

IN PRAISE OF (LA) RABBIA

1. PREAMBLE

I venture to open with a premise or a thesis, if you like: *Anachronie* is the law of the archive. It is not that the archival image is necessarily anachronic; it emerges from the Archive dated, bearing the imprints of the time and the place of its provenance. While this is often, though not always, the case, the concept ‘anachronie’ refers not to this linear archeological time: of the ruin, the remains. Its referent rather is a unique temporality proper to the archival image in repetition / projection, namely, the each time singular time in which the projected image itself ‘projects’: not another image but itself, differently. It differentiates itself, redoubles over itself in time, projecting itself *simultaneously* on two different temporal planes: the one retrospective (of what it had been), the other prospective (of what it has become), whose differing — *anachronie* — constitutes its time.

Something happens in the repetition that is the cinematic projection (irreducible to the effects of the mechanical operation of the projector). In the interval between the past present (the time of *enregistrement*) and the future present (the always unique here and now of repetition), virtual traces of a present that did not pass develop on the skin of the celluloid *a posteriori*. Signs that Walter Benjamin calls ‘historical indices’ — missives from the past to an always unique future — arrive, become visible / legible for the first time.

In other words, the law of the archive is the law of repetition. If ‘there is no first term in repetition’ (if, as Deleuze says, ‘même notre amour d'enfant pour la mère répète d'autres amours d'adultes à l'égard d'autres femmes'¹), it is because all future projections are present, virtually, in the ‘first’ image, which repeats them. If authentic repetition, cinematic projection not only takes (up) time but temporalizes; a ‘fourth repetition’ (as I call it elsewhere in relation to Deleuze’s three orders of repetition²) breaches open an *écart*, a creative interval. From this a gap of time, which is an other time, sendings from the past to a future yet to arrive arrive.

This productivity, however, takes on different forms in the curious case of two films, the two *Rabbias* that are the subject of this essay.³ They present a curious, indeed, exceptional case, not only because they are ‘twin’ films, created by two different authors, bearing the same title, released at the same time and screened together in the same theatre;

1 ‘Even our childhood love for the mother repeats other adult loves with regard to other women’. Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1968), p. 28. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 17.

2 Zsuzsa Baross, ‘A Fourth Repetition’, in *Deleuze and Philosophy*, ed. C. Boundas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 98-117.

3 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La Rabbia*, 1963; Giovanni Guareschi, *La Rabbia*, 1963. In 1962, the producer Gaston Ferranti entrusts his cine-journals ‘Mondo libero’ to Pasolini ‘to make a film about a Martian descending to earth’. Finding, in the words of Pasolini, the ‘ideological and poetic essay’ too radical to release on its own, Ferranti decides to have its point of view ‘balanced’, as our ‘official’ discourse would say today, by the opposing ‘ideology and doctrine’ of Guareschi, a popular right wing novelist and editor of humorist publications. After a violent protest, Pasolini cuts his film to reduce its length to 53 minutes and the two films are released under the same title as part one and two of the same *La Rabbia*.

In 2008, Pasolini’s film was restored to what was believed to be its original form by Giuseppe Bertolucci. It is not for practical reasons alone that in my text it is the shorter version released in 1963 is discussed. Restorations, director’s cuts, all of different lengths, need not be considered more ‘authentic’ than the version signed off by its author.

or because while the one, the *Rabbia* of Guareschi, presents itself as the counter-film of the other, by Pasolini, the two are assembled from practically the very same archives.⁴ They are of interest here because the law activates itself in each differently. Passing through the dispositive of the projective apparatus of the two films, the same archival images differentiate differently. In each repetition / projection, wherein time itself bifurcates otherwise, there open different paths for missives from the past to the future that is our present.

2. IN SEARCH OF SIGNS

But I need to retrace my steps and begin again, elsewhere, with the immediate inspiration and provocation for this essay. As it is often the case, the two sensations appear together as different faces of the same creative experience: an encounter with George Didi-Huberman's treatment (*traitement*) of Pasolini's *La Rabbia* in the course of several conferences given in the Louvre,⁵ at the University of Toronto,⁶ and at the Cinémathèque Française,⁷ respectively. More precisely, what instigates these reflections is a set of more or less parenthetical, more or less developed remarks which, while not central to the presentations themselves, are indicative of the silent background against which Georges Didi-Huberman (GDH) makes his *geste* (of revalorization or at least repositioning) toward both the film and the cinema of Pasolini.

The remarks in question propose to consider as significant a) that *La Rabbia* is the first cinematic essay, in Adorno's definition of this term, assembled from archival images alone (news reels, the cine journals of 'Mondo libero') — so that today we would consider it a found footage film (FF); and b) by extension, that the film teaches us how to look at the later works of this genre, later by about two decades, by Harun Farocki, for example, or the pair of pioneer archivist-filmmakers working in Italy, Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci, or Chris Marker, but especially Jean-Luc Godard. One conference title, 'Godard *face à* Pasolini', even signals the intention that the revalorization re-order the relation Pasolini-Godard along a direct line of succession. The provocation is precisely this chronological genealogy, to which I immediately, almost instinctively say, no! As we know, and as GDH himself certainly knows (I suspect it is in the interest of another rhetoric that he makes this move⁸), it is not the precursor whose work illuminates that of the successor; it is the latecomer who appropriates, converts, claims, or reveals (as if by a photographic *révéléateur*, *après coup*) the earlier work as that of a 'precursor' and thereby positions himself/herself as a 'successor'. Deleuze's 'sombre précurseur' is thus an amber that awaits to be enflamed, *réchauffé*, by someone yet to come in the future. Or as Godard himself rephrases Sartre on the nature of this relation: 'It is the future that shows whether the past is alive or

4 The news-real archives of *Mondo libero*, 1951-58.

5 'Image, poésie, politique, à partir de *La Rabbia* de Pier Paolo Pasolini', Musée de Louvre, 28 janvier 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h622NTQNzXI>.

6 'Image, Lament, and Rage. Pier Paolo Pasolini's *La Rabbia*', *Jackman Humanities Institute*, University of Toronto, October 10, 2013.

7 'Cinéma de poésie: Godard face à Pasolini', Cinémathèque Française, 28 octobre, 2013. http://www.canalu.tv/video/cinematheque_francaise/cinema_de_poésie_godard_face_a_pasolini_conference_de_georges_didi_huberman.13658.

8 A latent hostility and the desire to dethrone Godard as the innovator par excellence who continually reinvents modern cinema colour especially the conference at the Cinémathèque, where GDH charges, not only that Godard ignores or fails to mention Pasolini in his interviews and in the early version of his *Histoire(s)*, but more seriously, that he fails to acknowledge his debt to Pasolini as the first who creates cinema in and through the montage of footage found in the Archive.

not.⁹ The relation precursor-successor is forged in *contre-temps* in / by the work (*oeuvre*) whose (*travail*) it constitutes.

If I insist on this anachronic logic, it is because it itself is cinematic, and doubly so: on the one hand, it is at stake and in play in all FF films, which need to activate it and for their performative effects depend on it; on the other hand, it is the cinema that makes it visible, i.e., shows it, *après coup*, to have been always already at work in other mediums, genres, and registers. (It is perhaps not by accident that one of the earliest evidence, which as Godard would say requires the eyes of a cineaste, comes in one of the *Testaments*: ‘you would not seek me if you have not found me.’) It is therefore in and through the lens / perspective of what the cinema of Godard, Farocki, Marker taught us regarding what an image can do that I intend to look at (*regarder*, to use this very precise term of Godard) both *Rabbias* as dispositives for passing images retrieved from the Archive through a fourth repetition. (I have no time here to discuss the notion that the *concept* of the Archive refers not to an empty container / depository of images [images ‘without imagination’, as charges Lanzmann whose *Shoah* includes not a single archive], but to an active register, productive of what Benjamin calls ‘bildlich’ events; or that FF is not just a genre of cinema but an apparatus, a cinematic dispositive that, in repetition, projects onto the screen of a future an entirely different film than the footage it finds. These complex relations are developed at length in my book *Posthumously, for Jacques Derrida*.¹⁰)

When in preparation for this essay I order a copy of Pasolini’s *La Rabbia*, which is rarely screened, the DVD that arrives in the mail includes the other *Rabbia* as well, whose existence I’ve completely forgotten about or perhaps never even known of. What strikes me right away at the very first viewing of the two films in succession is not their different content or ideological charge — which is announced just after the main title and is all the more accentuated by virtue of the many common elements in the two films’ materials (Africa, Cuba, Jazz, events of British royalty, return of prisoners of war). No, what strikes me — and it is this intuition in Bergson’s philosophical sense of the term that I intend to begin to develop here in a rudimentary fashion — pertains to a purely cinematic phenomenon unique to FF. It concerns the irreducible heterogeneity of the missives, the genre of sendings (*envois*) that arrive from the two films to the ‘now’ that is our present from their common past.

What is that quintessentially cinematic phenomenon? Let’s call them ‘Signs’. Or rather, the *sending* of signs. The cinema, says Pasolini, is a system of signs. And in the case of these, as in all FF films (and Pasolini makes a distinction between ‘cinema’, the medium, and ‘film’, the work), the signs are sendings to the future from the past. Chris Marker (CM), who is a great connoisseur and reader of these signs, borrows a line from Claude Roy’s poem to name them ‘le souvenir d’un avenir’: the memory of a future to come. In his own film, which carries this same title, the memory in question is archived, traced on the photographs of a certain Denise Bellon, whose extraordinary images, as Marker’s film shows, and I need to underline this repetition / redoubling of showing as essential, do not simply register a present that is now past; instead, what each photograph shows, and again, this showing is precisely what Marker’s film itself projects, is that while each image shows a past, ‘un passé’, it also ‘deciphers a future’ (*déchiffre un avenir*). In one poignant sequence a series of photographs from the early 1930’s — an age where the body is discovered as a new object of interest — captures the aerial views of bodies, sunbathing on the banks of a river: ‘C’est là que la mémoire déchiffre’, it is here that memory deciphers, we hear the voice of the narrator saying. Soon, he continues, bodies will be seen / shown /

9 Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, *The Old Place*, 2000.

10 Zsuzsa Baross, *Posthumously, for Jacques Derrida* (Brighton: Sussex University Press, 2011).

photographed in the same way, from high up in the air, but as exposed to falling bombs from the sky, stretched out dead on the ground or scattering like ants, following the passage of bombers called *Stukas*. (In his *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, Godard himself shows this scene as imprinted on the memory screen of the cinema, which recalls it: his montage sequence borrows Hitchcock's famous scene of frightened school children fleeing the birds attacking from the sky, but substitutes low flying war planes for the birds. This same scene — columns of refugees, attacked from the sky — also appears in Pasolini's *Rabbia*, but the images, as projected by the film, will not recall this memory.)

This concept, that an image, particularly the cinematographic / photographic image, is the bearer of memory — not of a present past which it preserves as memory trace, but the memories of a future — is formulated with greater precision by Benjamin in his *Arcades Project*, where he introduces the prodigious term 'historical index': the historical index of images, writes Benjamin, not only says that they belong to a particular time (i.e., are historical in Heidegger's sense of the term), but that 'they attain to *legibility* at a particular time' in 'a movement on their interior' that is 'bildlich'.¹¹ In other words, an index is destined to a particular future, is a sending to a unique 'now'. If it is to arrive, that future 'now' needs to arrive. In each image then a potentially infinite number of signs corresponds with a potentially infinite number of possible futures. Their actualization, like that of all sendings, is a precarious affair. The affair of a future that may or may not arrive.

This is then what I expect to find in each of the two *Rabbias*: a 'deciphering' of the future that is our present, a 'déchiffrement', moreover, that is 'bildlich' as says Benjamin, inexorably tied to the cinema, to its projection-repetition — across the distance of time — of images found, chanced upon and extracted from the Archive. (For this complex process see the chapter 'Cinema, memory, history' in *Posthumously, for Jacques Derrida*.¹²)

Almost immediately I encounter a series of unexpected paradoxes. True, *La Rabbia* of Guareschi is crude, a crude collage rather than a montage: an 'umorismo sciocco', I believe to hear Pasolini's poetic voice precociously speaking off screen of this cinema of vanity, which exploits its materials in the service of cheap cynicism and vulgar racism.¹³ It mocks and ridicules what it takes to be its 'age', but curiously, lacks precisely the intensity and the positivity of the passion that is rage (Aristotle calls it a strong emotion). Moved by a reactive (reactionary) anger, against 'communism', the USSR, 'homosexuality', liberation movements in Africa, justice at Nuremberg; animated by an empty pathos for patria, monarchy, and the family, the film is dated, like a ruin is dated. It itself is an archive. Still, it is Guareschi's film that foretells the future that is our present, albeit in a grotesquely perverted sense: the catastrophe that befell Africa and its liberation movements, gay / lesbian marriage (which he ridicules, though not in defense of the radically new forms of sociality both Pasolini and Foucault sought); our grotesque experimentations, not just with animals but with all living matter (his chosen example is a 'triumph' of Soviet science: grafted onto the neck of a healthy dog is a pathetically helpless second head, confusedly struggling to escape from its incomprehensible captivity); our normal and moral terror of

11 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 462-63.

12 'Toward a Memory of the Future: Cinema, Memory, History', in Baross, *Posthumously for Jacques Derrida*, pp. 27-54.

13 Pasolini denounces the film, violently, even before its release: 'I know very well, what will be your rage, your reactionary rabbia'; 'I know very well who will be insulted and who will be humiliated in your film', he writes (ABC, April 8, 1963) as the publicity campaign begins; and a few days later (Il Giorno, April 13, 1963): 'By an intermediary, Eichmann made this film [...] One sees a young white girl who gives a flower to a black man. Immediately after, she is covered by the insults of the commentator.' References cited in www.derive.tv/La-rabbia-La-Rage. English translation of the French translation is mine.

even the word ‘communism’... In comparison, Pasolini’s film — the exuberance it shares with liberation movements (‘the color of man, in victory, is the unique color of man’¹⁴); his faith in the future of Africa (also in his *Notes for an African Oresteia*), in the future of color, of color making its entry to the world of the occident, of Cuba, in space flights as redemptive ... may strike us today as naive, a blind ‘liberal angelism’.¹⁵ While in his *Notes*, Pasolini enthusiastically speaks of philo-chinese tendencies in Africa, shows a ‘barefoot bookstore’ displaying over paper spread out on the pavement magazines and books with Mao’s picture on the cover — it is Guareschi’s film that uncannily, cruelly, announces the new colonization of the continent presently in progress: ‘you have not been liberated, 700 million Chinese look at you with avid eyes.’

There are two principal reasons for caution here, however.

First, the missive, the *envoi* does not forecast, does not predict the future; on the contrary, it arrives to one, to a ‘now’, if and when this now arrives. It may very well be the sign of our time — of this ‘now’ a) that it is in the *Rabbia* of cynical hatred that we recognize our present as projected and b) that it is with regard to this efficacy as prediction and forecast that we would be tempted to measure / weigh the difference between these two forms and the two films called *Rabbia*. But more importantly, and this is the second reason for caution, the failure to be prophetic may not be a flaw or weakness but an expression of the poetic force of a voice that speaks not with or for fate and destiny, as does Medea, Oedipus, or Tiresias (all figures in Pasolini’s films), toward a future that is always already determined. Instead, it turns toward the present, to its ‘now’, as a present in the proper sense: an open horizon, undetermined, pregnant / swarming with virtual / possible futures. (We see this in the alternation between the prosaic and the poetic voice: the one declares: ‘Il Tanganika è libero’; the other replies: ‘una povera libertà’, a poor liberty; or later, ‘Victory will cost terror’, and again, ‘Victory will cost injustice’ [La vittoria costerà terrore, La vittoria costerà ingiustizia].)

But what is the present, in 1962 or 1963? The ‘joy of liberation movements’? The ‘emergence of color into the world’? The ‘shame’ of France in Algeria, the ‘black nights of Hungary’, or ‘death and victory’ in Cuba, in Algeria? Or rather, the question should be more precisely stated as: to what possible futures does this voice of *rabbia* open its present? What exit to an outside does it puncture in the terrible vision of the world — a ‘series of ugly things, a depressing procession of an international “I don’t give a damn”, the triumph of the most banal reaction’ — projected, ironically, by the erroneously named archives of ‘Mondo libero’?¹⁶

The second paradox is more difficult to address, namely, that the cinematic phenomenon I seek to find, the missive, which is the FF effect — the historical index par excellence that FF makes visible — I can find only in Guareschi’s *Rabbia*. The most prominent example comes in the sequence which ridicules the black man’s ambition, mocks his ‘total political maturity’, his ‘profound maturity’ for ‘democracy’ (today, the ideological term par excellence, says Badiou). The images taken during the chaotic celebration of Congo’s independence show the exposed flesh of a mass of chaotic bodies — ‘natives’ in an assortment of traditional costumes, drumming / dancing. The close-ups of rhythmically vibrating buttocks meant to suggest a primitive animality, in the service of

14 Translations of the Italian narration of the film are mine throughout the text.

15 Even before I would come to Pasolini’s defense, I recall Deleuze on the thorny subject of revolution: it is not an end or aim. It is a becoming, that is, always in the present tense. Gilles Deleuze, ‘Le devenir révolutionnaire et les créations politique’, interview with Tony Negri: http://vadeker.net/humanite/philosophie/devenir_revolutionnaire_creation_politique.html.html.

16 Cited in Roberto Chiesi’s ‘Introduction,’ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *La Rage*, trans. from the Italian by Patrizia Atzei et Benoit Casas (Nous, 2014), p. 8. Translation of the French translation is mine.

the annunciation: ‘a terrifying tragedy installs itself in Africa.’ Yet the sign of the future catastrophe, which is our ‘normal’ today — and here GDH rightly refers to Agamben’s notion that the state of exception has become the normal order of the day — this sign is inscribed elsewhere in the image. Invisible to Guareschi, or to the celebrating masses, it is registered automatically by the camera, is imprinted on the image. In the first row of the stadium sit impassively, in their sinister grey suits, a group of men, already wearing their dark sunglasses. Apart from the mass, but properly westernized, are the future leaders of the nation. And the perpetrators of the catastrophe.



3. TRAITEMENT (TREATMENT)

No such secret index or anachronic sign arrives to solicit my gaze from Pasolini’s screen, at least not as the pure effect of a 4th repetition. Why?

One reason lies with the uniquely, as one might say, heretically Pasolinian conception (treatment) of the cinematographic image.¹⁷

True, Pasolini is a reader of signs. Of the three voices that from the sound track watch over the passage of images, especially the poetic voice is attentive to signs: the snow covered landscapes in the winter of ’56 somewhere in Hungary (‘queste nevi erano dell’altr’anno / o di mille anni fa, prima d’ogni speranza?’ [these snows, are they from last year or from before a thousand years, before every hope?]; the material signs etched onto faces, faces of the desert, desert faces (‘who would say that the most profound sentiment of

17 As his many writing on the subject of the cinema as ‘The Written Language of Reality’ testify, Pasolini is much influenced by the early writings of Christian Metz, particularly, *Le Cinéma: langue ou langage*, and remains committed to a linguistic, indeed, semiotic model until the very end, even after it has been abandoned by Metz himself. The radical difference that sets him apart, however, from every schema, school and model is his concept of the real as itself being deciphered, indeed, constructed as meaningful by the subject cinematographically.

liberty is alive in the hearts of such humble faces?), the faces brigands and assassins ('that harbour the terrible sentiment the French call liberty'), tearful faces of refugees on the road, fleeing to exile ('these are our mothers, our old parents, grandchildren [...] this is the same snow, the survivors of days of tears'); or the face of a traitor or of Marilyn ('è possibile che Marylin [sic], la piccola Marylin ci abbia indicato la strada?' [Is it possible that Marylin, la piccola Marilyn, has indicated us the path?]); or again, the signs of the anachronism (but not the anachronic signs) of the papacy and its church, of British royalty...

These are, however, not 'bildlich' signs or, in any case, are not read or projected as such. As signs whose imprint becomes visible / legible on the surface of the second-hand image for the first time, with delay, as it passes through the projective apparatus of *La Rabbia*, that is to say, as signs whose belatedness is constitutive not only their appearance but also their being — being anachronic signs, untimely missives.

Unlike the cinema of Godard, 'ontologic' as says Pasolini, a continent inscribed in the universe Cinema,¹⁸ the cinema of Pasolini does not privilege the image over the real. His cinema is the written language of reality ('I would say this: reality is a cinema in nature'¹⁹). The two registers, while not equivalent, are analogic. Reality, always already cinematic, shows through and washes over the image, the carrier of *its* signs.

By consequence, *La Rabbia* will not mobilize with force the logic Derrida calls the dissemination of signs. It will not project its second-hand material as images that themselves project: compose constellations with distant images that recall or conjugate with one another in virtual series along networks of anachronic lines. (I, who am also a reader of signs, I do see however these virtual articulations forging bonds, for example, between the close-up of the face of that old woman on a flat back truck facing the camera without seeing it in the winter of 1956 ['black winters of Hungary', says the poetic voice] and that famous close up by the photographer Dorothea Lange of another tired nameless woman, fleeing the dust bowl in 1930's America. She too is too exhausted for tears.)



If and when Pasolini reads images for the signatures of time, he finds not the historical index, but the immemorial, that is, the timeless. Not the time-effect of a purely *cinematic* repetition (*images* of men and woman in columns on the road carrying their suitcase of poverty, for refugees are always *filmed* that way), but the timeless procession of the same

18 'La poétique de Godard est ontologique, elle se nomme cinéma'. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *L'Expérience hérétique: langue et cinéma* (Paris: Payot, 1976), p. 150.

19 Pasolini, 'Sur le cinéma', in *L'Expérience hérétique*, p. 199.

figures in history, the same migration, the same snow, the same tears: ‘these are our mothers, our children and grandchildren, our old parents, these figures of semblance, survivors of the days of tears — who cry. Forty-three, forty-four, years of the same whiteness, with their ineffaceable snow, with their hereditary tears.’

On the screen it is the (same) history that repeats itself, not the multiple and incessantly becoming of *histoires* that pass through all the *histories* projected by the cinema (including Godard’s *Histoire[s]*).

A repetition without differentiation.

The second reason for the absence of signs that I sought in vain to find, and which requires the first as its condition of possibility, is *rabbia*: the emotion, the passion, the sentiment itself.

Rabbia speaks in the present tense. It does not look back in anger at the past, it does not foretell or warn the future. It addresses itself — judges, accuses, condemns, mercilessly, the present (which is why it is imperative that there be no gap, no interval — that is, differentiation — hypostatized between the real and its image). It addresses itself to the present ‘now’ that is contemporaneous with the ‘now’ of the image — even if the latter predates it by almost a decade in calendar time, as do the images of ’56 in Hungary.

In other words, the film is not found footage; its materials are not even ‘archives’.

But nor is the *rabbia* of the poet comparable to the anger (*colère*) the philosopher shares with his epoch. Philosophy, as writes Deleuze, ‘does not separate itself from the anger against its epoch, but nor form the serenity of which it assures us’.²⁰ The poets, instead, ‘these eternal indignants, these champions of intellectual rage, of philosophical fury’, writes Pasolini in ‘Traitement’, his manifesto of *rabbia*, charge themselves with creating, artificially, a state of emergency.²¹ Their *rabbia* is unshareable. It is the experience of the unshareable. It comes after words have failed, when discourse runs up against its impotence to persuade, to compel, to constrain, when words have been perverted, emptied of their meaning, used up, usurped. The ‘rabbioso’ as Pasolini calls himself is a solitary figure. A voice in the desert (as at the end of *Teorema*). A figure sentenced to death (the exemplary figure is Socrates) or assassinated in the darkness of the night.

So what comes after *rabbia*? For Pasolini, the cinema. His films are studies and variations in praise of *rabbia*:

Of the barbaric rage of Medea, who awakens from the slumber of despair, whose fury rises with the setting of the sun, on fire outside her window; who cries out with madness, with rage for justice: ‘O Dio! O giustizia cara a Dio! O luce del sole!’ (Oh God! Oh justice dear to God! Oh the light of the sun!). (Pasolini’s screen here becomes exceptionally ‘cinematic’ and spectacularly beautiful: as if to give itself over to Medea’s passion, it turns into a dizzying composition of superimposed revolving images. The screen itself trembles in an internal montage that alternates between close-ups and medium shots without cutting or moving the camera: the camera does not move, the editor does not cut, it is the commotion of bodies, of Medea, and of the women of the chorus, enclosed as if caged, in space, that creates the montage effect.)

Of the ancient or antique rage of Oedipus that irrupts on the sun-baked road where his passage is blocked by an angry old man. The killings are wordless. Each is preceded (or is it rather prepared for?) by a long inhuman howl — the first sequence lasting almost eight

20 ‘Il est vrais que la philosophie ne se sépare pas d’une colère contre l’époque, mais aussi d’une sérénité qu’elle nous assure’, Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Editions Minuit, 1990) p. 7. My translation in the text.

21 Pasolini, ‘Traitement’, *La Rage*, p.15.

minutes — followed by the cold sound of metal against metal, then its penetration into the matter of the body. This is *rabbia antica*: unscrupulous, its violence a-moral, that is, from before the ‘genealogy of morals’ by an uncomplicated (unfolded) conscience whose justness (rather than justice) is an extension — as Benjamin writes of natural law — of ‘his “right” to move his body in the direction of a desired goal’.²²

The howl in the desert that comes at the end of *Teorema* is a rage that already belongs to our world: disrobed, divested of everything, of property, of love, alone in the empty desert, the one who howls with his entire being, with his naked hairy body is incapable of words. For he does not understand himself why he howls, why he must howl.

In the same *Teorema*, she — alone in her car after a humiliating coitus in a dirty ditch by the roadside next to a church — lets out a hoarse, almost soundless scream. She has not even the strength to rage, to force out a proper scream.

As for the films themselves? They are the actualisations of poetic rage, from the early *La Ricotta* to the last terrifying *Salò*. In the first, the outrage about the death of a nameless figurant — forgotten, dying on the cross unseen, surrounded by the vulgar spectacle of the media below — is still tempered (or disguised?) by humour. Whereas the last film, *Salò*, a film of almost unsupportable violence and cruelty, is itself a long, uninterrupted scream. It howls at the world like Oedipus.

4. THE TEXT AND THE IMAGE

Having reached this point in my reflection, it would appear that the path I have been following so far, opened by GDH, passing from FF to Benjamin and Godard, is destined to miss its mark, fail to encounter precisely the singularity of *La Rabbia*. For while not the first cinematic essay, perhaps not even an essay as Adorno understands this term, and possibly not the strongest of Pasolini’s films,²³ *La Rabbia* is nonetheless a singular creation. It stands apart even in the corpus of Pasolini, itself an irruption, an island without organic connections (by tendencies, schools, influences) to the continent of the cinema. To my knowledge no other work — with the exception of the cinema of Duras, which will come later — privileges the text, or rather, the spoken word over the image this way.

Here, three distinct voices — the official (voice over of the newsreel), the prosaic and the poetic voice speaking Pasolini’s words — compose a complex, musical montage on the sound track. A montage of words *and* sounds, for words are also sounds. The voice lends its color, grain, texture, its unique melodic pitch to the words it speaks. The disembodied abstraction, the arbitrary code of Saussure is thereby taken up in another register — that of the senses and the sensuous, of sense as sensuous, whose experience is unmediated, acting directly on the body, on its senses, in ways an image cannot. The projected image, virtual, disembodied and distant, perhaps even abstract, is lifeless in comparison with the voice, always living, even if registered and archived. As Stanley Cavell says, a recorded sound is not a representation, it is the sound itself.²⁴ It issues from a presence, its resonance is that of a body that singularly marks it — by sex, time, age, fatigue, gender, mood.

Occasionally relying on music (a selection of mostly revolutionary songs, a melancholy motif from the Albinoni adagio), it is this montage of voices, voices that lend the body of their sound to the sense of words, make their sense resound, that drives the image track: it

22 Walter Benjamin, ‘The Critique of Violence’, in *Reflections* (New York: Harvest Book, 1978), p. 277.

23 The only sequence that Pasolini is said to have wished to preserve was the montage ‘Marilyn’.

24 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

subordinates the flow of images (which follows a rather conventional method of montage linking common themes and counter-themes) to its sense. If in FF cinema, the second-hand, often banal images are reworked on the interior, here they acquire a depth, a complexity, a potency by virtue of the three voices that, from the outside, implant their sense, contaminate and infect the images with the sense and the force of their own passion.

The official voice, anonymous, its programmed enthusiasm bright, speaks the discourse of ‘normality’ that the *Traitement* denounces as ‘empty, stupid, vain and lying words’;²⁵ it reassures (and assures) that normality is all around us: ‘two thousand year old ceremony’, ‘the clearest victory, quasi crushing, of the democratic labour unions’, or ‘the young queen [...] swears on the bible: “I will do with the aid of God.”’

The prosaic voice, now somber, now meditative, now ironic, retorts (for example, on the coronation ceremony of Elisabeth II): ‘The form [...] the most arrogant form of the absence of the soul...but these capes, these mountains of gold, petrified small spirits [...] who would have said in ’45?’

To both, the poetic voice replies softly: ‘Ah, dolce regina’, sweet queen, bourgeois wife.’ The leading voice in the composition, that of the poet Giorgio Bassani, it renders the words of Pasolini with a melodic piety, with pathos, or hope, or desperation. It mourns (death in Cuba, in Naples, of Marilyn in Hollywood), it rejoices, it hopes (with Gagarin’s ‘purifying flight’) ... it protests.

But most of all it judges, renders justice, pronounces a merciless justice, not only with regard to injustice (Ah Francia, l’odio! Ah Francia, la peste, Ah Francia, la viltà’ [Oh France, the hate / Oh France, the pestilence / Oh France, the cowardice], but also with regard to the justice of the injustice of combat, of victory (‘La vittoria costerà terrore / la vittoria costerà sudore / la vittoria costerà ingiustizia [...] i fratelli attaccati al terrore antico, i fratelli nella loro ferocia, innocenti’ {Victory will cost terror, Victory will cost the sweat of effort, Victory will cost injustice [...] brothers attached to ancient terror / bothers in their ferocity, innocent}).

The voice of the poet denounces ‘the voice of stupid humour, the fear of culture [...] the voice of everyday vulgarity,’ of the ‘powerful consenting to the gayness of subalterns’. It reclaims the justness of words, it claims justice to words, abused, used up, usurped, emptied of their meaning (‘If one does not cry long live liberty with humility, one does not cry long live liberty; if one does not cry *evviva la libertà* with laughter, one does not cry *evviva la libertà*; if one does not cry *evviva la libertà* with love, one does not cry *evviva la libertà*’).

It restitutes to words the power to name: the guilt of Stalin (‘Le colpe di Stalin sono le nostre colpe’ [the sin of Stalin is our sin], the shame of France; the ‘terrible sentiment’ the French call Liberty; ‘on the dirty rags’ and the scars of a tortured skin, on ‘my bare nudity (*nudità scheletrica*), over ‘my mother, the gypsy’ and ‘over my father, the shepherd, ‘my bother, the brigand’, ‘my gigolo comrades’, ‘my comrades unemployed’ [...] (it) write(s) your name (*tuo nome*) Liberty’.

This voice also *speaks* poetry. Setting itself against the fake enthusiasm of the official enunciation, but composing with the prosaic voice, measured, its range confined to a narrow band of moderation, the poetic voice signs. It sings the words, it sings the phrases, it syncopates: terRRibile, inno-CEnti, vitTTOria, comBAttare, bellEzza, ricchEzza ... Only a notation borrowed from contemporary music could do justice to its melodic lines, the variations of its refrains, its respiration, its repetitions.

This montage of voices — which now appropriates, now takes charge of what images say or show, which now accompanies, now mocks or mourns or cries, or screams over

25 Pasolini, *La Rage*, p. 16.

what they project — turns *La Rabbia* into a film to be watched by the ears. And yet, the image is not illustration. It becomes not only ‘expressive’ but ‘formally different’: the substratum that supports, holds up the voice on another plane. In between the two, the image-plane and plane of sounds, unfolds (*La*) *Rabbia*. The film and the sentiment, each complex, each many times folded.

5. THE MISSIVE

Can it be that no sending, no missive arrives to us today from the force of such a composition?

If there is a missive, if one does arrive, it is neither anachronic nor untimely. Pasolini speaks in our time. We are his contemporaries. The sending therefore is not a memory image, nor a reminder, which is why we could not see it right away. It concerns a memory we cannot remember. (As Deleuze, also speaking of our desert time says, the absent unknown will not be missed: ‘On ne remarque pas l’absence d’un inconnu.’²⁶) And the memory we cannot recall, the unnoticed absence, is precisely *rabbia*: not the sentiment or the passion but the faculty itself. It is not just that words and phrases — communism, rebellion, resistance, revolt, uprising, liberation struggle, working class, ferocious innocence, piety, terrible sentiment ... — have fallen out of our vocabulary, not just that the power of words has been turned against them, hollowing them out, emptying them of their meaning. All this was diagnosed by Pasolini himself. It is the faculty, the capacity to rage that has atrophied, fallen into oblivion.

Such is the missive that may be reaching us from *La Rabbia*, today, at the time of planetary wars and of planetary survival, when the survival of the planet itself is at stake, and when the state of emergency — still holding up the promise of an exit from ‘normality’ for Pasolini — has become the norm.

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²⁶ Deleuze, *Pourparlers*, p. 175.