

Spectres of (post)marxism? "Cultural revolution' and the sino-soviet split as entertainment in Jean-Luc Godard's *La Chinoise* (1967)

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This paper seeks to draw on scholarship which acknowledges the ability of film to capture and/or articulate a particular historical or theoretical 'moment' (Shapiro, 2020) as well as its unrivalled capacity to effectively represent 'geopolitics' for a popular, mass audience (Dodds, 2007). It will be suggested that Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film, *La Chinoise*, compellingly (if comically) captures the evolution of Marxist theory in the West as well as its ostensible practice in the East through its fascination with, and treatment of, the 'Cultural Revolution' (1966-1976) in Maoist China and through its provocative posing of grand theoretical questions (on utopia, on violence, on human agency) through radical cinematic techniques involving a subversive use of language, colour and sound. In short, while the film draws on the revolutionary events in China (as entertainment!), in so doing, it also problematises the notion of what constitutes a revolutionary cinema, and, at least in retrospect, appears to harbour a somewhat difficult and complex view of 'revolution' as at once a fundamental and farcical act. Godard's subsequent disavowal of all his previous work and his attempt to produce a genuinely 'revolutionary' cinema from 1968 onwards sheds even more light on *La Chinoise's* complex account of 'cultural revolution'. I suppose that behind Godard's uneasy, complex view of the 'Cultural Revolution' lies the historical shifts in theorizations of Marxism itself, both in the West (the emergence of the Frankfurt School, the critique of Stalin, Trotskyism, etc.) and in the East (the notion of the peasant rather than the worker as principal revolutionary agent) as well as attempting to capture culturally the material geopolitical tensions which had developed between China and the USSR at the time (with each nation claiming closer proximity to Marx's original ideas!). In addition, Godard's use of the 'Cultural Revolution' as the central theme in *La Chinoise* also points to the growing interest in the 'Third World' - or so-called Third-Worldism - which was gradually being exhibited by intellectuals in West at the time (e.g., Sartre, Foucault, Kristeva). Returning to Godard's 'long '67' - and *La Chinoise* in particular - then proves a fruitful object in which to analyse a critical historical and theoretical 'moment' in which the political theory of Marxism began to evolve/decompose in both theory and practice and on a global scale.

Spring Seminar 2020: Revolution and Cinema

15/10/20 → 16/10/20

Porto, Portugal