

FROM MILITANT CINEMA TO ESSAY FILM. *LETTER TO JANE* BY JEAN-LUC GODARD AND JEAN-PIERRE GORIN

LOURDES MONTERRUBIO

CINÉMA MILITANT

The ultimate expression of political documentary in the French space is undoubtedly the so-called *cinéma militant* produced between 1968 and 1981. A film practice born from the political and social circumstances that led to May '68 and extended to the seventies, when it also died. Militant cinema, extensively studied in various volumes – Gauthier et alii (ed.) (2004); Biet and Neveux (ed.) (2007) –, is described by Sebastien Layerle as follows: 'The film commitments in the spring of 1968 transformed the boundaries that separated the professional from the non-professional, the system from its margins, the creative act from activism. The life of the militant film takes place outside the traditional circuits, thereby challenging corporatisms and institutions. Its moral and legal paternity was subverted by new work divisions among "teams", founded on collective and anonymous practice' (LAYERLE, 2008: 15-16). This cine-

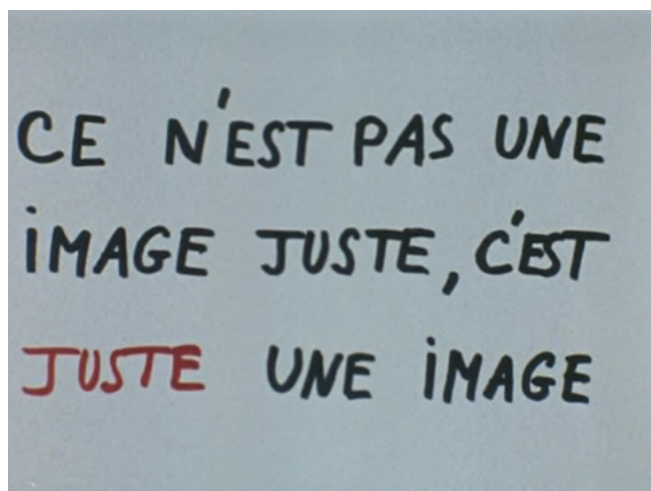
matographic commitment implied the abandon of the notion of *auteur* by various filmmakers, a concept inherent to modern cinema, in order to carry out a collective and anonymous filmic practice that becomes a political weapon, as promulgated by the manifesto *For a militant cinema* of the *États Généraux du Cinéma* (General States of the Cinema): 'for this reason we defend: the use of films as a weapon of political struggle [...] on which all militants involved exercise political control both in their making and in their dissemination'¹. Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard will be the most representative authors of this break. The first one organizes the collective film making of *Far from Vietnam* (Loin de Vietnam, 1967) in which the second one takes part, and both direct the production of *Cinétracts* in 1968. The first one creates the SLON group, later called ISKRA, and the second one the Dziga Vertov Group. This militant cinema, which is initially associated with *direct cinema*, evolves later into other spaces. Within this

evolution, Raymond Lecler analyses how the hybridization of direct cinema with fiction causes the rehabilitation of the *auteur* notion: '[...] it is due to the involvement in militant cinema of already recognized authors like Godard or Marker, and by drifting towards staging and fiction, that the notion of author is tacitly and progressively re-introduced' (LECLER, 2010: 60). This article aims to show how the consolidation of the cinematic form of the essay film in Jean-Luc Godard's work is the consequence of the evolution in his militant cinema experience. This relationship between *cinéma militant* and *ciné-essai* also occurs, albeit with different parameters, in Marker's filmic practice.

THE DZIGA VERTOV GROUP

In 1969 Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin founded the Dziga Vertov Group with the firm purpose of creating a revolutionary cinema, within the Maoist ideology in which both militated. Although their collaboration begins in the montage of *East wind* (*Vent d'Est*, 1969), the group will claim the authorship of the three films that Godard had made before, since the beginning of May '68 – *A film like any other* (*Un film comme les autres*, 1968), *British sounds* (1969) and *Pravda* [Truth] (1969) –, when he was already immersed in this revolutionary turn of his filmic work. Godard himself described what the purpose of the group was, differing from the militant practice of the moment: '[...] try to build a new cell that did not make cinema, but try to make political cinema politically, which was quite different from what the other militant filmmakers did'² (LEFÈVRE, 1983: 87). After nearly a decade as one of the established authors of the New Wave and more than a dozen films under the principles of the *jeunes turcs*, Godard announced the events of May '68 in *La Chinoise* (1967), a work that already evidences the change in the cinematic priorities of the filmmaker.

The production dynamics of the group's work is always the same: a European television commis-



Top. *A film like any other* (*Un film comme les autres*, Grupo Dziga Vertov, 1968)

Centre. *East wind* (*Vent d'Est*, Grupo Dziga Vertov, 1969)

Bottom. *Struggle in Italy* (*Lotte en Italia*, Grupo Dziga Vertov, 1970)

sions a film from the filmmaker par excellence of the New Wave to finally reject the result and refuse to broadcast it. Godard and Gorin, convinced that the production is the most important action and that their works are aimed at militant revolutionaries and not at the general public, continue with this form of production while the television channels provide them with the necessary funding. After *East wind*, the group accomplishes *Struggle in Italy* (Lotte in Italia, 1970) and *Vladimir and Rosa* (Vladimir et Rosa, 1970). Between these two works, Godard and Gorin travel to Jordan to shoot a film entitled *Jusqu'à la victoire* [To victory] (1970) about the struggle for Palestinian liberation, funded by the Arab League. Various kinds of difficulties and the events of the Black September delayed the film montage. During this trip, the *Al Fatah* newspaper published a text signed by Godard in July 1970³, which became a kind of manifesto for the group, in which the keys of this new filmic practice were established: 'Make a film politically. Show it politically. Distribute it politically' (GODARD, 2006: 138). The text vindicates the secondary task of the revolution, which they carry out in the cinematic field, and explains the need for implement the dialectical materialism in the audiovisual work through a montage practice that summarise the theories of the Bolshevik filmmaker Dziga Vertov, from whom the group takes its name. Daniel Faroult analyses the primacy of montage in the conception of this revolutionary cinema:

The primacy of the 'relations between images' over the images themselves is affirmed [...] Breaking with an ontologistic or immanentistic relation with the image, Godard reaffirms and develops the *vertovian* principle of the primacy given to the montage [...] Through the relations between images that it imposes or proposes, the montage establishes a causal, logical development of comparison. Thus, the filmmaker elaborates a conception of the world able to question representations. This montage then becomes the materialisation of thinking in film. (FAROULT, 2006: 134)

This embodiment of cinematic thinking already reveals the horizon of the essay film, where the montage must be established as the methodology of dialectical materialism, of the confrontation and questioning of images and sounds: 'It is imperialism that taught us to consider images in themselves, making us believe that an image is real. While common sense shows us that an image can't be anything but imaginary, precisely because it is an image. A reflection. Like your reflection in the mirror. What is real, is first of all you, and then the relation between you and this imaginary reflection' (GODARD, 2006: 139-140). Hence, revolutionary action involves destroying this imperialist practice to create new images and sounds, new relationships between those elements that shape the revolutionary cinema of the class struggle. Under this new prism, Althusserian theories about the concept of *ideology* as a set of small daily practices (developed in *Struggle in Italy*) are claimed in the cinematic field. The act of seeing a film implies also an ideological practice: if the spectator *consumes* the images as *real*, without questioning their construction, he will be performing an imperialist ideology. If, instead, he receives the images as manipulated reflections of reality, he questions himself on the relations between them and, so indispensable, between images and himself; then the spectator will be performing a revolutionary practice in the viewing of the film. Therefore, the filmmaker's revolutionary task is twofold: to disable the logic of the chain of images imposed by imperialism – *destroy their images* – and to create new ones that show the contradictions of the revolutionary movement and of the class struggle in order to be able to solve them through their analysis.

Jusqu'à la victoire was never completed as a film by the group. It was in 1974 when Godard and his new partner, Anne-Marie Miéville, took up this material to create *Here and elsewhere* (Ici et ailleurs, 1974). Finally, *Tout va bien* [Everything's all right] (1972) and *Letter to Jane: an investigation*



Tout va bien (Jean-Luc Godard y Jean-Pierre Godard, 1972)

about a still (1972) were the last two works by the Godard-Gorin couple, no longer belonged to the group. These two inextricably linked films inaugurated a procedure later widely used by Godard: the revisitation of a fiction for the creation of an essayistic work that explores the spaces of the former from the point of view of the latter.

TOUT VA BIEN

Once the production system funded by television companies from different European countries is no longer possible, Godard and Gorin decide to get a new film off the ground, *Tout va bien*, which means the return to the established film industry thanks to the inclusion of two stars in the project: Jane Fonda and Yves Montand. This choice does not respond to a mere commercial strategy. The directors' interest for both actors lies in the public image of militant leftist intellectuals that they have. What the filmmakers want to tackle in this film is the dialectics between the representation of the intellectual and his public image and political commitment. With the participation of both performers the film gets the necessary funding for its filming within a framework of imperialist production, the first of the contradictions shown in the work. Godard defines the film as a new offensive in the field of film industry, against those who want to see in *Tout va bien* a break with his revolutionary career: 'Being on the offensive today means making *Love Story*, but in a different way. It means to say: you are going to see a love film with your favourite stars. They love and fight each other as in all films. But what separates or joins them, we name it: it is the class struggle'⁴ (GODARD, 1998: 367). As for the choice of the actors, Gorin explains its motivation as follows: 'The important thing is to find which is here the role of the actor behind the term "star", and to make that this social function can be operational within the analysis of a given social situation'⁵ (GODARD, 1998: 370). By producing *Tout va bien* within the

film industry establishment, the project represents the most ambitious proposal of Godard-Gorin. The dialectical cinematic work of the couple is then settled in relation to a clear and inevitable question. After four years of *revolutionary experience*, a political assessment is demonstrated as essential. Gorin claims: 'If there is a question that *Tout va bien* poses, it is the following: "What do the advanced elements of the working class ask intellectuals, certain advanced elements of intellectuals?"' (GODARD, 1998: 374).

MAI 1968

MAI 1972

FRANCE 1972

TOUT VA BIEN

The film begins with these intertitles on the black screen. After them, the credits appear and we hear the clapperboard of different takes. Once historically and *revolutionarily* situated – the political struggle within the cinematic field –, the creators' voiceovers – a male and a female one – talk about the requirements for making a film: you need money and to create a story for the protagonists. Four years after the May 68 shown in the initial intertitles, it is time to take stock of the dreamt and rehearsed revolution: *tout va bien*. Suzanne is an American journalist working for the *American Broadcasting System* in Paris, in charge of the political chronicles. Jacques, his partner, is a film director dedicated to the advertising industry after May '68. Their relationship was forged then, and four years later it needs to be redefined by a materialist analysis, as well as the historical reality in which they live.

LUTTE DE CLASSES

1968 – FRANCE – 1972

The *today* of the couple must be built as a new synthesis based on the contradictions that these two Mays, separated by four years of struggle, cast. The demiurgic voices intervene again in the epilogue-synthesis of the work:

- And we will just say that he and she have started to think of themselves historically.



Letter to Jane: an investigation about a still (1972)

- Each his own historian.
- Me. France. 1972.
- France. 1972. History. Me.
- Me. You.
- Me. You.
- France. 1972.
- Each his own historian. We would be more careful and demanding about the way we live.
- Me, you, him, her, us, all of you.

The work synthesises a political and cinematic assessment. A political *tout va bien* with two opposing perspectives, the reactionary and the revolutionary one. A filmic *tout va bien* about the social function of cinema – commercial or political, imperialist or revolutionary – and about the individual responsibility of filmmakers in the future of the cinematic art. Continuing the revolutionary struggle means the acceptance of a constant recycling, in this case, the re-education of intellectuals in favour of the class struggle. *Thinking of oneself historically*, being one's own historian, as indicated by the creators' voices in the epilogue of the story, means to perform ideology in every personal and quotidian act, under one's own responsibility and revolutionary commitment, in order to put the *Self* at the same level as *History*.

LETTER TO JANE

On July 31st 1972, months after the release of *Tout va bien* in France – negatively received by critics and audiences –, the magazine *L'Express* published a report on Jane Fonda's visit to Hanoi in support of the North Vietnamese government and against the U.S. intervention. The main photograph of the report represented for Godard and Gorin the synthesis of the contradiction that they aimed to show in *Tout va bien*. For this reason, they decided to include it in the brochure that accompanies the presentation of the film in the Venice, New York and San Francisco Festivals. Besides, in the month of September, and in a single day of filming, they accomplished *Letter to Jane*: a fifty-minute long essay film born from the famous photograph. The intention of its directors was that this work accompanies *Tout va bien* in its premiere and tour around the United States⁶.

The title of the film defines the cinematic object created, an audiovisual letter to Jane Fonda – protagonist actress of *Tout va bien* and militant actress object of the report published by *L'Express* – about the already famous photo-testimony of her visit



Letter to Jane: an investigation about a still (1972)

to Hanoi. The letter aims to reveal the contradiction contained in this image, the contradiction the filmmakers wanted to tackle in *Tout va bien*, a film that they themselves consider as a failed attempt. They set out in their letter:

Today one often hears people say that cinema should serve the people. Fine. Rather than talk theoretically about the force and the virtue of *Tout va bien*, we are going to Vietnam. But we are going there by and with the means of *Tout va bien*. We are going to see if one may use the expression that way, how *Tout va bien* is working in Vietnam. And then, from this practical example we eventually will be able to draw a few conclusions about what to do and what not to do; each of us like how he is, with his life, his boss, his money, his desires, etc.

The letter, enunciated alternatively by the voices of Godard and Gorin, is then revealed as the most appropriate device, in the dialectical spirit of its authors, to create a speech addressed to different audiences: Jane Fonda, the spectators, the critics, the militants and the empire. Through the semiotic analysis of the photograph and its dialectical confrontation with frames of *Tout va bien* and other still materials, the filmmakers want to face the same question posed by their previous work in the fictional territory, but now from the field of the essay film: 'What part should intellectuals play in the revolution?' In doing so, they aim to reveal the contradiction of its implementation: Does Jane Fonda contribute to the cause of the Vietnamese people with the publication of this photo or does she contribute to the political manipulation of the situation on the part of the U.S. government? While the cinematic fiction has remained in the realm of theory, the photographic reality has imposed its practical response. Thus, *Letter to Jane* proposes the dialectics between the photographic imperialist image and the cinematic revolutionary one, through the presence of Jane Fonda in both materials, playing the same social function.

Through the semiotic analysis, the photo is revealed as a built reflection of reality that directs its interpretation and conditions the proposed question. The photo is not a reality that each observer can evaluate, but a previous and built response of the questions that it should raise. The question is no longer 'what can we see in this photo?' but 'what does this photo make us see?' The message the Vietnamese people want to convey is manipulated by the American capitalism. The *photographic letter* is therefore intervened and rewritten, which in turn destroys the actress work in other spaces, such as the cinematic one in *Tout va bien*. The individual responsibility of the revolutionary struggle in all areas is then stressed, showing the dialectics between the role that the Vietnamese people ask the actress to play and

the one that she finally carries out, performing the imperialist manipulation of the revolutionary message through the social function of a militant actress.

After the analysis of the photographic image, it is time to perform the consequent political practice. Faced with the photo already taken, and despite its manipulation, revolutionary political action is possible through its publication, by means of a different way to make it known. That other method is the one *tried* in *Tout va bien* – facing the hegemonic capitalist way represented by Fonda's photograph –, which finally achieved its successful materialisation in *Letter to Jane*. The comprehension of the relation between the filmic construction and really, not considering the former as a reflection of the latter but as spaces for the implementation of an ideology, is the political conception of the filmic work of Godard and Gorin, that of putting cinematic thinking at the service of political reflection. In the written text published in *Tel Quel*, which extends beyond the sound text of the film, the words of Godard and Gorin conclude: 'That is the reality, two sounds, two images, the old and the new, and their combinations. Because the imperialist capital says that two merge into one (and only shows a photo of you) and social and scientific revolution says that one divides into two (and shows how the new fights the old in you)' (GODARD, GORIN, 1972: 90).

FROM MILITANT CINEMA TO ESSAY FILM

The evolution towards the essay film in Godard's work is the result of his intention to make revolutionary cinema. It is the cinematic activism what pushes the filmmaker to the practice of cinematic thinking. While it is true that we find essayistic elements in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (*Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, 1966) and *The Joy of Learning* (*Le gai savoir*, 1968), the first work of the filmmaker that responds to the characterization of the essay film as we understand it



Short-film *Camera-eye* by Jean-Luc Godard included in the film *Far from Vietnam* (*Loin du Vietnam*, 1968)

today is *Camera-eye*, his contribution to the collective feature film *Far from Vietnam*. However, the collective and anonymous experience of militant cinema, immediately after, vetoed the expression of subjectivity that Godard had carried out in that film. The works of the group nevertheless allowed him to experiment with different elements of this cinematic form. Thus, when the group disbanded, Godard and Gorin recovered the first person of the filmic enunciation to make *Letter to Jane*, which means the consolidation of the essay film after the first attempt of *Camera-eye*. The perceptible evolution between the two films can only be explained by the militant cinema experience that separates them. Before and after the revolutionary experience, they share their theme. In the first film we find the same reflection on the intellectuals' social role in the revolutionary struggle – in this case regarding Godard himself as a filmmaker – that we have already analysed about *Letter to Jane*.

The essay film is defined as an expression of the thinking process and the self-reflection of a subjective identity by the hybridization of fiction, non-fiction, and experimental cinema. A filmic form studied by different authors whose contributions have generated a broad theoretical itinerary thoroughly described and analyzed by Antonio Weinrichter (2007). Among them, Philip Lopate (1996) defends the need for the presence of a text (spoken or written) that represents a unique perspective trying to draw a reasoned discourse about a problem: a text expressing a personal view and containing a style intention. Josep Maria Català, for his part, places the essence of the essay film in its self-reflective characteristic, defining it as a filmic reflection through the dialectics between visual and sound materials 'in whose structure visible traces of the thinking process remain' (CATALÀ, 2000: 84). Later, José Moure (2004: 36-37) stresses the hybridization between fiction and non-fiction as the natural territory of essay film, and he points out the border

between the work accomplished and the work to be accomplished as its temporality. *Letter to Jane* responds to this characterization materialising a self-reflection that slips into the area of indeterminacy arisen between the fiction of *Tout va bien* and the non-fiction of the photograph published in *L'Express*, in order to develop itself in the historical temporality between the finished work and the one in progress. This essential concept of the *present of the essayistic creation* is largely generated by the epistolary device. In addition, Laura Rascaroli stresses the importance of the dialogical aspect and that of the spectator: 'The structure of the essay film [...] is that of a constant interpellation; each spectator, as an individual and not as a member of an anonymous, collective audience, is called upon to engage in a dialogical relationship with the enunciator, hence to become active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the text. The spectatorial position is in the singular, because the genuine essay film raises problems and asks questions, and does not offer clear-cut answers' (RASCAROLI, 2009: 35-36). More recently, Timothy Corrigan adds the relevance of the *public experience* of the subjectivity, understood as the meeting of the latter with the *everyday*. Places, people and events demonstrate the multiplicity and variability of the daily spatial and temporal experience (CORRIGAN, 2011: 32). In Moure's aforementioned article, he lists five characteristics of the essay film that encompass and synthesise those designated by the authors cited. Once again, in the letter by Godard and Gorin we find a perfect exemplification of all of them: relational operation of different cultural materials; revelation of a *thinking in progress*; simultaneity of the discourse and the reflection on it; presence of the author himself, *the essayist*; and dialogic communication with the spectator (MOURE, 2004: 37-38). If Moure thus delimits the essay film space, Alain Ménil provides it with two polarities: attempt-temptation and objectivity-subjectivity (MÉNIL, 2004: 98-99). *Letter to Jane*

is generated as an *attempt* of political practice from the *temptation* to the photograph published, in order to confront the alleged photographic objectivity with its perception, analysis and subjective interpretation, its investigation: 'There is no essay that is not, somehow, the experience of its own adventure, that is not at the same time a search, an investigation or an inquiry *concerning* or *on the occasion of*, the occasion of an invention, an invention of its own method and of its own process. There is no essay that does not include the wandering of thinking [...] what we call digression and which is the first and last condition of thinking' (MÉNIL, 2004: 101). *Investigation* and *digression* find in the epistolary speech of *Letter to Jane* an effective tool to develop what Ménil calls «meta function» (MÉNIL, 2004: 102). In addition to the analysis of the photograph, which means the metalinguistic research on the photographic language, the film carries out a metalinguistic reflection on the fiction cinema thanks to the presence of *Tout va bien* and on the essayistic form that the letter generates as it develops. All of this in order to materialise digression, to *practise thinking* as Alain Bergala defines it (2000: 14), which constitutes a fundamental concept of the essay film. Finally, it must be noticed that the works analysed also materialise the idea proposed by Jean-Louis Leutrat about the relation between the essay film and the form of diptych: 'I think the form of the diptych is perfectly suited to the essay "about" cinema. Why? Because it reveals something about the functioning of cinema, at least as we project it imaginatively: the principle of communicating vessels (one reel empties while the other fills, the vampirism of cinema...)' (LEUTRAT, 2004: 242). A formula started with the couple *Tout va bien*-*Letter to Jane* and developed extensively in Godard's later career, once the revolutionary struggle had been abandoned: *Every Man for Himself* (*Sauve qui peut* (la vie), 1979) and *A Few Remarks on the Direction and the Production of the Film Sauve qui peut* (la vie) (*Quel-*

ques remarques sur la réalisation et la production du film *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*, 1979); *Godard's Passion* (*Passion*, 1982) and *Scénario du film Passion* [Script of the film *Passion*] (1982); *Hail Mary* (*Je vous salue, Marie*, 1983) and *Petites notes à propos du film Je vous salue, Marie* [Small notes regarding the film *Je vous salue, Marie*] (1983). We should not ignore here the relation between the essayistic works and their discursive proposals – the letter, the script and the notes are enunciative devices of subjectivity through which self-reflection can be achieved. In all of them, as Leutrat indicates, there is a discourse about the cinematic fact, which in the case of *Tout va bien*-*Letter to Jane* revolves around the question of how to bring revolutionary practice into the audiovisual field. *Tout va bien* does it with Brechtian staging principles and *Letter to Jane* with the analysis and the questioning of every audiovisual element and its construction, both to enable a representation that is always the consequence and the proof of a political practice.

Considering all the above, we confirm that the essayistic method enunciated in *In Praise of Love* (*Éloge de l'amour*, 2001) had already its first materialisations in *Camera-eye* and *Letter to Jane*. This law of the essay is synthesised by Cyril Neyrat as follows: '[...] to compare, from one's own experience, to invent the comparison. When a new experience is placed on the balance, thinking emerges from the comparison with another one, recovered from the past and deposited on the other plate. Merleau-Ponty wrote it regarding Montaigne: "be aware means be elsewhere". "We always think elsewhere"' (NEYRAT, 2004: 168). Godard's essay films build on the experience gained from the *cinéma militant*, since the latter develops and experiments with the elements that are defining features of the former: the reflection; the montage as a tool for the confrontation of images and sounds, trying to banish his immanentistic perception; and the spectator as an active part of a dialogical practice.

The essay film arises then from the emergence of subjectivity in the revolutionary cinematic experience, turning reflection into self-reflection and ideological practice into digression, into thinking process. It is the reflection on how to perform a political action through the cinematic practice what generates the need for creating *a form that thinks*. The essay film thus reaches its autonomy to leave the territory of militant cinema from which it emerged. ■

NOTES

- * The images illustrating this article have been contributed voluntarily by the author of the text, who was liable for locating and requesting the proprietary rights of reproduction. In any event, the inclusion of images in the texts of *L'Atalante* is always done by way of citation, for their analysis, commentary and critical assessment. (Editor's note).
- 1 *Le cinéma au service de la révolution*, Bulletins des États Généraux du Cinéma n° 3, December 1968. Paris: Éditions du Terrain Vague.
- 2 Godard's statements for the film magazine *Cinéma 70* n° 151, quoted by Raymond Lefèvre in *Jean-Luc Godard*, Paris Edilig, 1983.
- 3 The text was reprinted in *La Palestine et le cinéma* (1977), edited Guy Hennebelle and Khemaïs Khayati. Paris: Éditions du Centenaire, pp. 205-211. Included in *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents*, from which we take it.
- 4 Interview realized by Ivonne Baby and Martin Even for *Le Monde*, 27 april 1972, p. 17. Reprinted in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard Tome I 1950-1984*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma.
- 5 Interview realized by Michel Boujut, Jean-Claude Deschamps and Pierre-Henri Soller for *Politique Hebdo* n° 26, 27 April 1972. Reprinted in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard Tome I 1950-1984*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, pp. 367-375.
- 6 At the end of that same year the text enunciated in English by Godard and Gorin was published in French, *Enquête sur une image*, in the magazine *Tel Quel* n° 52, pp.74-90.

REFERENCES

- BERGALA, Alain (2000). Qu'est-ce qu'un film-essai. In S. ASTRIC, *Le film-essai: identification d'un genre* (catálogo). Paris: Bibliothèque Centre Pompidou.
- BIET, Christian, NEVEUX, Olivier (dir.) (2007). *Une histoire du spectacle militant : théâtre et cinéma militants, 1966-1981*. Vic-la-Gardiole: l'Etretemps éd.
- CATALÀ, Josep Maria (2000). El film-ensayo: la didáctica como una actividad subversiva. In *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, n° 34, 79-97.
- CORRIGAN, Timothy (2011). *The essay film: From Montagne, After Marker*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- FAROULT, Daniel (2006). Never more Godard. Le Groupe Dziga Vertov, l'auteur et la signature. In N. BRENEZ, D. FAROULT et alii. (eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents* (pp. 120-126). Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou.
- GAUTHIER, Guy, HELLER, Thomas, LAYERLE, Sébastien, MARTINEAU-HENNEBELLE, Monique (dir.) (2004). *Le cinéma militant reprend le travail*, CinémAction n° 110.
- GODARD, Jean-Luc (1998). *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard. Tome I 1950-1984*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma / Éditions de l'Étoile.
- (2006). Manifeste, *El Fatah*, juillet 1970. In N. BRENEZ, D. FAROULT et alii. (eds.), *Jean-Luc Godard. Documents* (pp. 138-140). Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou.
- GODARD, Jean-Luc and GORIN, Jean-Pierre (1972). Enquête sur une image. In *Tel Quel* n°52, 74-90.
- LAYERLE, Sébastien (2008). *Caméras en lutte en mai 68 : "par ailleurs le cinéma est une arme"*. Paris: Nouveau Monde.
- LECLER, Romain (2010). La mue des « gaspilleurs de pellicule ». Ou comment les cinéastes militants ont réhabilité la notion d'auteur (1968-1981). In *Raisons politiques* n° 39, 29-61.
- LEFÈVRE, Raymond (1983). *Jean-Luc Godard*. Paris: Edilig.
- LEUTRAT, Jean-Louis (2004). Un essai transformé. In S. LIANDRAT-GUIGUES y M. GAGNEBIN (dirs.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 237-249). Paris: Éditions Champ Vallon.
- LOPATE, Phillip (1996). In the Search of the Centaur. In C. WARREN (ed.), *Beyond Document. Essays on Nonfiction Film* (pp. 243-270). Hannover, London: Wesleyan University Press.
- MÉNIL, Alain (2004). Entre utopie et hérésie. Quelques remarques à propos de la notion d'essai. In S. LIANDRAT-GUIGUES y M. GAGNEBIN (dirs.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 87-126). Paris: Éditions Champ Vallon.
- MOURE, José (2004). Essai de définition de l'essai au cinéma. In S. LIANDRAT-GUIGUES y M. GAGNEBIN (dirs.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 25-39). Paris: Éditions Champ Vallon.
- NEYRAT, Cyril (2004). L'essai à la limite de la terre et de l'eau. In S. LIANDRAT-GUIGUES y M. GAGNEBIN (dirs.), *L'essai et le cinéma* (pp. 157-170). Paris: Éditions Champ Vallon.
- RASCAROLI, Laura (2009). *The personal camera: subjective cinéma and the essay film*. London: New York: Wallflower Press.
- WEINRICHTER, Antonio (2007). Un concepto fugitivo. Notas sobre el film-ensayo. In *La forma que piensa. Tentativas en torno al cine-ensayo* (pp. 18-48). Navarra: Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de Navarra.

FROM MILITANT CINEMA TO ESSAY FILM. LETTER TO JANE BY JEAN-LUC GODARD AND JEAN-PIERRE GORIN

Abstract

The present article aims to show how the consolidation of the cinematic form of the essay film in Jean-Luc Godard's work is a consequence of the evolution of his experience in the *cinéma militant*, which emerges from the political and social circumstances that caused May 68. In the case of the filmmaker it is materialised through his participation in the Dziga Vertov Group. The defining elements of the group's filmic experience – the supremacy of montage, the dialectics between images and sounds and the relevance of the spectator as an active part of a dialogic practice – are the same that bring about the essayistic form when the film is enunciated from the author's subjectivity. With the analysis of *Letter to Jane* this paper tries to demonstrate how the emergence of subjectivity in the revolutionary cinematic practice allows the appearance of self-reflexivity and the thinking process that define the essay film.

Key words

Militant cinema; Essay film; Dziga Vertov Group; Jean-Luc Godard; Jean-Pierre Gorin.

Author

Lourdes Monterrubio (Madrid, 1975) graduated in French Philology at Universidad Complutense of Madrid, where she received her PhD in the doctoral program *Literature and visual arts. Comparative Studies*. She previously studied a degree in Film Directing at Madrid's Cinema School ECAM. She is an expert in the relations between French literature and cinema and she collaborated as film critic with the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma. España*. Contact: loumonte@ucm.es.

Article reference

MONTERRUBIO, Lourdes (2016). From militant cinema to essay film. *Letter to Jane* by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 22, 55-66.

DEL CINÉMA MILITANT AL CINÉ-ESSAI. LETTER TO JANE DE JEAN-LUC GODARD Y JEAN-PIERRE GORIN

Resumen

El presente artículo pretende mostrar cómo la consolidación de la forma cinematográfica del film-ensayo en la obra de Jean-Luc Godard es consecuencia de la evolución de su experiencia en el *cinéma militant*. Un cine militante que surge de las circunstancias político-sociales que dieron lugar a mayo del 68 y que en el caso del cineasta se materializa mediante su participación en el Grupo Dziga Vertov. Los elementos definitorios de la experiencia fílmica del grupo –la primacía del montaje, la dialéctica entre imágenes y sonidos y la relevancia del espectador como parte activa de una práctica dialogística– son los mismos que propician la forma ensayística cuando la obra se enuncia desde la subjetividad del autor. Con el análisis de *Letter to Jane* pretendemos mostrar cómo la irrupción de la subjetividad en la práctica cinematográfica revolucionaria posibilita la aparición de la auto-reflexión y del proceso de pensamiento definitorios del ensayo cinematográfico.

Palabras clave

Cine militante; film-ensayo; Grupo Dziga Vertov; Jean-Luc Godard; Jean-Pierre Gorin.

Autor

Lourdes Monterrubio (Madrid, 1975) es licenciada en Filología Francesa por la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), donde ha obtenido el título de doctora dentro del programa *Literatura y Artes plásticas. Estudio comparado de los distintos lenguajes artísticos*. Anteriormente cursó la diplomatura en Dirección Cinematográfica en la ECAM (Escuela de Cinematografía y del Audiovisual de la Comunidad de Madrid). Es especialista en las relaciones entre literatura y cine en el espacio francés y ha colaborado como crítica cinematográfica en la revista *Cahiers du Cinéma. España*. Contacto: loumonte@ucm.es.

Referencia de este artículo

MONTERRUBIO, Lourdes (2016). Del cinéma militant al ciné-essai. *Letter to Jane* de Jean-Luc Godard y Jean-Pierre Gorin. *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 22, 55-66.

Edita / Published by



Licencia / License



ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB www.revistaatalante.com MAIL info@revistaatalante.com