

## Introduction: Remembering Rivette and Marker

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An aura of mystery surrounds Jacques Rivette and Chris Marker. Little is known of the private identities of these reclusive and elusive figures, other than their mutual regard and affection for cats. We remember them through their films, which continue to redefine the art of cinema around the world.

This special commemorative issue of *The Cine-Files* is dedicated to the films and artistic legacy of Jacques Rivette and Chris Marker. Both directors, associated with the Right and Left Bank of postwar French filmmaking, respectively, established their careers in the 1950s in France; both began their careers as writers (Rivette as a critic at *La Gazette du cinéma* and then at *Cahiers du cinéma*, Marker as a novelist and contributor to *Esprit*); both are associated with *cinéma vérité*; both reflect (and reflect upon) the influence of surrealism; a concern with temporality is central in both their oeuvres.

Contributions to this dossier call our attention to these and to many other intriguing similarities and differences that underscore the *auteurist* signatures of these two directors. Essays cover films from seven decades (from the 1950s to the 2010s), diverse mediums (animation, photography, television), and topics ranging from the “historiography” of *cinéma vérité* to the “historicity” of the costume drama, from the reinvention of the cinétract to that of the American musical, from the stylistic legacy of Lumière to that of Méliès.

From this panoply of seemingly disparate periods, traditions, and themes, common ground emerges: contributors consistently point to the radical innovations in form evident in the work of both directors, looking specifically at their distinctive approaches to duration, serial form, sound practice, and montage. Those authors writing on Rivette, unsurprisingly,

interrogate the interrelationship between theatricality, reflexivity, gender performance, and acting style. Those writing on Marker touch upon many of the same concerns, but their work, understandably, tends to be more directly focused on the politics of documentary form, in particular the role of citation, the evolution of the audiovisual essay, and the place of the photo-film in the mediatized present.

The presence and love of animals are in evidence throughout Rivette's and Marker's work; cats, of course, always held a special place in their films and in their lives. On this note, I would like to append a special dedication to the memory of Jacques Rivette's beloved cat Léo, who passed away earlier this year. I suspect that Léo has joined that elusive circle of cats spotted by Marker in *Chats perchés* who "watch over us as we sleep." (*Au coin des rues des rondes de chats pour veiller sur le sommeil du voisinage. Chats perchés, 2004*)

This dossier has greatly benefited from the contributions of several key individuals. I would like to express my gratitude to Tracy Cox-Stanton, editor in chief, for her patience, encouragement, and support. I am indebted to the expertise of Peter Low for his assistance with the translations of the essays by Jacques Rivette, Hélène Frappat, and Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues that appear in this issue. Finally, I owe a very special debt of gratitude to Véronique Manniez-Rivette for her generous contribution to this dossier.

The brief summary of the essays that follows is divided into two sections that provide a chronologically oriented overview of each director's work.

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## JACQUES RIVETTE

Let us begin with one of the first essays penned by **JACQUES RIVETTE**, "The Act and the Actor" (*L'acte et l'acteur; 1950*), which was discovered by his wife Véronique after his death last year. In the unedited text that appears here, the twenty-two-year-old filmmaker offers a pensive reflection upon the importance of the role of the actor and his/her rapport with the director and the audience. Rivette sees the actor as the source of the spectator's dynamic identification, which, he explains, is based upon the shifting configuration of movement, gesture, and action, rather than character psychology or plot. Rivette closes with a call for a poetics—a *poïétique*—of human gesture, which is followed by an incisive articulation of the interrelation of film and theater.

The legendary eight-episode serial *Out 1: Noli me tangere* (*Out 1: Touch Me Not; 1970-71*) is a literal illustration of this proposition that Rivette set forth in his early piece, "The Act

and the Actor”: “Every film is a documentary about the actor.” In “*Out 1* or Suspended Meaning,” **SUZANNE LIANDRAT-GUIGUES** explores the nuanced meanings of the title “Out,” which point to the different dimensions of the film as “work in progress” in which the behind-the-scenes mechanics of acting and filming (audition, rehearsal, experimentation) are placed at the film’s center rather than peripheralized “outside the frame.” Drawing on Roland Barthes’s notion of “suspended meaning,” which he discusses in the 1963 *Cahiers du cinéma* interview conducted by Rivette and Michel Delahaye, Liandrat-Guigues explains how the title “Out” designates “a place beyond commonly understood meaning,” where “the work is a question, held in suspension, to be conceptualized by each person.”

Inspired by the recurrent scrutiny of maps in *Out 1*, cine-cartographer **ROLAND-FRANÇOIS LACK** raises thirteen points relating to the film’s topography in “Mapping *Out 1*: Thirteen Cartographic Footnotes.” This textual excursion includes: the map of the film, maps in the film, (particularly the métro map), *Le Deauville* (the café habituated by Colin), the streets and *arrondissements* frequented by Frédérique (Juliet Berto), Sarah (Bernadette Lafont), and Colin (Jean-Pierre Léaud), Frédérique’s apartment, Balzac’s Paris, *L’angle du hasard* (Pauline/Émilie’s [Bulle Ogier] hippie boutique), *Le Théâtre de la Ville*, *Le palais de Chaillot*, and other locales that intersect and overlap with each other to reveal the labyrinthine network of Rivette’s Paris.

In “‘Scenes from Parallel Lives’: Marguerite Duras and Jacques Rivette,” **MARY WILES** considers the evolving relationship between Duras and Rivette, showing how the two filmmakers worked side by side towards the genesis of distinctive visions of cinematic *mise en scène*. She looks specifically at Duras’s Indian cycle film, *India Song* (1975), and *Duelle* (*Scènes de la vie parallèle*; 1976), the second part of *Les filles du feu*—Rivette’s unfinished Nervalian cycle of four films. Wiles shows how Duras and Rivette return to the performance traditions of the silent diva film and the American dance hall to fabricate oneiric worlds in which phantom heroines move through transfigured mythic spaces—from an illustrious French embassy to an abandoned tennis court in *India Song*, from a modern dance studio to a deserted park at dawn in *Duelle*.

**SAMM DEIGHAN’S** contribution to the selection of Featured Scholarship essays, “Three Houses with Neither Beams nor Rafters: Jacques Rivette’s *Merry-Go-Round* from Crime Serial to Surrealistic Fable,” adds to the growing body of critical work on a film that has been largely ignored until recently. Deighan teases out the possible meanings behind the whimsical ditty “Cadet Rousselle” that resonates within *Merry-Go-Round* (released 1983), prompting her investigation of varied intertextual influences, which include the crime serial inspired by early twentieth-century publications like *Fantômas*, the crime thrillers of Fritz Lang and Alfred Hitchcock, as well as the German *krimi* and Italian *giallo* cult film subgenres. Looking beyond obvious plot elements of crime, betrayal, and murder, Deighan

shows how the film might be understood as a surrealist fable, a subversive reimagining of the crime and mystery genres.

**DOUGLAS MORREY'S** essay, "Some Thoughts on Acting in *La Bande des quatre*," explores the paradoxical relationship between life and acting in *La bande des quatre* (Gang of Four; 1989), a film that takes place in the all-female spaces of a theatre class and a house in the Paris suburbs where five young women students live and study. Morrey provides a close analysis of two key scenes, one in which Constance (Bulle Ogier) evaluates Cécile's (Nathalie Richard) histrionic performance on stage and the other at the breakfast table in which the different performance styles of the four actresses provide insight into the evolution of their characters, while also allowing the audience to participate in the "engrossing spectacle of women listening to each other."

In a new translation of a previously published piece, "Rivette and Strong Sensations," **HÉLÈNE FRAPPAT** explores the implications of Rivette's shift to the musical comedy genre in *Haut bas fragile* (Up Down Fragile; 1995), a film that she considers to be a defining moment within the oeuvre. Frappat observes that the world of the theatre that had been situated at the center of previous films is largely absent from *Haut bas fragile*. She maintains that in abandoning the theatre—its *mise en scène* and body movements—Rivette dispenses with the prolonged intervals of uncertainty and waiting that had characterized his earlier work, especially those serial films riddled with ominous conspiracies and weighty secrets. Rivette invents a tone and new idiom for the *Phantom Ladies* who, Frappat astutely observes, are liberated from their secrets and "repatriated within our common world."

In "Jacques Rivette's Homage to Louis Lumière: To Pastiche and Beyond," **RICHARD NEUPERT** offers an eloquent close analysis of the 50-second *Une aventure de Ninon* (1995), which was completed at the request of Philippe Poulet of the Lumière Musée du Cinéma who had invited contemporary international filmmakers to shoot motion pictures using an original Cinématographe camera. Neupert maintains that *Une aventure de Ninon* builds loosely from Rivette's previous film, *Haut bas fragile*, mobilizing Nathalie Richard's freewheeling character Ninon and featuring "three characters in slightly different orbits who meet by chance before moving on." Neupert shows how *Une aventure de Ninon* reveals recurring aspects of Rivette's preoccupations, yet also functions in relation to Lumière's oeuvre; the restricted time frame, authentic format, and rigid guidelines to which each director was bound enabled Rivette to "return to the silent cinema's emphasis on composition, performance, movement, and duration."

In his incisive review of Rivette's penultimate feature film, *Ne touchez pas la hache* (Don't Touch the Axe; 2007), **JAMES NAREMORE** looks at the way in which Rivette's adaptation of Honoré de Balzac's novella, *La duchesse de Langeais*, respects what Lionel Trilling

calls “historicity.” Naremore values Rivette’s sensitivity to “the nineteenth century’s historically available expressive conventions,” comparing the film’s tone to the “austere historicism” of Roberto Rossellini’s *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV*. Naremore concludes that Rivette’s carefully composed costume drama, “achieves suspense, an air of estrangement, and sometimes a comic irony from the conflict between highly formalized manners and impulsive romanticism.”

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## CHRIS MARKER

**SARAH COOPER** offers a touching reflection on how the director’s death affected her in an elegantly composed piece, “Missing Marker.” Her philosophical musings take shape around *Sans soleil* (Sunless; 1982), which she confesses is the first film she had ever seen by Marker. Looking at the film’s opening segment, she distinguishes Marker’s montage effect from that of Kuleshov or Eisenstein, insisting that it occurs in the realm of imagination (inner ear/eye), emerging “beyond the visual realm, indebted to the verbal, but reducible to neither, brought out image upon image in the light of the mind, poetically rather than mathematically or geometrically.” She concludes by pondering the significance of the elusive graffiti cats that had been the subject of *Chats perchés* (The Case of the Grinning Cat; 2004) and considers the kind of films Marker might still be making in the light of recent political events.

In her contribution to the selection of Featured Scholarship essays, “Chris Marker’s “Animated Owls: Affects of Estrangement,” **JULIA ALEKSEYEVA** analyzes two rarely-discussed films by Marker: *Lettre de Sibérie* (Letter from Siberia; 1957), one of Marker’s first productions, and *Les astronautes* (The Astronauts; 1959), created with the Polish animator and filmmaker Walerian Borowczyk. Stressing the presence of Vertovian animation in both films, Alekseyeva argues that the tendency to animate is notable throughout Marker’s filmography and is consistent with his filmmaking style. She maintains that Marker’s use of animation allows him to make the familiar strange, thus exemplifying the concept of estrangement as described by Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky. Marker explores animation to create new ways of viewing old, familiar things, Alekseyeva argues, and thus allows a deeper, more affective, and more reflexive, approach to documentary cinema.

**CHANG-MIN YU** considers the aesthetic of *Le joli mai* (The Lovely Month of May; 1962) as a means of rethinking history and its representation in documentary form. In his contribution to the Featured Scholarship section of the dossier, “Ciné-méta-vérité: *Le Joli*

*Mai* and the Politics of Fictionality,” he argues that the film presents Marker’s stylistic and cinephiliac point of view in the mode of historiography, a meta-historical writing that he defines as “*ciné-méta-vérité*,” a mode of redefining documentary through the politics of fictionality. He looks specifically at Marker’s unorthodox focus on the hand and other cinephiliac references, which include Maurice Pialat’s *L’amour existe* and Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch’s *Chronique d’un été*.

In “The Essayist Among and Through Others: Chris Marker’s Symposial Montage in *The Owl’s Legacy*,” **RICK WARNER** examines Marker’s legacy as an essayist, stressing the frequently overlooked role of citation in the director’s work. Warner focuses on a few key segments from his TV series on Greek history and culture, *L’Héritage de la chouette* (*The Owl’s Legacy*; 1989), where he reflects on two different cave scenarios that have reflexive implications for cinema—Plato’s cave and Perseus’s confrontation with Medusa. He shows how Marker’s authorial voice finds indirect expression in a polyphonic ensemble of other voices (in a montage organized largely in terms of male-female pairings or couplings). He demonstrates that Marker’s work redefines the audiovisual essay that has historically figured the essayist as a unitary, stable source of personal expression. More generally, he connects Marker’s citation-driven work in *The Owl’s Legacy* to questions of authorship/auteurship and to the pedagogical significance of Marker’s essayistic sound and image practice for the viewer.

In her contribution to the Featured Scholarship section of the dossier, “Chris Marker’s *Overnight*: Cinétracts Then and Now,” **SARAH HAMBLIN** provides a close, perceptive analysis of one of Marker’s final short films, *Overnight* (2012), which was composed from photographs of the 2011 London riots taken by *The Times of London*. Hamblin details the ways in which it could be considered as a contemporary version of the cinétract, which she describes as “a mode of political filmmaking that Marker pioneered in response to what many leftists saw as the biased news coverage of 1968.” Yet she acknowledges that the existence of such links between *Overnight* and the cinétract project does not automatically render it a meaningful form of political cinema. Ultimately, Hamblin sees both the form and content of *Overnight* as reflective of “the problematic legacy of 1968 in relation to both protest and political filmmaking” and concludes by affirming “the need for new modes of political film practice” that are responsive to the challenges of the mediatized present.

A Note on Spelling: There are several accepted methods of capitalizing French titles and subtitles of works. Accordingly, this collection has refused the imposition of a single standard method, allowing contributors to choose the method of capitalization they prefer to use.