

Document Citation

Title	Godard on film
Author(s)	Richard Roud
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	
Type	article
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle (Two or three things I know about her), Godard, Jean Luc, 1967

GODARD ON FILM

Feb. 17: DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE (1966). Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. With Marina Vlady, Anny Duperey, Roger Montsoret, Jean Narboni.
Courtesy Anouchka Films. 85 minutes.

"DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE 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 reorganised. 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 characterise 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. I mean, I could have filmed a worker or a technician who, three-quarters of the time, doesn't behave, grosso modo, any differently.' 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 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 woodworms -- 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....

"But here, more than in Godard's previous films, prostitution is only a pretext: it is integrated into a much larger social picture. Godard's view is that under the pretence of reforming and modernising social structures in France, the Gaullist régime is only trying to regularise, to

standardise the natural tendencies of capitalism. He deduces further that by systematising its dirigisme and centralisation, the government is accentuating still further the distortion of the national economy, and even more that of the everyday morality which is its basis. 'This film,' he states, 'is a continuation of the movement begun by Resnais in MURIEL: an attempt at a description of a phenomenon known in mathematics and sociology as a complex. If this young woman lives in what is called a housing complex, it is not only a play on words. Therefore I sought to link the manner in which she arranges her life with the way in which the government's Plan is arranging the region of Paris.'

"In some ways this film resembles ALPHAVILLE, in that both have a kind of master idea behind them, one which helps give them unity and strength. Furthermore, one could say that DEUX OU TROIS CHOSES QUE JE SAIS D'ELLE shows us the Alphaville of today. But technically and formally speaking, it is more like a successful remake of UNE FEMME MARIEE. That film was characterised by Godard as an attempt 'to consider subjects as objects, a film in which chases would alternate with ethnological interviews, where the spectacle of life would be finally blended with an analysis of life: in short, a free film.'"

-- Richard Roud, Godard