

# Lumière, Astruc, Bazin: The Cinema of Raymond Depardon

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“I was born near Lyon, so the influence of the Lumières is felt.”

– Raymond Depardon, in interview with Jay Kuehner (35)<sup>1</sup>

Even though his reputation in France is primarily built on his fondness for taking photographs of both celebrity culture and combat zones that lend themselves to splashy newspaper headlines, the cinema of Raymond Depardon is based in a tripartite approach to the language of cinema. He is influenced in equal part by Alexandre Astruc's notion of the “caméra-stylo,” Andre Bazin's faith in cinema's realist vocation, and the Lumière brothers' faith in the ability of a well-constructed shot to illuminate the world.<sup>2</sup> What I want to argue here is that it is this three-part formal inheritance that supports Depardon's critique of capitalist modernity's relentless pursuit of efficacy. The critique is not mounted by didactically marshalling material along the lines of most documentary (of both the radical-political sort and the more benignly educational or informational). Depardon's films thus demand a strategy of “close reading” in a way that is exceptional among documentaries, and especially documentaries made by filmmakers with a background in journalism. This critique of modernity, implicit throughout his career both at the level of form and content, is most clearly visible in his “Profils paysans” trilogy (2001-2008). These are his most autobiographical films, shot in the French alpine countryside of his childhood. They are also the most painterly works he has done in cinema. The complex visual structures of the “Profils paysans” films let us see Depardon as a filmmaker whose critique of the brutalising qualities of both efficacy and efficiency is of a piece with his rejection of a continuity-led approach to film grammar in favour of this highly unorthodox combination of Astruc, Bazin, and the Lumières.

This is not to say that Depardon rejects montage out of hand; what he (like Bazin) rejects is an approach to editing that forces visual and philosophical nuances into an the artificial mould of the clear and linear. His film form is based not on the use of montage within a scene or decoupage, but on a sort of macro-level approach to montage, one that puts complexly composed images (oftentimes sequence-shots) into play with one another. This formal sensibility has an ethical component as well. In the “Profils paysans” films, the gradual slipping away of a resilient but embattled peasant way of life has an echo in the flashes of continuity editing in a cinematic vocabulary that is otherwise entirely opposed to such norms. Depardon is telling stories in all of these films, but he is doing so in a way that relies on an associative rather than a linear sensibility.

That Depardon's cinema would be so close to a deeply visual sense of the narrative is no surprise, for he is definitely better known as a photographer than as a filmmaker. He co-founded the Gamma photo agency in 1966, and recalled in *Depardon/Cinéma* (a catalogue raisonné that accompanied a 1993 touring retrospective of his work as a filmmaker) that

“When Gamma was founded in 66, with Gilles Caron and the others, I proposed that we create a film department. This frustrated desire to make films stuck with me. We bought an Eclair and we tried to match the press photos with TV documentaries.”<sup>3</sup> In France his name is synonymous with the image of the exciting life of the photojournalist, but cinema has been present in his career since the very beginning. His filmmaking has always been defined by a rigorous visual aesthetic whose qualities include stationary cameras, identically repeated setups, and lack of cutting within a scene. This eschewal of editing has been especially important to Depardon; in the anthology *Depardon/Cinéma* he recalled how as a young photographer, his boss Claude Otzenburger had shown him films by American cinéma vérité filmmakers like D.A. Pennebaker and the Maysles brothers, and had then rented him a camera and given him the following imperative: “you’ll go do some sequence-shots in public places, even without sound. But you won’t cut. I don’t want you to cut.”<sup>4</sup> A little later in the same essay, Depardon recalls that:

I got my start in 1963 with a little company called World TV Press, with Claude Otzenburger and Claude Barrett, which did stories for TV. I remember having done an interview on de Gaulle’s policies and it couldn’t have any cuts: Otzenburger asked people in the street what they thought of General de Gaulle and people left, discussed, spoke, and I didn’t cut at all. It was caméra stylo.<sup>5</sup>

Depardon is alluding here to Alexandre Astruc’s well-known concept of “la caméra stylo,” or the camera as pen. Writing in a 1948 issue of the popular movie magazine *L’Écran français*, Astruc marvelled at the rise of 16mm technology and its potential to allow filmmakers as much freedom as the novelist or the essayist. At one point, he speculated that “a Descartes of today would already have shut himself up in his bedroom with a 16mm camera and some film, and would be writing his philosophy on film.”<sup>6</sup> Clarifying that he meant all this “in a very precise sense,” he wrote that “I mean that the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language.”<sup>7</sup> Depardon is describing a very similar escape from “the tyranny of the visual,” by which I think Astruc means the demands of conventionally “clear” or composed imagery or editing patterns. In this case what Depardon is escaping is the tyranny of conventional montage, moving away from the immediate and concrete demands of documentary storytelling and trying to be as flexible and subtle as a writer trying to use oral testimony by way of presenting the current reality. This escape from immediate and concrete demands became the characterising quality of his formal and thematic tendencies alike.

The connection to Bazin can be seen in Depardon’s vérité-esque interest in small details – physical gestures, styles of dress, manners of speaking, all of which are emphasised by framing and repetition – and the way that such details illuminate the world of which they are a part. Bazin writes in his essay “An Aesthetic of Reality” about how in Roberto Rossellini’s film *Paisà* “The unit of cinematic narrative... is not the ‘shot,’ an abstract view of a reality which is being analyzed, but the ‘fact.’ A fragment of concrete reality in itself multiple and full of ambiguity, whose meaning emerges only after the fact, thanks to other imposed facts between which the mind establishes certain relationships.”<sup>8</sup> The establishment of these kinds of open-ended, ambiguous relationships between “facts” or small fragments of detail, which connect to each other in complex ways. Depardon, in an interview with Phillipe Séclier

that is part of his book 1968, recalled what he liked about photographing Charles de Gaulle: “General de Gaulle was incredibly photogenic. His dress, his cars, his bodyguards, all participated in this aestheticism that obviously fascinated every photographer.”<sup>9</sup> This interest in fragments of reality – bodyguards, cars, suits – and an ability to subtly frame them in a way that tries to understand how they form complex systems is equally key for the Lumières’ most lasting work, and this is what makes both the brothers’ and Depardon’s filmmaking consistent with Astruc’s belief that “All thought, like all feeling, is a relationship between one human being and another human being or certain objects which form part of his universe. It is by clarifying these relationships, by making a tangible allusion, that the cinema can really make itself the vehicle of thought.”<sup>10</sup> The “Profils paysans” series show us that Depardon has been thinking cinematically about the emergence of a world defined by a cold will to control, and, in following Astruc, has been doing that by clarifying the relationships between human beings and the objects that form their universe, a universe which is quickly and painfully fading away.

This “Profils paysans” series represents his coming full circle, from the margins (his first films were shot in places like Israel, Prague, and Chad) to the metropolis (he made many films in the 1970s-90s in Paris) and now back to the margins (of France’s Haute Loire).<sup>11</sup> There are ostensibly three “Profils,” although the series could be said to begin with the autobiographical film that Depardon made with Roger Ikhlef in 1984, *Les années déclic*, which is made up of photos and unedited film footage that he shot as a young man (including black and white footage of Toubou nomads), and a close-up of his face against a black background, narrating his life.<sup>12</sup> Depardon’s peasant background is front and centre in *Les années déclic*, his sentimental investment in the French countryside quite explicit. But that investment becomes less autobiographical, and more clearly political, in the three films that he made between 2001 and 2008: *Profils paysans : l’approche* (2001), *Profils paysans : le quotidien* (2005) and *Profils paysans : la vie moderne* (2008). It is in these films that Depardon intersects strongly with the thought of John Berger, specifically his work on peasant life. In addition to being a renowned art critic, Berger is also a Booker-winning novelist (for his 1972 novel *G*). His “Into their Labours” trilogy – comprised of *Pig Earth* (1979), *Once in Europa* (1987) and *Lilac and Flag* (1990) – is similar to the “Profils paysans” films in many ways. Both Berger and Depardon share a melancholy about the passing of peasant life, about the death of a mode of existence that is inherently difficult, impoverished, and isolated. *Pig Earth* concludes with what Berger calls a “Historical Afterword.” It is there that Berger classifies peasantry as a “culture of survival,” but laments that “For the first time ever it is possible that this class of survivors may not survive. Within a century, there may be no more peasants. In Western Europe, if the plans work out as the economic planners have foreseen, here will be no more peasants within twenty-five years.”<sup>13</sup> Depardon’s “Profils paysans” series, which begins 22 years and ends 29 years after Berger wrote that, offers a glimpse of what this post-peasantry might look like.

The “Profils paysans” films are largely made up of fixed-position sequence-shots, although there are some important visual differences. Early in the series’ first film, *Profils paysans : l’approche* (2001), there is a stunning image where Marcelle Brès (an aged, windowed farmer) and her neighbour Raymond tend to pigs; the camera is set well back from them, and is right in the centre of the feed area. There are long troughs on both sides and a small window just at the end where only white light is visible. The two old timers walk back and forth, chatting between themselves, in a take that lasts about two minutes. This shot is as patient as anything in Depardon’s cinema, but it has a kind of visual richness that is at odds with the spare, simple compositions that define so much photojournalism (including his own).

This is also true of the interviews that directly follow this, with Louis Brès and Raymond and Marcel Privat, all retired farmers. Depardon shoots both of these interviews, as he does all of the interviews in this series, at a kitchen table with the camera facing the subject directly. But in the Brès and Privat sequences, a green cloth runs along the very top of the composition, giving it the illusion of a frame. The interview with Brès and his young neighbour Monique Rivière is equally complex; the camera is again facing the subjects directly, but the frame is sharply divided between left and right, using both colour and darkness, in the foreground, mid-ground, and background. It is a dense, symmetrical image.

These compositions are as rigorous and unyielding as the sequence-shots of his earlier work, such as his landmark films in Chad or Paris. He made three films in that African country, two of which were devoted to the kidnapping of the French anthropologist Françoise Claustre (the first is known as *Tchad: L'embuscade* and is from 1970; the other two, devoted to Claustre, are known simply as *Tchad 2* and *Tchad 3*, and are from 1975 and 76, respectively). Depardon's interviews with Claustre are not quite uncut, but they are close to it; the only editing is jump-cuts. The angle throughout both films is almost identical; the camera is set low to the ground, seeming to be seated next to Claustre, and she is framed in, more or less, a medium shot. There is no camera movement. These are simply images of Claustre talking about her captivity and the conditions under which she lives. Although these are synch-sound films, the influence of the Lumières is clearly felt, to invoke Depardon's statement to Jay Kuehner; the film follows a grammar completely based on single shots rather than any kind of découpage or cutting within a setup. But there is a visual complexity in the comparably unblinking interviews in *Profils paysans : l'approche*, a sort of visual generosity, that marks this later work as very different from Depardon's earlier films. Having left the metropolitan and globe-trotting photojournalism behind, Depardon is now home, and thus presents the world of the Haute Loire as intricate, deep, and made up of compound elements. This interest in multiplicity defines his compositional sensibility in this film. His approach to editing has remained more or less the same, but he is definitely choosing a different kind of brush-stroke for these interviews than the ones he used to evoke Françoise Claustre or, in his similarly Lumière-esque 1994 film *Délits flagrants* (about accused criminals in Paris), those facing France's brutally bureaucratic justice system.<sup>14</sup> Those two films have a very clear relationship between subject matter and form. They are both about the pain of a desperately impoverished existence; Claustre was held by the rebels for over three years, while *Délits flagrants* is made up of a parade of increasingly desperate people accused of petty crimes. And they are both thus possessed of a compositional style and editing pattern that is defined by a kind of relentlessness. Depardon is evoking a more complex political and ethical situation in *Profils paysans : l'approche*, although we can still see an important theme of individuals being trapped in systems which have no regard for their well-being or distinct situation. Thus we see, in the later film, a kind of editing and mise-en-scène which recalls this grimmer, more brutalising work but which also leaves space for a viewer to feel the warmth and the profundity of the place that is being lost.

The visual schema of the second film in the series, *Profils paysans : le quotidien* (2005) is slightly different than that of its predecessor *Profils paysans : l'approche*, and its political analysis evolves along with this formal shift. Depardon acknowledged this in his conversation with Jay Kuehner, telling him that "In *Profils paysans*, in making the first and second chapters, there were years and other films in between, and I didn't shoot the two parts in the same way. I spoke with the farmers in the second chapter. So it's evolving. I'm not certain how the third chapter will turn out."<sup>15</sup> I would argue that these formal differences (including those that would indeed emerge in the third part) are inseparable from Depardon's

larger analysis of the dissolution of the peasant world. The opening images are of Louis Brès's funeral, and although the pace of editing is relatively crisp, the camera does not move at all. This is followed, however, by a series of hand-held long takes of Marcel Privat, wandering through the hills. This sequence is capped by a very long take where Depardon (off screen) discusses with Privat the daily life of the village and tries to squeeze out his feelings about the death of his neighbour; Privat is in close-up, and now the camera does not move at all. A bit later in the film there is a similar sequence with Marcelle Brès, which mixes still and hand-held camera work and has a fairly crisp pace of editing, but eschews any kind of cutting within a setup and which is capped by a very long take where the camera barely moves at all (there is a slight handheld pan left to follow Brès as she walks away), and Depardon's voice-over tells us that shortly after these images were taken, she fell and had to be hospitalised. The first film, then, is a studied, rigorously composed exposition of a community still clinging to very old rhythms of work and community, and its visual style reflects this: it is made up solely of long takes from fixed camera positions. The clear, focussed illusionism of continuity-oriented patterns of editing and composition are absent here; the visuals of *Le quotidien* are suggestive of nothing more than a pre-1900 film grammar, an artisanal as opposed to industrial visual style.

In the second film, though, the life of these villages is clearly shifting, and so is Depardon's aesthetic. We still have long takes, but from time to time they slip into montage. The formal shifts are infrequent enough to make them seem reluctant, part of the same sort of gradual and haphazard shifts that are defining rural life. A particularly expressive example of this comes in the interview with Amadine Gagnaire and Robert Maneval. This is in the kitchen-tableau style of the previous film, but features a cutaway to a close-up of Gagnaire, as Depardon's voice-over tells us that she comes from a suburb of Lyon, from a family with no agricultural background, and that she and her partner are struggling to buy a small plot while she finishes her schooling. Depardon also cuts to a very oddly composed image of Maneval's wife Paulette; the camera is to the side of her, making the line of the kitchen table a diagonal that goes about halfway up the frame; the camera is also just a bit to the side, not a quite at a Dutch angle but slightly off nevertheless. When Depardon cuts back to the head-on shot of the table, that's on a slight diagonal now too. Depardon returns to his favoured compositions, but there are variations here. Matters are shifting, and awkwardly. Gagnaire can't quite find her place, and Depardon doesn't quite find his visual groove.

Matters shift further in the third and final chapter of the series, *Profils paysans : la vie moderne*. Like the other films it begins with a long take shot out a car's windshield as it drives down a narrow dirt road; Depardon, on the voice over, talks about how they are returning to the Privat farm. The farm and its community, though, have changed: not beyond recognition, but significantly. That's true of Depardon's cinematic form too. Early in the film we meet Alain Privat, nephew of Marcel (he looks to be in his late 40s). The first time we see him he is awkwardly posing before the camera with his new wife, Cécile. This is a long shot, with the rolling hills in the background; the newlyweds ask Depardon, who is off-screen, if they should pose or just act naturally, and we hear Depardon reassure them that they'll take several poses. On the voice over Depardon explains how they met through an ad in the newspaper and now live together in a wing of the farm. It is a moment that is both self-reflexive (the newlyweds directly addressing the camera, wondering about the pose they should strike) and quite consistent with the demands of clear, linear narrative, as Depardon's voiceover fills in the gaps of the story of the farm since last we left it in *Profils paysans : le quotidien*. Furthermore, the kitchen table interviews are present again, but in a further diversified form. The first of these is with Cécile, and while it is, like the other interviews in

Depardon's cinema, a plan-séquence or sequence-shot, the camera is set closer than in the other tabletop interviews. The interview with the Privat brothers is shot further back and slightly to the side, with the brothers on opposite sides and the table forming a diagonal line that, as in the Paulette Maneval interview, goes about halfway up the frame. These interviews are interesting to compare visually because their subjects are talking about some of the same issues. Cécile talks about how the Privat uncles don't really accept her because she is an outsider, and because they are unhappy that their nephew has met someone while they have lived their lives as bachelors. The uncles, for their part, express scepticism about Cécile, shrugging when Depardon asks if they get along with her, saying that they don't like being pushed around and that she doesn't think much of older ways of doing things. The visual and cultural unity that was being evoked in a melancholy way in *Profils paysans : l'approche* and was beginning to fracture in *Profils paysans : le quotidien* really has passed into something different here, something recognisable as peasant life but much more fragmented, something that borders on the disjointed. We see this contrast most clearly when Marcel and Germaine Challaye milk the cows. We are back in the same setting of the stirring deep-focus shot of *Profils paysans : l'approche*: the cow barn. But instead of a patient long take, set well back from the characters, the first image of the sequence is basically a medium shot, and the milking unfolds in a slow montage of images, some of which even have pans. There is, of course, nothing unusual about this on the surface. This is the grammar of conventional documentary, the grammar of modern nonfiction cinema. But *Profils paysans : l'approche*, like so much of Depardon's cinema, was really defined by a seemingly antiquated conception of film grammar. Now, in *Profils paysans : la vie moderne*, cinematic form, like the world that Depardon evokes, has had to give way. It's still recognisable as distinct, but it has moved with the times.

This shift is most clear the interview where we return to Amadine Gagnaire. Here she is at the kitchen table with her two kids (baby on her lap, toddler at the head) and her husband Michel, with the camera head-on. Depardon starts the sequence by saying on voiceover that they have no farm even though Michel is a farmer's son (although they talk about having a bit of land for enough livestock to make cheese), that they are stuck paying on a mortgage until 2026, and are generally unable to fully devote themselves to agriculture. As the conversation around the table moves along, though, Depardon cuts to a close-up of Amadine, who talks about raising her kids as being a full-time job. Then he cuts to a close-up of Michel; he doesn't speak, but we still hear Amadine talking about how it's nice to be able to raise a few animals and make some cheese, but they are trying to avoid taking on too much debt. This flash of shot/reverse-shot is coupled with a vivid evocation of the post-peasant experience. In the place of land there are cramped spaces, in the place of overwhelming work is overwhelming debt. And in the place of long, uninterrupted takes is shot/reverse-shot, the fragmenting of a unified space into smaller, more easily consumable pieces. This is post-artisanal film grammar being used to evoke a post-peasant world.

The trilogy is thus a kind of nexus for Depardon's tripartite aesthetics Lumière, Bazin, Astruc. We can see him struggling, Astruc-style, to escape "the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake," as he centralises images that convey both the aspiration to continuity (precisely composed long takes that echo the slow, precise and anachronistic techniques that are specific to this region) and of the inescapable rupture of that continuity (flashes of decoupage that interrupt these sumptuous long takes, as young farmers explain the cotemporary impossibility of earning an actual living through agriculture). He advances his critique of this rupture by placing a deep faith in the reality that he marshals to express his engaged but mournful view of the world. I allude here, of course, to Bazin's well-known

distinction between “those directors who put their faith in the image and those who put their faith in reality.”<sup>16</sup> Writing in his 1958 essay “L’évolution du langage cinématographique,” Bazin was at pains to point out that this was the real distinction in film language (“la ligne de faille esthétique” is the term he uses), and that the split between sound and silent film was relatively minor in comparison. Writing in his homage to the great Italian filmmaker Vittorio de Sica, Bazin stated that in de Sica’s cinema, “There is not one image that is not charged with meaning, that does not drive home into the mind the sharp end of an unforgettable moral truth, and not one that to this end is false to the ontological ambiguity of reality. Not one gesture, not one incident, not a single object in the film is given a prior significance derived from the ideology of the director.”<sup>17</sup> This is very close to what Frédéric Sabouraud meant when he wrote that Depardon’s cinema was far from being a militant set of questions (“une problématique militant et réductrice” is the term he uses), and that it drives home the sharp ends of moral truths precisely because it privileges the conflicts, contradictions, rifts and sufferings that Sabouraud sees as central to his vision of the world. This lack of explicit militancy leaves *cinéma vérité*, an important inspiration for Depardon, open to critique as an apolitical, voyeuristic form. But in its most fully-realised forms the school has made a speciality of viscerally evoking just such conflicts, contradictions, rifts and sufferings. Much the same criticism could be levelled, of course, at the Lumière brothers; aren’t their little 50-second films just moving snapshots, the pseudo-scientific tinkering of some privileged industrialists and their employees? Such an analysis is for me irredeemably simplistic; the essence of the Lumière aesthetic is that it offers a small, highly subjective window onto the world, and an important aspect of that subjectivity is a palpable desire to escape the limitations of the late 19th century worldview and find a vision that is both more cosmopolitan (hence the *actualités* the Lumières had shot in places like Belfast or Jerusalem) and more attuned to the tiny details of the everyday. That is a pretty fair summary of the films of Raymond Depardon.

My crucial point here about the Lumières’ achievement is that it is to be found at the level of their aesthetic, just as for both Bazin and Astruc the ethical possibilities of filmmaking were really a matter of form, not subject matter. That is just as true of Depardon. The films that he made early in his career were aesthetically sophisticated but defined by a subject matter that made it easy to ignore those aesthetics and focus on what could very well have been a series of splashy newspaper stories: to exclude the Chad films or *Délits flagrants* entirely, we could point to 1974, *une partie de campagne* (1974, about the French presidential election), *Reporters* (1981, about the French paparazzi), *10e chambre : instants d’audience* (2004, another film about the French justice system). The *Profils paysans* films, though, are impossible to understand without some consideration of form narrative structure. The slowness of the exposition, the awkwardness of the compositions, the isolated moments of startling visual beauty: these are the aspects of the “*Profils paysans*” films that are the most pronounced, the most immediately striking. Very little information is conveyed, and very little story is told in any of these films. Their critique of capitalism’s tendency to homogenise culture is contained in their refusal to conform to the demands of cinematic efficacy or clarity.

It’s all a bit 1970s, I suppose, this tendency to ascribe an inherently progressive political sensibility to a non-mainstream form, and this is the sort of tendency that this journal’s two most beloved late contributors, Andrew Britton and Robin Wood, spent a lot of time critiquing.<sup>18</sup> No doubt there is much truth in their shared sense of Hollywood cinema’s radical possibilities, and much to be said for their shared scepticism that highly unorthodox formal patterns inherently constitute a radical politics. But as I have tried to show, Depardon’s films do not deny pleasure in the name of a political statement in the manner of

much 1970s and 70s-influenced counter-cinema. Indeed, I think that kind of filmmaking, which so annoyed Wood and Britton alike, is exactly what Sabouraud was talking about when he invoked the spectre of “une problématique militant et réductrice,” a problematique that he sees Depardon utterly rejecting. And for that matter, Depardon’s form isn’t really all that radical. Less than an anti-pleasure militant, Depardon is an anti-centralisation melancholic. He longs not for a world, or a cinema, where we all have to work harder, but instead a world, and a filmmaking practice, where different ways of working, and this different ways of moving through the world, can survive. His career has been spent subjecting institutions that are peculiar to modernity – media-savvy guerrilla movements, highly efficient criminal justice systems, the celebrity-obsessed press – to an unblinking scrutiny. His “Profils paysans” series is a the culmination of that project, the films where all the timely and eventually dated subject matter fades away and we are left with only a few basic elements: landscape, sequence shots, critique. Let’s put it another way: Lumière, Bazin, Astruc. The illusion of detached objectivity that hides a rich subjectivity; an intense desire to drive home moral truths; a belief that cinema allows us break away from the tyranny of the visual and really lay out a philosophy in a new way: this is the combination that defines Depardon’s Profils paysans. What it adds up to is window onto the world that drives home the sharp moral point that modernity has made difference impossible, and that only by escaping the tyranny of the visual, the tyranny of conventional documentary, can we can get a sense of what we have lost.

## NOTES

1. Jay Kuhner, “A Man with a Movie Camera: Raymond Depardon’s Recent Films,” *Cinema Scope* 23 (Summer 2005), 35.
2. In addition to feeling the influence of the Lumières in a general way because of being born near Lyon, Depardon has made a number of works that strongly recall their aesthetic, mostly as part of omnibus films. In 1991 he contributed to the omnibus film *Contre l’oubli*, offering a 3-minute, single-shot and camera-movement-free film called *Pour Alirio de Jesus Pedraza Becerra, Colombie* (it is on the DVD collection “Depardon Cinéaste” under the title *Cartagena*). He also participated in the 1995 omnibus film *Lumière et compagnie*, wherein 41 filmmakers were each asked to make a 50-second, single-shot film with the camera used by the Lumière Brothers.
3. Raymond Depardon and Frédéric Sabouraud, *Depardon/Cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1993), 11; my translation.
4. *Cinéma/Depardon*, 10.
5. *Cinéma/Depardon*, 11.

6. Alexandre Astruc, "The birth of a new avant garde: La caméra-stylo", in Peter Graham, ed., *The New Wave* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 19; no translator is given. In French: Alexandre Astruc, *Du stylo à la camera et de la caméra au stylo: Écrits (1942-1984)* (Paris: L'Archipel, 1992), 325.

7. Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant Garde," 18 / *Du stylo à la caméra*, 325.

8. André Bazin, *What is Cinema? v.1*, Hugh Gray, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 37. In French: André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* (Paris: Éditions du cerf, 2000), 281.

9. Raymond Depardon, 1968: *Une année autour du monde* (Paris: Points, 2008), 16; my translation.

10. Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant Garde," 20 / *Du stylo à la camera*, 327.

11. Depardon actually went back to Africa after making his Chad films, so this isn't as perfect a circle as I imply here. His other African films are *Yemen* (1973), *Empty Quarter (Une femme en Afrique)* (1985), *Afriques, Comment ça va avec la douleur ?* (1996), and *Un homme sans l'occident* (2003). This is to say nothing of *La captive du désert* (1989), Depardon's only fiction film, which was based on the events of the Françoise Claustre kidnapping; that film deserves an article unto itself.

12. Depardon's book *La ferme du Garet* (Paris: Éditions Carré, 1995) is in some ways a follow-up to this work; it is mostly comprised of photos taken of his family's farm. This was published in English as *Our Farm* (Paris: Actes Sud/DisVoir, 2007). The image "Villefranche-sur-Saône, 'Le Garet' Farmhouse, The Photographer's Mother," found in both editions, strongly recalls the kitchen interviews of the "Profils paysans" series, which I will discuss shortly.

13. John Berger, *Pig Earth* (New York: Pantheon, 1979), 196.

14. Depardon has made another film about the French justice system that is somewhat more easily available to English-speaking audiences: *10e chambre – Instances d'audience* (2004), which has also been released on an English-subtitled DVD as *10th District Court*. That said, *Délits flagrants* is one of the films in Arte Vidéo's "Depardon Cinéaste" box set that has optional English subtitles.

15. Kuehner, 36.

16. Bazin, What is Cinema? v.1, 24 / Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?, 64.

17. Bazin, What is Cinema? v.2, 68 / Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?, 318.

18. On Britton's side I would direct readers to his exchange with Janine Marchessault, "The Politics of Difference," in CineAction 17 (1989), where he was particularly critical of the politics and aesthetics of the Berwick Street Collective, heroes of 70s counter-cinema (p.9). On Wood's side I think the most relevant example is his essay "An Irresponsible Article" in CineAction 35 (1994), where he criticised John Greyson in part because he "sides with Brecht against Lukacs, but it is Brecht filtered through Godard, a 'false' Brechtianism" (p.13), one that does not pay sufficient attention to Brecht's refusal to entirely abandon popular forms, a "false Brechtianism" that was also very typical of 70s militant cinema.

Sources for the films on video:

The "Profils paysans" trilogy is published as a box set in France by Arte Vidéo, and is easily ordered at Amazon.fr (AISN: B001T4ENCC). It includes Les années dé clic. They are PAL-format, region-free discs. They do not have English subtitles.

Profils paysans : la vie moderne has been released in an English-subtitled version by Soda Pictures in the UK. It is titled Modern Life, and is easily ordered at Amazon.co.uk (AISN: B001X22XRC). It is PAL-format and region 2.

The box set "Depardon Cinéaste" is published in France by Arte Vidéo, and is easily ordered at Amazon.fr (AISN: B000GH2X34). They are PAL-format, region-free discs. The box set has the following feature-length films: 1974, une partie de campagne, San Clemente, Reporters, Faits divers, Empty Quarter: une femme en Afrique, Urgences, La captive du désert, Délits flagrants, Afriques, comment ça va avec la douleur?, Un Homme sans l'Occident, 10e chambre, instants d'audience. It also has the following shorts: Ian Palach, Révolutionnaires du Tchad, 10 minutes of silence for John Lennon, New York NY, Contact "Raymond Depardon" and Cartagena. Most of the feature-length films have English subtitles; none of the shorts do.