# Work information:

Title, parts:

The pleasures and problems of filming the French: the making of "Biquefarre", 2 pts

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Pt 2: 31 min 49 sec

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# Speaker List:

* William Harry Gilcher (WG)
* John Weiss (JW)
* Speaker 3 (Sp3): Audience member
* Speaker 4 (Sp4): Audience member
* Speaker 5 (Sp5): Audience member

# Note:

The [CLICK] sound noted in the transcript is the sound of a slide projector advancing. There is also a baby burbling and whining intermittently, not noted unless it interferes with hearing discussion.

# Provided Transcript:

## Part 1 of 2:

[00:00:05]

>> William Harry Gilcher (WG): -may not realize that the film *Biquefarre* was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities

>> John Weiss (JW): But not while you were working there.

>>WG: Not while I was working there, no. It was- People still ask me, even at the Endowment, ‘Why is it that we funded this French film?’ [CHUCKLES] And I have to remind them that studies of French civilization, anthropology, ethnography, whatever I can come up with, are traditional disciplines of the humanities,

[00:00:36]

And that language studies itself. There are many good reasons to fund this. Plus the fact was that the Endowment and John Weiss and Laurence Wiley and I felt that this was an absolutely unique chance to return to a place where a classic film had been made in 1944-45 and, with the same director, do a new film. Looking back at some of the same people, some of the same sites, following up with what had happened, and in a period of transition, which was, which has been overwhelming in this part of rural France.

[00:01:19]

There have been few periods in French history where a place like the Rouergue has changed so radically in such a short period of time, 35-40 years since World War 2. So it was seen as, as a unique project; the fact Rouquier was going to direct the new film, that we would be telling a contemporary story nonetheless was, was, these were the factors which persuaded the National Endowment to fund it. The- making a film like, like *Biquefarre* in a small place like Goutrens and Rignac and Aveyron.

[00:02:03]

Places which are about, if you look at a map, think of a map of France in your mind, about 2/3 of the way from Paris to the Spanish border. At the southern edge of the Massif Central. A very remote place where you only go if you're wanting to go there, you don't happen to, you don't happen across this place on the road to someplace else.

[00:02:27]

You have to want to go into these hilly regions where, where the train is on a single, single... –what do you call that? [CROSSTALK]– track, a single track, where in constantly going like this, where you feel sick after the time that you arrive because the train has been going back and forth.

>>Speaker 3 (Sp3): Is there a train to Rodez?

>>WG: Oh yeah, there is a train to Rodez, there’s a train to St-Christophe, which is a couple miles from Goutrens, but what I am trying to say is

[00:03:05]

It is a remote part of France, it is extremely rural and it has been hit by a agricultural and economic revolution in the last 35 years, which is without precedent in this part of France. There is now, by the way, an airport in Rodez and that is what really links, now, economically the Department of the Aveyron with Paris. [UNINTELLIGIBLE], economically. Family links have always existed; the Rouergue has been a great supplier of people, of labor, to the Paris region in particular, but also to Toulouse and Montpellier. The making of a film like this was a very interesting thing for me.

[00:03:55]

Certainly a extremely important experience in my life. Unlike anything that I’d ever done. In the first place, we were not dealing with people who spend their lives making films. The filmmakers, yes. But the subjects were, as they were in ‘44–45, relatively naive in terms of what filmmaking means, we were taking, we were going on location with nonprofessional actors.

[00:04:26]

Some of them, yes, had had experience in ‘44–45, but that’s a long time ago and there were only two or three who were involved again. And yet, we were using a crew of people who are coming from Paris region into this small village. One of the choices we made at the very beginning was to find people to be on the crew, which was going to, was going to be a small crew, not that we couldn't have afforded a larger crew, which was also probably true, but [LAUGHS].

[00:04:57]

We also wanted, it was a conscious decision made to keep the number of people to the minimum so that we would not be overwhelming the people in these families or in these villages. The idea being that we wanted to upset their lives as little as possible, knowing all the while that the making of this film would be an enormous upset in the cultural life and daily life of these families.

[00:05:23]

The second thing is that it's a family business affair, it’s family matters, which became very, very important in the making of this film. Georges Rouquier, the director is related to practically everybody who appears on the screen. All of the family troubles and joys of the last 40 years are somehow, are constantly a... sometimes problems and usually advantages to the making of this kind of a film.

[00:05:57]

In that, when, when I was talking with people at Farrebique itself, at the farm of Farrebique, I could not know that perhaps in 1955 there had been some terrific argument between Georges's wife and somebody else in the family. Those are the kind of details that a person in the family can know, but that I couldn’t know directly. There was no particular argument there.

[00:06:24]

There were many arguments, but that was not one of them that I only cite it as an example. So walking into the middle of this, essentially, family, family circle and trying to bring out a film was a very complicated matter. I felt after making the film that working through the diplomacy, the family diplomacy, between various branches of people, people who felt hurt that because they hadn't been used enough in the film, people who felt prideful because they were given chief roles and were therefore looking down at other people in the same family. I felt after that, that my place really should be in Geneva at the arms talks; solve all that in a weekend.

[00:07:13]

So those were very important matters that I had to concern myself with in terms of the feelings of a large family and trying to get everyone working to make this film. And that was no simple matter. Now, the film that you have now seen is a highly composed film, it is a structured film,

[00:07:44]

unlike most ethnographic documentaries which you may see. This was structured in advance, tells a story which did not occur in all its details. It’s a fiction to that extent. However, it picks up on real human relations. It picks up on real places and on actual characters who were trying to play ‘no one but themselves’

[00:08:07]

or, perhaps, if you think of it as ‘someone like themselves’. One of the wonders of Rouquier’s direction is that he was able to get these fabulous performances from people who, for the most part, had never been in front of a camera before. And that comes from the fact that he had established a personal rapport between himself and each of the actors and actresses.

[00:08:33]

They felt that they wanted to do a good job for Georges. He wanted to get a good performance out of them. He was asking them to play roles which were similar to their own, in real life. And he was asking them to play these roles in their own living rooms, in their own dining rooms and in their own kitchens, so that they would feel at their maximum ease. Again, the question of the crew came in, or we had to find people would understand what Georges wanted to do,

[00:09:00]

who wanted very much to work on this film, who would take no shortcuts in the seeing that the film was well made. We were a highly professional operation and people worked very, very well together. The one thing we could not afford was kind of fights among crewmen, people on the crew.

[00:09:21]

It was very, very important to us, to avoid all of that and to avoid any feeling on the part of the crew members that they were somehow superior to these people in these very rural areas. Because the traditional differences between a Parisian and a someone from the provinces is certainly no more, I can't imagine more distant than what could be possible between somebody who's a fancy filmmaker and a person who takes care of sheep most of the time. It’s just very big class differences that

[00:09:56]

we had to be careful of. And that's something that we looked, again, in terms of the make up of the crew, and by and large we were very successful. The-, we also had another kind of problem to work through. And that's an interesting one in terms of filmmaking. And that is that, that the people who work in agriculture in the Aveyron have had a rather low opinion of what filmmakers, TV people, professionals in media might do for a living.

[00:10:30]

Whether this was really work or whether they were simply being overpaid for a little bit of work. At the same time the crew members had only minimal experience of what farm life was really like. So they, well as I say, they're very sympathetic people, but nonetheless, they came with a very limited idea of what's involved in the daily life of a Aveyron farmer.

[00:11:00]

At the end of the film, I think, at the end of the filmmaking period, both the people who’d been involved in the film as actors, that is the farmers from this region, the families, felt as, felt that the filmmakers were just as hard-working as they were. They were astounded by the long hours that they put in, the efforts made to have just a very slight effect.

[00:11:26]

They were very impressed with that. At the same time the crew members learned incredible amount about agriculture. In the scene in the film where the artificial insemination was going on, I happened to be standing there holding a big piece of cardboard so that the light wouldn’t be reflected and so I was not watching the scene which is actually because I live in upstate NY, something I’ve seen before, I grew up here, but the crew members had never seen this. I was watching the crew, but they were watching what was going on and

[00:12:00]

I’ll tell you – the drama was over there with the crew. That's the kind of experience which these people had never had, and that was a very interesting part. What I would like to do is show you some slides of the making of the film and of this village. I think, perhaps, some of you are interested in what this place that really looks like.

[00:12:24]

We have limited view in the film of what a small French village looks like, and I do have a few slides of that which, which we can talk about. And then if you have questions, I'd be happy to, to answer them or say more about any particular subject that you want to talk about. Turn the lights off. [CLICK] Uh, this picture was taken in the market town of Rignac.

[00:13:02]

At the beginning of the film we shoot a market, the monthly market in Rignac. And this was the first time that I had been to there. This is Georges Rouquier standing here, I wish we could get it darker here, I guess it’s not feasible... and uh, the people in Goutrens which is where we have uh, actually this so clean I dare not touch it... [sound of writing on chalkboard] but the um, Goutrens is basically here, Rignac, I think of as over there, Farrebique, and Biquefarre are here in between. So there’s a road to Rignac, and then a road off of that to Farrebique and Biquefarre. Goutrens is a very small town, a few hundred people. It has no real grocery store, no market to speak of,

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so people go to Rignac for the market. And that's what we're doing here and at the beginning of the film, you’ll see some of the market scenes, and also… It's the market day, not only because all these people who come with their mobile vans to sell everything from cheese and sausage, to vegetables and meat, everything they sell. It’s also the day, once a month, when there is a major market for veal calves, for sheep, for lambs, for all kinds of animals. And that makes this is an extremely important

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social occasion. People come in, they spend the day really at this event. On the day of the market, school is closed in the morning. So that everybody comes. And starting from... the market starts around 5:30. At 8 o'clock in the morning, you can go into the various restaurants, in this particular town of which there are several. And they are completely set up, all of their tables are already full of people having what you and I would think of as a pretty large lunch or dinner and they're exchanging all the gossip, all the economic business, all the

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family business because everybody knows everybody in the region and they are all passing information back and forth, it’s an extremely important social occasion. So, at the beginning of the film, they say they're going to, the one sister, Hortense, is going to the market and she is going to pick up, do the errands for Maria. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] And this was the day we had gone to see what this market was, how, what it was like, whether we would be able to film in this area or not. [CLICK] In this town there is a major market building in which you see it in the film, in which here we were investigating for the first time as to how this might work.

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Interestingly enough, the mayor of Rignac, which is again a pretty small town, maybe a thousand people, I don’t know the exact number.

>>JW: It’s 2500.

>>WG: Is it that big? 2,500? Okay. It's still a fairly small place, but the mayor of Rignac is also a member of the of the Conseil Général de l’Aveyron, the governing council for the Aveyron Department and a Senator in Paris. So he’s a , he's a big guy politically in the Aveyron.

[00:17:01]

What this has meant for Rignac is that he has had a new market building built there, huge new market building sheds for, more than sheds, it’s kind of a hanger kind of situation, so that it makes the town of Rignac very important for its cattle market. A town like this would otherwise probably not have the economic means [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. So the mayor of Rignac was an important contact for us as well, politically, however, he’s on the … he is quite to the right, as opposed to Rouquier who was somewhere to the left. And …-

[00:17:40]

>> JW: The mayor of Goutrens was also on the left.

>>WG: And the mayor of Goutrens, on the other hand, was on the left. So we had to, we had to figure out how to balance these two mayors off and keep everybody happy and get the film done. The mayor of Rignac, the premiere of this film in France was done in this market hall

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last March, a year ago. Two weeks a year ago now. The mayor of Rignac introduced the film because this was a big political event for him – a thousand people in the building watching it, - but we had not allowed him to see the film beforehand, he had kidnapped the film practically in order to get an advance look at it because he wasn't sure of how much he wanted to say, or to what degree he needed to protect himself politically, and we wouldn’t allow him to see it.

>> Speaker 4 (Sp4): Are the mayors elected?

>>WG: Yes, the mayor is elected, yes, the mayor is elected.

[00:18:43]

So all the politics sort of interesting.

>>Sp3: [INAUDIBLE][CROSSTALK}

>>WG: No, no, no. One of the things that Rouquier did during the, during this visit, and subsequent visit was to take note as to exactly what these people did as they bought and sold cattle. And you see some of those gestures done in the, in the film.

[00:19:06]

Those gestures are by not at all directed. We did not ask anybody to do anything. We just filmed the conversations that were going on about particular sales. But one time, at one point you see, you see somebody with scissors, who was making a little cut in the hair back here, and they each have a little sign, which means ‘this is a veal calf which I have bought’, a little sign to say

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“this is mine”, and I will remember that they are working on a little sheet of paper, it gets a little difficult to remember at the end of a couple of hours which ones you’ve bought and which ones somebody else has bought and make sure that nobody is going to make you substitute some lesser quality animal. So they make little individual marks. And we watched also how they judged an animal’s condition, how they looked at them, where they, they would typically, for instance, sort of feel in this part of the animal, the rump here

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just to feel how much fat there was between the skin and the muscle, and these kinds of things. That's the kind of detail which Rouquier wanted to put in his film in which he had to understand which we got people to explain to us exactly what was going on. Now it's impossible. This is the difference, the difference in film style between this market scene and later in the film is striking. Here we were working with what was happening anyway.

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It was a market day. We went in and we shot with two cameras. The only time, roughly the only time we were using two cameras at once, two soundmen running around and just getting whatever we could; we were just collecting materials, basically, to be used in the film. The rest of the film is all structured and thought out in advance – we want so and so to be sitting here, we want so and so to be sitting there, we want them to say this line.

[00:21:01]

It’s a very different style of filmmaking. This is much more like what you’ll see in most ethnographic filmmaking, is where you run around and try to get people, try to get action happening in front of the cameras. On the other hand, the Aveyronnais who are in the film, who were in that market scene were not necessarily duped by what was going on. This is something that I think you should keep in mind if you are interested in filmmaking. That is that you always, your presence as a filmmaker, is of course, visible to everybody.

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And you do have an effect on what people say. Because I came out the day that we're shooting in here, not this day, this was when I first went taking notes, but the day that we were actually shooting at that place, I heard two farmers, he said “Ha, he thought I was really giving him the figures there but I wasn't.” He was playacting a little bit because he didn't want anybody to really know what, what he was being paid for, an animal-worth. They were giving other figures

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Imagining that we were so interested in the exact details of the particular sale that we wat to .... But they felt that they had sort of triumphed over the filmmakers. And to some degree they had but it didn't really, wasn't crucial to us. But if you were making an entire film where you were trying to, with what they call the direct cinema or the *cinéma vérité* style, you’re constantly running into the problem where people are playacting a little bit because you’re there.

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and they want to project a personality which is not really quite their normal everyday personality. There's always a difference. Now, just to show you something of the village of Goutrens. This is three miles on a very winding road from, from Rignac. This is what it looks like from the house

[00:23:02]

where Henri Rouquier lives. Henri, our main character in the film. Across the street there is a pasture and then the village proper. But there's all kinds of houses behind me. So you have a situation very common in France in these small towns where you have, can have barns and pastures really almost in the center of the village, not in the center of the village, but just on the outskirts before other houses. People have fields, pastures spread out among the countryside and they may have their barn someplace else.

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So it's very, very common, and somewhat dangerous, if you are not expecting it in the morning or evening to come across a herd of cattle or sheep walking along the road to get from their field to their barn. [CLICK] In the center of the village of Goutrens is a small square and the church and the war memorial, which is obligatory in French villages.

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This one is to, it was originally built for 1914–18 war and is painted, painted face, painted moustache. It stands right in front, or to the side of the church, on the other side of the square is a café, the Café Freyssinet. There had been a number of cafes in 1944-45, you get some image of that in the film, in the two films particularly, now there's only one. [CLICK]

[00:24:48]

So this, this was that statue again. Georges Rouquier’s father is listed on the list of the dead from the 1914–1918 war as well as in the church and we have an image of that as well in the film *Farrebique*. The church is now to our right, café is here to the left., and this is the main road which goes through Goutrens; it’s certainly not a romantic looking village.

[00:25:24]

>>Speaker 5 (SP5): [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

>>WG: Yes. Yes, that's a different part of the town lands.

>>JW: That’s about the least romantic French town, I think.

>> WG: Right. So gas stations, extremely important. There’s a garage, an important garage in Goutrens, the seller of used cars. Who, by the way, gets a lot of his revenue from taking, bringing used cars from the Paris region to Goutrens and vice versa. And repairing, he’s well known as an auto repair shop.

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And, as in all small towns, there’s a political connection as well. That is his wife is the secretary of the mayor and was, again, a key figure for us. Sort of figuring out how these villages work was an important part for us. This is a nicer view of Goutrens. In the film *Farrebique*, there's the house which the aunt, the older aunt, la Tante Marie, lives in, who serves the children lunch at noon.

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They come, they come from Farrebique to Goutrens to school and because it's a mile home they stay in the village at lunch time and Tante Marie serves them lunch. She lived in this little house here. Very, very small. The main room in that, in that place, if I was standing at one wall, the other wall would be where the door is. And it’s roughly from here to that wall, it’s the entire space of that room.

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So filming in there in 1944–45, with these enormous cameras, was extremely difficult. And you have the feeling in the film because he has, he has la Tante Marie pulling out the soup from underneath the mattress, from underneath the quilt to keep it warm and serving it and bringing it over and putting it on a table. And it's in two shots.

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In one, we see her taking the stuff out. And the next shot, we see her putting it down on the table itself. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] And you have this feeling that it's in quite a large room and she takes it over here and walks over someplace. In fact, she's going like this. And the illusion of space comes from the fact that’s it two shots, and it’s filmed with a wide-angle lens. [UNINTELLIGIBLE] That was one of the things that struck all of us coming from the outside to Goutrens and to Farrebique –

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is that everything, including the people are diminutive. Short and small and the places are small.

>>John Weiss: I mentioned in my lecture yesterday the basketball team they all desperately cheer for that I can’t imagine ever wins any games – the Aveyron basketball team. Made up of five footers. [CLICK]

>>WG: Goutrens, a byway in Goutrens. You can see the very narrow kinds of roads which are in this village. [CLICK] A number of places are falling apart, however.

[00:28:52]

There’s an influx now of people into the village from Toulouse, Rodez who are buying houses or buying back houses that were in their family for use as weekend or vacation places. But it's so remote from Paris, or Lyon, or Bordeaux that it's difficult for people to imagine buying a place down there as a vacation because it’s too far to go, too hard to get there. It’s a good eight-hour trip by car from Paris.

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It's not expensive, however, for the houses, for the land it is, but for the houses it’s not too expensive. The result of this is that people who are getting a little bit more bourgeois from Rodez, which is only 40 minutes away – 45-40 minutes away, may buy these places. That’s a limited number of people who have funds to do that but there are some or from Toulouse, which is an hour and a half.

[00:29:46]

They may, if they have some attachment to the region in particular, they may come and buy places here. [CLICK] This was a former café and it gives you, this is typical, where you have the, - it’s now used as a house, someone lives there, - but you can still see the old sign that says Café-Auberge Delon. It’s one of the numerous cafés which have closed since 1945. Since people do not need to any longer

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be attached to this very small community they go to Rignac. They don't necessarily work in the village anymore or on farms they work in Rignac or Rodez because of the possibility of doing that and earning more money and having a better material life. On the other hand, if you look at the next house down here, you can see it has been the re-plastered on the outside so people are keeping up where they can. [CLICK] So not everything in Goutrens is falling apart. Again, this is a street in Goutrens again that’s Georges

[00:31:06]

Rouquier looking in the window of la Tante Marie’s house that we were talking about that day. [CLICK] Laurence Wiley was one of our consultants on this on the film. That’s him on the right. Georges is in the center pointing out something or other and Henri Rouquier who is his first cousin and the main character in the film on his, on his right, our left.

[00:31:36]

These are the two cousins, Georges on the left, and Henri on the right. This is at a time when, this was the very beginning of this film project. Knowing whether or not it would be made was- [END AUDIO]

## Part 2 of 2:

[00:00:04]

>> WG: -exactly like he is in the film. Very warm, sympathetic man who has had a lot of experiences in life and was willing to do this for Georges. Most of the people said, “Well, I wouldn't do this for anybody else, but for Georges, I will go through this.”

>>SP3: So, does this mean that Georges in the intervening visits, all these years, kept in touch with his family, came down in summertime, helped, and [INAUDIBLE]?

>>WG: I wish he had, but he didn't do nearly enough of that, which was one of the reasons that we had the group diplomatic problems.

>>SP3: [INAUDIBLE]

>>JW: From about ‘48 to ‘78...

>>WG: Last time he was there, in the early fifties and then in the seventies he’d been down there.

[00:00:59]

>> SP3: So...

>>WG: There had been some people that had come to see him in Paris, but he had not been there very much at all. He kept in contact with Henri mostly by Christmas cards.

>>SP3: So then despite the fact that he had essentially left, moved away physically, they were still willing to...

>>WG: They were still willing because of the force of his personality and the warmth they felt for him, and many other reasons, but...

>>SP3: These characters weren’t paid at all?

>>WG: Yes...oh yes, they were paid. That’s one thing that was a premise of making the new film. It couldn't have been made any other way anyway.

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But it’s one of the, one thing that we insisted on that, we at the, from the American end of things particularly insisted on, and Georges saw that also was a necessity. That every person who played a role in this film be paid an equitable wage.

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So they were paid as the lowest scale of normal French actors on a daily basis or on a half day basis. It wouldn't have been possible to do it any other way. Certain characters like Henri probably would have been willing to be in the film anyway, not for financial gain but just because they wanted to do this. Georges had an enormous reputation in certain people's minds in this village, the making of *Farrebique* was a very high point in their life as a family and as an individual one.

[00:02:32]

So the idea of making another one wasn’t a negative one for many people. But certain people, however, certain people felt that because, especially at Farrebique, they had not been paid adequately in 1944–45, they were paid very little, almost nothing. The electricity was brought to the house. The house was wired, he got a little money and that was it. That was ‘44–45. Conditions have changed.

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And some, some people in the family get that, that’s why I mean it’s gotta be politics. Some people in the family felt that Georges, because the film *Farrebique* was actually a success in France, a financial as well as a critical success, that he had made a mint off of their backs, off of their labor. They didn't understand Georges's role as an artist first in putting this together. That he didn’t just take pictures of people and put them together in any which way and then have a film which was commercially successful or artistically successful. So they didn't understand what an artist does. And secondly they also didn't understand that Georges did not own the film.

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Georges was not the producer of the film. Georges did not make a bundle off of the film, the producers may have made a bundle off of the film. The producers should have perhaps come back to Goutrens and said listen we’d like to give you some money, or build a building in town, or something or other as a way of thanking you in a material way. But they didn't do that and that's something we had to struggle with in this town. But, but nonetheless, Henri and Georges always got along very well.

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Henri and and his brother Roch were somewhat more distant. And Henri and Berthe, the wife of Roch, were extremely distant. So I think for Henri, - this is, again, what anthropology is - for Henri, the idea of making another film with Georges, was a way of finding revenge against his sister-in-law and against, to some degree, less, and to some degree against his own brother Roch at Farrebique. Henri is the one who has to leave the farm

[00:04:54]

and to go find work elsewhere. But the one who has, according to the portrait made in 1944–45 in the film *Farrebique*, the one who has the most creative imagination, and the one who, perhaps, might have made more of Farrebique than his brother Roch did. Nonetheless, by the time the film was made, you will all be happy to know

[00:05:19]

that by the end of it, everybody was reconciled with everybody at an incredible dinner. People were singing songs and for a brief moment anyway all the Rouquiers seemed to like each other, so, that’s good... [CLICK] Now outside of Goutrens, we're now at Farrebique, and as I say there's, this is taken from the road between Goutrens and Rignac. And you look across the meadow towards the farm, towards the farm.

[00:05:53]

Here you see the older buildings, which you saw in the film. And to the left, the new house, which is sort of a shock in the film. [CLICK] The sign that points to Farrebique and the road down there, that's the way it really is. There is not now, nor was there ever a sign that said Farrebique and Biquefarre on the same one. That was made for purposes of the film. Biquefarre disappeared as a farm 10 years ago and was absorbed by Farrebique, but not in the way that the film portrays it. All that’s left at Biquefarre itself is part of the barn. One wall.

[00:06:34]

And Raymond uses it to keep the tractor in. The house that we used for Biquefarre, it was a couple of miles away.

>>JW: That’s beautiful slide [INAUDIBLE]

>>WG: Yeah, I think I think this is one of yours.

>>JW: No, well maybe it is.

>>WG: Could be.

>>JW: I like the shot of Georges

>>WG: This was our, our, our first time at Farrebique and Raymond, the younger son, ‘44–45 has come to take us around to show us the old buildings.

[00:07:09]

Laurence Wylie in the middle and Rouquier there. [CLICK] A stairway in the, in the old house, which is used for hanging sausages, for keeping things that don't fit in the house, and Maurice, and for, yes, cousin - Do you remember the baby was born in Farrebique? He’s Maurice, who’s now 38 and lives in the outskirts of Paris.

[00:07:40]

And he and his wife and their son come to come to Farrebique sometimes for a week or two in the summer and they'll stay here in this house. Serves as a guest house. Also Roch often in the summer when it's warm would come over and sleep in the old house because it feels more comfortable. [CLICK]

[00:08:07]

This is the back of the old house. One of the cracks in the wall which the grandfather’s constantly looking at was over in here, in fact, [UNINTELLIGIBLE] where they filmed. You can't tell exactly where it is. [CLICK] [CROSSTALK]. Donna Evleth was the person we used, the woman on the left here, was a person we used as a research assistant. She came down with John Weiss to do research at Farrebique and she is with Raymond, one of the few pictures I have of him also. [CLICK]

[00:08:47]

And Roch, Roch normally smiles a lot but became very serious for this portrait. Probably was a serious moment so he lost his smile. Now, to tell you something about the effect of making you feel like *Farrebique* on a man like Roch, in this context. When, when I first met Roch this day, shortly before I took this picture, after we said hello, and exchanged names, you must understand also

[00:09:22]

that he speaks a dialect which is very difficult to understand. Because he's missing a few teeth. And he also speaks a difficult dialect and it’s hard to understand him, so sometimes I have trouble, but I did understand this which was that practically after we were introduced, he said “Monsieur, you know, I don’t really look up ladies’ skirts.” This, in the film *Farrebique*, he is pictured as looking up, at the end of the spring sequence, as looking up his wife’s skirt in a perfectly innocent image that was made in two pieces. When Georges filmed first he has him one day, look up, takes a picture.

[00:10:08]

And several days later, a woman is standing at the top of the ladder looking for eggs in the straw, and a took a picture from a lower angle. And in the editing room, you can put them together so it looks like Roch is looking up with the woman. This has, - and, of course, Roch never saw that connection until the film was projected at the Paris Opera in its premiere and I was expect he was a little taken aback. But the way that it worked is that other people around the town never let him forget that this had happened.

[00:10:54]

And also they saw that it bothered Roch. If he had laughed it off, or had said “yes all the time it’s what I spend my life doing,” nobody would have bothered him. But as it was, he became a victim of that [shot?]. To the extent that this American guy shows up and he blurts out immediately, “you understand that I really have moral character [UNINTELLIGIBLE]”. What do you say?

>>Sp4: They never saw the film?

>>WG: They did not see the film before it was...

>>Sp4: How about this time?

>>WG: This time? This time they did not see the

[00:11:28]

the completed film until it was ready, and until it was shown in the marketplace.

>>Sp4: So you couldn’t change anything? If somebody said that “that was...”

>>WG: No, no, we couldn't change anything. Well, I suppose we could have changed something if we really had to, but this time, the great difference was that in this case, everybody had to, all the main characters read the screenplay entirely and understood what the story line was going to be.

[00:11:52]

There were no surprises like this one. The surprises came for people whose parts were cut out of the film, bit small parts for the use of economy. Not financial economy, but to make the film ninety minutes long, you have to keep it moving, so their entire role disappears. Those people were upset.

>>JW: Not what they were done, but what they weren’t doing.

>>WG: So...

>>SP3: He doesn’t actually have a stroke?

>>WG: No, no, no in real life he did not have a stroke. He had been ill, he had been very ill. Thatt’s one of the, it’s the main reason why we were not able to film very much at Farrebique.

[00:12:41]

Because he had been extremely ill. He recovered and then we were able to film. However, since the making of the film, last fall he did have a stroke and was paralyzed on the other side than on film. He’s now getting around on canes, and walks around the house.

>>SP3: He managed to look extraordinarily like a stroke victim.

>>WG: Yes, that's what's really stupendous. He did an incredible performance. Getting out of the car and walking at the cemetery when his foot dropped, his foot drops.

[00:13:27]

>>Sp4: How old is he?

>>WG: Oh, let’s see. He would be at least seventy. And wonderful voice. Like he can sing magnificently. And then that's one of the things, he’s a member of the senior citizens club, and they are always, always involves singing after dinner. And he has just a tremendous voice. And loves to sing. And one day we were there and he started singing a song which comes from the 1830’s. Which he said that his grandfather had taught him. He’d probably had that song since he was a child. He was singing about the assassination of the Duc de Guise…. [CLICK] Whoops. This bodes ill for the rest of the slides. Now here we are at the farm which we were using as a set for *Biquefarre*. Raoul, whose real name is Roger Malet, and who is, also a grandson of Farrebique.

[00:14:25]

His mother is one of the, is Henri’s sister, and Roch’s sister. Georges’s cousin. And his mother and father, you see them in the film *Farrebique*. We don’t make any of that connection, but he is actually. He’s walking across here and going to bring hay to his sheep, supposedly behind this door, or actually this door. If you actually looked through there, you would simply see a vacant area. Beyond this wall, this farm’s completely falling apart. And here the house is up to our left.

[00:15:02]

And if you look further back to the left you’d see a roof that’s caving in. So this is a house which farm which had been abandoned, the house is being, maybe restored, we’ll see. But it was abandoned in that period of the late 40’s and has remained the same since that time. So for the purposes of the film he walks across here and our next shot shows him actually at his own farm at home feeding his own sheep. So we were able to cheat that way

[00:15:33]

Filmically to give you the idea that it’s gone [UNINTELLIGIBLE]. [CLICK] Ugh, bad news. [SEVERAL PROJECTOR CLICKS] To give you a feeling for how these kinds of images are, are achieved, or how these people work, here we have Marius Benaben reading his lines. He was probably the laziest of the actors in terms of knowing what he was supposed to say. He constantly had his script handy. We did not film great long scenes with him at one time, but it was always had to be worried about whether he had read the stuff or not.

[00:16:23]

>>Sp4: The people actually memorized everything? Or did you use cards?

>>WG: Oh yeah. No, no, no, no, they memorized everything.

>>JW: Did you tell how we got shot of him looking mesmerized by the TV?

>>WG: What was the, what was he actually watching, I don’t remember?

>>JW: A playboy centerfold, we put that on the TV, that’s what he was watching instead, he was mesmerized. According to Georges. [CLICK]

>>WG: His wife Hélène who played Hortense, she's a, she and Maria Rouquier are really sisters, so those family relationships are genuine. And this farm which is called Bourrel and Farrebique, actually do adjoin, and they would have wanted the same land. And they are rivals, Farrebique and Bourrel.

[00:17:20]

All that, all that helps builds the emotionof these relations.

>>JW: [laughing] Final scenes of confrontation, it’s a lot. [CLICKS]

>>WG: Now we're rehearsing here a dinner here, a noon time scene at this place. Everybody is just practicing motions. [CLICK] Now they're doing it more seriously. Actually it’s filmed from a slightly different angle, but. [CLICK] Now this, so this is a little overexposed but

[00:18:09]

I left it in here to show you the outside of a, of a farm building where we did some shooting. And you'll notice that great care has been taken with the landscaping, this is the work of Colette Bras, she’s a wonderful woman who has taken extreme care to make everything gorgeous. However, the one thing that's lacking here is the odor, which comes from inside the barn of [CLICK] where the, this is where the veal calves are being kept in the stalls, or boxes.

[00:18:43]

We went through a whole thing here understanding how the veal calves are fed with this powdered milk, it was medicated stuff. You’ll notice here that we had to rip off the label because the manufacturers were not pleased that we were showing these things. Rip off the label at any point where it was going to be obvious exactly what it was, but the words which appear in the film and which are mistranslated in the subtitles says ‘*Aliments médicamenteux pour veau’,* ‘medicated food for veal’.

[00:19:21]

Georges’s idea here was that it was important for people to see the kind of artificial food which is being given to these veal calves, which, which is then sold at such a high price in the marketplace, and which has no, in Georges’s point of view, little or no nutritive value. And this sort of industrial production. [CLICK] Then the, the, measuring out. Again, Rouquier tries to see all of the details of how a particular action is accomplished.

[00:19:55]

Why it is, and then he analyzes that, and then he reconstructs it for the, for the film, making certain points. It's a somewhat didactic style here, mixed with a drama, with the fiction, because he has certain things he wanted to make sure that people understood and in fact he was only partially successful. Because, for him, the images, the juxtaposed images of the veal calves in these awful boxes where they cannot move, next to the other

[00:20:23]

the calves, which are being brought up by more traditional methods in the Aveyron, where the mother cow is licking the back of the calf. It’s a beautiful image. And, of course we did not coach the cow, is just devastating for Georges. And yet people in general do not get the point. They do not -if we had, we should have older vision [CROSSTALK]

>>Sp4: Yeah, except that’s a little unfair, because, I mean…

>>WG: Nothing’s fair in this world.

>>Sp4: No, I mean I thought that, you know, the first one was so romantic and so idealistic and, you know, you could have shown them showing them treating animals in a very barbaric way in the old film too. You know, and veal calves is always barbaric, you know, we’ve always taken them away from their mothers.

[00:20:51]

>>WG: Well, you see, in this part of the Aveyron they actually don’t. There was a method called *les* *veaux élevés sous la mère* where the calves are not taken away from the mothers but allowed to suckle until they’re incredibly large animals. And then they have, one of the interesting things they've done this region, is they have established a co-op where people from all over France can buy meat raised in these natural methods, nothing, no artificial food, directly from the, from the farm itself, and then frozen or through certain butchers in Paris which are organized for this kind of meat.

[00:21:50]

This is, it, yeah, it's not a, a fair film. It has a point of view and Georges, who is very concerned about what's going on with agricultural methods. Yes, he could have shown less pretty sides of life in 1944–45, but he chose not to. Here he really felt that he had to make a few points.

>>Sp4: He could have shown...more.

>>WG: Oh, he could have been much more brutal.

[00:22:12]

>>Sp4: No, but he could have shown more of the caring, gentle side of the relationship. I mean, he made a point of not showing anything. And I thought that was unfair too. I mean maybe that’s all he saw. It’s not necessarily all there was.

>>WG: Well, methods of industrial production, methods of industrial production, do not call for much interchange between the people. [CROSSTALK]

>>Sp4: Well this isn’t industrial production compared to, you know, what [Arabs?] do [UNINTELLIGIBLE] in Utica, where they have 800 cows...

>>WG: Oh, I know, this is on French scale, [CLICK] this is small time. Within the barn, it looks like this and here we are setting up for, for doing it. [CLICK] But the smell of these animals is just really disgusting.

>>SP5: They never clean the stalls?

>>WG: They clean the stalls,

[00:23:01]

but because of what they're fed, they have this sort of constant diarrhea. And it's just really revolting. [CLICK] Then they're basically put in there, and when they reach a height with the side where they can no longer stand or lie down in their cages, they’re sent off to the butcher. [CLICK] Well, and here we are back again, away from farming problems for a minute. [CLICK]

[00:23:43]

One of the ways we inserted images from the past in the present was to use these pictures from the film *Farrebique* on the wall of Henri’s house. Here Georges is showing the actor how he wants him to look at a few of these images before he does it. This is our second cameraman who looks like someone took his role. [SEVERAL CLICKS] A dinner scene which looks so easy in the film, but is so complicated in reality.

[00:24:31]

And a the point I wanted to make there. [SEVERAL CLICKS] I like this one because of Roger there in the background who’s seeing that I'm taking a picture and looking at me. [BABY CRIES] [CLICK] Henri. [CLICK] And one of the great differences in generations in the film is between Henri’s son, Pierre, and Henri. Can’t imagine they belong in the same family, but they do, and here he was waiting for his scene [CLICKS] and in the scene itself.

[00:25:26]

>>JW: How’s he doing Bill, have you found out, is he still?

>>WG: I don't know, he's still in medical school. I've haven’t heard this year. [CLICK] The apparatus of cinema continues. [CLICK] Filmmaking is also a time of celebration at the same time, all kinds of people, you have a good time at certain points making a film. This is so, part of the crew, sitting outside one of these farm buildings and relaxing for a moment.

This kind of experience for the crew is very important.

[00:25:56]

>>JW: How many of those crew had worked together before?

>>WG: A number of them had worked together before. Couldn’t give you an exact number.

>>Sp4: Any of them worked on the earlier film?

>>WG: No.

>>Sp4: None of them.

>>JW: Wasn’t there one he tried to get back? I forget, I guess not.

>>WG: I don’t think so. They’re old. Trying to get the scene where the insecticide falls on the... the pesticide falls on the... [CROSSTALK] Yeah. course we didn't really use…, [CROSSTALK] you know, we have to find something that would fall

>>Sp4: You used powdered milk, right?

[00:26:35]

>>WG: I think it was made with a mixture of plaster and powdered milk. Something that would look like it was a similar material and would fall right. It was very complicated. [CLICK] Just a shot in the bedroom, of Henri and Maria, one day various effects were just stuck there including the tombstone that we used in the film. The tombstone was remade for a couple of reasons – one of the things that we did wrong in the film was, a mistake made is that it says that Roch Rouquier here, who was the grandfather in the early film, the 44–45 film. He died in 1951 which is on his tombstone. But in the film, in the world of cinema

[00:27:28]

he died in 1945 or ‘47 and that was something which escaped Rouquier as he was working between reality, how much reality was in this and how much fiction was this. Even he got confused. [CLICK] Again, the ambiance on the set was very pleasant. Here we had another take. [SEVERAL CLICKS] Just whip through these others – the kitchen has been completely transformed now. It was very difficult to film in because of the acoustics.

[00:28:14]

You can hear it in the soundtrack. [CLICKS]

>>SP3: Wait a minute, that’s Henri’s kitchen?

>>WG: That's Henri’s kitchen. But also, people from the crew and people from the town got together at things like this, which we had a wonderful meal together, one of many. [SEVERAL CLICKS] and people worked getting it set up and that's what we had.

[00:28:46]

*Méchoui* [CLICK] That's the director of photography and I was making a collection of junk cars in the little French countryside, my contribution.

>>SP3: What is that, an old Packard?

>>WG: No, it was not a Packard, I think it’s an old Simca. It was just sitting out on one of the farms in these [INAUDIBLE] I have a small collection of junk car photographs, we decided was better than pictures of rural churches.

[00:29:16]

>>SP3: You see one of those, boys.

>>John Weiss: Oh, when Rouquier was here visiting, he would get into fights with some of the people in the Ag School over the whole issue of productivity. You know the guy’s name? He’d say “You gotta use hormones, you gotta use artificial, in vitro; you’re not going to be able to feed the world

[00:29:37]

everybody's going to starve”, and Rouquier would say, “There’s got to be a better way” and with his hormones, we’d practically have to pull him off people that he was visiting over there sometimes for the fights. And I think that some of these, as many of you are aware, do show of the alternatives that can be developed and I don’t know how far it can go, but I know if you have a question these guys are serious.

>>WG: Yeah, you go, and you sit down and wander into their kitchen and ask them about these questions and you’ll have two hours of conversation.

>>Sp4: Even around here, steer farms [UNINTELLIGIBLE], they’ll kill you.

[00:30:23]

>>JW: Well I didn’t know that part of it. [UNINTELLIGIBLE]...the Aveyron is polluted in that section of the river, the rivers just can’t be used.

>>Sp4: I mean, in this country, pollution is taking that turn. You know, it’s better. If you go to Madrid and you go to New York, New York is better than Madrid.

>>JW: Yeah, the Mediterranean is a dead pond.

>>Sp4: I was there last time, I was just crying. I just got this feeling, it was dying. I mean we were in Montpellier and we went down along the Spanish coast and it was just [INAUDIBLE] and all these American refineries [UNINTELLIGIBLE] it smells like South Jersey! And, you know, we don’t let them do that here anymore, so they go over there and do it. And you go to the fish restaurant and the fish tastes like oil. We didn’t go swimming there. He was just so fatalistic, “well I guess there’s nothing we can do about this.” [UNINTELLIGIBLE]

>>WG: No, we’re not quite, but almost.

>>Sp4: It just has to get a little worse. -