to a linking of Isabelle both with the victims of *El tres de mayo 1808,* as Godard observes in *Scénario du film Passion,* and with the analogy that the painting bears to the Crucifixion. I submit that the crux of *Passion* lies in this relationship between Isabelle and Goya's painting and, indeed, forms the basis for this thesis: that the art-historical image—and, in turn, the filmic image—substitutes the sacred as far as both Godard and Pasolini are concerned. Without obfuscation, Godard says about Isabelle that, "God abandons her but Goya offers her succour" (*SdfP*), recalling Nancy's argument that post-Christian society holds on to the art-historical sacred image in lieu of the sacred itself. The original French script is still more pertinent: "*Le grand Goya va a venir au sécour de la petite Isabelle*", creating differences of scale between the art-historical image and the human.

While *Je vous salue Marie* does not deal with the art historical to the same extent as *Passion*, its treatment of the image, the sacred and the body, and particularly touch, is germane to the subject of this thesis. In this respect, the relationship between *Passion* and *Je vous salue Marie* bears a resemblance to that of Pasolini's *La ricotta* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, in that *La ricotta* and *Passion*'s self-referentiality and direct citation of art-historical images in the form of *tableaux vivants* act as precursors to a subtler invocation of the art-

historical and the sacred that directly references the gospel narrative in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and *Je vous salue Marie*. Pasolini's comment that he used *La ricotta* to rid himself of art-historical excesses prior to his interpretation of the life of Christ may thus also be applied to Godard and his filming of *Passion* two years prior to *Je vous salue Marie.*

Chapter 3
Godard's visitation trilogy

3.1 *Je vous salue Marie*: Touching the sacred image

The narrative arc of *Je vous salue Marie* follows a contemporary version of the birth of Christ set on the outskirts of Geneva. Marie (Myriem Roussel) is a young basketball-playing student who lives with her father in the petrol station he runs. Joseph (Thierry Rode), her boyfriend, is a taxi driver. Juliette (Juliette Binoche) is also interested in Joseph, but he rejects her for Marie. In tandem with this narrative is a second one that relates to both science and the Old Testament, dealing as it does with the theme of creation. A Czechoslovak teacher (Johan Leusen), who has had to leave his homeland because of his teaching on intellectual design, debates with his class the possible origins of the Universe. He enters into a relationship with Eva (Anne Gautier), one of his young students, and finally leaves her to return to his wife and child. This strand facilitates the juxtaposition of scientific and religious creation theories and, most particularly, allows Godard to expound on the creation of the world by quoting philosophers such as Heidegger and Hölderlin.

The narrative as related to the New Testament commences with an Annunciation. Two characters, a tall, dark man (Philippe Lacoste), who is temperamental and physically imposing, and a serene young girl (Manon Andersen) represent the Angel Gabriel. The duality of the two figures—male/female, adult/child, angry/serene—refers the viewer back to the duality of Delacroix's angel in *Passion* and that film's dualities in general. Indeed, in many ways, *Je vous salue Marie* takes up and amplifies the themes of *Passion* that relate to art history and the sacred, to the extent that Alain Bergala describes it as "a logical extension" of *Passion* (1999, 140. Author's translation).

In a modern take on an angel's wings, the angelic pair arrives at the airport on a commercial flight. They then take Joseph's taxi to the petrol station belonging to Marie's father. On arrival, they call Marie out; the man rather brusquely and abstractly tells her what will happen: "It's you Marie", to which the little girl adds, "Be pure, be rough, follow thy way". From this point on, Marie physically distances herself from Joseph, rejecting any advances he makes and answering his repeated requests to kiss him with the obscure response, "I

kiss you, I do". She then visits her doctor, who confirms that she is pregnant, but still a virgin. The narrative focuses on Marie's struggle to convince Joseph that she has remained faithful to him and, more significantly, to impress on him how he can love her in a way that adequately reflects the status of her body as a vessel for the sacred. This latter aspect centres on the sense of touch and how Joseph learns to touch Marie's body in a way that is appropriate to the sacred. The narrative then moves forward in time to the birth of the child, and then further forward again to when Christ is a young boy living in a house in the countryside with his parents. The film finishes with the male Angel Gabriel figure reappearing to Marie as she gets into her car, pronouncing to her, "*Je vous salue Marie*" ("Hail Mary"). The last sequence of the film shows Marie hesitantly applying red lipstick using the car's rear-view mirror, the final image of the film being a close-up of Marie's open mouth forming a black hole framed by her startlingly red lips.[149]



Fig. 39. *Je vous salue Marie.* Angel Gabriel: man and girl

Noli me tangere

To Walter Benjamin, cinema was the embodiment of technological reproduction and the withering of the aura—or of "the unique phenomenon of a distance", as he describes it (216). This is what distinguishes the filmic image

[149] This final scene and the symbolism of lipstick and open mouth has been analysed in detail by Mulvey (1992), Bergala (1992), etc.

from the work of art. However, for Benjamin, writing in the 1930s, the cinematic image was an *arrivant* form, whereas for Godard in the 1980s, it is a *revenant* form, one he had already declared to be dead more than fifteen years previously at the end of *Weekend* (1967). Consequently, for Godard, cinema has acquired its own aura and distance, which will come increasingly to the fore in his work, until it reaches its apotheosis in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The taboo of touching the image or the auratic object is also of relevance to Godard's interlinking of body, particularly in its female form, and image in *Je vous salue Marie,* in which the dichotomy of Virgin as sacred image, not to be touched, and, simultaneously, physical flesh is the central theme of the film. This taboo for Godard is associated with acquiring the filmic image that he seeks, which does not readily yield itself.

In *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, Jacques Derrida considers touching of the Christic body, within the terms explored by Nancy, as a condition for salvation: "touching, without touching, that which would come in contact with his body, namely—like a fetish or the origin of fetishism, his garment, his cloak. It is not the touch that is saving them, but the faith that this touch signifies and attests" (2005, 101). The ontology of touch in *Je vous salue Marie* is similarly complex to the Nancean concept of touching without touching, or what Nancy and Derrida both describe as "tact" (Derrida 2005, 76 and Nancy, quoted in Derrida 2005, 105). Marie asks Joseph to have faith in her, to trust her when she says that she "sleeps with no-one" and to refrain from touching her. Joseph cannot understand that his physically desiring touch is not what Marie requires of him, nor does he understand when she says, on refusing to kiss him, "I do kiss you, but not like that". Touching without touching as regards Joseph and Marie has a double meaning: firstly, that Joseph must learn to touch without desire and with reverence for the sacred, rendering his touch altered from what he has previously understood in relation to Marie's body; secondly, in relation to Derrida's touching "that which would come in contact with his body", the child that Marie carries within her is ostensibly the Christ of the Gospels as described by Derrida. By touching Marie, Joseph is touching, without touching, Christ and so engaging in the process Derrida outlines.

As referred to in Chapter Two, Nancy places particular emphasis on touch and separation between the divine and the human, while linking the notion

of the body as site of the sacred to the taboo of touching the image, stating that "it is essential that the image in general not be touched" (2008a, 49). In a scene that is central to both the film and my discussion, Marie instructs Joseph in her bedroom how to touch her; at first, he is confused, but then begins to understand the touch—or tact—that she requires of him, and Marie lifts her vest to reveal her belly. It seems that, simultaneously, Godard achieves the image of the sacred body, and, equally, the sacred image of the body at this juncture. This image of Joseph's hand stretched out, flat and vertical, imperceptibly touching Marie's naked belly, backlit with sunlight, is a striking one, which is defining of the image Godard has sought. The viewer sees close-up the texture of the skin, the curving arc of the pregnant belly and the soft down that covers it, all offset by the approaching hand and impending touch. In this last respect, however, the camera angle does not allow the viewer to conclude decisively whether Joseph's hand is touching or proximate to Marie's skin. The ambiguity of contact here is similar to that which Nancy describes in certain *Noli me tangere* paintings whereby the superimposition of hands within the two-dimensional image makes it impossible to be sure as to whether a hand is touching or merely in close proximity. Nancy cites Giotto, Pontormo and Titian's respective works as examples in this regard, suggesting that the viewer must assume that the ambiguity is intentional and that she "take every superimposition of planes as possessing the value of a contact" (2008a, 35).[150] For Godard's filmic image, the same appears to be true in that the touch that is acceptable to Marie, in contrast to the touch that is not, is unknown to the viewer, therefore she must accept the possibility that the form of touch that is acceptable in relation to the sacred may be merely the approach or potentiality of touch rather than actual physical contact. Here, two possibilities exist: the body of Marie is in itself sacred and therefore cannot be touched, but only approached, like an auratic object; or her body takes on the role of a covering or vessel for the sacred that can be touched as a fetishistic object, as in Derrida's description. In this latter case, Joseph's newly discovered understanding of touch is then, like the believers touching Christ's garments, a sign of faith.

[150] Nancy comments, "in his [Titian's] version, the woman's right hand could be seen either as passing in front of the cloth or as brushing against it, especially since Christ is gathering the cloth to him as if to protect his body" (2008a, 35). This recalls Derrida's comment on the urge of the believer to make contact with that which itself is in contact with Christ's body.



Fig. 40. *Je vous salue Marie*. Learning to touch.



Fig. 41. Titian *Noli me tangere* (c. 1514)

As the acquisition of the filmic image consistently underpins the exploration of the sacred in these scenes, these two possibilities open onto two metacinematic possibilities. If Marie's body is sacred, then the reverence indicated by the withdrawal of touch is indicative of that body as embodying the filmic image; however, if Marie's body acts as a vessel for a sacred body, as in the second case, then Joseph, and hence Godard, touches the body in an act of faith to discover whether it will yield the sacred image within.[151]

[151] Bellour in referring to Godard's hand reaching towards the screen in *Scénario du film Passion,* recalls the withdrawal of touch in this scene, "He must maintain with respect to the image and to the life from which it emanates, the distance necessary for it to exist as an image...You don't

Touching-touched

Until Joseph realises how to touch the sacred within the body, Marie uses variations of the phrase "I do kiss you" as a refrain, while consistently rejecting Joseph's advances. In tandem, she tells the doctor and Joseph "I sleep with no-one" and "I touch no-one". Marie's frequent laying of her hand on Joseph further highlights the paradox inherent in her comments. Again, her action in this respect recalls Nancy's reading of Christ touching Mary Magdalene in the *Noli me tangere* paintings:

> Nothing prevents us from thinking that, in order to stop or gently reject the woman's gesture, the man ends up having to touch her. It would, however, be more likely for him to achieve this by withdrawing his hand from her. In making any other gesture, he becomes the one who touches and according the meaning of his phrase is shifted: 'Don't touch me, for it is I who touch you.' And this touching can be understood…as a very singular combination of distancing and tenderness, benediction and caress. (2008a, 35–36)

The Levinasian idea of touch as caress to which Nancy alludes here is a pertinent one as regards Marie's instructions to Joseph on the correct way to touch her and particularly her pregnant belly. Derrida examines Levinas's thinking on the caress and tenderness as regards Nancy's thinking on touch. In a passage that seems almost written about the touching scene between Marie and Joseph, he says of Levinas's thinking on the caress:

> The caress does not set upon anything tooth and nail. It is tender in that it does not push to take anything. It won't even let itself be pushed by the flesh. Rather it tends to give extend, tender forth the tender: "*Tiens*", hold, take what I do not possess, nor you, what we do not and shall never possess. This will not be properly our own; of this we shall never be the masters and owners. Gift or offering? (2005, 93)

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touch the Virgin's belly if you expect from her the aura destined to illuminate all images" (1992, 226).

This Levinasian caress becomes transformed in Derrida's reading of Nancy into the idea of the notion of touch as a hyphenated "con-tact" or "with tact", a touching without touching, what Nancy describes as: "the point where touching does not touch and where it must not touch in order to carry out its touch (its art, its tact, its grace) (2008a, 13)".



Fig. 42. Pontormo *Noli me tangere.* (1530)

Marie's contradictory statements and actions serve to reinforce the visual ambiguity of contact that is presented when Joseph's hand is finally in contact with her belly and oblige the viewer to question the ontology of touch as Nancy does in both the above quote and in relation to the *Noli me tangere* paintings. Contact, for Nancy, is similarly articulated in terms of withdrawal and spacing. The contact that is achieved with such difficulty in this scene stresses a similar fractality. The notion of spaced "con-tact" should be contrasted, in deference to Godardian word play, with the notion of Marie, as virgin, being "intact". Joseph's contact, defined in terms of withdrawal, allows Marie to remain intact, that is, untouched and virginal.[152] Marie alludes indirectly to this when she says, "being a virgin should mean being available or free, not being hurt", which refers us back to Nancy's observation, as discussed in relation to Isabelle in *Passion*, that "'the open' is the virginal and will always remain so" (2005, 57).

[152] The word *intact* comes from the Latin *intactus* meaning "untouched, uninjured, undefiled", its etymology coming from "not" (*in-*) + *tactus*, pp. of *tangere* "to touch".

Godard, through Marie, places the emphasis on the withdrawal and spacing of touch rather than a phenomenological concept of the tactile sense. The presence of touch is felt through its absence or removal. The same concept is the driving force in Nancy's *Noli me tangere*. In relation to Mary Magdalene's gesture, similar to Joseph's in *Je vous salue Marie*, of reaching out to touch the risen Christ and his ensuing *Noli me tangere* interdiction, Nancy observes:

> What must not be touched is the arisen body…Yet that does not mean that it is an ethereal or immaterial, a spectral or phantasmagoric body…this body is tangible. But it does not present itself as such here. Or rather, it slips away from a contact that it could have allowed. Its being and its truth as arisen are in this slipping away, in this withdrawal that alone gives the measure of the touch in question: not touching this body, to touch on its eternity. (2008a, 14–15)

The image of Joseph's hand reaching to touch Marie's body recalls Nancy's argument, particularly in the positioning of the two figures in relation to each other: the "divine" one—or the one who carries the divine—above and the human one below reaching outwards and upwards.[153] However, instead of the resurrected Christic body after Crucifixion and death, Godard deals with the Christic body prior to birth, held within Marie's corporeality, which has itself been rendered sacred by being chosen. The divinely impregnated body of Marie and the resurrected body of Christ have in common an alterity that is grounded in a transition from human to divine. Within this transition arises the interdiction to touch. Likewise, in the transition of body to image, as in painting or film, a similar interdiction exists in that touching becomes seeing, which Nancy describes as "deferred touch" (2008a, 49). Once the body becomes image, the viewer is forbidden to touch. Thus in Godard's rendering of Marie/Roussel and in the *Noli me tangere* scenes, as read by Nancy, the shift from tangibility to intangibility is at once present and emphasised.

In tandem with the above, we must consider the figures of Mary Magdalene and Joseph as human figures, in both these scenes, reaching out to

[153] The image of the hand as related to touch will be further explored in the analysis of *Nouvelle vague*.

touch the divine presence before them. Their eyes behold this presence, without any interdiction being imposed in relation to touching the divine in a visual sense. However, touch as represented by the outstretched hand is not permitted in either case. Here, Mary Magdalene and Joseph form an alliance with the viewer of the painting and film, respectively. The viewer stands before the pictorial or filmic image and, while allowed to touch with his/her eyes, is prevented from touching the image. Laura McMahon, in her analysis of Nancy's thinking on touch in "*Noli me tangere*: On the raising of the body" in relation to Claire Denis's film *L'Intrus* (*The Intruder,* 2004), offers some interesting observations in this respect by comparing Nancean touch as absent presence with Christian Metz's description of film as "made present in the mode of absence" (quoted in McMahon 2008, 32).[154] She identifies Metz's figuring of the status of image in terms of withdrawal as similar to Nancy's ideas of spacing and withdrawal as fundamental to touch, observing:

> Just as the resurrected body in *Noli me tangere* absents from the grasp of Mary Magdalene (the viewer), so film becomes a resurrected body, its potential tactility inviting yet eluding our grasp, its presence to the viewer mediated across an interdiction, its own form of "Noli me tangere". (2008, 32) [155]

Applying Metz's concept of film as resurrected body, the "*Noli me tangere*" interdiction thus operates on different levels in *Je vous salue Marie*: on a fundamental level, Joseph is forbidden to touch Marie in her divine state; while on a metacinematic level, it serves as a personal warning to Godard from Roussel that he can only touch her body through the mediation of the camera, and the interdiction is also given to the viewer: your eyes can be in "con-tact" with this

[154] Denis's film is based on Nancy's book *L'Intrus* (2000), which is a philosophical meditation on the heart transplant he received.

[155] In McMahon's analysis, she makes the point that, while Metz envisages the image as referring to the ontological absence of the object, for Nancy, in contrast, withdrawal is founded on the suspension of the absent, ungrasped object, giving rise to a hesitant, interruptive mode of contact (2008, 32).

body, presented as image, but, like Joseph, you are not permitted to touch it with your hand. [156]

Godard as God the Father

The male-female binary between, on the one hand, the figure of Christ as sacred figure opposite Mary Magdalene's human figure and, on the other, Marie as sacred vessel opposite Joseph's human figure is also worthy of consideration. Does Godard's doubling extend as far as equating the figure of Mary/Marie with the Christic figure?[157] We have already seen Godard do something similar as regards the character of Nana in *Vivre sa vie* and, like that earlier film, *Je vous salue Marie* features as its protagonist an actress whose image Godard obsesses over. While Marie is not submitted to a *via crucis* similar to the one which Nana undergoes, frequently in the voiceover Marie is referred to in terms that, it might be argued, evoke martyrdom: "Mary is a body fallen from a soul" and "God is a vampire who suffered me in Him, because I suffered and He didn't and He profited from my pain". The brutal language of martyrdom is visually supported by Godard filming Marie on her bed from the same angle as Andrea Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, recalling Ettore's death in Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*, as discussed in Chapter One. Furthermore, in the allusion to God as vampire, which is a radical presentation of the divine impregnation of Marie, the sense of death or, perhaps, resurrection is also inferred in a transgressive, secular interpretation.

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[156] Godard wanted to direct and appear with Roussel in a film on incest. However, Roussel did not feel comfortable with this idea; neither was she happy with a subsequent storyline that centred on the relationship between Sigmund Freud and a female patient of his called Dora, also focusing on a quasi-father/daughter relationship with sexual undertones. Finally, after reading Françoise Dolto's book *La foi au risque de la psychoanalyse* (first published 1981), Godard settled on the narrative of *Je vous salue Marie*. The book was the first of a series of three interviews between Dolto and another psychoanalyst, Gérard Sévérin (Dolto and Sévérin, 2000). The interviews examine the threat posed to the gospels and faith by psychoanalysis. Like Godard, Dolto emphasises the humanity of Christ and the elementary presence of the divine in the human. Godard openly admitted that he had hoped for "mixed relations, personal and work" with Roussel (quoted in Brody 2008, 457); in this respect, Bergala comments: "Since Myriem Roussel didn't want to make a film about incest with Godard as father, their compromise was to make a film together on the Virgin, thus drawing up a tacit contract between them: 'You will be the Virgin and I will be both Joseph and God the Father, thus you will be at the same time my wife, my daughter and my mother'" (1992, 59).

[157] See Julia Kristeva's "*Stabat Mater*" (1986, 160–185) for a discussion of how, prior to the thirteenth century, Mary was assigned a high spirituality that assimilated the Virgin to Christ, which was subsequently replaced with an earthly conception of a wholly human mother.



Fig. 43. Mantegna. *Lamentation over the dead Christ* (c.1490)



Fig. 44. *Je vous salue Marie.* Martyrology of Marie.

While Godard is not visible in *Je vous salue Marie,* he is nonetheless a forceful presence. This is particularly true after Joseph learns how to touch Marie without desire.[158] The film ceases to centre on his frustration at his lack of physical contact with Marie. He has served his purpose: he has illustrated how Marie's body must be read as a sacred site, whether we deem this to be the body of Marie itself or what it carries within it, and how touching the sacred may be a form of non-physical contact. In a meta-cinematic context, he has led Godard to the filmic image he fervently sought, in what Brody describes as "a quasi-mystical quest for an image worthy of the subject" (2008, 461). Godard's own frustration and conflict in attempting to shoot the film, particularly as regards finding the

[158] As Nancy points out, literally translated the *Noli me tangere* phrase means "do not wish to touch me" (2008a, 37).

correct image or, as Roussel describes, seeing "the frame that he wanted or what he wanted to show" might be read as a cinematic equivalent of Joseph's exasperation at not knowing how to deal with the physicality of a sacred body (quoted in Brody 2008, 461). Godard seeks to capture the filmic image of the Virgin Birth mediated through Roussel's body, while also seeking in a sense to dominate the same body, cinematically if not sexually.

Myriem Roussel re-enacts the virgin birth at Godard's bidding; however, he in turn is dominated by the image he seeks to obtain from her cinematically pregnant body. He recognises that Roussel has an image to yield, but wants to obtain it without her conscious mediation. Godard attempts to deliver the filmic image he reveres from Roussel in the same way that he imagines God impregnating Marie through divine means so that she will deliver the sacred as incarnated by the Christic body. While this may seem overstated, the evolution of the film's storyline supports this contention: father/daughter, Freud and his first female patient to, eventually, the narrative plot of Marie being impregnated by God the Father (see note 157).

Once the film's focus moves away from Joseph's frustrated attempts to engage Marie in a physical relationship, the role of Godard as godhead becomes more prominent, particularly in the scene when Marie is alone in her bedroom. Alain Bergala forcefully argues in favour of this interpretation:

> Godard has been content to accompany poor Joseph on his path and in his pain at seeing Marie's body; he's undergone the same trials and will succeed finally after a thousand difficulties in getting a pure shot of Marie's belly, a shot uncontaminated by other images. At exactly this point in the film Godard effects an ingenious reversal. He dismisses Joseph…Now, in the long and very beautiful scene in the room Godard can finally be alone with Marie. With no further need of a proxy within the image, he will himself occupy, offscreen, the silent place of the Master and of God the Father. (1992, 69)

In his continued efforts to wrest the filmic image from Roussel's body by assuming the mantle of the biblical narrative, and, within that, his own role as creator, he recalls Nancy's proposal, that it is not sufficient to understand

Christian painting as the representation of Christian legends or the representation of a Christian subject; instead, he suggests, we should consider Christian painting as Christianity "caught up in the process of making painting; pregnant with painting, giving birth to it while also announcing itself in it and as it" (2005, 122). If we substitute the word "painting" in this quotation for "film", it seems to approach a description of what Godard attempts to do in *Je vous salue Marie.*

Godard finally succeeds in casting himself as father to Roussel's daughter, but he makes his presence felt not through his image, but rather through his highly controlled manipulation of Roussel's image on screen. Nancy refers, in relation to the image of the *Noli me tangere*, to the "delicate intrigue that takes place between the visible and the invisible", a phrase which is appropriate to much of Godard's work discussed here (2005a, 23).[159] However, in the scene in which Marie writhes on her bed, its relevance seems particularly heightened. The scene was filmed with nobody present apart from Godard and Roussel, thus rendering the non-diegetic scene of director and actress into one that is reminiscent of the painter and his model alone in the studio as one seeks to convey the reality of the other's body to canvas. Godard has already propounded in *Scénario du film Passion* how, in his search for the image, he is like the grand masters seeking to translate their vision to the blank canvas and, through the agency of Jerzy's character, has explored at one remove the struggle to obtain the right light, the correct image. However, in the bedroom scene in *Je vous salue Marie*, Godard himself now struggles with these issues. He no longer stands at one remove to present a fictional character whose technical and metaphysical problems of representation replicate his, nor is he sitting in his video-editing suite reflecting coolly on these problems. The director is "fighting with the angel" to obtain his desired image of Roussel as Virgin impregnated with the sacred. On screen, the viewer witnesses a contrapuntal female image of his struggles in Marie's writhing: she too wrestles with the sacred. However, again, the demarcating lines between the sacred, the body, the filmic image and Godard's role as creator of the image become blurred. Bergala envisages Marie's

[159] The phrase also recalls Merleau-Ponty's unfinished manuscript *The Visible and the Invisible* (1964). Ian James suggests that, while Nancy shares Merleau-Ponty's aim in that he considers bodily sense as irreducible to an abstract system of signification, he considers this from a viewpoint of rupture and discontinuity rather than intertwining, reciprocity and chiasmus, as Merleau-Ponty does (2006, 132).

writhing as Roussel's struggle against Godard's attempts to wrest the (sacred) filmic image from her body: "Godard expects his actress to give him the truth she contains like a secret, but to which she does not herself possess the key" (1992, 69). "The truth", in Godard's eyes, is Roussel stripped of any acting experience or theatrical expression, before the camera, as if for the first time, effectively a virgin of the filmic image. Roussel's own account of filming supports Bergala's theory in that, while she wished to bring to bear in the film some of the acting experience she had gained in *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* (1983), she comments that Godard "wanted to put me back to the state of acting for the first time" (quoted in Brody 2008, 463). This standoff between the director and actress continued until Roussel, exhausted by all the delays that Godard created in order to wait until she yielded the desired image, acceded to his requests.[160] Tellingly, she comments in an interview with Richard Brody that "he doesn't ask, he steals", reinforcing the notion of the difficult birth of the image sought by Godard (2008, 463). The metaphorical touch and withdrawal of the camera in relation to Roussel's body is a mimetic equivalent to the previous scene with Joseph, while the camera's frantic search (in the hands of Godard) to "touch" the desired image also tallies with Nancy's ideas of touch as fractal and as spacing and withdrawal.

Marie's conflict with the divine within and the struggle between Godard and Roussel to obtain the sacred filmic image present an alternative form of *kenosis,* or emptying out, as discussed in relation to Pasolini and the sacred emptied into the crucified incarnate body of Christ in Chapter One. Here, in the narrative and shooting of *Je vous salue Marie,* the emptying out instead refers to an emptying of the sacred *out of* the human, rather than an emptying *into* the human.

Mary/The Magdalene/Eve

In presenting Marie as a very human body, who struggles with the idea of being pregnant with a divine being, Godard brings her sexuality to the fore, reversing somewhat the iconography that enshrines the Virgin Mary as a heavenly body, free from human desires. Laura Mulvey contends that a duality

[160] Bergala refers to Godard's willingness to wait for the image as "this terrible unspoken demand, this exasperating patience" (1992, 69).

exists between Carmen in *Prénom Carmen* and Marie, submitting that *Prénom Carmen* and *Je vous salue Marie* form a diptych in which the director returns to what has fascinated him about cinema: the magic/reality duality inherent in the form. She contends that the female protagonist in each film embodies the films' characteristics: magic/desire and spirituality/truth, respectively, or, alternatively put, between seduction/deceit, on the one hand and mysterious, unknowable essence, on the other (1993, 40–41). Mulvey contends that in *Prénom Carmen*, Godard associates the body of a woman—and thus cinema—with the arousal and betrayal of "carnal passion", whereas, in *Je vous salue Marie*, he is concerned with inscribing the spiritual in cinema through the figuration of the woman's body within which the word is made flesh (45). Thus Carmen and Marie are polar opposites: the femme fatale and the ascetic saint. While Mulvey's argument is more nuanced than the aspects that I describe here, nevertheless I submit that her claim that Carmen represents the sexualised female body in contrast to the "sanitised", asexualised body of Marie does not hold true in relation to the latter. Mulvey equates the body of a virgin with a non-sexualised body, but this equation seems overly simplistic. In addition, I contend that Godard's presentation of Marie/Roussel's body, while stressing the divine that she carries within her, is far from being non-sexualised. On the contrary, the camera's exploration of Marie's naked body renders her very much as a sexual being, although she is sexually unavailable. In addition, Marie's voiceover further grounds her body, emphasising that she is an earthly being, to the extent that the narration tends towards the carnivalesque, in a manner not unlike that discussed in relation to *La ricotta* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in Chapter One. Marie's voice claims: "earth and sex are in us; outside there are only stars". She follows this with a monologue on "asshole and mouth", thus reasserting that the body presented is an immanent, carnivalesque one.

In contrast to Mulvey's desexualised reading of Marie's body based on her lack of sexual activity, I suggest instead a Nancean reading of the same body and its image, in which the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene become a hyphenated entity that are at once the same and different. This reading speaks to the recurrent motifs of doubling and the between in Godard's work, as previously seen for the female and the sacred in the figure of Nana/Anna Karina in *Vivre sa vie* and the contrasting characters of Isabelle Huppert in *Sauve qui peut la vie* and

Passion (in addition to the contrast between the characters of Isabelle and Hana and their sexual availability). These motifs, as discussed, are present in *Je vous salue Marie* in the characters of Marie and Eve, and perhaps in the character of Juliette. In addition, Laura Mulvey's comparison of Carmen and Marie holds true, although not, I submit, in relation to her claim that Marie becomes a non-sexualised body. Marie's body is sexualised on many levels: in her own awareness of her body as sexual, but unavailable; in Joseph's desire for her body; and, in a metacinematic doubling of Joseph's lust, in Godard's desire for Roussel. This latter is also doubled within itself in that Godard the filmmaker desires the image of Roussel's body, while Godard the man, by his own admission, lusts for the physical body. The fact that Marie/Roussel's body is made so present throughout the film in itself highlights its sexuality. As Nancy comments:

> Why then a body? Because only a body can be cut down or raised up, because only a body can touch or not touch…A "pure spirit" gives only a formal and empty index of a presence entirely closed in on itself. A body opens this presence; it presents it; it puts presence outside of itself; and, by that very fact, it brings others along with it. (2008a, 48)

In "*Noli me tangere*: On the raising of the body", Nancy considers, through art-historical representations of the scene, why Mary Magdalene cannot touch the risen Christ, weaving that consideration into his own thoughts on the spacing and withdrawal of touch. My analysis and several others in the literature referred to here, consider Joseph's desire to touch and the prohibition to do so. However, what has not been considered to date, to this author's knowledge, is a similar prohibition on Marie not to reciprocate this desiring touch, because she is pregnant by and with a divine entity. Considered in this way, Marie, like Mary Magdalene, is similarly subjected to an interdiction not to touch—although in her case the interdiction does not refer to touching the sacred, but rather to touching others because she carries the sacred within her.

Nancy identifies that the motifs associated with Mary Magdalene are water and her long, unrestrained hair. Likewise, Godard frequently films Marie/Roussel with her hair loose and covering her face, while also using

numerous images of water in nature in the interdiegetic scenes.[161] Mulvey concedes that, towards the end of the film, her claim that Marie's body is sanitised breaks down, firstly in the scene where there is a semi-erotic interplay between Christ as a young boy and his mother, when he puts his head under her nightgown to name her various body parts; and, secondly, in Marie's gaping mouth as she applies red lipstick using the rear-view mirror in her car. Mulvey comments that, in the first scene, as the child's dependency on his mother comes to an end, Godard sees in this moment a transformation "from the sacred and complete body, holy and whole in its virginity, into the body of carnal woman" (1993, 55). I contend, however, that this carnality is evident throughout the film, but, as in Nancy's theory of touch, it is suspended and cannot be acted upon while Marie is pregnant. Therefore, within the body of Marie, the carnal and the sacred co-exist. In this, Marie embodies what Nancy refers to, in his description of Mary-Magdalene as a hyphenated figure within which the Virgin is contained:

> Everything about Mary-Magdalene is contained in her hyphen: grace and sin, pleasure and penitence, holiness and vice, the virgin and the tramp, the tightly plaited hair and the flowing hair, the suckling breast and the voluptuous breast, the birth of the son and service to the son, the intact or the untouched and touch. But the hyphen...remains a line of separation, keeping each at a distance from the other. Each is the truth of the other. (2008a, 64)

In Marie, while the carnal and the sacred are contained within one body, the line of separation remains, as evidenced in Marie's insistence on how Joseph must touch her while she is pregnant, but still "intact". She maintains the distance between the two facets of her body: the maternal and the sexual; nevertheless, each continues to be present within her.

Caravaggio's *Death of the Virgin,* in many senses an art-historical precedent for Godard's presentation of the Virgin as a sexual being, is the subject of Nancy's essay "On the threshold", which also considers the theme of the

[161] The scenes of nature that intersperse the diegesis form a third, pantheistic strand that complements the scientific explanations of creation presented in the classroom in Eve's narrative and the mystical account of creation inherent in Marie's narrative.

duality of the Virgin and Mary Magdalene, in relation to the painting.[162] At the time of its execution, *Death of the Virgin* caused a similar controversy to that which *Je vous salue Marie* provoked on its release. The painting was originally commissioned by a Carmelite order, but was rejected when it transpired that a well-known prostitute had been the model for the virgin, thus instilling a carnality into the painting that overlays the sacrality inherent in the virginal figure the painting purports to show. Nancy observes that in his rendering of the Virgin as carnal, Caravaggio has discarded "the sacredness, glory and royalty of the Virgin" that is normally assigned to her at the moment of the Assumption (1996, 63). In an alternative reading, he comments, Caravaggio could be bearing witness to "a new profoundly human spirituality of his age…which hails in Mary the co-redeemer of the most humble existence", thus painting her in a Christ-like pose, with her swollen body indicating the womb that carried her son (1996, 63). In this reading, reflections of both Godard and Pasolini's humanistic approach to the sacred are found. Applying the comments specifically to the figuration of Marie in *Je vous salue Marie,* the "new profoundly human spirituality", which is arguably as much present in the late twentieth century as in Caravaggio's era, is present in Godard's reading of a school-going teenager with a boyfriend upon whom a Virgin Birth is conferred and her subsequent coming to terms with the extraordinary that occurs in the midst of the everyday. In amalgamating the sexuality of Mary Magdalene and the spirituality of the Virgin Mary into the figure of Marie, Godard achieves a hyphenation similar to that which Nancy describes, in the process achieving a "new Eve, the one according to the birth of man, the other according to his fall, a double coming into the world" (1993, 65). In this incarnation, in which "it is no longer possible to know which is the mother of the god and which is the pleasure girl—where is sainthood, where is pleasure", a description which, taking into account the presentation of Marie throughout the film from before she conceives to the final scene of her red lips and open mouth, describes the Virgin as depicted in *Je vous salue Marie* as efficiently as it does Caravaggio's depiction of the Virgin (1993, 65).

[162] This text was originally read in front of the original painting in the Louvre in 1992 and was published in French and English versions in 1993.



Fig. 45. Caravaggio *Death of the Virgin,* (1605–6)

From a biblical perspective, Godard also subtly insinuates Eve and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden into the narrative strand of the film dealing with Marie. When Eva, who appears in the second storyline dealing with the theme of creation, takes her teacher to her parents' villa on the shores of Lake Geneva, they take Joseph's taxi, Eva asking Joseph to bring them to "Paradise Villa". While there, Eva walks around the house unclothed, answering the phone and switching on lights in the house, in a relaxed and unselfconscious manner that equates to the figure of Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the Fall. In a subsequent scene, when her teacher decides to return to his wife and child, and mistakenly calls her Eve, she retorts, "Eva. It's all over with Eve". This metaphorical expulsion from Paradise occurs immediately after the scene in which Joseph learns how to touch Marie; together they form contrasting examples of what Kaja Silverman describes as a "going toward" and "coming from" in Godard's work (specifically referring to *Passion*), in that, the case of Marie and Joseph presents a "going toward" a state of grace, whereas the other presents a "coming from" that state (Silverman and Farocki 1989, 188).

Godard does not mutually exclude Eva and Marie, even though Eva is flagged as sexually active while Marie is presented as sexually unavailable, but not, as I argue above, asexualised. First, shortly before the scene in Paradise Villa, we see Marie at home talking on the phone and eating an apple. Subsequently, in the Paradise Villa scene, Eve is very deliberately shown selecting an apple from a fruit bowl and then, in a full-face close-up, slowly

taking a bite from the apple. In Christian iconography, the apple is seen as a symbol of temptation and sin in the hands of Eve; however, when held by Mary or the Infant Christ, it is seen as a symbol of redemption.[163] Here, the referencing of art-historical Christian iconography on Godard's part is strikingly subtle in comparison to his more blatant citations in *Passion.* In juxtaposing Eve with the Virgin Mary, Godard is also reverting to a comparison often made in the Christian Church between Eve and Mary: "Death came through Eve but life came through Mary" (Jerome *Letter 22*) and "Through Mary the snake becomes a dove and we are freed from the chains of death" (Iraneus) (both quoted in Kristeva 1986, 165–66). As Eve was seen to be the cause of humanity's loss of the sacred, Mary was deemed, through giving birth to Christ, to have redeemed it. Within this context, Godard's counterbalancing of Marie/Mary with Eva/Eve through the two different narrative strands provides further ballast for his investigation of the boundary that separates the sacred from the human.[164]



Fig. 46. *Je vous salue Marie.* Eve eats the apple.

Art-historical and cinematic forebears

In *Je vous salue Marie*, Godard places himself in the position of creator, equivalent to God, but also to the Renaissance masters, who strove to render the body of Mary as a sacred, but contemporaneous image, in a way that recalls the directorial figure of Jerzy in *Passion*. Equally, from an art-historical perspective, the analysis presented here based on Nancy's readings of paintings outside the

[163] Although the Book of Genesis does not specify that it was an apple that was the forbidden fruit that Eve took from the tree, Christian art has traditionally shown it as such. This is possibly because the Latin for apple tree, *malum*, also means "evil."

[164] The notion of redemption in this context can be tied in to Godard's idea of redemption of the image, which will become increasingly prevalent in his work of the 1990s.

Annunciation/Virgin Birth narrative that Godard chooses to film, such as the *Noli me tangere* and the Death of the Virgin, is in keeping with his own visual influences in the filming of *Je vous salue Marie,* many of which are not directly related to the gospel episodes depicted either. In *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue Marie* (1983), a short video-essay made in advance of the film, Godard suggests to Myriem Roussel when instructing her how to achieve a Virginal demeanour that she imitate the expression of the Virgin in Michelangelo's *Pietà* (1498–99) rather than providing an Annunciation reference. However, he further complicates the reference by superimposing Roussel's face on a different image: a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci entitled *Head of a Woman* (undated), which is thought to be a study for the head of St. Anne, the mother of Mary, in the painting *Sant'Anna, la Vergine e il Bambino con l'agnellino* (*The Virgin and Chid with St. Anne*, 1510–13). One would imagine that this image was chosen for the superimposition because, on viewing the footage of Roussel, Godard decided that it was the figure in da Vinci's drawing that she most resembled, rather than Michelangelo's *Pietà.*[165]

Godard suggests to Roussel, in *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue Marie*, that another model she should use in her role as Marie is Giulietta Masina, the Italian actress and wife of Federico Fellini. The image shown at this point is a still of Masina dressed as a clown in Fellini's film *La strada* (*La Strada,* 1954). Juxtaposing the serenity of Michelangelo's *Pietà* against the playfulness of Giulietta Masina, "who kind of looks like a clown", Godard asks Myriem Roussel to switch from one to the other repeatedly: serene Pietà-like face—playful clowning. He comments, "I think there is a clownish side to Mary". This suggestion to mimic a cinematic icon in conjunction with an art-historical one supports both the argument that Godard is seeking an image that will refer to the histories of both art and cinema and, additionally, to blend the human and the carnivalesque with the sacred.

[165] Even when following the correct iconography for the Annunciation scene, in which, as Bergala identifies, Godard cinematically translates the painterly solutions of Renaissance painters to the challenge of representing the Annunciation, he changes the order of the Virgin's codified expressions deployed by artists. Whereas, conventionally, the Virgin's responses during the angelic conversation are as follows: concern, questioning, submission, worthiness; Godard uses a sequence of *tableau-vivant*-style shots that instead proceed in the order: concern, submission, questioning, worthiness (Bergala 1993, 160).

While Masina's clown is a slightly surprising and unconventional cinematic reference, Godard also refers to the work of film directors who preceded him in responding to the challenge of representing art-historical Christian iconography in the moving image. In an interview with Gerald Peary, Myriem Roussel remarks that, in the three years that she spent with Godard preparing for the film, he asked her to watch Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and Carl Theodor Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Peary, 2006). The influence of Dreyer's images of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc are evident in Godard's close-ups of Marie/Roussel, which are also reminiscent of the close-up images of Nana/Anna Karina in *Vivre sa vie*.[166]



Fig. 47. *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue Marie* Superimposition of Myriem Roussel and Leonardo da Vinci's *Head of a Woman* (undated).

[166] Another of Godard's cinematic touchstones as regards the sacred is more obliquely referenced in Joseph's voiceover just after Marie gives birth when he comments "Mary, what a strange road I had to take to reach you", which is taken from Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959), when Michel makes the same comment to Joan at the end of the film. The same line is redeployed in Godard's *Éloge de l'amour*.



Fig. 48. Marie in *Je vous salue Marie*.



Fig. 49. Maria Falconetti in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928)

As regards the influence of Pasolini, the spectral presence of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in *Je vous salue Marie* should be remarked here. The influence of Pasolini's gospel narrative is inherent throughout Godard's film in the combination of mystery and realism through which the evangelical story is rendered. However, more specific references to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* are also observed in Godard's depiction of Christ as a boy (Malachi Jara Kohan): firstly, in the scene where he asks the boys in the field their names and then renames them, asking them to come with him; and secondly, in a subsequent scene, in which he reacts angrily to his parents when they ask him to get in the car, shouting at them "No, I must see to my Father's affairs" and then running

away. The dialogue in these two scenes duplicates that in scenes from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo;* furthermore, in the dark-haired, dark-skinned, dark-eyed boy that Godard chooses to play the role of the young Christ, Godard seems to directly imitate Pasolini's choice of the Spanish student Enrique Irazoqui: Godard's young Christ could easily be Irazoqui as a boy. In a further mimetic example, thunder sounds in the background as the young boy angrily responds to his parents, which is reminiscent of the pathetic fallacy of the storm that Pasolini uses during the Sermon on the Mount.[167] Godard's installation of Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* as a cinematic benchmark for the sacred, in the same way as he employs Renaissance painting, in addition to Goya, Delacroix and Manet, amongst others, as art-historical keystones for visual readings of the sacred, particularly from a Judaeo-Christian perspective, becomes increasingly apparent in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.



Fig. 50. *Je vous salue Marie.* Christ (Malachi Jara Kohan) as a young boy



Fig. 51. *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* Christ (Enrique Irazoqui)

[167] Godard uses the same aural device in *Hélas pour moi* when God arrives in the village in the form of Simon.

The majority of the literature dealing with the art historical and the sacred in relation to *Je vous salue Marie* proceeds on the basis of the Annunciation. In particular, Alain Bergala provides some valuable insights with regard to the relationship between art-historical images of the Annunciation and Godard's mise-en-scène of the same episode in *Je vous salue Marie*. Bergala first considers the composition of Tuscan Quattrocento paintings of the Annunciation scene. He observes that, the painters, seeking to present a *storia* with temporal and spatial contiguity, while simultaneously depicting the heterogeneity of the figures of the angel and the Virgin, usually figure the Virgin in the right half of the composition, with the angel appearing in the left half. Quoting Louis Marin, Bergala observes that, two perpendicular axes are used: the first receding into the painting to give perspective and the second to create an axis of exchange and dialogue between the angel and the Virgin, compartmentalising the space into sacred and human. Filmmakers wishing to film an Annunciation scene therefore have to rework these two axes in terms of their medium (Bergala 1999, 155). In addition to the perpendicular axes, the Quattrocento painters also created two spatially and temporally contiguous contrasting spaces to represent the spacing between divine and human. Frequently the Virgin is depicted in the right half of the painting inscribed within a room or *loggia,* a protective closed architectural structure within which the depth of field is truncated either by an internal or external wall. In contrast, the angel is most frequently pictured on the threshold of the structure, but his wings are pictured against a landscape backdrop where nothing impedes the eye and the perspective loses itself in the vanishing point of the landscape. The angel is linked to nature while the Virgin is linked to the domestic and the human, both depicted as contemporaneous to the era. In cases where the angel and Virgin are both depicted in the same homogeneous space, an architectural feature is normally placed between the two figures to divide the spatial homogeneity. This can be a window, an opening, a central pathway or a pillar that separates the two figures. Bergala considers how cinema, freed of the requirement to constantly recalculate perspective, can erect a similar unbridgeable divide between two shots, rather than splicing two heterogeneous spaces together. He describes how the edges of the frame in the cinema can be used to construct this invisible column by separating two contingent shots so that they no longer join in the imagination of the spectator in a homogeneous and

continuous space. Thus, the two spaces, created by the first and second shot, become sacred around a virtual dividing column that forms a hiatus in the representation between the edge of the first frame, often the right-hand vertical, and the contingent edge of the second frame on the left-hand vertical.

Stanley Cavell observes that what appeals to him in *Je vous salue Marie* is "the idea of the ordinary" or "the banal in the scandalous", proceeding to identify that, by virtue of its very ordinariness, the film caused a scandal similar to the one that it attempts to depict (1993, xvii). This ordinariness is not only evident in the presentation of Marie as a normal teenage girl, but also in the film's mise-en-scène. In architectural terms, Bergala suggests that the modern-day petrol filling station is most representative of the Virgin's *loggia* in Quattrocento Annunciation scenes: a canopy covers a space that is open on one side to show the receding perspective lines of the road. In this cleverly observed detail, Bergala identifies a motivation at the heart of both Quattrocento painting and Godard's film: the ambition to master their respective forms through an honest rendering of what each finds before him/her. For the Tuscan Quattrocento painters this comprises contemporaneous domestic objects, architecture and landscape; the same is true of Godard who locates his Virgin and angel(s) in an environment—that of suburban Geneva—that is temporally and spatially familiar to him. In his rendering of the Virgin in this setting, Godard encountered an extraordinary level of controversy, which has been so well documented it is not necessary to go into any further here, but which has precedence in many art-historical renderings of the Virgin that were deemed to be transgressive at the time of their execution and yet are now seen as classical representations, as in the case of the *Death of the Virgin* discussed above.[168]

Bergala's rather brilliant analysis of how Quattrocento composition techniques can be translated to twentieth-century filmmaking, of course, has *Je vous salue Marie* as its central focus. He contends that the film's title reveals Godard's ambition to realise a "very personal and contemporary adaptation of this Annunciation sequence" and to respond cinematically to the figurative

[168] See Maryel Locke's "A History of the Public Controversy" for a summary of the general response to the film (in Locke and Warren 1993). Juliet Kristeva also claims that Piero's *Madonna della Misericordia* (1445–1462), which depicts the Virgin on a scale much greater than the figures she shelters under her cloak, was disavowed by the Catholic Church, but I am unable to find any further evidence of this claim (1986, 170).

challenge this scene posed for the Renaissance painters long before the existence of cinema (1999, 157. Author's translation). Bergala proceeds to a close reading of the Annunciation scene in the film highlighting how the Virgin and the angel never appear in the same frame, the two spaces appearing "to obey two completely different types of figurative logic", the two angel figures shot at eye level, whereas Marie is shot from a range of different angles (1999, 158. Author's translation). Bergala's analysis of the Annunciation scene from a Christian art perspective is incisive and comprehensive, requiring little addition in the way of further analysis; it does, however, provide an appropriate point of departure for considering how other art-historical images may also interact with *Je vous salue Marie.*

Bergala notes that "from the moment of her election, Marie has been excluded from the community of women…for Godard, knows this truth, which tortures him: election equals exclusion" (1992, 69). Bergala's analysis of Marie's exclusion is true insofar as we never see Marie with her mother or female family members, or discussing her pregnancy with other girls. The pregnancy is mediated through men: the doctor, the angel Gabriel, and Joseph. However, in isolating Marie from female company, with the exception of her prickly dealings with Juliette, who is jealous of Joseph's interest in Marie, and the scenes where she is playing basketball, Godard ignores a significant episode in the original narrative, that is, the Visitation. In this Gospel scene, Mary goes to visit her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, when she discovers that she is also going to have a baby. Elizabeth, who is six months pregnant, will give birth to John the Baptist. On seeing Mary, Elizabeth declares that she is "filled with the Holy Spirit" and that the child in her womb leaped for joy. I am interested in analysing *Je vous salue Marie* in relation to the Visitation primarily because Jean-Luc Nancy's "Visitation: Of Christian Painting" (2005), which analyses Pontormo's painting *La Visitazione* (*The Visitation*) (c. 1528) in terms of the embodiment of the sacred in Christian art and the relationship of Christian art to religion, contains many insights that seem highly relevant to Godard's film in relation to the body, image and touch as presented in Christian art. Diegetically, the only female apart from Marie who has a speaking part is Juliette, who is Marie's rival for Joseph's

affections.[169] However, the theme of visitation is relevant to *Je vous salue Marie* in various ways. The film depicts several visitations: the various visits that Joseph pays to Marie; Marie's visit to Joseph in his room; and Marie's visit to the doctor's surgery where the doctor confirms that she is pregnant while remaining a virgin, therefore being the first person apart from Marie to acknowledge that she will have a virgin birth. All of these visits form part of the gradual progression towards an understanding of how the sacred is both tangible and intangible. Given that my analysis is based on Godard forming an analogy between the Christian image and the filmic image, I also suggest that a kind of metacinematic visitation occurs in *Je vous salue Marie*, in the form of the viewer, who is witness to Marie's pregnancy, as are the women in the Visitation.

Like the *Noli me tangere*, the Visitation is a lesser event in the Gospel narratives than the Annunciation, Crucifixion or Resurrection, not forming a core of Christian belief. However, the scene has appealed to painters perhaps because it is, as Nancy suggests:

> a scene of piety more than of theology, a scene of emotion and surprise, and a scene of strangeness in relation to the more canonical and dogmatic scenes that frame it and intersect with it, namely the "Annunciation" and the "Nativity". (2005, 109)

Nancy chooses Pontormo's *Visitation* as a subject for analysis, principally, he contends, because it is a picture about painting as much as about a sacred subject and, in this respect, Godard's deployment of a sacred theme to explore the filmic image, as figured by the female body, is similar. Nancy points out that the *visitation* in ecclesiastical Latin is more than a visit, rather it is "a procedure for becoming aware of something for examining and experiencing something. In

[169] Richard Brody describes Juliette Binoche as playing the role of Mary Magdalene in the film, which would of course be an interesting aspect for analysis here, given the relevance I assign to that figure (2008, 462). However, I am unable to find any supporting evidence elsewhere that this is true. Furthermore, chronologically Mary Magdalene as a rival to Mary would be quite a leap from the original narrative (given that Godard stays reasonably faithful to the Gospel story in other respects) as Mary Magdalene is more commonly portrayed as possibly having had a relationship with Christ. Coincidentally, in Abel Ferrara's *Mary* (2005), Juliette Binoche is cast as an actress playing the character of Mary Magdalene. The film's storyline centres on a transgressive film based on the Resurrection narrative that causes similar controversy to that which *Je vous salue Marie* caused at the time of its release.

certain contexts, the word also signifies that which is brought by a visit from God—ordeal or grace" (2005, 109). Nancy's words have some bearing on the diegetic experiences of both Marie and Joseph in *Je vous salue Marie* in that they both experience a coming into contact with God, which is, in part, both ordeal and grace. Moreover, Nancy describes the Visitation as a scene in which "the essential is hidden from sight" and which poses "a pure challenge for painting…in which the invisible must leap out at us" (2005, 110–11). He contends that painting does not attempt to remove or resolve the mystery of the sacred that is hidden within nor does it seek to make it an object of belief, instead it immerses itself within the mystery. Again, this, I propose, also reflects the task that Godard has taken upon himself in the representation in filmic form of the invisible sacred in the form of the unborn child, figured only through Marie's body.



Fig. 52. Pontormo. *The Visitation* (1528–29)

Nancy identifies various modes of touch in the painting: the two wombs that "touch without touching", save for a piece of cloth from Elizabeth's head-covering that connects the two; the gazes of the two women that interlock, "moved by what can be neither seen nor said" (2005, 111). Equally, Nancy sees a doubling in the painting created by the presence of Mary and Elizabeth's

servants, respectively. While Mary and Elizabeth gaze at each other, the two servants—each servant, as Nancy observes, is homologous to her mistress in terms of age, dress and colour—look out fixedly across the pictorial surface.[170] Nancy comments that their gazes:

> seek our own and await it, as often happens in portraits. What is thus sought, what the painting is seeking, is the mutual visitation of a spectator and a painting, or a *subject* of painting. One who would know how to see the *subject,* at once the subject treated and the presence hidden in the womb, with its immemorial origin—so that we might know how to see the invisible and bring about the anamnesis that arises before birth (or at the far end of death). (2009, 112)

Here, Nancy connects the role of the viewer in relation to the Visitation and the equivalence of the Resurrection in relation to the unborn Christ in Mary's womb, forming boundaries between the image and the eye that beholds it and the boundaries between the sacred and the human, respectively. Extending his reflection on the painting's foregrounding of form, Nancy points to two tiny figures in the shadows, one of whom carries bread and one of whom carries wine. He identifies in these auxiliary figures and the objects they carry a second marking of the incarnation, but in this case "in the vicinity of sacrifice and death" (2005, 113). The stare of the younger servant, who is positioned to the left closest to the figures in the shadows, invites the viewer, according to Nancy, to consider how that which precedes and follows life are intertwined in the immemorial.[171] This intertwining is "of the absolutely intimate"; again, an echo of such an intertwining is present in *Je vous salue Marie* in that, as discussed previously, Godard also puts forward a martyrology of Marie that ties birth in with death and the Marian figure to the Christic figure (113). The language used in the scenes where Marie is depicted on her bed is both violent and sexual; for

[170] Nancy adds in a footnote that the two servants could also be Mary's two half-sisters, who are sometimes depicted in Visitation paintings (2009, n.5 154).

[171] Nancy describes the immemorial as follows: "The immemorial is, par excellence, something that precedes birth: it is what is absent from all remembrance but toward which an infinite memory endlessly rises, a hypermemory, or rather, an *immemory*" (2005, 108). Here Nancy refers to Chris Marker's concept of immemory as an overflowing of memory rather than a privation.

example, “The father and mother must fuck to death over my body. Then Lucifer will die and we’ll see who’s weariest”. Nancy’s identification of how the Visitation can be interpreted as a symbol of the transition from the Old to the New Testament is also echoed in *Je vous salue Marie* by the intertwining strands of Old Testament as represented by the story of Eva/Eve and the New Testament as represented by Marie/Mary.

In Pontormo’s *Visitation* “the real and hidden presence” is, Nancy suggests, contained in the painting itself that “would form its substance or conceal its mystery”, just as the wombs of Mary and Elizabeth contain the fruit of two mysterious conceptions (2005, 115). Furthermore, we as viewers engaged by the gaze of the two servants become:

> the substance or the subject of the painting, or that places in us, through the painted substance, the real presence of its subject (at once man and god, painter and spectator, representation and presence). (2005, 116)

The significance of form and image in the painting takes preference over the theme of religion. Nancy contends that, by placing the iconographic elements of bread and wine in the shadows, “ciphers of a presence at once hidden and exposed”, Pontormo is highlighting a reality that would be “nothing other than painting [which would] constitute a remarkable gesture of turning away from the religious” (2005, 116). Can the same be said of Godard’s treatment of the sacred: that it is, fundamentally, a turning away from religion and an investment of the sacred in the filmic form? We have seen how he subtly incorporates the art-historical solutions regarding the presentation of the sacred as if to honour and revere them, and how, as Bergala suggests, he seeks similar filmic solutions to a contemporary rendering of the birth of Christ as mediated through the moving image. Godard’s frequent equation of Christianity, specifically the preferencing of the image in Catholicism, with the cinema should be recalled in his deployment of Gospel narrative and the iconography of Christian art towards cinematic ends.

The various analogies of touching without touching and visitation between Nancy’s analyses of the sacred image and Godard’s treatment of the body and the filmic image highlight how the Christian image and its relationship

to the body and touch, as presented in art history, persist in film. These concerns, as represented by Godard in *Je vous salue Marie,* also reside in the challenge to represent, at once, an absent presence and, to paraphrase Nancy, to immerse the filmic image in the mystery of the sacred. The motifs and themes Godard uses to invoke these thought processes, particularly as figured through the visitation, will carry over into both *Nouvelle vague* and *Hélas pour moi.*

3.2 *Nouvelle vague*: the resurrected body

Nancy refers to the Annunciation, the Birth of Christ, the Resurrection and the Ascension into Heaven as "the great symbols of (Christian) faith" (2008a, 21); Godard deals with the first three of these symbols—and, arguably, the fourth—within the eight-year period between *Passion* and *Nouvelle vague*. The most commonly cited grouping of the films in this period is Marc Cerisuelo's description of *Passion, Prénom Carmen* and *Je vous salue Marie* as a "trilogy of the sublime" (1989, 207–32). Conversely, Jean-Louis Leutrat forms a second grouping that substitutes *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* for *Je vous salue Marie* as part of the trilogy (1986, 37). Yosefa Loshitzky describes *Passion*, *Je vous salue Marie* and *Nouvelle vague* as a trilogy that deals with *les grands objects théologiques* of the Crucifixion, the Annunciation and the Resurrection, respectively (1995, 96). Here, I propose a new trilogy incorporating *Je vous salue Marie*, *Nouvelle vague* and *Hélas pour moi*, which will take as its unifying element the concept of visitation—each of the three films involves an unanticipated visit—and the Nancean sense of this word: a procedure for becoming aware of, or examining and experiencing something, or an experience of ordeal or grace in the face of a visit from God.

In my analysis of *Nouvelle vague*, I will consider the transition of themes from the two films already discussed in the chapter, particularly in some key scenes, in which the iconography of the sacred image is highlighted and the references to *Passion* and *Je vous salue Marie* are manifest. The most relevant elements of these scenes as regards the thesis are touch, the sacred image, and Passion iconography (particularly prevalent in the film, although it does not centre on the Gospel narrative to the same extent as *Je vous salue Marie*). In *Nouvelle vague*, art and the sacred are further abstracted and fragmented as Godard's search for the sublime becomes increasingly refined.

The storyline of *Nouvelle vague* concerns Elena (Domiziana Giordano), a wealthy Italian who runs a family-owned factory and lives in a magnificent villa on the shore of Lake Geneva. While driving, she comes upon a man who has been knocked down at the side of the road. This man, Roger Lennox (Alain Delon), has no discernible background, neither does he seem to have a life to which he needs to return. Elena takes him in and they begin an affair. While out boating with Elena, Roger falls into the lake by accident. However, Elena makes no attempt to rescue him and he is left to drown. This scene forms a midway point in the film. Subsequently, a second man, Richard Lennox (also played by Alain Delon), ostensibly the brother of Roger, appears at the house. He also begins a relationship with Elena but the power balance has changed; whereas Elena is in a position of authority with Roger, she defers to Richard. Towards the end of the film, the boating scene is repeated with the roles reversed, when Elena falls into the lake; however, in this re-enactment of the original scene, Richard does not refuse her cries for help—although it initially appears he might—and helps her to reboard the boat. The film ends with Richard and Elena leaving the villa and dismissing the staff, with Elena tacitly acknowledging that Richard and Roger are the same person.

The themes of resurrection, the sacred and art only concern certain characters in the film: specifically: Lennox, in his two incarnations, Elena, and the gardener (Roland Amstutz). The servants and business colleagues surrounding Lennox and Elena are detached from this particular narrative strand, with the exception of the gardener, who, while also part of the staff, deals with nature and has no involvement in the house or the business.[172] His role may be summed up as a kind of metaphysical narrator, as he engages in hardly any conversation with the other characters, confining himself instead to expounding abstract observations on philosophy, nature, art and the divine, the majority of which are uncredited quotations from philosophy, literature, poetry and film.[173]

Nature serves, as in *Je vous salue Marie,* as a visual representation of the divine, but an earthly, pantheistic divine, present both in nature and the human

[172] We see the gardener only once in the house, when he is being fed by his daughter Cécile who is training to be a servant. He holds forth against the comings and goings of the house's occupants ("We learn something from imbeciles gone astray in high drama...").

[173] See Richard Brody for a discussion of how Godard gathered together quotations from a myriad of sources for the film (2008, 524).

figure. However, it also reflects the significance of landscape in Renaissance painting. This is quite clearly seen when Lennox and Elena meet for the first time. The setting is an open landscape with rolling plains. We see a solitary figure on the road bending to tie his lace and, far in the distance, a large truck travelling towards him. One is immediately reminded of the landscape in *Il Vangelo second Matteo* that Christ and his disciples pass through. The similarity to Pasolini's film is emphasised by the figure of what will prove to be Lennox moving along the road, in a similar way to both Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and to *Accattone* in the long, tracking shots that depict the eponymous character of that film as he moves through the *borgate*. As the truck and Elena's car behind it approach the figure of Lennox, he seems as surprised to encounter such aggressive traffic as if he had been a figure in a Renaissance Christological landscape. Indeed, even his pedestrian status on such a large, open road seems both incongruous and atemporal. The Christological connotations are further heightened by Godard's inclusion of an intertitle in Latin stating "*Incipit Lamentatio*" ("The Lamentation Begins").[174] Godard's use of this word here leaves no doubt that, whereas *Je vous salue Marie* presented his reading of the Annunciation, here the Christological reference is the Passion and, specifically, the Resurrection.

When Elena realises that someone has been knocked down, she reverses back to the tree where Lennox has fallen. This is the first of several sequences where a verticality is established between earth and sky. Indeed, even before Elena has left her car, the camera lingers on the sun in the sky as it flickers through the branches of the tree. Elena's glances up to sky and tree and then down to ground, establishing a further connection between earth and sky.[175] Again, the camera, following Elena's gaze, travels up to the trees and lingers there. As it descends, we see Elena looking through Roger's suitcase and then turning to him as he lies on the ground. Roger is earth-bound; he lies prostrate on the dead grass at the roadside. The shot introducing him is framed so that the viewer sees no sky: the contrast between the previous shot of the sun sparkling through the leaves of the tree and this shot is striking. As Elena bends over

[174] The Lamentation is another word for the Deposition; art-historical representations of this scene can use either term.
[175] Harun Farocki suggests that the majestic tree in this scene functions as a "heathen god" (Silverman and Farocki, 201)

Roger's seemingly lifeless body, she removes from underneath his tee-shirt a chain with a silver ankh or Egyptian cross on it. This ancient symbol is the Egyptian hieroglyphic representing eternal life and the sun. As such, even though the image of Roger is earth-bound, the cross he wears reflects the sun above him, suggesting that even though it seems initially that the man might be dead, he may instead be representative of renewed life. Indeed, this first "death" will be followed by another, more definitive death; however, each time Lennox is resurrected and returns to life. The scene concludes in an image/sequence that is immensely significant for the discussion here, as it references Renaissance painting, and touch and its spacing. It also recalls the scene in which Joseph learns to touch Marie's pregnant belly in *Je vous salue Marie,* and thereby forms a links between that image and subsequent, similar images in *Nouvelle vague.* In addition, as Douglas Morrey observes, it forms part of a theme in Godard's later work to which hands, eyes, touch and image are central (2005, 189–190). This sequence commences with Lennox still on the ground. He begins to move his hand upwards, as if in slow motion. Slowly, his hand ascends until it moves out of the top of the framed shot. The shot then changes to depict Lennox's hand framed against a backdrop of rolling countryside, now bathed in sunshine and much richer in colour than heretofore, reaching upwards to meet Elena's hand. Nancy's description of the *Noli me tangere* scenes is particularly apt here:

> In its pictorial representations, *Noli me tangere* usually gives rise to a remarkable game of hands: approach and designation of the other; arabesque of slender fingers; prayer and benediction; suggestion of a light touch; a brushing; an indication of caution or warning…[E]verything often seems arranged to start with the hands and to come back to them: in effect, these hands are the gestures and the signs of the intrigue of an arrival (that of Mary) and a departure (that of Jesus). These are hands ready to be joined but already disjoined and distant, like the shadow and the light, hands that exchange greetings mixed with desires, hands that show bodies but that also point to the sky (2008a, 31–32).

This quotation is relevant on many levels to *Nouvelle vague.* Nancy's reference to "the intrigue of an arrival...and a departure" goes to the heart of the film,

which is essentially a continuous stream of arrivals and departures, as evidenced by the fleet of cars outside the villa that is constantly in use, in addition to the boats and planes that also appear. Lennox's comings and goings are a particular source of intrigue, which is apt as he is the figure that primarily mirrors the Christological narrative. It is, however, Nancy's reference to the "game of hands" that most concerns us here. The image of Elena and Lennox's hands in the roadside scene is shot "as if it were a painting", comments Harun Farocki (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 202). Both Farocki and Silverman reference the image's similarity to Michelangelo Buonarroti's *Creazione di Adamo* (*God's Creation of Adam,* 1510) in the Sistine Chapel and, more generally, to a typical Renaissance portrait. Farocki observes that the hands are "shot like human or mythological figures in a three-dimensional space", rather than the traditional representation of hands as a functional part of the body (1998, 202). The background in this "portrait" of the couple's hands does indeed resemble the landscapes of Italian Renaissance painting, specifically, as discussed by Noa Steimatsky with regard to Pasolini's mise-en-scène in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* and by Alain Bergala in relation to Godard's transcription of art-historical images of the Annunciation to *Je vous salue Marie* (Steimatsky 2008, 158–160 and Bergala 1999, 154–158). Godard's use of a Renaissance-style landscape as a backdrop to frame this meeting of hands—which is, in effect, the first coming into contact of Elena and Lennox—mirrors the Renaissance artists' framing of sacred subjects in the Italian landscape, as is evident even in the background of *God's Creation of Adam*.[176] In the image and interplay of Elena and Lennox's hands, Godard uses landscape in the same way as Pasolini's *sacralità tecnica* creates a filmic image that possesses the perspectival flatness of a painting and uses the landscape as a backdrop onto which the human figure, or, in this case, part of the human figure, is projected.[177]

In addition to the visual citation that firmly ties this scene to art history and Christian iconography, Godard uses a verbal reference to establish a similar relationship to film and the sacred. As Elena and Lennox's hand encircle each other without touching, we hear Lennox's voice say in French, "*Ô miracle de nos*

[176] Whereas, conventionally in film, the significance of a first meeting of two central characters is visually represented by the meeting of their eyes, Godard transposes this to the hands.
[177] As discussed in Chapter One, Pasolini saw the work of Piero della Francesca as exemplary of this technique in relation to painting.

mains vides" ("Oh miracle of our empty hands"), to which Elena's voice replies in Italian "*O dolce miracolo*" ("Oh sweet miracle"). The call and response beautifully reference both Robert Bresson's film *Journal d'un curé de campagne* (*Diary of a Country Priest*, 1950) and the book by Georges Bernanos from which it is adapted (originally published in 1936). In the film, the young priest sits by the bed of the dead countess, whom he has helped to resolve her relationship with God after the death of her young son. The priest remarks: "*Ô merveille que de pouvoir donner ce qu'on ne possède pas. Ô miracle de nos main vides*" ("How wonderful to be able to give what you do not possess. Oh miracle of our empty hands"), which is reflected in Lennox's words. However, in the original novel, the words are slightly different: "*Ô merveille qu'on puisse ainsi faire present de ce qu'on ne possède pas soi-même, ô doux miracle de nos mains vides*" ("How wonderful to be able to give what you do not possess. Oh *sweet* miracle of our empty hands"), which is reflected in Elena's words (Bernanos 1974, 200. Emphasis inserted). Thus, Godard's citation references both novel and film, which in addition to the visual, art-historical references (and the reference I suggest to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*) makes for a truly intermedial citation in this simple image of hands reaching to touch. The citation also recalls Derrida's reading of Levinasian touch as caress, as previously discussed in relation to *Je vous salue Marie*, in which he refers to giving what is not one's to give: "take what I do not possess, nor you, what we do not and shall never possess. This will not be properly our own; of this we shall never be the masters and owners" (2005, 93). The allusion to "masters and owners" in Derrida's quote resonates in relation to Godard's marked emphasis on industry and commerce in *Nouvelle vague*. Contrasting the "miracle of empty hands" with the emphasis on ownership and control that pervades the commercial and industrial worlds, then we can read the citation as presenting love as something that can neither be bought or sold, nor given or received.

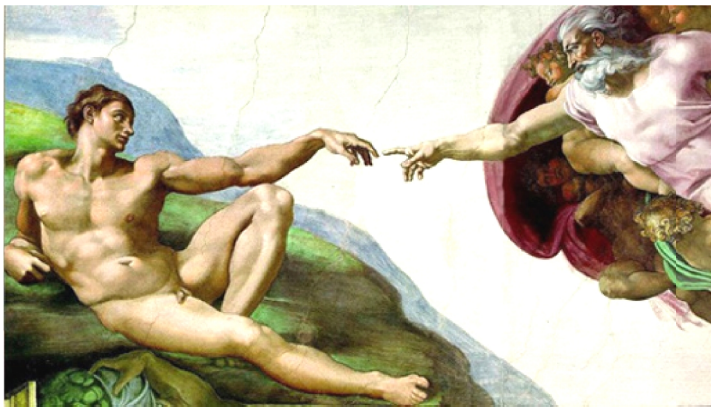


Fig. 53. Michelangelo Buonarroti. *God's Creation of Adam* (1510)

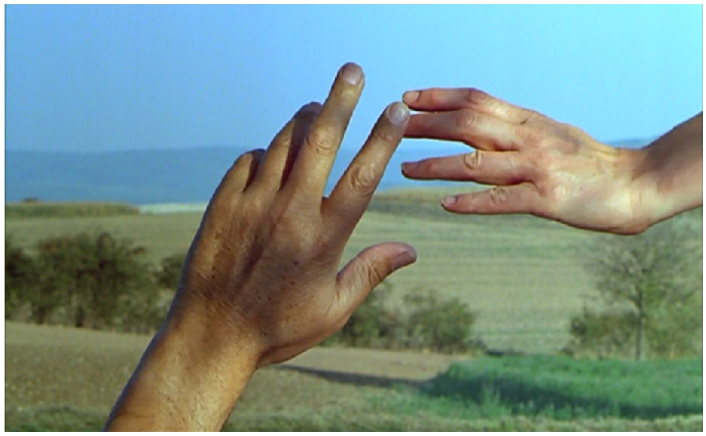


Fig. 54. *Nouvelle vague* "A remarkable game of hands": Elena and Lennox's meeting

Godard has commented that *Nouvelle vague* centres around three shots: a woman holding out her hand to a man; a man holding out his hand to the same woman, which she refuses to take; and the woman reaching out her hand to the man, who hesitates and then takes it (in Bergala and Godard 1998, 203). In addition to strongly validating the link between the film and the art-historical *Noli me tangere*, this highlights the fundamental importance of the sequence of scenes with hands outstretched to touch. The sequence of hands in *Nouvelle vague* implicitly relates to the scene where Joseph learns how to touch Marie in *Je vous salue Marie*. The difference, narratively speaking, is that here the *grand objet théologique* is the Resurrection rather than the Annunciation, but, as discussed previously, the equivalence between the Resurrection, particularly as regards the *Noli me tangere* meeting, and the Annunciation is manifest in the fact that both represent a meeting between a divine and a human entity. As such, my

analysis of these examples of "a remarkable game of hands" will be based on their relationship both to the aforementioned scene in *Je vous salue Marie* and the art-historical depictions of the *Noli me tangere*, thereby grounding it firmly in a further consideration of Godard's use of the image of the sacred body in his later work to convey his affirmation of both the immanent body and the image as sacred.

Before examining the second and third scenes in which a hand is extended towards another, I wish to return to the very first shot of the film, which depicts a solitary hand that fills the screen. It is open, palm-side up, as if for examination. This image prefigures the film's sequences of hands and the subtle use of art-historical Passion iconography, the latter through the static image of the hand, held up as if it were a pictorial object in front of the camera. This image persists on the screen for approximately five seconds; we then see the beginning of a movement where the person's other hand places a glove on the hand shown, however, this movement is not completed and the film then cuts to a credit title without any further explanation of the image of the hand. Perhaps, more specifically, this hand acts as a prefiguration or visual reference of the *mains vides* of Bernanos and Bresson that will be subsequently referenced in the roadside scene. The glove suggests, as does the backdrop of the garden, that it is the gardener's hand that is depicted. This further coincides with the motif of the *Noli me tangere*; the figure of the gardener in this respect and in relation to the central role he plays in the film will be analysed in greater detail later in the chapter.



Fig. 55. *Nouvelle vague*. The Gardener's hand

As stated, the initial meeting between Elena and Lennox, replete with Christian iconography, suggests an initial resurrection in that Lennox, motionless on the ground, comes back to life through opening his eyes and stretching up his hand towards Elena's. A recurrent theme throughout the film is the redemptive power of love, which is hinted at here in the initial encounter of the two protagonists and in the refrain: "Giving a hand is all I ever wanted of joy", which is said twice in the film, once by Lennox towards the end of the film and once, in voiceover, possibly by Lennox, although the gardener and his dog are depicted on screen as the words are said. The second scene of outstretched hands, however, is not one of redemptive love. Elena and Lennox, in his incarnation as Roger, take a boat out from the small harbour belonging to the villa. In the previous scene, we have effectively seen the two conclude their relationship in a regretful, but calm manner. Elena comments to Lennox: "Regret is seldom anything other than the consciousness of having paid too high a price for indifferent value", indicating that she no longer has an emotional investment in their relationship. Notwithstanding, her behaviour in the boat scene comes as a surprise to the viewer. Elena swims in the water, while Roger watches her from the boat. She attempts to encourage him into the water. When he explains that he can't swim, she begins to goad and mock him. She then asks him to "give me a hand", extending her hand towards him. Angry at her comments, he ignores her request. She continues to ask him to help her out of the water; when he finally acquiesces, she pulls herself into the boat, simultaneously pulling Lennox into the water. As he can't swim, he struggles in the water, begging her to help him out. She watches impassively as he drowns in front of her.

The most striking aspect of the scene described above is its surprising lack of visual exposition. Comparing the scene to the first meeting of Elena and Lennox, visualised through the interaction of their hands, we realise that here Godard deletes all art-historical iconography, omits the visual references to what Nancy describes as a "game of hands", and elides most of the narrative sequentiality. We see each of the protagonists separately but, after the shot of the boat leaving the harbour, we never see the two within the same frame throughout the entire scene. The camera lingers on Lennox when Elena is in the water; it reverts briefly to her, but primarily focuses on his face watching her. Conversely,

when Lennox falls in the water, the camera remains on Elena in the boat, cutting briefly to him struggling to remain afloat. A key point in the scene is the moment when the balance of power suddenly changes: Lennox's refusal to help Elena becomes Elena's refusal to help Lennox, the latter refusal having fatal consequences. Given the significance of this moment, it is striking that Godard does not show any of this reversal of situation, choosing instead to present the viewer with an out-of-focus shot of the water that entirely fills the screen. So, the moment of deferred touch, which he has previously captured so elegantly both in *Je vous salue Marie* and earlier in *Nouvelle vague,* is not visualised: rather than a depiction of "do not touch me", instead Godard presents us with an altered version that is in fact a refusal to show the moment of possible touch, which in effect leads to death rather than resurrection. The redemptive tone that infuses Elena and Roger's first meeting—and underpins the entire film—is absent in this scene, replaced by bitterness, division and, eventually, an apparent death. This bleakness of tone dispenses with the possibility of references to the art historical or the sacred: this is not a question of the sacred in the human or the body as an immanent form of transcendence; what Godard alludes to in this scene is inhumanity—not on a grand scale, but rather at the level of a relationship: the cruelty that one person can visit on another whom they no longer love. Kaja Silverman remarks that Elena's equation of the end of her relationship with Lennox as "the consciousness of having paid too high a price for indifferent value" is "the cruellest of the film's economic thematizations" (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 211). In the drowning scene, Godard provides us with the ultimate example of this cruelty: as Lennox no longer has any practical value for Elena, she has no reason to save him.

Given Elena's base motives, it is unsurprising that Godard chooses to strip the scene of any allusion to the transcendent, whether art historical or sacred. There are some vestigial traces, however, of these two elements, which figured so strongly in the first scene featuring Elena and Lennox. If we consider Lennox as possessing an undefined Christological aspect, and, in addition, if we take the first meeting, the first drowning, and the second drowning as all variations on a *Noli me tangere* theme, then, in this example, Lennox, as Christological figure, initially rejects the hand that is tendered towards him, as Christ does in the Gospel narrative. However, in a departure from the traditional

Noli me tangere, Lennox then relents and accepts the hand that is proffered to him resulting in a literal fall and subsequently death. It is as if Nancy's Christ had acquiesced to being human and suffered the consequences. Whether deliberate or not, Godard's styling of Elena in this scene corroborates this reading, in that she is wrapped in a red robe as the boat leaves the harbour, the colour traditionally associated with Mary Magdalene and her hair, which appears blonde throughout the film, takes on a red hue when wet, again concurring with the iconology of the Magdalene.[178]

A subtle figuring of Elena as the Magdalene is also observed earlier in the film when Elena arrives back at the villa as Lennox and Raoul talk outside the house. We see the reflection of Elena in the windows of the house: she is dressed completely in red and, in her reflected image, her hair also appears red. In the next shot, we see her reflection in a framed photograph of her parents on a table in the house. The film then cuts to a final image of Elena in red, this time not a reflection but in long shot and from behind, ascending the staircase out of the frame of the film. One can only speculate why Godard presents these images of Elena in red in such a mediated way, reflected or at a distance; we do not see her face throughout this sequence, only its reflection or, briefly, the back of her head. Is this a suggestion that Elena, representing the human, material world—as flagged by her commercial enterprises, and her human love for a Christological figure, is a reflection of Mary Magdalene? If so, then the *Noli me tangere* resonance in the film is heightened immeasurably.

Although the drowning scene revolves around hands and withdrawal of touch, the imagery of hands is conspicuously absent—just as it is blatantly present in the shot before the opening credits and in the scene where Elena and Roger first meet. Godard focuses on faces in the drowning scene, particularly Elena's impassiveness for Lennox's fate. When shown, the character's hands are not completely within the frame, as if rejecting the pictorial framing of Elena and Lennox's first encounter and the centrality of their hands within it. However, Godard concludes with an image of the hand that effectively excludes all else: as Lennox succumbs, in the face of Elena's failure to offer him assistance, we see

[178] One may also point to Elena's deep pink lipstick, recalling the last image of Marie in *Je vous salue Marie.* Godard often uses the image of heavily made-up lips as a rather hackneyed allusion to what Laura Mulvey describes as the "femme fatale", a role in which Mary Magdalene is often cast (1993, 40).

him disappear below the surface of the water. All that remains is his raised hand, stretched upwards, looking for help as in the roadside scene but this time receiving none. In this case there is no *"dolce miracolo*": Elena chooses not to give what she does not have.

If we apply Passion iconography to *Nouvelle vague,* the drowning scene described above is effectively the Crucifixion stripped of any Lamentation or Deposition. Lennox's death does not give rise to any repercussions: he arrived without any fanfare (or Annunciation) and disappears in the same way. The only after-effect of his death is Raoul (Christophe Odent), the lawyer, hurriedly picking up Lennox's canvas shoes from the pier and telling Jules, the gardener, to "get rid of them". Lennox's resurrection is equally unorthodox. Whereas in the gospels Christ reappears to Mary Magdalene as a gardener in Gethsemane, Lennox reappears in a double-breasted suit driving a red Italian sports car.[179] However, although the narrative of the original text is radically altered, Godard persists in alluding to the events using the terminology and iconography of the Passion. The scenes in which news of Lennox's return spreads through the house and in which the resurrected Lennox then appears are interspersed with the following intertitles: *Veni Creator* (Come creator); *Je est un autre* (I is another (*sic*)); and *Ecce Homo* (Behold a man).[180] The *Veni Creator* intertitle appears just before the shot of Lennox arriving in his sports car.



Fig. 56. *Nouvelle vague*. Lennox drowning.

[179] "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast lain him, and I will take him away" (quoted in 2008a, 20). Nancy refers to Mary Magdalene's mistaking Christ for a gardener as "the intrigue of vision" (2008a, 27).

[180] *Je est un autre:* Kaja Silverman observes that this as a quotation from Rimbaud, often used to theorise the otherness of the self. (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 216)

Again, as in the images of Elena in red, one of the first images we see of the resurrected Lennox is mediated through his reflection. This beautifully framed shot shows a pond in the garden with rushes and loose seeds floating in the air over it. Lennox—or, more accurately, his reflection—walks into the shot, stopping above a patch of reflected light. Once he is in place, the only movement in the shot is that of the seeds floating across the pond: thus, the reflected image of what we understand to be Roger Lennox hovers for a few moments on the screen. Nancy comments, in relation to Christ's appearance in Gethsemane and Mary Magdalene confusing him with the gardener:

> [I]t is as if his resemblance to himself were a suspended and floating moment. He is the same without being the same, altered within himself. Is it not thus that the dead appear? Is it not this alteration, at once imperceptible and striking—the appearing of that which or of he who can no longer properly appear, the appearing of an appeared and disappeared—that most properly and violently bears the imprint of death? The same is no longer the same; the aspect is dissociated from the appearance; the visage is made absent right in the face; the body is sinking into the body, sliding under it. (2008a, 28)

Although Christ reappears as a gardener and Lennox as Richard, a consummate businessman, whereas previously, as Roger, he had been a rather ineffectual presence, Nancy's description of the resurrected figure as "the same without being the same, altered within himself" perfectly describes the difference between Roger and Richard Lennox, as does Rimbaud's *Je est un autre* as an intertitle. In relation to the visage "made absent right in the face", the viewer notes that the facial expressions of Roger and Richard are markedly different, contributing to the sense of otherness. The use of the next intertitle, *Ecce Homo,* is more complex. *Ecce Homo* are the words attributed to Pontius Pilate when he beheld Christ after the latter had been scourged, bound and crowned with thorns. Thus, to apply them to what might be termed Lennox's meta-resurrection seems asynchronous. However, Godard uses them to imply, rather mockingly, that Lennox, reincarnated as a man of material substance, is now truly a man by the

capitalist standards of the contemporary Western world, in contrast to Pontius Pilate's use of the words to imply that Christ was evidently not a divine presence given his much reduced physical state, which he would have been able to transcend, had he been divine.

While acknowledging that Godard figures the resurrected Lennox as a man of commerce, we cannot ignore the symbolic presence of the gardener in the film, even if it is not in the same narrative capacity as in the gospel text. However, given Godard's pervasive tendency to paraphrase or abstract the majority of his references, whether literary, artistic or filmic, the figure of the gardener isolated from his original role as regards the conventional Resurrection narrative does not seem unusual.[181] Considering Richard and Roger Lennox as jointly representative of an individual who has died and is subsequently resurrected, I submit that a further dualism of character exists between the gardener and Lennox, in the same way as the Angel Gabriel in *Je vous salue Marie* is separated into the individual figures of the adult male and the young girl. Here, Jules, the gardener, and Lennox, in both his incarnations, are a manifestation of some sort of sublime presence.[182] Thus, there are two forms of dualism at play: the first is a consecutive dualism, in which Roger Lennox becomes Richard Lennox; the second is a concurrent one in which each version of Lennox exists alongside the gardener as a particular manifestation of the sublime.

While Lennox is the one who is the same but altered, the figure of the gardener suggests a Christological figure who is unrecognisable, as in the original *Noli me tangere* scene. His isolation as a character, having little interplay with the film's other characters, reinforces this reading. Also, his role as observer and interpreter of the film's metanarratives is in keeping with Nancy's interpretation of the role of the gardener in the *Noli me tangere*:

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[181] Nancy comments: "the painters have most often interpreted what is at stake with the 'gardener' by giving Jesus the attributes of this metier: a shovel, a spade or hoe, a straw hat. When his face is in shadow, as with Dürer, the intention could be to suggest the difficulty of discerning his characteristics. Alternatively, it could be that the shovel and hat belong only to the thinking of the woman, who believes it is the gardener. These attributes would be the image's representation of belief or illusion. Regarding faith, the image involves precisely what belief can neither supply nor withhold" (2008a, 29).

[182] Both provide voiceovers throughout the film that are rooted in philosophy, religion, art and nature. Elena is also heard in voiceover at intervals throughout the film quoting Dante in the original Italian.

> The gardener's care...forms a culture. Culture in general—all human culture—opens up the relation to death, the relation opened by death, without which there would be no relation at all: there would be only a universal adhesion, a coherence and a coalescence, a coagulation of all. (2008a, 45)

Death as a necessary agent of change, in Nancy's reading, coincides with Godard's presentation of death in *Nouvelle vague*, as evidenced by his use of the intertitle *Mourir de ne pas mourir* (To die of not dying). As Kaja Silverman observes "death in this film signifies something other than physical extinction" (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 215). Death, in its Nancean conception, as the prevention of coagulation and, thence, stagnation, becomes, like the more mundane arrivals and departures in the film, a means of flux, of a dynamism that has the capability to effect change and, in Lennox's case, resurrection. In turn, this resurrection becomes in Nancy's words "the infinite extension of death that displaces and dismantles all the values of presence and absence, of animate and inanimate, of body and soul". (2008a, 44) This also extends to a metacinematic level in that Jean-Louis Leutrat sees the aphorism *mourir de ne pas mourir*, within the resurrection narrative, as referring to the death of cinema (1992, 31). This resurrection of cinema is also, of course, inherent in the title of the film and in the presence of Alain Delon, who is, as it were, a spectre of French cinema of the 1960s. Transposing Nancy's idea of death as a means of avoiding coagulation to the death of cinema, we conclude that while Godard has proclaimed the death of cinema from as early as *Weekend*, this demise is not necessarily to be viewed negatively, rather it should be judged as a necessary agent that ensures the continued development of the moving image.

Lennox's newfound status results from him blackmailing Elena's lawyers into giving him one of her companies, in exchange for which he will not report that she effectively left him to drown. His new position brings him into contact with international business deals. As part of one of these deals, an art-historical reference previously used in *Passion,* Goya's *Naked Maja*, resurfaces as a

symbol of Islamic/Christian and art/commerce dualism.[183] What is striking here is Godard's introduction of the themes of art and the sacred directly into the narrative: up until this point, these themes have only been present in intertitles and voiceover references and in the abstract reflections of the gardener. The appearance of Lennox in an airplane hangar with what is apparently the original of the painting, which he has purchased in the Middle East, thus seems incongruous. Godard introduces the body of the painting or, strictly speaking, an image of the body of the painting, which is effectively an image of the body of the image. Lennox refers to the purchase—which, he comments, was an exchange: "the disasters of war for the crimes of love"—as "sacred...an act of faith...a commentary on Islam". He then remarks that Islam "isn't built on doubt like our civilization, but on certainty". The appearance of Della Street, Elena's assistant, in a hijab stresses this certitude. In the Western World, representative of a Christian perspective, the image of the sacred cannot be touched; treating the art-historical image as sacred, in this case the image of the maja, the businessmen admire the image of the body but do not touch. There is thus a blurring of boundaries between the sacred and the profane in which the art-historical image, in the form of *The Naked Maja,* is rendered sacred. Goya's painting is a particularly good example of this in that the maja has neither spiritual nor aristocratic associations and is thus, as subject matter, quite brazenly profane, although converted into an art-historical image she acquires a sacrality, at least to the Western eye. In contrast, Islam forbids the visual image and prohibits the female body from being publically looked upon or touched.

Godard's pinpointing of the absence of certitude raises an argument that is central to Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity: that Christianity is the only religion whose ends were in its own reasoning or, in Nancy's words, "the structure of origin of Christianity is the proclamation of its end" (2008b, 149).[184]

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[183] The latter dualism constantly resurfaces in Godard's work: particularly in *Passion*, with regard to finance and film, and *Éloge de l'amour*, with regard to the relationship between both finance and art and finance and film (in the form of Edgar's "project").

[184] The full text in this regard reads:

> Christianity is in itself essentially the movement of its own distension, because it represents the constituting of a subject in the process of opening and distending itself. Obviously, then, we must say that deconstruction, which is only possible by means of that distension, is itself Christian. It is Christian because Christianity is, originally, deconstructive, because it relates immediately to its own origin as to a slack, an interval, some play, an opening in the origin. [Continued overleaf.]

The basis for Nancy's suggestion is that, as God's creation of the world forms part of Christian belief, the end of creation, and Christianity, is therefore also implicit in it.[185] Godard touches on this uncertainty, pointing up that the art-historical image, in the form of *The Naked Maja,* and commerce provide certitude, which is inherent within the Islamic religion. Indeed, commerce, as Godard might be suggesting in his spelling out of Lennox's business deal as "S..A..C..R..E..D", is the religion of the contemporary world, in the same way as he applies the phrase *Ecce Homo* to Lennox, in his incarnation as Richard, in his business suit. As discussed above, in Lennox's drowning scene, Godard draws close to the art historical and *Noli me tangere* iconography only to stop short, denying the viewer the transcendent imagery of the hands meeting in the roadside scene; apparently, because in the drowning scene love is absent, therefore an art-historical treatment—which in Godard's thinking equates to a sacred treatment—is not apt. Once Lennox is restored as the confident, consummate businessman Richard, well capable of being in the world, connections are drawn between Richard's commercial dealings, the art-historical object and the certitude, or lack thereof, of religion, an equivalence more attributable to the outlook of Richard Lennox and the other business people in the film, than to that of the gardener or Roger Lennox.

The withdrawal of touch is present not only in the various "game of hands" scenes and the *Naked Maja* scene; spacing and withdrawal are elegantly demonstrated in several other scenes, two of which I discuss here. The first presents a simple visualisation of refusal or spacing of touch and, again, like Lennox's hand grasping Elena's wrist, is surprisingly brief: Richard Lennox is in the villa holding up a painting to examine it while chatting with a companion who wears a white scarf; Elena arrives with the character called Dorothy Parker, who says to Elena: "tell this one you'll love him". In reply, Elena takes the scarf from the neck of the other man, places it over Lennox's lips and kisses him forcefully on the mouth through the scarf; he immediately pulls away while she

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> But as we well know, in another sense Christianity is the exact opposite—denial, foreclosure of a deconstruction and its own deconstruction—precisely because it puts in the place of the structure of origin, of any and all origin, something else: the proclamation of its end. *The structure of origin of Christianity is the proclamation of its end.* (2008b, 149. Emphasis in original.)

[185] *Hélas pour moi* addresses the theme of God's creation of the world and its entropic unravelling.

looks puzzled and hurt. Again, as in *Je vous salue Marie,* a physical declaration of love needs to be mediated in some way; in this case, by the obstacle of the scarf over Lennox's face, resulting in a spacing of touch, which in turn is met by his subsequent refusal of touch. Godard at this point cuts to *The Naked Maja* scene, in which the painting Lennox holds in his hand in the scene in the villa (we do not see the image) is echoed in the large canvas of Goya's work. As the film cuts from one scene to the other, we hear a voice intone: "Among our vows of love was a promise never to force", echoing Marie's sentiments in the earlier film.

The second sequence—not a scene, as such—is an extraordinary piece of filmmaking that encapsulates *Nouvelle vague*'s implicit themes of art, Nancean touch, the nature of love, and resurrection. The sequence is an extended shot along the outside of the villa at night-time. The frame of the film becomes an outer frame to the window frames that allow the camera to view inside the house. Additional framing within the lit rooms is provided by door frames, mirrors, pictures, bookshelves and fireplaces. In effect, the shot becomes a symphony of framing that evokes both film and art in its execution, not only in its evocation of the film frame and the picture canvas, but, in its horizontal movement, of the art gallery and the motion of celluloid on the editing table (the latter a prominent motif in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*).

The sequence begins by cutting from a shot of a lake viewed through tree branches in full daylight. The camera travels along the dark exterior of the house, the shot lighting up each time it passes by a window. In each case, the viewer has an unimpeded view into the room, which is invariably perfectly laid out and lit, like a Dutch seventeenth-century interior, replete with large wall maps of the world. After moving along two or three rooms, the camera locates Lennox, standing in a right-profile shot, and framed in an open doorway. As the camera moves further, the viewer also sees Elena; however, she stands in a separate frame and is behind glass so that her image is slightly blurred by the reflections on the glass. Lennox intones: "The positive is given to us, it remains for us to make the negative".[186] This may be a reference to the protagonists' inclination to destroy the good in their relationship, referencing back to a previous comment of

[186] The sentence is also used in *Hélas pour moi.*

Elena's ("by holding in our hands this beginning of happiness we may be the first to destroy it"), which also functions as an observation on the difference between a touch that approaches but remains at a distance, and therefore hopeful, compared to a fulfilled touch and the disappointment that may be inherent in the completion of that action. However, given that light, as seen in *Passion*, is one of Godard's preferential metaphors for both cinema and painting, Lennox's comment may be taken as a metacinematic one referring to the importance of light and shadow in both film and painting.[187] The possibility is further validated by the very deliberate chiaroscuro tones Godard achieves in this particular shot. After the camera has passed Lennox and Elena, it continues to move room by room until it reaches the end of the house, where it turns to look back into the corner room through a different window frame, pauses, and then starts to return along its original path. However, this time, Cécile, the maid, (Cécile Reigher) moves through each room with the camera, pausing to switch off the lamp in each room as she goes, so that, rather than simple interiors, the images become figurative. The effect, as she switches off the lights in each room, is also that of the space between film frames or a cinema screen going black, as at the end of a film; it is also strongly reminiscent of Georges de la Tour's paintings with faces lit by candlelight from below.[188] Cécile then reaches the room next to where Lennox and Elena are. Here she turns to leave, but the camera proceeds to Lennox and Elena. His position is unchanged, still standing in right profile against the doorframe. Elena has moved; she now stands in front of him with her head resting on his shoulder, but with her body apart from his. Their figures are backlit by the light in the room, remaining essentially in shadow, except for a halo of light around Elena's hair and the light on Lennox's face, which shows him staring impassively into the distance. She says: "there is no judge; what isn't resolved by love stays forever in suspense", which acts as a response to his comment in the first part of the tracking shot, as if love could resolve both affairs of the heart and the painted or filmic image. As in the hand sequences, the body language in this shot suggests spacing and a Nancean *Noli me tangere*. The backlit figures with the light separating their bodies highlight the lack of

[187] *Passion* is referenced in this sequence through the voice heard off-screen commanding "Mange ta soupe", which is said to Isabelle's grandfather several times.
[188] We recall that one of the *tableaux vivants* that Godard originally set up in Zoetrope studios prior to making *Passion* was de la Tour's *The Newborn Christ* (c.1645).

touching hands. In fact, Lennox, unchanged from the first view of him and staring out over Elena's body, in this instance is the one who rejects touch and distances himself, in contrast to the first shot of the couple in this sequence, in which Elena, behind glass and in a separate frame, appeared the more distanced of the two. Indeed, the entire sequence of the camera travelling the length of the house in one direction and then returning in the opposite direction suggests the dualistic presentation of the couple's relationship: in the first half of the film, Elena controls their interactions, which culminates in Roger Lennox's drowning; in the second half, a reversal occurs: Richard Lennox takes charge both of the couple's relationship and Elena's business dealings. This reversal and indeed the two different characters of Lennox, the same but altered, are reflected in the tracking shot, which proceeds in one way and then the other.



Fig. 57. *Nouvelle vague.* Cécile



Fig. 58. Georges de la Tour. *The Young Singer* (1650)

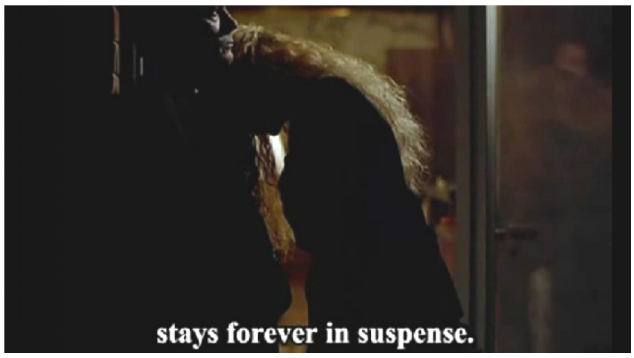


Fig. 59. *Nouvelle vague*. Lennox and Elena

After these detours from the original harmonious image of hands, engendered through art-historical and sacred symbolism, Godard restores harmony by returning as if to right the wrong of the first drowning: to mirror it, but with the outcome altered, and, in so doing, redeploys the imagery of hand, touch and withdrawal of touch. The beginning of this second scene on the boat shows Elena and Lennox once again leave from the small harbour adjacent to the villa, both symbolically wearing red on this occasion. The balance of power has shifted: Richard is dominant and Elena submissive. This time he jumps into the water—on the previous occasion, Lennox, as Roger, claimed that he was unable to swim. Elena remains on the boat, fully clothed, with an anxious air. In contrast to the previous boat scene, she wears no make-up; particularly striking is her lack of lipstick. She, as much as Lennox, seems altered or "the same without being the same", to quote Nancy. Her anxiety is signalled by an image of her hand clutching to the edge of the boat, which sets up the sequence of events that follows. Lennox, in the water, puts his hand on top of Elena's hand gripping the boat. She suffers it briefly, and then withdraws her hand, very much as Marie rejects Joseph's touch. Lennox then lifts his hand once more, placing it on Elena's. She again waits a little while before pulling her hand away; however, this time she places her hand on top of Lennox's, as if indicating Nancy's contention in relation to Christ in the *Noli me tangere* scene, that He touches Mary Magdalene in order to avoid being touched. Here, Elena assumes the role of the sacred figure both in her superior position and in her withdrawal of touch. Lennox, then, reaches his hand up to her face and cups it around her neck. This gesture, at first tender, becomes intimidating. Once again without the event being depicted on screen, Elena falls into the water and Lennox is in the boat, in a

complete reversal of the events of the first drowning scene: Lennox sits impassively as Elena cries for help.[189] However, the sequence has a redemptive conclusion. Elena's hand reaches out of the water for help, as she tries to remain afloat. The viewer's expectation is that the scene will play out as previously, this time with Lennox leaving Elena to drown. The hand's plea, as before, seems to go unanswered. This time, however, there is touch—not spaced or particularly pictorial, in fact, the image of Lennox's hand reaching for Elena's is so brief that it is difficult to see and there is no uncertainty as to whether the hands touch or not, or, indeed, any choreography between the hands. His hand grabs her wrist momentarily, before the film cuts to the two returning to the house through the garden.[190]



Fig. 60. *Nouvelle vague.* Lennox's hand touching Elena and Elena's hand grasping.



Fig. 61. Giotto, *Noli me tangere* (1325).

[189] It should be observed that, although slightly outside the bounds of this thesis and already alluded to elsewhere, the image of Lennox in the boat and, indeed, the tension that is created by the uncertainty as to whether the person in the water will be helped or hindered in both of the "drowning scenes" appears to be a deliberate citation on Godard's part of the narrative of and Delon's character in Jacques Delray's *La piscine* (*The Swimming Pool,* 1969).

[190] Harun Farocki remarks, referring to the "miracle of empty hands", that here, as in the accident scene, the gift that is not in one's possession is given (Silverman and Farocki 1998, 224).

In the boat scene, the outstretched hand, whether Lennox's touching Elena's on the boat or reaching to touch her neck, or Elena's reaching from the water for help, is associated to an upward dynamic. This is also the case in the first drowning scene, the roadside scene, and the scene where Joseph is allowed to touch Marie's pregnant belly in *Je vous salue Marie*: the hand reaching out to touch never reaches across or downwards; the motion of the hand is always upwards, as if in prayer. This up-reaching can be compared with the *Noli me tangere* paintings. If we consider the paintings that Nancy examines in his eponymous essay, we see that almost all of the images are constituted by a similar upward movement, with one of figures standing above the other.[191] Nancy examines the scene as painted by Rembrandt, Dürer, Titian, Pontormo and Cano in his essay; only in Pontormo's painting are Christ and Mary Magdalene both standing.[192] As regards these art-historical images, the upward motion of hands, and eyes, can be viewed as the human looking towards the divine, with the traditional iconography of the human as earthbound and the divine as celestial. Godard seems to deploy this symbolism in the upward gesture of the hand outstretched for a reciprocal touch—which also recalls the vertical camera movements of Elena and Lennox's original meeting, but in this case the touch signifies an immanent, grounded response, to which he assigns the value of transcendence through his use of art-historical iconography.[193] The figure of the gardener is also relevant in this regard: he works with his hands in or on the earth, thus he represents the polar opposite of a divine or celestial being (offering the same contrast that adds dramatic intensity to Mary Magdalene's mistaking of Christ for a gardener in the Gospel narratives). For Godard, earth and sky have an equal, almost reflective value, which is manifest in the many images of bodies of water and sky in films of the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in those that deal with the sublime. Earth and sky work together, with earth grounding sky as immanent grounds transcendent in his later work.[194]

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[191] Nancy also provides a comprehensive list of other paintings and sculptures depicting the scene.

[192] Even in Pontormo's painting there is a certain upward motion, due to the height difference of the two figures.

[193] There is an echo of the upraised hand, in the scene after Lennox pulls Elena from the water when as she walks up the hill towards the house, she stretches her hand back to him without looking at him; he then raises his hand to meet hers.

[194] Roland Amstutz, who plays Jules the gardener, remarked that on hearing his voice in *Nouvelle vague,* it struck him as being "*plus ancrée dans la terre*" ("more grounded in the earth") than

As the image of the gardener's hand prefigures the choreographed touch and spacing that takes place between the two protagonists throughout the film, likewise a similar coda occurs in the film's closing scene. Elena and Lennox, reconciled, are closing up the villa and saying goodbye to the staff: as the film begins with an arrival, it closes with a departure. Elena bends to tie Lennox's shoelace in a servile gesture that mirrors a previous intertitle, "*Ton Serviteur*" ("your servant"), and the motif of service that runs throughout the film in the form of the staff in the villa.[195] The gesture also acts as a final reinforcement of the switch in the power balance of the couple's relationship; however, the shot is completed by Lennox's hand reaching down to Elena to help her up while her hand, in turn, reaches up to meet his, once again recalling the upward movement as discussed above. The gesture and response seem to happen in slow motion. In contrast to the original meeting of the couple, as visualised by their hands touching, with the associated art-historical and sacred overtones, this shot is far more prosaic. The Renaissance-style background of the original shot, the reference to Michelangelo's *God's Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel, the Pasolinian frontality, and the slow interplay of hands that suggests a Nancean *Noli me tangere* are lacking: the shot is almost clumsily framed with the headlight of a car intruding into the shot on one side obscuring part of Elena's body; notwithstanding, the reference to the earlier image is quite clear. Godard seems to draw the series of hand images into the present in these final shots, rendering them particular to Elena and Lennox, rather than to cultural references from the past, as discussed below.

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usual. He also recalled how Godard instructed him to stand "*bien planté sur le sol*" ("planted solidly on the ground") (quoted in Morrey 2005, 175).

[195] "*Ton serviteur*" is taken from the Bible 1 Samuel 3:10: "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." See Silverman and Farocki for a more detailed analysis of the master/slave relationship in *Nouvelle vague,* particularly with regard to Hegel.



Fig. 62. *Nouvelle vague* Elena tying Lennox's shoelaces

Immediately after the shot of Lennox offering Elena his hand, we hear her voice quoting from Dante's *Divina commedia* (*Divine Comedy*, 1308-1321) against an image of autumn leaves against water, a kind of earthly Paradise: "my mind, till then so narrow, grew clear and broader as it wandered and I turned to face the hill, rising to the heavens", to which Lennox, in voiceover, responds "My mother said: 'Giving a hand was all I ever wanted of joy".[196] In these two quotes, the upward movement of hands is verbally echoed, again in a fragmented, abstract fashion. The film then cuts back to the figures of Lennox and Elena, in a similar position—but in close-up—to the second image of the couple in the extended tracking shot discussed above. In this shot, however, Elena's head is raised and her eyes are directed towards the Egyptian cross around Lennox's neck; he watches her, again in contrast to the tracking shot, in which he stared past her. Similarly to that shot, their bodies are separated and their faces are backlit by the sunshine in the garden behind them, subtly emphasising their separateness. Elena then picks up the Egyptian cross, saying "So, it was you". This gesture, together with the spacing of the two bodies, recalls Derrida's assertion about the fetishism of touch in relation to Christ in the Gospel, that the touching of his garments or his effects formed a "con-tact", a touching without touching; the Christological nuance is obviously heightened here by the silver cross. The *Noli me tangere* is also evoked in that Elena, here representing the human—although as I have identified the human/divine balance moves back and forth between the couple during the course of the film—only

[196] Silverman and Farocki use Dorothy Sayer's translation from Dante's original text: "My mind, till then in one strait groove compressed/Expanded, letting eager thought range free, And I looked up to that great mountain, soaring/Highest to Heaven from the encircling sea" (1998, 226).

now recognises that the resurrected figure, whom she had mistaken for another, is the person she originally knew. Lennox then reinforces the notion of spacing by drawing with the palm of his hand a vertical dividing line between them, saying: "it's you, it's me". The tone here, however, is conciliatory not hostile, as if to suggest that difference is innate and not to be feared. Elena's response, "I'll lead", reverses the balance of power between them once again, a reversal to which Lennox acquiesces by affirming: "the exchange is made". Once Elena has realised that Roger and Richard Lennox are the same person, she seems to revert to the original dynamic of their relationship. If we consider Elena's "I'll lead" in the original French "*C'est moi qui conduit*", it could equally be translated as "I'll drive"; however, it is Lennox who gets into the driver's seat of the car as they leave the villa, perhaps indicating yet another power switch. These rapid changes in dominance at the end of the film, in contrast to the far more deliberate division of power in the first and second sections of the film, suggest a type of status quo has been reached, where the relationship is constantly in flux, but balanced. The attainment of a dynamic balance is also suggested in relation to the divine/human motif that runs throughout the film, reached by means of reliving and appropriating the myriad of references throughout the film until this balance is reached. This closure is alluded to in the voiceover of the previous scene as the couple make their way from the harbour back to the villa:

> It was as if they had already lived all this. Their words seemed frozen, in the traces of other words from other times. They paid no heed to what they did but to the division that set today's actions in the present and parallel actions in the past. They felt tall, motionless; above them past and present: identical waves in the same ocean.

The above quotation encapsulates both the film's narrative and Godard's structuring of the film around visual and textual references (while also evoking a sense of Benjaminian now-time). Central to these references is the iconography of the Resurrection and the *Noli me tangere*, as mediated by art history, and, in my analysis, by Nancean ideas of touch and spacing. Having explored the iconography of hands and touch in *Je vous salue Marie* and *Nouvelle vague* by means of the Christological and art-historical, Godard will subsequently proceed

to further refine his exploration of the ontology of the filmic image in *Hélas pour moi*, while continuing to implement a similar framework of the image and the sacred.

3.3 *Hélas pour moi*: The dark side of the image

> *When my father's father's father had a difficult task to accomplish, he went to a certain place in the forest, lit a fire, and immersed himself in silent prayer. And what he had to do was done. When, later, my father's father was confronted with the same task, he went to the same place in the forest and said: "We no longer know how to light the fire, but we still know the prayer", and what he had to do was done. Later, my father too went into the forest and said, "We no longer know how to light the fire, we no longer know the mysteries of prayer, but we still know the exact place in the forest where it occurred. And that should do". And that did do. But when I was faced with the same task, I stayed home and said, "We no longer know how to light the fire, we no longer know how to say the prayers, we don't even know the place in the forest, but we still know how to tell the story".* (Opening narration from *Hélas pour moi.* Adapted from Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941))

By initiating *Hélas pour moi* (*O Woe is Me,* 1993) with the above paraphrased text that clearly identifies the waning of ritual in modern society, Godard signals from the outset of the film that post-Christianity as a metonym for the post-cinematic continues to underpin his filmic investigations in tandem with consistent reference to what has preceded it: the cinematic image and the art-historical image.[197] As in *Je vous salue Marie*—and, it might be debated, *Nouvelle vague*—the narrative revolves around the concept of a divine being in congress with a human woman, which Godard uses as a metacinematic pretext to investigate the ontology of the image and that which cannot be, or has not been, represented. The narrative takes as its basis the story of Amphitryon and

[197] Godard's work of the 1990s is generally what Douglas Morrey refers to as "a distinct turn towards the past" (2005, 196), as evidenced even in titles such as *Nouvelle vague* and *Allemagne neuf-zero* (1991), in addition to his short films *2 x 50 ans de cinéma française* (1995), *The Old Place* (1999), *De l'origine du XX^e siècle* (2000) and, of course, *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

Alcmene from classical mythology.[198] The beautiful and wise Alcmene is married to Amphitryon, who has gone to war. Zeus, the King of the Gods in Greek mythology, desiring Alcmene and aware of her faithful devotion to her husband, contrives to sleep with her disguised as Amphitryon. He descends to earth, using his godly powers to extend the night so that he can spend longer with her. From this union, Alcmene gives birth to Hercules (and his human twin Iphicles, fathered by Amphitryon, who returns home later that same night). When Amphitryon discovers what has happened, he attempts to have Alcmene burnt to death on a pyre. However, Zeus extinguishes the flames of the pyre; the couple then reconcile as a result of this divine intervention. Godard, as is his wont, presents a loose adaptation of the story, which Leslie Hill refers to as "a singular mysterious event occurring like a transfiguration on the shore of Lake Geneva" (2004, 397).

Figuring the deity

As in *Je vous salue Marie,* the mythical story is transposed to a contemporary Swiss setting and fragmented so that parts of the original remain, albeit collaged with a wealth of philosophical, literary and filmic citation. In Godard's retelling, Alcmene and Amphitryon become Rachel (Laurence Masilah) and Simon Donnadieu (Gérard Depardieu), a couple living in a small village near Geneva. Simon leaves the village with Paul, his business partner, to complete the purchase of a hotel in an unspecified location. He promises Rachel, who does not want him to go, that he will be back early the following morning. In the meantime, God (also Gérard Depardieu) arrives in the village, with his assistant Max Mercure (Jean-Louis Loca), and assumes Simon's identity. He spends the night with Rachel, who, unlike Alcmene, becomes aware that the person with her is not her husband, although she struggles to comprehend what is happening. In the morning, Rachel realises that a divine being has assumed the shape of her husband. Simon/God then departs, while the human Simon returns

[198] According to Richard Brody, Godard had seen a production of *Amphitryon* by Heinrich Von Kleist (1807) and subsequently read dramatised versions of the story by Molière (1668) and Jean Giraudoux (*Amphitryon 38,* 1929). He amalgamated his resulting interpretation with the poem "Hymn to the Patriarchs" by the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837), which speaks of "the anguish, the constant worries and the permanent disturbance of its creator before the numerous misadventures of man" (Godard quoted in Brody 2008, 549). Leopardi is referenced by name in *Hélas pour moi* as "the great Italian poet."

home. In his adaptation, Godard makes specific reference to elements of the original story while altering others. Rachel (Alcmene) says to Simon/God (Zeus) that she is not pretty, but stresses her quality of being "most faithful".[199] Simon/God responds that she is strong or that he hopes she is. Likewise, the duration of the night they spend together is depicted as being too short with dawn coming before five in the morning. Previously Simon/God has told Max Mercure he wants to lengthen the night, as in the original story, but Max claims this is impossible because night on earth "belongs to everyone; it doesn't take orders. It is their one democratic success". While the opening narration suggests a waning of ritual, the pervasive tone in relation to Simon/God is a waning of power allied to ineffectiveness, far removed from the portrayal of Zeus in Greek legend, or indeed God the Father in Christian belief. Simon/God remarks that after he created the world, he fell asleep; while he was sleeping: "the eternal one came; he messed everything up. Disorder crept in. On Monday everything had to be redone, since then war has been everywhere". Assuming that "the eternal one" is the Antichrist, Simon/God is evidently not the Supreme Being or "subduer of the Antichrist", as Walter Benjamin describes (1999a, 247). Godard's portrayal renders Simon/God as flawed, less divine and, consequently, more in the image of man.

The film's storyline is framed by a second narrative thread, in which a publisher, Abraham Klimt (Bernard Verley), arrives in the village to investigate the events of the night in question.[200] He interviews Aude Amiel (Aude Amiot), a young girl who witnessed God assume the physical identity of Simon. Using this premise, Godard allows himself to introduce a self-reflexive aspect, in which he as filmmaker struggling to recreate a story, becomes the investigating publisher who is trying to visualise the events that took place: while some of these events are immediately obvious to Klimt, others defy visual representation. Thus, Godard enters into a prolonged meditation throughout the film on the acquisition

[199] Rachel is consistently attributed the qualities of belief and faith, and at one point Max Mercure speaks of her as being "a truth": all of which associates her character to frequent references in Godard's work to the image, specifically, belief and faith in the truth of the image. The painterly way in which Godard portrays her throughout the film also speaks to the association of Rachel to the image.

[200] This framing was necessary, as Godard had argued irresolvably with Depardieu, who departed halfway through the shoot, leaving the director with what was effectively an unfinished film. Godard employed the framing device described to flesh out the film (Brody 2008, 551).

of the image and that which cannot be represented. The irrepresentable will become a pervasive theme in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in which Godard holds cinema responsible for not adequately representing the Holocaust: for a failure to attempt to represent that which cannot be represented because of the horror it entails.[201] In respect of this failure, which Godard deems to have effectively rendered cinema redundant and to have been the beginning of its decline, he has consistently, in his later work, sought to redeem the image. This is evident in his frequent assertion that "the image will come at the time of the resurrection".[202] Alain Bergala, in his analysis of *Hélas pour moi*, identifies that for Godard, in trying to identify the exact moment when cinema disconnected from the present as a result of its failure to observe the Holocaust, the time of resurrection becomes a time of redemption. In other words, cinema will be redeemed when it finds the "right" image.[203] The presence or absence of a visual record, particularly in regard to the sacred and the image of the sacred becomes part of that search, similar to Godard's extra-diegetic efforts to find the correct image of the sacred within Marie in *Je vous salue Marie*. *Hélas pour moi* differs in this respect, however, in that its metanarratives allude to the absence or withdrawal of vision, in contrast to *Je vous salue Marie* and *Nouvelle vague,* which both revolve around the withdrawal or spacing of touch. Here, rather than the sacred image that cannot be touched, Godard's concern is the sacred or sublime image that cannot be adequately visualised; or, put differently, it is signalled that the divine and the human—Simon/God and Rachel—will touch, but that this touch cannot be represented. These concerns operate at a diegetic and extra-diegetic level. While, diegetically, the divine/human structures that Godard uses in *Je vous salue Marie, Nouvelle vague* and *Hélas pour moi* differ, what is unchanged across the three films is the films' metacinematic allusion to his struggle with searching for and obtaining the correct filmic image, a search that becomes, to

[201] See Nancy "Forbidden Representation" (2005) and Georges Didi-Huberman *Images in Spite of All* (2008), which both argue against the notion that the Holocaust cannot be visually represented. Didi-Huberman uses *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as support for his argument.

[202] Godard's use of these words is normally attributed to St. Paul. However, as with "art is born from what it consumes", which very loosely paraphrases Malraux, the quote is actually a distillation of the Paulinian concept that through His resurrection Christ became the perfect *imago dei*.

[203] *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is dedicated to this attempt to find the point of disjuncture between cinema and reality, in the form of the Holocaust, and to find an image composed of film stills, photographs, art-historical images, newsreels, overlaid with astonishing depth, which might redeem cinema's failure.

return to Richard Brody's description, a quasi-mystical quest. For Godard, in his later work, and indeed for Pasolini before him, the image, as Nancy asserts, is sacred—regardless of whether a divine or human character is figured on screen. For both directors, their task is to create a filmic image that is not a slavish copy of the Christian art-historical image, but one that inspires a similar, post-Christian reverence. The waning of ritual as outlined in Scholem's paraphrased story at the beginning of the film points to the lack of God, something that is highlighted throughout the film. Indeed, although God is figured in the narrative—ostensibly, Zeus as in the Amphitryon myth, although his words suggest a Christian origin ("I had a little boy. He gave his life for you".)—he is, as Leslie Hill observes, "a negative and decidedly post-Christian entity" (2004, 397). This representation, where God himself admits that the world is a nightmare to which he must be loyal, tallies with what we might call the post-cinematic image; equating the post-Christian with the post-cinematic, Godard postulates that both cinema and God are dead, thus the search for the sacred and its image is rendered almost impossible. However, just as Scholem contends that the place where the stories were told is still known, Godard also searches where the images existed, revisiting those places—the religious and the art-historical—in a perpetuation of ritual and in the hope that the image will be redeemed.

The characters of Aude and Abraham Klimt (it is not, one presumes, coincidental that his name is composed of biblical and art-historical elements) serve as Godard's intermediaries in his search for the image. Klimt cannot comprehend why no image exists; Aude is wiser in this regard, realising the fate of the image and being resigned to it. In interconnected scenes that effectively function as the film's axis, Simon/God's night with Rachel is intercut with scenes in which Aude explains to Klimt what happened that night. The dialogue between the latter pair synopsises Godard's thinking on the increasing complexity, in a post-Christian/post-art-historical/post-cinematic era, of obtaining the correct image, as demonstrated in the following extract:

> Klimt: "This isn't clear miss".
> Aude: "Some things must remain undefined. Besides a vision isn't something you discuss...
> Klimt: "So you think no image exists?"
> Aude: "Not of what we're discussing. I thought I told you I had seen

nothing?"
Klimt: "You saw medieval imagery".
Aude: "Look at our poor old television. Not even that".

Here, the unfavourable comparison Aude draws between the television and "medieval imagery" highlights Godard's view of the image as deteriorated; thus God deteriorates or, at least, draws nearer to the boundary of the human; concurrently, the acquisition of the image is problematised.[204] This *rapprochement* between divine and human figures takes place over the course of *Je vous salue Marie, Nouvelle vague,* and *Hélas pour moi*. In the first film, God is not figured, although effectively he is an absent presence as creator of the image, that is, in the form of Godard himself, while the sacred is also identified as being present within the body of Myriem Roussel/Marie and the image it yields or cedes to the "creator". In the second film, the divine is located between the male and the female, although Lennox is the resurrected figure. Of course, as pointed out previously, Alain Delon as Lennox represents a further resurrection of the image in that he was, in previous decades, a "god" of French cinema, now resurrected by Godard. Likewise, this metaphor applies to Gérard Depardieu in that, at the time of filming, he too was a godlike presence in contemporary French cinema: Godard of course plays on this in that the apparition of God within the narrative becomes the extradiegetic apparition of Depardieu in the film. Apart from this metacinematic approximation of the sacred to the human, within the narrative of the latter film, we see God—designated as such, with none of *Nouvelle vague*'s prevarication—appear for a night of carnality with a strong, faithful woman: the human and divine in direct, physical contact. However, although Godard has located this point as the juncture at which the image might be redeemed, it is not representable; Nancy describes this dichotomy of representability and irrepresentability, particularly as regards the sacred as: "the Christian image, joined with the no less Christian refusal of the

[204] Although Godard has produced a significant amount of work for television, his attitude to the difference between that medium and the cinema is best summed up in his aphorism that to watch cinema one must raise up his/her eyes to the screen in reverence (again, evoking the notion of religious adoration) whereas no such gesture is necessary with regard to the television. He has also referred to the fact that cinema is projection, whereas television has no such effect. (Dudley Andrew (*What Cinema Is!* 2011. Chichester: Wiley and Sons), using the quote, cites Timothy Murray "Debased Projection and Cyberspatial Ping: Chris Marker's Digital Screen, "Parachute, 113 (2004), p. 92, who tracks the remark to Chris Marker's "Immemory" CD-ROM (1997)).

image—an internal tearing apart and stitching back together of Christianity...—bears all the intensity of the access to the inaccessible divine...the appearance of what does not appear" (2005, 122–23).[205] As Aude remarks, "God isn't a character", suggesting that Godard is doomed to failure in trying to portray God in his film. Indeed, Aude provides Godard with the arguments that defeat his efforts to capture the sacred image, which is, for him, the perfect cinematic image. When she points out to Klimt, in a Brechtian observation, that "neither you nor I nor anyone else are anymore than figures", she is making plain what Godard tacitly acknowledges from the beginning of the film, when the various characters strike *tableau*-like poses and call out their role in the film: "Spaniard", "teacher" etc.

Symbolism/iconography

The art-historical image is not present in *Hélas pour moi* as it is in *Je vous salue Marie, Nouvelle vague* and, particularly, *Passion*. The post-Christian reading of Amphitryon in which God is figured as a divine entity who has lost control of his creation is a signifier that the image is no longer available "not even in our poor television"; the effort to see what cannot be seen becomes an attempt to regain the vision to see what occurs when the divine and the human merge. In *Hélas pour moi*, this inaccessible divine—or the meeting of the divine and the human—becomes the image that is sought, which, in spite of the proliferation of images of nature in the "trilogy" of Annunciation, Resurrection and Transfiguration under discussion, is invariably figured in the human form or certainly suggested as having a bodily potential. The human figuring of the divine (image) is of course another Christian trope and, in this respect, Godard christianises the myth of Amphitryon, particularly in the changing of the names of the main character to those of Biblical figures, for instance, Rachel, Simon and Abraham. In designating the Amphitryon character as Simon, Godard introduces multiple, complex layers as regards the figuration of the divine as human.[206] Firstly, the transition from classical to Christian myth refers us back to, as Nancy

[205] Godard seems to suggest that the sexual act itself is the irrepresentable image, on screen, at least, in that he shows in close-up and transition a fleeting, almost indecipherable image of intercourse, similar examples of which also appear in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

[206] Nancy also acknowledges the difficulty involved in the concept of man as image of God and the accompanying, "infinitely complex" thematic and problematic of the image. (47)

cites, the Epistle of James: "men are made in the image of God", which itself refers back to the Book of Genesis ("And God created Man in His own image. In His own image he created him" (Genesis 127)). Nancy compares this with Paul, for whom Christ is "the image of the invisible God", and questions the relationship between "man-as-image and Jesus", pointing out, however, that James's emphasis is more focussed on "a certain relation of man to holiness that becomes an image in him" (2008b, 47).[207] The approximation between divine and human through the mediation of the image, which Pasolini also explores in depth, is fundamental to Godard's trilogy, as is the figure of Christ and his incarnation as man, which places him on a boundary between divine and human. This becomes most emphatic in events such as the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection, when the liminal space between the ontology of the divine and the human, the transcendent and the immanent, prevails. In *Hélas pour moi*, the Christ figure is subordinated to the Old Testament presentation of God the Father and, paradoxically, to a post-Christian presentation; granted this God becomes incarnate, but only temporarily, not in a mimesis of human birth as in the Christological narrative, but by possession of a human body.[208] However, elements of the New Testament are also incorporated, whether in the depiction of Simon/God walking on/in water or the reference that he makes to his son who gave his life for humanity. The incorporation of the New Testament and its relevance to the God-man-image paradigm is most notable in the renaming of Amphitryon as Simon. In the Gospel narratives, Christ chooses Simon to be an apostle and renames him as Peter. Subsequently, Christ chooses Peter to be his representative on earth, effectively the first pope and, thus, another form of intermediary—and image—between the divine and the sacred.

The conversion of Amphitryon to Simon/Peter also recalls Pasolini's evocation of Peter both in the inverted crucifixion poses of *Accattone* and in *Il Vangelo second Matteo*, as discussed previously in this thesis. Max Mercure describes Simon to God as he prepares to inhabit his body as "a simple man. He loves the lake and its thirty-two types of wind. He loves money but no more than

[207] This can be compared with Aude's words to Klimt in *Hélas pour moi*: "'Be in my image'. This command to man ultimately means let me sanctify myself in you then sanctify yourself."
[208] The regression towards more ancient gods is not confined to classical mythology and the Old Testament as is made clear in the brief discussion of ziggurats, in which one of the participants comments that the notion of the Ascension dates back to two-thousand years before Christ, to the thirty-two temples of Iraq: "stairways for the Gods that they may return to Earth".

anyone else. He doesn't even own a Mercedes. I think he has an old Lancia", a description that might apply to a modern-day incarnation of Peter as he is portrayed both in the original Gospel narrative and in Pasolini's filmed version.[209] Godard's presentation of Simon (Peter) as an everyman of no particular distinction, also recalls Eric Auerbach's description of Peter's narrative, as quoted previously in relation to Pasolini's Peter: "too serious for comedy, too contemporary and everyday for tragedy, politically too insignificant for history" (1953, 45). This description fits neatly with the story of Rachel and Simon, a couple living in a lakeside village, leading an ordinary life, who, nonetheless, Godard chooses to be the inheritors of the myth of Amphitryon and Alcmene, and of a Christian transfiguration narrative, the result being a similar mix of *sermo humilis* and *sermo sublimis*, of which, according to Auerbach, the Christological narrative was the first example.

The indeterminate boundary between divine and human is further stressed in that it remains unclear as to whether the transfigured Simon is actually God or Simon himself. Simon's unexpected return to Rachel, when he is supposed to be away for the night, is remembered with confusion and uncertainty by the inhabitants of the town; indeed, there is a hazy communal memory of how Simon departed from Rachel, which is depicted in multiple, consecutive versions of the same event. Alongside this memory is an awareness that an event took place, but whether it was Simon, or God in his place, is not clear. Towards the end of the film, Klimt meets the human Simon in a filling station and asks him about the night in question. Simon is unequivocal: "There is only one man. Me...It was me. I went back". Returning to the Simon/Peter analogy, we recall that Peter denied Christ three times during the Passion narrative, so perhaps it is unsurprising that Simon should deny God in this context. Klimt's questions to Simon, however, reverse the idea of man made in the image of God; he asks: "How about this man made in your image?", implying that God has been made in Simon's image rather than vice versa, further blurring the boundary that Godard sets between the

[209] The analogy is also present in the waterside setting and Simon's walking in—if not on—water: Simon Peter in the Gospel narrative is a fisherman whom Christ comes to at the water's edge and chooses to be the first of his apostles; when Christ walks on water, Peter also does for a moment before entering the water.

divine and human, particularly as regards the carnal.[210] The association becomes even more complex if we consider the hat and raincoat that Simon wears in this scene, clothes worn by the divine figuration of Simon, but not the human one; indeed, Simon's demeanour in his final appearance on the screen is more reminiscent of Simon/God than the more self-effacing human Simon.[211] In effect, it remains unclear, as with Lennox in *Nouvelle vague*, whether Simon is merely human, rendered God-like for one night when he acts out of character, or whether God really does take the form of Simon, while the human Simon is elsewhere. One imagines that this lack of clarity is deliberate on Godard's part, perhaps encapsulating the message of the film: Man is made in God's image; God can take on Man's image, so how can the boundary of divine and human be distinguished?



Fig. 63. *Hélas pour moi.* Walking on/in water

As Pasolini mediates degrees of sacredness in the image depending on the divinity or profanity of the figure he depicts, similarly Godard presents a spectrum of divinity/humanity along which there are no defined distinctions. When the intertitle appears that says: "Each man is the shadow of God for the woman that loves him", the indistinction between God and Man is such that the viewer may take this as a reference to Man being merely a shadow of a deity or that Man is made in God's image and a (cinematic) projection of God, thus God-like. The use of the name Simon/Peter reinforces this shadowing or mirroring,

[210] The confusion also arises earlier in the narrative when Aude, recounting to Klimt what she saw, says, in reference to Klimt's mention of a man with blue eyes, that: "He doesn't count. Simon is his Lord."

[211] Thunder sounds in the background in this scene, as it does just before Simon/God ascends the stairs to sleep with Rachel, which also recalls Pasolini's presentation of Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.*

particularly in a Christological regard, given Peter's inverted crucifixion, as discussed in Chapter One in relation to Pasolini's work.

In his presentation of Rachel, Godard redeploys motifs that he has appropriated from Christian iconography in previous films. Her red curly hair is reminiscent of Elena in *Nouvelle vague* and, as discussed, in relation to that character, to Mary Magdalene. In fact, the first time the viewer sees Rachel—apart from a group long shot—she is figured in a striking, out-of-focus shot, in which her red hair forms a halo around her head, like a highly abstracted Byzantine icon painting. Again the narrative of the human in contact with the divine, similar to previous instances in Godard's work, may be tacitly referencing the Magdalene. In one shot, the narrative of the original Greek myth, in which Amphitryon attempts to burn Alcmene on a pyre, is suggested: Rachel sits beside a bonfire while talking to the minister. She is shot from the neck down, her hands clasped as if in prayer, with the camera positioned on the other side of the flames. The resultant effect is that it appears she is being burnt at the stake. However, in addition to Alcmene, this also recalls Joan of Arc, which in turn recalls *Vivre sa vie* and Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. As is common in Godard's work, what might be termed a "double doubling" occurs, in that not only is Simon a double presence, but Rachel is also mirrored by the Minister's wife, Madame Monod (Anny Romand), who bears a striking physical resemblance to Rachel.[212] Both women have red curly hair, styled in the same way, and are of the same height and build. In addition, in the scene where Rachel goes to visit the Minister, the two women echo each other's movements. First of all, we see Madame Monod walking across the field, followed closely by Rachel, whose movements are identical to the first woman's. Then, in a scene in the Minister's house, we see Madame Monod who wears a dress with a cardigan over it, remove her cardigan and put it over her arm. In the next scene, Rachel talks outside the house to the minister; she is also wearing a dress and cardigan and removes the cardigan, putting it over her arm. The doubling of the two women is mostly confined to these scenes, but one is led to conclude that Godard chooses to mirror them in such a way because Madame Monod, who is married

[212] Godard's mother's surname was Monod; her family had a long tradition of Protestant ministry.

to the Minister, a representative of God, doubles Rachel in her relationship with Simon (Peter), God's first representative on earth in Christian dogma.



Fig. 64. *Hélas pour moi.* Halo of red hair



Fig. 65. *Hélas pour moi.* Recalling both Alcmene and *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*

In tandem with the exploration of the idea of God and Man as each other's reciprocal image is Godard's perennial theme of darkness and light—the fundamental elements of cinema—which is particularly predominant in *Passion*. If, in *Passion*, it is the light that Jerzy and, by association, Godard seeks; here, conversely, the search is for darkness. The theme of day and night/light and darkness runs throughout the film. In the final exchange between Klimt and Simon referred to above, Klimt says, when asking Simon what took place on the night in question, that "sometimes darkness can take over the self": the suggestion being that Simon and Simon/God were the same person, the latter

being a more sinister aspect of the former.[213] As stated, God is figured as a negative entity; Max Mercure says to him when preparing him to assume Simon's bodily form: "Don't stare at people. Do not be vengeful". Simon/God also makes several references to mistakes he has made in relation to his creation of the Universe ("I often get things wrong", he remarks to Rachel). Here, we recall Nancy's description of the image as being "inseparable from a hidden surface, from which it cannot, as it were, be peeled away: the dark side of the picture, its underside or backside" (2005, 2). This may be as good a description as any of what is sought in *Hélas pour moi*: the dark side of the image, or, to quote Paul Coates in this regard: "light and shadow are objects of both painterly and theological meditation, as the shadow fades into the darkness of both evil and negative theology" (2003, 57). This dark side of the theological, the physical and the image will be subsequently tied in to an association of the dark matter of the universe.

In addition to the darkness of character that is suggested, there are innumerable references to physical darkness and light. Most of the film takes place outdoors in bright daylight; however, the key scenes between Rachel and Simon/God on the night that he spends with her are initially in darkness and then in stunning early morning light, filmed in and around a balcony that looks onto the lake. Here, as mentioned previously, the narrative refers to the original myth of Amphitryon in that Simon/God rather frustratedly attempts to prolong the night; he comments to Rachel, "Max, warned me that I didn't stand a chance. It is night, Rachel, make no mistake; even if I did switch daylight on". In the background, we hear Klimt's voice saying: "A shadow, vague in every sense, projected from itself, with no light to define it as shadow, with no place for projection to justify it as a visible entity", thus relating the unobtainable image to cinematic form and process.

[213] Conversely, referring back to the reference of every man being the shadow of God to the woman he loves, this also can be interpreted as man representing the dark side of God.



Fig. 66. *Hélas pour moi.* Morning and Night alternating

The preferencing of night over day is also indicated in a subsequent voiceover: "For the sake of what curtain rise do we abandon our dreams? How dare we hold them up to the light when we awake? High up to the light each one of us carries around their invisible dreams", the suggestion being that these dreams or visions are only visible in the dark (as in the cinema).[214] The converse of the argument that Godard presents in *Passion* is presented here: if cinema is a function of the light then it can only operate against a background of darkness. As he remarks both in *Nouvelle vague* and in *Hélas pour moi*, "we are given positive things when we are born and fill in the negatives".[215] Furthermore, Nancy's observation in relation to the image regarding "the darkness that shares with the light its concealment from representation" is echoed both in these references and at an early stage in the film in a scene in the bookshop, in which the art historical image is discussed in a blending of voiceover and dialogue (2008, 49). The bookseller remarks to the three young people in his shop:

[214] There is a play on the word "vision" throughout the film: vision as in the sense of sight or the viewing of an image, and vision as in a spiritual experience.
[215] Lennox remarks in *Nouvelle vague*: "The positive is given to us, it remains for us to make the negative."

"Painting will not show you the way to get from exterior vision to...painting won't tell you the secret of suffering". This is layered with a voiceover that picks up the bookseller's unfinished sentence on moving from exterior vision, with the words: "to the almost jealous contemplation of human faces and gestures; in the light you set up to light them, in every shade from the first suns...and the most poignant shadows". This reference to "the most poignant shadows" in view of subsequent references to man as God's shadow and Klimt's quote mentioned above encapsulates Godard's core concerns of the human and the filmic, and indeed the idea of the physical function of vision combined with the mysterious or sacred vision.

The motifs of darkness and vision are also presented from a scientific point of view in this central section of the film, in which day and night begin to alternate with no perceivable logic, both in the scenes with Rachel and Simon/God, and those with Aude and Klimt.[216] Simon/God says: "this is what is true", and proceeds to give an account of the scientific discovery of dark matter, which he describes in terms of a deity as "omnipresent but invisible".[217] At this juncture, the suggestion that we cannot see fifty percent of matter reinforces Aude's claim to Klimt that "visions can't be seen" and her ongoing insistence that not everything is visible. Aude's repeated assertions to Klimt that some images cannot be seen appear to directly chastise Godard for his efforts (particularly, if we consider that most commentators, for example, Alain Bergala (1999) and Laetitia Fieschi-Vivet (2000), see Klimt as Godard's alter ego) to obtain the cinematic image of the sacred.[218] Another example of this self-reflexivity occurs in the conversation between Rachel and Simon/God at the table before they sleep together. Discussing how Simon took leave of Rachel earlier in the day, Simon/God says, "we need to re-enact the scene"; proceeding to talk about what took place almost as if in terms of a film shoot.

How do the themes presented in *Hélas pour moi* refer back to the idea of cinema's failure to represent the Holocaust and the necessity to redeem the image in the face of that failure, to which Godard will give full expression in *Histoire(s)*

[216] Just as Simon/God claims that it is night, when it is obviously day, Rachel standing on the balcony in the dark says, "So now it's daytime, I suppose."
[217] Colin MacCabe refers to Godard's faith in the cinema in relation to the European faith of his fathers—the faiths of art, science and religion. (2003, 318)
[218] At an earlier point in the film, Klimt in voiceover speaks of "the imperfection of cinematic language...there's always something depressing about the portrayal of crude reality."

du cinéma, particularly Chapter 1(a)?[219] Again, this is resolved through Aude and Klimt's discussions that intersperse what the viewer sees of Rachel and Simon/God's night together, specifically in their discussion of the non-existence of an image of the event that they are discussing. Aude, using Godard's aphorism "the image will come at the time of the resurrection", as referred to above, says: "perhaps an image will be formed, perhaps it will be redeemed". However, these lines connect up with a later scene, again intercut with the scenes between Rachel and Simon/God, in which Aude and Klimt pinpoint Christianity's focus on the body and resurrection:

> Aude: "Christianity's greatest innovation was the resurrection of the body".
> Klimt: "But bodies have different sexes".
> Aude: "Exactly".

This interchange is an explicit linking of the incarnation and resurrection with the carnal, just as Pasolini does in his poetry as discussed in the first chapter. Death and the carnal become two sides of the same coin or, as in Nancy's thinking, two sides of the same image, one the dark side of the other, hidden from view: the anamnesis of before birth and after death. However, as in Godard's subliminal imaging of genitalia and intercourse, in *Hélas pour moi* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, it might be adjudged that both the sex act and death are representative of the hidden side of the image, and yet both are vital to life. When Simon/God asks why Rachel does not want to be immortal, she answers: "What will I do with myself if I don't die? Life will stop", which recalls the intertitle "To die of not dying" in *Nouvelle vague* and Nancy's assertion that:

> without death there would only be contact, contiguity, and contagion, a cancerous propagation of life that would consequently no longer be life—or rather, it would only be life and not existence. (2008a, 45)

The diegetic visitation in *Hélas pour moi* is of the type that Nancy describes: a visit from God which is both ordeal and grace and, as stated

[219] *Hélas pour moi,* released in 1993, comes between the first two parts of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, released in 1988, and the following four chapters, which were released in 1998; accordingly, an overlap of the ideas explored in the two projects is not surprising.

previously, “a procedure for becoming aware of something, for examining and experiencing something”. Equally, as for *Je vous salue Marie*, the visitation is not confined to the diegesis, as we as viewers experience Godard’s analysis of the image, the mechanics of which he seeks to make plain to us, in the process making us aware of both the image and its hidden side, and revealing something as Nancy suggests. Likewise, the *Noli me tangere* is evoked in the references to resurrection and the body, but also in the tentative figuring of Rachel as a type of Magdalene, an association strengthened by her confusion as to whether the figure of Simon is human or divine, and her final acceptance that a deity has indeed appeared to her. This investigation, revolving as it does around the acquisition of the image, the viewer as observer in the process of image-making, and the sacred nature of what may or may not be seen, will continue in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in a more intensive manner, in which the diegetic narrative is set aside in favour of a documentary collage that foregrounds cinema and the visual media that preceded it. The attempt to associate the cinematic image to an art-historical image as its successor becomes a positioning of one alongside the other in Godard’s own *musée imaginaire*, as I will examine in the following chapter.

Chapter 4
PPP/JLG

4.1 *Teorema* revisited

In this chapter I consider in more detail the interaction between Pasolini's work dealing with themes of art and the sacred and Godard's work on similar topics. First, as a coda to the analysis of what I have called Godard's visitation trilogy, I return to Pasolini's *Teorema*, briefly mentioned in Chapter One, to examine how its themes interact with those of Godard's trilogy and perhaps influence the narrative construction and the mise-en-scène of the three later films.[220] Conversely, however, the trilogy also uncovers similar, less analysed themes of image and aesthetics in Pasolini's much earlier film that have been eclipsed by analysis of the preponderant theme of the psychological effects of sexual and emotional liberation on the bourgeoisie.

The narrative of *Teorema* is based around the visit of a charismatic stranger (Terence Stamp) to a wealthy Milanese family. During his stay, he exerts a physical attraction on each member of the family: the father Paolo (Massimo Girotti), a factory owner; the mother Lucia (Silvana Magnano); the daughter Odetta (Anne Wiazemsky); and Pietro, the son (Andrés José Cruz Soublette). The first person with whom he becomes involved is Emilia (Laura Betti), the family's maid. Pasolini's portrayal of Emilia is in marked contrast with that of the bourgeois family, who are left physically and emotionally devastated by the visitor's seduction and subsequent departure.[221] Emilia's brief encounter with the visitor leads her to a type of transcendent epiphany that results in her physical levitation. In a 1969 interview with Guy Flatley in the *New York Times*, Pasolini describes this disparity as follows: "the bourgeoisie have lost their sense of the sacred, and so they cannot solve their own lives in a

[220] It can be presumed that Godard was aware of Pasolini's film as he was married to Anne Wiazemsky, who plays the role of Odetta, at the time the film was made. In fact, in an interview with Richard Brody, Wiazemsky recounts that, after meeting Pasolini by accident on a *vaporetto* during the Venice Film Festival, he asked her to play one of the leading roles in *Teorema*. Wiazemsky did not know who Pasolini was at the time, and claims that it was Godard who explained to her. (Brody 2008, 310)

[221] Peter Bondanella refers to Emilia's situation as the corollary of the "theorem" of the film: the latter being that if a divine stranger were to appear to a middle class family, the self-awareness that would result from the encounter would lead to their destruction. The corollary is, of course, as figured in Emilia, that the subproletariat would survive and, indeed, transcend the situation. (2009, 420)

religious way. But the servant is a peasant, really a person from another era, a pre-industrial era".[222]

Teorema and Godard's three films all deal with the visit of a divine being; however, they vary in how the divine is figured (and the extent to which it is presented as divine). In *Je vous salue Marie,* Marie becomes pregnant without God taking on a human aspect, in an imitation of the Christian tenet of the Immaculate Conception. However, God as presented in the voiceover of the wilderness scenes in *Teorema* has much in common with Marie's description of a violent, virtually physical encounter in *Je vous salue Marie.* As Marie speaks of rape and violation in the latter film, so too does the voiceover in the former, which borrows from the Books of Exodus and Jeremiah. The citation from Jeremiah in *Teorema* is particularly forceful in describing the relationship between human and God in terms of physical domination: "You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced. You have violated me and you have prevailed" (Jer. 20:7). The representation of the spiritual in physical terminology in *Je vous salue Marie* substitutes the absence of an embodied God, and, as discussed earlier, the structuring physical absence of Godard whose dominating presence is behind the camera. In contrast, Pasolini overlays the idea of a physically dominant spiritual being onto the narrative of an embodied divine presence to reinforce his "theorem". The violence represented in the wilderness voiceover is not, however, reciprocated in the visitor's sexual encounters with the family members; in fact, the encounters are curiously anodyne and benign. In *Teorema,* it is the consequences of these encounters that exert a violent and traumatic impact on the individuals involved.

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[222] Available online. Http://www.moviecrazed.com/outpast/pasolini.html (accessed 01/02/2010). Jean-Luc Nancy, in a lecture at the European Graduate School on January 8, 2010, describes *Teorema* as "an entire story of holiness". The character of Emilia as depicted in the film is, he contends, an example of a post-religious "holiness", referring to Emilia's levitation and her burying of herself in the earth of the building site, her tears springing forth to create a small lake. In a parallel to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* where Susanna Colussi, Pasolini's mother, stands at the foot of the cross as the Virgin Mary and witnesses the death of Christ, in *Teorema* she helps Emilia to bury herself. In a further parallel to the earlier film, Emilia performs another miracle whereby she cures a young boy of leprosy, echoing Pasolini's depiction of Christ curing the leper. While Alessia Ricciardi, Robert Gordon and Maurizio Viano have commented on the biblical/messianic tone of the film, Nancy identifies *Teorema* as an early example of a re-siting of the sacred "away from the temple" into the profane world. However, in contrast to Pasolini's contention that Emilia is venerated in a way that the family are not, Nancy argues that "there are many saints" in the film and cites the mother as saintly in her search for both sense and love.

In *Nouvelle vague* the divine aspect is not as emphatic as in the other three films under discussion—while Lennox's narrative is associated with elements of the Passion, it is love, Godard suggests, that affords him a divine status. Nonetheless, the film bears a marked resemblance to *Teorema* in its narrative structure: the unexpected arrival of a stranger with no indication as to his provenance, who arrives into a household made wealthy by industrial production (the factory is a background presence in both narratives, particularly as related to Elena in *Hélas pour moi* and Paolo, the father, in *Teorema*); through his physical and emotional involvement with the household members, he effects profound change in their lives. In fact, one might suggest that Roger and Richard Lennox represent *Teorema*'s visitor split into two. Roger Lennox is disinterested in material gain and the business world; like the visitor, he merely observes and listens. In contrast, Richard becomes actively immersed in Elena's business dealings; notwithstanding, Elena's life is far more destabilised by the presence of Richard. She detaches herself from her business interests and returns to nature as does Paolo, the father in *Teorema*.[223] Leaving aside the issues of sexual orientation contained in Paolo's crisis of self identity, Elena's retreat from the world of industry and high finance bears much in common with the way in which he gives his factory to the workers and retreats from his former life.

Embodiment—the divine made flesh—is fundamental to the visitations in *Teorema* and *Hélas pour moi*, respectively; indeed these two films seem most alike in their figuring of the carnality of a divine being, although the serenely beautiful young man of *Teorema* stands in marked contrast to the addled, misanthropic God in *Hélas pour moi,* who struggles to fit into his skin and speak in a normal voice. The godly figure in *Hélas pour moi* suggests his divinity through his sheer bulk: as played by Gérard Depardieu, he seems a Herculean figure, albeit slumped and ill-humoured; in *Teorema* this divinity is instead signalled by youthful physical beauty. Both films also have a character whose name is related to the name Peter: in *Hélas pour moi,* Simon, as discussed earlier, is Peter's original name in the Gospel before he is chosen as an apostle; while the

[223] Paolo's return to nature is far more cathartic, however, as he wanders naked on the arid slopes of Mount Etna in emotional turmoil, whereas, in contrast, Elena's rejection of the business world merely involves sitting absent-mindedly on the grass in the gardens of the villa.

son in *Teorema* is named Pietro (Peter in Italian).[224] Whereas Simon doubles with God by the latter assuming his form while he is away; Pietro is figured as forming part of a binary with the divine visitor in that they are shown sleeping in twin beds. (Pasolini uses the pretext of family friends staying and a shortage of bedrooms to give narrative basis to this arrangement). This configuration highlights their similarities and differences: they are both young men of approximately the same age and height; the visitor, however, is possessed of a serene confidence, while Pietro seems racked by his own insecurities, not least his latent homosexuality. In addition, the visitor's good looks and physical self-ease contrast markedly with Pietro's scrawny body, his anxious countenance, and his lack of self-esteem. This is made clear when the two men prepare for bed: while the visitor undresses in front of Pietro to reveal a physically perfect body, and then slips into bed naked; Pietro strips down to his underpants hesitantly and then gets into to bed to fumble into his pyjamas under the bedcovers. The contrast between, on the one hand, Apollonian, god-like beauty and, on the other, the physical insecurities of a more ordinary human body is emphatic. Recalling Peter in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo,* Simon in *Hélas pour moi,* and the related discussion of the figure of Peter as an everyday man who struggles with his faith, as evidenced by his denial of Christ during the Passion, we see how Pietro also forms part of this group in more than name. Pietro's struggles are with himself: with his creativity and sexuality, but nevertheless are epic in his eyes. Once again, we recall Eric Auerbach's description of Peter: "too serious for comedy, too contemporary and everyday for tragedy, politically too insignificant for history" and see how appropriately it describes Pietro's situation also (1953, 45).

The sexual encounters in *Teorema* are indexical and, in turn, the visitor is indexical of the liberating potential of sex.[225] In other words, the figure of the visitor is the image of the carnal. The family members do not seem to respond to the character of the visitor, or his physical presence, but rather to his image. His

[224] It should also be observed that the father's name, Paolo (Paul), has notable significance for Pasolini, whose last, unmade film project was to be on the life of St. Paul transposed to the modern day.

[225] As Armando Maggi observes, the film's ideology of sex as a force that disrupts the falsity of the bourgeoisie seems outdated (2009, 61). Indeed, the prophecy made by the television reporter to the workers outside the factory at the outset of the film that the whole (Western) world would eventually become bourgeois may be argued to have occurred to such an extent that the ideological stance adopted by the film now seems outmoded.

conversation is minimal throughout his stay, and he remains amiably passive to events around him. He listens rather than speaks, and is often depicted engaged in passive activity such as reading. Moreover, the young Terence Stamp as the visitor, with his sculptural features and strikingly blue eyes, is reminiscent of a figure in one of the proto-renaissance paintings so much admired by the director. The combination of an aesthetically pleasing appearance and an impassive demeanour heightens the sense of the pictorial that Pasolini associates with the visitor.



Fig. 67. *Teorema:* Pietro and the visitor.

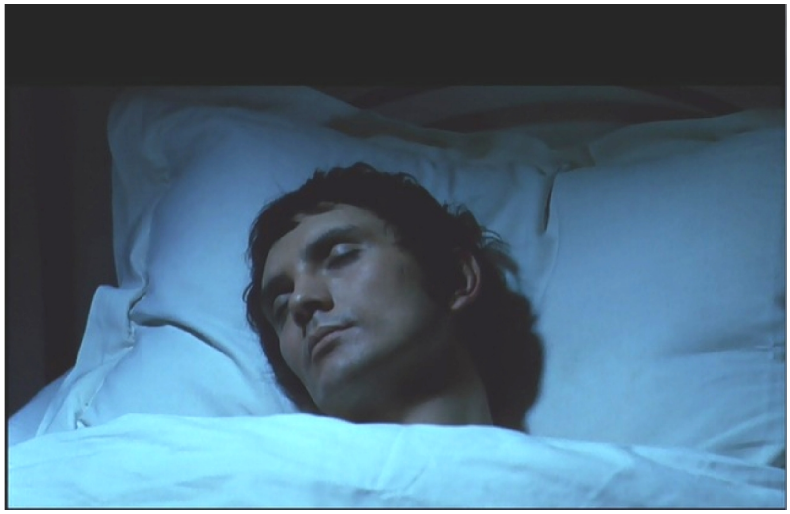


Fig. 68. *Teorema*. The visitor asleep



Fig. 69. Mantegna. Detail from *Lamentation over the dead Christ* (c.1540)

This pictoriality reaches an apex in the scenes with Pietro, particularly when Pietro watches him as he sleeps. Again, the mise-en-scène of the visitor asleep recalls the image of Mantegna's *Lamentation over the dead Christ*, although the visitor is not linked to martyrological symbolism in any respect—it is Emilia, instead, who functions as martyr in the film's narrative, being buried alive towards the end of the film. However, the figuration of the visitor recalls the art-historical iconography surrounding the first Christian martyr Sebastian. Like the visitor, Sebastian serves as a symbol of Apollonian beauty: although it is believed that he was actually a middle-aged soldier, the mythology that has attached to him is one of the aesthetically perfect youth. Thus, successive generations of artists have projected both their idea of physical beauty and their desire onto Sebastian's image. As a result, he is one of the most represented saints in Christian art; examples by Mantegna, El Greco, and Botticelli are presented here to illustrate the similarities between Pasolini's depiction of the visitor and art-historical imagery of Sebastian.

It is noteworthy that Pasolini did not employ the figure of Sebastian directly in his literary or filmic work, given that the symbolism of the saint is linked both to homoeroticism and to the notion of ecstatic suffering, although Colleen Ryan-Scheutz suggests that the character of Julian in *Porcile* is representative of Saint Sebastian, something that may also be said of the characters of Accattone and Ettore (2007, 120).[226] The similarity between the visitor and Sebastian resides in the symbolism of an aesthetic beauty that provokes sexual desire—and an apparent longing for Dionysian excess in the

[226] Derek Jarman and Paul Humfress's *Sebastiane* (1976) is, however, heavily influenced by Pasolini.

family members, although this desire is framed in a very sterile, impassionate manner. I suggest that, in *Teorema*, Pasolini uses the visual iconography of Sebastian in his figuring of the visitor. The white underpants or the shorts that we several times see the visitor wearing or cast off are reminiscent of the loincloth of Sebastian; the passivity demonstrated by the visitor in the face of the crises of identity that each member of the household undergoes resembles the long-suffering patience of the martyred saint as portrayed art-historically; the projection of the household members' most fundamental desires onto the undefined, but aesthetically perfect, figure of the visitor is similar to the manner in which artists have traditionally deployed the figure of the saint as representative of beauty and desire.



Fig. 70. El Greco. *Saint Sebastian* (c.1577)



Fig.71.Botticelli. *Saint Sebastian* (1474)



Fig. 72. Mantegna. *Saint Sebastian* (c.1459)



Fig. 73. *Teorema*. The visitor

The narrative section that relates to the search for the image that cannot be obtained begins with the visitor and Pietro looking at what seems to be a *catalogue raisonné* of Francis Bacon's work. As mentioned in Chapter One, the book is open on a page that depicts Bacon's *Three Studies for a Crucifixion.* The two men flick through the pages of the book, on which can be seen Bacon's paintings, several of which depict two male figures are on a bed of straw, with a background of cage bars, like a circus or zoo.[227] They then return to *Three Studies for a Crucifixion,* the camera pausing on a close-up of each of the triptych images. Although Pietro's encounters with the visitor all revolve around his incipient realisation of his homosexuality; from this point onwards, Pietro is presented as an artist struggling to find himself and the image.[228] This mediation of homosexuality through the agency of the art historical doubtlessly has an autobiographical dimension for Pasolini, but is also a further example of the director's linking of the art historical and the sacred, both in the divine figure of the visitor who introduces Pietro to art (it is notable that, aside from some reproductions on the wall, Pietro's bedroom walls are mostly covered with cartoons and posters, which might be taken as evidence of his childlike state) but also in the use of the *Three Studies* image as the key image shown in Bacon's *catalogue raisonné*. Again, as in *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma* and *La ricotta*, the image of the carnal is intrinsically related to the sacred; here Bacon's work serves as the indexical image of this.[229]

When Pietro sets out to paint, the image to which he refers is a print of Bacon's *Two Figures in the Grass* (1954) from the book that he had previously studied with the visitor. In trying to imitate Bacon, the homosexual painter who successfully captures the image of the sacred and the carnal, Pietro is seeking the "correct image" like Godard. However, in figuring Pietro as a homosexual artist,

[227] Pasolini makes a visual echo of these images in that behind the two men there is a very large ornate bird cage, which appears to be empty.
[228] See Armando Maggi for an analysis of the homosexual realisation of both the father and son in *Teorema* in psychoanalytical terms (2009, 61).
[229] In the film, a distinction is made between religion and sacrality. In contrast to the liberating potential of sacrality as embodied by the angelic visitor, religion, which is predominantly represented in Lucia's narrative, is seen as a repressive force. Firstly, she is shown blessing herself at the beginning of the film to indicate her religious belief. In the section where she is cruising looking for boys, there is a prevalence of religious statuary and architecture, which seem to cast a metonymic eye of oppressive disapproval on her behaviour. This is in keeping with Nancy's distinction between the religious and the sacred.

a human lacking religious faith, and a son who has no emotional connection with his father, Pasolini creates his alter ego. Later, Pietro will cover his eyes, effectively rendering him blind, in an unsuccessful attempt to paint that which cannot be represented: impeding his sensorial vision in order to see his interior vision of the visitation. One might counter-argue that if Pasolini's belief in the image—particularly of the human figure, as represented by the visitor—is such that it is rendered sacred for him, then Pietro, in turning to art after the visitor's departure, should, like Emilia, be redeemed or achieve some sort of transcendence. Here, however, Pietro's role may be likened to that of Klimt, the quasi-detective publisher in *Hélas pour moi*, in that after the visitor's departure, he seeks to capture an image of the "event", but the image he seeks cannot be obtained and he is ultimately defeated. Associating Pietro to Klimt in *Hélas pour moi,* also links him to Godard, whose efforts to see are represented by the latter character. Equally, Pietro can be seen as a successor of the character of the director in *La ricotta,* as played by Orson Welles, in that each serves as Pasolini's diegetic alter ego in his attempt to achieve the correct image; however, as Pasolini inherently links Pietro's creativity to his sexuality, the latter can be seen as offering a more comprehensive representation.[230]

In *Teorema* and *Hélas pour moi,* words provide support in the absence of image. Just as Klimt has in-depth discussions with Aude on the nature of the image in *Hélas pour moi,* likewise, while Pietro tries in vain to paint the image he desires, he recites what is effectively a poetic detailing of the struggle of the artist in seeking the image and his insecurity surrounding this attempt.[231] As he

[230] Most commentators skip over the artistic travails that Pietro undergoes while trying to capture the image of his relationship with the visitor, eliding this in favour of the scene in which, in his frustration at not being able to achieve an image, despite attempting in several ways to depict his experience, he resorts to urinating on the canvas.

[231] "We must try to invent new techniques/ unrecognizable, which are unlike any previous method/ to avoid childishness ridicule/make our world unlike any other/ where previous standards don't apply /which must be new, like the technique./Nobody must realise that the artist is worthless/that's he's an abnormal inferior being/who squirms and twists like a worm to survive./ Nobody must ever catch him out as naive./Everything must be presented as perfect/based on unknown, unquestionable rules./ Like a madman, pane after pane, because I can't correct anything/and nobody must notice a sign painted on a pane./A sign painted on a pane corrects, without soiling it/a sign painted earlier on another pane./But everyone must believe/ that it isn't the trick of an untalented, impotent artist./ Not at all, it must look like a sure decision/fearless, lofty and almost arrogant./Nobody must know that a sign that succeeds by chance is fragile./That as soon as a sign appears well made/ by a miracle, it must be protected/ looked after as in a shrine. But nobody must realise,/ that the artist is a poor trembling idiot /second-rate, living by chance and risk/in disgrace like a child/his life reduced to absurd melancholy/degraded by the feeling of something lost forever".

speaks the camera focuses on his face, not on the image he creates. While speaking, Pietro paints onto different panes of glass, which he places on top of each other to create a combined image. The use of a transparent medium is suggestive of celluloid, which of course is Pasolini's medium in *Teorema*. However, the evolution of *Teorema* was highly intermedial in that Pasolini also wrote a novel of the same title while shooting the film, and the idea for the narrative had originally come from a stage play written in verse in 1966 (Meyer-Krahmer 2006, 112). Thus, a dynamic of creative expression is set up between image and text. This dynamic is obvious elsewhere in the film, in which books are foregrounded throughout. We see the majority of the characters reading books at various points in the narrative. In a particularly relevant scene, the visitor sits in the garden with Odetta and Paolo, the father, who is recuperating from his first emotional breakdown. When Paolo asks him what he is reading, he recites from Rimbaud's poem *Les deserts de l'amour* (*The Deserts of Love,* 1872) as follows:

> His life was his and his alone. It would take longer to duplicate his goodness than to create a star. The godhead, which had come without my hoping for it, has not returned and will never return again.[232]

Although narrative elements of Tolstoy's *Smert' Ivana Il'icha* (1886, *The Death of Ivan Ilych*) are incorporated into the film, and Paolo the father is shown reading aloud from the book to Odetta and the visitor, Rimbaud's book figures far more prominently, in that throughout the film the visitor is shown as being engrossed in a copy of it with an image of Rimbaud on the front cover. Lucia, the mother also picks up the same copy, just before her encounter with the visitor.[233] The foregrounding of Rimbaud is significant as regards the character of Paolo, in

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[232] This translation is taken from the film's subtitles. However Carlo Testa provides a different translation: "I understood that He was occupied with His daily life, and that the circuit of kindness would be longer in returning than a star. He did not return, and will never return, that Adorable Man who came to my room—something I would never have supposed", while pointing out that the gender has been transposed as the original is "I understood that She was occupied with her daily life, and that the circuit of kindness would be longer in returning than a star. She did not return, and will never return, that Adorable woman who came to my room—something I would never have supposed" (2002, 61).

[233] In fact, the inclusion of physical copies of literary texts in the mise-en-scène and their citation is a notable element of all the films discussed here.

that Rimbaud as a young man began an affair with the poet Paul Verlaine, who was married at the time. In many ways, Rimbaud is more symbolic of the transgressive than the visitor who, with his neat clothes and pleasant manner, fits in well with the everyday life of the bourgeois household, even though the way in which the individual family members respond to him results in devastation for them. In 1873, around the same time as *The Deserts of Love,* Rimbaud wrote: "Boredom is no longer my bride. I know these passions and disasters too well—the rages, the debauches, the madness—my burden lifts" (2002, 200), which seems to encapsulate the various responses of the family to their respective encounters with the visitor and his subsequent departure.[234]

Like Pietro, Odetta also seeks the image of the visitor. Her reaction to Rimbaud's words read aloud is to run to the house to fetch a camera; she then returns and photographs both the visitor and her father. After the visitor leaves for good, Odetta returns to where she had sat with both men in an attempt to reconstruct the image of the three of them together.[235] First, she tries to map out physically where they had been sitting in relation to each other by pacing out the distances; then she attempts the same using a tape measure in another futile attempt to remap the event that occurred between the visitor, Paolo and her. Finally, she returns to her room, where she finds the album containing the photographs she took in the garden. In contrast to Pietro, she has obtained material images of the event as embodied by the visitor. However, viewing these images in his absence causes her to fall into a catatonic state. Odetta's situation is a corollary of the image or event that cannot be represented: she possesses and can touch the image, but is not able to withstand its effects.

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[234] Like Bacon, one of the few contemporary painters whose work is included in Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* the influence of Rimbaud is interwoven through the work of both directors. In *Nouvelle vague,* Godard quotes from Rimbaud in the film's intertitles: "Je est un autre". These words are also recalled in the original title, "Who is me", of Pasolini's autobiographical poem "Il poeta delle ceneri", which was written between 1966 and 1967, and published in *Nuovi argomenti* (1980). In the poem, Pasolini says, "I was 'a seven-year-old poet' like Rimbaud". In an earlier autobiographical poem, "Una disperata vitalità" (originally published in 1964 in the volume *Poesia in forma di rosa*), he uses the repeated refrain "Like in a film by Godard", picturing himself as "Belmondo, behind the wheel of his Alfa-Romeo", a reference to *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960). In Godard's *Pierrot le fou* (1965), also starring Jean-Paul Belmondo, several visual and verbal references are made to Rimbaud. Indeed, Angela Dalle Vacche observes how Godard's uses the poet's words and image in the film to exemplify "the tension between speaking and picturing" (1996, 114). A similar tension is also apparent in *Teorema*, particularly when considered that, unusually for a poet such as Pasolini, the entire dialogue is less than a thousand words.

[235] Throughout the film, Odetta is depicted as having a father fixation.

In Pietro and Odetta's responses to the visitor's departure, the importance of image is of equal, if not greater, importance to the carnality that is generally the focus of analyses of the film in the literature (Viano, Maggi, etc). Lucia's response is a carnal one, in that she resorts to picking up young boys for sex, but it is also indicative of seeking a physical mimesis of the visitor. In contrast, both Emilia and Paolo, rather than attempting to find a mimetic equivalent of the visitor, try instead to be a mimetic equivalent of him: Emilia by sanctifying herself and Paolo by casting off all his worldly goods, from his factory to his clothes. These actions are also indicative of seeking the image, recalling Aude's words in *Hélas pour moi*: "*Soit mon image*" ("Be in my image").



Fig. 74. *Teorema.* Touching the image, after the visitor has departed.

The challenge to capture the correct image, first encapsulated by the diegetic director in *La ricotta*, thus equally forms part of Pasolini's *Teorema,* as it does for Godard first in *Passion,* then in *Je vous salue Marie*, and later again in *Hélas pour moi.* This search is, of course, a fundamental part of any filmmaker's work; but, in the films listed here, that search seeps into the narrative and becomes part of the diegesis, such is the priority afforded it by both directors. Equally, their search is consistently underpinned by the Christian art-historical image, whether in its twentieth century transgressive form, as in Bacon's *Three Studies*, or in its more typical and traditional form, as in Pontormo and El Greco. In all of the films considered, the search ends in failure (with the possible exception of *Je vous salue Marie,* but even then the image is depicted as being hard-won both pro-filmically and otherwise); yet as viewers we see sublime images presented in all of these films, indicating that the sought-after image has

been found. However, we also understand in greater depth the challenge that both Pasolini and Godard set for themselves as regards the image and the sublime event: they measure themselves not only against the masters of Western art, but also against Rimbaud and Tolstoy; not only against what has been in previous centuries, but also against artists working contemporaneously with them, as Pasolini does with Bacon (and other artists, as shall be seen in the discussion of *La rabbia*), and, as Godard does with filmmakers, poets, photographers and artists in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

4.2 Pasolini's *La rabbia*: Poetic precursor of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*

"My aim was to invent a new film genre, to write an ideological and poetic essay with new sequences" (Pasolini quoted in Chiesi 2008, 35).

To pursue further the analysis of the Christological and the pictorial as reference points for both Pasolini and Godard, I turn to a film essay by each director in which both the pictorial and photographic image are depicted without mediation. In the following section I will consider *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in which Godard makes his art-historical influences manifest, tying them into a meditation on the resurrection and redemption of the image. Firstly, however, I shall return to one of Pasolini's least discussed works, which is composed almost entirely of newsreel footage and photographs. *La rabbia* (1963), while the subject of much controversy and, indeed, disowned by Pasolini in its originally released format, is according to Maurizio Viano "one of Pasolini's highest achievements...a stunningly beautiful and moving visual poem" (1993, 114). It is in that context, particularly in relation to its intermedial quotations—specifically, from painting and photography—that I consider it here.

The controversy surrounding *La rabbia* is perhaps better known than the film. The original film, the concept of Gastone Ferranti, editor of the Italian "Mondo Libero" newsreel, was based on the creation of a feature-length production that would use material from the newsreel's archive. Ferranti originally envisioned an omnibus film with several directors, but, when Pasolini agreed to direct, Ferranti assigned the entire project to him. Pasolini's original film showed footage from events dating from 1950 to 1963 including the Korean War, Russia's invasion of Hungary, the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and

other political and social events from Italy, France and the U.S.. The narration alternated between poetry and prose: author and editor Giorgio Bassani narrated the poetic sections while Renato Guttuso, a painter and friend of Pasolini's, whose work is depicted within *La rabbia*, read the prose sections.[236] However, when Pasolini had finished work on the film, which involved long hours of editing the celluloid newsreels, Ferranti, on seeing the finished product, decided to change the structure of the film and, in an attempt to make it more commercially viable, brought in the writer Giovannino Guareschi, creator of the *Don Camillo* series of stories, to contribute a contrapuntal section that would present an opposing political viewpoint. Pasolini was resolutely opposed to this development, but eventually acquiesced and was obliged to cut his ninety-minute film to almost half its original length. When he finally got to see Guareschi's section, shortly before the film was released, he was so horrified by its pro-colonial, racist content that he disavowed the entire film, hardly ever referring to it subsequently.[237]

Ferranti promoted *La rabbia* as a battle of wits against opposing political viewpoints; however, the film was poorly distributed and proved a commercial failure, the general public being disinterested in political ideology as a form of entertainment. Almost fifty years later, however, film critic and author Tatti Sanguineti found the original newsreels that Pasolini had selected, together with notes for the accompanying narration. Sanguineti asked Giuseppe Bertolucci, younger brother of Bernardo, to try to reconstruct it as faithfully as possible to Pasolini's original vision. The resulting work, which comprises the originally released shortened version with the reconstructed sequences added to the beginning, is obviously a fragmented work, but nonetheless—and perhaps because of it—is of great interest, particularly, from the viewpoint of the thesis, as regards the Christological reference point through the agency of art history, using still images from photography, painting, drawing and newspaper clippings.

In a short introductory passage to the originally released section, Pasolini's words as read by Guttuso explain that there is no chronological or

[236] Naomi Greene offers a more lyrical division of the two narrators, suggesting that Bassani is "the voice of peace and sorrow" and Guttuso is "the voice of rage" (1990, 68). Bassani, like Pasolini, had been a student of Roberto Longhi's at the University of Bologna and had also dubbed the voice of Orson Welles in *La ricotta*.

[237] Here, Naomi Greene suggests that the reasons why Pasolini found Guareschi's contribution unacceptable were more aesthetic than political (1990, 67).

logical order to the images presented; rather what motivates them is his "political reasoning and poetic feeling". One of the most interesting aspects of *La rabbia* is how the poetic—both in its verbal and visual sense—and political aspects of Pasolini's film-making run along separate paths, which is evident in this opening piece: while the voiceover speaks of "war and fear of war", the images—ostensibly highlighting the fear of war in their depiction of a nuclear explosion filmed from a plane—instead possess a spectacular beauty in the patterns they make on the sky, the sun's rays behind them, and the slow-motion cloud expanding outwards. Stripped of any related sound, with only Guttuso's narration, the images attract rather than repel.[238]

While I will not analyse Bertolucci's reconstructed section of *La rabbia* in any great detail, it serves to highlights how Pasolini's originally released version is far more than a collection of newsreels with an overarching narration—and, particularly, its similarities to Godard's much later *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Although Giuseppe Bertolucci states that he wanted to be "as neutral as possible" and for his "personal input to be minimal" (quoted in Chiesi 2008, 43), what the viewer actually experiences watching the reconstruction, however well intentioned it may be, is the lack of Pasolini as author. Two key aspects of Pasolini's work, intermediality and editing, result in the marked difference between the two versions. Although Bertolucci's reconstruction is composed of newsreel clips and therefore possessed with an inherent level of intermediality, there is no further development within this framework. He applies the scripted voiceovers discovered by Tatti Sanguineti to the selection of newsreels accompanying them. Likewise, Bertolucci preserves the musical motif of Tomaso Albinoni's *Adagio in G minor* throughout, but nothing is added to give colour or tone to Pasolini's selections: the result bearing little resemblance to the original section by Pasolini, which teems with intermedial images and sounds. In order to establish the visual resonance he sought, Pasolini requested Carlo di Carlo, his assistant director, to find material to complement the "Mondo Libero" newsreels that were available to him. Thus the footage from Cuba and Algeria is

[238] It is unclear where the images are recorded, although Maurizio Viano suggests that a later, similar image is of nuclear testing in Nevada. The opening of *Passion* also recalls these images in its silent shots of an airplane's jet trail on the sky.

not from the original newsreels, nor are any of the still images inserted.[239] As Roberto Chiesi observes, "Pasolini's film contaminated both the visual and the audio elements of the footage with which he was provided" (2008, 38). In a film whose mode of creation is editing and montage of found footage, Pasolini succeeds in staying steadfast to his aesthetic principles. One might indeed suggest that the found-footage format is ideal for his *contaminazione* style in that he is able to juxtapose images in a freely associative way that allows enormous scope.

Pasolini uses newspaper clippings, books, revolutionary songs and non-musical sounds throughout the original version in addition to reproductions of paintings, predominantly from the twentieth century, to illustrate his arguments and sometimes to add subtle emphasis to a visual sequence. The still images serve to punctuate the newsreels, creating visual rhythms similar to those established in the narration, which is metered by means of alternating between the prose and poetry sections and the narrators' voices that switch concurrently. Likewise, the sombre, melancholy tones of Albinoni's *Adagio* alternate with more upbeat musical styles such as jazz and world music. Used in this way, the stills, narrating voices and contrasting musical styles become part of an intense editing process that breaks up the original newsreel footage in a far more visually stimulating manner than Bertolucci's rather pedestrian reconstruction. In his approach to editing, Pasolini prefigures Godard's highly concentrated montage in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* which takes advantage of technological developments, particularly video, to layer, superimpose and create transitions, in a way that was not available to Pasolini in 1963.

Considering that *La rabbia* was made immediately before *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, the emphasis on portraiture in the former is perhaps unsurprising, given a similar marked emphasis in the latter film—and in the films preceding *La rabbia*, as discussed in Chapter One. In each section that addresses the oppressed or those who rise up against oppression, Pasolini unfailingly picks out the individual face in the crowd. These faces become "vectors of an

[239] Whereas in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Godard goes as far back as the Byzantine and Romanesque periods in the imagery deployed and while one would have imagined that Pasolini, so firmly attached to the ancient world, might have incorporated similar imagery, instead his visual citations in the film are predominantly from the twentieth century (with the exception of Pontormo's *Deposition* (1525)), although, as always, anchored in the human figure.

otherwise untransmittable meaning" (Viano 1993, 115). Thus, we see a Hungarian border guard, who is part of the uprising against the Russians, light a cigarette, while looking directly into the camera. One imagines how Pasolini, editing the vast amount of newsreel at his disposal, would instantly engage with such an image of another human looking out at the viewer through the lens, lending immediacy to the unfolding events. This focus on physiognomy dominates the film: acknowledging as much, Pasolini refers to coming upon "beautiful images: the smile of an unknown person, two eyes brimming with either joy or sorrow" while sifting through the archive footage (quoted in Viano, 1993, 113). The portrait images he shows here resemble those of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in that they depict miners, rebel soldiers, the poor—Pasolini's subproletariat, who for him provide access to the mythic ancient world, and who are present as the apostles, crowds, soldiers populating *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*. In the Cuban segment in *La rabbia*, a sequence of portraits of Cuban freedom fighters closely resembles the sequential portraiture in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* It is again noticeable, specifically by comparison with Bertolucci's reconstruction, that Pasolini has honed in on certain faces that catch his attention.

Pasolini's originally released film, in common with Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* seeks to isolate specific details in the still photographs used. In both films, this is particularly true of corpse imagery, but also of faces in the crowds at historic events. The human figure, whether in portraiture or as regards its suffering or death, is salient in *La rabbia*. Within the found footage, Pasolini consistently identifies what we might call the human moment: eye-to-camera contact, an affective interstice where the viewer establishes a connection with the face she beholds on screen. Often the image is obviously taken from a battered old photo, with a crease running down the middle, or is a detail from a magazine, which has been blown up to the point that it is almost indistinguishable. Notwithstanding, Pasolini pinpoints the human within the recycled image, which is particularly emphatic when compared with Bertolucci's reconstruction, in which there is no such attempt to provide a point of affective contact.



Fig. 75. *La rabbia.* Portrait of Cuban revolutionaries

The film's section on Algeria is particularly notable in this regard. Pasolini's narration, as read by Guttuso, commences by saying (rather patronisingly) "who would have said that the most profound sense of freedom could live in hearts with such humble faces?", over footage that depicts Algerian men and women meeting under the shade of a tree.[240] Further on in the sequence, he picks out faces of Algerian freedom fighters again from photographic stills. One example is particularly striking: the face of a young Algerian fighter looking nervously to his right, with a palpable, but unspecified anxiety. The camera then zooms out from the young man's face, revealing him to be part of a line of men, at the top of which we see a man with his back to the camera. His shirt is up around his shoulders, revealing what appear to be torture or bullet marks on his back. The establishment of a connection between the face in the crowd and the suffering of the human body is one that underpins *La rabbia* as a whole. As counterpoint to this, Pasolini consistently punctuates these images, which establish the viewer's empathy through a combination of portraiture and depictions of suffering, with images of the powerful and the bourgeoisie. While, as in *Teorema,* there is a note of detached pity for the men and women caught in the trap of the middle classes, in his depiction of the politically powerful, we feel

[240] This recalls *Sopralluoghi i Palestina* when examining the Palestinian children's faces; Pasolini finds them pre-Christian and thus unsuitable for use in his gospel film. There is a constant appraisal of what is contained in a face to determine where to place it: ancient, modern, pre-history or pre-Christian, for example. Furthermore, it is an early indication of Pasolini's tendency towards orientalism, which would become increasingly marked in his work. See Viano's trenchant denunciation of Pasolini's ethnocentrism in the "intolerably overblown" *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* (1993, 270).

only Pasolini's disdain. In various newsreel segments showing French, Spanish, English and American dignitaries and politicians, there is no distinguishing of faces and no affective point of contact established; in fact, in these sections, the faces, in suits and ties or ceremonial dress, blend into one indistinguishable mass.



Fig. 76. *La rabbia.* Young Algerian freedom fighter

Following the introduction, in which Pasolini proposes his two-pronged approach of politics and poetics, the first images presented are photographic stills of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the subsequent invasion of Russian troops. Again Pasolini commences with a motif that permeates *La rabbia:* the body as corpse, which Godard will also use as one of the recurrent motifs in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* In the Hungarian sequence, the images shown are lynchings of the notoriously brutal ÁVH (*Államvédelmi Hatóság* (State Security or Secret Police)) officers who have been turned upon by a mob. The first is a man hung by his feet from a tree, recalling the inverted crucifixion of St. Peter. In the second image, the victim is far more legible as a body with a face and, thus, the image possesses an even greater ability to shock; particularly as despite the legibility of face and body, they are horrifically transformed through the violence done to them.[241] The image jolts the viewer in a way that, in theory, one would expect from a similar image of a man nailed to a cross, as is the case in a

[241] Of course, it should be acknowledged that the image is not Pasolini's original work (although I have been unable to find a copy of this image elsewhere, it is most probably taken by *Life* magazine photographer John Sadovy who captured many similar images of murder and torture in the streets of Budapest in 1956).

Crucifixion image; however the latter has become so much part of our communal visual narrative, independently of religious belief, that we no longer experience a visceral response to it. In contrast, the Hungarian-lynching image appears like a re-imagined crucifixion that is thus reinvested with the image's original horror.



Fig: 77. *La rabbia.* Image of lynching victim. Budapest 1956.



Fig. 78. Goya. *Disasters of War*. Plate 36. *Tampoco* (*Neither do these,* 1810–14)

In addition to its power to shock, the photograph's composition and pathos recalls Goya's images from the *Los desastres de la guerra* series of etchings (*Disasters of War,* 1810-14), in themselves reimagined crucifixions that are capable of erasing the viewer's passivity. Pasolini's deployment of the Hungarian lynching photographs shares a further element in common with

Goya's etchings in that, although Pasolini takes the side of the Hungarians rebelling against the Russians, these particular images are of mob violence on the side that he supports. Likewise, Goya did not confine himself to creating images of atrocities committed solely by French soldiers on Spaniards, but also documented similar barbaric acts carried out by Spanish patriots on the French. Robert Hughes's addresses this ambiguity as regards blame, but certainty as regards the horrors of war, in Goya's series of prints:

> You cannot always tell whose side the dead were on, or whether the atrocities are "bad" (committed by French against Spanish) or "good" (by Spaniards against the French or traitors to the Spanish cause). This is not, of course, because Goya equated the two sides or was indifferent to Spanish suffering...Goya's excoriating cycle of prints is neither pro-Spanish nor pro-French, but against war as such". (2003, 292)



Fig. 79. Goya. *Disasters of War.* Plate 28. *Populacho* (*Mob*, 1863)

In Hughes's description of Plate 28, *Populacho* (*Mob*, 1863), a clear example of this ambivalence is found. In it, what Hughes suggests is probably a civilian French sympathiser is being beaten and horrifically abused by a group of Spanish peasants. Hughes focuses on Goya's title:

> one contemptuous word, spat on the page: *Populacho*, which does not mean "people" but "rabble"...Goya has no doubt, and leaves us none, that the patriots can be as brutal, sadistic, and depraved as the invaders; and sometimes he leaves open the question of which are the murderers and

> which the victims. The naked, the dismembered, and the dead wear no uniforms to identify them, which makes it impossible to know in which direction one's pity should extend. (2003, 293)

This could equally have been written of the two images of lynchings in Budapest that Pasolini shows. His part of *La rabbia*, characterised by its producer and, indeed, by analyses in the literature as taking a staunch left-wing perspective, I argue, is more nuanced than has been presented. The Hungarian-uprising sequence is a particularly clear example in that Pasolini, despite his Marxist tendencies, has chosen to include an event that highlights the failings of Communism as implemented by the Soviet Union. Like Goya, his concern is with humanity, and the inhuman deeds that are carried out in the name of politics and power.[242]

Pasolini consistently returns to images such as the ones discussed above that point to the horror of war, interspersed with the banal, the trite and the political taken from the "Mondo Libero" newsreels, thus establishing a rhythm of imagery and words. Having been forced to cut his entire section to half its original running time, Pasolini struggled to restore this rhythm to the shortened version; nevertheless, it remains sufficiently present for the viewer to appreciate, and to imagine the poetic coherency of the uncut version (with all due respect to Bertolucci's reverential, but ultimately unsatisfactory reconstruction). The final third of Pasolini's original film is one of the most sustained parts of the work, both as regards visual images and their poetic interpretation. Here, also, Pasolini's alternation of the suffering body (or the corpse of the body that has suffered) and the portrait reaches its apotheosis. The sequence commences with a clip showing students being given a guided tour of a Soviet museum. The museum displays paintings and sculptures of Soviet workers in the socialist realism style.[243] The narration, assuming the voice of the guide, feigns

[242] Pasolini habitually did not allow ideological preconceptions to colour his views of political events; one of the most well-known examples of this was his poem "*Il Pci ai giovani!*", published in the journal *Nuovi argomenti* (April–June 1968), in which he took the side of the police in relation to a student demonstration for educational reform in Rome in March 1968, which had resulted in violent clashes between police and students. Interestingly, Alain Bergala observes that the controversial stance he took in this case effectively resulted in *Cahiers du cinéma* totally ignoring his work from that time until his death and the release of *Salò* (1981, 10).

[243] Pasolini seems to suggest ("these paintings contain our error") that, aside from aesthetic considerations, the paintings form part of the Stalinist tradition and must thus be cast aside.

admiration for the politically earnest, but rather dull works shown in the footage. Finally, alleging discomfort and embarrassment at having to confess it, Pasolini's narrator rejects the paintings outright saying they should be taken off the wall and put in the basement. From this point, during a fifteen-minute sequence, the themes dealt with are ones with which Pasolini particularly engages. In his interview with Oswald Stack, he claims that the best part of his half of the released film is the sequence devoted to the death of Marilyn Monroe (which forms part of the passage I discuss here), saying that it was the only part "worth keeping" (1969, 70). However, from the perspective of the image of the martyred body allied to the portrait, the sequences leading up to the Monroe sequence are also worthy of consideration.

Immediately after Pasolini's rejection of the Soviet gallery paintings he contends, in a reference to Stalinist Russia, "we must start over from where there is no certainty", with these words, he leads into a sequence of eight works by Renato Guttuso (1912-1986).[244] The most striking aspect of Pasolini's use of Guttuso's paintings is that, like the *tableaux vivants* and banquet table in *La ricotta*, they are the only images in colour throughout the film and thus all the more compelling, particularly given the strength of Guttuso's expressionistic colour. The sequence of paintings by Guttuso is as follows:

Crocifissione (*Crucifixion*, 1941)
Lotte di minatori francesi (*The French miners' struggle*, 1948)
Operai in riposo (*Workers resting*, 1945)
Ragazzo che urla con bandiera rossa (*Boy shouting with red flag*, 1953)
Carretta di fucilati (*Cart of shooting victims*, 1944) (From the *Gott mit uns* series of drawings)
Fuciliazione di patrioti (*Shooting of the Patriots*, 1944)
Stombroli in eruzione (*Stromboli Erupts*, 1956)
Le donne d'Algeri (*Women of Algiers*, 1959)

[244] Of the same political leanings as Pasolini, Guttuso was a social-realist painter whose work tackled subjects such as the unjust treatment of workers and political oppression, and thus shared the concerns of Pasolini's oeuvre. In 1962, Pasolini wrote the introduction to an exhibition of Guttuso's work, entitled *20 disegni di Renato Guttuso presentati da Pier Paolo Pasolini* (1962. Roma: Editori Riunti) and was thus well acquainted with Guttuso's paintings.

These works, all figurative with the exception of *Stromboli in eruzione*, flow into each other in quick succession as Guttuso's voice, rising in tone, asserts "we are not Russians, we are Italian or Spanish workers; French intellectuals; Algerian partisans". Pasolini, in linking the works together, creates linkage between the Crucifixion, the daily struggle of workers, their more violent struggles against their bosses (in *Lotte minatori francesi*), and the horrors of war. In this respect, in the linking of labour, the Crucifixion and the workers' struggle, Pasolini pre-empts Godard's similar association of these metanarratives in *Passion* almost twenty years later. Although *Operai in riposo* does not depict cataclysm or trauma, it too in its execution portrays twisted bodies whose contorted forms contradict the reference to resting in the painting's title. The bodies of the workers lie sprawled, resembling in their prostration the corpses in the photographic stills that Pasolini incorporates in the film and in Guttuso's two works depicting atrocities carried out on Italian soil during World War II: *Carretta di fucilati* and *Fucilazione di patrioti*. In short, these workers are far removed from the beatific Soviet labourers shown in the previous sequence on the socialist realism exhibition.

By opening the Guttuso sequence with *Crocifissione*, Pasolini sets up a myriad of intratextual and intertextual visual references.[245] Guttuso's painting is influenced by and similar in composition and perspective to Rembrandt's etching *Christus gekruisigd tussen de twee moordenaars* (*Christ crucified between two thieves* c.1643–1644); however, the white cloth hanging from the cross references another Rembrandt etching from the same series, *De kruisafname bij fakkellicht* (*Descent from the Cross by Torchlight,* 1654), a detail of which appears in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and which will be further discussed in relation to that film. In these etchings, Rembrandt depicts Christ on a Tau cross, recalling the Tau crosses of Rosso Fiorentino's *Deposition* and Bacon's *Fragment of a Crucifixion*, discussed previously in regard to *La ricotta*.[246] The similarities to Rosso's painting, however, extend beyond the cross to the intensity, as regards both colour and composition, common to both works. The "violent and

[245] Like *La ricotta* on its release, *Crocifissione* caused huge controversy when it was first exhibited due to the naked figures of Mary Magdalene and the Virgin Mary, which were deemed to be highly transgressive by the Catholic Church. See Demelza Spargo, "Guttuso, Renato", *Grove Art Online* (0-www.oxfordartonline.com. Accessed 08/06/2012)

[246] Guttuso's work predates Bacon's, which was painted in 1950.

emotional expressiveness, which overrides everything else" present in Rosso's work, is equally present in Guttuso's rendering of the Crucifixion (Murray, 2003, 158). Guttuso's aim was to equate the trauma of Christ's Crucifixion to the horrors undergone by Europe in the twentieth-century, and so, in the background of the painting, he depicts a bombed-out town symbolising the events of World War II; however, the hillside town is equally reminiscent of proto-Renaissance backdrops and Pasolini's subsequent use of Matera as a location for *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* Intratextually, the crucified figures, particularly considering their unorthodox and slightly chaotic arrangement, echo the photographs of the lynched bodies in Budapest at the beginning of the film and prefigure equally horrific images from Algeria that will appear later in the film.



Fig. 80. Renato Guttuso *Crocifissione* (*Crucifixion,* 1941)



Fig. 81. Rembrandt *Christ crucified between the two thieves* (c.1643–44)

The violence of *Crocifissione* gives way to *Lotta di minatori francesi*, in which the jarring colour and expressive gesture is sustained, as it is in *Operai in riposo*, in which, as stated, the workers at rest could equally be the maimed and tortured bodies depicted elsewhere in the film; so much so, that while the drawing is shown on the screen, the narration speaks of the figures writhing "like the cremated in Buchenwald", thus setting up a further analogy between the struggle of the worker, the atrocities of war, and crucifixion iconography. In this visual association, the sacred is redistributed, as will also be the case in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*; the suffering of the Christological body that serves as a central tenet of Christian belief becomes the suffering of all humans exposed to the abuses of power, whether through war, political oppression or economic exploitation.

The sequence of group figurative paintings is then punctuated by a portrait-style detail from *Ragazzo che urla con bandiera rossa,* as the narration animatedly urges that "victory that shall never be the last", in what almost seems like a return to the propaganda of the socialist realism painting that preceded the Guttuso sequence. This image, however, is followed by *Caretta di fucilati*, a drawing from Guttuso's *Gott mit uns* series that details, in a similar fashion to Goya's *Disasters of War*, the atrocities committed in Italy after the German occupation of the country following Mussolini's downfall. The drawing is, in turn, succeeded by the stark image of *Fucilazione di patrioti,* in which three patriots, hands tied behind their back, stand surrounded by bloodied, twisted corpses, obviously awaiting the same fate. Pasolini pauses on the image, and then shows a detail depicting the corpse in the foreground on the right of the painting. The body is arranged in the form of a Deposition or Pietà, made all the more emphatic, because of his bare torso and the white trousers he wears, the folds of which Guttuso has rendered as if they were a loin cloth. This image serves as a counterpoint for the *Crocifissione* painting at the beginning of the sequence, again reinforcing the Christological analogy with the victims of the massacre, suggested by Guttuso and then reiterated and strengthened by Pasolini in his montage of the paintings.



Fig. 82. Renato Guttuso. *Fucilazione di patrioti* (1944)

The next painting, rendered with violently expressionistic brushstrokes, depicts the eruption of Stromboli. One imagines that Pasolini has inserted this work here as a means of heightening the notion of cataclysm that the entire sequence conveys; however, it also echoes the nuclear explosion images at the beginning of the film and a similar extended sequence that follows shortly after the sequence of paintings. The final image in the painting sequence very elegantly connects the passage that follows on Algeria and the twentieth-century crucifixion theme that pervades the Guttuso sequence: it is a detail from the painting *Le donne d'Algeri* (a homage to Delacroix's 1834 painting of the same name, but dealing, in contrast to Delacroix's original, with the effects of war). The detail that Pasolini singles out, a woman attending to a dead or wounded man, seems a completion of the Pietà he creates in isolating the corpse in *Fucilazione di patrioti*, particularly as the woman's white head scarf resembles the headwear in which Mary would conventionally be depicted in art-historical representations of the Pietà.

The transposition of a Christological narrative and iconography to these twentieth-century settings is all the more striking when considered that elsewhere in the film, Pasolini is intensely critical of the Catholic Church, particularly the reign of Pope Pius XII, footage of whose funeral procession he includes, remarking through the narration that "Christianity...had become the bourgeois religion [clung onto by] the tide of our century that still desperately needs

religion" (Translation from subtitles).[247] Effectively, he separates workers from Soviet notions of Communism and marries them with Passion iconography, which, equally, he isolates from conventional Catholic practice. Sacralising the workers and partisans in this way, while disparaging religious belief, recalls Nancy's argument that separates the religious from the sacred, in which he contends that the former seeks a bond, while the latter represents a cut, "set apart, at a distance" (2005, 1). Nancy presents the image as sacred or "distinct" in two modes: "it does not touch and it is dissimilar" (2005, 2). In the photographic stills and art works selected by Pasolini to single out the victims of oppression from the newsreels of the pomp and circumstance associated with those in authority, whether General de Gaulle, Elizabeth II or Pope Pius XII, a similar distinguishing occurs: these photographs, paintings and drawings stand apart in an emphatic visual underscoring. Through his linkage with or—as regards Guttuso's paintings—reinforcement of Passion iconography, Pasolini distinguishes these specific images, prefiguring a similar approach taken by Godard in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

Le donne d'Algeri forms a bridge between the sequence of Guttuso's paintings and the extended sequence dealing with the Algerian War—again creating an association between the Christological imagery of the paintings and the situation in Algeria. Here again Pasolini combines newsreel footage of French planes bombing Algeria (and some footage of Algerians) with stills of Algerian freedom fighters and martyrs. In one of the longest photographic montages in the film, images of Algerians lined up against walls, held at gun point, or dead on the ground proliferate; while Pasolini's verse as recited by Bassani refers to them as "his brothers". The stills sequences builds to a crescendo with images of victims severely burnt or showing evidence of torture, and bodies stretching into the distance. The culmination of the sequence is an extremely poor-quality image of a naked man stretched out in an enforced crucifixion pose, his head thrown back and his mouth open in agony. Here photographic evidence replaces art-historical imagery. Just as Godard will draw visual associations between art-historical images of the Passion and photographs of emaciated and tortured prisoners in Auschwitz, so here Pasolini draws a

[247] He is more indulgent of Pius XII's successor John XXIII, who, on account of his humble background, Pasolini sees as capable of being "shepherd to the ancient world".

similar link between the Algerian martyrs and Christ, echoing the suggested Pietà in *Le donne d'Algeri*. The grim grainy image then gives way to footage of joyous scenes of liberation in Algeria. This mood is not sustained, however, as Bassani reflects that war is "a terror unwilling to end", over images of a nuclear test being carried out. Again, although the words carry a message of pessimism and melancholy, the images shown, albeit of potentially catastrophic explosion, possess a marked beauty as the trails of smoke from the explosion form patterns across the sky. Pasolini contains his pessimism for the contemporary world within his words, while taking aesthetic pleasure it seems in the unlikely images that that world can yield, putting to the test, as Viano points out, his theory of cinema as language that can transcend logical discourse (1993, 115).

The images of nuclear testing are followed by a sequence paying homage to Marilyn Monroe. Monroe is not presented as a symbol of banality and mass hedonism, as is suggested with Ava Gardner and Sophia Loren earlier in the film, but rather as a tragic ancient hero unable to withstand the cruelties of a modern world.[248] Just as Pasolini referred to the Algerian freedom fighters as his brothers, he poignantly refers to Monroe as his "*sorellina*" (little sister). The key to the discrepancy in Pasolini's disregard of Gardner and Loren and his reverential treatment of Monroe, regardless that they were all famous film stars and, thus, products of the cult of celebrity and media that Pasolini despised, probably lies in Monroe's fragility and her premature death in uncertain circumstances in the full glare of publicity (ironically, not unlike his own death).[249] This, allied with her extraordinarily photogenic looks, renders her, in Pasolini's eyes, as a sort of iconic twentieth-century martyr of popular culture. Once again this martyrdom is referred to in terms of Passion iconography, here in the form of newsreel footage of a Passion play with a flagellated Christ wearing an elaborate crown of thorns, representing the ancient world of which Pasolini contends Monroe forms a part. This Christological image acts as a striking visual echo of the image of the second lynching victim shown in the Hungarian-uprising sequence; so much so, that one imagines that it must be deliberate on

[248] In Sophia Loren's case, the disdain has some context. Pasolini had fallen out with her husband Carlo Ponti in a row over a script for the film *Lettere di una novizia* (1960) (Chiesi 2008, 49).
[249] In contrast, in *Prima della rivoluzione* (*Before the revolution*, 1964) Bertolucci instead uses the announcement of Monroe's death to denounce the working-class dependence on the myths offered by the star system and celebrity culture.

Pasolini's part. The face of the Passion-play Christ is covered with blood; his crown of thorns is an elaborate structure that forms a dome around his head. The face of the lynching victim, likewise, is so completely covered in blood that not a patch of skin can be seen; he too has also been "crowned" with what looks like a bucket that forms the dome-type shape over his head. Thus, in a rather stunning visual linkage and through the use of Passion iconography, Pasolini connects the lynching of a Soviet collaborator in Budapest to the premature death of a film star. The much discussed and lauded sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* in which Godard links the victims of Auschwitz to Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun* via the director George Stephens and Giotto's *Noli me tangere*, surely finds a far earlier equivalent here. While a counter-argument might be made, that the cinematic aspect of failure, resurrection and redemption is lacking in Pasolini's linkage, the association of twentieth-century atrocity to a cinematic icon by way of Passion iconography is nonetheless inarguably present in Pasolini's example.



Fig. 83. *La rabbia*. Passion-play Christ

Sam Rohdie comments that one of the paradoxes manipulated by Pasolini was "the contrast between life and death, reality and meaning, as poetic preconditions for each other" (1996, 98). This constant interweaving of themes and motifs relating to death, the sacred, the primitive, the subjective and the carnal with the formal qualities of film is central to Pasolini's cinematic work and is very evidently transposed into the montage of found footage in *La rabbia*. The notion that death consumes life ties into Pasolini's prioritising of the primal

and corporeal: our vital instincts to sleep eat, defecate, copulate, which mark us out as living beings, are extinguished in death. On a formal level, Pasolini related his *ideologia della morte* (ideology of death), as Lino Micciché terms it, to montage in this well-known passage from the essay "Observations on the Sequence Shot" (first published 1967) contained in *Heretical Empiricism*:

> It is therefore absolutely necessary to die, because so long as we live, we have no meaning, and the language of our lives (with which we express ourselves, and, to which, we therefore attribute the greatest importance) is untranslatable, a chaos of possibilities, a search for relations and meanings without resolution. *Death effects an instantaneous montage of our lives*; that is, it chooses the truly meaningful moments (which are no longer modifiable by other possible contrary or incoherent moments) and puts them in a sequence, transforming an infinite, unstable and uncertain—and therefore linguistically not describable—present into a clear, stable, certain and therefore easily describable past … *It is only thanks to death that our life serves us to express ourselves*...Editing therefore performs on the material of the film…the operation that death performs on life. (2005, 236–7. Emphasis in the original)[250]

With regard to film, in his essay "Is being natural?" Pasolini, recalling Bazin's idea of photography and film as embalming, states that because the actions

[250] The description of editing as an operation performed on the material of film brings to mind the analogy Walter Benjamin draws between, on the one hand, magician and surgeon and, on the other, painter and film-maker, respectively, as the film-maker, in the process of editing, cuts into his material like a surgeon. Consider also, in "Is Being Natural?":

> I must repeat that a life with all its actions can be completely and truly deciphered only after death; at that point its rhythm is compressed and the insignificant is eliminated…The continuum of life, in the moment of death—that is after the editing operation—loses all the endlessness of the times in which, living, we bask, delighting in the perfect correspondence of our physical life—which brings us to consummation (sic)—with the passage of time: there isn't one instant in which this correspondence is not perfect. After death, this continuity of life is no longer there, but there is its *meaning*…either be immortal and unexpressed or express oneself and die (Pasolini 2005, 242–3).

Elsewhere in *Heretical Empiricism*, Pasolini comments "my idea of death is neither Catholic nor idealistic", further stating that his idea of death pertains not to an afterlife but with life "understood as a fulfilment, as a desperate, uncertain search for an expressive perfection", going on to state that he does not think this is contradictory to a Marxist stance (2005, 248 and 249).

depicted in cinema are analogous to, and signify, events that happened in real time, their meaning is already completed (first published 1967):

> as if death had already occurred. This means that in cinema time is complete, even if only through a pretence. Therefore, one must necessarily accept the story. Time in this context is not that of life when it lives, but of life after death; as such it is real, it is not an illusion, and it can very well be that of the story of a film. (2005, 243)

The conjunction of the pictorial, the filmic image's association with death and the loss of the corporeal, and the sacredness that Pasolini attributes to death as the final consumer of life, rather than any spiritual longing for resurrection, redemption or transcendence, explains why the iconography of the Passion of Christ and, specifically, the Crucifixion and the Deposition, is such a powerful one for Pasolini.[251] His early tendency to end his films in a death and the attraction of Marilyn Monroe's story in *La rabbia*, the only part of his film that he admired, can be understood through the prism of the desire to complete a narrative arc, in which death is viewed as a cessation of the corporeal. In this respect, it becomes evident why Pasolini saw death, in contrast to God and nature, as that which could not be demystified—its power comes from its ability to end life and, with it, all life's physicality and passions. It is the formidable sway that death exerts over that which Pasolini holds dearest that confers on it such a terrible fascination for him.

If we follow the process of editing, the cutting of the filmic material, to its logical conclusion, we arrive at the smallest unit of film—the frame. Inherent in the ontology of the frame is stasis and the paradox of the moving image, which is composed of a series of still images. Accordingly, Pasolini's theory that death and editing perform the same processes of rendering the present past leads to the conclusion that editing to the single frame is the embodiment of death, in the same way as Pasolini suggested that any given life could be described as an infinite sequence shot (2005, 133). In *La rabbia,* the use of still images, whether reproductions of painting, photographs or newspaper clippings may be described

[251] "Death … represents everything profoundly irrational, and somehow religious, in the mystery of the world" (quoted in Viano 1993, 168).

as, in effect, sustained single frames, somewhat similar to the *tableaux vivants* in *La ricotta*. These still images in conjunction with the consistent theme of violent or unexpected death throughout *La rabbia* highlight Pasolini's idea of the single frame as death in an unanticipated way.[252]

Bearing in mind the above, I return to the Monroe sequence, which commences with a photograph of the actress looking vulnerable and anxious: her gaze is directed to the left of the picture, not directly at the camera, and as such it seems that she is glancing backwards at the previous images of nuclear testing. This is one of the few sections where there is no music or voiceover. Monroe's image persists for about five or six seconds on the screen without comment, as if it speaks for itself. The footage of the Passion-play Christ then follows and the voice-over recommences: "Of the ancient world...". The actress's humble beginnings add extra resonance to her story for Pasolini (perhaps reinforcing his classification of her as being from the ancient world, something he often claimed for the subproletariat, including in the *La rabbia* commentary).

The sequence then returns to an extended montage of photographic images of Monroe accompanied by a poetic meditation on her beauty and the world's commandeering of it. These photographs are obviously taken from books and magazines: sometimes the photo is spread over two pages with the binding and the text surrounding the photographs visible. The images are not chronologically ordered, so that photographs of Monroe as a child are followed by photographs of her naked except for a white fur, very much grown up, which in turn are succeeded by images of her as a teenager without make-up or her signature blonde hair. These images of images of Monroe create a kind of posthumous mythicisation of her story that consigns her simultaneously to martyrhood and sainthood.

In *La rabbia,* Pasolini prefigures the intermedial layering that Godard applies in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, through the use of his own poetry, photography, newsreels, painting, drawing, newspaper cuttings, books, music and, in a very

[252] This echoes Barthes's observation on photography: "photography is a kind of primitive theatre, a kind of *Tableau Vivant*, a figuration of the motionless and made-up face beneath which we see the dead" (2000, 32). Indeed, Barthes sees the concepts of death, photography and history as inextricably linked in the same way as for Pasolini the filmic image, death and history are inseparable.

few instances, film.[253] As suggested earlier, Pasolini did not have access to the same technology as Godard would have decades later making *Histoire(s) du cinéma;* thus, he had to be more ingenious in his deployment of different media. An example in this respect forms part of the Monroe sequence. The image in question, (again, a single still image) is a reproduction of Ben Shahn's painting *The Photographer's Window* (1940), which appears in the midst of the montage of photographs of Monroe. In itself, the painting is a strange hybrid, a painting by an artist, who is also a photographer, of the display in the front of a photographer's studio showing family photos, weddings, young children set out in rows. Used in this sequence, it tacitly reinforces the notion that we are looking at an album, a sort of highly complex, intermedial summary of the photos that Pasolini shows of pre- and post-celebrity Monroe, that multiplies further the notion of images of images, being as it is a (filmic) image of a (painted) image of (photographic) images.



Fig. 84. *La rabbia.* Images of images: "Marilyn" sequence

[253] Pasolini uses one film clip, taken from *Rasskazy o Lenine* (*Stories about Lenin*, Sergei Jutkevich, 1957). Two other clips are shown in the same sequence from film recordings of the Bolshoi Ballet: *Giselle* (1935) and *Romeo and Juliet* (1940).



Fig. 85. *La rabbia*. Detail of Ben Shan's *The Photographer's Window* (1940)

Like the sequence of Guttuso's paintings, Shahn's painting resembles the *tableaux vivants* of *La ricotta*, albeit in a subtler manner, as it lacks the shock of colour that Pasolini assigns to both the *tableaux vivants* and Guttuso's work.[254] Of course, all of the photographic and art images used in the film may be said to create a similar intermedial rupture.[255] However, while Guttuso's sequences recall *La ricotta*'s *tableaux vivants,* through colour and duration of the sequence, *The Photographer's Window* is similar in that, like them, it incorporates several media within it. While the *tableaux vivants* represent the incorporation of painting and theatre into film, Pasolini's incorporation of Shahn's relatively unassuming work, incorporates both photography and painting into one filmic image.

Viano describes *La ricotta, La rabbia* and Pasolini's documentary on Italian sexual mores, *Comizi d'amore,* all made in the same year, as being, despite their formal differences, investigations of "cinema's potential for unmasking" (1993, 101). While the critical focus on *La rabbia* has centred on the

[254] A further crossover between the two films occurs in Pasolini's rather ambiguous insertion of Pontormo's *Deposition* (1523–25) in the middle of footage of earth as seen from a Russian cosmonaut's rocket.Visually, this sequence is similar to the nuclear testing images, but the tone of the narration is optimistic, viewing space travel as a positive, inspiring development—an upward movement, both literally and metaphorically, which the inclusion of Pontormo's work appears to echo.

[255] An earlier sequence of paintings in relation to the popularity of jazz music also depicts Shahn's paintings of musicians, along with an image by George Grosz. A second work by Shahn also appears in the Monroe sequence: *East 12th Street* (1927). Other art works included are several drawings by Jean Fautrier, a painting by Georges Braques, and one by Jackson Pollock. This latter group is used, however, to indicate Pasolini's disdain for abstraction and how abstract art is representative of the decline of culture.

controversy surrounding its production and the opposing political ideologies of Pasolini and Guareschi, one must also acknowledge Pasolini's originally released contribution as an intensely intermedial investigation of the image, in which the "poetics of the body" dominates, whether in the form of a close-up of a laughing Marilyn Monroe in a photographer's studio, a lynching victim in Budapest, or the grainy image of a young Algerian freedom fighter (Vighi 2002, 500). This emphasis on the human figure is underpinned by a general martyrology that is specifically visualised in terms of Passion iconography mediated and layered through the agency of the art-historical. In the following section, I will examine a similar process that occurs in Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

4.3 *Histoire(s) du cinéma:* Imaging suffering and the sacred

Apart from being the only non-fiction films discussed in this thesis, *La rabbia* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* are also unique in their direct association of Passion iconography to the atrocities of the twentieth century. In these films, the documentation of suffering through photography and film (and painting, in the case of Renato Guttuso in *La rabbia*), serves as a visual echo of art-historical representations of the Passion and of the work of artists such as Goya, who have also used the Passion of Christ as a visual reference for barbarous acts committed during wartime. I shall argue that art, whether in its painted or filmic form, becomes the means through which understanding of these atrocities is sought, rather than through religion or the figure of a Christian God.

Godard began work on *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in the mid-1980s. It would take more than ten years to complete, eventually comprising four chapters, each composed of two parts.[256] The first chapter, commissioned by French television channel Canal+, was shown simultaneously on five European channels in 1988; the following chapters were first screened at film festivals. The entire series was then released as a box set of four video cassettes and subsequently in DVD

[256] The seeds of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* were sown in the form of a series of lectures given in Canada, at the Montreal Film School in 1977, a project Godard had inherited after the death of Henri Langlois, creator of the *Cinémathèque Française* and Godard's original collaborator on a history of film project. Some of the lectures were presented in the book *Introduction to a true history of cinema* (1980), in which, as Jean-Louis Leutrat cites, Godard asserts that a "true history of cinema...[will] be made of pictures and sounds, not of illustrated texts", which Leutrat interprets as an audio-visual project in which the "medium must be the same as its object" (1986, 38).

format with English subtitles. The soundtrack was made available separately on CD and the various images from the chapters, together with the text, were also released in book form.

While Pasolini had at his disposal one archive newsreel source to which he added photographic stills, reproductions of artworks, newspaper clippings and some further footage of events in the Soviet Union, Algeria and Russia, Godard's visual compilation is a dizzying compendium of the archive of twentieth-century film. In addition, he incorporates photographs, paintings, intertitles (an element that is absent from *La rabbia*), books and sculpture, with an audio accompaniment that borrows Pasolini's idea of a poetic narration married to various voices, eclectic musical themes and sound effects, and multiplies it to the point that the dense visual and audio layering becomes a kind of symphony in which the different elements form a synergistic whole.[257] Notwithstanding the contrast in resources and technology, a marked similarity exists in the approach that both directors adopt in linking victims of war atrocities to the Christological narrative and, in doing so, referencing similar strategies in art. In the case of *La rabbia*, Renato Guttuso's paintings and their many art-historical influences mediate Pasolini's connection to art history, Godard, however, directly references many of the painters that he has cited in previous films due to their pre-cinematic approach to painting: artists such as Manet, Delacroix, Rembrandt, and Goya. Here, I shall examine Godard's connection in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* of the art-historical Passion image to lens-based media images of the twentieth century that equate to the horror of the crucified body. I will reference *La rabbia* as a much earlier example of this filmic approach, while acknowledging Godard's resolute film-centric focus and his equation of cinema to Christianity, which contrasts with Pasolini's less markedly cinephilic approach, in which cinema serves as a linguistic device that facilitates the creation of his epic-mythical view of the world rather than as an object for consideration in itself.[258]

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[257] With regard to identifying the myriad of visual, literary and aural references in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, I should acknowledge from the outset that Celine Scemama's "*La Partition des Histoire(s) du cinéma du Jean-Luc Godard*" (available online at: http://cri-image.univ-paris1.fr/celine/celinegodard.html) has proved an invaluable resource.

[258] Here, I speak purely in relation to filmmaking, as obviously Pasolini engaged extensively with the subject of cinema in his writings. However, as Bertolucci comments, "[Pasolini] was not a cinéphile, he knew very few films", which is in marked contrast to Godard's voracious appetite for cinema as a young man frequenting Henri Langlois's double bills at the *Cinemathèque* and the vast knowledge of film he displays in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (quoted in Gerard 2000, 181).

Of Pasolini's work, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* includes clips from *Teorema*, *Saló o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (*Salo, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, 1975), *Uccellacci e uccellini* (1966), and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, the use of which I discuss in greater detail below. One notices, however, looking at a filmography of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, that the filmmaker most extensively represented throughout the series is Godard himself; thus, the majority of his films considered in earlier chapters appear, including *Passion, Scénario du film Passion, Je vous salue Marie* (albeit only landscape shots; Anne-Marie Miéville's accompanying film *Le livre de Marie* (1984) is, however, included), *Nouvelle vague* and *Hélas pour moi*.[259] The "game of hands" sequences in *Nouvelle vague* are reprised (Nancy 2008a, 31–32), particularly in regard to the work of film editing; however, Godard's recycling of these latter two films is most potent in 4(b), in which he redeploys two scenes already discussed in the previous chapter, but mixes voice and image from both to striking effect. First we see an image of the Donnadieu's house in *Hélas pour moi*, then we hear Rachel's voice, with an echo effect added, asking twice: "So now it's morning?". We then hear Simon/God's voice, as the image changes to the beginning of the long tracking shot in *Nouvelle vague* with Elena looking out into the darkness from the interior of the villa, and the subsequent frames where the camera slowly moves from room to room.[260] Following this is Depardieu's monologue from *Hélas pour moi* on dark matter, also with echo effect, over still images from early film including *Faust* (Murnau, 1926)*, Vampyr* (Dreyer, 1932) and *Nana* (Renoir, 1926).[261] The sequence finishes with two shots of the lower half of Rachel's body taken from *Hélas pour moi*; in one shot her body is only lit by a sparkler; in the other, also in half-light, she is recumbent, touching her pubis, and superimposed over a shot of a sunset over water.[262]

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[259] Godard cites twenty-five of his films of which he is credited as sole director; four films of which he is credited as co-director with Anne-Marie Miéville, and one of which he is credited as co-director with Jean-Paul Gorin.

[260] Alain Delon, however, is excised from the beginning of this shot, as if there were not enough room for both him and Depardieu in the audiovisual montage—one god of French cinema too many.

[261] *Vampyr*'s year of production, 1932, is the same year as Jan Ort formed his theory of dark matter. Depardieu refers to the date in his monologue.

[262] This last shot also appears at the beginning of Godard's short film *De l'origine de XXIe siècle* (*Origins of the 21st century* 2000).

As I have identified, the *Nouvelle vague* shot is reminiscent of Dutch seventeenth-century painting, while the manner in which the camera moves horizontally from room to room resembles the movement of celluloid film across an editing bed. In addition, as discussed previously, Depardieu's monologue has a metacinematic tone, seeming to act as counterpoint to the veneration of light in *Passion* by extolling the presence of the darkness or what cannot be seen. The two scenes, thus conflated, intensify both the art-historical and filmic aspects of each. However, given that this sequence is preceded by a personal meditation spoken by Godard on the attraction of a woman's body (with the caption HISTOIRE(S) DU CINEMA overlaid by the word FATALE), visually supported by still images of Romy Schneider, Brigitte Bardot, Mary Pickford and Marilyn Monroe, among others, finishing with two images of a very melancholy Buster Keaton, cinematic female presence is also heavily underscored.[263] Indeed, the corporeal in general looms large in this extended sequence, in the actresses' still images, but also in Rachel's words to Simon/God: "To love you need a body. Without Simon you don't exist,", stressing the centrality of figuration to Christianity, the sacred (Christian) image and, of course, to Godard's history of cinema.[264]

The work of many of the artists who have thus far underpinned the discussion of the art-historical as related to cinema is also present. An art-historical group that includes Giotto, Masaccio, della Francesca, Delacroix, Manet, Rembrandt, and Goya forms the focus of the relationship of art history to the filmic image, Christianity and the suffering body. Furthermore, Godard incorporates art-historical representations of the Annunciation, the Birth of Christ, the Crucifixion and the Deposition in his meditation on the role of cinema in the twentieth century. He is, however, markedly selective in the depictions of Christ he employs: Botticelli and Fra Angelico for the Annunciation; Grünewald for the birth of Christ and the Crucifixion (in addition to Goya's meta-Crucifixion, *El tres de mayo 1808*), and a Deposition by Rembrandt, to which I should add Manet's *Le Christ mort avec les anges* (*Dead Christ with the Angels*,

[263] The black-and-white photographic study of a pensive Monroe turning away from the camera is a visual evocation of Pasolini's tribute to the actress in *La rabbia.* Like Pasolini, Godard only uses newsreel and photographic stills of Monroe in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

[264] In this regard, Michael Witt observes the "almost wholesale" absence of experimental cinema and avant-garde of any sort in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1999, 333).

1864) and Cézanne's *Le Christ aux limbes* (*Christ in Limbo*, 1867). From a cinematic perspective, Godard incorporates numerous film clips of Joan of Arc, whom he represents in her cinematic incarnations by Dreyer, Bresson and Rossellini.

In both *La rabbia* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the transgressive image of suffering moves from the Christian art-historical to the political in images of Algeria, Cuba, Bosnia, Rwanda and World War II. At the heart of the Passion narrative is the torture and murder of an innocent man, who, according to the tenets of Christianity, chose to become human and to suffer this fate to redeem humanity. Thus the two-thousand-year old image of a suffering Christ finds its reflection in the tortured bodies of Algeria, the corpses of Auschwitz, the appalling acts of genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia; both Pasolini and Godard, highly conscious of art history, retrace these images: Pasolini through Bacon and Guttuso to Pontormo and Rosso Fiorentino, and to Masaccio and della Francesca under the auspices of Longhi. Godard does the same, but through Goya and Manet, Delacroix and Rembrandt, to Grünewald, Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca, under the influence of André Malraux and Élie Faure. It is not a question of determining which of these images are "religious" and which are not, as Miriam Heywood attempts to categorise (2009, 276); I argue that instead they should be viewed as forming a continuum of representation of the suffering body in art history and, in the twentieth century, in photography, film and video. Passion iconography is particularly potent here in that it definitively locates the sacred within the suffering body. Both Pasolini and Godard extend this so that the image of the suffering body becomes sacred; however, Godard goes further again, intimating that cinema in its reverencing of the image equates to Christianity and its emphasis on the image.[265]

In its entirety, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* attempts to conflate, through image and sound, art history, Christian iconography, twentieth-century suffering and its documentation in filmic form, with Godard's personal experience of cinema as cinéphile, critic and filmmaker as focal point. Through the analysis of some of

[265] Douglas Morrey takes an opposing view in this regard: "the image for Godard does not symbolise the resurrection or the sacred, rather it evokes as sacred precisely that which cannot be symbolised, an absence which can never be made present. If Godard's argument deals in an idea of the sacred, it is a sacred that cannot simply be reduced to a Christian concept, even if it is Christian imagery that proves the most convenient stand-in for this sacred for an artist schooled in the Western tradition" (2002, 47).

the less-considered sequences in the eight episodes, I will examine how they represent Godard's visualisation of the intermedial linkage that persists in Western culture, from Renaissance painting—particularly proto-Renaissance painters such as Giotto and Piero della Francesca given that Godard's wont is to look to pioneers of form, Rembrandt, Goya, Manet, and then into early film with Gance, Eisenstein, Murnau, Dreyer. Here, there is perhaps a forking in Godard's interest that tallies with cinema's departure, as he sees it, from the recording of the horrors of the twentieth century. The depictions of the concentration camps are generally photographic stills or newsreel footage, as are those of Bosnia and Rwanda, although Godard also continues to track film's history (at least up as far as the *nouvelle vague,* with notably less examples postdating this period).

The limits of representation as regards both the sacred and suffering pose a consistent challenge to the visual artist, whether painter or filmmaker. The debate regarding these limits experiences its most rigorous test in relation to the Holocaust and, particularly, the concentration camps. Beyond the question of the legitimacy of representing the irrepresentable is a further question that addresses the validity of imposing Christian iconography on what was an episode of immeasurable devastation for Jewish people.[266] *Histoire(s) du cinéma* with its highly legible connection of Christian art-historical imagery to the visual archive, such as it is, of the Holocaust has inevitably been drawn into that debate within film, media and memory studies. Indeed, this particular aspect of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has been examined so thoroughly from a range of different viewpoints that I do not intend to add to what is already a dizzying amount of research in this respect. Georges Didi-Huberman's fractious debate with Gérard Wajcman regarding the capacity of the image to represent the true horror of the Holocaust, as outlined by Huberman (2008), has led to vigorous analysis within film studies of Godard's linking of cinema's failure to represent the reality of the Holocaust with the possibility of resurrection and redemption.[267] The *Noli me tangere*/*A*

[266] See, for example, Amishai-Maisels (1988).

[267] Originally published as *Images malgré tous* (2003), the focus of the book is four photographs taken in Auschwitz by concentration camp prisoners and smuggled out. The first chapter of the book was originally published in 2001 in the catalogue for an exhibition entitled *Mémoire des camps.* The following chapters extend the discussion in the wake of a "violent polemic" in the form of two articles published in the journal *Les Temps Moderne* by Gérard Wajcman and Elisabeth Pagnoux refuting the validity of the photographs and Didi-Huberman's analysis of them (2003, 51).

Place in the Sun sequence, discussed previously in relation to *Vivre sa vie* and in which Godard most specifically draws this analogy, has particularly been the subject of a significant amount of analysis in this respect, perhaps to the exclusion of other sequences within the essay film that, while not pointing so directly to cinema's failure in response to the Holocaust, certainly highlight the articulation that Godard forms between film, human suffering in its most extreme incarnation, and the Christian art-historical image.[268] Here, while acknowledging the debate that specifically centres around Didi-Huberman's defence of Godard's use of a Christian resurrection motif and Rancière's uneasiness in the same respect, I will instead consider the Holocaust imagery that Godard employs in relation to the themes of the thesis using ideas put forward by Nancy in his essay "Forbidden Representation" (2005).[269]

Similarly to Didi-Huberman, Nancy refutes the idea of the concentration camps as being that which cannot be represented, suggesting that the two different explanations for the Holocaust's irrepresentability contradict each other: the first being that it is not possible and the second that it is not permitted. As support for his argument, he cites Goya's *Disasters of war* as an example of depictions of war-related atrocities that are viewed as acceptable representations.

Nancy's central tenet is that Nazism promoted the cult of the Aryan figure as "the presentation of man regenerated as super-man", a regime that he calls "super-representation" (2008, 38). This Aryan body is the presence of an idea without remainder, which corresponds to the western idea of the idol. Thus, Nancy argues, this super-representation does not allow any remainder and, as such, all that is not Aryan is non-representation and therefore must be annihilated. This was the purpose of the concentration camps: to form a "stage on which super-representation plays out the spectacle of the annihilation...of non-representation" (40). Nancy observes, most relevantly to Godard's images of other genocides such as in Bosnia and Rwanda, that "in no way does this render other camps and other genocides of secondary importance; rather it opens to discernment that which invokes an identical or comparable logic elsewhere" (41).

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[268] See Rancière (2002), Saxton (2004), Williams (2000), Wright (2000), Morrey (2005), Heywood (2009).

[269] Originally published in French in 2001 as *L'art et la mémoire des camps—Répresenter/Exterminer* (Ed. J.-L. Nancy. Paris: Seuil).

Godard directly reflects Nancy's contention that the Nazis aimed, as part of the annihilation of "non-representation", to destroy images of annihilation with the following caption that appears in 1(a): "forgetting extermination is part of extermination". These words appear within a sequence shortly before the *Noli me tangere*/*A Place in the Sun* montage in 1(a), a sequence that, I contend, is of equal potency as regards the association of sacred, suffering, art history and cinema as the subsequent, more analysed one. Also, leading in, as it does, to the latter sequence, it provides an elegant example of how, as Miriam Heywood outlines, "Godard's montage works against the Nazi policy of extermination (*Vernichtung*) by allowing the archival images that do exist to communicate with other images (be they painted, photographic or filmic) so that the horrors of the Holocaust might temporarily be exposed" (2009, 273).

The end of 1(a) addresses World War II in a chronological order, with the war years appearing in print on screen. The beginning of this sequence shows slow-motion footage of the shadow of a fighter plane (a meta-cinematic projection) that in subsequent frames progresses to similarly slowed footage of bombs dropping.[270] As in *La rabbia*'s slow-motion images of the explosions following the testing of nuclear devices in the desert, these images possess their own sinister beauty, which Godard, like Pasolini, identifies and highlights through the slowing down of the images, as if to suggest that the image cannot be blamed for its deadly import.[271] There then follows an intertitle that reads ECCE HOMO (as used in *Nouvelle vague*, but here equating the human suffering in World War II with that of Christ's) and, shortly after, a reproduction of *La detención de Cristo* (*The Arrest of Christ*, 1798) by Goya, over which a caption reads: "War has broken out".[272] Simultaneously, the narrating voice expounds, citing by name Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (*Rome Open City*, 1945), that cinema is not about an event, but a vision; given that it is Goya's painting that is depicted rather than the film, we assume that Goya's expressionistic interpretation of the commencement of Christ's Passion (echoed, by implication, in the beginning of World War II) is representative of a pre-cinematic version of

[270] The narrating voice opines: "here's what the news can teach us", recalling Pasolini's manipulation of the "Mondo Libero" newsreels for his own purposes.
[271] The similarity extends to the affective music used as soundtrack, here Gregorian chant and, in *La rabbia*, Albinoni's *Adagio in G minor*.
[272] Goya painted two versions of this; the first, completed ten years earlier, was in a far more conventional style than this expressionistic later version.

this vision.[273] The sequence continues with a painting by Witold Wojtkiewicz (1879-1909), *Chrystus i dzieci* (*Christ and Children*, 1908), over which the narrator's voice says, "because the screen is the same canvas as the Samaritan's shirt". Shortly after, a detail of Goya's *Saturno devorando a su hijo* (*Saturn devouring his son,* c. 1820), one of the artist's "Black Paintings" series, is shown over footage of young men in civilian clothes at war, followed by Goya's *El tres de mayo 1808*, so familiar from *Passion.*[274]



Fig. 86. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Goya's *Arrest of Christ* (1798)

The visual intensity and density of this art-historical sequence is sustained by cutting from Goya's painting to a detail of Christ's body being taken from the cross in Rembrandt's etching *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* .[275] This is followed by an alternating montage of Paolo Uccello's *San Giorgio e il drago* (*St. George and the Dragon*, c.1470) and footage from André Malraux's film *L'éspoir* (1945), based on his experiences fighting in the Spanish civil war. A

[273] Williams asserts that *Rome Open City*, made in adverse conditions outside the studio system, in what Godard considers as an act of resistance to American cinema, "allowed cinema in some way to redeem itself after its abject failure to record the Holocaust" (2000, 128). He also refers to Godard's contention that only a Christian country like Italy could retrieve its identity so successfully since only Christianity is so directly concerned with images. Williams equates this to a belief that a new cinematic movement must "necessarily enact a major transformation according to the narrative of the Passion the miraculous process whereby God incarnates himself through Christ, who through His Passion (the Crucifixion and Resurrection) restores the visible and the fallen image of Man." hence giving rise to the Paulinian aphorism "the image will come at the time of the resurrection" (2000, 128).

[274] At several points in this sequence, other images are interspersed between the ones I mention; however, given the sheer volume of images that Godard incorporates into this and many other sequences, it becomes impossible to mention each one individually; thus, I only list the salient ones here.

[275] Godard's equation of Rembrandt to cinema in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has already been mentioned in the previous chapter.

photograph of Malraux, taken outdoors, possibly while fighting in the civil war in Spain is also shown. Malraux, as in a subsequent clip of *L'éspoir* in 3(b), is figured as, simultaneously, art historian, freedom fighter and filmmaker, encapsulating several of the various elements that characterise *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* A photograph of Ingrid Bergman in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Sam Wood, 1943) is included in this sequence, recalling the earlier citation of *Roma città aperta* by Bergman's husband, Rossellini. Here, over Malraux's photograph, Godard asserts that to forget extermination is part of extermination, as if to justify, a priori*,* his visual analysis of the camps. Shortly afterwards, just before the *Noli me tangere*/*A Place in the Sun* sequence, Rembrandt is referenced again in a reproduction of a self-portrait drawing, as is Goya in the visual citation of another *Disasters of War* plate and in the voiceover, linking Valentin Feldman, a young French philosopher tortured and killed by the Nazis in 1943, whom Godard asserts has been forgotten, to Goya, another "prisoner", that cannot be forgotten.[276] The image shown is a black-and-white photograph of a man and woman being hanged, followed then by a close-up of the male's face (although it is not clear if this is actually Feldman), again recalling similar photographic imagery in *La rabbia*, particularly the Budapest lynchings. This is immediately followed by a detail, almost abstracted, of a hanging victim from one of the *Disasters of War* plates, followed shortly after by a detail of another etching by Goya, *Buen Viaje* (*Bon Voyage*, 1799) from the *Caprichos* series, showing a group of open-mouthed ghouls.[277] Obviously, Godard draws a clear analogy between the images relating to Feldman and the numerous hangings depicted in the *Disasters*; like Nancy, he suggests that the visual representation of obscene violence committed in the name of war has a precedent in Goya. Here, however, we also recall that Godard has previously asserted the supremacy of the redemptive power of art, particularly as regards Goya, over that of religion in *Scénario du film Passion,* when he observes in relation to Isabelle: "God

[276] Douglas Morrey explains Godard's poetic licence by suggesting that Goya's "imprisonment" refers to the isolation he experienced when he went deaf. (2005, 225)

[277] James S. Williams notes the visual association between the gaping open mouths in Goya's *Buen viaje* and the concentration-camp corpses in George Stevens' images of Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, remarking that these are "'horizontal' moments of confluence, contiguity, conjunction and coincidence within the 'vertical' pull of Godard's rhetorical and imaginary manoeuvres", a description which might be quite appropriately applied to the visual linkage contained within the entire essay film (2000, 136).

abandons her, but Goya offers her succour". In the numerous images by Goya in this section and the verbal reference to him, Godard, given that his focus is on both the redemption of cinema and cinema's ability to redeem, intimates that Goya can act as a precursor in this regard. The visual references for this section, particularly Goya as visual documentarist of the inhumanity humans can visit upon each other, are reprised at the beginning of Chapter 3(a) in a section on the war in former Yugoslavia: the redeployed images include black-and-white footage showing the skeletal corpses of concentration-camp prisoners, Goya's *Saturn Devouring His Son* (in rapid alternation with Artemesia Gentileschi's *Giuditta e Oloferne* (*Judith and Holfernes,* 1820–24)), further plates from the *Disasters of War* series, and Edmund, the child from Rossellini's *Germania anno zero* (*Germany Year Zero, 1948*).[278] Here, we recall Nancy's assertion that the concept of super-representation as regards the Nazi concentration camps in World War II does not render other genocides secondary but rather opens up to discernment "that which invokes an identical or comparable logic elsewhere". Godard clearly sees in the atrocities committed in the former Yugoslavia an equivalence to those committed by the Nazis, and, accordingly, applies almost identical visual references to highlight that which invokes "identical or comparable logic".

Within the World-War-II sequence, many of the motifs already discussed in the thesis resurface: the shroud and *vera icona* as symbols of the connection between Christianity and cinema; Goya as a model for the visual documentation of suffering (as has been discussed both in relation to *Passion* and *La rabbia*), Passion iconography; both Goya and Rembrandt as proto-filmmakers; proto-renaissance painting, represented by Paolo Uccello; and the drawing of a relationship between all of the above to the human torment arising out of World War II. Indeed, the *vera icona* provides a solid point of departure from which the treatment of these various themes within *Histoire(s) du cinéma* can be appraised.

Between the two poles of the essentially simple premise of Christ's face imprinted on a white piece of cloth and the functional (analogue) operation of a

[278] Also used is a further deposition image, *Pietà* (1837) by Delacroix, a detail of the Temptation of St. Anthony from the Issenheim altarpiece (1512-15), and El Greco's *Expulsión de los mercaderes del templo* (*Christ chasing the merchants from the temple*, 1570); while, in addressing Europe's failure to intervene in the conflict, Godard contrasts these images of violence and trauma with some of Goya's court paintings.

filmic image projected onto a white screen, Godard creates a shape-shifting array of both objects and ideas that promote the notion of cinema as equating to the experience of Christianity, or, as he more pithily asserts, "Christianity as the first film" (2005, 98).[279] Thus, in this short sequence and in later visual echoes of it in 1(a), Godard verbally equates the Samaritan's shirt to the cinema screen, metamorphosing the veil of Veronica, one compassionate helper, into the clothing of another, the Samaritan.[280] The verbal reference to the shirt of the Samaritan is then transposed to Goya's *El tres de mayo 1808* in the form of the white-shirted victim of the firing squad, his arms held out in what, as was discussed previously in relation to *Passion*, Malraux describes as effectively a lay crucifixion. In Goya's image, and in Godard's teasing out of the various elements in the painting in relation to cinema, there is a further parallel in the shooting victim's white shirt reflecting the massive oil lamp that lights the scene, thus again tracing a route back to cinema and its fundamental elements of white light and white screen. This visual and verbal free association acts like a nodal network whereby images or words spread out and form interconnections not only with adjoining images or words but with all the audio and visual citations that Godard's holds together in a dynamic tension that becomes a kind of cinematic feat of engineering.[281]



Fig. 87. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Witold Wojtkiewicz, *Christ and Children* (1908)

[279] "In relation to painting and photography, Christianity made such a fuss about image, compared to other civilizations, which saw the question of whether to paint the Buddha as neither here nor there..." (Godard in Godard and Ishaghpour 2005, 100).
[280] The later clip of two bodies laid out on the ground being covered by a white sheet with the caption "kept in his folds" is particularly resonant.
[281] Jacques Aumont describes citation as the "poetic engine of Godard's cinema" (1999, 61)

In his constant metamorphosing of the ordinary fabric rendered extraordinary by contact with the divine and the reception of the sacred image, Godard is remaining remarkably true to the history of the *vera icona* in that it takes various forms, the overriding characteristic of all these forms being that an image of Christ is miraculously transferred to the cloth without any manual intervention, save for the cloth being put in contact with the face of Christ (*acheiropoieton*). Thus, examples of *acheiropoieta* are the Turin Shroud, believed to be the white sheet in which Christ was wrapped when he was taken from the cross and placed in the tomb, and the veil with which Veronica is believed to have wiped Christ's face on the *via dolorosa*. A further example of an *acheiropoieton* is the *Mandylion* or Image of Edessa, an image of Christ believed, according to legend, to have been obtained when a painter was sent from the Syrian town of Edessa by King Agbar to paint a portrait of Christ that would cure the king of leprosy. However, the painter was too dazzled by Christ's glory to execute the work; Christ seeing his predicament, washed his face in water and then dried it on a cloth, which became imprinted with the image of his face. He gave this cloth to the painter, who brought it to the king, following which his leprosy was cured and his kingdom embraced Christianity. This *acheiropoietic* version is particularly striking in its depiction of a sacred image as having a curative potential, given that Godard uses the analogy of screen as *acheiropoieton* in the section that addresses itself specifically to World War II and cinema's failure in the face of the Holocaust.

The link between *acheiropoietic* images and the process of analogue photographic (and filmic) reproduction is not original to Godard. The striking image of Christ's face on the Turin Shroud first transpired in 1898 when a photographer, Secondo Pia, was permitted to photograph the cloth.[282] The reverse side of his photographic plate revealed a negative image that clearly depicted the face of a man, which was much less legible on the original sepia-coloured cloth. Thus, in addition to the similarities in relation to transference of the image (the photographic image also appearing as if by a miracle), mechanical

[282] See Dudley Andrew (2011, 35–37), for an account of the photographic nature of the Turin Shroud from a Bazinian perspective, which Andrew sees as leading to the work of Nancy and Marie-José Mondzain, rather than the more conventional connection of Bazin to Deleuze and Derrida.

reproduction also had a role to play in the uncovering of this particular *acheiropoietic* image.[283]

The absent presence created by the suggestion in the material of the *acheiropoieton* of a being once present, now gone, evokes both Barthes's *eidos* of photography and Bazin's idea of the embalming nature of photography (and film, which Bazin envisaged as the achievement of photographic objectivity in time (2004, 14)). In addition, however, it coincides with Godard own coded deployment of Passion iconography, in which allusion is made to the central image of the Crucifixion and the cross, but the image itself remains resolutely absent. This is also true in his citation of a detail from Rembrandt's *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight,* which cuts out most of the etching's narrative, most particularly the cross, leaving only the body of Christ in the arms of the figure that holds him and the shroud, unravelled behind his body, which provides the principal light source in the image.[284]

Throughout his life, Rembrandt made etchings and paintings of the Passion. The Deposition was a particularly recurrent theme, often with the same figures, dressed in the same clothes, which confers a similar quality to a photograph or film still. This sensation is enhanced by the cinematic lighting of these images: with torch light as in the version discussed here, or in other cases, lit with a shaft of light from above, in which the central group is highlighted in markedly chiaroscuro tones.[285] In all of them the shroud depicted behind Christ's body reflects the light, so that Christ's body seems projected onto the white material. This recalls Godard's commentary in *Scénario du film Passion*, "the white screen like Veronica's handkerchief, Christ's body like the body of the film". Indeed, in relation to art history, the Christological, and creation of the image, the sequence under consideration seems to reiterate the concerns of both

[283] A further fertile area of research would be the parallel theme of hand and eye in Godard's essay film: the hand is a recurring visual motif throughout the various episodes, whether figured using details of paintings, or in film clips; the eye also figures prominently. Many of the texts cited include references to hand or eye, such as Denis de Rougemont's "Penser avec les mains" (1936) recited over the first shot of Elena and Roger's hands almost touching from *Nouvelle vague.* Referencing these two sites of the body, Godard appears to be separating the two cinematic processes of filming and editing, linking the first to the eye and the second to the hand.

[284] I will return to Godard's excision of the cross in art-historical imagery of the Passion later in the chapter in relation to Grünewald's Issenheim altarpiece.

[285] Rembrandt, in his turn, was influenced in the composition of his painting by Peter Paul Rubens' *Descent from the Cross* (1612-1614).

Passion and *Scénario du film Passion*, albeit now abstracted from any fictional narrative, the focus being resolutely on the "true image" of cinema.



Fig. 88. *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Detail of Rembrandt's *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight* (1654)

There is a further art-historical interweaving to be pointed out here, one unwittingly made on Godard's part, but nevertheless unifying in terms of the Deposition works discussed within the thesis. Along with the Shroud, a common element to almost all of the Deposition's discussed here—and not necessarily common to other Deposition images—is the Tau cross, first discussed in relation to Rosso Fiorentino and Francis Bacon, then revisited in relation to Renato Guttuso (who was influenced by Rembrandt's Crucifixion and Deposition images). Pontormo's Deposition does not show the cross at all, although the figures in the composition are arranged in a cruciform shape. In "Visitation: Of Christian Painting" Nancy asserts that, in Pontormo's *Visitation* painting, the religious is deliberately subordinated to art, with the two figures holding bread and wine only appearing as tiny shadowy figures in the far recesses of the painting, in what Nancy reads as "a gesture...[of] rare audacity towards the religion whose resources it is manipulating,...a remarkable gesture of turning away from the religious" (2005, 116).[286] If we read Pontormo's *Deposition* and its lack of a symbolic cross similarly, we see in the painting, which has been already so closely allied to Pasolini in *La ricotta*, a prefiguring of Godard's

[286] Nancy ponders "how many gestures of this kind are there in religious painting? One is tempted to say that there is, doubtless, nothing other than that, if only for the simple reason that it is precisely art, and not religion", which reflects one of the core premises of my thesis insofar as Pasolini and Godard are concerned (2005, n. 13, 155).

intentions as regards the use of Passion iconography that speaks directly to art history rather than to any religious impulse.

Returning to the section in 1(a) of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* that initiated this analysis, further connections can be drawn. Following shortly after the Malraux sequence, Godard juxtaposes scenes from Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*, 1939) with images of emaciated prisoners in the concentration camps. The scenes from Renoir's film depict its bourgeois characters dressed in evening attire engaging in banal social activities (gathered around a pianola playing; watching figures in a charade, one of whom is dressed as the Grim Reaper and chases the other guests). The inanity of these activities could not be further removed from the alternating concentration-camp images. We recall Pasolini's similar images in *La rabbia* of the Italian bourgeoisie socialising at grand occasions juxtaposed, albeit not in such intensely edited format, with images of dead bodies in Algeria. Further evoking *La rabbia*, Godard claims: "What there is of cinema in wartime newsreels says nothing. It does not judge. No close-ups, suffering is not a star; nor the burned church or the bombed-out countryside". Godard, here, rectifies this lack of focus on suffering by both prioritising it, whether by juxtaposition with illustrations of the banality of life in the Western (bourgeois) world, or by layering graphic image upon image of tortured or executed bodies. Likewise, Pasolini faced with what he considered to be the "banality and squalor" of the "Mondo Libero" archive and its depressing conservatism felt obliged to insert images of suffering from Algeria and Cuba to reinforce his outrage at world events, often in the form of photographic portraits, either found or created by cropping details of faces from larger-format stills (quoted in Viano 1993, 113). The marked leaning both display towards portraiture in their films, as discussed in relation to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in Pasolini's case and *Vivre sa vie* in Godard's, translate in their respective essay films into a persistent prioritising of the anonymous faces belonging to the victims of the horrors of the twentieth century.

Godard returns to Malraux, his art-historical touchstone, to establish the responsibility inherited by cinema from painting to record the real: "it is because this time alone, the only veritable popular art form rejoins painting, that is: art;

that is: what is reborn from what was burned".[287] The relevance of these words gradually becomes apparent over the final section of 1(a). Among the images that follow this quotation is the Virgin and Child panel from Grünewald's Issenheim altarpiece (1506-1515), set against footage of an orchestra of prisoners performing in their striped outfits in the yard of the concentration camp.[288] One might wonder, given the potency of Grünewald's graphic Crucifixion image from the same altarpiece and the subject he is addressing, why Godard does not show Grünewald's image of Christ's death, instead of the joyous image of his birth (although the narrative arc between the two is so familiar that one inevitably evokes the other). Again as the sequence progresses, this becomes clearer. The image of the Virgin and Child is followed immediately after by Caravaggio's *Salomè con la testa del Battista* (*Salomé and the Head of St. John the Baptist,* c. 1607). These two images set up a resonant chain of associations and linkages: John the Baptist was Elizabeth's son, born around the same time as Christ. (We recall as discussed in relation to *Je vous salue Marie* that the scene of the Visitation records the encounter between the two pregnant women.) Moreover, John the Baptist also acts as Christ's analogue in that he travelled to spread the news of Christ's coming, thereby paving the way for Christ. Thus, Godard presents Christ's birth and John the Baptist's death, suggesting the absent Crucifixion through these two visual markers. This is indicative of Godard's work evoking Passion iconography, in that Crucifixion images and particularly the cross are largely absent from these films, including *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, as we have seen earlier in relation to Rembrandt's *Descent from the Cross by Torchlight.* While there are several details of Christ's face taken from art-historical images of the Passion by artists such as Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca, the cross is notably not included in any of these. Likewise, Godard visually cites the Issenheim altarpiece several times in his essay film, but never

[287] Although Godard uses this aphorism in both *Scénario du film Passion* (1982) and more than once in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–1998), he is as usual employing some poetic licence in his citation. The original quote by Malraux is as follows: "For genius is inseparable from that which gives it birth as is a conflagration from that which it consumes" (1953, 146).

[288] In the painting, Mary is depicted with flowing locks of red hair, not unlike Elena Giordano in *Nouvelle vague*, Rachel Donnadieu in *Hélas pour moi*, and, of course, as discussed previously, the Magdalene, who is referenced shortly after in this sequence in Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (although not with red hair in this case).

refers to the Crucifixion panel.[289] Furthermore, and contrary to conventional Passion iconography, John the Baptist appears at the foot of the cross in the Issenheim altarpiece. Godard uses the figure of the saint and his pointing arm at various stages in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* but in this case he eschews the companion panel to Grünewald's *Virgin and Child* choosing instead Caravaggio's grisly image of John the Baptist's death.[290] This returns us to Metz's previously quoted description of cinema as film being "made present in the mode of absence": the most fundamental visual elements of Christian worship are lacking, being similarly present only by their absence. Furthermore, in excising the specifically religious imagery from the painting, the focus turns undilutedly to the figure, within which, for Godard, the sacred resides.



Fig. 89. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Grünewald. *Virgin and Child* (1506–1515)



Fig. 90. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Detail of Caravaggio's *Salomé and the Head of St. John the Baptist* (c.1607)

[289] A possible explanation is that the cross itself is too overtly religious, whereas, as I stress, neither Godard nor Pasolini express interest in religion as such, but rather the sacred as imaged in the canon of Western art, particularly in relation to the human figure.
[290] Gospel chronology suggests that John the Baptist died prior to the Crucifixion.

After the *Noli me tangere*/*A Place in the Sun* sequence, Godard extends the associations he so strikingly draws throughout this section to their logical conclusion. Returning to Rossellini, he includes the final scene from *Germania anno zero*, in which the young protagonist Edmund (Edmund Moeschke) jumps to his death from a bombed-out building. Almost the entire clip is shown superimposed onto a still of Giulietta Masina, in which the actress looks pensive and concerned. In this regard, we remember Godard's instruction to Myriem Roussel to think not only of Michelangelo's *Pietà* in her portrayal of Marie in *Je vous salue Marie*, but also to think of Giulietta Masina in *La strada*, commenting that he felt there was a playful side to the Virgin similar to that which Masina possessed. Consequently, the montage presents, within the parameters of Italian cinema, a Virgin Mary and a son who sacrifices himself, thus creating a meta-representational *Pietà* in which the cinematic substitutes the art historical, bringing back into focus the Malrucian assertion that "art is born from what it consumes" and Godard's earlier comment that "this time alone...the only veritable popular art form rejoins painting". Godard appears to equate Edmund's death with Christ's sacrifice, intimating that Rossellini's film in its sacrificing of Edmund offers redemption to cinema, in the same way that the art historical has, over the centuries, recorded Christ's sacrifice. Elsewhere, Godard contended that only a Christian country like Italy could retrieve cinema's identity so successfully [after its failure to record the Holocaust adequately], since only Christianity is so directly concerned with images (quoted in Williams 2000, 128). Godard is somewhat correct in his bold assertion, in that, although Rossellini, like Pasolini, did not profess to being particularly religious, he acknowledged that the Christian environment that surrounded him did exert an influence.[291]

[291] "I am not religious at all. I'm the product of a society that is religious among other things, and I deal with religion as a reality" (quoted in Peter Brunette 1996, 348). This recalls Pasolini's acknowledgement, cited in Chapter One, of Croce's assertion that no Italian can say that he is not a Christian.



Fig. 91. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* A cinematic *Pietà*: Giulietta Masina and Edmund in *Germania anno zero.*

Just as Godard creates a bridge between Grünewald's *Virgin and Child* and the conclusion of the narrative arc of the Passion in the form of Edmund's fatal jump, he effectively begins and ends the extended World-War-II section in 1(b) with Rossellini's films: the caption that proclaims war is broken out coincides with the narrating voice's mention of *Roma città aperta* and, in what is virtually the closing moments of the episode, the final gruesome scene of *Germania anno zero* is presented. In doing so, Godard figures Rossellini as the cinematic successor of Goya, as he successfully rises to the challenge of visually communicating the horrors of war.

Histoire(s) du cinéma is an opportunity for Godard to express the extent to which he reveres his cinematic icons—amongst them filmmakers such as Dreyer, Hitchcock, Bresson and Renoir, and critics and facilitators such as Malraux, Bazin, Faure and Henri Langlois. The latter, curator of the *Cinemathèque Française*, may also be figured as curator in Godard's *musée imaginaire* (or, as he describes his cinematic education, the "*musée réel*"), in that Godard credits Langlois's juxtaposing of contrasting films and film styles in his programming at the *Cinemathèque* as being central to his induction into cinephilia.[292] Thus, in Chapter 3(b), Langlois is rendered as an analogue to the angel in Botticelli's *Annunciation* (1481), in what Jacques Aumont describes as a "*parabole evangelique*" in the *musée réel* sequence (1999, 47). Notwithstanding,

[292] Once again, Godard frames the transformation the *nouvelle vague* group underwent within the *Cinemathèque* in art-historical terms, likening the wonderment they felt to that which Goya and El Greco experienced in Italy before the works of the Renaissance masters.

it is Rossellini to whom Godard attributes the power to redeem cinema, and, extending that, he credits the Italian neorealist movement generally with being the only national cinema worthy of praise during the war years. In his paean to Italian cinema, at the end of Chapter 3(a), when speaking of what made Italian film great, he mentions Rossellini, Fellini, Visconti and Antonioni. Clips are then shown from films by all the aforementioned directors in addition to de Sica, de Santis, and Pasolini.[293] The Pasolini clip from *Teorema* shows Anne Wiazemsky—superimposed over a second clip of a woman dancing with great abandon—spinning around the camera looking directly into it. Wiazemsky's face and her direct gaze dominate. Godard introduces this sequence with the rather poignant intertitle "The man who says 'I don't love her anymore' is still in love".[294] At the end of the sequence, he pauses on Wiazemsky's image only, and then allows the film to run again briefly, showing Wiazemsky turning her face away. One feels the reference here is more a personal one rather than to Pasolini, particularly given that Godard was married to Wiazemsky at the time *Teorema* was filmed and the montage of Italian cinema also features Giulietta Masina (Fellini's wife) and Ingrid Bergman (Rossellini's wife). Is *Teorema* included because Godard transposes himself as an equal of Rossellini and Fellini, rather than Pasolini? The closing moments of 3(a), which follow directly after the tribute to Italian cinema, go some way to supporting this contention.

[293] Conspicuous by his absence is Bernardo Bertolucci; this is most likely attributable to Bertolucci's initial reverence towards Godard, which became notably less devout as his film career developed. See Yosefa Loshitzky (1995) on the deterioration of the master-pupil relationship between Bertolucci and Godard. Bertolucci is an interesting figure as regards Pasolini and Godard; he worked on *Accattone* (Pasolini was friends with his father) and his first film *La commare secca* (*The Grim Reaper*, 1962) mimicked Pasolini's *sacralità tecnica*; however, after seeing Godard's *Á bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960), he aspired to a similar way of filmmaking. Bertolucci recounts that he told Pasolini about Godard's film, but Pasolini was at first dismissive (Bertolucci quoted in Gerard 2000, 182). All three would later contribute to the portmanteau film *Amore e rabbia* (*Love and Anger,* 1969), originally called *Vangelo 70* (*Gospel* 70).

[294] These intertitles are in Latin, as Godard, ruminating about Italian cinema's greatness despite the fact that sound was post-synchronised, reasons that the Latin language ("the language of Virgil, Dante and Leopardi") has been assumed into the images.



Fig. 92. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Anne Wiazemsky in Pasolini's *Teorema*.

The closing sequence in 3(a) commences with a photograph of Rossellini bearing the caption "Things are there, why manipulate them?", a Bazinian assertion of Rossellini's. The following image, captioned with the words "A thought that forms", is a photograph of Pasolini in dark glasses with his finger pressed to his lips, absorbed in "intellectual thought in the agonising process of being formed" (Williams in Temple and Williams 2000, 129). Directly after, the second half of the chiasmus, "A form that thinks", appears over a detail of Piero della Francesca's *Legend of the True Cross* (1452-60), depicting a Pharisee's head. Williams points out that Godard has made it clear elsewhere that, to him, the second, a form that thinks, is far more preferable than the first: a thought that forms (2000, 129).[295] Following this sequence, the closing image of the episode is the talking crow from Pasolini's *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (*Hawks and Sparrows,* 1966), who was voiced by Pasolini in the film and who pours forth unintelligible Marxist ideology to Totò and Ninetto, the two sub-proletarian protagonists.[296] This rather disdainful treatment of Pasolini, which contrasts markedly with the reverence shown for Rossellini, is probably rooted in Pasolini and Godard's differing positions in relation to semiotics in the 1960s.[297] For Godard, Pasolini's attempts to impose a semiotic discipline on cinema were too rigid; he described Pasolini, along with Roland Barthes, as "*les flics*" (the cops) to Bernardo

[295] Godard commented to Alain Bergala in an interview that he connects the idea of a "thought that forms" to an attempt to control thought rather than allow spontaneous associations to be formed (1998, 18).
[296] The crow also refers to the days of Rossellini and Brecht as being over.
[297] In 1966 at the Pesaro Film conference in Italy and through Italian magazines in 1971, Godard and Pasolini argued over semiology. Godard was of the opinion that excessive semiology gave rise to norms and codes that smother cinema; Pasolini was opposed to the idea that semiology could take the form of sabotage (See Matthieu Orlean 1998, 83–4).

Bertolucci, highlighting his opposition to Pasolini's semiotics of cinema and his didacticism—somewhat ironic given Godard's own tendency towards the didactic (quoted in Colin MacCabe 2005, 205). This disdain is all the more pointed in that Godard mocks Pasolini with an art-historical reference specific to Pasolini: the head by Piero della Francesca was used by Pasolini as a model for the headgear of the Pharisees in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.[298] Thus, the section that begins in a great swell of nostalgia for Italian film of the 1950s and 1960s ends in a validation of Rossellini's cinema and a criticism of Pasolini's intellectual approach to filmmaking. However, as I shall consider in the following paragraph, this criticism of Pasolini is not supported elsewhere in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

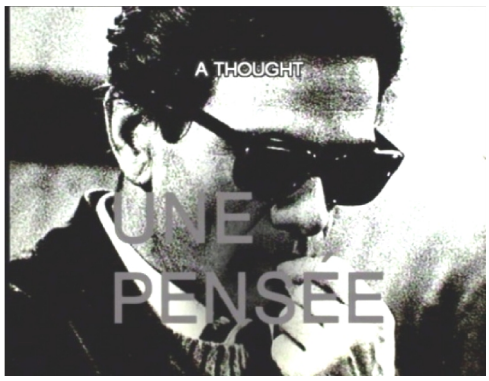


Fig. 93. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Pasolini: "A thought that forms"



Fig. 94. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Detail of Piero della Francesca's *Legend of the True Cross.* (1452–60): "A form that thinks".

[298] I should point out that other commentators read Godard's treatment of Pasolini far more positively; for example, Alessia Ricciardi comments that, "the sequence promotes an idea of the cultural history of Italy based on the metaphor of resurrection and a vision of Pasolini as the Christ-like sacrificial redeemer of modernity" (2003, 190). However, I feel that Williams' focus on the negative intimation in the quotation of Pasolini is more plausible, particularly given Godard's remarks to Bergala cited above.

Given that 3(a) closes on the image of Pasolini's talking Marxist crow with the words "To Be Continued", it is unsurprising that a further citation of Pasolini's films occurs towards the beginning of Chapter 3(b). However, in this case, the reference may be read as being considerably more favourable. In a glorious juxtaposition of Jacques Becker's *Touchez pas au grisbi* (1954) and Pasolini's *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo,* Godard confronts the material with the sacred or, as Aumont describes, "God against Mammon", which Aumont contends translates into "the cinema as art" or "the cinema as industry" (All quotes: 1999, 49. Author's translation).[299] In the sequence, we see Max the Liar (the world-weary Jean Gabin) driving an open top car on a country road at night accompanied by three other men, two with machines guns firing at the car in front, which contains a rival gang that has stolen Max's "*grisbi*" (loot). The scene from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, is the Sermon on the Mount, in which Enqrique Irazoqui as Christ is stern and imposing. In the montage, it appears that Christ is preaching to the rather chaotic group in the car as they shoot at the car they are chasing until it veers off the road, ending up in flames. The final shot in this scene is Max, watching the conflagration, shouting to his companions: "*Aidez-moi*! *Mon dieu, le grisbi*!" ("Help me, for God's sake! The money!"). The extracts from the two films are quite long by *Histoire(s) du cinéma*'s standards and the original soundtrack for both is retained. Thus, we hear Christ's voice with a storm in the background conflated with the sound of machine-gun fire, the car engine, and the agitated voices of Max and his men in a particularly striking example of the original images being allowed to work with the original voices and sounds of the respective films, which serves to heighten the tension between the profane and the sacred. However, this is not to suggest that montage, the most fundamental element of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* does not play any greater part than merely confronting the contrasting themes of the two films. Returning to

[299] Aumont reads the quotation from the Sermon on the mount, "This should be your prayer everyday", as a reference to cinema. He draws an analogy between the ritual of prayer to ensure that one is not remiss at communicating with God to cinematic words such as mise-en-scène, auteur, nouvelle vague—words that ensure the cinéphile does not forget (1999, 49)

one of his original Christian/cinematic references, Godard introduces into the sequence, directly after a clip of Christ from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, a shot of Maria Falconetti in tears in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. Seeing Pasolini's Christ and Dreyer's Joan placed alongside each other in this manner, we are reminded of Myriem Roussel's comment to Gerard Peary, quoted in the previous chapter, that Godard had told her to watch these two films while preparing for *Je vous salue Marie*; thus, the quotation of them here side by side serve as an intensification of what Godard envisages as the cinematic ideal of the sacred.[300]

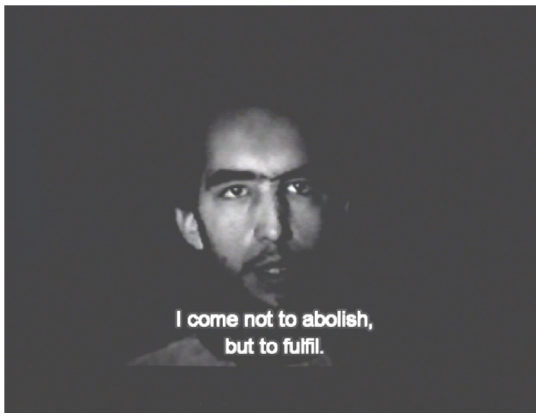


Fig. 95. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Sermon on the mount: *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*



Fig. 96. *Histoire(s) du cinéma. Touchez pas au grisbi*

[300] Bernardo Bertolucci comments that the only film Pasolini liked was Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, thus confirming the film as a cornerstone in the approach of both directors with respect to portraiture and the pictorial in the cinematic depiction of the sacred (Bertolucci in Gerard 2000, 109).

The God/Mammon or cinema as art versus cinema as industry theme that Aumont identifies in this sequence is presented in rather hubristic personal terms, if we consider the captions over these frames read: "there is enough clarity, to clarify—to clarify who are the chosen ones; there is enough obscurity to humiliate them". Initially, this might be understood as a reference to both Dreyer and Pasolini and the difficulties they experienced as filmmakers in their efforts to communicate a highly personal vision. However, as this sequence segues into the following one, with Irazoqui's voice as Christ saying "this should be your prayer every day" as a bridge, the clip shown is the final sequence at the beach from François Truffaut's *Les quatre cent coups* (*The Four Hundred Blows*, 1959), superimposed or alternated with various clips including Rossellini's Joan of Arc at the stake and Scottie saving Madeleine from the river in *Vertigo* (Hitchcock, 1958), one a true martyrdom and the other faked.[301] What follows is a montage of images of Jean-Pierre Léaud (as Antoine Doisnel), Truffaut and Godard, himself, who is alternated in quick succession with newsreel images, with the captions following on from Christ's exhortation, "this then should be your prayer every day": "Equality, Fraternity, Between the Real [image of Godard]—And Fiction [image of Truffaut]. This is followed by the caption: "French Cinema is dying under fake legends". Thus the entire sequence, that begins with Enrique Irazoqui as Christ proclaiming "I came not to abolish but to fulfil" proves, it appears, to be an attack on what Godard sees as Truffaut's selling-out to the commercial interests of cinema.[302] While an analysis of the relationship between Godard and Truffaut lies outside the thematical parameters of the thesis, what is most striking in this extended sequence is that Godard deploys Pasolini's Christ as a device to criticise Truffaut's filmmaking practice, given that at the end of the previous episode Pasolini was the subject of Godard's ire, as regards his theoretical approach to filmmaking. However, as for Pasolini, the extended citation of *Les quatre cent coups* here suggests Godard's admiration for Truffaut's films, at least his early ones, which leads one to conclude that for both

[301] In this sequence, Godard uses the final still of Léaud looking straight into the camera lens, recalling Wiazemsky's direct look into the camera in *Teorema*; particularly as Godard knew Léaud personally and cast him opposite Wiazemsky in *La Chinoise* (1967). The visual engagement with the viewer in both cases is reminiscent of portrait painting.

[302] Christ's words at the beginning of the sequence would thus appear to be employed as a direct reference to Godard's own cinematic practice and his belief that cinema is the closing chapter in the history of art, all viewed in sacral terms (quoted in Daney 1992, 162).

Pasolini and Truffaut, Godard's approach might be tentatively summed up as: "hate the filmmaker, love the film".

In the extended sequence discussed above, images of three cinematic versions of Joan of Arc come into play, taken from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Dreyer, 1928), *Giovanna d'Arco al rogo* (Rossellini, 1954) and *Le procès de Jeanne d'Arc* (Bresson, 1962). The image of the saint burning at the stake is a potent one for Godard, given his multiple citations of Malraux's "art is like fire, born from what it consumes". In the image of Joan of Arc, the figured sacred burns, as if the birth of cinema was being re-enacted on screen. Citations of the three films on Joan of Arc recur through the eight episodes of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* highlighting the centrality of this image (also taking into account that the three directors were all notable influences on Godard). However, strikingly, with the exception of one short clip of Dreyer's *Blade af Satan's Bog* (*Leaves from the Book of Satan*, 1921), the only filmic representation of Christ is that of Enrique Irazoqui in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*.[303] Thus, although Godard may cavil at Pasolini's intellectual approach, it is the latter's interpretation of Christ that he chooses to introduce as the cinematic response to two thousand years of art-historical representation of Christ.[304]

The ambivalence between Godard's presentation of Pasolini as an over-intellectualised director attempting to construct a "cinema of poetry", contrasted with his use of Pasolini's filmic figure of Christ as a touchstone for the sacral conflation of Christianity/cinema is unresolved in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* However, the citation of *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* reoccurs in two later short films: *The Old Place* (Godard and Miéville, 2000), commissioned by MOMA in New York, and *Dans le noir du temps* (Godard, 2002), Godard's contribution to the portmanteau film *Ten Minutes Older: The Cello*; these two further instances of citation not only resolve more fully Godard's view of Pasolini's work, but also

[303] Chapter 1(b) also includes a clip from the scene in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* in which Christ cures the leper, again using the original soundtrack (in French). This clip is superimposed on an image of a cinema screen, suggesting a doubling of the link between cinema and the Christological: cinema-Christ-cinema.

[304] This is particularly worthy of note given that Rossellini also filmed a life of Christ (*Il messia*, 1975); however, although Godard includes clips of Rossellini's films of Joan of Arc and St Francis of Assisi, *Francesco, giullare di Dio* (*The Flowers of St. Francis,* 1950), no reference is made to *Il messia.*

prove to be a natural point of conclusion for the thesis, as will become obvious below.

In *The Old Place,* Godard and Miéville apply Walter Benjamin's concept of constellations to the work of montage. Benjamin first proposed the constellation in *The Arcades Project* (1999. First published as *Passagen-werk* 1982):

> It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural <*bildich*>. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical—that is, not archaic—images. The image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognisability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded. (Benjamin 1999, 463)

Benjamin's description of the constellation encapsulates Godard's project in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* which the several short collage films that he made in the late 1990s and early 2000s basically reprise. Indeed, the concept of the constellation is also appropriate to Pasolini's experiment in *La rabbia,* although one might argue that, as *La rabbia* does not communicate with the historical or mythical past, the constellation might be better applied to his other films discussed here, particularly *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, as I have suggested in my discussion of now-time in that film.

Towards the end of *The Old Place*, Godard and Miéville, on the basis of Benjamin's concept, experiment with visual constellations by juxtaposing art-historical imagery with twentieth-century photography and film; the images they choose have great resonance for the themes of the thesis. In the first images, introduced by the intertitle "Baptism of Montage", two stills of river baptisms are shown, one from Charles Laughton's *The Night of the Hunter* (1955), the other being the long shot of St. John the Baptist baptising followers of Christ in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo.* Other pairs include Giotto's *La fuga in Egitto* (*The*

Flight into Egypt, 1304–06) and an image of a Kosovan refugee on a donkey; Bernini's sculpture *La beata Ludovica Albertoni* (*Death of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni,* 1674) set alongside a black-and-white photograph of a woman in Algeria grieving the death of a family member. The following pair is a detail of Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, showing Adam and Eve's agonised, hollowed-out faces, first together and then separately, juxtaposed with a clip from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* showing the Deposition group running across an open space towards Christ on the cross, the composition and framing both strongly reminiscent of Masaccio's horizontal groupings.



Fig. 97. *The Old Place.* Detail from Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (c.1425)



Fig. 98. *The Old Place.* Deposition group in *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*

In *Dans le noir du temps,* a ten-minute film based around the narrative framework of "The last minutes of.."., the themes considered include love, youth,

memory and courage. Towards the end of the film, a section entitled "The last minutes of the eternal" again shows the same clip from *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* used in *The Old Place.* In this case, however, the clip runs on to show Christ's face as the nails are being hammered into the cross, followed by the striking close-up of his face rotated ninety degrees so that it is horizontal. (In this regard, Pasolini's tendency resembles Godard given that he preferences close-ups during the Crucifixion scene rather than shots that include the cross). Directly after this clip is an intertitle with the words "Vivre sa vie", followed by the familiar image of Anna Karina as Nana in *Vivre sa vie* with tears streaming down her face as she watches *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc,* echoing the placement of Maria Falconetti as Joan of Arc, in tears, alongside Pasolini's Christ in the *Touchez pas au grisbi* sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The intertitle that follows this shot reads "The last minutes of cinema". This strikingly beautiful sequence, enhanced all the more by the use of Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978), sets up a linkage of a cinema of the sacred that extends from Dreyer's 1928 film to *Vivre sa vie* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* to Godard's conscious construction of a constellation between these images in the short film. (Indeed, *Vivre sa vie* already contains a constellation in its juxtaposition of Nana with Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*). Thus, through these two short films from Godard's relatively scant twenty-first century output, we are returned to *Vivre sa vie,* the first of Godard's films discussed in this thesis and, through the reference to Masaccio, Pasolini's "prime pictorial referent", we return, by association, to *Accattone,* the first film by Pasolini discussed here. In these circular constellations there is an element of logic, in that, as I have shown, while both directors specifically set out to establish visual associations to Christian art, whether through direct citation, as in their essay films, or through the use of *tableaux vivants* or more subtle referencing of composition or portraiture, a more spontaneous form of constellation occurs in which the directors, influenced by similar art-historical and cinematic antecedents, tend to echo and extend the art-historical and sacred allusions of the other. This is true to the point that the major work of the thesis has not only been identifying the constellations that Pasolini and Godard each create between art history and cinema in their search for the sacred figural image, but also the identification of the constellations that exist, whether consciously or otherwise, *between* the two filmmakers. In his later film

essays, commencing with *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard facilitates this work through his own investigation of the similarities (and differences) that exist between himself and Pasolini in this regard.

Conclusion

Cinema, since its inception, has been in an inevitable and evolving dialogue with art history, specifically painting, given the two forms' suitability for visual narrative. Equally, for its part, painting has continually interacted with Christianity over the centuries, particularly in relation to the Passion. This interaction has persisted into modernity despite the advent of the post-Christian era, in which religious devotion, insofar as it refers to Christianity, is no longer prevalent. In this regard, Jean Louis Schefer speaks of a "genealogy of images starting at the scene of Golgotha" (1998, 11. Author's translation). This thesis's aim was to establish the place of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean-Luc Godard within this genealogy by investigating how and why both incorporate Christian art and Passion iconography into their respective oeuvres, and, moreover, how these works interact with each other.

At the outset of the first and second chapters, I investigated how *Accattone* and *Vivre sa vie*, respectively, applied the sacred mediated through tropes of Christian art to their young protagonists and their secular narratives. I identified how *Vivre sa vie* acted as an early example of Godard's treatment of the cinematic image as sacred and the transfer of Passion iconography to the female figure. In addition, I discussed how both *Accattone* and *Vivre sa vie* showcased the centrality of Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* in both directors' approach to a cinematic image that conflates the pictorial and the sacred. In Chapter One, I proceeded to analyse how Pasolini's deployment of the sacred through the agency of the art-historical became more complex in *La ricotta* and *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, which, I have argued, redistribute sacrality between the divine and the human. In particular, I considered the role that the citation of Mannerist paintings in *La ricotta* played in Pasolini's rejection of art-historical excess, and his more visceral tendencies in that respect, in order to allow him re-imagine a cinematic figure of Christ in his gospel film that remained relatively free of the weight of art-historical representation. Likewise, in Chapter Two in my consideration of *Passion*, I examined how Godard uses his re-enactments of works by Goya, Delacroix and El Greco to negotiate the divide between the divine and the human in his deconstructed approach to Passion iconography, and, again, observed the transfer of this iconography to the female, particularly in the form of the Virgin and the absent presence of Mary

Magdalene. I also considered Godard's exposition in *Scénario du film Passion* of his creation of the filmic image and how he associates this act of creation with the *acheiropoietic* image, or image made without hands, thereby further emphasising the Christological allusions of *Passion*.

In the third chapter I looked at how the themes of *Passion* transfer to *Je vous salue Marie* and, applying Nancy's thinking on touch and the image, considered the former film in tandem with *Nouvelle vague* and *Hélas pour moi*, which I grouped together as a visitation trilogy, on the basis of their common narrative thread being the arrival of a mysterious visitor and using as support Nancy's essay "Visitation: Of Christian Painting". Specifically, I considered the withdrawal of the sacred and the challenge inherent in figuring it.

In Chapter Four, I sought to draw some firmer connections between the respective works of the two directors. Firstly, I looked at Pasolini's *Teorema* in the light of my analysis of Godard's three films discussed in Chapter Three. I then considered *La rabbia* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and the stylistic overlap inherent in the intermedial use of public images to convey a personal vision through film, leading to the suggestion that *La rabbia* might be considered as a precursor of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, despite its controversial production history and the resulting unsatisfactory outcome for Pasolini. Specifically, I considered how the themes of suffering and martyrdom transposed to the twentieth century are common to both films and are mediated through the agency of Passion iconography. Finally, in my discussion of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, I examined how Pasolini's work, particularly *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, becomes a cinematic reference point for the sacred in Godard's work as he incorporates Pasolini's Christ as a sort of cinematic sacral companion to Dreyer's Joan of Arc. Indeed, I suggest that Pasolini's Christ and Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* become cinematic equivalents to the art-historical reference points that have formed recurrent motifs throughout the thesis: Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*, Mantegna's *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, Goya's *Disasters of War* and *El tres de mayo 1808*, in addition to the *acheiropoietic* image as presented in the form of Veronica's veil.

In the closing section of the thesis, I examined how Godard and Pasolini's films dealing with the sacred and the art-historical form part of Benjaminian constellations that are visually articulated by Godard in his later

essay films, such as *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* but also in shorter, less well-known works such as *Dans le noir du temps* and *The Old Place*. Thus, while Jean-Louis Leutrat suggests that Pasolini "could serve as Godard's echo", it seems more appropriate to suggest the opposite: that it is Godard, in his later work, who comes to echo Pasolini, particularly in regard to his thinking on the relationship between the pictorial and the sacred in film (1992, 31).[305]

Although it might be simplistic to pair films by the two directors, a pattern emerges in which *Accattone* and *Vivre sa vie* both sacrifice their young protagonists, one a pimp the other a prostitute, while visually venerating them through a cinematic portraiture that owes a debt to art history. Next, through their diegetic directors, played respectively by Orson Welles and Jerzy Radziwilowicz*, La ricotta* and *Passion* rid both their non-diegetic directors of a tendency to view the sacred through the art historical in order to enable them to make a film about Christ, on the one hand, and the Virgin Mary, on the other, that present the sacred protagonist in terms of the human, rather than as an icon, while still subtly employing art-historical composition and iconography. Subsequently, *Teorema* and Godard's visitation trilogy, through the narrative device of a mysterious visitor, seek beyond the visible for a sacred image. Lastly, *La rabbia* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* transfer Passion iconography to twentieth-century suffering. While this schema is somewhat reductive, it nevertheless provides a clear indication of the interaction between the work of the two directors.

A predominant theme in the thesis is that of human suffering and how it relates to Passion iconography. The etymology of the word "passion" is from the Latin *passio* meaning suffering or endurance, and this suffering is evident in various guises in the films of both directors, respectively: for Pasolini, in *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma,* and *La ricotta*, it is incarnated in the lives of the marginalised inhabitants of the *borgate*; in *Teorema*, it is the suffering of the

[305] Leutrat explains his observation as follows: "In 1963, 'La Ricotta'...shows a director making a film (a Passion) out of *tableaux vivants* and still lifes. The penitent thief is asked, like the grandfather in *Passion*, to 'say his line'. As for the first shots of the sky in *Passion*, how could they fail to recall the last ones in *Che cosa sono le nuvole?* (a film 'framed' by Velázquez, from *Las Meninas* to *Venus at the Mirror*) and their commentary: 'Oh, searing and magical beauty of creation'" (Leutrat 1992, 31). However, even in the examples that Leutrat offers, it is clear that it is Godard echoing Pasolini rather than vice versa, seeing as all Pasolini's film mentioned predate their Godardian equivalent.

bourgeois in the face of their lack of sacrality; and in *La rabbia*, it is found in the atrocities of the post-War decades. Likewise, in Godard's work, suffering is presented in different guises: Nana's personal *via crucis* in *Vivre sa vie;* the suffering of both the worker and the creative mind in *Passion,* and, in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, as in *La rabbia*, twentieth-century atrocities, particularly genocides such as in World War II, Bosnia and Rwanda. These latter two films transpose Passion iconography into the suffering body of humanity as represented by the oppressed, the tortured, and the dead, recalling Bellour's observation that "there is always a residue of suffering in 'the image itself', in its pure visuality, which one is continually isolating, identifying, and trying to reconstitute" (1992, 227). In this way, both Pasolini and Godard take the transcendent message of the Passion and re-site it within the human body through the agency of art history, in a transimmanence, that is, "an immanence that does not go outside itself in transcending", the result being an image that is more sacred imago of the human body rather than an icon of the divine (Nancy 1996, 35). In his description of the imago, Nancy observes:

> [the imago] weaves, it images absence. It does not represent this absence, it does not evoke it, it does not symbolize it, even though all this is there too. But essentially it presents absence. The absent are not there, are not "in images." But they are imaged: their absence is woven into our presence. The empty place of the absent as a place that is not empty: that is the image. (2005, 67–68)

Similarly to Metz, Nancy suggests that the "framed body of cinema...[is a] mode of occupying this place" of the absent (2005, 68). The absent body, as he states, is not physically present "in images", however, as Angela Dalle Vacche succinctly asserts, "the history of art is *in* film", which is particularly true of the work of Pasolini and Godard (1996, 1. Emphasis in original). Thus, their filmic images interweave the imaged absent body with the art historical, in keeping with their shared conviction that cinema is a natural and worthy inheritor of art-historical culture, thereby absorbing the themes, motifs and styles of earlier art forms into its own unique form, or, in Godard's paraphrased aphorism of Malraux's words: "art is like fire, born of what it consumes". The image that

each of them seeks originates in the Christian-art image, but is redefined in filmic terms and remains consistently true to a cinematic rather than an art-historical vision.

While the human body and the art historical are interwoven in the work of Pasolini and Godard, how is the original Christic body accounted for in a post-Christian context? Bersani and Dutoit, in their analysis of Derek Jarman's film *Caravaggio* (1986), discuss how, through his depiction in art, Christ has become "nothing but centuries of representation" (1999, 48).[306] They reason that, although his appearance is recognisable, it is never repeated in exactly the same way, with the result that "his multiple presences are identical to an unending disappearance"; thus, Christ's exaltation through art effectively becomes his martyrdom by centuries of representation (1999, 48). Referring to Caravaggio's use of well-known models from the streets of Rome as sacred figures in his paintings, as I also discussed in Chapter Three in relation to his painting "The Death of the Virgin", Bersani and Dutoit contend that because the models were recognisable as such, they resisted symbolisation; however, in their reluctance to be "seen through", they make the figure they represent more visible: "it is as if they were proclaiming that the subject on the other side of their represented bodies is nothing but that: *their bodies*" (1999, 48. Emphasis in original). As for Christ, Christian art refers to His body, but the body "has become a ghost in a 'body' of art" in which the original body is disincarnated (1999, 48).

While Bersani and Dutoit do not proceed to a general location of the cinematic image within these centuries of representation, I propose that Pasolini and Godard's respective bodies of work move this process a stage further in that, in using Christian art as their reference point and effectively misplacing the original identity of Christ for a second time, the evangelical message is lost and, in turn, it is the Christian-art image that becomes an absent presence in the filmic image, rendering the figure of Christ a twice-removed absence. Nancy observes that "the movement from the icon to the portrait is exactly that from divine presence, offered in the face of its own absence to a 'desacralised' figure, that is, a figure opened onto the silence of its own absent presence" (2006, 236). Through the characters of Nana and Accattone; the photographic images of

[306] See Jill Murphy (2010) for an analysis of how Jarman substitutes the figures of both Caravaggio and Pasolini in place of Christ in his film.

victims of twentieth-century atrocities; the characters of Emilia in *Teorema* and Isabelle in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and *Passion*, instilled with the sacred in their capacity as workers; the cinematic god-like presences of Alain Delon, Gerard Depardieu, and Terence Stamp; Marilyn Monroe as martyr of twentieth-century popular culture, and, indeed, not omitting the reimagined cinematic presentation of Christ by Pasolini and the Virgin Mary by Godard, the two directors firmly install the Christological image in cinema, while removing the religious message and transferring the residual sacral value to the image itself and to the absent human figure it presents. The two directors' citation of the art-historical image in this process does not imply a tendency to subordinate cinema to art history; rather both cite artists who preference art and the human rather than the divine, recalling Nancy's conjecture as regards Pontormo's *Visitation* that it was possible that the painting dealt with a reality that was "nothing other than painting [which would] constitute a remarkable gesture of turning away from the religious" (2005, 116). Relating this to Bersani and Dutoit's assessment of Caravaggio's painting being only about the bodies of the models (while of course acknowledging that Pontormo and Caravaggio's styles were radically different), we see the kinship that exists between these earlier artists seeking to convey a human truth in the painted image and Pasolini and Godard, who both refer back to art history while seeking a similar truth in the filmic image, again in highly contrasting styles. This genealogical relationship of images that metamorphose in form while maintaining a similar artistic impulse makes it therefore fitting that one of the last films I mention in the thesis is Godard and Mièville's *The Old Place,* given that it is a gallery film that cites and establishes a constellation between the images of Pasolini and Masaccio—another artist who sought to convey a kind of painterly truth in his image; thereby returning the art-historical Christian image to the museum space, but in a radically different format than could have been imagined in a pre-cinematic era.

To conclude, Pasolini and Godard, through their dialogue with artists of earlier eras who sought to advance the presentation of the image through the mediation of Christian narrative, incorporate themselves into a long chain of artists who move pictorial narrative away from religious belief towards a more secular, humanist perspective, while not dispensing with the instantly recognisable tropes of Christian iconography, which are so indicative of visual

storytelling. In doing so, Pasolini and Godard, in their different approaches, and often with contrasting purposes, not only place cinema alongside art history, but open this conversation based on Christian art and Passion iconography to newer art forms such as digital video and installation art in their demonstration of how two art forms can work alongside each other without one compromising the other. By identifying the respective roles that Pasolini and Godard play in the incorporation of Christian art and Passion iconography in film, in addition to elucidating the relevance of art and the sacred in the two directors' work and the common ground that exists between them in this respect, I hope my research has contributed in a small but significant way to the understanding of how, in a post-Christian context, one of the most fundamental elements of visual narrative in Western culture is transposed to cinema via art history.

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Filmography

Films of Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975)

Accattone (1961)

Appunti per un'Orestiade Africana (*Notes towards an African Orestes*, 1970)

Comizi d'amore (1964)

Edipo Re (*Oedipus Rex* 1967)

Il decameron (*The Decameron*, 1971),

Il fiore della mille e una note (*Arabian Nights*, 1972)

Il Vangelo secondo Matteo (*The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 1964)

La rabbia (1963)

La ricotta (1963)

Mamma Roma (1962)

Medea

Porcile (*Pigsty*, 1969)

Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma (*Salò, or the 120 days of Sodom*, 1975)

Sopralluoghi in Palestina per Il Vangelo secondo Matteo (*Location Hunting in Palestine,* 1963–64)

Teorema (*Theorem*, 1968)

Uccellacci e Uccellini (*The Hawks and the Sparrows*, 1966)

Films of Jean-Luc Godard (1930–)

Alphaville (1965)

Dans le noir du temps (2002)

De l'origine du XXIe siècle (*Origins of the 21st Century*, 2000)

Eloge d'amour (2001)

Hélas pour moi (*O Woe is Me*, 1993)

Histoire(s) du cinéma (1988–98)

Je vous salue Marie (*Hail Mary,* 1984)

La Chinoise (1967)

Le Mépris (*Contempt*, 1963)

Nouvelle vague (1990)

Passion (1982)

Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue Marie (1983)

Pierrot Le Fou (1965)

Prénom Carmen (1983)

Sauve qui peut (la vie) (*Slow Motion,* 1979)

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Troisième état du Scénario du Film Passion or Le Travail et L'Amour: Introduction à un Scénario (1982).

Une femme mariée (1964)

Vivre sa vie (*My Life to Live,* 1962)

Weekend (1967)

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A Place in the Sun (George Stephens 1957)

Blade af Satan's Bog (*Leaves from the Book of Satan,* Dreyer 1921),

Cléo de 5 à 7 (Agnès Varda 1961)

Faust (Murnau, 1926)

For Whom the Bell Tolls (Sam Wood, 1943)

Germania anno zero (*Germany Year Zero*, Rossellini 1948)

Giovanna d'Arco al rogo (Rossellini, 1954)

Journal d'un curé de campagne (Diary of a Country Priest Bresson 1950)

L'éspoir (Malraux 1945)

L'intrus (*The Intruder* Denis*,* 2004)

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc (Dreyer 1928)

La strada (*La Strada,* 1954)

Le Camion (*The Truck,* Duras 1977)

Le livre de Marie (Mièville 1984)

Le procès de Jeanne d'Arc (Bresson 1962)

La règle du jeu (Renoir 1939)

Les quatre cent coups (*The Four Hundred Blows*, Truffaut 1959)

Nana (Renoir, 1926)

Pickpocket (Bresson 1959)

Roma città aperta (*Rome, Open City*, Rossellini 1945)

The Night of the Hunter (Laughton 1955)

The Old Place (Godard and Mièville 2000)

Touchez pas au grisbi (Becker 1954)

Vampyr (Dreyer, 1932)

Vertigo (Hitchcock 1958)