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AN UNKNOWN FILM BY JEAN-LUC GODARD
ABOUT POETIC SINCERITY

Suppose the girl was telling the truth.
She really loved them both, in the oily hovels
of her satisfaction loved them, and for their welding,
steel on steel, hammer blows, really loved them
the way rain loves falling down never mind who gets wet,

you, you delicate admirers, I send you this clever telegram
(the film says *pneu*’, we don’t have them here)
to propose I love you in some like fashion, me
with my hands on the wheel of nobody’s car
beating the mad wipers to sweep the no rain
and smiling my head off at you and you and you.

9 February 1995

[The film is “Montparnasse et Levallois,” a fourteen minute segment in *Paris vu par ...* (1965), which among its six sections also has Rohmer’s “Place de l’Étoile” and Chabrol’s “La Muette.”]

for Charlotte

And this is for you, a common measurement
(inch, rabbit, waterfall) you find
within a mile from where we sit
worrying about kerosene and French.

There is a sweetness in imagined things
(a wreath of roses on a Volvo's snout,
a crucifix dived for by Greek boys
in January, East River, alpenhorns)

and what is salt, after all? You know, you connoisseur
of the actual, with your red velvet hat
and skill with sailboats, deplorable weather
beating up along the dreary coast we love.

9 February 1995

IO SON, IO SON BEATRICE

The limitations of opportunity
offend none but those novelists
of wordless space, the immigrants.
Saddled with unbearable desires
they sneak onto sinking ships,
slip across sealed borders into
dying commonwealths. “The trees”
(as the girl said) “weep for you.”
The girl. She is the one (on the bridge,
little walkway, crumbling stone,
red and white, in filmy raiment ran)
who explained the fatuity
of wanting. All there is, is
circumstance, children
in sunlight on neat-joined floorboards
crawling away from you forever in big lofts
converted for you by Harvard drop-outs,
into city sunlight and enough to eat.
That is why you should do anything
(she meant), not because you want to
but because that’s what there is.
The endurable. The answer
cunningly on hand before any question.
The ways things are. Here are the children.
Their names are their names.

She means — if I take responsibility for them
I don’t have to take responsibility for me.
Hearing that nightmare mother logic, the immigrant
shoulders his cardboard satchel and slogs on.
He will not give up. He will not believe her.
He knows there is another country.
He will know it for sure because a different kind of tree.

10 February 1995

Star-crossed others in the scandalwood
a hint of what you want to do
the miracles of violence we consume
—pale inference: one on horseback, one
evanescent in hedges like April sunrays
one like limestone by the river, wade her,
one a summoning of (say) copper-beach leaves
torn by wind — smell that, a touch
on the staircase, the monstrous privacy of things
—a head dress — with aigrette — shimmying —
a calendar to do unto you as you would be done
no wonder sex is such a religion —
dust from a broken wall, suburban epic
TV documentary on ginger, or blue parrots.

11 February 1995

The high note is a kind of tight skirt she wears that he sings
because there is artistry in all of this, shadow of shadows,
and the blue rooves of the sewage treatment plant gullwing
out over the two bubbling pools. We are squeezed in things.

Clear-cut on the cliffs, a crawl of almost lawn reaches
back to where some little houses stand. Think there. Isolations
are built into the process, we don't need
a half-mile of cedar woods to hide the last thought from the next.
Whoever we are, we rest. *Clouds for sale*, we say, and hope
prospective buyers wise up in time. But for all the lack
of solidness in things, I still love Rossini's music,
those rushes towards a frenzied unison that feels like me.
Speak fast enough and words soar into ordinary meaning, & we live.

12 February 1995

a woman standing on a house
in the middle of the harbor,

a woman with a crown of sunrays
and curious children peering out of her eyes

a woman offering light to the world
when it comes to meet her

a woman holding something important to read—
a book one piece with her arm her breast her heart.

13 February 1995

A VALENTINE

for Charlotte

It could be domestic, could be those pears
We didn't buy, these potatoes washed
but not peeled yet. Could be the full moon
last night with Mars on its shoulder,

could be as intimate as the stars
in other words, tender as old airplanes,
everything that keeps remembering me
till I am yours. Have come to present.

The moment is a singular house indeed,
with room for everyone and a white wind.
So clear the sun as if it had caught
the moon's disease of giving everything,

and shadows leap from tree to tree in a still world.
The moment, full of body, language, grotesque,
corridors of feeling that never lead back
as if the heart of a house is to be outside

and we let our lights pour through our different doors.

14 February 1995

PARIS OF US

for Charlotte

I have seen so much without understanding
then was permitted to live and slowly figure out—
Paris in 1954, all I could trust myself to know
was the fall of light against high houses, the rhythm

of popular movement (I mean the way actual
people walked). Again and again each of us
has been there, but we've never been together in,
no wonder it fascinates us, *Paris, or The Marriage,*

two separate cities suddenly the same.

14 February 1995

A LITTLE URBAN PLANNING

for Charlotte

The glassness, the correlation
between myopia and something else
or the sweating sun a wind disposes
methane and sulfuric gasses maybe

we are on the planet of the possible
which may not be inevitable the shuttle
from Times Square to Grand Central
has its function a lottery of pigeons

all the bronze statues of the bozos
of our earliest anxiety, who hates
great men hates god said Blake
who made them so, our karma

is inexorable but exhaustible
we are rabbits in a Chinese orchard
fleeing the consequences of our appetites
down amazing burrows full of foreboding

but full of light, how can there be
such scating singularity of daybreak
quivering along the earthy tunnel walls
dreary music of what we settle for

when we say *that's what I mean?*
You are my albatross and bluebird
you are una and perpetua and true,
the sciences are still in infancy,

how much of what they tell us will be true
a hundred years from Tuesday,

don't hold your breath, the orchids
tumble about the fallen arches,

blue movie, parliament of scum.
There has to change it. There has to be
a correlation, eventually the wind
wears the rock down, scree, moon

sails away for reasons of its own.
Wind a tight orbit round what you think
and let the thread unravel, scarlet
extricating lengths of it pull out

traffic from the Holland Tunnel
coming home. Follow the red.
Names are really very old fashioned,
cities work on glances, a look

met or a look (the mystery) withheld.

14 February 1995

THE ORACLE OF THINGS HEARD

What kind of cookbook do the fixed stars use
to spice their planets with such afflictions?
“John Keats’s Porridge.”

There is an answer
to even the silliest question. There are also rules
too trivial to break. Examine your breathing—
do you pause after the in-breath more than the out?
Or otherwise or equal? Fat or thin? Tree
or desert, grease stains on your notebook, nuns
patrol the aisles of your mind. My small mind.

My false renunciations. This is a confession
no magistrate is concerned to hear — I breathe
greed, I hoard the indrawn breath. Ferns
around the roses sent me, by one whose perfect
breath is without recrimination.

The earnest
amplitudes of Haydn (“interesting boredoms”) swell,
the kind of music public radio stations like to play,
non-committal, offensive to no one but priests of passion,
and who are they? Do they eat chicken, do they vote?

A descant of ducks quacking, then the river freezes,
then geese quarrel in the clouds, a wind like a wound
is working on the door. Suppose there is a recipe,
show the worst of me at once, as if the worst
of all crimes is to dream, then tell your dream.

15 February 1995

That this should be enough for all of us,
a glint in the god's eye
(National Geographic visits Bombay)
who stands in the sea-foam soaked like any lover

and the sky here looks like snow
and a woman trudges uphill from the library
and where am I now, speaking of gods,
the measures of our destiny

by this time let the waves speak Spanish
born alone died alone, so everyone.
Suppose he was a schoolmaster or a raven or
one of those learned exceptions down in the footnotes—

isn't the wind enough of a mother? Isn't the hawk?

15 February 1995

To be a kind of it, an ancient mother and be kind,
or watch them playing on the autobahn, forgive their prowess,
speed also is hardiness, they are studying for winter now
with all their music, Captain Scott lies down under the snow
forever, not so easy to exhaust the action of an action,
they play now but they know full well that somber's growing
the cranny-flowers in their too likely minds, but love will make them.

And what of me, between the lime tree and the lectern, full of supposes?
Aren't I worth a question too, an ink spill, an assassin's guess?
Daisies or dahlias, they have petals enough to pluck. I mean to watch
serenely the frenzy that I dance — how else could I be of use to you
who want to see me suffer but also somehow out loud understand?

16 February 1995

for Charlotte

Why should I bore you with lies
when the sun shines fierce on the snow
and between that sacred glare and the shadow of a ruined barn

your Valentine roses cloister their dark contrasts.
Scarlet. Things have shapes, hence shadows.
Everything follows from this.

17 February 1995

Admirable enterprise, secession. The old laird
by his chimney. An island floats away.
Far as we travel, the body goes with us,
that dreary shadow in the airport.

Upstairs exalted passengers stare through dirty glass
into the Mayan sunlight fills the world
with carrying everything too far.
Where are they now, their kidneys, shoes, their hands?

17 February 1995

for Charlotte

Or open the window onto a made-up world.
Lies to tell you? This would be one, the things seen
with a heart in love with things, rather than things being
with a heart to love. The word translated 'heart'
could as well be rendered 'mind,' but not mine, if
not yours. *Si tu uales, ego quoque ualeo* —
sounds like Browning, plugging the Latin in like that,
but it's Lansing, the way he signed his greeny letters,
if you are well, then I'm well too, root and stem,
wind and water, who, among all these intellectuals,
these crowded Europes, can tell the difference.
If you flourish I flourish too, if this window makes you happy
then I will take pleasure from these naked savage sticks
two months will make expostulating buskers of,
noisy with green leaves and a threat of lilacs.

18 February 1995

THE FIFTH ROOT VOW

When the glass opens
water falls downstairs.
No wine for me,
its rushes its
insinuations, just

the toleration
of what is. And by
being, being like
to fall, and fall
lucidly, in

lightness come to rest.

18 February 1995

Water is the *right weight*.