

CONFLICTS OF GESTURES, CONFLICTS OF IMAGES

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ABSTRACT

The article presents some notes for an anthropology of the gestures of uprising [*soulèvement*]. It argues that, just as sounds (screams, words, slogans) always come out of the mouth of the demonstrators, images of all kinds are also brandished at the end of their arms. Based on this the article raises the question of the very notion of a *desire for uprising*.

KEYWORDS

Gestures, Political Uprisings, Anthropology of Political Imagination

Let us begin with an hypothesis: images and gestures—the two united in the warburgian concept of *Pathosformeln*—are acting as paradigmatic “interfaces”, or dialectical hinges, in conflicts, antagonisms, agonies and affects. I shall take, as an example, the situation of uprisings, which are, of course, both conflicts and antagonisms, both agonies and affects in the world of political and social history.

People endlessly rise up. Endless uprisings: because they often fall down, they fail, they wash up on the sands of conformism or come up against law enforcement. *Endlessly*: without the final goal—everything calming down, reconciliation obtained, desire satisfied *at last*—ever being reached. But also without desire ever letting up and along with it, the courage to disobey, the drive to invent, the force to do otherwise, the energy to re-subject oneself. Through this abundant multiplicity shown by the history of human societies, uprisings would thus form, when taken together, the great political art of *non finito* of conflicts and antagonisms, agonies and affects. That is, both their constitutive fragility—or constitutional: fragility to *undefine themselves* with respect to power—and their properly *infinite* potency. The potency of volcanos, waves, dust in motion, or hurricanes.

Since nothing in history is ever finished, to rise up would perhaps amount, quite simply, to the capacity to know how to begin again. To begin again whatever the price may be, to begin again *senza fine*, infinitely. This would be the faculty of becoming a subject that is reborn, that sets itself in motion again in order to invent gestualities and forms of life through which one will no

longer feel subjected. At the same time, I repeat, we never finish beginning, beginning again, continuing to struggle and to fight. Does not Samuel Beckett conclude his internal debate in *The Unnamable* by writing “I’ll go on,” just after having spoken his own splitting in the expression “I must go on, I can’t go on”? Is it not clear that this also meant: “There where everybody tells me *no*, I will, despite everything, keep on trying, attempting, desiring, speaking, affirming, inventing, saying *no to no*”?¹ We have endured so much and then, one day, we tell ourselves that this can no longer continue. We have long since thrown in the towel. Again, however—as we have been able to do on occasions, as others have so often done before us—we raise up our arms above our shoulders still marked by alienation, still bent by pain, by injustice, by the depression that had reigned up until then. It is now that we pick ourselves up: we throw our arms into the air, forward. We open, we re-open, our mouth. We cry out, we sing our desire. With our friends we discuss how it is to be done. We imagine, we advance, we act, we invent. We raised ourselves up through conflicts and antagonisms, agonies and affects.

All arms in the air, then. Like the arms of the sailors in *Battleship Potemkin* when, in a first gesture of disobedience, they throw a white sheet over their heads that would threaten them with a terrible death. Like the arms of the shipwrecked searching for hope, calling for help, in Géricault’s *The Raft of the Medusa*. Like the arms of Lady Liberty raising her flag at the outpost of the French revolutionaries of 1830 in the famous painting by Eugène Delacroix. Like the arms of the children in Jean Vigo’s *Zero for Conduct* who throw anything that they can lay their hands on off the roof of their school. Or like the arms of Goya’s lumpenproletariat who still seeks a form to give to his despair and their rage. In a painting that is housed today at the national museum of fine arts in Buenos Aires, Goya depicted a scene of massacre similar to *The Disasters of War*. It is the carnage of an unprecedented violence: power (the power of arms [*armes*]) is shown in its ability to kill all potency [*puissance*] (in particular that of a woman, in the left of the painting, that opens her arms wide and that we imagine, because her face is reduced to a brown stain, fully engulfed in her cry).

Higher up, alone on the hill, a human being—sketched no doubt so that we cannot see anything more than its basic outline—raises its arms. Seen together, it is a gesture of despair before the atrocity that is unfolding below, a gesture calling for help in the direction of the eventual saviors outside of the frame and, above all, a gesture of tragic imprecation beyond—or through—every



Francisco de Goya, *The Disasters of War*, 1808–12.
Oil on canvas. Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes
(donation Acevedo). Photo by Georges Didi-Huberman.

Francisco de Goya, *The Disasters of War*, 1808–12 (detail).
Oil on canvas. Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes
(donation Acevedo). Photo by Georges Didi-Huberman.



appeal to vengeance. Like the famous individual being executed in the *Third of May* who, he as well, raises his arms up high, it is less the isolated psychological signification of the character than it is a question of identifying the direction of the meaning given by the painter to the whole canvas: in these kinds of scenes, in fact, it is something like the potency of anonymous people who protest and rise up before armed forces of power that have come to enslave or massacre them. We find all of this, not surprisingly, in *Guernica*, where Picasso so forcefully throws the arms of his characters, with their eyes, with their mouths in the same movement, so that their bodies, whether they are wounded or leveled, will continue to *cry out against* with a sovereign energy, in the constant dialectic between pathetic forms of death endured and dynamic, vectoral signs of life rising up again.

Such is indeed the *non finito* of history: depression and bursts, reflux with returns of flows, borders that are suddenly crossed, losses with uprisings, all of this without letting up. In the middle of this all—both as skiffs on the waves and as the very medium of the political by which a backward movement is able to give way to a return of flows—are bodies, with their gestualities, their imaginations, their languages, their re-subjectivisations, their actions in public space. This is why the political is always “staged” in its perpetual vocation of *appearing*, which was picked up by Hannah Arendt in the fragments collected under the title *The Promise of Politics* and according to a problematic commented on afterwards by Étienne Tassin.² This staging thus goes beyond—or perhaps indeed behind, as much as it is quotidian and includes the intimate, disseminated, polymorphous, at multiple levels—the familiar political allegorisations, such as “the assembly of the People” or the image of the “body of Liberty” so often represented in the 19th century, notably, from David to Delacroix. The “body of Liberty” is not only a representation, it is also a gesture of antagonism, presence, or “presentation”, including its moments of public appearance that we so nicely call, in French, *manifestations* (a word which, phenomenologically speaking, will seem rather poorly translated by the English word *demonstration*, which is too argumentative).³

For in *to manifest*, there are first of all hands [*mains*], soon arms themselves and entire bodies. *Manifestus*, in Latin, is the individual who is “taken by the hand”, meaning: “to be caught red-handed” or “caught in the act”. It is the visible transgressor of the social rule, the *manifestatio* thus designating all that appears [*s'expose*], all that is

risked—according to the double meaning of appearing and taking a risk, indeed of the crime of transgression—in a visible way, “manifest” or transgressive, as the forceful defying of order. To manifest will thus be to have desired to proclaim one’s desire and, now, to disobey in acts or, rather, in concrete gestures. It is striking that, in the social genealogy of political protests in Europe, funerals, processions, or traditional festivals have constituted an anthropological matrix for protesting assemblies or processions, as Vincent Robert has shown in his book *Les Chemins de la manifestation*.⁴ To manifest would be thus to “get a handle on desire”: to transform loss into an uprising, the immobility of depression into a flowing movement, paralysing fright into sovereign progression, into a gesture of emancipation. This is what is shown, among many other possible examples, in the case of the funeral processions described by Paul Nizan in his 1938 novel *The Conspiracy*:

The boulevard filled up: it was the workers from the outlying districts, the masses from the city’s densely populated eastern and northern neighborhoods; they held the carriageway from one bank to the other bank, the river had finally begun to flow... One could not help thinking of vigorous forces, of sap, a river, the flow of blood. The boulevard suddenly merited the appellation ‘artery’.... The motionless men no longer resisted the moving men, nor the spectators the spectacle, nor the silent ones the singers; they stepped down to experience the river’s movement. Laforgue, Rosenthal and Bloyé lost what deference to convention they had let, they too plunged in and began to sing.⁵

Of course, *nothing* in a protest *ever plays out* as anticipated: everything remains suspended in the aleatory of the event, in the *non finito* of history and the relations of opposing forces. It is, however, a drama that *is always played out* in an almost “classical” way, with its unities of time and space where the street or the place thus takes on the function of the main stage (*The Street as Stage* is moreover the title of a collection of studies on this question). Historians such as Charles Tilly⁶ or Danielle Tartakowsky⁷ have, in the case of France, shown the evolution of “repertoires of collective action”, from the subsistence riots or the “taking of grains” during the Ancien Régime up until and including strike movements, electoral meetings, and other protests out in the street in the contemporary epoch. Indeed, we protest according to different possible modes of public expression and different structures of political organisation:

the revolutionary paradigm of 1789—we must storm the prisons/ fortresses [*Bastilles*]—or the constitution of a workers' movement, for example.

Like Michelet or Victor Hugo before him, Paul Nizan's description is at once allegorical (the “revolutionary sap or lifeblood” that rises with the agglomeration of the marching crowd, united by the singing of *L'Internationale*) and morphological: the boulevard, indeed, at that very moment, “merited the appellation ‘artery’”, since the people were ultimately circulating there in the same fluid movement, both compact and powerful. Everything in conflicts and antagonisms, is a question of *dynamic morphology*, which shows over and over again in historical or sociological studies on the phenomenon of political manifestations, from the works of Pierre Favre⁸ to those of Olivier Fillieule⁹ or, in the case of urban riots, the works of Alain Bertho.¹⁰ The protest then reveals all of the complexity of its aspects, of its processes, of its dialectics: notably, between its setting and its explosion, as soon as to protest falls both under a democratic right written in the Constitution and an act of radical dissensus, of an unexpected struggle that the forces of the police will try, not only to repress, but even to foresee and delegitimise by all means possible.

These plays of forces thus indeed *are manifested* by themselves: they appear directly in the streets, in public squares, and, in this respect, cannot be understood without an observation—indeed an anthropology, one that is tactile, sonorous, or visual of sensible space on the whole. An antagonistic process, on the one hand—when *to appear is to come into contact*, that is to say, to fight—a process of effusive participations or fraternisations on the other; spaces of calling with spaces of refusal; the will to be understood with the sentiment of not being that; “law enforcement agencies” with, opposite them, a “law enforcement” that aims not only at the repression of “misbehavior”, but again the stifling of the phenomenon itself according to protocols that are nothing other than, for the most part, attacks on fundamental public liberties. What becomes clear then, is that protest invests sensible space, notably visually, on the basis of a vigorous refusal of political representation: it makes a *political expression* appear—the qualifier “direct” would perhaps not be exact since it is always mediated by its choice of path, slogans, iconography, more or less obligatory compartments—which fundamentally contest the previously acquired forms of *political representation*, whether they be parliamentary, or even unionised.

So this is why protestors so often invent original gestualities, songs,

or images: *arts for doing and making* all their own. Arms are raised up, but not only in order to vote as in a classical parliamentary assembly. Mouths are opened and languages come undone, but not only in order to announce a political opinion *stricto sensu*. We walk, we dance, we run, we gesture, and we throw out all kinds of things. We get closer, we disperse. We sing and we provoke. We leave a place for the return of a carnivalesque dimension—that is today a festivity that claims to turn the social world upside down—as Kuba Majmurek, Kuba Mikurda and Janek Sowa were able to show in the context of *Solidarność*¹¹ or Rocío Martínez in the context of the Chiapas in Mexico.¹²

Bodies are in movement in conflicts, antagonisms, agonies and affects. Now any protesting body could be seen as a “body of Liberty”—and we should recall that Delacroix had taken the dynamic from the antique figures of nymphs that we call marching “Victories”. Would not every protesting body be like the prow of a heavy boat that advances behind it? This prow, moreover, itself possesses its own prows: a front that “makes a stand” and eyes that “burn with desire” for example. But there is also the mouth that is, in general, “the beginning or, if one prefers, the prow of animals” as Georges Bataille wrote in the journal *Documents*: “And on important occasions human life is still bestially concentrated in the mouth: fury makes men grind their teeth, terror and atrocious suffering transform the mouth into the organ of rending screams”—all of this would be opposed for example to the expression of a bank employee with “the narrow constipation of a strictly human attitude, the magisterial look of the face with a closed mouth, as beautiful as a safe.”¹³ The mouth is opened wide in order to exclaim, to reclaim, to transgress, whether by a process of “regression” that Pierre Fédida commented on, beginning with Bataille, in his book *Par où commence le corps humain (Where the human body begins)*.¹⁴

The “body of Liberty” thus advances, mouths in front. And mouths open to sing their rallying cry or their fundamental reclamation. At the same time, we again say, arms rise up: it is as if the protesting bodies, by *being exposed*, opened themselves up to the world and want to open the world itself by the gesture of their waving arms, their arms thrown out in front. But there is nothing human—and even less, nothing political—that is not part of an apparatus, that is not mediatised. That protesting bodies are perpetually held *between expression and representation*, as Emmanuel Soutrenon¹⁵ or Dominique Memmi¹⁶ have analysed, does not stop *images*, or any kind of object for that matter, from

being used as medium for the demand in question, from being waved at the end of arms in order to play their role in a sensible space of uprising. We must then ask: what is there at the ends of up-lifted arms? What do such arms raise, raise up or throw?

First their own hands, or their fists. Recall that in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, the fists of the Odessites, revolted by the unjust death of a sailor, were bordering on rage—every man for himself—before rising up unanimously in a sign of revolt that was, then, much more than just a simple affective expression: fists raised together, this became from then on the gestual emblem *par excellence* of the communist demand. Already in *Strike*, raised arms and open hands towards the sky, proclaiming, as it were, their desire for emancipation. A bit later, Jean Jaurès had to harangue the crowds of Pré-Saint-Gervais with his closed fist at the end of his right arm—a mark of intensity—and the left hand firmly gripping the red flag that hung over him. He was a kind of anti-militarist version—an idea that his speech even developed—of *Liberty Leading the People*, where the flag was being waved in the right hand and the bayonet rifle in the left, which we also find in Gustave Courbet's engraving for *Le Salut public* at the time of the 1848 Revolution.

A famous photograph by Willy Ronis, taken in 1938 in the saddlery studio of the Citroën factories in Javel, Paris, show a woman haranguing her comrades. At the end of her mouth is her outstretched arm. At the end of her arm is a finger pointed towards some exterior space. She is holding a small piece of paper. She incites the female workers to demand their legitimate rights and, thus, on that day, to strike. She is giving an account of, just as Willy Ronis had himself witnessed, the actions led by the CGTU, of which she was a militant, in “solidarity with the people of Spain.” Her name was Rose Zehner. At the end of the strike, she was fired, dismissed, and did not receive public recognition until much later, when the photograph—which was too under-exposed to be published in the communist magazine *Regards* that it was taken for—was eventually published, in 1980. It is as if in every case the extended arm accompanies the speech of uprising: it prolongs it and diffuses it towards other when it is a question of, as it is here, rallying a group around a particular political cause. The extended arm, moreover, concentrates many operations: it *opens the space* to somewhere else, it is *the body exclaiming* itself, and consequently, contributes to resubjectivising all of those who have reasons to “complain” into a group who, collectively, will go “make a complaint” in public space.

Willy Ronis, *Rose Zehner, grève aux usines Javel-Citroën* [strike at the Javel-Citroën factories], 1938. Photograph. Médiathèque de l'architecture et du patrimoine, Paris.

Tano D'Amico, *Manifestation féministe* [feminist demonstration], 1976. Photograph published in *Il gesto femminista. La rivolta delle donne: nel corpo, nel lavoro, nell'arte*, dir. I. Bussoni and R. Perna, Rome, 2014, p. 56.



In this sense, the gesture of Rose Zehner—and of *pasionarias* more generally, since the greek tragic outbursts of mothers studied by Nicole Loraux up to and including the famous harangues of Dolores Ibarruri in Madrid, Federica Montseny in Barcelona and beyond—finds its contemporary continuation in a quite simple gesture, but an extraordinarily powerful one, invented or re-invented by feminists at the beginning of the 1970s. As Laura Corradi recalls, this gesture “is part of the language of signs used by the deaf and mute: by opening the thumb and index finger of each of the two hands, we form an L, then, the extremities of the two thumbs and the two index fingers are joined, thus forming a triangle, the sign for the vagina, used in our country [Italy] during the feminist protests of the 1970s. But it is in fact a sign from early Antiquity”¹⁷ which goes back at least to the Sumerian civilisation. It is thus re-appropriated as a sign of rebellion, as an image of the female sex assumed in the course of political and public resubjectivization.

Ilaria Bussoni has rightly called it a “gesture of self-realisation”.¹⁸ Women are thus united in order to expose, at the end of their arms and in front of themselves, the *gestual image* of what was both the most intimate element of their anatomy—a site of pleasure, but also of common suffering when reified and controlled by male predation—and the reclaimed element of their sexual freedom or their decision with respect to gender. It was, in some sense, a helpful resubjectivisation, a “new sex” invented, as Ilaria Bussoni again puts it, and that appeared suddenly in a public space between the hands of these women. Gesture of sex: what a beautiful paradox! This will then not be a sublimated partisan gesture, “full” and “self-assured”, arms simply put up vertically, close fists or imitating hands, as we sometimes see, a pistol aimed at the enemy. It is a *gesture of desire*, indicating a relation of the self to the other, designating the *inside* of each woman while also being *open* in the face of a common world, which it de-frames and re-frames in its own way. It forms a front (since it is held forward) and, at the same time, it lets pass (since it shapes an opening). It marks, in this way, the affirmation of a fissure—or of a new dialectic—in our habitual ways of dividing the relations between the subjective world and the public world, desire and politics.

It is perhaps not by chance if, invented during the 1970s, this gesture equally evoked the diamond-shaped form chosen by Lacan to indicate the relation of the “punch” which, in what he called the “fundamental fantasy”, link and unlinked a subject to the object of desire. This relation, he said in his 1959 seminar *Desire and its Interpretation*, “assures the minimal structure to what must be

the support of desire.”¹⁹ Now this “minimal structure” is already complex, and to be sure, dialectical: it “is itself complex in so far as it is in a third relationship with fantasy that the subject constitutes itself as desire.”²⁰ It is thus that which makes it such that “the subject is given insofar as it fails” in its relation to the object, to the real.²¹ Such would then be a complimentary way of understanding the feminist gesture: a given form, affirmed, addressed, but also a “form of rupture”—intrinsic to desire—, as Lacan developed it then saying that this relation helps us to understand, fundamentally, that “every subject is *not one*.” This is what the feminists, in their own way, claimed in public. “Punch-gesture”, then: a gesture, both cut and conjoined, separated and united. *Gesture of division-sharing [partage] par excellence*, in the dialectical sense that this word will take on in the order of desire as in the order of the political, somewhere between an image of revolt and an image of hope. All of this is deployed, moreover, in what we can call the “feminist visual culture”, in the decisive works of artists such as Ana Mendieta, Valie Export, Cindy Sherman, and Helena Almeida.

What gestures are then at the end of our up-lifted arms? The body that hopes still has empty hands. The body that resists, searches another hand, to grab onto its hand, and to prolong its action. When it must give up and feels condemned, it again throws its palms towards the world—or towards a future time—in a gesture of desperate defiance. The body raised up, carries itself in a more clear and joyous way. But what are the strategies, the apparatuses of protension, of its progression? An inventiveness without end responds to this question, a great *non finito* of writing, of images and of objects. In the conflict that presupposes violent protests, this will be above all the slingshot, the Molotov cocktail, the cobblestone, indeed a simple rock. In the extreme cases of civil wars or wars of occupation, like the ones represented by Goya in his *Disasters*, it is an inexperienced hand, a woman’s hand, that dares arm itself with a piece of artillery when all the militants are already dead around her. During the course of his sociological study on the *Stratégies de la rue*, Olivier Fillieule extracted from the Central Service of the French National Police a photograph that shows, positioned on a white blanket, confiscated objects from the Creys-Malville uprising in 1977—slingshots, metal nuts, soldered rods—displayed as trophies of the war.²²

Non-violent methods are even more inventive and varied since it is a question of taking up arms, of making gestures, of making signs or making images out of the most minimal things. There is,

of course, the banner that is in front of the protestors and, in some sense, speaks for them. Philippe Artières dedicated a useful study to this, all the while reducing it to the single dimension of “exposed writing”.²³ Now the banner is a *surface of visibility* as much as it is a surface of readability: it is part of a system, for example, of flags which oftentimes saturate the sensible space of protests. It is oftentimes figurative. If Henri Cartier-Bresson tirelessly travelled the world in order to photograph all that he could of protestors’ processions—an infinite task, of course, art of the *non finito* before history—it is the relation of bodies to banners that appeared to him as an *anthropological form* exemplary of social life where each marches in the uprising of all and in the eyes of all.

So this is why we are not content to extend our arms in order to speak, as in the student assemblies of 1968, or in order to indicate to the procession of protestors the path they are to follow. *There are images at the end of uplifted arms*: there are flags which, oftentimes, lyrical and playful, are the size of large kites; there are inflatable balloons, sometimes immense and surprising, with which the police forces do not always know what to do; casserole lids upon which we make a racket, but which are also images of shields; carnivalesque constructions cobbled together and resembling festive chariots (for example a bicycle-megaphone or a huge catapult hurling bears made of straw, as was seen in the collection of *Disobedient Objects* gathered in 2014 at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London); masks or disguises, as is seen with feminists or the “zaps” of Act Up, studied in an article published in the journal *Sociétés contemporaines* by Victoire Patouillard in 1998.²⁴ It was as if there had to be, in these masquerades, a reinstatement of a “politics of laughter” inherited from satires and caricatures of the past, or indeed a replaying of the “festivals of the mad” whose profound dimension of blasphemy Foucault pointed out having seen them *de visu*.

So this is why, again, the veterans of the Zapatista army in Chiapas were engaged so patiently in embroidering their figurative fabrics or crafting their half-traditional half-propaganda dolls. Everywhere, then, the revolted make images, display them and circulate them. It is noteworthy that in May 1968 the typographic presses, lithographies, and silkscreens functioned at full capacity, in tandem with the intense activity of photographers and filmmakers. Four years later, some painters of the “Malassis cooperative” were forced to use their paintings from an exhibition—a very official exhibition, commissioned by president Georges Pompidou, and that they had decided to desert—as figurative banners or

as fortuitous shields when faced with a regiment of police who were incapable at the time of knowing who or what to charge or reprimand [*verbaliser*]. Artists also protest and protests also come with all kinds of formal inventions.

Whence the proliferation of visual marks and “protest colors”: the “orange revolution” in Ukraine or the *Black Bloc*, for example. Whence the quasi-industry of militant t-shirts and pins. But the most moving, no doubt, are the larger images that the protestors brandish, images representing even those whose disappearance we have come to mourn and for which we demand justice: this was the case of the funeral processions in Paris for the victims of Charonne in 1962—the procession, once again, was photographed by Henri Cartier-Bresson—, at the tragic moment of the Argentinian *desaparecidos* in 1983 as well as, that same year, during the March for equality where, at the front of the processions, portraits of the young North Africans who had been assassinated by the French police were displayed.

Even philosophy books and works of literature have been brandished both as images and as shields against the police: the *Book Bloc*. In the same way that they know how to create masks to protect against tear gas—a plastic bottle will do—protestors sometimes create large shields made up of books. Between two sheets of plexiglass, one needs only two layers of foam rubber and a piece of cardboard, and then one can put on the front part of the shield the title page of a book of their choice. This can be seen in the London riots of December 2010 when a large *Specters of Marx* protected a protester from the police’s club. The sensible space of uprising then takes on a strange figure: it is as if an entire library went down into the streets to make its demands heard. Would this not be, once again, a phenomena of resubjectivisation? When faced with police cordons, clubs, the Flash Ball or fire hoses, are these not in some sense, living books, each with their own “voice”, that from then on speak up and come together in order to make the right of peoples heard? It is thus that in Rome *A Thousand Plateaus* protested beside *The Republic* or *Don Quixote*, *Ethics* or *Dead Souls*. In London, *The Coming Insurrection* marched alongside *Ulysses* and *Endgame*, all of these titles, hastily painted in bright colors, hiding from the police force the faces of those who had no doubt read them and had decided to bring them as their spokesperson at the end of their arms.

It is both significant and banal to claim that, in the image of the protest in London, a video camera is directed—it too held out at the end of the arms—towards the point of contact between the police

and the *Book Bloc* militant. Everywhere in the world, today, we protest with cellphones, used as cameras or photographic devices, brandished in real space and immediately linked into cyberspace. It is a matter of images being used well beyond their simple informative and representative function: they can also function, psychically and socially, as operators of resubjectivisation. Today, in the insurgent forests in Chiapas, the “participation of women in the autonomous Government,” as it is explained in an entire part of the *Manual de la Escuelita Zapatista* (where it is written *lxs Zapatistas* in order to not separate the masculine from the feminine), is accompanied by work directly on the image.²⁵ As Guiomar Rovira was able to recount in *Femmes de maïs*²⁶ and as Rocío Martínez has since analysed²⁷, the famous *speech* of an indigenous woman in the Mexican Parliament in March 28, 2001—there where everybody was expecting Deputy Commander Marcos—was extended into a practice of *taking up of the image* by the women of Chiapas themselves. These peasants whose daily life is so difficult thus proceed to learn how to use cameras and video cameras in order to construct a point of view inherent to their own life of political struggle. Already, in 1972, the Mexican artist Francisco Toledo, with the help of Macario Matus, Elisa Ramírez, and Victor de la Cruz undertook a similar experiment in the context of the political struggle of the peasants from Juchitán in the State of Oaxaca: the camera thus became a tool of resubjectivisation in the hands—at the end of their arms—of the peasants themselves. Moreover, this was also the case in Brazilian *Cinema Novo* or even in the Portuguese filmic experiments during the time of the “Carnation Revolution.” As was also the case in France during the intense activity of avant-garde cinematographic groups who became close to the struggling workers and groups of political action. Conflicts, antagonisms, agonies and affects need tools, mediums, in the hands of the people itself.

*Translated from the French by David Maruzzella and
then modified by Georges Didi-Huberman*

- 1 Samuel Beckett Samuel, *L'Innommable* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1953), 213.
- 2 Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005) and Étienne Tassin, *Le Trésor perdu. Hannah Arendt, l'intelligence de l'action politique* (Paris: Payot, 1999 [rééd. Paris: Klicksiek, 2017]), 337-360.
- 3 TN: In English, a *manifestation* or *manif*, is perhaps best translated as protest, and not demonstration (which is a bit old fashioned). As Didi-Huberman notes, the French word very nicely emphasises the public nature of protest and the fact that it involves bodies appearing or manifesting themselves in public space.
- 4 Robert Vincent, *Les Chemins de la manifestation (1848-1914)* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1996), *passim*.
- 5 Paul Nizan, *The Conspiracy*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Verso, 2012), 35-37.
- 6 Charles Tilly, *La France conteste: de 1600 à nos jours*, trans. E. Diacon (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 527-560.
- 7 Danielle Tartakowsky, *Le pouvoir est dans la rue. Crises politiques et manifestations en France* (Paris: Aubier, 1998), 7-12 et *passim*.
- 8 Pierre Favre (ed.), *La Manifestation* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1990), *passim*.
- 9 Olivier Fillieule, *Stratégies de la rue. Les manifestations en France* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1997), *passim*.
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