

8 *Cinema, body and brain, thought*

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'Give me a body then': this is the formula of philosophical reversal. The body is no longer the obstacle that separates thought from itself, that which it has to overcome to reach thinking. It is on the contrary that which it plunges into or must plunge into, in order to reach the unthought, that is life. Not that the body thinks, but, obstinate and stubborn, it forces us to think, and forces us to think what is concealed from thought, life. Life will no longer be made to appear before the categories of thought; thought will be thrown into the categories of life. The categories of life are precisely the attitudes of the body, its postures. 'We do not even know what a body can do': in its sleep, in its drunkenness, in its efforts and resistances. To think is to learn what a non-thinking body is capable of, its capacity, its postures. It is through the body (and no longer through the intermediary of the body) that cinema forms its alliance with the spirit, with thought. 'Give me a body then' is first to mount the camera on an everyday body. The body is never in the present, it contains the before and the after, tiredness and waiting. Tiredness and waiting, even despair are the attitudes of the body. No one has gone further than Antonioni in this direction. His method: the interior *through* behavior, no longer experience, but 'what remains of past experiences', 'what comes afterwards, when everything has been said', such a method necessarily proceeds via the attitudes or postures of the body.¹ This is a time-image, the series of time. The daily attitude is what puts the before and after into the body, time into the body, the body as a revealer of the deadline. The attitude of the body relates thought to time as to that outside which is infinitely further than the outside world. Perhaps tiredness is the first and last attitude, because it simultaneously contains the before and the after: what Blanchot says is also what Antonioni shows, *not* the drama of communication, but the immense tiredness of the body, the tiredness there is beneath *The Outcry*, and which suggests to thought 'something to incommunicate', the 'unthought', life.

But there is another pole to the body, another cinema-body-thought link. 'To give' a body, to mount a camera on the body, takes on a different sense: it is no longer a matter of following and trailing the everyday body, but of making it pass through a ceremony, of introducing it into a glass cage or a crystal, of imposing a carnival or a masquerade on it which makes it into a grotesque body, but also brings out of it a gracious and glorious body, until at last the disappearance of the visible body is achieved. Carmelo Bene is one of the greatest constructors of crystal-images: the palace in *Notre-Dame des Turcs* floats in the image, or rather it is the whole image which moves or throbs, reflections take on a violent colour, the colours themselves crystallize in *Don Juan*, in the dance of the veils in *Capricci* where the material comes between the dancer and the camera. Eyes haunt the crystal, like the eye in the monstrance, but what we are first allowed to see are the skeletons in *Notre-Dame*, the old men in *Capricci*, the old, decrepit saint in *Salomé*, who exhaust themselves with useless gestures endlessly taken up again, with constantly inhibited and recommenced attitudes, up to the impossible posture (the Christ in *Salomé* who can't manage to crucify himself alone: how could the last hand nail itself?). The ceremony in Bene begins with parody, which affects the sounds as much as the gestures, for gestures are also vocal, and apraxia and aphasia are the two sides of the same posture. But what emerges from the grotesque, what is torn from it, is the gracious body of woman as superior mechanic, whether she dances among the old men, or goes through the stylized attitudes of a secret wish, or becomes fixed in an attitude of ecstasy. Is this not done in order finally to free the third body, that of the 'protagonist', or master of ceremonies, who passes through all the other bodies? It is already his eye which was sliding into the crystal, it is he who communicates with the crystalline setting, as in *Notre-Dame* where the history of the palace becomes an autobiography of the protagonist. It is he who takes up inhibited or incomplete gestures, as in *Notre-Dame* where he is continually missing his own death, a totally bandaged mummy who can no longer give himself an injection, the impossible posture. It is he who must desecrate the gracious body, or use it in some respect, in order finally to acquire the power to disappear, like the poet in *Capricci* who looks for the best position to die in. To disappear is already *Salomé's* obscure desire, when she went away, back turned, towards the moon. But, when the protagonist takes up everything in this way, it is because

he has reached that point of non-desire which now defines the pathetic, the Schopenhaurian point, Hamlet's point in *Un Hamlet de moins*, the point where the visible body disappears. What is freed in non-desire is music and speech, their intertwining in a body which is now only sound, a body of new opera. Even aphasia then becomes the noble and musical language. It is no longer the characters who have a voice, it is the voices, or rather the vocal modes of the protagonist (whisper, breathing, shout, eruc-tation...) which become the sole, true characters in the ceremony in what has become a musical setting: as in the prodigious monologues of Herod Antipas in *Salomé*, which rise from his leprosy-covered body, and which carry out the sound powers of the cinema.² In this undertaking, Carmelo Bene must be the director closest to Artaud. He has the same experience: he 'believes' in cinema, he believes that cinema can bring about a more profound theatricalization than theatre itself, but he only believes this for a short time. He soon thinks that theatre is more capable of renewing itself, and freeing sound powers, than a still limited, over-visual cinema, even if this means that the theatricalization has to include electronic rather than cinematographic aids. None the less he believed in it for a while, the time of a work too soon interrupted, voluntarily interrupted: the capacity that cinema would have to *give* a body, that is, to make it, to bring about its birth and disappearance in a ceremony, in a liturgy. It is perhaps here that we shall be able to grasp a stake in the theatre-cinema relationship.

These two poles, the everyday body and the ceremonial body, are discovered or rediscovered in experimental cinema. The latter is not necessarily more advanced; it can even come afterwards. The difference between experimental cinema and the other cinema is that the former experiments, whilst the other discovers, by virtue of a *different* necessity from that of the filmic process. In experimental cinema, sometimes the process mounts the camera on the everyday body; these are Warhol's famous essays, six and half hours on the man asleep in a fixed shot, three-quarters of an hour on the man eating a mushroom (*Sleep, Eat*).³ Sometimes, on the contrary, this cinema of the body mounts a ceremony, takes on an initiatory and liturgical aspect, and attempts to summon all the metallic and liquid powers of a sacred body, to the point of honour or revulsion, as in the essays of the Vienna school, Brus, Muehl and Nitsch.⁴ But can we talk in terms of opposite poles except in extreme cases which are not

necessarily the most successful? In the best instances, the everyday body might rather be said to lend itself to a ceremony which, perhaps, will never arrive, to prepare itself for a ceremony which, perhaps, will consist of waiting: as in the long preparation of the couple in *Mechanics of Love* by Maas and Moore, or that of the prostitute in *Flesh* by Morrissey and Warhol. By making marginals the characters of its cinema, the underground provided itself with the methods of an everydayness which continually leaked from the preparations for a stereotype ceremony, drugs, prostitution, transvestism. Attitudes and postures pass into this slow, everyday theatricalization of the body, as in *Flesh*, one of the finest of these films, with its fatigues and expectations, but also with the moment of relaxation, the game of three fundamental bodies, man woman, and child.

What is important is less the difference between poles than the passage from one to another, the imperceptible passage of attitudes or postures to 'gest'. It is Brecht who created the notion of gest, making it the essence of theatre, irreducible to the plot or the 'subject': for him, the gest should be social, although he recognizes that there are other kinds of gest.⁵ What we call gest in general is the link or knot of attitudes between themselves, their co-ordination with each other, in so far as they do not depend on a previous story, a pre-existing plot or an action-image. On the contrary, the gest is the development of attitudes themselves, and, as such, carries out a direct theatricalization of bodies, often very discreet, because it takes place independently of any role. The greatness of Cassavetes's work is to have undone the story, plot, or action, but also space, in order to get to attitudes as to categories which put time into the body, as well as thought into life. When Cassavetes says that characters must not come from a story or plot, but that the story should be secreted by the characters, he sums up the requirement of the cinema of bodies: the character is reduced to his own bodily attitudes, and what ought to result is the gest, that is, a 'spectacle', a theatricalization or dramatization which is valid for all plots. *Faces* is constructed on the attitudes of the bodies presented as faces going as far as the grimace, expressing waiting, fatigue, vertigo and depression. And on the basis of the attitudes of blacks, and the attitudes of whites, *Shadows* revealed the social gest which forms around the attitude of the white Negro, put in a position where it is impossible to choose, lonely, on the verge of evanescence. Comolli speaks of a cinema of *revelation*, where the only constraint is that of bodies, and the only

logic that of linkages of attitudes: characters 'are constituted gesture by gesture and word by word, as the film proceeds; they construct themselves, the shooting acting on them like a revelation, each advancement of the film allowing them a new development in their behaviour, their own duration very precisely coinciding with that of the film'.⁶ And, in the succeeding films, the spectacle can pass through a script: the point of this is less to tell a story than to develop and transform bodily attitudes, as in *A Woman under the Influence*: or in *Gloria*, where the abandoned child sticks to the body of the woman who first tries to push it away. In *Love Streams*, there is the brother and sister: the first can only experience his existence in an amassing of female bodies; the other in an amassing of luggage, or of animals which she offers to the brother. How can one exist, personally, if one cannot do so all alone? How can something be made to pass through these packets of body, which are at once both obstacle and means? Every time, space is made up of these excrescences of body, girls, luggage, animals, in search of a 'current' which would pass from one body to the next. But the lonely sister will leave on a dream, and the brother will remain under a hallucination: a hopeless story. As a general rule, Cassavetes keeps only the parts of space connected to bodies; he composes space with disconnected bits solely linked by a gest. This is association of images being replaced by formal linkage of attitudes.

The new wave, in France, has taken this cinema of attitudes and postures (whose model actor would be Jean-Pierre Léaud) a long way. The scenery is often made according to the attitudes of the body that it demands and the degrees of freedom that it allows them, like the flat in *Le mépris* or the bedroom in *Vivre sa vie*, in Godard. Embracing, striking, intertwining and bumping bodies animate major scenes as in *First Name Carmen* again, where the two lovers attempt to grab each other in doors or windows.⁷ Not only do bodies bang into each other, but the camera bangs against the bodies. In *Passion* each body not only has its space, but also its light. The body is sound as well as visible. all the components of the image come together on the body. Daney's formula when he defines *Ici et ailleurs* – restore images to the bodies on which they have been taken – applies to the whole of Godard's cinema and to the new wave. *Ici et ailleurs* does it politically, but the other films have at least a politics of the image, to restore the image to the attitudes and postures of the body. A characteristic image is that of a body leant against a wall, which lets itself go and falls to a

sitting position on the ground in a sliding of postures. Throughout his work, Rivette elaborates a formula where cinema, theatre and theatricality specific to cinema confront each other: *L'amour par terre* is its most perfect expression, that becomes dull as soon as it is presented in a theoretical way, whilst it sets in motion the most supple combinations. The characters are rehearsing a play; but the rehearsal precisely implies that they have not yet achieved the theatrical attitudes which correspond to the roles and to the plot of the play which goes beyond them; on the contrary, they resort to para-theatrical attitudes which they assume in relation to the play, in relation to their role, and each in relation to the others, and these second attitudes are all the purer and more independent for being free from all pre-existing plot, which exists only in the play. These attitudes will thus secrete a gest which is neither real nor imaginary, neither everyday nor ceremonial, but on the boundary between the two, and which will point from this position to the functioning of a truly visionary or hallucinatory sense (the magic sweet in *Celine and Julie Go Boating*, the magician's projections in *L'amour par terre*). It is as if the characters spring to life again on the walls of the theatre, and discover pure attitudes as independent of the theatrical role as they are of a real action, although echoing both of them. One of the finest instances, in Rivette, is *L'amour fou*, when the couple enclosed in a room take up and pass through all the postures, a refuge-posture, an aggressive posture, an amorous posture . . . It is a marvellous demonstration of postures. In this sense, Rivette invents a theatricality of cinema totally distinct from the theatricality of the theatre (even when cinema uses it as a reference).

Godard's solution is different, and seems at first sight simpler: it is, as we have seen, that characters begin to play for themselves, to dance and to mimic for themselves, in a theatricalization which directly extends their everyday attitudes. The character makes a theatre for himself. In *Pierrot le fou* we continually move from the attitude of the body to the theatrical gest which joins the attitudes together and produces further ones, up to the final suicide which absorbs all the others. In Godard, the attitudes of body are the categories of the spirit itself, and the gest is the thread which goes from one category to another. *Les carabiniers* is the Gesture of war. The gest is necessarily social and political, following Brecht's requirements, but it is necessarily something different as well (for Rivette as much as Godard). It is bio-vital, metaphysical and aesthetic.⁸ For Godard, in *Passion*, the postures of the boss, the

female owner, and the female worker, refer to a pictorial or para-pictorial gest. And in *First Name Carmen*, the attitudes of body continually refer to a musical gest which co-ordinates them independently of the plot; which takes them up and subjects to them to a higher linkage, but also frees all their potentialities; the rehearsals of the quartet are not limited to developing and directing the sound qualities of the image, but also the visual qualities, in the sense that the curve of the violinist's arm modifies the movement of the bodies which are embracing. The fact is that, in Godard, sounds and colours are attitudes of the body, that is, categories: they thus find their thread in the aesthetic composition which passes through them, no less than in the social and political organization which underpins them. *First Name Carmen*, from the outset, makes sounds depend on a body which collides with things, and collides with itself, bangs itself on the head. Godard's cinema goes from the attitudes of the body, visual and sound, to the pluri-dimensional, pictorial and musical gest, which constitutes their ceremony, liturgy and aesthetic organization. This was already true of *Slow Motion*, where music constituted the virtual directional thread going from one attitude to another, 'What is that music?', before it is revealed for itself, at the end of the film. The attitude of the body is like a time-image, the one which puts the before and the after in the body, the series of time; but the gest is already a different time-image, the order or organization of time, the simultaneity of its peaks, the coexistence of its sheets. In the passage from one to the other, Godard thus achieves a great complexity. All the more because he may follow the reverse procedure, and begin from a continuous gest initially given, in order to break it up into attitudes or categories: as in the halts on the image in *Slow Motion* (Where does the caress end and the slap begin? Where does the embrace end and the struggle begin?).⁹ There is not only the gest 'between' two attitudes; there is also the sound and the visual in the attitudes and in the gest and 'between' the attitudes and the gest itself, and inversely: as, again, in the visual and sound breaking down of the pornographic postures.

The post-new wave will continually work and invent in these directions: the attitudes and postures of the body, the valorizing of what happens on the ground or in bed, the speed and violence of co-ordination, the ceremony or theatre of cinema which is revealed (Chéreau's *La chair de l'orchidée* and especially his *L'homme blessé* are already very powerful in this respect). Certainly

the cinema of bodies does not proceed without risk: a glorification of marginal characters who make their daily life into an insipid ceremony; a cult of gratuitous violence in the linkage of postures; a cultivation of catatonic, hysterical or simply refuge-attitudes – Godard makes a kind of parody of these at the beginning of *First Name Carmen*. And we end up being tired of all these bodies who slide along the wall and then find themselves squatting on the ground. But since the new wave, every time there was a fine and powerful film, there was a new exploration of the body in it. Starting with *Jeanne Dielman*, Chantal Akerman wants to show 'gestures in their fullness'. Enclosed in the bedroom, the heroine of *Je Tu Il Elle* links involutive refuge- and infantile postures in a mode which is that of waiting, counting the days: a ceremony of anorexia. Chantal Akerman's novelty lies in showing in this way bodily attitudes as the sign of states of body particular to the female character, whilst the men speak for society, the environment, the part which is their due, the piece of history which they bring with them (*Anna's Rendezvous*). But the chain of states of female body is *not* closed: descending from the mother or going back to the mother, it serves as a revelation to men, who now talk about themselves, and on a deeper level to the environment, which now makes itself seen or heard only through the window of a room, or a train, a whole art of sound. In the same place or in space, a woman's body achieves a strange nomadism which makes it cross ages, situations and places (this was Virginia Woolf's secret in literature). The states of the body secrete the slow ceremony which joins together the corresponding attitudes, and develop a female gest which overcomes the history of men and the crisis of the world. It is this gest which reacts on the body giving it a hieratism like an austere theatricalization, or rather a 'stylization'. Whether it is possible to avoid the excess of stylization which tends, in the end, to enclose film and character is the problem that Chantal Akerman herself poses.¹⁰ The gest may become more burlesque, without concealing anything, and pass on to the film a lightness, an irresistible gaiety: already in *Toute une nuit*, but especially in the episode in *Paris vu par . . . 20 ans après*, whose title itself stimulates the whole of Akerman's work, 'I am hungry, I am cold', the states of body have become burlesque, sources of a ballad.

Female authors, female directors, do not owe their importance to a militant feminism. What is more important is the way they have produced innovations in this cinema of bodies, as if women

had to conquer the source of their own attitudes and the temporality which corresponds to them as individual or common gest (*Cleo from 5 to 7*, *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* by Agnès Varda, *Mon coeur est rouge* by Michèle Rosier). With *Mur murs* and *Documenteur*, Varda constructs a diptych whose second part presents the day-to-day attitudes and gestures of a woman lost in Los Angeles, while the first part shows, in the eyes of another woman walking in the same city, the historical and political gest of a minority community, murals by Chicanos in exasperated shapes and colours.

The cinema of the body or of attitudes also took new directions. From *Le cochon* and *La rosière de Pessac*, Eustache filmed cyclical festivals integrating collective attitudes and constituting a social gest. There was undoubtedly a whole context, an organization of power, of political aims, a whole history surrounding these ceremonies, in these ceremonies. But, following the lesson of *cinéma-vérité*, this history would not be told: it would be revealed, and all the more so for being less shown; the only thing to be shown would be the way the attitudes of the body are co-ordinated in the ceremony, so as to reveal what did not allow itself to be shown.¹¹ Eustache's cinema was henceforth to develop in several directions. The attitude of the body was no less vocal than gestural, one of the principal aims of cinema being, as Philippon puts it, *to film speech*. Attitudes and postures would engender their gest through a power of the false, from which bodies sometimes hid themselves, and to which they sometimes gave themselves fully, but always being confronted in this way with the pure act of cinema. If the attitude had been made to be seen and heard, it necessarily referred to a voyeur and a listener who were equally postures of the body and also attitudes, to the extent that the gest was made up of the attitude and its voyeur, and vice versa, likewise for speech. In the end, the diptych became the fundamental form of cinema, in very varied shapes but each time having the effect of putting time into bodies. Eustache was to make a second *Rosière de Pessac* years later, to confront and co-ordinate them on the basis of the second: 'It is the idea of time which interests me.' *Mes petites amoureuses* was organized as a diptych of which the first panel showed the attitudes of childish bodies, in the countryside, but the second, the 'false' adolescent attitudes of which the child, in the city, was now only the voyeur or hearer, until he returns to the countryside, having grown up with his new knowledge. *Une sale histoire* constituted the two

degrees where on both sides, attitude and speech, hearer and voyeur were joined together. All these aspects already made *The Mother and the Whore* a masterpiece of the cinema of bodies, of their gestural and vocal attitudes.

If modern cinema has been constructed on the ruins of the sensory-motor schema or of the action-image, it finds in the 'posture-voyeurism' couple a new element which functions all the better because the postures are innocent. The richness of such a cinema cannot be exhausted by one author, Akerman or Eustache. It is an abundance, in which only different styles can be recognized, and which founds the unity of a category ('the post-new wave') by passing through very different authors. *Faux-fuyants*, by Bergala and Limosin can be mentioned, as showing a strange ceremony, which consists, for an adult (the man with the camera?), of inspiring and co-ordinating only attitudes of the body in young people of whom he makes himself the voyeur, constituting a gest which links all the unexpected offences of flight, and replaces narration, from one crime to the next.¹² With *La drôlesse*, Jacques Doillon made an important film of postures, a mentally handicapped man took a wild little girl and subjected her to the innocent attitudes imposed by the décor of a barn, lying down, sitting down, eating, sleeping, under the surveillance of a fake viewing apparatus ineptly stuck together (it would be the police's business not to believe this, and to invent a non-existent story, that is, an action film with abduction and rape). And in most of his films, from *Doigts dans la tête*, which takes up a theme related to *The Mother and the Whore*, to *La pirate*, which pushes attitudes of body to a frenzy under the gaze of a stern watching little girl, Doillon uses a very supple diptych form, which is able to show the postural poles between which the body oscillates. Each time, the stylization of attitudes forms a theatricalization of cinema which is very different from theatre. But it is Philippe Garrel who goes furthest in this direction, because he provides himself with a genuine liturgy of bodies, because he restores them to a secret ceremony whose only characters are now Mary, Joseph and the Child, or their equivalents (*Le lit de la vierge*, *Marie pour mémoire*, *Le révélateur*, *L'enfant secret*). This is hardly a pious cinema, even though it is a cinema of revelation. If the ceremony is secret, it is precisely because Garrel takes the three characters 'before' the legend, before they have made a legend or constituted a holy story: the question posed by Godard, 'What did Joseph and Mary say to each other before having the baby?', not

only heralds a project of Godard's but sums up Garrel's experiences. The theatrical hieratism of characters, noticeable in his first films, is increasingly focused on a physics of fundamental bodies. What Garrel expresses in cinema, is the problem of the three bodies: the man, the woman and the child. The holy story as gesture. The fine opening of *Le révélateur* lets us guess that there is a child perched in the dark on top of the wardrobe, then shows the door opening on to the over-exposed silhouette of the father, and finally reveals, in front of him, the mother on her knees. Each will embrace one of the other two, in three combinations, in a big bed which resembles a cloud on the floor. Sometimes, the constantly invoked child is missing (*Marie pour mémoire*) or is a different one from the one we see (*L'enfant secret*): this is the sign that the problem of the three bodies remains cinematographically as well as physically insoluble. The child is in himself the problematic point. It is around him that the gest is composed, as in the episode in *Paris vu par . . . 20 ans après* ('Rue Fontaine'): the first attitude is that of the man in the middle of telling the story of a woman who said 'I want a child' and who disappeared; the second, that of the same man sitting in a woman's house and waiting; the third, they become lovers, attitudes and postures; the fourth, they have split up, he wants to see her again, but she tells him that she had a child who died; the fifth, he learns that she has been found dead herself, and he kills himself, his body toppling slowly over in a long image to become one with snow, as in a posture which has no end. The child thus appears as the undecidable point in terms of which the attitudes of a man and a woman are distributed. In Garrel as well, the diptych form is thus imposed, around an empty turning-point, unattainable limit, or irrational cut. It distributes not only attitudes, but the white and black, the cold and hot, as the conditions on which attitudes depend or the elements of which the bodies are made. There are the two coloured rooms, on each side of the bed, the cold one and the warm one, in *La concentration*. There are the two big landscapes in the *Lit de la vierge*, the white Arab village and the dark Brittany castle, the mystery of Christ and the quest for the Grail. There are the two quite distinct parts of *Liberté la nuit*, the black image of the couple where the man betrays the woman (the deserted woman who knits crying in the dark, empty theatre), the white image of the couple where the woman betrays the man (the two characters embracing in a field where the washing is drying, a sheet caught by the wind coming to cover them and cover the

screen). There are the alternations of hot and cold, the heat of the fire or a light in the night, but also the cold of the white drug caught in a mirror (as in *L'enfant secret* where we see the café window, the man with his back turned, and, in the window, the image of the woman also from the back crossing the street and going to meet the dealer). In Garrel, over-exposed and under-exposed, white and black, cold and hot, became the components of the body and the elements of its postures.¹³ They are the categories which 'give' a body.

'The absence of image', the black screen or the white screen, have a decisive importance in contemporary cinema. For, as Noël Burch has shown, they no longer have a simple function of punctuation, as if they marked a change, but enter into a dialectical relation between the image and its absence, and assume a properly structural value (as in Brakhage's *Reflections on Black* in experimental cinema).¹⁴ This new value of the black or white screen seems to us to correspond to the characteristics analysed earlier: on the one hand, what is important is no longer the association of images, the way in which they associate, but the interstice between two images; on the other hand, the cut in a sequence of images is not now a rational cut which marks the end of one or the beginning of another, but a so-called irrational cut which belongs neither to one nor the other, and sets out to be valid for itself. Garrel was able to give an extraordinary intensity to these irrational cuts, so that the series of anterior images has no end, while the series of subsequent images likewise has no beginning, the two series converging towards the white or black screen as their common limit. Moreover, used in this way, the screen becomes the medium for variations: the black screen and the under-exposed image, the intense blackness which lets us guess at dark volumes in process of being constituted, or the black marked by a fixed or moving luminous point, and all the combinations of black and fire; the white screen and the over-exposed image, the milky image, or the snowy image whose dancing seeds are to take shape . . . And, in *L'enfant secret*, it is often the flash which gives rise to the images and gathers together the powers of black and white. Throughout Garrel's films, the black or white screen no longer has only a structural value, but has a genetic one: with its variations and tonalities, it acquires the power of a constitution of bodies (primordial bodies from this point, Man, Woman and Child), the power of the genesis of postures.¹⁵ This may be the first case of a cinema of constitution,

one which is truly constitutive: constituting bodies, and in this way restoring our belief in the world, restoring our reason . . . It is doubtful if cinema is sufficient for this; but, if the world has become a bad cinema, in which we no longer believe, surely a true cinema can contribute to giving us back reasons to believe in the world and in vanished bodies? The price to be paid, in cinema as elsewhere, was always a confrontation with madness.¹⁶

In what sense is Garrel one of the greatest modern authors, whose work, alas, may well develop its effects only in the long term, endowing the cinema with powers that are as yet not well known? We have to go back to a very old problem, which already brought theatre and cinema into opposition. Those who deeply loved the theatre objected that cinema always lacked something, *presence*, the presence of bodies which remained the prerogative of theatre: cinema only showed us waves and dancing corpuscles with which it simulated bodies. When André Bazin takes up the problem, he looks for a sense in which there is a different mode of presence, a cinematographic one, which rivals that of theatre and may even outdo it with different methods.¹⁷ But, if cinema does not give us the presence of the body and cannot give us it, this is perhaps also because it sets itself a different objective; it spreads an 'experimental night' or a white space over us; it works with 'dancing seeds' and a 'luminous dust'; it affects the visible with a fundamental disturbance, and the world with a suspension, which contradicts all natural perception. What it produces in this way is the genesis of an 'unknown body' which we have in the back of our heads, like the unthought in thought, the birth of the visible which is still hidden from view. These responses which change the problem are those of Jean-Louis Schefer in *L'homme ordinaire du cinéma*. They consist in saying that the object of cinema is not to reconstitute a presence of bodies, in perception and action, but to carry out a primordial genesis of bodies in terms of a white, or a black or a grey (or even in terms of colours), in terms of a 'beginning of visible which is not yet a figure, which is not yet an action'. Is this what Bresson's project, *Genèse*, is? In any case, we believe that what Schefer seeks rare examples of in the history of cinema, in Dreyer and Kurosawa, is what Garrel draws on, not for a systematic recapitulation, but as a revitalizing inspiration which means that cinema thus coincides with its own essence, at least with one of its essences: a proceeding, a process of constitution of bodies from the neutral image, white or black, snowy or flashed. The problem is *not* that of a presence of

bodies, but that of a belief which is capable of restoring the world and the body to us on the basis of what signifies their absence. The camera must invent the movements or positions which correspond to the genesis of bodies, and which are the formal linkages of their primordial postures. Garrel's special role in the cinema of bodies can be found in a geometry which in turn goes to make up the world, with points, circles and semicircles. A little like in Cézanne, the dawn of the world is linked to the point, the plane, volume and section, not as abstract figures but as genesis and birth. In *Le révélateur*, the woman is often a fixed point, immobile and contradictory, whilst the child turns, around the woman, around the bed, around the trees, and the man does semicircles which maintain his relationship with the woman and the child. In *Les enfants désaccordés*, the camera which is initially a fixed point on to the dance, begins to turn around two dancers, approaching and moving away according to their rhythm, and the changing light; at the beginning of *La cicatrice intérieure* the circular tracking shot allows the character to make a complete turn, the camera remaining fixed on him as if it were moving laterally to find still the same speaker; and, in *Marie pour mémoire*, while Mary is imprisoned in the clinic, Joseph turns as he watches the camera, which changes position as if it were in a succession of different cars on a traffic interchange. On each occasion there is a construction of space as this is attached to bodies. And what is valid for the three fundamental bodies is also valid for the other trinity, that of the characters, the film-maker and the camera: placing them 'in the best possible posture, in the sense that we say of a configuration of stars that it is in an astrologically favourable position'.¹⁸

What is special to Doillon is the situation of the body caught between two sets, caught simultaneously in two exclusive sets. Truffaut had opened the way (*Jules and Jim*, *The Two English Girls*), and Eustache in *The Mother and the Whore* was able to construct the particular space of the non-choice. But Doillon renews and explores this ambiguous space. The character-body, the apprentice baker of *Doigts dans la tête*, the husband of *La femme qui pleure*, the young woman in *La pirate*, oscillate between two women, or between a woman and a man, but above all between two groupings, two modes of life, two sets demanding different attitudes. One of the two sets can always be said to prevail: the temporary girl sends the baker back to his constant fiancée; the happy woman sends the man back to the crying woman, as soon as

she realizes that she is herself only an excuse or pretext. And, in *La pirate*, if the predominance does not seem fixed in advance, it is, according to Doillon's own pronouncements, the tendering of a higher bid which should decide the heroine's life, or her reserve price. But there is something else. It is not that the character finds himself indecisive. It appears rather that two sets are really distinct, but that the character, or rather the body in the character, has no way of choosing between the two. He is in an impossible posture. The character in Doillon is in the situation of not being able to make out the distinct: he is not psychologically indecisive, he would be even the opposite. But the predominance is useless to him, because he inhabits his body like a zone of indiscernibility. Who is the mother, who is the whore? Even if it is decided for him, this changes nothing. His body will always retain the imprint of an undecidability which was just the passing of life. It may be here that the cinema of the body fundamentally contrasted with the cinema of action. The action-image presupposes a space in which ends, obstacles, means, subordinations, the principle and the secondary, predominances and loathings are distributed: a whole space which can be called 'hodological'. But the body is initially caught in a quite different space, where disparate sets overlap and rival each other, without being able to organize themselves according to sensory-motor schemata. They fit over each other, in an overlapping of perspectives which means that there is no way to distinguish them even though they are distinct and also incompatible. This is space before action, always haunted by a child, or by a clown, or by both at once. It is a pre-hodological space, like a *fluctuatio animi* which does not point to an indecision of the spirit, but to an undecidability of the body. The obstacle does not, as in the action-image, allow itself to be determined in relation to goals and means which would unify the set, but is dispersed in 'a plurality of ways of being present in the world', of belonging to sets, all incompatible and yet coexistent.¹⁹ Doillon's strength is to have made this pre-hodological space, this space of overlappings, the special object of a cinema of bodies. He leads his characters there; he creates this space where regression becomes discovery (*La fille prodigue*). Not only does he thereby undo the action-image of classical cinema, he reveals a non-choice of the body as the unthought, the other side or reversal of the spiritual choice. As in the dialogue exchanged in Godard's *Slow Motion*: 'You choose . . . No I'm not choosing . . . You choose . . . I'm not choosing . . .'

2

'Give me a brain' would be the other figure of modern cinema. This is an intellectual cinema, as distinct from the physical cinema. Experimental cinema is shared between these two areas: the physics of the body, everyday or ceremonial; the formal or informal 'eidetics' of the spirit (to use Bertetto's formulation). But experimental cinema develops the distinction according to two processes, one concrete, the other abstract. The abstract and the concrete, however, are not the right criteria, in a cinema which creates rather than experiments. We saw that Eisenstein already laid claim to an intellectual or cerebral cinema, which he considered to be more concrete than the physics of bodies in Pudovkin, or physical formalism in Vertov. There is no less of the concrete and abstract on the one side than on the other: there is as much feeling or intensity, passion, in a cinema of the brain as in a cinema of the body. Godard initiates a cinema of the body, Resnais, a cinema of the brain, but one is not more abstract or more concrete than the other. Body or brain is what cinema demands be given to it, what it gives to itself, what it invents itself, to construct its work according to two directions, each one of which is simultaneously abstract and concrete. The distinction is thus not between the concrete and the abstract (except in experimental cases and, even there, it is fairly consistently confused). The intellectual cinema of the brain and the physical cinema of the body will find the source of their distinction elsewhere, a very variable source, whether with authors who are attracted by one of the two poles, or with those who compose with both of them.

Antonioni would be the perfect example of a double composition. The unity of his work has often been sought in the established themes of solitude and incommunicability, as characteristics of the poverty of the modern world. Nevertheless, according to him, we walk at two very different paces, one for the body, one for the brain. In a fine passage, he explains that our knowledge does not hesitate to renew itself, to confront great mutations, whilst our morality and feelings remain prisoners of unadapted values of myths that no one believes any more, and find only poor excuses – cynical, erotic, or neurotic – for freeing themselves. Antonioni does not criticize the modern world, in whose possibilities he profoundly 'believes': he criticizes the coexistence in the world of a modern brain and a tired, worn-out,

neurotic body. So that his work, in a fundamental sense passes through a dualism which corresponds to the two aspects of the time-image: a cinema of the body, which puts all the weight of the past into the body, all the tiredness of the world and modern neurosis; but also a cinema of the brain, which reveals the creativity of the world, its colours aroused by a new space-time, its powers multiplied by artificial brains.²⁰ If Antonioni is a great colourist, it is because he has always believed in the colours of the world, in the possibility of creating them, and of renewing all our cerebral knowledge. He is not an author who moans about the impossibility of communicating in the world. It is just that the world is painted in splendid colours, while the bodies which people it are still insipid and colourless. The world awaits its inhabitants, who are still lost in neurosis. But this is one more reason to pay attention to the body, to scrutinize its tiredness and neurosis, to take tints from it. The unity of Antonioni's work is the confrontation of the body-character with his weariness and his past, and of the brain-colour with all its future potentialities, but the two making up one and the same world, ours, its hopes and its despair.

Antonioni's formula is valid for him only, it is he who invents it. Bodies are not destined for wearing out, any more than the brain is destined for novelty. But what is important is the possibility of a cinema of the brain which brings together all the powers, as much as the cinema of the body equally brought them together as well: there are, then, two different styles, where the difference itself is constantly varying, cinema of the body in Godard and cinema of the brain in Resnais, cinema of the body in Cassavetes and cinema of the brain in Kubrick. There is as much thought in the body as there is shock and violence in the brain. There is an equal amount of feeling in both of them. The brain gives orders to the body which is just an outgrowth of it, but the body also gives orders to the brain which is just a part of it: in both cases, these will not be the same bodily attitudes nor the same cerebral gest. Hence the specificity of a cinema of the brain, in relation to that of the cinema of bodies. If we look at Kubrick's work, we see the degree to which it is the brain which is *mis en scène*. Attitudes of body achieve a maximum level of violence, but they depend on the brain. For, in Kubrick, the world itself is a brain, there is identity of brain and world, as in the great circular and luminous table in *Doctor Strangelove*, the giant computer in *2001 A Space Odyssey*, the Overlook hotel in *The Shining*. The black stone of *2001* presides

over both cosmic states and cerebral stages: it is the soul of the three bodies, earth, sun and moon, but also the seed of the three brains, animal, human, machine. Kubrick is renewing the theme of the initiatory journey because every journey in the world is an exploration of the brain. The world-brain is *A Clockwork Orange*, or again, a spherical game of chess where the general can calculate his chances of promotion on the basis of the relation between soldiers killed and positions captured (*Paths of Glory*). But if the calculation fails, if the computer breaks down, it is because the brain is no more reasonable a system than the world is a rational one. The identity of world and brain, the automaton, does not form a whole, but rather a limit, a membrane which puts an outside and an inside in contact, makes them present to each other, confronts them or makes them clash. The inside is psychology, the past, involution, a whole psychology of depths which excavate the brain. The outside is the cosmology of galaxies, the future, evolution, a whole supernatural which makes the world explode. The two forces are forces of death which embrace, are ultimately exchanged and become ultimately indiscernible. The insane violence of Alex in *Clockwork Orange* is the force of the outside before passing into the service of an insane internal order. In *Space Odyssey*, the robot breaks down from the inside, before being lobotomized by the astronaut who penetrates it from the outside. And, in *The Shining*, how can we decide what comes from the inside and what comes from the outside, the extra-sensory perceptions or hallucinatory projections?²¹ The world-brain is strictly inseparable from the forces of death which pierce the membrane in both directions. Unless a reconciliation is carried out in another dimension, a regeneration of the membrane which would pacify the outside and the inside, and re-create a world-brain as a whole in the harmony of the spheres. At the end of *Space Odyssey*, it is in consequence of a fourth dimension that the sphere of the foetus and the sphere of the earth have a chance of entering into a new, incommensurable, unknown relation, which would convert death into a new life.

In France, at the same time as the new wave launched a cinema of bodies which mobilized the whole of thought, Resnais was creating a cinema of the brain which empowered bodies. We saw how states of the world and the brain found their common expression in the bio-psychic stages of *My American Uncle* (the three brains), or in the historical epochs in *Life is a bed of roses* (the three epochs). Landscapes are mental states, just as mental states

are cartographies, both crystallized in each other, geometrized, mineralized (the torrent in *L'amour à mort*). The identity of brain and world is the noosphere of *Je t'aime je t'aime*, it can be the diabolic organization of the extermination camps, but also the cosmo-spiritual structure of the Bibliothèque Nationale.²² In Resnais this identity already appears less in a whole than at the level of a polarized membrane which is constantly making relative outsides and insides communicate or exchange, putting them in contact with each other, extending them, and referring them to each other. This is not a whole, but rather like two zones which communicate all the more, or are all the more in contact, because they cease to be symmetrical and synchronous, like the halves of the brain in *Stavisky*.²³ In *Providence*, the bombshell is in the state of body of the old, alcoholic novelist, who rattles in every direction, but also in the state of the cosmos in thunder and lightning, and in the social state in machine-gun and rifle bursts. This membrane which makes the outside and the inside present to each other is called memory. If memory is the explicit theme of Resnais' work, there is no reason to look for a latent content which would be more subtle; it is better to evaluate the transformation that the notion of memory is made to undergo in Resnais (a transformation as important as that carried out by Proust or Bergson). For memory is clearly no longer the faculty of having recollections: it is the membrane which, in the most varied ways (continuity, but also discontinuity, envelopment, etc.), makes sheets of past and layers of reality correspond, the first emanating from an inside which is always already there, the second arriving from an outside always to come, the two gnawing at the present which is now only their encounter. These themes have been analysed earlier; and, if the cinema of bodies referred in particular to one aspect of the direct time-image – series of time according to the before and the after, the cinema of the brain develops the other aspect – the order of time according to the coexistence of its own relations.

But, if memory makes relative insides and outsides communicate like interiors and exteriors, an absolute outside and inside must confront each other and be co-present. René Prédal has shown the extent to which Auschwitz and Hiroshima remained the horizon of all Resnais' work, how close the hero in Resnais is to the 'Lazarean hero' which Cayrol made the soul of the new novel, in a fundamental relation with the extermination camps.²⁴ The character in Resnais' cinema is Lazarean precisely because he

returns from death, from the land of the dead; he has passed through death and is born from death, whose sensory-motor disturbances he retains. Even if he was not personally in Auschwitz, even if he was not personally in Hiroshima . . . He passed through a clinical death, he was born from an apparent death, he returns from the dead, Auschwitz or Hiroshima, Guernica or the Algerian war. The hero of *Je t'aime je t'aime* has not simply committed suicide; he speaks of Catrine, the woman he loves, as a marsh, a low tide, night, mud, which means that the dead are always victims of drowning. This is what a character in *Stavisky* says. It should be understood that, beyond all the sheets of memory, there is this lapping which stirs them, this death from the inside which forms an absolute, and from which he who has been able to escape it is reborn. And he who escapes, he who has been able to be reborn, moves inexorably towards a death from the outside, which comes to him as the other side of the absolute. *Je t'aime je t'aime* will make the two deaths coincide, the death from the inside from which he returns, the death from the outside which comes to him. *L'amour à mort*, which seems to us to be one of the most ambitious films in the history of cinema, moves from the clinical death from which the hero comes back to life, to the definitive death into which he goes down, 'a shallow stream' separating the two (it is clear that the Doctor had not been mistaken the first time, it was not an illusion, there had been apparent or clinical death, brain-death). Between one death and the other, the absolute inside and the absolute outside enter into contact, an inside deeper than all the sheets of past, an outside more distant than all the layers of external reality. Between the two, in the in-between, it is as if zombies peopled the brain-world for a moment: Resnais 'insists on preserving the ghostly character of the beings he shows, and on maintaining them in a society of spectres destined to be included for a moment in our mental universe; these shivering heroes . . . like to wear warm, out-of-date clothes'.²⁵ Resnais' characters do not just return from Auschwitz or Hiroshima, they are philosophers, thinkers, beings of thought in another way too. For philosophers are beings who have passed through a death, who are born from it, and go towards another death, perhaps the same one. In a very happy story, Pauline Harvey says that she understands nothing about philosophy, but is very fond of philosophers because they give her a double impression: they themselves believe that they are dead, that they have passed through death; and they also believe

that, although dead, they continue to live, but in a shivering way, with tiredness and prudence.²⁶ According to Pauline Harvey, this would be a double mistake, which amuses her. According to us, it is a double truth, although this is cause for amusement as well: the philosopher is someone who believes he has returned from the dead, rightly or wrongly, and who returns to the dead in full consciousness. The philosopher has returned from the dead and goes back there. This has been the living formulation of philosophy since Plato. When we say that Resnais' characters are philosophers, we are certainly not saying that these characters talk about philosophy, or that Resnais 'applies' philosophical ideas to a cinema, but that he invents a cinema of philosophy, a cinema of thought, which is totally new in the history of cinema and totally alive in the history of philosophy, creating, with his unique collaborators, a rare marriage between philosophy and cinema. The great post-war philosophers and writers demonstrated that thought has something to do with Auschwitz, with Hiroshima, but this was also demonstrated by the great cinema authors from Welles to Resnais – this time in the most serious way.

This is the opposite of a cult of death. Between the two sides of the absolute, between the two deaths – death from the inside or past, death from the outside or future – the internal sheets of memory and the external layers of reality will be mixed up, extended, short-circuited and form a whole moving life, which is at once that of the cosmos and of the brain, which sends out flashes from one pole to the other. Hence zombies sing a song, but it is that of life. Resnais' *Van Gogh* is a masterpiece because it shows that, between the apparent death from inside, the attack of madness, and the definitive death from outside as suicide, the sheets of internal life and the layers of external world plunge, extend and intersect with increasing speed up to the final black screen.²⁷ But, between the two, what flashes of lightning there will have been; these were life itself. From one pole to the other a creation will be constructed, which is true creation only because it will be carried out between the two deaths, the apparent and the real, all the more intense because it illuminates this interstice. The sheets of past come down and the layers of reality go up, in mutual embraces which are flashes of life: what Resnais calls 'feeling' or 'love', as mental function.

Resnais has always said that what interested him was the cerebral mechanism, mental functioning, the process of thought, and that here was the true element of cinema. A cinema which is

cerebral or intellectual, but not abstract, because it is clear to what extent feeling, affect, or passion are the principal characters of the brain-world. The question is rather that of knowing what difference there is between the 'classical' intellectual cinema, for example, Eisenstein's, and the modern, for example, Resnais'. For Eisenstein already identified cinema with the process of thought as this necessarily develops in the brain, as it necessarily envelops feeling or passion. Intellectual cinema was already the cerebral whole which brought together pathos and the organic. Resnais' pronouncements may be close to those of Eisenstein: the cerebral process as object and motor of cinema.²⁸ Nevertheless, something has changed, which undoubtedly has something to do with scientific knowledge of the brain, but still more with our personal relationship with the brain. So that intellectual cinema has changed, not because it has become more concrete (it was so from the outset), but because there has been a simultaneous change in our conception of the brain and our relationship with the brain. The 'classical' conception developed along two axes; on the one hand integration and differentiation, on the other association, through contiguity or similarity. The first axis is the law of the concept: it constitutes movement as continually integrating itself into a whole whose change it expresses, and as continually differentiating itself in accordance with the objects between which it is established. This integration-differentiation thus defines movement as movement of the concept. The second axis is the law of the image: similarity and contiguity determine the way in which we pass from one image to another. The two axes cut across each other, according to a principle of attraction, in order to achieve the identity of image and concept: indeed, the concept as whole does not become differentiated without externalizing itself in a sequence of associated images, and the images do not associate without being internalized in a concept as the whole which integrates them. Hence the ideal of knowledge as harmonious totality, which sustains this classical representation. Even the fundamentally open character of the whole does not compromise this model, on the contrary, because the out-of-field shows an associability which extends and goes beyond the given images, but also expresses the changing whole which integrates the extendable sequences of images (the two aspects of the out-of-field). We have seen how Eisenstein, like a cinematographic Hegel, presented the grand synthesis of this conception: the open spiral, with its commensurabilities and attractions. Eisenstein himself

did not hide the cerebral model which drove the whole synthesis, and which made cinema the cerebral art *par excellence*, the internal monologue of the brain-world; 'The form of montage is a restoration of the laws of the process of thought, which in turn restores moving reality in process of unrolling.' For the brain was both the vertical organization of integration-differentiation, and the horizontal organization of association. Our relationship with the brain has followed these axes for a long time. Of course, Bergson (who was, with Schopenhauer, one of the rare philosophers to propose a new conception of the brain) introduced a profound element of transformation: the brain was now only an interval [*écart*], a void, nothing but a void, between a stimulation and a response. But, whatever the importance of the discovery, this interval [*écart*] remained subject to an integrating whole which was embodied in it, and to associations which traversed it.²⁹ In yet another area, it could be said that linguistics maintained the classic cerebral model, both from the point of view of metaphor and metonymy (similarity-contiguity) and from the point of view of the syntagm and paradigm (integration-differentiation).³⁰

Scientific knowledge of the brain has evolved, and carried out a general rearrangement. The situation is so complicated that we should not speak of a break, but rather of new orientations which only produce an effect of a break with the classical image at the limit. But perhaps our own relationship with the brain changed at the same time, and, on its own account, independently of science, and consummated the break with the old relationship. On the one hand, the organic process of integration and differentiation increasingly pointed to relative levels of interiority and exteriority and, through them, to an absolute outside and inside, in contact topologically: this was the discovery of a topological cerebral space, which passed through relative mediums [*milieux*] to achieve the co-presence of an inside deeper than any internal medium, and an outside more distant than any external medium.³¹ On the other hand, the process of association increasingly came up against cuts in the continuous network of the brain; everywhere there were micro-fissures which were not simply voids to be crossed, but random mechanisms introducing themselves at each moment between the sending and receiving of an association message: this was the discovery of a probabilistic or semi-fortuitous cerebral space, 'an uncertain system'.³² It is perhaps through these two aspects that the brain can be defined as an acentred system.³³ It is obviously not through the influence

of science that our relationship with the brain changed: perhaps it was the opposite, our relationship with the brain having changed first, obscurely guiding science. Psychology has a good deal to say about a lived relationship with the brain, of a lived body, but it has less to say about a lived brain. Our lived relationship with the brain becomes increasingly fragile, less and less 'Euclidean' and goes through little cerebral deaths. The brain becomes our problem or our illness, our passion, rather than our mastery, our solution or decision. We are not copying Artaud, but Artaud lived and said something about the brain that concerns all of us: that 'its antennae turned towards the invisible', that it has a capacity to 'resume a resurrection from death'.

We no longer believe in a whole as interiority of thought – even an open one; we believe in a force from the outside which hollows itself out, grabs us and attracts the inside. We no longer believe in an association of images – even crossing voids; we believe in breaks which take on an absolute value and subordinate all association. This is not abstracting, these two aspects define the new 'intellectual' cinema and examples can be found in particular in Téchiné, and Benoit Jacquot. Both are able to take the sensory-motor collapse on which modern cinema is constituted as read. But they distinguish themselves from the cinema of bodies because for them (as for Resnais) it is the brain which initially orders attitudes. The brain cuts or puts to flight all internal associations, it summons an outside beyond any external world. In Téchiné, associated images slide and flee on windows, following currents up which the character must go back to move towards an outside which calls them, but which he will perhaps not be able to meet up with (the boat in *Barocco*, and then *L'hôtel des Amériques*).³⁴ In Jacquot, by contrast, it is a function of literalness of the image (flattened, redundancies and tautologies) which will shatter associations, to replace them with an infinity of interpretation whose only limit is an absolute outside (*L'assassin musicien*, *Les enfants du placard*).³⁵ In both cases, this is a cinema inspired by neo-psychoanalytical themes: give me a slip [*lapsus*], an act that is lacking and I will reconstruct the brain. The new cerebral images are defined by a topological structure of the outside and the inside, and a fortuitous character at each stage of the linkages or mediations.

The great corresponding novel is Andrei Bely's *Petersburg*. This masterpiece evolves in a noosphere, where a corridor is hollowed out inside the brain, in order to communicate with a cosmic void.

It no longer works by totalization, but by application of the inside on the outside, of the two sides of a membrane (the bomb of the inside and of the outside, in the belly and in the house). It no longer works through linkage of images, but through continual relinked parcellings (the fiendish appearances of the red domino). This is the constructivist novel as 'cerebral game'.³⁶ Resnais seems to us close to Bely because he makes cinema the cerebral game *par excellence*: hence the organic-cosmic bomb of *Providence* and the fragmentations through transformation of sheets in *Je t'aime je t'aime*. The hero is sent back to a minute of his past, but this is perpetually relinked in variable sequences, through succeeding drafts. Or again the ghostly city, as world and brain, Boulogne as much as Petersburg. This is a space which is both topological and probabilistic. In this respect, we can return to the great difference between classical cinema and modern cinema. The so-called classical cinema works above all through linkage of images, and subordinates cuts to this linkage. On the mathematical analogy, the cuts which divide up two series of images are rational, in the sense that they constitute either the final image of the first series, or the first image of the second. This is the case of the 'dissolve' in its various forms. But even when there is a pure optical cut, and likewise when there is false continuity, the optical cut and the false continuity function as simple lacunae, that is, as voids which are still motor, which the linked images must cross. In short, rational cuts always determine commensurable relations between series of images, and thereby constitute the whole rhythmic system and harmony of classical cinema, at the same time as they integrate associated images in an always open totality. Time here is, therefore, essentially the object of an indirect representation, according to the commensurable relations and rational cuts which organize the sequence or linkage of movement-images. This grandiose conception finds its apogee in the theory and practice of Eisenstein.³⁷ Now, modern cinema can communicate with the old, and the distinction between the two can be very relative. However, it will be defined ideally by a reversal where the image is unlinked and the cut begins to have an importance in itself. The cut, or interstice, between two series of images no longer forms part of either of the two series: it is the equivalent of an irrational cut, which determines the non-commensurable relations between images. It is thus no longer a lacuna that the associated images would be assumed to cross; the images are certainly not abandoned to chance, but there are only

relinkages subject to the cut, instead of cuts subject to the linkage. As in *Je t'aime je t'aime*, there is return to the same image, but caught up in a new series. Ultimately, there are no longer any rational cuts, but only irrational ones. There is thus no longer association through metaphor or metonymy, but relinkage on the literal image; there is no longer linkage of associated images, but only relinkages of independent images. Instead of one image after the other, there is one image *plus* another, and each shot is deframed in relation to the framing of the following shot.³⁸ We saw this detail in the case of Godard's interstitial method, and, more generally, it is the relinked parcelling that is found in Bresson, in Resnais, and in Jacquot and Téchiné. It is a whole new system of rhythm, and a serial or atonal cinema, a new conception of montage. The cut may now be extended and appear in its own right, as the black screen, the white screen and their derivatives and combinations: hence the great blue image of night, where little feathers or corpuscles flutter at various speeds and in various arrangements, which keeps reappearing in Resnais' *L'amour à mort*. In the first place, the cinematographic image becomes a direct presentation of time, according to non-commensurable relations and irrational cuts. In the second place, this time-image puts thought into contact with an unthought, the unsummonable, the inexplicable, the undecidable, the incommensurable. The outside or the obverse of the images has replaced the whole, at the same time as the interstice or the cut has replaced association.

Even abstract or 'eidetic' cinema shows a similar evolution. According to a rough periodization, the first epoch is that of geometrical figures, taken at the intersection of two axes, a vertical axis which concerns the integration and differentiation of their intelligible elements and a horizontal axis which concerns their linkages and transformations in a movement-material. A powerful organic life therefore sustains the figure, from one axis to the other, and sometimes gives it a linear 'tension' similar to Kandinsky (Eggeling's *Diagonal Symphony*), sometimes a punctual expansion closer to Paul Klee (Richter's *Rhythmus 23*). In a second period, line and point are freed from the figure, at the same time as life is freed from the axes of organic representation: power has passed into a non-organic life, which sometimes traces a continuous arabesque directly on to the film from which it will draw images by point-cuts, and sometimes generates the image by making the point flicker on and off on the void of a dark film.

This is the camera-less cinema of McLaren, which implies a new relationship with sound, whether in *Begone Dull Care* or *Workshop Experiment in Animated Sound*, or *Blinkity Blank*. But although these elements already had an important role, a third epoch appears when the black or white screen stands for the outside of all the images, when the flickerings multiply the interstices like irrational cuts (Tony Conrad's *The Flicker*), when proceeding by loops effects relinkages (George Landow's *The Film that Rises to the Surface of Clarified Butter*). The film does not record the filmic process in this way without projecting a cerebral process. A flickering brain, which relinks or creates loops – this is cinema. Lettrism had already gone a long way in this direction, and, after the geometric epoch and the 'engraving' epoch, proclaimed a cinema of expansion without camera, and also without screen or film stock. Everything can be used as a screen, the body of a protagonist or even the bodies of the spectators; everything can replace the film stock, in a virtual film which now only goes on in the head, behind the pupils, with sound sources taken as required from the auditorium. A disturbed brain-death or a new brain which would be at once the screen, the film stock and the camera, each time membrane of the outside and the inside?³⁹

In short, the three cerebral components are the point-cut, relinkage and the black or white screen. If the cut no longer forms part of either of the two series of images which it determines, there are only relinkages on either side. And, if it grows larger, if it absorbs all the images, then it becomes the screen, as contact independent of distance, co-presence or application of black and white, of negative and positive, of place and obverse, of full and empty, of past and future, of brain and cosmos, of the inside and the outside. It is these three aspects, topological, of probabilistic and irrational, which constitute the new image of thought. Each is easily inferred from the others, and forms with the others a circulation: the noosphere.

3

Resnais and the Straubs are probably the greatest political film-makers in the West, in modern cinema. But, oddly, this is not through the presence of the people. On the contrary, it is because they know how to show how the people are what is missing, what is

not there. Thus Resnais, in *La guerre est finie*, in relation to a Spain that will not be seen: do the people in the old central committee stand with the young terrorists or the tired militant? And the German people in the Straubs' *Unreconciled*: has there ever been a German people, in a country which has bungled its revolutions, and was constituted under Bismarck and Hitler, to be separated again? This is the first big difference between classical and modern cinema. For in classical cinema, the people are there, even though they are oppressed, tricked, subject, even though blind or unconscious. Soviet cinema is an example: the people are already there in Eisenstein, who shows them performing a qualitative leap in *The General Line (Old and New)*, or who, in *Ivan the Terrible*, makes them the advanced edge held in check by the tsar; and, in Pudovkin, it is on each occasion the progression of a certain awareness which means that the people already has a virtual existence in process of being actualized; and in Vertov and Dovzhenko, in two different ways, there is a unanimity which calls the different peoples into the same melting-pot from which the future emerges. But unanimity is also the political character of American cinema before and during the war: this time, it is not the twists and turns of class struggle and the confrontation of ideologies, but the economic crises, the fight against moral prejudice, profiteers and demagogues, which mark the awareness of a people, at the lowest point of their misfortune as well as at the peak of their hope (the unanimism of King Vidor, Capra, or Ford, for the problem runs through the Western as much as through the social drama, both testifying to the existence of a people, in hardships as well as in ways of recovering and rediscovering itself).⁴⁰ In American and in Soviet cinema, the people are already there, real before being actual, ideal without being abstract. Hence the idea that the cinema, as art of the masses, could be the supreme revolutionary or democratic art, which makes the masses a true subject. But a great many factors were to compromise this belief: the rise of Hitler, which gave cinema as its object not the masses become subject but the masses subjected; Stalinism, which replaced the unanimism of peoples with the tyrannical unity of a party; the break-up of the American people, who could no longer believe themselves to be either the melting-pot of peoples past or the seed of a people to come (it was the neo-Western that first demonstrated this break-up). In short, if there were a modern political cinema, it would be on this basis: the people no longer exist, or not yet . . . *the people are missing*.

No doubt this truth also applied to the West, but very few authors discovered it, because it was hidden by the mechanisms of power and the systems of majority. On the other hand, it was absolutely clear in the third world, where oppressed and exploited nations remained in a state of perpetual minorities, in a collective identity crisis. Third world and minorities gave rise to authors who would be in a position, in relation to their nation and their personal situation in that nation, to say: the people are what is missing. Kafka and Klee had been the first to state this explicitly. The first said that minor literatures, 'in the small nations', ought to supplement a 'national consciousness which is often inert and always in process of disintegration', and fulfil collective tasks in the absence of a people; the second said that painting, to bring together all the parts of its 'great work', needed a 'final force', the people who were still missing.⁴¹ This was all the more true for cinema as mass-art. Sometimes the third world film-maker finds himself before an illiterate public, swamped by American, Egyptian or Indian serials, and karate films, and he has to go through all this, it is this material that he has to work on, to extract from it the elements of a people who are still missing (Lino Brocka). Sometimes the minority film-maker finds himself in the impasse described by Kafka: the impossibility of not 'writing', the impossibility of writing in the dominant language, the impossibility of writing differently (Pierre Perrault encounters this situation in *Un pays sans bon sens*, the impossibility of not speaking, the impossibility of speaking other than in English, the impossibility of speaking English, the impossibility of settling in France in order to speak French . . .), and it is through this state of crisis that he has to pass, it is this that has to be resolved. This acknowledgement of a people who are missing is not a renunciation of political cinema, but on the contrary the new basis on which it is founded, in the third world and for minorities. Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. The moment the master, or the colonizer, proclaims 'There have never been people here', the missing people are a becoming, they invent themselves, in shanty towns and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute.

There is a second big difference between classical and modern political cinema, which concerns the relationship between the

political and the private. Kafka suggested that 'major' literatures always maintained a border between the political and the private, however mobile, whilst, in minor literature, the private affair was immediately political and 'entailed a verdict of life or death'. And it is true that, in the large nations, the family, the couple, the individual himself go about their own business, even though this business necessarily expresses social contradictions and problems, or directly suffers their effects. The private element can thus become the place of a becoming conscious, in so far as it goes back to root causes, or reveals the 'object' that it expresses. In this sense, classical cinema constantly maintained this boundary which marked the correlation of the political and the private, and which allowed, through the intermediary of an awareness, passage from one social force to another, from one political position to another: Pudovkin's *Mother* discovers the son's real object in fighting, and takes it over; in Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*, it is the mother who sees clearly up to a certain point, and who is relieved by the son when conditions change. This is no longer the case in modern political cinema, where no boundary survives to provide a minimum distance or evolution: the private affair merges with the social – or political – immediate. In Güney's *Yol*, the family clans form a network of alliances, a fabric of relationships so close-knit that one character must marry the wife of his dead brother, and another go far away to look for his guilty wife, across a desert of snow, to have her punished in the proper place; and, in *The Flock* as in *Yol*, the most progressive hero is condemned to death in advance. It could be said that this is a matter of archaic pastoral families. But, in fact, what is important is that there is no longer a 'general line', that is, of evolution from the Old to the New, or of revolution which produces a leap from one to the other. There is rather, as in South American cinema, a juxtaposition or compenetration of the old and the new which 'makes up an absurdity', which assumes 'the form of aberration'.⁴² What replaces the correlation of the political and the private is the coexistence, to the point of absurdity, of very different social stages. It is in this way that, in Glauber Rocha's work, the myths of the people, prophetism and banditism, are the archaic obverse of capitalist violence, as if the people were turning and increasing against themselves the violence that they suffer from somewhere else out of a need for idolization (*Black God and White Devil*). Gaining awareness is disallowed either because it takes place in the air, as with the intellectual, or because it is compressed into a

hollow, as with Antonio das Mortes, capable only of grasping the juxtaposition of two violences and the continuation of one by the other.

What, then, is left? The greatest 'agitprop' cinema that has ever been made: the agitprop is no longer a result of a becoming conscious, but consists of *putting everything into a trance*, the people and its masters, and the camera itself, pushing everything into a state of aberration, in order to communicate violences as well as to make private business pass into the political, and political affairs into the private (*Earth Entranced*). Hence the very specific aspect assumed by the critique of myth in Rocha: it is not a matter of analysing myth in order to discover its archaic meaning or structure, but of connecting archaic myth to the state of the drives in an absolutely contemporary society, hunger, thirst, sexuality, power, death, worship. In Asia, in Brocka's work, we can also find the immediacy of the raw drive and social violence underneath the myth, for the former is no more 'natural' than the latter is 'cultural'.⁴³ A lived actual which at the same time indicates the impossibility of living can be extracted from myth in other ways, but continues to constitute the new object of political cinema: putting into a trance, putting into a crisis. In Pierre Perrault, it is a matter of a state of crisis and not of trance. It is a matter of stubborn quests rather than of violent drives. However, the aberrant quest for French ancestors (*Le règne du jour, Un pays sans bon sens, C'était un Québécois en Bretagne*) testifies in its own way, beneath the myth of origins, to the absence of boundary between the private and the political, but also to the impossibility of living in these conditions, for the colonized person who comes up against an impasse in every direction.⁴⁴ It is as if modern political cinema were no longer constituted on the basis of a possibility of evolution and revolution, like the classical cinema, but on impossibilities, in the style of Kafka: *the intolerable*. Western authors cannot save themselves from this impasse, unless they settle for a cardboard people and paper revolutionaries: it is a condition which makes Comolli a true political film-maker when he takes as his object a double impossibility, that of forming a group *and* that of not forming a group, 'the impossibility of escaping from the group and the impossibility of being satisfied with it' (*L'ombre rouge*).⁴⁵

If the people are missing, if there is no longer consciousness, evolution or revolution, it is the scheme of reversal which itself becomes impossible. There will no longer be conquest of power

by a proletariat, or by a united or unified people. The best third world film-makers could believe in this for a time: Rocha's Guevarism, Chahine's Nasserism, black American cinema's black-powerism. But this was the perspective from which these authors were still taking part in the classical conception, so slow, imperceptible and difficult to site clearly. The death-knell for becoming conscious was precisely the consciousness that there were no people, but always several peoples, an infinity of peoples, who remained to be united, or should not be united, in order for the problem to change. It is in this way that third world cinema is a cinema of minorities, because the people exist only in the condition of minority, which is why they are missing. It is in minorities that private business is immediately political. Acknowledging the failure of fusions or unifications which did not re-create a tyrannical unity, and did not turn back against the people, modern political cinema has been created on this fragmentation, this break-up. This is its third difference. After the 1970s, black American cinema makes a return to the ghettos, returns to this side of a consciousness, and, instead of replacing a negative image of the black with a positive one, multiplies types and 'characters', and each time creates or re-creates only a small part of the image which no longer corresponds to a linkage of actions, but to shattered states of emotions or drives, expressible in pure images and sounds: the specificity of black cinema is now defined by a new form, 'the struggle that must bear on the medium itself' (Charles Burnett, Robert Gardner, Haile Gerima, Charles Lane).⁴⁶ In another style, this is the compositional mode of Chahine in Arab cinema: *Why Alexandria?* reveals a plurality of intertwined lines, primed from the beginning, one of these lines being the principal one (the story of the boy), the others having to be pushed until they cut across the principal one; and *Memory* leaves no place for the principal line, and pursues the multiple threads which end in the author's heart attack, conceived as internal trial and verdict, in a kind of *Why Me?*, but where the arteries of the inside are in immediate contact with the lines of the outside. In Chahine's work, the question 'why' takes on a properly cinematographic value, just as much as the question 'how' in Godard. 'Why?' is the question of the inside, the question of the I: for, if the people are missing, if they are breaking up into minorities, it is I who am first of all a people, the people of my atoms as Carmelo Bene said, the people of my arteries as Chahine said (for his part, Gerima says that, if there is a plurality of black

'movements', each film-maker is a movement in himself). 'But why?' is also the question from the outside, the question of the world, the question of the people who, missing, invent themselves, who have a chance to invent themselves by asking the I the question that it asked them: Alexandria-I, I-Alexandria. Many third world films invoke memory, implicitly or even in their title, Perrault's *Pour la suite du monde*, Chahine's *Memory*, Khleifi's *Fertile Memory*. This is not a psychological memory as faculty for summoning recollections, or even a collective memory as that of an existing people. It is, as we have seen, the strange faculty which puts into immediate contact the outside and the inside, the people's business and private business, the people who are missing and the I who is absent, a membrane, a double becoming. Kafka spoke of this power taken on by memory in small nations: 'The memory of a small nation is no shorter than that of a large one, hence it works on the existing material at a deeper level.' It gains in depth and distance what it lacks in extent. It is no longer psychological nor collective, because each person 'in a little country' inherits only the portion due to him, and has no goal other than this portion, even if he neither recognizes nor maintains it. Communication of the world and the I in a fragmented world and in a fragmented I which are constantly being exchanged. It is as if the whole memory of the world is set down on each oppressed people, and the whole memory of the I comes into play in an organic crisis. The arteries of the people to which I belong, or the people of my arteries . . .

But is this I not the I of the third world intellectual, whose portrait Rocha and Chahine among others have often sketched, and who has to break with the condition of the colonized, but can do so only by going over to the colonizer's side, even if only aesthetically, through artistic influences? Kafka pointed to another path, a narrow path between the two dangers: precisely because 'great talents' or superior individualities are rare in minor literatures, the author is not in a condition to produce individual utterances which would be like invented stories; but also, because the people are missing, the author is in a situation of producing utterances which are already collective, which are like the seeds of the people to come, and whose political impact is immediate and inescapable. The author can be marginalized or separate from his more or less illiterate community as much as you like; this condition puts him all the more in a position to express potential forces and, in his very solitude, to be a true

collective agent, a collective leaven, a catalyst. What Kafka suggests for literature is even more valid for cinema, in as much as it brings collective conditions together through itself. And this is in fact the last characteristic of a modern political cinema. The cinema author finds himself before a people which, from the point of view of culture, is doubly colonized: colonized by stories that have come from elsewhere, but also by their own myths become impersonal entities at the service of the colonizer. The author must not, then, make himself into the ethnologist of his people, nor himself invent a fiction which would be one more private story: for every personal fiction, like every impersonal myth, is on the side of the 'masters'. It is in this way that we see Rocha destroying myths from the inside, and Perrault repudiating every fiction that an author could create. There remains the possibility of the author providing himself with 'intercessors', that is, of taking real and not fictional characters, but putting these very characters in the condition of 'making up fiction', of 'making legends', of 'story-telling'. The author takes a step towards his characters, but the characters take a step towards the author: double becoming. Story-telling is not an impersonal myth, but neither is it a personal fiction: it is a word in act, a speech-act through which the character continually crosses the boundary which would separate his private business from politics, and which *itself produces collective utterances*.

Daney observed that African cinema (but this applies to the whole third world) is not, as the West would like, a cinema which dances, but a cinema which talks, a cinema of the speech-act. It is in this way that it avoids fiction and ethnology. In *Ceddo*, Ousmane Sembene extracts the story-telling which is the basis of living speech, which ensures its freedom and circulation, which gives it the value of collective utterance, thus contrasting it with the myths of the Islamic colonist.⁴⁷ Was this not already Rocha's way of operating on the myths of Brazil? His internal critique would first isolate a lived present beneath the myth, which could be intolerable, the unbelievable, the impossibility of living now in 'this' society (*Black God and White Devil*) (*Earth Entranced*); then he had to seize from the unliving a speech-act which could not be forced into silence, an act of story-telling which would not be a return to myth but a production of collective utterances capable of raising misery to a strange positivity, the invention of a people (*Antonio das Mortes*, *The Lion Has Seven Heads*, *Severed Heads*).⁴⁸ The trance, the putting into trances, are a transition, a passage, or a

becoming; it is the trance which makes the speech-act possible, through the ideology of the colonizer, the myths of the colonized and the discourse of the intellectual. The author puts the parties in trances in order to contribute to the invention of his people who, alone, can constitute the whole [*ensemble*]. The parties are again not exactly real in Rocha, but reconstructed (and in Sembene they are reconstituted in a story which goes back to the seventeenth century). It is Perrault, at the other end of America, who addresses real characters, his 'intercessors', in order to prevent any fiction, but also to carry out the critique of myth. Operating by putting into crisis, Perrault will isolate the story-telling speech-act, sometimes as the generator of action (the reinvention of porpoise-fishing in *Pour la suite du monde*), sometimes taking itself as object (the search for ancestors in *Le règne du jour*), sometimes bringing about a creative simulation (the elk-hunt in *La bête lumineuse*), but always in such a way that story-telling is itself memory, and memory is invention of a people. Everything perhaps culminates in *Le pays de la terre sans arbres*, which brings all the ways together, or, by contrast, in *Un pays sans bon sens*, which minimizes them (for, here, the real character has the most solitude, and does not even belong to Quebec, but to a tiny French minority in an English country, and leaps from Winnipeg to Paris the better to invent his belonging to Quebec, and to produce a collective utterance for it).⁴⁹ Not the myth of a past people, but the story-telling of the people to come. The speech-act must create itself as a foreign language in a dominant language, precisely in order to express an impossibility of living under domination. It is the real character who leaves his private condition, at the same time as the author his abstract condition, to form, between the two, between several, the utterances of Quebec, about Quebec, about America, about Brittany and Paris (free indirect discourse). In Jean Rouch, in Africa, the trance of the *Maîtres fous* is extended in a double becoming, through which the real characters become another by story-telling, but the author, too, himself becomes another, by providing himself with real characters. It may be objected that Jean Rouch can only with difficulty be considered a third world author, but no one has done so much to put the West to flight, to flee himself, to break with a cinema of ethnology and say *Moi un Noir*, at a time when blacks play roles in American series or those of hip Parisians. The speech-act has several heads, and, little by little, plants the elements of a people to come as the free indirect discourse of Africa about itself, about

America or about Paris. As a general rule, third world cinema has this aim: through trance or crisis, to constitute an assemblage which brings real parties together, in order to make them produce collective utterances as the prefiguration of the people who are missing (and, as Klee says, 'we can do no more').