

(UN)FAMILIAR FICTIONS: THE 17TH OCTOBER 1961 MASSACRE AND JACQUES PANIJEL'S *OCTOBRE À PARIS* (1962)

Abstract (173 words):

The 17th October 1961 police massacre of hundreds of protesting Algerians in the centre of Paris has become one of the most recognized events of the French-Algerian war. There are several online interactive documentaries about the event as well as a plethora of fiction films, *bandes dessinées*, television documentaries, and literary works. Jacques Panijel's documentary, *Octobre à Paris*, has received comparatively little attention, due to the fact that it was immediately censored upon its release in 1962, and was not screened in cinemas in France until October 2011. In *Naissance du cinéma algérien* (1971), Algerian author and film critic Rachid Boudjedra criticizes *Octobre à Paris* for being insufficiently political, suggesting that the aesthetic practices adopted distract the viewer from the accounts of Algerian witnesses. In contrast to Boudjedra, this article argues that the film's deployment of familiar cinematic tropes that are more readily associated with fiction film create a sense of spectator familiarity with the problematic subjects and themes presented, an understanding that was designed to lead to concrete social and political change.

Keywords: 17th October 1961, *Octobre à Paris*, French-Algerian War, Jacques Panijel, French documentary, Jacques Rancière.

Jacques Panijel's *Octobre à Paris* is a rare cinematic document. Jacques Panijel's 1962 work is the only sustained contemporaneous moving image representation of the 17th October 1961 massacre in Paris and it explores the tense atmosphere in wartime France that preceded the attacks and presents statements from French witnesses and Algerian victims following the bloodshed. The Algerians represented in the film are both members of the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale, the militant party for Algerian Independence) and civilians who, in the fraught socio-political climate of the

French-Algerian War, exposed themselves to enormous personal risk by being filmed.¹ These individuals appear cautious in recounting their narratives, yet strongly motivated by the desire to share the reality of their experiences. Indeed, an overwhelming desire to uncover the truth surrounding the massacre percolates through the film, evident in the director's narrative and aesthetic choices. This article situates the film within the French historical and memorial context of the 17th October 1961 massacre and explores the film's complicated history of censorship, a suppression that echoes the historicization of the event itself. A subsequent examination of the film's formal techniques in conjunction with Rancière's thinking of documentary cinema reveals that Panijel conceived the film as a political intervention, targeted at a primarily French audience with little or no knowledge of the massacre. The film can thus be read as documentary evidence of the crimes committed by the state in their name, yet as the final section of this intervention asks, does the temporal gap between its creation and final public reception neutralize the documentary's intended political aims?

The 17th October 1961 massacre has been widely acknowledged as one of the defining moments of the French-Algerian War, and it has become a touchstone in studies of national memory and historical omission. On the night of the 17th October 1961, 30,000 Algerians gathered for a demonstration that took them from suburbs like Nanterre and Gennevilliers on the outskirts of Paris towards the centre, in protest against a recently imposed curfew that prohibited the movement of French-Algerians between the hours of 8:30PM and 5:30AM. Despite the fact that 11,538 people were arrested on that evening alone (by the end of the week that figure had reached more than 14,000) and despite fatalities due to police violence that range in estimate from 30 to 335, the event more or less

¹ I will designate the protesters as Algerians, for both the sake of simplicity and also because the vast majority were first-generation immigrants, who by 1962 would be considered 'Algerian'. However, at this time they were officially considered French citizens, and designated 'Français musulmans d'Algérie' (see Einaudi, speaking in Mehdi Lallaoui's film, *À propos d'Octobre*, 2011).

disappeared from public consciousness for several decades.²

However, from the 1990s onwards, a plethora of historical and cultural memorial endeavours in relation to the 17th October 1961 incidents began to emerge. The trial of Maurice Papon for his role in the deportation of Jews from Bordeaux to Auschwitz eventually took place October 1997, after fourteen years of legal wrangling. It concomitantly brought to light his actions as police chief in Paris in 1961. The journalist and researcher Jean-Luc Einaudi gave evidence at Papon's trial, highlighting the systematic and deliberate manner in which the massacre was not only perpetrated but also camouflaged by Papon's control of the press. According to Einaudi, a full-scale cover-up was initiated, and thus the emergence of a more complete picture of the event was delayed by more than two decades.³ Einaudi was an extremely important figure in the cultural and memorial recognition of the massacre; however, because he was not a professionally trained historian he was denied access to police archives, and so his first book, *La bataille de Paris* (1991), documents the event exclusively through eyewitness testimony. The historiographical reliance on testimonial accounts of the massacre may be due to the obscurity that surrounded the violence, and that to some extent still persists. For example, it was, and still is, impossible to estimate with certainty the number of deaths. As Joshua Cole writes, 'uncertainty about this question [...] has been deftly translated by irresponsible commentators, beginning with Papon himself, into an uncertainty about the event as a whole'.⁴

² For a detailed discussion of the discrepancy in the number of deaths, see Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 161-179.

³ Einaudi's statements about the media cover-up feature in Philip Brook's and Alan Hayling's documentary *Une journée portée disparue: 17 Octobre 1961* (1992).

⁴ Joshua Cole, 'Entering History: The Memory of Police Violence in Paris, October 1961', in *Algeria & France, 1800-2000: Identity, Memory, Nostalgia*, ed. by Patricia M. E. Lorcin (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), pp. 117–134, p. 119.

The ambiguity surrounding the 17th October 1961 massacre can be traced to its public suppression, yet cultural endeavours continue to focus, somewhat obsessively, on this forgetting and exclusion. As Jim House and Neil Macmaster suggest, ‘17 October is now officially a day of remembrance, but a large part of what is now remembered is the forgetting of 17 October 1961, a public event that literally happened in plain sight’.⁵ Documentaries like Agnès Denis and Mehdi Lallaoui’s *Le Silence du fleuve* (1991), Philip Brooks and Alan Hayling’s *Une journée portée disparue: 17 Octobre 1961* (1992), Daniel Kupferstein’s *Dissimulation d’un massacre: 17 octobre 1961* (2001), and *Le Monde*’s online interactive documentary, *La Nuit oubliée* (2011) perform important memorial excavations, but they seem to invite reflection not on the teleology the massacre itself, but rather the causes and effects of its forgetting and silencing for French society as a whole. While fictional works like Leila Sebbar’s novella *La Seine était rouge* (1999), Didier Daeninckx’s detective fiction *Meurtres pour mémoire* (1985) and Michael Haneke’s *Caché* (2005) do not overtly privilege the obfuscation of the event, its forgotten aspect becomes a locus around which memory, form and genre are interrogated.

Screenings and Censorship: The Creation of Octobre à Paris

Within these cultural and historical schemas, the creation, reception, and formal strategies of *Octobre à Paris* render it a singular cultural, memorial, and political *objet à part*. While Elie Kagan’s widely distributed photographs capture the horror of the night in question, Panijel’s film stands as the only sustained contemporaneous audio-visual document which captures the political climate in France before, during, and after the massacre. Panijel, a biologist of Romanian origin working at the *Institut Pasteur*, participated in the French Resistance in the Vercors and penned a novel based on these experiences, entitled *La Rage* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1948). The novel questions the possibility of undertaking active and physical political resistance while still remaining an artist and an intellectual, and therefore it anticipates the style of *Octobre à Paris*, with its interwoven aesthetic

⁵ House and Macmaster, pp. 121-122.

and political concerns. A signatory of the *Manifeste des 121* (an open letter condemning the French-Algerian War signed by 121 French intellectuals in 1960), he was horrified by what he saw as a startling reiteration of Nazi brutality in French colonial practices in Algeria. In 1959, alongside Pierre Vidal-Naquet and Laurent Schwartz, he created the *Comité Audin*, a militant anti-colonial group founded following the torture and subsequent death of mathematician Maurice Audin, arrested by French military in 1957 during ‘The Battle of Algiers’. As a member of this faction of left-wing French intellectuals campaigning for Algerian liberation, Panijel was forewarned by an FLN representative that police reprisals would occur, and he witnessed the repression directly: ‘en traversant les Champs-Élysées, je découvre l’horreur: des centaines d’Algériens assis par terre entre deux rangées de flics en uniforme’.⁶

On the 18th October 1961, the day after the massacre, he proposed to the *Comité* that they produce a film about the massacre; they agreed, on the condition that ‘le film soit réalisé par un metteur en scène de renom’.⁷ This proved impossible: Panijel contacted several members of the *Nouvelle Vague*, as well as multiple foreign directors of repute, but they all refused.⁸ Only Jean Rouch showed a moderate degree of interest, but he wanted the film to be a minor undertaking and refused to produce the film in 35mm, while for Panijel and the *Comité* ‘il s’agissait d’un événement majeur’.⁹ Thus, by default, Panijel agreed to make the film himself, having garnered some cinematographic proficiency as a co-director with Jean-Paul Sassy on *La peau et les os*, which won the *Prix Jean Vigo* in 1960.

⁶ Jean-Philippe Renouard and Isabelle Saint-Saëns, ‘Festivals d’un film maudit. Entretien avec Jacques Panijel’, *Vacarme*, 3:13 (2000), pp. 20-23, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁸ Panijel quotes François Truffaut’s refusal to make a film about the massacre: ‘la guerre d’Algérie, je regrette mais qu’est ce que vous voulez que je dise là dessous, j’y connais rien. C’est comme si on me demandait de faire un film sur la déportation’. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

The difficulty Panijel experienced in recruiting an established director to the project was only the first step in a long and arduous cycle of refusal, repression and censorship that spans the film's creation, reception, and extremely limited distribution. As Jean-Philippe Renouard and Isabelle Saint-Saëns suggest, *Octobre à Paris* is truly 'un film maudit'.¹⁰ Having been recorded in secret in the *bidonvilles* of Gennevilliers and Nanterre, Panijel organized several private showings of the film for his friends in the press at the Studio Bertrand in Paris, where 'une fois sur deux la police arrivait et embarquait la copie du film'.¹¹ Panijel brought the film to Cannes in 1962, and prepared a few clandestine projections in a small room on the Rue d'Antibes. The police did not appear, but no French newspaper mentioned these screenings in their coverage of the festival; the only scant reference to the film made in the press came in the American entertainment magazine, *Variety!*. A series of viewings at the *Mostra de Venise* festival terminated in the seizure of the film by the Italian police, and Panijel ended up surreptitiously carrying *Octobre à Paris* with him to scientific conferences, where it was displayed to the bemusement of his fellow academics.

When Panijel was forewarned of the arrival of the police, he chose to project instead Herbert Biberman's *The Salt of the Earth* (1954), a film about a zinc miners' strike in New Mexico.¹² The explicitly political nature of Panijel's project, and his desire to foster links with other left-wing, polemical filmmakers is evident in his choice of alternative projection: Biberman was a Jewish American filmmaker who, following a 1947 investigation by the US House Committee on Un-American Activities, was imprisoned and blacklisted by Hollywood. Evidently, such forms of artistic censorship by the state were also at work in France, and *Octobre à Paris* was denied a *visa d'exploitation*, an administrative, government-sanctioned permit that allows films to be publicly projected in France. In 1973, René Vautier asked the UPCB (Unité de Production Cinématographique Bretagne) for a *visa* for *Octobre à Paris*, which was rejected. He launched a

¹⁰ Ibid., p.22.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 23.

¹² Panijel quoted in Antoine de Baecque, 'Rejouer le 17 octobre 1961', *L'Histoire*, 368 (2011), p. 26.

hunger strike, protesting the censorship of the film but also in opposition to French government control of the industry more broadly, demanding ‘la suppression de la possibilité pour la commission de censure cinématographique, de censurer des films sans fournir de raisons; et l’interdiction, pour cette commission, de demander coupes ou refus de visa pour des critères politiques’.¹³ The strike was supported by filmmakers like Alain Resnais, Robert Enrico and Claude Sautet, and after thirty days, Vautier received notice that the law would be revised, which it eventually was in 1974. Yet Panijel still could not find a distributor.

In the end, Panijel compounded the control to which *Octobre à Paris* was subject. In 1997, as a result of the publicity surrounding Papon’s trial, Gérard Vaugeois at *Les Films de L’Atalante* requested permission from Panijel to distribute the film, which Panijel refused, demanding that a short documentary preface be made to accompany the film, recontextualizing the events for present day audiences and marking the 17th October 1961 massacre as a epitome of a state crime.¹⁴ Following Panijel’s death in September 2010, Vaugeois negotiated distribution rights with Panijel’s widow and son and *Octobre à Paris* was released by *Les Films de l’Atalante* in 2011, with the introductory supplement, *A Propos d’Octobre*, and an additional documentary, *17 Octobre 1961*, by Sébastien Pascot.

A Propos d’Octobre, directed by Mehdi Lallaoui of the association *Au nom de la mémoire* (ANM), certainly situates the film in relation to a broader history of police brutality and violence in the 1960s. While it features interviews with Jean-Luc Einaudi and René Vautier, the latter describing the French state in the 1960s as a ‘régime totalitaire’, it cannot be said to offer an in-depth exploration of the moral and political definition of a state crime, which Panijel characterizes in the following terms: ‘généralement le crime d’Etat est commis par des individus à qui l’on a garanti

¹³ See Olivier Bitoun, ‘Critique du film: Octobre à Paris’, *DVD Classik*, October 2012, <<http://www.dvdclassik.com/critique/octobre-a-paris-panijel>> [Accessed 30th May 2016]. See also Vautier speaking in Lallaoui’s *À propos d’Octobre*.

¹⁴ De Baecque, ‘Rejouer le 17 octobre 1961’, p. 26.

l'innocence, qui sont relativement peu nombreux et possèdent un objectif très précis'.¹⁵ *Octobre à Paris* chooses what might be called an explicitly biased stance in depicting the crimes committed by these representatives of the state who were 'guaranteed innocence'. No reference is made to the police officers killed by the FLN, murders of which the general population would have been aware; nor is mention made of the pressure that the FLN exerted on Algerians civilians in the *bidonvilles*, where they were forced to pay regular sums of money to the FLN and threatened with physical violence if they did not participate in the march. This partiality can certainly be related to the fact that Panijel had to obtain the permission of the FLN authorities to film in Nanterre and Gennevilliers, yet considered alongside the filmic techniques I outline below, it also suggests that the film was specifically directed at a French audience, in order to show to them the crimes that were committed by the state in their name.

In summary, these difficulties reflect the broader political climate of negation and suppression that generally surrounded the French-Algerian War following the Evian Accords, and the 17th October 1961 massacre in particular. As Panijel remarks in 1992, 'c'était normal que la police se précipite dessous, puisqu'on a voulu occulter l'événement [...] on a occulté le film. On a fait comme si ça n'existait pas. Ce qui est triste, c'est que trente ans après on fait la même chose'.¹⁶ Panijel's comments illuminate this intersection of art and politics: the event was denied, and so the existence of the film was denied. While fiction films and historical accounts referencing the Algerian war were also censored (including Godard's *Le Petit Soldat*, made in 1960, but not released until 1963, and Paulette Péju's *Les harkis à Paris* and *Ratonnades à Paris*, both published by *Éditions François Maspero* in 1961), the documentary testimonies from Algerian witnesses in *Octobre à Paris* presented a particularly potent threat to the veil of invisibility the French state tried to draw over the massacre.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁶ Panijel is quoted from Brooks and Hayling, *Une journée portée disparue*.

The 17th October 1961 can be characterized as an event that attempts a double annihilation, what Rancière calls a '*vernichtung*': 'réduction à rien, c'est-à-dire anéantissement, disparition de ses traces, disparition de son nom même'.¹⁷ Not only does the event itself affect an erasure, through the elimination of 'dissenting' individuals, but its representation is also subject to attempted eradication. According to Rancière, this control of the sensory realm is characteristic of the work of the *police*. While the police is not to be confused with the literal police, in this case, and in many others, the terms somewhat overlap:

La police n'est pas une fonction sociale mais une constitution symbolique du social. L'essence de la police n'est pas la répression, pas même le contrôle sur le vivant. Son essence est un certain partage du sensible. On appellera partage du sensible la loi généralement implicite qui définit les formes de l'avoir-part en définissant d'abord les modes perceptifs dans lesquels ils s'inscrivent.¹⁸

The *police* regulates the space of the visible by excluding void, supplement, and difference, through what he calls the 'distribution of the sensible' (*le partage du sensible*), a system of sensory control over what is seen, heard, disseminated, and understood in the public and political sphere. According to Rancière, one of the means of doing this throughout the centuries was to inscribe the space of the interior, the publicly invisible, as the space of the *sans-parts*, those individuals who are prohibited from participating in political life. The groups that he categorizes under the rubric of the *sans-parts* include ethnic, religious and racial minorities, the economically disenfranchised, and women.

Octobre à Paris attempts to render visible the emergence of Algerians into civic space as both political and affective subjects. As House suggests, for many individuals who survived the 17th October 1961 violence, '17 October is remembered [...] as an affirmation in the public sphere of a

¹⁷ Jacques Rancière, *Figures de l'histoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), p. 45.

¹⁸ Rancière, *Aux bords du politique*, p. 240.

previously marginalised community'.¹⁹ Indeed, in *Aux bords du politique*, Rancière elaborates his thinking of the political protest with specific reference to the 17th October 1961 massacre, which he reads as the disruption of public, visible space by marginalized Algerian political subjects. For Rancière, the 17th October 1961 massacre exposed the fundamental hypocrisy of the French colonial system: for what could be more democratic, more expressive of the French *épistème* of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* than an entirely peaceful protest at a perceived social injustice? He writes:

Cette journée, avec son double aspect manifeste et caché, a en effet été un point tournant, un moment où les apories éthiques du rapport entre le mien et l'autre se sont transformées en subjectivation politique d'un rapport d'inclusion de l'altérité.²⁰

For Rancière, then, the Algerian protestors are engaged fundamentally in a form of politics, and the double movement of this day, its vacillation between excesses of visibility and invisibility, led to political recognition of the Algerian cause. In this way, the political protest becomes a form of public dissent that manifests subjects who are often invisible, vulnerable, and underrepresented, and it is always 'un affrontement entre deux partages du sensible [...] La manifestation politique est ainsi toujours ponctuelle et ses sujets toujours précaires'.²¹ The disruption of French public space by Algerian subjects can therefore be read as an affective and a figurative transgression of politically constituted borders, of who has the right to be seen and heard in public space, and who has not.

However, in Rancière's thought, disruptions in dominant modes of perception that lend visibility to fragile subjects are not confined to the political sphere. Aesthetic form, particularly in documentary cinema, can also instigate a similar confrontation or a reconfiguration of regimes of sensory apperception: 'il y a une politique de l'esthétique au sens où les formes nouvelles de

¹⁹ Jim House, 'Antiracist memories: The Case of 17 October 1961 in Historical Perspective', *Modern and Contemporary France*, 9:3 (2001), pp. 355-368, p. 361.

²⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Aux bords du politique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), p. 210.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

circulation de la parole, d'exposition du visible et de production des affects déterminant des capacités nouvelles'.²² While Rancière is clear that a film (or any artwork) *in and of itself* does not constitute politics, the techniques and practices it employs can contribute to a reconfiguration of the sensible, of what can be seen, heard, and understood in the political realm. He focuses on documentary as locus of debates around the political real in art because of its presentation (or non-presentation) of precarious, excluded subjects and because of its deployment of fictional aesthetics. Indeed, Rancière considers that *La sortie des usines Lumière* (1895), arguably the first documentary film ever made, comes to define the 'threshold' of cinema as an art that plays on the visible and the invisible through what it chooses to exclude: the life of the workers *inside* the factory.²³ Rancière stresses that while fiction tries to create an 'effet du réel' which is in itself a mark of fictional verisimilitude, documentary uses fictional elements to make the real more palatable, more digestible: in short, more familiar.²⁴ Nico Baumbach summarizes Rancière's conception of the relation between documentary and fiction in the following terms: 'documentary can be seen as a type of fiction film that, by taking the real as a point of contestation rather than an effect to be produced, opens up new possibilities for fictional invention'.²⁵

Between Image and Testimony

The vast majority of French citizens in 1962 were either unaware of the police brutality, or uncertain about what, exactly, had happened. Panijel appears to have been painfully cognizant of the atmosphere of negation, denial and suppression surrounding the massacre. To counter this, he deliberately constructs *Octobre à Paris* as a three-act tragedy: a before, during, and after of the

²² Jacques Rancière, *Le Spectateur émancipé* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2008), p. 70-71.

²³ Rancière, *Figures de l'histoire*, p. 33.

²⁴ Jacques Rancière, *La Fable cinématographique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 66.

²⁵ Nico Baumbach, 'Jacques Rancière and the Fictional Capacity of Documentary', *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 8:1 (2010), pp. 57-72, p. 57.

demonstration, staging ‘l’organisation et le départ de la manifestation que nous avons pu reconstituer, la manifestation racontée par des photographies, et les témoignages filmés après la manifestation’.²⁶ By reconstructing a chronology of the massacre and by situating the viewer within a broader temporal moment, Panijel acknowledges that the 17th October 1961 massacre constituted an instance of extreme violence within a broader framework of police repression and majoritarian public indifference. From the 1940s onwards, colonial ideologies, practices and methods were increasingly imported from the colonies to metropolitan France; indeed, Papon had served as the *Préfet regional* in Constantine from 1956 to 1958. As House notes, ‘the massacre was therefore the result of long-term and seemingly “normalised” repressive governance, public indifference and antipathy, and short-term conjunctural factors linked to the late war period’.²⁷ Einaudi references the scale and duration of the violence in *A Propos d’Octobre*, noting that in Paris in the months leading up to the massacre, ‘on retrouvait quotidiennement des cadavres [Algériens]’, highlighting how violence against the North African community had escalated daily in the build-up to the march.

The tripartite structure of the film was also designed to create points of reference to which the audience might be able to relate to as truth. Panijel further employs a range of fictional techniques to foster spectator familiarity, including sound-image disjunctions, flashbacks, and reconstructions of particular key events, including the departure of crowds of Algerians to the march on the night in question and the interrogation of inhabitants of the Goutte d’Or by *harkis* (Muslim Algerians who served as auxiliaries for the French during the Algerian War of Independence). The contrasting of these fictionalized sequences and techniques with the ‘real’ retrospective testimonies of victims formed the locus of Rachid Boudjedra’s criticisms of *Octobre à Paris*. He draws a distinction between the film’s aesthetic and political aims:

Octobre à Paris en tant qu’acte politique est irréfutable même si en tant qu’œuvre d’art on peut faire quelques

²⁶ Renouard and Saint-Saëns, ‘Festivals d’un film maudit’, p. 21.

²⁷ House, ‘Antiracist memories’, p. 357. See also House and Macmaster, *Paris 1961*, pp. 61-87.

réserve. [...] les auteurs du film [...] craignant la monotonie des plans fixes, [ont] fragmenté les témoignages qui font toute la valeur du film. Ainsi l'illustration de ces dialogues n'est pas toujours satisfaisante dans la mesure où le décalage est évident entre des images parfois peu significatives qui passent sur l'écran et la violence des discussions entre militants.²⁸

Yet while the importance of the testimonies is indisputable, I argue that their juxtaposition with these *images peu significatives* rather increases their value. From the outset of the film, Panijel forcefully stresses the truth of the narrative he presents, while at the same time, underscoring the ways in which knowledge can be manipulated through audio-visual presentation. *Octobre à Paris* opens to a black screen and a solitary voice, and we hear a spoken testimony that assures the audience that what we will see and hear is real. The voice is that of an Algerian witness named Kader: 'Je suis un Algérien [...] Je connais très bien tout ce que vous allez voir et entendre [...] Tout ceci est vrai'. Echoing the fact that the massacre happened in plain sight and yet could be denied, the black space immediately situates the viewer within a sphere where the connections between visibility and truth are rendered fragile. The rest of the opening sequence draws out the unreliable links between what is seen and what can be understood. An anonymous woman stands on a public pavement with a wall behind her: she emits a piercing scream, and the shot cuts to another woman screaming in terror. No explanation is given; all the spectator sees is a single shoe on the ground. The opening credits roll, and the blurred background image depicts a pile of assorted shoes, perhaps the clothing of missing Algerians that has washed up on the banks of the Seine.

For Rancière, this contrasting of the real and the abstract is central to the work of documentary film: the camera can record the momentous or the banal, but through its very recording, it creates historical importance. The prosaic universalization of significance brought about by the mechanic eye of the camera, this 'machine de monde qui rend tout également signifiant et insignifiant',²⁹ can be counteracted by aesthetic techniques that privilege 'la solitude de la parole'.³⁰

²⁸ Rachid Boudjedra, *Naissance du cinéma algérien* (Paris: François Maspéro, 1971), p. 39.

²⁹ Rancière, *Figures de l'histoire*, p. 40.

The loneliness of the voice, and particularly voices like Kader's that recount experiences which do not concur with dominant national narratives, emerges through the confrontation, superimposition, and interplay of words and images. Rancière insists that it is the interstices between word and image, the sense of 'strangeness' in the sound-image disjunction that produces the possibility of politics:

S'il y a un visible caché sous l'invisible, ce n'est pas l'arc électrique qui le révélera, qui le soustraira au non-être, mais la mise en scène des mots, le moment de dialogue entre la voix qui les fait résonner et le silence des images qui montrent l'absence de ce que les mots disent.³¹

By contrasting the clarity of Kader's words with the abstraction of the woman's scream in the previously mentioned sequence, Panijel draws the spectator's attention to various modes of transmitting knowledge, verbal and cognitive on the one hand, and sonorous and affective on the other.³² Indeed, Rancière specifically references these distinctions, drawing on Aristotle's elaboration of *logos* and *phonē*, as speech and voice respectively. Rancière suggests that while speech can be read as a political enunciation, voice is the term given to the noises, sounds, emanations of those without political power, used in corporeal expressions of pain and pleasure. He writes: 'whoever is in the presence of an animal that possesses the ability to articulate language and its power of demonstration, knows that he is dealing with a human – and therefore political – animal.'³³ The hysteria and impenetrability associated with the female scream here comes to stand in

³⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

³¹ Ibid., p. 43.

³² Lia Brozgal ties *Octobre à Paris* to varying registers of knowledge and 'epistophilia' as the desire for understanding in documentary cinema, as opposed to the scopophilic impulses of fiction film. Lia Brozgal, 'Evidence of Visibility: October 17 and Epistophilia'. Paper given at 'Research Seminar in French Studies: Crisis', King's College London, 20th November 2013.

³³ Jacques Rancière, trans. by Steven Corcoran, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Bloombury Academic, 2013), p. 37.

for the general lack of comprehension of Algerian trauma in France, while the solid rationality of the male speaking voice acts as a testimonial supplement, bolstering the emotive cry through verbal illumination.³⁴

Having contrasted the rationality of the speaking voice and the impenetrability of the scream in the opening sequence, Panijel continues to evoke this play of sound and image, of diegetic and non-diegetic worlds. Visual and verbal testimonies from victims and victim's families are captured either with wordless, rapid crosscutting or in long takes with medium shots, a discreet yet relatively personal distance that shuns the potential invasiveness and the affective identification often implied by the close-up. The medium shot captures the perspective of both the filmmaker and the French viewer: familiar and unfamiliar, close and distant, the Algerian subject became the uncanny supplement of French identity. The medium shot draws the spectator into this world, while simultaneously maintaining distance: we are not invited to fully identify with the victims, for such identification may not be possible. This technique can be contrasted to the use of close-ups in later documentaries about the event, including Yasmina Adi's *Ici on noie les Algériens* (2011), when the truth of the massacre had been absorbed into public consciousness. However, in 1962 Panijel recognized that the gap separating the filmed subjects and the intended audience was too great to permit emotive identification through the close-up.

Identification, Ethics and Intertextuality

This consideration of distance and proximity invites reflection upon the differential distribution of identification and the interpenetration of ethics and aesthetics in documentary technique.

³⁴ A detailed discussion of the gendering of victim and violence in audio-visual media is beyond my discussion here. However, see Adriana Cavarero, *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) and Maria Flood, 'Women Resisting Terror: The Algerian Civil War and Yamina Bachir-Chouikh's *Rachida* (2002)', *Journal of North African Studies* (forthcoming, 2017).

Identification varies greatly depending on the spectator and the subject, the gap between the issue presented and its arena of reception. As Lauren Berlant has shown, an ‘ethics of privilege’ operates in our apprehension of suffering, whereby affective identification is accorded unequally: quite simply, we feel more for those who resemble us, particularly in socio-economic terms.³⁵ In this differential distribution of empathy, the most vulnerable, perhaps the most deserving of our compassion, often fall outside of our capacity to care. Indeed, one of the earliest interventions into the debate on ethics, spectatorship, and documentary, Calvin Pryluck’s ‘Ultimately We Are All Outsiders’, recognizes this gap between subject viewing and object viewed. Pryluck charts the various positions documentary makers adopt towards their subjects, and one point remains particularly salient when considering the hostile conditions of reception to which *Octobre à Paris* was subject. Pryluck writes: ‘It turns out that the ethical problem is also an aesthetic one [...] a simple human principle can be evoked here: Those least able to protect themselves require the greatest protection. In the extreme, utter helplessness demands utter protection’.³⁶ The problem is that those who are most helpless, who require the most protection, are often those who are least familiar to the implied or targeted spectator.

For Sarah Cooper, the brackets that inscribe Bill Nichols’ well-known definition of documentary as ‘a fiction (un)like any other’,³⁷ mark ‘the play between the unfamiliar and the familiar that constitutes a particular documentary’s relation to “our” world’.³⁸ Cooper stresses this

³⁵ Lauren Berlant, ‘Compassion (and Withholding)’ in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.

³⁶ Calvin Pryluck, “‘Ultimately We Are All Outsiders’: The Ethics of Documentary Filming’, *Journal of the University Film Association*, 28 :1 (1976), pp. 21-29, p. 28.

³⁷ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 1; also quoted in Sarah Cooper, *Selfless Cinema?: Ethics and French Documentary* (Leeds: Legenda, 2006), p. 6.

³⁸ Cooper, *Selfless Cinema?*, p. 7.

delicate balance between the known and the unknown, the relation between the film, its subjects, and the spectator, noting that ‘unfamiliarity emerges as a fiction if it does not relate to aspects of the historical world that are familiar to us’.³⁹ Spectators must be able to grasp something recognizable in the documentary that anchors them in a known world, especially when the themes, subjects, or the realm depicted presented may be profoundly strange and unsettling. This might mean using fictionalizing techniques, or referencing other moving image texts. Indeed, for Rancière, it is precisely this introduction of fictional elements into the documentary itself that allows it to be read as ‘real’: ‘le documentaire n’atteindra son évidence humaine qu’à imiter [la fiction] au-delà même de sa logique. C’est le jeu fictionnel du signifiant et de l’a-signifiant [...] qui fait la puissance documentaire de l’image’.⁴⁰

Playing on this line between the meaningful and the aleatory, the significant and the a-significant, Panijel’s testimonies are frequently infiltrated by a non-diegetic sound track, which creeps in quietly before exploding in a cacophony of jarring violin chords, lone guitar strings, and aggressive percussion. Often, these sounds lead to a transition of image and theme, from testimonies to archive footage or images of the *bidonvilles*. Thus, even within these sequences that resolutely depict real violence and real shantytowns, this overtly, imposingly non-diegetic sound reminds the viewer of the constructed and fictional nature of film as art. By moving from what are now some of the most familiar images of the event by photographer Elie Kagan, to intense, grainy close-ups of these photographs, Panijel picks out individual faces and localized suffering amid the crowd of protestors to emphasize the individuals behind the anonymous and loaded signifier ‘Algerian’. He also creates montages, with wordless, rapid cuts and static images of either victims’ faces or scars they carry as a result of the violence they experienced, accompanied by lone violins or drums. In one case, he focuses on a young teenage boy, as well as faces covered in blood, bodies lying immobile on the ground, empty hands, or mouths or screaming in pain. This technique contrasts the mobility of

³⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁰ Rancière, *Figures de l’histoire*, p. 31.

the camera and the stillness of the photographic image, and the dense silence of the image with the incommensurability of the sound. It mixes sensory apperceptions in order to highlight the fragility of representation, and most particularly, representation of this event.

The dissonance between the sound and image tracks recalls his treatment of the trauma of French veterans returning from Algeria in Resnais' *Muriel, ou le temps d'un retour* (1963), while the montages, the use of photographic close ups and the non-diegetic sound which supplements the images of brutality on the screen are techniques that can also be uncovered in *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955). Moreover, the slow tracking shots over the *bidonvilles*, devoid of human presence, and the panning shots and rapid zooms that accompany the montage of photographs from the night in question recall Resnais' treatment of the empty spaces of Auschwitz and the mobile camera that arrests and amplifies the horrific images from the camps. Cooper stresses the ultimate difference of documentary lies in the mind of the audience, in the encounter between the spectator and the filmic text, and the conditions of reception that surround a particular film mark it as real or fictional: 'documentary, like its spectator, [...] is constructed through the viewing encounter rather than pre-existing it'.⁴¹ The spectator's knowledge and ability to categorize the images and themes presented depends on previous moving image encounters, on what prior cinematic texts have constructed as truth or fiction through aesthetic choices. This linking of *Octobre à Paris* to other representations of extreme political violence can also be a deliberate strategy designed to foster spectator recognition, and I underscore these connections here to highlight how similar techniques in documentary can produce similar effects.

Another sequence points to the interstices of the real and the fictional and to the limits of both visual and verbal representation in documentary filmmaking. A disembodied voice tells us how a policeman beat him with a *matraque*, and then threw him into the river where he remained underwater from midnight until dawn. As the man's voice describes how he climbed out of the water, the camera moves haltingly, at the pace of a freezing, uncertain human, before swinging abruptly to a

⁴¹ Cooper, *Selfless Cinema?*, p. 7.

sign hanging on a tree, which reads, 'Défense de déposer des ordures'. The implication of the words is self-evident: one is forbidden from throwing garbage into the river, but not certain human beings. The inclusion in the urban landscape of apparently random textual traces that reinforce underlying narrative themes is a feature of early *Nouvelle Vague* directors, used most prominently in Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1960), Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and *Muriel*, all contemporaneous to *Octobre à Paris*. This sequence further employs the fictional technique of the flashback: the spectator is shown proximate visions of a past event that the words describe. Yet the blank anonymity of the image and the absence of the human from the visual field point to the uncertainty surrounding the events of that night, the impossibility of verifying precise times, locations, and victims: this could be any riverbank, any farmhouse, and beyond this, the film later suggests, any person.

Rancière references this technique, the disjunction between the words of a victim of violence and images of the place (or approximate place, when this is unknown) where it occurred, in describing the testimony of Simon Srebnik in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985). Lanzmann grounds the viewer firmly in the present by tracing, through close ups of Srebnik's face, the memories that can only partially filter through to the spectator. The extreme dislocation between the images that Srebnik describes and the calm ordinariness of the pastoral landscape capture the great distance between what can be shown in the present and the memory of the victim. The image in both cases can only partially reflect the narrative, supplementing it without fully explaining it. This disjunction between the spoken words and the image presented touches on 'l'incroyable de l'événement, programmé par la logique même de l'extermination'.⁴² This space of uncertainty contrasts with representations of the police order that seek to draw clear distinctions between the real and the fictional, constructing a clear dividing line between the world of representations and that of facts.

In these gaps between fiction and documentary, significant and a-significant, an image of the human being and the inhuman act emerges. Writing of *Nuit et Brouillard* and the representation of the inhuman, Rancière stipulates that it is not a question of giving suffering and horror an image,

⁴² Rancière, *Le destin des images*, p. 144.

‘mais de montrer ce qui justement n’a pas d’image “naturelle”, l’inhumanité, le processus d’une négation d’humanité’.⁴³ As Emma Wilson notes, Resnais and scriptwriter Jean Cayrol risk lyricism and poetics in *Nuit et Brouillard*, particularly in the voiceover narration, to draw attention to ‘the disjunctions between the realities they depict and the aesthetic forms they impose on them’.⁴⁴ To similar ends, Panijel creates abstract montages, accompanied by lone violins or drums, with still fragmented photographs of victims’ faces or the corporeal scars they carry as a result of the violence. In one scene, a man shows the wounds inflicted on him during his time interned at *Le Palais des Sports*: we see dark black marks on his legs, shoulders and back, visceral and bodily reminders of the reality of violence. When a narrative is not sufficient, because the speaker cannot voice or the listener cannot hear, the physical marks left by violence can offer an alternative form of testimony, further imparting a sense of urgency and immediacy that other representations made decades later cannot. For the viewer, this mixing of sensory apperceptions underscores the fragility of representation, and most particularly, representation of this event. Watching *Octobre à Paris* months, years, or even decades after its creation, these scars become testaments and evidence of a violence that cannot be fully explained or understood, what Rancière calls an ‘*il y a eu qui excède la pensée*’.⁴⁵

Beyond the physical scars and direct testimonies, these abstract sequences capture the prevailing mood in France, and the dehumanization of Algerians reverberates through the scenes that portray the *bidonvilles*. By 1956, there were over 300,000 Algerians living in France and House and Macmaster note that the Interior Ministry recorded 46,827 shantytown residents by the 1960s.⁴⁶ Although the majority did not reside in the *bidonvilles*, according to House, ‘nothing exemplified Algerians’ socio-economic status better than the shanty-towns (*bidonvilles*) that grew around Paris,

⁴³ Rancière, *Figures de l’histoire*, p. 48.

⁴⁴ Emma Wilson, *Alain Resnais* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 27.

⁴⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Le Destin des images* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2003), p. 127.

⁴⁶ House and Macmaster, *Paris 1961*, p. 97.

Lyons and Marseilles in the 1950s'.⁴⁷ It was certainly easier to film in the shantytowns rather than the centre of the city and while Panijel's focus on the squalor of the *bidonvilles* is perhaps not representative of the living conditions of most Algerians in France, it carries a symbolic function, representing topographical, social, and economic inequality and marginalization.

The discordant string and drum track that accompanies these panning shots over the Algerians' dwellings mingles with the sounds of police helicopters circling over the encampments, further underscoring the sense of fear, uncertainty and isolation in the suburbs. Images of extreme poverty punctuate the film: dirty water and appalling sanitation conditions, people wading knee-deep in muddy passages, carcasses decapitated in grimy sheds, large families inhabiting small, corrugated iron constructions, and babies in cardboard boxes carried by toddlers. The camera also lingers on walls and fences, one that appears to be covered in long, human scratches. This image also occurs in *Nuit et Brouillard*, where it comes to signify, as Wilson memorably describes, 'material traces of presence [...] all but illegible signs of suffering'.⁴⁸ Like the images of the deserted riverbank and the empty streets, the scratches further reference the absence of the human from the immediate visual field, while attempting to memorialize an inscription of misery, however obscure. Panijel contrasts these claustrophobic spaces with images of the wide streets of Paris: clean, empty, and solidly concrete. Yet beneath these banal, familiar shop fronts and streets lurk darker truths: one shot of a café that is consistently repeated turns out to be the bar in Goutte d'Or in which *harkis* tortured Algerians suspected of collaboration with the FLN.

Memorial Processes and Temporal Emergence

The final scenes of *Octobre à Paris* attempt to further encode the spectator's acceptance of the

⁴⁷ Jim House, 'The Colonial and Post-colonial Dimensions of Algerian Migration to France',

History in Focus: Migration, 11 (2006),

<<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/house.html>> [Accessed 11 June 2016].

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Alain Resnais*, p. 29.

narrative presented by linking the 17th October massacre to the police violence at Charonne metro station, which killed 9 communist protesters and sympathizers.⁴⁹ The film closes circuitously with a black screen and the voice of Kader, who unravels further connections between different examples of political violence. Derogatory, racist terms used to describe North Africans and Jews are cited and inverted as the voiceover asks, ‘qu’est-ce qu’il faut donc encore pour que tout le monde comprenne que tout le monde est un youpin, que tout le monde est bicot, tout le monde’.⁵⁰ The ‘encore’ in this phrase evidently references Charonne, but given Panijel’s personal history in the French Resistance and the reference to ‘youpin’, it most likely also points towards World War II and the deportation of Jews from France. Indeed, *Nuit et Brouillard* concludes in a comparable elegiac flourish, reaching beyond the horrors of the Holocaust to ask the viewer to look for the murderers of the past in the present day: ‘qui de nous veille de cet étrange observatoire, pour nous avertir de la venue des nouveaux bourreaux? Ont-ils vraiment un autre visage que le nôtre?’. By moving past the specificity of the 17th October events, Panijel asks his audience to make connections between different instances of violence, and instigates a disruption in the police order that seeks to categorize, discount, and demarcate boundaries between different social and political groups.

This linking of the memory of the Holocaust with the quasi-colonial actions of the Paris police recalls Michael Rothberg’s conception of multidirectional memory, whereby the memorialization of the traumatic history of the Holocaust in the public sphere can lead to the emergence of the previously marginalized narratives of colonialism. Rothberg suggests this

⁴⁹ See Alain Dewerpe, *Charonne, 8 février 1962: anthropologie historique d'un massacre d'État*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2006).

⁵⁰ Mani Sharpe reads the final voiceover at the end of *Octobre à Paris* as a problematic insertion of French subjectivity into a film about Algerian victims, and certainly, the allusion to Charonne appears to reinforce this observation. Mani Sharpe, ““Screening” October 17 1961 in Jacques Panijel’s *October in Paris* (1962)”, Paper given at the ‘French Research Seminar’, University of Leeds, 16th February 2016.

memorial process moves beyond strictly narrowly defined identitarian categories, instead offering ‘an ethical vision based on commitment to uncovering historical relatedness and working through the partial overlaps and conflicting claims that constitute the archives of memory and the terrain of politics’.⁵¹ ‘Historical relatedness’, according to Rothberg, is not defined by modes of clear and complete identification with the victims of particular tragedies, but is instead a mode of drawing connections, sometimes partial and incomplete, between different occurrences of historical violence. Indeed, in relation to the 17th October 1961 massacre, Rancière suggests that the French public could not identify with the victims of the massacre, but rather that they *dis-identified* with the police who had committed it in their name: ‘nous ne pouvions pas nous identifier à ces Algériens mais nous pouvions mettre en question notre identification avec le “peuple français” au nom duquel ils avaient été mis à mort’.⁵²

This space of difference and of dis- or misidentification echoes Cooper’s Levinasian approach to documentary, which interrogates an ethics that seeks to reduce the other to the same. She suggests that we pay attention to the gap between self and other, and rather than stressing the connections and parallels between ‘our’ world and the world of the documentary that we ask ‘how documentary may resist the reflective mechanism that would refer one back to oneself or one’s own world’.⁵³ Instead of seeking grounding similarity and identification between the spectators and the subjects presented in a documentary, distance, difference and unfamiliarity become productive of an ethical encounter. In this context, it is not only a question of representing an event as real, or of using fictional techniques to evoke affective identification, but rather, in Rancière’s words, of demonstrating ‘le monde dans lequel son argument est un argument et le manifester pour celui qui

⁵¹ See Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), p.29.

⁵² Rancière, *Aux bords du politique*, p. 120.

⁵³ Cooper, *Selfless Cinema?*, p. 8.

n'a pas de cadre où le voir'.⁵⁴ In this sense, Panijel is not asking the spectator to fully identify with the Algerian victims, but rather, by using familiar fictional techniques, he weaves a narrative space in which their testimonies can be perceived as real.⁵⁵

However, neither Cooper nor Rancière expands upon the temporality of a documentary's emergence into the public sphere, its framing by the dominant social and political norms of a given era.⁵⁶ The film's long history of censorship also points to its being temporally out of synch, discordant with the modes of visibility, the 'distribution of the sensible' of that historical moment. Mireille Rosello echoes Rancière's thinking of the frameworks of perception that regulate the space of public recognition, and she elaborates her thesis in relation to the reception and transmission of memory. She distinguishes between a historical period as a demarcated era with concrete temporal parameters that are imposed in the historicization process of the following decades or centuries, and a 'moment of memory', when a traumatic occurrence returns to public consciousness, sometimes decades later. Moments of memory, in Rosello's schema, act like literary genres, designating and creating what is perceived as acceptable discourse around a particular issue: 'the moment of memory is not reducible to one story, but opens up a scene of production and reception, it delineates the contours of a specific public during a specific time and place'.⁵⁷ Moments of memory cannot be separated from the social and political context in which they occur, and Rosello suggests that they come about when various memory groups form organized factions demanding that their own

⁵⁴ Rancière, *Aux bords du politique*, p. 243.

⁵⁵ Panijel's refusal of concrete and overt viewer identification with the victims of the massacre contrasts with a work like Alain Tasma's *Nuit noire* (2005), which invites affective audience identification with both French and Algerian characters, specifically a policeman and a non-partisan Algerian man, while the principal state actors are painted in broad strokes of good and evil.

⁵⁶ See also Judith Butler's *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010).

⁵⁷ Mireille Rosello, *Reparative in Narratives: Works of Mourning in Progress* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p.106.

memorial thread be incorporated into the dominant historical fabric. Rosello uses the term ‘event of memory’ to refer to cultural and social acts that participate in this moment, by contributing to or creating public awareness about a past event, thus becoming integrated into the national hegemonic narrative.

Octobre à Paris can be considered as an event of memory participating in the moment of memory around the 17th October 1961 massacre, a moment, which began in earnest in the 1990s and arguably reached its zenith during the fifty-year commemoration of the massacre in 2011. In October 2011, *Octobre à Paris* was screened publically, legally and without interruption for the first time, as a double bill with Adi’s *Ici on noie les Algériens*. Adi’s film was created especially for the fifty-year commemoration of the massacre and the aesthetic divergences between the two documentaries signal the altered conditions of their creation and potential public reception. Adi’s work rests upon the (more or less correct) assumption that the audience is acquainted with the broad context of the 17th October 1961 events. Although it offers a particular and much-needed refocusing on the experiences of Algerian women, overall the film deploys an accessible cinematic vocabulary and constructs a (by then) familiar narrative of the massacre through a medley of archive footage, photography, and oral testimonies. It is also worth noting that the majority of the testimonies presented in *Ici on noie les Algériens* are given individually, while in *Octobre à Paris*, most Algerians speak in groups. This marks an important temporal transition, from a moment of profound fear and generalized disbelief in 1961 when speaking about their experiences potentially physically imperilled the lives of these witnesses, to a moment of national recognition, acceptance, and commemoration of the victims’ testimonies in 2011. Thus, Adi’s text can be described as a *document*, which in Rancière’s terms denotes the ‘texte [...] intentionnellement rédigé pour officialiser une mémoire’.⁵⁸ *Octobre à Paris*, by contrast, shuttles between the *document* and the *monument*. While the document is significant, intentional and visible, the monument can be insignificant, aleatory, and invisible, a historical inscription ‘qui garde mémoire par son être même [...] qui parle directement, par le fait que cela

⁵⁸ Rancière, *Figures de l’histoire*, p. 26.

n'était pas destiné à parler'.⁵⁹

Octobre à Paris: *political cinema* 'en tant que tel'?

While *Octobre à Paris* was certainly made to 'speak' to a broad public and instigate political change, the radical nature of its subject matter guaranteed that it did not emerge into the public sphere until the narrative it recounts was no longer contentious, and by extension, one might suggest, politically potent. Have the censorships, appropriations, and obscurity that scar the history of this 'accursed' film neutered it, so that when it is widely available, it is no longer politically relevant? If politics, for Rancière, 'consiste à refigurer l'espace, ce qu'il y a à y faire, à y voir, à y nommer',⁶⁰ has the film failed as a radical act that intervenes in and transforms the sensible? The aesthetic strategies I have described, carefully designed to strike a delicate balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar, truth and fiction, received no immediate public forum in which to move and motivate spectators.

Of course, suppressed and denied for many decades, including, eventually, by the director himself, the film's trajectory reflects that of the 17th October 1961 massacre. In this case, the work and legacy of documentary filmmaking is not simply the recording of a historical reality, but rather the reiteration of the historicization of the event itself. Remembered largely for its forgetting, the memorialization of the massacre is held up as an example of the integration of the history of French citizens of Algerian origin, yet its memorial excess occurred at a time in France when riots were devastating the suburbs (1995, 2005) and when a number of questionable laws around Muslim women's clothing and the teaching of colonialism in French schools were garnering national and international attention.⁶¹ Perhaps Panijel's reluctance to screen *Octobre à Paris* without an

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶⁰ Rancière, *Aux bords du politique*, p. 242.

⁶¹ The 'Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public' is an act of parliament passed by the Senate of France on 14 September 2010, prohibiting individuals from concealing their face in

introductory preface relates to his sense that he was still living in a state that was capable of committing such crimes with a degree of impunity, and where the differential distribution of justice by agents of the state and the structural bedrock of racism that led to the massacre in 1961 remained more or less intact.⁶²

The polemical nature of *Octobre à Paris*, its political immediacy and urgency, and its subsequent suppression for these very reasons, invite us to question what is lost when we do not engage immediately with difficult, traumatic national histories and the extent to which memorial practices can mask current injustices and inequalities. For Panijel, and indeed for Rancière, cinema as politics is born in the present, and sometimes, the more 'present' it is, the less presence it has in the political sphere. It is therefore fitting that the final words of this article should go to Panijel, whose words and images were so long ignored, and for whom cinema became, above all, a mode of immediate engagement, the engraving of unfamiliar truths on false national fictions:

Je ne demandais pas de dire qu'*Octobre à Paris* est une date importante dans l'histoire du cinéma mais plutôt: 'comme il est arrivé pendant la guerre d'Algérie avec *Octobre à Paris*, il y a eu manifestation du cinéma en tant que tel...' Conversation close.⁶³

public. Evidently, it disproportionately affects Muslim women. Just as disconcerting is the first paragraph of article 4 of the 'Loi 2005-158 du 23 février 2005 portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés' suggests that 'les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord'. Quoted in Rosello, *The Reparative in Narratives*, p. 15.

⁶² See Cathy Lisa Schneider, 'Police Power and Race Riots in Paris', *Politics and Society*, 36:1 (2008), pp. 133-159.

⁶³ Renouard and Saint-Saëns, 'Festivals d'un film maudit', p. 23.