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RIVETTE

Texts and Interviews

Edited by Jonathan Rosenbaum



Rivette, Jacques, 1928-

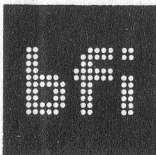
RIVETTE

Texts and Interviews

Edited and Introduced by Jonathan Rosenbaum

Translated by Amy Gateff and Tom Milne

1977



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The Editor

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Cover: Jacques Rivette directing Babette Lamy and Danièle Rosencranz during the shooting of *Norôit*. Courtesy of Sunchild Productions.

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Introduction

Jonathan Rosenbaum

Rather than be considered in isolation, this book should be regarded as part of a general effort to make the work of Jacques Rivette *available*, in every sense of the term. This is not to imply that the following texts and interviews are being offered as a mere supplement to his films: if the entire body of Rivette's work can be read as a series of evolving reflections on the cinema, the critical work contained in this volume is indissolubly linked with the critical work represented by his film-making. From this standpoint, it is not enough to say (for instance) that Rivette's 1957 review of Fritz Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* helps to 'explain' – indeed, provides a veritable blueprint for – many of the preoccupations of his 1976 film *Noroît*. One of the assumptions of this collection is that it might be equally valuable to view *Noroît* as a key towards understanding Rivette's important text on Lang.

More specifically, this book is primarily designed to accompany a season of films at the National Film Theatre which is itself intended to place Rivette's work within a critical and reflective context. Both book and season come at a time when most of Rivette's important work remains materially inaccessible in England and America: only *Paris Nous Appartient* and *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* are currently in distribution in the UK (both by Contemporary Films), while nothing after *L'Amour fou* is available in the US; and an examination of the Bibliography at the end of this volume will show that, apart from a few brief and/or incomplete translations, none of Rivette's writing has previously appeared in English.

It should be stressed that many independent factors are responsible for this overall neglect. Quite apart from the unusual lengths of *L'Amour fou*, both versions of *Out* and even *Céline et Julie*, the successful run of the latter in London last autumn only helped to demonstrate (once again) that a large segment of the film-going public continues to be well ahead of many of the regular film reviewers. There is nothing new about this state of affairs, in England or anywhere else, but it seems worth noting that if Rivette's most immediately legible and 'commercial' film went directly over the heads of some of London's most influential critics, the chances of gaining their support for works as experimental as *Out 1: Spectre* or *Noroît* do not seem very substantial.

One also has to consider that unlike any of his former 'New Wave' colleagues – Godard, Truffaut, Chabrol and even Rohmer – Rivette has never shown much aptitude or extended interest in 'selling' his work to a wider public, pursuing any of those elaborate public relations manoeuvres (apart from the occasional interview or festival appearance) that are usually felt to be essential in imposing a director's

name on the public's consciousness. Rather like Godard but unlike Chabrol, Rohmer and Truffaut, he has regarded all his work since *L'Amour fou* as exploratory 'work in progress', and it is the actual *process* of this work that interests him more than the 'product', marketable or otherwise, that results from it. The art (or craft) of a Chabrol or a Rohmer – or of a Bresson, an Eisenstein, a Tati or a Hitchcock – is to fill in a predestined design, 'realise' a prefigured pattern. The interest of Rivette, at least since *L'Amour fou*, is to combine prefigured elements with relatively unpredictable and uncontrollable ones, and see what occurs. This invariably places the work itself in a state of perpetual suspense (and suspension) where the spectator's uncertainties are not at all unrelated to the director's.

There are many interpretations that can be made of the consequences of this approach, and although it is not my ambition here to explore any of these at length – a critical task that certain other texts have assumed in part, some of which are cited as 'suggested criticism' in the Biofilmography – a few of the implications of Rivette's methods might be briefly noted. The profound 'mysteriousness' of all his films on one level or another, despite their radically different procedures; the declaration, near the end of the first interview in this collection, that 'the cinema is necessarily fascination and rape, that is how it acts on people; it is something pretty unclear, something one sees shrouded in darkness, where you project the same things as in dreams'; the increasing rejection of any 'phenomenological world', apart from the film-viewing situation itself, in *Duelle* and *Noroît* – these and related matters raise serious political and philosophical questions that most writing about Rivette has tended to avoid.

While Rivette's initial formation must undoubtedly be situated to a certain degree within the existential Catholicism and illusionism that lies at the roots of André Bazin's critical writing – belying a 'taste and theory' which, as Annette Michelson has reminded us, is 'fundamentally antipoetic, resolutely antimodernist'¹ – there is little question that Rivette's development, like Godard's, has largely proceeded in opposition to various notions associated with Bazin. This can be seen first of all in many of his earliest critical pieces, where the opposition takes various forms. Rivette's critical discovery of Howard Hawks in 1953 (preceded only by Manny Farber's in the pages of *The Nation*) was couched in terms that elicited Bazin's sharp disapproval ('You can see the danger, which is an aesthetic cult of personality': 'La Politique des Auteurs', *Cahiers du cinéma*, April 1957); if one places Rivette's 'Letter on Rossellini' alongside Bazin's subsequent 'Défense de Rossellini' (translated in *What is Cinema?*, Vol II, University of California Press, 1971), the differences in critical method and decorum are so striking that one can scarcely take the former to be the labours of a dutiful disciple; and Rivette's indefatigable, no less polemical celebrations over these same years of Hitchcock, Preminger, Nicholas Ray and Lang's last American film clearly didn't coincide with Bazin's sympathies. (In the same issue of *Cahiers* containing Rivette's review of *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*, Bazin labelled the film 'not worth bothering with' in the *Conseil des Dix*.)

¹ See her Introduction to Noël Burch's *Theory of Film Practice* (Secker & Warburg, 1973, pp. v-xii) and her review of *What is Cinema?* in *Artforum* VI, No. 10 (1968), pp. 66-71 – probably the two most valuable expositions of Bazin in English.

Examining 'The Hand' at closer range, it should become apparent that the thrust of Rivette's review is a calculated assault on the notion of the 'vraisemblable'² which is closely allied to Bazin's defence of realism. If this difficult but rewarding text seems to bear a dialectical relation to Rivette's earlier essay on Rossellini – implicitly endorsing Lang's '*absolute contempt*' for his characters (which is confirmed by Lang's own testimony about this film in Lotte Eisner's recent book on the director) after defending the expression of Rossellini's love for Ingrid Bergman; and propounding, after an application of Bazin's 'neo-realist' television aesthetic (the virtues of 'direct cinema' and an open form), an anti-realist aesthetic based on Lang's 'indirect' means of expression and his '*totally closed world*' – the same contradictions are to be found in Rivette's first feature, where neo-realist (Bazinian) and expressionist (anti-Bazinian) influences run virtually neck and neck.

On the one hand, there is the pronounced phenomenological side of *Paris Nous Appartient*, frequently remarked upon by contemporary reviewers: the desire to bear witness to the mood and experience of a particular place and time ('June 1957' reads the opening title) that continues to give the film, for all its limitations, a rather acute degree of historical pathos. (And despite the post-synchronisation, even the soundtrack is eerily prophetic of the urban paranoia of subsequent decades: note the remarks of an American about Nixon, overheard in a café towards the end of the film.) The phenomenological aspect is equally present in the film's respect for durations – not so much a matter of long takes, which the exigencies of the shooting made impractical, as the labyrinthine progress of the heroine in her 'quest', up dark stairways and down narrow hallways, and, above all, the extended *narrative* treatment of the sequence charting her movements throughout a single night and morning, after receiving Gérard's note threatening suicide. Yet at the same time, the Langian impulse to turn all this experience into a formalist brand of metaphysics – acknowledged in the direct quote of the Tower of Babel sequence from *Metropolis* – veers the film in quite a different direction which, given all the unforeseen twists, cheated expectations and reversals in the plot, might be construed as being tantamount to a *denial* of the real. The tension between these antithetical approaches – faith and scepticism, freedom and determinism, paranoia and chaos, 'Paris belongs to us' and 'Paris belongs to no one' – is of course the film's subject, and Rivette's designation of *Paris Nous Appartient* as an 'anti-thesis' film bears this out.

But if Rivette arrived at this contradiction on a thematic and stylistic level, he was not to realise its formal possibilities and implications until some years later, when he embarked on the adventure of *L'Amour fou*, an experience that is described in some detail in the first interview of this collection. In between came his protracted struggles with *La Religieuse*, the most overtly political of all his films, whose experimental aspects (also described in the first interview) are relatively submerged – a film that, for better and for worse, and discounting its musical ambitions, shows

² As is explained in an editorial footnote, Rivette's use of this term was in part suggested by the French title of Lang's film, *Invraisemblable Vérité* – permitting a form of word play that cannot be adequately conveyed in English translation. To understand the drift of Rivette's argument and its implications, it would be helpful to read 'reasonable' (and its variants) as 'plausible', 'probable' or even 'believable' throughout the review; all four meanings are implied in the French.

the marked influence of some of Otto Preminger's films in the 50s and early 60s. Certainly the most traditional of Rivette's films in method and appearance, it remains compelling thanks to its rigorous adherence to Diderot's protest theme (despite an adaptation which necessarily avoids the question of the novel's inception – as a practical joke of Diderot's designed to lure an old friend back to Paris), to Anna Karina's remarkable performance as Suzanne Simonin, and to Rivette's resourceful *mise en scène* – the latter a concern that he was not to take up and explore again, in relative isolation from other formal elements, until ten years later, in *Duelle* and *Noroît*.

Turning to the two versions of *Out* – dealt with in the second interview here, and unquestionably Rivette's most important accomplishment to date – we arrive at a work whose separate forms (to judge from reports of the longer version) describe yet another formula for the two sides of the Rivettian dialectic. The decision 'to adopt a perspective that is beyond good or bad' and film 'raw' improvisation by actors who have invented their own characters, in a 'pseudo-documentary' manner – reportedly reaching an apogee of sorts in a 45-minute take of a rehearsal by Michel Lonsdale's theatre group – where 'fiction gradually proliferates', presumably leads to a kind of parody-summation of Bazinian notions about realism in the 760-minute version. ('To my mind, *Out* (like *Céline et Julie*) is also a kind of comedy,' Rivette has noted.)

Contesting and contrasting this, in the subsequent editing of the 255-minute *Spectre*, is a very anti-Bazinian demonstration of 'how the very principle of montage risks becoming a principle of rejection and suppression – and not merely of elision, but quite literally of subtraction, erasure, or even impediment and "persecution" [of the spectator-voyeur]', whereby 'montage doesn't mean adding but withdrawing . . . not doing but un-doing: the negative at work.' In all fairness, it should be noted that in the preceding quotation Rivette is describing not *Out 1: Spectre* – which wasn't shot until a year later – but Vera Chytilova's *About Something Else*, in a discussion of montage with Jean Narboni and Sylvie Pierre which comprises the final critical text included here. Yet certain comments on editing in this piece (not merely in relation to Chytilova's film, but also in reference to Godard's *Made in USA* and Straub's *Not Reconciled*) anticipate so many of his own procedures, particularly in the first and last hours of *Spectre*, that it is difficult not to read them (at least in part) as a prospectus.

The final text by Rivette included here is a prospectus, written not for publication but for presentation to the Centre National de la Cinématographie as a request for a government advance on the project *Les Filles du Feu* (subsequently retitled *Scènes de la Vie Parallèle*). It is included here solely for its intrinsic interest: not as a critical piece or manifesto or even, necessarily, as a 'preview of coming attractions',³ but merely as a token acknowledgment of some of Rivette's current ambitions and interests.

Ideally, a collection of this sort should have been longer. A more comprehensive

³ There has already been a shift, for instance, in the order of the films as it is prefigured here: 'The Revenger' has become Part III (*Noroît*), while the 'musical comedy' featuring Carolyn Carlson's dance company is currently planned as the fourth film.

sampling of Rivette's criticism might include his texts (or remarks, in roundtable discussions) on film criticism, *Sommarlek*, *Les 400 Coups*, *Hiroshima*, *Mon Amour*, *Le Testament d'Orphée*, *Splendor in the Grass*, *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*, *Monsieur Verdoux*, *Muriel*, Franju's *Judex*, and at least part of his writing on Hawks, Hitchcock, Mizoguchi, Preminger and Renoir – to cite only a few examples. It is also worth remarking that, as the most fanatical cinéophile of his generation, Rivette is paradoxically the figure who was most instrumental in inaugurating interviews with figures outside the world of film in *Cahiers du cinéma*: Roland Barthes (1963), Pierre Boulez and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964).

In the course of editing this book, it was decided at an early stage that precedence would be given to (1) interviews and texts that were unavailable in English and (2) those which came closest to defining in some depth the continuity of Rivette's concerns. For this reason, short shrift has been paid to all three of Rivette's last features, apart from their inclusion in the Biofilmography and passing references to them here. As a film that has already attracted a relatively wide audience and has been discussed in some detail by Rivette in interviews published in *Sight and Sound* and *Film Comment*, *Céline et Julie vont en bateau* did not seem to warrant the kind of extended treatment accorded here to *L'Amour fou* and the two versions of *Out*; even if it had, there are no detailed interviews about the film available in French. The same is true, alas, for *Duelle* and *Noroît*, at least at the moment – an absence which seems more unfortunate, because both films have already been subject to a great deal of misunderstanding.

Considering the fact that these films represent only the second and third parts of a tetralogy whose eventual completion is still in question – after the disastrous commercial and critical reception of *Duelle* in France, and prior to the release of *Noroît* – it would be premature to attempt an extended response to these works in the present collection; the prospectus included here is scarcely more than an acknowledgment of this gap. I can only hazard the personal conviction that, with the passage of time, both films will be recognised as significant extensions of (and advances in) Rivette's explorations – even if, from the present standpoint, the former seems to hark back to some of the illusionist premises of Rivette's earliest work, while the latter abandons them with such virulence that it also rejects most of the forms of *narrative* suspense that Rivette's cinema has formerly depended upon.⁴

Both works, one might add, represent audacious rejections of 'contemporary relevance' in terms of their subject matter – refusals which have already provoked certain political questions, alluded to earlier in this introduction, regarding the implication of Rivette's formalism and the progressive abandonment of interest in 'lived experience'. Rather than attempt to answer these questions here, I will merely assert that, as a serious, critical investigation into the diverse *partis pris* of illusionistic narrative, there is a great deal more political import to be found in these

⁴ While *Duelle* might be described, from a strictly commercial standpoint, as a film 'aimed' at a particular kind of audience which no longer exists, the more ambitious and radical procedures of *Noroît* suggest both an acceptance of the fact of this 'lost audience' and a subsequent liberation from this frame of reference – thereby marking a return to the sort of experimentation and 'pure research' largely abandoned by Rivette after *Spectre*.

films – directly addressing the manner in which spectacle and spectator conspire to produce or deny meanings – than in the collected works of such purely unreflexive illusionist directors as Fassbinder, Herzog, Pakula or Rosi. And a response of Rivette's in one of his earliest interviews (*Télérama*, 1 April 1962) may not be entirely irrelevant here: asked whether he believed 'in a spiritual domain', he replied, 'Perhaps, but only through the concrete. If that means being materialist, I think that's what I am more and more.'

In closing, a few final specifications about the pages that follow. With the exception of the first interview, where a brief and inconsequential preface has been omitted, all the pieces presented here are virtually complete. The interviews precede the texts because it was felt that the former provide a more readily accessible introduction to Rivette's ideas than the latter (which require much more careful attention), although each section is ordered chronologically.

'Of all of us at *Cahiers*, he was the one who was most fiercely determined to become a director.' 'Someone like Rivette, who knows the cinema much better than I, shoots little; people don't speak of him, or hardly ever . . . If he had made ten films, he would have gone a lot further than I.' These two statements, by Truffaut and Godard respectively, may help explain why Rivette was the first of the *Cahiers* critics to embark on film-making. They may also serve as a sort of background to the somewhat exacerbated tone of 'Letter on Rossellini', which all but concludes with an impatient clarion call announcing Rivette's imminent debut as a director (which was to come the following year, with *Le Coup du Berger*). In his Rossellini monograph (Movie Paperbacks, 1970), José Luis Guarner states that this piece 'is still the finest article written on Rossellini'; as an indication of the particular appeal and influence exerted by *Voyage to Italy* on Godard and Truffaut as well as Rivette, it is certainly the most revealing. But to see this essay in a proper historical perspective, it should be noted that it was written at a time when the readership and reputation of *Cahiers du cinéma* were extremely marginal; the proliferation of 'insider' references clearly indicates that it was essentially addressed to a small group of friends.

This is also partially true of 'The Hand', written over two years later – roughly when *Le Coup du Berger* was released and Rivette was writing the script for *Paris Nous Appartient* with Jean Gruault. In this case, Rivette was counting on recent memories of Lang's film in the minds of his readers; and because few contemporary readers are likely to have this reference point, a great deal of the review might appear to be more abstract than it actually is. For the record, then, one *does* 'become aware of a brand of make-up' – the body make-up of the murdered woman – 'for purposes of plot'. And the plot in question involves the faking of evidence pointing to the guilt of the Dana Andrews character, who is engaged to Joan Fontaine – a stunt contrived by Andrews himself and Fontaine's father, a newspaper editor, supposedly in order to demonstrate how easily an innocent man might be condemned to death. After Andrews is brought to trial for murder, Fontaine's father perishes in a car accident which also destroys the photographs proving Andrews' innocence – a twist of fate eventually circumvented by the discovery of another document exposing the stunt. On the brink of being pardoned, however, Andrews admits to Fontaine that he actually *did* commit the murder. This

ultimately provokes her to permit an investigator who is much enamoured of her to phone the governor at the last minute and have him cancel the pardon. The 'scarcely wrinkled hand in the penultimate shot' referred to by Rivette is the governor's hand in close-up, resting beside the pardon on his desk which he has just refused to sign. (In fact, one sees both hands, on either side of the pardon – one of them clenched, the other at rest.) And the final shot is a fixed set-up of the impassive Andrews being led away from the camera by guards.

In its original appearance in *Cahiers* (after the magazine had switched to its larger format), 'Montage' is laid out in adjacent vertical columns, with two columns per page; on any two facing pages, the main body of the text occupies the two central columns, while footnotes and/or stills are placed in the outside ones. Unfortunately, it hasn't been possible to reproduce or approximate this jazzy sort of *mise en page* here – an effect closer to collage than to montage proper – but an attempt has been made, at least, to keep main text and footnotes within hailing distance of one another, to suggest the original intention. Readers should not be surprised if occasionally they find the footnotes more interesting than the texts they are appended to: as with some of the Sterne-like dashes in 'Letter on Rossellini', the gargantuan footnote in 'The Hand' and the cabaret performances in *Céline et Julie*, some of the finer moments in Rivette's work tend to take the form of spontaneous digressions.

Considering the fact that over eleven years have passed since 'The Hand', one can discern several signs of development and refinement in his thinking. If his earlier pieces, in contrast to Godard's, suggest not so much a passion for paradox as a tolerance for it, his remarks on 'Montage' suggest something closer to an absorption and assimilation of contradictions – what Hegel might call a synthesis. Much the same could be said of *L'Amour fou*, which opened in Paris shortly before Narboni, Pierre and Rivette attended the montage conference in Aix-en-Provence.

The basic intention behind the Biofilmography and Bibliography is to offer as much information about Rivette's career as possible; so an attempt has been made to be inclusive rather than selective. The only exception to this is the 'suggested criticism' listed after the credits of each film – a very selective choice which is also to some extent arbitrary, because I haven't read all the possible candidates. A few further references can be found in the Rivette bibliography of James Monaco's *The New Wave*. I omitted most reviews that I read of *Céline et Julie* and *Duelle*, my own included, because they finally seemed to be beside the point. Some of the others provide a few helpful starts, but it is my general conviction that the best Rivette criticism remains to be written – much as the best of Rivette's cinema remains to be seen.

The idea and many of the selections of this book were largely inspired by a somewhat similar collection edited and translated by Adriano Aprà – *Il cinema di Jacques Rivette*, prepared for the 10th 'Festival of New Cinema' at Pesaro, 12-19 September 1974 – the first book in any language devoted to Rivette. This is the second, and I am deeply indebted to Aprà's pioneering and judicious work. For other diverse kinds of assistance, advice and encouragement in relation to this project, I owe particular thanks to Charles Cameron Ball, Ian Christie, Richard

Combs, Jan Dawson, Amy Gateff, Jenny Gibson, Connie Greenbaum, Eduardo de Gregorio, John Hughes (for quotes from his Rivette interview), Lorenzo Mans, Tom Milne (especially), Jacques Rivette, James Stoller, Stéphane Tchalgadjieff, Paul Willemen and David Wilson.

J.R.
February 1977

Interviews

Time Overflowing

Interview with Jacques Rivette, from *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 204, 1968*

What gave you the idea of making *L'Amour fou*?

The film didn't start with an idea; it's difficult to answer that.

Had you been thinking of it for a long time?

No, it was simply a question of making a film within certain given economic circumstances. Beauregard kept on saying, 'Do you know someone who might have a script that we could shoot for 45 million francs?' I vaguely looked around; I think I even sent him one or two guys, but he didn't like their scripts. So finally I told him I had one. And that's when I started trying to think what could be filmed for 45 million francs. Which meant there had to be very few actors and very few changes of scenery.

In the end the film cost more than 45 million francs . . .

No, not the shooting. It's the editing which took it over the limit. In the end it's approximately a 60 million franc film – which, for an 'official' production, is still not very much per minute.

Was shooting in five weeks imposed by the 45 million franc limit?

Yes, with that amount it had to be shot in Paris with a small crew, very few changes of scenery and actors who weren't too hard to please. As I had also had a vague but strong desire to make a film with Bulle Ogier and Jean-Pierre Kalfon ever since I had seen *Les Bargasses*, I soon thought of them, without being able to tell whether the idea of the story about a couple made me think of them or vice versa.

Is it also because of this allusion to Marc O's company and productions that *L'Amour fou* is a film about the theatre?

* Conducted by Jacques Aumont, Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean Narboni and Sylvie Pierre, 27 July 1968.

Every time I start to think about a film – the ones that have been made as well as those which haven't – I always think that the subject I've got is only going to make a little short film, at the most, and I'm always looking for things to fill it out, at least to manage an hour and a quarter. That's what led me to think of the theatre.

Then another major reason was that I hadn't forgiven myself for the way I had shown the theatre in *Paris nous appartient*, which I find too picturesque, too much seen from the outside, based on clichés. The work I had done on *La Religieuse* at the Studio des Champs-Élysées had given me the feeling that work in the theatre was different, more secret, more mysterious, with deeper relationships between people who are caught up in this work, a relationship of accomplices. It's always very exciting and very effective to film someone at work, someone who is making something; and work in the theatre is easier to film than the work of a writer or a musician.

The main character is a man of the theatre, but to what extent was Jean-Pierre Kalfon really the director of *Andromaque*? Did he, for instance, choose his actors himself?

Before writing anything at all I had talked about it to Jean-Pierre, because the first thing I needed to know was whether he agreed to the idea of actually being the director. I suggested *Andromaque* to him, first of all because there wouldn't be any copyright problems and then also because, if we were going to take a classical play, it would be just as well to take one with an archetypal situation so that, even in bits and pieces, the audience would be able to find its way around slightly. He reread it and agreed. And then, yes, the idea was that he would choose whatever actors he wanted and direct *Andromaque* in accordance with his own ideas. We only had to agree on the actress who would play Hermione, since she was also to play the part of Marta; but actually it was he who brought me Josée Destoop, as well as almost all the others. For Phoenix, he hadn't found anyone, so I suggested Michel Delahaye. It all happened very simply, through more or less chance meetings: it was mainly – or rather three-quarters – a question of making up a friendly little group – which Didier and Claude-Eric joined later spontaneously.

And are you the one who chose Michèle Moretti? Or was she part of the group?

With her, it happened just before shooting took place. I had found her very good in *Les Bargasses* and *Les Idoles*, I like the way she lived, in relation to the others in the group, but there wasn't any part for her either in *Andromaque* or in the script; at the last minute, I suggested that she be Jean-Pierre's assistant, and that part turned out to be quite important, even though it wasn't at all planned or premeditated. She is what makes it a major part, because whatever happened with her was interesting. On the other hand, there were parts which were meant to be important which became less so, because they just happened not to work – like, for example, the role of Puck.

Was the only reason for choosing *Andromaque* the necessity of choosing a play where the audience could orient themselves easily? It seems to us that there are certain analogies, certain correspondences, between the subject of *Andromaque* and the situation in *L'Amour fou*. Were these analogies clear to you when you were writing the script?

Of course the choice of *Andromaque* was not completely naïve. The possibilities of analogy – if I may say so – between *Andromaque* and *L'Amour fou* were so striking even when we reread the play that Jean-Pierre and I decided from the start to avoid any terribly obvious comparisons between Racine and what we were doing. It was really too facile and was becoming rather annoying. During all the filming and then again during the editing, we didn't force ourselves constantly to eliminate every juxtaposition which appeared, but we never looked for them and when they seemed really too obvious or too much of a cop-out, we always tried to break them up. They had to remain two parallel entities, with even the echoes from one to the other remaining accidental. The guiding principle was to let things happen by themselves without ever forcing them, to be there as a witness.

Labarthe was telling us that you used a certain phrase of Renoir's as a motto during the shooting: that the director should pretend he's asleep.

Yes, the three weeks I spent with Renoir filming the programmes for *Cinéastes de notre temps*, right after shooting and finishing *La Religieuse*, made quite an impression on me. After a lie, all of a sudden, here was the truth. After a basically artificial cinema, here was the truth of the cinema. I therefore wanted to make a film, not inspired by Renoir, but trying to conform to the idea of a cinema incarnated by Renoir, a cinema which does not impose anything, where one tries to suggest things, to let them happen, where it is mainly a dialogue at every level, with the actors, with the situation, with the people you meet, where the act of filming is part of the film itself. What I liked most about this film was enjoying myself shoot it. The film itself is only the residue, where I hope something remains. What was exciting was creating a reality which began to have an existence of its own, independently of whether it was being filmed or not, then to treat it as an event that you're doing a documentary on, keeping only certain aspects of it, from certain points of view, according to chance or to your ideas, because, by definition, the event always overwhelms in every respect the story or the report one can make out of it.

I always used to find shooting a drag — something awful, a nightmare. I liked to think about the film before doing it; I liked to edit it once it had been filmed; but the filming itself always took place in poor conditions. This was the first time that the shooting was not only not hell, but was even a most exciting time. And also there was no continuity problem: the original idea of the film led immediately to conversations, with Jean-Pierre, with Bulle, with Marilù, with everyone we met for one reason or another in any connection with the project. All these conversations quite naturally led up to the point when Jean-Pierre started doing readings of *Androm-*

aque with people he had chosen. Then, gradually, it became the first day of shooting, when Jean-Pierre calmly continued the readings or began setting things up on the impetus of the previous week's work. In the evenings, we stayed together – we didn't leave each other's sides for five weeks – talking, not necessarily about the film but about everything else around it, and everything fell into place; then the next day, filming, we would continue the previous night's conversation. The editing was just a continuation, the same thing with different people, with the editors and sometimes still with people from the film who came along to see me, and the conversation continued. My memory is of one long, uninterrupted conversation. What *L'Amour fou* was, was a subject of conversation between us; and not necessarily with words; with silences as well, listening to records or going to see a film . . . For example, we all went to see *Marnie* again when we had nearly finished shooting, and not only did we have the feeling that Hitchcock had already filmed the whole subject of *L'Amour fou* and beyond, but afterwards this vision of *Marnie* integrated itself into the film for us. I think that is how it's fun to make a film; otherwise, it has no interest.

The relationships between people at the shooting and in the film are not necessarily the same – to some extent it's acting. For example, with Labarthe, we would have secretive little conspiracies, we would agree that he should interview one person or another and go at it in one way or another. Sometimes that wouldn't produce any results and he'd try again two days later from another angle. Similarly, after Jean-Pierre and his cast had been rehearsing for an hour or two while we had been standing around with our arms folded, all of a sudden we decided to set up a little rail in one corner and to film.

But it could just as easily have been fifteen minutes earlier or fifteen minutes later. I intervened as little as possible in Jean-Pierre's work; in any case, he hated me to. The only challenge was to try to sum up in six days of shooting what should have taken three weeks. Obviously, that had an effect on the film: that's what led us to use external aids, like for example the percussion instruments. At one point, since Jean-Pierre wanted to make his actors say the lines in a certain way, he started stressing according to the breaks in the ideas, then marking these breaks by clapping his hands, and it only took two days before they went from there quite naturally to the idea of gongs. But if we had really had three weeks, we could have got to the stage where the gongs would have been eliminated, because they were only a means, one stage in the process.

Despite the shortened time, one gets an impression of ripening, of a slow, regular, continual progress in the way the play is directed.

Yes, the shots that I kept, which were only a small proportion of what we filmed, in 35 or 16mm, are put together in approximately chronological order; but one's main impression is of a progression in the fatigue of the actors. At the beginning, they are fresh; they are still under the illusion that they will get to play *Andromaque* at the end of the week; while three or four days later, they know very well that they never will . . . And they really were frustrated about it, since they'd all thrown themselves into it with a desire to play it for real, before an audience. Luckily for him,

Jean-Pierre's part went on, and he threw himself into it that much more completely — all the more because his directing of *Andromaque* had suddenly been taken away from him. The others were left a bit at loose ends; they came to the shooting of the rest of the film and wandered around while we continued filming, even if they didn't have any special reason to be there.

How exactly did the filming of the more 'intimate' scenes take place?

The 'theatre' part was to come first, so that Jean-Pierre and the actors could rehearse a little before the shooting started, so that they wouldn't start completely from scratch on the first day. We started out making it purely as a documentary, first trying to get used to the system of filming with two cameras, and it was only after two days, after getting used to the collaboration between the Mitchell camera and the Coutant, having got all the crew and the actors used to each other, filming a lot quietly, from corners, and intervening as little as possible in the work of the play, that we started to bring in 'acted' scenes (Bulle's departure), while trying to keep as much as possible the same documentary spirit; that is, by planning only the outlines of the scene, what the cameras would do, the 'tactics' of the moment to be filmed, but never premeditating the details – or how the shot should end, which was almost always left very open and depended a lot on people's moods during each take. I only said to cut when there was really nothing else that could be done, and it was often the end of the reel which took care of deciding how to end the shot, instead of me. Then, after that, when we went into the flat, we tried to keep this documentary tone as much as possible; we tried never to hurry things, and the main way we did this was by filming chronologically and by anticipating. That made it possible to discuss each evening the next day's shooting, any points that were still not clear, and any we would try to decide on a bit ahead of time – at least to plan the basic ideas – and any we preferred to decide on or improvise during the shooting.

Was the dialogue scripted?

Not usually, and if it was, always at the last minute.

During the documentary scenes of the 'first week', what was Kalfon doing? Was he directing a play, or was he acting in a film?

He was directing a play. The film was an intruder which was keeping him from directing *Andromaque* as peacefully as he wanted to, interrupting his work and annoying him prodigiously. At the beginning, he enjoyed the interviews with Labarthe but then, after a while, they annoyed him too, because they intruded on his rapport with the actors and forced him to talk in the abstract. But I insisted on continuing to do them: if he was going to be persecuted by the cinema, it might as well be filmed; that made it more interesting.

And Labarthe was trying to put together a programme?

He was trying. He had just a little trouble, since he doesn't know the theatre as well as the cinema; he didn't always know what questions to ask Jean-Pierre to get him talking. Labarthe's programme, in principle, is the 16mm film, when it's all put together to its true length (between two and three hours): it is much more serene than the other. It is only of the people working, and never leaving this work, and of them talking about it . . . In the 35mm film, I only kept things which were related to the character of Sébastien.

Were Kalfon, on the one hand, and Labarthe on the other, actually planning to put on the play and the programme?

Jean-Pierre really wanted to do it; he only gave up the idea because he wasn't completely happy with the actors and he hadn't found a place to do it. In any case, he had already directed several plays a few years ago; I haven't seen any of them, and I didn't even know – he's the one who told me. And it was only afterwards that I learned that Michèle Moretti had actually been his assistant for some of the plays he directed.

Where did the idea come from to have Labarthe and his crew make this 16mm documentary?

It comes from the television programmes on Renoir, from *Cinéastes de notre temps*, and from my great admiration for most of the programmes in that series. It's an idea that came to me very quickly, for practical reasons: I knew that we would have very little time to devote to filming the theatrical part and from the start I wanted to have a lot of material for editing, which made it impossible to do with only the Mitchell. Then I thought it would be fun to do it with two very different systems at once and to introduce the very crude fiction – which is not meant to fool anyone – of the television documentary within the film. The idea of using Labarthe as the interviewer came largely from the role that the character of Marta was to play. She was to have a position; in other words, never to intervene in the dramatic progression, but to be a very strong pivotal character. She therefore needed some background, so we had to give her a past; but since she could never reveal it herself, it had to be under questioning . . . I did take a lot of it out during editing, because it was becoming too systematic.

In the final analysis, this haphazard system of having Kalfon direct a play and Labarthe and Etienne Becker film a programme seems to have been completely premeditated and to play a very specific role.

In the beginning, the idea was just to have as little as possible to do, to get myself as much rest as possible, to have only to chat with people a bit and then sit back and enjoy myself. When I hit upon an idea which got other people to do the work, I was thrilled. Etienne was taking the initiative; he knew that sometimes he was supposed

to orient himself in one direction rather than another, but he was really very free: he filmed what he liked by his own methods, sometimes just little bits and sometimes lining the reels up one after the other if he thought it was worth it. And the last three days we filmed separately with the two crews, one after the other, which made it possible to film from midday to midnight and gave Labarthe and Becker more latitude, since they no longer had to take into account the other crew's position; that's how we got the best bits of the documentary on *Andromaque*. There is one part that I only kept very short excerpts of in the film: the nearly continuous rehearsal of the last scene; it lasts more than an hour, and as is, it is really quite good.

So it isn't just a coincidence that Kalfon also seems to hate the idea of interfering, that he seems to want his actors to do everything themselves . . .

That comes from the conversations we had over a period of three months before starting to film, about Racine, about Barthes, about actors, about directing. And we were in complete agreement about this idea of non-interference as our guiding principle; the idea that the director must not only not be a dictator but must not be a father-figure either.

But, apart from these explanations about convenience or laziness, what is striking is the infinite number of combinations the three elements make possible – the 16mm camera, the 35mm camera and the theatre.

But that's also a lazy man's solution, because all we had to do was to decide from the start on the idea of using these three elements, and then it developed all by itself. In any case, I'm beginning to think more and more that films are decided upon beforehand and that, if the principles you base yourself on are right, then it carries on by itself, developing these principles. If not, if you start out not necessarily with the wrong ideas but, shall we say, with more abstract ideas, it means that you're giving yourself a terrible lot of work every time, to lift a ton by two millimetres, and that this fantastic output of energy only gives a meagre result. It's more pleasant to work in such a way that things multiply instead of dividing.

Then you are opposed to François Truffaut's theories, according to which the shooting goes counter to the script, the editing goes counter to the shooting, etc. Was there a stage for you where something went counter to what preceded it?

I am not at all opposed to that theory, but instead of saying 'goes counter to', I would rather say 'criticises'. We spent most of our time criticising: nothing was ever assumed or taken for granted. When filming a scene, sometimes we did it just as it was planned, and sometimes we changed it completely. It wasn't a matter of being for or against, it was spontaneous calling into question, which happened as a matter of course. In any case, there was actually no idea of separate phases, but rather of a continuity, of successive moments, all different, of the same thing – moments which, because they were different, always required different attitudes and, because of that, certain adjustments from one to the other.

But you never had this feeling of a battle against or of a grappling with the cinema which most directors have or seem to have?

And which I had myself to a terrifying extent when I made my first two films; that's what made me think that it certainly couldn't be the right way to make films. But this was the first time I didn't have that feeling.

The idea of taking material which is not completely your own and then transforming it and using it in a different way, so that everything has an effect on everything else – this is very similar to a certain kind of music.

Yes. Well, it's obvious; you can't help thinking of things like that. But I tried not to think about it too much. During the shooting, we tried, not to exhaust all the possibilities there were, because that is useless and impossible, but to use what we could, within the five weeks we had at our disposal, to put across the idea of this great number of inherent possibilities.

Precisely. Faced with this inexhaustible situation, with the 16mm and 35mm cameras, you must have realised very quickly that your film was going to be very long.

No, because I had absolutely no idea what I would feel like keeping when I edited it. Of course I sensed that I wouldn't be short of material to edit, but I didn't know at all what proportion of it I would keep.

How much 35mm had you filmed altogether?

About 25,000 metres. The first end-to-end screening of the 35mm lasted about four hours; then we tightened it up a bit, since the film now lasts four hours and twelve minutes, with about half an hour of 16mm.

Everything that was a tiny bit risky, which went off in all directions, during the shooting, comes together perfectly and certain things appear to be completely pre-meditated, the connecting points between the 16mm and the 35mm, which create a very rich dialectic of sorts . . .

It was an easy dialectic to plan. If you start with the fact that you're filming with two cameras, you have a good chance of having good connecting points; but you also get some surprises, which are very instructive . . .

And did you have a clear idea beforehand of the general outline?

The original idea was that here were three weeks in the life of two people. The first work to be done was to talk with Jean-Pierre and Bulle about their points of view and what they thought would be the reactions of the characters they were to play. In the original text, for example, there was a lot missing about Claire, but I

knew it was missing. So one evening when the three of us were talking, one of us – I really don't remember which any more – after twenty ideas that we threw out, came up with the idea that she should be looking for a dog.

The idea of the dog wasn't in the 30-page scenario?

In the 30-page one, yes, but not in the 10-page one. At the start, the film actually consisted of three sentences, on which Beaugard, and then Bulle and Jean-Pierre, gave me their agreement. I then wrote 10 pages to have a basis for starting discussions; it's at that stage that the conversations with Bulle and Jean-Pierre and the work with Marilù took place. Then we decided to make up a sort of calendar of their life day by day, almost hour by hour, for those three weeks; and it's that calendar which I then rewrote in 30 pages, in a slightly more literary form, so that it could be read. When we filmed, this was the calendar we followed, doing the opposite of some of the things that were written down, if necessary, and changing the emphasis of some things and clarifying others. For example, the scene where Sébastien rips up his clothes came to us during discussions the night before the first day of shooting: I only knew, in a completely abstract way, that at that point we needed a scene which reversed relations between Claire and Sébastien, where the 'madness' which had inhabited the character of Claire would be taken up by Sébastien.

So you knew what your characters were doing, day by day. But in the film, the fitting in of their respective timetables doesn't alternate regularly; there are long passages only about the theatre or only about Claire, during which one feels that something is happening with the other.

All the construction details were re-studied during the editing; but the film was edited day by day and the idea of the calendar was retained.

Yes, but they aren't felt to be days, more like pure durations of time.

That's why there are only a few indications of dates. Originally I had planned to mark every day, and then we thought that after all it would be good to lose once in a while a precise idea of time and not to have indicators all through, but still to give them from time to time, so that you can feel a deadline coming, like the end of one month and the beginning of the next: the last 'dramatic' day is a 31st and the day after, the 1st, is the day that the circle is completed. But between one day and the next, there is always black leader.

There is still one point when the idea of days disappears completely, to be replaced by the idea of a duration, when we find ourselves in exactly the same situation as Kalfon, and that's when he learns of the suicide attempt of Claire, whom we had forgotten about.

At that point, I didn't want any particular effect; I wanted people either to forget about her or, on the contrary, to think about her and to wonder what she is doing

during this long passage when we lose sight of her. There are still little allusions to her from time to time: Jean-Pierre's phone call at the bistro, the fact that she is spending the night at Marta's place. But both reactions remain possible, for different people: that's part of the audience's freedom. I wanted some 'free' spaces of time where people could occasionally forget completely the passage of time and then pick it up again in fits and starts. That's why I kept all the indications of time from the 16mm film, as when Jean-Pierre says 'There are only two weeks left . . .' or 'only one week . ..'. I also tried, at the beginning, to make the audience think they're on board for three weeks, but I didn't really succeed – this only comes across very faintly. In any case, this time of three weeks is arbitrary too; it could just as well be a picture of what could happen between the two of them in three months.

To get back to the theatre, one gets the impression that the actors haven't completely rehearsed *Andromaque*, that they are always going back over the same scenes . . .

Yes, it just happened that they rehearsed some scenes more than others because they knew them better. And also there are some that were less interesting for the film. In particular, the fact of coming back again and again to the same scenes created rhymes of sorts within the film: the first meeting between Pyrrhus and Andromaque, or Hermione's entrance. The last two acts are rather sacrificed because they hadn't rehearsed them as much. But none of that was premeditated. What I kept in are the most interesting parts from a visual point of view and with regard to Sébastien, rather than with regard to Racine.

How did you decide at exactly what points to bring in the 16mm?

Whenever I felt like it, without any general rule. The principle is that the 16mm camera is the only one that has the right to see the actors in close-ups.

What we have isn't a film within a film, but the cinema filming the theatre and filmed by the cinema. That creates the curious impression that the 16mm camera is taking the cinema's share over completely and that the 35mm camera doesn't exist except as a transparent filter.

I'm glad that's the impression one gets, because, precisely, the 35mm camera is giving a completely 'cow's eye view' of things. In a strict sense, it's the person who came in on tiptoe, the intruder who doesn't come too close because he'll get yelled at if he comes any closer, who watches from the corners, who looks down from the balcony, always hiding a bit. It has its oppressed voyeur side to it, like someone who can never come up as close as he would like to, who doesn't even hear everything. The Mitchell and the Coutant are two opposite forms of indiscretion, a passive one and an active one, one sly and one bossy; but it's the same idea, that reality is pre-existing, when it is not being filmed, as well as when it is.

That gives a strange effect, because in the scenes where there is a mixture of 16

and 35mm, it's the 16mm that comes off as being cinema, with clear sound; and when it's the 35mm, we have the impression of watching a play, of being in the audience. In the flat, because there is only the 35mm, you no longer have the impression of watching a play, of being in the audience.

Yes, that's what I wanted, to some extent, and that's why I tried to make the 35mm cameras as invisible as possible. We only track three times inside the flat, for completely functional reasons. And the whole technical crew felt very oppressed during the whole shooting, precisely because of that, because I wanted the 35mm camera to be nothing but a completely neutral recorder. I had practically no dealings with anyone but the actors; it was with them that I decided which way to take a scene; then afterwards, I would say, 'Let's put the camera here and "Action!"', checking a bit to see whether what I wanted to show was in frame. Quite often, towards the end, when we were shooting in a great hurry, Levent even did the framing himself. I placed my trust in the technicians but my dialogue was solely with the actors.

In any case, the role of the 16mm camera wasn't really premeditated. Of course I had seen that it came across as 'cinema'. And I was even sort of pleased when Jean-Pierre talked about having seen the rushes of Labarthe's programme. At one point, I'd even thought of filming him looking at those rushes; then I changed my mind – since he was saying it anyway, there was no need to film it.

You talk about a film within a film, but actually it is more a film outside a film. When you see a camera in a film, you usually get the impression that it is an element of the film that you're watching. But here, on the contrary, one gets the impression that there is a generalised sickness called the cinema and that it all centres itself in the 16mm camera. The 35mm camera, which was the intruder, isn't any longer; we no longer 'feel' it, and now it's the 16mm that gives a strong impression of being the intruder.

That is to the extent that the 16mm camera is active, while the 35mm camera tries to be as passive as it can be, with even a hypocritical side to it. From time to time it moves around a bit, but independently of what it is filming, in accordance with a principle which I didn't invent, of setting up the movement of the camera completely independently of what is being filmed and then letting the camera operator take care of adapting them to each other. But as I said, it's an old trick. And I never did that inside the flat.

Moreover, there is a very 'shocking' moment when you see 16mm shots somewhere other than the theatre, at Marta's place. It makes you feel as though it's a scandal, as though Labarthe had entered into the 35mm film; you even wonder for a minute whether he might be Marta's lover.

That was just a little bit that I put in right at the end of the editing; it's the continuation of the interviews with Marta which were begun at the theatre, in the dressing-room, then in the stalls and then in the bistro. When I edited, I dropped the interview at her place because it didn't add anything; or rather, it added too much.

But I felt like keeping those shots for purely visual reasons. I wanted to have something between Bulle's telephone call to Marta, asking her to meet her, and Bulle going into the bistro; and since it would have been a bad place to have more theatre, it had to continue with the idea of Marta. So those shots were just put in to have a break; obviously, when it was screened, we realised the enormity of it, but since we hadn't really chosen to have it like that, we left it, as something we had just learned.

But uncertainty is still permitted. Every second time I see the film, I get the impression that Labarthe is trying to make his way into Marta's life, that he is making an opening gambit. Then other times I get the feeling he is just there to continue his documentary, because Marta interests him professionally and not because he has noticed that she seems to be unattached at the moment.

Actually, the uneasiness is mainly caused by the fact that these shots are in 16mm and that at this point they concern the 'fiction' and connote 'film', while usually they connote 'theatre' . . .

In any case, it is kept in solely in order to have spaces of time, oppositions of décors and of characters; while the oppositions of material are just submitted to. I couldn't do any more about whether it was 16mm or 35mm, so I had to accept it as a fact which was independent of my will, like the atmosphere or unplanned noise due to using direct sound. All of that is part of the material we have to work from, which we must take as it is.

My only thought during the editing was that certain things existed which had been filmed, that some film existed and that editing consisted in knowing not what you would like to have said but what the film itself said, which might bear no relation to what you had planned. Editing is seeking the affinities which come to exist between those various moments in film, which exist completely on their own. The fact that at one time there was a camera in front of some people, which made them act in a certain way, and everything they may have thought or said or done at that time no longer has any importance. It is dead and gone; the only thing that counts is what remains, and what remains is a crystallisation of it, which is the rushes. And I never tire of looking at the rushes; I can spend days and days with them before I start to edit, and the first splice always feels like a sacrilege. Because we are doing them violence in forcing them to be set out in one order rather than another. That's also why I like to take a very long time editing so that there is time to go round and round it and to go back to the shots which have been cut, the re-takes, the out-takes, and to try to understand what they have to say as well. It's the moment when you pass from the stage of raw recorded reality into the dimensions of a film: that's the point where you have the greatest responsibility, because that is when the film – whether you like it or not – is going to start to 'say' something. But it, itself, must say it, not me nor anyone else.

For *L'Amour fou*, it was very exciting, because on that basis there was enough to play about with for a good long time. I was ready to demolish completely the original order of things – and some things which weren't really planned for any specific

place when we were shooting got moved all around. We had fun moving them about until they seemed to be in place, until they seemed to want to stay where they were. I had started by putting together the main 35mm skeleton in the same order as the scenario, and it was dreadful, terribly boring. Then I waited for the blown-up 16mm without touching a thing, letting the film sleep for almost two months. Then we started out again, reconstructing it little by little on the basis of extracts of the 16mm film; without the 16mm the film couldn't be put together, it was nothing. We might have got there in the end, but we would certainly have had to cut out a lot for it to be worth watching.

The 16mm brought in suspense. And when Louis Marcorelles accuses me of having been a traitor to the spirit of 16mm and to *cinéma-vérité* and going over to the Hitchcock camp, he's right. It's actually *cinéma-vérité* completely turned away from its deepest nature and placed in the service of an idea of the cinema which may basically be closer to Hitchcock than to Renoir. The suspense brought in by the 16mm made it possible to give the shots back the power they had in the rushes and which they lost in the end-to-end; some shots still didn't get back the strength they had in the rushes. But in every film, whether it is very *mise en scène* or very documentary, I've always noticed this wasting away of strength with regard to the rushes.

Is that a condemnation of editing?

No, I do think one must edit. I think that everyone has been tempted to show the rushes to people as they are – Godard, Eustache and Garrel and certainly in the past Renoir – but for the time being, I still think it would be an unprofitable easy way out and that rushes left as they are would gradually wither away and die.

When you talk about suspense brought in by the 16mm, you aren't just thinking about what relates to the 'fiction', but also about the very nature of the 16mm within the 35mm.

Yes, the 16 kept the 35 going, visually and dynamically. It was a different quality of image and in a different gear. For example, the second week – which is the part of the film which centres round Claire – was a complete failure in the end-to-end. And suddenly, by tiny injections of 16mm, it began to have a meaning. It can't really be explained: there was just too much 35mm at once. The only time that the 16mm film would have been incongruous is during the two days that Bulle and Jean-Pierre spend together in the flat: the idea there is to have everything on the same level for half an hour.

For what happens during those two days, had you written something down?

No, nothing. In the thirty pages of the scenario, there was just: 'At this point, there is a scene which will be whatever it will be', or something like that. We filmed it in one day, at the end of the filming in the flat. We had talked about this passage among

ourselves, but not very much; it was a sort of reward we were saving for the last, that we were almost afraid to talk about. At the start, we were going to have two or three days, then we got behind and we only had one day of shooting left, so that it was absolutely wild when we did it. The same lighting for everything, the camera moving about at top speed in all directions, shots where all of a sudden everyone had to hide because Jean-Pierre was moving in a direction that hadn't been planned at all and Levent only just managed to catch him. All we knew was that these two days would be based on the idea of childishness – two days when they are brother and sister – regression to childhood. We even felt like going a lot further in that direction, right into scatological humour, with a really childish spirit. There are still a few things left in that vein, like 'kaka-pipi' written on the wall, but it's very slight. We didn't have time to take it further. In any case, the basic idea was: they are four years old. Thinking about it later, it's the idea behind *Monkey Business*. I mention that Jean-Pierre was full of ideas in that area. He also wanted to pay homage to Laurel and Hardy with a yoghurt and cottage cheese duel, but unfortunately there wasn't enough time to film it. They were very tired at the end of all this nearly constant action and, since they were tired, we filmed tiredness, but that hadn't been planned at all. They had used up so much energy scribbling on the walls and rolling in the sheets and demolishing the door! After that, all I had to do was to bring the Mitchell camera over in front of them and film their exhaustion.

At that time, had you seen *Daisies*?

No, not yet. In any case, it really is the custard pie of the so-called new cinema. Since then I've seen lots of them: *Herostratus*, *The Happening*, *Sept jours ailleurs* . . . And yet destruction is the oldest theme of the cinema: it's Mack Sennett, it's burlesque. These are the things you necessarily come back to – all the more so since we weren't for a minute trying to be original. We were doing what obviously had to be done, what went without saying. They felt like covering themselves in paint, so they did . . .

But all of that is rhythmically punctuated by violent and repeated sexual acts which go against the idea of 'a return to childhood'.

Yes, there were times when Jean-Pierre began to forget the basic assumption. Although, infantile sexuality . . .

In any case, quite often during the film there is a very clear mother-child relationship between them.

Yes, that happened all by itself, like something so obvious that it wasn't worth bothering to plan. We even cut out or decided not to film some things on that theme. At the end, when Jean-Pierre is alone in the flat, we had planned that he would actually be in the foetal position, and then we didn't do it because it wasn't necessary.

But there is already an allusion to that in the film when Beneyton plays the death of Orestes . . .

Yes, and – precisely – that happened all by itself during the rehearsals. It wasn't worth repeating it.

What do you think of the way the actors play Racine?

I must admit that the fact that Racine is recited in a very abrupt, often awkward manner gives it extraordinary power. Otherwise, for it to come across, it would have to be played magnificently by brilliant actors. But here I find that there is a sort of brutality in the Racine line which turns up suddenly, hesitantly, when you least expect it.

There is a completely barbarous side to *Andromaque* itself as a play; it isn't at all a fine and elegant play and all the other clichés one could say about Racine.

Exactly, the play has an extraordinary savagery. At the start, our idea was to take an old stand-by from the French repertory, even though we knew, having read Barthes, that Racine was, well, really something. And then, when we re-read the play, we really found it fantastic; even Dennis and Yves, who at the start would have preferred us to do a play by Artaud, for example, got all enthusiastic as soon as readings began. For Jean-Pierre and myself, this contact of the actors, word by word, with the text, which is marvellous, was a revelation. That's what's exciting in that sort of work: it's when you're forced to follow the lines word for word that you realise each line is full of incredible wickedness and savagery and clarity and daring. He really is a mad writer, one of the great sick authors of French literature.

A true performance of Racine would be just as nearly unbearable as the Living Theatre's *Antigone*; but by completely different means, without playing at all on physical actions. And really, what would be ideal would be for the words to have the same violence as the actions in the Living Theatre's plays: words that hurt, that torture. What also struck us, right from the first reading, was to what extent it is a play about regression. It starts with men, who are talking about politics, and continues with women who start to talk about their love problems and then, little by little, the adult characters disappear and the fifth act is really the act of the *enfants terribles*, which can only lead to childish actions, to suicide and madness. And when Michèle and Jean-Pierre talk about the 'unplayable' side of Racine, they really did mean it. They said in front of the cameras what we had been saying to each other every evening.

Had you thought about Hitchcock when you were making the film?

Beforehand, very little. I knew that certain bits should be filmed from a sort of Hitchcock-like point of view, but I thought they would be a sort of nasty tangle quite independent from the rest of the film, and they even frightened me a bit, during and afterwards, because I had no idea whether they would clash with the rest. Apart

from which I didn't think about him any more until the day we went to see *Marnie* again, when we had almost finished filming, when the relations, so to speak, seemed obvious to us . . . But it may be that any film we might have gone to see in the mood we were in would have struck us in the same way. When it's like that, you project on to everything that you come across . . .

Was this intensity which the theatre has throughout the film, and which almost counterbalances what is going on between Kalfon and Bulle, actually intended?

Yes, I wanted the two things to be as interesting as each other, equally, if possible. The story is about someone who is torn between two places, two separate enclosures, one where he rehearses and the other where he is trying to save – so to speak – the couple which he forms with his wife, without anyone being able to tell whether it is because the couple is not working out that the play is not working out or vice versa. In fact, for him, it's all connected; he is caught in a muddle, being pushed into a corner from both sides.

Listening to you, one gets the impression that Sébastien is the main character . . .

It's true, he is the central character. But in the same way that there is a balance for him between the theatre and the flat, I wanted there to be a balance between the two of them. But the point of departure was that we were only to see her in relation to him. What we see of Claire is perhaps only Sébastien's own idea of her: there are passages about her, especially towards the end, where one may think that he is imagining it all. In any case, it is necessarily a man's idea of a woman.

For me, what crystallised it at the beginning was the idea of Pirandello's life, because he lived for fifteen years with his wife, who was mad. The scene with the pin comes straight from Pirandello's life. I had read it three months before in the programme notes of one of his plays which I'd been to see – I don't remember which – *She Wanted to Find Herself*, I think. Obviously, the same thing that had taken fifteen years couldn't happen in three weeks; it didn't have the same weight or the same meaning, and I didn't feel I had the strength, or even the desire, to make a film where the woman would really be mad. So this would only be a crisis, a bad patch, as everyone has. And that's when it became clear that she would be no more mad than he was and even that of the two he was clearly the one who was more sick. The main feeling was also expressed in a sentence from Pirandello that I happened to find when I was reading a bit before starting to write anything at all, which I had even copied out at the beginning of the scenario: 'I have thought about it and we are all mad.' It's what people commonly say, but the beauty is precisely in stopping to think about it.

This transfer of madness from one character to another comes from *Lilith* as well.

Yes, of course, but *Lilith* is a film that cuts across so many preoccupations that we all have . . . I noticed that after a few days. I realised that I was also kind of doing a remake of *Lilith*. But actually I thought about ten different films. One must never

hesitate to plagiarise. There again, Renoir is right.

What function do you give to the three scenes of rehearsals at Sébastien's flat?

I think these are rather important scenes, because it is the intrusion of the theatre upon Claire, while excluding her even more than the fact that she isn't participating in the play. Not only is she pushed out of the theatre, but the theatre comes and chases her right into her refuge.

Apart from records and the transistor radio, there is only one moment in the film when there is music, just before the end, at a point which is unlike any other part of the film. Did you decide in advance to place it at that spot, when Sébastien is taking a long walk by himself, and only at that spot?

I really valued this passage at the end of the film when Jean-Pierre comes back out, when we should have a feeling of false liberation and then where this feeling of liberation would gradually subside. I would have liked to do some more clever things at that point, playing on changes of location or changes of lighting, night falling. I couldn't. I had to film quite simply Jean-Pierre walking, with a few silly transition shots so that it could be edited. And in any case, it was a musical moment. So I felt like having music there and not elsewhere. On the one hand, I knew it was a film which had to play on total realism of sound, with maybe a few very brief punctuations, which I decided to drop after talking about it to Jean-Claude Eloy, because he convinced me it would just be useless 'boom-boom-booming'. And then, just because there wasn't any music at all, I thought there had to be some important music at some point, because all rules should be broken once, and also, for it to take off, for the passage really to soar, to go beyond the rest, to the other side . . . I wanted this passage not only to have music, but, to borrow a term from Boulez, for the music to be the carrying wave, with the image being a simple accompaniment, almost accidental, with no importance.

That's precisely the impression one gets: that during the filming this passage was conceived as being accompanied by music.

It didn't exactly seem indispensable when we were shooting, but very quickly, as soon as we had started editing, as soon as I started talking with Jean-Claude. At first, I had planned to have tiny bits of music here and there in the film and then suddenly a great burst, a block of music which would then subside completely at the end. When the music comes, dialogue has already been dead for some time: there was Françoise's telephone call to announce Claire's departure, then the conversation between the two of them at the station, where the degree of reality is already becoming more improbable, and then a few more indistinct lines in the dressing-room, and Jean-Pierre's muttering when he is walking along humming a theme of Otis Redding's. After the music, all that is left is pure sounds, and at the end the cries of a child, which are completely accidental and not at all premeditated, recorded in synch with the last shot. The music had to come not last, but next to last.

In the same way that Sébastien's walk is also a false ending?

Right from the start, this film is full of false endings. It is a film that won't stop ending. That's why it lasts so long.

But there is music at another point in the film: when Sébastien is sleeping, before the scene with the pin, one hears a sort of spluttering.

That isn't instrumental music – it's Zen priests. And that comes back in several places, but I wanted it to be very faint and it got a bit lost during the re-recording: it really is on the edge of perception, almost like infra-sound. During the titles, for example, the sound of the train changes into Zen priests, with a few gusts of folk music, drops of water, and all these elements going round in a loop. All that is very roughly inspired by *Telemusik*, obviously. Because formally the great ambition of the film was to seek an equivalent in the cinema for Stockhausen's recent research: this mixture of what is constructed and what is by chance, which also necessarily implies duration. And the other musical 'model' for the film – but this one is even more distant, unfortunately – was *Sgt Pepper* . . .

Was it Stravinsky for *Paris nous appartient*?

No, Bartok. This slightly decadent romanticism, this aspect which was meant to be grating, was intentional. The origin of *Paris nous appartient* – and this may seem a bit pretentious or even monstrous – was the Budapest crisis at the end of 1956. Just after *Le Coup du berger*, I'd written some scripts that Rossellini was to produce, of which, luckily, none was filmed, and it's one of those that I went back to and modified completely, six months later, in the spring of '57. It seems idiotic, but because of that, it was connected with Bartok.

How do you now see *Paris nous appartient*?

I haven't seen it again for a long time and I'm very much afraid of seeing it again. I wanted too much to film it to be able to disown it, but with perspective on it I am very unhappy about the dialogue, which I find atrocious. I still like the idea of the film, including the naïve aspects of it; I like the way it's constructed, the way the characters go from one décor to another and the way they move among themselves. I don't even mind the fact that the plot is rather unpolished, but the style of the dialogue and the resulting style of acting bother me prodigiously. I thought when I was writing it that it was counter to Aurenche and Bost, but I realise that it's the same thing – dialogue for effects, in the worst sense of the term. The lines are saved by certain of the actors; some make them worse – but they are terribly pleased with themselves, and I can't stand that any more. Even the theatre scenes are conventional and that's what made me want to show the theatre in another way.

In any case, that's nothing special. All films are about the theatre, there is no other

subject. That's choosing the easy way, of course, but I am more and more convinced that one must do the easy things and leave the difficult things to pedants. If you take a subject which deals with the theatre to any extent at all, you're dealing with the truth of the cinema: you're carried along. It isn't by chance that so many of the films we love are first of all about that subject, and you realise afterwards that all the others – Bergman, Renoir, the good Cukors, Garrel, Rouch, Cocteau, Godard, Mizoguchi – are also about that. Because that is the subject of truth and lies, and there is no other in the cinema: it is necessarily a questioning about truth, with means that are necessarily untruthful. Performance as the subject. Taking it as the subject of a film is being frank, so it must be done.

Isn't that a bit like taking the cinema directly as the subject of the cinema?

There have been many attempts in the cinema to make films on the cinema and it doesn't work as well; it is more laborious and comes off as affectation. It doesn't have the same force, maybe because there is only one level. It's the cinema contemplating itself, while if it looks at the theatre, it is already contemplating something else: not itself but its elder brother. Of course, it's another way of looking at itself in a mirror, but the theatre is the 'polite' version of the cinema. It's the face it takes when it is communicating with the public; while a film crew is a conspiracy, completely closed in upon itself, and no one has yet managed to film the reality of the conspiracy. There is something infamous, something profoundly debauched about cinema work. Maybe it should be filmed in a more critical manner, or a more violent manner, the way Garrel films his 'scene of the crime'. In any case, it's very difficult. Even 8½ stops before the film is begun; the fact that Mastroianni may be about to start shooting his film forces Fellini to end his.

Independently of all that, don't you think that what modern film directors – or those who have always been modern, like Renoir – are more and more interested in is something in common between the theatrical setting and the setting as it comes into modern cinema? When you see *Persona* or Garrel's films, you can't help asking yourself about the setting.

Whether the setting is pre-existent? Whether the film is an exploration of the setting? All I can say, empirically, is that in *L'Amour fou*, if the décors had been different, everything would have been fundamentally different, and first of all there is an operation of taming and exploring these two décors. We tried to show the flat in different dramatic situations: familiar, strange, tidy, messy, demolished, welcoming, hostile; and on the contrary, to show the theatre décor as completely immobile, since it is totally artificial. We were quite comfortable in that décor, because it was very large and very cosy at the same time. You could feel the lines of force in that place, which I really liked; each time I went back there, I felt good. While in the flat, it completely depended on what you made of it.

At the first and the last shots, with the stage and the blank screen, one gets the impression that the setting is tending to absorb the film, that space is devouring . . .

Precisely: 'Nothing will have taken place but the place itself'. Besides that, this beginning and ending were done to tie up the parcel, to try to find a bit of an equivalent – a purely functional one, based on the theatre – to the beginning and ending of *Persona*.

That is also what I still like about *Paris nous appartient*, the labyrinth that the décors create among themselves, the idea that one brings away from the film, of a sort of series of settings with relationships between them – some cut off, others communicating, others that are optional itineraries – and people moving about like mice inside these labyrinths, ending up in culs-de-sac or caught nose to nose. Then at the end it all disappears and there's nothing left but this lake and some birds flying away . . . In that, the setting is very, very different from the setting of the beginning – unlike *L'Amour fou* . . .

. . . with this cyclical aspect in that we see Kalfon listening to the tape recorder at the beginning and at the end?

We could have made a film which would simply count off the days of the calendar, from the first day to the last, but I also felt like having it form a circle and the easiest way was the old trick of the flashback.

But which doesn't play the role of a flashback at all . . .

No, purely playing the role of a reminder. It's a sort of homage to Stravinsky, since it's the beginning and ending of lots of Stravinsky, especially *The Flood* or *Canticum*, with the beginning and the end being mirror images of each other. Moreover, afterwards, I realised that lots of things mirrored each other in the film; that's why it doesn't bother me in the slightest to have an interval, because that accentuates the mirror effect.

The two days Jean-Pierre spends in the theatre and the two days he spends shut in the flat, the two conversations with Michèle, Marta and Puck – lots of things are echoes of each other. There are even some that I accentuated a bit once I had decided there should be an interval.

That's what Delahaye very elegantly calls the bow-tie structure. Thus, the interval becomes a very important point in the film . . .

Oh yes, for me the most important point is when everyone goes to take a leak.

At what point did you decide on that?

As soon as I saw the first complete rough-cut version straight through. I got the feeling that, physically, it was unbearable. That was also the reaction of the two editors, and I thought it should be taken into account: we realised that we had followed the first hour fine, the second fairly well, that we completely lost interest in the third hour and that little by little interest revived during the last hour. But one hour was completely lost because of physical fatigue. The interval is also the point

where we pretend to be nice to the viewer and to give him back his freedom. So he does whatever he wants; if he wants to go away, he goes. And I do hope that there will be people who leave, maybe not quite half the audience, but let's say a quarter or a fifth of them, if only to prove that I was right to include an interval. It should be like in the theatre, where you can leave in the middle – which I do, very often. On the other hand, I would like those who stay to stay right through to the end; I even think the doors ought to be locked. Going to see a film must be a contract – an act and a contract. And one of the clauses of the contract is that they have the right to leave during the interval but not at any other time.

Have you tried to shorten the film?

I very soon saw that in any case it would be more than three hours long. But I think its present length – four hours and twelve minutes – is just about the right length and just about the maximum length as well. I have the feeling that there are only five minutes' leeway in either direction, that it would have been wrong to go on longer.

Weren't you tempted to film *Andromaque* straight through?

At the start, this is what was planned. The actors thought they were actually going to play *Andromaque* on the last day, after six days of rehearsals; and we were to film it with two cameras. We gave up the idea because the actors weren't ready and, in any case, we wouldn't have had enough film.

Would you like to film a theatre performance or a play?

I think all directors have wanted to do that but no one ever has. But what would be interesting in filming a play wouldn't be filming it but directing it and maybe writing it.

So how do you see *La Religieuse* between those two films and in relation to the play which you staged?

As a seductive error. At first, I felt like doing it only as an adaptation, in order to get people to know the book; then there was directing the play, and I felt like filming the play and sometimes wanted to see passages of it become a film while still remaining within a theatrical performance. I had even talked to Beauregard about it, but he didn't agree at all; so I cheated a little, which means that for me it remains a film about a play. I wanted to play on the fact that there were some very theatrical passages, which were intentionally played for a theatrical effect, and that sometimes it became more just physical actions and therefore became cinematic. But the edges are too blurred and the theatre passages are more like unsuccessful cinema; it only shows a little in the way the actors play, and especially in the manner of filming, which is very frontal in the 'theatre' parts.

But you weren't able to indicate the presence of the theatre explicitly or at length?

I did it in little things: the three knocks at the beginning, the opening scene where I wanted the spectators at the ceremony to seem like a theatre audience and the ceremony to be filmed as if it were a performance – things like that. But that wasn't enough; we would have needed twice as much time and twice as much money. It's really a film that suffers from trying to seem expensive, when actually it is a film that was done on the cheap, put together with bits of string, where we were constantly up against financial problems. It's a perfect example of an undertaking where you try to retain your original intentions, but where you end up retaining only one out of ten and that one loses its meaning. The only thing which was fun was the problem of the décors, which were done on the opposite principle from that of *Paris nous appartient*. We had to completely build two imaginary convents, with bits of walls, corridors, stairways, filmed here and there within a 40-kilometre radius of Avignon: every time Anna goes through a doorway or we change shots, it means a jump from Villeneuve to the Pont du Gard. It was really like a puzzle, with us joining up the pieces with lighting tricks, doors opening, changes of gear, things like that. But the *place* exists only on the screen, in the film: it is the movement of the film which creates the décor.

The origin of *La Religieuse* was mainly music, the ideas of Boulez – though very badly assimilated. The idea was that each shot had its own duration, its tempo, its 'colour' (that is, its tone), its intensity and its level of play. But most of the time I didn't manage to make all these elements clear because we had first of all to keep filming and we really filmed whatever we could, however we could.

One gets the impression – it particularly struck Jean-Marie Straub – that the film was worked on a great deal during editing.

No, the editing was done very carefully but very quickly. The real editing was the preparation and the shooting. Afterwards, we put the shots end to end, making sharp cuts and cutting the sound very short. From the start, I had planned to have very elaborate sound because it would help me to accentuate the breaks from one 'cell' to the next. The original idea of *La Religieuse* was a play on words: making a 'cellular' film, because it was about cells full of nuns.

How did you work with Jean-Claude Eloy? Before shooting the film?

After shooting. Very closely. I knew basically before shooting that this or that shot would be put to music and would only make sense if it lasted exactly the same length of time as a piece of music. Then, at the movieola, we looked at the film together, shot by shot, and with Denise de Casabianca and Jean-Claude we discussed together the entire sound construction of the film, not only where there was music but also where there wasn't. The soundtrack thus became an entire score. In any case, the idea was that we would try to have as little music as possible, to relieve it with atmosphere, with more or less made-up sounds, with varying degrees from pure direct sound to pure music, with all the other variations in between, such as real

sounds mixed together, slowed down, backwards, with percussion instruments, more or less clear, loops of music at varying speeds. And when we really had no other choice, Jean-Claude agreed to write music for that part; the idea being that we would be as stingy as possible with the music, but that there would be music throughout and that its role would become more and more pronounced and clear as the film progressed, with the principal piece of music being just before the end, during the big scene between Anna and Rabal, which is the real ending of the film, the scene where Suzanne suddenly understands – and where the spoken word is completely caught up in the music and becomes an element of it.

Did Eloy see his music in relation to a particular shot as forming a global cell, or did he base it on one of those elements of the shot that you were talking about – timbre, pitch . . . ?

He wrote all the music with an eye to this main musical passage (which, in *Macles**, begins and ends it), with the rest all being developments of certain parts of that main passage, written more for one instrument or another, depending upon the shot and also depending upon the real sound which we had, which we always kept, beneath the music. All the sounds were noted and integrated into his score.

There is a marked resemblance between the character of Suzanne as you have described her – a character who is deluded during nine-tenths of the film and who understands everything at the end – and that of Claire.

You know, without trying to impose 'Rivettian' themes, one could say the same thing about the woman in *Le Coup du berger* or of Anne in *Paris nous appartient*. It was only on the last day of mixing that it suddenly struck me, and I finally understood why I'd been wanting to make *La Religieuse* for so long, when I realised that it was a repetition of *Paris nous appartient*: exactly the same subject, with better dialogue! And even *Le Coup du berger*, as well: in that one, I wanted to try to give as much weight as possible to an everyday anecdote, in such a way that the end would almost be felt to be tragic. It was greatly inspired by *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, obviously; and the dialogue attempted to take its inspiration from Cocteau – who is the great secret inspiration of French film directors, what *Lola*, Truffaut, some Godard and now Garrel have in common.

It took me five years to make *La Religieuse* and I filmed it with much more perspective and coolness, quite certainly, than if I had done it straight away. The idea wasn't to do an adaptation but that there was no *auteur* at all. More and more I think there is no *auteur* in films and that a film is something which pre-exists in its own right. It is only interesting if you have this feeling that the film pre-exists and that you are trying to reach it, to discover it, taking precautions to avoid spoiling it or deforming

* Concerto for zarb and instrumental ensemble written by Jean-Claude Eloy from the musical elements of *La Religieuse*, made up of fixed structures, interchangeable sequences and actual trills by the soloist.

it. And that's why it is so nice to make a film like *L'Amour fou*, where we could talk among ourselves about the film the way we would talk about someone who wasn't there but whom we would like to see. After a while, *La Religieuse* was no longer an adaptation of Diderot at all: I got the feeling that I had so completely assimilated the book that it no longer existed as a literary work – I was really trying to rediscover Suzanne Simonin. Of course there was a pre-existing text, but precisely, it existed as a text, as a reality which was completely independent of the existence of an author named Diderot; and it was something which had to be accepted with its variations, its reality as a written text, contradicting any idea of fiction (which was, at the same time, connected to the switch from the first person to the third person), all the while knowing that what I wanted to get at was also something beyond this text, as it is also beyond the film. And Anna was the medium for that.

Isn't that a very different point of view from that of the *mise en scène* of the play?

Yes, I think it came just after the play, as a reaction. I knew from the start that Anna would be playing the part, but it became much stronger with the play, where she saved the whole miserable botched-up show. I had never seen that happen in the theatre. The temptation was to try to do the same thing again in a film, but that wasn't possible; and, doing the film, we suffered from the fact that there wasn't the same excitement as in the theatre. But the film had to be this hostile and disagreeable thing, this machine which imprisons Suzanne.

One feels this commitment in the visual elements, especially the metallic aspect of the colour.

That's the only idea I had of it to start with. I knew I wanted contrasts to be as violent as possible; then again, when we printed, we tried to accentuate the hardness of the image even more. We didn't quite manage, first of all because we would have needed arc lights and also because Eastman colour is always very pretty and pastel. We should have printed in Technicolor to have really hard blacks or blues.

One thing which is present in your first three films but absent from *L'Amour fou* is money.

At the start, I had expected the money question to come up, at least for the theatre, and then we were fed up, we felt like going wild. It was obvious to us that these were people who were pretty broke, even though they were lucky enough to live in a fairly big flat – but I think they rented it furnished. It's quite clear that they are camping there – and they have a little money because he puts on plays occasionally and she acts from time to time. I had planned to have a guy come and bother her occasionally, and remind her that they'd have to start on such-and-such a date, that they'd have to hurry, etc., but then the idea of shooting these scenes seemed so boring . . .

Tell us about your work with Bulle Ogier. Her acting is very different here from what it is in Marc'O's *Les Idoles* . . .

I played particularly on her anxiety; I spent most of my time making sure she wasn't too sure of herself, that she hadn't learned her texts too well. Most of the time, she starts with a text – in which, by the way, there are as many of her ideas as of mine – a text that she has read a certain number of times, but not completely assimilated. So there were great differences from one take to the next.

A lot of people who have seen the film are very surprised to learn that Bulle and Kalfon aren't a couple in real life.

It seemed to me that it would be impossible to make a film about a couple played by two actors who didn't already know each other quite well; but, on the other hand, I would have found it very difficult to make it with two actors who *were* a real couple. It was already partially a psychodrama, where they have necessarily given some of themselves and if they were a real couple doing that together, I would have felt very guilty and quite upset. I was lucky that there was a certain complicity between them in real life and a shared vocabulary . . .

Do you believe that the cinema is useful? Or that a revolutionary cinema can exist?

I think revolutionary cinema can only be a 'differential' cinema, a cinema which questions all the rest of cinema. But in France, in any case, in relation to a possible revolution, I don't believe in a revolutionary cinema of the first degree, which is satisfied with taking the revolution as its subject. A film like *Terra em transe** which does take the revolution as its subject is also really a revolutionary film; it's always stupid to make assumptions, but I don't think that could exist in France now. Films that content themselves with taking the revolution as a subject actually subordinate themselves to bourgeois ideas of content, message, expression. While the only way to make revolutionary cinema in France is to make sure that it escapes all the bourgeois aesthetic clichés: like the idea that there is an *auteur* of the film, expressing himself. The only thing we can do in France at the moment is to try to deny that a film is a personal creation. I think *Playtime* is a revolutionary film, in spite of Tati: the film completely overshadowed the creator. In films, what is important is the point where the film no longer has an *auteur*, where it has no more actors, no more story even, no more subject, nothing left but the film itself speaking and saying something that can't be translated: the point where it becomes the discourse of someone or something else, which cannot be said, precisely because it is beyond expression. And I think you can only get there by trying to be as passive as possible at all the various stages, never intervening on one's own behalf but rather on behalf of this something else which is nameless.

But that is something that very often happens, for example in Bergman, even though he is on the contrary very active, a real demiurge.

That's true, but I still get the impression that Bergman is someone who writes

* 1967 film by Glauber Rocha. (Ed)

scripts without asking himself questions about the meaning of what he is writing. People have often talked about the commonplace elements in *Persona*, for example; but what is important in *Persona* is precisely that beyond all those elements which Bergman started off with, he hasn't kept that 'something else' coming through. Maybe it's precisely because he doesn't question what he feels like filming that he does film that way. In a sense, he accepts being only an intermediary; Bergman's films are something completely different from Bergman's vision of the world, which interests no one. What speaks in Bergman's films isn't Bergman but the film, and that's what is revolutionary, because that is what seems to me to question very deeply everything that justifies the world as it is and as it disgusts us.

But don't we then end up back with the idea of an *auteur* strong enough to let the film speak for itself?

Not necessarily – I think there are a lot of methods. Bergman's 'genius' is a method, but the absence of genius can also be just as effective a method. The fact of being a collective, for example . . .

Don't you think that's a myth?

No, I don't think so. Of course I know that the effect would have been completely different with Bulle and Jean-Pierre and a different director, apart from any question of talent or anything else. It has nothing to do with that; it's an aggregate of almost physical or biological reactions; it has nothing to do with intelligence.

Maybe there is one more point to mention about Bergman: the fact that he works with his 'family', with the same people, that he doesn't write his scripts in the abstract and then afterwards wonder: 'Who on earth could I use? Sophia Loren isn't free; I know, I'll take Liv Ullmann . . .' It's like Renoir, who only wrote scenarios for people he'd chosen beforehand. Maybe it's only at that level that a collective can exist. In any case, Renoir is the person who has understood the cinema best of all, even better than Rossellini, better than Godard, better than anyone.

What about Rouch?

Rouch is contained in Renoir. I don't know whether Renoir saw Rouch's films, but if he saw them, I'm sure that, first of all, he'd find them 'stunning', and that on the other hand he wouldn't find them stunning at all. Rouch is the force behind all French cinema of the past ten years, although few people realise it. Jean-Luc Godard came from Rouch. In a way, Rouch is more important than Godard in the evolution of the French cinema. Godard goes in a direction that is only valid for himself, which doesn't set an example, in my opinion. Whereas all Rouch's films are exemplary, even those where he failed, even *Les Veuves de quinze ans*. Jean-Luc doesn't set an example, he provokes. He provokes reactions, either of imitation or of contradiction or of rejection, but he can't strictly be taken as an example. While Rouch or Renoir can be.

Do you believe that a cinema which takes directly political elements for its theme has the power to mobilise people?

Less and less. I believe more and more that the role of the cinema is to destroy myths, to demobilise, to be pessimistic. Its role is to take people out of their cocoons and to plunge them into horror.

One can do that very well using the revolution as a theme.

Yes, but on the condition that the revolution is just a theme like any other. The only interesting film on the May 'events' (obviously, I haven't seen them all) is one about the return to the Wonder factories, filmed by students at IDHEC – because it is a terrifying and painful film. It's the only film that was really revolutionary. Maybe because it's a moment when reality is transforming itself at such a rate that it starts to condense a whole political situation into ten minutes of wild dramatic intensity. It's a fascinating film, but one couldn't say that it mobilises people at all, or if it does, it's by provoking a reflex reaction of horror and rejection. Really, I think that the only role of the cinema is to upset people, to contradict structures which pre-shadow those ideas: it must ensure that the cinema is no longer comfortable. More and more, I tend to divide films into two sorts: those that are comfortable and those that aren't. The former are all vile and the others positive to a greater or lesser degree. Some films I've seen, on Flins or Saint-Nazaire*, are pitifully comfortable; not only do they change nothing, but they also make the audience feel pleased with themselves. It's like *Humanité*† demonstrations.

Obviously, it's difficult to believe in political films which think that by showing 'reality' it will denounce itself.

I think that what counts isn't whether it is fiction or non-fiction, it's the attitude that the person takes at the moment when he is filming; for example, whether or not he accepts direct sound. In any case, the fiction is actually direct sound, because there is still the point when you are filming. And with direct sound, ninety times out of a hundred, since people know they are being filmed, they probably start to base their reactions on that fact, and so it becomes almost super-fiction. All the more so because the director then has complete freedom to use the material that's been filmed: to tighten up, to keep the long bits, to choose, not to choose, with the sound faked or not. And that is the real political moment.

Do you think the film-maker takes a moral position with regard to what he is filming?

Without any doubt, that's all there is. First, with regard to the people he is filming,

* Flins and Saint-Nazaire: two major factories where there were strikes and sit-ins in May 1968. (trans.)

† *Humanité* – France's Communist newspaper (trans.)

and then again with regard to the audience, in the way he chooses to communicate to them what he has filmed. But all films are political. In any case, I maintain that *L'Amour fou* is a deeply political film. It is political because the attitude we all had during the filming and then during the editing corresponds to moral choices, to ideas on human relationships, and therefore to political choices.

Which are communicated to the audience?

I hope so. The will to make a scene last in one way and not in another – I find that a political choice.

So it's a very general idea of politics . . .

But politics is extremely general. It's what corresponds to the widest-ranging point of view one can have regarding existence. *La Marseillaise* is a film that is directly political, but so very different from a film like *Toni*, which is indirectly political, and even from *Boudu*, which doesn't seem to be political at all. While actually *Boudu* is a completely political film: it is a great film of the left. Almost all Renoir's films are more or less directly political, even those that are the least explicitly political, like *Madame Bovary* and *Le Testament du Docteur Cordelier*. I think what is most important *politically* is the attitude the film-maker takes with regard to all the aesthetic – or rather, so-called aesthetic – criteria which govern art in general and cinematic expression, in triple inverted commas, in particular. One can refine down afterwards, within the choices one has made, but that is what counts first of all. And what counted first of all for us, for Jean-Pierre and myself, him for *Andromaque*, me for the film, was the rejection of the idea of entertainment, and on the contrary the idea of an ordeal either imposed on or at least proposed to the viewer – who is no longer the comfortable viewer, but someone who participates in common work – long, difficult, responsible work something like delivering a baby. But it's a sort of work that always has to be done again, this work of denying entertainment. There is a perpetual co-opting taking place or which always might take place, of the preceding stage, which is immediately taken up from an aesthetic point of view or a contemplative point of view: the prudent distance of people who won't let themselves be caught twice, which is the basic attitude of all Western audiences.

And it is precisely the fear of always being co-opted which makes this desire to deny entertainment limitless. Films like Bergman's or like Godard's are actually only superficially co-opted by this sort of Parisian habit which makes it possible to take films in by saying 'Oh, yes, of course, the theme of the absence of God', and various other stupid remarks like that. This superficial co-opting does oblige the director to go further in the following film, to try once and for all to show that it isn't a question of the absence of God or anything else, but of being suddenly confronted with everything one rejects, by will or by force.

What do you think of Garrel's films, from that point of view?

In my opinion, they correspond exactly to what one should expect of the cinema today. That is, that a film must be, if not an ordeal, at least an experience, something which makes the film transform the viewer, who has undergone something through the film, who is no longer the same after having seen the film. In the same way that the people who made the film really offered up troubling personal things, the viewer must be upset by seeing the film; the film must make his habits of thought go off their beaten tracks: so that it can't be seen with impunity.

But, precisely, intelligent people who don't like Garrel accuse him of having a conception of art as a 'primal scream' and of making films which aren't very far from Hitchcock's, a cinema of fascination, a hypnotic cinema which, in the end, seems very old-fashioned.

I wondered quite a bit whether one could create a 'distanced' cinema, and basically I don't think so. The cinema is necessarily fascination and rape, that is how it acts on people; it is something pretty unclear, something one sees shrouded in darkness, where you project the same things as in dreams: that is where the cliché becomes true.

What about Straub?

That's another sort of fascination, which is not contradicted by the intellectual tension he requires, but on the contrary is connected to it – actually very similar to the great amount of work we sometimes do in a dream in order to follow it. But fantasy is not necessarily fascination; it can have lots of dimensions.

What is sure is that we are attacking a whole conception of the cinema based on communication and ease of communication.

Which is actually theatre. It is admirable, but I believe it's incompatible with what the cinema is becoming; literally, in any case.

But in American cinema there's an abundance of examples – Lubitsch, the Chaplin of *Verdoux* – based on the fact that you could tell people things while seeming to tell them something else.

Maybe it's everything which, for the time being, seems to be impossible, not because it was harmful or bad in itself, but because it has been co-opted; it's become docile.

Can't we just say, 'because it was ineffectual'.

It really has been co-opted in the same way that Racine is co-opted by the Comédie Française. And one can try to save it, but first of all you have to change the rules of the game.

Are you constantly aware of references when you are filming?

No, not at all, really. In any case, not clearly. I just try to follow the logic of what is happening.

Why the title, *L'Amour fou*?

It's purely a play on words; it's based on the multiple meanings of the word *fou*. It's obviously in homage to Breton and to everything he represents. It's a nice title.

And what are you doing now?

I'd really like to be able to finish editing the 16mm film on the rehearsals: to have another film as a footnote to the film. What might be fun now would be to watch the film, then to watch the 16mm film, then to watch the film again. I think that would give a different idea of everything that happens in *Andromaque*, and maybe in the rest as well. It's also the only way to justify the idea of a 'shortened version': propose to the viewer a different angle of vision on the same original reality and see what happens, what that modifies, how perspectives change . . .

Translated by Amy Gateff

Interview with Jacques Rivette from *La Nouvelle Critique*, No 63 (244), April 1973*

Jacques Rivette has made four films (or five if, as we shall see, the last may be counted as double): *Paris nous appartient*, *La Religieuse*, *L'Amour fou* and *Out/Spectre*. The first two, to simplify slightly, belong to the *classical* cinema: predominant are a dramaturgy pre-existing the filming, a written text, a 'planned' *découpage*. The films that follow radically modify the function and powers traditionally assigned to the film-maker: here the script is no longer a programme to be carried out, a score to be followed, but a sort of vast fictional trap, simultaneously rigorous and open, designed to orient the improvisation (by actors and technicians), to subject it to certain 'obligatory passages' or to abandon it to a *freé* flow which will acquire its order, its scansion, its proportions only during the final montage, in an ultimate interplay between the inherent logic of the material filmed (its potentialities, its resistances) and the demands of a rational critical organisation. Critical in two ways: of the material filmed (concrete) and of the scheme (abstract) which provided the initial impulse. This attitude, with the principle pushed to its limits, resulted in the birth of a *film-fleuve* with *Out*, undoubtedly one of the longest in the history of the cinema: thirteen hours. Needless to say, under the current distribution system (and with television being what it is where culture is concerned), this film has remained, except on one single and highly successful occasion at the Maison de la Culture in Le Havre, virtually unseen by the public. But *Out* is two films. A 'shorter' version exists, running for approximately four hours, which is not simply a digest of the full version (as was the case, it may be recalled, with the condensed version of *L'Amour fou* disowned by Rivette), but quite literally a reorganisation along new lines of the completely transformed premises: it is another film, a splintered reflection of the first, illuminating, obfuscating, challenging it by suggesting other avenues or angles of approach for anyone who has seen both films, but also working perfectly as an autonomous experience.

A case as systematic as this (two *different* films emerging from the *same* basic material) is, as far as I am aware, unique. It goes without saying that the interview which follows is justified primarily by the intrinsic interest of Rivette's method, since readers of *La Nouvelle Critique* will have seen neither *Out* (thirteen hours) nor *Spectre* (four hours). But through these two films, perforce unavailable for the moment as concrete items of reference for the interview, a whole problematic is adumbrated that is of vital importance today, with Rivette among those who have explored it furthest in both theory and practice: the problem in the cinema (following Rouch, Perrault and a few others) or in music (Cage, Stockhausen) of the relationship between premeditation and improvisation, freedom and restraint (between *chance* and *design*); the problem of *another* function (different, if not less important) for the film-maker and his collaborators, technicians or actors; of new fictional forms arising from this method; of 'direct' cinema and its possibilities, its limits, its risks; of montage; and, more generally, the problem of 'performance'. Furthermore: Rivette's thinking is founded on an extensive, systematic intercourse

* Conducted by Bernard Eisenschitz, Jean-André Fieschi and Eduardo de Gregorio.

with existing cinema in its entirety, both as a heritage that is constantly revalued and restored to its proper perspective (from Feuillade and Griffith to Godard and Resnais), and as a cultural environment (the cinema developing its form). With this in mind, the interview attempts to introduce a train of thought to be pursued in terms of history and the evolution of forms. These general considerations explain the specific organisation of the text that follows. The first part is devoted to *Out* (and the overall problematic illuminated by that film). The second, more generally, to the cinema today, and to those elements in the cinema today that constitute for Rivette what Pierre Boulez would call 'a crestline' (Jancsó, Fellini, Straub, Tati, Bergman, etc).

J. A. F.

What is the origin of *Out* (its place in relation to your earlier films)? What part is played by doubt and certainty – or premeditation and chance, for that matter – in the initial stages of a project like this?

It's a sort of offhand synthesis, treated deliberately offhandedly, of contradictory things I had been more or less thinking about for more or less a long time. There was the desire I'd had before *La Religieuse*, and which was aggravated by the filming of *La Religieuse*, to make a film which, instead of being predicated on a central character presented as the conscience reflecting everything that happens in the action, would be a film about a collective, about a group, though in what form I didn't know exactly. One of the only things I did know was that it wasn't going to be set in Paris but in a small provincial town.

A group of young men and women, fluctuating since it was to cover three months, six months, a year, with the theoretical notion – a little too theoretical, actually – that the point was the variations within the group, so that eventually, by the end of the film, the people wouldn't be the same ones as at the beginning, all the members of the group had changed and their relationships had become completely different, with even the group becoming something else again. Finally the idea was left up in the air because I couldn't find an anchoring point for it.

Another desire I had, at variance with the first, was one that came to me much later, possibly in thinking about *Méditerranée*¹ and that type of film. It certainly also came to me in connection with *About Something Else*² and other films based on this principle of parallel narratives. This was the desire to make a film which would not be made up of just two interlocking films but of several, a whole series. Although it isn't a good film, or maybe because of that, I don't really know, I had been struck by

¹ *Méditerranée*: a medium-length film by Jean-Daniel Pollet with a text by Philippe Sollers. A series of images, filmed in various countries around the Mediterranean (a Sicilian garden, a Greek temple, a fisherman, a young girl on an operating table), reappear throughout the film, in a different order each time, held for different lengths of time, constituting a sort of mythical narrative in which each image serves as something like an ideogram. The order of these shots was not predetermined before shooting but established, by trial and error, in the montage.

² *About Something Else*: a Czech film by Vera Chytilova, comprising two parallel stories (one about a gymnast training for a competition, the other about a housewife). These two narratives never meet but are articulated together by a very complex formal interplay of oppositions and connections of various kinds (sound, gesture, rhythm, etc.).

Cayatte's *La Vie conjugale*³. What I liked about it was that when you saw the first film, you thought it was awful, but when you saw the second it began to be interesting. Above all, seeing the second one made you want to see the first again. I very much wanted to make a series of films referring back and forth to each other.

I set out from all these ideas, and when shooting began, it was with the intention of filming material inspired by quite separate characters, so that there would be four completely different 'threads' at the outset, without knowing – I should have known, but I'd avoided asking myself the question – how this material would be edited together. Ultimately, perhaps it would have had to be edited in the form of films independent of each other but referring back and forth, along the lines of *La Vie conjugale*, though instead of having two films showing both sides of the same story, there would have been at least three films whose relationship to each other wouldn't just have been positive and negative, right side and wrong side. But this wasn't a carefully blueprinted project; on the contrary it was a sort of amorphous mixture of more or less bygone impulses that had coagulated in this way.

Several films in one

Anyway, a week before shooting began, I was faced by the need to find some way of representing all this. The situation was becoming urgent if we weren't to waste the six weeks' filming provided for by the budget, so we had to have a planned shooting schedule. I spent two days with Suzanne Schiffman⁴. All one afternoon she asked me questions, saying tell me everything you know. So I told her roughly what I knew, the characters, remembering what each actor had said, what he wanted to do, what we'd talked about in each case⁵.

Suzanne scribbled all this stuff down, filling up thirty or forty pages in a notebook. Then we looked at each other and we said: what are we going to do with all this? We tried to take each character in turn, but nothing came of that, then suddenly I think it was she who had the great idea: we must draw up a bogus chronology – because after all a story does unfold in time – indicating an arbitrary number of weeks and days on the vertical lines, and the names of the characters going the other way. From that moment . . . it was very odd but this sort of grid influenced the film a lot.

The great temptation was, not to fill in all the squares of course, but when you saw from the document that Colin, say, was meeting somebody or other, to think: well now, why shouldn't he meet so-and-so as well? Our idea throughout wasn't so much to have one character meet another, Colin and Thomas, or one actor another, Jean-Pierre Léaud and Michel Lonsdale, and so forth. But it seemed a pity not to have this or that actor at the same time and to have them confront each other for at least twenty minutes to see whether anything happened between them. After that it

³ *La Vie conjugale*: two films by André Cayatte released simultaneously, each telling the story of a couple, one from the woman's point of view, and the other from the man's.

⁴ Associate in various guises (script-girl, assistant director, production assistant) of Truffaut and Godard; played an important role in the preparation and shooting of *Out*.

⁵ The actors contacted were left a very considerable margin of freedom in the choice of their characters and how they developed.

became like a game, like a crossword. Actually it was done very quickly.

Whereas *L'Amour fou* brought into play two individuals and (centring on Jean-Pierre Kalfon) a group of people particularly coherent as a group (being basically Marc'O's company⁶ at that time), by contrast with this I wanted to play on a more heteroclitic, more heterogeneous casting; to play on the heterogeneity, and in fact from my point of view this heterogeneity is much less flagrant than I'd originally planned.

And afterwards, when filming was completed, what was it like compared to your prior idea (or ideas)?

To our way of thinking, the diagram indicated possibilities; it was a way of starting off a film which could be even longer and which could be continued, where the various strands were brought together of a plot that could be continued, with new characters still to turn up later on. We had made up a possible list of all the actors who might be interested in working on a project like this. The ending was deliberately inconclusive. I'd asked Suzanne to plan the work schedule so that during the last few days of shooting, corresponding roughly to the last week in our chronology, we wouldn't be trapped by the grid in everything concerning the ending; this way we could change, rearrange if need be, depending on what happened during filming earlier. In the end I suddenly felt – and Suzanne and the actors eventually agreed – that instead of leaving the story suspended, I wanted to pretend to end it, to make it (relatively speaking) a film with a conclusion. I realised I wouldn't want to carry on with the continuation six months or a year later. It was with this in mind that I filmed the ending, whereas when we were preparing the film it was with a view to it continuing afterwards. That's one thing that happened.

Another was that when we started the editing with Nicole Lubtchansky, faced by all these rushes, we started by sorting them out according to a rough chronology. I still didn't know whether I might not follow the principle of separate films during editing, but then, as we were putting it together, we soon began wanting one particular scene to come after another. We quickly realised that it didn't cut together any old how, in any order. For instance, if you put Juliet Berto's scenes one after another, or did that with Jean-Pierre Léaud's scenes or Michel Lonsdale's – something we never did, actually – it was obvious that they had to be broken up by each other, and that there was in fact another continuity in the intersection of the strands which we had to follow or find.

Some myths . . .

How exactly does the method you used differ from the traditional conceptions of cinema that are still dominant? Several more or less established notions are shaken up in a pretty radical way: 'the director', 'the script', 'the actor' and so on. How?

⁶ A theatrical group, experienced in the techniques of improvisation and the psychodrama, whose productions included *Les Bargasses* and *Les Idoles*. Among the members were Bulle Ogier, Pierre Clémenti, Jean-Pierre Kalfon.

Time was, in a so-called classical tradition of cinema, when the preparation of a film meant first of all finding a good story, developing it, scripting it and writing dialogue; with that done, you found actors who suited the characters and then you shot it. This is something I've done twice, with *Paris nous appartient* and *La Religieuse*, and I found the method totally unsatisfying, if only because it involves such boredom. What I have tried since – after many others, following the precedents of Rouch, Godard and so on – is to attempt to find, alone or in company (I always set out from the desire to make a film with particular actors), a generating principle which will then, as though on its own (I stress the 'as though'), develop in an autonomous manner and engender a filmic product from which, afterwards, a film destined eventually for screening to audiences can be cut, or rather 'produced'.

Now, under all this there are several myths which should of course be flushed out one after the other and challenged.

The first aspect one very often stumbles up against, and about which there is enormous confusion, is the mythology, the myth of what has been called direct cinema, of what has even been called, in an even greater misuse, *cinéma-vérité*. Well, I don't think there is any point in putting *cinéma-vérité* on trial all over again: it's a word, a formula, which has been applied completely mistakenly, because even the films for which this formula was invented were far from corresponding to what the term implies. It isn't worth pursuing, let's just stick to the term 'direct cinema': it's more ambivalent, it's more adaptable. People have long been aware now, though they weren't always, that 'cinema direct' . . . we won't say equals 'cinema lie', but that it has at any rate nothing to do with notions of real or false. It's a technique, not just like any other but a technique all the same, which produces artifice by means other than those of traditional *mise en scène*, but which does, through its very function, produce artificiality. This artificiality is simply designated differently from other cinematic artificialities. But there is no innocence, no candour, no spontaneity attached to direct filming.

Knowing all that, you use this method anyway. Why?

Precisely because that's where direct cinema becomes exciting; from the moment you realise it's a creator of artifice (and not, I repeat, of lies). But one which, by comparison with the traditional method, is more directly in touch with that particular artifice which constitutes the act of *mise en scène*, of filming.

When I say this, I'm probably exaggerating. It is quite clear that the borderline between direct cinema and the cinema of *mise en scène* is a false one, like the old Lumière-Méliès border. What you can say, in fact, is that there you have the two ends of the chain, but it doesn't part anywhere in the middle; you get from one end to the other through a whole series of detours, surprises, circumstances demanding adaptability. In any case, in the two films I've made 'since', I've never felt any desire to use a technique in any purist sense. On the contrary, what interested me – and if I make any more films this is the direction in which I'd like to go – was to see how, within the direct cinema method, it could be used more 'impurely'. Because, in my case anyway, it never is direct cinema properly speaking; it remains a technique very

closely akin to *mise en scène*. To begin with, I've always worked with actors, with a comparatively precise canvas-scenario as a starting-point, and with a normal technical crew; not at all the 'wild' conditions of someone like Perrault⁷, or Rouch when he made *La Chasse au lion à l'arc*.

New fictions

Isn't there an attempt to effect a renewal of fiction here, in the shifting of responsibilities from you to the actors?

Yes.

Nevertheless, a threshold of intervention still exists . . .

The myth in this sort of film-making is of a creative collectivity in which everything is happy and spontaneous and everybody 'participates'. I don't think this is true. Quite the contrary, the atmosphere is usually relatively tense, because nobody knows where they are, everyone is exhausted, film-maker, actors and technicians are all in a muddle. Nobody really knows what is going on. I think the only possible attitude in situations like this – it's what I've always tried to do, at all events – is to adopt a perspective that is beyond good or bad. You must virtually refuse, for the time being, to judge what is being shot. There are moments when you feel you're letting everything go by passing on to the next bit, and others where I suddenly find myself sticking on a detail anyway: it has to be just so, at this particular moment the character has to say such and such.

***Out* seems to be constructed contrary to any established dramaturgic principle. The strictly fictional elements, for example, are a long time in appearing.**

We asked ourselves this question. Nothing simpler, if we'd wanted, than to do what is almost always done in films, which is to kick off with strong dramatic elements, after which you can get the exposition out of the way. It's the old device the cinema has used almost since the beginning: any narrative activity requires the prior disposition of a certain number of elements before, by interlacing these elements with each other, crisis situations can then be reached which constitute what is traditionally called the story proper, the motor element. This is a necessity dating from the origins of all dramatic or narrative forms, and each period, each means of expression, has resolved it in a different way.

⁷ French-Canadian film-maker (*Pour la suite du monde, Le Règne du jour, Les Voitures d'eau*), working on confrontations between real life characters and more or less arbitrary situations. The unusual 'fictions' deriving from these confrontations are the result of an enormous amount of work at the editing stage, classifying, selecting and rearranging a considerable quantity of raw material.

Even in *L'Amour fou* where it was time that created the action, which was the action – more so than in *Paris nous appartient* – we started, in a small way, on a minor crisis: the sequence in which Bulle Ogier walks out of the company. We deliberately made the sequence rather flat, however, not dramatising it at all. Coming back to *Out*, Suzanne and I decided we wouldn't use the good old method and that we'd start . . . in documentary fashion would be putting it too strongly, but at any rate without any dramatic elements. And since the *Histoire des Treize*⁸ was used in the film, we thought: all right, we'll have an exposition in the manner of Balzac. Comparatively speaking, of course, but the dramatic interest of the first three or four hours is purely in the description, not so much of the settings as of the actor-characters, their variously interesting or uninteresting jobs, their different social spheres. And within this pseudo-documentary (almost documentary in certain sequences involving Lonsdale's theatrical group, which were shot as reportage), the idea was that the fiction gradually proliferates. We start off with the reportage – it's phony, of course, set up, but presented more or less as reportage – with the fiction slipping in very stealthily at first, but then beginning to proliferate until it swallows everything up and finally auto-destructs. This was the principle governing the whole of the end, where we linger on the remains, the refuse left, you might say, after fiction has been at work like this.

Quotations

The film makes use of a large number of pre-existing texts . . .

This was one of the main ingredients of the thirteen-hour version, one of the few things mentioned in the five pages we gave to the Commission du Centre in requesting our advance⁹. Actually, it remained more an intention than a fact in the film as it turned out. A lot of texts vanished en route. But others came to us along the way, ones I hadn't thought of, that I discovered during the editing.

⁸ A secret society founded in Paris under the Empire by 'thirteen men all haunted by the same feeling, all endowed with sufficient energy to adhere to the same opinion, all mutually honest enough not to betray each other, even though their interests lay in opposing directions, profoundly political enough to hide the sacred ties that united them, strong enough to place themselves above all laws, bold enough to undertake and fortunate enough to have almost invariably succeeded in their designs (. . .); having achieved mutual acceptance of each other exactly as they were, irrespective of any social prejudice (. . .) and recruiting only among men of excellent merit (. . .), all fatalists, men of great heart and tender poesy, but bored with the dreary lives they were leading' (Balzac, preface to *The History of the Thirteen*). This principle of the secret society is one of the motors constituting the fiction of *Out*, the relationships between the characters in the film being defined in terms of their membership or otherwise (or their supposed membership) of this society.

⁹ The Commission du Centre national du Cinéma grants to a certain number of films, on submission of the scenario, an advance that is in principle supposed to be repaid out of receipts when the film is released. In fact this advance is decisive in determining the fate of a number of projects which would otherwise never reach fruition.

Among the pre-existing texts there was Balzac, there were the two Aeschylus plays¹⁰, which produced results, more or less. In theory they were to proliferate. There was Tasso, of whom little remains. The one who came along very late but became very important was Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*.

And Feuillade?

Feuillade, of course, but I wasn't thinking so much of film texts. I'd reread *Les Misérables* a year previously, so what I had in mind was the 19th century popular novel. *Les Mystères de Paris*, rather than Feuillade. Even what we borrowed from Balzac hinges on three or four archetypes of the popular novel. There is for instance the idea of people living on the fringes of society, whether because they are labelled as 'artists' or because they indulge in 'marginal' activities like Jean-Pierre Léaud or Juliet Berto, or because they really are marginal, like the secret society. And the other old standby element is the secret message. As we used it, it's Jules Verne rather than Edgar Allan Poe. What I wanted was a message that could be subjected to successive readings, as in *Captain Grant's Children*. It's all very reminiscent and not very serious, but at the same time the mainspring of the film, the desire to make it, lay in the amusement of writing these messages. It's one of the few things I did in the film. I didn't write the dialogue, but I did take great pleasure in writing these¹¹.

They are motor elements in the film, not just accessories . . .

Yes, but they're decentralised motors which you don't see.

Rather like your own position?

Exactly.

What is the film about, ultimately?

In fact, it's about too much rather than too little. To begin with, *play* in all senses of the word was the only idea: the playing by the actors, the play between the characters, play in the sense that children play, and also play in the sense that there is play between the parties at an assembly. This was the basic principle, implying a relative interdependence between the elements, and a relative distance maintained by the actors between themselves and the characters they were playing. I discussed this from the start with Michèle Moretti, with Bulle, with Lonsdale, in order to counteract the spuriously 'lived' aspect of *L'Amour fou*: each actor had to play an extremely fictional character, and theoretically maintain a considerable distance

¹⁰ In *Out*, two theatre groups, one directed by Michel Lonsdale and the other by Michèle Moretti, are working on plays by Aeschylus: *Seven Against Thebes* and *Prometheus Bound*.

¹¹ Secret messages circulate in the film which one of the characters, Colin (Jean-Pierre Léaud), attempts to decode with a view to establishing contact with the Thirteen and their organisation.

between himself and that character. In the event, there really was 'play' between the actors and the characters they were playing, and at the same time they revealed a hundred times more things about themselves than if they had been identifying with these fictional characters or were supposed to be playing their own 'characters'.

Actors, one constantly feels, could never speak a written text in this way . . .

One great difference between the thirteen and four-hour versions is that in the thirteen-hour version, and not the other, we deliberately retained a number of fluffs here and there in the final cut, because there were things among these fluffs that we liked, that we found moving, that preserved the slightly perilous aspect of the project, the feel of walking on a tightrope. We left in some passages where the actors repeat themselves or get muddled, which we could have cut out. It wouldn't always have been easy, but we could have: you always can. Similarly with the very long 'reportage' sequences on Lonsdale's group: either you kept them integrally or you cut them out entirely. There are several I didn't include at all, but those we did put in are there in their entirety.

Durations

In a normal length film, the fluffs would have looked like fluffs in any case, but the film establishes other criteria for judgment. If the generative element in the thirteen-hour version is the duration itself, what is it in the four-hour version? This shorter version appears, by contrast, to be very much edited in the classical sense of the term.

I wanted, without knowing how, to make a film quite different from the other. I asked Denise de Casabianca¹² first of all to spend a fortnight alone with the 12-hour 40-minute film, getting to know it a little, because there was no other material. Having done that, she made a first rough cut. And it was immediately apparent that you were still held by the fictional centre, which proved to be much tighter, much more compelling than I'd thought, and that there weren't umpteen solutions, there were only two. Either we could do something extremely arbitrary, with flagrant ruptures in time, breaking up the chronology, a sort of Robbe-Grillet montage. Or we could play the game of a seeming narration, which was after all the game played by the material, thus keeping a seeming chronology, no matter how patchy and wobbly it might sometimes be.

At which point the whole centre of the film dug its heels in completely; and this four-and-a-quarter hour version was edited from the centre outwards. We couldn't really touch this centre, because there is a moment, one single shot even, in which almost all the fictions intersect, as if all these lines had to pass through a ring. This shot we put squarely in the middle: it comes just before the intermission. Having done so, we then had to keep everything relating directly to this shot before and

¹² With the exception of Rivette himself, naturally, the teams who edited the two versions were different.

after. After that, of course, we were a little more at liberty for the two ends: the first and last hours.

The interesting thing with the four-hour-fifteen-minute version was to use this material which incorporated a good deal of improvisation in as precise, as tight and as formal a manner as possible. To try to find as many formal principles as possible, visible or invisible, for getting from one shot to the next. Some are very obvious, others happened by chance and we only noticed afterwards.

How should one envisage the spectator relationship in *Out*, and what is your opinion concerning what you were saying about the impossibility of 'distanciation' in the cinema, with reference to *Out* and the very strong identification factor that operated – partly in a negative way – in *L'Amour fou*?

The relationship to the thirteen-hour film is a relationship totally falsified at the outset by the fact of the performance. Even in *L'Amour fou* this came into play for the spectator to a certain extent – the idea of going into an auditorium and getting out four and a quarter hours later – but at least it kept within reasonable limits, it was still feasible, only a little longer than *Gone with the Wind*, though without the bonus of the Civil War. Whereas twelve hours forty minutes . . . it may not be the first time a film has run for so long, but at any rate the only equivalent in my opinion – and even then it isn't so long — is when Langlois shows a Feuillade serial at the Cinémathèque, starting at six in the evening and going on till one a.m. with three little breaks. It is obvious that the first two hours of *Out*, for example, are bearable only because one knows one has embarked on something that is going to last for twelve hours and forty minutes. We impose three-quarters of an hour of hysteria from Lonsdale's group on people, something that can be done only under these conditions.

Ideally, I still hope the film can be shown. It wasn't in any way intended to be a difficult film, except perhaps in its length and the fact that there are moments one can call *longueurs*. Otherwise – perhaps it's hypocritical, but it's a hypocrisy I cling to – everything that might loom as an obstacle or flaunt its difference is rejected. Perhaps this is also a weak point, since these are often the things that certain spectators latch on to. In theory I can very well imagine the film being shown in cinemas; but precisely because it is so long, there wouldn't be any point except in suitable cinemas where people can be not too uncomfortably seated, where they can breathe, and that are big enough to house a sizeable audience. It is 16mm, but it was made with the big screen in mind: it has a meaning on the big screen which it wouldn't have on the small screen. Even visually it is composed of elements implying a massive image – a monumentality is putting it too grandly but that's it nevertheless.

This struck me at each of the screenings we had for television with five or six people present. Even if people liked it, I felt the relationship to the film was wrong, because it is first and foremost theatre. It is performances up there on the screen, *mise en scène* in the theatrical sense of staging rather than in the film sense.

How could one define the particular narrative form that interests you here? Or to put it more generally: how does this film contribute along with other films (which ones, in your opinion?) to the attempt, fairly widespread in spite of everything even though still very limited, to bring about a renewal of fiction, and indeed of the cinema as a whole?

What I'd like is to discover a cinema where the narrative element doesn't necessarily play the driving role. I don't say it would be completely eliminated, I think that's impossible: if you throw narrative out by the door, it comes back through the window. What I mean is that in the cinema I have in mind it wouldn't be in the driving seat, and the principal priorities on the screen would be purely spectacular ones, in the strict sense of the word. That's why, when I say I'd like this film to be shown on a big screen with an audience of five hundred people, it isn't at all because it tells a story where spectators are caught up by a plot, as in a Hitchcock film; my motive is purely plastic, allied to a certain status of the image and sound.

But let's talk in general about the cinema I'm after, of which there are better examples around at the moment: examples of films which impose themselves on the spectator through a sort of domination of visual and sound 'events', and which require the screen, a big screen, to be effective. In the final analysis, all the films that have impressed me recently are films in which, in very different ways, this fact of a narrative spectacle comes into play: Fellini, Jancsó, Werner Schroeter's *Salomé*. And for me it's very important even in films where this 'spectacular' quality seems less obvious, as in *Othon*, or *Le moindre geste*¹³, or Tati's films of course. These are films that impose themselves visually through their monumentality. I'm using the word monumental simply because I can't think of another offhand. What I mean is that there is a weight to what is on the screen, and which is there on the screen as a statue might be, or a building or a huge beast. And this weight is perhaps what Barthes would call the weight of the signifier, though I wouldn't go to the stake on that . . .

These are films that tend towards the ritual, towards the ceremonial, the oratorio, the theatrical, the magical, not in the mystical so much as the more devotional sense of the word as in the celebration of Mass. *Technique and Rite*, as Jancsó has it, is a good definition. These words should be explored to try to see what lies behind them: rite or ceremony or monumental. One would probably first find what Barthes and Ricardou have been pointing out for years: in films, as in texts and in theatrical performances, the accent should be placed on the elements in which the spectacle itself (or the fiction) is represented.

But this isn't enough to account for the element of violence, of affirmation without evidence, of erotic power, which I'm trying to express when I talk of monumentality and when I think back on these few films.

¹³ A film by Jean-Pierre Daniel and Fernand Deligny: see below.

The spectator at *Out* finds himself faced by a vast, very unusual 'machinery'. What does this machinery set in motion?

A film is always presented in a closed form: a certain number of reels which are screened in a certain order, a beginning, an end. Within this, all these phenomena can occur of circulating meanings, functions and forms; moreover, these phenomena can be incomplete, not finally determined once and for all. This isn't simply a matter of tinkering, of something mechanical constructed from the outside, but rather – to refer back to what I was saying at the beginning – of something that has been 'generated' which seems to entail biological factors. It isn't a matter of making a film or a work that exhausts its coherence, that closes in on itself; it must continue to function, and to create new meanings, directions and feelings.

Here one comes back to the Barthes definition. I refer to Barthes a good deal, but I find that he speaks more lucidly than anyone else at the present time about this kind of problem . . . and he says: there is a text from the moment one can say: things are circulating. To me it is evident that this potential in the cinema is allied to the semblance of monumentality we were just talking about. What I mean is that on the screen the film presents a certain number of events, objects, characters in quotes, which are closed in on themselves, turned inward, exactly as a statue can be, presenting themselves without immediately stating an identity, and which simultaneously establish comings-and-goings, echoes, among one another.

Tati, Fellini, Jancsó . . .

Is there a connection between these elements and the fact that these films lack a central character, a protagonist?

Yes, it is almost always groups that are involved, and this is a further link to the idea of ritual, of ceremony. If, at a pinch, there is an individual at the ceremony, it can only be the priest, someone who is never anything but the delegate, the representative of some community. But I don't think this tendency in the cinema entirely obviates the possibility of a central protagonist. For example, I put Straub's *Othon* in the same category (yet it's a play which plays more than other Corneille dramas on the impossibility of saying who is 'the' hero; there is no one interlocutor, one purveyor of truth in *Othon*, which isn't *Le Cid* or *Polyeucte* – the role circulates freely). Another example I include in the cinema of monumentality is *Le moindre geste* by Deligny and Daniel. On screen there is a protagonist who is present for nine-tenths of the film, but this protagonist is someone with whom identification is strictly precluded, because he is by clinical definition a mental defective, and he is there on the screen purely as a physical presence, or on the soundtrack purely as an utterance detached from the physical presence, disconnected, first of all because these are fragments of tapes recorded independently of the visuals (and therefore not synchronous), but also because this utterance is itself aberrant in the literal sense of the word. Another film I'd place in the same category, perhaps mistakenly, is Tati's *Traffic*. Now there is a protagonist in *Traffic*, and it's Hulot; but at the same time it's quite obvious that the process which had already started in *Monsieur*

Hulot's Holiday is accentuated here, whereby Hulot no longer runs the conveyor belt, he is swept along by the fiction in almost precisely the same way as Fellini is swept along by *Roma*. You see Hulot wandering by from time to time in the background of his film, just as Fellini passes by suddenly wandering around in his *Roma*. Well, is one thing a consequence of the other? I have no idea. And one of the things I'm interested in now is to remake a film which has a strong, totally present central character – therefore one who is proposed as a vehicle, as operating the conveyor belt – and see what this contradiction would do to him.

I think it might be a pity, within a cinema of 'signification' – to employ this neologism – to abandon completely something that was so exciting in the traditional cinema: this play with the protagonist, the so-called central character, the Hitchcockian-Langian play on the phony central consciousness and all that this allows. But perhaps they are incompatible: it remains to be seen.

Another common factor in all these films – to my mind the only ones of any importance for several years – is the categorical refusal in practically all of them to use written dialogue. A refusal which doesn't always happen in the same way, however, and doesn't produce the same results. Broadly speaking, what I see in common is their refusal to write a text themselves which the actors will then interpret, the refusal to have the actors become interpreters of dialogue written beforehand which one has either written oneself or at any rate is responsible for. As to how to proceed from here, there are different solutions . . . I won't say they're equivalent, some are undoubtedly more powerful than others. These consist either of asking the actors to find their own words, or of giving the actors pre-existing texts for which one isn't oneself responsible: the author of the text is antecedent, the author of the text is challenged in a sense, because either it's Corneille (though as 'matter') in the case of Straub, or, in the technique that Godard has used more and more systematically, the author of the text is multiple, this being what has been called the technique of quotations. But these aren't quotations, because the important point in the sequence of Jean-Luc's films came when he began removing the quotation marks and the names of the authors, thus not wanting to be the author of his scripts and wanting these texts coming from all over the place to lose their authorship. This method has I think been taken up again in part by Jancsó, in so far as Jancsó uses songs a good deal – pre-existing material, of course – and I think that in the moments with dialogue, or so I felt while watching *Red Psalm*, he draws extensively and very systematically on real militant texts, historical or contemporary. And I believe that Hernady's¹⁴ job is increasingly becoming a matter of *collages*, on the same principle as Godard though perhaps not quite so extreme.

Other solutions to this rejection of scripted dialogue: it can be Tati, unintelligible dialogue where all one hears is snatches of speech; it can be the Taviani Brothers¹⁵; it can be Daniel, who takes previously recorded tapes, which moreover carry speech having no fixed reference in the fiction and being completely erratic as speech. The only great exception I can see is Bergman. All the same I feel very inclined to put *The Rite* with the cinema of monumentality and signification, and nothing could be more scripted than that.

¹⁴ Regular scriptwriter on Miklós Jancsó's recent films.

¹⁵ Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Italian directors, notably of *Sotto il Segno dello Scorpione*.

Or even over-written, like Resnais.

Resnais, actually, is someone who has always worked with written texts, very highly written even, but with the purpose of not writing them himself. For Resnais, as for Godard, there is purpose in using someone else's text, a text of which he isn't the author, the signatory. One could perhaps salvage Bergman simply as a sort of monster, a perfect schizo. Bergman is dual, like Jekyll/Hyde. There is a Bergman who writes a script, then a Bergman who films the script, and they aren't the same. In *The Rite*, the words carried by the images are not filmed for their meaning but rather for their materiality, as events and not as meanings. The same is true of the 'strong beat' moments in Duras' films. Yes, I think that's the basis for everything: to treat the text as material which plays a role exactly similar to the other materials in the film: the actors' faces, their gestures, the photographic texture.

But can the signified carried by this text-material be a matter of indifference?

I think one can say of the signified what we were saying earlier about narrative: it's something that inevitably reappears anyway. Knowing it will reappear, one might as well try to have it circulate as much as possible, to use Barthes' phrase. I think what all these film-makers are trying to do is to have the signifieds that are present be caught up and carried in the general movement of the signifiers. This seems to me glaringly obvious in Jancsó's films. I know too little about the Hungarian context of these films to be able to tell whether some things may not well have a more precise function there than here, with respect to the situation in Hungary.

Recreation and Terror

All the same, I think that Jancsó's prime ambition is not to play cat and mouse with the State system as a whole: it seems to me a very partial view to see them as films playing on ambiguity, playing on the questioning of certain political values, inasmuch as he in fact spends his time playing on the rearrangement of labels. What struck me about both *Sirocco* and *Technique and Rite*, in so far as objectively they are perhaps the least 'successful' though not the least fascinating of his recent films, is their element of juvenile play. These are ten-year old children playing at spies or at war just like cops and robbers (or like *Le Petit Soldat*: Godard again). In all these Jancsó films it is really recreation time: the children are in the playground during break between classes, dividing up into groups, forming into rings. It's the political game to the letter: politics as a game, a game as politics, with the whole arsenal of revolutionary signifieds congealed, put back into circulation. And when I say juvenile, it isn't meant pejoratively in any way. This may be a partial view of Jancsó's films, but it's more and more how I see them. Recreation time, but in the widest sense of the word; as Cocteau said, 'When a child leaves the classroom, we say it is for re-creation'. I think this is the value of Jancsó's films: within a revolutionary state, he plays the role of re-creation.

Aren't we coming back to the problem of pleasure in the cinema?

Yes, but pleasure has never been absent.

Hasn't there been a tendency to minimise its importance on pseudo-scientific grounds? Now the idea that it is an important factor is being rediscovered.

But this idea of a game, of pleasure, is also found in Renoir, it's found in Rouch, it's found in Godard.

Isn't it to be found in Brecht too, but oriented towards the spectator? And during the period of the formation of the Berliner Ensemble, particularly . . .

Yes, the whole last part of the *Little Organum* is concerned with this. Anyhow, pleasure is contrary to what I call journalistic films – in the derogatory sense of the term – whose only merit is to provide information that is already out of date, and very often don't even do that.

One must be careful, though: the inflated notions about pleasure and entertainment over recent years have been very confused, because this can very quickly lead to the attitude that anything goes. All it takes is to smoke a little, acquire the right euphoric state, and one can get pleasure out of looking at or listening to absolutely anything. Some films seem to me to be made purely with a view to narcissistic pleasure, totally without productivity: if one doesn't bring along one's own euphoria, the films themselves produce nothing. So I am inclined to continue defending films which are themselves the producers of pleasure.

Then again this pleasure or – why not? – this ecstasy* of the spectator's isn't necessarily connected with euphoria; it can tend more in the direction of . . . let's not say work – which is a large word that has been much abused (and one mustn't confuse the work of the spectator or of the signifier with other forms of work) – but this pleasure in fact passes through certain stages, certain periods, which can equally well be attentiveness, perplexity, irritation or even boredom. For me, the most powerful pleasure in cinema – and this is something that interests me more and more, and I don't know if it can be related to this cinema of signification, of monumentality, that we were talking about – is connected with terror and anguish. For some years now I have been re-fascinated by horror films. And in *Out* this was something I hadn't planned at all at the outset. Initially we thought it was going to be very jolly, and we started out with the actors by criticising *L'Amour fou* for its element of anguish, of psychodrama – psychosis, even – saying well, it won't be like that this time but just a jolly game with serial-type fiction; but very soon an element of anguish crept into the film (rather than the actual shooting). So even in a film where anguish hadn't been planned, it reappeared, to such an extent that my editors said to me: 'Now you should really make a horror film . . .' But perhaps they were hoping that might be fun to edit . . .

Translated by Tom Milne

* Cf. Barthes' discussion of *plaisir* and *jouissance* in *Le plaisir du texte* (*The Pleasure of the Text*). (Ed.)

2. Texts

Letter on Rossellini, from *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No 46, April 1955

'Ordinance protects. Order reigns.'

You don't think much of Rossellini; you don't, so you tell me, like *Voyage to Italy*; and everything seems to be in order. But no; you are not assured enough in your rejection not to sound out the opinion of Rossellinians. They provoke you, worry you, as if you weren't quite easy in your mind about your taste. What a curious attitude!

But enough of this bantering tone. Yes, I have a very special admiration for Rossellini's latest film (or rather, the latest to be released here). On what grounds? Ah, that's where it gets more difficult. I cannot invoke exaltation, emotion, joy: these are terms you will scarcely admit as evidence; but at least you will, I trust, understand them. (If not, may God help you.)

To gratify you, let us change the tone yet again. Mastery, freedom, these are words you can accept; for what we have here is the film in which Rossellini affirms his mastery most clearly, and, as in all art, through the free exercise of his talents; I shall come back to this later. First I have something to say which should be of greater concern to you: if there is a modern cinema, this is it. But you still require evidence.

1. – If I consider Rossellini to be the most modern of film-makers, it is not without reason; nor is it through reason, either. It seems to me impossible to see *Voyage to Italy* without receiving direct evidence of the fact that the film opens a breach, and that all cinema, on pain of death, must pass through it. (Yes, that there is now no other hope of salvation for our miserable French cinema but a healthy transfusion of this young blood.) This is, of course, only a personal impression. And I should like forthwith to forestall a misunderstanding: for there are other films, other film-makers doubtless no less great than this; though less, how shall I put it, *exemplary*. I mean that having reached this point in their careers, their creation seems to close in on itself, what they do is of importance for, and within the perspectives of, this creation. Here, undoubtedly, is the culmination of art, no longer answerable to anyone but itself and, once the experimental fumbings and explorations are past, discouraging disciples by isolating the masters: their domain dies with them, along with the laws and the methods current there. Renoir, Hawks, Lang belong here, of course, and in a certain sense, Hitchcock. *Le Carrosse d'Or* may inspire muddled copies, but never à school; only presumption and ignorance make these copies possible, and the real secrets are so well hidden within the series

of Chinese boxes that to unravel them would probably take as many years as Renoir's career now stretches to; they merge with the various mutations and developments undergone over thirty years by an exceptionally keen and exacting creative intelligence. In its energy and dash, the work of youth or early maturity remains a reflection of the movements of everyday life; animated by a different current, it is shackled to time and can detach itself only with difficulty. But the secret of *Le Carrosse d'Or* is that of creation and the problems, the trials, the gambles it subjects itself to in order to perfect an object and give it the autonomy and the subtlety of an as yet unexplored world. What example is there here, unless that of discreet, patient work which finally effaces all traces of its passage? But what could painters or musicians ever retain from the later works of Poussin or Picasso, Mozart or Stravinsky – except a salutary despair.

There is reason to think that in a decade or so Rossellini too will attain (and acclimatise himself to) this degree of purity; he has not reached it yet – luckily, it may be said; there is still time to follow him before within him in his turn eternity . . .*; while the man of action still lives in the artist.

2. – Modern, I said; after a few minutes watching *Voyage to Italy*, for instance, a name kept recurring in my mind which seems out of place here: Matisse. Each image, each movement, confirmed for me the secret affinity between the painter and the film-maker. This is simpler to state than to demonstrate; I mean to try, however, though I fear that my main reasons may seem rather frivolous to you, and the rest either obscure or specious.

All you need do, to start with, is look: note, throughout the first part, the predilection for large white surfaces, judiciously set off by a neat trait, an almost decorative detail; if the house is new and absolutely modern in appearance, this is of course because Rossellini is particularly attracted to contemporary things, to the most recent forms of our environment and customs; and also because it delights him visually. This may seem surprising on the part of a *realist* (and even neo-realist); for heaven's sake, why? Matisse, in my book, is a realist too: the harmonious arrangement of fluid matter, the attraction of the white page pregnant with a single sign, of virgin sands awaiting the invention of the precise trait, all this suggests to me a more genuine realism than the overstatements, the affectations, the pseudo-Russian conventionalism of *Miracle in Milan*; all this, far from muffling the film-maker's voice, gives him a new, contemporary tone that speaks to us through our freshest, most vital sensibility; all this affects the modern man in us, and in fact bears witness to the period as faithfully as the narrative does; all this in fact deals with the *honnête homme* of 1953 or 1954; this, in fact, is the theme.

3. – On the canvas, a spontaneous curve circumscribes, without ever pinning down, the most brilliant of colours; a broken line, nevertheless unique, encompasses matter that is miraculously alive, as though transferred intact from its source. On the

* A reference to the first line of Mallarmé's poem, *Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe*: 'Tel qu'en Lui-même enfin l'éternité le change'. (*Trans.*)

screen, a long parabola, pliant and precise, guides and controls each sequence, then punctually closes again. Think of any Rossellini film: each scene, each episode will recur in your memory not as a succession of shots and compositions, a more or less harmonious succession of more or less brilliant images, but as a vast melodic phrase, a continuous arabesque, a single implacable line which leads people ineluctably towards the as yet unknown, embracing in its trajectory a palpitant and definitive universe; whether it be a fragment from *Paisa*, a *fioretto* from *The Flowers of St Francis*, a 'station' in *Europa '51*, or these films in their entirety, the symphony in three movements of *Germany, Year Zero*, the doggedly ascending scale of *The Miracle* or *Stromboli* (musical metaphors come as spontaneously as visual ones) – the indefatigable eye of the camera invariably assumes the role of the pencil, a temporal sketch is perpetuated before our eyes (but rest assured, without attempts to instruct us by using slow motion to analyse the Master's inspiration for our benefit);* we live through its progress until the final shading off, until it loses itself in the continuance of time just as it had loomed out of the whiteness of the canvas. For there are films which begin and end, which have a beginning and an ending, which conduct a story through from its initial premise until everything has been restored to peace and order, and there have been deaths, a marriage or a revelation; there is Hawks, Hitchcock, Murnau, Ray, Griffith. And there are the films quite unlike this, which recede into time like rivers to the sea; and which offer us only the most banal of closing images: rivers flowing, crowds, armies, shadows passing, curtains falling in perpetuity, a girl dancing till the end of time; there is Renoir and Rossellini. It is then up to us, in silence, to prolong this movement that has returned to secrecy, this hidden arc that has buried itself beneath the earth again; we have not finished with it yet.

(Of course all this is arbitrary, and you are right: the first group prolong themselves too, but not quite in the same way, it seems to me; they gratify the mind, their eddies buoy us up, whereas the others burden us, weigh us down. That is what I meant to say.)

And there are the films that rejoin time through a painfully maintained immobility; that expend themselves without flinching in a perilous position on summits that seem uninhabitable; such as *The Miracle*, *Europa '51*.

4. – Is it too soon for such enthusiasms? A little too soon, I fear; so let us return to earth and, since you wish it, talk of compositions: but this lack of balance, this divergence from the customary centres of gravity, this apparent uncertainty which secretly shocks you so deeply, forgive me if once again I see the hand of Matisse here, his asymmetrism, the magisterial 'falseness' in composition, tranquilly eccentric, which also shocks at first glance and only subsequently reveals its secret equilibrium where values are as important as the lines, and which gives to each canvas this unobtrusive movement, just as here it yields at each moment this controlled dynamism, this profound inclination of all elements, all arcs and volumes at that instant, towards the new equilibrium, and in the following second of the new disequilibrium towards the next; and this might be learnedly described as the art of

* A reference to Clouzot's *Le Mystère Picasso*. (Trans.)

succession in composition (or rather, of successive composition) which, unlike all the static experiments that have been stifling the cinema for thirty years, seems to me to stand to reason as the only visual device legitimate for the film-maker.

5. – I shall not labour the point further: any comparison soon becomes irksome, and I fear that this one has already continued too long; in any case, who will be convinced except those who see the point as soon as it is stated? But allow me just one last remark – concerning the Trait: grace and gaucheness indissolubly linked. Render tribute in either case to a youthful grace, impetuous and stiff, clumsy and yet disconcertingly at ease, that seems to me to be in the very nature of adolescence, the awkward age, where the most overwhelming, the most *effective* gestures seem to burst unexpectedly in this way from a body strained by an acute sense of embarrassment. Matisse and Rossellini affirm the freedom of the artist, but do not misunderstand me: a controlled, constructed freedom, where the initial building finally disappears beneath the sketch.

For this trait must be added which will resume all the rest: the common sense of the draft. A sketch more accurate, more detailed than any detail and the most scrupulous design, a disposition of forces more accurate than composition, these are the sort of miracles from which springs the sovereign truth of the imagination, of the governing idea which only has to put in an appearance to assume control, summarily outlined in broad essential strokes, clumsy and hurried yet epitomising twenty fully rounded studies. For there is no doubt that these hurried films, improvised out of very slender means and filmed in a turmoil that is often apparent from the images, contain the only real portrait of our times; and these times are a draft too. How could one fail suddenly to recognise, quintessentially sketched, ill-composed, incomplete, the semblance of our daily existence? These arbitrary groups, these absolutely theoretical collections of people eaten away by lassitude and boredom, exactly as we know them to be, as the irrefutable, accusing image of our heteroclitic, dissident, discordant societies. *Europa '51*, *Germany, Year Zero*, and this film which might be called *Italy '53*, just as *Paisa* was *Italy '44*, these are our mirror, scarcely flattering to us; let us yet hope that these times, true in their turn like these kindred films, will secretly orient themselves towards an inner order, towards a truth which will give them meaning and *in the end* justify so much disorder and flurried confusion.

6. – Ah, now there is cause for misgivings: the author is showing the cloven hoof. I can hear the mutters already: coterie talk, fanaticism, intolerance. But this famous freedom, and much vaunted freedom of expression, but more particularly the freedom to express everything of oneself, who carries it further? – To the point of immodesty, comes the answering cry; for the strange thing is that people still complain, and precisely those people who are loudest in their claims for freedom (to what end? the liberation of man? I'll buy that, but from what chains? That man is free is what we are taught in the catechism, and what Rossellini quite simply shows; and his *cynicism* is the cynicism of great art). '*Voyage to Italy* is the *Essays of Montaigne*,' our friend M. prettily says; this, it seems, is not a compliment; permit me to think otherwise, and to wonder at the fact that our era, which can no longer be

shocked by anything, should pretend to be scandalised because a film-maker dares to talk about himself without restraint; it is true that Rossellini's films have more and more obviously become *amateur* films; home movies; *Joan of Arc at the Stake* is not a cinematic transposition of the celebrated oratorio, but simply a souvenir film of his wife's performance in it, just as *The Human Voice* was primarily the record of a performance by Anna Magnani (the most curious thing is that *Joan of Arc at the Stake*, like *The Human Voice*, is a *real* film, not in the least theatrical in its appeal; but this would lead us into deep waters). Similarly, Rossellini's episode in *We the Women* is simply the account of a day in Ingrid Bergman's life; while *Voyage to Italy* presents a transparent fable, and George Sanders a face barely masking that of the film-maker himself (a trifle tarnished, no doubt, but that is humility). – Now he is no longer filming just his ideas, as in *Stromboli* or *Europa '51*, but the most everyday details of his life; this life, however, is 'exemplary' in the fullest sense that Goethe implied: that everything in it is instructive, including the errors; and the account of a busy afternoon in Mrs Rossellini's life is no more frivolous in this context than the long description Eckermann gives us of that beautiful day, on May 1st 1825, when he and Goethe practised archery together. – So there, then, you have this country, this city; but a privileged country, an exceptional city, retaining intact innocence and faith, living squarely in the eternal; a *providential* city; and here, by the same token, is Rossellini's secret, which is to move with unremitting freedom, and one single, simple motion, through manifest eternity: the world of the incarnation; but that Rossellini's genius is possible only within Christianity is a point I shall not labour, since Maurice Schérer* has already argued it better than I could ever hope to do, in a magazine: *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, if I remember right.

7. – Such freedom, absolute, inordinate, whose extreme licence never involves the sacrifice of inner rigour, is freedom won; or better yet, earned. This notion of earning is quite new, I fear, and astonishing even though evident; so the next thing is, earned how? – By virtue of meditation, of exploring an idea or an inner harmony; by virtue of sowing this predestined seed in the concrete world which is also the intellectual world ('which is the same as the spiritual world'); by virtue of persistence, which then justifies any surrender to the hazards of creation, and even urges our hapless creator to such surrender; once again the idea becomes flesh, the work of art, the truth to come, becomes the very life of the artist, who can thereafter no longer do anything that steers clear of this pole, this magnetic point. – And thereafter we too, I fear, can barely leave this inner circle any more, this basic refrain that is reprised chorally: that the body is the soul, the other is myself, the object is the truth and the message; and now we are also trapped by this place where the passage from one shot to the next is perpetual and infinitely reciprocal; where Matisse's arabesques are not just invisibly linked to their hearth, do not merely *represent* it, but are the fire itself.

* 'Génie du Christianisme' by Maurice Schérer (Eric Rohmer) in *Cahiers du Cinéma* No. 25, July 1953.

8. – This position offers strange rewards; but grant me another detour, which like all detours will have the advantage of getting us more quickly to where I want to take you. (It is becoming obvious anyway that I am not trying to follow a coherent line of argument, but rather that I am bent on repeating the same thing in different ways; affirming it on different keyboards.) I have already spoken of Rossellini's eye, his look; I think I even made a rather hasty comparison with Matisse's tenacious pencil; it doesn't matter, one cannot stress the film-maker's eye too highly (and who can doubt that this is where his genius primarily lies?), and above all its singularity. Ah, I'm not really talking about Kíno-Eye, about documentary objectivity and all that jazz; I'd like to have you feel (with your finger) more tangibly the *powers* of this look: which may not be the most subtle, which is Renoir, or the most acute, which is Hitchcock, but is the most active; and the point is not that it is concerned with some transfiguration of appearances, like Welles, or their condensation, like Murnau, but with their capture: a hunt for each and every moment, at each *perilous* moment a corporeal quest (and therefore a spiritual one; a quest for the spirit by the body), an incessant movement of seizure and pursuit which bestows on the images some indefinable quality at once of triumph and agitation: the very note, indeed, of conquest. – (But perceive, I beg you, wherein the difference lies here; this is not some pagan conquest, the exploits of some infidel general; do you perceive the fraternal quality in this word, and what sort of conquest is implied, what it comprises of humility, of charity?)

9. – For 'I have made a discovery': there is a television aesthetic; don't laugh, that isn't my discovery, of course; and what this aesthetic is (what it is beginning to be) I learned just recently from an article by André Bazin* which, like me, you read in the coloured issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma* (definitely an excellent magazine). But this is what I realised: that Rossellini's films, though film, are also subject to this *direct* aesthetic, with all it comprises of gamble, tension, chance and providence (which in fact chiefly explains the mystery of *Joan of Arc at the Stake*, where each shot change seems to take the same risks, and induce the same anxiety, as each camera change). So there we are, because of a film this time, ensconced in the darkness, holding our breath, eyes riveted to the screen which is at last granting us such privileges: spying on our neighbour with the most appalling indiscretion, violating with impunity the physical intimacy of people who are quite unaware of being exposed to our fascinated gaze; and in consequence, to the imminent rape of their souls. But in just punishment, we must instantly suffer the anguish of anticipating, of prejudging what *must come after*; what weight time suddenly lends to each gesture; one does not know what is going to happen, when, how; one has a presentiment of the event, but without seeing it take shape; everything here is fortuitous, instantly inevitable; even the sense of *hereafter*, within the impassive web of duration. So, you say, the films of a voyeur? – or a seer.

10. – Here we have a dangerous word, which has been made to mean a good many

* 'Pour contribuer à une érotologie de la Télévision' in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 42.

silly things, and which I don't much like using; again you're going to need a definition. But what else can one call this faculty of seeing through beings and things to the soul or the ideal they carry within them, this privilege of reaching through appearances to the doubles which engender them? (Is Rossellini a Platonist? – Why not, after all he was thinking of filming *Socrates*.)

Because as the screening went on, after an hour went by I wasn't thinking of Matisse any more, I'm afraid, but of Goethe: the art of associating the idea with the substance first of all in the mind, of blending it with its *object* by virtue of meditation; but he who speaks aloud of the object, through it instantly names the idea. – Several conditions are necessary, of course: and not just this vital concentration, this intimate mortification of reality, which are the artist's secret and to which we have no access; and which are none of our business anyway. There is also the precision in the presentation of this object, secretly impregnated; the lucidity and the candour (Goethe's celebrated 'objective description'). This is not yet enough; this is where ordering comes into play, no, order itself, the heart of creation, the creator's design; what is modestly known in professional terms as the construction (and which has nothing to do with the assembling of shots currently in vogue; it obeys different laws); that order, in other words, which, giving precedence to each appearance according to merit, within the illusion that they are simply succeeding one another, forces the mind to conceive another law than chance for their judicious advent.

This is something narrative has known, in film or novel, since it grew up. Novelists and film-makers of long standing, Stendhal and Renoir, Hawks and Balzac, know how to make construction the secret element in their work. Yet the cinema turned its back on the essay (I employ A. M.'s* word), and repudiated its unfortunate guerrillas, *Intolerance*, *La Règle du Jeu*, *Citizen Kane*. There was *The River*, the first didactic poem: now there is *Voyage to Italy* which, with absolute lucidity, at last offers the cinema, hitherto condemned to narrative, the possibility of the essay.

11. – For over fifty years now the essay has been the very language of modern art; it is freedom, concern, exploration, spontaneity; it has gradually – Gide, Proust, Valéry, Chardonne, Audiberti – buried the novel beneath it; since Manet and Degas it has reigned over painting, and gives it its impassioned manner, the sense of pursuit and proximity. – But do you remember that rather appealing group some years ago which had chosen some number or other as their objective and never stopped clamouring for the 'liberation' of the cinema;** don't worry, for once it had nothing to do with the advancement of man; they simply wanted the Seventh Art to enjoy a little of that more rarefied air in which its elders were flourishing; a very proper feeling lay behind it all. It appears, however, that some of the survivors don't care at all for *Voyage to Italy*; this seems incredible. For here is a film that comprises almost everything they prayed for: metaphysical essay, confession, log-book, intimate journal – and they failed to realise it. This is an edifying story, and I wanted to tell you the whole of it.

* Probably André Martin. (*Trans.*)

** Possibly a reference to Ricciotto Canudo (1879-1923) and his Club des Amis du Septième Art. (*Trans.*)

12. – I can see only one reason for this; I fear I may be being malicious (but maliciousness, it seems, is to today's taste): this is the unhealthy fear of genius that holds sway this season. The fashion is for subtleties, refinements, the sport of smart-set kings; Rossellini is not subtle but fantastically simple. Literature is still the arbiter: anyone who can do a pastiche of Moravia has genius; ecstasies are aroused by the daubings of a Soldati, Wheeler, Fellini (we'll talk about Mr Zavattini another time); tiresome repetitions and longueurs are set down as novelistic density or the sense of time passing; dullness and drabness are the effect of psychological subtlety. – Rossellini falls into this swamp like a butterfly broken on the wheel; reproving eyes are turned away from this importunate yokel.* And in fact nothing could be less literary or novelistic; Rossellini does not care much for narration, and still less for demonstration; what business has he with the perfidies of argumentation? Dialectic is a whore who sleeps with all odds and ends of thought, and offers herself to any sophism; and dialecticians are riff-raff. – His heroes prove nothing, they act; for Francis of Assisi, saintliness is not a beautiful thought. If it so happens that Rossellini wants to defend an idea, he too has no other way to convince us than to act, to create, to film; the thesis of *Europa '51*, absurd as each new episode starts, overwhelms us five minutes later, and each sequence is above all the mystery of the incarnation of this idea; we resist the thematic development of the plot, but we capitulate before Bergman's tears, before the *evidence* of her acts and of her suffering; in each scene the film-maker fulfils the theorist by multiplying him to the highest unknown quantity. But this time there is no longer the slightest impediment: Rossellini does not demonstrate, he shows.

And we have *seen*: that everything in Italy has meaning, that all of Italy is instructive and is part of a profound *dogmatism*, that there one suddenly finds oneself in the domain of the spirit and the soul; all this may perhaps not belong to the kingdom of pure truths, but is certainly shown by the film to be of the kingdom of perceptible truths, which are even more true. There is no longer any question of symbols here, and we are already on the road towards the great Christian allegory. Everything now seen by this distraught woman, lost in the kingdom of grace, these statues, these lovers, these pregnant women who form for her an omnipresent, haunting cortège, and then those huddled corpses, those skulls, and finally those banners, that procession for some almost barbaric cult, everything now radiates a different light, everything reveals itself as something else; here, visible to our eyes, are beauty, love, maternity, death, God.

13. – All rather outmoded notions; yet there they are, visible; all you can do is cover your eyes or kneel.

There is a moment in Mozart where the music suddenly seems to draw inspiration only from itself, from an obsession with a pure chord, all the rest being but approaches, successive explorations, and withdrawals from this supreme position where time is abolished. All art may perhaps reach fruition only through the transitory destruction of its means, and the cinema is never more great than in

* Rivette's original of this sentence reads: 'Rossellini tombe dans ce marécage comme le pavé de l'ours; on se détourne avec des moues réprobatrices de ce paysan du Danube'. The bear and the Danube peasant are references to Fables by La Fontaine. (*Trans.*)

certain moments that transcend and abruptly suspend the drama: I am thinking of Lillian Gish feverishly spinning round, of Jannings' extraordinary passivity, the marvellous moments of tranquillity in *The River*, the night sequence in *Tabu* with its slumbers and awakenings; of all those shots which the very greatest film-makers can contrive at the heart of a Western, a thriller, a comedy, where the genre is suddenly abolished as the hero briefly takes stock of himself (and above all of those two confessions by Bergman and Anne Baxter, those two long self-flashbacks by heroines who are the exact centre and the kernel of *Under Capricorn* and *I Confess*). What am I getting at? This: nothing in Rossellini better betokens the great film-maker than those vast chords formed within his films by all the shots of eyes looking; whether those of the small boy turned on the ruins of Berlin, or Magnani's on the mountain in *The Miracle*, or Bergman's on the Roman suburbs, the island of Stromboli, and finally all of Italy; (and each time the two shots, one of the woman looking, then her vision; and sometimes the two merged); a high note is suddenly attained which thereafter need only be held by means of tiny modulations and constant returns to the dominant (do you know Stravinsky's 1952 *Cantata*?); similarly the successive stanzas of *The Flowers of St Francis* are woven together on the ground bass (readable at sight) of charity. – Or at the heart of the film is this moment when the characters have touched bottom and are trying to find themselves without evident success; this vertiginous awareness of self that grips them, like the fundamental note's own delighted return to itself at the heart of a symphony. Whence comes the greatness of *Rome*, *Open City*, of *Paisa*, if not from this sudden repose in human beings, from these tranquil essays in confronting the impossible fraternity, from this sudden lassitude which for a second paralyses them in the very course of the action? Bergman's solitude is at the heart of both *Stromboli* and *Europa '51*: vainly she veers, without apparent progress; yet without knowing it she is advancing, through the attrition of boredom and of time, which cannot resist so protracted an effort, such a persistent concern with her moral decline, a lassitude so unwearied, so active and so impatient, which in the end will undoubtedly surmount this wall of inertia and despair, this exile from the true kingdom.

14. – Rossellini's work 'isn't much fun'; it is deeply serious, even, and turns its back on comedy; and I imagine that Rossellini would condemn laughter with the same Catholic virulence as Baudelaire; (and Catholicism isn't much fun either, despite its worthy apostles. – *Dov'è la libertà?* should make very curious viewing from this point of view). What is it he never tires of saying? That human beings are alone, and their solitude irreducible; that, except by miracle or saintliness, our ignorance of others is complete; that only a life in God, in his love and his sacraments, only the communion of the saints can enable us to meet, to know, to possess another being than ourselves alone; and that one can only know and possess oneself in God. Through all these films human destinies trace separate curves, which intersect only by accident; face to face, men and women remain wrapped in themselves, pursuing their obsessive monologues; delineation of the 'concentration camp world'* of men without God.

* Rivette was referring to David Rousset's book, *L'Univers Concentrationnaire*. (Trans.)

Rossellini, however, is not merely Christian, but Catholic; in other words, carnal to the point of scandal; one recalls the outrage over *The Miracle*; but Catholicism is by vocation a scandalous religion; the fact that *our body*, like Christ's, also plays its part in the divine mystery is something hardly to everyone's taste, and in this creed which makes the presence of the flesh one of its dogmas, there is a concrete meaning, weighty, almost sensual, to flesh and matter that is highly repugnant to chaste spirits: their 'intellectual evolution' no longer permits them to participate in mysteries as gross as this. In any case, Protestantism is more in fashion, especially among sceptics and free-thinkers; here is a more intellectual religion, a shade abstract, that instantly places the man for you: Huguenot ancestry infallibly hints at a coat of arms. – I am not likely to forget the disgusted expressions with which, not so long ago, some spoke of Bergman's weeping and snivelling in *Stromboli*. And it must be admitted that this goes (Rossellini often does) to the limits of what is bearable, of what is decently admissible, to the very brink of indelicacy. The direction of Bergman here is totally conjugal, and based on an intimate knowledge less of the actress than of the woman; we may also add that our little world of cinema finds it difficult – when the couple are not man and wife* – to accept a notion of love like this, with nothing joyous or extravagant about it, a conception so serious and genuinely carnal (let us not hesitate to repeat the word) of a sentiment more usually disputed nowadays by either eroticism or angelism; but leave it to the Dolmancés** among us to take offence at the way it is presented (or even just its reflection, like a watermark, on the face of the submissive wife), as though at some obscenity quite foreign to their light, amusing – and so very modern – fancies.

15. – Enough of that; but do you now understand what this freedom is: the freedom of the ardent soul, cradled by providence and grace which, never abandoning it to its tribulations, save it from perils and errors and make each *trial* redound to its glory. Rossellini has the eye of a modern, but also the spirit; he is more modern than any of us; and Catholicism is still as modern as anything.

You are weary of reading me; I am beginning to tire of writing to you, or at least my hand is; I would have liked to tell you many more things. One will suffice: the striking novelty of the acting, which here seems to be abolished, gradually killed off by a higher necessity; all flourishes, all glowing enthusiasms, all outbursts must yield to this intimate pressure which forces them to efface themselves and pass on with the same humble haste, as though in a hurry to finish and be done with it. This way of draining actors must often infuriate them, but there are times when they should be listened to, others when they should be silenced. If you want my opinion, I think that this is what acting in the cinema tomorrow will be like. Yet how we have loved the American comedies, and so many little films whose charm lay almost entirely in the bubbling inventiveness of their movements and attitudes, the spontaneous felicities of some actor, the pretty poutings and fluttering eyelashes of a smart and saucy actress; that one of the cinema's aims should be this delightful pursuit of movement

* The adulterous affair between Rossellini and Bergman, which began during the shooting of *Stromboli* (1949), and their subsequent child, caused an enormous press scandal which virtually exiled Bergman from Hollywood. (Ed.)

** A character in De Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*. (Trans.)

and gesture was true yesterday, and even true two minutes ago, but after this film may not be so any longer; the absence of studied effects here is superior to any successful pursuit, the resignation more beautiful than any glow of enthusiasm, the inspired simplicity loftier than the most dazzling performance by any diva. This lassitude of demeanour, this habit so deeply ingrained in every movement that the body no longer vaunts them, but rather restrains them, keeps them within itself, this is the only kind of acting we shall be able to take for a long time to come; after this taste of pungency, all sweetness is but insipid and unremembered.

16. – With the appearance of *Voyage to Italy*, all films have suddenly aged ten years; nothing is more pitiless than youth, than this unequivocal intrusion by the modern cinema, in which we can at last recognise what we were vaguely awaiting. With all due deference to recalcitrant spirits, it is *this* that shocks or troubles them, that vindicates itself today, it is in this that truth lies in 1955. Here is our cinema, those of us who in our turn are preparing to make films (did I tell you, it may be soon); as a start I have already suggested something that intrigues you: is there to be a Rossellini school? and what will its dogmas be? – I don't know if there is a school, but I do know there should be: first, to come to an understanding about the meaning of the word realism, which is not some rather simple scriptwriting technique, nor yet a style of *mise en scène*, but a state of mind: *that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points*; (judge your De Sicas, Lattuada and Visconti by this yardstick). Second point: a fig for the sceptics, the rational, the judicious; irony and sarcasm have had their day; now it is time to love the cinema so much that one has little taste left for what presently passes by that name, and wants to impose a more exacting image of it. As you see, this hardly comprises a programme, but it may be enough to give you the heart to begin.

This has been a very long letter. But the lonely should be forgiven: what they write is like the love letter that goes astray. To my mind, anyway, there is no more urgent topic today.

One word more: I began with a quotation from Péguy; here is another in conclusion: '*Kantism has unsullied hands*' (shake hands, Kant and Luther, and you too, Jansen), '*but it has no hands*'.

Yours faithfully,
Jacques Rivette

Translated by Tom Milne

The Hand

Review of Fritz Lang's *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt** in *Cahiers du Cinéma* No 76, November 1957

The first point that strikes the unsuspecting spectator, a few minutes into the film, is the diagrammatic, or rather expository aspect instantly assumed by the unfolding of the images: as though what we were watching were less the *mise en scène* of a script than simply the reading of this script, presented to us just as it is, without embellishment. Without personal comment of any kind on the part of the storyteller either. So one might be tempted to talk about a purely objective *mise en scène*, if such a thing were possible: more prudent, therefore, to suppose this to be some stratagem, and wait to see what happens.

The second point at first seems to confirm this impression: this is the proliferation of denials underlying the very conception of the film, and possibly constituting it. The denial, ostentatiously, of reasonableness, both in the elaboration of the plot as well as in that other more factitious reasonableness in setting up situations, in preparation, in atmosphere, which usually enables scriptwriters the world over to put across plot points ten times more capricious than the ones here without any difficulty at all. No concession is made here to the everyday, to detail: no remarks about the weather, the cut of a dress, the graciousness of a gesture; if one does become aware of a brand of make-up, it is for purposes of plot. We are plunged into a world of necessity, all the more apparent in that it coexists so harmoniously with the arbitrariness of the premises; Lang, as is well known, always seeks the truth beyond the reasonable, and here seeks it from the threshold of the unreasonable. Another denial, on a par with the first, is of the picturesque: connoisseurs will find none of those amusingly sketched silhouettes, the sparkling repartee, or the brilliant touches due more to surprise than to invention, which are currently making the reputations, after so many others, of film-makers like Lumet or Kubrick. All these denials, moreover, are conducted with a sort of disdain which some have been tempted to see as the film-maker's contempt for the undertaking; why not, rather, for this kind of spectator?

Then, as the film continues on its way, these first impressions find their justification. The expository tone proves to be the right one, since all the data for a

* Known in France as *Invraisemblable Vérité* ('Implausible truth', 'Improbable truth'). *Vraisemblable* has been rendered here as 'reasonable' to conform with Rivette's play of words on the French title. (Ed.)

problem – two problems, actually – are being propounded to us: the first derives from the script, and being quite clear, need not be dwelt on for the moment; the other, more subterranean, might reasonably be formulated as follows: given certain conditions of temperature and pressure (here of a transcendental order of experience), can anything human subsist in such an atmosphere? Or, more unassumingly, what part of life, even inhuman, can subsist in a quasi-abstract universe which is nevertheless within the range of possible universes? In other words, a science fiction problem. (For anyone doubting this assumption, I would suggest a comparison between this film and *Woman in the Moon*, where the plot served Lang primarily as a pretext for his first attempt at a *totally closed* world).

At this point the *coup de théâtre* intervenes: five minutes before the dénouement, the terms of the problem are suddenly reversed, much to the dismay of Cartesian spirits, who scarcely acknowledge the technique of dialectical inversion. Although the solutions may also seem to be modified, however, it only seems so. *The proportions remain unchanged*, and, all the conditions thus being fulfilled, poetry makes its entry. Q. E. D.

The word poetry may astonish here, doubtless being hardly the term one would have expected. I shall let it stand provisionally, however, since I know no other that better expresses this sudden fusion into a single vibration of all the elements hitherto kept separate by the abstract and discursive purpose. So let us proceed to the most immediate consequences.

One of these I have already alluded to: the reactions of the audience. A film like this is obviously the absolute antithesis of the idea of 'an entertaining evening', and by comparison *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé* or *The Wrong Man* are jolly Saturday nights out. Here one breathes, if I may venture to say so, the rarefied air of the summits, but at risk of asphyxiation; one should have expected no less from the ultimate in overstepping bounds by one of the most intransigent spirits of today, whose recent films had already prepared us for this *coup d'état* of absolute understanding.

Another objection I take more to heart: that this film is purely negative, and so effective in its destructive aspects that it ends ultimately by destroying itself. This is not unreasonable. In talking just now of denials, I was too tentative: destruction is in fact the word I should have used. Destruction of the scene: since no scene is treated for its own sake, all that subsists is a series of pure moments, of which all that is retained is the mediatory aspect; anything that might determine or actualise them more concretely is not abstracted or suppressed – Lang is not Bresson – but devalued and reduced to the condition of pure spatio-temporal reference, devoid of embodiment. Destruction, even, of the characters: each of them here is really no more than what he says and what he does. Who *are* Dana Andrews, Joan Fontaine, her father? Questions like this no longer have any meaning, for the characters have lost all individual quality, are not more than human *concepts*. But in consequence they are all the more human for being the less individual. Here we find the first answer: what remains of humanity? There is now only pure humanity, whereas Fellini's exhibitionists instantly reduce it by compromising it with their lies and buffoonery (lies obligatory when one attempts to *reconstitute* some extraordinary situation, buffoonery all the more offensive in that it purports to be 'realistic' and

not simply pulling faces). Anyone who fails to be more moved by this film than by such appeals for sympathy knows nothing, not only of cinema but of man.

Strange, this destroyer, leading us to this conclusion while obliging us to resume the objection in reverse: if this film is negative, it can only be so in the mode of *the pure negative*, which is of course also the Hegelian definition of intelligence¹.

It is difficult to find a precise formula to define the personality of Fritz Lang (best forgotten are the notions someone like Clouzot might have): an 'expressionist' film-maker, meticulous about décor and lighting? Rather too summary. Supreme architect? This seems less and less true. Brilliant director of actors? Of course, but what else? What I propose is this: Lang is the cinéaste of the concept, which suggests that one cannot talk of abstraction or stylisation in connection with him without falling into error, but of necessity (necessity which must be able to contradict itself without losing its reality): moreover it is not an exterior necessity – the film-maker's, for instance – but derived from the real movement of the concept. It is up to

¹ I know the objection that will undoubtedly be raised: that what we are concerned with here is merely a classic device of the detective novel, particularly the second-rate variety characterised by a sudden dramatic revelation in which the basic premises are turned upside down or altered. But the fact that we find this notion of the '*coup de théâtre*' reappearing in the scripts of *all* recent important films may mean that what seemed at first to be in the order of arbitrary dramatics is in fact necessity, and that all these films, despite their diversity of theme, no doubt assume precisely the same inner process which Lang makes his immediate subject. Just as the pact which binds Von Stratten to Arkadin takes on its full reality only when it proves to be negated in its original form, or Irene's fear of blackmail [in Rossellini's *Fear*] only when we know it to be devised by her husband, so the necessity of the dialectic movement alone renders credible the resurrection in *Ordet*, the surrender of *The Golden Coach*, the conversion in *Stromboli*, Rossellini, Renoir and Dreyer having openly disdained any justification outside this ultimate reversal. On the other hand, it is clearly the absence of this movement that is the most serious deficiency in the scripts of films like *Oeil pour oeil* or *Les Espions*; and that the sense of dissatisfaction left by films in other respects as accomplished as *Un Condamné à mort s'est échappé* or *The Wrong Man* probably has no other cause. Not that a movement like this, whose process comprises the element of contradiction, is foreign to Hitchcock or Bresson (one need only think, for instance, of *Suspicion* or *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*), nor that it is totally absent from their most recent films, though it is there rather by implication and never dependent on the rigour of the concept: there is an element of wager in Fontaine's escape, but more particularly the logical consequence of his persistence; its success never seems anything other than the parity achieved by the proof of a theorem (a mistake never made by the greatest cinéaste of human endeavour: cf. the endings of *Scarface*, *To Have and Have Not*, *Red River*, etc.). Or again, one simply has to compare the miracle in *The Wrong Man* with the one in *Voyage to Italy* to see the clash between two diametrically antithetical ideas, not only of Grace (in the former film, a reward for zeal in prayer; in the latter, pure deliverance lighting, within the very moment of despair, upon raw faith that is totally unaware of itself), but also of freedom, and that this preoccupation with necessity – or with logic, to use one of Rossellini's favourite terms – is carried to such lengths by these film-makers only the better to affirm the freedom of the characters and, quite simply, to make it possible: a freedom quite impossible, on the other hand, in the arbitrary worlds of Cayette or Clouzot, in which only puppets can exist. – What I say of recent film-makers is also true, it seems to me, for the whole of cinema, starting with the work of F. W. Murnau; and *Sunrise* remains a perfect example of rigorous dialectic construction. In this, however, I make no claim to be breaking new ground (cf. among others, Alexandre Astruc's article 'Cinéma et dialectique').

the spectator to assume responsibility not only for the thoughts and 'motives' of the characters, but for this movement from the Interior, grasping the phenomenon solely on its appearances; it is up to him to know how to transform its contradictory moments into the concept. What, then, is this film really? Fable, parable, equation, blueprint? None of these things, but simply the description of an *experiment*.

I realise I have not yet mentioned the subject of this experiment; it isn't without interest, either. The starting point is merely a new, actually quite subtle variation on the usual indictment of the death penalty: a series of damning circumstances may send an innocent man to the electric chair; furthermore, though the innocent is finally found really to be guilty, it is only by his own confession just at the point where his innocence had in fact been recognised; hence, vanity of human justice, judge not, and so forth. But this soon begins to seem too facile: the *dénouement* resists such easy reduction, and immediately leads in to a second movement: there can be no 'wrong man'; all men are guilty *a priori*; and the one who has just been mistakenly reprieved cannot prevent himself from immediately incriminating himself. This same movement takes us into a pitiless world where everything denies grace, where sin and penalty are irremediably bound together, and where the only possible attitude of the creator must be one of *absolute contempt*. But an attitude like this is difficult to sustain: whereas magnanimity leaves itself open to the inevitable loss of its illusions, to disappointment and bitterness, contempt can encounter only pleasant surprises and realise eventually, not that man is not contemptible (he remains so), but that he perhaps isn't quite so much so as might have been supposed.

So all this obliges us to pass this second stage as well, and finally attempt to reach, *beyond*, that of truth. But of what order can this be?

I think I see a solution: which is that it may be pointless to attempt to contrast this latest film of Fritz Lang's with earlier ones like *Fury* or *You Only Live Once*. What in fact do we see in each case? In the earlier films, innocence with all the appearances of guilt; here, guilt with all the appearances of innocence. Can anyone fail to see that they're about the same thing, or at least about the same question? Beyond appearances, what are guilt and innocence? Is one ever in fact innocent or guilty? If, in the absolute, there is an answer, it can probably only be negative; to each, then, to create for himself his own truth, however unreasonable it may be. In the final shot, the hero finally *conceives himself* innocent or guilty. Rightly or wrongly, what matter to him?

Remembering the last lines of *Les Voix du Silence*, 'Humanism does not mean saying: what I have done, etc . . .', let us salute that scarcely wrinkled hand in the penultimate shot, ineluctably at rest *near* to pardon, and which does not cause even a tremor in this most secret form of the power and the glory of being man.

Translated by Tom Milne

Montage by Jean Narboni, Sylvie Pierre and Jacques Rivette (*Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 210, March 1969)

Circumstances: Aix-en-Provence, more specifically the Centre Dramatique du Sud-Est where, at the invitation of Antoine Bourseiller, four of us found ourselves along with fifteen films on February 7, 8 and 9. In the little time available between screenings, discussions on these films, loosely hinging on the notion of montage, took place between the audience and us. This text is derived from a consideration of those discussions. The form of the text: neither debate nor round table discussion, collection of articles or treatise by several voices, but a 'montage' of critical texts. Reading of the text: 1. Non-linear, without beginning or end, attempting to open a reading space where the blanks and deficiencies, omissions or redundancies, hopefully leave the reader free to interject his own opinions or his reservations. 2. Not circumscribed, since a network of notes challenges it, opens it out, defines it more precisely. The unsigned notes are by the person to whose contribution they relate. 3. Not concluded. Provisional: between open doors and yawning questions, an arena of probing draughts. (Further articles will attempt to offer remedies.)

JACQUES RIVETTE: What was the principle of the '*journées*' at Aix? To take the notion of montage as a connecting thread, a notion that today becomes central to the consideration of other matters than cinema (cf. the fact, for instance, that Sollers or Faye can cite Eisenstein on an equal footing with leading literary theorists and practitioners); and on this basis to view or re-view a certain number of films, regrouping, arranging, 'superimposing' them, and from this superimposition (as with patterns) to try to discover the common grounds and the differences.

In practice, therefore, alongside a characteristic example – Eisenstein's *The General Line*; and it was only for practical reasons that Griffith's *Intolerance* could not be screened – a number of trail-blazing films from the last ten years were brought together: *About Something Else* (Chytilova), *Made in USA* (Godard), *Méditerranée* (Pollet), *Machorka-Muff*, *Not Reconciled* and *The Bridegroom*, *The Comedienne and the Pimp* (Straub), *Marie pour mémoire* (Garrel), *The Hour of the Furnaces* (Solanas); facing these, following the hypothesis whereby the resurgence of montage over the last ten years began with the emergence of direct methods, two key stages in 'direct cinema': *Shadows* (Cassavetes) and *Pour la suite du monde* (Perrault), Rouch being omitted only through unavoidable circumstances; and finally, to put our thesis to the test, if indeed there was such a thing as a thesis, the antithesis of two supreme achievements of the so-called 'classical' cinema: Mizoguchi (*The Empress Yang Kwei Fei*) and Dreyer (*Gertrud*) – though it might equally well have been Renoir, Ford or Rossellini.

The ambition behind this grouping was in effect to attempt, in a rather hazardous (indeed aleatory) manner, a 'montage of films': to interrelate, by means of these examples, different approaches to methods of structuring film, and to see what these connections and continuities might produce.

SYLVIE PIERRE: Perhaps we started out from a slight misunderstanding in that we were trying to talk simultaneously about the problems of cinematographic montage, and about the problems posed for the cinema by a more abstract idea, 'the idea of montage', which in fact derives from a sort of metaphorical extension of cinemato-

graphic montage within non-cinematographic areas.¹ So on the one hand we were examining montage as a technique of juxtaposing shots, which quite naturally led us to the consideration of films representing extreme cases of montage: whether 'over'-edited (Eisenstein, Pollet) or 'under'-edited (Dreyer, Mizoguchi)². Whereas montage as a metaphorical term, on the other hand – in other words collage, broadly speaking – led us into quite another area of speculation, for instance with *Made in USA*.

RIVETTE: I don't think there was any misunderstanding insofar as the choice of films was concerned: let's say that originally we stated or implied a sort of methodological *a priori*, distinguishing between all films having in common that they went through the editola stage as a *creative* stage, and the rest; or to put it another way, between directors who 'make' the film essentially during shooting (and in the pre-planning: for example Ford and Renoir), and those for whom this work of writing or *strategy* and the actual shooting is merely the accumulation of material (a working stock) which is subsequently subjected to scrutiny anew, and only acquires its order and meaning in the editing room (Rouch and Perrault as well as Godard and Eisenstein): two families which we weren't comparing in quality but opposing – provisionally at least – in an attempt to understand more clearly.

JEAN NARBONI: To my mind another misunderstanding might have arisen from the confusion which still persists between montage as the *idea of montage* and montage as *effect* (or effects, most often understood pejoratively). When we presented these films, the intention wasn't to focus them on the secondary sense alone – montage as king, sovereign organising principle of the film, manipulation in control – but more generally on the primary meaning: montage (even where it doesn't manifest itself in obvious 'effects') as essential productive work. Objection could be made that in this sense any film, insofar as it comprises a certain number of shots placed end to end and stuck one to another, is dependent on montage, and that therefore any film would qualify (or indeed any shot, since Eisenstein demonstrated so forcibly that montage could not be absent even within a shot). This was why I used the words

¹ In the initial stages of our (attempt at) systematic reflection, our reading of the first issue in the 'Change' series, entitled *Le Montage*, and even more particularly the very fact of its appearance, were extremely influential and, as it were, encouraging. For, keeping all due proportion in mind, what we were trying to do in examining montage more specifically in the cinema, was to establish ourselves within the same general problematic: that is, an inquiry into all notions of liaison, juxtaposition, combinative (and their corollaries: difference, rupture, analysis). An inquiry which we too hoped would implement itself both through our analysis of the films themselves, and through the play (itself combinative, in that it set up multiple transitions from one film to another) of this analysis.

² Here, it became evident after the discussions at Aix, one must consider two negative directions: montage attenuated by the length of the shots (*Gertrud* and *Marie pour mémoire*) and montage made unobtrusive by a continuity – narrative or musical – which obliterates the passages from one shot to the next (*The Empress Yang Kwei Fei* and *La Règle du jeu*). In the first case (attenuated montage), the paucity of liaisons can of course be tactical: the montage is all the more concerted in that it is sparing of its means and effects. In the second (unobtrusive montage), the montage is concerned to make one forget its presence, to conceal its function of discontinuity. In both cases, therefore, the negative idea can be reversed: to attenuate the montage, or make it unobtrusive, is still on occasion a montage tactic.

work, productive, creative montage, montage texture, to make a clear distinction between the films that are dependent on montage, and those in which the business of arranging shots, of interrupting them at this point or that, is merely the continuation, the completion – a nuance or improvement or two apart – of a preconceived purpose, and contents itself with following an already determined meaning instead of making a new one emerge. Exemplary in respect to the first category, for instance, are two films as different as *About Something Else* and *Pour la suite du monde* where, without being manifest through 'exterior signs', the montage plays an active role as mainspring, motor, propellant, mobile suspension between two shots, but also – especially – between the larger units of the discourse.³

With regard to the famous montage 'effects', we ought to reconsider this term and its usage very carefully and precisely in order to avoid perpetuating the errors and vague notions still evoked by any 'edited' film. If by 'montage effects' we mean manufactured devices, extraneous ornamentation, rhetorical tricks, then the term should be applied strictly to films which use them as such, which reduce to pure formula and cliché what constituted the foundation stone and not just the trimmings of the great Soviet silents (Eisenstein, Vertov, Dovzhenko), who are unquestionably beyond reproach in this matter in that they considered montage as a dynamic creative process. By including all films where montage plays a primordial role in the same debatable category, one risks falling into the same error which led to the long-held view that a poetic discourse was merely a prose discourse with something extra – the poetic flavour or effect, in fact. But if one examines a film like *Gertrud*, apparently remote from the preoccupations of montage, one realises that montage is very much present, though as a screening effect, a mask, and that it can intervene in a film as a creative process equally well through its effacement as through its attested credentials (a process which has nothing to do with the 'transparent montage' of the American cinema, for example). Jean-Luc Godard's comparison of montage to a heartbeat may be profitably recalled to pursue the analogy by saying that, just as the cardiac function alternates diastole and systole, silences – large and small – and sounds, so montage is as effective in its pervasions as in its voids, in its absences as in its traces.

³ A misconception is still rife which one would have thought should have been cleared up long ago: the identification of montage (in its active effects) with *rapid* montage, thus assuming that the work of montage necessarily implies the proliferation and atomisation of shots. In the silent Soviet cinema, the fragmentation of scenes might at a pinch mobilise the attention sufficiently to obscure the rigorous work of articulation between one sequence and the next (as we know, however, this construction was of prime importance for Eisenstein and Dovzhenko), but it is difficult to see why this unwarrantable identification of montage with short, sharp, staccato discontinuity should have continued in currency over the last ten years. For a sizeable portion of the modern cinema is concerned with the movement of compact blocks, the arrangement of long, continuous effluxions, the gradual and carefully controlled imbrication of homogeneous parts, of narrative elements that seem themselves to be seeking and indicating their most appropriate position within the overall system of the film. *La Chinoise* is a characteristic example of this sort of film, where no definite intention pre-existed the arrangement of its parts, where the logic of the narrative has imposed its authority rather than been itself imposed by the 'author', creating its own connections, entailing the inclusion of one element or the rejection of another through the movement of its own genesis, tentative, hesitant, finally infallible, each block that is displaced retaining the trace of its passages and its redistributions, the imprint, the mark of the combinative. The montage, consequently, is not work on a pre-existing material,

but work by that material, self-fashioning, self-productive, at once mould and matter, locus of a movement and sum of the constituent elements of this movement.

Marie pour mémoire: similar in certain ways to *La Chinoise*: homogeneous blocks, undivided, units displacing themselves as index throughout the still absent matrix of the montage (becoming, at their point of insertion, designated object instead of index). The montage thus cannot be said to be better or worse than it might have been (a normative illusion that refers a product back to a perfect and definitive model) since, being what it is, it also comprises its own attributes. What can one deduce from this? 1. All charges made against Garrel's work to the effect that it falls into the category of symbolism are suspect (it is, on the contrary, *literal* in the quality of its materiality: the body translated to the letter, the letter translated to the body). A radical differentiation must be made here between 'symbolism' as a fixed and rigid system, and 'the symbolic' as understood by Lacan: which is mobile, constantly shifting and substituting, leeway for signifiers. 2. This idea of montage as being *what it is* cannot result where the filmmaker simply decides this is how it should be; it derives its necessity from the *work*, whose locus it has been, whose imprint it retains, as if a profound, muffled upheaval had taken place and persists in the final form of the film (each shot wins its place itself). Work, in Garrel's case, that is to be understood in its gynaecological sense of labour: just as the woman in child-bed retains the perturbations of her pregnant state over long months, so with the film: mingled tranquillity and ferment. And birth, the fertilisation of the shots, has occurred in every way, reciprocally and against the grain as well (thus, in the film, Marie is mother, wife and daughter to Jesus).

In *La Concentration* another process took place. Shut away with his actors and crew in a tiny studio, Garrel filmed for three whole days without interruption. At one point, with tension, fatigue and other imposed conditions all playing their part, he began to fear that the sequence of shots (which were also to form the chronological sequence of the film, since he had for the first time pre-planned his montage) might be overloaded with too great a charge of intensity. So he changed the order of shooting, first filming the end, then the penultimate section. Is this *montage generating the shooting* and its methods?

RIVETTE: This is why it was essential to see Chytilova's film again right away: a film in which the role played by montage-manipulation is quite obvious, where one sees quite clearly how both detail (plastic and dynamic: the 'trait') and the effect of each splice have been systematically rethought on the editola; but above all a film where the work of montage at this primary level (the level of micro-structures) has manifest repercussions on the 'thought' of the film as a whole (what musicians call 'the grand form') and vice versa: each incessantly gearing itself on the other. So the film functions as the irregular alternation, the 'matching' of two autonomous films, or of two hypergeneric sequences, each one being governed at every level by its own formal laws, not only in so far as methods of '*mise en scène*', camera attitudes and directing the actors are concerned, but in its own internal montage.

This said, what makes *About Something Else* particularly interesting is to see how this principle in fact works not purely and simply as the alternation of two parallel actions, as merely the sum of the two, but as a *multiplication* of each 'level' by the other: and this without any interference or reference from one to the other, but on the contrary through the independence that is affirmed at every moment, re-established, reconstituted, recreated by each of them; it is through an incessant process of rejection, much more than through 'connections', that the micro-formal web organises itself: the act whereby the montage effectively becomes a productive process is sustained here by a rigorous system of deception.⁴

⁴ One can perhaps get an inkling from Chytilova's film of how the very principle of montage risks becoming a principle of rejection and suppression – and not merely of elision, but quite

literally of subtraction, erasure, or even impediment and 'persecution' (of the spectator-voyeur: thus Eisenstein refused to let him contemplate the trajectory of a gesture, and forced him to create an 'idea' of the action while refusing him the pleasure and short-circuiting its conditions). Thus montage doesn't mean adding but withdrawing (and *the withdrawal* in action), not doing but un-doing: the negative at work. The film should be seen as a *residuum*, the network of traces left by the dual process of an action (the shooting, a process of accumulation) and its negation (the montage, a process of consumption): the latter thus functions by 'intaglio', not as the absence but the act of hollowing itself, the effacement, the movement of retreat, of the Other.

At its extreme, film is the rejection of film, its contradiction (its 'anti-film?'): only the milestones remain, the tokens of its 'passage', forever past/future; just as the film in the projector exists only through the effacement of one by the other, the incessant difference, the consumption-destruction of all its 'images': a false presence, a deception constantly renewed, constantly deferred. The montage is the functioning of this deception.

At the same time, the interlacing of the plots is not so much what arouses the interest (the participation) as what blocks it, frustrates it (deprives it of its dividend by threatening its capital) by its displacement of the referent – of the relation: of 'the real' – to their manipulation. Hence the full scope that subsequently arises for space-time distortions, without any possibility of verification from the narrative: one can equally well feel that Chytilova makes too much of these or too little. A fictitious (fictional) space-time, strictly non-psychological (nothing to do with the imaginary according to Robbe-Grillet), the continuum of the film is *opening*, like space (on the stage) and time (on magnetic tape) for Merce Cunningham, but which is not pre-existent here, which therefore doesn't have to be filled, which is nothing other than a void, and like the imprint of a fossil, is left gaping by the decay of the old narrative and representational space-time.

PIERRE: At the outset, at any rate, we envisaged the films within three characteristic types of situation with regard to montage.

1. Films dependent, as Jean Narboni was saying, on 'montage texture': films based on montage as the instrument of a dialectic and of a discourse (Eisenstein, Solanas).
2. Films which do not seem to establish themselves in relation to montage as creative work, in which montage is not present as a dominant effect, but in which, as we have seen, the apparent absence of montage at the creative stage may conceal various montage manoeuvres: whether the employment, to maximum effect, of a small number of liaisons between lengthy shots, or whether the displacement of the work of montage by means of other hinges in the cinematic combinative than those of montage properly speaking (through the *découpage* – e.g. Straub – and through articulation within the shot itself – e.g. Mizoguchi or Renoir).
3. Films based, as in 1, on a creative work of montage, but which use it less for its power to carry meanings than, on the contrary, for its power to block them. The montage serving, in other words, a preoccupation with obscuring or even banishing the meaning (Pollet).

In this last category, the montage principles of underground or 'undergroundish' cinema should of course be considered. Here a veritable passion for montage seems to derive less from a concern (as with Pollet) to give the film a poetic structure, than from a terrorist desire for atomising, for exploding the very notion of an 'oeuvre'. Montage, rapid by preference, thus being used as a means (among others) to a

'systematic derangement' of the discourse.^{5/6}

RIVETTE: Perhaps we should now abandon this area of *a priori* classifications for the moment, and make the leap⁷ into trying to see what these classifications 'mean', what they correspond to in the activity of the films themselves. One very soon realises, in fact, that as soon as one wants to make a rather closer analysis of the 'work' of one of these films (work of the film-maker on the film, operation of the film on the 'reader'), one has to begin by carefully examining the categories to which it is usually subordinated.

In the case of *Made in USA*, for instance, the now generally accepted notion of 'collage' has first to be challenged: not to deny it, but in order to try to understand better how the collage worked in this case and what particular form of collage Godard's method derived from. For what distinguishes his films from those of Chytilova, Eisenstein or Pollet, is that with him one feels there was (or used to be) an earlier state of the film, an inference the others do not permit. In *Made in USA* Godard leaves the impression of an earlier film, rejected, contested, defaced, torn to shreds: destroyed as such, but still 'subjacent'. The film only functions in relation to simultaneous referents, more or less tacit but proliferating, encroaching on each other so that they themselves ravel up and weave the entire filmic texture, since ultimately one can feel that there is nothing, no phrase, shot or movement, that is not a more or less 'pure' citation or referent: the important thing being, during the course of the film, not to try to identify all these referents, which would be both

⁵ The extremism of this systematic could be quite well represented by a film like Taylor Mead's *European Diary* which, filmed image by image, can save itself the bother of an editing stage and be edited as it is shot. The extreme rapidity of the liaisons goes so far as to prohibit even perception of each shot. The spectator, ruthlessly left all at sea, is gripped by a dizzying monotony. But then another discourse may perhaps establish itself (if the spectator brings a certain goodwill to it, or helps out with a certain protective conscience), not in the film but in the spectator himself, on the strength of infra-perceived fragments of the film. Like those complicated, overabundant dreams that are immediately forgotten on waking (a).

a) Opposite perspective: Andy Warhol's (more) celebrated (than seen) *Chelsea Girls*. Absolute non-montage, since the film is merely the alternation or juxtaposition (ordered by chance) of reels exactly as they left the camera, uncut and including both unforeseen accidents and reels; and yet the simple fact of projection, therefore of the successions and the simultaneity (through the coexistence of the two screens) of raw shots *creates* montage: different each time, but inescapable. As though one couldn't leave the circle, as if it were impossible to break the montage's seal. (J.R.)

⁶ With Cassavetes' use of montage is very different: naturalistic. (As Jean Narboni rightly says, Cassavetes' work is a 'natural expressionism'.) What has to be expressed is edginess, doubts, hesitations, illuminations, fleeting and contradictory expressions, lassitudes, irritations, idle moments and bursts of activity succeeding one another as they do in life. The montage becomes the privileged means: the instrument of touch. And the phrase is used only barely metaphorically: in painting, a touch of green brings a *realistic* contradiction to red. One of those contradictions brought to life out of respect for life. It isn't a question of nuance (nothing is more assertive than nuance), but rather of a war waged, by tremors and hesitations, on meaning in its living inexactitude.

⁷ To be understood, in the circumstances, in its gymnastic and sporting sense rather than the Marxist one, I presume (as we shall be using it later). (J.N.)

impossible and pointless, but to realise (to see within the perspective of the idea) that *everything* is referential, though the referents are set with traps and dissembled, deconsecrated, by an operation that is literally 'terrorist'.

The initial impulse of the film, what one can probably think of as the point of departure for Godard's activity, is in fact a montage idea: what happens if one 'edits' together, if one combines some lousy *série noire* novel with the Ben Barka affair: not of course the 'reality' of the affair, which I don't know, which escapes me, but as I might have read about it in the papers, as I might reconstruct it, *imagine* it, from a collage of newspaper cuttings; hence, a montage of two 'texts' (but also, shredding of the pre-texts). A reading of the film proper, which offers itself as 'completed', must in a sense retrace this movement by de-montage and, through a decipherment of both the tattered remains of the thriller plot and the echoes of political coordinates (a task itself embroiled, obstructed, frankly presented as unfeasible), finally attain – later, and likely after re-viewing – a level where the film becomes immediately legible as it unfolds on the screen.

Almost all of Godard's films function, as a matter of fact, through the embroilment of sub-texts: in *Le Mépris*, for instance, *The Odyssey*, Fritz Lang, Moravia's novel, Cinecittà . . . In *Méditerranée*, on the other hand, Pollet *makes use of* the fascination exerted by a more or less comparable ideological background: bullfighting, ruined Greek temples, Egyptian statues, the sea: but he wants to use each of these elements as a word closed in on itself, loaded with the full charge of its potential meaning⁸, whereas with Godard now, most of the time, he balks at any clear and distinct expression of the 'word'; and increasingly, moreover, the reference for each citation is, if not false, at least *falsified*: whereas in the early films quotations still played their traditional role, presented openly with an indication of the source and its traditional connotations, nowadays the fragmentation of his referents constitutes the texture and the very matter of the film, and in a certain sense, its *end*.

PIERRE: It may be no accident that there are so many torn posters in *Made in USA*: defacements which epitomise the complementary action of the collage. For in order for collage to exist, each element must first have been torn from its context, and this preliminary operation involves a violence at least equal to that subsequently involved in the shock of producing the new combination. With Godard, what is all the more violent about this excision of the elements is their loss of identity (the fact that one cannot recognise the quotations, but also that everything becomes quotation, even what isn't) in favour of a sort of general super-identity: an overall hyper-Godardisation.

In Pollet's case, the relationship of the parts to the whole is of the same order. There is indeed *loss* of identity (of the proper name) among the parts in favour of the

⁸ Cf. Jean Narboni's criticism further on of this correlation of shot and word; but it is a fact that Pollet wanted to take each element in the film — Venice, operating table, Greek temple — to its most extreme point of 'purity' (and modesty): like the words in the Mallarmé-ish poem (the reference to *Un Coup de dés* is explicit throughout Sollers' text), polished, orbited, crystallised, as though cut off from any lexicographic impurities. Whereas Godard works to *destroy* this minimum element (this moneme): similarly Joyce 'worked on' his words both from 'within' and in the dictionary context: dis-membered, dissected, collided, commingled.

whole (in other words, the idea of Mediterranean as wholly mythical), but in point of fact, inasmuch as it refers back to such a prestigious whole, each element becomes fascinating again for its own sake, acquiring more weight than it has itself. It is then up to the commentary to take over the work of laceration, both of the parts (by disrupting the fascination exerted by each image) and of the whole (the commentary's task of demystification with respect to the Mediterranean myth). This commentary method obviously cannot result in a pulverisation of the elements as radical as Godard's. Pollet's commentary-images montage remains edifying, in the sense that the film aims to be a poem, an edifice.

NARBONI: *Méditerranée* is an exemplary case. Among the films we selected, in fact, it established precisely the question around which our choice was organised, since it is an interrogation of montage, a question endlessly put and put again to montage: when, how, why pass from one thing to another? A sentence in Sollers' commentary defines and underlines this interrogation: 'And if at the same time somewhere in some unimaginable somewhere someone calmly began to replace you?' (to examine in their turn the 'somewhere', the 'unimaginable', the 'calmly', could lead us too far, though still to the point of the film and the question it asks of montage). Similarly, 'how to end?', 'how to begin?', all those apparently self-evident questions that are never asked in films (but are beginning to be: cf. for instance, *Le Gai savoir* or *Marie pour mémoire*), are also omnipresent throughout the film, and not merely at the beginning and end. It is the course of the film that poses them.⁹ For those who see in *Méditerranée* only a series of shots stirred up more or less felicitously, accompanied by a 'literary' commentary by Philippe Sollers, let us recall that similar preoccupations are the subject of a novel, *Drame* by Philippe Sollers in fact, concerning which Roland Barthes writes: 'The narration is in fact merely the free figure in this question: *what is a story?* At what level of myself, of the world, shall I decide *that something is happening to me?* The earliest poets, the authors of those very old epic ballads preceding *The Iliad*, exorcised the terrifying arbitrariness of narrative (why begin here rather than there) by a preamble whose ritual meaning was this: the story is infinite, it began long ago (did it ever begin?): I take it up *at this point*, where I start.'

How does the montage work in *Méditerranée*, what is its role, its function, its mechanism? Precisely, it seems to me, in the area of effacing the meanings and connotations with which the content of the shot is charged even before the film starts. Selecting a limited number of *shots revolving around* the Mediterranean, Pollet edits and organises them, introducing and rearranging them in a process designed

⁹ Even through its title, Chytilova's film also poses a question (questions). It is remarkable, actually, how almost all the titles of these films are 'signifiers' of their functioning: *About Something Else*, of course, but also *The Old and the New* (which are at work, and in conflict, in each sequence, each cell, each frame), *Not Reconciled* (true of each shot, locked in on its own cognisance: deliberate banishment of compromise from the Adenauer world, tranquil rejection of a sham harmony). *Intolerance*, *Made in USA*, *Pour la suite du monde*, *Méditerranée* ('sea surrounded by land' . . .): each of these titles is like a 'directions for use' for the film. Whereas *Gertrud*, *The Empress Yang Kwei Fei*, are merely labels (though it would certainly be easy to find Renoir or Rossellini, but also Ford or Dreyer films with ambivalent titles like this, more or less clearly indicating the same awareness of form as being the 'content of form' . . .). (J.R.)

gradually to make them equivalent in value, to equalise them in their symbolic importance. In my opinion it isn't true to say that there is no text pre-existing *Méditerranée*, that the film establishes a first text. The graphic inscription [*écriture*] of the film is of course creative, but *against* and in relation to another text, which is extra-cinematographic – yes – but cultural and ideological. The film acquires meaning (of being, in fact, *Méditerranée* and nothing else) only by effacing all previous meanings. It is articulated around two kinds of shot, some of them very *marked*, heavily charged with cultural symbolisms and connotations (pyramid, temple, or places of modern myth such as factory and hospital), others more neutral; and their intermixture, their distribution and redistribution, their alternation and recurrence, initiate – purely through the impetus of the film's course, its movement, through the analogy of situation that comes into play (all these shots are *of* the film) – a process of levelling, of equalisation. The antithetical coupling of ancient and modern, marked and unmarked, gives way to a locus where unequal valuations, hierarchical degrees and temporal differences no longer hold sway. This seems to me to be the reason why Pollet has tried to turn each of his shots into the equivalent of a word, or at least – since such a thing is impossible – the nearest thing to a word. We know, in fact, as Christian Metz has clearly demonstrated in five points, that a film shot, no matter how parsimonious its information, can be the equivalent only of at least a sentence, never of a word: 1. Shots are infinite, the words in a language finite in number. 2. Shots are inventions by the film-maker, words pre-exist in a dictionary. 3. The shot yields an indefinite amount of information. 4. The shot is an actualised unit of the discourse; the word, a unit in the dictionary, is purely virtual: an image of a bench signifying in effect 'here is a bench' and not simply 'bench'. 5. A shot assumes its meaning only to a small degree through paradigmatic opposition to the other shots that might have appeared at the same point in the chain (since these are indefinite in number), whereas a word always forms part of one or several more or less organised semantic fields. Pollet, one realises however, has intuitively tried to reduce these distinctions by taking all these points into account: 1. he has limited the number of his shots, and played on their recurrence rather than their variety; 2. he has 'invented' or 'staged' as little as possible in them; 3. in attempting to reduce them each time to a single unit of content, he made a maximum reduction in the information they can give; 5. he has tried to establish a rich paradigmatic of the film, first by playing on the title, *Méditerranée*, as a 'reserve' furnishing a limited number of shots, so that each of them is in effect buoyed by the ensemble of other shots that the theme of *Méditerranée* might have supplied (even if we do not represent them, we think them as the *other*, *all-embracing* and *lacking* from each shot); but also through the ordering of the shots themselves, whose periodical recurrence (even when filmed from a different angle) denotes each time that they have been chosen – levied – from a relatively restricted field; 4. and finally, by effecting a perversion (the commentary is crucially important here) of the actualisation of the images and of their quality of assertiveness, so that the 'here is a bench', for example, apprehended in a text (imaged and voiced) where distinctions between dream/sleep, imaginary/real and so forth all subside, is eventually called into question in its turn. The pivot, the axis

constituted by the commentary, is the basic element around which the vacillation in the spectacle takes place, the inversion of spectator/performer, seer/seen ('And suppose one were being watched?', 'A spectacle, however, which one knows very well will not come from without'). We are a long way here from the accusations of 'poeticism' the film incurred.

PIERRE: This reflection of Pollet's on montage, which has been contrasted with Eisenstein's cinema of montage, in fact establishes itself with Eisenstein on the horizon, with a reflection on montage according to Eisenstein; with the idea that montage is the only way to create non-reactionary cinema as opposed to the cinema of beguilement, of representation. But here we must be extremely careful and very precise in the terms used, for as soon as political implications come into it one is all too inclined to be taken in by vague metaphors. Undoubtedly one can consider that a cinema which conceals its shot-to-shot liaisons from you (the 'unobtrusive montage' discussed earlier), or which gives preference to long takes (the 'attenuated montage' also discussed), manoeuvres the spectator in a way one might describe as reactionary because what is then involved is either illusionism (concealment of cinematographic discontinuity) or beguilement by means of the shot. In each case it is the impossibility of escaping what *is* on the screen. So, where one can by contrast qualify Eisensteinian montage as 'progressist' is, paradoxically, in its most dictatorial aspect: the passages from one shot to another deprive the spectator of any possibility of escaping from thought, from the need to maintain a reflective distance in relation to the shot. Hence there is no way one can give oneself up to the representation. And it is this impossibility that Pollet took up in his turn; though rejecting the dictatorship by discourse and meaning.

NARBONI: Eisenstein was of course trying to convey a meaning by and in his films which wasn't simply the meaning of the film as meaning, as self-designation, but the meaning of Communism itself. What places him incomparably higher than the other propagandist film-makers is that he himself set out in quest of this meaning – which, as a Marxist film-maker, he controlled – dismembering and reconstituting it, sweeping the spectator along with him, and thus verifying Marx's words (which he quotes in *Notes of a Film Director*) on the necessity for the investigation of truth itself to be true, on the means as part of the truth just as much as the result, on investigation as deployed and dispersed truth reuniting in the result.

Inasmuch as Pollet declares war on the meanings which weigh down the shots in *Méditerranée* with their whole cultural weight, he tends to adumbrate nothing but the film as meaning, to say nothing in the film but the work of the film.

RIVETTE: There is also the fact that the idea of meaning is 'progressist' in the context in which Eisenstein worked, whereas it functions in a reactionary way – as 'truth' – in Pollet's context (which is also ours): Eisenstein, and to a certain extent Solanas¹⁰, produce a film in a milieu where meaning is still relatively innocent (and

¹⁰ And it is precisely in this distance maintained by Pollet with regard to Eisenstein (his rejection of the dictatorship of meaning) that the case of Solanas should be considered. In *The Hour of*

the Furnaces there is an extremely violent dictatorship of the discourse (implemented chiefly by the montage of sound and image). Those of us accustomed, in a French context, to the idea that an obligatory meaning is a reactionary principle, are therefore suddenly required to go an extremely long way in adjusting the relativity of our reasoning. As far, in fact, as bringing it directly into touch with the current situation in Argentina. Is this meaning, then (that Peronism, as an already existing force for regrouping the popular masses, should be the starting-point for propaganda and revolutionary action) to be imposed on the Argentinians? I confess I have no idea. But *in any case* doesn't the very notion of political violence (a revolution, for instance, but it could equally well be to do with reaction or fascism) itself impose, as a corollary, the notion of violence in meaning? So the production of an obligatory meaning would no longer have to be considered reactionary, but one would have to consider nothing but this meaning. Are we forced into this regression by politics themselves? Is the notion of an open work, in other words, one of the last manifestations of Western liberalism? Or must we examine *the contexts* of the work yet again with greater stringency? (S.P.)

they take this 'relative' strictly into account), whereas in our case, whether we like it or not, it is invariably taken up by the commercial market, accessory to the ideology of exchange¹¹.

And one mustn't forget how Eisenstein has very consciously implemented his own 'text' through the perversion and transposition of an earlier text. Griffith was the first to draw the inferences from his historical situation, he made the first great synthesis (*Birth of a Nation*) of the implicit and random 'discoveries' of his predecessors; but his master-stroke remains that, having just completed *The Mother and the Law*, a film reflecting an unconsciously reactionary liberal ideology, he immediately adopted it as the mother cell and motor element of his next film, *Intolerance*: the very fact of interlacing four 'stories' into a single flow, of imposing the same law on four periods, of gradually substituting the single course of the film for the succession of stories (a 'gesture' of revelation/annulment that absolutely dominates the whole final reel), literally turns the meanings of the Ur-film upside down. It is this 'intuition' of Griffith's that Eisenstein, in full awareness, chose to adopt; perfecting in the light of Marxism what Griffith had only been able to portend within a bourgeois ideology, he undertook precisely the same operation with respect to this intuition as Marx did in relation to Hegel, and through a systematic refraction and inversion of its data, gave the post-Dickensian guilty liberal conscience its full meaning as a class struggle.

NARBONI: When Dreyer borrowed the thematic and construction of *Intolerance* to make *Leaves from Satan's Book*, he reconstituted a film with four different and quite distinct stories, chronologically told, failing to recognise the possibilities of reactivation, contamination and subversive interaction that the intermingling of the stories offered to Griffith. The latter is a typical example in film history of someone capable of producing a form or a concept without being able to formulate the theory of that concept correctly, and this is because the historical present in which he existed, the cultural and ideological text he inherited from his period, furnished him

¹¹ Cf. the authoritative articles by Jean-Joseph Goux: 'Marx et l'Inscription du travail', 'Numismatiques' (*Tel Quel*, nos. 33, 35, 36).

with neither the means nor the terrain, or even the need¹².

RIVETTE: Yet as everyone knows, this 'theory' of montage – though its practice persists after a fashion here and there – whether American (but Griffith remained isolated; Stroheim and Vidor were already playing the 'stage' card – sound cinema, in other words) or Soviet (Eisenstein, Vertov, Dovzhenko), was virtually wiped out by the arrival of sound, despite the celebrated Manifesto of 1928. Yet on a basis of speech (Resnais, Godard)¹³ or of 'direct' (Rouch, Leacock, Perrault and many others), the 'resumption' of Griffith/Eisenstein has been gradually taking place over the last ten years: diffuse, often confused or barely conscious, but representing a collective will to reactivate the idea of montage on the basis of – and in terms of – the knowledge acquired over the thirty intervening years.

Implicitly with Griffith, then explicitly with Eisenstein and with all film-makers who endeavour to be even moderately lucid as to the meanings of their work, to think the montage is to think the criticism of a pre-existing text: of a 'datum' which is itself – and this is what the process of the textual operations reveals – in fact only a fabrication. Hence this working *hypothesis*: if all coherent thought concerning montage is *de facto* critical thought, doesn't any form of rejection or disregard of montage imply a theological mentality, in other words acceptance of the world as it is, and if not resignation, at least passive contemplation of *the being there* purely as presence, involving neither History nor mediation, with all the concepts of permanence and fate bound up with this ideology?

Of course to say that montage and critical thought go together may simply seem tautological; but what must be stressed is that it is the material work, the concrete manipulation of montage (as soon as this goes beyond the level of continuity and ellipsis, the narrative level of 'stylistic tricks') that 'generates' this work of critical thought, and this at *all* levels of the film, including some the film-maker probably hasn't considered: any questioning of the superstructures reverberates a shock on the level of the infrastructures. Another consequence: this critical movement is not limited to the results of its functioning in the film, for the film preserves it intact through the course of its development: not as an imprint (a fixed 'montage effect') but as a dynamic (montage as act) affecting the spectator as such; so it becomes impossible for him to abandon himself comfortably to the telling of a story, to the representation of a fable or pseudo-reality: he must, if he wants to read the film, assume responsibility in his turn for this critical work; if he wants to *see* the film, he must fulfil this responsibility.

¹² Conversely, we know the way in which Eisenstein took over Lang's *Dr Mabuse*, to re-edit and correct it. We also know how, in order to give it its full political meaning, he betrayed Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy*: 'Undoubtedly a first-class novel – although not, from our point of view, a class novel' – stripping it of all the vaguely 'progressist' ideology that encumbered it, instead of giving his producers 'an uncomplicated whodunit with a good murder and a nice love story' (of course they turned it down). (*Notes of a Film Director*)

¹³ Note how it is the same desire to annex to the contemporary 'vocabulary' of film, in one case the texts of Duras, Robbe-Grillet, Cayrol, but for the other the speech that is most threatened (everyday, contingent, trivial, transient) – which seems to constrain them to rediscover the techniques of discontinuity.

NARBONI: But the practice of montage as absolute manipulation, as an all-powerful technique of all-purpose arrangement, has long been – and continues to be – held as authoritarian, manipulative of the spectator on whom it supposedly imposes a series of univocal and unquestionable meanings. Broadly speaking, this was the attitude that lay behind the theories of André Bazin, who was for instance more responsive to the cinema of deep focus or the sequence-shot as being to his way of thinking more respectful both of the freedom of the spectator – whose eye and understanding are thereby not subjected to a strictly programmed course – and of the 'ambiguity of reality'. We realise today that when he wrote 'in analysing reality, montage assumed, through its very nature, a unity of meaning in the dramatic event', Bazin was right in so far as the work of someone like Pudovkin is concerned – where the fragmentation of scenes, the breaking down into shots, never had any purpose other than carrying analysis to its extremes, dislocating a situation in order to dramatise or magnify it – but not Eisenstein, for whom it was a question each time of 'involving the spectator in the course of a process productive of meaning'. The integration of montage with visual space which Bazin recognised as the mark of modern cinema can be found in many Eisenstein scenes and many of his writings, just as Eisenstein's formula, 'the number of intervals determining the tensional pressure', could perfectly well apply to the examples on which Bazin based his analyses (Wyler's films, the kitchen sequence in *The Magnificent Ambersons*, which were constructed on the principle of potential voltage difference and of the slow dramatic charge in the shots). The freedom allowed to the spectator in these films was never more than whatever freedom – guided, oriented between certain poles and strong-points perfectly disposed at intervals within the shot – the film-maker chose to grant him, before finally imposing a predetermined meaning which, because of his delay in conjuring it, might seem to have been discovered by the spectator himself. Here one finds the most extreme contradiction in Bazin's analyses, preoccupied on the one hand by a belief in the ambiguity of reality, and on the other by the conviction that an international language exists, a natural and hidden meaning to things which the cinema does not have to produce, whose advent it need only – by virtue of its own perception and persistence – apprehend.

RIVETTE: Historically, in fact, this notion of cinema as transparent, which can be resumed in the Renoir – Rossellini – Bazin trilogy, was itself established in reaction to a generalised 'perversion' (perversion in the ordinary sense, bourgeois perversion) of Eisensteinian practice; for what was Pudovkin doing if not simply adopting the husk of Eisenstein's theoretical principles and placing them at the service of storytelling, in tow to narrative: the montage effect is no longer 'utilised' except to lend greater effectiveness to a narrative subordinated to the development of character. By way of Pudovkin, this compromise and this caricature of the 'art of montage' was taken over by whole areas of the commercial cinema. (One may note how at the same time and in the same way – with the same finality orienting the same process – Pabst was instrumental in effecting the liquidation of expressionism in favour of the aesthetic of *'mise en scène'* as a formal bluff which even today still governs the entire European and Hollywood cinema: Clément, Preminger, Chukrai, Rosi. This technique of manipulating 'reality', where the director is the

more or less invisible master, quickly ceased to be the art of montage to become the art of *découpage* (and concomitantly, of 'framing' and the 'direction of actors'.) It was in fact against dictatorship in this area that Renoir or Rossellini took a stance and not against montage, which with them is more of a censored area, a 'blank': the fact that the film-maker no longer has any need to go to his cutting-room, no longer feels this need, leads them in practice – and unconsciously, it would seem – to reinvest a part of this montage thought at the construction level, and more particularly at the stage of actual shooting. (Cf. the role of the sequence-shot or the mobility of the camera with these film-makers or Welles, Hitchcock and Mizoguchi, in contrast to the more generalised analytic technique, and as a structuring of levels and formal conflicts).

So one might, very schematically, distinguish four moments: the *invention* of montage (Griffith, Eisenstein), its deviation (Pudovkin-Hollywood: elaboration of the techniques of propaganda cinema), the rejection of propaganda (a rejection loosely or closely allied to long takes, direct sound, amateur or auxiliary actors, non-linear narrative, heterogeneity of genres, elements or techniques, etc), and finally, what we have been observing over the last ten years, in other words the attempt to 'salvage', to re-inject into contemporary methods the spirit and the *theory* of the first period, though without rejecting the contribution made by the third, but rather trying to cultivate one through the other, to dialectise them and, in a sense, to *edit* them.

NARBONI: Eisenstein, Pudovkin: today we must no longer think of the opposition between them in the generally agreed terms, categories and relationships – intellectual montage/lyrical montage, cinema-cry/cinema-song, dominant creativity/dominant theory – but according to their particular conceptions of the dynamics of cinema as revealed in their films and clarified in their writings. Here a decisive text must be quoted: 'The basic element of Soviet cinema, its specific problem, is montage. Montage is neither a means of showing or narrating, fragment by fragment as a mason stacks up bricks (Kuleshov), nor a method for developing an idea through a succession of shots (Pudovkin's lyrical principle). The idea must result from the clash between two independent elements'. From this we can see very clearly what differentiates Eisenstein's *écriture* – successive transformative effects whose motor elements are linked by dynamic signs of correlation and integration, where the operations actualised are multiplicatory and productive, where the collision between two elements engenders, through a crucial leap, a new concept – from that of Pudovkin, a chain of shots each in turn carrying a single idea in a simple process of summation. What therefore distinguishes a multidimensional space and time, structured according to the principles of a complex polyphony, a signifying purpose, a volume in constant expansion, a scenography, from a spuriously dialectic linear time. I shall borrow a question and answer from L. Althusser: 'How can a dialectic be late? Only on condition that it is the other name for a consciousness' . . . 'there is – in the strict sense – no dialectic of consciousness opening, by virtue of its own contradictions, on to reality itself . . . For the consciousness attains reality not through its internal development but through a radical discovery of *the other than self*'. It is this *other* of the consciousness that Pudovkin never attained. A film like *Mother*, for example, centred on a *central*

character, a consciousness embodying within itself all the circumstances of the drama, quite unjustifiably assumes the mask of a dialectical and Marxist film inasmuch as Pudovkin's cinema was subject to a simple narrative logic which prevented it from bringing multiple, discontinuous temporalities – merely time governed by a uniform successiveness – into play.

NARBONI/RIVETTE: All of which leads us to re-examine this theme of the 'awakening consciousness' and to expose its complicity with the method whereby Pudovkin 'progresses' in his work only by following the thread of an idea which runs through the film like a watermark, and which is never *produced* by the shots, merely transmitted by them. If we compare *Mother* and *The General Line*, it can be seen that the former tells the story (is the *narrative*) of a character whose view of the world is gradually modified by accumulations from the various phases and circumstances of the plot (a story such as Ford, for example, could tell – better – in *The Grapes of Wrath*; but cf. in counter-verification, Brecht's version of the same Gorki text); whereas the latter makes us witness, and collaborate in, a *metamorphosis* through a series of mutations of the 'mediator-protagonist' who punctuates the course of the film – and who is no longer a character but a node of forces and acts: *actor* (acted on/acting), and functions in the organisation of the sequences like a word being transformed and exhausting all its possibilities one after the other –: a consciousness no longer central, which never at any moment reflects or dominates the situation in its entirety, but is presented each time as an *effect* of the dynamic of the film. No 'scene' shows or demonstrates a particular stage (conscious and considered) in the peasant woman's 'long and hard road'; it is praxis alone that modifies her state; it is because the tractor breaks down that she makes (that she undergoes) the decisive qualitative leap: she is then at a stage Z corresponding to the final point in her evolution as a peasant (by jumps from the 'alienated peasant' stage to that of 'enlightened peasant'), the tractor stops, the mechanic rips up her skirt, stripping her of the rags of her present condition, to use the strips as rags (which thus have a part in cleaning the engine), and there is here a sudden, unexpected leap: she *is* a tractor-driver. (And the whole end of the film is simply montage of herself with herself: her successive *aspects* matching with the image of her 'final' (within the term of the film) transformation. The character, far from subjecting the logic of the narrative to the laws of its thought processes, is produced by the transformational mechanism of the sequences¹⁴.

¹⁴ Neither the Russian release title (*The Old and the New*) nor the title Eisenstein wanted to use (*The General Line*) give a correct account of the real dynamic and overall system of the film, in that both titles still belong to the category of linear and continuous time; progressively generated, the time of historical succession (a succession broken in the release title by the sudden shift to the New, a movement of dogged progress towards Communism in Eisenstein's title). The film, on the contrary, functioning through blocks and ensembles, through discontinuous series, is never bisected once and for all by the miraculous line which supposedly marks the definitive passage from Old to New (a type of 'progress' characteristic of 'liberal' American films, complying with the ideology of an unbroken history guided by some starry horizon of enlightenment); each scene, moreover, is itself traversed by this Old/New line, the movement is one of more and more radical leaps from scene to scene, each one embodying all

its predecessors before being absorbed in its turn. This movement might be resumed diagrammatically:

S (1)	S (2)
Old/New	Old/New
Old	New

Thus one sees that the film, itself, in its entirety, and only at its end, can be described as 'the New', with the important reservation that no sooner has the last shot faded than the film is surrendered in its turn to the Old, demanding that its revolutionary movement be in its turn taken up, extended, pursued by each spectator, and this time in *life*.

The impossibility of representing the movement of Eisenstein's film in our unidimensional Western language clearly demonstrates the extent to which the film effected a breach in History (history of the cinema, its storytelling) through the establishment of a volumetric space, a plural time, a complex topology. (J.N.)

NARBONI: It is inconceivable that this discontinuity in the evolution shown in the peasant woman was a secondary discontinuity, achieved as an afterthought by eliminating intermediary stages and linking passages which had been filmed, that it was intended as something in the order of an ellipse or stylistic effect. It could happen with Eisenstein that during shooting, with a view to montage and with an idea in mind, he accumulated considerably more filmic material than he intended to retain; he frequently left possibilities open for unforeseen articulations, new concatenations, valencies to be saturated; while editing, he might breach and leave gaps in a continuity previously filmed, retaining only certain stages of a movement, moments of a trajectory, highlights of a situation: but it is inconceivable, in this particular case of the peasant woman in *The Old and the New*, that he could have filmed it with the genesis of her evolution faithfully respected in its continuity. His strict application of the Marxist theories of the leap, of the sudden break as a revolutionary moment of total renewal, undoubtedly prohibited him from doing so.

RIVETTE: A detour, whereby we might perhaps come back to the problematic of the relationship between 'direct' and montage; for a film like *Pour la suite du monde* shows very clearly how Perrault (like Rouch) was very soon able to go beyond the stage of montage as simply selecting and ordering material by definition overabundant in relation to the 'projected' film, and how the film, over and above its value as a document, acquires a poetic quality only in so far as this material is reworked throughout in very precise formal patterns, while at the same time itself suggesting these patterns and informing them dialectically; this both on the level of shot-to-shot relationships, and in the structuring of the film in movements (musical) and chapters (fictional or thematic). Which is even more explicit in *Le Règne du jour*, just as the creative intervention of montage is more flagrant in *La Chasse au lion à l'arc* than in *Jaguar* or *Moi un Noir*: the latter are closer to the chronicle form, the former to the epic form.

Another point, arising from the preceding, another similarity: just as montage looms large on the horizon even at the pre-shooting stage for Eisenstein (all the more so during the shooting, if only in the sometimes systematic use of multiple cameras: cf. Noël Burch's article, 'Fonctions de l'aléa', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No

194*), so the direct film-maker accumulates matter *for* the montage, with a view to the re-examination of this raw material and its destruction as such. This attitude plays the same motor role with Cassavetes, even though it is within a dramaturgical perspective (but a dramaturgy exposed, radically undermined by the use of such material: deflected and turned inside out) that it performs its task of intercepting the 'text' (the pre-text at this stage, in its first state of 'eruption', closely scrutinised by the meaning)¹⁵.

Contrariwise, in the case of *Not Reconciled*, one can see that the montage is detailed with absolute precision, how Straub has tightened or loosened each liaison, played on variations of tempi and so on – in other words, materialised the *principle* of the film on the editola – but also how only what was strictly necessary in view of the 'anticipated' film was shot, how the film therefore pre-existed its matter from the moment of its *écriture*; but at the same time one must note how this work of condensation, choice and re-ordering was in fact effected on the basis of an extensive source material (ie Böll's text, *Billiards at Half-Past Nine*, which here undergoes an operation of reduction, dislocation and conversion which no longer has anything to do with what is normally called 'adaptation'): here, therefore, the preparatory work of *écriture* functions as montage¹⁶.

Moreover, Straub imposes on the spectator (the virgin spectator viewing the film for the first time, at any rate, but also in part at subsequent viewings) an obscurity in the language, which seems wilfully indirect, apparently unaware of him as the addressee (even if he nevertheless, though tacitly, fulfils his task), and which prevents him from direct attainment of the 'knowledge' it seemed to be entrusted with bringing him¹⁷; the film functions before him as a dream, one might say, as the

* See 'Chance and Its Functions' in *Theory of Film Practice* by Noël Burch (Secker & Warburg, 1973, pp. 105-21). (Ed.)

¹⁵ Of what is direct (sound/cinema) the 'proof'? Cf. in particular 'Le détour par le direct' (Jean-Louis Comolli, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 209). Direct sound = sign of the eruption of a fragment of 'reality', evidence of the operation of interception at a certain precise moment in History (hic et nunc, but also past/elsewhere) of some fortuity: the *take* is a product by machine of the 'event', a primitive inscription by encounter: hence the rushes, the nascent stage of the film. And montage = tactic for encounters between successive sound-images, but at the same time between soundtrack and visual track, towards 'the' film in its posthumous state. Dual dual-process, and productivity through bringing into contact (into conflict) these two re-fissured 'blocks': film 1 and film 2 (in front/behind the camera//co-existence/succession of images-sounds). A dual intersection spatialising the process of the film (a dynamic 'cube') on all spatio-temporal vectors.

¹⁶ It should be noted, moreover, that it was through the action of the oral discourse which governs the film – or rather the 'series' of fragmentary discourses – that Straub found himself forced, as it were (after a first chronological 'treatment'), into his definitive construction.

¹⁷ Not through any desire for obscurity, but on the contrary because it pushes to their point of fusion, simultaneously, all the functions (rigour of the liaisons, autonomy of the elements) which are more commonly used only in succession and in a looser manner, and reduces – too much, all things considered – the area of imprecision to which one is accustomed; likewise there is a Mallarmé-ish *side* to the text which is 'obscure' only by sheer force of speed and logic, by force of clarity.

product of *an* unconscious (but whose unconscious? Does it belong to the literary text? To fifty years of German history? The Straubs? The 'characters' in the film?), whose structure comprises only multiple re-crossings and literal echoes, the ultimate play on words and/or images, all the informational elements also being annexed to the puzzle, though dislocated, secreted, shuffled: for instance the central monologue by the mother (who is, not by chance, at the point where all the components of the *fasces*¹⁸ converge and diverge), discourse of a space-time where all times and all spaces are collided and compounded (resorbed by a process of montage/mixing).

Now, it was a very similar problematic that faced us when we re-viewed *Gertrud* a few hours later: if Dreyer's film, more 'logical', in any case more chronological, doesn't function formally as a dream, it nevertheless also prescribes¹⁹ an 'oneiric' vocabulary: at once the *telling* of a dream and a session of *analysis* (an analysis in which the roles are unceasingly changing; subjected to the flow, the regular tide of the long takes, the mesmeric passes of the incessant camera movements, the even monotone of the voices, the steadiness of the eyes – always turned aside, often parallel, towards us: a little above us – the strained immobility of the bodies, huddled in armchairs, on sofas behind which the other silently stands, fixed in ritual attitudes which make them no more than corridors for speech to pass through, gliding through a semi-obscurity arbitrarily punctuated with luminous zones into which the somnambulists emerge of their own accord . . .)²⁰. So, two films which impose, by converging routes, the same analogy between their functioning (their *operation*) and that of 'all' that is implied by the word unconscious; but at the same time, two films where the basic work seems to have taken place at the level of the *intention* and the *écriture* (with Straub, pulverisation of the original text; with Dreyer, condensation and 'concentration' of this text²¹; but films, finally, where the moment of the montage 'acts' as the fulfilment of this work, but also as an intervention by the *arbitrary*. Now, this 'enigmatic' function of montage, constant with Dreyer, always operates in his work through the 'imposition' of gaps (marks of censorship?): cf. how the beginnings and ends of each shot in *Master of the House*

¹⁸ A form which 'explains itself', since it is Fascism that is in question here. In the same spirit, I must confess I cannot resist the temptation to write: in so far as the film is structured as a language, it acts as though (it mimes the action of an) unconscious.

¹⁹ This is unequivocally signalled both by the nightmare with the dogs (and its recurrence in the tapestry) and by the very specific allusions to Charcot's group and methods of hypnotism.

²⁰ What is suggested here about Dreyer could probably be applied equally well (with all the evident changes and 'corrections' made) to Mizoguchi: but the film we should have seen again is *Ugetsu Monogatari* or *The Life of Oharu*, rather than *The Empress Yang Kwei Fei*. Let us simply recall here the phenomenon of gliding between multiple levels, abetted by the indecisiveness, the instability of the 'signs' marking each of these levels, with which the movement of the film and most of its elements are informed . . .

²¹ A question must then arise (a question that remains open here): can films where the formal work intervenes only at the montage stage, without previous work on the *écriture*, relate back so directly to the workings of the unconscious? *Méditerranée* certainly 'works' on the unconscious (the reader's), but does it function as such? Or again: if there is retrenchment of the pre-text, can there be a 'return' of the repressed?

are systematically interrupted, chopped, cut off, *in* the movement (invariably lacunary in part), each articulation 'false' by a few frames; cf. even more so, the whole of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and how, from *Vampyr* to *Ordet*, Dreyer arrests and cuts off almost all his camera movements en route; cf. finally, in *Gertrud*, the three or four cut-ellipses at the junctures of two long takes, tranquilly intervening within the supposed continuity of the scene: tantalising cuts, deliberately disturbing, which mean that the spectator is made to wonder where Gertrud 'went'; well, she went *in* the splice. And perhaps it is through this deliberate desire to introduce, at the montage stage (instead of limiting himself to having it recopy the pre-shooting text, or like Bresson limiting it to a role that is above all 'musical'), into the *écriture*, no matter how precise and closely controlled it may have been in the earlier stages, these cuts, these ruptures, these leaps: this irrational – that the 'passage' of the unconscious, trapped by the literal game, is effected.

✓ NARBONI: The reference to music just made in connection with Bresson may also be applied to all of Straub's films, which are so rife with preoccupations tending in this direction, so essentially a search for possible homologies. One might cite, more or less at random, the distribution and proportionment of tempi, the alternation of zones of tension and release, of dense nuclei and silent expanses, the complex and variable interplay of autonomy and interdependence among the 'cells', the composition in large blocks or pinpoint elements, the combination of solidly built structures with other 'freer' ones, and finally, the application of the principle never belied by Stravinsky, *the rejection of expressivity*. Let us recall the terms, equally valid for all of Straub's films, in which Stockhausen wrote about *Machorka-Muff*: 'What interested me above all in your film was the composition of the film-time – it is closely related to music. You have achieved good durational proportions between the scenes where the events are almost without movement – how astonishing that a film which is relatively taut and brief should have the courage of slow tempi, pauses, rests – and those where they are extremely fast – how dazzling to have chosen for these the newspaper cuttings displayed at all angles on the screen. What's more, the relative density of the changes of tempo is well done. You have let each element arrive at its *own* irreplaceable moment; and there is no ornamentation. 'Everything is essential,' as Webern said in similar circumstances (but everything in its time, one should add) . . . I like the sharpness of the film, the strangely flashing movement of the camera in the street scenes, and the empty walls of the hotel room on which the camera comes to rest for long periods, that bareness from which it cannot break away. I also like the 'unreal' condensation of time, and yet one never feels hurried. Progress is only possible on that ridge between truth, concentration and that sharpening which penetrates by burning into our perception of reality . . .'

Valid for the twenty-minute account of a day in the life of a West German officer – a day particularly rich in incident – these remarks could apply equally well to the treatment, to the transformation into fifty-five minutes of film of fifty no less busy years of German history (*Not Reconciled*), or of thirty years of intense musical creativity into an hour and a half's flow of images and sounds (*The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*). One can simply try to discover the function assigned by Straub to this treatment of time: what is the *rhyme* or reason for this combination of

overloaded signifying nodes, saturated with information (sometimes to the limits of our capacity for assimilation, our speed in deciphering them), with the pauses, the 'sustained notes', the empty fringes, the blemishes and 'unnecessary' temporal effusions, the vacant passages (which can come at the beginning or the end of a shot, and sometimes exercise a shot in its entirety, in the insistence on its progression). One seems to be able to divide this function into three registers, to link it to (at least) three orders of preoccupation: 1. *structural, rhythmic, compositional*: interplay of continuity/discontinuity, of retention/protension, conducted on the model of the 'lacunary body'²², 2. *anti-expressive*: referring therefore to Stravinsky's phrase suggesting that music is incapable of expressing anything whatsoever, with as corollary the 'empty' shots (though not necessarily empty of characters), voided of everything that might involve ascendancy of a meaning, domination of a prior intent, 3. *transformational*: on the one hand, the time specific to the film effects the takeover and mutation to its own behalf of chronological, referential, 'vital' time, but in order to validate this strictly filmic regime (to succeed, for example, in conveying a whole life in an hour and a half, to give the impression that it is unfolding and not merely captured at certain privileged and emblematic moments), it must also reinvest this time of life in shots whose rhythm and continuity seem to adhere to it. It must mark, alongside the gulfs and breaches into which ('vital') duration is swallowed up from sight, moments where one has the impression that it has time to pass into the film-time. An effect one might call 'effect of temporal reality', engendering a very particular type of suspense, without finality, which acts on us as a power to recharge and reactivate, subjecting our attention to a beating, throbbing flow.

RIVETTE: And a purely formal suspense: what is the shot going to be? – and not: what is going to be in the shot? At the same time, this desire to *empty* certain shots, to have a shot filled with information followed by one which seems to offer none, or, likewise, the proliferation of false information at certain points (false because non-referential in the context of the film, non-'informative': false trails where the reader's memory and powers of concentration lose their way – the mass of proper names, the paprika . . .), all this seems to me to form part of what enables the film to function as an account of the unconscious. The film must be over before its reading (its re-reading) can be started; the telling of the dream must be finished so that the analysis, setting aside all non-literal matter, can discover the recurring, genuinely significant elements, together with the slips of the tongue, the masks, the metamorphoses, the censorship.

Translated by Tom Milne

²² One can compare the 'holes' productive of 'silences' in Webern, of which Boulez said that they did not act simply as elements of rhythm, but modify the neighbouring sounds, acting on the morphology of pitch. 'Silence' in Straub's films has a similar operative function, being not merely pause, scansion, but acting on the 'frequency', the vibration of the preceding shot (or beginning of the shot of which it is the end) and the one following (or continuation of the following shot where it is the beginning).

For the shooting of *Les Filles du Feu*

Why four films at the same time? In the first place because (since the film-maker does not enjoy the same status in relation to his characters as the Balzacian novelist does) it is the only way of being able to establish a specific 'circulation' between these films with certain characters and certain décors reappearing from one to another under different lights, contradictory or complementary.

But mainly to see 'what happens' if four stories, whose respective genres would theoretically make them very different from each other, are filmed in one burst: how the interplay of reciprocal influences from the four productions would function, the interactions between the casts, their attitudes, their relationships – and what might be modified (accentuated, influenced, transformed) by this interplay.

But of course, in making four films one after the other in a limited time, other methods would have to be envisaged, which should in their turn transform the very nature of these four films.

First, starting from the basic principle of each of the fictions, the building of not so much a traditional scenario as a canvas: a construction, a framework of some fifteen block-sequences'. Evolving parallel in time, the four stories are all divided into three main sections, three acts, corresponding to the three lunar phases (from new moon to full, return of the new moon, then finally full moon again – therefore with the same number of transitions from darkness to light) which circumscribe the forty days of Carnival.

Then, during shooting, each 'unit' (each block-sequence) will be subjected to a method designed to break down not only conventional dramatic techniques but also the more recent conventions of improvisation with all the prolixities and clichés it entails (hesitations, provocations, etc . . .), and to establish an *écriture* based on actions, movements, attitudes, the actor's 'gestural', in other words. The ambition of these films is to discover a new approach to acting in the cinema, where speech, reduced to essential phrases, to precise formulas, would play a role of 'poetic' punctuation. Not a return to the silent cinema, neither pantomime nor choreography: something else, where the movement of bodies, their counterpoint, their inscription within the screen space, would be the basis of the *mise en scène*.

In order to enable us to make a definitive crossing of the frontier which separates traditional acting from the one we are looking for: the constant presence during shooting of musicians (different instruments and styles of music according to each film) who would improvise during the filming of sequences, their improvisation dependent on the actors' playing, the latter also being modified by the musicians'

own inventions (recorded in direct sound along with the dialogue and the 'stage noises' properly speaking).

The interaction of our four films will thus be redoubled by the progressive accentuation, from one film to the next, of these principles of *mise en scène*: from the first film (*Marie and Julien*), where they will function as an element of dislocation and strangeness within a dramatic construct still following the rules of romantic fiction – by way of the fantasy/horror film and the musical – to the fourth film (*The Revenger*), where the various aspects are to be driven to paroxysm (all the characters surrounding our three heroines are to be carried off by the dancers of Carolyn Carlson's company).

To create one's own space through the movements of one's body, to occupy and traverse the spaces imposed by the décors and the camera's field, to move and act within (and in relation to) the simultaneous musical space: these are the three parameters on which our actors are going to attempt to base their work.

Translated by Tom Milne

Biofilmography

Jonathan Rosenbaum

Jacques Rivette

Born 1 March 1928 in Rouen, France. Comes from a family 'where everyone is a pharmacist'. Began a *licence des lettres* in Rouen which was never completed. Dates 'the beginning of my vocation as a director' at the point when he read Cocteau's diary of the shooting of *La Belle et la Bête*; shot his first film, *Aux Quatre Coins* – silent, in 16mm, approximately 20 min. long – in 1949. Moved to Paris the same year, taking his film with him; failed his oral exam at l'IDHEC. Met Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut (and shortly thereafter, Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol) at Cinémathèque on Avenue de Messine in late 1950; wrote for *Gazette du cinéma* the same year. Shot two silent 16mm films between 1950 and 1952: *La Quadrille* ('produced' by Godard, with Godard and Anne-Marie Cazalis as actors, lasting approximately 40 mins.: see Tom Milne's account of a ciné-club screening on Rue Danton circa 1950 in *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1969, p. 63) and *Le Divertissement* (1952, also 40 mins., with Sacha Briquet and Olga Warren as actors). Both these films, along with *Aux Quatre Coins*, are described by Rivette today as 'personal films' and 'apprentice films'; none were distributed. Began writing for *Cahiers du cinéma* in 1952; collaborated on or conducted interviews with Otto Preminger, Jacques Becker and Jean Renoir, watched the shooting of *Madame de . . .*, and wrote about Hawks, Hitchcock and Anthony Mann in 1953. During this period, he also worked as assistant editor with Jean Mitry, 'stagiaire' (apprentice) on Becker's *Ali Baba* and Renoir's *French Cancan* (1954), cameraman on Truffaut's *Une visite* and Rohmer's *Bérénice* (both 16mm shorts, 1954). In 1955, collaborated on a screenplay *Les Quatre Jeudis*, for Jean-Claude Brial, with Chabrol, Truffaut and Charles Bitsch: see Truffaut's *Les Films de ma Vie* (Flammarion, 1975, pp. 333-337) – a book dedicated to Rivette – for a description of this unrealised project and an excellent account of Rivette in the early 50s. In 1956, with the help of Chabrol and Pierre Braunberger, he directed his first 35mm film, a short, which was distributed by Braunberger with Gilles Grangier's *Trois jours à vivre* in late 1957. The script was inspired by a news item about a divorce trial; shooting took about two weeks, mainly in the flats of Chabrol and 'one of Chabrol's friends'. (See interview with Rivette in *Télérama* No. 637, 1 April 1962.)

Le Coup du Berger (1956)

p. c/p – Claude Chabrol/Les Films de la Pléiade/Pierre Braunberger. *sc* – Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, Charles Bitsch. *asst* – Jean-Marie Straub. *ph* – Charles Bitsch. *ed* – Denise de Casabianca. *m* – François Couperin. *narrator* – Jacques Rivette. *l.p* – Virginie Vitry (*Claire*), Etienne Loinod [Jacques Doniol-Valcroze] (*Claire's Husband*), Jean-Claude Brial (*Claire's Lover*), Anne Doat (*Claire's Sister*), Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut. 28 mins. (For a contemporary review of this film, see 'Autocritique' by Claude de Givray, *Cahiers du cinéma* No. 77, Dec. 1957, pp. 60-62.)

The same year, Rivette wrote a script with Jean Gruault, *La Cité*, which he showed to Roberto Rossellini after the latter proposed producing a series of films by young directors: '... a theme somewhat derivative of *The Blackboard Jungle*, about racism and students of various nationalities within the setting of Cité Universitaire. It was an extremely phony script, because I projected a purely external view of the Cité, never having lived there myself, and also because

I was rather under the influence of a particular area of American cinema, including Richard Brooks. Rossellini tore it to pieces pitilessly but quite justifiably, and I set to work with Jean Gruault on another script which luckily wasn't filmed either but out of which, more or less, came *Paris Nous Appartient*, which was also concerned with students and other outsiders.' (Interview with Rivette by Carlos Clarens and Edgardo Cozarinsky, *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1974.)

The script of *Paris Nous Appartient* was written in 1957; shooting (in 35mm, without sound) began in July 1958, on a loan from *Cahiers du cinéma*, and proceeded sporadically as funds periodically ran out. Chabrol contributed leftover film stock from *Les Cousins*, and according to Truffaut, 'Rivette completed his shooting the same time I did [on *Les 400 Coups*],' i.e., in late 1958 or early 1959. (The final 'country' sequences were shot in Ermenonville in November.) But because of the numerous debts that had accumulated by this time, Rivette was unable to start work on post-synchronisation, editing and mixing until after the Cannes Festival the following summer, when Truffaut and Chabrol decided to become the film's co-producers. After the film was completed, Rivette had further problems finding a distributor; the film finally opened in Paris in mid-December 1961.

Paris Nous Appartient (Paris Belongs to Us) (1960)

p.c. – Ajym/Les Films du Carrosse. *p.* – Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut. *sc.* – Jacques Rivette, Jean Gruault. *asst. d.* – Jean Herman, Suzanne Schiffman. *ph.* – Charles Bitsch. *ed.* – Denise de Casabianca. *m.* – Philippe Arthuys. *sd.* – Christian Hackspill. *l.p.* – Betty Schneider (*Anne Goupil*), Gianni Eposito (*Gérard Lenz*), Françoise Prévost (*Terry Jordan*), Daniel Crohem (*Philip Kaufman*), François Maistre (*Pierre Goupil*), Jean-Claude Brialy (*Jean-Marc*), André Thorent (*Bernard*), Jean-Marie Robain (*Jean-Bernard George*), Paul Bisciglia and Henri Poirier (*Members of Theatre Group*), Birgitta Juslin (*Finnish Model*), Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette and Louise Roblin (*Guests at Party in Neuilly*), Anne Zamire (*Woman with Baby*), Jean-Luc Godard (*Man in Café*), Noëlle Leiris, Monique Le Porrier, Malka Ribowska, Jean-Pierre Delage, Jean Martin, Jacques Demy. 140 mins. (Note: a shorter version of 120 mins. was also prepared for distribution in the French provinces.)

'If I try to sum up the adventure of *Paris Nous Appartient* in a word, I can't find any other but that: an adventure – inconclusive, abortive perhaps, but wasn't this a risk implied in the adventure itself? What sort of adventure? Of an idea, a hypothesis alternately suggested, dispelled, revived, distorted, rejected, debased – exhausted finally in that it tries to appropriate everything to itself. Generally a film is a story built round an idea; that is, instead of deploying the initial motive as an endgame, the conclusion here can only cancel it: "Nothing will have taken place but the place."

'No idea can hope to explain the world, or exhaust by itself all the possibilities of the real, which, because it is real, invariably thwarts the idea through its own contradictions. But of course at twenty or at thirty one can believe that one is going to discover the secret of the universe, and that Paris belongs to you; and Péguy can in fact say so, but only because he also knows, at the same instant, that Paris belongs to no one.' (Text by Rivette, written to accompany the release of *Paris Nous Appartient*.)

Suggested criticism: Michel Delahaye, 'L'idée maîtresse ou le complot sans maître', *Cahiers du cinéma* No. 128, Feb. 1962, pp. 41-45; Raymond Durgnat, 'Jacques Rivette', *Nouvelle Vague: The First Decade (Motion)*, 1963, pp. 60-64; Ken Kelman, 'Swan Song, 1960', *Moviegoer* No. 2, Summer/Autumn 1964, pp. 61-66; Paul Mayersberg, *Movie* No. 2, Sept. 1962, p. 34; Tom Milne, *Monthly Film Bulletin* No. 343, Aug. 1962, pp. 108-109; Claude Ollier, 'Finesse et Géométrie', *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, Feb. 1962 and 'Thème du Texte et du Complot', *Navettes* (collection of essays by Ollier), Gallimard, pp. 151-162; Eric Rhode, 'Jacques Rivette', *Tower of Babel* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966); Robert Vas, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1961/62, pp. 38-39. A very interesting attack on the film by Gérard Gozlan can be found in *Positif* No. 47, 1962, translated in Peter Graham's *The New Wave* (Secker & Warburg, 1968), pp. 114-135.

In the summer of 1960, Rivette made a fleeting, uncredited appearance in Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronique d'un été* (1961) as the boyfriend of Marilù, secretary at *Cahiers du cinéma*.

In 1962, he collaborated with Gruault again on a screenplay, *La Religieuse*, adapted from Diderot's novel; it was rejected by the French pre-censor board, and had to be rewritten three times – with the title changed to *Suzanne Simonin, La Religieuse de Denis Diderot* and producer Georges de Beauregard adding 'a disclaimer title explaining that it was a work of fiction' – before shooting was allowed to begin in September 1965. (See Elliott Stein's article in *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1966, pp. 130-133, probably the most comprehensive account of *l'affaire de La Religieuse* in print.)

In the interim, 1963, Rivette directed a stage production of *La Religieuse* at Théâtre du Studio des Champs-Élysées which was financed by Godard and produced by Antoine Bourseiller. (See Jean-Louis Comolli's report on this production in *Cahiers du cinéma* No. 142, April 1963, pp. 36-38.) The credits of this production were as follows:

Adaptation – Jean Gruault. *designer* – Bernard Evein. *costumes* – Jacqueline Moreau. *music* – Philippe Arthuys. *cast (in order of appearance)* – Pierre Gérald (*Officiating Priest*), Anna Karina (*Suzanne Simonin*), Dominique Vincent (*Mme. Simonin*), Charles Millot (*M. Simonin*), Françoise Godde (*Maid*), Florence Guerfy (*Mme. K.*), Bernard Rousselet (*M. K.*), Odile Geoffroy (*Mme. Bauchon*), Georges Beauvilliers (*M. Bauchon*), Raymond Jourdan (*Father Séraphin*), Catherine Tache (*Mme. de Moni*), Natalie Nerval (*Sister St. Christine*), Gillette Barbier (*Sister Economa*), Odile Geoffroy (*Sister Agnès*), Brigitte Morizan (*Novice*), Nicole Hotte (*Sister Cécile*), Anne Zamire (*First Wardress*), Reine Villers (*Second Wardress*), Henri Poirier (*M. Manouri*), Michel Delahaye (*M. Hébert*), Michael Huillard (*Priest*), Pierre Gérald (*Family Lawyer*), Georges Beauvilliers (*Guest of M. Manouri*), Isabelle Ehni (*Mother Superior at Arpajon*), Nicole Hotte, Françoise Godde, Brigitte Morizan and Odile Geoffroy (*Sisters at Arpajon*), Florence Guerfy (*Sister Thérèse*), Michel Huillard (*Father Lemoine*), Bernard Rousselet (*Dom Morel*), Gillette Barbier (*Sister Ursule*).

'*La Religieuse* was an opportunity that presented itself, and it wasn't very successful. Luckily, there was Anna Karina, who wanted to play the main part. She gave an interest to the play, which was otherwise quite unsuccessful. In any event, it was a totally traditional theatre piece.' (Interview with Rivette by Jonathan Rosenbaum, Lauren Sedotsky and Gilbert Adair, *Film Comment*, Sept-Oct. 1974.)

From June 1963 to April 1965, Rivette was editor-in-chief of *Cahiers du cinéma*.

The film of *La Religieuse* was completed in early 1966 (shooting finished in Dec. 1965), and despite a public campaign that had already started against the film, it was passed by the French censor board on March 22. On April 1, Minister of Information Yvon Bourges overruled this decision and banned the film both in France and for export, thereby launching a nation-wide scandal (see Elliott Stein's article, cited above). The film was finally passed over a year later by Bourges' successor, M. Gorse, in 1967.

Suzanne Simonin, La Religieuse de Denis Diderot (La Religieuse) (The Nun) (1966)

p.c. – Rome-Paris Films/Productions Georges de Beauregard/Société de Cinématographie. *p.* – Georges de Beauregard. *assoc. p.* – René Demoulin. *sc/adapt.* – Jean Gruault, Jacques Rivette. *dial.* – Jean Gruault. *asst. d.* – Philippe Fourastié, Pierre Fabre, Claude Bakka. *ph.* – Alan Levent. *asst. ph.* – Claude Zidi. *col.* – Eastman Colour. *script-girl* – Lydie Mahias. *ed.* – Denise de Casabianca. *art d.* – Jean-Jacques Fabre. *m.* – Jean-Claude Eloy. *cost.* – Gitt Magrini. *sd.* – Guy Villette. *technical adviser* – Michel Delahaye. *l.p.* – Anna Karina (*Suzanne Simonin*), Liselotte Pulver (*Mme. de Chelles*), Micheline Presle (*Mme. de Moni*), Francine Bergé (*Sister St. Christophe*), Christiane Lenier (*Mme. Simonin*), Francisco Rabal (*Dom Morel*), Wolfgang Reichmann (*Father Lemoine*), Catherine Diamant (*Sister St. Cécile*), Yori Bertin (*Sister St. Thérèse*), Jean Martin (*M. Hébert*), Annick Morice, Danièle Palmero, Gillette Barbier, Michel Delahaye. 140 mins.

La Religieuse may appear to be an uncharacteristic work, but it isn't one for me. . . . *Toutes proportions gardées*, it was my idea to make a film in the spirit of Mizoguchi. But it's not Mizoguchi. There was an attempt to make a film with extended takes or even one-shot sequences, with a flexible camera and rather stylised performances. So for me it was a deliberately theatrical film.' (Interview with Rivette in *Film Comment*, op. cit.)

Suggested criticism: reviews by Jacques Aumont (*Cahiers du cinéma* No. 194, Oct. 1967, pp. 64-65), Molly Haskell (*The Village Voice*, 22 July 1971), Tom Milne (*Sight and Sound*, Winter

1967/68, pp. 38-39), and discussions of the film by Peter Lloyd (*Monogram* No. 2, Summer 1971, p. 12) and James Monaco (*The New Wave*, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 315-318). In 1966, Rivette also directed three television programmes on Jean Renoir for André S. Labarthe and Janine Bazin's series *Cinéastes de notre temps*, shot between May 25 and June 7 in Paris, Essay and the Château de la Ferté Saint-Aubin (where part of *La Règle du jeu* was filmed):

Jean Renoir, le Patron (1966)

ph – Pierre Mareschal. *ed* – Jean Eustache. *sd* – Guy Solignac. 260½ mins. (I: *La recherche du relatif*, 94½ mins., broadcast on O.R.T.F. 18 January 1967; II: *La direction d'acteurs*, 90 mins., not broadcast; III: *La règle et l'exception*, 76 mins., broadcast on O.R.T.F. 18 February 1967.) (Apparently Part II, a conversation between Renoir and Michel Simon, was not shown because of the latter's racy language.) [The programmes] were deliberately made very simple, because what was interesting was to place the camera in front of Renoir and let him speak, and to show extracts from his films. First of all, we had fifteen days of shooting with Renoir in the country; we stayed with him, lunched with him, so had plenty of time to speak to him. Then came three months of editing with Eustache, in which we had time to view sequences again and again, to choose ones we wanted. To see films which I thought I knew very well, which *a priori* would hardly seem to assert themselves on the movieola as much as films by Hitchcock or Eisenstein, for whom editing is more important. But despite everything, the fact of seeing Renoir's films on the movieola made me see things differently.' (Interview with Rivette in *Film Comment*, op. cit.)

Rivette next embarked on *L'Amour fou*, whose inception is described in the first interview in this book. This film was shot in Aug. and Sept. 1967; it was first released in Paris (on 15 Jan. 1969) in a version that was roughly half as long as Rivette's final cut, and which Rivette disowned; eventually, the full-length version was allowed to open concurrently with the shorter version in Paris, and did substantially better at the box-office.

L'Amour Fou (1968)

p.c – Cocinor-Marceau, Sogexportfilm/Productions Georges De Beauregard. *p* – Georges de Beauregard. *assoc. p* – Roger Scipion. *sc* – Jacques Rivette, Marilù Parolini. *asst. d* – Philippe Fourastie. *script-girl* – Lydie Mahias. *ph* – (35mm) Alain Levent, (16mm) Etienne Becker. *ed* – Nicole Lubtchansky. *m* – Jean-Claude Eloy. *sd* – (35mm) Bernard Aubouy, (16mm) Jean-Claude Laureux. *l.p.* – Bulle Ogier (Claire), Jean-Pierre Kalfon (Sébastien/Pyrhus), Josée Destoop (Maria/Hermione), Michèle Moretti (Michèle), Célia (Célia/Andromaque), Françoise Godde (Françoise/Cléone), Maddly Bemy (Maddly/Céphise), Liliane Bordoni (Puck), Yves Beneyton (Yves/Oreste or Pylade), Dennis Berry (Dennis/Pylade or Oreste), Michel Delahaye (Michel/Phoenix), André S. Labarthe (TV Director), Didier Léon (Didier), Claude-Eric Richard (Philippe). 252 mins.

It seems possible that the following incident involving Godard and Anna Karina, described by Paul Gégauff, inspired the climactic scenes of destruction in *L'Amour Fou*:

'Finally the door opened. What a scene! Jean-Luc, stark naked, in an icy, totally wrecked room. He had sent the piano flying in splinters, cut the strings, sawn the legs off the furniture, ripped the paintings, torn up the prints, slashed the hangings and curtains, shattered the telephone, broken the windows, drenched the carpet in India ink, smashed the vases, decapitated the busts, and all this methodically, in the spirit of Bonaparte rather than Attila, and much less concerned with revenge than with justice. All his clothes and Anna's were lying on the ground in tatters, the sleeves slashed with a razor, in a mess of wine and broken glass. Jean-Luc's first words appeared to be a justification: "Anyway, it's a furnished flat."

'It was then, growing accustomed to the semi-darkness, that I noticed Anna on a sort of dais in the far corner of the room, also quite naked. With a top hat on her head, the sole survivor of the massacre, and her arms slowly waving, she was dancing a kind of lascivious jig. For a couple of hours Jean-Luc sat there in a prostrated silence right out of a Russian novel, in spite of himself admiring his wife's shapely lines. "I'd offer you a glass of something," he said, "only there aren't any glasses left". Then: "Go and buy us a couple of raincoats so that we can go

out."' ('Salut les Coquins!', *Lui* No. 84, Jan. 1971, p. 106.)

Suggested criticism: articles by Gérard Legrand (*Positif* No. 104, April 1969, pp. 22-26), Peter Lloyd (*Monogram* No. 2, Summer 1971, pp. 10-15), Tom Milne (*Sight and Sound*, Spring 1969, pp. 63-66) and Sylvie Pierre (*Cahiers du cinéma* No. 204, Sept. 1968, p. 22). See also Rivette's interviews in 1969 with *Télérama*, *Jeune Cinéma*, *Image et Son* and *Positif*, all cited in Bibliography.

In spring 1970, Rivette shot approximately thirty hours of improvisation with over three dozen actors. Originally intended to be shown as a TV serial 'in eight episodes lasting an hour and a half each' (see interview in *Film Comment*, op. cit.), *Out 1: Noli me Tangere* was rejected by the O.R.T.F., and has been shown publicly only once – at Le Havre, 9-10 Sept. 1971 – as an unprocessed workprint, the form in which it currently remains. (See three articles by Martin Even in *Le Monde* – 18 Sept. 1971, 14th Oct. 1971 and 28 March 1974 – for accounts of this public screening.) A detailed description of the inception of this project can be found in the second interview in this book.

Out 1: Noli Me Tangere (1971)

p.c. – Sunchild Productions. *p* – Stéphane Tchalgadjieff. *sc* – Jacques Rivette, Suzanne Schiffman. *script-girl* – Lydie Mahias. *ph* – (16mm.) Pierre-William Glenn. In colour. *ed* – Nicole Lubtchansky. *sd* – René-Jean Bouyer. *l.p* – Pierre Baillet (*Quentin*), Juliet Berto (*Frédérique*), Michel Berto (*Michel*), Jean Bouise (*Warok*), Marcel Bozonet (*Nicolas*), Marc Chapiteau (*Soccer Player*), Sylvain Corthay (*Achille*), Pierre Cottrell and Bernard Eisenschitz (*Men in Café*), Michel Delahaye (*Ethnologist*), Jacques Doniol-Valcroze (*Etienne*), Françoise Fabian (*Lucie*), Hermine Karagheuz (*Marie*), Bernadette Lafont (*Sarah*), Jean-Pierre Léaud (*Colin*), Alain Libolt (*Renaud*), Michel Lonsdale (*Thomas*), Edwina Moatti (*Béatrice*), Michèle Moretti (*Lili*), Bulle Ogier (*Pauline/Emilie*), Bernadette Onfroy (*Bergamotte*), Karen Puig (*Elaine*), Eric Rohmer (*Balzac Specialist*), Stéphane Tchalgadjieff (*Messenger*), Christian de Tillière (*Idler*). 760 mins.

'[In the long version of *Out*], there is a sequence where we see Colin near madness, banging his head against the wall. Then he recovers mysteriously and visits his old friend, Warok. He says that he has understood and transcended the story of the thirteen, that it doesn't bother him any more. He says that he intends to lead a happy life in the future, but after he leaves Warok we see him dancing madly about in the streets with his harmonica. Then we see him begging, posing as a deaf mute as in the beginning of the film.' (Interview with Rivette by John Hughes in *Rear Window* No. 5, Spring 1975.)

After it became clear that he could not get this film shown on TV or released theatrically, Rivette spent the better part of a year editing a shorter, quite different film out of this material, which eventually opened in Paris in March 1974.

Out 1: Spectre (1972)

Credits are the same here as above except for editor (Denise de Casabianca) and running time (255 mins.)

The action of *Spectre* is preceded by three introductory titles, which read as follows: 'Hypothesis – location of the story:', 'Paris and its double. The time:', 'April or May 1970. Meaning of the story:' . . . 'I wanted [the titles] to indicate that the film was shot in April and May 1970 – that, for me, is the important thing, since there are many allusions in the dialogue to that period. It should be evident that the group of thirteen individuals had probably met and talked for some time until May 1968, when everything changed and they probably disbanded. [. . .]

' . . . I didn't want to repeat [*Paris Nous Appartient*], but to do a critique of it. When I decided to use *Histoire des treize*, it was as a critique of *Paris*, which tried to show more clearly the vanity of this kind of utopian group, hoping to dominate society. It begins by being fascinating and tempting, but in the course of the film comes to be seen as futile.' (Interview with Rivette in *Film Comment*, op. cit.)

'[The last shot of *Spectre*] was an unimportant scene lost somewhere in the middle of the thirteen-hour version. When I began cutting up *Out*, I first decided what were to be the first and

last shots of *Out 1: Spectre*. I knew right away that the scene with Léaud and the [Eiffel Tower] toy would have to be the end. The meaning which it has in *Spectre* . . . is totally different from the impact of this scene in *Out* . . .

[The black-and-white production stills] are very important – I spent most of the editing time of *Spectre* selecting them. They should be seen as a kind of machine, an electronic computer that interrupts the general dream of the characters in *Spectre* . . .

. . . The idea of continuity is for me a problem concerning the duration of the take. I like to cut just before the emotional momentum of the shot is exhausted.'

(Interview with Rivette in *Rear Window*, op. cit.)

Suggested criticism: articles by Adriano Aprà ('Geogratia del labirinto' – a general study of Rivette's work – in *Il cinema di Jacques Rivette*, 10 Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema, Pesaro, 12/19 Sept. 1974, pp. 100-105), John Ashbery (*Soho Weekly News*, ? Oct. 1974), Jonathan Rosenbaum ('Work and Play in the House of Fiction', *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1974, pp. 190-194), Richard Roud (*Film Comment*, Sept-Oct. 1973, pp. 2, 64, 66), Lauren Sedofsky (*Film Comment*, Sept-Oct. 1974, pp. 19-20), and André Techiné (*Image et Son* No. 285, June-July 1974, pp. 100-101). See also interviews with Rivette in 1973-75, cited in Bibliography.

Following the editing of *Spectre*, Rivette collaborated with Suzanne Schiffmann and Eduardo de Gregorio on the treatment of a new film, *Phénix*, a costume drama set in the late 19th century. Utilising a double-plot and centred round Jeanne Moreau – as an actress living in a flat inside a Paris theatre in one plot, and as a madwoman living in the country in the other – the project also had parts prefigured for Juliet Berto, Pierre Clémenti and Michel Lonsdale, among others, but Rivette failed to find sufficient financial backing. 'When we realised . . . that we couldn't bring this project to fruition, I spoke to Juliet one evening and we decided to do something else. Something which would be on the contrary very cheap, as easy to make as possible, and fun to do. The first idea was to bring together Juliet and Dominique [Labourier], who were already friends . . .' (Interview with Rivette in *Film Comment*, op. cit.) Filming took place in the summer of 1973: 'I had expected four weeks of shooting. It wound up taking me five.' (Interview in *Télérama* No. 1288, 18 Sept. 1974.) Although Rivette agreed in his contract to come up with a film of no more than 'normal length', his final cut – virtually ready by March 1974 – was 192 mins., and had its first public showing at the Cannes Festival in May in this form.

Céline et Julie vont en bateau (Céline and Julie Go Boating) (1974)

p.c. – Les Films du Losange. In association with Action Films/Les Films Christian Fechner/Les Films 7/Rennes Productions/Saga/Simar/Vincent Malle Productions. *p.* – Barbet Schroeder. *sc.* – Eduardo de Gregorio, Juliet Berto, Dominique Labourier, Bulle Ogier, Marie-France Pisier. Jacques Rivette. [The film-within-the-film, *Phantom Ladies Over Paris*, suggested by Henry James' play *The Other House* and his story *A Romance of Certain Old Clothes*.] *asst. d.* – Luc Béraud, Pascal Lemaître. *ph.* – (16mm blown up to 35mm) Jacques Renard. *col.* – Eastman Colour. *ed.* – Nicole Lubtchansky. *m/songs* – Jean-Marie Sénia. *make-up* – Ronaldo Abreu. *sd.* *ed.* – Paul Laine. *sd. rec.* – Elvire Lerner. *l.p.* – Juliet Berto (*Céline*), Dominique Labourier (*Julie*), Bulle Ogier (*Camille*), Marie-France Pisier (*Sophie*), Barbet Schroeder (*Olivier*), Philippe Clevenot (*Guilou*), Nathalie Asnar (*Madlyn*), Marie-Thérèse Saussure (*Poupie*), Jean Douchet (*M. Dédé*), Adele Taffetas (*Alice*), Anne Zamire (*Lil*), Monique Clément (*Myrtille*), Jérôme Richard (*Julien*), Michael Graham (*Boris*), Jean-Marie Sénia (*Cyrille*), Jean-Claude Biette, Jean Eustache, Jean-Claude Romer and Michel Caen (*Spectators in Cabaret*), Jean Eustache and Jacques Bontemps (*Readers in Library*). 192 mins.

. . . Contrary to what some critics at Cannes thought, our ambitions weren't along the lines of parody, but rather a pastiche of an old-fashioned sort of cinema. For instance, the use of wide angles and deep focus. I thought during the shooting that the film was a little bit like an RKO movie of the 50s, but in colour – those films that more or less successfully imitated Wyler's. There was a fad between 1945 and 1950 to use *mise en scène* in depth, particularly at RKO – the Gregg Toland influence . . .' (Interview in *Film Comment*, op. cit.)

. . . In *Céline and Julie* there is almost no improvisation, the scenes were carefully constructed beforehand, and the racy, zigzag character of the film is completely premeditated . . .

'Both *Spectre* and *Céline and Julie* were shot in 16mm. We used the Eclair camera and a Nagra for the sound. At least part of the impressionism . . . in Duras and Straub (who, by the way, was completely hypnotised by a screening of the thirteen-hour *Out*) comes from their low-budget techniques. I aim at something a little different in my recent films, you might almost say that I am trying to bring back the old MGM Technicolor! . . . I used the zoom in *Céline and Julie* only in order to move the camera closer for successive takes. As for lenses, the technicians on the set called me "Mr. Twenty-five" because I almost always use the twenty-five mm. lens . . .' (Interview in *Rear Window*, op. cit.)

Suggested criticism: articles by Gilbert Adair (*Film Comment*, Sept-Oct. 1974, p. 20), William Johnson (*Film Quarterly*, Winter 1974-75, pp. 32-39), Gérard Legrand (*Positif* No. 162, Oct. 1974, pp. 14-16), Salvatore Piscicelli (*Il cinema di Jacques Rivette*, op. cit., pp. 106-108) and David Thomson (*A Biographical Dictionary of the Cinema*, Secker & Warburg, 1975, pp. 480-483). See also interviews with Rivette in *Film Comment*, *Rear Window* and *Sight and Sound* (op. cit.), interviews with Berto and Labourier in *Film* (March 1975) and *Positif* No. 162 (Oct. 1974, pp. 19-30), and articles by Berto, Labourier, Ogier and Pisier in *Il cinema di Jacques Rivette* (op. cit., pp. 93-99).

In late 1974, Rivette began preparations on *Les Filles du Feu*, a cycle of four average-length 35mm features to be shot in swift succession the following year. The initial plan was to shoot each feature in three weeks, and edit the four films in the order of their eventual releases only after the final one was shot. For various practical reasons, he decided to shoot the second film in the series first, and work commenced on this project in early 1975. Although the shooting schedule ultimately ran over three weeks, Rivette had already started mapping out the next film (originally known as *Le Vengeur*) with Eduardo de Gregorio by late spring, and this was shot in Brittany during the summer: see '*Les Filles du Feu: Rivette x 4*' by Gilbert Adair, Michael Graham and Jonathan Rosenbaum in *Sight and Sound*, Autumn 1975, pp. 234-239 for a detailed account of the shooting of both these features. But after Rivette began shooting the third feature in September – the first film in the series, starring Leslie Caron and Albert Finney, with dialogue written by Michael Graham – nervous exhaustion forced him to discontinue work after a few days, and the later film (along with Part IV) was postponed for the following year. It was decided that Rivette would edit the two films already shot before embarking on the remaining two, and he set to work on the film that had been shot the previous spring – under the working titles of *L'Oeil Froid* and later *Viva* – which was completed in time for the Cannes Festival in May 1976, and opened in Paris the following autumn. The final title given to the tetralogy as a whole was *Scènes de la Vie Parallèle*, and Part II was christened *Duelle*.

Duelle (Twilight) (1976)

p.c. – Sunchild Productions/Les Productions Jacques Roitfeld/L'INA. *p.* – Stéphane Tchalga-djéff. *sc.* – Eduardo de Gregorio, Marilù Parolini, Jacques Rivette. *dial.* – Eduardo de Gregorio. *asst. d.* – Bertrand van Effenterre. *script-girl* – Lydie Mahias. *ph.* – William Lubtchansky. In colour. *ed.* – Nicole Lubtchansky, Chris Tullio-Altan. *art d.* – Eric Simon. *m.* – Jean Wiener. *cost* – Renée Renard. *make-up* – Ronaldo Abreu. *sd. ed.* – Pierre Gamet. *sd. rec.* – Claude Villand. *l.p.* – Juliet Berto (*Leni*), Bulle Ogier (*Viva*), Jean Babilée (*Pierrot*), Hermine Karageuz (*Lucie*), Nicola Garcia (*Elsa/Jeanne*), Claire Nadeau (*Sylvia Stern*), Elisabeth Wiener (*Elisabeth*), Jean Wiener (*Pianist*). 118 mins.

'If one wishes to understand *Duelle*, it is necessary to read Claude Gaignebet's *Le Carnaval* and, in particular, Jean Markale's *La Femme Celte* (Editions Payot). Not only are they exciting, but each shot of the film is explained there.' (Interview with Rivette in *Télérama* No. 1392, 15 Sept 1976.)

'Everything is clear when you don't ask yourself questions.' (Interview with Rivette in *Le Figaro*, 15 Sept 1976.)

Suggested criticism: review by René Prédal (*Jeune Cinéma* No. 96, July-Aug. 1976, p. 28).

Rivette edited the next film – Part III in the series – during the summer of 1976, and it received its world premiere at the National Film Theatre during the London Film Festival on 17 Nov. 1976.

Noroit (Nor'west) (1976)

p.c – Sunchild Productions. *p* – Stéphane Tchaladjieff. *sc* – Eduardo de Gregorio, Marilù Parolini, Jacques Rivette. Inspired in part by *The Revenger's Tragedy* by Cyril Tourneur. *dial* – Eduardo de Gregorio. *asst. d* – Bertrand van Effenterre. *script-girl* – Lydie Mahias. *ph* – William Lubtchansky. In colour. *ed* – Nicole Lubtchansky, Chris Tullio-Altan. *art d* – Eric Simon. *m* – Jean Cohen-Solal, Robert Cohen-Solal, Daniel Ponsard. *cost* – Renée Renard, *make-up* – Thi Loan Nguyen. *sd* – Pierre Gamet. *l.p* – Bernadette Lafont (*Giulia*), Geraldine Chaplin (*Morag*), Kika Markham (*Erika*), Babette Lamy (*Régine*), Elisabeth Medveczky (*Elisa*), Danièle Rosencranz (*Celia*), Carole Laurenty (*Charlotte*), Anne-Marie Fijal (*Fiao*), Humbert Balsan (*Jacob*), Larrío Ekson (*Ludovico*), Anne-Marie Reynaud (*Arno*), Georges Gatecloud (*Tugoual*), Anne Bedou (*Romain*), Marie-Christine Moureau-Meynard (*Tony*), Jean Cohen-Solal, Robert Cohen-Solal and Daniel Ponsard (*Musicians*). Approximately 145 mins.

Suggested criticism: review by Jonathan Rosenbaum (*Sight and Sound*, Winter 1976/77, pp. 59-60).

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Jonathan Rosenbaum

The following lists of texts and interviews is almost certainly incomplete, although every attempt has been made to make them exhaustive. Apart from minor corrections and updating, this bibliography originally appeared in *Monthly Film Bulletin* No. 511, Aug. 1976.

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