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*Abandon All Hope, Ye Who Enter the Hell of Images**

In the final version of Gance's *J'Accuse*, the dead soldiers rise up before Douaumont's illuminated charnel house and march past the living like so many terrifying holograms.

After 1914, while old Europe was being covered with cenotaphs, indestructible mausoleums and other monuments to the glory of its dead millions, the Americans, who had suffered fewer losses, were building their great cinema temples – deconsecrated sanctuaries in which, as Paul Morand put it, the public sensed the end of the world in an ambience of profanation and black masses. A number of studies have recently been made of this wave of cinema palaces which spread throughout the world and finally came to an end around 1960. Their abrupt disappearance clearly shows their historical necessity in the period between two wars which, in reality, were but one conflict interrupted by a kind of twenty-year armistice.

These monuments, of which little is now left but photographs,[1] seem less unreal if one thinks back to those department stores which, a century earlier, had infatuated the public as soon as they opened their doors in the big cities of the West. The architectural vocabulary of the American cinema cathedrals was already there in the agglomeration of heterogeneous styles, the huge naves and

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* Abel Gance

long gangways, the disproportionate central staircase, and above all the imposing technological environment of electricity, lifts, air conditioning, and so on. Mere commercial logic seemed to go by the board, for the invention of marketing had the result that *the whole commodity system of the young industrial civilization henceforth presented itself within immaterial fields of perception*. When Aristide Boucicaut thought up the 'mois du blanc'[2] one Boxing Day, he had just noticed that his department store was empty and that it was snowing outside. The idea, launched with a great fanfare, attracted a large number of customers who were determined to brave the weather simply because Boucicaut had elevated his merchandise to one of 'those precise, naked appearances in the mind' which 'the understanding lays up (with names commonly annexed to them) as the standards to rank real existence into sorts.'[3]

Not many years ago, some women spent most of their time in these monuments, as others would do in railway stations or in cinemas with continuous performances. Cinemas took over both from the department stores and from music halls. Nineteenth-century Europeans, observed Taine, were forever on the move to *see* new commodities; now, with the coming of the cinema, pure visions were for sale. The cinema became the major site for a *trade in dematerialization*, a new industrial market which no longer produced matter but light, as the luminosity of those vast stained-glass windows of old was suddenly concentrated into the screen.

'Death is just a big show in itself', said Samuel Lionel Rothapfel, son of a German shoemaker, one-time marine and inventor of the first cinema to be baptised a cathedral, the Roxy.[4] In other words, the speed effects of light created another form of collective memory in these new temples, an astronomical introversion comparable to that described by Evry Shatzmann: 'If you consider that observation takes place by means of light, which is propagated at a finite speed, things are observed in a past as far back as they are spatially distant.'[5]

There is a kind of cinematic 'heroization' in which the 'tragic lyricism of ubiquitousness and ever-present speed' renews the mythical chronos of aboriginality, that eternal present of native-born offspring for whom time is ceaselessly annulled in the

irrevocable return of the end to the origin.[6] One thinks here of statements such as the following one made by Isser Harel, chief of Mossad:

> After the creation of the Jewish state in May 1948, the search for Eichmann was one of the main objectives of the Israeli State Services because he was responsible for the fate of our six million dead . . . this was all the more imperative in that the Nuremberg trials, for reasons of foreign policy, had carefully avoided any talk of Jewish genocide: French, Poles, Hungarians, etc. had been exterminated in the concentration camps, but nowhere was it mentioned that a great majority of them were Jews. . . . Later, particularly with Professor Faurisson and his followers, the *reality* of the holocaust was also denied.

If Isser Harel's statement is taken literally, it says everything: the new aboriginality of the Jewish people rests on the existence in memory of six million missing persons who have to be made to reappear somewhere. The search for Eichmann was a priority because he had been not so much the butcher as the punctilious accountant of the holocaust, the functionary who 'called the victims by their right name'. The blindness of Nuremberg was a greater threat to the political existence of the State of Israel than any military violation of its frontiers.

In fact Faurisson and his kind built in a most disturbing way upon the work of disinformation that the Nazis had themselves undertaken forty years before. As Walter Laqueur has shown, the Jews were in the grip of an information implosion which prevented them from understanding what was actually being done. They were the first not to believe in their extermination.[7]

The director Veit Harlan has shown that Goebbels was a past master at disinformation. One of his specialities was the spreading of contradictory rumours, including some which mentioned extermination but were coupled with 'transparent' source material in the shape of photographs designed to devalue precise reports. There was also the pretence of 'colonization in the East', with articles and films purporting to show the relocation of Jews as settlers. Although more than two million Jews had already been killed by 1942, the Jewish press in Palestine still found grounds for reassurance about the fate of the agricultural information centres in Poland and elsewhere, 'interpreting signs that no longer had

any meaning' and dismissing detailed accounts because they were too terrifying.[8] And yet, the psychic anaesthesia which made Jews incapable of looking reality in the face was not a specifically Nazi method but an age-old military technique based on the simple idea that 'man can only take a certain amount of terror'. Twenty-five years earlier, this statement by the military theorist Charles Ardant du Picq had borne heavily on the psychology and handling of the rank-and-file soldiers who were decimated in the '14–18 war. To paraphrase Kipling, one might say that the concept of reality is always the first victim of war.

Burying-beetles are always busy at the foundation or re-establishment of military states. And if *memory is science itself* for those who make war, the memory in question is not like that of a popular culture based upon common experience: rather, it is a parallel memory, a paramnesia, a mislocation in time and space, an illusion of the *déjà vu*. The state's only original existence is as a visual hallucination akin to dreaming. As General MacArthur said: 'Great soldiers don't die, they fade away.' It is an ancient belief, for Sparta, the first military democracy, was already based upon what have been called 'inorganic individualities', upon a subtle shift in meaning between birth and reproduction such that the relationship among Spartans has been seen as one not so much of equality as of *fellowship*.[9] For their part, the Jews held the City-State to be *a travesty of birth, a field of death dressed up as life*. In Athens, every warrior who was killed had a reborn double: to die in war was art for art's sake, and invocations in the agony of death were sufficient unto themselves. Happy to be born of mother earth, happy to return. The city of Antiquity began by gathering the dead from beneath scattered domestic hearths and placing them together in great suburban necropolises. As it grew more arduous to arrange a meeting with the departed heroes, Hermes the Psychic Undertaker took charge of establishing contacts, restoring to the state its natural protectors. Hermes: the god of *berme*, of the big stone and particularly the stone enclosing the camera obscura of the tomb, the 'Attic stele which brings death itself before us in a living picture'.

A presence around tombstones, a light kept burning, a cult of heroes – these are near-universal beliefs and practices, to be

found in Asia as well as the North. In Iran in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini planned to proclaim the Islamic Republic in that vast South Teheran necropolis where the victims whom the city had mourned for the past year or more lay buried. At the funerals of IRA members, it is not the spouses and mothers but fellow-combatants in penitents' hoods who wear black. The heroes are those who, in losing their real features, present and yet unknown, escape the sense-memory of their family and close ones. The American Mormons (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) have decided to carry out a census of eighteen billion persons, both dead and alive, with the aim of baptising them all. To this end they travel across Europe and the world, going from town to village and putting the smallest civil register on microfilm that is then stored in a 200-metre-deep atomic shelter in the Rocky Mountains, a necropolis where film takes the place of bodies for all eternity.

Even closer to home, when the new French socialist state was born in May 1981, one of the first acts of President Francois Mitterrand was to perform an ambivalent act of worship. Studiously turning his back on the festive Parisian crowd, Mitterrand preferred to become a film for millions of television viewers as he moved rose in hand through the corridors of the Panthéon. With the cameras lying in ambush, he passed from one burial-place to the next, from Jean Jaurès to Jean Moulin, so that the small screen became a means of screening what lay beyond the grave. Just as Mendès-France said that history was not chronological, so Mitterrand reminded us that communication techniques are not necessarily of the present day but can be quite ancient and turned to the past.

Abel Gance made no mistake when he wrote in 1927, just as he was finishing *Napoleon:* 'All legends, all mythology and all myths, all founders of religions and all religions themselves look forward to their *luminous resurrection*, and the heroes are jostling at our doors to enter.' He further noted: 'Here we are, wondrously flashed-back into the time of the Egyptians. . . . The language of the images is not yet up-to-date, because *we are not yet made for them*. There is not yet enough respect, enough worship, for what they express.'[10]

When Gance wrote these lines about hieroglyphs, the tomb of Tutan-khamun had recently been discovered in the Valley of the Kings. The field-work and fabulous trove had received wide publicity, mainly through the coverage of the American reporter-photographer Burton. It is well known how influential the 'Egyptian style' was on cinema and on the furnishing, decoration and architecture of picture-houses, as well as on the screen presence of actors like Rudolph Valentino, a veritable double of the young pharaoh. More generally, however, the priceless funerary discovery reminds us that all art is like death, an inertia of the instant, and thus a *speed change in the order of time as it is lived*. If the Egyptians already prerecorded their lives, 'as if they were to die tomorrow yet built as if they were to live eternally', this is because they realized, like Cleopatra founding the 'society of inimitable livers', that since everything was happening then and there, they were living days that could never be imitated. When Agnès Varda suggested that for the Impressionists light corresponded to a certain idea of happiness, she was doubtless thinking that they were among the last to put this intensity of the moment into their painting, so that sunlight became an expression of time in a reaction against the frozen artificiality of studio-lighting. The motor of the film-camera sprang into life shortly after the decline of the old pictorial art (easel painting, portraiture as a business) because it involved the re-establishment of a late sun-cult. And when Gance said that 'cinema is putting a sun in every image', he was merely repeating three thousand years on the words of Akhenaton's song: 'The sun creates millions of appearances.'

Everything in this sunlit world is dedicated to speed. Even the tomb contains the instruments of dromology (sophisticated vehicles, chariots, vessels), and sovereign Death is represented holding a symbolic whip and bit tightly to his chest. The beyond does not interrupt the days of the pharaoh. The departure of the animating soul leaves the body motionless, but for Egyptian art the point is not to see the body still moving since *everything goes on moving*. Egyptian 'realism' is essentially a cinematic temptation. Arranging the tomb thus becomes a dromoscopic pleasure for its future occupant, just as being buried with his Cadillac was a matter of 'open-grave driving' for a rich American recently in the news.

Quite understandably, the passenger-to-be devotes major material and technological resources to this task, comparable to those with which one prepares for a distant conquest or an expedition into unknown territory. Pictorial representation itself is a dromoscopic sketch, systematically juxtaposing autonomous events, and the habitual 'two plus one' method is conceived as *a rhythm imposed on the human retina*. Animation is produced by what the Egyptians called 'luminous vitality' – an expression which shows how well they had mastered the anatomical problem of perception and the production of appearance, not as something given but as an active operation of the mind. Much later Seurat rediscovered this with his 'divisionism', while Kandinsky and film-makers like Gance saw that *the first task is to speak to the eyes.* In Egypt there was no symmetry but only equivalences: walls were walls of images, limestone strips painted from top to bottom on which figures passed 'in action'. Once more we are very close to the definition of chronophotography: 'Successive images representing the different positions that a living being with a certain gait has occupied in space at a given moment.'[11]

Such movement, which is actually a movement of withdrawal, plunges us directly into ethnology. Whereas the modern dreamer, as Jean Duvignaud has remarked,[12] represses his dreams and will not admit to them, in ancient societies revery and paradoxical sleep are cultivated as major activities and it is of their essence that one should be able to talk about them in words. 'Doing *kabary*' was the expression used by Malagasy shepherds at the foot of Mandraka. '*Rökut pit*' (absent sleep) is how the Jorai refer to someone who has fallen asleep, but '*rökut*' is also said of someone who is absent from his home, on a real journey by road. Stretched out on a mat *as if already dead*, the Jorai dreams because his *böngat* has gone off walking. It is this walk which provides the inert Jorai with his dream images, and with the tale that he will later tell, impossible to locate in geographical space or astronomical time.

These practices too are well-nigh universal. When the invention of printing revolutionized Renaissance Europe with its *silent reading*, the often religious paramnesia of the dream narrative (one thinks also of the birth of the novel, whose heroes are

travellers en route in an unbounded universe) no longer involved spoken exchanges in human gatherings but rather industrial reproduction of a standard text. Millions of books were published within a few decades, prefiguring the later spread of photography, cinema and now electronics. The innovation of silent reading had the effect that everyone believed what they read, for at the moment of reading they had the illusion that they were alone in seeing it, just as the inert dreamer created an equivalence between the waking state and paradoxical sleep. Numerous affinities exist between the instantaneities of writing and photography, both being inserted in time which is 'exposed' rather than simply passing. Printing already introduces a new technological interface: the means of communication slow and retain the immediate, fixing it in an exposure time that escapes daily wear and the calendar of society, opening a gap between the instrument of transmission and our capacity to assume present existence. If we give a new book to two children, the enjoyment will always be compromised for the one who reads it second. The metro passenger reading a paper over his neighbour's shoulder puts him in a similar position, for although tens of thousands of other people are also reading the paper at that moment it is annoying to have to share it with someone else. *Pace* Robespierre, history is not read as a past charged with 'non-presence'; the very fact of its mediated transmission implies a journey through empty and soon heterogeneous time (Benjamin).

A false equation of sign-reading with knowledge, and even with the whole of knowledge, gave rise to the imperialism of the fourth estate – the power, that is, of press and communications media directly involved in the atypical temporality of broadcasting technology. When the press speaks of its own 'objectivity', it can easily make one believe in its truthfulness. For the newspaper's present superiority over a book is that it has no author, the reader taking it in as a truth that he alone knows, true because he 'believes his eyes'. We can see why journalists with their anonymous style have acquired such immense power in every field of publishing, as well as in politics at the crossroads of the media. In France the old *presse d'opinion* vanished after 1914, along with

its great polemicists and writer-reporters – men like Dumas, London or Kipling for whom the novel was truly 'a mirror walking on the highway' (Stendhal). It is evident that the long-range media have gradually taken over from the 'anima', and that the motor (twin projector, both producing speed and propagating images) now recounts the journey and supplies the dream images. Like the motorcar, which ensures 'that the traveller's head bursts under the pressure of a mass of truncated images vainly striving to join up with each other',[13] the thresholds of dynamic transformation trigger the dissipation of visual structures. It has been written of Eisenstein's and Alexandrov's *October* (1927):

> The inner tension of the film, the inner current of the montage, set up such strong disturbances that no logical determination seems tenable any more . . . with no anchorage in space and time, the readability of the shapes is called into question by such a large number of shots that it is impossible to hold them in memory.[14]

The technology of mixing, generalized to this degree, actually achieves that 'still moving' which ethnology found on the mat of the inert dreamer. It can thus easily appear as a substitute religion, as Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber unwittingly suggests in his recent book *Le Nouveau Défi*, which is more an act of faith or Pascalian wager than a perspective with anything remotely rational to it. One can only wonder at this immaterial logistical pantheism, in which social well-being rests upon advanced technologies that bear no relationship to reality. The exposure time of silent reading vanishes in the anatomical eye of the camera, releasing a flood of illiteracy in the developed countries. Electronic games have transformed the 'softening up' effects of wonder and astonishment of earlier cultures, since now it is more a question of seeing than of understanding. Similarly, the mass of viewers have become less interested in team games like cycling or football than in live broadcasts of sports like tennis, where a little ball bounces unpredictably for hours across a court much as a computer-player pilots synthetic blobs back and forth on an electronic screen.

Paul Claudel, referring to the stained-glass windows of old cathedrals, once said: 'All those colours together, all those various points, all that does not remain motionless.' In the thirteenth century, Guillaume Durrand wrote of the technically innovative

Chartres windows: 'The stained-glass is divine writing which pours the *brightness of the real sun* (that is, of God) into the church (that is, into the hearts of men) whilst iluminating them.' Everything visible appears to us in the light, we believe our eyes and the light calmly appears to us as *the truth of the world*. The early-twentieth-century comparison of giant cinemas to cathedrals was based on the fact that the latter were already solar projection rooms, which took root in society with the same lightning speed. Their demolition began in similar manner, long before the French Revolution, in that late-seventeenth-century 'illuminism' of the Enlightenment which prefigured the scientism of the nineteenth century. We should not forget that, ever since Antiquity, the liturgy was a *public service* which combined the logistical organization of distant expeditions, religious ceremonies laid down by the spiritual authorities, and spectacles conceived as 'special effects' (*deus ex machina*). To paraphrase Heidegger, we might say that in the cathedral Christ is already dead, since the new sanctuary aspires to expose science, at once and in its entirety, to the power of the world, without troubling to mix in the disciplines of human existence (nation, customs, state, war, poetry, thought, belief, disease, madness, death, technology). Before it became the throne of totality, the Christian sanctuary was a stronghold, a bunker, a fortified church for those who remained within it; all their powers and capacities were deployed and strengthened *in, through and as combat*. It is often said to be difficult or impossible to imagine the attitude of medieval Christians in their new churches. But already today, we can no longer precisely imagine how film-goers of the thirties or even fifties behaved as they streamed towards the cinema-cathedrals of the military state.

'World War One was the reason for Hollywood', said Anita Loos.[15] The cinema-town (Cinecittà, Hollywood . . .) of the military-industrial era succeeded the theatre-town of the ancient City-State. At first, studios and cinemas were built in the suburbs like the necropolises of old. This was because in practice theatre still held *droit de cité* as the fount of living relations, whereas the silent cinema was reserved for an unintegrated (often unnaturalized) migrant proletariat sprawling illiterate in the limbo-like outskirts.

The cinema trance, like that of the combatant, rested upon a certain kind of social suffering, the daily grind to which life was reduced in over-populated suburbs where East met West without merging in civic fellowship. In whatever way, the target population was that 'shapeless sociological conglomerate' of the military–industrial proletariat, which was calmly summoned to factory and battlefield at a time when the 'Bolshevik threat' stretched from Munich to the gates of India and when the Americans expected to wake up every day with the Russians camped in Paris.

Paradoxically, the cinema gratified the wish of migrant workers for a lasting and even eternal homeland, giving them a new kind of freedom of the city. For the religion of ceramics cinematography substituted recorded film, a standardized Valhalla with its images of various types of event, object and character. The cinema auditorium would not be a new city agora for the living where immigrants from the whole world might gather and communicate with one another; it was much more of a cenotaph, and the essential capacity of cinema in its huge temples was to shape society by putting order into visual chaos. This made cinema the black mass necessary for the country to achieve a new aboriginality in the midst of demographic anarchy. In his memoirs Marcel Pagnol emphasizes this unfailing penetrativeness of the cinema beam:

> A theatre audience of a thousand cannot all sit in the same place, and so one can say that none of them sees the same play. In order to reach his audience in the right way, a dramatist has to take his duck-gun and stuff it with a thousand pieces of shot so that one pull of the trigger will hit a thousand different targets. Cinema solves this problem, however, because what each member of the audience sees from anywhere in the room (or in a country, where there is an audience of millions) is the exact picture taken by the camera. If Charlie Chaplin looks at the lens, his picture will look straight at anyone who sees it, whether they are on the left or the right, upstairs or downstairs. . . . So there is not just an audience of a thousand (or millions if all the cinemas are included); *now there is only one audience which sees and hears exactly as the camera and microphone do.*[16]

According to J.F.C. Fuller, any individual, man or woman, is potentially a nervous target, and in fact it was the precision of the camera-shot which first created audience panic at the Lumières'

'motion demonstrations' of the train's arrival at la Ciotat, when everyone felt that they risked being crushed or injured by the train. This kind of fear, akin to the sense of speed that people seek on roller coasters, did not disappear but simply became more pernicious as the audience learnt to control its nervous reactions and began to find death amusing. In Westerns, death had to become more and more common, and the body count started – just as in those army headquarters where a high number of casualties and a depletion of men and matériel were considered to be marks of a commander's talent or personality, even proofs of the orthodox nature of his art. Moreover, the duel of the homicide-suicide couple (hetero or homo) which is the core of war's vagaries is endlessly reproduced and chewed over by the military–industrial cinema, becoming such a powerful model that it rapidly overturns age-old customs. The sociologist Lewis Feuer has pointed out that the emotional overload in the Western has completely changed people's mentality in Asia, where the ritual of classical drama most often had the 'goodies' suffering at the hands of victorious 'baddies'. Now a new philosophy of history has established itself in the East with the notion of 'just war'.[17]

At the time when Wells was writing *The Time Machine*, 'Hale's Tour' was already setting the audience up as aggressors in a room ten foot deep with seats on either side of a central aisle, just as in a railway carriage travelling at top speed. The film itself, taken from behind or in front of a locomotive crossing varied countryside, was projected onto a screen at the end of the room which served as a kind of windscreen. The whole performance was usually financed by transport or arms companies, which were to lose no time in distinguishing themselves during the First World War.

Shortly afterwards, V. Bush noticed that young people in their thousands, without suspecting a thing, were becoming involved in veritable military training camps simply through their passion for cars and motorcycles, mechanics and wirelesses, and that if the time came, such training could very rapidly be converted into an aptitude for building the complex apparatus of war. Cinemas, too, were training camps which bonded people together in the face of death agony, teaching them to master the fear of what they did not know – or rather, as Hitchcock put it, of what did

not exist. 'In essence,' he once said, 'we create violence out of our memories and not out of what is directly presented to our vision, just as in childhood the viewer himself fills the blanks and his own head with pictures that he manufactures a posteriori.'[18]

The essayist John A. Kouwenhoven, in a work on 'what is American in America', later asked which common factor could bind together such 'symptoms' as skyscrapers, chewing-gum, assembly-lines, cartoon strips, baseball, and so on. In fact, the military–industrial cinema took up this heap of signs and information to compound not only the unity of the nation but the personality profile of each new citizen. In the Second World War, Allied counter-espionage used questionnaires probing such seemingly disparate characteristics in order to unmask Nazi fifth-columnists who had infiltrated Britain or the United States. And GIs in Europe always found the same collection of symptoms (bible, chewing-gum, toilet paper, etc.) in their packs. This tradition was continued after the war with the famous Liberty ships, but it was both a strength and a weakness because, once perception was deprived of such logistical support, the army proved incapable of facing a difficult campaign, as in North Africa in 1942–44 or in Korea and later Vietnam.

The star system, after 1914, used these same types of trigger, which 'oscillated in zones higher than the universe of practical things and lower than the disembodied forces that animate such things' (Arnheim). At the very beginning, the big US corporations and film directors had been violently opposed to a theatre-type star system in the cinema, and when actors were finally accepted by name they were regarded as so many 'fellow-creatures'. Losing their real traits in the manner of ancient heroes, slipping from the immediate memory of their family and friends, they became inorganic individuals through an arbitrary selection of indefinitely reproducible common features. Soon, even in their private lives, they were not supposed to stray from the paramnesiac placement that was written into their contract. Ingrid Bergman's illegitimate pregnancy (she, the young Joan of Arc!) and her relationship with Rossellini led to her being questioned by the US Senate at the time of the Korean War, and subsequently ruined her Hollywood career.

Cinema begins at its palace arches where letters of fire blazon forth the names of its stars. It is like 'life's splendour' which, according to Kafka, 'forever lies in wait about each one of us in all its fullness, but veiled from view, deep down, invisible, far off. If you summon it by the right word, by its right name, it will come. This is the essence of magic, which one does not create but summons.'[19] As part of the isolating world of indirect perception, the star is an iconic figure which cannot be compared to the flesh-and-blood presence of theatrical creation. Vestal virgin of that 'sun in each image' (Gance), guardian of a national hearth of incomparable brightness, the star suffers a fate like that of the ancient priestess: to give in to mortal love and all-too-human passions spells the end of her own immortality, the beginning of an immurement diligently organized by the censors, politicians or puritanical leagues. In fact, as soon as the cinema's civic potential became evident after 1914, it was placed under house arrest and brought under a system of regulation based on the methods of wartime black propaganda.

False rumours, belated revelations, trading on personality, banning orders, trials, denunciations, inquisitions, witch-hunts – in all this, dread of the Communist or Nazi enemy was mixed up with the terror of drugs and the prohibition of alcohol and sex. In the United States Will Hays, a former member of the Harding administration, was solicited by the producers themselves to take charge of film censorship in the twenties. The civic, religious and family leagues were joined by police chiefs, army officers, the Hearst press, anti-drug agents, and so on. Even after the black-lists and the tragedy of McCarthyism, a 1975 report of the Trilateral Commission was still denouncing 'artists and intellectuals' as marginal, irrecuperable elements. At the same time, however, the report called for compulsory curbs on world economic growth and announced that the democratic model based on the family cell, in which many Americans still believed, was falling into disrepair. Hollywood had lost its reason for existence.

Here too one is struck by the similarity with the theatrical world, whose music-hall stars or divas ostensibly led 'immoral careers' as courtesans. Sarah Bernhardt, for example, went onto

police records for prostitution – she who, paradoxically, helped to make Zukor's fortune by starring in *Queen Elizabeth*, which he bought from the British for 28,000 dollars and showed in New York on 12 July 1912 in a specially hired theatre, after a publicity campaign tending to suggest that the audience would be able to see the renowned Sarah in the flesh. Playing on the confusion between bodily presence and cinema, Al Lichtman went on to hire many more theatres to show the film. Zukor himself netted 80,000 dollars from this novel swindle and used the money to set himself up as a producer. Soon the producers would be writing into star contracts a clause that forced them to conceal their private lives in the manner recommended to leading politicians. Some, like Greta Garbo, who loved John Gilbert in front of the cameras, never lost their fear of any 'proxemic' look.[20]

The blazing of the female star, in a country where women, like Blacks, had long struggled for recognition of their civil rights, reminds us that at the foundation or restoration of a military state, in fusion with its intense burial activity, a whole series of exchanges and transfers of power take place between male warriors and logistical spouses[21] – that is to say, between natural reproduction of the old gynaecocracy (in which kinship is mostly matrilinear) and all the techniques for preserving and reproducing the new City-States, from the fortress designed as Mother through the industrial die of the weaponry to the military–industrial cinema itself. The ethnological evidence is always there, and always the same. In Europe, such exchanges resumed with the establishment of feudalism, particularly with the Salic law in France, Spain and elsewhere.

At that time, women played an ambiguous role in narratives, emanating from a rather uncertain and dangerous world of water and impenetrable, magical forest. Male partners, when found, had strayed into an unfamiliar environment where women were at ease and in a sense the mistresses. Already in Jorai legend woman is the fairy-hunter, the one who organizes the lures, weaves and places the nets into which game and enemies will fall. And yet, the Jorai woman does not herself take part in hunting or warfare, leaving the role of final killer to the male. When Europe's strategic fortresses were being built, woman still kept her power as tactician and an old Norman dictum stated that 'there is no fortress where

a woman has not first set hand or foot.' One thinks of Vivian, or the Mélusine of the House of Lusignan, a fairy–woman–animal who cast her protective stronghold over a territory grown huge through her topo-logical wiles, or of that other enchantress who was found in the woods by a knight and agreed to stay with him on condition that she never heard him utter the word 'death'. Those 'precise, naked appearances' which John Locke discussed in connection with abstraction are found again here as models coming from no one knows where.

In the courtly novel, the woman's body soon merges completely with the stronghold and its snares. She herself is seen as a 'box full of surprises and strategems' which can make the duel of hetero-sexual love and war last indiscriminately for ever.

As the colonial City of Antiquity promiscuously adopted the gods of conquered or neighbouring peoples, so did Hollywood in its heyday drain and adapt the talents of the Western world, in a ceaseless quest for the abstract yet visually perceptible models required to programme the common features of a universal star system. In her brief career Louise Brooks, the *femme fatale* Lulu in Pabst's *Die Büsche der Pandora* (1928) and described by Lotte Eisner as that 'uncommon earthly creature endowed with animal beauty', was one of the distant mediums of the fairy-woman and the immortal Pandora. Herself created by Hephaistos, the god of fire and forges, Pandora kept the fateful box containing both human happiness and unhappiness – a box at the bottom of which remained nothing but hope.

At the end of the Middle Ages, that Hollywood favourite Joan of Arc had already crystallized these universal symptoms, her great power deriving from her capacity to alter the course of a hundred years' war. Originally a shepherdess living in the woods and meadows, she was accepted as a strategist with an ease which, though surprising today, was ethnologically quite conceivable in those days. At the age of seventeen, then, she was entrusted with an army and had princes under her command. But she went unarmed into combat and, like the Jorai women, did not partici-pate in the male carnage, taking great care over her transsexual appearance and sublimating her warrior's equipment (armour,

horse, standard) as instruments of recognition. In this way, she powerfully intervened in the conduct of battles, those circumstantial fields of perception which have always been the main arenas for the fast-stimulating slogans and emblems later employed in commercial design and the film industry.

Joan's fate was exactly like that of the female logistician of ancient times. After the army-state was re-established in Rheims, she was sold, tried and sent to the stake as a witch, a fairy-woman specially for the occasion, and this is still how she appears in Shakespeare's work. The Maid of Orleans or Artemis of Antiquity brings us back to sexual abstinence and the uniformity of a chaste model. And it was precisely these grounds of resemblance which brought on Ingrid Bergman's downfall in 1949, when she became illegitimately pregnant a year after filming *Joan of Arc*.

After the Civil War and the conquest of the West, the Americans began to put on stage and to direct the 'true heroes' of the barely pacified South or Far West: Calamity Jane, Buffalo Bill, Sitting Bull, and so forth. After the 1914–18 war and again during the 'Cold War', large numbers of ex-combatants relived their exploits in front of the camera and some, like Audie Murphy, managed to use their military titles and decorations to make a film career for themselves. When a Hollywood old-timer finally canvassed for the presidency of the United States, he had the idea of putting on a TV spectacular, a strange military-cum-political festival in which genuine veterans of the war like General Bradley rubbed shoulders with Hollywood survivors, sundry imitators and politicians' doubles. Ronald Reagan himself, seated on a throne, presided with his wife over hallucinatory games worthy of Lewis Carroll or Monty Python.

After his election in January 1982, Reagan asked his friend Charles Wick, a California millionaire and director of *Voice of America*, to organize 'the greatest show since the creation of the world'. The stars were to be a dozen heads of state and government, each of whom had to read a message expressing their country's solidarity with the Polish people and their opposition to the Soviet-backed regime of General Jaruzelski. These somewhat austere communications were lightened by the presence of singers, musicians and actors like Frank Sinatra, Charlton Heston, Kirk Douglas

and Bob Hope, and the whole show was broadcast by satellite across the United States and the world in a 'weekend of solidarity' organized by Westerners. The North American side of the operation, however, posed serious problems as *Voice of America* is a long-standing propaganda agency which does not have the right to broadcast to the United States itself. Nevertheless, Congress saw fit to give its approval and the show went ahead.

In March 1983 President Reagan signed 'National Security Directive 75' which, though not published, has been substantively quoted in the *Los Angeles Times*. Its author, Richard Pipes, is a former adviser on the USSR for the National Security Council. Among other things, this directive outlined the so-called 'Project Democracy' – in reality, an appeal for greater propaganda efforts to accompany US economic sanctions and rearmament. The administration accordingly asked for a credit of 85 million dollars in films, books and means of communication to promote democracy in general and free trade unions in particular, the manna to be distributed mainly in Western and Eastern Europe. Once again, Congress did not fail to release major resources, which were soon swept up.[22]

In 1982 the Soviet news agency TASS characterized the 'Let Poland Be Poland' operation as a provocative act of telesubversion instigated by the White House. Brushing aside any challenge, President Ronald Reagan had carried with him to the awesome pinnacle of global power an old stock of perceptual material that faithfully reproduced the scenes and methods of Hollywood's past. As a B-movie actor, Reagan had testified for the prosecution at the sessions of the House Committee on Un-American Activities which preceded the notorious trial of the 'Hollywood Ten', and at the height of McCarthyism he had been chairman of the Actors' Guild. 'Directive 75', then, was a way of drawing on his cinema knowledge to prepare a new kind of frontier violation, a new and logistically powerful audiovisual force which, alongside the Euromissiles, would more closely integrate the European suburb into America's system of security. It was conceived as an indispensable complement to 'power projection', in a year when Weinberger's budgetary report was laying stress on the geographical exposure of states in the modern world.

With this deneutralization of the East–West media, we are clearly heading towards a new Yalta and perhaps towards a new world state. In the last century Ratzel defined war as the taking of one's frontiers to another's territory, and there can be no doubt that the world-wide Reagan Show involved an attempt to go beyond the ancient founding rites of the state. The actor-turned-president enjoyed bestowing on stars like Sinatra and Heston a status as immortal beings of the City, with a political power really capable of founding the American state and its cultural hold on the world. Still, the day after 'Let Poland Be Poland', a *Libération* journalist could report that 'the Reagan show did not draw a full house'. The 500,000-dollar spectacular, with its curious endgame atmosphere, had only limited success and the mass of dissatisfied TV viewers turned away from the stars of cinema and politics alike.

The journalist's expression was interesting because it compared the world to a single movie-house, as if 'the greatest show since the creation of the world' was at the same time the smallest. This brings us to that 'imposture of immediacy' denounced by the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer – at once a crisis of dimensions and a crisis of representation.