University of Dundee

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Keohane, Oisin

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The Disrobing of Aphrodite: Brigitte Bardot in *Le Mépris*

Oisín Keohane, University of Dundee

Abstract:
This article examines a number of philosophical concepts that are at stake in the visual culture of the nude. It particularly focuses on Aphrodite's appearance, or rather, what I call her exposed concealment, in Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 *Le Mépris*. A film, I argue, which is not only concerned with Aphrodite and the figure of the female nude via Brigitte Bardot, but which also explores the very idea of the sex goddess in cinema. In the first section I introduce arguments from T.J. Clark about the changing status of the nude in nineteenth-century France. In the second section, having introduced Kenneth Clark's work on Aphrodite, I outline Michael Williams' work on the archaeology of divine stardom and discuss my disagreement with the way Ginette Vincendeau and Colin Gardner interpret Bardot in the film. In the longest section, the third, I examine several shots in *Le Mépris* in conversation with Stanley Cavell and argue that the nude scenes both invoke and rework the pictorial language of nudity found in the history of painting and sculpture, as well as Bardot's film back catalogue, and I conclude by suggesting the film provides an indirect critique of what Hegel says about female nudity.

Keywords: Bardot; Aphrodite; nude; Godard; Cavell; Hegel.

The art historian T. J. Clark, who examines the status of the female nude in 1860s France, posits that by the 1860s the genre of the nude established centuries previously – the body as an abstract ideal, with

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the nude desexualising the human form – was "disintegrating" (Clark, 1999, p. 128). To illustrate his point, he contrasts Ingres' *Venus Rising From the Sea* (*Vénus Anadyomène*) from 1848, where the body, in his words, "triumphs over its nakedness", and where a distinction between "the body as particular and excessive fact" and "the body as a sign" is still able to operate with confidence, with Manet's more disquieting *Olympia* from 1863. In Manet's painting the distinction between "the body as particular and excessive fact" and "the body as a sign" is much more fraught, with the consequence that sex enters into the picture, and in this case, Manet's picture, in a way that nudes in previous centuries did not (Clark, 1999, p. 126). As Clark writes in *The Painting of Modern Life*:

> The genre [of the nude] existed to reconcile th[e] opposites [of propriety and sexual pleasure], and when the nude was working normally as a form of knowledge, both would be recognized in criticism and spelt out in paint. In the 1860s that did not happen: the nude, for the most part, was conceived to be the strict antithesis of sex; because sex had no part in the matter, it kept appearing directly in the flesh, unintended, as something which spoilt what was meant to be a pure formality. (Clark, 1999, p. 130)

To get a sense of how sex spoilt what was meant to be a pure formality for some, T.J. Clark cites the art critic Maxime Du Camp in 1863, who declared that art "should have no more sex than mathematics" and that to "clothe the nude in immodesty [*impudeur*]" by sexualising it was something "disreputable" (Du Camp, as cited in TJ Clark, 1999, p. 128). The nude from this point of view is not about sex, and to paint the nude otherwise is to "clothe the nude in immodesty". The nude as an abstract ideal is therefore modest. Du Camp sees the paintings of Ingres in this regard as exemplary. In contrast, the immodest nude is the nude painted in the *clothes* of immodesty. Notice the logic at stake in Du Camp's formulation: the sexualised nude is a *clothed* nude, a veiled nude, an untrue nude. Sexuality is viewed here not as something that belongs to the body, but something *projected* by the image-maker, a layer akin to clothing that should be discarded when dealing with the nude.

If Manet's *Olympia* from 1863 is positioned as the central painting of the 1860s that made us question the relationship of nakedness to sexual identity in the medium of paint, I argue in this article that *Le Mépris* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963) is the central film of the 1960s that made us question the relationship of nakedness to sexual identity in the medium of film as well as the other arts more

generally.[1] This builds on Ginette Vincendeau's observation that in "the 1960s, a trend towards a more daring kind of nudity swept through cinema" (Vincendeau, 2013, p. 94). But there is another reason I have chosen to consider this film and this reason harks back to Plato. In Plato's *Symposium*, the character Pausanias distinguishes between two kinds of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. There is Heavenly or "Celestial" Aphrodite, born out of Uranus's castrated genitals and the foam of the sea, and there is "Common" Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione (*Symposium*, 180d). The art historian Kenneth Clark posited in 1956 that the history of the female nude in painting and sculpture is the history of these two Aphrodites, which Clark distinguishes as the "crystalline Aphrodite" and the "vegetable Aphrodite" (Clark, 2010, p. 53). He associates the former with geometrical lines, ideality, and the transcendent, and the latter with curves, sensuality, and the immanent. However, Clark never reflected on the wider impact of Aphrodite in the arts, and specifically cinema, restricting his analysis to painting and sculpture. I thus want to explore these two Aphrodites – also called, in Latin, Venus Coelestis and Venus Vulgaris/Naturalis – by examining Bardot in Godard's film. My association of Bardot with the twinned Aphrodites, known for their links with beauty and prostitution – prominent themes in the film – is based, first, on the film's images of the sea and Bardot's bathing and swimming, second, on its statues of deities, and third, on Bardot's nudity. While the nude scenes of the film, and the reasons for their insertion into the film are well known – namely, that Godard's two producers, Joe Levine and Carlo Ponti, forced him to shoot more footage of Bardot naked than he originally shot in the first cut of the film, since the producers thought this would make the film more commercially successful – little work has been done to position these nude images in the long lineage of the female nude in art history. I will argue that the nude scenes both invoke and rework the pictorial language of nudity in painting and sculpture, the kind that can be found, for example, in Jean Marcadé's *Roma Amor*, an illustrated

1 I say medium of paint when speaking of *Olympia*, but Alexander Nehamas offers an intriguing way of interpreting Manet's painting, namely, that "Manet has painted not just Olympia's photograph [as some have suggested], but Olympia herself *being photographed* – he painted Olympia as she might have looked to – and at – a photographer taking her picture. That explains why the *Olympia* [...] failed, and continues to fail, to make narrative sense – that is to say, it fails to make narrative sense *as a painting*" (Nehamas, 2007, p. 118 – emphasis in the original). Manet's interest in photography, and its impact on painting, we might note, finds a parallel in Godard's own interest in paintings and their impact on cinema (including *Olympia*, which is glimpsed) in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, chapter 3(a), 1998.

book containing images of Etruscan and Roman erotic ancient art, whose depictions can be glimpsed in the film itself when the text is read by two central characters, Camille Javal (Brigitte Bardot) and Paul Javal (Michel Piccoli).[2]

I

Clark's act of distinguishing the two Aphrodites or Venuses is not done to praise the Celestial *over* the non-Celestial, or to say the *more* celestial the Aphrodite the better the art is (which is, in effect, what Du Camp had earlier posited). Rather, it is a means to reveal two dimensions of the female nude, between which Clark himself admits he cannot always distinguish, since they partake of each other's characters. As Clark puts it, "Plato made his two goddesses mother and daughter; the Renaissance philosophers, more perceptively, recognised that they were twins" and "even when most unlike one another they partake of each other's characters" (Clark, 2010, p. 53). It is also important to note that they do not compete in Clark's schema with one another over who is more beautiful or praiseworthy, even if it is true that Clark, who had played an influential role in Lord Longford's 1972 committee on pornography, famously distinguishes pornography from the nude, and associated pornography more with *Venus Vulgaris* than Venus Coelestis, saying: "Since the earliest times the obsessive, unreasonable nature of physical desire has sought relief in images, and to give these lineages a form by which Venus may cease to be vulgar and become celestial has been one of the recurring aims of European art" (Clark, 2010, p. 53).

Though Clark never speaks of the nude in cinema, Michael Williams has extensively studied the link between cinema and its invocation of Greek and Roman antiquity, including the figure of Aphrodite/Venus. His "archaeology of stardom" unearths how this link was established early by Hollywood in the silent era (his opening example in *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism* is a 1928 *Photoplay* article that identified the measurements of Joan Crawford's body as one with the body of Venus) and how the divinised conception of stardom continued (if transformed) in the 1930s and 1940s using such stars as Greta Garbo and Rita Hayworth, who were all explicitly associated in the press or in marketing material with the figure of Aphrodite/Venus (Williams 2017, p. 8). Rita Hayworth, for instance, in a publicity shot for *Down to Earth* (1947), appears in a composite photograph beside the sculpture of *Venus de Milo* and

2 For more on this book, see Hayes, K. (2004), 'The body and the book in *Contempt*', *Studies in European Cinema* 1: 1, pp. 31–41.

THE CULT OF
THE LOVE GODDESS
IN AMERICA
Rita Hayworth, a movie star and princess of American glamour, symbolizes a phenomenon of profound sociological significance

Figure 1: Rita Hayworth in *Life* magazine's November 1947 issue beside the *Venus of Cyrene*.

was dubbed 'Rita de Milo' in a British press headline (Williams 2017, p. 113–223). Similarly, Williams notes, a 1947 *Life* article about Hayworth entitled 'The Cult of the Love Goddess', by Winthrop Sargeant, inserts a monochrome photograph of the sculpture *Venus of Cyrene* into Sargeant's text (see Fig. 1). This photograph appears beside a colour image of Hayworth with a "cloud-enshrouded Parnassus" behind her (Williams 2017, p. 103). A copy of this very same sculpture (the *Venus of Cyrene* also called the *Aphrodite of Cyrene*) appears in *Le Mépris* and will be discussed later. The use of classicism in Godard's movie can thus be understood to be as much about star discourse and Hollywood and *its* invocation of the ancient past, as the ancient past invoked by the novel by Alberto Moravia (*Il disprezzo*) that is the basis of Godard's film. In sum, *Le Mépris* can thus be said to constitute a *study* of "divinised female film stardom" using three axes: i) the iconographic resources of the ancient past, ii) the genre of the nude and iii) film stardom (Williams 2017, p. 17).

Having now laid out some initial concepts when analysing the nude, I now turn to nudity in *Le Mépris*. At the heart of the film is Bardot playing the role of Camille Javal. Michel Piccoli plays her husband, Paul Javal. Paul, a writer, is hired by a brash and overbearing American producer,

Jeremy Prokosch ('Jerry'), played by Jack Palance, to alter the screenplay of Fritz Lang's adaptation of Homer's *The Odyssey.* The fact that Bardot plays the part of Camille in *Le Mépris* is in itself telling. By the 1950s, Bardot had become what is usually referred to as a sex goddess, a term especially apt when we think of the doubled Aphrodite tradition and earlier Hollywood invocations of Aphrodite/Venus.

The conception of Bardot as a sex goddess emerged primarily due to such films such as *And God Created Women* (Roger Vadim, 1956), and *Plucking the Daisy* (Marc Allégret, 1956). As Ginette Vincendeau notes, in these films from the 1950s, "Bardot is constantly dressing, undressing, unbuttoning, emphasizing both her clothes and her body" (Vincendeau, 2000, p. 95). I also mention these films because Simone de Beauvoir in 1959 – four years before *Le Mépris* was made – published an essay commissioned for the magazine *Esquire*, entitled 'Brigitte Bardot and the Lolita Syndrome'. There Beauvoir defends Bardot, to whom she affectionately refers to, using her initials, as BB (homophonic with *bébé*, that is, baby), against those who would say "BB springs from and expresses the immorality of an age" (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 118). Focusing on Bardot's combination of voluptuousness *and* childlike innocence, Beauvoir insists that BB is a new type of female character on the screen, she is neither a cinematic *femme fatale* nor a passive plaything, rather, she is a non-passive, non-fatal, erotic female figure with sexual autonomy, or what Beauvoir calls an 'erotic hoyden' (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 116). In sum, while there have been plenty of erotic female figures in the history of cinema, Beauvoir notes they tend to be either passive and submissive (what she calls "the girlfriend") or active and deadly (what she calls the vamp or *femme fatale*). This echoes the "Myths" section of Volume I of *The Second Sex*, where she highlights the negative stereotyping of the *femme fatale* and the vamp in Hollywood cinema as responsible for perpetuating the myth that free women are a danger to society (Beauvoir, 2010, p. 213). For Beauvoir, BB is not submissive, but she is also not a vamp nor a *femme fatale* and this makes her distinctive. Beauvoir continues:

> BB does not cast spells, she is on the go. *Her flesh does not have the abundance that, in others, symbolizes passivity. Her clothes are not fetishes and when she strips she is not unveiling a mystery.* She is showing her body, neither more nor less, and that body rarely settles into a state of immobility. She walks, she dances, she moves about. Her eroticism is not magical, it is aggressive. (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 119 – my emphasis)

Using Bardot, Vadim in *And God Created Women* thus invented, according to Beauvoir, "a resolutely modern version of 'the eternal feminine' and

thereby launched a new type of eroticism" that replaced the cinematic character of the vamp (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 115). Though Beauvoir in one sense is praising this new eroticism, one can also detect a distinct line of criticism, not only when she uses the term 'eternal feminine' (which she associates with the myths of patriarchy), but when she discusses the way Vadim positions the spectator of his films as a voyeur. Beauvoir states that Vadim "de-situates sexuality and the spectators become voyeurs because they are unable to project themselves on screen" (Beauvoir, 2015, p. 121). If this is so, I want to argue that what Godard does in *Le Mépris* is precisely to bring Vadim's cinema of the voyeur into question, and that Godard does this *without* de-eroticising Bardot. My argument will thus be against, unsurprisingly, those who think that Godard de-eroticises her body in the film, as, for example, Colin Gardner argues, when he says:

> As one might expect, Godard's use of tinting in *Le Mépris* was used non-realistically, the red and blue alluding symbolically to the tricoleur (Bardot as a national cinematic icon) but also serving to de-eroticize her body as a "colorized" spectacular object. In other words, Godard uses tinting for its Brechtian alienation effect (V-Effekt), so that monochromatic color adds Godard's own artistic contempt for his producer, Joe Levine, to Camille's resistance to her reification as a series of sensate body parts, a pure object of scopophilia, whereby the sensual is circumscribed, like Paul's writerly and intellectual creativity, by the commercial marketplace. (Gardner, 2019, p. 256)

Ginette Vincendeau in her commentary on *Le Mépris* similarly notes that contrary to Bardot's appearance in other films (where she frequently dances), Bardot in *Le Mépris* is "immobilised [and quoting Michel Marie] like 'a block of marble'" (Vincendeau citing Marie, 2013, p. 106). In refusing to film the way Bardot moves, Vincendeau takes "the film to be contradicting a key element" of Bardot's star image, namely, her mobility, and the non-diegetic shots of Bardot that appear in the film (later analysed by me) are thus said by her to "make a visual rhyme with a statue" (Sellier and Vincendeau, 1998, p. 125, my translation). This marmoreal effect according to Vincendeau "sap[s] the vitality of Bardot – the vitality of a desiring woman [as opposed to a desired woman], and the vitality of popular culture [and replaces it with iconicity]" (Sellier and Vincendeau, 1998, p. 125 – my translation). She thus claims, "we can see *Le Mépris* as one long attempt by Godard to control the star" (Vincendeau, 2013, p. 106).

In sum, according to Vincendeau's reading, Godard would be presenting a statuesque Bardot to us, akin to when Didi-Huberman, speaking of Botticelli's painting *The Birth of Venus* (1484–86), says that

her nudity is "chiselled, sculptural, mineral [...] The fact that we should find ourselves in the presence of an almost *mineral* nude would then imply a sort of transcendent nudity, sublime and sublimated, perfect, ideal. That is, a *celestial* nudity" (Didi-Huberman, 2006, p. 37, emphasis in the original). I take Vincendeau to have accurately noticed the importance of Bardot's statuesque immobility in the film, but to miss a key aspect of this immobility (and so its meaning) by not taking into account the *specific* statue or block of marble or iconicity being invoked – Aphrodite/Venus, and the way Godard explores the two Aphrodites and their relationship with one another. This is despite the fact Michel Marie, whom Vincendeau cites, himself notes the profusion of classical allusions in the film, including "the body of Aphrodite. Hence the importance of Camille's pose, of the halted gesture that the camera freezes for a moment. Camille is more than a character; she is a mythical model" (Marie, 1990, p. 70, my translation). In sum, Vincendeau errs in too quickly opposing marble and flesh, the myths of antiquity and the myths of cinema; in opposing the marmoreal and immobile nude in contrast to Bardot's vitality and the aesthetics of popular culture. Vincendeau therefore loses sight of what Williams calls "the ancient mythical substructures of screen stardom" (Williams, 2017, p. 2). Her position in effect links Godard's auteur cinema with Celestial Aphrodite (via the immobile block of marble), and popular culture with Common Aphrodite (via moving flesh). As she puts it: "Bardot's body becomes the site of a struggle between elite culture (which includes here auteur cinema) and mass culture" (Sellier and Vincendeau, 1998, p. 124, my translation).

II

To demonstrate my counter argument to those who think Godard de-sexualises Bardot, or that Godard is presenting Bardot as an immobile and marmoreal Celestial Aphrodite *in opposition* to a Common Aphrodite, we will have to examine several nude sequences in the film, including the colour filter scene that Gardner and Vincendeau mention. The nine sequences that Bardot appears nude in are, in order, as follows: 1) her first appearance on the marital bed when she appears under red, white and blue filtered light, 2) when she gets out of the bath and wraps a red towel around herself 3) on the red sofa, when she flings part of the red towel away to reveal a lengthy strip of her naked body, 4) what I will call the white insertion, when she faces the camera naked 5) what I will call the blue insertion, showing her naked body and hair 6) what I will call the red insertion, showing only her naked legs and backside 7) the white insertion again, 8) in Capri, lying on a yellow towel, with a book on her

buttocks, which is removed by Paul, and finally, 9) in the blue sea, swimming naked away from land. Finally, we also see two others forms of nudity in the film. There are some nude female sculptures shown in Lang's film-within-a-film (his adaptation of *The Odyssey*) and we also see in Lang's film a naked woman (Linda Veras), swimming languidly in the azure water round Ulysses' boat. These shots of a naked woman have an electrifying effect on Jerry. For when Lang first screens some rushes from his adaptation, including shots of the nude female sculptures, Jerry shows little interest in the sculptures though he says he likes gods because he knows exactly how they feel, but upon seeing the naked female swimming, Jerry jolts up in his seat, suddenly excited and asks, 'what is that?' Upon being told it is a mermaid (*sirène*),[3] Jerry lets out a sleazy and boisterous chuckle, asking "Fritz [Lang], that is wonderful for you and me, but do you think the public is going to understand that?". The interpreter in the projector room, Francesca (Giorgia Moll), in her translation of Jerry's question, adds the word "art" to the question in French: "it's art [*c'est de l'art*], but do you think the public is going to

3 I add the French, since we hear this term, meaning *both* sirens and mermaids, due to the interpreter's presence in the projector room. It is unclear whether Lang in his film is depicting what in English we call a siren or mermaid, since only the former appears in the *Odyssey*, and in the French screenplay (the one given by Godard to Bardot, which was published in 2013), only the word *sirène* is used (though in the film, Jerry is clearly told it is a mermaid by Francesca, and Lang does not correct her – but Lang might not be aware of the differences in English, or think that Jerry would not be interested in such distinctions). Most likely, it is a siren and not a mermaid, and Francesca has used the wrong term, which would not be surprising, in this film which is so often about misunderstandings – be it misunderstandings about gestures, sentences, moods or behaviour. In a later scene at Capri in *Le Mépris*, Paul asks whether the actresses on the boat in Lang's film will take off their clothes. When Francesca replies in the affirmative, Paul replies: "Marvellous, cinema. [Normally when] one sees women, they are wearing dresses, [but in] cinema, snap, one sees their asses [Merveilleux cinéma. *On voit des* femmes, *elles ont des robes*, *elles me font du ciné craque on voit leur cul*]". The camera however notably does *not* show these women naked, only disrobing from their yellow or red bathrobes – and Godard himself can be seen to remove one of the woman's bathrobes, playing the part of Lang's assistant on the boat getting things ready prior to some filming – to reveal yet *more* clothes underneath, in the form of white tunics. One might also note that while Paul's line does not appear in the original screenplay, the woman in this scene are identified as *sirènes* in this screenplay. Finally, the last time Paul sees Camille alive, and the last time we see Bardot naked, is when she swims away from him into the sea. She strips out of shot, flings her yellow bathrobe towards Paul's feet, and we then hear, but do not see her plunge into the sea. The same sea, the Mediterranean, from which Aphrodite is said to be born from, when, according to the myth described in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Cronus cut off his father Uranus's genitals and threw them into the sea.

understand that?" Jerry's question assumes that the public, like he himself (as is evident by his behaviour), will be unable to see anything other than a naked woman – that the genre of the nude which T.J Clark argues was beginning to disintegrate in 1863 has now almost completely disappeared in 1963, and so in Clark's language, that "the body as particular and excessive fact" will now completely dominate over "the body as a sign" (Clark, 1999, p. 126). Jerry's question is also, needless to say, one that Godard's own audience might ask of itself in 1963 – namely, do they have conviction in the genre of the nude anymore, one hundred years after its quasi-de-divinisation in Manet's *Olympia* (where the divine Aphrodite/Venus associated with the genre of the female nude becomes a prostitute of the *demi-monde*).[4] All the more so since the shots that inspire Jerry's "do you think the public is going to understand that?" are pointedly *not* the more austere and poetic shots in Lang's film-within-a-film as one might expect – the low-angle close-ups of statues framed with only the sky as a background, which according to Lang depict a fight against the gods, and which Jerry simply dismisses with a wave of his hand – but a sequence that displays a naked female swimmer.

In order to understand nudity then in *Le Mépris*, I will examine some of these sequences in more depth. Due to space constraints, I will only discuss a few of the above nine sequences that show Bardot naked. To begin with the first nude sequence, I want to highlight how the camera and its coloured filters, alongside the use of dialogue, work as an acknowledgement of what becomes of Aphrodite on film. For unlike other media, such as painting or sculpture, where the body of Aphrodite can, and often has been, an assembly of parts from *different* women (for example, the arm of this woman, the leg of this woman, the buttocks of this woman), in the film we are presented with *one* intact body, namely, Bardot's. The intactness of the filmed body hence contrasts with "the belief [that some hold] that although no individual body is satisfactory as

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4 Alexander Nehamas, speaking of this painting, says "Divinity, naturally, has nothing to do with Manet's prostitute [seemingly echoing Kenneth Clark's claim that this painting was almost the first time since the Renaissance that a nude represented a real woman in mundane surroundings]. And yet, when all is said and done, Olympia too doesn't fully belong to the world of her viewers" (Nehamas, 2007, p. 120). The quasi-de-divinisation at work in Manet's painting is thus more complicated than a simple rejection of the Celestial Aphrodite in the name of immanence (the world of the here and now or the world of the viewer) or *Venus Vulgaris*. It is another reason I pair this painting with Godard's film, since I will later argue that Bardot as filmed by Godard does not fully belong to the world of her viewers when I later comment on the French expression Aphrodite *se dérobe* and explore how female horizontal nudity, as analysed by Emma Wilson, allows for images of simultaneous involvement *and* refusal.

a whole, the artist [such as a sculptor] can choose the perfect parts from a number of figures and then combine them into a perfect whole. Such, we are told by Pliny, was the procedure of Zeuxis when he constructed his Aphrodite out of the five beautiful maidens of Kroton, and the advice reappears in the earliest treatise on painting of the post-antique world, Alberti's *Della pittura*. Dürer went so far to say that he had 'searched through two or three hundred'" (Clark, 2010, p. 10).[5]

Bardot's listing of body parts hence mimics the idea of separate body parts from different woman being used to depict Aphrodite. Bardot begins with her feet, asking her clothed husband if he can see her feet in the mirror – an essential prop in the iconography of Venus in the history of painting – and proceeds to name her knees, breasts, nipples and so on. The camera noticeably does not linger or even often show the body parts named, beginning with feet, which we see only in silhouette. As she speaks, and once the red filter has been removed, the camera travels down the length of her body just as she comes to name parts of her upper body now out of shot. There is thus a split in this Aphrodite, but the split is not the traditional split of different woman and their parts *à la* Zeuxis, but a lack of *contact* between what is named and what is shown, as if our very modes of touching – in this scene full Paul's caresses – were somehow amiss. To dwell on Paul's touch for a moment, we can recall that Camille tells Paul in this sequence to be softer and gentler in his touch, and how he later in the film touches up and sexually harasses other women, as well as nonchalantly knocking on the breasts and pelvic area of the metallic modern statue in the apartment he shares with Camille.

Stanley Cavell, in his *The World Viewed*, also examines this nude sequence, insightfully stating:

> In the passage in *Contempt* during which Brigitte Bardot turns her bright body in bed as part of a questioning of her lover, she is flooded in changing centerfold or calendar hues. Godard perceives here not merely our taste for mild pornography, but that our tastes and convictions in love have become pornographized, which above all means publicized, externalized—letting society tell us what to love and needing it to tell us whether we do. (Cavell, 1979, p. 95)

5 Of course, still photography in contrast to film at this time allowed for such assemblages. Vincendeau notes, for instance, that "the British magazine *Film Review* [in 1962] constructed a 'mix-me-a-star' composed of ideal body parts from leading stars of the time (Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor), in which Bardot's contribution is her hair" (Vincendeau, 2016, p. 106). Bardot's hair is discussed in section III of this article.

Cavell elsewhere in the book gives an analysis of the ontological conditions of the undressed woman in film that I find, however, to be problematic. Responding to Baudelaire's claim that a woman and her garb, meaning her dress, are an indivisible whole, Cavell responds that in film, in contrast to painting and theatre, a woman and her garb are in fact divisible and can be, and often are, separated:

> In paintings and in the theatre, clothes reveal a person's character and his station, also his body and its attitudes. The clothes *are* the body, as the expression is the face. In movies, clothes conceal; hence they conceal something separate from them; the something is therefore empirically there to be unconcealed. A woman in a movie is *dressed* (as she is, when she is, in reality), hence potentially undressed. (Cavell, 1979, p. 44)

Since Cavell claims that clothes in film conceal, but does not say this for paintings, one can infer that for Cavell clothes in painting do not – at least in the same way as film – conceal, because there is nothing *underneath* the clothes. That the figures in the painting were not clothed by, say, the painter, and so originally naked or nude, but created as clothed from the beginning. Born clothed, as it were, in a way impossible for a human being in the flesh. In sum, paintings depicting clothed figures do not have to start off as nudes. They are not paintings with clothes added on after the fact of nudity (one can note here though a complication Cavell does not bring up, namely, that painters often make sketches of nude models and then dress the bodies on the canvas). Hence Cavell's claim that in painting clothes *are* the body. This however leaves the ontological conditions of the genre of the nude in the medium of paint in an uncertain position. Cavell responds in the following way:

> A nude is a fine enough thing in itself, and no reason is required to explain nakedness; we were born that way, and besides, [and now Cavell quotes Wittgenstein:] "the human body is the best picture of the human soul." But to be undressed is something else, and it does require a reason; in seeing a film of a desirable woman we are looking for a reason. (Cavell, 1979, p. 45)

My sense of this passage is that Cavell brushes off the difficulties here rather than confronting them, and ends matters too abruptly by quoting Wittgenstein. This seems to leave the nude in painting as an obvious uncomplicated fact, nothing in need of an explanation, or at least, the same level of deep explanation as film. It also appears to relegate the nude in the medium of paint to a peripheral matter insofar as it is the clothed portrait rather than the nude that reveals the ontological conditions of painting. In sum, Cavell's point that in painting, in contrast to film,

clothes *are* the body, only works by brushing aside the genre of the nude in painting. The nude in painting is simply accepted as a fact of nature, like nakedness itself, something with no explanation particularly needed – be it cultural, religious or political in nature, reflecting the fact that we humans of flesh are born naked and that nakedness is our natural condition. This highlights that Cavell takes the nude in painting to be a genre of art which has become accepted and stabilised to the point where we have ceased asking questions, unlike in film. One way of understanding Godard's enterprise, however, is to see him asking questions about the history of nudity in *all* visual arts, including painting and sculpture, and not simply in film.

It might also be noted that one year after *The World Viewed* was originally published in 1971, John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* appeared in 1972, which precisely questions the history of the nude in a way Cavell does not. Taking exception to how Kenneth Clark defines the nude, Berger states that the "to be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself [...]. Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display" (Berger, 1972, p. 54). Nakedness is active and reveals itself under its own power, because it makes "no allowance for the spectator", whilst the nude, by contrast, is passive and acted upon. The spectator is hence central to the drama of the nude: the nude is made to be seen nude. Berger thus praises expressive paintings or photographs of the naked – noting in passing that praiseworthy instances of the latter are rarer – but critiques the nude, which he thinks has turned women into a sight for men to behold. The result is that "To be on display is to have the surface of one's own skin, the hairs of one's own body, turned into a disguise which, in that situation, can never be discarded. The nude is condemned to never being naked. Nudity is a form of dress" (Berger, 1972, p. 54).

Whilst for Cavell the clothes are the body in painting, because they cannot be discarded, for Berger, on the contrary, nudity is a form of dress that cannot be discarded, a disguise that cannot be removed. A woman and her nudity are an indivisible whole. Both Cavell and Berger thus emphasise how in paintings dress or clothes cannot be shed, but they find the essential revelation in different forms of painting. Cavell finds it in painterly depictions of clothed women, Berger, in female nudes ("nudity is a form of dress"). Berger's suggestion, however, does not overhaul the distinction between the nude and the naked, it simply reverts the field of privilege afforded to the nude originally by Clark back to the naked, with the nude now understood as something passive and on display, and the naked as active and something that reveals itself. Moreover, Berger suggests they are mutually exclusive. In doing so, he makes the contrast

between the nude and the naked rather stark. The nude, accordingly, is held to be voyeuristic, whilst paintings depicting those naked express love: "they are no longer nudes – they break the norms of the art-form; they are paintings of loved women [...] In each case the painter's personal vision [Berger's example in this case is Rubens' painting of Hélène Fourment in a fur coat] is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator. The painter's vision binds the women to him so that they become as inseparable as *couples in stone*" (Berger, 1972, p. 57 – my emphasis).

Berger thus provides little room for options other than voyeurism and depicting loved women, since only two terms are provided (nude and naked) and they are held to be mutually exclusive. Godard, however, I want to claim, finds another way in *Le Mépris*. Rather than merely displaying Bardot as passive and on display ("nude" in Berger's terminology), or filming a loved woman in his personal vision (of her), which makes no allowance for the spectator ("naked" in Berger's terminology), Godard depicts her as Aphrodite. Not one half of what Berger calls a couple in stone, using the language of sculpture, but one of the most famous women carved in stone, an Aphrodite who, whilst on display, slips away and hides herself by *disrobing* herself, following the logic of what might call, using the resources of French, Aphrodite *se dérobe*. As one might translate it into English, Aphrodite, she steals away, she slips away, she hides herself (*se dérober* can have all these meanings). These formulations are meant to capture how although Bardot is presented naked in the film, and partly at the insistence of the film's producers, she is not given by Godard to the audience as a pure object of scopophilia, but withheld from us, not in spite of her nakedness, but because of the kind of nakedness we see.[6]

If Clark notes how the English language, "with its elaborate generosity", as he says, distinguishes between the naked and the nude, I will make the claim that the French language, with its own elaborate generosity, allows us to think about a form of non-exposed exposure using the formula of *se dérober* (Clark, 2010, p. 3). (I also highlight these translation issues because it is another preoccupation of *Le Mépris*, embodied in the character of the interpreter, Francesca, who translates between the four main languages used in the film – English, French, German and Italian.) However, the aforementioned English translations I supplied do not quite

6 In saying Bardot is naked, I am neither following Clark's or Berger's definition of the naked, but the more everyday one, and rather than appeal to a specific distinction between the naked and the nude, I prefer in this piece to speak of the logic of *se dérober*.

do justice to the phrase *se dérober*, for *se dérober* as a phrase would also indicate the way, or the manner in which Aphrodite slips away and hides herself, namely, by *disrobing* herself, following the conjugated verb *dérober*, which would also literally conceal within itself the word 'dis-robing' or 'un-dressing' (*dé-robe*), as well as, homophonically, *des robes*. Indeed, Jean-Luc Nancy (whom I might note has also written a 'Paean to Aphrodite') speaks of thought disrobing itself in his piece 'Concealed Thinking' in his book *La Pensée derobée*. He writes: "To conceal, *dérober*, to dis-guise, if you like is also to disrobe. And yet this is but one aspect of the term, since 'robe' and 'disrobe' have the same origin (as in English 'rob' or German *rauben* suggest, the robe would, in the first instance, be a garment seized by a thief) [...] A thinking that conceals itself [*se dérobe*], therefore, is also one that undresses itself, that disrobes, exposing itself, more specifically, as a naked woman; as truth" (Nancy, 2003, p. 39). What Aphrodite *qui se dérobe* lays bare one might say is that the nakedness of Aphrodite does not expose, it is no simple exhibition. On the contrary, the paradox of Bardot's Aphrodite is that she hides not by covering herself up, but by disrobing – that will be her naked truth. She is hence both on display and disrobed, and so passive on Berger's terms, and yet has agency in slipping away from us and so is active.

Since I take it that Godard is interested in the history of the nude in all visual arts, and not just film, in what follows I will turn to three different nude shots in film and one which displays nude sculptures (in Lang's film-within-a-film), and contrast them with the opening scene already discussed. This is where Kenneth Clark proves helpful. According to him, the two Aphrodites have not reigned equally throughout art history. The Celestial Aphrodite dominated the arts from the ancient Greeks (exemplified by the Knidian Aphrodite of Praxiteles) till the rise of Christianity, whereupon Common Aphrodite takes her throne (exemplified by Pisano's 1302 *Prudence*). This continues till the Renaissance emerges, whereupon Celestial Aphrodite comes to dominance once again (exemplified by Botticelli), but this time, unlike with the ancient Greeks, it is balanced with an appreciation for Common Aphrodite (exemplified by Titian). Finally, with post-Renaissance art up until the twentieth century, Common Aphrodite takes centre stage once more (exemplified by Rubens, Ingres, Manet, and Renoir). Clark thus views the history of female nudity as the result of the productive tensions between these two Aphrodites. However, rather than locate Bardot's nudity in one of these traditions, it is better to view *Le Mépris* as about these two Aphrodites in the first place. The opening nude shots of Bardot could thus be aligned with the geometrical lines and ideality of Celestial Aphrodite, and the later red, white and blue insertions, which I am about to discuss, with the

Figure 2: Le Mépris – Bardot, lying on white.

curves and sensuality of the Common Aphrodite – even though the opening nude shots have a piercing strain of sensuality and the latter shots of nudity still have recourse to ideality and the transcendent. So, let us discuss these coloured insertions that echo the original colour filters used to film Bardot's nudity. In the white insertion (Fig. 2) – I call these insertions because they contain non-diegetic elements – we see Bardot facing us but lying down on her stomach on a white shag pile carpet that fills the frame.

The camera is low to the ground but still noticeably above her, tilted downwards. The length of her body is thus shortened and made more compact. (In fact, her hands and feet are slightly out of shot.) At first, her head lies resting on the carpet alongside her body, at one with it. She then raises it slowly, so that it now blocks our view of her rear-end, but in doing so, also makes visible her breasts for the first time. It is the only time that Bardot is nude *looking at* the camera and it contrasts with the opening sequence where Bardot is revealed to be naked and the camera is behind her, rather than in front of her. Agamben, in an essay entitled 'Nudity', speaking of the face, states that "This expressive supremacy of the face finds its confirmation, as well as its point of weakness, in the uncontrollable blushing that attests to the shame we feel at being nude. This is perhaps the reason why the assertion of nudity seems to call the primacy of the face into question" (Agamben, 2011, p. 88). Accordingly, we might say Bardot's face as seen in Fig. 2 is revealed to show that she is perfectly aware that she is nude and to show that she does not blush as a

Figure 3: Le Mépris – Bardot lying on blue.

result – to show that the face has remain unaffected by the display of its naked body.

In what I call the blue insertion (Fig. 3), we see Bardot amidst a swathe of blue fibres. The luxuriant blue fibres in the shot, which she both lies on and which vertically rises behind her, flattens the image, and encases her as if she were a jewel on display in a fur-lined ring box. The profusion of fibres has the effect of making something not only touch, but linger against her body and it noticeably dissolves the contours of her lower body by blurring its outline. Whilst the shaggy texture of the fibres blurs her outline, the blue colouring, by contrast, highlights not only her naked flesh, but her blond hair. T. J. Clark notes that:

> Hair, so the textbooks say, is a secondary sexual characteristic. In the nude, however, it is a prime signifier of sex: plenty of it in the right places [such as tresses running down the length of the body] is [is understood to be] delightful and feminine [in the genre of the nude]; pubic hair, need it be said, may hide the lack of phallus but is somehow too close to *being* that lack, which is why it cannot be shown; and hair is disallowed for some reason in all manner of other places (Clark, 1999, p. 136 – emphasis in the original).

He thus writes that head hair "is a strong sign and a safe one, for hair let down is decent and excessive at the same time; it is allowed disorder, simple luxuriance, slight wantonness; and none of these qualities need be alarming, since hair on the head can be combed out and pinned up again in due course" (Clark, 1999, p. 136). One can thus notice how the blonde hair of Bardot – her face, so central to the white insertion nude, now carefully excluded from the shot – falls down her shoulders and upper

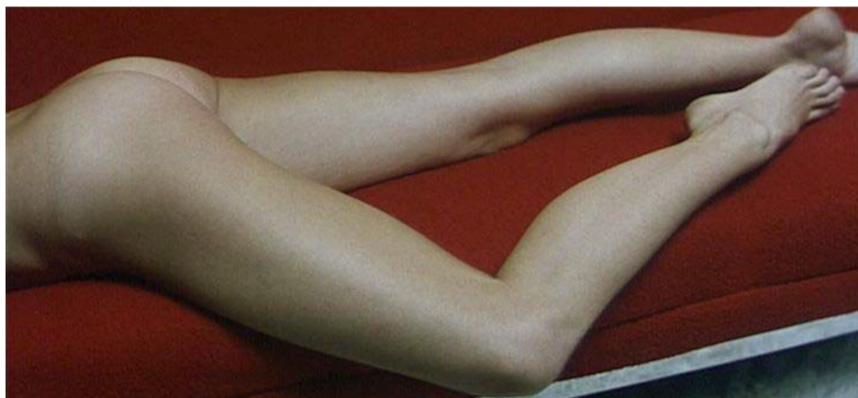

Figure 4: Le Mépris – Bardot lying on red.

back. Vincendeau argues that Godard as a film "auteur [...is] concerned to subdue her [Bardot's] star potency" in the film by attempting to "tame" or hide her hair, following her reading that Godard is someone who wishes to control the star element of Bardot in *Le Mépris* (Vincendeau, 2016, p. 108). While it is true that in the film Bardot does not display her famous *choucroute* hairstyle, to say that Godard "tames" her hair so as to "subdue" her feels inaccurate, since I take this shot to in fact announce the potency of her blond hair precisely by juxtaposing it with a swathe of blue fibres. The effect is to intensify Bardot's blondeness, not diminish it.[7] The red insertion (Fig. 4) of Bardot's body on the sofa, in contrast to the blue, gives us clear contours of Bardot's body, but it also cuts entirely what the blue shot highlighted – Bardot's head hair (just as elsewhere in the film, Bardot's blonde hair is hidden under a brown wig). The attention of the camera turns from the length of her body and her head hair to her backside and shaved legs. Indeed, the pose on the sofa owes something to the painting by the eighteenth-century French painter François Boucher of *Mademoiselle O'*Murphy (1751). Though an older antecedent can be found, as Marie notes, Georges Sadoul in 1963 described the way Bardot was filmed as presenting us with a modern-day *Venus Callipyge* (also known as *Aphrodite Kallipygos*), a sculpture whose very name means Venus (or Aphrodite) of the beautiful buttocks (Marie, 1990, p. 69).

7 Moreover, the copy of the *Medici Venus* that we see in Lang's film-within-a -film, and which I will later discuss, has her head hair and pubic hair coloured blond/gold, linking her with Bardot. This act of selective colouring will, I argue, *prevent* rather than facilitate identifying the statue as a conventional Celestial Aphrodite.

Unlike the other shots, where Bardot playfully rises her right leg, in this shot on the sofa, the legs remain still, pinned down like the wings of a butterfly. The absence of visible (body) hair and the kempt fabric of the sofa (in contrast to the shaggy textures in the white and blue insertions), as well as the dominance of red in this shot, give a different quality to Bardot's skin. There is more sense of a body weighed down, or brought down to earth, even though it is held aloft on a sofa. There is also more shadow in this shot than the others. The skin on the right knee lies slightly crumpled and wrinkled from the natural pressure of the body being on a firmer surface than a rug.

It might also be noted that all of the insertions I have discussed are horizontal nudes. Emma Wilson, in her *The Reclining Nude*, examines nude "female horizontality" created by female artists who create lens-based artworks and observes that *Jane B. by Agnès V.* (1988) "reiterates the imaging" of Bardot in *Le Mépris* (Wilson, 2019, p. 89). Considering that Godard was a friend of Varda's by the time *Le Mépris* was made, and that he has a cameo one year before *Le Mépris* in Varda's *Cléo 5 to 7* (1962) – a film in fact analysed by Wilson because a scene takes place inside a sculpture studio where Dorothée Blanck is modelling nude[8] – one might conjecture that Varda's interest in the nude shaped Godard's own interest in this topic. Whatever the direction(s) of influence is when it comes to exploring nudity in these two directors, I take it that Godard's exploration of female horizontal nudity, at least in *Le Mépris*, is allied with the values of Varda's filmmaking, so that when Wilson, describing the images of female horizontality found specifically in female artists such as Varda, says these artists explore images "of involvement, [and] of refusal [in their use of female horizontality]", this description would befit Godard as well (Wilson, 2019, p. 201).

Having taken stock of Bardot's nudity, I now wish to contrast the aforementioned three sequences with an earlier shot of three life-sized female statues on a grassy knoll, rather than a temple, as we might expect (Fig. 5) – glimpsed when we see the daily takes of Lang's adaptation of *The Odyssey*. In film criticism so far, these are referred to as simply generic Greek sculptures, but in fact two of them can be identified as Venus.

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8 Wilson, registering the importance of the sculptural in this scene, describes Blanck's body in the following way: "Her body, filmed by Varda, is angular with a bone showing at her elbow, her spine and scapulae visible through the skin, yet softer and curved around the top of her thighs, with greater density of flesh entirely different in texture from the sculpted matter [that we see in the studio where Blanck poses]" (Wilson, 2019, p. 60). Blanck's nude body had also appeared in Varda's earlier *L'Opéra-Mouffe* (1958), also analysed by Wilson.

Figure 5: Le Mépris – Copies of *Hebe* by Thorvaldsen, the *Medici Venus*, and the *Venus of Cyrene*.

One is copy of the *Medici Venus* (in the middle) and the other of *Venus of Cyrene* (on the far right), whilst the third (on the far left), and the only one that is partially clothed, can be identified as a copy of *Hebe* by Thorvaldsen (1816).

While the sculptures offer frontal nudity, Bardot's nudity is mostly from behind featuring her back and buttocks, and while the sculptures are standing, Bardot's pose, as already mentioned, is reclining. In this way, Bardot's nudity aligns much more with Renaissance and post-Renaissance nude imagery (following, say, the nudes of Giorgione, Titian, Ingres, Delacroix), than ancient Roman or Greek nudes (where the reclining nude was almost unheard of). But then, what is the role of these frontal nude sculptures?

In what follows, I argue that the inclusion of female nude statuary in the film raises questions about nudity in the past, and our relationship to the past, in a way that resists Hegel, precisely because Hegel speaks of our relationship to the Greeks and because the film itself is so concerned with the question of our relationship to the Greeks. Hegel, in his lectures on fine art, states that one might at first think that the ideal of sculpture is the "nude form'" due to its "sensuous beauty", and that drapery and clothing is hence "only a disadvantage" (Hegel, 1975, p. 742). But he goes on to argue that this is not so, and that clothes, or rather, clothed figures, might better reveal the spiritual itself. He thus writes: "In general it need only be said on this matter that from the point of view of sensuous beauty

preference must be given to the nude, but sensuous beauty as such is not the ultimate aim of sculpture, and so it follows that the Greeks did not fall into error by representing most of their male figures nude but by far the majority of the female ones clothed" (Hegel, 1975, p. 742).

So Hegel reasons, if the ultimate aim of sculpture were sensuous beauty, then both male and female statuary should be nude, but because this is not the ultimate aim – rather, it is something more spiritual for him – it was correct for Greek sculptors to depict clothed woman and naked men. In other words, since sensuous beauty is not the ultimate aim of sculpture, the female figure needs to be covered up, precisely because she is for Hegel *the very embodiment* of sensuous beauty. The male figure, in contrast, does not need to be covered up for Hegel, since it does not express simple sensual desire for him, but something already akin to spiritual desire, which is "indifference to purely sensual desire, for the sake of beauty alone" (Hegel, 1975, p. 744). So, in Hegel's outline, the female figure expresses the spiritual only provided she does *not* show herself to be nude, provided she conceals or veils the sensuous. In sum, female beauty is modest – it is modesty itself, insofar as beauty is for Hegel "the veiling of the sensuous" (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1993, p. 141).

To return to *Le Mépris*, one of the most striking things about the shot of the statues in Lang's film-within-a-film (Fig. 5) is that both naked Venus statues have their pubic hair highlighted by being painted. Note, unlike the original polychrome sculptures that the Greeks made, only very selected body parts of the sculptures are painted here, principally head hair, pubic hair and nipples, making the painted parts much more visible than they would otherwise be.[9] What we see is thus *neither* a reconstruction of a polychrome sculpture as the Greeks made them nor a reproduction of the (inaccurate) monochrome (white) sculptures that we are all too familiar with from museums. The sculptures in Godard's film are not even akin to John Gibson's *Tinted Venus* exhibited at the 1862 Universal Exhibition, since their pubic hair is so visible, which highlights that the originals were sculpted, unlike Greek male nudes, *sans pubes* – in other words, unlike the nipples or head hair, where what *is* sculpted is painted, with pubic hair what is *not* sculpted is painted on. In addition, the Venus in the centre, the Medici Venus – the one we can link with Bardot due to her painted blond/gold hair – covers her genitalia with her

9 Michel Marie, speaking of the opening scene with the colour filters discussed earlier, says "we no longer see the body of Camille, but the statuesque body [*le corps statufié*] of an ancient goddess, drawn by polychromy" (Marie, 1990, p. 92 – my translation). There would thus be two kinds of unconventional polychrome statues in the film – the statuesque body of Bardot under colour filters and the partially painted sculptures.

Figure 6: Le Mépris – Poseidon.

left hand, and has been turned so that which she is covering is more visible to the camera than if she were facing the camera head-on. In other words, the gesture that should be shielding her genitalia to the onlooker – making her a so-called modest Venus, a *Venus pudica* (from the Latin *pudendus*, meaning genitalia or shame, or both simultaneously) as the art tradition has it – is made defunct. What was supposed to be deftly hinted at is now more forcefully exposed, used to highlight not simply the genitalia but our very idea of explicitness, of what counts as explicit.

What we are seeing is thus neither a simple Venus Coelestis (since the painted sculptures highlight parts such as the pubic hair) nor a simple Venus Vulgaris (since the two Venus sculptures that are painted are associated with the Venus Coelestis tradition), but an incomplete and indeterminate Venus. The fact that these female statues are glimpsed as a whole and nude is all the more revealing given that the *other* Greek sculptures are neither glimpsed as a whole nor as nudes (even when they are in reality, nudes). Thus the male statue identified in the film as Poseidon (Fig. 6), enemy of Odysseus or Ulysses, is not shown nude, even though the sculpture chosen to depict Poseidon in Lang's film is a well-known nude sculpture, complete with pubic hair (the so-called *Artemision Bronze*, Fig. 7).

Instead of seeing him whole and thus nude, we only see his upper body or head in close-up and from a low-angle with a rotating camera showing

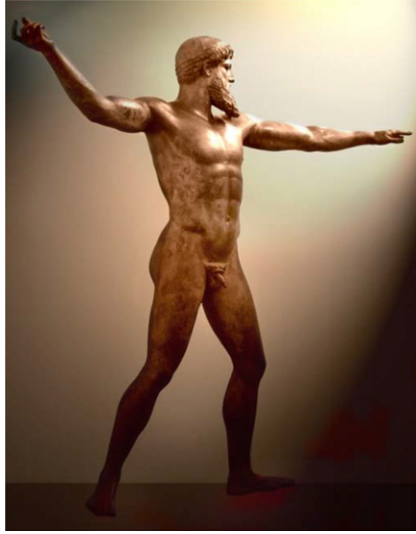

Figure 7: The Artemision Bronze.

us the clouds and sky behind him that herald his divinity and power. Godard thus intentionally shows us female (Greek) nude statues but withholds the nudity of male (Greek) statues. It is the opposite of what Hegel sought.

The fact this is done specifically through the figure of Aphrodite or Venus is paramount. Hegel ends his analysis of Greek nude statuary by giving us a taxonomy of Greek nudity which includes a list of male figures, including male heroic gods, youth, and wrestlers, but he also notes that any taxonomy of Greek nudity will include Aphrodite, "because", as he writes, "in her a chief feature is the sensuous charm of a woman [*insofern in ihr der sinnliche weibliche Liebreiz ein Hauptmoment ist*]" (Hegel, 1975, p. 745). The problem with this schema is that Aphrodite is often depicted as undressed; she should thus have nothing to do with feminine beauty as the veiling of the sensuous. Even though Aphrodite appears thus in Hegel's list of naked figures, Aphrodite has no real place in Hegel's logic, in his schema of feminine beauty, something amplified by the fact that because undressing is always unveiling for Hegel, he leaves no room for something to slip away, to be concealed, by undressing or disrobing. As one might put it, having recourse to the French formula again, there is no Aphrodite *qui se dérobe* in Hegel; Aphrodite slips past Hegel, she evades him, and she evades him precisely *in* her nudity, and *by* her nudity, just as he attempts to put her in her place (by nevertheless including her in his taxonomical list).

To conclude with Godard's film, it can thus be observed that it not only explores and engages with the complex history of nudity (from the Greeks to Hegel) and the very idea of the sex goddess in the form of Bardot as Aphrodite, but exposes the ontological conditions of how film fleshes out, as well as transforms the flesh of, the two Aphrodites tradition, of what becomes of Aphrodite on film. In effect, what the film undermines is one of the key distinctions Clark makes in his work, namely, that the nude is concerned with the body as a "design" rather than a "living organism" (Clark, 2010, p. 3).[10] Godard's film shows us Bardot's body as a living organism and as a design by engaging with the very history that creates this design and ideal of the nude in the first place. If Clark speaks of the two Aphrodites as twins, one might say Godard twins the nude body as a design and living organism in the figure of Bardot as Aphrodite. Jean-Luc Nancy, in his prose-poem 'Nude Enumerated', speaks of "Nude knot tied up in contradictions. Not dialectical for all that. No mediation between naked dearth of hair and the luxuriance of tufts. No middle way or replacement or surpassing. But rather contradictory joinings. Fragile sturdy; smooth rough; dry wet; empty full; open closed" (Nancy, 2016, p. 139). Godard's film, one might say, pays homage to the contradictory joinings of Bardot's Aphrodite, her exposed concealment, her ability to hide or slip away (from the likes of Hegel) by disrobing, what Francesca, the interpreter in the film, might have rendered as: Aphrodite *se dérobe*.

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10 One might pair up Kenneth Clark's the body as "living organism" with T.J. Clark's "the body as particular and excessive fact" and conversely, Kenneth Clark's the body as a "design" with T.J. Clark's "the body as a sign".

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