

AGNÈS VARDA AND THE REINVENTION OF THE FLÂNEUSE

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EPIGRAPH

“Quand je suis là, j'ai l'impression que j'habite le cinéma, que c'est ma maison, il me semble que j'y ai toujours habité.”

("When I'm there, I feel like I live in the cinema, that this is my home, it seems to me that I have always lived there.")

- Agnès Varda (2008)

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this thesis to God. He has guided me through this writing process. A special thanks to my family. To my parents, Nonye and Gyana, who have constantly motivated me through this thesis, and have also listened to me vent about the thesis even though they do not know what I am talking about. To my siblings, Gospel and Zoe, for providing me support and making sure I do not totally explode due to the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary thesis examines Agnès Varda's inhabitation of the flâneuse in the city space, the national space, and the international space. Varda goes beyond showing a character as a flâneuse, but is the flâneuse herself. The flâneuse is a female wanderer who observes the cityscape. The term originates from the male wanderer, the flâneur. Varda extends flânerie beyond the cityscapes and goes into unfamiliar territories. This work closely analyzes Varda's narrative and documentary films that take place in Paris, the French countryside, California, Iran, and Cuba. By studying these films, the thesis reveals Varda's relationship with psychogeography, feminism, and space. Ultimately, the thesis will lead to an understanding of the essence of the female perspective and of how the female gaze observes the changes that occur around her and the subject as she documents it through film. Varda embodies this idea as she moves from portraying the flâneuse by following the rules of flânerie to becoming the flâneuse by breaking all the rules of flânerie and presenting other scenarios in which flânerie can take place.

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INTRODUCTION

The art of *flânerie* dates back to the 16th and 17th century, but was popularized in the 19th century with the familiarization of the term “*flâneur*”. According to John Short, the *flâneur* is “considered an iconic figure who processed the newly modern city of the nineteenth-century industrializing West (particularly Paris) in subjective terms by randomly wandering through it, absorbing its shocking novelties, and translating his experiences into art that was as radically modern as the fleeting moments it attempted to capture” (Short 121). In other words, the *flâneur* is a man who observes the cityscape. As the definition suggests, he is a transformational figure who seems to be part of something reciprocal. He, the *flâneur*, is having as much impact on the scene through the art of writing or interpreting the urban experience as the urban landscape is having on him. The popularization of the *flâneur* came after Charles Baudelaire published “The Painter of Modern Life.” In that essay, he describes the *flâneur*: “I saw at once that it was not precisely an artist, but rather a man of the world with whom I had to do. I ask you to understand the word *artist* in a very restricted sense, and *man of the world* in a very broad one” (Baudelaire 6-7). Baudelaire first describes the *flâneur* as a man of the world, then later describes him as the man of the crowd. Changing the definition restricted the setting of *flânerie* to the city. Baudelaire does this by using the word “crowd,” which means that the *flâneur* cannot wander places without crowds. This rules out the town and countryside spaces.

At the time Baudelaire wrote “The Painter of Modern Life,” Paris was going through a psychogeographical change. During the mid to late 19th century, a modernization was going on in the city commissioned by Emperor Napoléon Bonaparte and led by Georges-Eugene Hausmann. At that time Bonaparte was the emperor of France while Hausmann was the prefect

of Seine, which means he was in charge of overseeing Paris and its neighboring suburbs.

Bonaparte wanted Paris to look more “modern.” Walter Benjamin in the *Arcades Project* explains this by saying:

Hausmann’s ideal in the city planning consisted of long perspectives down broad straight thoroughfares. Such an ideal corresponds to the tendency—common in the nineteenth century—to ennoble technological necessities through artistic ends. The instructions of the bourgeoisie’s worldly and spiritual dominance were to find their apotheosis within the framework of the boulevards (Benjamin 11).

Hausmann’s Paris gave rise to passageways, alleyways, barricades, and arcades. The initial purpose for the renovation was due to the fears of a civil war beginning provoked by Napoléon’s leadership of France. The Hausmann renovation is an early example of psychogeography.

Psychogeography is a term brought forward by the French philosopher, Guy Debord and is the psychological effect of urban space on the city dweller. In the 1950s, Debord brought forward a new type of movement, *dérive*. He defined the *dérive* as “a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. *Dérives* involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychological effects and are thus quite different from the classic notion of the journey or stroll” (Debord 2).

Unlike *flânerie*, which focuses on wandering and observations, *dérive* does not wander but rather drifts as one observes. They both observe the psychogeography of the city. This new Parisian setting triggered the curiosity of the bourgeois man, who had time to explore the new city and was not restricted by gender roles in the same way women were restricted to the home to take care of the children. This *flâneur* appealed to the male artist and he started exploring the city too.

This was triggered by Baudelaire's quote about the flâneur being an artist in the restricted sense. This means that Baudelaire had the artist in mind when he brought forth the idea of the flâneur.

Wandering the city moved from a leisure activity to an art form. Baudelaire encouraged the flâneur to document his observations with artistic mediums. These mediums include art, poetry, and prose. This stems from Baudelaire defining the flâneur as "the man of the crowd." Baudelaire gets this definition from one of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories, "A story by Edgar Allen Poe, included among his *Tales* (1845), and translated by Baudelaire in the *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires*" (Baudelaire 216). The story is about a man who wanders through the crowds of London, inviting his audience to observe what he sees. Baudelaire gets his definition of the flâneur from a written form of art, poetry, as he extends his suggestion of artistic mediums as a form of documentation by suggesting poetry as a form the flâneur could use to document his movement: "Glittering equipment, music, bold determined glances, heavy, solemn moustaches – he absorbs it all pell-mell; and in a few moments the resulting 'poem' will be virtually composed" (Baudelaire 11). He states that the observations could inspire the flâneur to write a poem based on what he observes. Baudelaire not only encourages written art, but he also encourages visual arts. He is aware that the visual artist can't paint or draw as he observes and thus "extols the modern artist who immerses himself in the bath of the crowd, gathers impressions and jots them down only when he returns to his studio" (White 36). Baudelaire encourages the visual artist to partake in this documentation even if their form of documentation is not possible in the instant. The visual artist flâneur should jot what he observes, get to the studio and visually show what he has jotted. He can do this by taking detailed notes of what he saw in the city and creating art from the details he wrote down. The flâneur can do this by

creating paintings, sculptures, or drawings. These suggestions by Baudelaire brought about a new set of people observing the cityscape, the visual artists.

One of those visual artists observing the city was Eugene Atget. Atget could be described at the time as “an obsessed photographer who was determined to document every corner of Paris before it disappeared under the assault of modern ‘improvements’” (White 41). Atget’s mission was to document every corner of Paris before it was gone due to the Hausmann’s renovation. He used photography, a somewhat instant way for the visual artist to capture what he observes. For this to be successful:

Atget carried his tripod, view camera and glass plates everywhere with him, shooting all the monuments but also the fading advertisements painted on a wall, the dolls in a shop window, the rain-slick cobbled street, the door knocker, the quay, the stairwell, even the grown of wood steps. He photographed the grand salon of the Austrian embassy but also street vendors hawking baskets and the humble horse-drawn fiacre waiting for a customer. He wore his voluminous cape everywhere, carrying his heavy equipment in hands that had been badly affected by developing situations (White 41).

Atget was determined to capture Paris before modernization. Unlike the other flâneurs that try to wander around the city to understand the new Paris, Atget wanted to make sure that the old Paris was not gone forever.

At the turn of the 20th century, there will be another element of flânerie, the journalistic element. Walter Benjamin presents the element of journalism into flânerie when he writes, “The social base of flânerie is journalism” (Benjamin 446). By calling the flâneur a journalist, Benjamin is stating that it is not only enough for the flâneur to document his movements; a

journalist should also share the information from his observations. This suggestion adds another layer to the flâneur as he is not only an artist but also an intellectual. Supporting this argument, Benjamin considers the flâneur as the press: “The press brings into play an overabundance of information which can be all the more provocative the more it is exempt from any use” (Benjamin 447). Benjamin considers documentation useless if it is not shared. Why will he document something that would not be seen? Benjamin explains that flânerie goes beyond documentation; it must be shared.

Also happening during this time, the Parisian streets are starting to see more female wanderers observing the psychogeographical change. Prior to that, during the 19th century, women did not take part in flânerie; those women who did take part had to find ways to do it discreetly. Lauren Elkins in her book *Flâneuse: Women Walk the City in Paris, New York, Tokyo, Venice, and London* gives an example of a discreet female wanderer, “There’s one of George Sand, who dressed like a boy to walk through the streets, lost in the city, an ‘atom’ in the crowd” (Elkin 2). For women like Sand at the time who persisted in taking part in wandering, she had to pause her femininity and take up a masculine disguise. This was no longer the case by the mid 20th century. The 20th century gave rise to both the first wave and the second-wave feminism. Women began moving away from the home and exploring outside.

During the second wave of feminism in 1962, during the French New Wave, Agnès Varda released *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), “a film which tracks, minute by minute, a young woman’s movements around Paris, mostly in and around Montparnasse, in real-time” (Elkin 211). The film focuses on Cléo, who wanders around the city as a woman. This was a privilege previously only reserved for the flâneur, and now there is a woman walking around the streets of the city,

mostly alone, in a film. The film follows a lot of the rules for flânerie: it is set in the city, and the medium of documentation is artistic, as Baudelaire encourages; it is a film that captures the Paris of that time just like Atget did with photography; and the film being viewed is a distribution of information as Benjamin suggests it should be. The one rule Varda breaks with *Cléo de 5 à 7* is that Cléo is a woman. This will not be the last time Varda breaks the rules of flânerie. She removed the female wanderer away from the cityscape to the French countryside in films like *Vagabond* (1985). The movements are not supposed to cross the city limits, but Varda makes it cross the city limits. She not only defies the rules by taking flânerie out of the cityscape but also introduces a new “first,” the international flâneur (or flâneuse). Varda shows the women walking the streets of Iran in *Plaisir d’amour en Iran* (1977). There are two ways Varda shows the movement of the flâneuse in film. She either portrays a character’s movements in front of the screen as she guides the fictional flâneuse from behind the screen. Varda also shows herself as the flâneuse in front of the screen. She moves from being the behind-the-scenes flâneuse to moving from the city, countryside, and foreign spaces in front of the screen.

Even though Varda shows the female wanderer in film since the 1960s, there was no name for the female wanderer until the 21st century. The name given to them was the flâneuse. The origins of the word “flâneuse” is still unclear, but it can be defined as “*Flâneuse* [flanne-euhze], noun, from the French. Feminine form of flâneur [flanne-euhr], an idler, a dawdling observer, usually found in cities” (Elkin 7). This definition is similar to the definition of flâneur. The only difference between the flâneur and the flâneuse is the spelling. The French masculine -eur is changed to the feminine -euse since the definition is feminine. Even though the flâneur and flânerie are considered official words in both the English and French dictionaries,

the flâneuse is not considered an official word in a lot of the French or English dictionaries.

Elkins points out that the definition of flâneuse is in *Dictionnaire Vivant de la Langue Française*:

“But the Dictionnaire Vivant de la Langue Française defines it, believe it or not, as a kind of lounge chair” (Elkin 7). The one definition a dictionary has on the word flâneuse defines it as a lounge chair, which is the opposite of how it is used. The lounge chair signifies a pause of movement, but the flâneuse signifies constant movement. Varda can be called a true flâneuse because she not only shows the flâneuse character in her film, but she also focuses the camera on herself as she moves through spaces and places, showing that she is also a partaker of flânerie.

1. Movement through Paris

1.1 The Camera-Style and The Auteur

In her embodiment of the flâneuse off-screen, Varda goes beyond being a director; she becomes an auteur and makes use of “the camera stylo.” During the French new wave, new filmic notions started to pop up, “seen to embody the notions of the ‘auteur’ and ‘caméra-stylo’ [camera pen] advanced by Alexandre Astruc and others – concepts that came to be associated with the New Wave” (DeRoo 24). Alexandre Astruc introduces the idea of the “camera-stylo” in the new wave, which literally translates to camera-pen. Astruc describes the concept as, “By it 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” (Astruc 1). The French new wave film movement was about dismantling the rigidity of the film industry, so the bases of Astruc’s argument come from a place of dismantling. The caméra-stylo is the dismantling of the visual cinema practices and replacing it with a more flexible technique that presents each shot as a written language. Also during this film movement, the concept of the auteur was popularized, and according to fellow French new wave director, François Truffaut, “An auteur was a film director who expressed an optimistic image of human potentialities within an utterly corrupt society” (Hess 2). A director whose filmic career revolves around dismantling the norm in the film industry by presenting the human experience even if the society presented behind that experience is corrupt is considered an auteur. Varda takes these elements of the French new wave and wanders the city of Paris by proxy, through a fictional character, in *Cléo de 5 à 7*. Varda uses her camera as a pen to write the character of Cléo in a Paris that is going through a political

change in its psychogeographical space while presenting Cléo's potentialities in a 1960s Parisian urban space.

Cléo de 5 à 7 is Varda's second feature-length film, set in 1961 in Paris, and focuses on a singer waiting for the results of her biopsy. The film is divided into chapters almost like a book and each chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter, but it seems that with continuation the world around Cléo moves fast. Elkins explains this in her book, "But it was nostalgic for the present, above all; the fast cars and onslaught of advertising gave the impression that the world was moving so quickly that the present was always just moments behind the now, *en décalage* with itself" (Elkins 218). The official meaning of *décalage* in French is a lag or a shift, but to the auteur, *décalage* are shifts and gaps in continuity used to present the paradox that is the dream state in the reality of the society that is the city of Paris. Varda shows this *décalage* by showing a character waiting for her biopsy in a Paris that is booming while at the same time a Paris that is in the middle of fighting a war with Algeria. This is an example of the "corrupt society" Truffaut talks about in his definition of the auteur. France is fighting in a war to prevent the independence of another country while its economy is booming. In this reality, Varda presents this character, Cléo, who is the centerpiece of a booming Paris, but a Paris concerned about war, but Cléo's movements are presented as a dream within this reality. This is an auteurist directorial choice Varda made to show the absurdity of the Algerian war.

From the beginning of the film, the audience sees Varda use her camera like a pen, writing symbolic characteristics in the setting and in the character. The film starts with color, in the middle of a tarot card reading. The shot goes to black and white when it focuses on the face of the card reader, then a quick shot to Cléo. The shot moves between color for the cards

and black and white showing Cléo and the card reader. The death card is pulled from the deck and Cléo is immediately worried. Cléo asks the card reader for a palm reading and the card reader refuses. As Cléo stands up to leave, she is obviously devastated about the tarot card reading. Chapter 1 of the film starts when Cléo walks down a flight of stairs. The motion is repeated as the camera zooms in on her face. She goes down the stairs and looks at the mirror. She admires herself and says, “Wait, pretty butterfly. Ugliness is a kind of death” (*Cléo de 5 à 7* 00:05:48 - 00:05:52). Varda uses the camera to write the characteristics of Cléo’s character. The close-up to her face as she walks down the stairs, and the focus on Cléo’s face, the audience begins to read Cléo as someone who is worried about her beauty. Varda takes her time on Cléo’s facial as she makes the descent down the stairs, writing Cléo’s emotion on her face and conveying a look of distress for the audience to interpret. She makes her audience focus on this character in the beginning because this is the introduction of the flâneuse to the audience. Varda notes Cléo’s fixation on her image: “Varda calls Cléo a ‘cliché-woman: tall, beautiful, blonde, voluptuous” (Elkin 220). The descent to the mirror and her comparison between ugliness and death confirms this characteristic. These are easily read with camera movements. With the camera, Varda is able to show the superficiality of Cléo.

Cléo’s superficiality makes her an unreliable flâneuse as she wanders leaving Varda to do most of the observation. The economic prosperity of Paris is seen immediately when Cléo leaves the building of the card reader. There is the constant movement of cars, people walking, small vendors everywhere. As Cléo walks, she is solicited by a vendor who wanted her to visit their store. This 1960s Paris is a crowded city with people constantly on the move via wheels or foot. As Cléo walks, not observing her surroundings, the shots observe the surroundings. Paris is filled

with Parisians going in and out of stores, the street vendors are having crowds of customers, and the streets are dirty. Cléo ignores all this because she is focused on going to her destination. Elkins explains this gaze within the gaze when she writes, “even with her lens trained on one place, she can find, there, an infinity of other places” (Elkins 217). Cléo is an unreliable flâneuse at this point in the film because of her fixation on herself rather than the street, so the audience can only rely on Varda as a flâneuse to understand the cityscapes in the film. This shows that Varda is the ultimate observer, not only observing from the gaze of Cléo, but from her lens. At the start of Chapter 2, Cléo goes into a crowded cafe, and meets with Angèle, her governess, and laments the results of the tarot card reading. In fact, not only does her fixation on herself seem to make her an unreliable flâneuse in this chapter, but it also makes her annoying to the people around her. This begins when the camera focuses on Angèle as Cléo looks at herself in a reflective glass and cries. Angèle has had enough of this, and she says, “Her and her hysterics, when she could be happy. She needs to be looked after. She’s a child” (00:09:02 - 00:09:10). Varda adds another characteristic to Cléo’s character with the use of a close-up, but this time the close-up is on another character, who gives a side note about Cléo. Angèle looks like she is talking to the audience in this scene. This breaking of the fourth wall is necessary because the gaze of both Varda and Cléo shows a limitation at this point. Varda’s gaze is focused on the city while Cléo’s gaze at this point is focused on herself, so the audience does not have inside information about characters like Angèle. They are only provided the information about how Angèle feels about Cléo at this point, but nothing more is known about Angèle.

In another chapter, Varda introduces another element of flânerie by presenting characters not only wandering the city on foot but also via cars. The chapter begins when Cléo

and Angéle are in a taxi that is driven by a woman. The driver can be described as, “a *flâneuse* on wheels: she knows the city, she’s completely independent, and she knows how to defend herself” (Elkin 225). Even though the driver is a fascinating woman Cléo does not pay much attention to the driver or the urban scenes of Paris as the car passes; her fixation on herself makes her get distracted and the only things she is able to notice are some African masks that are on different display cases. These masks make her uneasy. Chapter 4 begins when some art students surround the car; this makes Cléo uneasy, but Angéle laughs about it. This makes Angéle reminisce, “They need their fun. We were just like them” (00:19:30 - 00:19:35). Observing the urban space in a car presents a moment of reflection for Angéle. She looks out the window and sees herself in the art students; this makes her reminisce on the past. The art student throws water on cars, which adds to the litter on the streets. It is in this chapter that the mention of the war in Algeria is first heard. The radio in the car starts with news about shampoo but goes on to talk about the Algerian war. The voice over the radio says, “Today brought about rioting in Algeria. The latest casualty toll: 20 dead and 60 wounded. In Paris, before a military tribunal, Commander Robin, a rebel in the Algiers uprising, was sentenced to six years in prison” (00:21:02 - 00:21:20). This news goes on and there is no discussion about it in the car. The average Parisian at the time is just living their lives without serious concerns about the war because the war is not fought in France, but in Algeria. Even though the news presented a different layer of Parisian prosperity, Varda the auteur shows how the corrupt society prefers to focus on prosperity rather than the problem. The only discussion that happens is the discussion between Cléo and Angéle about the rehearsals at the house. The car presented a lot of options for Cléo to explore, but she is too fixated on herself to observe.

The transformation of Cléo begins in chapter 7 when Cléo moves from being the subject to becoming a reliable flâneuse. Cléo has a music rehearsal when one of the musicians presents her with a song called “cry for love” (00:38:32). The camera begins to move from a wide to a mid, to a close up of Cléo and Elkins explains the scene; “all we see is Cléo’s face with a black background behind her casting her into a visual abyss. It is as if Cléo has entered a different space to the others” (Elkin 230). The song is about emptiness and loneliness and the empty mask that is beauty. This becomes the turning point in the film as Cléo blows up and what is seen to the other characters as a tantrum is the birth of a new Cléo. She moves from someone who fixates on her looks to someone who does not want to bask in the loneliness that is perfection. This creates a shift in how she sees the space around her, she goes from wanting to be the subject of people’s admiration to wanting to see so she cannot feel empty. She takes off the perfect wig and puts on a hat, and leaves her apartment to find solace in the streets. Cléo immediately stops in front of the mirror. Unlike other times where she looks and gives herself a compliment, this time she says, “That unchanging doll’s face, that ridiculous hat. I can’t see my own fears. I think everyone’s looking at me, but I look at myself. It wears me out” (00:44:13 - 00:44:25). Cléo uses the mirror as a reflection of her reality, a reality she has had buried under the constant reflective compliment she gives herself. In this awareness of herself, she becomes aware of her surroundings. Her first observation is that of a street performer, as he puts frogs in his mouth. This is the beginning of Cléo’s journey, “Cléo’s journey from image to subject, the pivot from being ‘the object of the look’ to ‘the subject who looks’” (Elkin 220). She goes from being the subject of Varda’s camera to being Varda’s own proxy flâneuse, a flâneuse that would help Varda

observe the city space. So as Varda observes with the camera, Cléo observes by being part of the space.

As Cléo moves into a familiar urban space at the beginning of chapter 8, the cafe, she now enters as a *flâneuse*. When Cléo enters the cafe, the camera moves into the cafe, giving the illusion that the audience can see the cafe from the eyes of Cléo herself, unlike the other cafe scene where the camera walked in facing Cléo. From this new perspective, the audience sees a different viewpoint on the Parisian's take on the Algerian war. A man in the cafe says, "This madness in Algeria. Their damned politics! Who can paint now?" (00:45:51 - 00:46:00). As this conversation goes on, Cléo picks a song in the jukebox. After the conversation, she turns to look at the man before putting on a dark shade. As she walks to look for where to sit, she becomes more aware of people's conversations. The camera during these conversations is mostly shot in a way to portray it as Cléo's point of view. The camera does not fixate on Cléo, rather the camera moves like it is Cléo moving and the audience sees what she is seeing. A lot of these conversations are regarding paints, art, and poems. When Cléo stands up to wander around the cafe, her eyes take notice of the paintings on the wall. It was due to her awareness of one of these conversations that she decided to go and visit her friend, Dorthée. Cléo as a *flâneuse* in the cafe is made aware of a Paris outside of herself. She finally sees that there is a Paris beyond its prosperity and made aware of the irony of war and prosperity.

With her friend Dorothee, Cléo becomes the *flâneuse* on wheels. Even though she had previously been in a car, she never partook in observing the city through the car because she was an unreliable *flâneuse* back then. The Paris Varda present is an urban space where women could drive and wander without male supervision; Elkins explains that "Except for the fact that it's two

women, on the road together, no man in sight, no guns, no brooding, complicated lovers waiting for them at home with a cigarette and a scheme” (Elkin 237). Varda uses Dorthée and Cléo’s driving around the streets of Paris to argue the idea that it is only the man who has the agency to wander and observe the streets. In one scene, when Dorothee has to pick up something and leaves Cléo in the car, Cléo takes that time to observe the people around her. She notices the different groups of people are carrying suitcases, from some nuns to a man who is just smoking. This scene shows not only Paris with intercity movements but a few Parisians eager to leave the city space. This observation shows that even though Paris is booming economically, there are people eager to leave the crowd of the city.

Towards the end, the flâneuse is further developed when Cleo’s ideas are refracted through the lens of a person, who challenges her ideas and reflects them back on the ideas of the heroine. After her little drive with Dorothee Cléo says goodbye to her and heads to the park. This is a space the old Cléo never went to at the beginning of the film. It was during a drive to the park that she noticed a building. Compared to the trees and the openness of the park, the building stands out. Cléo asks the driver about it, he says, “The observatory”(01:08:37). The camera keeps the shot on the building, until Cléo decides that she wants to continue her observations on foot. Through her wanderings around the park, she meets Antonie. Antonie is a French soldier on his way to the Algerian war. It is to this man that she opens up and is vulnerable. She tells him her fears relating to her illness, and even tells him her real name, Florence. The irony of it is that Antonie is about to go to war, and the conversation about death is coming from Cléo. Cléo and Antonie observe the urban space from the bus. Antonie presents the perspective of viewing things from the outside and appreciating it. Elkins writes “in Antonie’s observations of the city,

as if Varda herself were accompanying and confronting her heroine - which she is and has been doing the whole film” (Elkin 239). Antonie brings this appreciative perspective to Cléo’s flânerie, and this makes her enjoy her wanders around the city. Antonie serves as a reflection of Varda as a form of communication to Cléo about appreciating the female gaze.

The entire movie presents the growth of the gaze in the form of human potentiality. The old Cleo was not really Cléo, but a presentation of a Cléo from a male gaze. She was a subject of the gaze of a society that is heavily patriarchal, which is why she was constantly fixated on her look. The point of that is, “The film specifically challenges the idea that a woman could not walk the streets the way a man does, anonymously, taking in the spectacle: a woman *is* the spectacle, goes this argument” (Elkin 220). The film transforms Cléo from the object, to observing with her own gaze, the female gaze. It takes place while she sings a sad song, then the realization of the emptiness and loneliness of perfection hits her. This causes her to stop fixating on herself and causes her to want to see beyond herself. The psychogeography presented an opportunity for Cléo to see her potentiality in a Paris that is filled with concerns. The city space awakened Cléo to a world beyond her; it showed her the goriness of the world in her encounter with street performers, it showed her the reality of the world when she finds out some Parisian reaction to the Algerian War, and finally it shows her the beauty of the world when she meets Antonie and basks in the beauty of the city space.

1.2 The Movement without the Motion

Unlike in *Cléo de 5 à 7*, in *Daguerréotypes* (1976) Varda does not wander the streets of Paris by observing the streets themselves, but by observing the people that make up the streets.

Daguerréotypes is a documentary that “focuses on a specific geographical location rue Daguerre, the street where Varda lives in Paris” (Benezet 22). The documentary focuses on the shopkeepers and workers whose livelihood revolves around the rue Daguerre. Varda incorporates the caméra stylo and becomes the camera. She is not seen in the documentary, but the audience is aware of her presence because of the voiceover commentary she gives as she wanders from shop to shop. With these commentaries, “she develops a vigorous critique of the policies that ‘modernized,’ radically renovated, and gentrified Paris in the 1960s and 1970s; she presents the film as part of a broader history of artistic commentary on urban reorganization and resistance” (DeRoo 86). Just like the Hausmann renovation, Paris was going through another renovation led by Georges Pompidou, the president of France, around the time *Daguerréotypes* was shot. Varda decides to observe its effects from the perspective of the shopkeepers in rue Daguerre. To successfully enable the audience to understand the perspective of the shopkeepers, Varda does not only include motion in her movements, but also includes stillness, which presents another perspective of the shopkeepers.

The title, *Daguerréotypes*, induces a memory of stillness because its origins are from photography. The film starts by explaining what a daguerreotype is: “As you know, a daguerreotype was an early kind of photograph first produced by Louis Daguerre in 1839” (*Daguerréotypes* 00:01:28 - 00:01:38). When a daguerreotype photograph is taken, the person being photographed has to sit for a long period of time in one specific position as the photograph is being taken. This photographic style was used mostly in the 1840s and 1850s. This type of photography focused on people and represented a pause in movement. By the time the Haussmann renovation occurred and movement became the norm, this photographic style began

to diminish in popularity. One flâneur who had the opportunity to incorporate movement with photography (stillness) was Eugene Atget, “Atget depicted practices that has survived the nineteenth century renovation of Paris under the Haussmann, but through city restrictions were being forced out of the public space of the street, evoking workers’ struggle over urban space” (DeRoo 89). Atget decided to document what was left of old Paris after the renovation; he does this by moving around the changing space; walking through the barricades and arcades, and taking still images of the changing Parisian space. His stills induce movements as he photographs shops and corners. With these stills he was able to highlight the struggles the workers had with the renovated space; they become the subjects to understand the psychogeographical space. Varda uses these techniques in *Daguerréotypes* as she focuses her lens on the shopkeepers to enable the audience to understand the changing psychogeography of her street.

Varda takes this concept and puts it into film. She documents what is left from Pompidou’s renovation on her street, which are the artisan shops. The film starts off as a photograph. There is a magician standing in front of the Eiffel Tower. He moves around his cape as he introduces the movie. As he introduces the crew of the documentary the audience sees the first stillness. The scene has cases of film stacked behind this glass, and each case is labeled “Daguerreotypes”; the audience sees Varda’s reflection holding a director’s slate and a woman behind her, and a girl in front of her. This is the only time the audience sees Varda as she mostly focuses on showing the movements from behind the camera, making the camera the extension of her gaze. The scene transitions to a couple awkwardly holding their pose behind their shop. This shot lasts for several seconds, and, as DeRoo notes, “we sense the unnatural stillness as the

subject tried to hold their poses” (DeRoo 91). This references the nature of a Daguerreotype taken around the 1850s. The couple looks out the front door of their store as they hold these poses. The name of their shop is revealed, “Au Chardon Bleu” (00:02:42 - 00:02:44), which means “The Blue Thistle” in English. The camera moves away from them and begins to look around the store as the commentary begins. Varda introduces the shopkeeper with stillness to present them to the audience before giving more context about who they are. Unlike in *Cléo de 5 à 7* where Varda introduces the flâneuse with movements, but here Varda introduces herself as the flâneuse by showing she has control over the motions of her observations.

Although Varda’s flânerie focuses on observing her street through the shopkeepers, the interactions between the camera and the people becomes awkward and voyeuristic. While the shopkeepers work, Varda uses lingering camera movements to understand their jobs. In the scene with the baker’s wife, who sells bread, “the camera lingers on the hands of the baker’s wife when she touches the bread to pick one with just the right crust, then it remains on them while she rummages through her drawer to find the exact change” (Bénézet 24). The camera moves sometimes but mostly stays in one place in the store, as the audience observes the movements of the workers and their customers. This observation from the stagnant camera induces a voyeuristic feeling by the audience. By presenting this stillness, Varda evokes an uncomfortable awkwardness to her audience. The audience sees the moment in the still, “we sense the unnatural stillness as the subjects try to hold their poses. Their slight gestures, like the butcher’s nervous breath, do not escape our attention, and their awkwardness and discomfort in turn make us, as viewers, uncomfortable and self-consciously aware of our own voyeurism” (DeRoo 91). The audience begins to feel as awkward about watching these as the customers feel about being

filmed. In one of the scenes, around timestamp 00:18:23, a little girl looks up at the camera. She looks uncomfortable, just as uncomfortable as the audience feels watching her look directly at the camera. Varda introduces a new element to flânerie by showing that the flâneuse can observe a city through its people. The negative side to this element is that it intrudes on people's personal space. Some people will find it comfortable, but some people will find the lingering uncomfortable.

Even with the apparently singular voyeuristic nature induced by the lingering camera stillness focused indoors, Varda extends this gaze outside the shops as well. The documentary mostly focuses on the shopkeepers but there is a portion in the documentary where Varda turns her camera outside to the streets. There is an immediate difference between the 1960s Paris in *Cléo de 5 à 7* and the 1970s Paris in *Daguerréotypes*. Firstly, there are a lot of cars parked on the side of the streets, and even though there are shops where these cars are parked, people are hardly going into the stores. As the shops open, Varda draws the attention of the walkers as her camera focuses on them. Varda goes as far as to focus her camera on a conversation between two people where one of them says, "I was having memory lapses" (00:08:45 - 00:08:47). In her aim to understand her street during this time, Varda has begun to blur the lines between reality and fiction, asking questions like "is this scene real or scripted? And if real, has the boundary of privacy been crossed?" The comment was random and out of place. This immediately makes the audience ponder about the reality of the statement. This goes with flânerie being presented as a dream in the reality of the city. It is during this observation of the streets from outside the shops that Varda mentions the Montparnasse: "Though not far from the Tour Montparnasse, it's a very average street with people passing by or chatting, people behind each door, each window, that

silent majority behind its fearsome mask that nonetheless behaves with the quaint charm you'd expect, all to the strains of an accordion" (00:09:15 - 00:09: 34). The Montparnasse is a tower that was constructed in 1969 and was the tallest building at the time. The tower, compared to the rest of the Parisian psychogeography looked, out of place, but it became the hub for shops and restaurants, especially departmental stores. This took a lot of customers from the artisan stores and shops that Varda shows in *Daguerréotypes*. Varda never shows this building or comment on the impact the building had on her subjects; she just goes on to observe the shopkeepers to hold on to what might soon disappear from Paris due to modernization.

Meanwhile, Varda induces the dream state in the reality of the city by including a magical performance in the lives of the shopkeepers. The magician shows up again, but this time he presents his magic show, "But something's brewing at the corner café. At no added charge, a festival of magic featuring a man from far, far away -- the 20th arrondissement. Who is he? What's his name?" (00:30:40 - 00:30:52). As Varda talks about the magician, the camera stills to a poster on the wall. The people stop and look at it, then move on with their lives. There are a lot of questions with this magician including his name since he is not part of the shopkeepers or part of the residents of the street. The residents of rue Daguerre go to see his magic trick. These magician scenes represent the power Varda has as an auteur over her subjects. The magician is an extension of Varda in this reality. As DeRoo claims, "Varda thus explicitly associates photography and film with magic; she suggests her subjective role as a magician of sorts, conveying the power she wields over her subjects" (DeRoo 103). She compares the scenes of the magic tricks to the stillness the camera has on the shopkeepers as they work. For example, as the magician does a trick with rice and a bowl, the scene shifts to the grocery store workers who are

pouring rice into a bag. This goes on throughout the magic scenes, as the scenes mirror the camera watching the shopkeepers do their work. The magician represents an escapism for the shopkeepers from their works, but also a fictionalized reality Varda observes that the shopkeepers cannot escape due to modernization. They are stuck to face the reality that the changing psychogeography is affecting their livelihood. Varda's flâneuse highlights the reality of the shopkeepers by implanting a fictional escapism.

Towards the end of the documentary, Varda realizes that the shopkeeper cannot escape from their reality by asking the shopkeepers if they dream. There is a mixed array of answers, mostly yes, but they usually dream about their work. But for the butcher, Varda focuses on him trying to sleep on a chair, lying in front of the television. She comments, "Perhaps we all want to mask off at dusk. No doubt we're all prisoners in our own lives. But to those proud to be 'normal,' to dream is an illness. They'd rather discuss their work than their dreams. They deny having any daydreams or inner life. It's truly the silence of a deep sleep, a resistance to change" (01:11:52 - 01:12:11). The fact that when asked about their dreams, the shopkeepers talk about their work or that they dream about work, shows a resistance to change. Their work is their whole life, and if they dream, they leave the reality that this modernized Paris will change the status of their livelihoods. They prefer to stay in the reality they are in than dream of a different reality. So even if the flâneuse observes them escape their reality with the presence of the magician, the reality is inescapable for them.

1.3 The Woman Behind the Camera

Even though her *flânerie* was more prominent through filmmaking, Varda's *flânerie* did not start when she became a filmmaker; she had been a *flâneuse* since she was very young. Varda was not born in the city space; she was born in 1928 in Ixelles, Belgium (Conway 2). Varda and her family did not immediately move to the city when they moved to France. They lived in the countryside, a fishing village called Sète, where Varda spent most of her adolescence (Conway 2). She would eventually go back to Sète, which would become the location for the film *La Pointe Courte* (1955). The film would become Varda's first feature and the film that would bring Varda into the French film limelight. The move from Ixelles to Sète was because of an uneasiness happening in Europe at the time; Belgium in the 1940s was one of the warfronts in Europe during World War 2. Germany would eventually take over Belgium, and Belgian troops would surrender. This led to a lot of Belgians escaping to neighboring France. While in Sète Varda had an eagerness to move to the city, so she moved to Paris at seventeen and soon began attending the Sorbonne (Conway 2). At the Sorbonne, Varda earned a bachelor's degree in Literature and philosophy. During her time there, Varda attended some lectures from Gaston Bachelard. Bachelard is the philosopher who looked at the poetics of space. According to Bénézet, "Varda attended some of Gaston Bachelard's lectures in Paris and although she claims she did not understand much, her practice seems to be steeped into a phenomenological and relational understanding of space" (Bénézet 89-90). Varda would use this poetics of space to not only understand Paris as she moves through Paris with her lens, but she integrates this philosophy into her *flâneuse's* movement and understanding of location. This philosophy believes that architecture is pivotal in understanding the nature of the space one is in. Varda is

constantly focusing her camera on buildings and structures in her documentary and narrative films. Varda's life started out with movements, as she moved from Belgium due to the war, finds herself in a fishing town before moving to the city. This shows that Varda started out her life as a flâneuse.

When Varda starts documenting her movements, she takes advice from Baudelaire and begins to document her movements through artistic means. She immediately dives into art and photography; Conway writes that "Varda was a professional photographer whose initial aesthetic commitments were framed by modernist literature and Renaissance painting as much as anything else" (Conway 4). After she received her bachelor's degree in literature and philosophy from the Sorbonne, she integrated what she learned to her photos. She does this by including framings of modernist literature and renaissance art. She studied photography and art at the Ecole du Louvre. This is where she learns to integrate the art form of painting and the art form of stills. Even though Varda enjoyed both art and photography, she wanted to do more, and she decided to transition into film: "She started out as a photographer, and this is how she got into cinema: image spoke so loudly she had to give them words" (Elkin 214). The motivation for Varda going into film is because she wanted to put words into the photographs that she takes. To Varda, it is one thing to document one's movements using stills like art or photography, but it is another thing to be able to show the movements in real time with audio and dialogue. This was what Varda wanted to do with film. The first film Varda directs is *La Pointe Courte* (1958). Varda's journey to film started as an urge to document her movements but also giving the movements a voice. She started out her artistic documentation with art and photography, but these documentations were without movement or sound. Varda wanted more; she wanted these stills to

move, she wanted these stills to speak of their wanders. She was able to find this through film, because it provided her the opportunity to document with movement and sound.

Varda begins her filmic documentation of the city by observing the city from her experience; this is similar to the flâneur, who observes his city from his perspective. The first film Varda shot in the city of Paris is *L'opéra-mouffe* (1958). The English title is *Diary of a Pregnant Woman*, which is exactly what the short film is about. The film is 16 minutes long and shows the state of Paris as a woman narrates. The narrator is fearful for her unborn child, to bring the child into the world. According to Bénézet, “Varda shows the spectator how overwhelmed the pregnant woman of the subtitle feels when she considers the precarious nature of her unborn child” (Bénézet 12). To show these fears, Varda contrasts the belly of a pregnant woman with a vendor violently pulling out seeds from a pumpkin in the streets. Around the time the film is made, Varda herself is pregnant with her first child. She wanders the streets of Paris in this state as the voiceover from a mysterious woman describes her fears. The city of Paris at the time, even though still seen as a city where people wanted to go in the 1950s, is shown by Varda as dirty with a lot of homeless people. Varda had previously done some photographic projects on this street, rue Mouffetard. This short film is the first time Varda uses her camera around the city of Paris, focusing on the psychogeography of the city. Varda will continue to do this in Parisian movies like *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), *Daguerréotypes* (1975) and *One Sings, the Other Doesn't* (1977). In these movies, she wanders around Paris examining the city dweller's behaviour towards the changes in Paris. This began the rule breaking process for Varda, she went from observing the city through her perspective, to observing the city through other people's perspectives.

Being part of the French New Wave film movement is a reason why Varda is constantly breaking the rules of flânerie. The French New Wave film movement was a movement on a mission to dismantle the rules of filmmaking; Varda took it a step further by using the dismantled rules of filmmaking to dismantle the rules of flânerie. Unlike a lot of the directors during the French New Wave, Varda was not a cinephile before she became a director. She claims to not have watched a lot of movies, “He asks: ‘Were you a cinephile?’ (cinephile being a hallmark of the New Wave director that was cultivated for example , via the Cinematheque Francaise, cine-clubs, and critical writing of the period). Varda offers her familiar response: ‘No, I wasn’t a cinephile. I’d only see about 10 movies by the age of 25” (DeRoo 18). At the time she directed her first film, Varda had only watched 10 movies. During the time of Goddard, Trauffaut e.t.c, that was rare because a lot of filmmakers were avid film viewers before they picked up their own camera. The French new wave directors were divided into two arms, the Left Bank and the directors associated with *Cahier du Cinema*. As DeRoo explains, “Unlike many of her New Wave colleagues, she did not write as a critic or openly participate in theoretical debates of the time period” (DeRoo 6). Varda did not fit into either of the sects, but she was mostly labeled as a Left Bank director. The Left Bank directors are usually known for their political critiques of France and French culture. Varda fits into this group because of her portrayal of women and her political commentary she makes with her films. For example, in *Cléo de 5 a 7*, Varda’s portrayal of Cléo was new to French New Wave cinema. According to DeRoo, “Sellier explains that the audacity of masculine New Wave directors was often associated with the depiction of ‘modern,’ scandalously sexual and objectified representations of female characters that were seen to challenge normative roles for women as wives and mothers” (DeRoo 5). The New Wave

directors portrayed women outside of the role of women and wives, which at the time was very revolutionary in itself, but they still portrayed women as objects and sexualized women in their films. Varda, as the only female French New Wave director, portrays Cléo as a character beyond a sexualized object, but she portrays Cléo as a woman who isn't a wife or a mother but has to deal with real world issues, especially the issue of death in an uncertain Paris. But even with this commentary, some people, like DeRoo, considered her part of the *Cahier du cinema* director, stating, "she has been cast at the fringes of the critical and directorial culture associated with the *Cahier du cinema*" (DeRoo 6). Varda presented herself as well knowledgeable in the technique of film and was instantly considered like the director-critiques of the *Cahier du cinema*. Varda was a very hard director to put into a box, she constantly did not adhere to any rules and was on a constant mission to break as many rules as she can, she is an artistic rulebreaker.

Varda's interaction with the city space was the beginning of her journey as a filmic flâneuse. It was in the city that Varda realized she was drawn to film, so she can have the opportunity to document her movements and give the movements a voice of their own. While in the city, Varda wandered around and observed the psychogeographical change of Paris while adhering to the rules set up by flâneurs like Baudelaire, Benjamin and Atget. It was also while wandering the city that she decided to break the rules of flânerie, giving the idea that anyone can take part in it regardless of gender or socioeconomic status. Finally, it was also while wandering the city that she realized that to understand the psychogeographic change of Paris, a flâneuse must look beyond the streets, arcades, and corners of Paris; a true flâneuse had to look at the people who made up the city. Varda wandering through Paris is the beginning of her flânerie rule breaking streak.

2. The Flâneuse outside of Paris

2.1 The Flâneuse's freedoms and limitations

Varda defies the main rule of flânerie when she takes the flâneuse away from the city, even though the city is supposed to be the main space for flânerie. This puts the flâneuse in a vulnerable situation because most towns and countrysides lack crowds, so this removes the security that comes with multiplicity, and it puts attention on the flâneuse. Because the flâneuse is a woman, she becomes the focus of the male gaze. Varda, as a flâneuse herself, shows the freedom and limitations of being a flâneuse in *Vagabond* (1985). *Vagabond* is a narrative film that, “chronicled the final two months in the life of a young woman wandering the south of France during a bitterly cold winter” (Conway 57-58). Similar to *Cléo de 5 à 7*, *Vagabond* deals with tracking time and movements of the flâneuse. But unlike *Cléo*, where the audience eventually sees things from her perspective, the audience sees Mona, the flâneuse in *Vagabond*, from other people’s perspective. Varda uses *Vagabond* to present the gaze on the flâneuse; the flâneuse cannot escape the gaze she gets outside of the city, especially the male gaze. Breaking the main rule of flânerie as a flâneuse has its consequences and Varda highlights these consequences.

Before the making of *Vagabond*, Varda wandered the south of France trying to understand how she would portray the countryside flâneuse. For Varda to understand how the flâneuse would fare in the countryside, Varda had to do her research. She had to make sure she understood the countryside and the people the countryside perceived women. In an interview she says:

I went to scout out the terrain, if I may put it that way. I picked up hitchhikers, I hung out at the train station, I went into some of the homeless shelters at night, etc. One day I

picked up a girl hitchhiking and she was so extraordinary a character that I began to realize how much more interesting it is to see a girl hitchhiking than a guy. That's when I decided that my main character would be a girl. It presupposes more physical courage, more endurance, more guts, a greater capacity to say "up yours!" to people, and that kind of thing. (Kline 161).

For Varda to understand how the flâneuse outside of the city behaved, she had to become the gaze that observes the flâneuse; she observes the locations and she picked up hitchhikers. Observing the hitchhikers, she observed that she enjoyed the characteristics of the female hitchhiker and understood the female movement through a subjective perspective. So Varda goes through different degradations of flânerie as she is the flâneuse, observing the flâneuse, while scouting for the character traits she wants to portray in a film about a flâneuse. She observes female movements as she moves. This is the full embodiment of flânerie. Varda decides to focus on the country flâneuse who values freedom no matter the cost, but also is not aware of the consequences of seeking nomadic freedom as a woman. She notices this through her observation of the hitchhikers, where she notices this flâneuse puts her life in the hands of strangers all in the name of freedom. Unlike the city flâneuse, whose wanders seem like a dream because of the presence of the crowd, the country flâneuse has to constantly come face to face with reality and the consequence. The audience is immediately faced with Mona's reality from the beginning of the film when they find her body in the cold, her cause of death being because of exposure. Varda introduces the film with awareness, making her audience know of the protagonist's death and the cause of death. This reveal will trigger the question, how did she get there? With

flashbacks Varda shows how Mona gets there from the perspective of Varda and the people Mona meets.

Even though Mona attracts the gaze of the people of the countryside, especially men, no one gets to know the flâneuse. After searching Mona's body, the police do not find any form of identification and the people she meets just know her based on how she looks and they keep using the term "the woman" to describe her. The only way the audience is aware of her name is through Varda's narrations in the beginning. She says, "But people she'd met recently remembered her. Those who helped me tell about the final weeks of her last winter. She stood out in their minds. They spoke of her, not knowing she had died. I didn't tell them that, nor that her name was Mona Bergeron. I know little about her myself, but it seems she came from the sea" (00:05:25 - 00:05:46). Unlike the city flâneuse that either does not attract so much attention, or if she does the memory of her presence is only temporary, the countryside flâneuse easily gets noticed and she is remembered. This is because of the lack of crowds in the countryside making the flâneuse obvious and memorable to the male gaze. Mona is remembered even though people do not know her name or where she came from. Because of the attention Mona receives, she gets downgraded from the observer to the person being observed, and even though she does not reveal herself, she is the object of other people's perceptions.

These perceptions of Mona are mostly seen from the male perspective because a lot of the witnesses of Mona's wanders are men. Some of the first witnesses are two boys who constantly fantasize about women. When remembering Mona, one of the boys tells the other boy, "Yeah, sure, but when you find a real naked girl you chicken out. That day on the beach, I was ready. A girl all alone is easy!" (00:06:03 - 00:06:12). This was in reference to the time they saw

Mona on the beach naked. She immediately became an object of their sexual fantasies. Not knowing where she is from, or who she is, they just see her as an object; the male gaze overshadows that of the flâneuse in the countryside because Mona is seen from their perspective and the audience hardly see things from Mona's perspective.

Sometimes Mona is aware of how she is seen from the male perspective and tries to play around with this. Since she is a nordic flâneuse in the countryside, she rarely has a job, food, or a shelter over her head; she realizes this and decides to use the male gaze. In a scene where she goes into a café, she sits down beside a man and stares at his sandwich. She is obviously hungry and he notices this; he asks, "You looking at me? Or my sandwich?"(00:13:58 - 00:14:03). Mona points out that she is looking at the sandwich in a flirtatious manner, and there is some light flirting going on between the two before he orders a sandwich for her. This scene points out Mona's awareness of the male gaze and how she sometimes manipulates it to benefit her. This is something the country flâneuse has to do for survival because these are the consequences of wandering the countryside as a woman.

Even though this sexualized objectification of Mona has been harmless so far, it will prove to be very harmful because she gets raped by a stranger, this proves to be the first ultimate consequence of taking the flâneuse out of the city. For a short period of time, Mona finds a companion, "David, a fellow drifter who becomes Mona's lover for a few days" (Conway 60). In this addiction-influenced relationship with David, Mona is still able to maintain her freedom while also having a companion. He does not only see her as a sexual object. When Mona goes back to being alone, she gets raped. Since *Vagabond* is from the perspective of other people, the audience is not given the privilege to know how Mona feels about the rape. The audience just

sees her move on with her wanderings. But this shows the limitations of the freedoms of the flâneuse, and how the male gaze is harmful.

Mona is also the object of the female gaze, but unlike the male gaze the female gaze is either that of admiration or that of concern, and some even go as far as helping her without requiring anything. Unlike the male gaze that looks at Mona as a sexual object, the female gaze either looks at Mona in admiration of her freedom, or looks of worry because they know the dangers of being the focus of the male gaze. In one scene, Mona stops at a house and asks the lady if she can use her tap for water; the lady does not hesitate and allows Mona to use the tap. Even when Mona does not seem to understand how the tap works, the lady helps her get the tap working. It was during this instant the woman has a conversation with Mona:

Woman: Did your car break down?

Mona: No. I am camping

Woman: In this weather?

Mona: Yeah. It's okay. (00:10:12 - 00:10:15).

The woman is concerned about Mona's safety; she knows the consequences of wandering about the countryside alone as a woman. She questions Mona to understand why she will be alone on the road. Another woman concerned about Mona was Madame Landier. In her interview, she comments about how Mona smells a lot, but she cannot say "no" when she picks her up. The flashback between Mona and Madame Landier shows a deeper side of Mona. Madame Landier bombards Mona with questions about why she is alone and why she is homeless. The audience finds out that Mona does not have family members she speaks with. She goes on to buy food for Mona. Mona and Madame Landier become friends and Madame Landier says in her interview,

“What bothered me was that I quickly forgot about her stench, her chain-smoking, her poverty. Because she liked being in my car, she felt at home” (00:50:46 - 00:51:00). Madame Landier sees Mona on a deeper level than any other witnesses in the movie and she is the only person able to see Mona as more than an object. She becomes really concerned about Mona when Mona leaves. The women who are concerned about Mona are one of the few people who ask Mona questions to better understand who she is and why she hitchhikes and walks around town. They know the consequences of seeking independence and freedom by walking around and hitchhiking as a woman, and they are worried about the consequences Mona might face; they are able to foresee it before it happens.

Even though a lot of the female gaze on Mona is that of concern, some of the female gaze, like the daughter of the woman who offers water to Mona, looks at Mona’s freedom and admires her for that, and hopes to be as free as Mona. After seeing Mona leave, the girl laments :

Girl: I’d like to go away. That girl who wanted water — she was free. She goes where she likes.

Mother: She may be hungry, with no mother to feed her.

Girl: Sometimes it’d be better not to eat. I’d like to be free. (00:11:05 - 00:11:20).

The girl admires Mona and sees Mona as a role model of freedom. This could also be that the girl is young and is unaware of the consequences of seeking freedom as a woman. Varda shows the only female who really admires Mona’s freedom is a young woman who is unaware of the world; this is important because this will lead to a rise in more countryside flâneuses and might also normalize this type of flânerie so the consequences like rape or death would not be a hinderance for the countryside flâneuse.

As a flâneuse observing a fictional flâneuse, Varda makes sure that she does not have any control of the character from start to finish. In an interview Varda says, “I wanted to create a character that is escaping me, and I don’t feel like a demiurge creating and knowing everything. I like to create characters that I cannot control in a way; they start to have their own lives, and I do what I can to say who they are” (Bénézet 136). As Varda documents Mona, she learns more as she shoots, just like her audience learns more as we watch. But at the end of the movie because Mona never becomes the subject, but just an object from two gendered gaze, “She’s an enigma that remains unfathomable” (Kline 182). The audience never knows who Mona really is, and they just watch her try to survive and then die. Varda shows being a countryside flâneuse has its limitations by highlighting the sexualized nature of the male gaze, and once those limitations are crossed, the flâneuse has to face consequences.

2.2 Partaking in and observing survival

The reality that the flâneuse documents in the countryside is in accordance with Benjamin's scholarly suggestion where the partaker of flânerie shares what they observe. Benjamin suggests that someone who partakes in flânerie should observe realities and share it and Varda does this in the countryside. Varda takes this further with herself as a flâneuse. She goes from just observing and documenting the observations to partaking in these observations and documenting herself partaking in the realities she observes. This is significant because it adds another layer to Benjamin’s suggestion and shows that a partaker of flânerie can not only document what they observe, but can also show themselves observing information at that given time. This defies the rule of flânerie where the flâneuse or flâneur is supposed to just observe

instead of partaking in what they observe, but Varda partakes as she observes. Varda does this in her documentary feature, *The Gleaners and I* (2000). The documentary observes Varda as she observes and partakes in an old survival technique, gleaning.

The Gleaners and I was shot at the turn of a new century, the beginning of the twenty-first century. The documentary is about “the long-standing practice of ‘gleaning’ in France, originally a desperate scavenging for remnants of crops after the main harvest had taken place, and more figuratively a form of grazing for table scraps and leftovers in a variety of contexts, both social and cultural” (Conway 73). The original meaning of gleaning is the act of picking, usually picking items one after the other. In a social sense, gleaning is synonymous to scavenging, that is going to farms or vineyards to pick leftover fruits, vegetables, and different crops. The practice is so old that it can be dated back to the Bible from the book of Leviticus: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest” (*New Revised Standard Version Bible*, Lev. 19.9). This evolved in Europe over time as the poor were allowed to glean lands according to the laws in France and England. It was a common practice, especially among women. Varda in the beginning of the film says, “In days past, only women gleaned” (*The Gleaners and I* 00:01:04 - 00:01:08). The act of women gleaning was so popular that it inspired a 1857 painting by Jean-François Millet called “The Gleaners.” But this traditional act of picking leftovers has morphed with the move from the 20th century to the 21st century. An ex-gleaner Varda interviews adds, “But sadly we no longer do, because machines are so efficient nowadays” (00:01:46 - 00:00:53). With the incorporation of machines, gleaning has drastically changed. With the turn of the century, things moved from human labor to mechanic labor. In this

documentary, Varda successfully shows the different ways the act of gleaning has changed and partakes in it in her own way, which enables her to fully understand the survival experience and document it from a first-person perspective.

To understand gleaning and make her audience understand the practice, Varda observes and partakes in the traditional form of gleaning. The traditional way of gleaning is by bending down to pick crops. In a very industrialized century, this form of gleaning looks different from how it looked in the 19th century, but it is very similar. Varda says, “Gleaning may belong to another era, but the posture hasn’t vanished from our society. Urban and rural gleaners bend down to gather up. There is not shame, just worries” (00:03:20 - 00:03:31). The posture of bending down and gathering food whether it is on the streets or in the store, stems from the posture of the traditional gleaner. It was from observing this posture that Varda got inspiration to document the gleaners, “The first one was noticing the motion of these people bending in the open market” (Kline 215). In the film, Varda shows a montage of modern emulation of this posture when it comes to food. Varda transitions to the countryside where a lot of the traditional gleaning is not lost. She focuses on a potato farm: “In town and country today, just like in yesteryear, gleaners still humbly stoop down. But it’s not just women anymore. It’s men too” (00:04:18 - 00:04:27). Gleaning, an activity traditionally done by women, has evolved to include men and even children. The reason for this change stems from survival. These people need to put food on their tables and one of the ways they can is by bending down to pick potatoes from partially harvested fields, or pick potatoes that are rejected from the farm for being too big. The number of gleaners in the potato farm is not overwhelming, even with the incorporation of men and children. Gleaning has moved from being a group activity to being a solitary activity. Varda

points out, “What struck me is how each person gleanes on their own. In old paintings, they were always in clusters, rarely alone. But there was one famous solitary gleaner in a painting by Jules Breton, now in the museum in Arras” (00:04:34 - 00:04:45). This painting has a glaneuse holding ears of wheat on her shoulder. Varda imitates this painting in the museum. By partaking in the traditional way of gleaning, Varda is able to understand first hand how the practice has evolved over time. This way she is able to document her flânerie accurately because she has not only observed it, but she has also experienced it.

By imitating the Breton painting, Varda merges the flâneuse and the glaneuse, showing that the flâneuse observes and documents survival, while the glaneuse partakes in survival. She observed and analyzed the painting then she decided to experience the painting by imitating it. This is how she is able to both observe and partake in gleaning, then she moves on to document it. Varda comments, “I’m happy to drop the ears of wheat and pick up my camera” (00:05:18 - 00:05:22). This transition from posing beside the Breton painting with ears of wheat to dropping the wheat and picking up a camera shows the lines between observing and partaking being blurred and the camera is the catalyst for this blur. The camera is Varda’s instrument to document her flânerie with and by picking it up like a glaneuse, she shows that by blurring the observing and the partaking, she has fully incorporated gleaning into her lifestyle. After this transition, Varda does not only show the gleaner as a distance of her own self, but she sees gleaning as part of who she is, thereby making her a gleaning flâneuse. The scene moves back to the potato farm where Varda discovers a heart-shaped potato in the pile left for the gleaners. When given the heart-shaped potato Varda says, “I was pleased. I immediately filmed them up close. With one hand I shakily filmed, my other hand gleaning heart-shaped potatoes” (00:10:50 - 00:10:59).

Unlike the other gleaners in the farm, Varda is not gleaning for survival. She sees gleaning as an art. This is not only a look at the way Varda balances the *flâneuse* and the *glaneuse*, but also a way of providing social commentary about ignorance that comes with the rules of the farm. In her subtle commentary Varda reveals “the absurdity of this practice and then demonstrates through her own actions how one might respond. In a heap of abandoned potatoes, she finds heart-shaped potatoes, which intrigue her. In a gesture of reflexivity, she has herself filmed while she films her own hand picking up heart-shaped potatoes” (Conway 79). It is absurd that the farm is willing to waste potatoes due to their shape or size, but Varda takes this waste and turns it into art. Her balancing the *flâneuse* and the *glaneuse* enabled her to see first-hand the absurdity of the food industry in relation to waste. She sees that the food industry is willing to waste something still of worth due to unnecessary implementations like the size of the potato. This shows that Varda’s *flâneuse* who incorporates gleaning into her *flânerie* is able to make observations that cannot be made by just observing.

Varda, while partaking in gleaning, is able to see that some elements of the traditional gleaners are still in place, like the fact that a lot of people who still partake in gleaning are poor. In the past, the gleaners were poor and had to glean to survive. Varda in the beginning does show the traditional type of people who glean, when she says:

As you know, there is a way of saying, “Oh, my God, these poor people.” At the beginning, this sentiment led me to make the film. I felt bad for them. I could see an old woman bending with difficulty, and I remembered that image so strongly. I felt she’s obliged to do it— if she could afford to buy without bending, she’d do it. There was a kind of . . . not sentimental, but pitiful feeling. (Kline 216).

Most of the gleaners Varda noticed prior to making the film were those who gleaned for survival purposes. She tries to understand them since she does not glean for the same reasons. She interviews a man who picks the potatoes on the farm, and he says, “But this is potato country, so we take what we find. We’re better off gathering in the fields than shoplifting. It’s the same for other people. I’m not alone. You get by as best as you can” (00:13:25 - 00:13:36). He does not have many options when it comes to putting food on the table; he either gleanes or shoplifts. Varda follows him to the poor trailer community he lives in, and he explains the reason he lives this way. He opens up to Varda about his divorce and how that led to a downward spiral for him. His openness to trust Varda with this information shows the effect the flâneuse has when she partakes and not just observes; he sees her as a fellow gleaner and decides to open up to her. The flâneuse by taking part in gleaning is able to get more information that she can document for her audience.

Even though she observes the ways in which gleaning has maintained its traditional form, by partaking in it Varda has noticed ways in which gleaning has morphed from just picking in the farms to a more modern form like dumpster diving. In a modern society where not everyone has access to farms, the gleaners who need to survive have discovered a more modern form of gleaning by rummaging through trash and looking for what is still edible. The same man who lives in the trailer park leads Varda to a dumpster to show her how he gets other food items apart from potatoes. He says, “We have to panhandle and rummage through the trash. We find food in the garbage. Yes, we find good food that could be sold in stores. But they have to keep turning over their inventory. That’s to our advantage. It’s lucky for us” (00:17:39 - 00:17:59). Varda as a flâneuse is able to observe the waste culture and how this helps the gleaners who do not have the

opportunity of being able to glean different farms. She does not necessarily partake in this modern form of gleaning but relies mostly on wandering with these modern gleaners to understand them. Varda also shows those who dumpster dive, but not for survival reasons but for other reasons like environmental reasons. Varda interviews a man who has even out from the trash for 10 to 15 years:

Varda: You don't have a job

Man: Sure I do. I have a job, a salary, a social security number.

Varda: So it's not due to poverty?

Man: Absolutely not. I salvage out of ethical concerns. Seeing all the waste in the streets is disgraceful. (00:57:12 - 00:57:32).

The man is so concerned about the human waste on the environment that he lives entirely off food that he gets from the dumpster. Varda is able to show the concerns about the environment with the turn of the century. This is a foreshadow of how they will be more people who think like this man as the 21st century goes further, making the concerns about the treatment of the environment a very central issue. Varda is able to rely as herself as a flâneuse to understand the perspective of these modern gleaners; even though she does not partake in it, she is still able to show her audience the modern gleaners who glean for the purpose of survival and the modern gleaners who glean for ethical reasons like to save the environment as the turn of the century presented a survival not just for mankind, but survival for the environment.

Then there are those like Varda who glean for artistic purposes. Varda refers to them as the artistic gleaners: "I felt that although I'm not a gleaner— I'm not poor, I have enough to eat— there's another kind of gleaning, which is artistic gleaning. You pick ideas, you pick

images, you pick emotions from other people, and then you make it into a film” (Kline 215).

Gleaning not for survival in the sense of food hunger, but survival in the sense of artistic hunger, the constant need to be creative and to turn waste to something creative. One artist describes his paintings as follows: “I make images from salvaged material. Wood for the frame, packaging materials, slate. I also recycle my own packets from cigarette papers. The good thing about these recycled items is that they’ve already had a life” (00:36:40 - 00:37:03). This artist takes what is considered trash to make his art. Varda does this too throughout the film; she goes to a garage filled with what is considered rubbish and picks up what interests her. In one scene, while observing another gleaner, she looks at what he picks and rejects. He rejects a clock that has no hands. Varda immediately switches to a glaneuse and picks up the clock. When she gets home, she sets the clock in between two cat sculptors and passes behind it. Varda explains:

You know it’s such a simple thing. I’m with my friend, he scrounged that clock and he threw it away. So I put it on my two little Chinese cabinets I have near the window, just put it on and it looks beautiful. So I do the shot of that, and then since the words bring ideas and ideas bring words, I said “well, it’s not passing, the time is not passing, but I’m passing, I’m about to go.” So I actually did the real physical idea, the clock doesn’t move, doesn’t pass time, but I pass it behind. So I went to the back, that’s my place, the clock is still there, still at the window, I went to the patio of my own place, I took the skateboard of one of my grandsons. So I put myself on the skateboard and there was one of my trainees kneeling, pushing me slowly. This is why the camera was inside shooting itself, so that’s the kind of natural idea coming from just words. And I think words mean so much in our mind. (Kline 229).

This goes back to Varda as a flâneuse constantly playing with time. She does this in *Cléo de 5 à 7*, *Vagabond* and now this film. Her partaking in gleaning for artistic reasons enabled Varda to have an introspective observation of herself as a flâneuse. The clock not having a hand signifies the lack of passage time and what is moving is the person. Varda constantly shows the flâneuse movements and time working hand in hand, but here, she disregards that and also shows that the flâneuse moves even when the time is not moving. Varda being able to partake as a glaneuse enables her to better understand movements as a flâneuse in relation to time. It enables her to come face to face with the reality that the flâneuse is not forever even though her flânerie is timeless. The flâneuse will face the reality that she will age and die, but her documentation does not die and her flânerie moves on. This is a timelessness Varda realizes as she artistically gleans and gets that clock. The combination of gleaning and flânerie does not only enable Varda to understand the subjects of her observation but enables Varda to realize the inevitable reality of the flâneuse which is death.

2.3 Life, Aging, Death

Varda using the countryside to show the realities of the flâneuse makes Varda turn the camera on herself and show her own reality; this disregards the rule of flânerie where she is supposed to be just the spectator but instead of just spectating her surroundings, Varda becomes the subject of her wanderings. In *The Beaches of Agnès* (2008), and *Faces Places* (2017), Varda stays in the countryside to reflect on her life, signaling that the flâneuse does not last forever and she will eventually succumb to aging and then the final stage, death. *The Beaches of Agnès* is “a complex artistic meditation on her life and career that she describes as an *autoportrait* or self

portrait” (DeRoo 144). The reflection is done entirely from a beach where she combines her artistic style with a retrospective gaze to the past. She does this by focusing the camera on her reflection and using the mirror as a transition to her past. Meanwhile, *Faces Places* is a documentary that focuses on Varda and a French photographer, JR, on a road trip through the French countryside as they use the power of still images to show the faces that make those places. These two documentaries take place nine years apart and have different subject points, but what they have in common is how the flâneuse still uses art forms like film and photography to observe her environment even if that environment is her own self. *The Beaches of Agnès* observes Varda’s life by moving through the beach and mirroring the environment as a reflection to Varda’s past while *Faces Places* observes life by moving through different environments and mirroring the people in those environment as a reflection of Varda’s past. This is important because it shows that the flâneuse can observe her surroundings while also observing herself.

The Beaches of Agnès is an autobiographical documentary that focuses on the life of Varda as she wanders around the beach recreating some scenes of her childhood. When asked about what inspired her to do this documentary and look back at her life, Varda replies, “I wanted to make a point because I was turning eighty. I thought I should do something. You always remember passing by a zero, and when I was younger I could never imagine being eighty” (Kline 234). The reason Varda decides to look back at her life is that she is at an age considered old. She does not like the idea of being eighty, and she adds, “Not at all! I can remember thinking that people who were forty were very old, and people who were fifty— they were out! I remember vividly being disinterested in these people and thinking, ‘I remember vividly being disinterested in these people and thinking, “I hope I don’t live beyond forty-five.’ I thought it was poetic to die

young.” (Kline 235). She never expected that she would be eighty when she was younger, so turning eighty was a big milestone for her, and she had to mark it by doing what she does best, flânerie. She goes back to where it all began, “The Belgian beaches were all I knew during all my childhood vacations. When I hear Knokke le Zoute, Blankenberge, Ostende, Mariakerke, Middelkerke, La Panne and Zeebrugge the sound are music to my ears” (*The Beaches of Agnès* 00:05:53 - 00:06:11). She goes back to the beaches in countryside Belgium where she spent a lot of her childhood during vacations. For Varda to better understand her past, she wanders in the location where it all started for her, the country she was born, Belgium.

As Varda wanders through her life, she carries her audience with her. Throughout her time as a filmmaking flâneuse, Varda has not only taken Benjamin’s suggestion of recording and showing movement to an audience, but Varda takes her audience into her observations. In *The Beaches of Agnès*, she does this by recreating her childhood for the audience to see. In one scene while looking at her childhood family photographs, she says, “I’d love to see a little girl in this striped bathing suit and another in this one with the long straps.... I don’t know. I don’t know what it means to recreate a scene like this. Do we relive the moment? For me it’s cinema, it’s a game” (00:07:12 - 00:07:45). In this scene she is able to recreate the beach childhood photograph with two girls on the beach. She is surprised how well that snapshot moment, decades ago, was able to be recreated now. By doing this, Varda does not only reminisce about a certain observation of her life to her audience, but she brings it to life, for the audience to observe too as she observes through memory. While looking at the girls at the beach who depict her and her sister when they were younger, Varda adds, “Imagining oneself as a child is like running backwards. Imagining oneself very old is funny, like a dirty joke” (00:08:12 - 00:08:19). Varda

notes that in this documentary, she is running backwards through her life, observing poignant memories of her life and showing them on screen through the camera. She makes memories the protagonist of her documentary. This is important because as Benjamin suggests that documentation is key for those who participate in flânerie so their observations cannot be forgotten, but by making her memories the central focus of her wanders in *The Beaches of Agnès*, Varda is able to make her life timeless and show how the flâneuse came to be. This is new in flânerie because the flâneur never focused his documented observation on himself.

However, the reason Varda decides to participate in flânerie this way is that she is old and cannot move the same way she used to, so instead it is more convenient for her to wander around her memory instead of physically wandering through locations. And this can be seen when she moves around in *Faces Places*. When Varda makes the documentary with the world-renowned photographer and artist, JR, Varda is 89 years old. This will be the last documentary Varda directs while she is alive. The film is released in 2017; two years later, just before Varda reaches the age of 91, she dies. This documentary shows the flâneuse's battling time and aging while accepting the possibility of death. The documentary shows Varda and JR on a mission to take pictures of the local people of countryside France and understand them beyond subjects. But the flâneuse needs help to observe and can no longer observe by walking on her own. Throughout her life as a film flâneuse, Varda has constantly wandered around spaces and places independently, but as she continues wandering, she realizes that she can only wander through her memory or need the help of a younger flâneur or flâneuse to wander physical spaces.

Varda makes it known that her body is deteriorating because of her old age. In one of the scenes when she talks to JR she says, "I'm ruining myself. My legs, my eyes. You look blurry"

(*Faces Places* 00:13:03 - 00:13:05). This is the reality that Varda shows in *Faces Places*: the reality of aging and that the flâneuse does not live forever. This solidifies Benjamin's point that those participating in flânerie have to document it for future observers and wanderers. Now even in her death, Varda has presented different ways the flânerie rules can be broken, reinventing the flâneuse. Sometimes in the documentary, the audience gets to see the way Varda sees. The camera becomes really blurry and so out of focus. This shows the grave length to which the eyes of the flâneuse can no longer observe, and she has to observe through someone else. Even though the flâneuse is usually a lone wanderer, there are times she has to wander with someone. Varda is in one of those situations where due to her age, she has to wander with someone else. By breaking the rules of flânerie by wandering with someone, Varda is able to show different avenues in which an old flâneuse could still partake in flânerie.

The flâneuse has to come face to face with death. In one scene, Varda goes to visit a cemetery. One of the graves is that of Henri Cartier-Bresson, a French photographer and flâneur. Varda and JR discuss his life and his works. Then Jr asks Varda, "Are you afraid of death?" (01:02:44 - 01:02:45). This is a poignant question because with all that is happening to Varda with her eyes and her legs and her age, it seems that death is something very close and something she either has in mind, or something she is thinking about. But Varda replies, "I don't think so. I think about it a lot. I don't think I'm afraid, but I might at the end. I'm looking forward to it" (01:02: 47 - 01:02:59). Varda does not know how she feels about death, but she is looking forward to it. She has completed her sole purpose as a flâneuse by observing as much as she can and by recording it for future flâneuses to see. She looks forward to death "because that'll be

that” (01:03:00 - 01:03:01). This documentary serves as Varda’s last bow as a flâneuse and passing the baton to future flâneuses.

Varda breaking a main rule of flânerie by wandering out the city limits brought to light different observations that can only be observed outside the city limits, these observations include the influence of the male gaze, waste culture and the reality of death. *Vagabond* was able to highlight the reality that in a less crowded space like the city, the flâneuse’s observations are dominated by the male gaze making the flâneuse in danger of different forms of violence. Meanwhile in *The Gleaners and I*, Varda partakes in gleaning where she is able to observe first-hand the French waste culture and those whose survival relies on the waste. Even though the flâneuse is just supposed to observe, Varda shows by partaking the flâneuse is able to observe more information than those who partake in the standard form of flânerie. And in *The Beaches of Agnès* and *Faces Places*, Varda is able to face the reality that she cannot be a flâneuse forever and the only way she can continue in her flânerie is by documenting as many movements as she can even though she is old. She documents the wanders around her memory and wanders with a flâneur because as an old flâneuse, she has to break the rules of flânerie to keep wandering. As Varda wanders outside the city limits, she is able to see realities she could not see while in the city because the city makes the flâneuse too lost in the crowd that she cannot fully observe reality.

3. The Unfamiliar Global Space

3.1 From Familiarity to Unfamiliarity

For Varda, going beyond the city limits was not enough for her *flânerie*; as a *flâneuse* she wanted to observe what was going on in the world, so Varda took *flânerie* beyond France. To successfully do this, she had to make sure that she understood the foreign space, and she takes what she learns from her time at the Sorbonne to understand this unfamiliar space. At the Sorbonne, Varda studied under the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard. In an interview Varda says, “But this professor, Gaston Bachelard— he’s dead now— he really blew my mind. He was a very old man with a beard, and he had this dream of the material in people: a psychoanalysis of the material world related to people, wood, rivers, the sea, fire, wind, air, all these things” (Kline 82). Varda goes on to talk about how what she learned from Bachelard influences most of her work. In 1958, years after Varda had graduated from the Sorbonne and four years after Varda released her first film, Bachelard published a book called *The Poetics of Space*. In the work, Bachelard emphasizes the human emotional response to architecture, especially unfamiliar architecture. He explains that there is a psychological connection between architecture and human reaction or thought. He then explains that these can be seen and expressed through poetry, prose, or any artistic forms. This is similar to Baudelaire’s argument that the *flâneur* should use art to document what they observe, but in Bachelard’s case, he is referring specifically to the psychological reaction to spatial architecture. It is uncertain if Varda read this work, or if Bachelard taught on this at the Sorbonne during the time Varda was his pupil, but the elements of *The Poetics of Space* can be seen in Varda’s *flânerie* in countries outside of France. As Varda wanders spaces that she is unfamiliar with, she wanders through spatial architecture and people

and tries to understand these spaces by linking it to a psychological familiarity. This poetics of space is especially seen in her films, *One Sings, The Other Doesn't* (1977) and *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran* (1977). In this feature and short film, Varda wanders from the familiar city of Paris, France to the unfamiliar city of Tehran, Iran where she poetically tries to understand the spatial psychology of the unfamiliar city from her gaze and Pauline's gaze.

In *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran*, Varda puts the flâneuse in an unfamiliar location to observe and analyze what the flâneuse sees as familiar. *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran* is a short film that seems to serve as either a missing piece of Pauline's love story in Iran for the feature *One Sings, The Other Doesn't*, or it serves as an intermission in the feature that separates itself from the feature. In the feature, *One Sings, The Other Doesn't*, Pauline's love story is mostly prominent in Iran. A cinematic scholar who has studied Varda's work mostly in the 21st century would wonder, "why Iran? Why depict a romantic progression in Iran?" To understand this, one has to look at the year when this film was released. The film was released in 1977, two years before the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Iran from the 1940s - 1970s had more similarities with France than modern day Iran. Iran in the films, serve as a place for character realization in an unfamiliar space. When Pauline gets to Iran she says, "Once in Iran, I felt I had become a postcard myself, or an extra in an artsy short film" (*One Sings, The Other Doesn't*, 01:01:51 - 01:01:58). This is Pauline's first experience in another country and she compares her amazement with the unfamiliar space to the postcard, and being an extra in a short film where the main focus is the space itself. Varda via Pauline realizes how the space in an unfamiliar country takes the central role for the flâneuse. The observation of the international space is not for Paulina, but for Varda

because she wants to understand a place that seems distant for her. Pauline's realization of her secondary status in the global space leads to Varda's short film, *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran*.

With Pauline realizing her extra role in the new space, Varda as a flâneuse takes over and leads the audience through the poetic space of Isfahan by being the narrator of the unfamiliar location. By doing this, she introduces the audience to her immediate reaction to the architecture. Varda presents the short film to the audience, "In Isfahan in Iran, religious architecture is sensual, and even sexual: Minarets standing proudly erect, round supple domes, shady, aromatic bushes, and porticos with flowery mosaics. It's the perfect setting for two lovers" (*Plaisir D'Amour en Iran*, Introduction, 00:00:03 - 00:00:23). In her introduction for the short film, Varda immediately jumps to talk about the architecture following the Bachelard, as she includes her psychological reaction to the religious architecture. This is important because Varda fixates on the architecture to understand the whole space of Tehran and she psychoanalyzes it like Bachelard and documents her reactions to her analysis. The immediate reaction to the architecture is a sexual correlation between the poignant shapes of the architecture to the shapes on the human body. The translation of the title of the film means "The Pleasure of Love in Iran." Varda sees this space as a good environment to study love because of the pleasure it incites with the spatial characteristics the flâneuse observes. The narration makes the spectator understand why the flâneuse places the love story in Iran:

The film is unapologetically presented like a fiction when it opens with the off-screen voice of a woman saying: 'Il était une fois un homme et une femme qui étaient amoureux à Ispahan en Iran' ('Once upon a time there was a man and a woman who were in love in

Hispanan in Iran'). As she speaks, the spectator sees a series of long shots of a beautiful mosque visited by tourists and locals including a young couple. (Bénézet 91).

Even though the short is presented as fiction, there is a reality in the flânerie that makes it real. This reality is sparked by the narration done by the flâneuse on the architecture and intertwining the architecture to the love story. Varda does this by letting the fictional characters, the lovers, speak about their reaction to the architecture. Pauline looks at the roof and says, "Funny, the roofs are like boobs" (00:01:39 - 00:01:42). Even though this seems like Pauline's own reaction to the architecture, this is actually Varda's reaction to the architecture, and she documents this through her fictional character in the short. The reason for this, like Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, is to document one's spatial reaction to architecture in an unfamiliar space using an art form. Varda uses film, and she wanders through the unfamiliar space through her characters and expressing her reaction to this architectural space through her characters. This is new for flânerie because Varda introduces the concept of commentary during a flâneuse's observation but she does not only do this through her narrations, but she also does this through her characters' movements. Varda takes Bachelard's philosophical reading of spatial poetics and she implants this in *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran* as she tries to understand the unfamiliar space by relating it to something familiar.

To familiarize herself with the architectural space, Varda observes the space by comparing it to the familiarity of the human body. Pauline continues her description of the roof of the Mosque her and Darius familiarize themselves with the unfamiliar architectural space:

Pauline: All these domes and cupolas are like women's breasts

Darius: Yours are so beautiful

Pauline: Your minaret's not bad either

Darius: Come closer... here

Pauline: You have a nice bottom

Darius: So do you (00:01:45 - 00:02:05).

This looks like a distraction from observing the unfamiliar space, but both Pauline and Darius are not the ones observing the unfamiliar space. Rather it is Varda who is observing the unfamiliar space and the sexualization of the space by the lovers produces this familiar recognition of the unfamiliar. The *flâneuse* does not only use the lovers as a show of her own understanding of the space, but, as Bénézet adds, “The narrator explains that the couple is astounded by so much beauty and amazed to see and feel for the first time the effects of the total harmony between architecture and nature as well as between their environment and their body (*l’harmonie entre nature et architecture, entre corps et décor*)” (Bénézet 91). Varda uses the couple as a connector between the space and the body. The link between the architectural space and the body is more of a chain than a link. Varda correlates the architecture to nature, then she relays that with the correlation between this unfamiliar space to their bodies. As the lovers continue to talk about their bodies in a sexual way, Varda uses her camera to pan around the Mosque. She observes the architectural space through the familiar poetics of the sexual lovers. This is Varda’s familiarity in the unfamiliar. The unfamiliar mosque becomes familiar when Varda intertwines architecture and sexuality, making a place where the openness to discuss one’s sexuality is taboo into a place where the *flâneuse* and her audience will relate space to sexuality.

In correlating the space with the lovers, Varda opens herself to further wanders around the historical curiosity of the architectural space. As Varda pans away from the lovers, she looks

into the space of other historical lovers: “The film,” according to Bénézet, “then shifts to a series of close ups on Persian miniatures representing a couple embracing followed by groups of men and women who are described and linked to the story of the couple by the female narrator’s voice-over” (Bénézet 92). As Varda has set the familiarity between the couple and the architecture, Varda looks for couples within the architecture historically, so that she can better understand the space. Varda continues narrating, “Did these lovers here understand each other better, or as badly? The poet Saadi says that this man, a cobbler, bit his young wife’s lip till it bled” (00:04:40 - 00:04:50). Varda nods at *The Poetics of Space* when she quotes poet Saadi on one of the paintings of couples and signals the intensity of lovers in this unfamiliar space, since *The Poetics of Space* reinforces an understanding of architecture through art, in this case through a poem. By looking at the historical nature of the building from the lens of the lovers, Varda is able to understand why there is an intensity in the familiar space for lovers. Through Pauline and Darius, Varda is able to witness the intensity of the unfamiliar space. After familiarizing herself with the architecture, Varda moves to understanding the place by focusing on the lovers themselves.

As the unfamiliar architectural space becomes familiar, the intensity for the flâneuse to continue to stay in Iran withers away. Varda has now familiarized herself with the space of Tehran by fixating on the architecture of the mosque that she starts to search for a new adventure and new observations. This is seen through Varda’s focus on Pauline and Darius’s relationship. When the unfamiliar becomes familiar, the flâneuse is able to see the negative that comes with this familiarity, and she is immediately ready for her next unfamiliar space. Pauline explains, “I walk along the streets. The women’s world is in the markets and bathhouses. Then there’s the

men's world in the streets and the cafés. It's like two separate worlds" (01:12:33 - 01:12:50). The flâneuse starts seeing the new space in a negative light as it becomes familiar. Varda does this through Pauline as Pauline writes a postcard to Suzanne and complains about how it seems like two different worlds based on gender. This is the beginning of the separation of the lovers because Pauline and Varda see the space as restrictive for women and the flâneuse cannot flourish in a restrictive space. For the most part, the lovers love blooming in Iran as Pauline and Darius get married and Pauline gets pregnant. To Pauline, Darius begins to change as he settles in his familiar home in Iran: "I'm playing a starry-eyed lover, but it's not me. And the Iranian liberal I knew in France, the open-minded guy, feminist in his own way, back in Iran, on his home turf, once he knew I was hooked, became what he wanted to be all along: a traditional husband" (01:14:57 - 01:15:15). As the spell of unfamiliarity wipes away from Pauline's face, she sees Darius for what he truly is, a traditional man, instead of what he portrayed himself to be to her in Paris. In an interview, Varda adds, "When Darius is in France, away from home, he has an open mind... Yes, and he goes to demonstrations, supports the women, but when he gets back to the Iranian family, he has to play the role. Look, I don't like the character that much, but this is his environment, and there is almost no way to get out of it in such a country" (Kline 141). As Iran was an unfamiliar space for both Varda and Pauline, France was an unfamiliar space for Darius. In this space, he was able to be something that he was not: looking at the architecture of France from a feminist perspective, which he could not do back in Iran. In France he attended different protests for the equality of women; some of these protests, he did with Pauline. But because of how the society of Iran is male dominated, Darius feels the need to change back to a traditional man. Once this charm of exploring a new space has worn off for both Pauline and

Varda, Pauline does not see Darius as the same anymore. She sees him as a man who will want to suppress her feminist thoughts and she cannot be with someone like that. Meanwhile, Varda does not see the love in the lovers. Darius is back in his familiar space and his familiar ways of seeing himself as the dominant individual in their marriage, while Pauline familiarizes herself with the space and realizes that Iran is not for her, Varda is able to see the marriage breaking off because of these factors. Towards the end of her stay in Iran, Pauline longs to go back to her familiar France, and the flâneuse agrees with her because Varda no longer wanders the Iranian space; rather she fixates on Pauline's eagerness to go home. Even though the flâneuse is eager to explore a new space and make new observations, once she discovers that the space would be a burden to her freedom, she seeks to leave to her familiar space or seek a new adventure in a new international space. This shows that Varda's flâneuse breaks the rules of flânerie because she sees it as restrictive and decides to totally disregard it.

Varda takes note from Bachelard's work on *The Poetics of Space* as she wanders the architectural space of Iran by psychoanalyzing Isfahan and linking the architecture to the female sexuality so it can be familiar for the flâneuse. She begins to understand it from the familiar sexualization from lovers and from the historical perspective. Varda's amazement of the art and architecture in Iran is seen through the character Pauline, as Pauline looks at Iran through starry love eyes. This begins to dismantle as both Varda and Pauline see Iran as familiar and then the beauty of Iran begins to diminish in both their eyes. This adds another layer into Varda's flâneuse as she shows wandering in an unfamiliar place for too long can lead to the flâneuse seeing the not-so-fascinating observations of the unfamiliar country.

3.2 The Stills of Socialism

Just like her flânerie around France, Varda does not only look at the unfamiliar architectural spaces in her global wanders, but she also aims her lens toward people previously outside her realm of familiarity. One of Varda's earlier films and her first flânerie outside of France happened in Cuba, during the Fidel Castro regime. Around that time, a lot of French artists and intellectuals were curious about the Cuban revolution. As Moroz reminds us, "The energy of the 1950s Cuban revolution had already thrilled and attracted a number of French artists and intellectuals to the country. Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir had hung out with Che Guevara and reported for the French press; Henri Cartier-Bresson visited at the same time as Varda, and they crossed paths at a hotel" (Moroz). Varda was one of another one of the French artists and intellectuals interested in Cuba and the changing space that Cuba was going through. The curiosity of the flâneuse leads her into unfamiliar territory and this curiosity about Cuba leads Varda to make the short documentary, *Salut les Cubains* (1963). Unlike Varda's shot in Iran, *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran* (1977), *Salut les Cubains* does not focus on the architectural space of Cuba, but observes Latin socialism and the changes in Cuba from the perspective of the people. Contrary to a lot of Varda's features and shorts, *Salut les Cubains* does not have any movements in front of the camera. The whole documentary short is a compilation of photographic still images and Varda does this on purpose:

Chris Marker, filmmaker and friend of Varda, had been too – his trip led to the film *Cuba Si*, in 1961, which prompted Varda's own journey, and his 1962 film *La Jetée* inspired her narrated photography method. She explains that her reason for making her Cuba film

from still images was to avoid lugging around 16mm equipment and dealing with bad sound (Moroz).

Inspired by another French filmmaker, Chris Marker, Varda uses the camera to understand socialism from the perspective of Latin America. This is Varda's flâneuse, one who uses the camera as an instrument to find answers as she wanders the streets in Cuba and takes pictures of the Cuban people.

To understand the Cuban revolution and its effects on the Cuban culture, Varda looks to the Cuban people and tries to understand their lifestyle in a time of change. Right from the beginning of the documentary, the audience sees post-revolution Cuba. As the stills move, a male voice does the commentary. The voice starts by saying, "Since the Cuban Revolution, all Cubans have beards because of Fidel Castro" (*Salut les Cubains* 00:02:50 - 00:02:54). Varda immediately links an observation she makes with the revolution. Her connecting the way Cuban men have their beards with Fidel Castro is the flâneuse trying to understand this global space which she is unfamiliar with, but eager to understand. For the flâneuse understanding means familiarizing herself with the unfamiliar by connecting the unfamiliar to the familiar, in this case she connects the Cuban people's reaction to the revolution to the way the men wear their beards. This signifies the flâneuse that the Cuban people are so happy with Castro as a leader that they get stylistic inspiration from him. She emphasizes this understanding of Cuba when she adds, "Yes, there are beards. In the style of the rebels, of artists, or of public servants. But the most common beard in Cuba is the string of cotton candy, for this is the land of sugar" (00:03:54 - 00:04:07). Varda understands the Cuban lifestyle by connecting the dots. She connects the new bearded lifestyle to Cuba's sugar abundance. This is the poetics of this space, a space where the

flâneuse understands by making connections. The flâneuse moves from trying to understand to trying to be part of the space. Varda in an interview says, “ I really found the Cubans extraordinary and the form of their socialism surprising and joyful. They are the only Latin socialists. When I’m in Moscow I feel like I belong to another race from the Soviets. I have to work to understand them. In Cuba things were easier. I felt like I was Cuban and could understand” (Kline 71). As Varda documents the people of Cuba, she begins to feel like she is one of them. This is the flâneuse implanting herself in the space she is curious about or, rather, the space that she studies. Unlike in Iran where Varda flâneuse felt the need to leave because of how restricted the space is, here in Cuba the space is anything but restrictive and this makes the flâneuse excited to know more about Cuba. After all, the main reason Varda takes flânerie outside of France is because she wants to understand the world around her. As she is understanding Cuba, she feels part of Cuba. As the documentary proceeds, the narrator moves from the male voice to Varda’s commentary. She starts by saying, “I was in Cuba. I brought back these disordered images. To put them in order, I made this homage, entitled *Salut les Cubains*. (00:03:21 - 00:03:33). Varda considers the documentary as a homage to Cuba. This goes beyond the flâneuse thinking she is part of the unfamiliar space; rather, this is the flâneuse insisting on paying homage to the unfamiliar space in a poetic manner. The reason for this homage to Cuba is because Varda is so comfortable in Cuba she wants to show her audience to see what she has observed there and she does this through a homage.

For Varda’s flâneuse to really understand Cuban socialism from the perspective of the Cubans, she had to make sure she did not present any preconceived notion of what she thought Latin socialism was. In a 2007 introduction for the film Varda says, “Drawn by my enthusiasm

for the Cuban people, and the infatuation among left-wing people with this unique revolution, I went there” (*Salut les Cubains*: Introduction 00:00:08 - 00:00:14). During a time of global fear and anxiety about the Cuban socialism, Varda’s flâneuse finds this situation fascinating. This fascination stems from curiosity, like the 19th century flâneur that wandered the changing streets of Paris caused by the renovations. This time, Varda’s 20th century flâneuse is fascinated by a revolution and how the people are affected by this revolution. Delphine Bénézet, a film scholar, describe the film:

Salut les Cubains! (1964) is a distinctive political documentary, mostly made of animated photographs that Agnès Varda took on a trip to Cuba in December 1962 and January 1963. But while grounded in the ‘here and now’ of the 1960s in France and Cuba, it also features many of the traits found in Varda’s other artistic projects. It is informed by its political and historical context and shaped by the conditions in which it was made. (Bénézet 1).

For Varda to show her fascination with her wanders, she documents her discoveries in a familiar way, through stills and movement. This gives her audience the opportunity to understand her wanders by giving the still photograph movements and making the stills animated. In the beginning of the documentary, Varda shows some people in Paris in 1963 looking at the photograph she took in Cuba in an art exhibition. They have amazed looks on their faces. This reaction is the reaction Varda expects from her audience. This will not be the reaction from her audience because the audience already has a preconceived notion about socialism and communism that Varda’s photograph and documentary of Cuba began to be perceived as a form of socialist propaganda. This is different from Varda’s other documentations of flânerie because

Varda does not take into account how her audience will react to this work. It shows that the flâneuse's role is not to change the perspective of her audience, but to show what she has observed whether her audience agrees with it or not.

Even though Varda presents herself as someone who is just trying to understand 1960s Cuba, she has gotten a lot of criticism for being so infatuated with Cuba and Cuban culture. The documentary came out in 1964, which was two years after the Cuban missile crisis. The documentary also makes a comment about the Cuban Missile crisis when the male narrator says, "Since the Cuban Missile Crisis, Cuba's been a floating mine. Yet curiosity about Cuba remains intense, seeing as how the Cubans have carried out the revolution with lyricism" (00:02:58 - 00:03:02). The description of the crisis does not carry any negative criticism. This was out of place during the time of the cold war between communism and capitalism. The narrator describing the Cubans as having carried out a revolution with lyricism, this according to critics seems politicized. Bénézet adds, "Today some might frown at a film praising Castro's dictatorship, but at the time, Cuba is a fresh new cause" (Bénézet 1). A modern understanding of Cuba in the 1960s, prevents some film critics from understanding Varda's flânerie around Cuba and why she presents Cuba in a good light. It almost looks like a propaganda video. Varda does not agree with this, she says, "'I was not at all politicised.'" She adds, "I like being curious, and to learn from people ... I tried to discover everything about Cuba by just being there." The undertones of political fervor are more muted in her shots than the sense of vitality" (Moroz). Varda does not agree that the documentary is a propaganda or a politicization of the Cuban people. As a flâneuse should be, she is curious and tries to understand Cuba beyond people's general perception of the country. Even though the documentary shows a lot of infatuation with

the space, the questions about it being considered a propaganda documentary should be considered. Varda got to go to Cuba because of I.C.A (International Council on Archives), “That’s right. It’s an homage to Cuba. I was invited there by the I.C.A., the Cuban Film Institute” (Kline 71). If her trip was commissioned by the Cuban film institute and was there to observe the Cuban people, it might look like Varda was commissioned to make a propaganda that shows Cuba to be vibrant and interesting, but that goes against the whole idea of flânerie. Varda does not wander because she is paid to, but rather she wanders out of curiosity. She wanders to understand the world around her; she has to observe to come to her own conclusion and document this reaction for her audience. In Cuba, Varda observed the Cuban revolution first-hand and saw the positive side of the socialist country even though this was not a popular stance at the time. The flâneuse does not understand the world around her based on popular stance, but by observing it herself.

3.3 Land of Discovery

Traditionally, the flâneur never wandered out of his familiar city space; Varda does the opposite for the flâneuse, constantly making sure she wanders in unfamiliar spaces. When she finds herself out of her familiar space, she wanders around the unfamiliarity to find what is familiar. Varda does this when she finds herself in California and she wanders around the Oakland-San Francisco area. The results of this flânerie are two short films:

Varda and Demy lived in Los Angeles from 1967 to 1969, where Demy made *Model Shop* (1969) for Columbia Pictures and Varda made two shorts and one feature. Varda’s happy immersion in the political and popular culture of America in the late 1960s reveals

itself in her films' subjects and styles. *Uncle Yanco* (1967) is a portrait of her artist uncle living on a houseboat in Sausalito, while *Black Panthers* (1968) documents the Black Power movement in Oakland (Conway 57).

Varda finds herself in California because of her husband Jacques Demy, but the flâneuse in her just could not visit California without wandering it. While Varda wanders and documents her wanders in California, she makes some discoveries. In her flânerie around the unfamiliar global space that is California, Varda does not only discover the familiar political protest for civil rights but she also discovers family, her uncle Yanco. In a foreign space, the flâneuse discovers the familiar as she observes and tries to understand the global space around her.

During her time in California, Varda studies the poetics of the visual spaces as she wanders through the mural spaces in Los Angeles in *Mur Murs* (1981). But her flânerie is really seen as she immerses herself in the unfamiliar space among the Black Panthers in her short documentary *Black Panthers* (1968) as she realizes the familiarity between France and California in the 1960s. When Varda goes to California for the first time, it is during the 1960s. The 1960s are known as the civil rights era in America. According to Varda in her 2007 introduction of the documentary, something similar was happening in France. Varda draws a connection between what was happening in France with the Black Panthers: "Black is beautiful and history rolls on from one movement to the next. Beginning in May of 1968 in France, demands and hopes are expressed with violence. In the U.S., the black community mobilizes around the trial of a Black Panther leader" (*Black Panthers*, 2007 Introduction 00:00:01 - 00:00:18). Varda makes a connection with what happened in France in May 1968 to the mobilization of the Black Panthers to protest against the unfair arrest of Huey Newton. To understand Varda's connection, one has to

look at France in May 1968. Varda's global flâneuse constantly makes a connection between the familiar and the unfamiliar. For the flâneuse to understand what is going on in this foreign space, she has to relate what she sees with something she knows. Varda relates the plight of the Black Panthers to what happened in France in May 1968.

Even though the French are well known for their protesting, the protests in May 1968 came as a surprise. In an article by NPR, "In March 1968, a journalist from France's *Le Monde* newspaper claimed that the French were too bored to take part in the upheaval that had begun sweeping other countries that year. There was peace and prosperity in France" (Beardsley). In the beginning of 1968, France was filled with a lot of prosperity and peace but that did not last long because in May there will be an upheaval that will ripple through other countries. According to the NPR article, the sudden protest started in France because of a few students in University of Paris at Nanterre: "Their spontaneous occupation of some of the administration buildings was partly a demonstration against the Vietnam War, and partly to demand something closer to home: to be able to spend the night in each other's dorm rooms. Several students were arrested and the university was temporarily closed" (Beardsley). The protest started as an anti-war protest mixed with a call for freedom in France by these University students. The protest will spread to other Universities and lead to a serious upheaval. This protest led to the rise of other protests for freedom including the Women's movement and the Sexual Revolution in France. Varda connects the two because she sees the protests against the arrest of Huey Newton as an extended protest of this global search for freedom. Through this connection, Varda's flâneuse is able to understand the Black Panthers even though she is not American.

In America, during the 1960s in the middle of the Civil Rights movement, there was a party formed called The Black Panther Party. In the eyes of America and Americans at the time, this party was seen as “radical” as they pushed far-left agendas for the sole purpose of racial equality. Varda’s flâneuse curiosity leads her to wander among the Black Panthers and tries to understand them beyond the rhetoric they have been painted. Varda does not narrate the documentary; the narrator is unknown. The beginning of the documentary starts by explaining the Black Panther Party, “The panther was chosen as their symbol. It is a beautiful black animal which never attacks but defends itself ferociously” (*Black Panthers* 00:04:09 - 00:04:14). The narrator explains why the Black Panthers chose their symbol. This points to the Black Panthers being more defensive when attacked but not being the attacker in the first place. Varda using this to describe the Black Panthers insinuates that she does not believe the Black Panthers as the attackers; rather, they are defenders against the attack of the system and how it has stripped the freedom from Black people. This is the flâneuse not just observing but also inputting her commentary through an unknown narrator, signaling to her audience that this is how she understands what is going on, and from her perspective the Black Panthers are not the attackers, but just defending themselves.

With the few times she had spent wandering around the space of the Black Panthers, Varda as a flâneuse was able to understand them more than the country they live in. This shows the flâneuse not being swayed by the external portrayal of the Black panthers and rather documenting the genuine Black Panthers. Just like Benjamin’s idea of flânerie where he explains flânerie should be like journalism, Varda becomes a journalist for this documentary. Knowing that the Black Panthers are protesting because of the unjust arrest of Huey Newton, Varda and

her team seek out to talk to Huey Newton in jail. When they ask Newton how he was treated in jail, he replies, “I’ve been constantly harassed. I’m in solitary confinement. Yes. I’ve been in solitary confinement for approximately three months now” (00:08:01 - 00:08:15). This gives a new perspective of the documentary because it does not only give the perspective of the protesters but from the perspective of the person they are protesting for, to bring to light the injustice and the restriction of freedom.

Even though the flâneuse tries to understand the world around her by wandering the global space, she also finds herself in her wanders. As Varda wanders San Francisco, she discovers her uncle in *Uncle Yanco* (1967). This discovery shows that the flânerie is not only a form of observation but also a form of discovery. Discovery for the flâneuse in this case is a discovery of the flâneuse’s self through family. In the introduction of the short film, Varda explains how she discovered her Uncle Yanco: “I heard about him in San Francisco. Thanks to Tom Luddy, I went to see this Yanco Varda, my father’s cousin, and indeed my uncle” (*Uncle Yanco*, 2007 Introduction 00:00:17 - 00:00:24). While on her trip around San Francisco, Varda hears about Yanco Varda from one of her friends. The curiosity of the flâneuse led her to investigate and see who this Yanco Varda is. Varda adds, “For me he instantly became the image of an artist/father, the father I’d always dreamed of who loved colors, wore pink trousers, took his young friends out sailing on San Francisco Bay and loved to laugh and paint” (00:00:29 - 00:00:42). Varda discovers that her uncle is an artist just like her and whose whole life was artistic, from the way he dressed to the way he lived his life. Baudelaire always wrote about art in relation to flânerie, and Varda finds this in her uncle. There is no proof that he is a flâneur, since he never spoke about his wanderings, but he is an artist just like Varda. By merging herself

with her *flânerie*, Varda is able to see that her artistic curiosity that leads to her *flâneuse*, could be genetic.

To understand and observe her uncle and his artistic lifestyle, Varda observes the spatial environment in the city he lives in to familiarize herself with that space. The documentary starts with a narration about the city of San Francisco; this is a similar beginning in *Salut les Cubains* (1963) and *Black Panthers* (1968). Since these spaces are unfamiliar to the *flâneuse*, she has to give a slight description before she dives into the films. The narrator begins to talk about San Francisco and says, “They call San Francisco ‘the holy city.’ it’s the city of love. Hippie art is psychedelic. It’s magnificent. Perhaps it’s an explosion of joy. The night has tremendous charm too. I compare the night to God. Then there’s the dawn. ‘Rosy fingered dawn’” (*Uncle Yanco* 00:01:27 - 00:01:56). Varda starts by looking at the poetics of the space she is in. The narration explains the poetics of the space when it uses terms like “the holy city,” “explosion of joy,” “tremendous charm,” and “rosy fingered dawn.” These words almost look like the words of a poet to describe a person. While the narrator describes San Francisco in this poetic way, the video pans around the art and architecture of San Francisco. The camera moves through the Golden Gate bridge, and pans around the skyscrapers and the water around the San Francisco Bay area. Varda’s camera also looks at the psychedelic art around the San Francisco Bay area. This is the *flâneuse* making notes of the place she is in and understanding how such a space contributes to her uncle’s lifestyle. This is important because it not only shows Varda’s *flâneuse* trying to understand the space around her, but she is also trying to figure out how her uncle sees the world and if that has any effect on how she observes the world.

Even though she uses the poetics of space to understand the wider city of San Francisco, she also uses this poetics of space to understand the location in which her uncle lives in and how that adds to his artistic lifestyle. Yanco Varda did not live in the city; rather, “Yanco Varda was a painter and a teacher who lived with many others in a houseboat community full of strange and wonderful constructions” (Bénézet 116). Yanco Varda lived with other people in a houseboat community. These people were young people and in the documentary he sticks out as the old person amongst young people. In the documentary Yanco Varda says, “I am not into politics. I side with the young people. At all the universities, the men of tomorrow, those who will govern America, are against the government” (00:02:15 - 00:02:27). Uncle Yanco explains that young people are the leaders of the protests in America, especially the anti-war protest against the Vietnam War. Because of the optimism he has for young people, Uncle Yanco prefers to spend his time with younger people. This adds to his very young artistic lifestyle and the way he presents himself. Varda then shifts her focus to the aquatic community in which Uncle Yanco lives: “Sausalito is what they call ‘aquatic suburbia.’ The aquatic suburbs represent a certain intelligence. It’s people who aren’t rebels with guns, but rebels against the system, against the American obsession with making money. They’re really fine people. Here everyone builds his house on pilings, pontoons, anything” (00:02:57 - 00:03:39). Uncle Yanco talks about protests against the wars and the young people leading the protests, but Varda shows that Uncle Yanco is living a life of rebellion, not a march on the streets kind of rebellion, but a rebellion of architecture and a rebellion of space. In contrast to the narration of San Francisco, where the description of the city was so dreamlike, there is a reality in how Varda describes the city of Sausalito. The poetic space of Sausalito is a space of rebellion where the inhabitants protest

against the capitalist system of America. They do not buy their houses; they make their houses and live very consumer-free lifestyles. This is why it attracts young people and people with vibrant personalities like Uncle Yanco. Even though he says he is not into politics, his architectural space says the contrary. His space is anti-capitalist and pro-community. By Varda wandering around Uncle Yanco's space, she is able to discover more about him and understand how he sees the world. She sees his lifestyle as a mirror of her life as a flâneuse. Just as Uncle Yanco is rebelling against the capitalist system with his lifestyle, Varda is rebelling against the standard rules of flânerie by making the flâneuse wander in any space she wants and anyhow she wants to wander.

Varda's flânerie in California is filled with discovery. These discoveries include discovery of familiarity in a new space. In this case it is the protests that go on in California at the time. These protests include anti-war protests and a protest for racial equality. These protests were similar to the protests happening in France around the same time. Varda wanders and discovers to understand and discovers to fulfil her curiosity. On her wanders, she also discovers family. And this discovery did not come out from her searching. Her need to discover leads her to meet her uncle and leads her to be curious about her uncle's artistic lifestyle by looking at the architectural space in which her uncle lived. In her flânerie around California, Varda is able to discover that her rebellious nature against the restrictive art of traditional flânerie stems from coming from a family of rebels. Her uncle's rebellious lifestyle is against the capitalist system and Varda's rebellious wanderings are against the traditional art of flânerie that only restricts the flâneur to one location and to observe from a distance. Meanwhile, Varda's flâneuse wanders where she wants and implants herself in her observations.

CONCLUSION

Flânerie has been depicted in different artistic ways since it was popularized by Baudelaire in the 19th century. In art, flâneurs like Camille Pissarro used painting to depict his observations of post-renovation Paris as he walked across boulevards and gardens in Paris. He used his impressionist techniques to show what was known at that time as the “modern” Paris. In photography, during the late 19th century to the early 20th century, Eugene Atget used his camera to take stills of the transition from the disappearing Paris to modern Paris. The stills show the changing Paris. In literature, Edmund White in *The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris*, write about his observations in the city of Paris in the 1980s. He maps out what catches his eyes in Paris and the different scenes he experienced in Paris. And in film, the depiction of flânerie is seen in films like *Breathless* (1960), where the male protagonist wanders around the city of Paris and causes chaos in every corner and shop he walks into, and Or *Midnight in Paris* (2011), where the male protagonist walks through the city of Paris and discovers magic through time. The similarities between all these artistic examples of flânerie is that they are all done by men and they are all done in the Parisian space.

Varda, on the other hand, from the start breaks the rules of flânerie and modifies it to fit her as a flâneuse. The first rule she breaks is that she shows a female participating in flânerie. In *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), “Cléo spends an afternoon walking through the incessant noise and grime and gossip of Paris, from five to seven in the evening (or more precisely from just before five until six thirty: Varda’s practical joke)” (Elkins 219). Throughout the afternoon, Cléo wanders the streets of Paris mostly alone. She grows in the eyes of the audience from the object to the subject. The reason she grows is because of flânerie. Even though for the 19th century flâneur,

the reason for flânerie is mostly for the purpose of observation, Varda adds another layer to that by presenting Cléo as one who finds comfort in her wanderings and she is not necessarily searching for anything, but just wants an escape from reality.

Even though it seems Varda breaks the rules of flânerie with Cléo as a flâneuse, during her own flânerie around Paris she seems to highlight some rules of flânerie. One of the rules she highlights when she wanders around Paris is that flânerie always portrays this dream-state. Because flânerie takes place in Paris, there is this artificiality that comes with the cityscape. Walter Benjamin described this as “phantasmagoria” (Benjamin 21). This term in a literal sense means some form of horror theatre but in this sense Benjamin believes that the city space turns into some fantasy landscape for the flâneur. In Varda’s documentary *Daguerréotypes* (1976), as she wanders through the reality of the lives of the shopkeepers, she transforms the reality to a fantasy landscape by including a magician that is not part of the rue Daguerre. This addition shows how even in a state of observing the reality of the shopkeepers the city of Paris provides this dream landscape where the reality is overshadowed by the fantasy. The focus of the documentary are the artisan shopkeepers on rue Daguerre and how these types of shops will disappear because of the Manhattanization of Paris by Georges Pompidou. The distraction for both the shopkeepers and the audience who watch Varda wandering the street is the magician. In her flânerie, Varda is able to show the reality of these shopkeepers in the Parisian dream landscape even though this reality is blurred by the crowded city space.

Varda’s mission to reinvent flânerie is not something that started with *Cléo de 5 à 7*, but since the beginning of her artistic journey, Varda has always been the flâneuse. From her journey from art to photography to film, she has always used her craft to observe her location. One of her

first short films she shot in Paris is a documentary short called *L'opéra-mouffe* (1958). This documentary serves as a diary of a pregnant woman as she understands the space around her which was the street rue Mouffetard. The reason Varda wanders around this place is because this was a place Varda did one of her photographic projects for school, where she photographed the grimes of Paris. For a short documentary, there is a lot going on but just like *Daguerreotypes*; the reality in this documentary which is to bring to light the filthy nature of Paris and the not so beauty in this city of beauty is all overshadowed by the surrealistic glance of the woman's body and the nature of pregnancy. Even though the purpose of flânerie throughout the 19th century and after the 19th century is to make observations and see things the standard Parisian does not see, the flâneur is distracted by the trance Paris puts on the flâneur. Varda knows this so well because of her years of experience being a flâneuse, so for her to make real observations and observe clear realities, she has to take the flâneuse out of the dream-like landscape; she has to take the flâneuse out of the city.

Even though Varda follows some of the rules of flânerie, she mostly breaks one of the main rules of flânerie, which is to keep the flânerie within the city limits, in her reinvention of the flâneuse. But during her flânerie, Varda discovers that to actually observe reality, one has to go outside of the city limits. It is during her observation in the countryside of France that Varda discovered the risk of being a flâneuse. Because of the gender of the flâneuse, the male gaze on the flâneuse sometimes overtakes her gaze on the realities she is observing. Varda shows this in *Vagabond* (1985). As Mona hitchhikes and wanders around the countryside of France, she is described mostly from the perspective of the people who observed her movements. These observations are mostly from men. At the end of the film, the audience does not know anything

about Mona and they do not know what she is observing. With *Vagabond* Varda brings to light the risk factors. The flâneur can wander but does not have to have the internalized worry of the female gaze, while the flâneuse has to put in the back of her mind that she might be seen from the male gaze. The only reason Varda shows this outside the city is because it is more noticeable in the country space, where there are not a lot of city distractions for either the flâneuse or the audience.

Although the male gaze might put off the flâneuse from observing outside the city, Varda encourages the flâneuse to observe the country space because one can be introduced to something new. During her flânerie, Varda discovered the gleaners and what it means to glean. This is one of the many documentaries that moves between spaces. It moves from the country space to the city space. In *The Gleaners and I* (2000) the flâneuse observes the traditional type of gleaning to the modern type of gleaning. She also compared the waste culture of the countryside to the waste culture of the city. The flâneuse is made aware of this observation because the countryside provided no distraction, so the flâneuse is faced with the reality of what is going on. The flâneuse discovered the consumer culture in relation to the survivor culture of the gleaners. She also realizes that by partaking and not just observing during her flânerie, she is able to observe more information and deeply immerse herself in what she is observing. The traditional form of flânerie only observes and therefore can only see information from a third-person perspective and not the full information.

Agnès Varda passed away on March 29th, 2019. That was the death of the flâneuse but was not an end to her flânerie. Even while she was old, Varda did not stop her flânerie. One of her last documentaries was co-directed with photographer and street artist, JR. The documentary

was called *Faces Places* (2017). It was released two years before she died. The documentary focused on the faces of the people that make up the countryside of France. This was one of the few examples of flânerie where Varda was not wandering alone. It brought to light the reality that the flâneuse will die, but it does not mean that the flânerie of the flâneuse ends. With the documentation of her movements with film (documentary or narrative), Varda has inspired other flâneuses to take to the street or wander around their personal spaces. *Faces Places* wanders into other people's spaces while coming to grips with mortality. The documentary highlights that the flâneuse would not love forever and the flâneuse has to document as much as she can so that her flânerie lives on even if she dies.

Nevertheless, Varda continues to break the rule by taking flânerie outside of France and into places that are considered controversial, but Varda shows these spaces beyond their controversial nature. The flâneuse tries to understand the world around her and not just rely on people's perception of the world. She has to observe for herself and come to her own conclusion. Varda first wanders around Cuba in her documentary short film *Salut les Cubain* (1963), in which Varda documents Cuba during the Castro regime. This was so controversial because it almost seemed like propaganda for the Castro regime but it was less about the Castro regime and more about the happiness of the Cuban people. Varda wanders the unfamiliar space through photographic images and gives the images movement. Varda also finds herself in Iran in *Plaisir D'Amour en Iran* (1977). Even though in this present day it will be considered controversial to focus on a country like Iran, Varda shows the pre-islamic revolution Iran, where the space looked more like a place for lovers than the way it is now. And Varda finds herself in the land of discovery, in the United States of America, where she discovers the journey to freedom in the

Black Panther Party in *Black Panthers* (1968) and where she was able to understand the racial movement more than America understood them. While discovering something new and something familiar, Varda discovered family in *Uncle Yanco* (1967). She found her father's cousin, who lived an artistic life, almost like the flâneuse herself, but his artistic life is not one of movement, but one of rebellion. Just like Varda's flâneuse rebelling against the flânerie rules, Yanco Varda is rebelling against the capitalist system with his lifestyle. Varda's rebellious flânerie is able to wander Yanco's space in Sausalito and understands the artistic connection between herself and her uncle.

Varda has spent her whole life breaking the rules, such as the rules of filmmaking that warrant a filmmaker to stick to a genre. Her films do not follow a genre and they bend the lines between fiction and documentary. On the other hand there is Varda participating in flânerie but breaking the main rules of flânerie. She shows that the art of flânerie should not have rules. Anyone can participate in flânerie, in any location and at any point of one's life. As long as someone has the curiosity to become a flâneur or flâneuse, one can do that; Varda has spent her career as a filmmaking showing the playbook of what it mean to be a flâneuse, which is just a curious wanderer exploring a space and documenting it. This is her reinvented flâneuse.

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