
FILM-PHILOSOPHY

The Principle of Revelation

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Even though I am reviewing this book forwards I have read it backwards. Meaning not that I have attempted an exercise in reverse hermeneutics, but that I have first read the conclusion and proceeded back one chapter at a time until the introduction. By doing this I have discovered two things, and perhaps many others that have not yet occurred to me. For one, that this option had to do with my own understanding of the way Marker builds context *from within* in his film-essay mode – from within a particular study of an experience of temporality into a broader, and usually interference prone, historical timeframe. With this in mind, reading a book *naturally* - from beginning to end that is – is something akin to our linear, past-to-future-through-present conception of time, a conception that is common definition of the term *History* itself¹, while reading it backwards would be something closer to our actual experience of History – that of something witnessed and relayed from a time gone, that of something that is an effort of the present to reach behind itself, through memory which is mostly indirect. This notion of history as forgetfulness is central to Marker's work, as is made clear in Catherine Lupton's work. On the other hand, something that at the time occurred to me as both obvious and strange, is that when one is writing a text, most terms, abbreviations or personality

¹ Cf. Encyclopaedia Britannica Online definition: "the discipline that studies the chronological record of events (as affecting a nation or people), based on a critical examination of source materials and usually presenting an explanation of their causes."

biographies are stated and defined the *first time* they are mentioned, meaning that while reading the book, references like "SLON", "PCF", "Khmyr" were not clear to me, but eventually became so as I travelled further back in the chapters – this visitation of unclear terms that seem to require some definition which one assumes was given at some point in the past, and that in the absence of their definition can only be understood when set against more familiar (or apparently so) surrounding terms, is for me an accurate description of Marker's method, a sort of interference driven visual and aural hermeneutics that is used to allow for a reevaluation of whatever theme is being dealt with. That is what lies at the root of Marker's much referred to erudition and technique of comparative anthropology.

It is wise at this moment to rethink the notion of what a book review should be, given that such a work as Catherine Lupton's drives one to delve right into Marker, and aligns the reader with the author along her sights and not against her. It is therefore required of me to write about a book about Marker and not about Marker, and that is what I shall venture into.

"The aim of this book is to provide the first comprehensive study in English of Chris Marker's work" (9). And comprehensive it is. It not only provides step-by-step biographical and (essentially) historical/political guidance for the creative and reactive environment of Marker's work, it touches the core matters – his token subjects and main preoccupations – with an accuracy and weightlessness that seem to at once to defy the stated complexity and be fully in tune with Marker's own sharp, agile and synthetic spirit. Actually, I think *graceful* is the adjective I would choose if I had been called upon to do a one-word review of this text. It is a path both inspired and full of grace, and one which Catherine Lupton follows through (and with) Marker, there being never a fact stated that does not carry a suggestion of an interpretative route which, as in Marker's own alluring touch, is equally understated and enticing.

Shortly after stating her aim, the author invites comparison with the following works: Guy Gauthier's *Chris Marker: écrivain multimedia* (2001) and *Théorème, VI, Recherches sur Chris Marker* (2002), and Birgit Kämper's and Thomas Tode's *Chris Marker: Filmessayist* (1997). Such comparison will not be undertaken in this review, but as the author herself seems to affirm by the extensive use of these works as sources for her book, this would greatly benefit and enrich any reading of her own exposition.

The introduction, entitled "Free Radical" (7), gathers several remarks that announce Marker's famed ubiquity. The animal tokens that he so often uses to represent himself to himself or to another; the cat and the owl; his fictional approach to biography; his many pseudonyms and at some point in his career the art of dissolving into a collective; his notion of the key role of the editor in a world of images, as this encapsulated in a quotation from one of his conversations with his friend, the artist William Klein:

The trouble with people like this is that we tend to cut them into pieces and leave each piece to the specialists: a film to the film critic, a photograph to the photographic expert, a picture to the art pundit, a sketchbook to nobody in particular. Whereas the really interesting phenomenon is the totality of these forms of expression, their obvious or secret correspondences, their interdependence. (10)

This resonates deeply both with André Bazin's quoted statement that "the primary matter of Marker's work was intelligence" (10), and also with his pioneering venture into new media as a medium to be harnessed by filmmakers that feel the filmic thought does not belong solely on film, but also installed in a gallery exhibition, on the internet or on a TV channel. Another curious juxtaposition in this introductory chapter is the following note:

When the iconoclastic force of the New Wave receded in the second half of the 1960s, and many of its directors settled safely back within known cinematic bounds, only Marker and Godard stood out in their parallel, if very differently manifested, commitments to both media innovation and political efficacy. The paths of these two veterans continue to hold out intriguing comparisons: Godard chiselling away at the edifice of cinema from within, Marker skirting through and across it in his protean engagements with other media. (8)

This is relevant if one considers Marker a sort of lunar counterpart to Godard's *virile* intellectual approach to filmmaking, as an underground operative that preserves his anonymity not just in the face of the instituted system he wishes to subvert, but also before any who might follow his subversion as their own. One might conceive this more clearly if one considers the role of women in both filmmakers' works: women in Godard manifest their mystery through contradiction, in Marker through silence.

"This secret and unpredictable man, dressed unlike anyone else, always ready to defend lost and difficult causes" (13) affirmed Benigno Cacérès, one of the founders of *Peuple et Culture*, an organization established in late 40s post-war Paris and dedicated to popular education and the dissemination of culture, one of the many enterprises of the kind Marker was involved with in his early years as a writer, graphic artist and cultural

editor. This quotation sets the tone of Lupton's first chapter, "The Invention of Chris Marker", where the author presents the genesis of the filmmaker by focusing on his mainly literary creative output and the way it already previewed other media, not only in newspaper articles, critical and poetic production, but also in his first (and only) novel, *Le Coeur net* (1949):

Surveyed as a whole, Marker's early writings are striking not only for their diversity but for their permeability to the influence of other media; their desire to reach beyond writing and embrace other potential forms of reflection and enquiry. (14)

An important point is made by the author when referring to how Marker was open to new media, and particularly the transgression between matter and method, as a reflection of his early notion that creativity is poorly served by the attempt to classify each of the diverse and naturally interfering artistic practices as being strictly self-contained. Here is also presented the idea of *photo-text*, a concept that manifests itself in different forms in Marker's work, such as his use of voice over narration as a counterpart and declaration of meaning (or lack thereof) of images being projected, or his employment of filmic notions of editing, composition and duration in his photo-album based projects such his film *La Jetée* (1962) or the book *Coréennes* (1959).

Another key element for the definition of Marker's creative identity is the way he began, in the newspaper *Esprit*² where "the position he adopts is that of a lively and irreverent dialectician, who deploys archly ironic humour and dazzling erudition to expose the contradictions, double standards and mental laziness that sustain the cherished dogmas of all political persuasions" (19), to assume "fantasy to be the logical barometer of the contemporary political climate since, as his later essay on Jean Cocteau's *Orphée* (1950) would observe, life does not imitate art, but rather comes to fulfil its prophecies" (18). Such use of fantasy will in his later works, as for instance *L'Embassade* (1973), *2084* (1984) or once more *La Jetée*, be used as a tool to project historical moments in a temporal displacement that succeeds in providing them with a strangeness and a clarity that place them open to interpretation, as if released from the weight of the documentary as a consciousness of the present, viewed instead as an oracle or like in Ernst

² Founded in 1932 by personalist philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, *Esprit* "quickly gained prominence as a focus for Roman Catholics looking to dissociate themselves from the disgrace of the Church's conservative right" (16) and "strongly emphasized its ambition to forge a link between personalism's spiritual principles and the political acuity and engagement demanded by the contemporary world" (17).

Junger's novel *Eumeswill* (1977), a *lupanar* where historic events can be recalled in their timeless subjectivity.

The approach to filmmaking Marker undertakes, especially the use of the foreign and inexplicit as a principle of revelation, his personal brand of anthropology, in such documentaries as *Le Mystère Koumiko* (1965) and *Sans Soleil* (1982), is noted here by Catherine Lupton in a earlier, different and more intrinsically filmic incarnation, when she refers to an article by Marker on Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928). Referring to how Marker conceived the exchange between space and time in cinema, she says "these two notions are reconciled in his notion of a temporal grammar of film shots, where long shots correspond to the past and close-ups to the present" (22), concluding that in his analysis of Dreyer's film he recognised the correlation between close-ups and "a tangible experience of historical events made to seem eternally present" (23).

Lupton focuses then on a central point when she underlines Marker's fascination with cinema's power to "unveil deeper realities that expand and enrich the significance of the everyday world, but remain firmly grounded in its objects and appearances" (23). This realisation is seen in the light of the neo-Bergsonian critics and personalist philosophers³ tied to *Esprit*, with whom Marker shared the notion of the "ordinary physical world as a medium of revelation" (23), and this is at the core of Marker's conception of the documentary not as a genre but as a practice that is set at the convergence between image and reality, or film (or art for that matter) and life, or memory and experience, or history and identity. Film as not only a principle of revelation but as an interpretative medium where meaning can become manifest.

This crucial notion is explicitly stated by Lupton when she affirms that

this developed sense of the physical world in film as the bearer of an inner imaginative reality sheds light on the way that Marker's own films have used documentary footage of the actual world to map a subjective consciousness, via incisive dialogues between the spoken commentary and the assembled images. (23)

She then quotes Marker himself as saying "that you express yourself much better through the texts of others, among which you have complete freedom of choice, than by your own" (26). This concretely defines Marker's identity as foremost that of an editor who is set

³ Mainly the Swiss philosopher Albert Béguin (1898-1957), belonging to the so-called Geneva School and having a profound interest in the French poets Paul Claudel (1868-1955) and Charles Péguy (1873-1914).

before the factuality of images which can only become witnesses through his own subjectivity.

It must be made clear by now that one of Lupton's main achievements in this book is to have it be always a testimony of careful and exhaustive research that is balanced between fact and interpretation, and she does so without making the fact sound factual or the interpretation interpretative. Trying to measure up to this achievement, this review can only touch on a very narrow succession of moments that are at once enlightening and provocative as insightful companions to Marker's own work. This is truly an engaging work and it is wise to keep in mind that the inconstancy of this review is not a reflection of the reviewed work. It is probably a sign of my own resistance to reviewing a work that does not make a point but functions rather as a tool for point-making, and that is something rare and much sought after.

This first chapter ends with a reference to another main theme in Marker's work: death. Or better put, the place of death in Western culture and its relation to that of African culture, as treated in his *Les Statues meurent aussi* (1950-53) in collaboration with Alain Resnais (Marker's debut in public filmmaking). Here, through the influence of colonialism in African art, considered as a devitalisation due to its placement in an unsuitable environment - the museum - Marker deals with the African culture's proximity to death as compared to Western denial of it. Curiously, the French government ten-year political ban imposed on this work could almost be the ultimate attempt to ignore the inevitable. This work inaugurates Marker's political filmic approach and also his focus in the following decade on leftist movements arising throughout the world, and their eventual capitulation of sorts. This film also inaugurates Marker's uncompromising and fiercely individual attitude towards his own time and work.

"Travels in a Small Planet", the second chapter, deals with the extensive (and intensive) journeys that Marker undertook throughout the 50s and early 60s, and Lupton declares the filmmaker's self-imposed mission in these terms:

Disdaining the fanfare of clichés and national stereotypes, Marker seeks out the fugitive signs, embedded in the texture and habit of everyday life, that reveal how nations and cultures organize and express themselves, how they engage with the memory of their past and imagine their contributions to the future. (41)

The notion of *travel* itself is presented as essential in this chapter: travel as an experience of diversity, as an experience of identity (as in the *travelogue* approach so favoured by

Marker), of the self that, as Lupton notes quoting the poet Gérard Nerval's maxim "that the purpose of travel is to verify one's dreams" (44), "humbly accepts the random upheavals of the journey" (43). As such, travel becomes a receptacle of the future and of memory, and again as an experience of death, for change occurs when life and death touch each other, and as departing is as much an experience of death as it is humanly possible, so arriving is the image of life as an ongoing genesis.

Lupton eloquently notes that:

the distinctive, disembodied / who speaks or is implied in Marker's travel commentaries measures this distance by tracing his own displacement in the effort to show and enter imaginatively into the living worlds of other nations and cultures, reversing expectations by perceiving strangeness as familiarity and depicting the routine habits of his own culture as bizarre and outlandish rites (44).

This not only resonates with Marker's previously quoted statement that "contrary to what people say, using the first person in films tends to be a sign of humility: all I have to offer is myself" (12), but it clarifies the way he postulates his above mentioned *principle of revelation*, and is made manifest in such works as *Dimanche à Pékin* (1956), *Lettre de Sibérie* (1958) and his collaboration as an editor, graphic designer, writer and photographer to the travel book series *Petite Planete*. Specifically concerning *Lettre de Sibérie*, a work that the critic and film historian Andre Bazin assessed as being the definition of the term film-essay, Lupton mentions that,

Bazin felt that intelligence, expressed in the commentary, was the primary matter of *Letter from Siberia*, and he famously characterized its innovative structure as "horizontal" montage, in which meanings and associations develop less from shot to shot than via the lateral relay of commentary to images: from the ear to the eye (55).

This reference to an *horizontal* montage is particularly interesting when we learn further on how Marker was influenced by Dziga Vertov and Soviet cinematic techniques such as the Kuleshov effect, concerning the implicit interpretation produced by the viewer when exposed to a series of apparently unconnected images. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is when in *Lettre de Sibérie* the same sequence is projected with different narrations – "a pro-Soviet eulogy, a darkly anti-Communist critique and an objective report of the narrator's own impressions" (57). Another element that Marker developed with his narration technique is a sort of mythical thinking that is tied intimately

with his animal tokens. For instance in the commentary he wrote for Mario Rupoli's documentary *Les hommes de la baleine* (1956):

Reflecting on the extensive use of sperm whale by-products in the cosmetics industry, the commentary remarks that the modern woman put sperm whale everywhere, so much so that: the ghost of a sperm whale clings to a pretty woman's day, to bring out her beauty, and by this means, in provoking the ruin of man, takes its revenge on him (59).

In "A Moment in Time", the third chapter, we learn how the same technical developments that in the 60s, mainly hand-held 16mm cameras and portable Nagra sound recorders, gave rise to the concept of cinema-verite, coined by the filmmaker and founder of *Ateliers Varan*, Jean Rouch, were influential on Marker in his maturation of the concept of *dialogue*. Lupton also provides an in-depth appraisal of Marker's documentary *Le Joli mai* and his strange and mystifying still-image piece *La Jetée*, both from 1962, the former being the clearest and earliest example of his notion of *dialogue*, and the latter as the one piece that became intimately identified with Chris Marker, a sort of stepping-stone or totem to which commentators would return over and over. Here they find both a superficial sadness of being and mortality (both on historical and individual scales) and a deeper notion of *image* and the meaning that memory attaches to it as being the definite fabric of human experience – and consequently cinema being the art that comes closer to dealing with it. Concerning *Le Joli mai* Marker is quoted as stating that:

what I wanted to come out of the film is a sort of call to make contact with others, and for both the people in the film and the spectators, it's the possibility of doing something with others that at one extreme creates a society or a civilization... but can simply provide love, friendship, sympathy. (80)

This contact with the other places the interlocutor in the position of a witness, an investigator and a consciousness – a sort of resonance of the words being exchanged that manifests itself through the images and finally engages the viewer.

This is the notion of a constitution of something like the Greek *Agora*, where citizenship is the exercise of the word. Lupton points out that the role of the singular voice-over typical of Marker is greatly subdued in this documentary, but instead raises a collective take on filmmaking that is not simply found in filming the many voices (and faces) of people Marker met on the streets of Paris, but also in the closer collaboration with the cameraman (Pierre Lhomme) and sound engineer (Antoine Bonfanti):

Lhomme's images have many characteristics in common with Marker's own approach to filming and taking photographs: a respectful attention to human faces, sensitivity to physical movements and gestures, and the instinct to home in suddenly on trivial but potent details – like the sustained close-up of a large spider crawling on the suit of an inventor, who is holding forth about the part played by chance in creativity. (84)

This influence that Marker could exert even through the collective, or perhaps because of it, is clearly stated when Lupton mentions that “faced with Rouch's label *cinema verite*, with its troublesome connotation of some general truth discovered through cinema, Marker is credited with promptly rephrasing it as *cine, ma verite* (cinema, my truth)” (84).

It is another of Marker's obsessions that we find in Lupton's commentary on *La Jetee*: the human face (especially the woman's face). In this fiction piece it is an image of childhood, a woman's face, that is the beacon that guides a man through a chemically induced psychic time travel.

This is the story of a man marked by an image from his childhood. The story of *La Jetee* is delivered in voice-over, and its opening line immediately establishes the presence of omniscient narration: a controlling agency that tells the story from outside and has ultimate knowledge of the characters and their destiny (the voice clearly suggests that the narrator and the hero are not the same). (89)

This disembodied narrator does not appear to be an omniscient god, but the voice of omniscience itself, the voice of time as a witness of the ripples in its own fabric.

The fact that this film is composed of still photographic images, a filmic piece that forfeits the illusion of movement, and yet possesses a filmic identity, a duration, testifies that the frames “are like memories of a film, which in our mind seem to be motionless and quantifiable, but if we search through the print never exactly correspond to one individual frame, or to the frozen drama of production stills” (91). This attempt to expose the specificity of cinematic time becomes clearer when Lupton refers to Barthes' essay *The Rhetoric of the Image*: “Roland Barthes distinguished between the referentiality of the photograph as a record of *having been there* and the prime illusion of cinema as an impression of *being there*” (93). The image of a woman's face as both annihilation and revelation is described in the only moment in *La Jetee* where the illusion of movement returns through a momentary smile and a wink directly at the camera in a close-up.

The same mystery is present in *Le Mystère Koumiko* where “Koumiko is the vanishing point into which fiction and documentary dissolve, a character whose mystery

resides in being simultaneously a real Japanese woman and a figment of Marker's fertile imagination" (99). When Marker gives up his role as an interlocutor, and returns to France to receive Koumiko's recordings from her wanderings in Tokyo, he departs from the object of his film but gains the filmic consistency of subjective detachment – an apparent oxymoron that is revealed as being the assumption that two subjectivities can neither truly touch nor imagine they are one, instead entering a zone where time and perspective become an object beyond the object. On this note and returning to the previous film, Lupton concludes that "*La Jetee* recognizes that memories become memories *on account of their scars*; their intensity is directly related to the proximity of trauma and loss, and the paradoxical function of memory is both to shield the subject from this trauma, and to expose them to its presence" (95).

The next chapter, "A Grin Without a Cat", describes in detail Marker's involvement with several key moments in the history of the militant Left during the late 60s and early 70s. Apart from the lengthy discussion of Marker's homonymous work – 1977's *Le Fond de l'air est rouge* (A Grin Without a Cat) – this chapter organises intricate facts about Marker's increasing collectivist approach to filmmaking, including his pedagogical effort to allow factory and rural workers themselves access to filmmaking. This vision of cinema as a tool to build a socio-political identity, as well as an awareness of the individual and the community as a symbiotic entity, are central to Marker's growing notion of a filmmaker's responsibility as both medium and witness for the manifestation of a secret history – a form of *counter-information*. Perhaps something like an archaeology of meaning in the apparent fact of the image. In this chapter, Lupton also notes Marker's meeting and fascination with the Russian filmmaker Alexander Medvedkin, and his connection to the history of the soviet film-trains, and the notion of cinema as once again the tool to change the world – in this case the tool to revolutionise the world into a communist utopia with both its glories and shortcomings.

The fifth chapter entitled "Into the Zone" focuses on Marker as a new media artist, in the sense that the technological world gradually caught up with his futuristic urge, and from the late 70s on he embraced digital image processing, Apple computers, the CD-ROM, the multimedia installation, video and programming techniques while, as one might expect by now, retaining a very personal and consistent approach to all the possibilities brought on by these tools. The *Zone* is therefore the domain of the digital reincarnation of filmic potential. In a certain sense Marker's editing and approach to filmmaking in general

had always been a form of synthesising raw data into a composite entity that was meant to somehow manifest the plural possibilities and perspectives that that data actually contained, and Lupton succinctly exposes the thought-process behind the use of digitally altered images. For instance in Marker's 1982 *Sans Soleil*, where a specific technique called *solarisation* was employed:

Four years later, in *Sunless*, Marker would put forward a philosophy for the use of these treated images, claiming that they break down the illusory presence of the past normally created by archive film, and allow the depiction, in *non-images*, of things that either do not officially exist in history, or have ceased to exist. (150)

Here digital enhancement becomes another tool for the manifestation of a secret history, or better put, of the fact as a manifestation of meaning apart from its historical concept. Here also the notion of *concept* would become quite close to that expounded by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their 1991 work *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* For them the *concept* meant a sort of agglomerative and resonating element that would have an intrinsic consistency and at the same time an interfering nature, apart from for instance a propositional form in which such concept might be used. Just as Deleuze and Guattari state that the proper function of Philosophy is to produce concepts, it seems Marker became aware of the new media's potential to produce filmic concepts and reintroduce them in an historical and anthropological context. Many ghosts populate Marker's *Sans Soleil*: his travelling pseudonyms, the cameraman Sandor Krasna and the Japanese programmer that actually coined *The Zone* as an homage to Tarkovsky's 1979 *Stalker*; the women, the mysterious women in Cabo Verde and Japan and the woman who narrates the voice-over; the dissolution of the contemporary world through an imagetic overdose as seen in the Japanese TV excerpts and Tokyo's Manga saturated streets; and his prized animals, which here have two of their most endearing and bizarre appearances – one being the missing cat Tora and its owners ritual to ensure her spiritual rest, and the other "the copulating stuffed animals in the Josenkai sex museum in Hokkaido" (161).

As Lupton explains:

One of the labyrinthine paths into memory proposed by the film involves simultaneously trusting to appearances (nothing is left but the ephemera of images), and recognizing that they can be deceptive; or, more specifically, that they require time in order to be properly understood. In one passage, the film proposes that what passes for collective history might be nothing more than an accumulation of private memories and wounds. (157)

She clearly refers to that recurring principle of revelation that has been referred to above that is at the very core of Marker's work and that can be viewed as almost a *monadic* element as conceived by the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz, meaning conceiving an image and the memory affiliated to it as a substantial unit that in its individuality reflects the whole – an individuality that can only be expressed by the sublimation of a given image into the core of meaning that transforms it into a witness of history, both of a temporal flow and of a moment in time.

Another of Marker's fascinating projects that Lupton discusses is his 1989 television series for the channel La Sept entitled *L'Heritage de la chouette* (The Owl's Legacy). This thirteen episode series focuses on several concepts that have their origins in ancient Greek culture and language, such as: the symposium, mythology, democracy, Diaspora, Greek history, mathematics and Greek art. Mostly interview driven, this series touches on both Marker's fascination with TV as a significant visual medium which is at the same time specially vulnerable to political, historical and economic pressure, and his own concept of *dialogue*, in this series expounded to include the very Greek notion of *symposium*, a banquet where the word is made manifest. Lupton notes that:

Making the series brought Marker back to one strand of his intellectual origins, since one of the more reliable fragments of information about his early life is that he obtained a degree in philosophy from the Sorbonne. Many of the facets of ancient Greek thought and culture explored in the series – the concept of selfhood as a constant interior dialogue with the Other, the Socratic principles of rigorous intellectual enquiry by questioning and debate, the centrality of myth and the meaning of artistic creation – are the foundations of Marker's own approach to cinema and other audio-visual media as a perpetual dialogue with oneself and others, which seeks to generate reflective knowledge about the world. (174)

This book's final chapter, the homonymously titled *Memories of the Future*, encompasses Marker's multimedia productions and latest works from the 1990s to the present. Two works are specially noted for their relevance in summing up Marker's artistic progression and his own notion of purpose and biographical sameness: the 1990-93 multimedia installation *Zapping Zone* and the 1998 CD-ROM *Immemory*. Lupton points out that "*Zapping Zone* can on one level be viewed as Marker's fantasy television schedule" (184), but also that "within his desire to reshape broadcasting according to his own whims and enthusiasms, Marker uses *Zapping Zone* to propose a critical interrogation of television as it currently exists, and invites the viewer to share in imagining the

possibilities of what television might be instead" (184). It seems Marker has become increasingly interested in the chaotic nature of contemporary visual cultural, and that he seems to find this chaotic aspect a mirror to the political, social and historical context that unfolds before him. Thus, *The Zone* becomes the shape shifting, morphing and bending cyber-noise so keen to post-modern taste. But it also becomes its own consequence and seems to unequivocally deny the *end of history* thesis by being the consciousness of chaos instead. Another video installation, 1995's *Silent Movie*, gathers several elements including five twenty minute loops gathered from pre-1940s films named: *The Journey*, *The Face*, *The Gesture*, *The Waltz*, the fifth being devoted to "images of eyes and *abstracted archival imagery*" (193). On this installation Lupton quotes Marker on the inspiration behind this work: "The idea of a state of perception anterior to understanding, anterior to conscience, anterior by millenniums to film critics and analysis. A kind of *Ur-Kino*, the cinema of origins, closer to Aphrodite than to Garbo" (194). Lupton expounds further:

The reconstitution of self-contained films as an infinite array of moments and fragments invokes the concept of *photogenie* developed by Jean Epstein in the 1920s: the unexpected and alluring visual qualities of the filmed or photographed image, which go unnoticed in nature, and in a film have the power to undercut the momentum of narrative. (195)

But where *Zapping Zone* and *Silent Movie* seem to advocate a certain drifting element closer to the surrealists than to the situationists,⁴ "the figures of Marcel Proust and Alfred Hitchcock preside over the entry into the Memory zone of Marker's CD-ROM *Immemory*" (205). Lupton tells us that,

What Marker proposes in *Immemory* is the geography of his own memory, to be traced via the accumulated signs and mementos of a lifetime. His hypothesis is that *every memory with some reach is more structured than it seems*, that photos taken apparently by chance, postcards chosen on the whim of the moment, begin once they mount up to sketch an itinerary, to map the imaginary country which spreads out inside of us. (206)

Here we find another element key to an understanding of Marker's work, namely his notion of *chance*. Chance is perceived as the build up of meaning beneath a veil of contingency, particularly in the images and obsessions that populate one's life, that serve as beacons of sorts, and that eventually find their way into one's artistic production, where

⁴ "Epstein's contemporaries, the Surrealists, famously invented habits of cinema-going that also fixated on the fragment over the coherence of the story, entering and leaving cinemas at random and refusing the experience of absorption in the narrative" (195).

they stand once again as tokens of a personal connection to the creative force. To be before this creative force as before a consciousness of the self is what Catherine Lupton points to when she notes that,

One of Marker's crucial conceptual sources for *Immunity* is the philosophical model of memory proposed by the seventeenth-century English savant Robert Hooke, whose studies anticipated Newton's theory of gravity. Hooke postulated the existence of a point in the human brain, the seat of the soul, where *all impressions are transmitted and gathered for the contemplation*. (210)

Marker's latest film, with Yannick Bellon, *Remembrance of Things to Come* (2002) returns to the still image technique he used in *La Jetée*, the essence of which Lupton describes as "each of the photos shows a past, but deciphers a future" (215). This resonates with the short conclusion of this book, entitled "The Eye That Writes", when Lupton presents Marker as a sort of mad inventor that keeps himself connected to the world's ongoing spewing forth of images (through a panoptic view of multiple TV channels) and attempts to make sense of the insanity of contemporary rhythms.

But I prefer to think that this description is a fantasy written for me, the reader. That to imagine that "he sits and sleeps with his legs folded up in an armchair, like an elderly monkey who has no use for a bed" and that "the windows are covered to black out the daylight, and inside seven or eight television screens are perpetually switched on" (217) in Catherine Lupton's description, is to allow me to make Marker my own token of sorts. To let this strange and inspiring creature be a beacon that will make me aware of my responsibility towards my own time, and towards my own death. And as the author finishes by telling us that "at the end of the day, he is happiest to be by himself, creating his own worlds by recording and reflecting upon the images of this one, and holding them up as mirrors and masks for the deepest cultural memories and desires of the histories we live", I will finish with "I imagine an apartment somewhere in Paris" (217).