ROGER CRITTENDEN

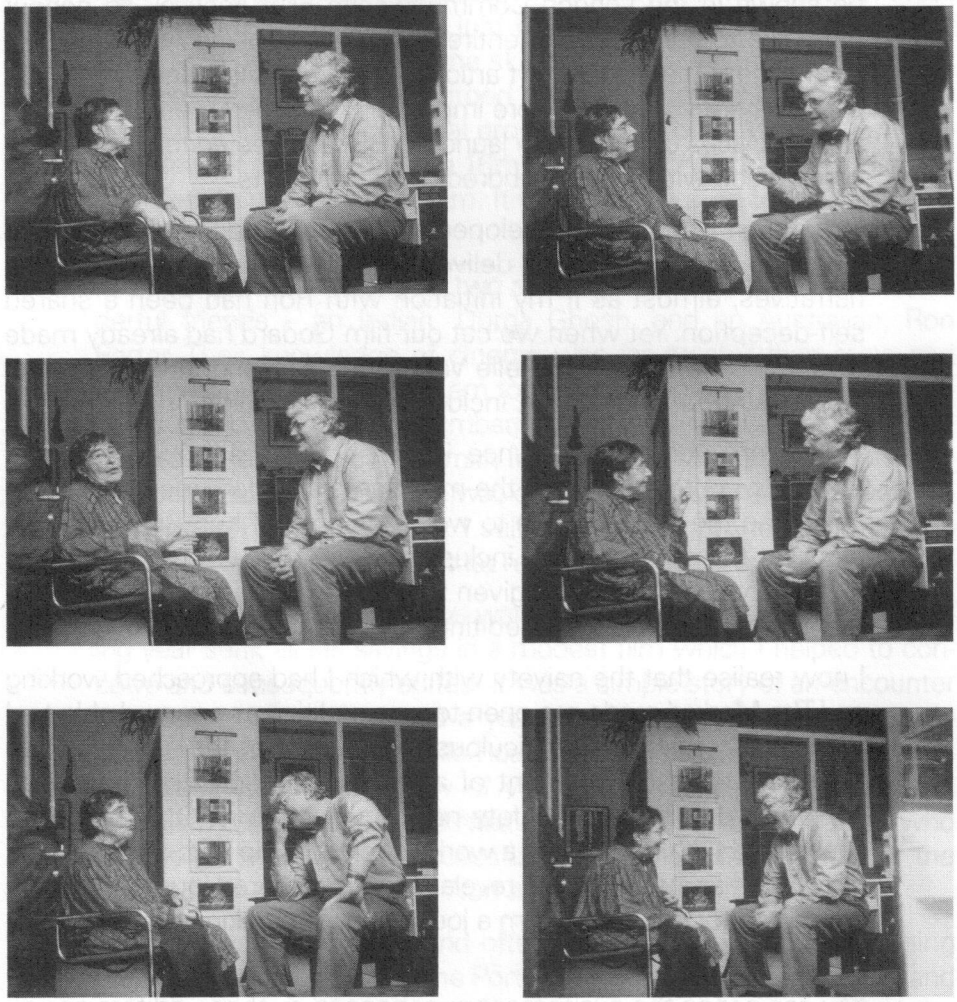
FINE CUTS

THE ART OF EUROPEAN FILM EDITING

FOREWORD BY WALTER MURCH

Focal Press

despite a shared fear of confessing the details of their voluntary commitment to a closed world. It remains to be seen whether future generations can look forward to a similar richness of cinematic forms emerging from the edit suites of Europe.



Agnès Guillemot with Roger Crittenden (© Roger Crittenden)

1 Montage, Mon Beau Souci

(Montage My Fine Care, Jean-Luc Godard – Cahiers du Cinéma, December 1956) © Les Cahiers du Cinéma, 1996

This is an extract from the article referred to by Agnès Guillemot in our conversation where Godard says 'If direction is a look, montage is a heartbeat'. Considering that when he wrote this piece he had yet to make a full-length film, it is a surprisingly elegant insight.

. . . montage is above all an integral part of mise-en-scène. Only at peril can one be separated from the other. One might as well try to separate the rhythm from the melody. '*Eléna et les hommes*'[1] and '*Mr Arkadin*'[2] are both models of montage because each is a model of mise-en-scène. 'We'll save it in the cutting room': a typical producer's axiom, therefore. The most that efficient editing will give a film, otherwise without interest, is precisely the initial impression of having been directed. Editing can restore to actuality that ephemeral grace neglected by both snob and film-lover or can transform chance into destiny. Can there be any higher praise of what the general public confuses with script construction?

If direction is a look, montage is a heartbeat. To foresee is the characteristic of both: but what one seeks to foresee in space, the other seeks in time. Suppose you notice a young girl in the street who attracts you. You hesitate to follow her. A quarter of a second. How to convey this hesitation? Mise-en-scène will answer the question 'How shall I approach her?' But in order to render explicit the other question, 'Am I going to love her?' you are forced to bestow importance on the quarter of a second during which the two questions are born. It may be, therefore, that it will be for the montage rather than the mise-en-scène to express both exactly and clearly the life of an

idea or its sudden emergence in the course of a story. When? Without playing on words, each time the situation requires it, each time within a shot when a shock effect demands to take the place of an arabesque, each time between one scene and another when the inner continuity of the film enjoins with a change of shot the superimposition of the description of a character on that of the plot. This example shows that talking of mise-en-scène automatically implies montage. When montage effects surpass those of mise-en-scène in efficacity, the beauty of the latter is doubled, the unforeseen unveiling secrets by its charm is an operation analogous to using unknown quantities in mathematics.

Anyone who yields to the temptation of montage yields also to the temptation of the brief shot. How? By making the look a key piece in his game. Cutting on a look is almost the definition of montage, its supreme ambition as well as its submission to mise-en-scène. It is, in effect, to bring out the soul under the spirit, the passion behind the intrigue, to make the heart prevail over the intelligence by destroying the notion of space in favour of that of time. The famous sequence of the cymbals in the remake of '*The Man Who Knew Too Much*'[3] is the best proof. Knowing just how long one can make a scene last is already montage, just as thinking about transitions is part of the problem of shooting. Certainly a brilliantly directed film gives the impression of having simply been placed end to end, but a film brilliantly edited gives the impression of having suppressed all direction. Cinematographically speaking, granted the different subjects, the battle in '*Alexander Nevsky*'[4] is in no way inferior to '*The Navigator*'.[5] In other words to give the impression of duration through movement, of a close shot through a long shot, is one of the aims of mise-en-scène and the opposite of one of those of montage. Invention and improvisation take place in front of the Moviola just as much as it does on the set. Cutting a camera movement in four may prove more effective than keeping it as one shot. An exchange of glances, to revert to our previous example, can only be expressed with sufficient force – when necessary – by editing. . . .

. . . . The montage, consequently, both denies and prepares the way for the mise-en-scène: the two are interdependent. To direct means to scheme, and one says of a scheme that it is well or badly mounted.

That is why saying that a director should closely supervise the editing of his film comes to the same thing as saying that the editor should also forsake the smell of glue and celluloid for the heat of the arc lamps. Wandering on the set he will discover exactly where the interest of a scene lies, which are its strong and weak moments, what demands a change of shot, and will therefore not yield to the temptation of cutting simply on movement – the a b c of montage, I admit, provided it is not used too mechanically in the manner of, say, Marguerite Renoir,[6] who often gives the impression of cutting a scene just as it was going to become interesting. In so doing, the editor would be taking his first steps in direction.

Notes

1. ***Eléna et les hommes*** – Jean Renoir (1956) with Ingrid Bergman.
2. ***Mr Arkadin*** – Orson Welles, 1955.
3. ***The Man Who Knew Too Much*** – Alfred Hitchcock, 1955.
4. ***Alexander Nevsky*** – Sergei Eisenstein, 1938.
5. ***The Navigator*** – Buster Keaton, 1924.
6. **Marguerite Renoir (born Houllé)** – She was Jean Renoir's partner and edited all his films in the 1930s from '*La Chienne*' in 1931 to '*La Règle du jeu*' in 1939. I think this remark is a little harsh on the person who, for instance, cut '*Ume partie de campagne*' (1936).

2 Agnès Guillemot

The only editor to work with both Godard and Truffaut, Agnès Guillemot's career spans from the beginning of La Nouvelle vague in the 1960s to the sexual radicalism of Catherine Breillat at the turn of the century. I talked to Agnès in her home in Paris, where she was then living with her husband Claude, a film-maker in his own right. My friend, Sarah Hickson, joined me to lubricate the conversation for which I am immensely grateful. I started, as usual, by asking Agnès about her background.

Agnès Guillemot and Jean-Luc Godard in the cutting room (© les cahiers du cinema, 1985)

I am a war child from a modest background in the north of France, Roubaix. During the war there was not much cinema. Our studies were done in the cellars with air raids in the background. I did not feed on films when I was young. I went on studying. I read a lot and went on to study philosophy. But the arts were revealed to me, not by the dialecticals or intellectuals, but by the poets and their world and philosophy.

The art that appealed most to me was music. Unfortunately I had been unable to learn it. I would have liked to become a conductor and I discovered that cinema is music and that editing is like being a conductor. I would not be able to invent themes, to be a composer, but I can produce orchestrations – I can adapt things therefore I can edit.

In fact I did not have any manual dexterity. I could not draw – editing gave me all that. It did not come from the head – it came through the rhythm, the music, the poetry, which brought me to the meaning of things. One had to listen, feel, receive and then transmit. This is how I came to it – not through my family.

We lived in the north during the textile crisis, during the war. My mother was a maths teacher. I had an unhappy childhood. It does not prepare one for the cinema. I was a student in Poitiers. Then I discovered music, (discovering something late has many good points), what music meant. A discovery in depth – music in its entirety, its vastness – as well as an analytical approach – it engulfed me from all directions.

I had not been brought up with the radio on all the time – I never had a gramophone (record player). I was addicted neither to films nor to music. You can count on your fingers the number of films I saw as a child. One day the school took us to the cinema. It makes me laugh because of '*Les Carabiniers*'.[1] It was a film on animals: a bear was disappearing at the bottom of the screen – I got up to see it go! It always reminds me of the shot in *Carabiniers* where the young actor, Michel Ange, goes to the cinema and wants to touch the woman at the bottom of the screen and tears it. It was the same naivety. His discovery was like mine, but I was young.

Nothing prepared me for it but then I discovered the role of the conductor. When I saw a film on Roberto Benzi, who was a child prodigy conductor in the 1950s, I said to myself this is what I want to do. Not with music – with what I did not know – but I would find out.

I had finished my degree, in philosophy, and I thought about the cinema – its role, its meaning, its ethos – all that, and I wanted to write a thesis on this. But I went to IDHEC[2] and editing seduced me. It was not out of an inability to do anything else – it was a deliberate choice. It was meant for me.

I could not have been a director – I cannot invent stories. Editing has one marvellous thing – you are alone with the material and you listen. I use many metaphors, metaphors you use when talking about painters and sculptors. They look at a landscape, a stone; the stone inspires them to do this or that. Editing is the same. The material is given by somebody else, but I listen to it afresh. I do not try to make it mine, I try to make it produce what it can do. The object is inside – it must be made to come out. It is exactly this – I listen, I look a long time with all my being and I extract what the director wants.

I do not rush and produce some mechanical cuts – all this is not what is real. Everybody can do this but it does not make a film. To give birth to the true film is my passion. I am very lucky, I am very modest and I do not mind doing this for somebody else. On the contrary, I can 'be' the other person – enter his skin, feel what he wants to say, empathise completely, be one with the other. I can go very far in that direction – it can become like an addiction, but it is instrumental in the formation of a good editor.

When I edited my first Truffaut after having edited for Godard, some friends of Truffaut said, but she is going to do a 'Godard'. Completely idiotic – it was too much praise and at the same time not being understood at all. I deliver a Truffaut from Truffaut, a Godard from Godard. I do not mix things up. Film buffs recognise a film edited by me not because of some special seal but through sheer research and attention – I reach a certain truth, a strength. You could think of such and such a piece of music conducted by such and such a conductor and you recognise the conductor's hand. I have not written the music, but I conduct it.

I have been very lucky. Of all the films I have edited, I only regretted doing one (I will not tell you which one) and it is not the worst of all the films I edited. Some were very good, others more indifferent, but in all of them I thought it was worth giving something of myself. Some films I refused to take because the directors do them so as to be 'somebody' in social circles. They do not care a damn about their

films. I am not at the service of the director – I am at the service of the film. Otherwise I quit. People who want to shine in society alongside a director are legion: I can't.

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When I arrived in Paris, my degree in philosophy in my pocket, I thought I would do some work in depth on the cinema, its aims and responsibilities, its meaning, its ethics. To be right in it I did IDHEC. My parents were all for it, my mother being herself in teaching. It was a good place to learn, to be in the middle of things. I preferred the way IDHEC was run in those days. Some said it did not let students' genius develop. This is wrong. Genius is not given by any school – either you have it or you don't.

At IDHEC we knew that the cinema is a team effort. At La FEMIS[3] I saw the director on his own in the cutting room, editing his own film. It is not right. The director is not the best person to deliver his film. He delivers what he thinks is best, but he does not know it all. The greatest directors have always worked with editors.

It is true, later on, Godard with his sense of humour said 'I edited my films myself when I saw how easy it was', but this was after having edited a dozen films with me. I was his only editor, although there had been some substitutes when I was pregnant or editing another film. But even in his first political films he had an assistant – an assistant not a partner in editing. After he did it on his own when he discovered video and he meditated at length on virtual editing thinking one could mix film and video. For years he pondered about this and I could not follow him on those tracks. In the end he again separated one from the other. In Telerama he said: 'He who makes films like they were video is a dunce; he who makes video as if it were film is also a dunce'. From then on he separated the two.

He did try to make films where he mixed both. '*Passion*' despite being a success is not completely a film. The first he did really with his own money and which meant a lot to him was '*Je vous salue, Marie*'[4] on film. This year of reflection led him to see that different methods give different results. I am not saying that you must not do any videos but you must not think that if you make video instead of

a film, on film you will have the same thing. The thinking time (*during editing*) does not take place in the same way. It is a solitary work that has no transmission of knowledge. It is terrible; the constant work at night – abnormal working conditions. On top of that the producer thinks it's easy.

On my last film, '*Selon Matthieu*',[5] I fell ill. When I was getting better they sent me a cassette of the film. The director and the producer had done a version to ask me what I thought. Abominable! There is no distance. You must take the audience on a voyage of discovery, whereas in their version they knew everything before the end, and I do not think that films can be edited like this. In France the Cinema is being invaded by the power of TV. If TV does not want such an actor you do not shoot the film. It is frightening.

I am glad that the end of my career coincided with the compulsory use of video. In 1966 I cut '*Mémoires d'un jeune con*'[6] on Avid and they then printed it on 35mm. The director, Patrick Aurignac, spent seven years in prison and wrote a script based on his experiences. I found this worthy of interest. The producer, to save money, made him direct his film and it went to his head. He was not up to it – it would have been a worthy film but he was badly advised. He committed suicide. It was worth breaking my beliefs for, but I wish it had a better ending.

Since I retired I have been working as an adviser on films shot on video. I always use the same technique. I will not say straight away after looking at it, it's fine or no, something is wrong. I will say – we watch the film together and then you go and have lunch. I think and then two hours later I will tell you the result.

When I watched a film I would treat it as I would a music manuscript – I would divide it into movements. I can tell you that timing the pieces made it obvious, allowed a dialogue with the director, showed why it did not work – a question of rhythm. If you try to explain to them, make speeches, they do not understand. If you tell them you have two sequences lasting exactly the same and which say more or less the same thing they understand. Even working in Avid I did some scenes like this to be able to discuss them.

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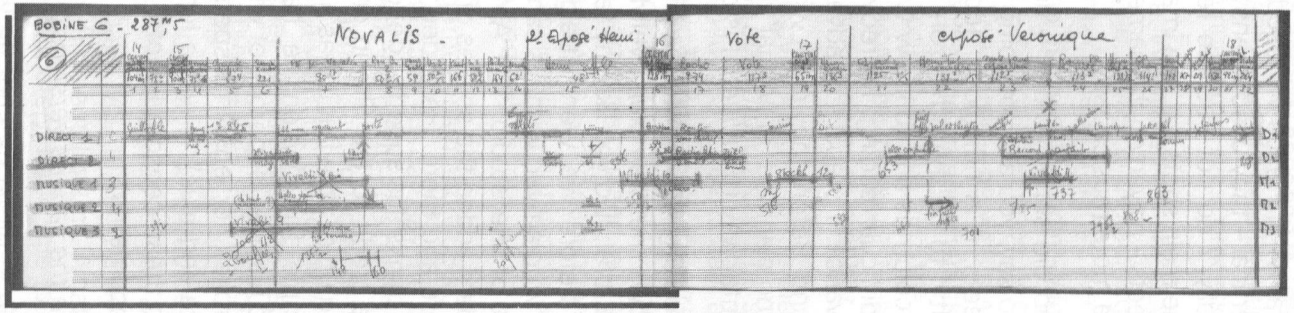
Agnès then decided to show me the way she prepared her dubbing sheets – using music manuscript paper horizontally instead of the industry norm of vertical.



Example of dubbing chart designed by Agnès Guillemot (Courtesy of Agnès Guillemot)

My first 'score' was with Godard on '*Le Petit Soldat*'[7] and he called them 'my little trains'. In France we used to prepare mixing sheets vertically. Why vertical – they used to answer me – because the film unthreads vertically. I do not see the relevance. On my 'score' I would indicate the main shots (i.e. the image), direct sound, dubbing and all similar effects – played on the same 'instrument'. It allowed us to divide it up in a more musical way.

My husband who did some editing – he is not an editor he is a director – used to say, you are not going to do like everybody else, with vertical sheets, it is ridiculous. Together we realised it was much more 'crafty' to do them horizontally. In the vertical sheets we had big long columns and to know what was happening in parallel made very difficult reading. Moreover one would not prepare the charts in advance. I prepare in advance where my assistants must put the sound. Before they put it where there is an empty column. There was no planning. In 'Virtual' they found out what I used to do, the horizontal way (*timeline*), it is obvious.

Godard said I should give them to the Cinémathèque.[8] This one is '*Le Mépris*'[9] (*shows me example*). Everybody speaks of the shot in this film – so beautiful; 'Do you like my feet, etc.' In fact it is not the original version; before we went straight from the cameraman, Raoul Coutard,[10] who arrived with his camera, to Jack Palance, who was coming out of the studio. The Americans said there is not enough sex. Godard added the scenes of Bardot naked. The scenes are peppered here and there. He added that travelling shot on the bed – everybody thinks it is superb. I get cross – it was superb to go directly from the credit to the film in one shot. Now one speaks about the splitting up of time but it was not like this – it was a much more linear, simple film. When he had to put things for the Americans he did his best (superb shot where they are sitting on the settee and he strokes her legs, interspersed with shots of her on a carpet, red, white and blue). It was a long shot (*continuous*) but it was cut to put in these censored shots. It was painful – I have the proof in these documents.

Agnès shows me the various versions.

With '*Vivre sa Vie*':[11] when he shot he knew exactly what he was going to do – no discussion. He was the only one (and even his

friends of the Nouvelle Vague were astounded by this) who knew. He 'saw' his film before actually shooting it. There were very few things he did not know. We hesitated a few little times but for most things it was a logical continuation of what preceded it. It was in his head.

We spoke very little. We were two shy guys. We understood each other's body language. I was on the editing machine – he was next to me. I run the film – when he thinks we should stop, I stop. We look again – we stop at the same point. We spoke very little. When there were doubts – it happened once or twice on some travelling shots in relation to the music – he would say 'underline the strong beats in white – I will sit down and mark them' – he used a yellow marker. When we looked at the film the yellow and white coincided. He said 'it won't be possible to say we did not get on'. Sometimes things would surprise me, but I would listen.

In the book 'Godard by Godard'[12] in the piece '*Montage mon beau souci*' (*Montage my beautiful concern*) he said 'To direct is a look to edit is a beat of the heart'. Our hearts beat at the same rhythm – we did not need to speak. Take '*Les Carabiniers*'. There is a scene in the woods; the partisans are ambushed by the so-called soldiers. One of them removes a partisan's cap and fair hair falls to her shoulders. The gesture is done twice – in closeup and again in a wider shot. We tried to do a classical link, but it did not have the same import as it did when we used both shots.

I put them both together again and Godard said 'How are we going to justify this?' and I said 'we can say, he did it and when he did it he asked himself why he did it – he does it again to know how he did it'. It is the only thing I said to Godard. It was a bit twisted – not an explanation, only a word here and there. For the sake of equilibrium we needed other 'double raccord' (repeat actions) in the film, but they were less moving than this first one.

Godard's films are impeccably constructed. The only time that censorship came into his films was in '*Le Mépris*'. He was furious because he knew that if you take off a beat the whole thing may fall. I learnt this with him: equilibrium. What I learnt with him is that genius is caring passionately. I told this to Nicole Garcia[13] who did not understand at first, but saw the truth of it later on. One reacts differently as an actress than as a director. Her films are good. She

was good. I ended my career as an editor with '*Romance*'.[14] Good film – great dignity of female sexual pleasure – not pornographic.

'*Vivre sa Vie*' is a masterpiece. There are different categories of film in Godard – for instance contemplative films, of which '*Vivre sa Vie*' is the prototype. '*Bande à part*'[15] is something else. I worked with Godard in the first ten years of his career. He then stopped to make his political films and then his research. When he started again he did not want an editor. He was not sure of himself but he was sure he had 'perfect pitch' as far as films were concerned.

He could not stand people talking on the set. They prevented him from listening. He looked at everything with an open eye. His films were not expensive – he shot very quickly – he knew exactly what he was going to do. He extracted from things all that could be extracted. I see him walking in the location of '*Masculin, Feminin*',[16] a bistro. He sent all the team to the next bistro to be in peace, and he 'felt' the set. When he asked people to come back he knew exactly where to put them. It was not as things were done then – we are going to do a shot here and there – he would do long tracks. He did not change things without a reason. He found things in the workplace – no known recipes.

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Jean Douchet[17] in his book on the *New Wave* said we were not aware of what we were inventing or discovering – we lived it intensely but without saying to ourselves we are inventing new things. On the whole people do not like it when I say this. Anna Karina[18] in an interview describes Godard as an intellectual, but I do not think this is the right term. He is marvellously intelligent but not an intellectual. The other day I was asked why did he want to do a science fiction film with '*Alphaville*'.[19] I answered, he did not decide to do a science fiction film. He went looking for locations for '*Ume Femme Mariée*'[20] – he was looking for locations in Orly airport, which was being built. He saw the basements, the odd buildings – at the time the atomic bomb was in the headlines. He saw the swimming pool in the airport – a new thing at the time. The film was to be called, '*A new adventure of Lemmy Caution*'. When he saw all these settings it all crystallised and became the elements of what became a science fiction film,

linking the swimming pool and the interrogations, as in certain countries at the time. At the time and even now people do not realise that it is a 'true' science fiction – there are no special effects. Here it is the daily routine, which creates the science fiction.

Godard looked at everything with passion. He found things in everyday life when he walked, listened, found things for his scripts. He listens. It is while walking in the street, seeing the girls in the street, that '*Vivre sa Vie*' started. There is an expression of a novelist – 'Sculpture came up from his feet'. Inspiration came from his feet to the heart. It is tactile, physical. Intellectuals would talk at conferences on Godard, but when Godard came they did not ask him any questions. Vampires, they live off Godard's films but the person does not interest them.

I divide people between the earthly and the pure spirit. Godard told me he was visual/audio and I was audio/visual. I was an audio tactile. This is why I could not work in virtual. I have to touch the film. In the last film of Godard, a reflection on the cinema, he edits a film with a female assistant who is blind. He gives her a piece of film and asks her to put the sound on it.

A producer once said, he hasn't done any splicing for three days. He spends his time looking at the film backwards, looking at the same scene. I am sure this is how one should edit ones film – not by rushing to do the first splice. I had to fight with the producer at first. They wanted me to edit the first sequence to find the results, but it does not mean that the final editing will be the same. You have to see the whole film – I have to explain this to directors.

Once Catherine Breillat called me to come to her aid. She had told her editor to edit the first sequence between two characters. She said the editor had sabotaged the sequence. When I came I saw why it did not work. We saw the characters later on – we discover their tempo – their dialogue. She had edited this tac/tac/tac quickly. Whereas it was two characters that took their time to speak; the editor must see the whole of the film.

In French films music is used as an illustration – not a good use of music and sounds. Godard always uses direct sound except in '*Le Petit Soldat*' because of Anna Karina's accent. He wanted to show the sound level. We are not conscious of the sound level we hear.

(He was in the editing room for the image but not for the sound – he was in the bistro downstairs.) In '*Le Petit Soldat*', at the beginning, a car arrives silently, one does not hear the brakes, sound of a match, car goes, one hears nothing – then music.

By the way, I did not know Godard before I worked with him. He had asked one of my former pupils in IDHEC if she knew somebody who was not deformed by traditional films who could edit his film.

In '*Ume Femme est ume femme*' Anna Karina gets up, goes to the bistro. She is inside, asks for a 'green' crème – goes out in the street, lots of noise, the shot after – no more noise. It was to make us hear the sound level that you normally do not hear, like abstract music. With the Italians we sent them an International copy (*sound mix without dialogue*) with the cut. They thought there was a mistake and they reintroduced the sound everywhere – put sound in the 'hole'.

He sees it as his rhythm that he adds to the music. He always said that he is not a musician himself and discovered music later on. He had a tremendous ear – he did not want to use music to illustrate things, to accompany. He wanted music that would talk with the other sounds in the film – a dialogue – not music to make things smoother, easier to understand, to create false emotions. Sometimes I hear people say here it is not too good, let us put some music.

'*Le Mépris*' was the only time when he used a score – Delerue[21] – good collaboration. He did not cut it. In the scene in the music hall, normally you would lower the music when people talk – here he cuts it: no half-measures.

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I worked with Truffaut from '*Baisers Volés*',[22] because Claudine Bouché[23] was not available. We got on well with '*Baisers Volés*', the way one got on with Truffaut. Truffaut was not bothered by how one makes a film, how one puts things together. He is the spectator – he wants to see the result, not the know-how. I was completely puzzled. Godard never shot a scene from different angles saying we will choose, but Truffaut did it. Naively I thought he was going to say I want this or that in closeup on such characters. He said nothing, do what you like, disconcerting but exciting.

'*Baisers Volés*' was edited in quite a new way. For instance the scene where Lonsdale[24] comes to see the private detective and says nobody loves me, when you sell shoes you are a shoe-nick twenty-four hours a day. In principle one puts a wide shot then one gets nearer, then closeup. Looking at the film I thought this is ridiculous – why do this? Lonsdale was fantastic in medium closeup and closeup. I went from one to the other to take the best.

Truffaut asked why did you do this? I said I do not want the best things to stay in the rushes, discarded. He accepted the principle of the thing after we projected it. When it was alright he would not say much but when it did not work he would say so. He was jealous of Godard. I suffered from having worked with Godard but I was proud of it. Truffaut did not use me without letting me know – it was his way. During '*Domicile Conjugal*'[25] one scene with Claude Jade[26] was causing problems. He said we should not edit it this way. I said I had tried everything – can you come to the editing room. Then he was mad. He did not know what to say – he hated it.

'*Baisers Volés*', '*L'Enfant sauvage*'[27] and '*La Sirène du Mississipi*'[28] are his three best films. '*Domicile Conjugal*' I like least. Truffaut was very susceptible. Jealousy and his unfaithfulness were his worst defects. He needed to love and be loved. His films went by fours. Of his editors only Martine Barraqué[29] did more.

When I was on the dole I went to see a director – a lover of film – Pierre Tchernia.[30] He was making a film that I do not like – '*Le Viager*'.[31] He told me 'I do not do Godard'. Later on when somebody said that to me I would reply 'it is a shame you don't'. There is a very poignant article by Godard in Telerama. After his accident he tried to start again. 'I have to start from scratch, as if I had not done anything before'.

Truffaut shot in a more traditional way. His trademark is his sensitivity. There is a charm that is Truffaut – it comes from the way he learnt about the cinema when he was very young – he likes cliché. With Godard it was the opposite so for me it was sometimes difficult. The cliché which may cost me my work with him was in '*Domicile Conjugal*'. Claude Jade has a child. Léaud[32] comes home late – meets his in-laws at the bottom of the stairs. Truffaut shot two versions: one where the in-laws said, 'Be nice to her, she had a lot of

pain, she went through a lot' the other 'You have a lovely little boy, be happy and nice with her'. Earlier in the film we had been told that she was listening to a record about childbirth without pain – automatically I chose the second version. Truffaut said to me 'why did you choose this one?' I said 'If you shoot her listening to the record, you are not going to traumatise generations of young women'. It was bad faith. In the scene where Claude Jade and Leaud meet again she says 'now you are proud of your son, but before, you dropped me'. He betrayed her with the Japanese girl – it was bad faith.

Godard says 'the cinema is a question of morality'. It was contrary to my belief to put the first version. For Truffaut it was better to put the more hackneyed idea. Women suffer and to hide the fact she was putting on a face because her partner had betrayed her. He took my version but he was not a moralist. I was nearer to Godard.

With Truffaut there was no joy in the cutting room. Once I had a big bouquet and a telegram for '*Baisers Volés*': 'make the film how you like, I shot it thinking of other things (it was 1968) I trust you completely, do as if I were dead' I found this note after Truffaut's death. In June 1968 all the technicians were on strike. He had asked me if we could go and do one projection without saying anything to anybody. I said no. I did not like it, it was contrary to my principles. I do not see why I should have given in.

I am very severe on '*La Nuit américaine*'.[33] It presents the cinema to the public in the same way that Cinémonde[34] would show it to the reader. This is why I share Godard's view who wrote to him: 'From a cineaste who is such a film buff you should have been more faithful'. One could have done better on a film about film. When I saw it, it annoyed me.

I did not like this line in '*Baisers Volés*': 'politeness is better than being sincere' – I do not think so. In the scene when Delphine Seyrig[35] comes in the room it was not easy. The frame when he is clowning in his bed – it was not very well directed – and hard to find some reactions. She is superb – I love the scene when he is on top of the ladder in the shoe shop and sings.

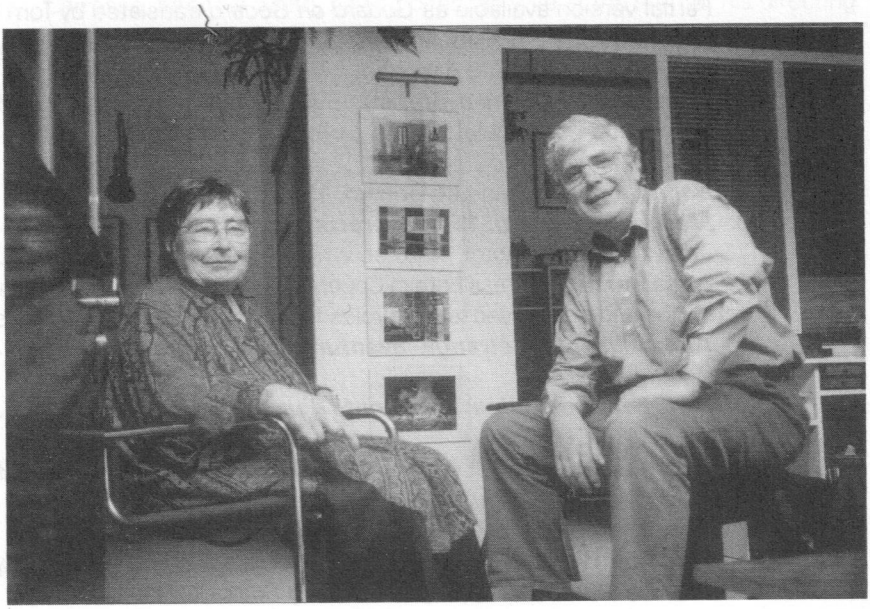
In '*Le Sirène du Mississipi*' there were lots of aphorisms: 'I love you because you are loveable'! One could not discuss with him.

Not even Suzanne Schiffman[36] – she was wonderful – she just died. She understood Truffaut. She had worked with Godard too. When they split it was very painful. I do not like to speak too much of my work with Truffaut. It is good to admire and I do not admire him that much. At first it was possible when he was in love with Catherine Deneuve.[37] He went to Brittany and left the film with me, in full confidence. Then when he broke with Deneuve – I knew he would not take me again. He had an extraordinary wife, Madeleine Morgenstern.[38]

Yann Dedet[39] and Martine Barraqué went on the set. I never did – or I went out of politeness. Truffaut liked people to go. When I see a film being shot it has not the same mystery for me as when I discover it in the projection room. It is fantastic, the editor seeing it for the first time. This does not happen in video – everybody has seen everything as it happens. One's eyes are polluted by so many shots.

Anna Karina says in an article 'to make films one has to take everything seriously' – I add to this 'except oneself'. One has to be modest:

Shall we drink a coffee now?



Agnès Guillemot with Roger Crittenden (© Roger Crittenden)

Notes

1. ***Les Carabiniers*** – Film by Jean-Luc Godard, 1963.
2. **L'IDHEC** – L'Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques, French National Film School, established after the 2nd World War in Paris.
3. **La FEMIS** – Fondation European des metiers de l'image et du son, successor to the above institution.
4. ***Passion*** (1982), ***Je vous salue, Marie*** (1985) – Jean-Luc Godard.
5. ***Selon Matthieu*** – Xavier Beauvois, 2000. Edited by Christophe Nowak.
6. ***Mémoires d'un jeune con*** – Patrick Aurignac, 1996.
7. ***Le Petit Soldat*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1960.
8. **Cinémathèque *(Francaise)*** – This refers to the institution established by Henri Langlois where many of the French New Wave gained their cinematic education by full immersion in screenings and discussions of films from all places and eras. Langlois became a *cause celebre* when the government closed the Cinémathèque, provoking violent demonstrations which were a precursor to the unrest of 1968, only in France!
9. ***Le Mépris*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1963, based on a novel by Alberto Moravia and starring Brigitte Bardot, Michel Piccoli and Jack Palance.
10. **Raoul Coutard** – Along with Henri Decae the leading cinematographer of *Le Nouvelle Vague*, to whom much credit must be given for the visual style developed during that period.
11. ***Vivre sa Vie: film en douze tableau*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1962.
12. **Godard by Godard** – Fascinating book where Jean-Luc Godard chronicles his career including many examples of his working documents. Partial version available as *Godard on Godard* translated by Tom Milne.
13. **Nicole Garcia** – Brilliant actress, born in Algeria, who in recent years has successfully turned to direction.
14. ***Romance*** – Catherine Breillat, 1999, a frank and, for some, disturbing examination of female sexuality, which this director has further explored in other films.
15. ***Bande à part*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1964.
16. ***Masculin–Féminin: 15 faits précis*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1966.
17. **Jean Douchet** – Actor, director, writer and former professor at L'IDHEC.
18. **Anna Karina** – Actress born in Copenhagen, was Godard's muse in the early sixties and also played leading roles for Jacques Rivette and Agnès Varda.
19. ***Alphaville: une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1965.
20. ***Ume Femme mariée: Fragments d'une film tourné en 1964*** – Jean-Luc Godard, 1964.
21. **Georges Delerue** – Eminent music composer for well over 300 films including many for Truffaut.
22. ***Baisers Volés*** – François Truffaut, 1968.
23. **Claudine Bouché** – Editor who cut for Truffaut and is still active. Most recently – '*Water dropping on Burning Rocks*' for François Ozon.

24. **Mich(a)el Lonsdale** – Prolific actor, including for Luis Buñuel.
25. ***Domicile Conjugal*** – François Truffaut, 1970.
26. **Claude Jade** – '*Baisers Volés*' was her first screen appearance. She reprised the role of girl friend and then wife to Antoine Doinel in two subsequent Truffaut films, '*Domicile Conjugal*' and '*L'Amour en fuite*'.
27. ***L'Enfant sauvage*** – François Truffaut, 1969.
28. ***La Sirène du Mississipi*** – François Truffaut, 1969.
29. **Martine Barraqué** – Editor for François Truffaut on his last eight films.
30. **Pierre Tchernia** – Actor, writer, director.
31. ***Le Viager*** – Tchernia, 1972 (there are three editing credits).
32. **Jean-Pierre Léaud** – François Truffaut's alter-ego as Antoine Doinel from '*Les Quatre-cents coups*', 1959 to '*L'Amour en fuite*', 1979. Also acted for Godard.
33. ***La Nuit américaine*** – François Truffaut, 1973. Truffaut's tribute to the magic of filmmaking.
34. ***Cinémonde*** – A popular film magazine.
35. **Delphine Seyrig (1932–90)** – Born in Beirut, became an eminent actress in French films and theatre. Worked with, amongst others, Truffaut, Resnais, Buñuel and Akerman.
36. **Suzanne Schiffman** – François Truffaut's right hand woman, from script girl to co-writer. Also worked with Godard.
37. **Catherine Deneuve** – Worked with Truffaut and Buñuel, amongst many other credits, still the Diva.
38. **Madeleine Morgenstern** – Ran Truffaut's company, Les Films du Carrosse, after his death, having been his wife at the start of his directing career. A remarkable woman.
39. **Yann Dedet** – Film editor – see interview next. . .