

Contempt  
Counter Cinema in Cinemascope  
The Architecture of Imagery  
by  
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## Table of Contents

|            |                       |    |
|------------|-----------------------|----|
| Chapter 1: | Introduction.....     | 5  |
| Chapter 2: | Il Disprezzo.....     | 10 |
| Chapter 3: | Classical Cinema..... | 22 |
| Chapter 4: | Counter Cinema.....   | 33 |
| Chapter 5: | Conclusion.....       | 45 |

## Abstract

This thesis explores and deconstructs the architecture of imagery within the framework of Jean Luc Godard's film Le Mépris (hereafter referred to by its English title Contempt). Though categorized with the Nouvelle Vague (hereafter French New Wave), its production however was a mainstream or traditional one, thus establishing a dichotomy within this movement whereby illusion meets realism and cinema meets counter-cinema. The movie in question thus occupies a unique position within this movement. The result I believe is actually a hybrid with qualities belonging to two expressions of cinema. Partially based on how it is classified, reviews and critiques have thus fallen short because of a normalized point of view which approaches the film from either one of two perspectives but never both. Though the French New Wave only lasted a brief period, from 1958-1967 (1958-1964 when restricted by some scholars) its wake continued thereafter in establishing the concept of the "auteur" and influencing the New Hollywood. Considered arguably Godard's best work, Contempt however presents a problem because the French New Wave was founded upon counter-cinema as opposed to the conventional system employed by Hollywood. Since its undertaking was backed by an international ensemble of producers (France, Italy and the US) and actors which included Brigitte Bardot, Jack Palance and legendary director Fritz Lang, the movie's production forced a more orthodox approach through controlled artistic expression in catering to its commercial aspect.

## CHAPTER 1

*Introductory Section*

“I love the cinema because it’s an indirect art [...]. It conceals as much as it reveals” François Truffaut, (8)



Fig 1

Truffaut’s above quote from Jefferson Kline’s book Screening the Text reveals a latent density to film and so perhaps a brief word about the title “Counter Cinema in Cinemascope” would not be unwarranted here as it embraces more than an arbitrary selection of aesthetic syntax. It forms a dichotomic statement which embodies the essence of what this study is primarily about and is perhaps the smallest reduction possible if one had to encapsulate this entire work into a single phrase. Counter cinema pertains to the counter culture objectives and iconoclastic methodologies a new group of filmmakers started within the film industry in France in the late 1950’s, a movement that became known though loosely defined as the French New Wave. These cineastes broke with established tenets and techniques. The movement was influenced by Italian Neo-realism a decade earlier and notably by the writings of Alexandre Astruc and André Bazin one of the most prolific critics within the group. François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Éric Rohmer, Agnès Varda, Claude Chabrol and Jacques Rivette, also belonging to this movement many of whom began as critics, writing for the famous film magazine Cahiers du cinéma before becoming directors. Chabrol’s Le Beau Serge (1958) is generally credited as the first New Wave feature followed by François Truffaut’s Les quatre cents coups (The 400 Blows, 1959) and Jean-Luc Godard’s A Bout de Souffle (Breathless, 1960), these retain the prestigious position as being the landmark films that ushered in the French New Wave.

Of these directors Jean Luc Godard became its most prolific and radical filmmaker. It is his however his sixth full length feature movie Contempt 1963 which holds special interest. This film is unique in that it is perhaps Godard’s most orthodox movie and arguably his finest.

Godard's films before this were all black and white with the exception of Une Femme est une femme (A Woman is a Woman, 1961). The fact that Contempt was filmed in color and CinemaScope tells us something about its production. Due to their inherent expense, Technicolor and CinemaScope were trademarked names generally reserved for large budget productions Hollywood style. Aspect ratio from the early days of cinema had been 1.33: 1 which was a pleasing aesthetic and one sentimentally held to by the New Wavers. However during the 1940's and early 1950's with the deregulation of film formats and competition from Television's growing audience, film was coerced into newer technologies. Greater advances in color and new anamorphic aspect ratios (e.g. 1.66:1 and 2.35:1) arose. Many of these advances became more of a requirement than a matter of choice. Light weight handheld cameras such as the Arriflex and Cameflex used for documentaries and disseminating current events had become the choice of New Wavers as they allowed greater freedom, mobility and could be concealed in tight quarters and thus capture events within real settings. Godard's preference is made clear in Contempt as Fritz Lang remarks that CinemaScope "was only good for filming snakes and funerals". Large productions on the other hand required special cameras such as the heavy and bulky Mitchell, noise insulation, synch systems, film and lenses all added to the size and generally required large crews to handle and dolly tracks for mobility (Fig 1), in addition to a process which was in the day beyond the financial means of small independent productions. Even Hollywood was forced to rent equipment and outsourced the processing of film to the company owning the rights and having the processing capability. Many production companies employed the Cinemascope technology but renamed it to avoid copyright infringements such Franscope which was essentially the Cinemascope technology as used in many French and European productions.

Contempt stands unique in Godard's portfolio and within the French New Wave movement by combining the best of two styles of cinema or to use what David Bordwell's defines as two "distinct modes of film practice" which will shortly be discussed further. We had seen Godard's raw, abrupt and brazen creativeness with a bare bones crew, *Cinéma vérité* style using handheld cameras with cheap grainy Black and White film stock and aleatory techniques devoid of serious financial backing. It could well be argued that Godard's success resulted from his lack of choices and ignorance of filmmaking and that by way of fluke he struck it lucky in a period which had witnessed a lull in the film industry partly due to social shifts and television's growing success. It was indeed ironic that in catering to a vibrant postwar youth culture, these avant-garde cineastes of their time with a contemporary medium as their canvas were still using the most dated material for their work. Contempt therefore with a wealthy infusion of both cash and the support of accredited studio professionals would test Godard's true abilities as a director. By placing him in the premiere league of filmmaking, he now had choices but within unfamiliar waters, a new realm of complexities and compromises as these also came part and parceled with the politics and bureaucracy of working under a large studio system where egos clashed beneath the hierarchies of power and fame. Godard actually took this personal experience of making Contempt and transferred the *rappports de production* into its very theme.

### *Background of Study*

Contempt is based upon the novel by Alberto Moravia, Il Disprezzo, (1954). Narrated from the perspective of a paranoid egotist, he has prostituted his literary ambitions for the sake of supporting his married lifestyle. With his intellect reduced to the menial labor of writing screenplays, it follows his fall into bathos as he seeks answers for his failing relationship as his wife begins distancing herself. Moravia's novel like Godard's movies addresses both literature

and film. This no doubt had an impact on Godard when he read it, resulting in his adaptation for which he also wrote the screenplay, in an interview taken from Godard on Godard by Tom Milne, Godard stated: “Moravia’s novel is a nice, vulgar one for a train journey, full of classical old fashioned sentiments in spite of the modernity of the situations. But it is this kind of novel that one can often make to best films.” ( 96)

Early in the 1960’s the average movie in France had a working budget of approximately \$300 000, those falling under \$200 000 considered low budget and those over \$400 000 approaching large budget. Breathless was shot on an \$80,000 budget with a bulk of that cost going to American actress Jean Seberg. Contempt three years later had a budget of 1 million dollars with half of that reportedly going to Brigitte Bardot. By comparison Cleopatra a classical Hollywood production released in the same year as Contempt originally budgeted at 2 million dollars was made at an eventual cost of 44 million (the equivalent of 295 million dollars in 2007 making it one of the most expensive movies ever made). Elizabeth Taylor was awarded a record setting contract of \$1 million. This amount eventually swelled to several million due to the delays in production. Begun in 1960 and premiered in June of 63 it was released in July 1963. Cleopatra went on to take 48 million dollars in North America, making it the highest grossing film of the year though still a financial loss for the film studio.

Twentieth Century Fox was almost forced into bankruptcy as a result of this single production. In part many of its troubles were a result of the break up in the traditional "studio-system" prevalent in Hollywood up to that time, two of the original male leads left the cast due to conflicting commitments. The Studio was forced to sell most of its large back-lot in Los Angeles to developers, hence the name Century city. Twentieth Century Fox recovered from its financial straits a year later with the release of The Sound of Music in 1965. The problems encountered with Cleopatra were indicative of pandemic problems within the movie industry in general. These problems were caused by social shifts, fragmentation within the industry and competition from international films which saw new styles rising in movements like the French New Wave. This plight is intertextually addressed within Contempt. Godard’s seventh feature Bande à part (Band of Outsiders 1964) coming directly after Contempt was made on a budget of approximately \$120 000. The term Technicolor and Cinemascope when used in general speech as synonymous with big budget films can be seen in its sarcastic reference at the end of A Band of Outsiders which had Godard return to low budget Black and White productions. At the end of this film as Franz and Odile leave Europe and head to Brazil on an ocean liner, Godard displays before the end credits “the upcoming movie: the tropical adventures of Franz and Odile” in “CinemaScope and Technicolor” plays well into the big budget pun these trademarks invoked.

Contempt is a movie covered in essentially three acts. For consistency purposes pertaining to this study we can likewise break the novel into three acts with each one corresponding to the films coverage of events. Therefore Act I of the movie covers approximately chapters 1 & 2 of the novel, while Act II covers chapters 3 to 11 and finally Act III corresponding to chapters 12 to 23. With a running time of 103 minutes all acts are for the most part of equal duration. Each of these three acts will be looked at individually pertaining to the three areas of focus, novel, classical cinema and counter cinema. As we are dealing with the architecture of imagery within a visual medium, I felt it also necessary to include images to support this study.

Considering that Contempt is an adaptation of the novel Il Disprezzo, it is perhaps best to discuss the imagery in relation to the novel first, its similarities as well as its differences. Since Godard changed all the character names in his adaptation, this study will, to avoid confusion

refer to the character names as they appear in the novel while their corresponding counterparts in the film shall be referenced by the actors playing the part.

| <u>Book</u>      |                    | <u>Movie</u>                    |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Emilia Molteni   | corresponding part | Brigitte Bardot (Camille Javal) |
| Riccardo Molteni | corresponding part | Michel Piccolli (Paul Javal)    |
| Battista         | corresponding part | Jack Palance (Prokosch)         |
| Rheingold        | corresponding part | Fritz Lang as himself           |
|                  |                    | Georgia Moll (Francesca)        |

### *Theoretical Approach*

David Bordwell in a 1979 article entitled “The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice” found in Film Theory and Criticism by Brandy and Cohen, contrasts art films against the mainstream films of classical Hollywood cinema:

The classical narrative cinema-paradigmatically, studio feature filmmaking in Hollywood since 1920-rests upon particular assumptions about narrative structure [...] specifically cause-effect logic and narrative parallelism generate a narrative which projects its action through psychologically-defined, goal oriented characters. Narrative time and space are constructed to represent the cause-effect chain. To this end, cinematic representation has recourse to fixed figure of cutting (e.g. 180° continuity, crosscutting, “montage sequences), mise-en-scene (e.g. three point lighting, perspective sets), cinematography (e.g. ranges of camera distances and lens lengths) and sound (e.g. modulation and voice over narration). (775)

Thus classical Hollywood cinema utilizes guidelines, mechanisms and methodologies which have become standardized in its effort to establish verisimilitude and ultimately aims at advancing the story’s narrative to a plausible finality. The plot for mainstream movies is thus driven by a well-defined archetypical protagonist who takes the audience through a logical sequence of events and problem-solving structures to reach a goal of moral significance. Pacing and sound (including music) are seamlessly woven into smooth editing to enhance and solicit appropriate emotional response from the audience.

Art Cinema on the other hand opposes this classical narrative mode by loosening the chain of cause and effect if not completely breaking the logical sequencing of narrative on either the spatial and/or temporal continuum. Concerning Art Cinema Bordwell goes on to state:

this cinema motivates narrative by two principles: realism and authorial expressivity. Art cinema defines itself as a realistic cinema. It will show us real locations and real problems [...] Most important, the art cinema uses “realistic” that is, psychologically complex characters [...] The characters of art cinema lack defined desires or goals.

Based on these two distinct modes of cinema Contempt’s imagery will prove a construct that actually employs elements of both modes thus creating a hybrid. Despite the more favorable reviews today compared to its initial release in 1963, it has still been met over the years with negative criticism by some of the industry’s most acclaimed critics. Noted critic Jonathan Rosenbaum of the Chicago Reader for example despite praising the film’s aesthetics also criticizes it in his review in 1997, assertions which this study will counter argue:

Much as William Faulkner once credited his success as a novelist to his failure as a lyric poet and Dizzy Gillespie explained his early trumpet style as an abortive attempt to imitate Roy Eldridge, what Godard can't do is fundamental to what he winds up doing. If *Contempt* invents a new way of thinking about the world--combining the whole complicated business of shooting a movie with reflections on antiquity and modernity, love and filmmaking, sound and image, art and commerce, thoughts and emotions, and four different languages and cultures--it arrives at this vision mainly through a series of detours and roadblocks. Indeed, it might be argued that Godard fails as a storyteller, as an entertainer, as an essayist, and as a film critic in the very process of succeeding as an artist.

Contempt's complex construct is steeped in semiotics and layered with latent parallels and structural binary contrasts to a depth which requires a deconstructive analysis beyond just that of a movie reviewed passively as either a conventional film or an art house one. Despite its commercialism and mass audience appeal it still holds true to Godard's concept of counter-cinema though subtly executed on a more sophisticated level when compared to his earlier raw autonomous productions. Visuals are film's most endearing and aesthetic quality, however to grasp the essence of imagery it must be examined within the context of its environment.

Contempt's exposure beyond its superficial or any perceived scopophilic aesthetics will hopefully yield a greater understanding of its dynamic structure. This imagery will be addressed within three areas of concern: its relationship to 1) the Novel it is based upon. 2) conventional cinema. 3) counter cinema. We will thus seek to reconcile this particular film's varied reception across opposing audiences on the premise of "what is cinema" a rhetorical question posed by Andre Bazin which he wrote extensively about and a multifarious debate which still continues amongst film scholars today as a medium which is torn between the world of economics and art.

### *Delimitations*

At 24 frames a second, analyzing a movie on a frame by frame basis would be a voluminous task far beyond the scope of this study. By condensing sections and using just a few examples pertaining to the novel, classical cinema and counter cinema with the support of leading scholars in the field will suffice to build a reasonable argument.

## CHAPTER 2

### Il Disprezzo

In What is Cinema, Bazin states that “A good adaptation should result in a restoration of the essence of the letter and the spirit. But one knows how intimate a possession of a language and of the genius proper to it is required for a good translation.” (67). Italian Neorealism is a term generally applied to a film movement of postwar Italy stretching between the 1940’s and declining within a decade in the 1950’s. However it had its beginning earlier than this in literature. Millicent Marcus author of Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism extends Neorealism’s filmic impact from 1945 to 1982 which included Bertolucci’s critically acclaimed “The Conformist” which was based on a novel also by Alberto Moravia.

The Term Neorealism began its career as a literary designation, coined by Arnaldo Bocelli in 1930 to describe the style that arose in reaction to the autobiographical lyricism and elegiac introversion of contemporary Italian letters. In contrast, neorealism offered a strenuously analytic, crude, dramatic representation of a human condition tormented between will and inclination by the anguish of the senses, the conventions of bourgeois life, the emptiness and boredom of existence, and a language founded no longer on the how but on the what sunk as deeply as possible into things adhering to the object. (18)

Despite denying it himself, Marcus lists Alberto Moravia as one of the literary figures classed beneath this umbrella. With the removal of specifics this above definition could likewise be applied to the French New Wave or indeed many of the radical shifts or departures within 20<sup>th</sup> century art. The French New Wave was the younger though bolder sibling of Italian Neorealism and therefore it lends itself well to the adaptation of novels from writers who lived within its light, Kline in his book Screening the Text states that:

Cinema has always, of course, been “literary” if only in the sense that it wanted to tell a story and “borrowed” from the novel not only many of the narrative techniques necessary to this project but most of its plots [...] Since French cinema in particular (and cinema in general) had been tied too closely to classic forms of narration and film production these young theorists (French New Wavers) centered their attack on the [...] tradition of the “well made” and ‘literary’ film. Film would no longer be the handmaiden of literature, but would stand as its rival. (2)

Moravia’s novel follows the course of troubled marriage moving towards a bitter and tragic end over the course of approximately nine months, resulting in abandonment and ruination along the way. Narrated in the first person through the eyes of the husband Riccardo Molteni, a narcissistic writer forced against his conscience to write movie scripts in order to sustain a living. Married only two years and now in a new apartment, his troubles begin when his wife begins withdrawing her affection for him. While contracted to write a movie adaptation of Homer’s The Odyssey he seeks answers for his failing relationship with Emilia. Much of his torment is self inflicted, filled with self doubt, conceited intellectual ideologies and paranoia from continual introspections. We are exposed to his torment through external monologues. He seeks to uncover the reason for the rift which ultimately culminates into a caustic self made psychological hell whose repercussions cause reactions and behaviors which further alienates his wife from his love. Emilia’s coldness eventually turns to contempt hence the title. The cause of their conjugal disintegration is obscure and never fully developed or resolved. The novel is surprisingly simple

and sparse in specifics but dense in psychoanalytical ramblings as one would expect from the existentialist qualities Moravia often employed.

How does Godard fail as a storyteller and entertainer? The plot of *Contempt* proceeds by fits and starts over an afternoon in Rome and a morning in Capri, interrupted by constant digressions and labyrinthine ruminations. Palanca as Prokosch is a screaming caricature of an oracular producer, Bardot the unlikeliest "former typist" imaginable.

These words by Jonathan Rosenbaum for the Chicago Reader in his review of *Contempt* in 1997 are debatable. Rosenbaum in that same lengthy review also stated "Based on a novel by Alberto Moravia that *I haven't read*". Though one doesn't have to read a novel to understand its adaptation as a movie, I would argue that if one is going to fault it on storyline, reading the novel would be prerequisite. Godard holds very well to the thematic structure and ambience of Moravia's novel and so to fault Godard in failing as a storyteller is to fault Moravia as one, which raises a greater problem since the story is of greater importance to the novel than it is to the film, the film has a broader base on which to establish and promote itself such as the aesthetics and pleasure of visuals alone. However a story even within a novel and especially true of modern literature does not have to be objective or a goal oriented one, this is a crucial point concerning the nature Moravia's fiction. In fact one of the defining elements of art cinema is often its lack of story as Bordwell points out:

Characters may wander out and never reappear, events may lead to nothing [...] lacking a goal the art-film character slides passively from one situation to another [...] Thus the art film's thematic of *la condition humaine*, its attempt to pronounce judgments on "modern life" as a whole proceeds from its formal needs: had the characters a goal, life would no longer seem so meaningless. (Braudy/Cohen 776)

Both *Contempt* the novel and the film deal with goalless aspects of *la condition humaine* in modern society and both accomplish the task par excellence though through different means. Storyline therefore is of no primary concern in *Contempt* but contingent upon the psychological effects of human interaction within a mundane reality and the futile search for its cause or as Bordwell describes it "the dissection of feeling is often represented explicitly as therapy and cure." (Braudy/Cohen 776) Since the psychological and emotional estrangement between a narcissist's account of his marital disintegration is thus the focal point tackled by both Moravia and Godard, it subsequently nullifies any need for a plot or defined goal. Godard himself made this point very clear: "I have stuck to the main theme, simply altering a few details on the principle that something filmed is automatically different from something written and therefore original" (Milne, 96).

Though Moravia disagreed with Godard's earlier expression in chapter 1 concerning his novel when asked the question if he considered it "a novel to be read on the train", he replied "Absolutely not, I consider it one of my best novels". (Elkann/Moravia 216)

He did however agree with Godard in the latter part of Godard's quote when asked if he thought the film was superior to the book, Moravia replied: "I consider the writer and the director as two distinct artists, unrelated to each other [...]. If he had been less original perhaps he would have been faithful." (Elkann/Moravia 216)

Godard's location is specific i.e. the grounds of *Cinecittà* just outside of Rome, Italy's famous movie studio. Godard's love of film is indicative in his choice of location here. Since Molteni in the novel lives in Rome and is hired by Battista, a producer to write a movie script, Godard's location is not entirely improbable despite the location not being specifically

mentioned in the novel. Godard no doubt could have solicited greater detail from Moravia if he required. They did meet, though according to Moravia the meeting was not a successful one.

ELKANN. How did you get along with Godard?

MORAVIA. I didn't, Godard is a man of genius who has revolutionized cinema but he is a person with whom it is difficult or virtually impossible to communicate. (Elkann/Moravia 217).

Such being the case the remote reader is not given such descriptive details in the novel so as to construct an accurate image of what perhaps Moravia envisioned but is given enough to construct a resemblance. Existentialism however is more concerned with the solipsist struggle in an unfathomable universe and less with rational construct in the observed world around us, under these circumstances physical realities extrinsic to self are reduced in importance if not entirely negligible.

Concerning Godard's quote from earlier on, he makes two important points which are key to his imagery in light of the novel it is based upon, first, that he stuck to the main theme of the novel and second, a truism agreed upon and supported by both Godard and Moravia i.e. that novels and film are two very inherently different mediums of communication and therefore both stand separately on their own merits and cannot be directly compared (confirmed also by Bazin 141). This should not be viewed as a contradiction to Kline's quotation above, where he deals with narrative structure, Godard deals with the medium through which the narrative is transferred from the point of view of a director, hence the terms *Auteur* and *Camera-stylo* which are definitions indigenous to film but borrowed from the world of literature or as Kline states "the new cineastes engaged directly in "film writing" rejecting the seamless interpretation of events that was implied by adaptation" (Kline 3). Cinema in an effort to define itself especially with movements like the French New Wave has had a love hate relationship with literature. While the New Wave acknowledges its relevance to cinema they also wanted cinema to stand on its own merits without the crutch of other arts, a point also acknowledged by Bazin: "The cinema is young, but literature, theater and music are as old as history. Just as the education of a child derives from imitating the adults around him, so the evolution of the cinema has been influenced by the example of the hallowed arts." (Bazin 56)

When one removes the heavy focus on movie making within Godard's film it quickly becomes apparent how closely Godard held to the structure and theme of Moravia's novel. Godard successfully portrays the novel's bleakness and alienation but giving it his own *camera-stylo* signature. The essence of the entire novel is captured within Act II of the movie. Though the marital disintegration and alienation begins in Act I and crescendos in Act III, Act II is unique as it is the only act which doesn't deal with the subject of film making, just Piccoli and Bardot at home in a very dislocated form of communication which captures the banal and mundane awkwardness of a relationship in crisis. Moravia's carries this through his entire movie with Battista and Rheingold appearing sporadically and without prolonged presences.

Godard's real point of departure from Moravia novel is in his intrepid dual purpose while also dealing with an estranged couple's sojourn, he couples the subject of movie making, an area Moravia doesn't harp upon. Moravia does discuss movie making but only the preliminary stages and not the actual production, he touches upon the differences between producers, directors and scriptwriters and the preliminary plans for translating Homer's masterpiece into a script. Molteni meets with Rheingold, the director and Battista the producer to discuss the script and the adaptation whereas Godard pushes the movie beyond its preliminary stages and into the actual production. It should not be construed that Moravia was unfamiliar

with movie making because he wasn't the little information he does supply on the contrary indicates a knowledge of the industry. However it didn't serve his purpose but was simply background decor with his meticulous focus on the strained tensions between Riccardo and Emilia.

While remaining faithful to Moravia's two physical locations Rome and Capri, Godard expands the novels embrace beyond the borders of Italy. While Rheingold in the novel is a German director, he is the only foreign character in the novel (Battista is spoken of as having a foreign accent (Moravia 79) but which may simply be another Italian dialect since he later refers to himself as Italian (Moravia 153)). However because Godard focuses heavily on film production within the movie, and that cinema is a universal medium, Godard pushes these boundaries to global limits and hence his characters assume international profiles. Battista the Italian producer becomes an American producer, Palance's character. His character is representative of the autonomy of crass consumerism while Rheingold becomes legendary German Director Lang playing himself. This introduces Francesca, a character not found in the novel into the film. Francesca serves as a translator for all these languages and so in essence Godard builds a complex model showing the socio-economical dynamics of modern day moviemaking while paralleling its personification to the interpersonal miscommunications and problematic intricacies within a marriage.

Godard takes no liberties in replacing Rheingold the director with Fritz Lang himself, as Moravia even mentions Lang within the novel:

Rheingold was a German director who in the pre Nazi film era had directed in Germany various films of the colossal type which had had a considerable success at the time, He was certainly not in the same class as the Pabsts and *Langs* [...]. After the advent of Hitler, nothing had been heard of him. It was said that he was working in Hollywood. (Moravia 79).

Though we are given little detail about Rheingold, the little we are given surprising parallels Lang's history, a maker of "colossal" movies in Berlin of pre Nazi Germany, his departure to the US and working in Hollywood greatly narrows down the possible choices if Rheingold's character was modeled on a real person. With such a heavy focus on filmmaking, Lang is Godard's ideal choice for a number of reasons, first Godard's complete respect for Lang as a director, Lang's early pre-Nazi movies were held in high esteem by the New Wavers (this respect is also be seen in that Godard plays assistant to the director in the movie, and his contempt for producers is also shown in the way Lang speaks condescendingly to Palance, also indicative of Godard's own sentiments). Second, we have the introduction of a real and legendary director into a fictional work thus suppressing the illusion and promoting the realism within the movie. Third, is that Lang is used as a double signifier, not only representing himself but in representing the pure face and history of cinema or as Godard calls him the film's "conscience" (Milne 96). Lang had worked under both systems of movie making, however his movies during his American period in which he worked for the best studios didn't match the critical acclaim of his pre Nazi movies in part because his visual style was simplified as a result of working under the constraints of the Hollywood studio system. An important shift Godard also makes concerning the functions of these directors is that Rheingold in the book wants to make a Freudian style psychoanalytical adaptation of the *Odyssey* whereas Godard has Lang (the rushes, created by his second unit) creating it in classical structure though highly stylized within Godard's movie, more representative than real.

Il Disprezzo was very much a reflection of Moravia's life at its time of creation, which can be seen from an interview with Alain Elkann:

ELKANN. You told me you had written *Il disprezzo* in an excess of irritation with Elsa?

MORAVIA. Yes there were days when I would have liked to kill her. Not just separate from her, which would have been a rational solution, but kill her, because our relationship was so close, so complex, and finally, so alive that crime seemed to me easier than separation

ELKANN. Why did you want to kill her? What had happened?

MORAVIA. Absolutely nothing new had happened, but at certain moments I couldn't stand it any longer.

ELKANN. You couldn't stand her character any longer?

MORAVIA. She had been too cruel, practically sadistic. If you read carefully *La Storia*, this cruelty strangely combined with her creaturely and pre-moral pity, will seem obvious to you [...] pity and cruelty are only two aspects of a relationship with reality more physiological than intellectual. In any case, the idea of killing her was transferred almost immediately into a novel." (Elkann/Moravia 215)

Elsa Morante a fellow writer was Moravia's wife during this time and was reportedly having an affair that Moravia was aware of but did nothing about, the resulting turbulence and instability eventually ended with a divorce in 1961, though her affair by this time was long over. This does not assume a formalist approach to Moravia's novel but used to parallel similarities in his life and Godard's during the time their respective works were created. These outlets do nevertheless become deliberate conduits fostering a personal climate. Though Moravia further into this interview states that Emilia is not Elsa, the few descriptions he does provide of Emilia builds the framework of a woman who is of typical Italian stock, dark features, Roman nose, generous proportions and short.

"Her naked body now looked to me big, ample, powerful although I knew that in reality she was not in the least massive. She had the most beautiful shoulders, beautiful arms, the most beautiful neck I had ever seen, full and rounded [...]. Her complexion was dark her nose pronounced and in form severe, her mouth full and fresh and laughing [...] her eyes very large of a fine golden brown sensual in expression." (Moravia 29)

Thus Emilia is closer to the Italian woman in appearance than Bardot who was a complete metamorphosis of Moravia's novelic character. The only other woman with any real presence in Moravia's novel is Signora Pasetti the wife of another director who only appears once in the novel and is described:

she was a small woman with a large head and two bands of smooth black hair framing her long oval very pale face. Her eyes were large but light in color and inexpressive and she became animated only when her husband was present and then she never took them off his face for one single moment, like an affectionate dog with its master. But when her husband was not there she kept them lowered. (Moravia 51).

Godard always grounds his movies within the exacts of contemporary history and is confirmed by Palance in the movie who emphatically states the year is 1963. Thus Godard moves the novel forward in time from 1954 when it was written (which was then the present for Moravia's

setting) to 63 which is Godard's present, in doing so he pushes it forward on a social and cultural basis also elevating the role of women.

Janice Kozma in The Architecture of Imagery in Alberto Moravia's Fiction quotes Jane Cortell from her book on Moravia:

Apparently a Moravian female need only exude sensuality: she may be only semi-literate or even totally illiterate but in no case does she have intellectual interests nor is she portrayed as being a thinking being. She lives by animal like instincts and for sensual pleasure" and goes then goes on to say Moravia simply "does not understand women very well. His ideas about female sexuality appear ill-informed or at best, not representative of the great majority of women" In many of his depictions she finds him "self-indulgent and wish-fulfilling. (Kozma 39)

Cortell's assertions can certainly be confirmed in this particular novel and are blatantly divulged in excerpts like these:

I had not married a woman who could understand and share my ideas, tastes and ambitions, instead I had married, for her beauty, an uncultivated, simple typist, full, it seemed to me, of all the prejudices and ambitions of the class from which she came. (Moravia 21)

She is certainly capable of understanding the commercial motives for which Battista insists upon a spectacular Odyssey [...] she is certainly incapable of achieving the level of my own interpretation, or rather that of Homer and Dante. (Moravia 233)

Kozma herself states that:

Women rarely describe themselves nor are they often described by the narrators as being anything remotely connected to an abstract, intellectual, philosophical, existential, or even moderately complex concept. Women are not given the luxury of much significant imagery of human experience. Sharon Wood writes that "The Moravian existential spirit is specifically male. (Kozma 38)

Both women in Godard's film, Bardot and Moll, are above the dimwitted domestic portrayal of females assigned in Moravia's novel. Moll speaks several languages, discusses classical poetry with Lang and is the only unifier within the movie while Bardot though a former "typist" as in the novel is very literate, she is not only familiar with Lang's work but is shown reading books on both art and Lang. This is in part why Emilia becomes Bardot's Camille in the movie. This seemingly small detail is in fact a monumental character shift from Moravia's character. Godard borrowed his name from Alfred de Musset's heroine in his play On ne badine pas avec l'amour, (Do Not Trifle With Love, 1834). In this play Camille is match-made to her uncle's son, who having paid for her education and upbringing feels this match is justified. However Camille is not the girl her uncle imagines a girl should be, and thus taunts and plays with her suitor's emotions. Musset a French Romantic did write plays that were adapted to film, his play Les Caprices de Marianne (The Moods of Marianne, 1833) for example was the basis for Jean Renoir's critically acclaimed The Rules of the Game (1939), a director and movie which was also inspirational to New Wave directors. As a result Bardot's character as Camille is imbued with a gender equality and thus elevated to a position not found in Emilia's character in Moravia's novel. Rosenbaum's comment: that Bardot is the "unlikeliest "former typist" imaginable" is redundant if not altogether supercilious, as if to suggest that there is no such thing as a smart and beautiful typist, secretarial work and typing were two of the very few career

choices women had during that period. There is however an additional reason for the female shift in the movie, Godard wanted Camille to fit Bardot and not vice versa, which is why Bardot gives perhaps one of her best performances since she is no longer acting but being herself.

Godard was the only filmmaker truly to tackle Bardot as a subject and the body as moral attitude. For Godard, Bardot was no slut and her behavior wasn't scandalous. She was an ordinary woman, a secretary someone simple, honest, and untouched by the sickness of the age, and its great tragedy money. This isn't made explicit in the film but it is visible in the body that Godard observes, follows in its movements, its poses, its way of speaking, of saying "words," and in the animal truth of its being. Like Ophuls with Martine Carol, Godard didn't want Bardot to interpret Camille, he wanted Camille to be Bardot. (Douchet 146)

Hence Emilia is essentially replaced by Bardot's strong spontaneous personality which was the new woman of the sixties. A precursor to what would ultimately culminate both politically and socially in shifts resulting in movements like the Women's Liberation. Godard's forward thinking sentiments on femininity are seen as far back as Breathless where Patricia (Seberg) is braless beneath her official company T-shirt advertising the "New York Herald Tribune" as she sells her newspapers on the street, which is a point deliberately addressed by Michel (Belmondo). Though certainly not the first modern woman to go braless, the use of film as a mass media device giving attention to it is a unique point of reference. Such a triviality alludes to what bras symbolized hence the bra burning myths that eventually arose in the US during the 60's as women began lobbying for greater rights and gender equality. "In short, what emerges from Godard's years of meditation on American cinema is an admiration for soul, the secrets of characterization, feminine intuition as a kind of metaphysics, belief in essence and predefinition of character, revealed rather than formed by action" (Kline 192)

Another change Godard also makes is removing the novel's narrative from the first person. In Moravia's novel the story is told through Riccardo Molteni's narrative and so we view the entire course of events and troubles through his eyes only. The problem with this kind of narrative angle especially in a novel like Moravia's is that it makes assumptions about the feelings, thoughts and/or behavior of others which may or may not be true. However Godard's move from this first person narrative is an important one because it places the feuding couple on a level playing field, we are no longer forced to view life with biased persuasion but remotely and therefore more objectively.

## Act 1



Fig 2

Act 1 of *Contempt* approximately covers the first two chapters of the novel. In the novel we are introduced to three characters two of these characters are Riccardo and Emilia Molteni, played by Piccoli and Bardot in the movie and the third one is Battista the producer played by Palance. Aside from Godard's infusion of film making which runs parallel to Moravia's theme within the film, the physical ambiguities and lack of tangible specifics in Moravia's novel is obviously an important reason why perhaps he envisioned something entirely different to what Godard created. In chapter one for example we are told that Battista (Palance's character) drives "a very expensive red car, but with a narrow body and only two seats" (Moravia 5). Godard likewise uses a red sports car but one of the superior qualities of cinema is in its visual ability to tell a story in greater detail, this superiority is not an intellectual one but a realistic one as to how we actually perceive our world, largely through the sense of sight, one frame of a movie can show what would take an inordinate amount of words to convey within a novel. This very concept is discussed in Seymour Chatman's essay on "What Novels can do that Films can't (and Vice Versa)":

We read in typical handbooks like Thrall and Hibbard: Description...has as its purpose the picturing of a scene or setting." But that is only part of the story: such a definition eliminates *inter alia* the description of an abstract state of affairs, or of a character's mental posture or indeed of anything not strictly visual or visualizable. Narratologists argue that a more correct and comprehensive account of description rest on a temporal structure. As we have already noted, narrative story and that of the time line of the discourse. Now what happens in description is that the time line of the story is interrupted and frozen. Events are stopped, though our reading of discourse-time continues, and we look at the characters and the settings elements as at a *tableau vivant*. (Braudy/Cohen 447).

Since the description of a scene in a novel is dispensed to the reader by means of a serial stream of data, the time line is temporarily frozen. Words are read sequentially which must then

be translated one building block at a time for the mind to construct a mental image. In freezing this time line within a novel, the writer is aware that details require words and that too many words can disrupt the momentum of the story if not completely destroy it and so only relevant information is generally relayed. Film supplies data visually which is processed by the brain simultaneously and instantaneously allowing for greater detail to be transferred without disrupting the continuity of time. Film thus supplies physical specifics while the novel conveys an impression and so what we gather from Godard's movie are that the additional facts that the car is an Alfa Romeo and a convertible. Moravia further along in that same paragraph tells us that "Battista puts his head of the window" (Moravia 5) which seems to indicate a hard top as opposed to convertible, although it could be argued it was a convertible with its top engaged which would perhaps then indicate the possibility of rain but we are told it was "October and still warm" (Moravia 5). However further into the novel as Battista and Emilia take off for Capri with Riccardo and Rheingold in Molteni's car we read:

Behind me I heard the roar of Battista's car as it started then it passed us and went off swiftly down the hill. I had scarcely time to catch a glimpse, through the *rear window*, of the head and shoulders of Emilia and Battista side by side, then the car turned a corner and vanished. (Moravia 137).

Though at this point it is June, we are told the weather was cloudy and windy, however the description still implies a car with a roof. Cars occupy a certain ideology within Godard's movies, though movies about the modern urban world are seldom without vehicles, Godard uses them a symbols of consumerism, many of his movies feature long banal driving sequences which add nothing to his narrative but imply the inescapability of our existence in the modern world, a fast and alienating one. The rev of Battista's car in chapter 12 of the novel is heard in Act 1 of Godard's movie as Palance roars down to the viewing room for the rushes while everyone else walks, the noise of modern machinery breaking the tranquility of the surrounding environment. Godard's Maoist ideologies here are juxtaposed against the pollution of capitalism. Palance incidentally is the only main character to drive a car in this film. In Breathless Michel's character is seen driving a number of stolen cars around Paris but what is unusual there is that most of the cars are American cars, Fords and Cadillac's which prefigure a shrinking world, international homogenization and the globalization of the industrialized bourgeois. American vehicles were in no way prolific in France in the 60's and so this perpetual motif pushes the concept towards the unrealistic hence their symbolic significance since Michel himself is modeled after and mimics Humphrey Bogart. Seberg's nationality, movies like The Harder they Fall, Whirlwind and Gun Crazy or references to William Faulkner's The Wild Palms all support the Americanism of Breathless. However in Contempt, even though Palance is an American he drives an Italian car, a minor detail showing Godard's attention to detail in holding true to Moravia's reality when it didn't conflict with his own stylistic vision.

## Act 2



Fig 3

In arguing against Rheingold's desire to make a modern Freudian adaptation of The Odyssey Battista contends that:

If I wanted to make a film about relations between husband and wife, I should take a modern novel, I should stay in Rome and I should shoot the film in the bedrooms and drawing-rooms of the Pariolo quarter.....I shouldn't bother about Homer and the Odyssey. (Moravia 155)

Both Moravia and Godard do precisely this in Act II of both the novel and movie. Act II in the movie is unique in that it deals strictly with Bardot and Piccoli's relationship, devoid of any other characters or any distracting emphasis on movie making.

The flat was on the top floor of a newly built block, as smooth and white as if it had all been made of plaster [...], a big living room of greater length than width and a bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen and the maids room were all three very small....

"You won't mind will you if I sleep on the divan bed in the other room"

"Just for tonight, you mean" I inquired puzzled and still uncomprehending"

"No, for always" she replied hurriedly "To tell you the truth that's one of the reason I wanted a new home. I really can't go on sleeping with the shutters open, as you like to do." (Moravia 25)

She went backwards and forwards between the bedroom and the living room [...] and suddenly the suspicion that she no longer loved me sprang into my mind again, in an abrupt, haunting sort of way as a feeling of the impossibility of contact and communions between my body and hers. (Moravia 29).

[...]felt a kind of painful nausea at the thought that our intimacy had turned, for no reason at all, into estrangement, absence, separation [...] meanwhile Emilia, who had gone into the bathroom, was washing, as I could tell from the sounds of water flowing from the taps. (Moravia 30)

Moravia gives little detail about the type of furniture Molteni's apartment held, Riccardo and Emilia had furnished it gradually and probably scantily since they were low on funds. The little details Moravia provides are used exactly by Godard, the shape of the rooms, the newness of the flat with paint cans lying around and un-hung frames etc are immediately apparent as we are taken inside. Trivial events like Emilia talking to her mother on the phone in their bedroom and making "an impatient gesture as if to tell me to shut the door" or the reasons why she chooses to sleep on the divan are Moravian (Moravia 63, 26). Godard however does create the apartment ultramodern which is in all likelihood was a departure from Moravia but one must remember this is nine years after Moravia's novel, time enough for a change in fashion and style to have occurred and the décor is now from a French design sense not Italian, its design isn't just constructed to match the period, culture and taste but to exaggerate the modernity of the time.

These excerpts also show an ordinary couple involved in ordinary life at home. Literature has the advantage here of being able to exclude unnecessary elements from a scene by just not mentioning them and so the tedium of a crumbling relationship can be highlighted through a long volley of bickering or prolonged exterior monologues concentrating on intrinsic anguish. Godard overcomes this problem in a very creative way, the high saturation of primary colors within the living quarters compete for attention and help extenuate the banality of the interpersonal misfires in communication between the couple devoid of the fancy conventions seen in classical cinema, had this been a classical Hollywood production this entire 30 minute sequence would likely have been compressed into a five minute scene with high drama and polished dialog. Nevertheless the beauty of modern literature is its attention to such mundane and ordinary details which Godard likewise executes realistically.

### Act 3



Fig 4

Battista caught up with her in the middle of the room and put his arm around her waist, bringing his face close to hers, over her shoulder. She immediately

protested [...] grasping the edge of her dress on her shoulder in his fist, with a strange, cruel violence, twisted and pulled it roughly downwards. One of Emilia's shoulders now was completely bare, and Battista's head was bending over it so that he might press his mouth against it [...]. Then she looked in the direction of the window, and it seemed to me that our eyes met, I saw her make a gesture of disdain and then, holding up the torn shoulder-strap with one hand, leave the room hurriedly, I turned and walked back along the terrace. (Moravia 162)

This is the closest contact we see between Battista and Emilia in the novel, Riccardo is outside on the terrace smoking while watching Battista violently trying to seduce his wife Emilia. Godard shows this violence in an abstract way, though the kiss between Bardot and Palance is not forced but rather invited and mutual, it is on the lips thus far more intimate. However the emotional violence of the action is seen in the canted framing and dizzying angle of the shot. Whereas Moravia uses a horizontal line of sight, Godard uses height and spatial fragmentation, the camera's ability to narrate through three dimensional space is one of its great advantages over two dimensional mediums or unilateral modes of narration. The pronounced high diagonal of the roof top abruptly breaks and abstracts the comforts of spatial symmetry as Piccoli looks down upon the infidelity below. Interesting is the fact that Palance and Bardot are out of sight. He knows they are there, Bardot's hand is on the sill and she does look out the window and is aware of his presence too. Even though the kiss cannot be seen by Piccoli, dialog no doubt can be heard. The silence during the moment of the kiss and its obscure uncertainty adds to the void and alienation between the couple causing mental torment which is so apparent in the novel from Riccardo's analytical thought patterns but captured here visually in substitute.

After seeing myself despised for no reason, it was I, now, who had full justification for despising, and the whole mystery of Emilia's conduct towards me resolved itself into a perfectly ordinary intrigue. It may be that this first harsh yet logical reflection, dictated largely by my own pride, prevented me, at that moment from being conscious of any pain caused by the discovery of Emilia's unfaithfulness (or what appeared to me to be unfaithfulness). (Moravia 163)

These words a continuation of the previous quote demonstrates that even though Emilia protested to Battista and that she was no in way responsible for his advances, Molteni concludes she was unfaithful, thus his paranoid mind believes even when the eyes tell him otherwise. Even with Piccoli's line of sight broken by impenetrable walls we see both Piccoli looking down upon Palance and Bardot kissing, from our vantage point we see all three and can thus assume his mind also fabricates but in this instance it is what his eyes cannot see which is literally opposite to the novel's construct but with the same conclusion due to spectator point of reference which is not possible in literature.

### CHAPTER 3 Conventional Cinema

#### Act 1



Fig 5

“Those interested in Brigitte Bardot’s behind—in Cinemascope and color—will find ample rewards in Contempt.” writes Stanley Kauffmann for the New Republic while Robert Benayoun of the France-Observateur reviewing Contempt in December of 1963 after its release stated:

It required (long live America!) repeated requests on the part of the producer Joseph E Levine, before the director consented to film Bardot in the long introductory nude scene, the best in the film and the only one to provide a brief glimmer of hope. Bardot unclothed is an ever-renewing, always inspiring spectacle, that changes color like the sea and transforms the grumpy viewer into a grateful pup. I’m afraid that Bardot’s presence, as sublime as it is, won’t save contempt. The nude scenes come at too high a price, resulting in a vague uneasiness resembling the discomforts of insomnia. (Douchet 271)

Both reviews here highlight an important point concerning this study, namely public expectations and preferential reasons for seeing the movie which in Contempt is Bardot. It demonstrates a common superficialness in how movies are perceived even by professional critics who should know better. However it also illustrates what star power can do for a film in helping market and commercialize it. Contempt’s casting of Bardot is certainly enough reason to hold the attention of conventional viewer. In a 2006 article concerning star power the New York Times reported:

the industry still places an enormous importance on superstar power based on a straightforward fact: On average, movies that have big names starring in them make more money at the box office than movies that do not.

Movie industry specialists argue that, in the complicated world of Hollywood economics, stars bring many different kinds of benefits. They are easier to market, they help sell more tickets at home and overseas and they help drive home-video sales, which are a bigger and bigger slice of studio revenue.

Anita Elberse, an associate professor at the Harvard Business School. Found, for instance, that the announcement in 2002 that Mr. Cruise had dropped out of “Cold Mountain” — he had been expected to play the lead — reduced the movie’s expected gross by \$10 million. The announcement that Mr. Cruise was in talks to play a leading role in “The Last Samurai” lifted the movie’s expected gross by \$28 million. (Porter and Fabrikant)

Nudity when portrayed in within acceptable limits and then combined with Star power can be a tour de force. Those who saw Contempt for Bardot got to see her in one of her finest roles despite any voyeuristic disappointments, those who saw it for Godard’s work knew better, to expect the unexpected. It was such preconceived notions that Godard constantly challenged. Both classical Hollywood cinema and art cinema approach nudity and eroticism very differently, the use of pornographic imagery in art movies is often misconceived for its face value, merely suggestive sexual gratifications when it often constitutes a form of intellectual montage addressing social issues beyond the simple representation of carnal pleasure. Godard was said to have originally lobbied for Frank Sinatra and Kim Novak for the lead parts. If this is true Contempt’s ultimate success would have been very different, not success entirely based on box office sales but in both its eventual reception and classification (Bazin’s idea of success is a movie’s ability to defy aging, 109). While Contempt opened to mixed reviews, the heavy editing required for many countries dampened its international potential. Novak for one probably would not have agreed to nude scenes, though a body double could have been used Hollywood was still under the Production code, even though by the 1960’s this control was weakening, sex and nudity were still considered taboo within the American film industry. Such chaste control however should not be misconstrued as purity, Hollywood was about business and maximizing profits through targeting the broadest possible audience. That being said the film may well have been more successful in the States with stars like Sinatra and Novak and without the complications of language, however Bardot’s stage presence in this movie is its real selling point, no other leading lady at the time could match Bardot’s on screen sexuality and pouting vibrancy even though her sensual charisma is suppressed in this role.

Brigitte Bardot’s confidence and independence through years of training in classical dance drew her to the bohemian way of life in a neighborhood of Paris that was also home to the New Wavers. By the age of 15 she had already graced the pages of Elle as a model and was inducted into movies not much later, she is said to have been solely responsible for popularizing the Bikini by her role in Girl in a Bikini (1952). Roger Vadim who had known her from her teens cast her in Et Dieu.Créa la femme (And God Created Woman 1956) which broke her out of a confined mold. Bardot’s naturalness was as comfortable in front of the camera as her photogenic looks and body were. She was in a spontaneous and insouciant sense the female embodiment of New Wave sensibility, the only problem being, she was already an international star and thus beyond New Wave budgets until this movie: Her relationship to the New Wave can be seen from Douchet’s coverage of her in his book on the French New Wave:

She evolved in symbiosis with the new way of life in which the young generation unconsciously aspired. Bourgeois society [...] had to confront its own censorship. In establishing a new set of values, consumption, money, and pleasure

as the goal of existence, it undermined its own morality. Bourgeois society's punitive morality, ultimately based on frustration, began to crumble; propriety in both dress and behaviour, was cast aside. People were again learning to be comfortable with their bodies and carried themselves accordingly [...]. Bardot gave birth to a new state of mind, or rather a whole new moral attitude, one of ease with one's physical self [...]. Bardot had no use for the public's opinion or their judgment. Her body was hers to do with as she pleased. In this sense she was representative of the needs of her time, and introduced an era of liberalization that managed to break down every social and cinematic taboo.

Her impact on the media surpassed that of the most successful American stars; even Marilyn Monroe never challenged Bardot's uniqueness. But she wasn't as fortunate as Monroe, who was directed by some of Hollywood's greatest filmmakers Lang, Hawks, Huston, Wilder and others. (Douchet 145)

Walter Benjamin in his acclaimed essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" was astute enough to observe a profound fact about this mass media juggernaut back in the 1930's concerning actors, the movie industry, and the cult of the movie star, he noted that an actor in front of a camera was essentially the same "as one's own reflection in the mirror, "But now the reflected image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? Before the public" (Braudy/Cohen 801) Benjamin goes on to discuss what he calls the loss of the aura, essentially as a reflection has no soul or life-force of its own, but is simply an image as is an actors presence on screen:

The film responds to the shriveling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the personality outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the spell of the personality, the phony spell of a commodity. (Braudy/Cohen 802)

Thus movie stars take on an off screen high public profile which helps the spectator identify with their onscreen characters. When news leaked that Godard was making a film starring Bardot, producers and public alike were thus already expecting to see Bardot as the sex siren she had already been prepackaged as. Both nudity and eroticism were not new subjects for either Bardot or Godard. Godard for example in Une Femme est une femme (A woman is a Woman, 1961) confronted nudity and dealt with the subject of a stripper, and as far back as the mid 1950's Bardot had exposed the glory of her sensational nakedness. It was And God Created Woman which shot her to international fame overnight, becoming one of Frances biggest exported products by 1957, an icon ushering in the new modern woman, a liberated child of nature, self willed, vibrant, completely comfortable in her own skin with full awareness of her raw sexual power. Her sex symbol status nonetheless wasn't new to the industry and as with other pretty faces or voluptuous bodies she was marginalized and displayed simply in one dimensional splendor, the object of male fantasy, landing her in stereotypical roles. Godard discusses Bardot at length in his interview with Francois Chalais which supports her commercial contribution"

CHALAIS. In Contempt that famous scene where Miss Bardot is so pleased to shed her clothes were you forced to include that?

GODARD. Not "pleased" at all, I though she did very tactfully

CHALAIS. But were obliged to include that scene?

GODARD. I didn't film it at first. Then the American producers said "The film's beautiful but not commercial. We'd like a scene in the beginning where

Bardot and Piccoli are naked in bed, making love. We'd like the same thing in the middle and at the end." I told them at the end is impossible and in the middle as well since they are no longer in love. But I can do it another way that you will still like. As for at the beginning fine. I can do it in a certain way if you'll agree. They agreed and that's the way I did it.

CHALAIS. But you hadn't planned on doing it?

GODARD. I had, but I took it out because there was no point. I still find there's no point. But that is, it doesn't add anything to the story.

CHALAIS. I thought you only did what you wanted to do

GODARD. I do want it, I find it very good now and I wouldn't remove it. If I was asked to remove it now I wouldn't. There was some talk once about removing it for the censors and I wouldn't have it

CHALAIS. Did Brigitte Bardot readily agree to doing it?

GODARD. Brigitte agreed to do the film and she did what I asked her to do

CHALAIS. Because she can do what she pleases, she doesn't have to undress these days. Producers are happy just to have her. Even with all her clothes on she's still a gold mine. Does the fact she did it mean she enjoys revealing herself that way? Since you know her very well.

GODARD. I couldn't say, it's a character in a story. It was the right thing to show Brigitte Bardot from the start in the film, there was no way to cheat. Since we were going to show her undressed we might as well show her completely undressed or not at all.

CHALAIS. I don't understand why she consented when it wasn't necessary

GODARD. [...]. There's nothing erotic involved in agreeing or not agreeing to undress. It's like asking Praxiteles when he was sculpting the nude Venus "Did Venus agree to undress?"

CHALAIS. But I still think that reasoning is faulty, those who would like to see Miss Bardot undress in a movie made by a bad or vulgar director wouldn't dare go see it. But with you their conscience is clean because it's art.

Bardot's nude scene appears at the beginning of the movie after Godard's induction. As a counter attack for its forced inclusion, Godard creates a decoupage and artificially commodifies Bardot's presence reducing it to scopophilic demeanor as a mockery to both audience expectation and producer autonomy, he accomplishes this in a number of ways. The first way is by having her husband Paul (Piccoli) clothed/covered in a perched elevated position behind Camille (Bardot) who is naked lying in front, this *mise-en-scène* construct is Godard's exposé on the chauvinistic and licentious nature of the commercial film industry. The scene's associated dialog dislocates the narrative and furthers this argument by going from ordinary small talk into an inventory of her physical attributes seeking approval from her husband:

CAMILLE. Do you see my feet in the mirror

PAUL. Yes

CAMILLE. Do you think they are pretty?

PAUL. Very

CAMILLE. And my ankles, do you like them?

PAUL. Yes

CAMILLE. And my knees too?

PAUL. Yes. I really like your knees.

CAMILLE. And my thighs?

PAUL. Your thighs too

CAMILLE. See my behind in the mirror?

This is the first time we actually see Paul glancing over Camille's head to look into a mirror which is hidden from the audience.

PAUL. Yes

CAMILLE. Do you think I have a cute ass?

PAUL. Very really

CAMILLE. Shall I get on my knees?

PAUL. No need to

CAMILLE. and my breasts, you like them.

PAUL. Yes, tremendously, as he nuzzles into her

CAMILLE. Gently Paul not so hard.

PAUL. Sorry

CAMILLE. [...]

PAUL. [...]

CAMILLE. And my face?

PAUL. Your face too

CAMILLE. All of it, my mouth, my eyes, my nose, my ears?

PAUL. Yes, everything.

CAMILLE. Then you love me totally?

PAUL. I love you totally, tenderly, tragically

CAMILLE. Me too Paul.

The identification of body parts up until Bardot's (Camille's) shoulders and arms takes place through a red filter, her arms and shoulders are observed in natural light and then her head and facial features are inventoried close up through a blue filter. The words "Totally, tenderly and tragically" echo that existential view of individualist plight and its ultimate futility even within the elated position of love, it thus serves as both a prologue and an epilogue to the film. What is also interesting concerning this scene is that Paul is viewing Camille's physique by means of a mirror, hence tying it back to Benjamin's reflection or the annihilation of the aura on screen, hence the partition of what the audience is expecting from Bardot as opposed to what Godard wants to show. The audience is not privileged to see this mirror meaning that it only exists within the movie set, not just to the actors but to the production crew. As was observed with the camera turning on the audience at the film's induction, this reflection might even be what is framed by the camera and visible to the audience. So we have Bardot's duality, on one hand she is Bardot a commercial commodity and on the other hand Camille, a female with all the qualities, complexities and sensitivities of an ordinary woman. Such an unusual scene so early in the movie challenges audience comprehension.

In the second last chapter of the novel, Riccardo takes a boat ride with Emilia, it appears to be a turning point in the novel as they settle their differences and reconcile their love for one another. As they enter a dark cave, Emilia disappears from sight, Riccardo searches for her assuming she has fallen into the sea. Moravia masterfully leads us through what is perceived as a real experience until we reach the end of the chapter where he concludes: "And I remembered that noon was the hour for ghosts and I realized that I had been talking and weeping in the presence of a ghost." (Moravia 243)

This chapter was the reason for Il Disprezzo's original English release under the title A Ghost at Noon however Godard does not deal with this doppelganger event in Contempt, but again this ethereal concept is indirectly established in Bardot's nudity with reference to her dual nature. Such structural binaries or polarizations play throughout the movie but not always through Bardot, we have for example Bardot as Camille, Camille as Penelope, Camille as Anna Karina, sex kitten versus broody wife, classicism versus modernism, Lang as both himself and the conscience of classicism. Prokosch as both producer and the fascist face of capitalism. Godard in Godard on Godard stated that Contempt was:

A simple film without mystery and Aristotelian film stripped of appearance, Le Mepris proves in 149 shots that in the cinema as in life there is no secret, nothing to elucidate merely the need to live... and to make films. (Milne 201)

The film thus offers the spectator viewing choices, a mono simplistic view which is purely aesthetic or a stereo complexity which deals with modes of existence, Godard's beliefs and socio-economical dynamics beneath its mask. The film however was far from simple for Godard with his personal life troubled by his own marital crisis, he was also plagued on set by the incessant paparazzi that hounded Bardot and her annoying boyfriend who doted on her. Jack Palance was said to have called his agent on numerous occasions looking for a way out of his contract because Godard continually ignored his advice. These very behind the scenes troubles are thus transferred and addressed in the movie concentrating its substance.

Bardot's opening nudity scene is often paralleled by film scholars to the Greek sculptures dispersed throughout the movie in connection with the adaptation of the Odyssey. The scene however is unique in a number of ways creating an index of other possibilities, first it was a forced inclusion, Godard compromised his integrity under pressure from the producers. Second, the series of colored filters used in the scene separates it from the straight color conventions employed in the rest of the film. third, Paul's view of Bardot's body is by means of a mirror. Fourth, the scene begins without a proper narrative intro (i.e. in the middle of a conversation). Fifth, it has the construct of a love scene but after the act and sixth the dialog and scene itself is redundant and of no necessity. Based on these observations while Bardot's body can justifiably be paralleled to a Greek statue, this parallel can be digressed further to encompass the environs this statue existed in, a polytheist and polyglot culture, temples and alters ( Cinecittà and Casa Malaparte in Act III of the movie), temple prostitutes (directors, scriptwriters and women) and demigods (producers and capitalism).

The dialog is parenthetically more pornographic than the visuals are, however little does a captivated audience lost in a fantasy know, that they are being insulted by Godard. It establishes false expectations, the audience perhaps seeing Bardot nude so early in the movie are likely to her in greater spectacle later, a desire Godard tenaciously denies them. Despite the disharmony that Godard's nude scene provokes there is some conventional sense to it, namely that it establishes a relationship between Piccoli and Bardot, though not initially apparent it becomes so later on. Part of this reason may have to do with how Moravia begins his novel relating how Molteni and his wife Emilia had been married for two years and sharing a single room together because of their financial position.

With Bardot naked and Piccoli covered, the scene projected through the red filter also impresses the idea of prostitution which is a metonym for Godard who applies it to the flagrant exploitation and obsessed commercialism of filmmaking. The fact that only Bardot's derriere is shown visually while her breasts are depicted through the unflattering use of dialog dictates Godard's respectful discretion as he taunts and teases both the producers and audience giving

them something but just barely enough to wet appetites and stir fantasies. Moravia's novel on the other hand contains both sexually charged scenes and nudity throughout: "then wildly she tore off her skirt, unbuttoned her chemise, and thrust her belly against mine [...] with all the weight of her body, she was pulling me down towards the floor. We made love on the floor on the dusty tiles." (Moravia 18). As close as Godard stuck to the novel in many areas he fails to do here with regards to Bardot's body. Moravia's novel (33, 34 or 196 for example) presents plenty of opportunities where he would have been perfectly justified in having Bardot naked. and yet Godard also constrains voyeuristic possibilities here by having Bardot when sunbathing or parading around the apartment showing partial skin but with her body largely concealed, areas where Moravia describes frontal nudity.

## Act 2



Fig 6

The human being is all-important in the theater. The drama on the screen can exist without actors [...] As Jean-Paul Sartre, I think it was, said, in theater the drama proceeds from the actor, in the cinema it goes from the décor to man. This reversal of the dramatic flow is of decisive importance. It is bound up with the very essence of the mise-en-scene [...]. Drama is freed by the camera from all contingencies of time and space [...]. It's true that on the screen you would doubtless have some close-ups of a blood-stained handkerchief, but a skillful stage production would also know how to make some play with a the cough and the handkerchief. (Bazin 102)

Act II is introduced by an exterior skewed view of the couple's apartment. Such a strong diagonal, saw-tooth graphical representation solicits a sense of tension and provides us with a foregleam of what is to come as the couple enters their adobe. Bazin in the above quote discusses the concept what is often called "filmed theater" the relationship between theater and cinema. In essence part of the reason why classical cinema was opposed by the New Wavers was that it relied all too often upon the conventions borrowed from theater without promoting it's own

benefits over theater or as Bazin puts it concerning the mobility of the camera, it “frees the spectator from his seat” and has the ability to tell without actors present on stage. Fig 6 provides such an example where the actors become the center of attention. Physical violence is straight forward in establishing immediately recognizable conditions and unrest in an audience. Such a scene is easily conveyed as it would be in theater through actions alone whereas emotional violence is a little more challenging but a skillful director can pull it off without reliance on such direct drama (compare Fig 9). Moravia’s novel contains greater violence than the film, in chapter 9 for example Riccardo in the apartment with Emilia is seeking answers for Emilia’s cooling affection towards him when the situation escalates out of control:

Before I knew what I was doing, I jumped to my feet shouting: “Don’t imagine I’m here just to keep up a bright conversation!” and had leaped on top of her and seized her by the throat and thrown her back on to the divan and was yelling into her face [...].

Beneath me the big, perfect body that I loved so much was struggling this way and that, and she had grown red and swollen in the face [...]. I wanted to kill her [...] she struggled free [...] she cried out in a voice of exasperation: “I despise you [...], that’s the feeling I have for you and that’s the reason I stopped loving you. I despise you and you disgust me every time you touch me, [...], my hand move towards a massive glass ashtray that stood on the table. She certainly thought I intended to kill her. (Moravia 109)

Riccardo refrains from using the ashtray on Emilia. Godard does portray glimpses of this violence but tempers it, reducing it to moments of grabbing or a petty slapping. Godard didn’t need to show it but obviously felt it was a energy required, at some 30 minutes long and with straight dialog perhaps he felt it necessary to break the tedium. Godard uses both conventional theatricals and his skill as an auteur to achieve, both this physical and emotional impact. However the physical violence is not near as harsh as Moravia’s. There are two reasons for this: one Bardot is more an equal to Piccoli in the movie than Emilia is in the novel, her character is stronger and she occupies a more central role as opposed to Riccardo’s central role in the novel. Two, Godard places greater emphasis on the emotional separation and estrangement which is also greater in the novel however in the novel it is carried through and sustained from start to finish with no competing parallel narratives and therefore apparent, however since this act is only one third of the entire movie’s length and the only act not involved with film making, Godard needs to have the emotional separation take precedence here.

With the couple engaged in violence through drama or emotional forlorn by spatial separation we additionally get to see both Piccoli and Bardot flicking through the pages of an erotic art book on separate occasions which punctuates their incessant erosive bickering. This montage or collision of shots thus generates a *tertium quid* or establishes a conclusion not entirely discernible from the shots individually, i.e. the distancing not only of Bardot’s erotic nature but of indeed a sexless relationship. The book taken from Palance’s villa in Act I is shown in greater detail in Act II, though a classical art book it features frescos and relief’s of erotica, and indicates a sexual intimacy the couple no longer has, Godard uses the voice over narration to accompany some of the images which drives an otherwise passive reference home.

## Act 3



Fig 7

This is the same kiss Piccoli witnesses from the roof top (Fig 4) but from inside the house thus imparting not just two points of view of a single action but highlighting two styles of cinema. This frame is a classical Hollywood shot both in structure and style, its straight on view by which the camera assumes the position of a spectator watching a play. Symmetrically framed by a window against a shimmering panoramic view of the Mediterranean behind, it has the semblance of famous Hollywood kisses, reminiscent for example of scenes such as the illicit passionate kiss between Lancaster and Kerr on the beach in From here to Eternity or Stewart and Novak kissing in Vertigo with the soothing waves of ocean behind them. The light caring embrace of both Palance and Bardot defy both their characters, its got the aesthetics of a couple in love which is both contrived and artificial, They've just met so don't know one another nor do they speak the same language. It's an overdramatic superfluous scene antitypical of Godard which is counter balanced by Piccoli's point of view scene.

Godard in his early movies such as Breathless had relied on post-synchronization, or sound recorded separate to filming and then edited in after filming was complete, and yet in Contempt with the latest in sound recording equipment he still relies upon his own aesthetic use of sound as an independent force to be reckoned with. This is an area often overlooked in conventional cinema which uses it as fill or for dramatic effects supporting visual strength and prominence. The Nagra 3, a portable and self contained sound recorder was introduced in 1958 and its success as a news reporting device and potential was realized during its coverage of the Olympics in Rome in 1960. Jean Rouch used the new technology for film in 1961 and Godard was using the technology by 1962 in My Life to Live. The Nagra 3 now enabled filmmakers to capture natural ambient sounds of a city during filming adding to the visual realism captured with handheld cameras. As a result dialog became blended with surrounding sounds which often muffled the dialog, layering it with a natural texture. Not much of this technique is noticeable in Contempt, the three locations used are largely devoid of what was known as "sound pollution" Cinecittà in Act I for example is a vacant lot, in Act II the apartment scene is an insulated

environment, and likewise in Act III Casa Malaparte and Capri are both remote and likewise insulated environs, quite opposite to the urban bustles and city noises Godard was used to shooting against.

Treating the film and sound tracks as equals, Godard superimposed without ever merging them (he rarely used a potentiometer). He allowed each sound its specificity, its history, and then manipulated their relationship. In this way he created a dramaturgy that was no longer linear but multiple, plural. The incessant transition from one track to another created a network of counterpoints and voiceovers between words, noises, sounds and music, which gave rise to emotional response. In Godard the sound track is always fundamental, sometimes the primary element in the film. (Douchet 230)

Georges Delerue who had also worked with Truffaut composed the musical score for Contempt. Robert Stam comments that the music serves more as punctuation as opposed to mood music. A commentary on Delerue's states that: "One thinks for example of the completely original use of the famous theme of Camille in Godard's Contempt (1963). Godard wanted this thematic repetition to give to his film a universal and bewitching quality." (Delerue's official website). Though repetition of a score throughout a film theoretically would lend itself to a diminishing impact on mood, here on the contrary it promotes the mood in Contempt as a result of the film's style, pace and theme. Punctuation is seen in areas without dialog, however even in such areas the use of camera focusing for example on a single character like Bardot in Act I walking through the garden of Palance's Roman villa adds a melancholic heaviness to the somber silence. In this sense the score actually becomes a form of narration, without words without drama but a rhythmic montage through music and silent visuals, we thus "feel" rather than "know" that something is awry. Her beauty is framed like a portrait but her languid movements and distant side glance from a downward stare in the direction of Piccoli are extenuated by the score. The score is hauntingly evocative, as the film's dialog meanders aimlessly, the score's repetition enhances the overall ambience of loss amid lethargy.

Godard plays with volume control and duration as he does in most of his movies however in Contempt it is more subtly controlled as if here using a potentiometer when compared with the loud and abrupt use of the musical score in A Woman is a Woman which irritatingly assaults the audience in its mismatched and out of context use. At times the music does reach a point to where it over powers the dialog forcing the audience to pay greater attention as voices becomes faint to the point of inaudibility. This is also true of just plain dialog without background music, e.g. in Act II Bardot pushes Piccoli out of the room while talking to her mother, as the bedroom door is shut Piccoli strains to eavesdrop on the conversation, his difficulty in hearing the conversation is very reflexive and likewise difficult for the audience to hear which forces the spectator to occupy the same spatial parameters as him. Dialog is key to classical cinema especially concerning speech between two main characters in close proximity. Classical cinema relies on both appropriate balance and volume consistency, dialog has the specific job of furthering the plot and so takes precedence at times. Godard however modulates sound which mirrors its fluctuation in real life as one moves in relation to a sound source. One must remember that dialog in this film is not a sequencing narrative to logically further an objective plot, its about communication or its lack thereof, it's failure to resolve despite its necessity within the realm of human activities. Such treatises on human communication are discussed at length between a Sorbonne professor and Karina in scene 11 of My Life to Live. Godard's use of sound

as a mask in overcoming auditory passivity helps emphasize his acute awareness of the variety of possible modes available in dispensing language.

## CHAPTER 4 Counter Cinema

“We are certain that Thomas Garner and Citizen Kane would never have existed if it had not been for James Joyce and Dos Passos. We are witnessing at the point at which the avant-garde has now arrived the making of films that dare to take their inspiration from a novel-like style one might describe as ultracinematographic.” (Bazin 64). Godard’s introduction to *Contempt* is uniquely Godardian in a number of ways the credits for one are audibly spoken not scrolled as text thus promoting audio, mixed media is an area film also succeeds in where other forms of communication such as literature fall short. The camera operated by cinematographer Raoul Coutard tracks Georgia Moll (Fig 1), employing a light meter which he regularly consults. The studio to the left is *Teatro 6* of *Cinecittà* which the audience shortly encounters after Bardot’s scene but from the lateral perspective of Coutard’s dolly. As the dolly approaches the audience Coutard turns the camera and rests it upon the audience thus directly addressing them by means of cinematic narrative. This is both reflexive and very Brechtian causing that V-effekt whereby stage illusion is destroyed or that fourth wall which normally separates audience from actors is overcome forcing the audience to become visible observers of what unfolds before us, thus we are no longer simply passive viewers but actively involved in the films critique and meaning. While this movie is a movie within a movie or more succinctly concerning filmmaking, the movie we see here being created is *Contempt* itself. Though the movie will shortly shift to the making of Homer’s *The Odyssey* the reason for this explicit shot of *Contempt*’s creation is that the making of the *Odyssey* alludes to the troubles Godard had in making *Contempt*. This intellectual involvement though not apparent is tested as we are taken into Bardot’s nude scene, while the visuals play on our eyes we are also placed into a conversation that has already begun, this abruptness of narrative is classic Godard which forces the viewer to fill in the gaps as to what proceeded it.

The colored filters used in the portrayal of Bardot’s body are also worth mentioning as it helps in the defamiliarization of the nude body, these shift from red, to yellow/natural light and then to blue. Nothing much has ever been discussed concerning this anomaly, Robert Stam in his commentary for the Criterion Collection release of the movie claims the filters represent the various aspects of cinematography. He also goes on to state that they also make up the colors of the French and American flags indicating the film’s collaboration between two of the countries involved in its production. This however is problematic, first because Italy was also part of the production’s collaboration and is not mentioned and secondly the middle color isn’t really white though “natural” or full spectrum lighting, it is an interior shot and has a yellow hue due to the color of flesh set against a yellow blanket. Richard Neupert’s reference to the red, white and blues used in the opening titles of Godard’s previous color film *A Woman is a Woman* can likewise be applied here:

Color is part of the medium communicating to the audience, yet it can never be reduced to simple monological connotations, this movie does not reward a facile attempt to read the triple color motif as representing France or the United States, any more than the colors in a Paul Klee can be narrativized. (Neupert 235)

Godard in most of his early new wave movies always included references to art. For example Jean Seberg is seen juxtaposed against a Renoir in *Breathless*, Anna Karina’s head and shoulders are framed and compared to Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Oval Portrait” in *My Life to Live* and she is also shown juxtaposed with a scissors against a Picasso in his *Pierrot le Fou*. However in his

two, colored productions A Woman is a Woman and Contempt neither Karina nor Bardot are set against paintings, his vivid and solid primaries create the art itself existing within the frame of the camera. Godard in an interview with Michel Mardore in 1963 stated that he only used primary colors: “Always very pure, unadulterated tones. You can’t imitate a painting by playing with color, its pointless. You have to film things with simplicity.” (Douchet 270)

A fitting reason for the colors would perhaps be the color palette alluding to the primary colors which are used and resurface throughout the movie in distinct solid forms. The color palette in art often uses yellow in place of green such as the triadic palette, many artists often prefer to make their own greens using yellows it lightens, extends and better contrasts the realistic range of the other two primaries. Color however only exists within the realm of light and Godard’s bold primaries are also pronounced due to the uniformity and homogenization of his interior lighting which was also a form of rebellion. Neupert also deals with the subject of Godard’s lighting.

Technicolor’s Natalie Kalmus, who is responsible for the Technicolor style that dominated Hollywood of the 1930’s into the 1950’s, had argued against maintaining equal light levels in interiors since “unimportant” bright objects such as a painting in the background would compete for attention with the actors [...] Godard plants his camera directly in front of highly saturated primary colors, producing a very flat, pop art space, resembling modern painting or collages that destroy depth cues. Third Godard’s color echoes Eisenstein’s call for color selection that is textually determined for a limited color palette specific to the world of each film. (Neupert 233)

Again though these words are spoken of in reference to A Woman is a Woman Neupert acknowledges that they were established and used throughout his career and can be applied here. Godard completely attacks Kalmus’s argument in Contempt which was typical of Godard, to defy and break every rule in the book and so the interior of Piccoli and Bardot’s apartment uses such saturated colors that at certain points the dominate the scene. These bright hyper-realistic colors create a pop-art style set which when combined with a shallow focus lens causes the exteriors seen through the windows to become flat and muted like paintings hanging on a wall. To the New Wavers reality stipulated that we exist as part of the world around us and not separate to it and therefore objects like interior furniture and exterior landscapes facilitate as much emphasis as people. Godard makes this point clear “My characters are no longer in harmony with nature as the ancients were. Yet I treated this landscape as a character giving it as much presence as the actors.” (Douchet 270). Even the scenic views of the Mediterranean from the massive seamless window of Casa Malaparte in Act III pales against vivid blue couch and contrasting yellow robe Moll wears. While these colors clearly compete for attention and some instances draw us away from the characters they also serve in dislocating modern life from the natural environment exterior to these interior shots. However in light of the otherwise straight and conservative nature of Contempt the use of these filters in the beginning nude scene is nonetheless an anomaly. Perhaps Godard’s only reason for the filters is far more simplistic, he was basically alienating this scene from rest of the movie as one he could not fully justify including. Thus color coding it as defective for the forced inclusion of a tyrannical system, A intellectual montage of sorts in rebellion towards the studio system he was working under.

The chief Cameraman had a large degree of freedom even within the studio system. Three-point lighting was already a well established science and technically concrete system within classical cinema. The first main light was used to light the main characters and cast the

principle shadows, while a second back light was used for volume, to highlight objects and push them forward and the third was a filler while also to soften the other shadows. Quite often when looking at classical movies three cast shadows from these three sources can often be noticed, even in scenes that are meant to be exterior shots. In favor of more realistic lighting this system was also an area the New Wave directors directly challenged. They strove only to use natural ambient lighting with a single light source, the result was often overexposed shots, flares and deep shadows which was considered sacrilegious under the academic classical system. This was often mistakenly seen by critics as a form of incompetence. Contempt's review by Gerard Legrand for *Positif* in 1964 stated: "Ninety minutes later the same viewer sees a flat and overexposed expanse of sea which through violent efforts eventually turns blue". (Douchet 243) With a tendency to rely more upon naturalistic elements meant a reduced reliance upon technology resulting in the transparent manual adjustments of the analog mechanics of the cinematic device. However the advantage was the ease and transition of location shots using real interiors and exteriors.

New wave cinematography was never the result of a technical formula, like three-point lighting, but closer to an analysis of natural light whose technical implications we tried to understand. It was dramatic as well, and forced a confrontation with a realistic context. Thus dramaturgy was subject to the laws that governed the real world. (Douchet 215)

Famous cinematographer Leon Shamroy who won an Oscar for his cinematography in Cleopatra, was also known in the business for his signature use of light, contrasting and shadows. It was a stylistic convention favored by him, his works could be determined even when his movies were done under different directors, however even his artistic expression was still in harmony with Kalmus's lighting creed: "I would light significant details more strongly and I was able to do it even though I worked with a large number of directors" (Douchet 213). On the contrary the New Wave placed greater faith in the spectator's ability to find such details. Details took a relative position in their natural state and relationship to light and everything else within the scene.

## Act 1



Fig 8

How does he fail as a film critic? *Contempt* begins and ends by showing the execution of a particular tracking shot. The first of these accompanies Francesca down a patch of the Cinecittà back lot while a male voice, after reciting the film's major credits, intones the following: "The cinema,' Andre Bazin said, 'substitutes for our gaze a world that corresponds to our desires.' *Contempt* is the story of this world." Godard is clearly fond of this quotation, because he cites it again in both *Histoire(s) du cinema* and his latest feature, *For Ever Mozart*. But as far as I've been able to determine, neither the quotation nor the attribution is correct. A likelier source is a much wordier passage by the controversial *Cahiers du cinema* critic Michel Mourlet. One of the most passionate defenders of Lang's Indian films, he wrote in 1959, several months after Bazin's death: "Since cinema is a gaze which is substituted for our own in order to give us a world that corresponds to our desires, it settles on faces, on radiant or bruised but always beautiful bodies, on this glory or this devastation which testifies to the same primordial nobility, on this chosen race that we recognize as our own, the ultimate projection of life towards God." Jonathan Rosenbaum for the Chicago Reader 1997

The "Bazin quote" was obviously one Godard was fond of as he used it elsewhere on numerous occasions and not just in this movie, Rosenbaum may be correct in saying Godard's opening quote is a wrongly attributed quote. Nevertheless both Godard and the other New Wavers occupied unique positions as directors since many of them had worked as critics prior to becoming directors. They brought with them a background steeped in film history and critique. They were amongst the first to highlight this history through its own medium. *Contempt* captures the complete process of filmmaking from script writing, through the technical aspects, camera's and sound etc to auditions, producing and directing. The above frame is a pivotal point in the

film. The audience gets to experience the Cinematic apparatus. With the exception of Bardot all the main characters are gathered to preview Lang's rushes. The rushes are anything but Langian, highly stylized they actually reflect imagery alluded to in the novel when Battista is giving his input as to what the movie should contain: "Take for example the Nausicaa episode. All those lovely girls dressed in nothing at all, splashing about in the water under the eyes of Ulysses who is hiding behind a bush. There, with slight variations, you have a complete Bathing Beauties scene" (Moravia 86)

Lang condescendingly speaks to Palance as if speaking to a child about his inability in grasping the movie despite there being nothing complex from the rushes we are exposed to. If anything can be gathered from the shooting angles and camera tilts, this epic is pushed towards the un-epic, and counters the "colossal movies" mentioned in regards to Rheingold in fiction and Lang in life. Godard was driving home here the need for change within the industry. His finger was certainly on the pulse of his times when the scope of a troubled epic like *Cleopatra's* is chronicled as shown in chapter 1. Palance is a perfect fit for this role as Prokosch, he was considered one of the most gripping and intense villains on screen in the 1950's exemplifying evil incarnate, Godard was fully aware of his authoritative stage presence. As far back as *Breathless* Palance is seen credited in an advertisement for the film *10 Seconds to Hell* about a group of ex-German soldiers who embark upon a life as explosives disposal experts. At 6'4" his rugged features and raspy voice embody the butchery of film making beneath large studio systems and powerful producers. Godard initially introduces Palance walking out of *Teatro 6*, elevated on a platform above Moll and Piccoli, he walks out with a fist raised speaking grandiose words about *Cinecittà's* past glory in catering to Kings and Heroes, the 1959 epic *Ben Hur* being a then current example filmed there on location. His authority and position are thus established by the vertical architecture and character placement in this scene.

Palance unhappy with what he sees hurls a film reel like a discus reminiscent of an Olympian God, an association he himself arrogantly makes while watching the rushes, "I like gods, I like them very much, I know exactly how they feel". Lang, Piccoli and even Francesca at times discuss Dante and Hölderlin which again reflects areas of the novel where Homer is discussed poetically in reference to Petrarch, Joyce and Dante (Moravia 161, 207, 211). These conversations happen without Palance's involvement as if to suggest directors and writers' intellectual superiority over producers or even Europe's rich heritage over America's young and naïve history. The inscription on the wall is quote from Louis Lumiere one of the founding fathers of cinema, it translates "the cinema is an invention without a future. Small details like this displays Godard's homage to those who proceeded him but it is also proverbial in echoing trouble within the industry at that time. The rushes are not what Palance envisioned and feels he has been cheated by Lang and looks to the script to see why his vision differs from that of Lang and finds that the rushes are indeed what was in the script but are nonetheless different to his conjured imagery. Lang replies to Palance a truism concerning adaptation. "In the script it is written but on the screen it is pictures". Lang perfectly understands and reflects Godard's own views here on adaptation, regardless how close one holds to the original, different mediums have uniquely inherent qualities which will always morph the original and thereby reinvent. Lang then beyond playing himself and the classical face of cinema also assumes the role of a modern day Homer while also reflecting the ideologies of Godard. After Palance throws the reel, Lang sarcastically comments "Finally you get the Greek culture". Palance's reply to this is "whenever I here the word culture I get out my checkbook".

This play on words is a variation of the quote “whenever I hear the words culture I get out my revolver (or more correctly “Browning” which was a 9mm semi-automatic pistol: *Wenn ich Kultur höre[ ...] entsichere ich meinen Browning*)” The Criterion Collection commentary on the movie attributes the quote to Joseph Goebbels but these words are more correctly attributed to another Nazi military commander Hermann Goering (though still plagiarized). Rudolf Hess and Heinrich Himmler were also said to have used the quote. Goebbels though the propaganda minister during the Nazi regime bending to Hitler’s wishes, was nonetheless an advocate of culture and brought culture to the masses. He helped sustain the UFA during this difficult period for the arts as he saw its use as a medium for propaganda and also resisted Nazi xenophobe pressure to ban all foreign movies. Nevertheless regardless of what Nazi official(s) used the quote, it does not originate from any of them, its documented origins are from the play Schlageter by Hanns Johst, and is uttered by character Thiemann in Act 1 scene 1. This play was first performed in April of 1933 in honor of Hitler’s birthday. It nonetheless reflects a parallel between Palance’s role and that of a dictator within a fascist regime. This again is seen when Palance is conversing with Piccoli in reference to Lang making the movie he says, “He will do it, this is not 33 its 63” which essentially equates to him being able to flee from the clutches of fascism then but not now. Goebbels was said to have asked Lang to head the UFA the day before he fled from Germany however there is no documentation supporting claim.

When Bardot arrives to meet Piccoli, he introduces her to Lang, referring to him as “he’s the one who made the western with Dietrich”. The western being spoken of is no doubt Rancho Notorious to which Lang replies “I prefer M”. Bardot relates how she had just seen it on TV, signifying one possible social reasons why the movie industry was in crisis then. Lang’s mention of M is a direct reference here to the two systems he had worked under, Rancho Notorious was made in 1952 by Lang working under the Hollywood studio system while M was his pre-Nazi era indicating his stylistic preference. M is considered a landmark movie in cinematic greatness, an artistic precursor to the film Noirs that were eventually adopted and mastered by the Americans. Interestingly Rancho Notorious features the lead Marlene Dietrich, herself a strong woman not unlike Bardot, this movie was also the precursor to two more Freudian style psychological westerns, Johnny Guitar (1954) by Nicholas Ray whom Godard later references in Contempt (another favorite director of his) and Samuel Fuller’s Forty Guns (1957). Originally titled “The legend of Chuck-a-Luck” producer Howard Hughes insisted on Lang changing the name, hence a real experience transferred to the struggle both Lang has with Palance and the real struggle Godard was having with Contempt’s producer Levine.

## Act 2



Fig 9

Cocteau was well aware of this when he filmed his *Parents terribles*. Again, since his play was markedly realist, Cocteau the film-maker understood that he must add nothing to the setting, that the role of cinema was not to multiply but to intensify...if a room of the play became an apartment in the film, thanks to the screen and to the camera it would feel even more cramped than the room on the stage. What it was essential to being out was a sense of people being shut in and living in close proximity [...]. We do not have here the example of the classical editing short-cut but a positive part of the direction. (Bazin 90)

Bazin's treatment here of a plays adaptation to film can equally apply to the adaptation of a novel to film. Godard masters the bleakness of Moravia's narrative on conjugal disintegration in Act II using spatial division and partitions to accomplish visually an emotional void and psychological state which though easily achieved in literature challenges tangible construct on screen.

Never before now had there been this mechanical docility, cold and detached, such as was apparent from the tone of her voice.....Formerly everything had happened in a cloud of inspired haste, of intoxicated unconsciousness, of ravished complicity [...].

[...] she had now become a semblance in a mirage, with a haze of impossibility [...] and infinitely remote, as though she were not only a few paces away from me but in some far-off region, outside reality and outside my personal feelings." (Moravia 35)

Godard here uses the full width of CinemaScope's anamorphic lens to its maximum extremities as can be seen in Fig 9, Bardot and Piccoli pushed to the limits of the frame on either side. The academy aspect Godard was used to working with would have cropped both characters out of this frame. Where spatial division is not used physical partition is used in lieu, we see the couple talking but from within different rooms or parts of the apartment. Though the shot scale, frames a

relatively close confined area, the whiteness of the walls and minimalist furnishings generate a greater sense of expanse and emptiness. Interestingly the Statue to the right of Bardot in Fig 9 is also approached and confronted on a least one occasion by both Bardot and Piccoli in separate instances, indicating the emptiness and emotional vagrancy of both characters though corporeally present. The apartment scene is also unusual in the length of the take, done in near real time, this temporal length forms a tonal montage slowing the pace and adding the efficacy of perceived space to the emotional stale dilemma of the couple.

Godard has Bardot sport a wig in the middle act which is worth noting. Though first taken seriously as an actress in La Vérité (The Truth, 1960), Godard was the first director to approach Bardot as a person above the politics of sexuality. It was said he had wanted her as a brunette in the movie which is in fact her real hair color, however Bardot the product was trademarked blonde and would remain that way for all promotional purposes. Godard tactfully deals with this issue throughout the movie by having her sport a black wig, which was both reminiscent of Anna Karina and Penelope from Homer's the Odyssey. Robert Stam alludes to Bardot's wig as perhaps a pun on Elizabeth Taylor's portrayal of Cleopatra in the movie Cleopatra as a result of its "colossal failure". However with Cleopatra released on July 31<sup>st</sup> 1963 and Godard beginning the production of Contempt around April 1963 (Neupert 244) and released on Oct 29<sup>th</sup> these dates overlap and are too close for this analogy to be correct. Though the movie was being shot in London, Godard may have been aware of its production and mounting expenses but its failure or success could not possibly have been accurately gauged during the making of Contempt, i.e. cost of production versus box office sales since Cleopatra's international release was gradual and even beyond the release date of Contempt in many European countries.

Bardot's wig gives the impression of Homer's Penelope which is obvious as both her and Piccoli stroll around the apartment wearing towels/sheets like ancient togas. Piccoli also sporting a hat is mimetic of Dean Martin in Some Came Running, however a more fitting symbol for Bardot's wig is Anna Karina. There are a number of reasons for this first, Godard was having marital troubles himself during the production of Contempt and was alone during its production. He and Karina would divorce a few years later. Thus it was not unusual for Godard to transfer his personal life into this movie since movie making was always a personal endeavor for him (Godard seldom took breaks from his career, transitioning immediately into the making of a new movie when another was complete). Second, the wig is not just reminiscent of Karina in general, but her role in a particular movie My life to Live. This extrapolation can be gathered from the Cinecittà scene of Act I where movie posters are visible hanging on the walls of a building in the production lot as Piccoli waits for the other characters to arrive. These posters are deliberate mise-en-scene elements of Godard's favorite directors such as Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho and Howard Hawks Hatari but one of these movie posters is the Italian release of My Life to Live (see Fig 2).

My Life to Live's literal theme becomes Godard's subtextual theme in Contempt, Anna Karina's character (Nana) in that movie plays a prostitute, hence Godard's view of movie making in general especially the relationship between director and producer. The wig is also a stylized replicate of Nana's hair even down to the lock curls and the mannerisms in the way she fixes. Nana's unfortunate choices results in her death which foreshadows Bardot's path to destruction. However one of the most latent parallels within My life to live is in scene 12 "The Oval Portrait" which is the title of an Edgar Allen Poe short story. It holds the key to both Godard's philosophy on life and film, namely the central idea that the story resides in the

confusing relationship between art and life. In “The Oval Portrait” art and the addiction to it are ultimately depicted as killers, responsible for a young bride’s death. In this context, one can synonymously equate art with death, whereas the relationship between art and life is consequently considered as a rivalry. In Poe’s short story, a viewer is so disturbed by the realism of a portrait that he consults the story of the painting only to find that the painter had become so caught up in exacting the realism of his beautiful bride that when he had completed his masterpiece, he turned to her and she was dead. Nana after her beauty is framed, she matures, quits prostitution but tragically dies in the process at the hands of her pimp. Bardot follows this exact same faith where Piccoli substitutes as the pimp. Piccoli accepts \$10 000 to write a script in Act 1 against his will, while in the same moment Palance also inquires “I hear you have a beautiful wife”. We can thus make an association between this dialog with the price Piccoli is paid, Bardot in essence is included in the price he receives. Poe’s story also deals with a story within a story just as Godard portrays Contempt as a film within a film.

Jump shots and editing or the “cinematic hyperactivity” as Kline calls it (Kline 194), one of Godard’s boldest techniques to shock conventional cinema, very apparent in movies like Breathless are muted in Contempt, the closest we come to them are the flash edits. Towards the end of Act II for example Piccoli inquires “why don’t you want to make love to me any more” Bardot lies on the divan and partially removes her robe and replies “Let’s go, but make it fast” Piccoli doesn’t take her up on the offer and we are introduced to a series of flash edits. Robert Stam in his book Literature through Film labels these shots as:

(1) Highly posed “achronic” Playboy style shots of a nude Bardot (shots we have not seen before); (2) Analeptic shots cited from earlier points in the film; and (3) anticipatory proleptic shot which anticipate later moments in the film [...] many of the shots are from Camille’s point of view which is significant in view of the fact that the novel was focalized entirely from Molteni’s point of view. Indeed these flashback shots are the only shots that could be said to be linked so clearly to the point of view of a particular character. (Stam 297)

Corresponding to Bardot’s detached invitation the novel’s closest scene has Emilia lying naked on the bed, her invitation like Bardot’s is cold “Well then, if you really want to, let’s get on with it” (Moravia 33) however when we examine the context of the surrounding text from the novel, Bardot’s point of view dialog does not match the imagery which on the contrary appears to be point of view shots from Piccoli’s vantage point, notice the wording in the novel:

it was always like that she had always undressed and lain down on the bed [...] Formerly everything on the contrary had happened in a cloud of inspired haste, of intoxicated unconsciousness of ravished complicity [...]. I was not longer face to face with the wife I loved and who loved me, but with a rather impatient and inexpert prostitute who was preparing to submit passively to my embraces hoping only that they would be brief and not too tiring. (Moravia 35).

The nostalgic past glimpses of Riccardo match Bardot’s dialog whereas the imagery resides with Piccoli. Thus Stam’s Playboy style shots are from Piccoli’s point of view, commodification imaging of Bardot as in the opening scene of the movie and evidenced by the word “prostitute” in the novel. While Bardot relates happier earlier days the imagery doesn’t sync with her words, in fact we see Bardot in scenes which don’t even seem to belong in the movie, e.g. sipping tea in an outfit not seen anywhere else or the country scene, she is alone in practically all these scenes, never smiling which nullifies any perceived state of bliss. This is typical Godardian, tearing apart the probability of smooth transitive narrative with such abruptions that bear no relevance in the

movie. Where Godard uses sudden disruption with loud sound in other movies he does likewise here with this flash imagery. Their unusual nature defies rational explanation under the soviet dialectics on montage because they serve no logical purpose in forwarding the story. They can be seen as metric based solely on the nature of time however they are not inserted to solicit emotional response other than a pestering annoyance which was not beyond Godard's sensibility. These flash shots are so Godardian that they were cut from earlier international releases of the film including the US release, their relatively quick succession opposes the ennui and pacing of the Act.

In an interview with Andre Labarthe, Godard discussed examples of conventional cinematic rules such as a white wall could not be filmed or that the shirt of an actor couldn't be white, anything with a sheen had to be dulled down, such as high polished metal etc. The reason being, that such unimportant decor competed for attention. Godard however always questioned rules! His belief was that things should be filmed as they really exist, in this interview he quotes Truffaut "French film is dying under the weight of false myths." In the apartment scene we see such challenges met head on, every room is freshly painted white, Piccoli wears a white shirt, even the homogenized and uniform lighting itself a rule breaker promotes the aggregate whiteness of this interior scene. One very distinct style of camera work is seen in the conversation which takes place between the Bardot and Piccoli towards the end of Act II, while sitting at a table. Godard employs an unusual tracking shot here to capture this conversation, each line of communication is essentially tracked individually as we are shown its direction visually traveling by means of the camera traversing the space between the couple. A lamp on the table which separates both characters turns on and off during the tracking as if depicting the synaptic process of thought creation in communication or simply an item of peculiar interest since there are times when both characters are displaced out of frame as the camera move to and fro between both. Classical cinema would generally show such an interlocutory scene with both characters first in frame so that their respective positions are seen and then a series of back and forth over the shoulder shots edited to exclude any spatial transition of the camera from one character to the other.

From the apartment Bardot and Piccoli take a cab to sit in on the auditions with Lang and Palance. The cab leaves from their home in broad daylight only to arrive at night. Godard noticeably tampers with the passage of time, day rapidly turning to night as they drive. Though not specified we can assume the auditions are in Rome, since this is where the characters reside and because we see the cab entering the city at night. With a square like geographical boundary at some 1285 square kilometers in size and allowing for any traffic congestion that existed in Rome then, the city's most extreme distance could still be covered in a reasonable amount of time numbering tens of minutes but not hours. If they therefore left in broad daylight they would most certainly arrive at their destination in daylight. In classical cinema actors driving are often set in stationary cars with a moving image behind them to create the illusion of an exterior driving scene. Godard reverses this illusion by placing the actors in cars actually driving on real streets but deliberately staccatos this reality, going from day to night through rapid abruptions of editing resulting in a very staged and discernable manipulation of light. The audition itself is also a farce, and Godard here reverts to his usual counter cinema tactics by turning sounding on and off throughout as opposed to its gradual and seamless integration using conventional techniques.

## Act 3



Fig 10

While Shooting The Odyssey on a boat along the coastline of Capri, Piccoli comments on the female actresses in costume and asks “Will they undress” a voice from a source not shown replies “Of course” to which Piccoli replies “Aren’t movies great, you see women in dresses, in movies you see their ass”. This translates to women are essentially dressed in real life but undressed in cinema, Godard again is exposing the film industry’s voyeuristic nature and how opposite and transparent the illusion is to reality. This is also reinforced by the only female assistant working on the set who is clad in a skimpy bikini at all times while every other male crew member is fully clothed. Godard takes this voyeurism of conventional cinema and then shows its implicit intellectual use in counter cinema. He does this by showing Bardot sunbathing on the roof of Casa Malaparte with a book covering her derriere. When one compares this scene with the nude scene at the start of the movie we can validate Godard’s dialectics through subtle *mise-en-scène* architecture which is both aesthetic and profound, while he uses color and dialog to dismantle the nude body in the first nude scene, here with regular color convention he uses an object instead, the book’s itself a symbol of intellectualism is emphasized by its placement on Bardot’s derriere, a completely unusual place for a nude sunbather to place a book she is not reading. Another unusual element here is what appears to be a red robe at her feet, we thus assume the yellow material she is lying upon is a towel, and yet when she gets up, dresses (not seen by the audience) and emerges from behind the wall she is wearing a yellow robe and so spectator logic has been fooled. With small nuances like this Godard shows the subjectivity of cinema while challenging the spectator comprehension.

normal editing is a compromise between three ways of possibly analyzing reality. (1) A purely logical and descriptive analysis (the weapon used in the crime lying beside the corpse). (2) A psychological analysis from within the film, one that fits the point of view of one of the protagonists in a given situation [...]. (3) Finally, psychological analysis from the point of view of spectator interest, either a

spontaneous interest or provoked by the director thanks precisely to this analysis.  
(Bazin 91)

Godard uses points 1 and 3 of Bazin's analysis in the car accident which kills both Palance and Bardot. The imagery is descriptive in highlighting the outcome but not logical which results in Godard's use of point 3 also, a psychological analysis from the point of view of the spectator but provoked by the director due to its abstract nature. Bardot leaving with Palance in his red sports car corresponds likewise with the novel, however in the novel Battista swerves to avoid an ox-drawn cart on a country road, with Emilia asleep the swerve is violent enough to break her neck (Moravia 248). Riccardo receives this news via telegram which he relays to the reader. Godard removes the accident from pastoral country to urban traffic and creates a more violent accident. Godard however doesn't show the accident happening, we see a close up of a note followed by the asynchronous sound of an accident and then see the aftermath.

It has been argued that staging a car crash is an expensive inclusion in a movie, the cost of the vehicles, stunt men etc. however this is not likely the reason Godard refused to show the accident happening. One can gather this from examining the crash itself. It is both picaresque and completely artificial more akin to abstractions and juxtapositions of a modernist painting or sculpture. Godard therefore relied on a sound library recording of the crash which accompanies the note. Sound libraries are used extensively in classical cinema, an synthesized unrealistic convention abhorred by Godard who preferred natural recordings while filming on location, however considering that the film is in part conventional, the actual crash not executed or seen and highly stylized, this library recording is not completely out of place, a cheap theatrical which compliments the fake imagery.

The car leaves the gas station exiting the camera frame to the right and yet at the crash its left turn signal is on as we then see the crashed car but again as entering the frame from the right. This breaks one of the golden rules in the classical cinema, the 180° rule, a car leaving the camera frame from one side should enter into view on the opposite side, this establishes continuity and direction while also preventing disorientation for the spectator, though the car is not moving the conventional technique would still have the camera pan left to show the crash. The direction of both the truck and car are crossed on diagonals and counter the direction of the road beyond. The car is not smashed into the truck itself but between the trailers with not enough damage likely to have caused two deaths. Bardot and Palance are completely separated pushed to extreme laterals and facing in opposite directions from each other and in a direction which opposes the direction of the impact. This car crash is a snap shot of the similarly contrived but greatly exaggerated and prolonged crashes seen Weekend (1967) his last New Wave film at which point Godard's movies ceased to have any logic narrative and his imagery became simply abstractions in time. The truck is a fuel truck, itself a motif of the modern world and the abstract nature of the scene highlights a modern impression which gives us the same information as a classically constructed crash but assembled in a very Godardian fashion. Though in the novel only Emilia dies both Palance and Bardot die here, this is calculated since Godard's focus on movie making mirrors the conjugal strife in the novel it is therefore imperative that both should die. The separation between the both characters and their opposite facing positions indicates the elope was one of pragmatic convenience and not love.

## CHAPTER 5 Conclusion

Rheingold's Freudian interpretation of the *Odyssey* in the novel causes some introspection on the part of Molteni

"Ulysses is the civilized man, Penelope the primitive woman" Rheingold in short, after having, by his strained interpretation of the *Odyssey*, unintentionally precipitated the supreme crisis in my relations with Emilia," (Moravia 230)

In the aggregate, though the psychological application of the *Odyssey* can thus be applied to its modern day counterpart, this is really as far as we can take the parallel. The transference of the characters Ulysses to Piccoli, Penelope to Bardot, Demigod and suitor to Palance is a difficult one, their superimpositions are antitypical, both forced and arbitrary as their destinies are at odds to each other. Piccoli does not kill Palance like Ulysses does to Penelope's suitors, nor does Penelope die as does Bardot. If any transference can be made, Stam is correct in alluding to them as "diminished shadows" of bygone hero's, Piccoli thus becomes an anti-heroic Ulysses too weak to fight for his own pride or for Bardot's love, while Penelope's love for her husband becomes Bardot's contempt since she is a stronger and more independent woman than Penelope, Homer's world like Moravia's one is a male dominated one, narrated through the eyes of a male. Bardot finds in her suitor a convenient way out, her beauty for his money, a modern day contract to sustain her mode of existence. Though Palance is devoid of emotional intimacy or attractive qualities, her relationship with Piccoli was also lacking these however Palance has strength behind his wealth, a strength Piccoli doesn't possess not by financial means but even his intellectual strength has fallen prey to Palance's greater power of money. It began in Act I where Bardot was urged by her husband to ride in the car with Palance, his request but against her wish to stay and catch a taxi with Piccoli to Palance's Roman villa. He arrives late due to an accident which she may have perceived as a lie, to perhaps give Palance some time additional time with her alone, a self realization of her sale.

Materialism triumphs over the ideals of mind and spirit. Piccoli's weakness and degrading values beneath the presence of wealth perhaps causes Bardot to lose respect for her husband. This makes sense in view of Moravia's novel where Riccardo discusses Ulysses and Penelope with Rheingold, Penelope is spoken of as the "traditional feminine figure, archaic, feudal [...] virtuous, noble, proud a good housewife, a good mother, a good wife" and then later as "Penelope is not a civilized woman, she is a woman of tradition. She does not understand reason, she only understands instinct, blood and pride" (Moravia 185, 190). Rheingold goes on to state "The *Odyssey* is already written...the film is yet to be made (Moravia 186). One could likewise say this about Moravia's novel and Godard's movie. In psychoanalyzing The Odyssey Rheingold poses this question "Ulysses had done something to displease Penelope. What?" (Moravia 186). In application to Riccardo and Emilia's relationship this "what" is never fully answered nor does Godard answer it. For Godard life is open-ended, there are questions that exist without answers, we chose our own destiny. He therefore doesn't attempt to bring closure to something beyond his own limits but leaves them as they are, something not typical in classical cinema which strives for closure regardless of how a story ends.

In a more encompassing and generalized sense the classicism of Homer's day reveals a simplicity and purity which has been lost to the modern world, one which is further complicated by psychoanalysis and an effort to understand our own existence through the fragmentation of culture and issues of global homogeneity. Godard in Act II has Piccoli pack a gun for their trip to

Capri however the gun is never used. It maybe that the idea of killing Palance is insinuated as mentioned in the novel, regarding Riccardo.

“Ulysses, in order to regain Penelope’s love, killed the suitors, In theory, you ought to kill Battista, “ (Moravia 195). However this ploy is a McGuffin, Godard creates a detour for the audience which drives the logic of a possible murder into the plot thus delineating the story only for it to go nowhere. This again is Godard challenging the logical structure of conventional cinema, one assumes there is a reason and place for every action or event within a movie, however as in life events are often random and arbitrary. This technique is not uniquely Godardian. The anticipation of a sub-plot which turns out to be irrelevant and unnecessary can be seen in Hitchcock’s Psycho, the subplot involving Janet Leigh who dies half way through the movie. Psycho likewise is one of the movie posters we see in Contempt.



Fig. 11

The two locations (Rome and Capri) used in Moravia’s novel were places very familiar to him, Rome being his place of birth and main residence with his early married years to Elsa Morante spent in Capri. Casa Malaparte was home to Curzio Malaparte a contemporary writer and acquaintance of Moravia. Malaparte died in 1957 after which his home was left largely neglected. Godard’s use of this location however was in no way accidental, aside from its connection to Moravia, its architecture provided the perfect setting for the conclusion of Contempt, as a contrasting blend of modern rectilinear construct set against a classical rugged landscape not unlike the topography of Homer’s world. Indeed Capri is both the landscape of Roman mythology home to the Sirens and history being home to emperors like Tiberius. The location creates the communion of two distinct and opposing worlds. Casa Malaparte itself was built by Malaparte, after being exiled by Mussolini to the island of Lipari in the 1930’s, the steps leading to the church of the Annunziata became the inspiration for his home. With a V shaped staircase indicative of an inverted Mayan pyramid leading to the rooftop altar, solipsistic reality is swallowed by the vastness of the imposing vistas unhampered by obstructions or parapets. The rooftop sail, a sweeping white coma, halos the roof like a fallen half sunken corona from a

celestial abode. This rooftop both offers the self indulgent pleasures of modern life as can be seen by Bardot sunbathing against the backdrop of classical nostalgia where Lang is filming the *Odyssey*. It is here that both worlds collide in a symphony of contradictions. The location satisfies the needs of both classical cinema with its panoramic views enhanced by both Cinemascope and Technicolor while counter cinema finds its desire in the lassitude gathering and Bauhaus style architecture softened with surrealist organics.

“People in general do not give much thought to the cinema. For them it means vast décor, exteriors, and plenty of action. If they are not given at least a minimum of what they call cinema, they feel cheated. The cinema must be more lavish than the theater. Every actor must be a somebody and any hint of poverty or meanness in the everyday surrounding contributes, so they say, to a flop.

Obviously then, a director or a producer who is willing to challenge the prejudices in matters needs courage (Bazin 86)”

Godard’s polemics constantly sought new ways to redefine the substance of cinema and challenge the sensibility of audiences. Despite his own contempt for producers, they are an inseparable element of large productions. Bardot and Palance would normally have been beyond Godard’s reach as would his locations and sets for this production. With Contempt Godard was given a chance to work amongst peers, artists likewise at the top of their own craft, in return his creativity was thus regulated as he sacrificed absolute autonomy over its production. Contempt thus tempered Godard’s abstract narrative but not completely and as a result the public received a classically styled film with New Wave trimmings resulting in a greater spectrum of audience appeal, received well by cinephiles from both art house and conventional circles. Contempt can perhaps best be summarized by using an existing model. Peter Wollen’s essay “Godard and Counter Cinema” (Braudy/Cohen 525) which addressed Godard’s film Vent D’est was done using a model which he created to show how Godard’s movie delineates from classical conventional cinema by taking what he calls the seven cardinal values or virtues (listed on the left) and contrasting them in a sense with seven deadly sins employed by counter cinema (right). These are as follows:

| <u>Classical Cinema</u> |        | <u>Counter Cinema</u>     |
|-------------------------|--------|---------------------------|
| Narrative Transitivity  | versus | Narrative intransitivity, |
| Identification          | versus | Estrangement,             |
| Transparency            | versus | Foregrounding,            |
| Single diegesis         | versus | Multiple diegesis,        |
| Closure                 | versus | Aperture,                 |
| Pleasure                | versus | Unpleasure,               |
| Fiction                 | versus | Reality                   |

Taking this model and applying it to Contempt yields a mixed result, whereas all of the above counter cinema values can be affirmed in most of Godard’s New Wave period films, they are divided when applied to Contempt. Those applying to Contempt are highlighted in bold.

1). **Narrative Transitivity** v. Narrative Intransitivity is “one thing following another v. gaps and interruptions, episodic construction, undigested digression.”

Contempt’s narrative is largely transitive, both story-time and discourse-time are for the most part completely linear and unidirectional, as it follows Bardot and Piccoli’s breakdown moving progressively forward over the course of what is apparently only a few days. Its narrative

momentum is however slow if not almost static at times right up to its finale but purposely and effectively done so to create its emotionally bleak state and awkward atmosphere. There is however areas of intransitivity within the movie shifting it from narrative to poetic, featuring digressive flash editing with flashbacks and flash-forwards however these montages appear to be stylistically thrown in by Godard to break the banality of the film's transitive nature. Godard's reason may have been simply done out of his own arrogance, a self proclamation of what he detested in the simple narrative structure of the quality system or to wake the audience from any sedentary state they may have slipped into. The only other interruptions are location jumps which is common to classical Hollywood narrative.

2) Identification v. **Estrangement**: "empathy, emotional involvement with a character v. direct address, multiple and divided characters, commentary."

This value is a little more ambiguous and as a result it appears that both value systems can be observed in Contempt though estrangement becomes the dominant quality. The movie is contained, it features only a handful of characters that remain throughout the movie and on a linear continuum and so there is a sense of identification due to the permanence of the characters. Inter-relational conflicts are real and resonate with the audience, the use of tonal montage with an appropriate musical score is also used to solicit and heighten the emotional impact. However even with all this it is hard to identify with the characters, the film doesn't really have a traditional beginning or character development which allows us to immediately identify a protagonist or an antagonist. The marriage in crisis has no rational premise, no wrong doing by either party is established to justify taking sides and so characters remain divided and mysterious. However the strongest element of estrangement observed within the movie is perhaps Fritz Lang appearing as himself thus the inclusion of not just a real person but real and famous person operating as he does in real life into a fictional premise.

3) Transparency v. **Foregrounding**: "Language wants to be over-looked siertsema v making the mechanics of the film/text visible and explicit."

Cinema has always been a topic of Godard's most of his movie's have direct references to film or the mechanics of film but Contempt deals with movie making as a theme of this film and so foregrounding is plainly evident. The viewer is given the privilege of seeing the entire process from script to production. The opening scene for example we see Raoul Coutard tracking Moll from behind a camera on a Dolly, however the movie we are witnessing is not the adaptation of the Odyssey but the making of Contempt itself which we are also watching. Then from this same dolly we eventually see Palanca emerging from *Teatro 6* as it tracks laterally.

4) Single Diegesis v. **Multiple diegesis**: "A homogeneous world v heterogeneous worlds."

Contempt deals with multiple diegesis world not only are we shown a film within a film but the cooptation involved with its process is international. Godard could have insinuated this through other references but instead had everyone involved speak their native tongues and so what we get is a French, Italian, German and English being spoken done to exaggerate the polyglot nature of the business and Hollywood's new involvement in the international co productions due to its wealth and a slacking domestic market.

5) Closure v **Aperture**: "A self contained object, harmonized within its own bounds v open endedness, overspill, intertextuality, illusion, quotation and parody."

Godard's movies seldom have closure, and are always imbued with quotation and intertextuality. It is seen with the Bazin's quote at the start, the Lumiere quote on the wall of the preview room, references to Nazi officials and Marx. Dante, Hölderine etc are also quoted. The Odyssey is

never completed within the movie and Piccoli leaves Casa Malaparte without any connection made or remorse felt regarding the death of his wife.

6) **Pleasure** v. Unpleasure “entertainment, aiming to satisfy the spectator v. provocation, aiming to dissatisfy and hence change the spectator.”

While Contempt's emotionally uncomfortable subject matter especially in Act II causes a certain amount of discomfort, the visual aesthetics provides a level of pleasure that easily overrides any displeasure due to its overwhelming presence throughout the movie, though displeasure may be assumed from the movie's lack of plot or of pace, however what is lacking in essence actually promotes the film's beauty and power. Italy's panoramic landscapes, Casa Malaparte and natural settings vividly enhanced interiors saturated with primary colors over compensates for any short comings. However, perhaps the biggest pleasurable aspect of Contempt to a conventional audience or mass appeal was the casting of Brigitte Bardot.

7) Fiction versus **Reality** “Actors wearing makeup, acting v real life, the breakdown of representation, truth.”

There is little illusion within Contempt we see the mechanics of movie making and are thus fully aware this is a movie. Though the story is based upon a fictional novel, it is a contemporary one. The banal dialog especially between Bardot and Piccoli is both unpolished and arbitrary. Godard often worked from guideline scripts, i.e. the actors where not given verbatim scripts to rehearse from but rather given a generally idea of what to say and then put into their own words, what resulted was a very real impression of natural dialog. Lang's rushes are very stylized as is the car crash at the end and so artificial elements highlight certain fictional qualities but they reside within this reality as this is a film within a film, Lang's rushes a completely unlike anything he would ever do but they are purposely stylized to created that contrast between the movie being made and Godard's own movie Contempt.

We can thus see that Contempt is not exclusive to either side of this model, but a marriage, based upon the needs of commercialism as advocated by the demands of powerful producers but balanced by Godard's unwillingness to completely compromise his artistic creed. Godard in his interview with Francois Chalais which aired on Cinepanorama in 1964 said it was “a dream of his to make a film with a five million dollar budget on the large MGM lot in Hollywood” he went on to conclude that this dream would never be fulfilled. This interview took place after Contempt's release which was its focus. Contempt did offer Godard that dream and perhaps it was this experience itself, the process of its creation which signaled a realization that his dream was simply a romantic one. Having tried the classical Hollywood route, it forced compromises he wasn't initially happy with and yet despite its conventionalism Godard's surreptitious mark is still indelibly impressed showing that he can't be anyone but himself. Following Godard's Contempt his movies became more and more radically incoherent eventually ceasing to have any logical narrative but all complete creations subjected to his own visions and absolutism.

Battista in fact went on after a moments reflection: “in my opinion everyone is rather tired of the neo-realistic film mainly because it's not a healthy type of film [...].The neo-realistic film is depressing, gloomy. Apart from the fact that it represents Italy as a country of ragamuffins [...], it insists too much on the negative sides of life, on all that is ugliest, dirtiest, most abnormal in human existence [...], it reminds people of their difficulties instead of helping them to overcome them. (Moravia 84)

Ironically this quote summarizes the very type of novel Moravia wrote and Godard filmed. “A galaxy filmed in a cup of coffee – is Godard’s major concern” (Douchet 243) Godard through quotation and intertextual references to the web of films supporting arts and Maoist philosophy exposes the catharsis of modern humanity at 24 frames a second. His reflexive allusions to film as the seventh art, a culturally significant contribution to modern society cannot be overstated and is the mark of this auteur. In researching material for this study I came across two separate translations of Godard’s notes on Contempt

I filmed a *spiritual* Odyssey: the eye of the camera watching these characters in search of Homer replaces that of the gods watching over Ulysses and his companions. (Milne 201)

I filmed a *moral* Odyssey, The way the camera examine the characters looking for Homer replaces the way the gods looked down on Ulysses and his companions. (Douchet 269)

Both “spiritual” and “moral” are two very distinct words in the English language and regardless which one is closer to the correct translation or even if both meanings can be derived from the original French is irrelevant. Case in point, if such differences can be deduced in a simple translation by those knowing Godard’s semantics how much greater the challenge becomes when translating and extrapolating meaning from the ubiquitous language of cinema.

## *Definitions*

### Auteur:

Term which arose in 1950's holds that a director's films reflect that director's personal creative vision, as if he or she were the primary "auteur" (the French word for 'author').

### Brechtian:

Pertaining to the stage theories of Bertolt Brecht an influential German Socialist, Dramatist and stage director. Best known for his theories like the Alienation effect: (Verfremdungseffekt or "the V-effekt") a theatrical and cinematic device which prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, and which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer.

### Camera-stylo:

Term developed by French film critic Alexandre Astruc translated as "camera-pen" and the idea that a director should wield his camera like a writer uses his pen

### Cinecittà:

(Italian for Cinema City) Famous film studio just outside of Rome founded in 1937 by Benito Mussolini, bombed by the Western Allies during World War II which forced filming onto the streets helping give rise to Neorealism films. During the 1950's it was used for several large American productions and also became the studio associated with Federico Fellini.

### Cinéma vérité:

Literally Cinema of Truth taken from Dziga Vertov's Russian term Kino Pravda, a style of filmmaking which combines naturalistic techniques used in documentary filmmaking, with stylized and creative use of cinematic devices, editing and camerawork

### Defamiliarization (priem ostranenie):

Often used as a satirical tactic, it is an artistic technique central to 20<sup>th</sup> century art which forces the audience to see common things in an unfamiliar or strange way, in order to enhance perception of the familiar.

### French New Wave:

(French: la Nouvelle Vague) Although never a formally organized movement was a blanket term coined by critics for a group of French filmmakers of the late 1950s and 1960s, influenced by Italian Neorealism. These filmmakers were related in their self-conscious rejection of classical cinematic form, re-established film principals based upon postwar youth culture ideologies and iconoclasm. Their radical experiments with editing, visual style, and narrative broke away and refreshed the tradition conventional system.

### Imagery:

In this study is as it is applied to cinema, defined by André Bazin in his critical work What is Cinema (Bazin 24) i.e. "Everything that the representation on the screen adds to the object there represented" which he reduces to two categories "those that relate to the plastics of the image" and "those that relate to the resources of montage".

Italian Neorealism:

A movement which started in Italy's film industry after the World War II and continued into the 1950's when occupation forced film production out of the studios. It was characterized by stories set amongst the poor and working class, filmed in real locations, frequently using nonprofessional actors for secondary and sometimes primary roles. Italian neorealist films mostly contend with the difficult economical and moral conditions of postwar Italy, reflecting the changes in the conditions of everyday life which included poverty and desperation.

McGuffin:

A term used by Hitchcock which suggests an event which drives a new assumption concerning the plot but ultimately comes to be insignificant.

Mise-en-scène:

French for "putting into the scene" is an expression used in the theatre and film worlds to describe the design aspects of a production. It refers to everything that appears before the camera and its arrangement – sets, props, actors, costumes, and lighting. Mise en scène also includes the positioning and movement of actors on the set, which is called blocking.

Montage:

French for "putting together" Sergei Eisenstein formulated "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form" when he noted that montage is "the nerve of cinema," and that "to determine the nature of montage is to solve the specific problem of cinema. Montage is thus the editing of a movie and the effect from the collision of independent shots. This montage is broken into Metric, Rhythmic, Tonal, Associational and Intellectual.

Potentiometer:

A three-terminal resistor with an adjustable center connection, widely used for volume control in radio and television receivers.

Production Code:

Was a set of industry rules governing the production of American motion pictures. Also known as Hays. It dictated what was and what was not morally acceptable for the public audience. It began in the 1930's and was replaced in 1967 by the Motion Picture Association of American (MPAA) rating system.

Tertium Quid:

Literally "third thing", in montage theory the generation of a third possibility or concept based on the result from a collision of two images, whereby the whole becomes greater than the sum of its individual shots.

UFA:

Universum Film AG, was the principal film studio in Germany, home of the German film industry during the Weimar Republic and a major force in world cinema during its brief existence from 1917 to 1945.

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