

**JEAN-LUC
GODARD
PHRASES
SIX FILMS**

**Translated
& with an introduction by
Stuart Kendall**



**A STORY
HAVE A B
NG, A MI
AN END,
NECESS
IN THAT**

SHOULD
EGINNI
DDLE, &
BUT NOT
ARILY
ORDER

Mannequin

JEAN-LUC GODARD PHRASES SIX FILMS

Translated

✧ with an introduction by

Stuart Kendall



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For Ever Mozart, JLG / JLG,
Les enfants jouent à la Russie,
Allemagne neuf zéro, 2x50 ans
de cinéma français and *Eloge de*
l'amour © 1996, 1998, 2001 P. O. L.
Editeur, Jean-Luc Godard

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INTRODUCTION

TRACES OF CINEMA

The texts collected herein consist of transcriptions of the spoken words from six films by Jean-Luc Godard. They were each originally released as individual books by the French publisher P.O.L. between 1996 and 2001: *For Ever Mozart* and *JLG / JLG* in 1996; *Germany Nine Zero*, *The Kids Play Russian*, and *2 x 50 Years of French Cinema* in 1998; and *In Praise of Love* in 2001. Each book carried the subtitle *phrases*, which can mean both *phrases* and *sentences* in English. The later four volumes also carried the phrase *sorties d'un film*, extracts from a film, presumably emphasizing their inherent incompleteness, not only as words without images, but also as words without some of the additional language that might help establish the context of any given utterance, indications as to who might be speaking, for example, or other incidental language.

Released in relatively quick succession, only the first and the last of the books appeared in near coincidence with the films from which they derived. *Germany Nine Zero*, the earliest film collected here, was made for French television in 1990. *The Kids Play Russian* was a project for an American distribution company completed in 1992. The French film company Gaumont commissioned *JLG / JLG* in 1994 as part of a retrospective of its films and for the upcoming centenary of cinema at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The British Film Institute commissioned *2 x 50 Years of French Cinema* in 1995, also in honor of the centenary of cinema. The feature film *For Ever Mozart* appeared the following year and *In Praise of Love*, the final feature included here, was released in 2001.

These were not the only films Godard made during this relatively short period, far from it in fact. Most significantly, a great deal of Godard's time and energy from the late 1980s to 1998

went into his monumental eight-part video series, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the first episodes of which appeared in 1988 with additional episodes appearing intermittently until 1998.¹ Unsurprisingly, a number of themes and in some cases actual text from that project echo throughout the texts gathered here. Godard referred to *The Kids Play Russian* in particular as a kind of “annex” to the *Histoire(s)*.² *2 x 50 Years of French Cinema* also stands in obvious relation to the video series and is in fact included as a supplement to the DVD version of the series released in region 2. Other films from the period include the features *Nouvelle Vague* (New Wave, 1990) and *Hélas pour moi* (Oh Woe is Me, 1993) & the videos *The Old Place* (1999) and *L’Origine du XXI Siècle* (The Origin of the 21st Century, 2000). *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, a collection of Godard’s texts, documents, and interviews edited by Alain Bergala, gathers materials from this period under the heading “the years of memory.”³ Though the film itself was not released until 2001, draft scenarios for *In Praise of Love* conclude that book, if not necessarily Godard’s work of memory.

Godard first approached Paul Otchakovsky-Laurens, the publisher of the essentially eponymous editions, P.O.L., in 1993, with a proposal to produce a collage-volume of images and hand-written texts derived from his then current film project, *Hélas pour moi*. The publisher and a graphic designer for the press examined Godard’s mock-ups without enthusiasm, leading the filmmaker to withdraw the proposal. Three years later, while discussing the possible acquisition of rights to film a book recently published by P.O.L., Godard proposed publishing a “book of phrases” based on *For Ever Mozart*. Otchakovsky-Laurens accepted this proposal and agreed to publish that book and the subsequent volumes in a form stipulated by Godard and notably distinct from the common formal conventions of published screenplays, scenarios, or film books. As noted above,

For Ever Mozart appeared in 1996, followed by the other five volumes collected herein. After *In Praise of Love*, Godard wrote to Otchakovsky-Laurens indicating that he wasn't interested in continuing the publications.⁴ Nine years later, P.O.L. published an altogether different volume of images and texts related to Godard's *Film Socialisme*; that volume is formally distinct enough from the earlier texts for it to merit publication on its own rather than within this volume.

During the period from 1996 to 1998 when the first five of these six books appeared, Godard was of course also working on another book project. Simultaneously with the completion of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in 1998, Godard published a four-volume boxed edition of carefully arranged images and texts from the video series through the French publisher Gallimard in its prestigious "Blanche" series, with a subvention from the Centre National de la Cinématographie and the Ministry of Culture and Communication — to keep the price of the luxurious volumes relatively modest. The project had taken two years of painstaking effort to complete, alongside the video series itself and the other projects. Godard had originally proposed a volume of images and texts based on *Histoire(s)* to the publisher Flammarion in 1989 though that project foundered when the publisher suggested reorganizing the material in a more straightforward and traditional format. The arrangement of the text in the Gallimard edition of *Histoire(s)* is similar to that of the text in the P.O.L. volumes, with, however, significant differences, most notably the inclusion of images.

During this same period and related to these projects, Godard also extended his collaboration with ECM, the German music label founded by Manfred Eicher. Godard and Eicher became friends in 1988, when Eicher sent Godard some CDs of music by Arvo Pärt and David Darling released by ECM. The sound quality impressed Godard, who then visited the ECM

studios and began using music by Pärt, Darling, and other ECM artists frequently in his films. In 1997, ECM released the complete sound track of Godard's 1990 film *Nouvelle Vague* on a two-CD set. A lavish four-CD boxed set, including the complete sound track as well as the text of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* — in French, English, and German — appeared two years later. More recently, in 2006, ECM released a beautifully packaged DVD edition of four films by Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville: *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (Hail Sarajevo, 1994), *The Old Place* (1999), *L'Origine du XXI Siècle* (2000), and *Liberté et patrie* (Freedom and Fatherland, 2002). The handsome booklet accompanying the DVD includes the texts spoken in the films. The availability of *Nouvelle Vague* on audio CD may in part explain its absence from the series of texts published by P.O.L.

Finally, it should also be noted that the two volumes of the previously mentioned collection, *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, appeared in 1998 under the imprint of Cahiers du Cinéma with a subvention from the Centre National du Livre. These volumes include, alongside essays, interviews, & working notes and documents, extracts of texts represented herein as well as the complete texts of some other films and videos.

Considering this veritable mountain of work — aside from the films themselves, eleven books over three years, plus CDs, at the peak — a number of questions beg to be asked. What logic might explain the diversity of forms, as well as the inclusion or exclusion of images? Why didn't all of these texts appear in one series issued by one publisher? What relationship links the various works to one another — the books to the films as well as the books to one another? How are the books related to the films?

The answers to some of these questions are undoubtedly quite simple and of only anecdotal or historical interest. Others however open onto issues with wider implications for Godard's work, and indeed the nature of communications media.

Godard's experimental and iterative approach to his work offers one easy and very general answer to some of these questions: every formal gesture affords an attempt to push the work into some heretofore unexplored capacity. Beyond that, the mere diversity — or perhaps rather diversification — of these forms is itself interesting as a means of dissemination, of carrying the works beyond the borders of cinema as an industry as well as beyond the frame of any one mode of production.

All of this in mind, we can say that these texts derive from a relatively discreet period of Godard's working life without either fully representing that period or fully cohering as a set or series of texts within it. They also stand in the shadow of, but in distinct relation to, his major work from those years, *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, as well as apart from the other films and videos not presented in this fashion. Can they be said to constitute a series, and if so, on what grounds? If they are minor works, it is undoubtedly in the best possible sense of that phrase, as in Artaud's injunction against masterpieces and in favor of works that are distinctly experimental and disruptive, divertingly fecund.

In an interview with Pierre Assouline published in *Lire* in 1997, when asked to describe the books collected herein, then only recently published, Godard replied: "Not books. Rather recollections of films, without the photos or the uninteresting details: 'the car arrives ...' Only the spoken phrases. They offer a little prolongation. One even discovers things that aren't in the films in them, which is rather powerful for a recollection. These books aren't literature or cinema. Traces of a film, close to certain texts by Duras."⁵

For a filmmaker, and to understate the matter considerably, Jean-Luc Godard has had a complicated relationship to the written word. In the interview with Pierre Assouline, Godard attributed his discovery of cinema not to the discovery of a great film, like *Citizen Kane*, but to that of a great book, André Gidé's

Les Nourritures Terrestres specifically, a book he received as a gift on his 14th birthday. His discovery was the discovery of literature, which is to say art, which is to say, in this equation, cinema.⁶ In *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, the notion appears like this: “with Edouard Manet / begins / modern painting / which is to say / cinematography / which is to say / forms that lead / toward speech / very precisely / a form that thinks.”⁷ Needless to say, this equation (literature = art = cinema = thought) is not necessarily common among writers, artists, filmmakers, or philosophers. Nor is it, strictly speaking, as simple as that, even for Godard himself. Books are books; paintings are paintings; films are films. The forms flow into & reflect one another but remain distinct: film, for Godard, and with significant implications, inherited the legacies — the potentialities as well as the responsibilities — of each of the other forms. To consider Godard in this light is to consider him, as he seems to want to be considered, within a broad and extended history of both philosophy and communications media, from cave painting to the present.

Nevertheless, and more narrowly, if Godard did not pursue a career in literature, it was in part because the technical apparatus of cinema — the camera, in short — offered him an alternative and a shortcut. As he put it in conversation with Marguerite Duras, “I hate writing. Not writing in itself, but the moment in which it comes, all of that time.”⁸ Later, in a different conversation with Duras, he said: “Writers intrigue me, that they dare to write. I haven’t dared. I was content to discover a mechanical object that doesn’t require you do to a great deal, if one can say that.”⁹ The camera offers a filmmaker a convenient solution to the existential threat of the blank page and the temporal demands of writing. Whereas a writer must carefully and patiently set a scene (“It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows...”), the cineaste simply points his camera and shoots; the scene is in some sense always already set (though of course

cinema requires an altogether different kind of patience, not to mention financing). Godard again: "What always frustrated me about literature was having to write one phrase after another ... Ok, I can write the first phrase, but I always asked myself: 'what will I put after that?' and I don't know ..." ¹⁰ In these more or less casual moments recorded in interviews, Godard's ambivalence toward writing shifts between uncertainty ("I don't know...") and aggression ("I hate writing") without however letting go of writing or literature as a referent in his work or life.

Godard's passage into cinema did in fact, and as is well known, cut through writing, specifically through writing film criticism, most famously for *Cahiers du cinéma* during the 1950s. Toward the end of that decade, when Godard and his friends at *Cahiers* — François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette — began making films of their own, they viewed them, at least in part, as a continuation of the critical gesture, as criticism by other means. During that period of apprenticeship, prior to making his own feature films, Godard also worked briefly in the publicity department for the Paris office of Twentieth Century Fox, preparing press kits. Both of these experiences would be of use as he began his career as a filmmaker. His intimate familiarity with the processes of publication, promotion, and critical discussion surrounding film production allowed him to participate in this realm with greater control, if not necessarily success, than would have been possible without such knowledge.

It is not too much to say that, from its point of inception, Godard's cinema has been deeply concerned with both the cinematic artifacts — the films themselves — and the apparatus — technical, cultural, as well as financial — surrounding them. Edited by Jean Narboni, the first collection of Godard's writings & interviews appeared in French in 1968. Subsequent volumes have appeared in the intervening years under the general title, *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*. ¹¹ Nor did Godard's

involvement with writing about or even writing *around* films end when he began making films. In May 1979, for example, twenty years after his first feature, and just prior to his return to feature filmmaking, he guest-edited a commemorative special issue — No 300 — of *Cahiers du cinéma*. Beyond criticism though, and even during his early years as a filmmaker, Godard also frequently produced or collaborated on the production of materials that might too easily be written off as either preliminary or promotional rather than as genuine extensions of, or supplements to, his films. In the case of *Une femme mariée* (A Married Woman, 1964), for example, he co-signed with the female lead, Macha Méril, a collage-book of images and texts based on the film, *Journal d'une femme mariée*.¹² Throughout his career, in fact, Godard has produced a number of audio recordings, synopses, video-scenarios, and other materials that might often best be understood as supplements to the films themselves, in the fullest sense of that term, works that at once stand-in for, and at least potentially replace, while nevertheless simultaneously standing alongside, redirecting, or even simply destabilizing the meaning of the original work. The texts gathered here function, at least in some ways, according to this logic.

And yet these texts might also be mistaken for film books of a very different kind. Before viewers could stream videos on demand over the Internet, anywhere, anytime, before VHS videocassettes, DVDs, and Blue-Ray discs made movies available outside of movie theaters or television broadcasts; before 24/7 cable television: books and other texts based on films served a kind of interim purpose, making the details of films — details of shots, plots, settings, & dialogue — available to interested readers who did not have access to the films themselves. Publications like these enjoyed a long history and readership in books and magazines devoted to film and the arts. In the absence of funding, ideas for films — particularly avant-garde or experimental

films — could be circulated as scenarios or shot lists prior to production. These publications flourished perhaps most prominently in the 1960s and 1970s, as cinema was beginning to be taken seriously as an art form and amid what was then comparatively widespread interest in international and art-house cinema. Along these lines, Godard published a number of scenarios and synopses in *Cahiers du cinéma* and *L'Avant-scène cinéma*, among other journalistic venues, in the 1960s and early 1970s, and permitted a number of books based on his films to be published during the same period.¹³ In France, a 1971 book based on *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (Two or Three Things I Know About Her, 1966) enjoyed perhaps the widest circulation. From even just a glance at these publications, it is clear that Godard himself did not always have a direct hand in their production. Moreover, however accurate or faithful they may be as representations of the films in question, these books offer a specific *a posteriori* view of them, often supplemented with images and descriptive insertions. They are clearly records of the films, in more or less scholarly form, rather than, as Godard says of the texts considered here, recollections; traces of the films. Records remain secondary and therefore all but entirely subservient to the films they attempt to represent. Recollections or traces serve a different function or perhaps rather simply admit the pull of a different power or necessity: as memory fades, recollection takes its place, transforms the thing remembered into something new without fully letting go of the trace of the memory.

At stake here is a question of genre that impacts a reader's expectations and experiences of a work. The texts presented herein are not film books in the traditional sense: they are not simply representations of absent films. Nevertheless, derived directly from films, and largely dependent upon them, they are also not literature, certainly not poetry, which, at first glance, they might seem to be. In the booklet accompanying the four

films distributed on DVD by ECM, the texts from the films, including some quotations reproduced in a different context herein, are presented in a different layout, as prose. Similarly, when Godard published excerpts from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* in the French newspaper, *Le Monde*, the text appeared in the layout of a more traditional essay. Even the back covers of each volume of *Histoire(s)* present excerpted text as prose. The format and function of the text fluctuates through these different instances of dissemination.

Each of these texts is also, and in significant ways, distinct from the others collected here in terms of the formal logic of the text, the laws of its composition, and the rules of the game that animates it. Some of these texts are more faithful to the films from which they derive than others; some omit a greater or lesser degree of incidental language from the film; some include the intertitles from the film, others do not; some use gaps in spacing for purposes of clarification or emphasis, some make much less use of spacing as a device within the text. It lies beyond the scope of this introduction to detail all of these divergences of form.

Works like these inevitably raise intriguing questions about originality, origin, representation, and fidelity. These problems are doubly complicated in the case of works by Jean-Luc Godard. Were the films in question typical Hollywood productions, we might look to an adapted novel or original story, or perhaps a scenario, screenplay, or shooting script as the possible point of origin against which to evaluate the fidelity of the final filmic representation as well as any secondary copy of that representation, like a film book. Godard however, and much to the chagrin of his financial backers, does not typically write screenplays or even synopses of his films before beginning to make them. Or, if he does, when filming actually begins, the proposed notes often fall quickly by the wayside in favor of scenes and dialogue written early on the day of shooting. Even when his films are

JLG / JLG

Autoportrait from December

AUTHORS QUOTED INCLUDE:

Anne Michel
Roger Leenhardt
Georges Bernanos
Louis Aragon
Pierre Reverdy
Henri Atlan
A.E. van Vogt
G.W.F. Hegel
Stendhal
Jean Giraudoux
Julien Green
André Suarès
Édouard Peisson
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Denis Diderot
Alexis de Tocqueville
Martin Heidegger
E.M. Cioran
Maurice Merleau-Ponty
Brice Parain
Ovid

THE SUCCESSORS
OF LÉON GAUMONT
PRESENT

JLG, JLG

exercise 174

JLG

JLG

AUTO PORTRAIT
FROM DECEMBER

start
assigning roles
begin
rehearsals
resolve
problems
of staging
carefully arrange
entrances and exits
learn one's role
by heart
work
to improve
one's interpretation
get into the skin
of the character

FRIMAIRE

to have
a role to
do the rehearsals
or the dress rehearsals
to give the first
show

BRUMAIRE

leading to
a success
a triumph
or the opposite
a failure
a flop

he had hope
but
the boy didn't know
that what was important
was to know
what had
him
what dark
power
could lay claim
to him

VENDÉMIAIRE

normally
it starts
like this
death
occurs
and then
mourning
begins
I don't know
why exactly
but I did
the opposite

DARK ROOM

I began mourning
first
but death did not come
neither in the streets
of Paris
nor on the banks
of Lake Geneva

MAGIC LANTERN

are you crazy?
so what
it's his test

it's over
he might
have been hurt
the three of us
did it last year
it didn't kill us

even later
it wasn't necessary
for me to go
to any distant
Samarkand
on the contrary
the risks came here
which is to say life

it's a stupid game
and the war of fire
to defend Toring
well
you let yourself down

no but, then
say
what must be done
yes, say
soon, perhaps

hence undoubtedly
the stunned look
I had
in that little photo
that didn't come
simply

from a slap
or a sprain
or even
from bending the rules
or the thought
of Judgment Day
and it should not be
the point
of this film
to determine why
no, I was already
in mourning
for myself
my sole
and unique companion
and I thought
that the soul
had tripped
over the body
and that it had left
without extending a hand

SEIN UND ZEIT

PROJECTION

listen, yes
but it's hard
it's
this business of culture

they mix everything
with art
and they have to
I wish I knew
Latin
in order to be clear
listen
I'll call this evening
ok
until then

ok, then
there is the rule
fine
there is the exception
fine
the rule
is culture
no
there is culture
which comes from the rule
which is part of the rule
there is the exception
which comes from art
which is part of art
everyone speaks the rule
cigarettes
computers
t-shirts
television
tourism
war
and then
no one says

VENTÔSE

in a sense
you see
fear is all the same
the daughter of God
redeemed the night
of Good Friday
she is not a pretty sight
no
sometimes scoffed
sometimes cursed
repudiated by everyone
and yet
make no mistake
she is at the bedside
of every agony
interceding for mankind

excuse me
excuse me

no one says the exception

say again

everyone says the rule
no one says the exception

excuse me
I said excuse me

it isn't said
it is not said
it is not said
it's written
Flaubert, no
Pushkin
Flaubert
Dostoevsky
it's written Flaubert
Dostoevsky
it's composed
Gershwin, Mozart
it's painted
Cézanne, Vermeer
it's filmed
Antonioni, Vigo
no
or it is lived
or it is lived
and then it's the art of living
Srebrenica
Mostar
Sarajevo
yes, and
the rule wants
the death
of the exception
the rule wants
the death of the exception
no

it's
no
it is therefore the rule
of Europe
of culture
the rule of the culture
of Europe to
arrange the death
of the art of living
that still flourishes
at our feet

in fact, a rhyme
always has
three things
Aragon explained it
in his rhyme
in 1940
in his broken heart

once it's time to close
the book
it will be without regretting
anything
I've seen so many people
live so poorly
and so many people
die so well

AFTER
THE REQUIEM

the image is a pure
creation
of the spirit
it cannot be
born from a comparison
that's true

but from bringing together
two more
or less distant
realities

did you know
that
I couldn't avoid it

the more the relation
between the two realities
brought together
is distant and just
the stronger the image will be
two realities with no relationship
cannot be brought together
usefully
no image
will be created
and two contrary
realities
do not come together
they oppose one another
an image

is not strong
because it is brutal or fantastic
but because the association
of ideas is distant
distant, and just

SAILING OUT OF LIVERPOOL

oh
how moving
are the pathways

THE ROOT
OF THE PROBLEM

of the unconscious
when one knows
that the two forms of existence
between which
the living sail
crystal and smoke
also designate
the tragedy of the death that
in my parents' generation
came down
on individuals
vehicles of this tradition
Kristallnacht
and the fog
of smoke

121

shall we say
the manifesto of the 121
shall we say
where doubt is absent
so is knowledge

125

if a blind man asked me
do you have two hands
it is not by looking at them
that I'll be certain

yes

I don't know

why

I would trust

my eyes

when in doubt

yes, why

wouldn't I check

my eyes

by looking

to see if I have

two eyes

Wittgenstein

On Certainty

Diderot

Letter on the Blind

she said

that only the heart

and wit

could win

her over

it was but one advantage
of being sightless
especially for a woman
never
she said
would any handsome man
turn her head
and she added
a surveyor
spends almost all of his life
with his eyes shut

and now Jeannot
Jeannot
which rhymes with stereo
stereo suits
dogs
and the blind
it always projects
like this
when it should be done
like this
but since we project
like this
and since I
while I listen
am here
opposite
receiving this projection
which I reflect
I am in the situation
that this figure describes

this is the figure of stereo
but this figure
if we look
in history
now
because stereo
also exists
in history
there was Euclid
and then there was Pascal
Pascal who reflected this
and this is the mystical hexagram
but in history
in the history of history
there was Germany
which projected Israel
Israel which reflected
this projection
and Israel found its cross
and the law of stereo
continues
Israel projected
the Palestinian people
and the Palestinian people
in their turn
carried their cross
that's the true legend
of stereo

NIVÔSE

PLUVIÔSE

goodbye
Mister Jean
I'll change the flowers tomorrow
come on, Clémence
goodbye, Clémence
what are you doing?
eh
a joke
she wants to hear another joke
oh, yes
what joke?
what joke do you want to hear
stop asking
it doesn't matter
it doesn't matter
very well
it doesn't matter
so, there is a family of sharks
watching an ocean liner
sinking
and the father says
to the two children
remember, kids
women and children first
ha ha ha
goodbye
Mister Jean

he was stupefied
but the curious thing was
that he felt no need to insist
on this point
a thing is not
what you say
it is
it is much more
it is an ensemble
in the largest sense
a chair
is not a chair
it is a structure
of an inconceivable
complexity
atomically
electronically
chemically
ah, and then
the thought
how a simple chair
constitutes what
Korzybski
calls an identification
and it's the totality of these identifications
that produces
nonsense
and tyranny

ROBERTO

inverno 1944
all'inizio della primavera
la guerra era finite

it's not that
but you look
so bored

JACQUES

can I help you
you know very well
and I've already told you
that there is only one way
to help me
and that
I was sure
she was going to help me
oh, you can be so
crass
fine
we'll leave you alone
but who helps you
here
remember that
we came from Corsica
just
to see you
me, I didn't ask for anything

we made an expensive trip
so that you could find
the producer
and get your money back
and you welcome us
by talking about horoscopes
with that awful
blonde

BORIS

NICHOLAS

how many men
have you forgotten
as many women
as you remember
don't go away
I haven't moved
tell me something nice
sure
what d'you want to hear
lie to me
tell me
all these years
you've waited
tell me
all these years
I've waited
tell me you'd have died
if I hadn't come back

I would have died
if you hadn't
come back
tell me
you still love me
like I love you
I still love you
like you love me

JEANNOT

thanks

the mind is this power
only to the extent
that it contemplates
the negative directly
the kingdom of France
and stays

ah, my country

and stays
near it

I've imagined you like this
for a long time
a blessed land
magical
stunning
oh beloved land
where are you

Музыка играет так бодро
Весело
И хочется
Боже мой
Пройдёт время
И мы уйдём навеки
Голоса
Сколько бы ни было

in der irdischen Gesellschaft
in der Welt des Geistes
in der jeder Mensch
entflieht
wenn ihn die irdische Welt
nicht mehr befriedigt

philosophy begins
with the ruin
of the real world

they will say that only he
exists
you only live
for him
I can no longer
see you
alone
never
you always
go out with him
you never leave him
you know
where you are

SIGNS AMONG US

I want a bright future
for him
you know
what kind of life you would have here
me
I had a bright past
a marvelous life
life with my sisters
the reprobates
my sisters
the condemned
your sisters in misery
yes

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Mister Jean
Mister Jean
Mister Jean
I'm leaving
the tragedy
in sexual relations
Mister Jean
Mister Jean
is the greed of souls
I'm leaving
what is it
Adrienne

the nanny's departure
good luck
Mister Jean
goodbye, Adrienne
Brigitte
Mister Jean
Brigitte
I'm not so sure
in the extreme confusion
that was
for this woman
all the things
of the earth
with difficulty
the sound of human
words
came to her
but
she could no longer make
sense of them
already her eyes
were fixed in the vision
that the dead contemplate
forever
the end of *Adrienne Mesurat*
thanks, Mister Jean
you are courageous
really
you'll find yourself
unemployed
no, no
Mister Delors said
yesterday

on television
that Europe
will build
large information
superhighways
there will be jobs
for everyone
there will be jobs
for everyone

grand larceny
can only occur
in powerful democratic
nations
where the government
is concentrated
in the hands of the few
and where
the state is charged
with running
vast enterprises
1830
Alexis de Tocqueville

this is the hour of the evening
that P.-J. Toulet
loved
this is the horizon that blurs
a large ivory cloud
setting
and
from the zenith to the ground
the crepuscular sky

the immense solitude
already frozen
full of a liquid silence
this is the hour
of the poet
who distills life
in his heart
in order to extract
the secret essence
fragrant
poisoned

I went into his room
one last time

this is the hour of the evening
the memory of the struggle
we both faced
came back to my memory
so strongly
that I thought I might faint

Paul-Jean Toulet

I pulled back the muslin veil
caressed her forehead
with my fingers
I said to her
be at peace
and on bended knee
she received that peace
oh wonder
that one can give

what one does not oneself
possess
oh sweet miracle
of our empty hands

while the band pours out
its slightly old fashioned program
among the ordinary crowd
I see you in the distance
and you, divine
in silence
your chin posed on a finger
eyes half closed
in thought
I hope it was of me

I am
Anne Marie

yes, yes, yes
I'll see
I'll see
inspēctor
cinema center
it's the inspēctors
from the cinema center
ok
see you later
Joseph
come in, gentlemen
don't waste any time
Mister Bernard
you've made

studies
books
photos
Mister André
films
copies of films
in 1955
J.L.G. said
that films
would never be seen
on television
only copies

be quite Cassandra

this idiot
J.L.G.
he should have known
that by creating
two, three Vietnams
ipso facto
he would create
two, three Americas
yes, even here
we see the results
for America
1, 2, 3, 16 shelves
for Germany
2 shelves
for Russia
1 shelf
for Italy, the same

and Vietnam,
is a character
help
help
but first a few facts
since the truth
is among them

ah, Jean Renoir
 a whole set of shelves
 this idiot J.L.G.
 Mister Jean
 anything else to declare

be quiet, Cassandra
 anything else
 to declare

yes
 Europe has memories
 be quiet
 Cassandra
 America has T-shirts
 your perspective
 on the Berne convention
 and the GATT accords
 films are merchandise
 and we must
 burn the films
 I said to Langlois
 but note
 with inner fire
 art is like a fire
 born from what it burns
Man's Hope
 André Malraux
 in 1914
 Senator McBride
 told congress
 trade follows films

in 1939
 in *The Rules of the Game*
 after *Grand Illusion*
 and *The Dictator*
 by his friend
 Charles Spenser Chaplin
 they foresaw
 a second world war

IN PRAISE OF LOVE

AUTHORS QUOTED INCLUDE :

Count Hermann von Keyserling

Robert Walser

Robert Brasillach

Georges Bataille

Georges Bernanos

Emmanuel d'Astier

Jehan Rictus

Jean Anouilh

Charles Péguy

E.M. Cioran

Maurice Blanchot

Jacques Drillon

Simone de Beauvoir

Paul Celan

Robert Bresson

François-René Chateaubriand

and then
the first moment
do you remember the names
no, no
perhaps they weren't spoken
no, I don't know at all

the end of a demonstration
then she was with a male friend
who called
and then
to please him
she
sewed a yellow star
on her jacket
and then we hear
some guys arrive
and then she writes
something
unemployed, use the time to start
thinking
yes, and at just that moment
the guys arrive
they see the yellow star
try to tear it off
telling her
if you want to see some fascists
well, here they are
then they beat her
until she's unconscious
and then there are people who
what a time
and if you were asked
if it was up to you

a trinity of histories
the beginning
the end

pass the time
don't move
humans remain

what if you had to choose
film, theater, novel
or opera
what would you choose
the novel, I think

I'm leaving

ok, so we have a project
and it relates
something of the history
of three couples
there are the young, the adults
and the old
and this something
is one of the moments
of the four moments of love
to know
the meeting
the physical passion
then the separation, then
the reconciliation
and you, what would you play in that
and you
what would you play in that
I think that I
would play the young girl
who
I'm thinking of something
suppose his name is
Perceval
and her name will be
Églantine
very good
ok, very good

I'm Églantine
 very good, ok
 have you made a difference
 have you understood
 that it's not the story of Églantine
 but a moment
 of history
 of History
 that passes through Églantine
 the moment of youth
 yes
 the moment of youth
 we might say that
 it's a sociological study
 for example
 when the old man and
 the old woman meet
 it will be in
 a soup kitchen
 yes, in this project
 in fact, we can't avoid
 showing
 showing, yes
 the miserable
 they are everywhere today
 those whom Victor Hugo
 do you know Victor Hugo?
 yes, of course

sit down
 you can smoke
 if you want
 what are you thinking about

I'm wondering
if my cigarette will last
until tonight
and also, if my laces
will hold out until tomorrow
and also
if my breath will hold out until
next week
do you work
yes, a lot
nights too
especially nights, and the night
in the day
do you ever cry
at first glance
you can understand
why children cry

just like people walking by
just like people walking by
that's how
Albert and Albertine
loved each other
I don't know, it depends on how
I still see myself
someone who still plans to keep
moving ahead
implicates in his previous self
a self that no longer exists
and he loses interest in it
on the other hand
some people's projects
reject time

and a very strong link
in solidarity with
the past is established
this is the case
with almost all old people
they don't want
time
because they fear wasting away
each of them, in his inner self

madame, madame, here
please
fascists, fags
there are the poor

but I don't know
how memory can help us
reclaim our lives
perhaps the question is not
one of knowing
if man will endure
but whether he has the right to

here's *Le petit chose*
we are too quick to forget that
the classical painters only worked
with relationships
that's the fundamental issue

who's this one by?
Delacroix?
I think Matisse
when
do you think we'll have an answer?
we still need agreement
from the bank
I'll see them Tuesday
you seem very attached to this young man
too much, in my opinion
well, that's your opinion
that's your opinion
a thief remains
a thief
national museum or not
they apologized
no
note that I didn't either
yes, but you, you're different
and what if they only return
the Braque and the Vlamincks
or make an exchange
go on, we know them
the director of the Louvre
doesn't only want to protect
the Victory of Samothrace
he wants to be the author of that protection
on equal terms with Phidias
the times have changed, yes
there is this feeling of yesteryear
that's discouraging
too many changes are in the air
which don't yet have

their means of expression
 we laugh about 1900
 and find ourselves in an analogous
 period
 which I expect will seem
 equally ridiculous
 and perhaps as charming
 I don't know, Forlani
 memory is complicated
 when they were arrested, in '42
 Edgar's grandfather was the same age
 as my father, they were partners
 in the gallery
 I was ten years old
 I played in the Tuileries with his daughter
 I was madly in love with her
 she preferred another
 so I said to her, like Jouvet
 will you be happy with
 that hapless man
 what became of him
 in the end
 with her fifty percent
 Hélène bought him a Gordini
 then a Talbot
 & then he got himself killed in Indianapolis
 the same year as Ascari, I think
 then it seems to me
 that you don't owe
 anything
 no, but there is the memory
 yes, the obligations of memory

hey, I really enjoy that
 you're great
 okay, good to meet you

no, dear fellow
 memory has no obligations
 read Bergson
 or else I must still be in love
 you know, she looked like
 that girl
 in the photograph by Boubat
 staring into the distance
 with a decisive look, a black bra
 under her white shirt
 have you kept in touch
 with her
 no, she committed suicide, fortunately
 she didn't have power of attorney
 I recovered two Corots
 at Vollard's, a Lichtenstein
 at Castelli, in New York
 but it was too late
 I was able to buy back the little Breughel
 over there, at Bloch-Massart
 though, in my opinion, it's a copy
 so all that really remains
 of this story
 is the desire that the boy make
 something
 more than money, you know
 I got to know him
 completely by chance
 at a party at Soulages' home
 Antoinette Sachs's daughter
 introduced us, I think
 she was Edgar's
 godmother

maybe he's aware
 of the situation, but
 he hasn't said anything
 it's still a lot
 even if the project is remarkable
 yes, in fact
 I have no idea what
 it's about
 an opera maybe
 a film
 a documentary film
 they told me, but I don't know
 the exact meaning of the word
 I'm leaving, Pelletier, we're going
 and what's it called
 something *of love*
in praise, I think
 isn't it strange how works of art
 require titles
 as in the days of the nobility
 and of Wall Street
 speaking of cinema
 did you know Henri Langlois
 oh, not really
 Lazare Meerson's wife, yes
 but Langlois, no
 oh, once perhaps, lunch
 at Raphaël, in '58 or '59
 with the old Deutschmeister
 downstairs they told me that
 he founded the International
 Film Archives
 in this apartment

with a German &
a New Yorker
I forgot her name in 1938
Iris Barry
I'm trying to remember the name
of the German
see Mr. Forlani out
yes sir
the Americans are everywhere
aren't they, sir
who remembers
the Vietnamese resistance

it's a Mr. Edgar
asking for Mr. Rosenthal
tell him
that he says to come up

explain it to me
a bit better
it's like this
with young people, it's obvious
when you pass them in the street
and at first you say
they are young
the old, the same thing, before anything else
you think
that's an old man
but an adult, it's anything
but obvious
they are never entirely naked
if you know what I mean
they need a story
even in porn films
yes, I understand
we'll have to see what is
at the bottom of this business
but I understand

I understand what you're saying
 I don't know
 we need the three ages
 you see
 or else that will be the end of the project
 it will become
 a story with Julia Roberts
 Hollywood
 not history
 yes, I understand what you mean
 Edgar, it's hard
 but you'll find something
 and this young woman
 that Philippe told me about
 you still haven't seen her
 I've seen so many, and then
 she acted
 in a television series
 that depresses me
 I heard that she refused to speak
 her lines
 wasn't she fired
 yes
 that counts for something, these days
 you have to admit
 it's true, I'll make an effort
 do you have a photograph
 with you
 she refused to give us one
 ok, Philippe, I'm going to sleep here
 you go to see Madame
 de Polignac
 show her the van Dongen

I'll call tomorrow morning
take the car of course
and tell Laurent to stay
with you
I don't seek
I find
Picasso
Picasso

hey, you there, hey hey
is there anything there
almost everyone has the courage
to live their life
but not to imagine it
so how can I do it
for them
yes, sir
yes, sir
two years ago, I met
someone
I don't think I told you
no
not very attractive
but she dared to say things
I wonder
what became of her
what is an adult, for you
precisely
how should an adult act
she really had something to say
about the State
and about the impossibility of
the State falling in love
actually, I'm dreaming

I would like someone, you see
 like Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt
 it's too bad you gave up
 your cantata, was the music
 the problem
 it was me
 do you know
 what she earns as a waitress
 three, four thousand francs
 she also works other places
 you know when they earn
 no more than 10 thousand francs per month
 my feeling is that
 the French let it
 dictate their lives
 don't you think so, Philippe
 I don't know, sir
 it was me, me

the strangest thing
 is that the living dead
 of this world
 are modeled on the world as it was
 their thoughts, their sensations
 are from before

ah, there you are
 yes, so, did you remember the phrase
 I don't know
 I think it's
 oh, Jeanne, what a strange path
 led me to you
 but I'm not sure

we'll see
a cigarette, please
a cigarette, no
a cigarette, please
I'll check in the bookstore
I think it's behind
the door to Clichy
miss, madame, sir
I was right, this evening
at the railroad depot
things are right in front of us
why invent them

we're looking for a girl, she sometimes
works here
she has big eyes
go see the ones
who work out back
miss

it's you again
I said no
I've already said it
you're killing yourself
that's my business
maybe not, not for so long
how are you
otherwise
please, I'm working
leave me alone, and you
how are you
me, I'm fine, and how'd it go
with the Americans

which Americans
oh yes, the Americans
from North America
you have a good memory
yes, I think maybe I do
maybe even too good
I wouldn't know
it isn't my problem any more
can we talk for a minute
no
please
please
can't you see
I'm working
so am I, I can wait
I saw an Arab restaurant at the entrance
it was still open
I'll wait for you there
no, I said, I have to clean offices
after this
at the Place d'Italie
we could drive you there
if you like
no, I don't want to
next week, then
I don't know
you must have
a day off
next week, I have to drive
my son to Dijon
to his uncle, go on
goodbye, it's not serious

I want to discuss a project
maybe better than that
yes, certainly
but I already said no
you'd prefer never
what'd she say
maybe

when young people
break up, everything becomes
in general
incomprehensible
them, for example
they're at the pool, she watches him
swim under water with a girlfriend
she shivers
why doesn't he love her
now
you didn't get my letter
he asks
yes, but I didn't understand it
it's simple enough, he says
I love you so much, you are
so present
all the time
you are so real
for me
and for ever
that it is useless
for me to see you
since you are always there
no matter what happens
she tugs nervously on

a little necklace
 that she has around her neck
 it breaks, the pearls
 fall into the water, he dives
 and brings one back to her
 he says something else
 she starts to cry

why run after
 something
 you already have
 in a word, I find you
 too beautiful
 to be desired, and I place you
 too high, for you
 to satisfy me
 I love you, you're mine
 but since I have you
 I don't have to see you anymore
 you see
 what's going on
 yes
 and you
 yes
 could you say the same thing
 to someone you love
 yes
 and you, would you accept it
 from someone you love
 no
 that's why
 Églantine and Perceval
 broke up

we'll wait another five minutes
 do you have the time
 yes, yes
 two years ago
 someone
 said that
 I remembered it
 but not clearly
 once, at a bookstall
 I found the precise text
 it's from a little book
 by Georges Bataille, have you
 heard of that writer
 Bataille, no
 when people talk about
 the Spanish civil war
 they always talk about
Man's Hope, never
Blue of Noon
 it's true that it came out
 after the liberation of France
 I think it sold
 three hundred copies
 Philippe
 read it with him
 the love of a mortal being
 you say love, but
 nothing is more contrary to the image
 of the beloved
 than that of the State
 whose logic is opposed to
 the sovereign value
 of love

the State lacks or has lost
 the power to embrace
 in front of us
 the totality of the world
 this totality of the universe
 offered both outside
 in the beloved
 as an object
 and within, in the lover
 as a subject
 no, that's no good
 but why
 I already said why
 there's no such thing as an adult

do you ever
 think about death
 yes
 I mean, about your own death
 no
 so you haven't made a will
 no
 someone was executed
 during the Liberation of France
 fifty years ago
 he wrote this the night before
 read it to us
 in my thirty-fifth year
 a prisoner like Villon
 like Cervantes
 no, that won't do
 you need to learn to read, madame
 or recite

or learn to listen
don't you agree, Philippe
yes, sir
in my thirty-fifth year
a prisoner like Villon
like Cervantes
enchained
condemned like
André Chénier, before
the hour of destiny
like others
in other times
in the awkward scrawl of these pages
I begin my testament
by court order they will take
my worldly goods and heritage
it's easy, I have neither
land or money among my things
and my books and my images
can be dispersed
with the wind
tenderness and courage
cannot be judged

Edgar
good evening, Mr. Rosenthal
everything is all right
the minister has given his agreement
thank you, counselor
thank you, sir
are you strolling
or working
we're going to hear a talk
on Kosovo

I didn't say
look
I said
listen, hear
hear

Mark Hunter just came back from there
 good evening, gentlemen
 good evening, gentlemen
 are you following this business
 you too
 a little, that's all
 it was announced in *Le Monde*
la Maison du Dictionnaire
 right
 House of Dictionary

I think the French government
 is wrong
 when justice hasn't been done
 it's pointless to talk
 about brotherhood

maybe so
 yes, undoubtedly
 and the young lady, Edgar
 yes, yes, we went to see her
 not great
 she's no Berthe Morisot
 if you want my opinion
 Philippe, didn't you know that
 I already knew her
 oh really, no
 yes, yes
 two years ago, by chance
 on the coast
 come by on Monday, Edgar
 Martine will give you your check
 no, what's important
 is to be closest to the markets
 yes
 thank you, sir, good evening
 good night

what dollars, what dollars
the right questions have to be posed
what dollars

I knew how this history
would be told
the Serbs committed
horrible acts
which is perfectly correct
in their dreadful persecution
of the Albanian population
of Kosovo

no journalist noted
that most of the refugees
were
in their homes
when the war broke out
and that the Serbs
warned
that they would settle their scores
with the Albanians
if NATO attacked
Yugoslavia

that's right
shush

in Kosovo, once
you start asking questions
and listening
to the answers
it's a definition
of disaster
it's a twelve year
old girl
who tells me
take me to an hospital
why do you want to go to
the hospital
so they'll take away
my dreams
my mom went to the hospital
and she doesn't dream
any more

every day
I do stuff
I see my friends
but at night it comes back
I see it all over
I can't live like that

I recognize their fear
 we learned
 from the radio
 that Belgrade had granted
 the people
 the right to kill at will
 that's right
 even the women
 the children and the old people
 but I cannot hide
 my shame
 at learning
 that for the first time
 in our history
 we the Albanians
 of Kosovo
 are equally capable of
 acts just as monstrous
 that's right
 shush
 shush
 signed Veton Surroi
 he is Kosovar
 Kurd, but stateless
 and directs the newspaper
 in Pristina
 Koha Ditore

she's seen thirteen people
 including her father
 being murdered and
 cut to pieces in front
 of her

where are you from
 Aubervilliers

no, I mean
 what nationality
 I have no nationality
 go on

I'm from Madrid
 the weight of every word
 is amazing

that's right
shush, shush

no peace without justice
that's what they said in Sarajevo
there are also some good Americans
Mark left his country
during the Reagan years
there can be no resistance
without memory
and without universalism

no peace without justice
that's what they said
in Sarajevo
but what do we do
with the treaties
we're stupid

that American accent
is terrible
you wanted America
you got it
not me, I didn't ask for anything
and your parents, in 1944
and your grandparents
in 1918

we're listening
to a young woman
who's worried
for her three-and-a-half
year old son
who's asking for his father
murdered while he watched
then the woman says nothing
and cries

it's true, you can't talk
to the Kosovars
about the Serbians
right now
it's too violent
too hard
it's too soon

it's impossible
since the second world war
how often have the victims had
to live among the victimizers
without
any acknowledgment
of the facts
by their authors

what are you talking about
nothing
it's history
that's right
shush, be quiet
he's looking for someone
to edit
his book
and correct the proofs

without judgment
without planning for
the slightest reparation
from the guilty party
without open discussion

the judgment of war crimes
and of crimes
against humanity
indispensable, essential
remains to be done

there can be no resistance
without memory & without universalism

not possible

that's the way it is
watching impotently is
an intrinsic part
of this profession

not possible

this number is
at the newspaper
and this one is my portable
all right

not possible

well, see you soon
yes, I hope so
see you soon
goodnight
goodbye
goodbye

all the same, it's strange
don't you think
how history has been replaced
with technology, but why
hasn't politics been replaced
with the Gospel
the church is in step with time
take the rue de Rivoli, Laurent
yes, sir
drop Mr. Forlani
at the Intercontinental
yes, sir

in fifty meters, turn
left

if you agree, Paul
part of your fees
will be paid in kind, as they say
I don't understand
I thought you were looking
for an original Balzac
absolutely
Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes
the edition from 1844
where did you find it
better than the original
better than the original
the living copy
living, Paul
she had hair that
no hairdresser's hand
could hold
so thick was it, and so long
that when it fell to the ground

it formed rings	prepare to turn right
Esther	
living, Paul	
a thousand thanks	you have arrived
good evening, gentlemen	at your destination
a Jewess	
as only Raphael could draw them	
let's go back	

the church is in step with time
 like troops moving
 through unfamiliar territory
 where normal provisioning is impossible
 how can it bequeath
 to the meek
 who are the legitimate heirs
 of God
 a kingdom that is not
 of this world

we never think about it
 but it could be that
 the truth is sad
 what are you looking for, with me
 I have papers to sign
 but I don't understand
 what the lawyers say
 I'm looking for people
 for my project
 the few that I've seen
 I don't like this place
 me too, you know
 I'm full of doubts

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Stuart Kendall is a writer, editor, and translator working at the intersections of poetics, visual culture, and design. His books include *The Ends of Art and Design*, *Georges Bataille*, and many edited or translated volumes. Contra Mundum published his *Gilgamesh* in 2012. He lives in Oakland, California, where he teaches at the California College of the Arts.



COLOPHON

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Dedicated to the value & the indispensable importance of the individual voice, to works that test the boundaries of thought & experience.

The primary aim of Contra Mundum is to publish translations of writers who in their use of form and style are *à rebours*, or who deviate significantly from more programmatic & spurious forms of experimentation. Such writing attests to the volatile nature of modernism. Our preference is for works that have not yet been translated into English, are out of print, or are poorly translated, for writers whose thinking & æsthetics are in opposition to timely or mainstream currents of thought, value systems, or moralities. We also reprint obscure and out-of-print works we consider significant but which have been forgotten, neglected, or overshadowed.

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Phrases presents the spoken language from six films by Jean-Luc Godard: *Germany Nine Zero*, *The Kids Play Russian*, *JLG / JLG*, *2 x 50 Years of French Cinema*, *For Ever Mozart* and *In Praise of Love*. Completed between 1991 & 2001, during what has been called Godard's "years of memory," these films and videos were made alongside and in the shadow of his major work from that time, his monumental *Histoire(s) du cinema*, complementing and extending its themes. Like *Histoire(s)*, they offer meditations on, among other things, the tides of history, the fate of nations, the work of memory, the power of cinema, and, ultimately, the nature of love.

Gathered here, in written form, they are words without images: not exactly screenplays, not exactly poetry, something else entirely. Godard himself described them enigmatically: "Not books. Rather recollections of films, without the photos or the uninteresting details... Only the spoken phrases. They offer a little prolongation. One even discovers things that aren't in the film in them, which is rather powerful for a recollection. These books aren't literature or cinema. Traces of a film..."

In our era of ubiquitous streaming video, ebooks, and social media, these traces of cinema raise compelling questions for the future of media, cinematic, literary, and otherwise.

Manuel Godard



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