

Mick Eaton and Colin MacCabe

## 5: TECHNOLOGY.

**At a time when the social debate is getting angrier and angrier — yet more coherent and specific, he looks very like a man huddling in the shelter of his gadgets — and only through gadgets, and machine-like presentation to admit that human warmth exists.**

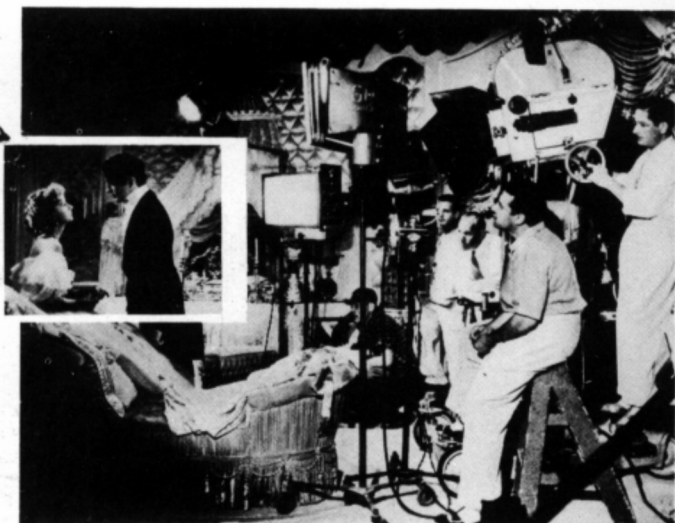
From a review of *Numéro deux* in the *Observer*, 30 January 1977

**The lords of imperialism have transformed technology and sexuality into instruments of repression.**

From *Le Gai Savoir*

Audience →

Fiction



**ON THE FLOOR.**—Here is a general view of a picture in the making. On the left you see the stars GRETA GARBO and ROBERT TAYLOR. The director, GEORGE CUKOR, is seated by the camera in the right foreground. WILLIAM DANIELS, cameraman of most of the Garbo pictures, is behind the camera. Leaning on a stool in the background is the assistant director. The scene is the boudoir in "Camille."

### Behind the Scenes . . .

the director, discussing lighting, calling out instructions to the electricians up on high on the catwalks overhead, tending the big lamps that shine down on the scene. The man peering through the camera is more likely to be the cameraman's first assistant. The young man giving orders is the assistant director, responsible for seeing that everybody is on hand when wanted, for carrying out whatever the director wants, yelling or blowing his whistle when silence is needed for a rehearsal or a "take." Sitting with his headphones at a

switchboard nearby is the recording expert, in direct communication with the sound department to which the sound is carried by the microphone—see it there, the little black thing like a honey-comb hanging at the end of a boom, which is operated crane-fashion so that the "mike" can move easily and freely to whatever position is desired, even while the scene is being taken.

The stand-ins walk through the movements of the scene, the cameraman and director approve the lighting scheme, the stars take their places. The assistant director calls for silence. The red light outside the door is on now. Nothing

Exercise for the reader:

*Try to put yourself  
in the picture*



From Numéro deux

Art is not the reflection of reality, it is the reality of that reflection.

From La Chinoise

## With your new Kodak XL movie camera, you can shoot indoors or out, day or night, rain or shine!



The camera that sees as clearly as the human eye.

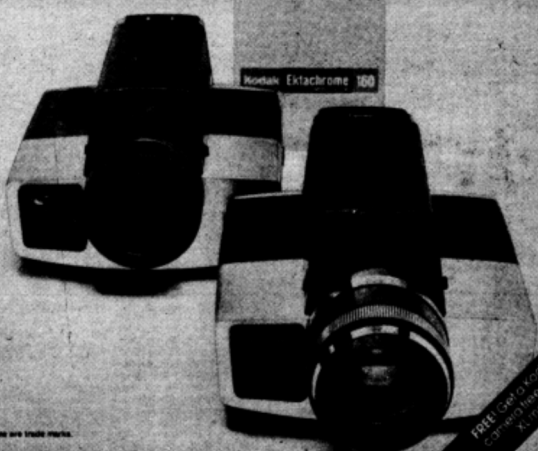
The Kodak XL movie camera. XL means fixating light. That means you can shoot movies in anything from candlelight to bright sunlight.

The secret's in the super-fast  $f/1.2$  lens and 230° shutter. With these advanced features, and high-speed Kodak 'Ektachrome' 160 movie film, you can make super-8 movies in lower lighting conditions than ever before. For daylight photography, of course, you can use 'Kodachrome' II movie film.

Another special feature: the unique binocular grip, which helps you keep the camera really steady.

The XL33 costs £69.98.\*  
And the XL55, with power zoom, costs £115.08.\*

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To say that we live in a world of images is a commonplace of our age. But perhaps only Godard has taken this commonplace at its word and deduced that to displace the image is literally to destroy a world. Professional film-makers, reporters and the institutions which employ them seem concerned only to produce, relentlessly, even fearfully, more sounds and images for our consumption. Godard's work, particularly since 1968, has been concerned more with an interrogation of the sounds and images which prescribe our cultural horizons than with adding to their ceaseless production.

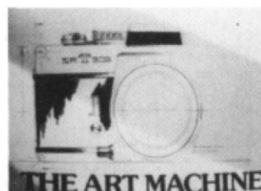
The advertisements for cameras shown here reflect the notion that the production of the photographic image is a unique combination of Art and Science, of aesthetics and technology — the intuitive eye of the artist and the mechanical laws of the instrument. The traces of this split are manifested throughout the range of institutions engaged in photographic, cinematic and televisual practice: the film artist as opposed to the film technician; the 'auteur' and the camera operator, the 'social message' of art and the neutrality of the technology required to produce that message.



'Leave the technology to us,  
you invent the images'



A chance to break into the system



The Art Machine

At its worst this widely-held formulation carries with it the implication that the camera is merely an instrument to be used by the film-maker as a neutral tool for recording either the world as it exists 'out there' (in documentary films) or the expression of the film-maker's own peculiar and subjective view of the world (in fiction films or 'art cinema'). The specifications of photographic technology and the social and economic formations in which they are produced can have no determining influences on the 'messages' of the film or the ways in which they are received. As the advertising agency hired by the camera manufacturer tells us, 'Leave the technology to us — you invent the images'. But images of what? For whom?

Given this cultural context Godard's preoccupation in his life with cinematic and televisual technology, as well as his experiments with different,

more collaborative methods of making films, is dismissed by professional critics as an obsession with gadgetry. The questions his films raise about what it means to be a film-maker, and what it means to be a film-viewer, are condemned as idle self-indulgence. Moreover, this indulgence is seen as personally constipating, stopping Godard from involving himself in 'the real issues', from contributing to 'the social debate'.

We are asked to think that the development of cinematic technology has evidenced, especially in the last twenty years, a progression towards an increasingly unmediated relationship with reality — that the development of light, portable sync-sound cameras with the ability to film for longer periods of time and the increasing sophistication of video equipment has allowed the events of the world to be captured easily, directly and unproblematically. We are assured that the spectacular use of the latest technology can bring these events — the Olympics, the Iranian revolution, whatever — into our own living rooms, increasing our understanding of the world and bringing us closer together as citizens of the global village that the world has become. The picture editors of national newspapers and the makers of television documentary films tells us that a photograph can in itself sum up a decade, a war, a person, that a documentary film can show us what is happening in other parts of the world or in our own backyard.

These are all ideological constructions that Godard has resolutely worked against in his film practice — **'cinema is not the reflection of reality, but the reality of that reflection'**. Cinema constructs meaning, it does not embody it, and the material apparatus of the cinema is integral to that construction. It is for that reason, not for some idiosyncratic indulgence, that cinematic technology is so often part of the pro-filmic event, the subject matter, in Godard's films, and that the cinematic institution's categories of 'documentary' and 'fiction' are so continuously thrown into crisis in the manipulation of that technology.



From *Tout va bien*

CE N'EST PAS UNE  
IMAGE JUSTE, C'EST  
JUSTE UNE IMAGE

Godard's famous maxim, 'Ce n'est pas une image juste, c'est juste une image' ('This is not a just image, it's just an image') insists on the fact that no image has a life of its own outside the institutions which exist to fix its meanings. Film does not exist as a neutral medium to convey messages which are independent, rather it finds its meanings in a series of social relations which place producer and consumer so that only certain meanings are possible. 'In every image we must know who speaks' — thus Godard, and this imperative demands that we uncover the terms of address in the cinema, the terms in which we are constructed as spectators. Godard's films pose, as the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has said, 'questions which silence answers', questions whose importance lies in the very fact that they disrupt and displace our routine ways of talking about the cinema. Questions which reveal that both the cinematic technology and the discourses which surround it and support it are fundamentally and profoundly ideological.

From the beginning of his career Godard has been concerned with — many of the technicians on his films might say obsessed with — cinematic techniques and technologies normally associated with direct cinema. Although he did not use 16mm cameras until 1965 — and then only for his short sketch for *Paris vu par* — the hand-held Cameflex, the sequence-length shot and, particularly, use of direct sound all feature prominently in his early films. Stories abound of his insistence, against conventional cinematic practice of the time, on naturalistic shooting. For example, Godard wanted to film *A bout de souffle* in natural light conditions. His cameraman, Raoul Coutard, who had been a still photographer, recommended using Ilford HPS stock for shooting in daylight with no extra artificial lighting. However, this was a stock for still cameras, not for the movies. So for the film they stuck together the 17½-metre lengths of the stock to make reels of the required length for motion-picture shooting and then shot with the relatively lightweight Cameflex as its sprocket holes corresponded most closely to those of a 35mm still camera. To process this they had to borrow a machine as no commercial laboratory could afford to develop at the speed they wanted, which was much faster than that normally required.

For *Une Femme est une femme* several sequences were shot in a studio — originally because this allowed easier camera manipulation during the lengthy and complicated sequence shots. However, when it came to the shooting Godard would not allow any of the walls to be moved and demanded that a ceiling be

built for the set, allowing a more naturalistic claustrophobic space but removing all the advantages of shooting in a studio in the first place — especially as this was a colour film and colour stock is slow, a problem usually solved by overhead studio lighting. Although some use was made of direct sound for this film it was not until *Vivre sa vie* that a film was shot completely using sync-sound with only some of the music track of the film being post-synchronised. In several of the scenes only one microphone was used, as is the practice of Rouch, the French documentary filmmaker and pioneer of direct sound. For the other scenes even though several mikes were employed all the mixing was done on the spot.

Similarly, Godard departed from normal cinematic convention towards a more direct approach with his use of colour in *Pierrot le fou*. Colour film stock is very unstable and has to be corrected — the colours made uniform — in the lab after filming. Common practice, dating from the early days of Technicolor, is to use human skin-tone as a basis for this grading. This normally requires heavy red make-up, which is later corrected by adding blue in the lab. However, as Coutard points out (in an article entitled 'Light of Day' from which this and many other of the anecdotes in this section are taken — English translation in *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1965/6): '*with someone like Godard, who has a passion for filming against white walls, everything goes to pieces if the walls turn blue*'.

For the shooting of the film, then, a neutral make-up was used — Coutard again: '*make-up men have their habits, their normal working methods, and it is a crusade to get a more naturalistic kind of make-up out of them.*'

There are a host of similar stories that could be told about the relentless pursuit of 'naturalism' across all the elements of cinematic technology and professional convention. The fundamental question still remains: why this insistence on the technologies and techniques of direct cinema/*cinéma vérité* in the production of film texts which, even in the early stages, are fundamentally anti-naturalistic, which resolutely work against the filmic and pro-filmic codes of the *cinéma vérité* documentary, with its insistence on reality captured on the run, its naive and impossible belief that if you refuse to manipulate the pro-filmic event then the film will capture a reality totally independent of the cinema?

Godard's cinema was thus from the beginning a cinema that combined techniques of direct cinema with a commitment to both montage and *mise en scène*. He thus combined three approaches which were, and to a certain extent are, widely held to be incompatible. André Bazin, the film critic and theoretical mentor of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, had formulated in the late forties an opposition between montage, which was held to interrupt the transparent relation between the film spectator and the object filmed, and a form of *mise en scène*, often exemplified with reference to the Italian neo-realists, which allowed the spectator free access to what was in front of the camera. In an article on montage in 1956, Godard had refused this opposition, arguing that there was never an



independent reality which film captured but rather a filmic articulation of reality in which both montage and *mise en scène* had a part to play.

This theoretical break with one opposition was combined with a practical break with the opposition between direct cinema and either montage or *mise en scène*. For practitioners of direct cinema, usually documentary film-makers, montage was anathema, evidencing manipulation of the filmed footage and thus of the spectator (although, of course, editing was grudgingly accepted — twenty-one hours of footage for Rouch's *Chronique d'un été* had to be reduced to a distributable ninety minutes) and *mise en scène* was impossible in that it would constitute manipulation of the object, the pro-filmic event. Godard's careful and precise use of the techniques of direct cinema was in radical contradiction with the ideological aims of direct cinema. The reality he insisted — and insists — on is the reality of the experience of film, and the importance of that reality in the lives of the spectators, not the ability of film to capture reality 'out there' for us 'back here'. For Godard, the technology of direct cinema is used for the investigation of reality through film, not for the negation of the reality of film in that process of investigation.

If the ideologists of direct cinema refused to produce a coherent reality in front of the camera, they nevertheless ignored the coherence produced for that reality by the screen on to which a film is projected. Godard used their techniques to disrupt the coherence of the pro-filmic event but he never forgot the other moment in the cinematic process, a moment ignored by the ideologists of direct cinema, the moment of consumption.

These considerations explain why Godard was eager to criticise Richard Leacock so vehemently in 1963 and yet only a year later was working with Albert Maysles, Leacock's camera operator, for the sketch **Montparnasse-Levallois** which was to appear in the collection *Paris vu par*. About Leacock's 'candid camera' Godard had written:

**Leacock is Candide in more ways than one, busily hunting down truth . . . without asking what truth he is after . . . they have no idea what it is they are staging, and that pure reportage does not exist . . . Honesty, in other words, is not enough for a fighter in the avant-garde, particularly when he does not know that if reality is stranger than fiction, the latter returns the compliment. (Godard on Godard, pp.202-3).**

But Leacock's refusal to order events in front of the camera led to the development of new skills on the part of the cameraman, constantly having to pay attention to everything in the viewfinder. For **Montparnasse-Levallois** the script was written and the actors rehearsed in advance of the shooting with Maysles brought in to film on 16mm, acting 'as a newsreel cameraman, as if he were faced by real events over which he had no control. I tried to organise the happening in the best way possible, but not to direct it like a theatrical production'.

(*Godard on Godard*, p.212). If much of this attitude to the technology and ideology of direct cinema was implicit in Godard's pre-'68 movies, it was not until he made **Pravda** that the terms of his opposition to the ideology of direct cinema were made explicit.

**Pravda** was shot in Czechoslovakia in March 1969 ostensibly as a documentary for West German television. Today it can most profitably be seen as a repudiation of contemporary documentary practice rather than as the analysis of Soviet bloc revisionism that it claims to be. Every element of the film's construction denies the possibility of cinematic technology's privileged access to reality.

It is the Dziga-Vertov group's insistence on the primacy of montage which organises the film rather than any notion of a pre-existent reality which finds its correct visual representation. The guiding principle of this montage is analysis but, and here we come to the moment at which the film finally produces a coherence for the spectator, the analysis is always given in advance of any image by the correct political line. The refusal of an ideology of vision in favour of a political analysis is indicated throughout the last section of **Pravda**, when shots of the cameraman reveal that his eyes are not focused on the reality of the pro-filmic event which the camera is bringing back to us from Czechoslovakia but on a copy of Mao's Little Red Book. If finally this dominance of a political analysis is as oppressive as the dominance of vision that it seeks to displace, and there is a voice at the end of the film which suggests this, nevertheless certain steps forward are made in **Pravda**. Above all, the idea that 'seeing is believing', that the camera can illustrate the words of a documentary commentary with images that confirm those words, these founding ideas of film and television practice are torn apart, dismembered, in **Pravda**.

The first section of the film consists of images of modern Czechoslovakia — images of revisionism, as it were — advertising slogans, old men walking in the streets, young workers, a couple washing their car, shops, televisions and so on. The soundtrack contains sync-sound of some of the images as well



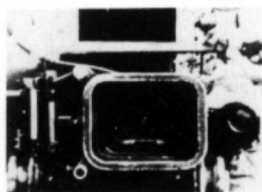
From **Pravda**



From Pravda

as pop music and sound from television programmes. But this is overlaid with the defining and controlling voice of the commentator, organised as a discourse between Vladimir (Lenin) and Rosa (Luxemburg). This narration is both descriptive: '**Transport for the less fortunate workers**', '**There are still quite a few small shopkeepers particularly in the large cities**', and disdainful: '**Many workers would rather wash their cars than fuck their wives**'. This commentary thus supplies us with information which the images themselves are not adequate to supply. It is as if the film has moved away from direct cinema, where sounds and images are deemed capable of 'speaking for themselves', but only to move back towards a more conventional style of television documentary, where the commentator acts as an intermediary between the images and the audience, interpreting them for us, anchoring their ambiguities into one definite meaning to be consumed with ease.

At the end of this section the commentary declares the redundancy and unprofitability of this approach. What emerges is just a '**travelogue**', which might have been produced by '**Marker or the New York Times**', by the left or by the right. Two years previously Godard had contributed a section to the film **Far from Vietnam**, which was made by Chris Marker's production company SLON. Marker's documentary work has been consistent in its commitment to analyse political struggle both in France and abroad: in Cuba, Chile and Vietnam, for example. Yet Godard contributed a section to **Far from Vietnam** in which he talks primarily of his own personal difficulties in making films which resist the 'aesthetic imperialism' of American film-making, but which, at the same time, isolate him from the working class in France. Although those scenes with him at the eye-piece of his Mitchell camera can be easily dismissed as empty solipsism one thing emerges as clear from his investigations at this time and his rejection of the kind of political cinema associated with Marker: the 'evidence of our senses' cannot be trusted and is no



From Loin du Vietnam

basis for analysis because those senses are always put in place by the common sense of the dominant ideology, that ideology which takes truth as evident and thus ignores our place in that truth. And that place always includes technological determinants so it is of little surprise that Godard, as a film-maker, must include a Mitchell, a product of American technology, in his film about Vietnam. The dominant voice in **Pravda** rejects this evidence of the senses in the following terms: **'It isn't enough because it is only the knowledge perceived by our senses; now we must rise above this perceptive knowledge, we need to struggle to transform it into rational knowledge'**.

The second part of the film announces itself as a **'concrete analysis of a concrete situation'**. We see interviews with students, peasants and industrial workers, but none of these interviews is subtitled or translated. Is this merely an indication that these people do not know what they are saying, that they are victims of some revisionist 'false consciousness', that the film is refusing to allow them to 'speak for themselves'? Or is it, more pertinently, to ask what we would know even if we could interpret these foreign words, to question the basis of any transparent knowledge the film could provide us with? The film stresses our distance from Czechoslovakia ironically when the commentary advises: **'If you don't know Czech you'd better learn it fast'**.

The fact that the dominant relations of sound and image always presuppose that the audience is divorced from their production and the choices made in that production is underlined in the short section that **Pravda** devotes to the Czechoslovak film industry. Overdetermined, as always, by the necessity to construct the 'revisionism' or 'Westernism' of the Czech people, the sound-track to the section is none the less important: **'Here, just as in Hollywood, movies are made for the common man. You go to the people without coming from them. You criticise the people's shortcomings without taking the people's point of view.'**

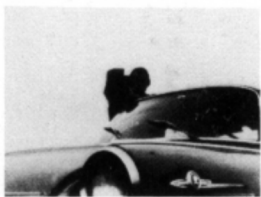




From Pravda



As shown in Harold Evans's  
*Pictures on a Page*



From Pravda

The commentary accompanies a sequence in which images of workers in a munitions factory making anti-aircraft guns for the North Vietnamese are intercut with images of film workers making sounds and images for popular consumption, the structure of the relation between work and politics in Czechoslovakia entailing that both groups of workers fail to consider either the effects of the work they do or, consequently, their engagement in that work.

This is not without its confusions, or its condescensions, as critics have been swift to point out. But how much more condescending, how much more confused are those films, those photographs, those sounds and images which presume to bring to their audience the true picture of a foreign situation, never considering how the audience that they feel they have every right to speak to is constructed in the organisation of their sounds and images?

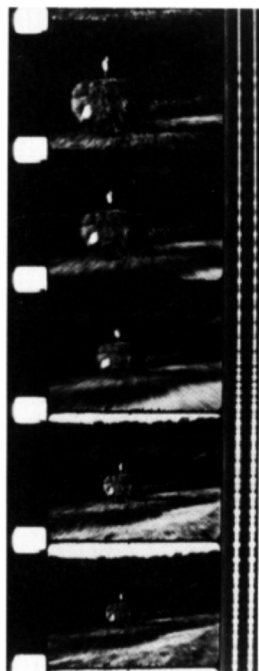
The film attempts to resolve these problems in its third section with 'he dictum, **'to a picture that is sick add a sound that is not sick'**. Such a decision is premised on the correctness of the sound-track, guaranteed by the correct revolutionary line that Rosa is enunciating. In fact this correctness is hesitantly questioned by Vladimir at the close of the film:

**'You say true texts but with what, with images still half-false, you thought we could seize the relations of production between images and sounds just like that, by chance; in fact you've acted dogmatically; what you've ultimately adopted is a lot of posters and slogans. You thought that you'd taken a step forward — result: we've taken two steps backwards.'**

Vladimir's intervention carries little weight in the balance of the film and in any case the film ends with a fourth section which finally finds a correct sound, the 'Internationale', to go with the correct revolutionary image: red. What is important from the perspective chosen here is that the relation of correct sound to correct image, even if still held as a possibility, is never considered in the standard terms of film and

television documentary. Nowhere is this more evident than in that part of the third section which deals with the peasantry. On the sound-track Rosa spells out the lessons of Lenin's handling of the peasantry. The image that accompanies this analysis is that of two peasants loading a hay cart, an image which constantly changes as the camera zooms in and out. The zoom always functions at the service of an ideology of vision as knowledge in documentary film practice, this ideology operating around metaphors of 'closeness' and 'distance'. Some documentarists, Rouch for one, will never use a zoom, preferring to move closer to the subject being filmed, rather than 'spy' from a distance. In television documentary films the zoom-in generally functions to 'get close' to the subject, to convince the viewer that he can really see what is going on, whilst the zoom-out is characteristically used to 'put the subject in its context', so that the spectator can receive 'a total social picture'. One might also think here of Antonioni's frequent use of the zoom in the films he made in the People's Republic of China, where he would continually zoom in on some small idiosyncratic detail — an old man in a crowd, for example — which questioned the 'total social picture' he was allowed to film, picking out, as it were, the individuality which is lost by looking at the masses. Godard's use here is very different. The zooms themselves are too sudden, calling attention to themselves as technical effects, products of lens technology and functioning differently from the human eye. More significantly as the zoom receives no motivation from the sound-track — Rosa's analysis takes no account of it — it functions to reinforce the fact that the visual image produced by the camera is, in itself, insufficient to give us a picture of reality. Every image already presupposes an articulation with other images and with a sound-track, with an already-understood articulation of reality. But — and this is the question Godard poses — understood by whom? And to what purpose?

In one sense sounds and images are always in contradiction in film — the sound-track running



continuously even when nothing is recorded on it, whilst the illusion of movement is achieved by the rapid flickering of still images. For Godard there can be no easy harmonisation of these two technologies in the interests of constructing a world which is readily accessible because easily perceived. If **Pravda** is a film that is continually questioning its own deployment of cinematic technology, that is not necessarily to say that the result is mere confusion. Rather it is truly an 'experimental film', which insists, even at the expense of resolution, that the technology of cinema can never be separated from the way that it is used, from who is using it and from the purpose for which it is being used.

However, **Pravda**, like the other Dziga-Vertov films, never ultimately escapes the assumption that a correct sound-track is possible, that a correct analysis of the situation is available and that, finally, a correct image can complete the ideal film. The granting of primacy to the political meant that both audience and film-maker were defined in political terms. It was not just that the films were made for the politically committed but that politics exhaustively described the situation of the film-maker. When, at the beginning of the second section of **Pravda**, the commentators want to start from their own situation this entails an analysis of the social relations which enabled them to hire the car in which they travel throughout the film. The Maoist slogan to count on one's own forces and its emphasis on the importance of personal struggle amounted to a definition of the personal in terms of the political. It is this exhaustive (exhausting, exhausted) definition which is abandoned in the move away from Paris. The interest in technology does not therefore recede — if anything Godard's interests in questions of cinematic and televisual technology have increased in this period, particularly in video technology. However, the insistence on correctness which underlined the Dziga-Vertov group's films has been superseded by questions of subjectivity, which are not just questions of the personal but also questions of the relationship between the subject and information, and



the technology required to construct that information.

Two of the episodes from the television programmes on communication, **Six Fois deux**, will serve to illustrate some of the terms in which the tension between questions of the personal and questions of ideology and technology are articulated. The two episodes are **Photos et Cie (Photography and Co)** and **Marcel** and both are specifically concerned with photography. The first episode examines news photography — the public face of the image — whilst **Marcel** examines the work of an amateur film-maker, for whom image-construction is a hobby, an escape from the work he does during the week, work which finances this hobby. But although these programmes deal with other people's work, they are none the less continually concerned with the deployment of technology and the construction of images in the programmes themselves. Contemporary televisual technology offers a range of techniques which provide the possibility of the creation of new relationships between the spectator and the text. Most of these are, of course, systematically repressed in institutional television practice. Just as the technological innovations of the early sixties, marking a new range of possibilities for the articulation of sound and image, quickly became confined, on the whole, to the service of an unproblematic rendering of documentary reality, so the innovations of more recent years in video technology have been confined to, and naturalised by, their use for spectacular reporting of sports events, outside broadcasts and so on. Once again, we see technological innovation not as something with a force, a progress, with its own determining implications, but rather being used to support a particular ideology of the visible. For example, vision-mixing allows for a very simple and rapid way of overlaying one image onto another, or of inserting a smaller image into a portion of the screen. This is used time and again in sports broadcasting, where we see athletes lining up to start a race, with an insert of the starter's gun in the top corner, for example. But it is never used in drama productions, situation comedies

From *Photos et Cie*

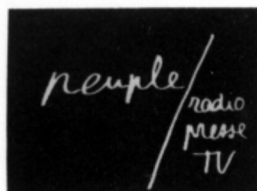


From *Nous trois*





They don't want progress.  
They want to be first.



From *Photos et Cie*



From *Marcel*

or television fiction generally. Similarly, video technology offers the possibility of writing directly on to the broadcast image, or of punching on captions in a way which is much simpler than film allows, where an optical printing process would be necessary. Again we see this technique in election-night broadcasts, or at the Miss World event, but we never see it used to comment on or to complicate the flow of images in, say, a documentary film or a politician's speech. These are two techniques that Godard has experimented with since *Numéro deux* in order to complicate the relationship between images, sounds and words, and thereby to include the spectator in the construction of the image, to throw the ideology of the visible into crisis. Again television has created the possibility of broadcasting interviews with people, dialogues between people, which could be as long or as short as the situation demanded, but, in the interests of scheduling, ratings and the need to maintain the almost imperceptible flow of television, what we have instead are those short interviews where a television professional patronisingly quizzes a 'member of the public' on how he/she felt when their roof caved in or when their pet goose learned to play the xylophone. These confrontations allow the interviewees no possibility of rephrasing the questions or of taking their own time to answer them. In *Six Fois deux* Godard liberates the television interviews from these constraints — a member of the public, like Marcel, the amateur photographer, or Louison, the dairy farmer, is given as much time to speak as René Thom, the mathematician (in television terms, an expert). The dialogues are conducted without professional spectacularity, or patronisation. So, whilst conducting a theoretical examination of the technological, ideological and economic determinations operating on the images, public and private, which surrounds us, the members of the Sonimage team never hide the technological construction of their own broadcast. It is as if we are seeing television for the first time.

The first section of *Photos et Cie* gives the

audience the opportunity to look for about ten minutes at a news photograph — something which is constructed to make an instant sensational impact before our eyes move on to look at something else. The photograph chosen is of the bayoneting of Biharis accused of collaborating with the Pakistani army. It was taken in Dacca towards the end of the Bangladesh war. It is a typical photograph in many ways, but we should remember that the event recorded was set up as a 'photo-opportunity' to which Western press photographers had been expressly invited. It was an event that had been initiated so that it would be photographed. So we are invited to look closely at this photograph out of its context and for a long period of time — perhaps some might say it is less of an invitation and more of an act of force, but this is a rare opportunity and one which only the cinema or television could achieve as duration is one of the fundamental attributes of those media (though, of course, this is not an attribute that professionals in media are interested in, or rather their sole interest in the time of the image is to deny it — we must change images quickly lest the viewer becomes aware of time). While this photograph is presented to view its photographer delivers a monologue on some of the determinations operating on the construction of such a photograph. Given that the normal context for such a photograph is the newspaper or the news magazine, where it will be looked at only for a few seconds, the task of the professional is to know, intuitively we are led to believe, how to capture that precise five-hundredth of a second which will 'sum up' the event, 'communicating' its 'message' to the reader. As Donald McCullin puts it later in the film, the professional must have '**the knowledge to know which is the right moment . . . to press that button**'; if we have to stop and look at the finished product for very long, if we consider it as a photograph, then it must have failed, it can't have communicated effectively. Once again, of course, every aspect of photographic technology is understood to be at the service of a reality simply waiting to be represented to a spectator.





As we watch the Biharis being endlessly bayoneted, the photographer takes us through the technical and economic determinations of the image, determinations which in his discourse are simply part of an immutable and natural order in which his own place is not a subject for interrogation:

**'It's a situation you can't control; you can't pose your subjects in photo-journalism, so it comes down to the technical reflexes you have, especially in this type of situation . . . For magazines you've got to deliver the goods. This black-and-white photo might get by in a daily, which doesn't have colour photos. But an Italian or German news magazine often needs colour pictures of an event. So you've got to be able to give them colour as well. But in a case like this one, which you don't control, you can't do that — a flower, yes, I could photograph that calmly in colour and in black and white. In war reporting you can't afford to miss an event with your camera, you've got to catch it. I get it in black and white and forget about the colour. So there, in Dacca, where things were happening fast I used black-and-white Tri-X stock, a very fast film. We were in full sunlight so I set it at a five-hundredth . . . This is the standard speed for capturing abrupt movement. Colour is much more difficult to use because colour film is much slower, so you're working at slower speeds and it's less spontaneous and less sincere than a black-and-white photo, which is faster. Also, in sunlight, you always set the camera between 11 and 16 with a wide-angle lens, a 28mm, so everything is in focus . . . so if anything happens to surprise us we're prepared for it and we try not to be surprised by an action, that's our job.'**

As is evident in this monologue, it is impossible to separate the question of the construction of images from the question of their exchange value. It is the image's double position in an economic and ideological circuit of exchange which stimulates the *chasse aux images*, the hunt for images. The specific image from Bangladesh chosen by the Sonimage team

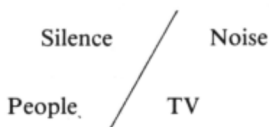
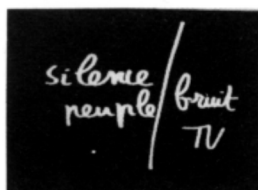
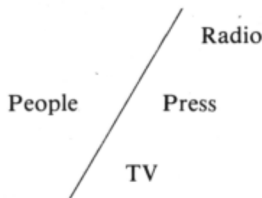
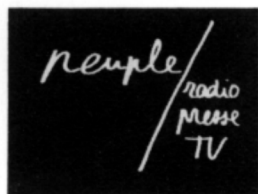
was exemplary in this respect in that the various images of this execution became competitors for the Pulitzer Prize, an award which aptly illustrates the articulation of the economic and ideological. Insofar as this articulation is generally recognised it tends to be dealt with in the discourses of humanist morality as a question of individual conscience as, for example, in the editor of the *Sunday Times*, Harold Evans's, comments: *'People were murdered for the camera; and some photographers and a television camera crew departed without taking a picture in the hope that in the absence of cameramen the acts might not be committed. Others felt that the mob was beyond the appeal to mercy. They stayed and won Pulitzer Prizes. Were they right?'* (Evans, 1978, p.xiv).

This moral discourse which refuses to consider the circuits which organise information is very evident in a certain kind of left-wing moralising. Such moralising contents itself with deploring the actual state of the media but considers that nothing more is needed than a change in personnel. This kind of stance refuses to confront the necessary displacements that would interrupt the series of exchanges on which the present organisation of information is founded. There are few better examples of a moralising discourse that refuses to confront problems of subjectivity than that of the French Communist Party. **Photos et Cie** stresses this in the next section of the programme, filmed at a Communist conference at which Georges Marchais, general secretary of the French party, made a speech attacking television reporting. The irony of this is that although Marchais was speaking against the media we see that, in effect, he was speaking for them. In front of the stage from which he delivers his speech are gathered the massed ranks of newsmen from the press, radio and television frantically employed in recording what he says. The members of the public, Marchais's followers, the manual and intellectual workers of France, are confined to the gallery, separated from the speaker by the crowds of professionals below. To whom is the speech addressed? To those who have come to listen or



From **Photos et Cie**

to the newsmen who 'represent' the general public? Always remembering that the very notion of 'general public' is dependent on a particular organisation of information. Over the image of the event Godard writes the following set of polarities, drawing out the contradictions of the event:



From *Photos et Cie*

and over the direct sound recording of the speech we hear another voice:

**'Not producing. Not consuming. Only recording. Just taking stock. Sounds and light produced by others and consumed by others . . . Radio, the press and television. Racing to the four corners of the world. Sticking to events. Getting paid for that. Getting paid for that . . . being a professional for radio, photography and television . . . being a professional.'**

The hidden economic and ideological assumptions of photography are elaborated in one of the most striking sequences from the programme, in which Godard sifts through a pile of photographs, talking all the time:

**'Professional photographers. There are things you could say but you have to have the time. When you have the time you don't have the space and when you have the space you don't have the time.'**

'A photo of a tourist who  
pays for the right to take photos.  
. . . Amateurs pay and professionals don't pay. . . .



That one, yes, she's a model,  
must be a professional.



But not that one. . . .



And those, while  
they're being searched in prison,  
they can get lost if they think they're going to get paid  
by the photographer. . . .



Vietnam.  
How much were all those people paid?  
That's the real scandal.  
The magazines of the world made a fortune  
out of photos from Vietnam.



Captions.  
A Chinaman who's shaking hands with Nixon.  
The caption reads: "This brave courageous man."  
It's the Chinaman who's courageous  
shaking the hand of a man like that. . . .





They always photograph the ones who  
are doing the torturing from the back and their  
victims face on.



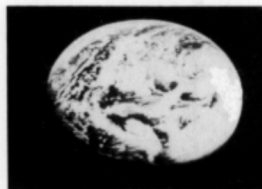
The first photo taken was that of a flower.



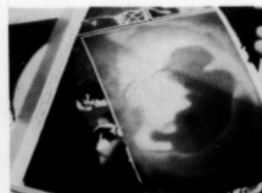
The first photo published was of  
the gunned-down Communards . . .



A square of paper.  
When you look at it closely it's a real landscape  
made of paper.  
When you look at it close up it smiles . . .



The world is far away,  
but television is there, near us, reassuring us'.



To be able to see you have to turn your eyes.  
Open your eyes wide.  
To do that you need time,  
and you need space. . .'

In the final section of this programme we see, for the first time, news photographs in their context, in the pages of *Le Nouvel Observateur*. But here this context is affirmed in its relation to all the advertisements in the magazine — ‘news’ and ‘information’ bolstering up, and being bolstered up, by the demands of commerce. When all the pages containing advertising have been removed, when this literal act of deconstruction has been achieved, there is little else remaining. What does remain cannot stand by itself; news photography demands the context of commodity circulation; it cannot be separated from it.

Marcel makes super-8 movies and 35mm colour transparencies of the flora and fauna of the Alps. His life is engaged in image-making just as much as are those of the professionals in **Photos et Cie**, yet this is seen as a hobby, a ‘liberation from everyday work’. As an amateur he pays for this hobby from the money he earns working as a watch-maker. Though the interview with Marcel is anything but a simple illustration of certain theses, and this because of its length and Godard’s method of asking questions to which he does not know the answer, it is nevertheless clear that, as an image-maker, he is caught in a circuit of exchange every bit as determining as that in which the professionals labour. These determinations can be read across the whole range of his work — from the type of equipment he uses to the aesthetic decisions he makes and to the places in which and the people to whom his work is exhibited. The contrast between the professionals and someone like Marcel repeats the shifting polarity which runs through **Numéro deux** — that of the *usine* (factory) and *paysage* (landscape), the polarity so central to advanced capitalism in which work and enjoyment are understood as mutually exclusive. To work in our enjoyment, to enjoy in our work, such possibilities are denied in contemporary organisations of space and time. And yet, for Godard, it is only the interfusion of the two that can bring any real satisfaction. Indeed, it is in these terms that one can understand his successive physical displacements



From Marcel





From Marcel

in the last seven years, as an attempt to base his factory, his studio in the countryside. For Marcel, the factory and the countryside are rigorously separated, although the viewer may find his position at the editing table and his position at his work bench almost identical.

His photographs deliberately concentrate on what is 'beautiful'; this, in effect, means the world of nature; he rarely takes pictures of people. His camera is set on a tripod, his pans are as smooth as can be expected from his super-8 equipment, he focuses clearly on the wild life and wild flowers of the Alps and he has no difficulty at the editing stage of the work in eliminating those images which are 'defective'. Similarly, Marcel seems to keep himself out of his own images as much as possible. He will not speak his own commentaries to his films but relies on music because he feels his speaking voice is not good enough. His ideas about himself, just as much as his use of technology, seems to be coming from another place. However, to dismiss this practice as an aesthetic conservatism would be to miss the point of the broadcast, particularly in its relation to **Photos et Cie**. The Sonimage team may not be setting up Marcel's practice as an escape from the demands of commercial photography, but neither are they concerned to dismiss it. Rather, what are being investigated are the determinations on that practice — the now familiar questions of 'who speaks in an image?' or 'where is the money?' are being asked in relation to another sort of image-making.

These questions are approached, for example, in the following section of dialogue in the film around the differences between stills and movies. It should be noted that the conversation loses some of its force in English because the French word for production line is the same as chain (*la chaîne*) and therefore the emphasis on how one operation necessarily follows another is not as strong in English.

**Marcel: 'I can, in still photography, pick up whatever I want. I can go from a tulip to a woman's face; you can't do that in movies.'**

**Godard: 'Don't you find you're not so free, then, with movies?'**

**'Yes, exactly; with movies I'm less free because I**

have to choose a way. It's like writing a book . . . things have to follow on from one another.'

'It's a bit like a production line, then?'

'Yes, a production line — a marvellous production line. The production line of happiness.'

'The production line of what?'

'The production line of happiness.'

'But it's more difficult to follow a production line.'

'Yes, you have to go through every process.'

'And don't you feel imprisoned?'

'Yes, a little imprisoned. The production line is an imprisonment. We have where I work a production line for watches. But it's not the production line of happiness.'

'And don't you think there's something in common between them? All factories have their production lines.'

'Yes.'

'And don't you think there's a similarity between that production line and the fact that in a film there is a production line of images? Perhaps it's the first time you've looked at it like that, but you can try and think about that?'

'Yes, but I'll tell you that perhaps it's not the same production line. The production line is open, deeper, it's the production line you find in nature . . . and from the material, the industrial point of view, I think there's an enormous difference. That's my opinion.'

Not only does this sequence illustrate how Godard's interviews break with normal television patterns but it demonstrates how, for Godard, technical questions immediately engage questions of form: of the relations between the film-maker or film-spectator and the image, relations which cannot be understood by any notion of cinema or photography which would limit them to a series of technical descriptions. It is within this context, ever more stressed since the move towards autonomy and greater control of technological resources signalled by the establishment on Sonimage, that one can understand Godard's collaboration with the Swiss camera-maker, Jean-Pierre Beauviala. Beauviala has constantly attempted to keep his inventions, a product of his radical work in optics, out of the hands of the large corporations and to insist on non-production-line methods of construction. Beauviala is currently producing a 35mm camera, designed to Godard's specifications, which will to a certain extent consolidate the practices that Godard elaborated in the early sixties, combining a Mitchell's quality of image with the size and flexibility of a super-8 camera.

But if the technology of the cinema is an ever more crucial

element in Godard's film-making, that technology has been understood for the last seven years as a technology in which video is perhaps the most important element. Godard's increasing interest in, and use of, video is not to be understood as some final approach to reality, still less as the McLuhanite fantasy of a mechanical extension of the central nervous system which would complete our humanity. Rather the question of the image is now as much a question of video as of film, and specifically of the relation between the two. It is this relation which is one of the focal points of Godard's work since shooting *Numéro deux* on video and then transferring it on to film. *Sauve qui peut* was shot on film but it may be transferred on to video for editing and then transferred back to film. To carry out these complicated operations Godard has finally, after a long struggle, obtained a telecine, a machine which transforms a film image into video and which will enable him to work more directly on both media. The result of that work, the new questions which will silence our answers, must await its use in the editing of *Sauve qui peut* or in some further project.

# AATON



A. M. Mouton

## Aaton makes J.-L. Godard a 35 mm camera. Ultimate steadiness

Two years ago, the well known film director, J.-L. Godard, commissioned Aaton to make a 35 mm camera. He wanted to combine the advantages of the quantity of information contained in a 35 mm film image, and the ease of handling and subtleties of super 8 cameras. The first prototype has been in use since April 1979, and the results are more than encouraging.

The Aaton 8.35 is handheld, and has instant magazines: until now, the only 35 mm camera with instant mag. has been the Camiflex (1948), which is extremely noisy.

The noise level of the 8.35 is 33 dB. Without any sound absorbing material, the prototype runs at 33 dB; two decibels less is realistic with damping. 33 dB appears quite acceptable in light of the fact that a non-optimum self-blended 16 mm camera can run in that area.

The steadiness is excellent: it is ensured by the same slow movement system (U.S. patent 3800146) that has made a name for the Aaton 16 mm LTR. The pull-down of the stroke is absolutely linear, with the dead point in the film plane. Wily Lichchansky, J.-L. Godard's cameraman, contends that the 8.35's steadiness is comparable to that of a Mitchell. On double exposure ones, no visible sign of any movement whatsoever can be observed.

An original feature: a second electric motor in the camera body drives the 80 m and 120 m magazines through an independent drive clutch.

The 8.35 is small, and light: it weighs in at around 5 kg, with 60 m mag. — slightly less than the Aaton LTR 16 mm camera.

This camera is meant to be a companion to the Panavision or Arriflex BL; it is easy to handle, unobtrusive, mobile. For certain films, it may even be the only camera: with a soft blimp, the sound level could be made acceptable for indoor work.

Availability: early 1981.

Price: in the area of 90,000 F with two magazines.

**Colin MacCabe:**

Could you explain your constant interest in the latest advances in technology?

**Jean-Luc Godard:**

I usen't be aware of the reason but now I am. It's just because that when it's new it is less rigid, and there are less instructions from the police, the law or circulation. There is not less law, but it hasn't been made, it isn't written down. It is before the written . . . You can handle it, or think you can handle it, which is not the same. You have no rules so you have something to live with, you have to invent some rules and to communicate with other people. 'Are these rules good?' 'Do you think this is a good way to cross a street?' But that's all . . . I was interested because there were no rules. At the time I was attacked and then it became the new mood and I was against it. Because I'm not against that rule, I'm against the fact that it's only that rule, always. I'm not for or against the hand-held camera or sensitive stock. Sometimes you need a hand-held camera, sometimes you need a steady one. I'm against always being obliged to use just one. As soon as there is something new there is less law and then you discover that there are very few people who are interested in working with you because they are lost. You have to find rules in yourself and when to work more or to love. Remember, I was condemned and condemned to make pictures with small money. Why? I could use a lot of money but then you'd be condemned to only make big pictures.

Why have you always used very small crews?

Sometimes because I liked it but sometimes I was obliged to. When you have huge crews it's like going to a city. You know no one. You're not obliged to talk. People discover that it's much more difficult to work with me in a small crew because if you're trying to work differently then you're just obliged to invest. You're not just a hired professional who can escape. If you're a father then the director has a right to speak to you about being a father if the film you're making is about childhood. You can ask your camera operator, 'What do you think as a father' — and then the operator discovers that he doesn't like me because the question is too rough. But if you have a huge crew you never know, you just say 'Hello', 'How are you?', 'Wonderful'. The fact is that I don't make any distinction between reality and the image of it. That's what you must understand. A scientist, a physicist is only a physicist when he studies, when he's working on physics, not when he's at home. I see no difference between reality and an image of reality. For me they're the same. I always say, 'A picture is life and life is a picture'. And when I make pictures, it's making life and that's why it's very hard for the crew to follow and that's why I prefer to keep them small. Because at least, even if we don't talk, even if there's no relationship, at least they can follow. If there were a hundred, well, the picture would never get done.

OK. You say there's no difference between the real and the image. At the same time, before you make your image, you have a fantastic commitment to the real. On the *Hornuss* field, for example, ★ you could have tried to synchronise an interesting bit of the game, a train passing and the dialogue. But if it didn't happen, you wouldn't make it happen.

★ For a description of Godard's direction at the game of *Hornuss*, see Chapter 2, pp.43-44.

**I'm trying to make music in the country. If I go to the woods to make good music, a music inspired by the wood or the animals and then shoot every animal and chop down every tree so that I was sure I was making my own music . . . well, it's the same with the film.**

I'd still like to understand better the basis of the commitment to the real. The fact that you wouldn't direct . . .

**But I'm directing a direction. I don't see. There's no difference between shooting and the following of something when the camera isn't turning. That's something which people in the movies don't understand. Something that is interesting about video is that the camera is always running. The tape-recorder is not running, not always. Of course, in television they only use that for live shows. But for me it's always running. To shoot is to re-run. But before, when I'm going to shoot, I'm not sure. A novelist doesn't think that the only time he's writing a novel is when he's sitting at a table writing. Or a painter or a musician. It's an attitude you only find in the movies and that's incredible or just silly. I prefer to say 'silly' to people because they are angry when you say that but if you said 'incredible' they wouldn't react at all.**

Could you give the chronology of your interest in video?

**I can't really remember . . . I remember when I tried to use one of the first video outfits made by Philips in '67 in *La Chinoise*. I wanted the characters to shoot themselves and then use the footage for self-criticism but it was too new as equipment then . . . I don't know why I got interested. Maybe because it wasn't run by movie people so there was no law. It was movie equipment and there was no law. So I was authorised. Even with a camera, a Pentax or a Nikon, there are so many people who'll say, 'if you're out of focus, that's no good'. So you hesitate to use it because you think, 'I'm not able to'. Just like Anne-Marie often says about movies. And I say, 'Just by saying that you prove that you are able'. It's very hard to convince people. Of course there is skilfulness in a lot of areas but the whole process should be more accessible. I don't know what the rules were in England but when I began to make movies in France only the camera-operator and the director were authorised to look in the viewfinder. The other members of the crew couldn't. It was like the Middle Ages. Everybody had a category.**

So the interest in video grew out of the fact that it was cheaper and that there were less rules?

Yes, maybe. Maybe too because you have the whole system. You have a theatre which is the TV set. You have a laboratory which is the tape-recorder. At any time you can always make a picture. I can always borrow, or kill someone. You just need small money, you don't have to beg from a banker. So at least I feel secure. Possibly it's like a hunter who has a bow and arrow. Yes, there are cannons but the bow works all the same. I think there is something in that. I've never done it that way. But I always say, 'if I lose everything I can still go on now, more than ever'. If movie-makers say they can't make a film, I say, 'that's not true, you can make a picture'. There's slides, there's small cassette recorders, like the one we're using now. When I started the tape-recorder took up half the room. It's not true. You can record a sound and if nobody's interested in buying then the only one to blame, maybe not the only one but the most important one, is yourself.

I've been particularly struck by the lighting in your video programmes. Could you say what principles you use in lighting?

I wish I could be . . . That's why I was interested in video too, because at least you can look at the lighting and begin to free yourself from the photographer as the sorcerer who knows the magic that you don't know. He knows what's in the black box and all you know is that he takes it away and four days later he brings it back. But at least in video you can say, 'It's dreadful' or 'It's beautiful, I like it that way'. And then he says, 'You like this dreadful thing?' and you say, 'Yes' and you can learn, can begin to learn but then it means sharing the whole equipment and all the social things. And that's why most of the time I don't light. I don't light because at least there is no rule; there is only one rule: to try to get the right aperture. And then you discover that there is a whole world of difference between 2.2 and 5.6 and the operator doesn't know why he's choosing one world rather than another. They hope there's a reason and I try to work on that reason but *before* the shooting and then they don't want to work, they just want to do their job. Or if they're famous for opening at 5.6 then they're like Steve McQueen. He's paid five million dollars and then he acts in a certain way but you can't ask him to do something for five million dollars. The more he's paid, the less you can ask. Just like a king.

Although colour's very important in your work, I couldn't find any way to talk about it. It's like a difficulty that I have with Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. The most complex, difficult part of the book is about the children's discovery of colour and how that's related to sexuality and to shame. I'm convinced there's something there but I can't say it.

One can't say it . . . It's fifty years since I read books like Joyce or Céline. But I think that in a movie something can be done, that you can mix things like Joyce but in a normal way and more accessible too, not difficult because to look is not something uneasy.

From *Finnegans Wake*

ning. Fools top! Singty, sangty, meekly loose, defendy nous from prowlabouts. Make a shine on the curst. Emen.

But the duvlin sulph was in Glugger, that lost-to-lurning. Punct. He was sbuffing and sputing, tussing like anisine, whipping his eyesoult and gnatsching his teats over the brividies from existers and the outhur liubbocks of life. He halth kelchy chosen a clayblade and makes prayes to his three of clubs. To part from these, my corsets, is into overlusting fear. Acts of feet, hoof and jarrety: athletes longfoot. Djowl, uphere!

Aminxt that nombre of evelings, but how pierceful in their sojestiveness were those first girly stirs, with zitterings of flight released and twinglings of twitchbells in rondel after, with waverings that made shimmershake rather naughtily all the duskcended airs and shyilit beaconings from shehind hims back. Sammy, call on. Mirrylamb, she was shuffering all the diseasinesses of the unherd of. Mary Louisan Shousapinas! If Arck could no more salve his agnols from the wiles of willy wooly woolf! If all the airish signics of her dipandump helpabit from an Father Hogam till the Mutther Masons could not that Glugg to catch her by the calour of her brideness! Not Rose, Sevilla nor Citronelle; not Esmeralde, Pervinca nor Indra; not Viola even nor all of them four themes over. But, the monthage stick in the melmelode jawr, I am (twintomine) all thees thing. Up tighty in the front, down again on the loose, drim and drumming on her back and a pop from her whistle. What is that, O holytroopers? Isot givin yoe?

Up he stulpled, glee you gees, with search a fling did die near sea, beamy owen and calmy hugh and if you what you my call for me I will wishyoumaycull for you.

And they are met, face a facing. They are set, force to force. And no such Copenhagen-Marengo was less so fated for a fall