

NILO GOLDFARB I'm remembering a conversation we had. Must've been around 2019, at Bar Olio. We were there with a friend from New York... he brought up Godard and you said flippantly: 'those films are just pastiche.'

ANDREW CHRISTOPHER GREEN Yes, this wasn't fair, obviously an exaggeration. I just remember at that time being put off by its quality of cleverness. The way it uses cinema as a thinking form, always aware of the effect it's going to have—the effect a cut, a gesture, a sound, a light is going to have—always subverting it. His films appear to be writing, directing, and cutting themselves as they go along. They are unlike anything that had been made before. But at that time it also felt like Godard, for me, was far too assimilable to what I didn't like in contemporary art. His films demonstrated a capacity to think through form, reflexively but often quite literally. I was then very interested in films that regarded the external world as something foreign and full of a vital resistance.

Right. I feel what you just alluded to is very reflective of that moment in time, a new track that you and certain others were taking. Just as you are putting it now. Although at the time, I misremembered what you said. I happily misremembered you saying this: 'all his films are just montage'...

I'll just mention that in Bazin's wonderful essay about montage he gives two formulations:

1. Directors who put their faith in the image, people like Eisenstein, whose images derive meaning not from the world but their interaction with other images
2. Directors who put their faith in reality, directors whose images give back to and derive meaning from the world they depict

When we were talking before, you described Godard as playing with the "codes of cinema." It called to mind structuralism, the diagrams designed for people like Levi-Strauss—playing things out on the surface. This "play with code" admitted more and more the role played by the unconscious. But you're approaching the same question completely differently, because you're showing us how this play with codes presents a mastery of them. Prevents the challenge from the world presenting itself to the artist.

Yeah, treating everything and everyone as a text or a program is a way of avoiding the issue of subjectivity.

I wonder if we might talk about the film you were imagining making at this time. Your Bar Olio film. In that film, there was the montage between the shots that construct the labor relations and the process of making the dish. But the meaning you assign to the film has to do with a whole set of other factors...

I decided I wanted to follow this assignment that [Peter] Kubelka gave to his students for their first films, something I read about in an interview Williams included in one of his Black Box dossiers. Kubelka said his students should shoot their first films on Super8 because everything would have to be planned out in advance. Super8 film is so small that you can see the splices of the cuts in the projection. So Kubelka thought their films should be edited in camera; every shot ought to be predetermined and timed in accordance with the 3 minutes 20 seconds the reel allows.

I knew which elements were involved in the cooking of the dish I shot: the frying of the vegetables, the cooking and stirring of the risotto, and the frying of the octopus, and then its assembly. Each shot showed an element being prepared for a separate dish. It was six different times that they cooked the dish for six different plates. I read a funny quote in Anthony Bourdain's biography that brought the elements of the film together. He said that line cooks are like the craftsmen of the middle ages. They are not the architects, but it was their labor that built and ornamented the cathedrals we admire. They were following an assignment, their work was the realization of someone else's design. But their labor was performed with integrity and devotion, and their yield was something monumental and anonymous.

What about... I could take this two different ways. On the one hand you have the idea that you're analogous to the cook and not the chef. Another conversation—well it's funny because we didn't actually have the conversation—but I remember we were standing near the jacket rack in your apartment, we were either coming or going, and I was asking if you



thought that contemporary art (we were talking about contemporary art daily) might not be remembered by the individual artists... it was a sort of naive thought...

I don't think anything will be remembered about contemporary art— its dilemma is so profound and banal that it won't leave behind anything fruitful for future generations to discover.

Well that much is hard to know. Not everything is the same.

Right, we'll have to agree to disagree.

Well, that was one direction as if you are working yourself into the groundwork of the building. The other direction would be that you aren't really the same as these cooks. You're more like the chef of the film, a middle class artist position.

The work of a line cook is alienated, the work of a craftsman in the middle ages was not. Artmaking is different from architecture or stonemasonry or cooking. It is alienated as well, but it offers us an opportunity to experience alienation in a different way. I think this is a very important point with respect to this issue of subjectivity. When I was making that work I was constantly mowing over an issue Williams would bring up in class discussions. He talked about wanting to displace his authorship, and for things like history, the program of photography, and other discursive relations to be the author of his photographs. He wanted to step to the side and problematize his role as the singular generator of their meaning. This was an important critical intervention on his generation's behalf. I think we face different challenges, I think we have to haphazardly try to learn to discover authorship again.

Well there's a naive version of it that's almost fascistic, you're accountable for everything you say. But then there's also an empowering version of that thought that corresponds to where you were at with imagining this film. Seeing artworks that actually have a heart [or come from the heart] in some way. And that can only happen through recognition of intent. Dialectical, of course, the intent to eliminate yourself.

There was a tongue and cheek element in both Bar Olio and Frederike, my graduation piece, which is that I wanted to play with these stale elements of Institutional Critique, but to do so from the perspective of someone who doesn't understand them. This was the way in which I was wanting to do a structuralist film, as if someone would just drink the kool-aid his professor gave him. I wanted to express my suspicion earnestly.

So if this is the culture from which the idea emerges and the form corresponds to that culture, who would you say is on the receiving end of that articulation? Who sees all of these repetitions and correspondences? Ultimately is the film identity politics for the small province of people influenced by Christopher Williams?

Walker Evans said in an interview about working in the style of the documentary; "A man operating under that definition could take a sly pleasure in the disguise. Very often I'm doing one thing when I'm thought to be doing another." I felt a resonance with this insight, with its provocative impulse towards misdirection. My hope is to get somewhere vulnerable and decisive and strange.