

# ARE WE THE ACTORS OF OUR OWN LIFE? NOTES ON THE EXPERIMENTAL ACTOR

In his *De institutione oratoria*, the first-century lawyer Quintilian distinguishes between three types of arts: the *theoretical* arts, which rely on speculation and the knowledge of things and require no action, such as astrology; the *practical* arts, which involve action and “the action once performed, nothing more remains to do”, such as dancing; and the *poetic* arts, which “achieve their purpose in the completion of a visible task: such we style productive”, such as painting (QUINTILIAN, 1953: 347). It is clear that the film actor achieves a synthesis of these three dimensions of art, leaving us the task of figuring out how he achieves the first, “the intelligence of reality”, in Quintilian’s words; how he undertakes the second, that is, the performance; and what type of image he creates.

Unless we refer blindly to a Civil Code which abstracts, cuts and simplifies for legal purposes, we will never exactly know what a body, a person, a man, an equal, the self or our neighbour is. The ordinary experience of the undefined is often intensified: for example, in the mirror test, the test of the doubt,

of the swoon or the spectacle of an actor whose performance transforms the undefined into expressiveness. [... The actor is the site of this doubt and of this investigation. In this sense, he is, anthropologically speaking, an experimental laboratory, irrespective of the aesthetic tradition to which he belongs.] Whether he is caught in the trap of a repertoire, rebels against the sign or has no point of reference at all, the actor puts the representation to the test with his body and sets himself up as a quasi-subject. “Being is *what requires creation of us* for us to experience it” (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1968: 197).

## 1. The actor rebels: Marlon Brando-Delphine Seyrig

In the hand-to-hand tussle with the imaginary, dedicated and confined to the symbolic, the whole set of delegation practices at work in a society are connected and associations with other representatives (the politician, the artist, the bard, etc.) are generated. It is often confused, for the worse (Ronald Reagan) or the better (Bob Dylan, Doors singer Jim Morrison, star of the excel-

lent experimental film *HWY: An American Pastoral*, [Paul Ferrara, 1969]).

### The actor's social function

"Man is the singular animal who watches himself live" (Valéry, 1983: 57). Adopting the form of parietal footprints, drawings, engravings, paintings and all kinds of live performances, he surrounds himself with effigies which allow him to delimit his experience, to redesign the collective rituals, to banish for a moment the terror that can be inspired by the meaninglessness of life and, more recently, throughout the history of performance, to question his own identity. By his nature, the actor challenges familiar existence, an existence that is needy even in its emotional habits, as his job involves transporting life to the territories of creation, beginning by turning to the possible or the impossible, by reaching towards or away from existence. Most often the actor raises an effigy of confirmation that can be used to verify a condition of the world and of its representation. He may also create a defector that takes a position on the negative side or that contests the rational forms of knowledge and signification.

### Actors who agree/refuse to play: Marlon Brando

Opposed to the immense mass of actors who agree to play and col-

laborate with the dominant ideology (whatever that ideology may be) and who are happy and proud to support it with their complacent reflections, there are initiatives by actors who rebel not only against the images, but also against the prevailing codes of symbolisation. The work of an actor is also defined by what he refuses to play or do, such as Gian Maria Volonté's refusal to attend the Cannes Festival in 1972, where two of his films were to be presented, in solidarity with Pierre Clémenti, imprisoned in Italy, and with Lou Castel, expelled from the same country<sup>1</sup>. A beacon in this respect is Marlon Brando, who staged a brilliant ploy in 1973. Nominated for an Oscar for his role in *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), Brando refused to attend the ceremony and sent in his place a young Apache woman, Sacheen Littlefeather, who read a speech denouncing the depiction of Indians in films and on television. It was later revealed that Sacheen was a Mexican actress named Maria Cruz. Despite his landmark performances in *On the Waterfront* (Elia Kazan, 1954), *Queimada!* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1969) or *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1976), Brando's masterpiece is really *Meet Marlon Brando*, a documentary by Albert and David Maysles, who followed the actor around in 1965 (a date long before Hollywood's alignment with the counterculture movement), while he was promoting the film *Morituri* (Bernhard Wicki, 1965). Marlon Brando, at his most energetic, sabotages with irresistible irony every industry norm, and takes the journalists (who are delighted to escape for a moment from their own servility) along for the ride.

Lois Leppart (KMSP-TV, Minneapolis): It's a wonderful show, I've talked to people who have previewed it and they tell me...

Marlon Brando: I don't think we should believe what we hear. Even if it's a good report, and even if it's a bad report. We have to make up our own minds about

it. I think that's essential. And don't... You shouldn't... make up your mind about that picture until you see it.

Lois Leppart: You know this is sort of your whole personality. In a capsule. Not to believe...

Marlon Brando: How do you know what my personality is?

[...]

Bill Gordon (KGO-TV, San Francisco): We haven't seen the picture yet, but I'm here to tell you I'll bet it's a great picture, isn't it, Marlon?

Marlon Brando: It sure is, pal. No, all the pictures that they make in Hollywood are really great films, and everybody knows that!

Bill Gordon: They haven't made a bad picture there in...

Marlon Brando: ... in ninety years!

Bill Gordon: That's right. *Lassie gets Bar-Mitzvah*<sup>2</sup>, that was probably the last bad picture that I think Hollywood made.

Marlon Brando: Bill, it's been wonderful talking to you and, gee, that's a real checkered coat... and... Vote for Willie!<sup>3</sup>

Marlon Brando's example inspired his whole generation. For example, Vanessa Redgrave, in her speech at the Oscars (for *Julia* [Fred Zinnemann, 1977]) announced her professional plan: "America is gangsterism for the private profit of the few [...] I choose all my roles very carefully so that when my career is finished I will have covered all our recent history of oppression". Becoming a great actress entails having a vision of the world and of the role we play in the *theatrum mundi*.

### Delphine Seyrig

This conviction was shared by Nicholas Cassavetes. When John Cassavetes told his father that he wanted to become an actor, he expected vehement disapproval. But his father, a descendant of the civic-minded Greek culture that gave us democracy, told him: "Son, be a worthy representative; it is a great responsibility to represent the lives of human beings." Delphine Seyrig, with the bea-

*Meet Marlon Brando* (Albert y David Maysles, 1965)





Delphine Seyrig in *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, 1976)

ring of a Greek statue and the face of Athena, has embodied that sense of responsibility even in her most trivial choices.

We can view the fulfilment of the actress' work as a political catalyst in Delphine Seyrig's collaboration with Carole Roussopoulos, which gave rise to three major cinematic essays. In *SCUM Manifesto* (Carole Roussopoulos, Delphine Seyrig, 1976), Seyrig gives one of her best performances as she recites with her melodious and deliberate voice the incendiary and brutal words of Valérie Solanas, shattering Seyrig's principle of an unbreakable alliance between aristocratic grace and radical subversion. *Maso et Miso vont en bateau* (Nadja Ringart, Carole Roussopoulos, Delphine Seyrig, Ioana Wieder, 1975) offers a wild, hilarious and direct critique of the naïve feminism of Françoise Giroud, criticised in a broadcast of "Apostrophes". "Television images do not and cannot represent us. It is with video that we tell our stories." This conclusion from *Miso et Maso vont en bateau* became our profession of faith." By 1974 Delphine Seyrig had thus formulated the project that would become *Sois belle et tais-toi* (Delphine Seyrig, 1981): "One thing I would like to do is a kind of film with other actresses of my generation. Because the common de-

nominator that I have with all women is that I'm an actress. I think all women are forced to act. Basically, actresses only do what all women are asked to do. We do it more thoroughly, because we felt the desire to go all the way with it (this dress-up). I'd like to talk to other actresses and find out how they got here" (BERNHEIM, 1974: 98). *Sois belle et tais-toi* was filmed with Carole Roussopoulos in Los Angeles in 1975 and later, in 1976, in Paris. Delphine Seyrig asks twenty-two actresses about their job: Jane Fonda, Anne Wiazemsky, Juliet Berto, Maria Schneider, Viva, Barbara Steele, Ellen Burstyn, Jill Clayburgh... to compile a collective testimony of the reduction of the image of the woman to certain archetypes imposed by the film industry and by images in general, resulting in a paucity of roles for actresses. Jane Fonda, an emblematic figure in the fight for civil rights and against the Vietnam War, describes the reification of the actor in Hollywood in the following terms \*\*:

I'll never forget the first day I went to Warner Brothers for a makeup test. It was the first time I was going to be in front of a camera. They put you, as every actress knows, on a chair that looks a bit like a dentist's chair: lots of light on your face and all the men like surgeons, men, a bunch of guys, like surgeons all around

you. Yes, you see people, heads of the makeup departments from the main Hollywood studios, very, very well-known guys who have created the big stars: Garbo, Lombard and all the rest. Then they made up my face and they stood me up and I looked at myself in the mirror and I didn't know who I was. I looked like someone off a production line... With eyebrows going in all directions, huge lips like an eagle's mouth. They told me that I should dye my hair blonde because that was the way it had to be. They wanted me have my jaw broken, to get it fractured by a dentist to highlight my cheekbones. To mark my cheekbones... I had pretty cheeks a bit like a teenager's... Joshua Logan, who was the director (and also my godfather!), told me: "With that nose you'll never be able to play tragedy, because you can't be taken seriously with a nose like that." And finally, the word came from the top that Jack Warner, the head of the studio, wanted me to wear fake breasts; he didn't like women with small breasts. So it was very clear, I was a market product and I had to get fixed in order to be saleable because they were going to invest money in me. They never fixed my jaw, or my nose, but I did wear fake breasts, blonde hair and lashes for... ten years. This means that I, Jane Fonda, was here [big gesture with both arms towards her left] and that this image was there [big gesture with both arms to her right] and there was this alienation between the two.

As Susan Tyrrell, the actress in *Fat City* (John Huston, 1972) and later in *Cry Baby* (John Waters, 1990), bluntly puts it: "I don't know what I'll do but I won't be greater, or stronger, by playing the part of a blockhead. These blockheads they write about have little minds, and I... should I play the part of the good little woman to pay my rent?"

More than anything else, Delphine Seyrig fought against this degradation polemically affirmatively. Thanks to her critical elegance, her discernment and her fertile activism she managed to escape it by creating the complex and powerful characters of Hélène Aughain (in *Muriel* [Muriel ou le temps d'un

retour, Alain Resnais, 1963)), Jeanne Dielman (in *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* [Chantal Akerman, 1975]), or Anne-Marie Stretter (in *India Song* [Marguerite Duras, 1975]); by creating the dreamlike silhouette of *Last Year at Marienbad* (L'Année dernière à Marienbad, Alain Resnais, 1961) or the very different burlesque allegory of Mary Magdalene in *Mr Freedom* (William Klein, 1969).

Carole Roussopoulos's last project was a film dedicated to Delphine Seyrig, who passed away in 1990. Roussopoulos herself died in 2009, leaving the film unfinished.

## 2. Invention of a mode of criticism: the Jack Smith/Andy Warhol/Nico constellation

Moving on a different stage from that of the real world gives the actor certain kinds of freedom. Moderation and excess, simplification, complexity, oblivion; acting is a protocol that enables any experience of expression, behaviour, feasibility, links between phenomena, or the intelligibility of things. This is one of the most profound issues affecting the actor (and especially the film actor): as they are the result of broad cultural processes, notions of person and personal identity are revealed through the actor's work, which exposes and lays bare the way in which the links between a creature of flesh and its *imago* (the ideal self, psychic projections in general) are tied and untied. Thus, our beliefs about identity, the individual, the self and others are clarified or given concrete form in the existential melting pot that is the work of an actor. The actor, an experimental laboratory of identity, redefines the accepted configurations or develops before our eyes specific prototypes of beings that can be inscribed, not only in the history of ideas and images, but also in our social reality.

### Mobility: the actor against impersonation

On a hypothetical array of human inventions, modern empiricism views

personal identity as pure illusion, the imaginary synthesis of sensory impressions through the abusive transference of primary relationships (similarity, contiguity and causation). We "run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation" writes Hume (1978: 254), who, to describe the disappearance of individual identity, creates that beautiful image of a theatre without a scene (in the sense of *sce-*

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*nium*). "The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, repass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is composed" (HUME, 1978: 253). This leaves nothing but a specific dissociation, as the person dissolves into a flow of heterogeneous sensations conducive to illusions of continuity, and the actor can add the flow of his own variations to the great swell of appearances, contours, shadows of beings or phenomena that inhabit the psyche and our impressions of the world.

One of the greatest poets of unstructured appearance was the US experimental performer and filmmaker Jack Smith. Like Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith lived in a state of fascination for the

Hollywood imaginary and, also like Kenneth, through his imitations he breathed life, desire and madness into the industrial icons and made them truly beautiful. However, whereas Kenneth Anger worked on modern mythology with great seriousness, faithfully following the texts of the occultist Aleister Crowley much like Giotto adhered to the Gospel, the burlesque and fantasy-prone spirit of Jack Smith, who created wonderful texts in honour of Maria Montez (SMITH, 1997), let loose a population of creatures whose purpose is not so much to exist but merely to appear. Consumed by the simple fact of appearing, thrilled by their improbable character, they strictly do nothing but dance, droop and fall away. The action of a story is not necessary to have direct access to the myth: what is needed is to invent the behaviour of what a living image would be, a kind of awkward bas-relief that still has a little substance. Jack Smith aptly called them *Flaming Creatures*, the title of his film (1963), in which the stage names of the actors are as parodic as the names of their characters: Mario Montez plays Dolores Flores, Joel Markman plays Our Lady of the Docks. Under her real name the great Judith Malina (the founder of The Living Theatre together with Julian Beck) plays The Fascinating Woman. The performances and films of Jack Smith, a pioneer of the gay-kitsch-camp aesthetic, had a great influence on Andy Warhol, whose films constitute the documentary version of this style.

In 1963, Andy Warhol played a part in Jack Smith's *Normal Love* and shot the film's "making of". Warhol adopted from Smith his actors (Mario Montez, Naomi Levine, Beverly Grant, etc.), the notion of "Superstar" and, above all, the principle that, in order to get to the heart of cinema, all that is needed is to document the presence of the bodies. Warhol's contemplative minimalist style allows the actors to develop their own *imago* and offers us a series of unforgettable portraits: sometimes pure documents (such as the *Most Beautiful* series), and sometimes simple portraits,



such as the *Screen Tests* series (1965), in which Ronald Tavel, off camera, interrogates the actors. "I made my earliest films using, for hours, just one actor on the screen doing the same thing: eating or sleeping or smoking; I did this because people usually just go to the movies to see only the star, to eat him up, so here at last is a chance to look only at the star for as long as you like, no matter what he does and to eat him up all you want to. It was also easier to make" (WARHOL in O'PRAY, 1989: 57)<sup>5</sup>. Minimalist, fetishistic, contemplative, obsessive and literally *hungry* in every sense, the Warholian portrait produces incomparable epiphanic effects. With his program of scopic devouring ("eat him up"), Andy Warhol unwittingly realises Jean Epstein's dream: "Never before has a face been so close to mine. It follows me even closer and yet it is I who am following it, face to face. There is truly no space between us; I absorb it. It is within me even as the Holy Sacrament. My faculty of vision is at its keenest" (MITRY, 1997:71).

The films with Edie Sedgwick or even *Chelsea Girls* (Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey, 1966), in turn inspired the contemplative and minimalist aesthetic of Philippe Garrel, an artist on a quest for epiphanies, who dedicated an immense fresco in celebration of Nico and several film essays to the exploration of the relationships between actors and characters: *Un Ange passe* (1975), *Elle a passé tant d'heures sous les sunlights* (1985) and *Les Baisers de secours* (1989). Thanks to Warhol's and Garrel's fascinating portraits (followed by those of Gérard Courant's Zanzibar group), cinema acquired a materialist and poetic *anima*.

Thomas Lescure: A critic, exasperated by the silent, almost motionless images of *Athanor* compared them to a series of slides.

Philippe Garrel: Someone, no doubt who was ignorant of what a breath is. (GARREL, LESCURE, 1992: 65).

Philippe Garrel's *Le Berceau de Cristal* (1976) depicts, mostly using still single-take scenes, a series of portraits

of characters isolated from each other; Philippe Garrel himself, Tina Aumont, Margareth Clémenti... and especially Nico, who thinks, writes, composes; in her monumental countenance we witness the time of creation, as if we had entered the spiritual abyss of Sappho or of some other mythological poet. But in the last shot, Nico raises a revolver and shoots herself in the temple: what we had understood as creative self-absorption suddenly needs to be reconsidered in terms of a meditation on death, the work she was writing was a will, the portrait a *memento mori* and therefore also a conceit, the vibrant time of poetic duration, the documentation *sub specie aeternitatis* of an inevitable fleetingness.

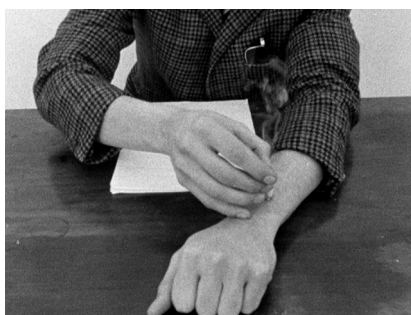
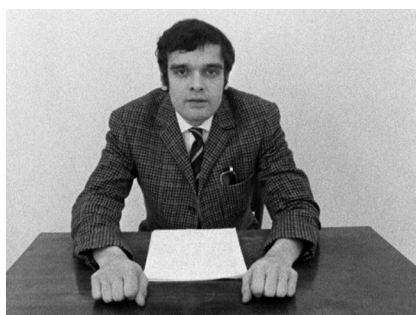
### 3. Constructivism: the actor against illusion

The filmmaker and, frequently, actor who systematised throughout his work the question of the cinema actor is, undoubtedly, Jean-Luc Godard. Typically, instead of artificially building characters in *Pierrot le Fou* (1965), for their dialogues Godard gave Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina the exercises that Stanislavski had written in *Building a Character* (1930). Godard brought back planning into the film shot and, in consequence, the actor to his work (*A Woman Is a Woman* [Une femme est une femme, 1961]), the self-portrait of the extra in his status (the re-

flective "Été André, cinema extra" from *Pierrot le Fou*), the lampoon of mimicry of a militant actress (*Letter to Jane: An Investigation About a Still*, 1972), the poetic essays on the direction of actors and the process of building figures (*Scénario du film Passion* [1982], *Petites notes à propos du film 'Je vous salue, Marie'* [1983]...), the exposure of the presence of the body as strict passage of bodies into the frame (*Grandeur et décadence d'un petit commerce de cinéma*, [1986])... Godard was constantly analysing the technical, historical and political factors that governed the work of the actor. His constructivist project recalls the poetics of sketching, such as that introduced to cinema by Jean Rouch, when one of the members of the Hauka movement declares to "the genius of strength" that he is going to possess him: "I'm listening to you, but I haven't got here yet" (*The Mad Masters* [Les Maîtres Fous, Jean Rouch, 1955]). Under this title, Godard's whole range of reflective propositions about playing constitute a theoretical version of a traditional Chinese practice, the variability of actor's positions in relation to his acting, which sometimes gets closer to and sometimes moves away from what he is playing: "there is nothing fixed, just a constant modification of the relationships; it is the show that constructs the main aspect, while the identification, the lived experience, is just a secondary aspect" (BANU, 1998: 85).

*A Woman Is a Woman* (Une femme est une femme, Jean-Luc Godard, 1961)





*The Inextinguishable Fire* (Nicht löschesbares Feuer, Harun Farocki, 1969)

*La Chinoise* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967) is a Marxist-Leninist adaptation of a Goethe novel published in 1796, whose original title was *Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Calling* and which was later called *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Goethe organises a quasi-montage alternating between chapters of action (sentimental) and chapters with dialogues about art, its forms and functions, *Hamlet* being the privileged topic. In the same way, *La Chinoise* alternates between domestic scenes and scenes reflecting on representation, politics and action. Godard's Guillaume Meister, played by a Jean-Pierre Léaud at the height of his artistic prowess, offers us a definition of the actor explicitly inspired by Bertolt Brecht but also, more subtly, by the great movement of *happenings* practised and theorised by John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg and, especially, Allan Kaprow, who had just published *Assemblages, Environments and Happenings* (1966). The example of a Chinese student who calls the press to reveal his unharmed face under his bandages becomes the paradigm of an actor's job:

Guillaume (*talks directly to the camera, hesitantly*): An actor, mmm, it's hard to explain. Yes, yes, yes. I agree (*laughs, confused*). Mmm... I'll try to show you something, it will give you an idea about what theatre is. [...] Then, of course, the reporters began to rail about it: "But these Chinese people are all story-tellers, comedians, what does all this mean?" and they hadn't... they hadn't understood a thing (*punctuates his phrases with a persuasive gesture*). No, they hadn't understood that it was theatre...

While Guillaume continues, a board appears with drawings and a typed text: "Where is the new theatre? Theatre is a laboratory".

Guillaume (*off*): ...real theatre is a reflection on reality. I mean it's like (*photo of a young Brecht*) Brecht or like... like... (*picture of Shakespeare*) Shakespeare!<sup>16</sup>

It is impossible not to recall the performance of Harun Farocki in *Inextinguishable Fire* (Nicht löschesbares Feuer, Harun Farocki, 1969), who burnt himself with a cigarette to represent the violence of napalm on the bodies of Vietnamese.

Through this portrait of the actor as an activist responsible not only for reflecting the world but also for analysing it and changing it, Godard introduces us to what Claude Lefort called the *savage mind*: "The mind that makes its own law, not because it submits everything to its will, but because it submits to Being; it is awakened by contact with the event to contest the legitimacy of established knowledge" (LEFORT, 1961: 286). Through his practice, through his energy, because he no longer wants to impersonate, the actor has the means to contest everything, to begin everything anew. In this sense, the work of performers-filmmakers is crucial.

### Conclusion: Imperative acting (imperative needs of acting): the little boy from Luanda; the man from New York

Dancers, visual artists, musicians and, of course, performers could be the source of powerful experimental initiatives in the acting field. This is the case, to name a few classic examples, of Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schne-

mann, and Wolf Vostell in the United States; Yoko Ono in Japan; Valie Export and Otto Muehl in Austria; Maurice Lemaître, Sylvina Boissonnas and Ben Vautier in France; and in Germany, Joseph Beuys or Harun Farocki who, apart from his own performances and film essays, in 1984 made a beautiful portrait in *Peter Lorre – Das doppelte Gesicht* [Peter Lorre – The Double Face].

But I would like to conclude by quoting the work of those actors from whom acting means engaging in real activism, such as Lou Castel, Gian Maria Volonté, Tobias Engel or the actors filmed by the filmmaker Raymundo Gleyzer, both amateurs and professionals, who risked their lives by playing during the Argentinean dictatorship. Raymundo Gleyzer, a filmmaker who was a member of the Worker's Revolutionary Party (or PRT, for its Spanish acronym), started his career with anthropological films and reports (*Ceramiqueros de tras la sierra* [1965], *Nuestras Islas Malvinas* [1966]...). In 1971, he founded Grupo Cine de la Base [The Base Film Group] and began making interventionist films, such as *Swift, comunicados cinematográficos del Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo n°5 et 7* (1971), *Banca nacional de desarrollo, comunicado cinematográfico del Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo n°2* (1972), *Ni olvido ni perdón: 1972, la masacre de Trelew* (1972), *Me matan si no trabajo y si trabajo me matan: la huelga obrera en la fábrica INSUD* (1974). These films were shown for free in the streets and in factories: "Sometimes we showed them in theatres, for five dollars, for the bourgeoisie. It is necessary

for them to know what the revolution looks like”<sup>7</sup>. In 1973, Cine de la Base made a fiction film based on actual events, *The Traitors* (Los traidores, Raymundo Gleyzer, 1973), about the corruption of the Peronist union bosses. The actors, aware of the risks they were taking, offered their presence, their gestures, their voices and their vulnerability so that this fiction film could do justice to history, because “they believed films could be a weapon to defend the rights of the people.” Any one of these actors is more important to us than all the false stars put together. In 1976, when he was 34 years old, Raymundo Gleyzer was kidnapped, tortured and murdered by the military junta that had taken control of Argentina. He rejected any hierarchical distinction between director, crew, actors and extras. “We work collectively. Why should the director be the star? Before the stars were the actors, nowadays it is the director, next year it may be the extras... for us, poetry is not an end in itself. For us, poetry is a tool to change the world. We have to be useful, like the stone that breaks the silence or the bullet that triggers the battle”.

Beyond the narcissistic satisfaction experienced by the actor, beyond the socially organised entertainment institutions (built around the figures of the shaman, the priest, the orator, etc.), we sometimes find in a film an expressive impulse, the vital need for which inspires the construction of a symbolisation and the creation of a scene (in both the spatial and the narrative sense). In *A Luta Continua* (Bruno Muel, Marcel Trillat and Asdrúbal Rebeleo, 1977), a little boy from Luanda, in an effort to deal with the grief of losing his brother during the war, composes a

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song for him and, standing in the dust, sings through his tears, screaming out his beautiful song which is both a homage, a combat against the tears, a catharsis and an ephemera.

Another of these rare occurrences, in this case more accessible, combines the power of argumentation and of conviction that symbolization can achieve in acting and is directed to an audience: in an episode of *Far from Vietnam* (Loin du Vietnam, 1967), shot by William Klein, a bearded man on a New York street stands on a corner and yells: “Na-

palm! Napalm! Napalm!” Passers-by begin crowding around him, and when the man stops shouting, they began talking to each other about the Vietnam War. Both the little boy who sings for himself or his dead brother and the bearded man in the crowd trying to get those around him to react, these two very different performers who to express themselves have nothing but their bodies, their energy and their knowledge of a situation, embody the need for acting.

### Notes

\* This text is a new transcription of “L’acteur expérimental: 5 échantillons”. A conference organized by the Groupe de Recherche sur l’Acteur au Cinéma (GRAC), directed by

Christian Viviani, of the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, Paris, 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 2009.

\*\* The following quote is an English translation of Jane Fonda’s comment in the film, which was given in French.

\*\*\* The copyright holders of the images are not referenced in the footnotes since they belong to films currently discontinued in Spain, therefore we understand that the images have come into the public domain since no distribution company has purchased their license to commercialise them in our country. In any case, the inclusion of images in the texts of *L’Atalante* is always done as a quotation, for its analysis, commentary and critical judgement. (Edition note).

1 Interview with Lou Castel by David Pellecuer (unpublished in France).

2 T.N. Title ironically invented by the journalist who interviewed Marlon Brando.

3 Wendell Willkie, candidate against Roosevelt in 1940. The full transcription of the interview was published in the magazine *Squire* in February, 1965, and was reproduced by Albert Maysles: KASHER GALLERY, Steven (2007) *A Maysles Scrapbook: Photographs, Cinemagraphs, Docu-*

*Nuestras islas Malvinas* (Raymundo Gleyzer, 1966)



ments. New York : Steven Kasher Gallery: 141.

4. Roussopoulos, Carole. Letter to the author. 25 October 2006.
5. Andy Warhol was interviewed by Gretchen Berg in "Cahiers du cinéma in English" (May, 1967), extract by Michael O'Pray: O'PRAY, Michael (Ed.) (1989). *Andy Warhol. Film Factory*. London: BFI.
6. Transcription of *L'avant-Scène Cinéma*, 114, May 1971.
7. Interview by Terry Plane with Raymundo Gleyzer, Adelaide, Australia, June 1974.

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