



Jean-Luc Godard's

**Two or Three
Things I Know
About Her**

RIALTO PICTURES PRESSBOOK



CREDITS

Director/Screenwriter
Jean-Luc Godard

Based on articles by Catherine Vimenet¹

Executive Producer
Anatole Dauman

Producer
Philippe Dussart

Cinematography
Raoul Coutard

Editor
Françoise Collin

Costume Designer
Gitt Magrini

Music
Ludwig van Beethoven (from "Quartet no. 16")

Sound
René Levert

Subtitles (2006 Rialto re-release)
Lenny Borger

France 1967
Color Scope
running time: 84 minutes

An Argos Films – Les Films du Carrosse – Anouchka Films – Parc Films
co-production

A RIALTO PICTURES RELEASE

¹ Vimenet's articles exposing prostitution among Paris housewives originally appeared in the newsweekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* (1966)



CAST

Juliette Janson
Marina Vlady

Robert Janson, her husband
Roger Montsoret

Roger, Robert's friend
Jean Narboni

Marianne
Anny Duperey

Monsieur Gérard
Joseph Gehrard

Christophe, Juliette's son
Christophe Bourseiller²

John Bogus (the American journalist)
Raoul Lévy

Bouvard and Pécuchet³
Claude Miller and Jean-Patrick Lebel

The writer
Jean-Pierre Laverne

The student
Blandine Jeanson

Girl who talks to Robert
Juliete Berto

Narrator
Jean-Luc Godard

² Born in 1957, Bourseiller went on to a prominent multi-faced career as a film and stage actor, journalist, novelist and teacher. He appeared in two other Godard films.

³ "Bouvard and Pécuchet" are the encyclopaedist heroes of Flaubert's unfinished eponymous comic novel. Godard's two actors, Miller and Lebel, went on to become filmmakers, notably Miller, who also worked as Godard's unit manager.



François Truffaut⁴ on “*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*”

Why did I join the producers of *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*? Is it because Jean-Luc has been a friend of mine for nigh on twenty years or because Godard is the greatest filmmaker in the world?

Jean-Luc Godard is not the only one who films as he breathes, but he is the one who breathes best. He is quick like Rossellini, wicked like Sacha Guitry, musical like Orson Welles, simple like Pagnol, hurt like Nicholas Ray, effective like Hitchcock, profound, profound, profound like Ingmar Bergman and insolent like nobody else.

Even those who hate Godard, sitting in the dark before one of his films, well, even if they don't understand a thing, I guarantee you that they won't miss a beat. In other words, just as the O.R.T.F.⁵ examines audience ratings, you could measure the intensity in an auditorium while a Godard film is being projected and you would find that he knows how to make himself heard and watched like nobody else.

He is the one who killed off the two or three worst things I know about the public: polite indifference, vague interest, amused condescension. His authority, since that is what we are talking about, is such that you might call it a good-luck charm or an *infallibility* curse. Will Jean-Luc Godard become more popular than the Pope, that is to say, just a little less than the Beatles? It's possible. Professor Chiarini has stated, “There is the cinema *pre*-Godard and *post*-Godard.” That's true, and as the years go by we grow more certain that *Breathless* (1960) marked a crucial turning point in the cinema, just as *Citizen Kane* did in 1940. Godard has pulverized the system, he has turned the cinema inside out, just as Picasso did in painting, and like him, he has made everything possible. France, formerly called Gaul, is turning into a country with a population of forty-five million cinéastes. Filming from morning till night, it is a real pleasure to see him and to act as the financier of such a brilliant “savate” fighter⁶.

More soberly, I can conclude by saying that I became the co-producer of Jean-Luc Godard's thirteenth film because I noticed that the people who invested money in his twelve previous masterpieces have all become rich.

-- excerpted from *French Boxing and Finance, or Two or Three Things I Know About Him*

⁴ Truffaut's Films du Carrosse was one of the film's four production companies.

⁵ the former French radio and television broadcasting corporation

⁶ “savate” is a form of French boxing



Vincent Canby on "Two or Three Things..."

Filmographically speaking, Jean Luc Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* comes after *Alphaville*, *Pierrot le Fou* and *Masculine Feminine*, all made in 1965, and it precedes several short films as well as the features *La Chinoise* (1967), *Weekend*, *Le Gai Savoir* and *One Plus One* (also called *Sympathy for the Devil*), all made in 1968.

I go into this detail because Godard in each of his films, constantly directs our attention to the place an individual film takes in relation to his other films, and because the director has repudiated these earlier works and is now reportedly devoting himself to filmmaking as a revolutionary activity, rather than to making revolutionary films. There is a difference.

Two or Three Things I Know About Her does not, as some have said, mark the end of Godard's "classical" period (he didn't abandon people and people-in-place until after *Weekend*), but it does dramatize the beginning of Godard as the formal movie essayist.

The film coolly, and in strikingly beautiful images (many of which are dominated by the sort of red that would rivet the eye of a child), pictures the situation (it does not tell a story) of a thirtyish Parisian housewife who becomes a part-time prostitute to help pay for the telly, the clothes, the car and the apartment she shares with her husband and children in one of Paris's new housing projects.

Alternating with these scenes are shots of the construction of the "new" Paris that is arising around Juliette, and all the people like her, to form a concrete and steel environment that effectively makes prostitutes of them all. On the soundtrack, Godard whispers "*petites lectures*" on everything from politics and the meaning of words to the separation between emotion and thought, between thought and word, and between word and the meaning communicated.

In a similar way is Juliette separated from Paris (actually, the 20th arrondissement), the "her" of the title. Godard's preoccupation with vocabulary and syntax as weapons of political and psychological repression (which is what *Le Gai Savoir* is all about) keeps cropping up throughout *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* in narration, in interviews-as-dialogue, and even in posters.

The ideas—which come in the form of Godard's interrogation of himself and of the beliefs that shaped the self-proclaimed Maoist of today—are lucidly, often humorously, presented by Raoul Coutard's camera that explores faces, rooms, buildings, cars, Coke bottles, and Ajax cans, all with Brechtian dispassion. It's a lovely film and should be seen... -- *New York Times*, May 1, 1970



James Monaco on "Two or Three Things..."

Two or Three Things I Know About Her may very well be Godard's most consummate film. It began with an article about prostitution in the new suburbs of Paris published in *Le Nouvel Observateur*. The "elle" of the title is Juliette (Marina Vlady), as well as Paris. "During the course of the film," Godard explained, "I want to include everything; sport, politics, even groceries." This is Godard at his best, jostling images and sounds, words and meaning, in a symphony of ideas: Juliette, the victim of the Paris suburban housing complex, the war in Vietnam, the poetry of consumer goods, the French fascination with America, the exploitation of women, her own indifference. . . .

Two of the important scenes of the film take place in cafés, as do so many key scenes in Godard. In one there's a series of quick shots, each one a closer enlargement of a coffee cup until finally the cup fills the center of the scope image.

We hear Godard on the soundtrack: "Perhaps an object like this will make it possible to link up, to move from one subject to another, from living in society, to being together. But then, since social relationships are always ambiguous, since my thought is only a unit, since an immense moat separates the subjective certitude that I have for myself from the objective truth that I am for others, since I never stop finding myself guilty, even though I feel innocent, since every event transforms my daily life, since I always seem to fail to communicate . . . since... since . . . since I can't tear myself away from the objectivity that crushes me, nor from the subjectivity that isolates me, since it isn't possible for me either to raise myself into Being, or to fall into Nothingness . . . , it's necessary that I listen, it's necessary that I look around me more than ever . . . the world . . . my fellow creatures . . . my brothers."

This is not a film talking. It is a man. It's the most personal moment in all of Godard. Poets sometimes speak to us directly but filmmakers seldom do. Throughout this long monologue shimmering black coffee swirls in the cup. The spoon stirs the sugar. The sharp light refracts in the bubbles that form, turn slowly, slowly on the surface, and then annihilate themselves. Godard is a great filmmaker because he makes great cinema out of a close-up of a coffee cup and a narrative of his own thoughts about his own feelings.

Two or Three Things I Know About Her won the Prix Marilyn Monroe du Cinéma, awarded by an all-woman jury including Marguerite Duras and Florence Malraux.

-- excerpted from Godard entry in *World Film Directors* – Volume Two, Edited by John Wakeman (1988, H. W. Wilson Company)



Marina Vlady: "Godard et Moi"

Godard and I had separately read the reportage in the *Nouvel Observateur* [newsweekly]. We had discussed it as two friends who read might discuss an article in the *Nouvel Observateur*. At that time Jean-Luc wanted to make a film of Balzac's *The Lily of the Valley*. After our conversations, he dropped the idea. *Two or Three Things* used several cases mentioned in the *Nouvel Observateur* probe: the girl who lives in her first modern apartment and who keeps taking baths without realizing how expensive it is; the old man who sub-leases his apartment for "tricks"; the girls who turn the basement into a brothel, etc. And there's this girl, Juliette, to whom I lend my features—because with Godard you can't really talk about acting. Obviously, in the film Godard makes comments about life in Paris, the condition of women, the war in Vietnam, etc. For him, prostitution is simply a pretext, or rather an extreme, a caricature. I know this film might irritate viewers just like certain readers failed to grasp the sense of the *Nouvel Observateur* article. I'm very fond of this film. Would I behave as Juliette does if I found myself in similar conditions? I think I would. But you know, Juliette doesn't prostitute herself to eat. She has enough to live on. She wants to buy herself decorations, dresses, not let mediocrity destroy her femininity. When I read the *Nouvel Observateur* article, I said to myself that life was poorly organized and that we had to say so. Still, I don't think Godard wanted to make a "realist" film about prostitution in the housing projects. He wanted to speak out on society today and also raise awareness, inform." – from *Le Nouvel Observateur*, March 8, 1967

Richard Roud on "Two or Three Things..."

Two or Three Things I Know About Her is, in Godard's own words, a sociological essay in the form of a novel but written, not with words, but with notes of music. It is much more ambitious than *Made in U.S.A.*, both in its subject-matter, which deals with the whole Parisian region—the 'her' of the title—and in its form. "At this moment," wrote Godard, "the whole area round Paris is being reorganized. On a vast scale, the region is being transformed; and what strikes me is that it is really being rearranged as a huge brothel. One finds here all the things that characterize the brothel: the inhabitants are obedient and docile, and they are prostituting themselves. If I have filmed a prostitute, it is because I wanted to show this..." In short, the film is a kind of apotheosis of Godard's feelings about prostitution in modern life.

The idea came from an exposé in *Le Nouvel Observateur* which showed how many of the women residing in the new low-cost high-rise housing complexes resort to casual prostitution in order to make ends meet. The practice has become so common, apparently, that there is even a name for them: 'shooting

RIALTO PICTURES

stars'. The economic reasons for this, as Godard explained in an interview, are that most of these women have been forcibly re-located in these dreary buildings outside the city. Their flats are modern, with central heating and all modern conveniences, but they are not allowed to bring with them their old furniture—for fear of woodworm—and so they have the initial expense of refurnishing the house. Then there is the cost of moving, charges for connecting gas and light, and furthermore many of them, carried away by their new-found luxury, run up heavy bills for gas and electricity. From the very beginning they are in debt. Faced with the necessity of paying off these debts, and more important, affording all the luxuries with which our consumer society tempts us, many of these women go into Paris (some once a week, some only at the difficult end of the month), to prostitute themselves. Returning home with a full grocery bag, they are much appreciated for their 'clever management' by their unsuspecting—or complaisant—husbands.

This is the pretext for the film, and it also gives it a basic structure: twenty-four hours in the day of one of these 'shooting stars', an attractive young housewife (played by Marina Vlady) who lives with her garage mechanic husband and their two children in a housing complex. The film begins one evening and ends the next, during which time she has spent the day in Paris. . . .

His model, in some respects, has been Francis Ponge, a French poet who began during the last war to write little poems in prose which are neither more nor less than the descriptions of objects....When Godard shows us for what seems like two or three minutes a shot of a coffee-cup seen from above, with the bubbles first gradually separating, then re-forming into a circle in the centre, then redispersing, one feels one is experiencing something much more important than at first sight it seems to be....The music of the spheres? The movement of molecules?

The many shots of cranes, steam shovels, dump trucks are of course easier to 'justify'—they are what is physically transforming the new Paris, and the way in which they tower over the old Paris dominating the life of the inhabitants is thematically quite clear. So, too, the shots of consumer products, which...are meant to figure the role of advertising in our lives. But the coffee-cup, and another extraordinarily long-held shot of the end of a burning cigarette, carry more premonitory weight than one would have thought possible....

Before going on to Godard's use of subjective descriptions, one must point out that the characters of the film are also seen as objects:

"It is 4:45.

Should I speak of Juliette or of these leaves?

Since it is impossible, in any case, really to do both together, let's say that both tremble gently in this beginning of the end of an October afternoon."

Every attempt is continually made to remind us that we are watching a film; nowhere can one slip back into simply absorbing a story. At the very beginning, we are told by the narrator (Godard himself, whispering): "This woman is Marina Vlady. She is an actress. She's wearing a midnight-blue sweater with two yellow stripes. She is of Russian origin, and her hair is dark chestnut or light brown, I'm not sure which." Then Marina Vlady takes up the commentary herself and says: "Yes, to speak as if one were quoting truth. It was old Brecht who said that actors should seem to be quoting." Then Godard takes it up again: "This woman is Juliette Janson. She lives here. She is wearing a midnight-blue sweater with two yellow stripes. Her hair is dark chestnut or else light brown. I am not sure which. She is of Russian origin." And then Marina Vlady, assuming her character, says: "Two years ago, I was in Martinique..." and we're off. But this is not just a stylistic trick: throughout the film, whenever one might forget one is watching a film, one is caught up short by Godard. In any case, there are also Godard's own commentaries, such as the one that follows the first long dramatic scene. "It is certain that the rearranging of the Parisian area is going to make it easier for the government to pursue its class politics, and for the great monopolies to orient and organize the economy without worrying too much about the needs and aspirations to a better life of the eight million people who live here."

Curiously enough, the effect is not to destroy the dramatic scenes; rather I found that they were heightened and given not only more meaning (which one would expect), but also more beauty by being thus set off.

Now for what Godard has called the 'subjectively descriptive' side of the film. In an attempt to make his mosaic full and meaningful, and in accordance with his basic idea that if you have something to say, the best way is just to say it, many of the characters interrupt their dialogue to let us hear—straight to camera—their thoughts. Even minor characters—attendants in shops—while moving across the room to get a dress, will stop, face the camera and say things like: "I stop work at seven o'clock. I've got a date at eight with Jean-Claude. We'll go to a restaurant, and then to the cinema." Or in the beauty parlor, one of the girls suddenly turns and says: "My name is Paulette Cadjaris. I failed at being a short-hand typist. No, I don't believe in the future ... I walk a lot; I don't like to be closed in. When I can, I read. The cinema—two or three times a month, but never in the summer. I've never been to the theatre. But I'd like to. . . ." It is almost as if they were answering an invisible interviewer, which is doubtless exactly what they are doing. But sometimes the interruptions are briefer, more spontaneous, as if somehow a layer of personality has been lifted off, and one plunges for a second beneath the depths of ordinary conversation, and the character 'justifies' himself, somewhat in the manner of a Noh play.... Sometimes these interruptions simply provide information about the speaker which relates him or her to the general situation. At other times one feels that a soul has been stripped before us.

Juliette swings throughout the film from conversation to her own thoughts—or occasionally to Godard speaking through her mouth....For example, early in the film, Juliette's husband comes into the kitchen to announce that their friend Roger is going home. Juliette replies, "Right, I'm coming," and then, without any gear switching, she immediately continues her thoughts from earlier in the scene: "You try often to find, to analyze the meaning of words, but one is too easily impressed by them. You've got to admit that nothing is simpler than thinking that this or that thing is just a matter of course."

One might think that this mixture of commentary, internal monologue, ordinary dialogue, the lengthy examination of objects, the brief flashes of the cranes and the bulldozers, would make the film very difficult to follow. And yet it doesn't. First of all, we are given a thread to hang on to—a day in the life of Juliette Janson and then that day is, as it were, blocked out. We begin after dinner in her flat. The next morning Juliette sets off for Paris, leaving her child in the care of a little old man who uses his meagerly furnished flat as a kind of nursery-cum-brothel. (In one room he looks after the children, telling them fairy-tales; while another he rents out by the half-hour to couples who have nowhere else to go. Everyone pays in tinned goods.) The next sections show Juliette at a dress shop, then in the bar where the prostitutes hang out. Next, there is a long scene at a smart hotel where Juliette and a friend take care of a rich American client, just back from Vietnam. (John Bogus, war correspondent in Saigon for an Arkansas daily, is played by the late Raoul Levy in a curious mixture of accented English and French, as he puts forth the curious reflection that since one dead Vietcong costs the Americans a million dollars. President Johnson could easily afford to have 20,000 whores for himself instead.) From there we go to her hairdresser, to Robert's garage, then to a cafe where Robert awaits Juliette, and then home again.

These nine 'chapters' help to give the work a kind of shape....Because there is a coherent master idea behind *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* it succeeds on all levels. Content and form are played off one against the other in an entirely satisfying and rewarding way, each one pushing the other forward to give the film a strength and an impetus that makes it for me the summit of Godard's work.

But also, one must recognize a deeper strain of pessimism in Godard which applies not only to economic and social factors, but to life itself. Juliette, alone in her bedroom, muses: "To define oneself in a single word: Not yet dead." An older woman in the beauty parlor suddenly speaks from the depths of her soul—and perhaps Godard's too: "I am very careful crossing streets. I think of the accident before it can happen. And that my life might stop right there ... Unemployment... Sickness ... Old Age ... Death ... Never ... I have no plans for the future, for my horizons are closed."

"Well, here at last." Juliette replies: "Where?" Robert: "Home." Juliette: "And then

what, what are we going to do?" Robert: "Sleep.... what's got into you?" Juliette: "And then what?" Robert: "We'll get up." Juliette: "And then what?" Robert: "The same thing. We'll start all over again. We'll wake up, work, eat." Juliette: "And then what?" Robert: "I dunno... Die." Juliette: "And then what?" And as she pronounces those last words we get a flash of a petrol-pump, its dial immobile; then it begins to turn slowly, and then faster and faster. The figures whirl by in an obscene parody of life.

[Godard] is not giving us a recipe for a better life; that is not his job. But he is enriching our understanding of it. Like many artists, he is a reformer: it is up to us to decide how practical are his reforms, how much we are willing to sacrifice to achieve a healthier state of society. He is both contesting the conditions under which we live, and at the same time restating the human condition. Equally important, he is contesting the way in which films are made, by continually reinventing the cinema.

"Literary critics," said Godard, "often praise works like *Ulysses* or *Fin de Partie* because they exhaust a certain genre, they close the doors on it. But in the cinema we are always praising works which *open* doors." Let us now praise Godard, then, who has opened so many."

--Excerpted from *Godard* by Richard Roud (1968, Doubleday)

Georges Sadoul on "Two or Three Things..."

How can *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* be characterized? As "Pieces of a broken mirror." ...In 1923, Eisenstein spoke of "shock attractions," and this term does not seem out of place in talking about *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*. For if this film is basically a portrayal of a day in the life of a woman living in a high-rise apartment complex, her actions and the people she meets bring about no small number of shocks, striking images that shatter the unities of space, time, and action into tiny fragments.

But the film does not stop there. There is also the muffled commentary given to us by Jean-Luc Godard himself, who explains to us his deepest intentions and who makes various remarks that are no doubt riddled with literary quotations. And Godard is not the only one to speak in the first person. His characters also explain themselves on occasion, with their eyes fixed almost directly on the eyes of the audience, contrary to all the "rules."

But let's forget about the *broken mirror* and the *shocks*.... It is more appropriate here to talk in terms of a series of flashes, or even better, of a series of rapid visions mingled with soliloquies and reflections about two or three things.

RIALTO PICTURES

Elle (Her) is a well defined and precisely described woman: Marina Vlady. But it is also a city (Paris) and its periphery, a city in the midst of transformation, a city completely overwhelmed by huge buildings and speculations as it hasn't been for over a hundred years, since the heyday of Baron Haussmann....

The idea for *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* came to Godard via an investigation entitled "Prostitution in the High Rises," which appeared in the *Nouvel Observateur* in March and May of 1966. Is it the filmmaker or is it the investigator who gives us the social causes for this prostitution? A woman, in order to live and pay the rent, becomes a whore. She ends up marrying one of her lovers. They settle in a high rise, with all their household items having been bought on the installment plan. After a year or two of these "roses on credit," it's the husband himself who asks his wife to prostitute herself so that the monthly payments can be met.

In *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, a perfectly honorable mother, who perhaps does some acting when she feels like it, does a bit of "hustling" in Paris, either with or without the knowledge of her husband, who waits for her patiently in a Paris café, where he always manages to strike up a conversation.

Before becoming a filmmaker, Jean-Luc Godard took courses in ethnography at the Musée de l'homme. One can still see traces of Jean Rouch in Godard, if one considers that, instead of studying the customs of the Blacks in Africa, he studies the lives of Parisian men and women of today.

The more Godard advances in his work, the less place the novel has in his films. ...*Two or Three Things I Know About Her* is related, particularly through Godard's commentary, to the comic strips. ...The title of the film defines its content. It is not a question of saying everything about a woman or a city, or of defining and explaining them in some kind of logical diagram. Instead, only "two or three things" are said about "them," and it is up to the audience to complete the puzzle by imagining a past and a future for them, whereas only a few fragmentary aspects of their present are given...

...Chaplin was so enthused over *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* that he referred to it as "one of the most beautiful symphonies I have ever heard." Let us hope that this unique symphony of noises and colors created by Godard will arouse similar enthusiasm, and particularly that it will be understood by the general public, which is all too often confused by novelty, by these two or three things which make up a part of a *grand ensemble* that is both contemporary France and the work of Godard.

--Excerpted from *Focus on Godard*, Edited by Royal S. Brown (1972, Prentice-Hall)



Godard on "Two or Three Things..."

One Should Put Everything into a Film

I don't write my scripts. I improvise as shooting goes on. But this improvisation can only be the result of previous inner preparation, which presupposes concentration. And in fact I make my films not only when I'm shooting but as I dream, eat, read, talk to you. *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* is much more ambitious (than *Made in U.S.A.*), both on the documentary level, since it is about the replanning of the Parisian area, and on the level of pure research, since it is a film in which I am continually asking myself what I'm doing. There is, of course, the pretext of life itself - and sometimes prostitution - in the new housing complexes. But the real purpose of the film is to observe a huge mutation. For me, to describe modern life is to observe mutations, and not simply to describe, as certain newspapers do, the new gadgets and industrial progress. Basically, what I am doing is making the spectator share the arbitrary nature of my choices, and the quest for general rules which might justify a particular choice. Why am I making this film, why am I making it this way? Is the character played by Marina Vlady representative of the inhabitants of these housing complexes? I am constantly asking questions. I watch myself filming, and you hear me thinking aloud. In other words it isn't a film, it's an attempt at film and is presented as such. It really forms part of my personal research. It is not a story, but hopefully a document to a degree where I think Paul Delouvrier himself should have commissioned the film.

Actually, if I have a secret ambition, it is to be put in charge of the French newsreel services. All my films have been reports on the state of the nation; they are newsreel documents, treated in a personal manner perhaps, but in terms of contemporary actuality.

To return to this film about the housing complexes, the thing that most excited me was that the anecdote it tells coincides basically with one of my most deep-rooted theories. The idea that, in order to live in Parisian society today, at whatever level or on whatever plane, one is forced to prostitute oneself in one way or another, or else to live according to conditions resembling those of prostitution.

During the course of the film - in its discourse, its discontinuous course, that is - I want to include everything, sport, politics, even groceries. Look at a man like Edouard Leclerc, a really extraordinary man whom I would love to do a film with or about. Everything can be put into a film. Everything should be put into a film. When people ask me why I talk or have my characters talk - about Vietnam, about Jacques Anquetil, or about a woman who deceives her husband, I refer the questioner to his own newspaper. It's all there. And it's all mixed up. This is why I



am so attracted by television. A televised newspaper made up of carefully prepared documents would be extraordinary. Even more so if one could get newspaper editors to take turns at editing these televised newspapers.

This is why, rather than speak of cinema and television. I prefer to use the more generalized terms of images and sounds.

My Approach in Four Movements

As I have said, the story of Juliette in *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* will not be told continuously, because not only she, but the events of which she is part, are to be described. It is a matter of describing 'a complex'.

This 'complex' and its parts (Juliette being the one I have chosen to examine in greater detail, in order to suggest that the other parts also exist in depth) must be described and talked about as both objects and subjects. What I mean is that I cannot avoid the fact that all things exist both from the inside and the outside. This can be demonstrated by filming a house from the outside, then from the inside, as though we were entering inside a cube, an object. The same goes for a human being, whose face is generally seen from the outside.

But how does this person himself see what surrounds him? I mean, how does he physically experience his relationship with other people and with the world? (Malraux said: 'One hears the voice of others with the ears, and one's own voice with the throat.') This is something I would like to make people feel throughout the film, and have inherent in it.

If one now analyzes this project for a film, one sees that my approach divided into four principal movements.

1. Objective Description

(or least attempt at description, Ponge would say)

(a) objective description of objects: houses, cars, cigarettes, apartments, beds, TV sets, books, clothes, etc.

(b) objective description of subjects: the characters, Juliette, the American, Robert, the hairdresser, Marianne, the travellers, the motorists, the social workers, the old man, the children, the passers-by, etc.

2. Subjective Description

(or at least attempt)

(a) subjective description of subjects: particularly by way of feelings, that is through scenes more or less written and acted.

(b) subjective description of objects: settings seen from the inside, where the world is outside, behind the windows, or on the other side of the walls.

3. Search for Structures (or at least attempt)

In other words, $1 + 2 = 3$. In other words, the sum of the objective description and the subjective description should lead to the discovery of certain more general forms; should enable one to pick out, not a generalized overall truth, but a certain 'complex feeling', something which corresponds emotionally to the laws one must discover and apply in order to live in society. (The problem is precisely that what we discover is not a harmonious society, but a society too inclined towards and to consumer values.)

This third movement corresponds to the inner movement of the film, which is the attempt to describe a complex (people and things), since no distinction is made between them and, in order to simplify, people are spoken of as things, and things as people; and I do not neglect conscience, since this is manifest in the cinematographic movement which directs me to these people or these things.

(As Sternberg and his fish would say: I think, therefore the cinema exists.)

4. LIFE

In other words, $1+2+3=4$. In other words, having been able to define certain complex phenomena while continuing to describe particular events and emotions, this will eventually bring us closer to life than at the outset. Maybe, if the film comes off (I hope it will; if not all the time, at least in certain images and certain sounds), maybe then will be revealed what Merleau-Ponty calls the 'singular existence' of a person - Juliette's in particular.

Next, all these movements must be mixed up together.

Finally, I must be able sometimes, not always but sometimes, to give the feeling of being very close to people.

Actually, when I come to think about it, a film like this is a little as if I wanted to write a sociological essay in the form of a novel, and in order to do so had only musical notes at my disposition.

Is this cinema? Am I right to go on trying?

- excerpted from *Godard on Godard* (1968, Da Capo Press)



WHAT THE CRITICS SAID...

Chosen by J. Hoberman and Gavin Smith as one of the “Top 10 Films of the 20th Century” in 1999 Village Voice poll, and by Amy Taubin, Laura Mulvey, Hoberman, and Smith in *Sight and Sound* Poll, 2002.

“Arguably the greatest film made by arguably the most important world director...the richest of Godard’s films... a uniquely rewarding film that requires *many* viewings, *Two or Three Things*... is a brilliant, powerful, overtly political film still relevant today...The film’s title alone suggests the richness of what unfolds—“her” is at once our heroine Juliette, actress Vlady, Paris, consumerism, politics, structuralism, and about a dozen other things. The use of disjunctive editing, saturated color schemes, endless quotation (from Marx to Wittgenstein) and deadpan performance style make this film deliberately “difficult” to engage. Godard is challenging us, asking us to consider how we watch films and how we live our lives. Unforgettable moments are numerous.” – *The Movie Guide*

“It’s a pivotal film made in the summer of 1966, more essay than narrative, about alienation in consumer society and anticipating the mood and ideas that brought about *les événements* of 1968...Deeply influenced by Brecht, the picture is alternately naive and sophisticated, silly and profound, and Godard’s commentary, uttered in a conspiratorial whisper, is an anti-American, anti-Gaullist and anti-capitalist diatribe.” – Philip French, *The Observer* (London)

“One of Godard’s most stimulating investigations of images and surfaces—the meanings they convey and the webs they spin.” – Dave Kehr

“Godard is one of the major artists of our age and his twelfth and perhaps greatest feature film, *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, is certainly one of the most difficult and ambitious ever made.” – Susan Sontag

“The sheer energy of Godard’s dazzling sociological fable is enough to commend it. Paris and prostitution, seen through 24 hours in the life of a housewife-prostitute, tell a story of selling yourself to buy happiness, but getting paid in bad dreams. A fictional documentary of *Alphaville*’s nightmare, its virtuoso display of confession and analysis, the sublime and ridiculous, show Godard’s deft grasp of the subversive nature of laughter and passions. Too good to miss.” – *Time Out* (London)



JEAN-LUC GODARD (Director/Writer)

Born December 3, 1930 in Paris, the son of a doctor and a banker's daughter, Godard had his elementary and high school education in Switzerland and in Paris, then enrolled at the Sorbonne, ostensibly to study ethnology. During his university days he developed a passionate devotion to the cinema, spending endless hours at Left Bank cinema clubs and at the Cinémathèque Française, where in 1950 he met the critic André Bazin and future filmmakers François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, and Claude Chabrol, with whom he would later form the nucleus of the French New Wave. Godard began contributing articles and film criticism for *La Gazette du Cinéma*, then *Cahiers du Cinéma*.

In 1951, Godard toured North and South America. Supporting himself with a variety of odd jobs, he continued watching films at a fanatical rate, and his articles for *Cahiers* began reflecting an enthusiastic admiration for little-known American directors of action films and at the same time a deep contempt for the traditional cinema, especially the commercial French film.

In 1954, Godard returned to work as a laborer on a dam project. With his earnings he bought himself a 35mm camera and made his first film, *Opération Beton*, a 20-minute short about the construction of the dam.

Following four more shorts, Godard stunned the world with his first feature film, *Breathless*, released early in 1960. The film marked a significant break from orthodox cinema techniques, reshaping the traditional film syntax with its astonishing jump cuts and unsteady hand-held moving shots. It was a spontaneous, impulsive, vibrant, and totally original film that reflected the director's enchantment with the immediacy of the American gangster movie and his impatience with the traditional techniques of "quality" cinema. It immediately established Godard as a leading spokesman of the Nouvelle Vague.

Godard's next film, *Le Petit Soldat*, was a savage exposition of the Algerian conflict and also the first of seven features to star his future wife Anna Karina. Karina next played a stripper in his *A Woman Is a Woman* (1961, re-released by Rialto Pictures in 2003) and a Paris prostitute in *My Life to Live* (1962). *Les Carabiniers* (1963) was an anti-war allegory that provoked violently hostile reaction from audiences. Its grainy dreariness stood in sharp contrast to the wide-screen color cinematography of *Contempt* (1963, re-released by Rialto & Strand Releasing in 1997), which starred Brigitte Bardot and Michel Piccoli.

With *Band of Outsiders* (1964, re-released by Rialto Pictures in 2001), Godard returned to the world of the gangster. *A Married Woman* (1964) was the study of an alienated Parisian woman. *Alphaville* (1965), Godard's only excursion into science fiction, was followed in the same year by *Pierrot le Fou*.



Godard's impact on the cinema of the 60s was monumental and sweeping. He used the camera inventively, re-writing the syntax of films along the way. *Masculine Feminine* (1966, re-released by Rialto in 2005) was a free-form study of the mores of Parisian youth. *Made in USA* (1966) was based on an American potboiler. *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1967) told the story of a Paris housewife who moonlights as a prostitute. *La Chinoise* (1967) featured in the leading role actress Anne Wiazemsky, who became Godard's second wife.

After *Week End* (1968), a new Godard surfaced, a revolutionary, didactic filmmaker who became obsessed with the spoken word and increasingly apathetic to cinema as a visual medium. He dedicated himself to making "revolutionary films for revolutionary audiences." In the late 70s Godard underwent yet another metamorphosis, rediscovering himself and his love of film. He refocused his sights on themes of universal humanistic concern in *Every Man for Himself* (1980), *Passion* (1982), and *First Name: Carmen* (1983). He even paid a renewed homage to American cinema in *Déetective* (1985), but caused massive controversy with his *Hail Mary!* (1985).

King Lear (1987) was an unsuccessful attempt to film Shakespeare. *Soigne ta droite* (1987), *Nouvelle Vague* (1990) and *Hélas pour moi* (1994) all featured top stars, but his *For Ever Mozart* (1997), with its typically Godardian disquisition on art and war, was the best received of the four. In 1998, Godard completed his long-gestating *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, a highly personal meditation on 100 years of cinema, which was released on video and in book form. Other works of the 90s include *Germany Year 90 Nine Zero*, and the self-portrait *JLG/JLG* (1995).

In 2003, he made *In Praise of Love*, a surprisingly moving study of art, history, madness and exploitation and, in 2004, *Notre Musique*, shot on location in Sarajevo. *Morceaux choisis* (literally, "choice bits"), a 90-minute re-edit of his *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*, was shown in 2004 at the Pompidou Center in Paris and was the opening night film of the re-opened Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Among his many prizes and honors, Godard won the best director award at the Berlin Festival for *Breathless*, a Berlin Jury Prize for *A Woman Is a Woman*, and Venice's Golden Lion (Best Film) for *First Name: Carmen*. In 1986, he was honored with a Special French César Award for lifetime achievement. Earlier this year, the Pompidou Center held the most complete Godard retrospective to date.

Adapted from Ephraim Katz's Film Encyclopedia; updated by Lenny Berger



RAOUL COUTARD (Cinematographer)

“My friend Raoul Coutard, France’s most brilliant cinematographer,” says the hero of Godard’s *Le Petit Soldat*. Between 1959 and 1967, Godard’s friend shot all but one of his first 15 features (*Masculine Feminine*) and returned to shoot *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* in the early 80s. The definitive New Wave cinematographer, Coutard began his career in photojournalism, first as part of his military service, then for such magazines as *Paris Match* and *Life*. This experience and his early work in documentaries fed directly into his innovative use of hand-held camera and natural lighting techniques. He shot most of Truffaut’s 60s classics, beginning with *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Jules and Jim*, along with Jacques Demy’s debut feature, *Lola* (1960). With Pierre Schoendoerffer, he made the Indochina War fiction feature, *La 317e Section* (1964) and *Le Crabe tambour*, for which he won a César in 1977. Other major credits include Jean Rouch’s cinema vérité-style *Chronique d’un été* (1961) and Costa-Gavras’ *Z* (1969). Coutard personally directed two films: *Hoa Binh* (1970), an evocation of the Indochina War, and *La Légion saute sur Kolwezi* (1980), a recreation of a true paramilitary operation in Africa.

MARINA VLADY (“Elle,” Juliette Janson)

Born Marina de Poliakov-Baidaroff in 1938, in Clichy, France, Marina Vlady was raised in a show business family; her father was an opera singer, her mother a famous dancer, and her three sisters all became actresses. She made her film debut at age 11 in Jean Gehret’s *Orange d’été* (1949), but first attracted public and critical attention for her role in André Cayatte’s *Avant le déluge* (1954). At 17, she married director/actor Robert Hossein, who cast her in his own *Les Salauds vont en enfer* (1956), *Pardonnez nos offenses* (1956), and *Toi, le venin* (1958). Her career peaked in 1963 with Marco Ferreri’s *The Conjugal Bed* (1963), for which she earned a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Actress and won the Best Actress award at Cannes. Other notable credits include Orson Welles’ *Chimes at Midnight* (1965), Philippe de Broca’s *Seven Deadly Sins* (1962), Márta Mészáros’ *Women* (1977), and René Gainville’s *Le Complot* (1973). In 2005, Vlady published her autobiography, *24 images/seconds*, in which she revealed that Godard had proposed marriage to her – twice.

LENNY BORGER (English subtitles)

Two or Three Things... is translator/subtitled Lenny Borger’s eighth Godard film, after *Breathless*, *Band of Outsiders*, *A Woman is a Woman*, *Contempt*, *Masculine Feminine*, *In Praise of Love*, and *Notre Musique*. On Godard’s latest films, Borger has collaborated with the director himself.



RIALTO PICTURES

Described as “the gold standard of reissue distributors” by Los Angeles Times/NPR film critic Kenneth Turan, Rialto Pictures was founded in 1997 by Bruce Goldstein. A year later, Adrienne Halpern joined him as partner. In 2002, Eric Di Bernardo became the company’s National Sales Director.

Rialto’s past releases have included Renoir’s *Grand Illusion*; Carol Reed’s *The Third Man*; Fellini’s *Nights of Cabiria*; Jules Dassin’s *Rififi*; De Sica’s *Umberto D*; Godard’s *Contempt*, *Band of Outsiders* and *A Woman is a Woman*; Julien Duvivier’s *Pépé le Moko*; Buñuel’s *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *The Phantom of Liberty*, *The Milky Way* and *That Obscure Object of Desire*; John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar*; Clouzot’s *Quai des Orfèvres*; Mike Nichols’ *The Graduate*; The Maysles’ *Grey Gardens*; Mel Brooks’ *The Producers*; Jacques Becker’s *Touchez Pas Au Grisbi*; Bresson’s *Au Hasard Balthazar* and *Mouchette*; Franju’s *Eyes Without A Face*; and Melville’s *Bob le Flambeur* and *Le Cercle Rouge*. In 2002, the company released the acclaimed first-run film *Murderous Maids*, the chilling true story of two homicidal sisters.

Rialto’s 2004 slate included the original 1954 Japanese version of *Godzilla*; the Oscar-winning 1974 documentary *Hearts and Minds*; and Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers*, which became one of the year’s top-grossing foreign films. The company’s 2005/2006 releases included Louis Malle’s *Elevator to the Gallows*, Godard’s *Masculine Feminine*, Claude Berri’s *The Two of Us*, Bresson’s *Mouchette*, and Claude Sautet’s rarely-seen film noir classic *Classe Tous Risques*.

Rialto’s current releases are Carol Reed’s rediscovered masterwork *The Fallen Idol*, the French swashbuckling classic *Fanfan La Tulipe*, starring Gérard Philipe and Gino Lollobrigida, and Melville’s *Army of Shadows*, being released in the U.S. for the very first time. A box office disappointment to Melville in his lifetime, *Army of Shadows* has become the most acclaimed film of 2006.

In early 2007, Rialto will re-release Alberto Lattuada’s rediscovered black comedy *Mafioso*, starring the legendary Italian star Albert Sordi. *Mafioso* was a sensation when screened at this year’s New York Film Festival. Writing in *The New York Times*, A.O. Scott called it “an utter blast” and “a film festival unto itself.”

In 1999, Rialto received a special Heritage Award from the National Society of Film Critics, and in 2000 received a special award from the New York Film Critics Circle, presented to Goldstein and Halpern by Jeanne Moreau. The two co-presidents have each received the French Order of Chevalier of Arts and Letters.



2007 Releases MAFIOSO (Jan. '07)

2006 Releases ARMY OF SHADOWS
THE FALLEN IDOL
FANFAN LA TULIPE
TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER

2005 Releases MASCULINE FEMININE
ELEVATOR TO THE GALLOWS
THE TWO OF US
CLASSE TOUS RISQUES
MOUCHETTE

2004 Releases THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS
GODZILLA (U.S. premiere of uncut Japanese version)
HEARTS AND MINDS

2003 Releases LE CERCLE ROUGE (U.S. premiere of uncut version)
A WOMAN IS A WOMAN
TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI
AU HASARD BALTHAZAR
EYES WITHOUT A FACE
THE MILKY WAY

2002 Releases PEPE LE MOKO
MURDEROUS MAIDS
QUAI DES ORFEVRES (JENNY LAMOUR)
UMBERTO D.
THE PRODUCERS
THE PHANTOM OF LIBERTY

2001 Releases BAND OF OUTSIDERS
BOB LE FLAMBEUR
THAT OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE
JULIET OF THE SPIRITS

2000 Releases RIFI FI
THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE BOURGEOISIE
DIARY OF A CHAMBERMAID
BILLY LIAR

1999 Releases THE THIRD MAN
GRAND ILLUSION
PEEPING TOM

1998 Releases NIGHTS OF CABIRIA
GREY GARDENS

1997 Releases CONTEMPT
THE GRADUATE