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Opening cans of Campbell's soup

Jane de Almeida

The films made by the Dziga Vertov Group are being shown in Brazil for the first time. Given their complexity and temporal displacement and that they have never been seen by most people here, a number of questions have been part and parcel of this production since this Exhibition was conceived, a little more than two years ago.

They include: how does one show a collection of films that are extremely complex and that, in simplified terms, were seen as being mere political pamphlets by the film critics, or as extravagant exercises in cinema for political involvement? How does one introduce to the Brazilian public the effects of the dialectic process produced by the proposal, a film experience that is unique in its disassociation between sound and image —whether this was successful or not —, at a time when the funding policies for cinema are being discussed on a national level in terms of public heritage and financial return as a response to the question of the type of images that should be produced? How does one talk about a proposal for collective production against that of authorship and which as a consequence generates a series of misunderstandings regarding the very authorship of the films? Not to mention the fact that one of the participants is one of the most important directors in the history of cinema and that he was one of those responsible for the phenomenon of film authorship. Finally, how does one present films that were made more than 30 years ago in a climate of intense political debate from which the Brazilian public was forced to retire?

These are questions that are put forward in this book and which the same is surely unable to answer. The articles were selected based on three different angles: the Dziga Vertov Group and its history, the relationship of Glauber Rocha with the Group and the presence of Jean-Pierre Gorin at this Exhibition.

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It is hoped that this will serve as an initial point of reference and inspiration for the new questions that are certain to arise from the explanations and misunderstandings examined by the authors.

The arrival of the Dziga Vertov Group was accompanied by the arrival of others, such as the ARC Group (Atelier de recherche cinématographique) and Chris Marker's SLON group, aided by the new technologies for capture and editing of the *ciné-tracts*, since these mini films could be edited directly on the camera, promoting the idea of the absence of authorship (or of sole authorship) in the name of a collective work. Thus, *Un film comme les autres* is the precursor of the series, while not yet being named as a Dziga Vertov Group film¹. It is only later on, probably after *British Sounds*, that the group took on the name of "Dziga Vertov", due to the influence of Jean-Pierre Gorin. With *Vent d'Est*, the group is established and Godard announces that for the Russian filmmaker Vertov, the definition of *Kinoki* is not of filmmaker, but rather of filmhand, differentiating *moviemaker* from *film worker*².

Alongside Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, some other members were more frequent participants, such as Jean-Henri Roger, who is responsible for *British Sounds* and *Pravda*, writing scripts and directing with Godard; the photographer Paul Burron; Gérard Martin, who is sometimes cited as being co-director of *Vent d'Est*; and Anne Wiazemsky, who at that time was married to Godard and who acted in a number of the films of the Group. Other participants were at the fringes of this movement and their precise participation is not known. This, in a way, is a consequence of the proposal of collective filmmaking. Ironically, despite the collaborative will, the films are generally considered and analyzed as being part of Godard's filmography alone. Another consequence is that until not long ago the films appear to have been adrift among the distributors, who did not know who to ask for the rights of exhibition. For some time we had no clues as to how to obtain them, until after a festival of political films in Nantes, in 2003, when Gaumont sent us an answer³. The same thing occurs when seeking to list the credits for the films, since the entire technical credit is resumed under the name of the Dziga Vertov Group, with one or another name attached.

(1) Godard himself admits that *Un film comme les autres* is the first in the series of revolutionary films he made, in an interview for Kent E. Carrol published in "Film and revolution: Interview with the Dziga-Vertov Group". In *Focus on Godard*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1972. p.53.

(2) In the same interview cited above for Kent E. Carrol given in English in 1970, p. 50.

(3) The *Cahiers du Cinéma* comment on this problem when they write about the Festival of Nantes. Patrice BLOUIN. "Mémoire. Où est le cinéma politique ?" Paris, April 2003. pp. 10-12.

In extreme cases, as in the text by James MacBean on *Vent d'Est* published in this catalogue, the films appear solely as works by Jean-Luc Godard. Instead of crediting the films simply to the "Dziga Vertov Group", we decided to publish a credit guide with references to all the different sources. If on one hand this appears contradictory to the proposals of the Group, on the other it brings a little of the historicity of the process and its reception, and also enlists subjectivities somehow and examines issues related to collective work. This initiative appears to be coherent when one considers the path marked out by the films of the Group. Each film attempts to answer questions remaining from its predecessors and, almost in the end, in *Tout va bien* (which at this stage is not a film by the Group, but rather by Godard and Gorin and signed as such), the conclusion regarding the collective, arising from an initial disappointment with the workers organizations, falls more evidently upon the individual story as being that which constructs the greater history. In a way, this is also the procedure in *Letter to Jane*. Nowadays it is more common to think that the Group came into being as a result of the effort and desire of Godard and Gorin. Gorin answers, in an interview given in 1970, when he and Godard were asked how many people comprised the Dziga Vertov Group: "At this moment, two, but we are not even sure. There is a left wing and a right wing. Sometimes he is the left and I am the right, it is a question of practice".¹⁴ In compliment to this statement, Godard at this time declares several times that working as a group was a way to destroy the dictatorship of the director.

After more than 35 years since its beginning, having been immediately received with a certain furor by the first viewers and soon being relegated to limbo and qualified as being "extremist", "radical", "unwatchable" and over politicized by film lovers and also overly "aestheticizing" for political cinema made at that time, these films return together in the form of presentations or as part of the cinematography of Jean-Luc Godard, or in tributes that present films made by Jean-Pierre Gorin or within a political theme regarding the 1960's and 1970's. Rarely is there an exhibition solely of "Dziga Vertov Group" films and, for this reason, another question becomes necessary: what does it mean to watch these films today? Before attempting to frame them within a more temporal perspective,

¹⁴ Michael GOODWIN, Tom LUDDY and Naomi WISE. "The Dziga Vertov film group in America". In *Take One. The film magazine*, vol. II, n. 10. Canada, March/April 1970. pp. 8-27. Or in "The Dziga Vertov film group in "America: an interview with Jean Luc Godard and Jean Pierre Gorin", in *Cinefiles*. Internet version of the same interview: http://www.mip.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cine_doc_detail.pl/cine_img?11165?11165?1

which obliges the receptor to try and understand the object of fruition according to what it brings from its time, these films are singular experiences regarding the ideological consequences of that which one chooses as a form. The films lead Brecht beyond alienation, lending continuity to the very Brechtian lesson that the problem of form is in itself the problem of politics. And in this they bring the breeze of the freedom with which they were made, in the bold contrast of color used by those who made films to be seen and not to be read, as Gorin insists, arguing against the proclaimed end of writing ⁵. In all of the nine films, to a greater or lesser degree, the sound and the image are independent elements that sometimes dance together and sometimes clash. In this sense, the accusation of the pamphletary verbosity is an accusation that is little reflected from a hasty point of view in that which it presents. There is a first layer containing a solid presence of spoken lines. But, perhaps given the complexity that these propose, the viewer is left in a position of admitting that there are other layers to be perceived via unexpected connections that are brought to life in them.

It is very rare to see a political film that has taken its proposal as far as the films made by the Dziga Vertov Group. Of course, after the more student based political phase, after the prolonged and risky terrorist political attempts, after the growth of the consumer ideologies, after the cultivation of an independent position as a subjective ideal, it is difficult for the common contemporary man to see himself as belonging to the “bourgeois” or the “worker” group, since he has always been a part of both. But since then, the more political films that go against the grain of power have been so focused on content, so unconcerned with the consideration of form (if we wish, to be submitted to that which Hollywood defines as form), with such simplified readings of what is power, that we appear to have lost the connecting link between what happened in the days of the Group and what is happening today. There is, in this sense of loss, a desire for evolution that does not always occur, but reviewing and rethinking these films to a point beyond that of a nostalgic feeling may stimulate chains of connections that were unperceived and connections that were already thought of as established, principally in regard to the world we have constructed since May of 1968.

The first of the films, *Un film comme les autres*, shows an explosion of images from ciné-tracts made in May 1968 in black and white, intercalating the student debate on the class struggle. It is the precursor of collective film making in the

[5] Gorin in an interview. Christian Braad THOMSEN, “Jean-Pierre Gorin interviewed. Filmmaking and history”, Jump Cut, n. 3, 1974. pp. 17-19. <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC03folder/GorinIntThomson.html>

work of Godard and is born of the political discussions between Godard and Gorin⁶. The conception of this way of making films, which does not reveal identities, in as much as it favors the spoken lines in detriment to the faces of the characters, is in itself already a procedure of this way of thinking that is to take shape in the next films. However, the contrast between the colorful rural landscape and the calm of the debaters, and the images of bombs and striking workers generates, at first, two interpretations: one with regard to the differences between the classes themselves, or rather, one that poses for the film and another that “poses” for the struggle. This latter opens up the problem that was later to be questioned by the Group—as in *Lotte in Italia*—with regard to the reality of theory and the reality of practice.

The next film, *British Sounds*, was made in England, shortly after *One plus one* and from the outset the desire to film collectively was stated. Roger works with Godard and Maoism is what provides the stronger tone of the film’s political scheme. The color of the film is red and the sound is that of repetition. The seven sequences, even if declared as being political, are still presented with a certain irony and humor in the play on revolutionary clichés, such as the flag being torn at the beginning and the bloody hand grasping for the red flag at the end. The irony reveals in itself the discomfort of assuming two positions and this resource is used frequently by Godard. In fact, the nucleus of the film is loaded with ironic scenes, such as the scene with the television announcer who parts from a liberal standpoint to state prejudice and which is intercalated with scenes of a British reality that fails to bear witness to the speech of the announcer. But if we think of the seriousness of the revolutionary sound that ends the film, in synchronicity with the image, its contrast with this irony appears to reveal a certain hesitation between the Godard of *Alphaville* and the revolutionary Godard.

Vent d’Est, after *Pravda*, is the next in the series. It is entirely taken by the voice of the malign genius which, with the exception of *Tout va bien*, was to remain until *Ici et Ailleurs*. In reality it is a number of voices (and in the case of *Vent d’Est*, female), but one especially fulfills the role of dialectic differentia, and as a main thread guarantees the structure of the films. It also guarantees the deconstruction of the same in a more formal sense. Little by little, the characteristic disconnection between sound and image is what guides the films and also, gradually, gives a life of its own to the sound. *Vent d’Est* is a more vigorous work, with open questions. The voice of the malign genius answers *British Sounds* with no hesi-

⁶ Affirmation by Gorin in *Kamp Cit*.

tation and opens up an entire pathway of experiences, of which one was made with the participation of Glauber Rocha. Gorin explains that when working on the scene with Isabel Pons, the pregnant girl with the camera, it became a metaphor for the difficulties and hopes of the time that encountered at the crossroads the impossibility of a meeting between the tropicalists of the Third World and the conceptualists of the First in the question of class revolution. This impossibility is marked by the three hesitant steps taken by the pregnant girl towards Glauber and soon after her return by the same path ⁷. The voice of Glauber sings and indicates the way of the “dangerous, divine and wonderful cinema” —of that time.

Brazil was entering the most terrifying phase of the political dictatorship. Our cinema came under the censor, our thinkers were arrested, tortured and exiled; and Brazil was left with no dialogue between the inside and the outside that it had just taken up again with the modernist tradition. Glauber did not stop filming and his *Der leone have sept heads* is clearly an influence for the Dziga Vertov Group, as noted by Jean-Pierre Gorin and José Carlos Avellar, who in an article in this book also suggest a tighter exchange of influences with des-encountered solutions between the cinematographies of Glauber and Godard, of the First and the Third Worlds.

Watching these films today is like being able to see a lost part of an important discussion that may perhaps have fed a line of film making somewhat abandoned by film goers and film producers, whose aesthetic project includes the reflectivity of the apparatus and a formal experimentation in cinema. A line that unites Mário Peixoto with Júlio Bressane and which, ironically, has nothing to do with so called “political” cinema. This line includes Glauber, but it appears that the “political” side of Glauber, in terms of the more commercialized interpretation of his *Hunger Aesthetic*, has been cultivated in our cinema. This is a shame, since it diminishes the diversity of readings on the complexity of the world.

The films of the Dziga Vertov Group, which have less political importance today —in terms of the more evident political aspect, since in a way the aesthetic choice is

(7) E-mail correspondence. “It is my girlfriend of the time, Isabel Pons, I enlisted to meet Glauber at the crossroad and whose pregnancy I transformed as a metaphor of our difficulties and our hopes by loading her with a camera; Glauber is in that scene because Raphael Sorin and I went to look for him in Rome; and the procedure, the ‘script’ that enabled Glauber to improvise his lines, the idea to have him stand at the crossroad and riff on the ‘cinema do Terceiro Mundo’ is mine; and this impossibility to meet for the Tropicalists of the Third World and the conceptualists of the First in quest of a revolution of the medium marked by Isabel’s three hesitant steps in the direction indicated by Glauber and her return to the path she came from, I articulated it...”

in itself a political act —are more experimentally interesting. They are what the cinema may consider as being a threshold situation, in as much as that they are still considered to be films and that they make use of the basic cinematographic apparatus: film, projector, screen, seat, dark room, tickets to enter, traditional cinematographic time. However, what one sees on the screen is much closer to that which today is frequently seen in museums in a shorter time frame: the so called installations, that were more often seen in video and today are made with digital material. There are several films within each individual film, made according to the availability of low cost material, creating images of images recycled within the films themselves. There is nothing more “pop” than the impressions of sunlight on the dark screen, the cards with handwritten schemes, the red frames and the strips of film in *Vent d’Est*. The economical material movement of the cinema and the plastic arts are opposite. While cinema has high costs and is sold at low prices, the plastic arts generally cost very little and are sold at high prices. In this sense, the films made by the Group follow contemporary art in using as much everyday material as possible, instead of proposing the careful finishing that is demanded with increasing intensity by the modern film industry. Kent Jones, in an article published in this catalogue, uses Gorin’s metaphor of the “can-opener” (“We made this film in the same way that you would make a can-opener”) to describe the process used to make these films. To make a film like a can-opener is to lend it the power to serve as an instrument for opening something that is hermetically sealed, such as the image of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. If thought of as being a “pop” artefact, the films are not content to simply present the new culture or reveal the reality of consumption. Even cans of Campbell’s soup need to be opened.

In interviews made in the days of the Group, generally represented by Godard and Gorin, several questions were asked with regard to the audience for which the films were made. The duo demonstrated a true concern for this issue when they made *Tout va bien*. Despite the presence of famous actors or of the care taken in the finishing, the film was not a public success, and neither was it well received by the critics. Seeing it today, this preoccupation becomes senseless and we are grateful for its existence. Without wishing to say that the film has finally reached its audience, or that the works of the Dziga Vertov Group have now found a public, it would be good if, when considering the policies of support and funding for films, it would also be possible to argue in the sense of the paradigmatic axis and ask: how many generations will watch these films?

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SYNDICAT GENE
DES METALLIQUES
LA RETRAITE

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A 60 ANS

Jean-Pierre Gorin

Erik Ulman

Jean-Pierre Gorin first achieved international attention through his collaborations with Jean-Luc Godard as the Dziga Vertov Group. This association has brought him both celebrity and neglect: those who admire the films of the “Vertov period” often attribute their virtues to Godard with scant or no reference to Gorin; and many that dislike them often view Gorin as a punk who led the master astray while riding his coattails. This controversy tends to overshadow and ignore the small but impressive body of work that Gorin has produced since parting with Godard in 1973. To be sure, circumstances have made these films all too easy to overlook: there are only three features and a pair of related video works, along with a number of aborted or never-begun projects, made at intervals of years, distributed spottily, and of deliberate modesty.

These solo films, however, may well prove as important as the collaborations with Godard. What they lose in provocation and extremity they gain back in charm and in complexity of form and nuance: they stand among the most ingenious and potentially fertile contributions to the “film essay” genre. They are characterized by a resolute fidelity to the local, revealed with tenderness and humor, and are personal and engaging in ways unimaginable in the Vertov-period works. These three films — *Poto and Cabengo* (1978), *Routine Pleasures* (1986), and *My Crazy Life* (1991) —deserve to be much more widely seen and discussed; and the videos —*Letter to Peter* and a record of Olivier Messiaen’s opera *St. François d’Assise* (both 1992) —open up new areas which one hopes Gorin will have the opportunity to explore further.

Gorin was born on April 17, 1943 in Paris; his parents were Jewish leftists, his father a respected (and Trotskyite) doctor, his mother a woman of considerable intelligence and somewhat unpredictable

energy. After a turbulent but studious adolescence, Gorin received his baccalaureate in Philosophy in 1960, subsequently enrolling at the Sorbonne. Here he took part in the seminars of Louis Althusser (including the one defining the theory of the ideological state apparatus), Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault. In addition, from 1965 to 1968, Gorin was an editor at *Le Monde*, helping create its weekly literary supplement, “Le Monde des Livres”. In this period he wrote dozens of articles, contributing to the political and aesthetic debates that would lead eventually to the upheaval of May 1968.

Gorin first met Godard in 1967. At this time Godard was becoming increasingly interested in the younger generation and, by extension, in radical politics, as *Masculin féminin* (1966) indicates. Gorin was a perfect contact, as one of the most articulate and engaged of France’s young New Left. For his part Gorin had been a cinephile since his youth, and the formal and political rigor of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet’s *Nicht Versöhnt* (1965) had stimulated his desire to make films. Gorin came to befriend Godard: he advised Godard on *La Chinoise* (1967), as someone with first-hand practical and theoretical experience of emergent leftist militancy; and was present during at least some of the shooting of *Le gai savoir* (1968).

In the aftermath of May 1968 Godard turned his back on the conventional film industry, to make films reflecting a new political commitment and developing a new practice, a way of “making films politically,” not merely promulgating leftist ideas within a traditional, and hence discredited, aesthetic. The need was “to return to zero,” as *Le gai savoir* had announced, to “build images” from scratch and to “combat the tyranny of image over sound.”¹ With the sporadic assistance of several younger apprentices, including Gorin and Jean-Henri Roger, Godard created *Un film comme les autres* (1968), *British Sounds* (1968), and *Privda* (1969), films of an aggressive technical leanness and political stridency. These films began to be signed by the “Dziga Vertov Group,” a name chosen to pay homage to the then-neglected master of Soviet film, to his radical politics and his exposure of film’s material and formal foundations, his dismantling of cinematic illusion.

Although this name apparently originated with Gorin, the first “Vertov films” were fundamentally Godard’s own work. However, a turning point came with *Vent d’Est* (1969). Godard went to Italy to film a Western in collaboration with a num-

[1] See James Monaco’s chapter “Godard: Theory and Practice: The Dziga-Vertov Period”, in *The New Wave* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 221), which remains probably the most clear-sighted general accounting of this group of films.

ber of prominent leftists, including Brazilian director Glauber Rocha, activist Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and spaghetti Western star/communist Gian Maria Volonté. This collaboration quickly stalled, due to general indiscipline; and Godard invited Gorin to help salvage the project. This effort inaugurated a period of truly joint authorship that would encompass *Lotte in Italia* (1969), *Vladimir et Rosa* (1971), *Tout va bien* (1972), and *Letter to Jane* (1972); *Ici et ailleurs* (1975) can be considered an appendix to this body of work. Parcelling out authorial responsibilities in these films is difficult, and, indeed, contrary to their intentions: Gorin has remarked that they arose from a “constant exchange of ideas” that aimed at a fundamental “transformation of practice,” a repudiation of the auteurism which Godard had helped formulate². Be that as it may, it seems that at least *Lotte in Italia* and *Tout va bien* are, if anything, more Gorin’s than Godard’s, and that in the others creative responsibility was fairly equal³. The two filmmakers were working together daily, not only on these larger films but on smaller projects: there were “news reports,” shown daily in Paris, which included interviews and skits (Juliet Berto in a bathtub explaining the Vietnam War); and also proposals for advertisements, at least one of which was actually filmed, as a source of money.

Although Gorin remains proud of the Vertov films, it is hardly for their ideological purity: to this extent, these films, as he once characterized the militants in *La Chinoise*, are marked by a “cretinistic seriousness,”⁴ all too premonitory of the pompous puritanism of much subsequent political art. More durable are their formal beauty⁵, their daring, their emphasis on soundtrack over image, their accuracy as time capsules, their humor (evident at least from *Vladimir et Rosa* on, although often unremarked), and what could be called their proto-punk “do it yourself” ethos. Most of these features are far removed from the academic discourse and practice which have constituted the principal legacy of these films, and of which Gorin is largely dismissive: for Gorin, to read these films principally for their political message is uninteresting, even beside the point. To be sure, it is difficult to believe that the political content of *Vent d’Est*, for example, is ironical

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 [2] These comments are from a video interview with Gorin conducted in Melbourne in 1987; I do not know the identity of the interviewer.

[3] Gorin once modestly asserted, “Basically all I have done comes from Jean-Luc’s previous work; that’s why some of our last films are considered highly Godardian, even though I made them”. Quoted in MONACO, 215.

[4] Melbourne interview.

[5] Once vigorously denied: Godard: “if *Vent d’Est* succeeds at all, it’s because it isn’t beautiful at all”. In James Roy MACBEAN, “Godard and Rocha at the Crossroads of *Wind From the East*,” in *Film and Revolution*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975, p. 120.

or incidental; and the arrogance of Gorin and Godard's public persona at the time (see Ralph Thanhauser's *Godard in America* [1970]) has not aged well. Still, the Vertov films remain extremely rewarding, and deserve renewed attention.

It has taken me some time to see *Vent d'Est* freshly: my initial encounters with the film were with nth-generation video dupes of an American version with an appalling voiceover (in which *L'Humanité* becomes "human-nite"). Given the ugliness and indecipherability of sound and image, one relied heavily both on the published script and on the famous essays on the film by such writers as Peter Wollen, which seemed to celebrate it for purveying what Gilberto Perez has called "militant unpleasure", an unrelenting negation of any aesthetic values as inadmissibly treacherous superstructure⁶. This grimly ideological doggedness is part of *Vent d'Est*, but only part: what is most crucial in the film, as can be seen in the lovely Japanese DVD release, is its unresolved dialectic between verbal ideology and visual beauty, in which each stands as a critique of the other. If the soundtrack denounces the American imperialist Griffith, the lush natural splendour of the almost static opening shots make one think of Griffith's last interview:

What the modern movie lacks is beauty—the beauty of moving wind in the trees, the little movement in a beautiful blowing on the blossoms in the trees. That they have forgotten entirely.... In my arrogant belief, we have lost beauty⁷.

Vent d'Est is an exceptionally rich film, if one takes the time both to see and hear, and to set aside the rhetoric surrounding it—as an extension and subversion of the Western, revealing and interrogating its implicit ideologies, as a document of the possibilities and dangers of the revolutionary project (as in the chilling sequence about terrorism near the end, in which Pop still lifes descending from *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* [1966] become diagrams of home-made explosives), and for the complex intersections of formal beauty with loaded and refractory content.

Where *Vent d'Est* is wide-ranging and heterogeneous, *Lotte in Italia* is tight, disciplined, even elegant: Gorin has described its structure as resembling a deck of

[6] See Peter WOLLEN, "Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent d'Est*," in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies*. London: New Left Books, 1982, pp. 79-91. For Perez's dismissal of the "Dziga Vertov Group" films, see *The Material Ghost*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998, p. 362.

[7] Ezra GOODMAN, *The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961, p. 11.

cards, proceeding by juxtapositions and substitutions of more or less static panels to articulate an Althusserian analysis of the ideologies underpinning a young Italian militant's existence. By contrast, *Vladimir et Rosa*, a reflection on the Chicago 8 trial as political theater, is the wildest and most miscellaneous of the Vertov films, its reckless abundance of materials, skits, implications: it is scatter-shot, but exuberant, and includes some of Gorin and Godard's most significant meditations on the construction of a new cinematic language, cast, often enough, in disarmingly comic guise.

To my mind, however, the greatest films to emerge from the collaboration are the last three: *Tout va bien*, *Letter to Jane*, and *Ici et ailleurs*.

Tout va bien is, for obvious reasons, the most "professional" of the Vertov films. Gorin and Godard wanted to work again on a larger and more "popular" scale. To this end, they secured two stars from the left, Yves Montand and Jane Fonda; devised a narrative; and built a set—a sausage factory headquarters during a strike. Having accepted these concessions, Gorin and Godard play with them cunningly: for much of the film the stars function as extras, while other "non-stars" assume center stage; the stars' "love story," once it emerges, fixes their romance solidly in the context of their jobs (as film director and journalist respectively), and thus within the hypocrisies of commercial culture; and the set, in tribute to Jerry Lewis' *The Ladies' Man* (1961), is a cutaway functioning as another Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. Such strategies make a film whose formal complexity matches a new variety of discourse: Gorin and Godard here allow boss, unionist, and radical striker all to speak for themselves, giving us more freedom to weigh their respective positions. This freedom is welcome, though it also indicates a loss of fervor. As Gorin has said, *Tout va bien* is a film of 1972, not of 1968; and the bleakness of its concluding travelling shot underlines the inadequacy of the revolutionary actions that it depicts, the passing of the revolutionary moment⁸.

One last blast of hard militant theory, *Letter to Jane* has received especially bad press, as "insufferable" and humorless⁹. I find it both funny and revelatory. The film is a fifty-minute meditation on a single photograph of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. Passing the narration between them, and juxtaposing Fonda's image with other

[8] For a more detailed analysis of *Tout va bien*, see David BORDWELL and Kristin THOMPSON, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. New York: Knopf, 1986, pp. 335-42.

[9] PEREZ, 362; Jonathan DAWSON, "Letter to Jane" in *Senses of Cinema*, <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/19/cteq/letter.html>



photographs, Gorin and Godard reflect on the function of Fonda and this image within the Western media's representation of the Vietnamese struggle for self-determination. Some have claimed that the filmmakers are unfair and misogynist in their criticism of their erstwhile collaborator; on the contrary, they are repeatedly at pains to distinguish Fonda as person from the social role they criticize. Further, the excessively pedantic mode of argumentation (proceeding, for example, from "Elements of Elements" to "Elementary Elements"), while no doubt a serious attempt to argue logically, mocks its own absolutism (though few, such as James Monaco, seem to perceive the irony).¹⁰ *Letter to Jane* remains, in Susan Sontag's words, "a model lesson on how to read any photograph, how to decipher the un-innocent nature of a photograph's framing, angle, focus";¹¹ in addition, it is full of provocative insights, especially into the history of film acting, and the eclipse of the silent actor's "materialism" by a vacuous style of "heavy thinking," which Gorin and Godard link directly to an ineffectual Western liberalism.

Ici et ailleurs, completed by Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, is perhaps the most complex of all of these works, a stunning reflection on the Palestinian resistance, on the political dimensions of sound and image, and on the failure of European radicalism after 1968. Commissioned by the Arab League in 1970 to make a film to be entitled *Jusqu'à la victoire*, Gorin and Godard shot footage in Jordan of Al Fatah. Later that year, most of the people they had filmed and whose guests they had been were killed by the Jordanian army in Black September, rendering the working title grotesquely irrelevant and utterly changing the significance of the footage. Eventually Godard, Gorin, and Miéville combined this material with trenchant critiques of the strategies of both the revolutionaries and the filmmakers, drawing from the latter a direct connection to a European left more interested in struggles other than their own and to the coercive and ubiquitous nature of mass communications, in which "chains of images enslaving other images" come to condition and constitute human consciousness. *Ici et ailleurs* is one of the greatest of all political films, achieving an extraordinary formal density with its layered images, sounds, and histories, as well as a political lucidity that remains all too relevant today.

The Vertov period had been intensely productive and exciting; but Gorin needed to strike out on his own. He was still very much in Godard's shadow; further, he

(10) See Monaco's very useful discussion in *The New Wave*, pp. 245-50.

(11) Susan SONTAG, *On Photography*. New York: Delta, 1977. p. 108.

felt stifled by politics and theory, and wanted to explore new areas. In an interview with Martin Walsh, Gorin identified his favorite American filmmaker as Russ Meyer and remarked: "I'm no longer trying to be a Brechtian. The very idea of trying to think through the lenses of a guy who was thinking in the 1930's seems to me, now, extraordinarily backward.... I'm hardly even a Marxist anymore, so it opens my space a little".¹²

Gorin's first solo film is now lost. Entitled *L'Ailleurs immédiat*, it was largely complete when the drug arrest of its leading actress stalled production; faced with an indeterminate delay, the producers blithely melted the film down for its silver content. This destruction is intensely to be regretted: on one hand, one wonders how Gorin's career may have developed if the film had been completed and released; and, on the other, the film is likely to have been fascinating. The title's allusion to Georges Bataille indicates the direction Gorin was taking; according to him, *L'Ailleurs* was sexually and psychologically uncompromising, leading Godard to dub it, in contradistinction to Bertolucci's controversial but comparatively safe *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (1972), "the Anti-Tango". Gorin himself played the lead; his descriptions of some of the film's action, in which he recites passages from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* while getting tattooed, or masturbates while hanging outside an upper-story window on a Paris street, perhaps give some idea of the extremity (and zaniness) of the project. Coinciding with, and in some way motivating, this work was the continued deterioration of the revolutionary spirit of May 1968; Gorin has spoken of the increasingly fragmented and deranged nature of the militant left, and of his desire to distance himself from it. Perhaps *L'Ailleurs immédiat* would have been the Dionysian counterpart to Jean Eustache's cold and objective dissection of the 1960's aftermath in *La maman et la putain* (1973).

In any case, after the forced incompleteness of *L'Ailleurs*, Gorin left Europe, and, in 1975, accepted Manny Farber's invitation to join the faculty of the University of California at San Diego, where Gorin has remained to the present day. With Farber, Gorin developed a strong and enduring friendship: in Farber's words, they became "twin brains". Farber had long been both an impressive painter as well as one of America's leading film critics: he was one of the first serious advocates of such "action directors" as Mann, Fuller, and Hawks; more recently, he had become an equally astute observer of such avant-gardists as Snow, Straub and Huillet, Fassbinder, and Godard. Gorin's appointment at UCSD involved him

[12] Martin WALSH, "Godard and Me: Jean-Pierre Gorin Talks," in *Take One* (Vol. 5 # 1, 1976), pp. 14-15.

in a nourishing dialogue with both Farber and his wife and collaborator Patricia Patterson. In addition, Gorin enjoyed university life: certainly his brilliant and idiosyncratic lectures and mentoring have been indispensable to several generations of art and film students at UCSD. However, one regrets that academia has absorbed so much energy that could have been spent making films.

Gorin's directorial ambitions did not end with his teaching career. He wanted to break into Hollywood, and found work on *Apocalypse Now* (although his role in this legendarily chaotic project came to little more than instructing Frederic Forrest in the intricacies of French cuisine). Still, Gorin was hopeful that Francis Ford Coppola might support him in a project of his own. He had obtained the rights to a number of works by the science fiction writer Philip K. Dick; and, further, Dick had prepared for Gorin an extraordinarily detailed treatment of his novel *Ubik*. Neither Coppola nor George Lucas, however, would back the project, and Gorin had the bitter experience of watching his options lapse on this and other properties.

If Gorin was frustrated in Hollywood, he fortunately had the opportunity to explore documentary. Soon, funded by West German television, he began the first film of what would become a trilogy about language, arrested development, and cultural displacement in Southern California: *Poto and Cabengo*.

Poto approaches the theme of "children and language" through the case of two young San Diego twins, Gracie and Ginny Kennedy, who had apparently invented a private language. Actually, this language was a pidgin form of the German and English they heard in their relative isolation at home. Gorin traces this subject in every direction: the news coverage of the twins, which dwindles from inaccurate hype to nonexistence; the official opinions of child psychologists and linguists; the social ambitions of the twins' unhappy and financially precarious family. In addition, Gorin eschews those recurrent alternative presumptions of documentary film, of neutral reportage or of Godlike omniscience: rather, he enters the story himself as a decidedly inexperienced investigator, a comic Philip Marlowe; and his growing involvement with the twins, introducing them to the world, becomes another strand in the film's "plural narrative". From this complex network of forces, Gorin reveals much about the allure and pressures of an elusive American dream; about the social nature of language; about the displaced legacies of emigration. And, while keeping these large subjects in play, Gorin never loses sight either of the humanity of his subjects—he does not condescend to the pathetic parents—or of the film's formal complexity, which constantly varies its permutations of sound, written text, and image, often, as in the Vertov period, privileging the first. Formally and thematically, the film is a virtuoso piece of

polyphony, all the more remarkable for never losing its lightness of touch, even as it grazes profundity and tragedy¹³.

If *Poto* was about children and language, *Routine Pleasures* makes of its investigation of “men and imagination” in 1980’s America, “a small-scale epic,” in Gorin’s words, a remake of *Only Angels Have Wings*¹⁴. Gorin’s principal subject is a group of model train enthusiasts who meet weekly at the Del Mar Fairgrounds in Southern California: their miniature landscapes preserve a lost, perhaps illusory America, and their obsession curiously entwines work and childhood. Gorin weaves this subject with another: his friend and mentor Manny Farber. Farber doesn’t appear, except in photographs; but his paintings and words (and such preoccupations as Jimmy Cagney) do; and Gorin, again assuming the persona of bemused investigator, shuttles between these strands with effortless ingenuity. The film’s intersecting narratives function like the crossing tracks of the train set, or the lines of force of Farber’s paintings, establishing nodes of resemblance and resonance; and all the while Gorin assesses American identity, its experience of geography and frontier, of masculinity, of history, of the relation of private and collective. Like *Poto*, *Routine Pleasures* is notable for its lightness and charm, although the polyphony here is if anything more intricate than in its predecessor. One should also mention Babette Mangolte’s excellent cinematography, marvelously nuanced both in black and white and in color. For *Routine Pleasures*, Gorin won the award for Best Experimental Documentary at the Festival dei Popoli in Florence.

Again, academic obligations were a principal reason for the delay before Gorin’s next film. *My Crazy Life* (which won the Special Jury Prize at Sundance in 1992) rounds off his California trilogy with an exploration of the life of a Samoan gang in Long Beach. This is perhaps the most difficult of Gorin’s solo films, deliberately intervening in the reality it documents more frequently and elusively than its predecessors, and forgoing the orientation hitherto provided by Gorin’s traditional persona of investigator. Rather as Jean Rouch had done in *Moi, un noir* (1958), Gorin invites his subjects to collaborate actively in his representation of them, most evidently in some obviously acted scenes, but more subtly as well, as in apparently spontaneous but actually scripted monologues. In addition, Gorin widens the scope from merely documenting daily life in Long Beach: several gangsters go to

[13] See also Vivian SOBCHACK, “16 Ways to Pronounce Potato’: Authority and Authorship in *Poto* and *Cabengo*,” *The Journal of Film and Video*, issue XXXI, fall 1984, pp. 21-29.

[14] Melbourne interview.

Samoa and encounter their cultural origins, both in family and in fantasy. Even science fiction intrudes in the ruminations of a computer in a sympathetic cop's patrol car; these musings stand in, perhaps, for the missing Gorin character, but disrupt the film's tone. Despite such flights, *My Crazy Life* resists all sensationalism: there is no spectacular violence, nor any romanticizing or demonizing of its subjects. One is struck instead by the gangsters' curious innocence, and by the normative tedium of their existence, from which Gorin manages to invent a texture whose complexity only unfolds itself over repeated viewings.

Since *My Crazy Life*, Gorin has, as he has said, "focused on the possibility of rethinking film narrative along musical structural lines". Musicality has in various ways long been a concern of Gorin: one thinks of his intelligent choice of music in his films (Erroll Garner and Mozart played by Gould in *Poto*, Conlon Nancarrow in *Routine*, Joji Yuasa's intermittent but elegant score for *My Crazy Life*), but, more essentially, of the emphasis on the soundtrack already characteristic of the Vertov films, and of the rhythmic and polyphonic structures of his solo works. *Letter to Peter* (1992), a feature-length video built around Peter Sellars' staging of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* in Salzburg, is a kind of etude extending and synthesizing these concerns. However, it is not as rich as his films: perhaps reflecting a certain impatience with Sellars (evidenced by welcome if somewhat rude fastforwards during some of his monologues), it doesn't completely integrate its often interesting views of the rehearsal process with its larger speculations on music and creation. More successful, if less ambitious, is Gorin's record of the performance, made for Österreichischer Rundfunk, which makes Sellars' staging (to my mind questionable) as effective as live video can register. In any case, these two direct engagements with music itself have sharpened Gorin's interest in filmic musicality; and among his current projects are soundtracks built as a primary layer, to which images will be added later, reversing usual filmic practice. Gorin has also been writing filmscripts and stories; and in 2001 he directed a workshop in Japan with a number of young Japanese artists. Here, in collaboration with the students and with painter/videographer Ryuta Nakajima, he shot footage for a projected video "E-mail" tribute to his friends and elders Godard and Chris Marker. In the past months, Gorin has at last begun shaping this footage: one is glad that Gorin's exchange of ideas and enthusiasm with this younger generation, and the growing international interest in his work, has helped renew his own creative energy, and one hopes that the intermittent rhythm of Gorin's production will become more steady.

If Godard has fashioned himself into "the ultimate image of the end of Europe" (as Charles Olson once wrote of Ezra Pound), Gorin has done something more

modest. Each of his films chews on recurrent themes—of childhood or nostalgia for childhood, of language and exile—with intensely local concentration. If Marker’s *Sans soleil* (1982) or *The Last Bolshevik* (1993) expand grandly from their immediate subjects to the illumination of History, Gorin’s burrow instead into their locality. Since the generalizing rhetoric of the Vertov period, Gorin has allergically avoided “large statements”: instead, his work is allied with, and tender and inquisitive toward, the small, the individualizing detail. It is, in Manny Farber’s words, “termite art,” “eating its own boundaries,” leaving “nothing in its path other than the signs of eager, industrious, unkempt activity.”¹⁵ In this very modesty, Gorin’s work is perhaps of special importance in a time dominated by the soulless and grandiose spectacles of Hollywood, and by the cynicism and affectlessness of so much “independent” film. Instead, the eccentricity of Gorin’s movies reminds me of those from certain other great contemporaries, like Abbas Kiarostami or João Cesar Monteiro, whose quirky particularity allows them extraordinary range and engenders deep and abundant pleasures.

Filmography as director

- Vent d’Est* (1969; with Jean-Luc Godard)
- Lotte in Italia* (1969; with Jean-Luc Godard)
- Vladimir et Rosa* (1971; with Jean-Luc Godard)
- Tout va bien* (1972; with Jean-Luc Godard)
- Letter to Jane* (1972; with Jean-Luc Godard)
- Ici et ailleurs* (1975; with Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville)
- Poto and Cabengo* (1978)
- Routine Pleasures* (1986)
- My Crazy Life* (1991)
- Letter to Peter* (1992; video)
- St. François d’Assise* (1992; video of Peter Sellars’ staging of Messiaen’s opera)

[15] Manny Farber, *Negative Space* (expanded edition). New York: Da Capo, 1998, p. 135.



The filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin talks about how the director of *Land in Trance* became an actor in *Vent d'Est*, which is to be shown this week for the first time in Brazil.

Jean-Pierre Gorin is known for his partnership with Jean-Luc Godard in the 1960's and 1970's. They directed six films together, four of them with various left-wing revolutionaries of the day, as an exercise in collective labor and under the name of the Dziga Vertov Group, a tribute to the Russian filmmaker, to serve as opposition not only to Hollywood, but also to the tradition of Eisenstein. The first film born of this partnership is *Vent d'est* (1969), a western made in Italy with the participation of Gian Maria Volonté, as an actor, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, as a screen writer, as well as an appearance by Glauber Rocha. Part of the film shows a number of people gathered in a deserted spot reflecting on what it is to make movies and, as this was the major concern of the group, what it is to make movies politically. And it is Glauber who, at a crossroads, shows the different paths of cinema, including the one of the Third World, which is "dangerous, divine and wonderful".

The other three films made by the group are *Lotte in Italia* (1969), *Vladimir et Rosa* (1971) and *Jusqu'à la Victoire* (1970), which was unfinished. No longer under the name of Dziga Vertov, Godard and Gorin directed, in 1972, *Tout Va Bien*, with Yves Montand and Jane Fonda, and *Letter to Jane*, a caustic reading of a photo taken of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. The film warranted the attention of

A friend of Glauber [and Godard]

Jane de Almeida

special article for the newspaper Folha de São Paulo

Susan Sontag in her famous essay *On Photography* (republished recently by Companhia das Letras), presenting it as a lesson in the deciphering of an apparently innocent framework.

Gorin met Godard some time around 1965 when he was the literary editor of *Le Monde* and one of the creators of the supplement "Le Monde des Livres". He had studied philosophy and attended the lectures of Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. He was an eminent participant of the new generation of the French left-wing, which was to culminate in the revolution of May 1968, and represented an innovating force in the thinking of Godard at that time, so much so that he was one of his confidants and advisors for *La Chinoise* (1967) and *Le Gai Savoir* (1968), films that were made before those of the Dziga Vertov Group.

Since 1975, Jean-Pierre Gorin has been a professor for the department of visual arts at the University of California, in San Diego, and he still directs, writes and produces films. Gorin took the trouble to answer the questions below and said that they brought back fond memories. He also said that, if he could, he would take a plane straight away so that he could see the presentation of *Vent d'est* in Brazil.

Glauber Rocha's part in Vent d'Est is small but crucial, as he is the one to point to the paths of the cinema at the crossroad? How did you and Godard meet Glauber, and what was in your mind when you decided to invite him to play that part?

Glauber, Glauber, Glauber. At the crossroad always. He pops up first in my life in Paris a few months after I watched *Land in Trance* some 30 times in a row over a period of ten days. We meet through Raphael Sorin, now Houellebecq's publisher, who would after be linked to *Vent d'Est*. An immediate connection. It translates into endless roaming through Paris streets (Glauber knew how to push the night away!) and a disheveled fifteen-day crash course in "Tropicalismo". Then a year later, as *Vent d'Est* is being shot, he emerges from the night, sits at our table in this dingy Roman trattoria and knots the threads of our last conversation as if we had just left each other the night before. I remember introducing him to Godard. I might be wrong on that one, they might have

nodded to each other prior in some festival or other. I know the idea to enlist Glauber and offer him this cameo as the talking signpost at the crossroad of the various ways of cinema came from me. What was in my mind? Pretty obvious, isn't it? Things were splitting at the seams. It felt that everything could be and was being put on the table to be examined anew. The ways of images and sounds were being questioned all over the place. In a sense we were all (I mean those of us for whom film mattered both in and of itself and in relationship to the convulsions of the world it lived in) at the crossroad. The question was not the question of a "true" path, but the question of the type of dialogue that could be knotted, folded from all this disparate questioning that was going on. Nobody could simply dream to adopt wholesale the experimentation of anybody else, precisely because these experimentations refracted the specificity of experience. That's why the guys of the Cinema Novo were so important: for how Brazilian they were determined to be, for their specificity and how it forced us to interrogate our own and sent us in a direction that had not been mapped out. Glauber's apparition in *Vent d'Est* is both an homage to the Cinema Novo and an affectionate piece of naïve theater that indicates that the works done in Brazil forced us to bushwhack our way out of the thicket (Hollywood, the New Wave, the Ice Age political cinema of the Cold War etc...) toward the specificity of our time and place.

After almost 40 years, how do you see the propositions and the production of the Dziga Vertov Group?

In 1989, at the time of the bi-centennial anniversary of the French revolution a newspaper interviewed various world leaders to get their one line assessment of its legacy. Deng Tsiao Ping, then the leader of China, hesitated for a while and then answered: "Too early to tell!" All joking aside, and with due modesty, I'll use the same answer. I recently looked at *Vent d'Est* and sent the following note to a friend:

Long e-mail from a Brazilian Cultural Center that seems bent on showing *Vent d'Est* for the first time in Glauber Rocha land (got a Japanese DVD edition of the old chestnut and I was blown away by the fact that it looked so fucking gorgeous, not to mention the fact that it felt in turn like a) the only true adaptation of the *Iliad* (sorry I'm coming out of *Troy*, and pretty pissed off at that!)...I mean *Vent d'Est* as the Culture War seen by two Cassandra(s) (two for the price of one at

that! JLG/JPG), b) a small scale Shakespearian epic (nobody cared/cares to read the late 1960's as a Rosencrantz and Guildenstern romp, but I did then/do even more so now...my generation put poor Y (a.k.a. Marxism and its avatars) into the grave...it was dead then but it did not know it...almost 30 years to wait for the ghost to dissipate into the wind (Tien An Men + the crumbling of the Berlin wall), c) one the best science fiction pieces ever (if *2001* is Dullards in space, *Vent d'Est* is Dullards in the roman countryside, the postscript to *Bouvard and Pécuchet* that Flaubert never quite wrote where he intended to collect the writings of his two blockheads... a perfect complement to *La Chinoise* in that respect).

So, "too early to tell"... I am sure that in ten years I'll see *Vent d'Est* and the work I did then through a different set of welder's goggles. The affection, the irony, the infuriation they generated in me then and they generate now will still remain, but the works will seem to address yet another set of preoccupations. There are works that do that; they remain mysteriously alive and capable to address times beyond their time. I call them "decent". They are works that display a director's embattlement with the task at hand, show him/her sweating the details, juggling several balls at the same time and not afraid to drop a few on the floor (out of incapacity as well out of showmanship just to get the audience on his/her side). All in all I have made "decent" works.

Do you think that the crossroads metaphor is still valid, after the "winds from the east" stopped blowing so strongly, and considering that the cinema nowadays rarely questions the cinema itself, as it did back then?

I beg to differ. The questions are there. I can hear them in the films of Lars von Trier like I can hear them in the films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul. I can see them snake through and shape the films of Abbas Kiarostami and the films of Hou Hshiao Hshen or Tsai Ming Liang. And whether I like or dislike these films is completely beside the point. I could add to the list. Known names and names yet unknown. I tend to think that filmmakers fall in two groups the people of the idiom and the people of the grammar. The people of the idiom tend to function best in the stability of conventions; the people of the grammar are bent on interrogating them. Once in a while, the members of one tribe wander (even if for a frightened moment) in the territory of the other. And the ebb and flow of history tend to favor alternately one tribe over the other. Enough with the armchair anthropology! The fact is that a lot of questioning is going on. It always was going on. It will always

be going on. Always... it is inherent to the practice be it of film, writing, music, painting. The question might be more squarely put on the critics. What makes them so unwilling to pick up on the questions that are being asked, so incapable to trace them, to amplify them? What makes them so determined to reinforce the vapidness of the status quo? A little less "thumbs up/thumbs down" and a little more reflection might help. If anything, I think that filmmakers should take the vow to grab the pen and make the effort to speak of the films of others (or the moments or gestures in these films) that move them aesthetically and emotionally. A little less insularity and a little more generosity might help to reclaim the territory that has been lost with the collapse of criticism.

Do you believe it is still possible to experiment with the very language of the cinema, as it was back then? Is it still possible for the cinema to question itself? How? If differently from that time, in which way? If you believe it is no longer possible, why not?

Yes, emphatically so. A few summary disconnected pointers. The digital, first. What does it bring? When will it come into its own, the properties of the digital being explored and not simply considered as an expedient form of filming? What esthetic does it carry forth? How does that esthetic will affect and transform or sense of storytelling? Sound design, second. When are filmmakers going to acknowledge the sophistication of their audience as far as sound design is concerned? When are they going to actively understand that the average viewer has now a familiarity with the complexities of sound layering, sampling, mixing that they derive from their familiarity with popular music? And when is this understanding going to translate into new and different narrative strategies? The 1960's were marked by a shift that saw filmmakers move away from literary models (high and low) and find their point of reference in painting. Early Godard is a pretty good example of what it meant: how many times did he force us to read a frame like we read a painting by Matisse, flat expanses of primary colors lit as if by the sun at noon? And how much did this strategy gel into a new form of narrative? It seems inevitable that music (or more aptly said, sound) will offer the next referent. Alleluia. The era of the sound film is upon us. Look, I could go on and line up the signs of hope (i.e. the shifts and changes that force filmmakers to embrace their time). The shifts in the political winds would figure prominently on the list but it would take us many nights around the campfire.

You made six films with Godard. How was working with him as a partner? What characteristics from Godard do you see in your work after having produced so many films together?

I'll take a rain check on this one. Understand that one of the curses my youth has imposed upon me is that people address me as if I was caught in its eternal present like a deer in the headlights. I suspect that if I had been a) a tad less naïve, b) a bit less ballsy, I would have joined forces with someone who would not have concentrated on his head the mystic of the author with a capital A. But so be it. I felt he was the one whose practice could accommodate my questions. This being said, it is both flattering and tiresome to be brought back to one's youth with such unnerving consistency.

A few years after your partnership with Godard, you moved to the U.S. and began to teach in a university. Still, you directed four films (please correct me if I am wrong: Poto and Cabengo, Routine Pleasures, My Crazy Life, Letter to Peter), and also wrote some scripts. How do you manage your academic life and your cinematographic production?

As best/as badly as I can. Teaching is fairly simple. It consists in persuading people that they don't need you. As all things simple it requires time and effort to achieve. I also saw it as political duty as I felt the need to pass something on and to show young folks to "never underestimate the revolutionary power of the past", as Pasolini once said. Besides, it keeps one on the ball of one's feet and one's brain finely tuned if one does it with passion. Few do, alas. As for the films I got more slowed down by the incapacity of producers to take risks, the absurd cecity of critics, my almost pathological disdain for playing the game and (let's be honest) my own procrastinating ways.

What are your latest works (or projects)?

I have just finished a script, *The Devil's Dicks*. It is a straight genre film that I wrote with my partner Patrick Amos, and that I don't intend to direct. A kind of *Ghostbusters* meets *Saló*, cartoonish to the nth power. It came out one of some sense that this format might best suited to tackle these times of ours.

Some authors consider you to be a kind of resistance between the wearisome grandiloquence of Hollywood movies and the cynicism of the American “independent” cinema. How do you feel about that?

Hey, I'll take them where I can get them! Look I make the kind of films I make out of necessity. By default would be a more appropriate term. That's my palette. That's my voice. My little music. Can't do anything else. It's both my glory and my curse. A limited and yet ambitious way to function in the world.

And now, as long as I have answered your questions, a request. Thank Caetano Veloso, Tom Ze, Gilberto Gil, Jorge Ben. Without them it would more difficult to think. And pay a visit to Glauber's grave. The last time we talked, he called me collect for two hours to tell me “we were right”. He never gave me enough space to answer. And I was so broke then that the only thing I could think of was how I could get him off the line. Now, in hindsight, I think he might have called it. Not exactly as he meant it then, but who cares...

James Roy MacBean
Vent d'Est
or Godard and Rocha at the crossroads

Near the middle of *Vent d'Est* (*Wind from the East*), there is a sequence where Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha plays a brief but symbolically important role. As Rocha stands with arms outstretched at a dusty crossroads, a young woman with a movie camera comes up one of the paths (and the fact that she is very evidently pregnant is undoubtedly "pregnant" with meaning). She goes up to Rocha and says very politely: "Excuse me for interrupting your class struggle, but could you please tell the way towards political cinema?"

Rocha points first in front of him, then behind and to his left, and he says, "That way is the cinema of aesthetic adventure and philosophical enquiry, while this way is the Third World cinema – a dangerous cinema, divine and marvellous, where the questions are practical ones like production, distribution, training 300 film-makers to make 600 films a year for Brazil alone, to supply one of the world's biggest markets."

The woman starts off down the path to the Third World, when the inexplicable appearance of a red balloon seems to discourage her from proceeding in this direction. She takes a half-hearted kick at the ball which rolls back to her anyway, as if it were doggedly insisting on following her – like Lamorisse's famous "red balloon", which it resembles – and she then doubles back behind Glauber Rocha, who is still standing at the crossroads with arms outspread like a scarecrow or a crucified Christ without a cross. She sets out anew along the path of aesthetic adventure and philosophical enquiry.

I choose to begin an analysis of *Vent d'Est* by describing this brief sequence and suggesting some of its tongue-in-cheek symbolism because I believe it to be of critical importance not just for an

understanding of what Godard is trying to do in this film, but also for an understanding of the way certain very important issues are shaping up in the vanguard of contemporary cinema. The presence of Rocha in this sequence is particularly significant; but the issues involved certainly go beyond just Godard and Rocha – and ultimately it may well be cinema itself which now stands at a critical crossroads.

To get at these issues and to delve more deeply into the significance of the crossroads sequence, I think it best to take first a brief detour and explain a little of how *Vent d'Est* came into being and of Rocha's problematical association with this film at various stages of its development. Shortly after France's student uprisings in May 1968, Godard contacted one of the May movement's leading militants, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and suggested that they collaborate on a film project which would explore the deadly ideological malaise at the root not only of French politics but of the post-Cold War political situation in general. Godard also indicated his desire to make the film in such a way as to draw parallels between the repressiveness of traditional political structures and the repressiveness of traditional film structures, particularly those of the standard Western.

Cohn-Bendit agreed, and Godard contacted Italian producer Gianni Barcelloni, who had previously worked with directors like Pasolini and Glauber Rocha and the young French underground film-maker Philippe Garrel. Barcelloni persuaded Cineriz to advance him \$100,000 for "a Western in color, to be scripted by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, and starring Gian Maria Volonté". What the producer and distributor apparently were expecting was something on the order of a "*Cohn-Bendit le fou*".

Shooting took place in Italy in early summer 1969. Godard, who by this time had committed himself to collective creation, assembled his three-man Dziga Vertov Group (which at this writing, is down to two members – Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin), his actress wife Anne Wiazemsky, numerous Italian actors and technicians, and a number of French and Italian militants of diverse leftist persuasions. Cohn-Bendit, who had discussed with Godard the overall conception of the film, showed up for only part of the shooting, apparently argued with Godard and Gorin, and does not appear in the finished film (as Godard said in Berkeley last April, "all the anarchists went to the beach"). Exit Cohn-Bendit. Enter Glauber Rocha.

In Rome for talks with Barcelloni, Rocha encountered Godard, who, as Rocha tells it, suggested that the two of them should coordinate efforts "to destroy cinema" – to which Rocha replied that he was on a very different trip, that his business

was to build cinema in Brazil and the rest of the Third World, to handle very practical problems of production, distribution etc.

This argument seems to have given Godard the idea of shooting a "Rocha at the crossroads" sequence to include in *Vent d'Est* as a way of delineating divergent revolutionary strategies. Rocha agreed to play his part, although he indicated his reluctance at "joining the collective mythology of the unforgettable French May-Gang".

In any case, the sequence was shot and Godard and Rocha parted amicably, but with each man apparently feeling that the other had failed to understand his position. Godard went to work on editing of *Vent d'Est*, and completed the film early in the winter. Rocha happened to be in Rome again at the time of the private preview, saw the film, and found himself – and everyone else – in such bewilderment and consternation at the path taken by Godard that he decided to write an article about the film for the Brazilian magazine *Manchete*¹.

At Cannes in May 1970, *Vent d'Est* was given a midnight showing during the Director's Fortnight. (Godard, by the way, didn't want the film shown at Cannes at all: it was entirely the distributor's doing.) A few people admired the film; most hated it. Ditto for the September showing of *Vent d'Est* at the New York Festival. Ditto again for the showings a few weeks later in Berkeley and San Francisco. But that kind of reaction is more or less to be expected whenever a new Godard film is first released. What is unusual and a bit more complicated is the controversy over whether or not *Vent d'Est* can be considered a "visually beautiful" film, and whether or not "visual beauty" is an attribute or a liability given Godard's revolutionary aims.

Much of the controversy over the film's visual quality may arise simply from the fact that both 35mm and 16mm prints of the film are being shown; and that visually these are two very different films. Although the film was shot (entirely outdoors, by the way) in 16mm, it is the blown up 35mm print which is by far the better of the two, with very lush colour (especially the greens of the beautiful Italian countryside rose-red wall of an old half-ruined peasant dwelling). The 16mm print is extremely dark and murky, with very false, somber color.

But the controversy really gets thick when people start debating the relative merits and demerits of visual beauty (or its absence) in *Vent d'Est*. And as things now stand, it's even a bit difficult to determine who said what, and why – and which print they were talking about. For example, when the film was shown in

[1] See *Manchete* n. 928 (January 31st, 1970), Rio de Janeiro.

Berkeley and San Francisco, some critics were heard countering viewers' objections to the "visual trash" by pointing that Glauber Rocha had supposedly criticized the film for being "too beautiful" and thereby remaining in the realm of aesthetics instead of functioning as a politically militant film. The trouble is, Rocha doesn't take this position at all. This line of reasoning, while mistakenly attribute to Rocha, is accepted in principle by Godard, who, however, turns the argument around to assert that "if *Vent d'Est* succeeds at all, it's because it isn't beautifully made at all". As for Rocha, in his *Manchete* article he comes out against *Vent d'Est* not because the film remains in the realm of aesthetics, but rather because he sees Godard as trying to destroy aesthetics. Rocha praises the film for its "desperate beauty" but reproaches Godard for feeling so desperate about the usefulness of art. He laments that such a gifted artist as Godard (whom he compares to Bach and Michelangelo) should no longer have faith in art and should seek instead to "destroy" it.

For Rocha, the present intellectual crisis in Western Europe over the usefulness of art is senseless and politically negative. He sees the European artist – best exemplified by Godard – as having worked himself into a dead end, and he concludes that where cinema is concerned, the Third World may be the only place where an artist can still fruitfully go about the task of making films. Godard, on the other hand, reproaches Rocha for having "a producer's mentality", for thinking too much in so-called "practical" terms of production, distribution, markets etc., thereby perpetuating the capitalist structures of cinema by extending them to the Third World – and in the process, neglecting urgent theoretical questions that must be asked if Third World cinema is to avoid merely repeating the ideological errors of Western cinema.

What sorts of ideological errors might Godard have in mind? Well, let's go back to the crossroads sequence in *Vent d'Est*. If our association of the red plastic ball with Lamorisse's "red balloon" is correct, then this sequence reads something like this: the cinema, at a very pregnant stage of creative development, turns to the Third World for advice and direction regarding the proper relation between cinema and society ("political cinema"). Given a somewhat equivocal answer by Glauber Rocha, but sufficiently impressed by what he says about Third World cinema (and perhaps impressed by the way he says it – or rather sings it in Portuguese) cinema starts off down the path to Third World cinema, only to discover, a few steps along the way, that Third World cinema is turning out Third World imitations of *The Red Balloon*. Discouraged by this, cinema decides quickly that the real way to advance lies not in this direction, but to proceed further along the path of aesthetic adventure and philosophical enquiry – which path she resolutely sets out upon.

Now, the question arises: what's wrong with *The Red Balloon*? What ideological errors, inherent in Western cinema, are manifest in *The Red Balloon*? What could possibly be objectionable in this charming tale of a little French boy and a balloon which endearingly follows him wherever he goes, like a friendly dog? André Bazin, one might recall, devoted one of his more important essays ("Montage interdit", in vol. I of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*) to *The Red Balloon* and to Lamorisse's other popular short, *Cin blanc*. Bazin's argument - a basic stepping-stone in the development of his realist aesthetics - was that even in a film of such imaginative fantasy as *The Red Balloon*, what was essential (*ontologically essential*) was the cinematic faithfulness to reality, "the simple photographic respect for spatial unity". The fact that a trick was employed to enable the balloon to appear to follow the boy didn't matter to Bazin just so long as the trick was not a cinematographic trick - like, in his opinion, montage. What mattered was simply that whatever we saw on the screen had been photographed as it really happened in time and space. What we didn't see (like an imperceptible nylon thread which enabled Lamorisse to control the balloon) didn't matter to Bazin so long as what we did see really took place, was *pris sur le vif* by the camera, and was untampered with in the laboratory or on the editing table.

And it mattered not a bit to Bazin (in fact, it fitted in perfectly with his bourgeois humanist idealism) that this faithfulness to "reality" served as a jumping-off point for simplistic metaphysical pretensions and sentimental moralizing - as in *The Red Balloon*, where a struggle between the little boy and a gang of street toughies symbolizes the struggle between Good and Evil, with Evil winning out here on Earth as the balloon gets popped, but Good winning out in another, "higher" realm, as thousands of other balloons miraculously descend from on high, lift up the little boy, and carry him up to the heavens.

For Bazin, as a careful reading reveals, all roads lead to the heavens. The religious terminology that crops up again and again in his writings is by no means coincidental or even merely metaphorical. Bazin's entire aesthetic system is rooted in a mystical-religious (Catholic) framework of transcendence. The faithful "reflection of reality" is really just a prerequisite - and ultimately merely a pretext - for finding a "transcendental truth" which supposedly exists in reality and is "miraculously" revealed by the camera. Reality, if one reads Bazin carefully, sheds very quickly its *material* shell and is "elevated" to a purely metaphysical (one could justifiably call it a *theological*) sphere.

Given half a chance (as when writing on Bresson's *Journal d'un curé de campagne*), Bazin even lets the cat out of the bag - and his flagrant abuse of the term

“phenomenology” reaches the height of absurdity in “a phenomenology of God’s grace”. But even when writing about a film like Buñuel’s *Land Without Bread*, which is a scathing documentation of the material condition of a specific people (the inhabitants of the valley of Las Hurdes) in a specific country (Spain) under a specific ruling class coalition (between the bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church), all of which is pointed out with bitter emphasis in the film itself, Bazin nonetheless manages to sweep the *material* dust under the table so fast you hardly know what you saw, and he immediately takes off for the more edifying dust of heavens.

Not once, it has been pointed out², does Bazin in his article on *Land Without Bread* even mention the words “class”, “exploited”, “rich”, “capitalism”, “property”, “proletariat”, “bourgeoisie”, “order”, “money”, “profit” etc. And what words do we find in their place? Large ones, broad generous concepts that are the staple of a long tradition of bourgeois humanist idealism – words like “conscience”, “salvation”, “sadness”, “purity”, “integrity”, “objective cruelty of the world”, “transcendental truth”, “cruelty of human condition”, “unhappiness”, “the cruelty in the Creation”, “destiny”, “horror”, “pity”, “Madonna”, “human misery”, “surgical obscenity”, “love”, “*dialectique pascalienne*” (it would have to be *pascalienne*!), “all the beauty of a Spanish *Pietà*”, “nobility and harmony”, “presence of the beautiful in the atrocious”, “an infernal earthly paradise” etc., etc. And this is no unique case, either in Bazin’s writings or in bourgeois ideology in general. The more generous and general the concepts, the easier it is to cover up the absence of a materialist, process-oriented analysis of human society that, if undertaken, would reveal some hard, unpleasant facts that could cause people to start rocking the boat. In short, ideology functions at least as much in what it does *not say* – in what it keeps quiet – as in what it does say. As for cinema, Godard deplors the way in which cinema, right from its birth, has been disfigured by a bourgeois capitalist ideology that permeates its very theoretical foundations and has never been correctly diagnosed, much less corrected. In *Vent d’Est*, therefore, he systematically takes apart the traditional elements of bourgeois cinema – especially as exemplified by the Western – revealing the sometimes hidden, sometimes blatant repressiveness which underlies it.

Godard accuses the bourgeois cinema of over-emphasizing and playing upon the deep-seated emotional fears and desires of the audience at the expense of

[2] See Gerard Gozlan’s critical reading of Bazin in *Pssitif* n. 46 and 47 (June and July, 1962).

their critical intelligence. He seeks to combat this tyranny of the emotions, not because he is “against” emotions and “for” rationality, nor because he is opposed to people's attitudes and actions being influenced by their experience of art; quite the contrary. But he believes very strongly that the filmgoer should not be taken advantage of, that he should not be *manipulated* emotionally but should instead be addressed directly in a lucid dialogue which calls forth all of his human faculties.

The way things now stand, however, every element of a bourgeois film is carefully calculated to invite the viewer to indulge in a “lived” emotional experience of a so-called “slice of life” instead of assuming a critical, analytical, and ultimately political attitude towards what he sees and hears. Why should one's attitude towards a film be political, one might ask? The answer is, of course, that the invitation to indulge in emotion at the expense of rational analysis already constitutes a political act – and implies a political attitude on the part of the viewer, without the viewer necessarily being even aware of it.

For one thing, by letting himself be emotionally “moved” by the cinema – and even demanding that the cinema should be emotionally moving – the filmgoer puts himself at the mercy of anyone who comes along with a lot of money to invest in seeing to it that filmgoers are “moved”. And the people who have that kind of money to invest also have a vested interest in making sure that the film audiences are moved in the right direction – that is, in the direction of perpetuating the investor's advantageous position in an economic system which permits gross inequities to exist in the distribution of wealth. In short, cinema (as well as television) functions as an ideological tool or weapon used by the ruling-owning class to extend the market for the dreams it sells.

Moreover, as Godard asserts in *Vent d'Est*, cinema tries to pass off bourgeois dreams as reality, and even plays on the heightening and enhancing effect of cinema in an effort to make us believe that the these dreams depicted on our movie screens are somehow “larger than life”, that they are not only “real” but somehow “more real than the real”. In bourgeois cinema, all conspires to this effect: the acting style is at the same time “realistic” (or, if filmed on location, simply real), but they are also carefully selected for their beauty and their “larger than life” aspect. Likewise for the costumes, clothing, jewelry, and make-up worn by the actors and actresses, who, themselves, are carefully selected for their “larger than life” aspect. Finally, even sound is used to give us the illusion that we are eavesdropping on a moment of “reality” where the characters are oblivious of our presence and are simply living out their “real-life” emotions.

Since *Week-End*, Godard has rejected conventional film dialogue because he finds that it contributes to this misguided illusion of “reality” and makes it all the easier for the viewer-listener to imagine himself right up there with the people on the screen, present yet “safe”, in a perfect position (that of an eavesdropper and a peeping Tom) to participate vicariously in the emotion of the moment. In short, the bourgeois cinema pretends to ignore the presence of the spectator, pretends that what is being said and done on the movie screen is not aimed at the spectator, pretends that cinema is a “reflection of reality”; yet all the time it plays on his emotions and capitalizes on his identification-projection mechanisms in order to induce him, subtly, insidiously, unconsciously, to participate in the dreams and fantasies that are marketed by bourgeois capitalist society.

There is an excellent sequence in *Vent d'Est* where Godard demonstrates and demystifies what takes place behind the façade of bourgeois cinema. On the sound track we are told that “In ten seconds you will see and hear a typical character in bourgeois cinema. He is in every film and he always plays a Don Juan type. He will describe the room you are sitting in”. We then see a close-up of a very handsome young Italian actor standing at the edge of a swift-running stream and looking directly into the camera. Behind him – but photographed so that depth-perception is greatly reduced and the image as a whole is markedly flat – rises the grassy green slope of the opposite bank.

The young man speaks in Italian, while voices on the soundtrack give us a running translation in both French and English. The translation, however, is rendered “indirectly”: the voice tells us, “He says the room is dark. He sees people sitting downstairs and also up in the balcony. He says there is an ugly old fogey over there, all wrinkled; and over here he says he has spotted a good-looking young chick. He says he would like to lay her. He asks her to come up on the screen with him. He says it's beautiful up there, with the sun shining and green trees all around and lots of happy people having a good time. He says if you don't believe him, look...” And at that point the camera suddenly moves back and slightly upward, keeping the young man in focus in the right-hand corner of the frame while it reveals on the left side – and what seems like almost a hundred feet below the young man – a breathtakingly beautiful scene of a waterfall spilling into a natural pool in a shaded glen where young people are diving and swimming in the clear water.

It's a magnificent shot. The image itself is extremely beautiful, and most amazing of all is the very complex restructuring of space accomplished by such a simple camera movement. But if we think about this sequence and its dazzling

denouement, we realise that everything in it is a calculated come-on aimed at the dreams and fantasies of the audience. The man is young and handsome. When he speaks, he disparages age and ugliness, and glorifies youth and glamour. What he wants is sex, what he offers is sex. On the screen, he assures us, everything is beautiful and people are happy.

And that sudden restructuring of space literally invites us into the image all by itself. Like bourgeois cinema in general, it presents the bourgeois capitalist world as one of great depth, inexhaustibly rich and endlessly inviting. And the bourgeois cinema's predilection for depth-of-field photography (see Bazin) emphasizes the "you are there" illusion and thereby masks its own presence (and its act of presenting this image) behind a self-effacing false modesty calculated to make cinema appear to be the humble servant of "reality" itself instead of what it really is - the not at all humble lackey of the capitalist ruling class. The audience is flirted with, coaxed, and cajoled into coming up on the screen to join the "beautiful people" for a little sex and leisure amid beautiful surroundings. And the thing that really clinches the deal is the stunning virtuosity of the camera in providing visual thrills.

Once again, this raises the problem of visual beauty in "political" cinema; but it also demonstrates how Godard uses visual beauty in new ways that serve to demystify (and make us less vulnerable to) the old uses of visual beauty in bourgeois cinema. After all, if beauty (like language) is one of the arms the ruling class uses to pacify us and "keep us in our place", then one of our tasks is to turn that weapon around and make it work against the enemy. One way to do this is to demystify beauty and to show how the ruling class uses it against us; another way is to effect a "transvaluation of values" in which we make a vice of the bourgeois concept of beauty while making a virtue of a different concept (e.g., "Black is beautiful") which the bourgeoisie will be unable to recognize or accept. In his films since *Week-End*, Godard has been utilizing both of these tactics: his films now have a very different look about them which a lot of people are unable to consider "beautiful", there is always some cinematic element or juxtaposition of elements that calls our attention to just how "beauty" is achieved and how it is used as an ideological weapon.

In any case, whatever the pros and cons may be where "beauty" in a militant film is concerned, it certainly does no good to criticise Godard's use of visual beauty in *Vent d'Est* without having understood just how and why he uses it - or, still worse, to criticise him for trying to "move" people emotionally as the bourgeois cinema does, but failing in this effort because his images have a very formal beauty which somehow turns the viewer off instead of turning him

on. And, inexplicably, this latter is exactly what Glauber Rocha seems to do when, in the *Manchete* article, he criticises the shot of the “American cavalry officer” roughing up the girl militant (Anne Wiazemsky) for not really being frightening at all, but only beautiful. What Rocha inexcusably seems not to realise is that Godard does not want this shot to be frightening and that he makes it beautiful in precisely such a way as to ensure that it couldn't be frightening. While the officer (Gian Maria Volonté) wrings the girl's neck and shouts at her, someone offscreen throws thick gobs of red paint that catch in her auburn hair and splatter the officer's dark blue coat. The visual effect, with its rich interplay of colors and textures, is quite striking, and it serves to distance us from the action and the emotion it might otherwise arouse.

A few moments later, Godard gives us another, similar shot, only handled this time more in the emotive style of bourgeois cinema. Instead of shooting from behind the girl's right shoulder as he did in the previous “torture” shot (with torturer and victim face-to-face, but only the face of the torturer seen by the audience), Godard now has the officer holding the girl from behind so that the scene can be shot to reveal both of their faces in frontal close-up, with the framing and composition and lighting drawing our attention particularly to the girl's grimaces of pain. This time, however, no paint is thrown in and there are no overtly theatrical elements of the “distancing” kind. There is only a very good acting performance by Anne Wiazemsky, who really seems to be wincing with great pain. In a bourgeois film this shot might be quite painful or frightening for the audience (especially if the girl screamed, as the bourgeois cinema loves to have actresses do); but in this film, coming after the earlier “torture” shot with the paint thrown in, the painful or frightening effect of the shot is minimized (notice that I do *not* say it is eliminated) and our critical intelligence is alerted to analyse the differences in handling between the two shots.

Later, a similar alerting of our critical faculties occurs in the sequence where the cavalry officer rides around on horseback clubbing the recalcitrant prisoners - another scene which Rocha finds extremely beautiful but which he criticizes for not turning out to be brutal in the way he (and even Ventura, who was the sound man for *Vent d'Est*) thinks the scene was intended. What Godard does in this sequence is to utilise a few of the techniques so often employed by the bourgeois cinema for this type of violent action sequence – turning the sound volume way up and continually making abrupt camera movements. The effect of these devices is usually a high emotional intensity and a very visceral sense of violence and confusion. (Remember their use in *Tom Jones*.) But Godard

has made one major variation on these elements which completely changes our relation to this sequence.

His camera does continually make abrupt movements, but it also traces a very precise formal pattern – swinging abruptly about 35° left, then 35° right, back and forth several times, then abruptly swinging about 35° up, then 35° down, and so on, exploring in a very formal way the closed space of the lush ravine where the action takes place. The purely formal quality of these camera movements (Rocha admirably proclaimed them "unprecedented in the whole history of film") effectively distances us from the action and prevents us from reacting to it emotionally. In short, this sequence is not meant to be brutal, but it is meant to call our attention to the way bourgeois cinema would make it brutal – and, in so doing, brutalizes us.

As in the "torture" shots, our critical intelligence is alerted to compare the way various cinematic elements are normally used and what effects they produce, with the very different way they are used by Godard and the very different effects they produce in *Vent d'Est*. Or at least that's what *should* happen. But if even people like Glauber Rocha fail to see what Godard is doing and why, then something is wrong somewhere. It would be convenient, of course, to pin the blame on Godard, to say that his experiments with image and sound are just too complex or too cryptic to be understood. But I find this argument much more of an excuse for intellectual laziness than a justified put-down on Godard. His experiments with elements of cinema are not hard to understand; after all, he makes a point of critically calling attention to what he is doing. And all he asks is that the viewer-listener do a little critical thinking of his own instead of merely sitting back and waiting for these emotions to be played with. No, what's wrong, I'm afraid, is not what Godard does with image and sound; it's the way even people who should know better look and listen to those images and sounds. What's wrong is the tremendously strong habit of looking at films in a bourgeois way. What's wrong is that even politically militant films are expected to express their militancy in the same language that bourgeois films use to inculcate the dreams and fantasies of bourgeois capitalism. What's wrong is that even among the world's leading film-makers – and even among those who are seeking a revolutionary transformation of society – not nearly enough thought is given to theoretical questions of the uses and abuses of image and sound, and of the ways to build new relations between them that will no longer exploit the viewer-listener but will instead engage him openly and forthrightly in a lucid dialogue, the other half of which must come from him.

But the way things stand now, the filmgoer rarely seems to look upon the cinema as a dialogue between himself and the film, and he relinquishes all too readily his own active part in that dialogue and hands over the tool of dialogue exclusively to the people in the film. And the more emotionally charged the dialogue in the film, the more the viewer is "moved" by it. In *Vent d'Est*, however, this habitual passivity is challenged from the outset, as Godard gives us an opening shot that arouses our curiosity (a young man and woman are seen lying motionless on the ground, their arms bound together by a heavy chain) but he systematically thwarts our expectations by simply holding the shot *for* nearly eight minutes without any action (the young man does stir enough to gently touch the face of the young woman at one point) and without dialogue. In fact, when the voice-over "commentary" finally breaks in (on the "forest murmurs" we have been hearing), what we get is not dialogue but the critique of dialogue.

Ostensibly talking about strike tactics in some labour dispute, the speaker states at one point that what is needed is dialogue, but that dialogue is usually handed over to a "qualified representative" who translates the demands of the workers into the language of the bosses, and in so doing betrays the people he supposedly represents. This voice-over discussion of the failure of dialogue clearly refers to the bargaining dialogues that go on between labour and capital; and a few minutes later, in the next sequence, there is a demonstration (in the style of a Western movie) of the way the "qualified representative" (the union delegate) distorts the real demands of the workers (for revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system which exploits them) by translating those demands into terms the bosses can deal with (higher wages, shorter hours, better working conditions etc.). But in a strange and insightful way, this discussion of the failure of dialogue in the hands of a "qualified representative" also refers to the failure of dialogue within the "bourgeois concept of representation" in the cinema.

"What is needed is dialogue": this statement in the voice-over "commentary" seems to echo our own thoughts as we watch this exasperatingly long, static, and dialogue-less shot. We are impatient to "get into the movie", we are impatient to get on with plot. We wonder why the young couple is lying on the ground and why they are chained together. We wish they would at least regain consciousness enough to start talking to each other so that we could find out, from their dialogue, what is happening – that is, what is happening to *them*. As usual, in the cinema we don't ask ourselves what is happening to us. We don't ask ourselves why a film addresses us in this particular way or that. In fact, we rarely

think of a film as addressing us, or, for that matter, anyone at all. We sit back and accept the tacit understanding that a film is a "reflection of reality" captured in the mirror of that magical "eye of God" that is a movie camera. We sit back passively and wait for a film to lead us by the hand or, more literally, by the heart.

We relinquish our dialogue with the film; and when this happens the film no longer speaks with us, or even to us, but instead speaks *for* us, in our place. And in bourgeois capitalist society, film (like television) speaks the language of big business, which seeks constantly to shove more goods down our gullets, to get us to like being force-fed, to get us desire the very state of affairs which perpetuates our exploited and alienated condition. In letting a film speak for us, we allow our real needs to be distorted into the ersatz needs big business wants us to have. We are accomplices in your betrayal.

What is to be done, then, to get us out of this deplorable situation? As the voice-over speaker in *Vent d'Est* puts it: "Today the question 'what is to be done?' is urgently asked of militant film-makers. It is no longer a question of what path to take; it is a question of what one should do practically on a path that the history of revolutionary struggles has helped us to recognise. To make a film, for example, is to ask oneself the question 'where do we stand'. And what does this question mean for a militant film-maker? It means, first but not exclusively, opening a parenthesis in which we ask ourselves what the history of revolutionary cinema can teach us".

There then follows a most interesting rundown on some of the high points and weak spots of what could be qualified as revolutionary cinema - beginning with the young Eisenstein's admiration for D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. Certainly Griffith was a decisive influence on Eisenstein; and, through Eisenstein, on the first great chapter of revolutionary cinema - the Russian silent film. But the "commentator" in *Vent d'Est* asserts that from a revolutionary standpoint this borrowing of technique from the expressive arsenal of a "North American imperialist" (Griffith) eventually did more harm than good, and represents a defeat in the history of revolutionary cinema. As a consequence of this initial ideological error, it is affirmed, Eisenstein confused primary and secondary tasks, and instead of glorifying the struggles of the present, glorified the historic revolt of the sailors of the Battleship *Potemkin*. As a second consequence, in 1929, when he made *The General Line* (also called *The Old and the New*), Eisenstein managed to find new ways of expressing czarist repression, but could only utilize the same old forms to express the process of collectivization and agrarian reform. In his case, it is asserted, the "old" ultimately won out

over the "new" – and, as a consequence, Hollywood found no difficulty in hiring Eisenstein to film revolution in Mexico, while at the same time in Berlin, Dr. Goebbels asked Leni Riefenstahl to make "a Nazi *Potemkin*".

All of this may sound somewhat heretical and perhaps arbitrary, but there is actually a very perceptive argument here if one follows it closely. The same techniques that Griffith used to glorify in retrospect the old racist cause of the Southern whites in the American Civil War were taken over and developed by Eisenstein to glorify in retrospect an already twenty-year-old episode (the mutiny of the Battleship *Potemkin* took place in 1905) – and not a particularly important one at that – in the history of the Russian Revolution. Later, when confronted with the task of dealing with issues of contemporary urgency (collectivization), Eisenstein could only trot out the same – now somewhat older – techniques. Later still, those same techniques were perfectly compatible with the propaganda of the Nazis; and Eisenstein himself was not altogether unjustifiably considered to be "co-optable" by Hollywood.

The problem is that the cinematic forms which Eisenstein inherited from Griffith, and which he then developed, were not sufficiently flexible to deal with the complexities of the ongoing present, but were very well suited to emotionalized, reconstituted documentaries of past history. Moreover, precisely because they emphasized the emotional, "lived", "you are there" aspect of history, it was all too easy for these cinematic forms to be used to stir up people's emotional involvement in even such aberrant doctrines as Hitler's "racial purity" and blind obedience to the Führer.

Next in line for critical scrutiny is Dziga Vertov, in whose name Godard founded his militant film-makers' collective. Vertov is credited with achieving a victory for revolutionary cinema when he declared that "there is no cinema which stands above class, no cinema which stands above class struggle", and that "cinema is only a secondary task in the world struggle for revolutionary liberation". But Vertov is faulted for having forgotten that, in the words of Lenin, "politics commands the economy" – with the result that his film *The Eleventh Year* does not sing the praises of 11 years of sound political leadership at the hands of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but glorifies instead Russia's surging economy and developing industry in exactly the same emotional terms that capitalist propaganda uses to glorify its own economic growth. "It is at this point", *Vent d'Est's* commentator asserts, "that revisionism invaded the Soviet movie screens once and for all".

Next in the rundown of revolutionary cinema is the "false victory" of the early 1960's, when progressive African governments, having achieved their

revolution and kicked out the imperialists, "let them back through the window of the movie camera" by turning over the production of films to the old European and American movie industry – "thereby giving white Christians the right to speak on behalf of blacks and Arabs". Finally, a victory is claimed for revolutionary cinema in the recent report of Comrade Kiang Tsing³ (wife of Mao), in which the theory of "the royal road of realism" was denounced, along with a denunciation of most of the canons of the old Stalinist "socialist-realism" aesthetics.

Throughout this brief "bird's-eye view" of revolutionary cinema there runs the unifying thread of the necessity of thinking through very thoroughly the theoretical foundations of one's cinematic *praxis*. If we (along with Godard) can learn anything from the history of revolutionary cinema, it is clearly that constant self-critical vigilance is necessary if a film-maker is to avoid playing unwittingly into the hands of the opposition. And if a film-maker's commitment to revolutionary liberation is more than just an emotional identification with the oppressed, then his cinematic practice must address itself to more than just the emotions and identification-projection mechanisms of the audience. If he is firmly convinced (as Godard is) that the process of revolutionary liberation involves far more than just the revenge of the persecuted, and that it offers the concrete possibility of putting an end to persecution (in other words, of creating an objectively more *just* society in which the free development of the individual works for rather than against the free development of his fellow man), then it is the film-maker's urgent task to create cinematic forms which, themselves, work for rather than against the free development of the spectator, forms which do not manipulate his emotions or his unconscious but which provide him with analytical tool to utilise in dealing with the complexity of the present.

And self-criticism is an integral part of Godard's analytical cinema, as witnessed by the fact that the second half of *Vent d'Est* is given over to his critique of his own previous efforts at revolutionary film-making. The first and most serious criticism he brings forth is his own previous lack (and present insufficiency) of contact with the masses. (Since he began working collectively with the "Dziga Vertov Group" after May 1968, Godard has made increasingly frequent and fruitful contacts with militant workers' groups, especially at Issy-les-Moulineaux, outside Paris.) Second, he criticises the "bourgeois-

(3) See "Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Art on the Armed Forces with which Lin Piao Entrusted Comrade Kiang Tsing", Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1968.

sociology” approach to cinema, in which the film-maker shows the misery of the masses but does not show their struggles. (While this criticism is made in the commentary, we see a number of shots of shantytown houses and modern high-rise apartment buildings like the ones Godard photographed for *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* – which film he has referred to as “a sociological essay”.) The trouble with this approach – as well as with *cinéma vérité* – it is asserted, is that by not showing the struggles of the masses one weakens their ability to struggle; and the implication is that the cinematic image of their misery simply reinforces their own self-image of misery, while the cinematic image of their struggles conversely reinforces their ability to carry on the struggle.

Finally, it is pointed out that contemporary cinema in Russia (“Brezhnev-Mosfilm”) is perfectly interchangeable with contemporary cinema in America (“Nixon-Hollywood”); and, moreover, that the two of them together are perfectly interchangeable with what passes for “progressive” cinema at the avant-garde film festivals throughout Europe. These so-called “liberated” films, it is asserted, are revisionist because they do not question the bourgeois cinema’s relations between image and sound, and because, although they have broken the old bourgeois taboos on sex, drugs, and apocalyptic poetry, they have continued to uphold the most important bourgeois taboo of all – that which prohibits the depicting of the class struggle. (Self-criticism is clearly implicit in this statement too, since the same reproach could be made – and has been made by Godard himself – to all of his own films up to and including *Week-End*.)

But Godard’s self-criticism does not arise out of morbid self-doubt, defeatism, or an urge for self-destruction, as Glauber Rocha argues rather vindictively in his article on *Vent d’Est*. On the contrary, self-criticism plays a large part in Godard’s current cinematic practice (and, for that matter, it always has – at least implicitly) for the simple reason that Godard, along with Mao, considers self-criticism a constructive activity of the highest order. (And in the cinema, as we have seen, this kind of check on the almost unilateral power wielded by the film-maker over his audience is urgently needed.)

Godard’s recent films are politically pointed, to be sure; but although the verbal “commentary” is prominent – if not pre-eminent – the films are not exhortatory. There is nothing demagogic in Godard’s approach either to cinema or to politics. A film like *Vent d’Est* is at the opposite pole in cinematic method from either Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* or Eisenstein’s *Potemkin*. And for that matter, Godard’s *British Sounds*, *Pravda*, and *Vent d’Est* are far removed in

cinematic method from Rocha's *Black God, White Devil*, *Land in Trance*, and *Antonio das Mortes*. There is a strong messianic tone in Rocha's films that is very alien to Godard's way of constructing a film. (It is quite clear, by the way, that Rocha's outstretched arms in *Vent d'Est* – suggesting a parallel between Rocha and Christ – constitutes Godard's ironic comment on the messianic aspects of Rocha's film style.)

And while both Rocha and Godard are committed to the worldwide struggle for revolutionary liberation, they clearly have very divergent opinions about how revolution can develop and how cinema can contribute to that development. Rocha takes the "spontaneous" approach and largely discounts the importance of theoretical concerns, which he considers mere "auxiliaries" to the spontaneous energy of the masses. He has expressed his belief that: "The true revolutionaries in South America are individuals, suffering personalities, who are not involved in theoretical problems... the provocation to violence, the contact with bitter reality that may eventually produce violent change in South America, this upheaval can come only from individual people who have suffered themselves and who have realised that a need for change is present – not for theoretical reasons but because of personal agony".⁴ And Rocha emphasizes his belief that the real strength of the South American masses lies in *mysticism*, in "an emotional, Dionysiac behavior" which he sees as arising from a mixture of Catholicism and African religions. The energy which has its source in mysticism, Rocha argues, is what will ultimately lead the people to resist oppression – and it is this emotional energy Rocha seeks to tap in his films.

Godard, on the other hand, rejects the emotional approach as one which plays into the hand of the enemy and seeks to combat mystification in any form, whether from the right or the left. While there is no indication that Godard underestimates the importance of the agonised personal experience of oppression as a starting-point for the development of revolutionary consciousness, he clearly takes the position that solidly developed organisation on sound theoretical foundations is needed if the revolutionary movement is to advance beyond the stage of abortive, short-lived, "spontaneous" uprisings (like the May 1968 events in France).

And in emphasizing the theoretical struggle, Godard follows in the path of no less a practical revolutionary than Lenin himself, who in his pamphlet entitled *What*

[4] Quoted from "The Way to Make a Future: A Conversation with Glauber Rocha", by Gordon Hitchens. *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1970.

Is To Be Done? (echoes of which abound in *Vent d'Est*), roundly castigated the "cult of spontaneity" and pointed out that "any cult of spontaneity, any weakening of the 'element of lucid awareness'... *signifies in itself – and whether one wants it this way or not is immaterial – a reinforcing of the influence of bourgeois ideology*" (Italics are Lenin's) ⁵. Or, as Lenin puts it a few lines further on: "The problem poses itself in these terms and in no other: bourgeois ideology or socialist ideology. There is no middle ground (for humanity has never set up a 'third' ideology; and, in any case, where society is torn by class struggle, there could never be an ideology above and beyond class)". And, later, "But why – asks the reader – does the spontaneous movement, which tends towards the direction of the least effort, lead precisely to domination by bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that, chronologically, bourgeois ideology is much older than socialist ideology, that it is much more thoroughly elaborated, and that it possesses infinitely more means of diffusion". And, finally, "The greater the spontaneous spirit of the masses, and the more the movement is widespread, then all the more urgent is the necessity of the utmost lucidity in our theoretical work and our organizing". ⁶

Lest anyone be tempted, by the way, to jump to the conclusion (one which Rocha seems to encourage in his article on *Vent d'Est*) that the differences of opinion on revolutionary strategy between Godard and Rocha are simply the result of cultural differences between the European world-view and that of the Third World, it should be pointed out that even in the South American cinema there is nowhere unanimous support for the spontaneous "approach". South American film-makers are increasingly following the lead of Argentine film-maker Fernando Solanas (*La hora de los homos*) in calling for an intensification of the theoretical struggle at the level of ideology.

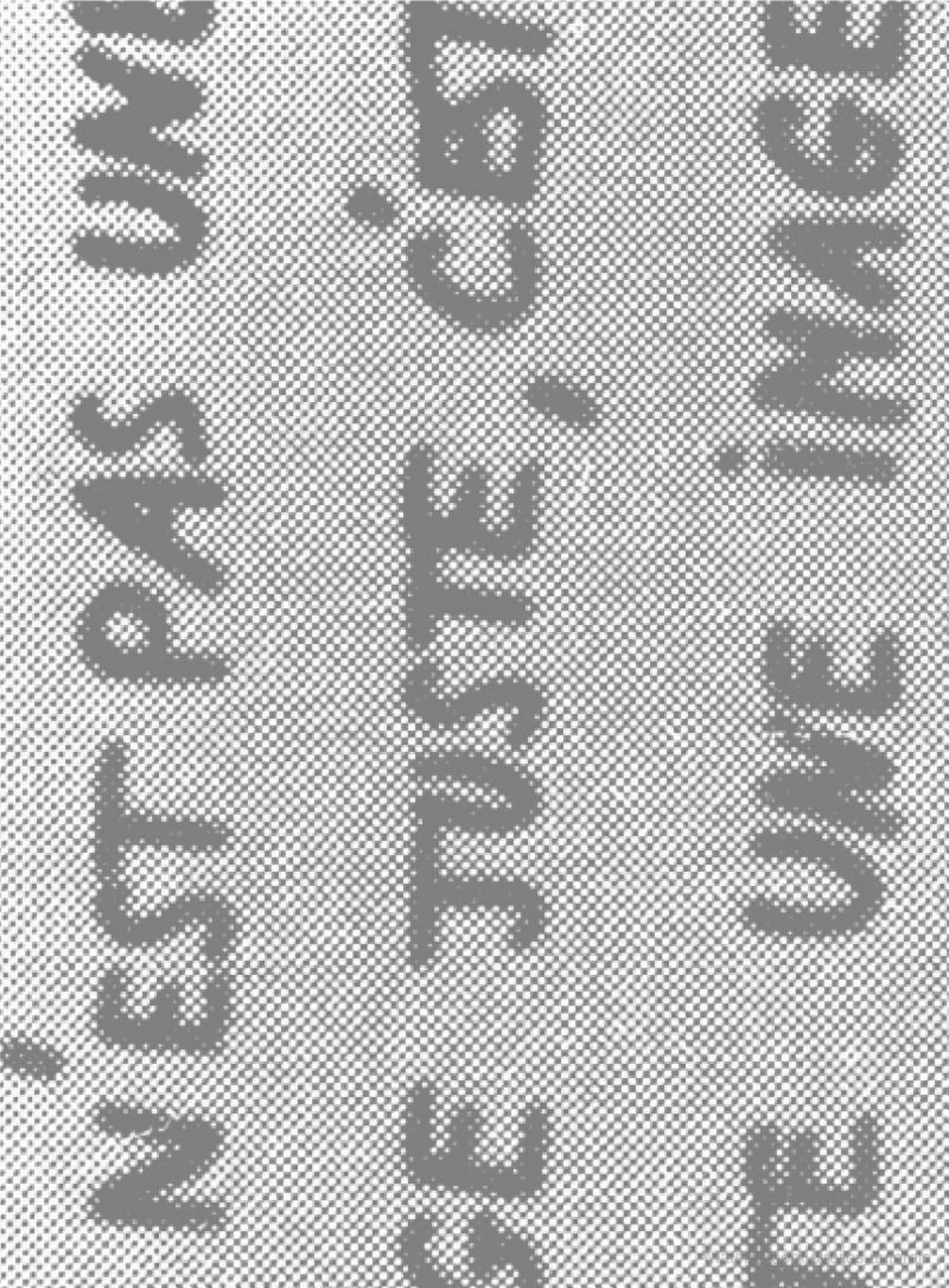
It must be understood, however, that Rocha has a legitimate gripe when he complains of the flood of imitation-Godard monstrosities being turned out by self-

(5) LÉNIN, *Que faire?* Editions Sociales, Paris, 1969. All translations from the French edition are by the present author.

(6) This latter statement comes closest to Lenin's later qualification of the position adopted in *What Is to be Done?* – which position, as he indicated, was a tactical response arising from a concrete analysis of a concrete situation (the 1902 squabbles among diverse factions of the left). Later, when the potential dangers of the spontaneous position were no longer as much of a threat to the revolution, Lenin toned down the attack on spontaneity and called for a more dialectical approach of "organised spontaneity and spontaneous organisation". (For excellent material on this, see the special Lenin-Hegel issue of *Radical America*, September-October, 1970.)

indulgent film students in the Third World and everywhere. But the blame is hardly Godard's. (Does anyone doubt for a moment that these same students would be turning out self-indulgent monstrosities whether Godard existed or not?) Moreover, if there is anything which could effectively combat the sort of mindless self-indulgence which characterizes not only most student films but quite simply most films in general, surely it is very thorough, resolute and self-disciplined *theoretical praxis* embodied by the films of Jean-Luc Godard.

I use the expression *theoretical praxis* quite pointedly, for I want to emphasise that *theory* and *practice* are by no means mutually exclusive. To illustrate what I mean, let us pick up once more the crossroads metaphor. Godard's path – which, as he points out, is simply the path which study of the history of revolutionary cinema has helped him to recognise – is the path of creating the theoretical foundations of revolutionary cinema within the day-to-day practice of making films. The real dilemma for film-makers today is not a choice between theory and practice. The act of making a film necessarily combines both – and this is true whether one makes films in the Third World, in Russia, or the West. In *Vent d'Est*'s “crossroads” sequence, there is even a strong visual suggestion that the three-way intersection is simply the point where two paths – that of the Third World and that of the European woman with a movie-camera has traveled up to this point – converge and join together in what is really one big ongoing path of “aesthetic adventure and philosophical inquiry”; which, by necessity, combines both theory and practice.



James Roy MacBean

Vento do Leste ou Godard e Rocha na encruzilhada

Próximo do meio de *Vento do Leste* (*Vent d'Est*), há uma seqüência na qual o cineasta brasileiro Glauber Rocha tem uma participação breve, porém de simbólica importância. Enquanto Rocha está parado em uma encruzilhada poeirenta, com os braços abertos, uma jovem mulher emerge de um dos caminhos, segurando uma filmadora (e o fato de ela estar evidentemente grávida é, sem dúvida, “fértil” em significado). Ela se volta para Rocha e diz, muito educada: “Desculpe-me por interromper sua luta de classes, mas você poderia me mostrar o caminho que leva ao cinema político?”

Rocha aponta primeiro para frente, depois para trás, e então para a esquerda, e diz: “Aquele é o caminho do cinema da aventura estética e de indagação filosófica, enquanto este é o caminho do cinema de Terceiro Mundo, um cinema perigoso, divino e maravilhoso, em que as perguntas são de cunho prático, como produção, distribuição, treinamento de 300 cineastas para fazer 600 filmes por ano somente no Brasil, abastecer um dos maiores mercados do mundo.”

A mulher começa a traçar o caminho do Terceiro Mundo, quando o inexplicável aparecimento de um balão vermelho parece desencorajá-la a continuar nessa direção. Ela chuta, sem muito entusiasmo, a bola, que mesmo assim volta rolando para onde ela está, como se insistindo em segui-la – como o famoso “balão vermelho” de *Lamorisse*, com o qual guarda alguma semelhança –, e refaz seus passos até Glauber Rocha, que continua plantado na encruzilhada com os braços abertos, como um espantalho ou um Cristo crucificado sem uma cruz. Ela parte mais uma vez, desta vez seguindo a trilha da aventura estética e da indagação filosófica.

Decidi começar minha análise sobre *Vento do Leste* descrevendo esta breve seqüência e sugerindo

alguns de seus divertidos simbolismos por acreditar que sejam de vital importância, não apenas para o entendimento do que Godard está tentando fazer neste filme, mas também para a compreensão da maneira como certas questões de grande importância estão tomando forma na vanguarda do cinema contemporâneo. A presença de Rocha nesta seqüência é particularmente significativa, mas as questões envolvidas certamente vão além de Godard e Rocha – e, em última instância, é bem capaz que o próprio cinema esteja agora em uma encruzilhada crítica.

Para lidar com estas questões e sondar com maior profundidade a significância da seqüência da encruzilhada, acho que o melhor é primeiro tomarmos um breve desvio, explicando um pouco as circunstâncias que levaram a *Vento do Leste* e à associação problemática de Glauber Rocha a este filme, em vários estágios de seu desenvolvimento. Logo após os levantes estudantis ocorridos na França em 1968, Godard contactou um dos líderes militantes desse movimento, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, e sugeriu que os dois colaborassem no projeto de um filme que exploraria o funesto declínio ideológico, moral e social enraizado não apenas na política francesa, mas na situação política do pós-Guerra Fria de forma geral. Godard também aludiu a seu desejo de fazer o filme de tal forma que fossem criados paralelos entre a representatividade de estruturas políticas tradicionais e a representatividade de estruturas tradicionais de filmes, em particular aquelas de padrão ocidental.

Cohn-Bendit concordou, e Godard contactou o produtor italiano Gianni Barcelloni, que já havia trabalhado com diretores como Pasolini e Glauber Rocha, e o jovem cineasta *underground* francês Philippe Garrel. Barcelloni convenceu a Cineriz a lhe dar um adiantamento de cem mil dólares para “um faroeste em cores, a ser roteirizado por Daniel Cohn-Bendit, dirigido por Jean-Luc Godard e estrelado por Gian Maria Volonté”. Aparentemente, o que o produtor e o distribuidor esperavam era algo na linha de um “*Cohn-Bendit le fou*”.

As filmagens foram conduzidas no início do verão de 1969, na Itália. Godard, então comprometido com a criação coletiva, congregou os três membros do seu Grupo Dziga Vertov (que na época em que este texto foi escrito estava reduzido a apenas dois membros – Godard e Jean-Pierre Gorin), sua esposa, a atriz Anne Wiazemsky, diversos atores e técnicos italianos, e uma série de militantes franceses e italianos de diversas inclinações esquerdistas. Cohn-Bendit, que havia discutido a concepção geral do filme com Godard, esteve presente apenas em parte das filmagens, aparentemente discutiu com Godard e Gorin, e não aparece na versão final do filme (como Godard colocou em Berkeley em abril do ano passado, “todos os anarquistas foram para a praia”). Sai Cohn-Bendit. Entra Glauber Rocha.

Em Roma para reuniões com Barcelloni, Rocha encontrou Godard, que, segundo Rocha, sugeriu que os dois deveriam coordenar esforços “para destruir o cinema” – ao que Rocha teria respondido estar em um caminho bem diferente, que seu objetivo era construir o cinema no Brasil e no resto do Terceiro Mundo, lidando com problemas práticos de produção, distribuição etc.

Esta divergência parece ter dado a Godard a idéia de filmar uma seqüência com “Rocha na encruzilhada”, para incluir em *Vento do Leste* como uma maneira de delinear diferentes estratégias revolucionárias. Rocha concordou em representar o papel, mas não sem mostrar relutância em “se juntar à mitologia coletiva da inesquecível Gangue Francesa de Maio”.

De qualquer maneira, a seqüência foi filmada, e Godard e Rocha se despediram amigavelmente, mas, ao que parece, ambos com a sensação de que o outro havia falhado em entender sua posição. Godard se dedicou à edição de *Vento do Leste*, e concluiu o filme no início do inverno. Por acaso, Rocha estava em Roma novamente na época da pré-exibição particular, assistiu ao filme, e se viu – como aconteceu com todos os presentes – de tal forma desnorteado e consternado com o caminho tomado por Godard, que decidiu escrever um artigo sobre o filme para a revista brasileira *Manchete*¹.

No Festival de Cannes, em maio de 1970, *Vento do Leste* teve uma exibição à meia-noite, durante a Quinzena do Diretor. (Godard não queria que o filme fosse apresentado em Cannes; a exibição foi de total responsabilidade do distribuidor.) Algumas poucas pessoas admiraram o filme; a maioria detestou. Idem para a exibição de *Vento do Leste* no New York Festival, em setembro. O mesmo se repetiu algumas semanas mais tarde em Berkeley e San Francisco. Este tipo de reação era mais ou menos esperada sempre que um novo filme de Godard era lançado. Fora do comum e um pouco mais complicada foi a controvérsia sobre se *Vento do Leste* poderia ser considerado um filme “visualmente belo”, e se esta beleza visual seria um atributo ou uma deficiência, considerando-se as metas revolucionárias de Godard.

Muito da controvérsia sobre a qualidade visual do filme pode ter resultado simplesmente do fato de que estavam sendo exibidas tanto versões em 35 mm como em 16 mm do filme; e que, em termos visuais, estas duas versões são bastante diferentes. Apesar de o filme ter sido filmado em 16 mm (inteiramente em áreas externas), a cópia em 35 mm é muito superior, com cores luxuriantes (principalmente os verdes das belas paisagens interioranas da Itália e o vermelho intenso

¹ Vide *Manchete* nº 928 (31 de janeiro de 1970), Rio de Janeiro.

da parede de uma antiga morada rústica, parcialmente em ruínas). A cópia em 16 mm é bastante escura e sombria, com cores muito falsas e melancólicas.

A controvérsia realmente se adensa quando começa o debate sobre os méritos e deméritos relativos à beleza visual (ou de sua ausência) em *Vento do Leste*. Hoje, é até difícil determinar quem disse o que e por quê – e a que cópia se referiam os comentários. Por exemplo, quando o filme estava sendo exibido em Berkeley e San Francisco, alguns críticos fizeram objeções ao “lixo visual”, mencionando que Glauber Rocha supostamente teria criticado o filme por ser “demasiadamente belo”, assim se mantendo no domínio da estética, ao invés de funcionar como um filme politicamente militante. O problema é que a posição de Rocha nunca foi essa. Esta linha de pensamento, enquanto erroneamente atribuída a Rocha, a princípio é aceita por Godard, que, no entanto, rebate afirmando que “se *Vento do Leste* tem algum mérito, é o de não ser, de forma alguma, belo”. Já Rocha, em seu artigo na *Manchete*, ataca *Vento do Leste* não porque o filme se mantém no domínio da estética, mas por acreditar que Godard estivesse tentando destruir a estética. Rocha elogia o filme por sua “beleza desesperada”, mas censura Godard por se sentir tão sem esperanças quanto à utilidade da arte. Rocha lamenta que um artista tão talentoso como Godard (que ele compara a Bach e Michelangelo) não tenha mais fé na arte, procurando, em vez disso, “destruí-la”.

Para Rocha, a presente crise intelectual na Europa Ocidental sobre a utilidade da arte é sem sentido e politicamente negativa. Ele vê o artista europeu – melhor exemplificado por Godard – como tendo se colocado em um beco sem saída, e conclui que, no que diz respeito ao cinema, o Terceiro Mundo pode ser o único lugar onde um artista ainda pode fazer filmes de forma frutífera. Godard, por outro lado, censura Rocha por sua “mentalidade de produtor”, por pensar demais nos chamados termos práticos de produção, distribuição, mercados etc., assim perpetuando as estruturas capitalistas do cinema, levando-as ao Terceiro Mundo – e negligenciando, no processo, questões teóricas urgentes que precisam ser consideradas se o cinema do Terceiro Mundo pretende evitar a simples repetição dos erros ideológicos do cinema ocidental.

Que tipo de erros ideológicos Godard poderia ter em mente? Bem, voltemos à seqüência da encruzilhada em *Vento do Leste*. Se a nossa associação da bola vermelha de plástico com o “balão vermelho” de Lamorisse estiver correta, então esta seqüência pode ser lida assim: o cinema, em um estágio muito fecundo de desenvolvimento criativo, se volta para o Terceiro Mundo procurando aconselhamento e direcionamento quanto à relação adequada entre o cinema e a sociedade (“cinema político”). Recebendo uma resposta de certa forma

equivocada de Glauber Rocha, mas suficientemente impressionado pelo que ele coloca sobre o cinema do Terceiro Mundo (e talvez impressionado pela maneira como ele argumenta – ou melhor, canta – em Português), o cinema toma o caminho do cinema no Terceiro Mundo, para descobrir, alguns passos à frente, que o cinema do Terceiro Mundo está se transformando em uma série de imitações terceiro-mundistas de *O balão vermelho*. Desencorajado, o cinema rapidamente decide que o verdadeiro avanço não está nessa direção, mas sim em prosseguir pelo caminho de aventura estética e questionamento filosófico – um caminho que a mulher resolutamente toma.

Agora surge a pergunta: o que há de errado com *O balão vermelho*? Quais erros ideológicos, inerentes ao cinema ocidental, se manifestam neste filme? A que poderíamos possivelmente nos contrapor na charmosa história sobre um menino francês e um balão vermelho que o segue onde quer que ele vá, como um cachorrinho brincalhão? Podemos também lembrar que André Bazin dedicou um de seus ensaios mais importantes (“Montagem invisível”, no volume I de *O que é o cinema?*) a *O balão vermelho* e a outro curta popular de Lamorisse, *Cin blanc*. O argumento de Bazin, um trampolim para o desenvolvimento de sua estética realista, era que, mesmo em um filme de fantasia tão imaginativa como *O balão vermelho*, era essencial (ontologicamente essencial) manter a fidelidade cinematográfica à realidade, “o simples respeito fotográfico pela unidade espacial”. O fato de ter sido usado um truque para permitir que o balão parecesse seguir o menino não era de importância para Bazin, desde que o truque não fosse uma trucagem – como era, na sua opinião, a montagem. O que importava era simplesmente que tudo o que fosse visto na tela tivesse sido fotografado como realmente aconteceu no tempo e espaço. O que não podíamos ver (como um fio de náilon imperceptível a permitir que Lamorisse controlasse os movimentos do balão) não importava para Bazin, desde que o que nós víssemos tivesse efetivamente acontecido, fosse *pris sur le vif* (capturado ao vivo) pela câmera, não tendo sido adulterado em laboratório ou na moviola.

E Bazin não se importava nem um pouco (na verdade, o conceito se encaixava perfeitamente em seu idealismo humanista burguês) que sua fidelidade à “realidade” servisse como um trampolim para pretensões metafísicas simplistas e moralização sentimental – como, por exemplo, em *O balão vermelho*, em que a luta entre o menino e uma gangue de rua simboliza a luta entre o Bem e o Mal, com o Mal vencendo aqui na Terra e o balão estourando, mas o Bem vencendo em uma outra esfera “mais elevada”, com milhares de outros balões miraculosamente descendendo do firmamento, erguendo o menino e o carregando para o céu.

Para Bazin, conforme revelado por uma leitura cuidadosa, todos os caminhos levam ao céu. A terminologia religiosa que aparece repetidamente em seus escritos certamente não tem nada de coincidência ou mesmo de meramente metafórica. Todo o sistema estético de Bazin se baseia em uma estrutura mística e religiosa (católica) de transcendência. A fiel "reflexão da realidade", na verdade, nada mais é do que um pré-requisito – e em última instância simplesmente um pretexto – para encontrar uma "verdade transcendental" que supostamente existe na realidade e é "miraculosamente" revelada pela câmera. A realidade, se estudarmos Bazin com atenção, rapidamente se despe de sua casca material e é "elevada" a uma esfera puramente metafísica (que poderíamos justificadamente chamar de teológica).

Dada a menor oportunidade (como quando escrevendo sobre *Journal d'un curé de campagne* de Bresson), Bazin chega a revelar o segredo – e seu abuso flagrante do termo "fenomenologia" alcança um pináculo de absurdo em "uma fenomenologia da graça de Deus". Mas mesmo ao escrever sobre um filme como *Tema sem pão*, de Buñuel, que é uma documentação mordaz da condição material de uma população específica (os habitantes do vale de Las Hurdes) em um país específico (Espanha), sob uma coligação específica de classes prevalentes (da burguesia e da Igreja Católica), tudo isso apresentado com amarga ênfase no próprio filme, Bazin ainda consegue varrer a poeira material para debaixo do tapete, tão rapidamente que é difícil saber o que foi visto e escapar de forma imediata para as poeiras mais edificantes do paraíso.

Foi observado² que, em seu artigo sobre *Tema sem pão*, Bazin nem sequer menciona as palavras "classe", "explorada", "rico", "capitalismo", "propriedade", "proletariado", "burguesia", "ordem", "dinheiro", "lucro" etc. E quais são as palavras que encontramos em seu lugar? Expressões grandiosas, conceitos abrangentes e generosos que são a matéria-prima de uma extensa tradição do idealismo humanista burguês – como "consciência", "salvação", "tristeza", "pureza", "integridade", "crueldade objetiva do mundo", "verdade transcendental", "crueldade da condição humana", "infelicidade", "a crueldade na Criação", "destino", "horror", "piedade", "Madona", "miséria humana", "obscenidade cirúrgica", "amor", "dialética pascaliana" (tinha de ser pascaliana!), "toda beleza de uma *Pietà* espanhola", "nobreza e harmonia", "presença do belo no atroz", "um infernal paraíso terrestre" etc. etc.

Enão se trata de um caso único, seja nas escritas de Bazin ou na ideologia burguesa em geral. Quanto mais generosos e gerais os conceitos, mais fácil é cobrir a falta

2 | Vide a interpretação crítica de Gerard Gozlan sobre Bazin em *Positif*, n.ºs. 46 e 47 (junho e julho de 1962).

de uma análise materialista, voltada ao processo da sociedade humana e que, caso ocorresse, revelaria alguns fatos duros e desagradáveis que poderiam fazer as pessoas começarem a se rebelar. Em resumo, a ideologia é pelo menos tão eficiente no que deixa de dizer – naquilo que mantém oculto – quanto no que diz.

Godard lamenta a forma como o cinema, desde seu nascimento, foi desfigurado por uma ideologia capitalista burguesa que permeia suas próprias fundações teóricas, sem jamais ter sido corretamente diagnosticada, e muito menos corrigida. Em *Vento do Leste*, portanto, ele sistematicamente desmonta os elementos tradicionais do cinema burguês – principalmente conforme exemplificado pelo Ocidente – e revela o (por vezes oculto e por vezes escancarado) caráter repressivo que o sustenta.

Godard acusa o cinema burguês de colocar demasiada ênfase nos medos e desejos emocionais mais básicos da audiência, jogando com esses medos e desejos, sacrificando a inteligência crítica do espectador. E Godard tenta combater esta tirania das emoções, não porque seja “contra” emoções e “a favor” da racionalidade, nem tampouco porque se oponha a que as atitudes e ações das pessoas sejam influenciadas por sua experiência artística; muito pelo contrário. Mas por acreditar fortemente que a audiência não deve se deixar explorar, como acontece no cinema burguês, que não deve ser manipulada emocionalmente, mas deve, sim, ser tratada de forma direta e franca, em um diálogo lúcido que evoque todas as suas faculdades humanas.

Hoje, no entanto, cada elemento de um filme burguês é calculado para convidar a audiência a se perder em uma experiência emocional “vivida” de uma chamada “fatia de vida”, em vez de assumir uma atitude crítica, analítica, e, em última instância, política em relação ao que se vê e ao que se ouve. Alguém poderia perguntar: por que a atitude de um indivíduo em relação a um filme deveria ser política? A resposta, obviamente, é que o convite para se perder em emoções ao custo da análise racional já constitui um ato político – implicando em uma atitude política por parte do espectador, sem que este esteja necessariamente ciente disso.

De fato, ao se deixar “tocar” emocionalmente pelo cinema – e até mesmo exigir que o cinema seja emocionalmente tocante – o espectador se coloca à mercê de qualquer um que apareça com dinheiro para investir e que se dê ao trabalho de garantir que a audiência se sinta “tocada”. Mas as pessoas que têm dinheiro suficiente para investir também têm um interesse oculto em assegurar que as audiências sejam tocadas na direção certa, ou seja: em uma direção que perpetue a posição vantajosa do investidor, em um sistema econômico que

permita a existência de enormes desigualdades na distribuição das riquezas. Resumindo, o cinema (bem como a televisão) funciona como uma ferramenta ou arma ideológica, usada pela classe prevalente-proprietária para ampliar o mercado para os sonhos burgueses que vende.

Além disso, como Godard afirma em *Vento do Leste*, o cinema tenta vender os sonhos burgueses como realidade, inclusive jogando com os efeitos de intensificação e enaltecimento cinematográficos, numa tentativa de nos fazer acreditar que os sonhos burgueses que aparecem em nossas telas de cinema são, de alguma maneira, fantásticos, que são não apenas “reais”, mas, de certa forma, “mais reais que a realidade”. No cinema burguês, tudo conspira para este efeito: a linha de atuação é ao mesmo tempo “realista” e fantástica; os cenários são “realistas” (ou, se filmados em locação, simplesmente reais), mas também são cuidadosamente escolhidos por sua beleza e por seu aspecto extraordinário. O mesmo vale para os figurinos, roupas, jóias e maquiagem usados pelos atores e atrizes, que também são cuidadosamente escolhidos por sua beleza e seu aspecto extraordinário. Por fim, até mesmo o som no cinema burguês é usado para nos passar a ilusão de estarmos escutando, às escondidas, um momento de realidade, em que os personagens estão cegos à nossa presença e simplesmente vivendo as emoções de suas “vidas reais”.

Desde *Weekend à francesa*, Godard passou a rejeitar o diálogo convencional do cinema, por achar que ele contribui para esta ilusão mal-direcionada de realidade, tornando ainda mais fácil para a audiência se imaginar ali com as pessoas na tela, presente porém “a salvo”, em uma posição perfeita (a de um bisbilhoteiro, de um *voyeur*) para uma participação vicarial na emoção do momento. Resumindo, o cinema burguês finge ignorar a presença do espectador, finge que o que está sendo dito e feito na tela não é direcionado para o espectador, finge que o cinema é um “reflexo da realidade”; e ao mesmo tempo joga constantemente com as emoções da audiência e capitaliza seus mecanismos de identificação-projeção, a fim de induzi-la, de forma sutil, insidiosa, inconsciente, a participar dos sonhos e fantasias que são vendidos pela sociedade capitalista burguesa.

Existe uma seqüência excelente em *Vento do Leste* na qual Godard demonstra e desmistifica o que acontece por trás da fachada do cinema burguês. A trilha sonora explica que “dentro de alguns segundos você irá ver e ouvir um personagem típico do cinema burguês. Ele está em todos os filmes e sempre faz o papel de um Don Juan. Ele irá descrever a sala em que você está sentado”. Vemos então o *close-up* de um belíssimo jovem ator italiano parado na beirada de um riacho borbulhante, olhando diretamente para a câmera. Atrás dele – mas fotografado de modo que a percepção de profundidade seja muito reduzida

e a imagem, como um todo, seja marcadamente plana – ergue-se o talude gramado e verde da margem oposta do rio.

O jovem fala em italiano, enquanto vozes na trilha sonora nos dão a tradução tanto em francês como em inglês. A tradução, contudo, é em voz indireta. A voz nos informa: “Ele diz que a sala está escura. Vê pessoas sentadas na parte de baixo e também em cima, no balcão. Diz que tem um velho feioso ali, todo encarquilhado; e acolá, ele diz que vê uma garota jovem e bela. Diz que gostaria de dormir com ela. Pede que ela suba na tela com ele. Ele diz que é lindo lá em cima, com o sol brilhando, árvores verdejantes em todas as partes e várias pessoas felizes se divertindo. Ele diz que se você não acredita nele, olhe ...” Neste ponto a câmera move-se subitamente para trás e para cima, mantendo o jovem em foco no canto direito do quadro, enquanto revela no lado esquerdo – que parece estar quase 30 metros abaixo do jovem – uma cena de beleza estonteante, mostrando uma cachoeira que deságua numa piscina natural em um vale estreito e sombreado, onde jovens mergulham e nadam na água límpida.

Trata-se de uma tomada magnífica. A imagem em si é de extrema beleza, e o mais surpreendente é a complexa reestruturação do espaço conseguida através de um simples movimento da câmera. Mas se pararmos para pensar sobre esta seqüência e sobre seu deslumbrante desenlace, percebemos que tudo nela é um engodo calculado, direcionado aos sonhos e fantasias da audiência. O homem é jovem e belo. Quando fala, menospreza a idade e a feiúra, e glorifica a juventude e o *glamour*. O que ele quer é sexo, o que ele oferece é sexo. Na tela, ele nos garante, tudo é belo e as pessoas são felizes.

E esta súbita reestruturação do espaço nos convida, literalmente e por si só, para dentro da imagem. Como acontece geralmente no cinema burguês, o mundo capitalista burguês é apresentado como sendo de grande profundidade, de uma riqueza inexaurível, e infinitamente convidativo. E a predileção do cinema burguês por uma fotografia com grande profundidade de campo (vide Bazin) enfatiza a ilusão de que “você está na tela”, e portanto mascara sua própria presença (e o ato de apresentar esta imagem) atrás de uma falsa modestia calculada, que se oculta para fazer o cinema parecer ser o humilde servo da realidade, ao invés do que é na realidade: o criado bajulador e arrogante da classe prevalente. O cinema burguês flerta com o espectador, adulator e lisonjeiro, para que ele suba à tela e se junte às “pessoas belas” para um pouco de sexo e lazer em um lugar idílico. E o seu grande trunfo é a estonteante capacidade de oferecer emoções visuais excitantes.

Isto mais uma vez levanta o problema da beleza visual no cinema político; mas também demonstra como Godard usa esta beleza de novas maneiras, que servem para

desmistificar seus usos antigos no cinema burguês (e nos tornar menos vulneráveis a eles). Afinal, se a beleza (como a linguagem) é uma das armas que a classe prevalente usa para nos acalmar e nos “manter em nossos devidos lugares”, então uma de nossas tarefas seria voltar essa mesma arma contra nossos opressores. Uma forma de fazer isso seria desmistificar a beleza e mostrar como ela é usada contra nós; outra maneira seria efetivar uma “transvaloração de valores”, fazemos do conceito burguês de beleza um vício, ao mesmo tempo tomando um conceito diferente de beleza em uma virtude (por exemplo, “Black is beautiful”) que a burguesia será incapaz de reconhecer ou aceitar. Em seus filmes desde *Weekend à francesa*, Godard utiliza ambas as táticas. Seus filmes agora têm um visual bastante diferente, que muitos não conseguem considerar “belo”, e sempre existe algum elemento cinematográfico ou uma justaposição de elementos que chama atenção para como esta “beleza” é conseguida e como é usada como arma ideológica.

Sejam quais forem os prós e contras no que diz respeito à “beleza” em um filme militante, certamente não faz sentido criticar o uso que Godard faz da beleza visual em *Vento do Leste* sem antes compreender como e por que ele a usa – ou, pior ainda, criticá-lo por tentar “tocar” as pessoas emocionalmente, como faz o cinema burguês, mas sem ter sucesso nessa tentativa, já que as suas imagens são de uma beleza extremamente formal e austera, provocando de alguma forma uma sensação de desligamento, em vez de atuar como um estimulante. Inexplicavelmente, é exatamente isto que Glauber Rocha parece fazer quando, em seu artigo na revista *Manchete*, critica a cena do “oficial da cavalaria americana” atacando a garota militante (Anne Wiazemsky) por não ser, na verdade, nem um pouco assustadora, mas apenas bela. O que Rocha parece não perceber é que Godard não quer que a cena seja assustadora: ele a torna bela precisamente para garantir que não seja assustadora. Enquanto o oficial (Gian Maria Volonté) torce o pescoço da garota e grita com ela, alguém fora da tela atira neles uma espessa tinta vermelha que gruda nos cabelos castanhos dela e respinga na jaqueta azul-marinho do oficial. O efeito visual, com sua rica interação de cores e texturas, é impressionante, e serve para nos distanciar da ação e da emoção que a cena de outra forma poderia provocar.

Alguns momentos depois, Godard nos mostra outra cena similar, só que desta vez tratada no estilo mais emotivo do cinema burguês. Em vez de filmar por trás do ombro direito da garota, como na cena anterior de “tortura” (com o torturado e a vítima face a face, mas apenas o rosto do torturador visível para a audiência), Godard agora posiciona o torturador segurando a garota por trás. Assim a cena pode ser filmada de modo a revelar os rostos de ambos em um *close-up* frontal,

quando o “comentário” em voz *over* finalmente começa (sobre os “murmúrios da floresta” que ouvimos), o que temos não é um diálogo, mas uma crítica de diálogo.

Ostensivamente falando sobre táticas de greve em alguma disputa trabalhista, a narradora afirma em certo momento que é o diálogo que é necessário, mas este diálogo normalmente é cedido a um “representante qualificado”, que traduz as exigências dos trabalhadores na linguagem dos chefes e, ao fazer isso, trai as pessoas que supostamente representa. Esta discussão em voz *over* sobre a derrota do diálogo se refere claramente aos diálogos de barganha que ocorrem entre a mão-de-obra e o capital, e alguns minutos mais tarde, na próxima seqüência, ocorre uma demonstração (no estilo de um faroeste) da maneira como o “representante qualificado” (o representante do sindicato) distorce as exigências reais dos trabalhadores (para a subversão revolucionária do sistema capitalista que os explora), traduzindo tais exigências em termos com os quais os patrões consigam lidar (salários mais altos, menos horas, melhores condições de trabalho etc.). De uma maneira estranha e criteriosa, no entanto, esta discussão do fracasso do diálogo nas mãos de um “representante qualificado” também se refere ao fracasso do diálogo contido no “conceito de representação burguês” do cinema.

“O que precisamos é de diálogo” – esta declaração no “comentário” em voz *over* parece ecoar nossos próprios pensamentos conforme assistimos essa cena de extensão exasperante, estática e sem diálogo. Estamos impacientes para “começar o filme”, impacientes para o desenrolar do enredo. Imaginamos por que o jovem casal está deitado no chão e por que estão acorrentados um ao outro. Desejamos que eles ao menos recobrem a consciência o suficiente para começar uma conversa, para que possamos descobrir, através de seu diálogo, o que está acontecendo – ou seja, o que está acontecendo com eles. Como é normal, no cinema não nos perguntamos o que está acontecendo conosco. Não nos perguntamos por que um filme nos trata de uma certa maneira. Na verdade, raramente pensamos que o filme se dirija a nós, ou, na verdade, a qualquer pessoa. Nós nos sentamos e aceitamos o acordo tácito de que um filme é um “reflexo da realidade”, capturado no espelho daquele mágico “olho de Deus” que é a câmera cinematográfica. Sentamo-nos passivamente e esperamos que o filme nos leve pela mão, ou, mais literalmente, pelo coração.

Abrimos mão do nosso diálogo com o filme; e quando isso acontece, o filme deixa de falar conosco, ou mesmo para nós, passando a falar por nós, em nosso lugar. E na sociedade capitalista burguesa, os filmes (como a televisão) falam a língua das grandes empresas, que buscam constantemente nos forçar mais bens goela

abaixo, fazendo com que gostemos de ser alimentados à força, fazendo com que desejemos o próprio estado que perpetua nossa condição explorada e alienada. Ao deixar um filme falar por nós, permitimos que nossas necessidades reais sejam distorcidas nas necessidades artificiais que as grandes empresas querem que tenhamos. Somos cúmplices em nossa traição.

O que deve ser feito, então, para nos tirar desta situação deplorável? Como a narradora em voz *over* coloca em *Vento do Leste*: “Hoje a pergunta ‘o que se deve fazer?’ é feita com urgência para cineastas militantes. Não se trata mais da questão de qual caminho tomar; é a questão de o que devemos fazer em termos práticos num caminho que a história de lutas revolucionárias nos ajudou a reconhecer. Fazer um filme, por exemplo, é perguntar-se: ‘qual é a nossa posição?’. E o que esta questão significa para um cineasta militante? Significa, primeiro, mas não exclusivamente, abrir um parêntese no qual nos perguntamos o que a história do cinema revolucionário pode nos ensinar”.

Segue então um breve histórico sobre alguns dos altos e baixos do que poderíamos qualificar como cinema revolucionário, começando com a admiração do jovem Eisenstein por *Intolerância*, de D. W. Griffith. Griffith certamente foi uma influência decisiva para Eisenstein e, através de Eisenstein, para o primeiro grande capítulo do cinema revolucionário: o filme mudo russo. Mas a comentarista em *Vento do Leste* afirma que, de um ponto de vista revolucionário, este empréstimo da técnica do expressivo arsenal de um “imperialista norte-americano” (Griffith) no fim fez mais mal do que bem, representando uma derrota na história do cinema revolucionário. Como consequência deste erro ideológico inicial, afirma, Eisenstein confundiu tarefas primárias e secundárias e, em vez de glorificar os conflitos do presente, glorificou a revolta histórica dos marinheiros do encouraçado *Potemkin*. Como uma segunda consequência, em 1929, quando fez *A linha geral* (também conhecido como *O velho e o novo*), Eisenstein conseguiu achar novas maneiras de expressar a repressão czarista, mas somente através da utilização das mesmas velhas formas para expressar o processo de coletivização e reforma agrária. Neste caso, afirma, em última instância, o “velho” venceu o “novo” – e, assim, Hollywood não teve problemas em contratar Eisenstein para filmar a revolução no México, enquanto ao mesmo tempo, em Berlim, o doutor Goebbels pedia que Leni Riefenstahl fizesse “um *Potemkin* nazista”.

Tudo isso pode soar um pouco herético e talvez arbitrário, mas, na verdade, temos aqui um argumento bastante perceptivo, se acompanhado atentamente. As mesmas técnicas que Griffith usou para glorificar, em retrospecto, a antiga causa racista dos brancos sulistas na Guerra Civil Americana foram retomadas e

desenvolvidas por Eisenstein para glorificar, em retrospecto, um episódio que já datava 20 anos (o motim no encouraçado *Potemkin* ocorreu em 1905) e que nem sequer era um episódio particularmente importante na história da Revolução Russa. Mais tarde, quando confrontado com a tarefa de lidar com questões de urgência contemporânea (coletivização), Eisenstein somente foi capaz de se valer das mesmas velhas técnicas, então ainda mais velhas. E, mais adiante, estas mesmas técnicas se mostraram perfeitamente compatíveis com a propaganda dos nazistas: o próprio Eisenstein foi considerado, não de forma totalmente injustificada, como sendo “cooptável” por Hollywood.

O problema é que as formas cinematográficas que Eisenstein herdou de Griffith e então desenvolveu não eram suficientemente flexíveis para lidar com as complexidades dos acontecimentos do presente, mas eram bastante adequadas para documentários emocionalísticos e reconstituídos da história passada. Além disso, precisamente por enfatizarem o aspecto emocional da história “vívda”, do tipo “você estava lá”, era muito fácil usar tais formas cinematográficas para incitar o envolvimento emocional das pessoas, até mesmo em doutrinas tão aberrantes como as da “pureza racial” e da obediência cega ao *Führer*, de Hitler.

O próximo a ser submetido a um escrutínio crítico é Dziga Vertov, em cujo nome Godard fundou sua cooperativa de cineastas militantes. Vertov leva o crédito de alcançar uma vitória para o cinema revolucionário ao declarar que “não existe um cinema que se posicione acima das classes, um cinema que se posicione acima da luta de classes” e que “o cinema é apenas uma tarefa secundária na luta mundial pela liberação revolucionária”. Mas Vertov falha por esquecer que, nas palavras de Lenin, “a política comanda a economia”. Como resultado, seu filme *O décimo primeiro ano* não exalta os 11 anos de sólida liderança política nas mãos da ditadura do proletariado, glorificando, em vez disso, a economia emergente e a indústria em rápido desenvolvimento da Rússia, exatamente nos mesmos termos emocionais que a propaganda capitalista usa para aclamar seu próprio crescimento econômico. “Foi nesse momento”, afirma a comentadora de *Vento do Leste*, “que o revisionismo invadiu as telas de cinema soviéticas de uma vez por todas”.

Próxima no resumo do cinema revolucionário está a “falsa vitória” do início da década de 1960, quando governos progressistas africanos, tendo conseguido sua revolução e expulsado os imperialistas, “os deixam voltar, entrando através da janela de uma câmera de vídeo”, entregando a produção de filmes para a velha indústria de cinema européia e americana – “assim dando a cristãos brancos o direito de falar em nome de negros e árabes”. Finalmente, uma vitória pode ser reivindicada para o cinema revolucionário no recente relatório da camarada

Kiang Tsing³ (esposa de Mao), no qual foi denunciada a teoria da “estrada real do realismo”, juntamente com uma denúncia da maioria dos cânones das antigas estéticas stalinistas do “realismo socialista”.

Por toda esta breve visão geral do cinema revolucionário corre o fio unificador da necessidade de se pensar de forma completa sobre as fundações teóricas da práxis do cinema. Se existe algo que nós (juntamente com Godard) podemos apreender com a história do cinema revolucionário, é que se um cineasta pretende evitar favorecer inadvertidamente os opressores, uma vigilância autocrítica constante é claramente necessária. E se o compromisso de um cineasta com a liberação revolucionária é mais que uma mera identificação emocional com o oprimido, então sua prática cinematográfica deve ir além das emoções e dos mecanismos de identificação-projeção da audiência. Além do mais, se ele está firmemente convencido (como é o caso de Godard) que o processo de liberação revolucionária envolve muito mais que a simples vingança do oprimido e oferece a possibilidade concreta de colocar um fim em toda perseguição (em outras palavras, de criar uma sociedade mais justa, na qual o livre desenvolvimento do indivíduo trabalha em prol ao invés de contra o livre desenvolvimento do próximo), então a tarefa urgente do cineasta é criar formas cinematográficas que trabalhem, elas mesmas, em prol e não contra o livre desenvolvimento do espectador, formas que não manipulem suas emoções ou seu inconsciente, mas que forneçam uma ferramenta analítica a ser utilizada para lidar com a complexidade do presente.

E a autocrítica é parte integrante do cinema analítico de Godard, conforme testemunhado pelo fato de a segunda metade de *Vento do Leste* se dedicar a uma crítica dos seus próprios trabalhos anteriores. A primeira e mais séria crítica apresentada é sobre sua própria falta de contato anterior (e presente insuficiência) com as massas. (Desde que começou a trabalhar coletivamente com o Grupo Dziga Vertov, depois de maio de 1968, Godard vinha tendo contato cada vez mais freqüente e produtivo com grupos de trabalhadores militantes, em particular em Issy-les-Moulineaux, nos arredores de Paris.) Em segundo lugar, ele critica a abordagem de “sociologia burguesa” no cinema, na qual o cineasta mostra a miséria das massas mas não mostra suas lutas. (Enquanto esta crítica é feita no comentário, vemos uma série de tomadas de casas de favela e

[3] Vide “Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Art on the Armed Forces with which Lin Piao Entrusted Comrade Kiang Tsing” (“Sumário do fórum sobre o trabalho em Literatura e Arte nas Forças Armadas que Lin Piao confiou à camarada Kiang Tsing”), Foreign Language Press, Pequim, 1968.

modernos prédios altos de apartamentos, como aqueles que Godard fotografou para *Duas ou três coisas que eu sei dela*, filme ao qual ele se referiu como sendo “um ensaio sociológico”.) O problema com esta abordagem, bem como com o cinema-verdade, afirma, é que, ao não mostrar as lutas das massas, a sua capacidade de lutar enfraquece; e a implicação é que a imagem de sua miséria no cinema simplesmente reforça sua própria auto-imagem de miséria, enquanto, por outro lado, a imagem de suas lutas no cinema reforça sua capacidade de continuar a lutar.

Finalmente, aponta que o cinema contemporâneo na Rússia (“Brezhnev-Mosfilm”) é perfeitamente intercambiável com o cinema contemporâneo nos EUA (“Nixon-Paramount”); e que os dois juntos são perfeitamente intercambiáveis com o que se passa por cinema “progressivo” em festivais de filmes de vanguarda em toda Europa. Estes chamados filmes “independentes”, afirma, são revisionistas porque não questionam as relações entre imagem e som no cinema burguês, e porque, apesar de terem quebrado os velhos tabus burgueses de sexo, drogas e poesia apocalíptica, continuam a sustentar o mais importante de todos os tabus burgueses – aquele que proíbe a representação da luta de classes. (A autocrítica também está claramente implícita nesta declaração, já que a mesma abordagem poderia ser usada – e foi, pelo próprio Godard – em todos os seus próprios filmes inclusive, *Weekend à francesa*.)

Mas a autocrítica de Godard não emerge de uma autodúvida mórbida, de derrotismo, ou de um desejo de autodestruição, como Glauber Rocha argumenta de forma deveras vingativa em seu artigo sobre *Vento do Leste*. Pelo contrário, a autocrítica tem um papel importante na atual prática do cinema de Godard (e, na verdade, sempre teve – ao menos de forma implícita), pela simples razão que Godard, como Mao, considera a autocrítica uma atividade construtiva da maior importância. (E, no cinema, como já vimos, urge este tipo de verificação sobre o poder quase unilateral exercido pelo cineasta sobre sua audiência.)

Os filmes recentes de Godard são certamente politicamente penetrantes; mas apesar do “comentário” verbal ser proeminente – se não preeminente – os filmes não são exortatórios. Não há nada de demagógico na abordagem de Godard, seja do cinema ou da política. Em termos de método cinematográfico, *Vento do Leste* é o pólo oposto de filmes como *O triunfo da vontade*, de Riefenstahl, ou *Encouraçado Potemkin*, de Eisenstein. E, de fato, *Sons britânicos*, *Pravda*, e *Vento do Leste* de Godard são muito distantes em termos de método cinematográfico de *Deus e o Diabo na terra do sol*, *Terra em transe*, e *O dragão da maldade contra o santo guerreiro*, de Glauber Rocha. Existe um forte tom messiânico nos filmes de Rocha, que é bastante discrepante da maneira de Godard construir um filme. (É bem

claro, aliás, que os braços abertos de Rocha em *Vento do Leste* – sugerindo um paralelo entre Rocha e Cristo – constituem um comentário irônico de Godard sobre os aspectos messiânicos do estilo dos filmes de Rocha.)

Embora tanto Rocha como Godard estejam comprometidos com a luta global pela liberação revolucionária, suas divergências sobre como a revolução pode se desenvolver e como o cinema pode contribuir para este desenvolvimento são claras. Rocha adota a abordagem espontânea que desconsidera quase totalmente a importância de preocupações teóricas, as quais ele concebe como meros “auxiliares” à energia espontânea das massas. Ele expressou sua crença de que “os verdadeiros revolucionários na América do Sul são indivíduos, personalidades em sofrimento – não envolvidos em problemas teóricos... a provocação à violência, o contato com a amarga realidade que pode produzir uma mudança violenta na América do Sul, este levante apenas pode vir de indivíduos que tenham passado por um sofrimento pessoal, e tenham percebido que a necessidade de mudar está presente – não por razões teóricas, mas por questões de agonia pessoal”.⁴ E Rocha enfatiza sua crença de que a verdadeira força das massas sul-americanas está no misticismo, em “um comportamento emocional, dionisíaco”, que para ele surge de uma mistura de catolicismo e religiões africanas. A energia que tem sua fonte no misticismo, segundo Rocha, é o que, em última instância, levará as pessoas a resistir à opressão – e é esta energia emocional que Rocha busca fazer fluir em seus filmes.

Godard, por outro lado, rejeita a abordagem emocional por ela favorecer o inimigo e busca combater a mistificação em qualquer forma, venha ela da direita ou da esquerda. Embora não haja indicação de que Godard subestime a importância da experiência pessoal agoniada da opressão como um ponto de partida para o desenvolvimento de uma conscientização revolucionária, ele assume a posição clara de que existe a necessidade premente de uma organização firmemente desenvolvida sobre sólidas fundações teóricas, caso o movimento revolucionário pretenda avançar além do estágio de levantes abortivos, de curta duração, “espontâneos” (como os eventos de maio de 1968 na França).

Ao enfatizar a luta teórica, Godard segue no caminho de um revolucionário nada menos prático que o próprio Lenin, que, em seu panfleto intitulado *Que fazer?* (do qual abundam ecos em *Vento do Leste*), denuncia o “culto da espontaneidade” e aponta que “qualquer culto à espontaneidade, qualquer

⁴ Gordon HITCHENS, *The Way to Make a Future: A Conversation with Glauber Rocha*. *Film Quarterly*, outono de 1970.

enfraquecimento do 'elemento de conscientização lúcida'... *significa por si só – e o fato de se desejar que seja assim ou não é secundário – um reforço da influência da ideologia burguesa*" (itálicos do próprio Lenin).⁵ Ou, como Lenin coloca algumas linhas adiante, "o problema se coloca nestes termos e em nenhum outro: a ideologia burguesa ou a ideologia socialista. Não há um meio termo (pois a humanidade nunca estabeleceu uma 'terceira' ideologia; de qualquer forma, em uma sociedade dividida por uma luta de classes nunca poderia haver uma ideologia acima e além das classes)". E, mais tarde, "mas por que, pergunta o leitor, o movimento espontâneo, que tende na direção do mínimo esforço, leva exatamente à dominação pela ideologia burguesa? Pela simples razão que, cronologicamente, a ideologia burguesa é muito mais antiga que a ideologia socialista, é muito mais elaborada, possuindo um número infinitamente maior de meios de difusão". E, por fim: "Quanto maior o espírito espontâneo das massas, e quanto mais o movimento se espalhar, maior a urgência da necessidade da mais completa lucidez em nosso trabalho teórico, em nosso trabalho político e em nossa organização".⁶

Para que ninguém se sinta tentado, contudo, a tirar conclusões precipitadas (que Rocha parece encorajar em seu artigo sobre *Vento do Leste*), considerando que as diferenças de opinião sobre estratégia revolucionária de Godard e Rocha são simplesmente o resultado de diferenças culturais entre a situação européia e aquela do Terceiro Mundo, devemos apontar que mesmo no cinema da América Latina não há, em parte alguma, suporte unânime para a "abordagem" espontânea. Cineastas sul-americanos estão cada vez mais seguindo os passos do cineasta argentino Fernando Solanas (*La hora de los hombres*), clamando por uma intensificação da luta teórica organizada e lúcida em nível ideológico.

Deve ser entendido, contudo, que Rocha tem um domínio legítimo quando reclama da inundação de imitações monstruosas de Godard, apresentadas por alunos de cinema comodistas no Terceiro Mundo e em outras partes. Mas Godard não pode ser culpado por isso. (Alguém acredita, por um único instante, que estes

(5) LENIN, *Que faire?* Editions Sociales, Paris, 1969. Todas as traduções da edição francesa foram feitas pelo autor.

(6) Esta última afirmação se aproxima mais da qualificação posterior de Lenin da posição adotada em *Que fazer?* – posição, conforme ele indicou, que representa uma resposta tática emergindo da análise concreta de uma situação concreta (as disputas de 1902 entre diversas facções esquerdistas). Mais tarde, quando os perigos potenciais da posição espontânea não representavam mais uma ameaça tão grande à revolução, Lenin abrandou os ataques à espontaneidade e pediu uma abordagem mais dialética da "espontaneidade organizada e organização espontânea". (Para maiores informações a este respeito, vide a excelente edição especial sobre Lenin-Hegel de *Radical America*, setembro-outubro de 1970).

mesmos alunos não estariam comodamente criando monstruosidades caso Godard não existisse?) Além do mais, se existe algo que pode combater com eficácia o tipo de comodismo impensado que caracteriza não apenas a maioria dos filmes de estudantes de cinema, mas simplesmente a maioria dos filmes em geral, certamente é a práxis teórica extremamente completa, resoluta e autodisciplinada personificada pelos filmes de Jean-Luc Godard.

Uso a expressão “práxis teórica” de forma bastante propositada, já que quero enfatizar que teoria e prática não são, de forma alguma, mutuamente exclusivas. A fim de ilustrar o que eu quero dizer, voltemos mais uma vez para a metáfora da encruzilhada. O caminho de Godard – que, como ele aponta, nada mais é do que o caminho que o estudo da história do cinema revolucionário o ajudou a reconhecer – é o da criação das fundações teóricas do cinema revolucionário dentro da prática cotidiana de se fazer filmes. O verdadeiro dilema para os cineastas de hoje não é uma escolha entre a teoria e a prática. O ato de fazer um filme necessariamente combina ambos – e isso é verdadeiro para um filme no Terceiro Mundo, na Rússia ou no Ocidente.

Na seqüência da encruzilhada em *Vento do Leste*, temos até uma forte sugestão visual de que a intersecção de três vias é simplesmente o ponto onde dois caminhos – aquele do Terceiro Mundo e aquele que a mulher européia traçou até agora – convergem e se unem no que não passa de um grande caminho contínuo de “aventura estética e indagação filosófica”, que combina, necessariamente, tanto a teoria como a prática.

José Carlos Avellar

Vento, barravento

[Glauber and Godard at the gates of the Lumière factory]

The title of the film, as it appears on the screen, is a mixture of Italian and French: *Vento Le Vent d'Est dell'Est*. This written form, one word after the other and all with the same graphic styling, may suggest a difficulty in reading that in reality does not occur in the presentation of the title for *Vent d'Est*. The title card for the film favours the name written in French, in the centre of the picture and in large red letters, framed by the line at the top of the screen with the word *Vento*, in smaller and black letters, and the line at the bottom of the screen, again in smaller, black letters with the wording *dell'Est*. No difficulty in the reading, but this refusal to reduce the Italian title to a mere subtitle translating the original name of this French-Italian production is a way of making the viewer read them both at once, Italian and French, one inside the other.

The title card with this lettering appears only briefly. Soon we see the first image of the film itself, the opening scene for the narration, and this follows the same style of composition as the lettering. It also demands a simultaneous reading: the image speaks one language, and the sound speaks another. We see a couple laying on the grass in a park, we hear a discussion about a strike. Like in the title presentation, a discussion in French (“La grève”, says a man’s voice) and in Italian (“Sciopero”, says the voice of a woman).

The viewer may imagine that the voice informing us about the strike belongs to the woman laying on the grass in the park, that what we hear is her inner voice, thinking about something that had happened there, at the house in the park, or that we are hearing a conversation, the sound coming before the image, which would be made clear later.

So, it is the woman lying in the park talking about a trip she had made to visit her father’s family home, as was her habit in the month of May:

saying that the house was away from the city, in the middle of a park;

that they have dinner every day at eight o'clock sharp;

that one Friday her uncle didn't show up;

that they waited all night for him;

that on Saturday, at around midday, they found out that the uncle was being held captive by the striking workers in his office at the factory;

and that, on the night of that same Saturday, she had walked in on a conversation between her father (she calls him *dad*) and her other uncle (whom she calls *uncle Sam*) about the strike.

The viewer may imagine a fusion between the image and the sound, establish an immediate relationship between what he/she sees (a couple laying on the grass, shown upside down in the frame) and hears (a woman's voice saying that she heard *dad* say to *uncle Sam* that the workers were out on strike), as if the image and the sound ran, as they normally do in films, side by side, advancing in the same direction, following the same path. But it is not exactly this relationship that *Vent d'Est* proposes: image and sound tell different stories, they speak different languages, they follow different paths; what we hear is not the inner voice of the woman laying beside the man on the grass. We see/hear an image that is only a voice. It tells us that the uncle, on a Friday in May, didn't come home for dinner: he was held captive by striking workers. We see/hear an image that is only visual, with no words, with no sound whatsoever that tells us of a couple lying on the grass in a park, just the way a painting or a photograph usually tells us something. The film invites us to follow, simultaneously, one story and the other: the couple relaxing on the grass has no connection whatsoever to do with the discussion about the strike.

That is to say, it's not *quite* like that, there is a relationship: in the same way that the strike changed the annual May trip and the daily eight o'clock dinner, the strike also changed the relationship between sound and image in this film. One appears to be in conflict with the other: action on the soundtrack and strike in the image; using one conflict to illustrate another. What one seeks, therefore (using the words of Glauber's Corisco in *Black God White Devil*), is to untide the tidy, or (as Glauber's Paulo Martins shouts in *Land Entranced*), let the

wagon roll on its own. Image and sound in *Vent d'Est* are articulated in the same way that the workers articulate themselves in a strike.

La grève: in the image of the couple in the park everything is still —only the vegetation sways gently in the (east?) wind.

Sciopero: the conversation on the soundtrack goes on animatedly and regardless of what is happening in the image —even when this image moves slightly.

What the sound is telling us begins to be revealed in the long opening sequence, goes through the following scene, in which a man armed with a rifle passes in front of a country house, and continues in the third scene, in counterpoint to the couple in the park. Absolutely fixed images; the only thing that really moves in them is the sound, a discussion about the condition of the workers (not as bad as it used to be, they can now eat chicken every weekend), about the unions, about the workers' representatives, about representation and about the cinema, which should follow the paths of which the history of the revolutionary struggles teaches us to be aware.

What the image tells us often appears to be something that usually happens before (actors putting on make-up for the scene) or after a film (a reflection about what the cinema is and how a film should be made): a character paints his face with vivid colours —yellow, green, blue, red; someone out of the scene throws red paint over the characters; lettering appears saying “what can we do?” or warning that “this is not a just image, it is just an image”. We see cards that tell us nothing, that simply cloak the scenes in black or red, and images that neither tell us nor show us anything. The picture is scratched out and scribbled on, the word is cut off in the middle or drowned out by a racket, everyone is shouting at the same time. In the place of a film, something like an assembly of striking workers occurs and effectively, at a certain point, the whole crew gathers together —the camera and the microphone open to all the members of the crew interrupt the narrative —in order to discuss how the next sequence should be filmed.

In 1968, almost simultaneously and also in 16 mm (but in black and white), Glauber was to make a non-commercial film (cinema on strike?): *Cancer*. “I’m not going to send it to festivals nor am I going to show it in cinemas”, he said to Peruvian magazine *Hablemos de Cine*. “My pleasure was in simply making the film and I suppose that perhaps what is on the film is of no importance. I didn’t make it in order to show it; maybe I will show it, but I haven’t finished it yet, it still needs editing”. Speaking of *Cancer* (“It was made to show that in cinema there is not a single path. The path of cinema is all paths”), speaking of the film that he only got around to finishing in 1972, Glauber appears to be describing Godard’s *Vent d’Est*. “It has no story”; it studies “the duration of the cinematographic take”; it

experiments with “the virtual elimination of editing, when there is a constant verbal and psychological action within a single take”.

A film on strike against the model of production of the great industry.

The idea has been around since *Black God White Devil*, since *Hunger Aesthetics*: cinema at the service of important causes of its time, obliged to cut itself away from the industry, “because the commitment of industrial cinema is to lies and exploitation”. It passes through *Land Entranced*, via reflections on “the character of a true film director” (second chapter of *Cinema moderno, cinema novo*, José Álvaro Editor, Rio de Janeiro, 1966): the film director “is not measured, above all, by his resistance in the face of the efforts of the industry. Directors do not live by film alone, but also by the silences to which he is forced in order to maintain his dignity”. This idea becomes more radical later on, shortly after *Der leone have sept heads* and *Severed Heads*, and shortly before *Claro*. Glauber said that in the future cinema would be light, sound, delirium; that the viewers should watch a film “as if they were in bed, at a party, in a strike or in a revolution”, and declared that he was on strike: “like a worker at the factory gates”, fighting for “the right to make political films, with no commercial or professional commitments involved”. On strike: “I haven’t filmed anything for a year and a half, among other reasons because left-wing cinema is going through a terrible crisis and because the commercial and financial relationships that exist in film production have become a trap” (June 1972, statement published in *Cuba intemacional*, in *Afrique-Asie* and in *Écran*).

Cinema on strike: *Vent d’Est* is nothing like a film and that’s just what Godard wanted: to join the workers, stage a walk-out at the Lumière factory.

In December of 1970 (in a statement to the *Cinéma 70* magazine), Godard told of how he met Jean-Pierre Gorin, after May of 1968. “Two people, one coming from mainstream cinema, the other a militant bent on making films as a political duty. He wanted to theorise what happened in May and go on from there to practice it, and I wanted to attach myself to someone who was not from the world of cinema. In summary, one wanted to make films and the other wanted to stop making films. It was about constructing a new unit made from two opposites, in keeping with the Marxist concept, and from there attempting to construct a new cell group —not to make political cinema, but to make political cinema politically, which was very different from what the militant film makers of the time were doing”. From this was born the Dziga Vertov Group, which produced six films between 1969 and 1971. The name Dziga Vertov was chosen not because there was an intention of using his programme, but because the group wanted to promote it “as a standard-bearer in relation to Eisenstein,

who in our view was a revisionist film maker". For Vertov what was needed to be done was to "simply open people's eyes and show the world in the name of the proletarian dictatorship".

Political cinema: Vento (Vertov?)? Barravento (Eisenstein?)? Or one thing and the other?

In the gap between *Land Entranced* ("Não me interessam as flores do estilo/ Como por dia mil notícias amargas/ Que definem o mundo em que vivo" —I have no interest in the flowers of style/ I eat a thousand pieces of bad news per day/ which define the world in which I live) and *Der leone have sept heads* ("Down with colonialism! Down with colonialism! Down with colonialism!"),

in dialogue with what begins to take shape in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* ("as we break down to zero it is from there that we must depart"),

and in *La Chinoise* ("fifty years after the October revolution, American cinema reigns over cinema from the rest of the world. There is not much to add to this state of things. Except, on our modest scale, we should create two or three Vietnams in the middle of the immense Hollywood-Cinecitta-Mosfilm-Pinewood-etc empire, and this both economically and aesthetically, I mean fighting on two fronts, creating national, free, brotherly, comradely and friendly cinemas"),

in dialogue also with the Latin-American tempo (Fanon cited by Solanas in *La hora de los homos*: "Every viewer is either a coward or a traitor"),

thinking on the role of the Latin-American intellectual ("The first thing he has to do is to deny himself completely, demystify himself completely, and let go of this role as interpreter, of historical critic with no real, political participation in history. The only way for him to revolutionise himself is to demystify himself and make political thought and political action into an integrated entity"),

Glauber proposed a political cinema that "does not intend to inform through logic", marked by poetical irreverence, "by the introduction of the anarchic plane", by "images forbidden in the bourgeois context", in order to destroy all "that which the viewer accepts as being normal".

How does one make a political film? By filming politically, "without reducing people to sociopolitical schemes":

It is not enough to simply register "rallies, wars, strikes and protests to make a political film. This is positive and useful. Such films can be efficient, just as some

literary works can be politically efficient. To what extent does a purely political essay, published in a magazine with a small circulation, contribute to the revolution? I don't know. The impossibility of answering these questions is born of the impossibility of the questions themselves. The usefulness of art is an old issue. This debate results from a certain typically intellectual feeling of guilt, from European intellectuals and Third World intellectuals, a feeling of guilt that is more Christian than Marxist. In certain historical moments, a film may have value for agitation and propaganda, but it can only be efficient at a given time and in very special circumstances. For film buffs and for the public in general the cinema is above all an oneiric provocateur: the public seeks in films an oneiric vision of reality, even in more realistic films. The intellectual is looking for something that corresponds to his obsessions. The cinema, deep down, is a manifestation of play. In terms of political efficiency, we should highlight Godard and Straub, who make political films that on an immediate level are inefficient" because they propose "a revolutionary poetry, the only one capable of changing consciences".

Thinking of the revolution as an aesthetic: in the same way that Buñuel is essential to the underdeveloped world, "for the developed world it is more than necessary to have an 'anarcocratic' spirit like that of Godard", who starts his cinema "at the point where Joyce left off with his writing. The greatest moments of Joyce tend towards impossible figurativeness: the next step is taken by Godard". He expresses "the most things in the least amount of time", he proposes an "action in tandem with Joyce" and a meeting of "sociology with fiction, of anthropology with poetry, of Shakespeare with science-fiction, of painting with philosophy". He speaks of a Godard who is "as humble as St. Francis of Assisi, embarrassed by his geniality, apologizing to everyone" and says that in his presence, "a thin, balding, forty-year-old man, I feel like a fond aunt who's embarrassed to give a sweet to an unhappy nephew. This image is trite, but Godard arouses a great feeling of affection. Now, it is no longer trite: it is the same thing as seeing Bach or Michelangelo eating spaghetti and down in the dumps feeling incapable of painting the Sistine Chapel or composing the 'Actus Tragicus'".

For Glauber, Godard therefore resumed, shortly after May of 1968, "all of the questions facing today's European intellectual: is it worth making art? The issue of the usefulness of art is an old one but it's currently in fashion. And in cinema Godard is the walking crisis itself".

Between Glauber and Godard an unplanned dialogue/debate is established, organized spontaneously, in order to consider the cinema as it began to be made around the ideas of the Hunger Aesthetic, of Cine Imperfecto, of Terceer Cine, of

Cine Junto al Pueblo, around the idea of a (the title of the French magazine sums it up well) *Cinéthique*.

Godard, taking Vertov as a standard and repeating that there was no sense in making films as spectacles or authorial films:

“It is necessary to abandon the idea of making films and to relearn the language. During the projection of a militant film, the screen is simply a blackboard or a classroom wall that offers a concrete analysis of a concrete situation.”

Glauber, closer to the tradition of Eisenstein and insisting that making art makes sense in any third world country:

“Pity the underdeveloped country that has no strong and passionately national artistic expression because, without its art, it is weakened (to have its mind colonized), and this is the more dangerous extension of economic colonisation”.

This unplanned dialogue/debate led to the natural meeting of the two at a road junction in *Vent d'Est*. Glauber (in a footnote to an interview for *Cahiers du Cinéma* in July of 1969) sums up the encounter and the filming of the scene in which Godard asks “which are the paths of cinema and he himself indicates the answer: that way is the unknown cinema of aesthetic adventure and philosophical speculation, this way is the cinema of the Third World”. He says:

“Italy. Godard is filming a western and he asks me about the direction of political cinema. On the first day I stand in front of the camera with my arms open and indicate a direction towards the unknown and to adventure, and I show another direction for the cinema of the Third World. But as Godard wanted to show the scene a second time, I sang that you had to be alert and strong because we have no time to fear death, and later the character who asked me the path of political cinema heads towards the path of the Third World and then comes back behind me and goes towards adventure and the unknown. I didn't repeat the speech of the first day of shooting but sang that everything is dangerous, divine and wonderful”.

Later (in a text for *Manchete* magazine, in January of 1970), he tells more about his participation in the “western in colour written by Cohn-Bendit and directed by Jean-Luc Godard and featuring Gian Maria Volonté”; he talks about the gossip that surrounded the film, “I met a young man who told me: Did you know? In Godard's western there are two horses reciting Mao!”; he says that Godard asked “to help him destroy cinema, so I told him I was into something else, that

my thing was to build cinema in Brazil and the Third World”; and that he asked whether he wanted to do a scene for *Vent d’Est* —“I, who am quick on the uptake and have a built in doubt meter, tell him to ease up since I’m only there to flirt”; for the scene, he says, “he asks me what are the paths of cinema and he indicates the answer himself: that way is the unknown cinema of the aesthetic adventure and the philosophical spectacle (etc.); this way is the cinema of the Third World”.

The scene begins with Glauber, with open arms standing at a road junction, fixed scene, singing in Portuguese:

“Atenção: é preciso estar atento e forte. Não temos tempo de temer a morte”.

(Attention: we have to be alert and strong. There is no time to fear death.)

A woman’s voice says softly, in French —while Glauber sings over and over that we have to be alert and strong —, that cinema should follow the path the history of the revolutionary struggles have taught us. So as to know exactly where to find this path, she decides to ask the Third World cinema. From the back of the scene comes a girl with a camera who asks Glauber in French: “Sorry to interrupt your class struggle, but it’s important: what is the path of political cinema?” Glauber responds in Portuguese: he points in a direction and says that that way is the cinema of the unknown, of the aesthetic adventure. He points in another direction and says that that way is the way of the cinema of the Third World, a cinema that is dangerous, divine and wonderful, the victim of imperialist repression and oppression, a cinema that is dangerous, divine and wonderful and which, in the case of Brazil, needs to produce 300 filmmakers per year in order to make 600 films per year.

The question —communicating the cinema via politics and/or communicating politics via cinema —did not arise at that time, but was the subject of lively debate on this picket line: *Cancer* and *Vent d’Est* at the gates of the factory of dreams. The intellectual abandoning his privileged position and integrating with the political process, as Glauber wished. The militant influencing the cinema and being influenced by it in return, as Godard wished. The issue was debated in much the same way as it was represented by Godard in the scene filmed with Glauber. It was about asking the Third World which direction political cinema should take; it was about advancing simultaneously down the two paths: that of aesthetic adventure and that of the dangerous, divine and wonderful cinema of the Third World.

When Glauber, in *Hunger Aesthetics*, speaks of the need to separate useful art (that is, useful to the political activism of the revolutionary art that is launched at the opening of new discussions) from revolutionary art, which, in his opinion,

should not only act on an immediately political level, but also promote philosophical speculation and represent an impossibility of understanding to the dominating reason (in such a way that this reason denies itself and devours itself trying to comprehend it)... Well, when Glauber does so, he appears to be repeating what Godard used to say on behalf of the Dziga Vertov Group —or vice-versa, Godard appears to repeat the words of Glauber when he says that it is important to make political films (which is what everyone does, with a greater or lesser degree of conscience) in a political manner (which is what few seem able to do). Anyone who expresses new contents must express new forms, anyone who expresses new forms must express new relationships between form and content. In order to find new answers, we should learn to ask in a different way, otherwise, in cinema or in any other social struggle, we will continue to answer what are entirely new questions in the same old way. They were saying the same thing, even when they seemed to be saying the opposite: destroy cinema, says one; build cinema in Brazil and in the Third World, says another. It's as if they were saying that it is necessary to fight on two fronts, to create national cinemas that are free, brotherly, comradely and friendly; that the path of cinema is all paths: and that, above all else, workers who are committed to participating in the political process should set up a picket line at the factory gates and cry out to the four winds: *Strike!*



José Carlos Avellar

Vento, barravento

[Glauber e Godard na porta da usina Lumière]

O título do filme, tal como desenhado na tela, mistura italiano e francês: *Vento Le Vent d'Est dell'Est*. Escrever assim, uma palavra depois da outra, e todas com idêntico tratamento gráfico, pode sugerir uma dificuldade de leitura que na realidade não existe no letreiro de apresentação de *Vento do Leste*. O cartão com o título do filme privilegia o que está escrito em francês, no centro do quadro em letras grandes e vermelhas, emolduradas pela linha no alto da tela em letras menores e pretas, *Vento*, e pelo que vem no pé da tela, igualmente em letras menores e pretas, *dell'Est*. Nenhuma dificuldade de leitura, mas esta se recusa a reduzir o título italiano a uma legenda para traduzir o título original deste filme franco-italiano: é um modo de levar o espectador a ler os dois simultaneamente, italiano e francês, um dentro do outro.

O letreiro com o título fica pouco tempo na tela. Logo surge a primeira imagem do filme propriamente dita, a cena que abre a narração, que segue o mesmo estilo de composição do letreiro e solicita também uma leitura simultânea: a imagem fala uma língua, o som outra. Vemos um casal deitado no chão de um parque, ouvimos uma discussão sobre uma greve. Como no letreiro de apresentação, uma discussão em francês (“La greve”, diz uma voz masculina), e em italiano (“Sciopero”, diz uma voz feminina).

O espectador pode imaginar que a voz que nos fala da greve é da mulher deitada no parque, que estaríamos ouvindo sua voz interior —ela estaria pensando no que ocorrera ali mesmo, na casa dentro do parque —ou estaríamos ouvindo uma conversa, o som se antecipando à imagem, que se esclareceria adiante.

Assim, a mulher deitada no parque é que estaria contando a viagem para a casa da família do pai, como de costume no mês de maio;

dizendo que a casa era distante da cidade, no meio de um parque;

que eles jantavam pontualmente às oito horas;

que numa sexta-feira o tio não veio;

que eles ficaram esperando a noite inteira;

que no sábado por volta do meio-dia ficaram sabendo que o tio estava preso no escritório da fábrica pelos operários em greve;

e que na noite deste mesmo sábado ela surpreendeu uma conversa entre o pai (*dad*, diz ela) e seu outro tio (*uncle Sam*, diz ela) sobre a greve.

O espectador pode imaginar uma fusão entre a imagem e o som, estabelecer uma relação imediata entre o que vê (um casal deitado na relva, no quadro de cabeça para baixo) e o que ouve (uma voz feminina contando que ouviu *dad* dizer para *uncle Sam* que os trabalhadores estavam em greve), como se imagem e som corressem tal como de hábito no cinema, lado a lado, avançando na mesma direção, seguindo o mesmo caminho. Mas não é propriamente esta relação que *Vento do Leste* propõe: imagem e som contam histórias diferentes, falam línguas diferentes, seguem caminhos diferentes; o que ouvimos não é a voz interior da mulher deitada ao lado do homem no parque. Vemos/ouvimos uma imagem somente voz. Ela nos conta que o tio, numa sexta-feira de maio, não veio para o jantar: ficou preso pelos trabalhadores em greve. Vemos/ouvimos uma imagem somente visual, sem palavras, sem som algum, que nos fala de um casal deitado num parque assim como uma pintura ou fotografia costuma contar qualquer coisa. O filme convida a acompanhar simultaneamente uma história e outra: o casal que se deixa ficar tranquilo na relva não tem ligação alguma com a discussão sobre a greve.

Quer dizer, não é bem assim, existe uma relação: assim como a greve mudou a viagem de todos os anos no mês de maio e o jantar de todo dia às oito da noite, assim também a greve mudou a relação entre imagem e som neste filme. Uma coisa aparece em conflito com a outra: ação na faixa sonora, greve na imagem; falar de um conflito por meio de um conflito. O que se procura então (usemos as palavras do Corisco de Glauber em *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*) é desarrumar o arrumado, ou (como grita o Paulo Martins de Glauber

em *Tema em transe*) deixar o vagão correr solto. Imagem e som em *Vento do Leste* se articulam assim como se articulam trabalhadores em greve.

La grève: na imagem do casal no parque tudo está parado —apenas a vegetação se move suavemente ao vento (do leste?).

Sciopero: a conversa na faixa sonora prossegue bem viva e independente do que acontece na imagem —mesmo quando ela se move ligeiramente.

O que o som nos conta começa a ser contado no longo plano de abertura, atravessa o quadro seguinte, em que um homem armado de fuzil passa em frente a uma casa no campo, e continua no terceiro plano, um contraplano do casal deitado no parque. Imagens absolutamente fixas; o que nelas se move de verdade é o som, uma discussão sobre a condição dos trabalhadores (menos ruim, já conseguem comer frango todos os fins de semana), sobre os sindicatos, sobre os representantes dos trabalhadores, sobre representação e sobre o cinema, que deveria seguir o caminho que a história das lutas revolucionárias ensina a conhecer.

O que a imagem nos conta parece muitas vezes algo que ocorre antes (atores se maquiando para a cena) ou depois de um filme (uma reflexão sobre o que é o cinema e como se deve realizar um filme): um personagem pinta o rosto de cores bem vivas —amarelo, verde, azul, vermelho; alguém fora de quadro joga tinta vermelha sobre os personagens; letreiros perguntam “o que fazer?” ou advertem: “esta não é uma imagem justa, mas justo uma imagem”. Vemos cartões que não dizem nada, simplesmente cobrem a cena com um manto preto ou vermelho, e imagens que não mostram nem dizem nada: o quadro é riscado e rabiscado, a palavra é cortada ao meio ou encoberta por uma algazarra, todos gritam ao mesmo tempo. No lugar de um filme, algo parecido com uma assembléia de trabalhadores em greve, e efetivamente a certa altura toda a equipe se reúne em assembléia —a câmera e o microfone abertos a todos os integrantes da equipe interrompe a narrativa para discutir de que modo deveria ser filmada a seqüência seguinte.

Quase ao mesmo tempo, também em 16 mm (mas em preto-e-branco), Glauber filma em 1968 um filme não-comercial (cinema em greve?): *Câncer*. “Não vou enviá-lo a festivais nem vou exibí-lo nos cinemas”, disse, em depoimento à revista peruana *Hablemos de Cine*; “meu prazer foi só filmá-lo e suponho que talvez o que esteja lá não tem importância. Não o fiz para ser exibido; talvez o exhiba, mas ainda não o terminei, falta fazer a montagem”. Falando de *Câncer* (“Foi feito para demonstrar que em cinema não há um só caminho. O caminho do cinema são todos os caminhos”), falando do filme que concluiu somente em 1972, Glauber parece estar descrevendo *Vent d’Est* de Godard: “Não tem

história”; estuda “a resistência de duração do plano cinematográfico”; experimenta “a quase eliminação da montagem quando existe uma ação verbal e psicológica constante dentro da mesma tomada”.

Um filme em greve contra o modelo de produção da grande indústria.

A idéia vem desde *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*, desde a *Estética da fome*: o cinema a serviço das causas importantes de seu tempo, obrigado a se marginalizar da indústria, “porque o compromisso do cinema industrial é com a mentira e a exploração”. Passa por *Tema em transe*, pelas reflexões sobre “o caráter de um verdadeiro diretor de cinema” (no segundo capítulo de *Cinema moderno, cinema novo*, José Álvaro Editor, Rio de Janeiro, 1966): o diretor de cinema “se mede, sobretudo, pela sua resistência diante das tentativas da indústria. Nem só de filme vive um diretor, mas também dos silêncios a que se impõe para manter sua dignidade”. A idéia se radicaliza adiante, pouco depois de *Der leone have sept cabeças* e de *Cabeças cortadas*, pouco antes de *Claw*: Glauber diz que no futuro o cinema será luz, som, delírio; que o espectador deverá ver um filme “como se estivesse numa cama, numa festa, numa greve ou numa revolução”, e se declara em greve “como um trabalhador na porta da fábrica”, lutando pelo “direito de fazer filmes políticos, sem compromissos comerciais ou profissionais”. Em greve: “Há um ano e meio que não filmo, entre outros motivos porque o cinema de esquerda está atravessando uma crise terrível e porque as relações comerciais e financeiras que existem na produção cinematográfica se transformaram numa armadilha” (junho de 1972, depoimento publicado em *Cuba internacional*, em *Afrique-Asie* e em *Écran*).

O cinema em greve: *Vento do Leste* nem parece filme, e o que Godard desejava era isso mesmo —juntar-se aos trabalhadores, sair da fábrica de Lumière.

Em dezembro de 1970 (em depoimento para a revista *Cinéma 70*), Godard conta como conheceu Jean-Pierre Gorin, depois de maio de 1968. “Duas pessoas, uma vindo do cinema normal, a outra um militante decidido a fazer cinema como uma tarefa política. Ele queria teorizar o que aconteceu em maio e daí passar à prática, e eu queria me ligar a alguém que não viesse do cinema. Em resumo, um desejava fazer cinema, o outro desejava deixar de fazer cinema. Tratava-se de construir uma nova unidade feita de dois contrários, de acordo com o conceito marxista, e tentar então constituir uma nova célula —não para fazer cinema político, mas para fazer cinema político politicamente, o que era bem diferente do que realizavam então os cineastas militantes”. Assim se criou o Grupo Dziga Vertov, que produziu seis filmes entre 1969 e 1971. O nome de Dziga Vertov foi escolhido não porque pretendessem aplicar seu programa, mas porque o grupo queria tomá-lo “como porta-bandeira em relação a Eisenstein,

que, em nossa análise, era um cineasta revisionista”. Para Vértov, o que se deveria fazer era “simplesmente abrir os olhos e mostrar o mundo em nome da ditadura do proletariado”.

Cinema político: Vento (Vértov?)? Barravento (Eisenstein?)? Ou uma coisa e outra?

No espaço entre *Terra em transe* (“Não me interessam as flores do estilo / Como por dia mil notícias amargas / Que definem o mundo em que vivo”) e *Der leone have sept cabeças* (“Abaixo o colonialismo! Abaixo o colonialismo! Abaixo o colonialismo!”),

dialogando com o que começa a se desenhar em *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (“Como nos reduzem a zero é de lá que precisamos partir”)

e em *La chinoise* (“Cinquenta anos depois da revolução de outubro, o cinema americano reina sobre o cinema mundial. Não há muito a acrescentar a este estado de coisas. A não ser que em nossa escala modesta nós devemos criar dois ou três Vietnames no meio do imenso império de Hollywood-Cinécitta-Mosfilm-Pinewood-etc., e tanto economicamente quanto esteticamente, quer dizer, lutando em dois , criar cinemas nacionais, livres, irmãos, camaradas e amigos”),

dialogando também com o tempo latino-americano (Fanon retomado por Solanas em *La hora de los homos*: “Todo espectador é um covarde ou um traidor”),

pensando o papel do intelectual latino-americano (“A primeira coisa que ele tem a fazer é negar-se completamente, é desmistificar-se completamente, é sair desse papel de intérprete, de crítico da história sem nenhuma participação concreta, política, na história. A única forma de ele se revolucionar e se desmistificar é fazer do pensamento e da ação política uma coisa integrada”),

Glauber propôs um cinema político que “não pretende informar pela lógica”, marcado pela irreverência poética, “pela introdução do plano anárquico”, por “imagens proibidas no contexto da burguesia”, para aniquilar tudo “aquilo que o espectador aceita como normal”.

Como fazer um filme político? Filmando politicamente, “sem reduzir os homens a esquemas sociopolíticos”:

Não basta registrar “comícios, guerras, greves, manifestações, para fazer um filme político. Isto é positivo e útil. Tais filmes podem ser eficazes, tal como algumas obras literárias podem ser politicamente eficazes. Em que medida um ensaio político puro publicado numa revista de pequena tiragem contribui para a



revolução? Não sei. A impossibilidade de responder estas questões vem da impossibilidade destas questões. A utilidade da arte é uma questão antiga. Esta discussão resulta de um certo sentimento de culpa tipicamente intelectual, do intelectual europeu e do intelectual do Terceiro Mundo, um sentimento de culpa mais cristão que marxista. Em certos momentos históricos um filme pode ter valor como agitação e propaganda, mas só pode ser eficaz em uma determinada época e em circunstâncias muito especiais. Para os cinéfilos e para o público do cinema, é sobretudo um provocador onírico: o público procura no cinema uma visão onírica da realidade, mesmo nos filmes mais realistas. O intelectual procura algo que corresponda a suas obsessões. O cinema, no fundo, é uma manifestação lúdica. Em termos de eficácia política, devemos destacar Godard e Straub, que fazem filmes políticos que no plano imediato são ineficazes” porque propõem “uma poética revolucionária, a única que pode modificar a consciência”.

Pensar a revolução como uma estética: assim como Buñuel é essencial para o mundo subdesenvolvido, “para o mundo desenvolvido é mais do que necessário um espírito anarcocrítico como o de Godard”, que começa seu cinema “no ponto onde Joyce parou com o romance. Os maiores momentos de Joyce tendem à impossível figuração: o passo adiante é dado por Godard”. Ele expressa “o máximo de coisas no mínimo de tempo”, propõe uma “ação simultânea, como Joyce” e um encontro “da sociologia com a ficção, da antropologia com a poesia, de Shakespeare com a *science-fiction*, da pintura com a filosofia”. Fala de Godard “humilde que nem São Francisco de Assis, com vergonha da genialidade, pedindo desculpa a todo mundo” e diz que diante dele, “homem magro e calvo de 40 anos, eu me sinto uma tia carinhosa que tem vergonha de dar um doce para um sobrinho triste. A imagem é besta, mas Godard desperta um sentimento de carinho muito grande. Agora, não é besteira: é a mesma coisa que você ver Bach ou o Michelângelo comendo *spaghetti* e na maior fossa, achando que não dá pé pintar a Capela Sistina ou compor o ‘Actus Tragicus’”.

Para Glauber, Godard resumia então, pouco depois do maio de 1968, “todas as questões do intelectual europeu de hoje em dia: vale a pena fazer arte? A questão da utilidade da arte é velha, mas está na moda. E no cinema Godard é a própria crise ambulante”.

Entre Glauber e Godard se estabelece um diálogo/debate não planejado, organizando de modo espontâneo, para pensar o cinema, assim como ele começava a ser feito em torno das idéias da *Estética da fome*, do Cine Imperfecto, do Terceiro Cine, do Cine Junto al Pueblo, em torno da idéia de uma (o título da revista francesa resume bem) *Cinéthique*.

Godard, tomando Vertov como bandeira e repetindo que não tinha sentido fazer cinema-espetáculo ou cinema de autor:

“É preciso abandonar a idéia de fazer filmes e reaprender a linguagem. Durante a projeção de um filme militante, a tela é simplesmente um quadro-negro ou a parede de uma escola, que oferece a análise concreta de uma situação concreta.”

Glauber, mais próximo da tradição de Eisenstein e insistindo que fazer arte tem sentido em qualquer país do Terceiro Mundo:

“Pobre do país subdesenvolvido que não tiver uma arte forte e loucamente nacional porque, sem sua arte, ele está mais fraco (para ser colonizado na cuca), e essa é a extensão mais perigosa da colonização econômica.”

Este diálogo/debate não planejado levou ao natural encontro do dois numa dobra da estrada, em *Vento do Leste*. Glauber (numa nota ao pé de uma entrevista ao *Cahiers du Cinéma* em julho de 1969) resume o encontro e a filmagem do plano em que Godard “pergunta quais são os caminhos do cinema e ele mesmo indica a resposta: por ali é o cinema desconhecido da aventura estética e da especulação filosófica, por aqui é o cinema do terceiro mundo”. Diz:

“Itália. Godard está filmando um *western* e me pergunta a direção do cinema político. No primeiro dia eu fico diante da câmera com os braços abertos e desenho uma direção rumo ao desconhecido e à aventura e mostro uma outra direção para o cinema do Terceiro Mundo, mas como Godard queria rodar o plano uma segunda vez, eu cantei que era preciso estar atento e forte porque nós não temos tempo de temer a morte, e depois o personagem que me perguntou a direção do cinema político se dirige para o caminho do Terceiro Mundo, em seguida retorna atrás de mim e vai em direção ao desconhecido e à aventura, e eu não repeti o discurso do primeiro dia de filmagem, mas cantei que tudo é perigoso, tudo é divino e maravilhoso.”

Adiante (num texto para a revista *Manchete*, janeiro de 1970), conta mais sobre sua participação no “*western* em cores escrito por Cohn-Bendit e dirigido por Jean-Luc Godard com interpretação de Gian Maria Volonté”; conta as fofocas que corriam em torno do filme, “encontrei um rapaz que me disse: você já sabe? No faroeste do Godard tem dois cavalos recitando Mao!”; diz que Godard pediu “para ajudá-lo a destruir o cinema, aí eu digo para ele que estou em outra, que meu negócio é construir o cinema no Brasil e no Terceiro Mundo”; e que perguntou se ele queria filmar um plano de *Vento do Leste* — “eu, que

sou malandro e tenho desconfiômetro, digo para manear, pois estou ali apenas na paquera”; para a cena, conta, “ele me pergunta quais são os caminhos do cinema e ele mesmo me indica a resposta: por ali é o cinema desconhecido da aventura estética e da especulação filosófica (e etc.); por aqui é o cinema do Terceiro Mundo”.

A cena começa com Glauber, de braços abertos, numa dobra do caminho, plano fixo, cantando em português:

“Atenção: é preciso estar atento e forte. Não temos tempo de temer a morte”.

Uma voz feminina diz baixinho, em francês (enquanto Glauber canta de novo e de novo que é preciso estar atento e forte), que o cinema deve seguir a estrada que a história das lutas revolucionárias ensinou a conhecer. Para saber com exatidão onde essa estrada se encontra, ela decide perguntar ao cinema do Terceiro Mundo. Do fundo do quadro, surge uma moça com uma câmera que se dirige a Glauber e pergunta em francês: “Desculpe interromper a sua luta de classes, mas é importante: qual é o caminho do cinema político?”. Glauber responde em português: aponta uma direção e diz que para lá é o cinema do desconhecido, o cinema da aventura estética. Aponta outra direção e diz que por ali é o cinema do Terceiro Mundo, um cinema perigoso, divino e maravilhoso, vítima da repressão e da opressão imperialista, cinema perigoso, divino e maravilhoso, que no caso brasileiro precisa formar 300 cineastas para fazer 600 filmes por ano.

A questão —informar o cinema pela política, informar a política pelo cinema, —não surgiu neste momento, mas era vivamente debatida neste piquete de greve: *Câncere Vento do Leste* na porta da usina de sonhos. O intelectual abandonando a sua posição privilegiada para se integrar no processo político, como queria Glauber. O militante influenciando o cinema e sendo influenciado por ele, como queria Godard. A questão era debatida bem assim como Godard a representa na cena em que filmou Glauber. Tratava-se de perguntar ao Terceiro Mundo qual o caminho do cinema político; tratava-se de avançar simultaneamente nas duas estradas: a da aventura estética e a do divino e maravilhoso cinema do Terceiro Mundo.

Quando Glauber, na *Estética da fome*, fala da necessidade de separar a arte útil (útil ao ativismo político de uma arte revolucionária lançada na abertura de novas discussões) da arte revolucionária, que para ele não só deveria atuar de modo imediatamente político como também promover a especulação filosófica e ser uma impossibilidade de compreensão para a razão dominadora (de tal forma que ela se negue e se devore diante de sua impossibilidade de compreender), quando diz assim, Glauber parece estar repetindo o que Godard dizia à frente

do Grupo Dziga Vertov —ou vice-versa, Godard parece repetir Glauber quando diz que o importante é fazer filmes políticos (o que, com maior ou menor consciência, todos fazem) politicamente (o que poucos conseguem fazer): quem diz novos conteúdos deve dizer formas novas, quem diz formas novas deve dizer novas relações entre forma e conteúdo. Para encontrar novas respostas devemos aprender a perguntar de outra maneira, senão, no cinema, como em qualquer luta social, continuaremos a responder de maneira antiga a questões inteiramente novas. Estavam dizendo o mesmo, mesmo quando pareciam dizer o contrário: destruir o cinema, diz um; construir o cinema no Brasil e no Terceiro Mundo, diz outro. É como se estivessem dizendo que é preciso lutar em duas frentes, criar cinemas nacionais, livres, irmãos, camaradas e amigos; que o caminho do cinema são todos os caminhos. E que, mais importante que tudo, trabalhadores decididos a participar do processo político, montar um piquete na porta da fábrica e gritar aos quatro ventos: *Greve!*



In general, when one receives films from a distributor, they are accompanied by technical notes with the credits for the people involved in the making of these films. One may choose to follow these or to resort to research material in books about the films. Naturally, one can not expect too much in this sense from the older films, but nevertheless, down the years the credits have become consensual and are the subject of material that is used for research and quotations. Unless some researcher reveals something new about an unexpected participation, the credits are usually maintained. In the case of the Dziga Vertov Group, two problems were encountered, since Gaumont themselves, responsible for the distribution and publicity of the films, do not have these notes. The first problem relates to the necessary time for the films to become consensual, since the bibliography available on the Group is still fairly unreliable and it is only recently that it has become possible to see the films collectively. The second problem relates to the nature of the Group itself, since, as the proposal was to work in conjunction, many of the films bear no signature, and are merely mentioned in books as belonging to the Dziga Vertov Group.

Taking the team apart, as was done with the technical notes below, may seem to be a contradiction to the purposes of the Group. But, firstly, it was necessary to decide which credits were to be published in the limited space available in the publicity material. The credits found in books diverge to a great extent and the only fixed reference is the name of Jean-Luc Godard. If they were to be purely viewed under the collective name of the Dziga Vertov Group, it would be necessary to name all of the participants in the same, and they did not work homogeneously. In fact sometimes they did not even finish the particular films in which they were participating. Therefore,

it was decided to publish only what appeared to be most coherent and most recurrent in the publicity material, which needed to be kept short. However, given this more generous amount of space, it was chosen to publish the research that was carried out with regard to the credits and synopses, so as to shed more light on the history of the Group itself, remembering that their films were made over a four-year period counting from *Un film comme les autres* to *Letter to Jane*, and often simultaneously.

The main references for the credits are indicated by the initials of the authors of books concerning the filmography of Godard and this phase of his film making. Although Colin MacCabe was responsible for publishing an important book at the start of the eighties regarding this phase of Godard's life, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, the filmography published with technical details is incipient, but the filmography published in his more recent book *Godard: a portrait of an artist at seventy* is much more consistent and detailed. Also, MacCabe is a referential author for this period in the filmography of Godard. This book, published in 2003, was used for reference in the research. The guide compiled by Julia Lesage is a known reference containing details of credits and synopses, as well as the MoMA catalogue, which produced a special exhibition of the films of Jean-Luc Godard in the 1990's. The slightly more recent book by Dixon also presented details that were not mentioned by either MacCabe or Lesage. Some of the historical references were taken from the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, from the book *Film and Revolution* by James MacBean, from the DVD catalogue containing *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*, launched by the Criterion Collection and from the Internet database IMDb.

Julia Lesage, *Jean-Luc Godard: A guide to references and resources* = JL

Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Portrait of an artist at seventy* = CM

Catalogue of the Jean-Luc Godard film exhibition produced by the Museum of Modern Art, *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image* = MoMA

Wheeler Dixon, *The films of Jean-Luc Godard* = WD

DVD of *Tout va bien* containing *Letter to Jane* = DVD

Internet Movie Database = IMDb

A film like any other
Un film comme les autres

France, 1968, 100 min, 16 mm, B&W and Colour

Ciné-tracts filmed in Paris in May, 1968 by Jean-Luc Godard. The group of youths meets on a lawn in Flins in July and August of 1968

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (JL)

Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group (MOMA)

Jean-Luc Godard with the ARC Group and Jacques Kébadian (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group - Godard and Gorin (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dziga Vertov Group (IMDb)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard and Dziga Vertov Group (MoMA)

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dziga Vertov Group (IMDb)

Cinematography

William Lubtchansky (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard and Dziga Vertov Group (MoMA)

Jean-Luc Godard (IMDb)

Film editing

Christine Aya (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard and Dziga Vertov Group (MoMA, IMDb)

Cast

Three students from Nanterre, two workers from the Renault factory and the voice of Godard on the soundtrack (CM, WD)

During the year of 1968, Godard produced a series of *ciné-tracts*, small three-minute documents filmed in 16 mm, black and white, and edited on the camera itself. Apart from Godard, film makers such as Alain Resnais and Chris Marker also produced *ciné-tracts* in the intention of forming a collective work with no directors' signature. It was all about filming rallies, protest marches and discussions with political aims. During the month of May, specifically, Godard filmed students in Nanterre and workers discussing the political situation of the times.

Un film comme les autres made use of this material. The colour film shows an extensive political discussion involving a group of young people sitting on the grass in some unnamed place. The camera shows the group from behind, without distinguishing faces for a long time. The film is gradually intersected by the *ciné-tracts* – which Godard later came to name “film-tracts” – showing cars being burnt, groups of protesters, the police arresting people at protests, Daniel Cohn-Bendit speaking at a student rally, students mimeographing pamphlets, as well as workers on strike.

The soundtrack works with fusions of local sounds, dialogues and slogans in French and English and serves, if not to initiate, then at least to strengthen, a frequent dialectic intervention between image and sound in the previous films of the Dziga Vertov Group. Gradually the viewer is able to identify the characters, but identifies them by their voices. They discuss the role of the communist party, of the workers' organisations and also of the spectacle oriented society. However, they do not agree on all of the issues and no point of view is favoured. There are two lines of discourse: that of the dialogue within the group and another in the form of a voice-over, and there are two images: one in colour, pastoral and quiet, versus one in black and white, agitated and in conflict.

Colin MacCabe does not present *Un film comme les autres* as being the work of the Dziga Vertov Group, but rather as being that of Godard and the ARC Group (Atelier de recherche cinématographique) in his latest book *Godard: Portrait of an Artist at Seventy*. However, in his previous book *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, published in 1980, he credits the film to the Dziga Vertov Group and the “États Généraux du Cinéma”. In reality, the film was produced with neither any component of the Group, nor exactly with the proposals of the Dziga Vertov Group. But, it may be considered a precursor of the Group in as much as that it was designed to be a joint effort with no single named author.

This film-documentary became famous because Godard left a message for the projectionist to “flip a coin” to define which of the rolls was to be shown first, following a showing at the Lincoln Center in New York, in December 1968, where only a hundred members of an audience that began as one thousand remained to see the film.

British Sounds (or See you at Mao)

France, 1969, 52 min, 16 mm, Colour

Filmed in England in February or March of 1969. Produced by London Weekend Television

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Henri Roger (MoMA, IMDb)

Jean-Luc Godard, together with Jean-Henri Roger in the name of the Dziga Vertov Group (JL)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Henri Roger (MoMA, CM, IMDb)

Jean-Luc Godard (WD, JL)

Research

Mo Teitelbaum (JL)

Cinematography

Charles Stewart (JL)

Sound

Fred Sharp (JL)

Sound mixing

Antoine Bonfanti (CM)

Film editing

Christine Aya (CM) (MacCabe affirms that Kozmian was only given a mention because Godard had to give some credit to the British crew. *Godard*, p. 413, n. 36)

Elizabeth Kozmian (MoMA, WD, JL)

Cast

Students from Oxford, students from Essex and a group of militant workers from Dagenham; voice of Godard on the soundtrack and workers at the GM factory.



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Filmed secretly in former Czechoslovakia in March of 1969, soon after the spring disturbances in Prague and the Russian invasion. Various images of daily life in Czechoslovakia are accompanied by the voice-overs of Vladimir and Rosa which analyse the paradoxes of the political situation of the country and the new directions of Red Czechoslovakia. Red that would serve the film not only through its ambiguity as blood, but also as a reflection on the fading images of the world. In this sense, the opening comments are sarcastic in their dealing with the revisionism of the Czechoslovakian socialism. The image of a red rose appears in a number of circumstances, as a direct metaphor for the delicacy of the revolutionary proposals. At the end, the voices ask how one should arrive at a suitable theory according to the ideas of Mao, and they respond stating that the theory should come in tandem with social practices, with the class struggle and with production, as well as with scientific experimentation.

This film rethinks the usual manner of making documentaries, which does not generally perceive sound and image as being different materials, and it also rethinks the relationships between concept and image. *Pravda* makes a radical criticism of the documentary practice covering the proposals of Dziga Vertov, and it is therefore considered to be the “most vertovian” of the Group’s films. The film was made using Agfa products and the logo of this company is shown in conjunction with all the imagined features of western capitalism. Another metalinguistic reference is the image of the film-maker with a red camera shooting the film itself.

The film was commissioned by West German Television. In his hotel room, Paul Burron filmed and photographed images directly from Czechoslovakian television. Jean-Henri Roger did not accompany the editing of the film to the end. In this period, Jean-Pierre Gorin started a partnership with Godard that was to influence the film politically and was to become effective in *Vent d’est*. The dialogues from the film were published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n. 240, July/August 1972 as being those of Godard and Roger.



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Vladimir et Rosa Vladimir and Rose

France, 1971, 103 min, 16 mm, Colour

Filmed in the autumn of 1970, in Paris

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (JL, WD, MoMA, IMDb)

Dziga Vertov Group (CM)

Writing credits

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (MoMA, IMDb)

Film editing

Christine Aya and Chantal Colomer (CM)

Cinematography

Armand Marco and Gérard Martin (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (MoMA)

Sound editing

Antoine Bonfanti (CM)

Cast

Jean-Luc Godard (Vladimir Lenin); Jean-Pierre Gorin (Karl Rosa and later Rosa Luxemburg); Anne Wiazemsky (Ann, women's liberation militant); Juliet Berto (Juliet, woman of the times and hippie); Ernest Menzer [Judge (Julius Hoffman, according to Dixon. Actor cited by MacCabe)]; Yves Afonso (Yves, student revolutionary from Berkeley); Larry Martin (only cited by MacCabe); Claude Nejar (Dave Dellinger, according to Dixon); voice-over in French by Jean-Pierre Gorin and Jean-Luc Godard (Cast based on Lesage. Dixon presents Godard as "Rosa")

Produced by

Claude Nejar (CM)



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In 1970, Godard and Gorin accepted the proposal of the Palestinian militant group Al Fatah to make a film about the political situation in Lebanon and Jordan. They travelled to the Middle East and filmed images such as the Palestinian training camps, guerrilla warfare locations, men and women shooting, adults and children exercising. After a certain time, with their money coming to an end, the two of them had to return home and accept the proposals of the German television company and Grove Films in order to raise more money so that they could finish the film. It was this fact that inspired the reference, at the beginning of *Vladimir et Rosa*, to the purpose of that film being made only so that they could finish the other. Highly appropriately, this film was to be called *Jusqu'à la victoire* ("Until victory"), but it went no further. This was also when the Dziga Vertov Group came to an end. Following the massacre in Aman, known as "Black September", Godard had difficulty finishing the film, in fact he affirmed that almost all of the actors had been killed.

Later on, Godard and Méville re-edited this material, together with some new material discussing precisely the proposals of the Dziga Vertov Group. The new film alleges that the "sound" of the guerrilla warfare, of the inflamed political speeches, overwhelmed the images. This film saw the start of the process of the extensive use of video in the work of Godard, which uses newspaper photos, familiar television images and images of the holocaust. It is a reflection on the part of Godard regarding the proposals of the Dziga Vertov Group, through the images captured in Jordan. Throughout the film, these reflections extend to the places from which the film is shot, from where it is projected and from where it is seen here, in French family television, and there, in the Palestinian revolution. For Godard, the place of cinema (more precisely, of the image) is in the *et* (and) that connects *ici* (here) to *ailleurs* (there).

On the first day that the film was shown, in Paris in September 1976, a bomb was found in the Quintette screen room and the film was no longer shown there, being kept only in one other screen room. The situation at the time that *Jusqu'à la victoire* was edited was so complicated that Godard went as far as asking the producer to provide special protection at the door of the editing room, the place where he lived at the time. Julia Lesage, in her guide to the works of Godard, reproduces the majority of the dialogues from *Ici et Ailleurs*.

All's well
Tout va bien

France, 1972, 95 min, 35 mm, Colour

Filmed at the Epinay studio between the 1st and 23rd of February 1972 and around Paris in the periods from the 17th to the 31st of January 1972 and the 24th to the 06th of March 1972. Monologues based on *Vive la société de consommation* by Jean Saint-Goeurs, in the magazine *CGT*, on the official monologue of the union *La vie ouvrière*, on the magazine *Maoist* and on the monologue of the left-wing worker *La cause du peuple*.

Directed by

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, JL, WD, MoMA, IMDb, DVD)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, JL, WD, MoMA, IMDb, DVD)

Film editing

Kenout Peltier, Claudine Merlin (CM, JL, DVD)
Kenout Peltier (MoMA, WD)

Cinematography

Armand Marco, Yves Agostini, Edouard Burgess (CM)
Armand Marco (WD, JL, MoMA, DVD)

Cameramen

Yves Agostini, Édouard Burgess (DVD)

Assistant Directors

Isabelle Pons, Jean-Hughes Nelkene (CM)

Art Directors

Jacques Dugied, Olivier Girard, Jean-Luc Dugied (JL)
Jacques Dugied (DVD, as set designer)

Sponsorship and Execution

Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil

Cultural Support

French Embassy

Editorial Coordination, Research and Image Selection

Jane de Almeida

Executive Production and Editing

Witz

Production

Marilia Perracini

Design

estação

Translation into Portuguese

Priscila Adachi

English Version

Phil Turner

Proofreading and Text Editing

Carol Mesquita and Gustavo Mesquita

Images Credits

Gaumont

Special Thanks

Jean-Pierre Gorin, Hélène Bettembourg, Christian Boudier, Sarah Choyeau, Cícero Inácio da Silva, Erik Ulman, José Carlos Avellar and Martine Broutolle.

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Catálogo na Fonte do Departamento Nacional do Livro
[Fundação Biblioteca Nacional]

Almeida, Jane de.

Dziga Vertov Group: organized by Jane de Almeida.

São Paulo: witz edições, 2005

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 85-98100-05-6

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