



Gleaning [*glanage*] itself is unknown – is forgotten. The word is passé. I was intrigued by people in the street picking up discarded food, and I wondered: what’s happening to the fields of wheat? Nothing there left to glean. So I visited the potato fields, and I found these heart-shaped potatoes, and it made me feel good. It made me feel that I was on the right track.

Films always originate in emotions. This time it was seeing so many people combing the marketplace or rummaging through supermarket trash bins for leftovers. Seeing them made me want to film them and, specifically, what could not be filmed without their consent. How can one bear witness without hindering them?

Agnès Varda, “Gleaning’ the Passion of Agnès Varda”¹

gestures and postures

Agnès Varda’s *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* [*The Gleaners and I*] was filmed between September 1999 and March 2000 and released later that year, marking film’s entry into the new millennium. Along with its companion piece, *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse . . . deux ans après* [*The Gleaners and I: Two Years Later*] (2002),² it is a prime representative of a protean genre known as the film-essay.³ Most importantly, however, the film offers an icon for digitally emancipated film and the consciousness of the image as *manipulated* (from the French *manipule*, or “handful, as of grain”).⁴

The logic of Agnès Varda’s recent films invites a pair of comparisons. The terms to be compared are the activities of *flânerie*, *glanage* and *chiffonnage* – or the figures of the *flâneur*, the *glaneuse*, and the *chiffonnier*, all three historical “types” in their own right. The first, the city-

s.d. chrostowska

VIS-À-VIS THE GLANEUSE

stroller, is a character of nineteenth-century French urban, and specifically Parisian, culture. He has been well documented, given much critical attention, and come to be adopted as an emblem of sorts by film theorists and film historians.⁵ The second figure, the *glaneuse* or gleaner, once a fixture of the French rural, peasant way of life, has not yet been the subject of such discourses. The third, the *chiffonnier* or ragpicker, belongs, like the *flâneur*, to the Parisian landscape, but in a rather different capacity. My intention in this three-faceted comparison is to show that the *glaneuse* shares with the *chiffonnier* several crucial traits that distinguish her from the *flâneur*, and that these relationships hold on the figurative level, specifically in relation to the medium of film.

My argument is plain: Varda's perspective in her two films about gleaning renders the *glaneuse's* modus operandi antithetical to *flânerie* and akin to the *métier* of the *chiffonnier*. If the *flâneur* – that modern, bourgeois male, often characterized as a distracted, egocentric urban spectator of capitalism – stands for classical, narrative cinema, then the *glaneuse* can be seen as a postmodern cinematic figure, a keen participant-observer (transcending the gender divide) of the rural and urban spheres alike. Through Varda's lens, the work of gleaning stands for documentary/essayistic, anti-consumerist, democratic, empathetic filmmaking.

The *flâneur*, as theorized by Walter Benjamin and taken up by his many commentators, was a habitual, leisurely walker, taking in the cityscape in a whimsical, impassive, aleatory manner, in possession of himself but desperate to lose his bearings. Reacting to boredom, attuned to the quotidian and the obscure, his desire – unlike the tourist's but like the voyeur's – was aroused by the patterns and flow of capital before his eyes. His ambulatory urge, which could strike him at any hour of the day, and his impulsive changes of pace (depending on where his legs took him) signified someone with too much leisure time on his hands – hence the association of *flânerie* with idleness. *Flânerie* had little in common with pedestrianism save for habitat and being incognito. Whereas the pedestrian “wedged himself into the crowd,” the *flâneur's* habitus and “art of strolling” required “elbow room,” which arcades and boulevards amply provided.⁶ Finally, his inhabiting of the city “split[s] [it] into its dialectical poles. It becomes a landscape that opens up to him and a parlour [an *intérieur*] that encloses him.”⁷ Abstracted in this way, the *flâneur* becomes something of a capitalist myth. Although “[*f*]lânerie has become so common a term to describe urban spectatorship that it has begun to seem hollow,” writes Vanessa R. Schwartz,

it can still be used to describe the historically specific conditions of spectatorship in the consumer-oriented city that emphasizes mobility and fluid subjectivity and pleasure. Benjamin understood the *flâneur* [...] as a “type” who exemplified urban spectators

[...] [This focus] has allowed scholars to extrapolate from the descriptions of the *flâneur* to envision a historically specific mode of experiencing the spectacle of the city in which the viewer assumes the position of being able to observe, command, and participate in this spectacle all at the same time. (28–29)

Benjamin himself saw twentieth-century manifestations of *flânerie* as an anachronism, surviving on borrowed time – although, as he tells us in “Die Wiederkehr des Flâneurs [The Return of the *Flâneur*],” the figure did make a comeback in the twentieth century.⁸ Since Benjamin, “[t]he figure and the activity appear regularly in the attempts of social and cultural commentators to get some grip on the nature and implications of the conditions of modernity and post-modernity.”⁹ In one of these interpretations, the *flâneur's* observational stance, his propensity for watching city life go by, is seen as prefiguring and configuring the (apparently) neutral, probing, roving eye of the motion-picture camera.¹⁰ Thus, *flânerie* was already cinematic before the birth of cinema as such, and (by way of its inherent voyeurism) proto-cinephilic before the emergence of cinephilia. Indeed, more than simply a precursor of cinematic form, the experience of *flânerie* mirrors the values and desires of consumer society later represented and satisfied in narrative film.

That said, the above portrait of *flânerie* and its relation to cinema culture is over a century old. Assuming it is not already obsolete, how has *flânerie* changed? How do today's *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* habituate themselves, where do they train their gaze, by what means do they perpetuate their diversion? If recent discussions are any indication, updated *flânerie* is primarily window-shopping, a shadow of its former state.¹¹ The jury is still out on whether it may be carried out only on foot in city streets, or also by vehicle, inside a mall, irrespective of social class. Although the *flâneuse*, the *flâneur's* female counterpart, has joined the latter in theoretical argot (the issue being historical rights to the activity of *flânerie*), there are scarcely more than traces of the *flâneuse's* historical visibility. If these seem like moot points, it may be because

flânerie's cultural relevance is due for reconsideration. Debate over the limits of its figurative hyperextension suggests that *flânerie* as a concept may need to be retired to make way for another sociocultural genealogy. In particular, its ideological white-male pedigree poses problems as a symbol for contemporary, diasporic, multi-cultural film art. Quite independently of this, however, film today – in the midst of a digital revolution and the resurgence of documentary-style filmmaking – deserves an emblem of its own.

Varda's *glaneuse* is a discernible alternative, a kind of "second sex" that lends itself to theorization relative to the *flâneur*. Even though the masculine-plural "*glaneurs*" in Varda's title is gender-inclusive, gleaners were traditionally *glaneuses*, women gathering grain left behind by reapers.¹² These subtleties are lost in the English translation. As Varda explains,

In French we have the masculine and the feminine [forms of the noun "gleaner"], so the title *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* doesn't translate [into English] [...] We had to translate it as "The Gleaners and I," which emphasizes in a way the "I." In the French, "glaneuse" refers to an anonymous female gleaner. That little nuance [...] makes it more important than me. ("Gleaning Agnès Varda")

Apart from frugality, gleaning connotes humility, a stance literally having to do with the ground (Latin *humus*): bending down in the field in order to pick up something discarded is no lofty act. A further connotation is that the thing gleaned offers no resistance; quite the contrary, it is not merely "ripe for the picking" but positively "ready-to-hand," waiting to be taken, catching the gleaner's attention. Through an imaginative leap (which Varda invites us to take), everything "beckons" to be noticed and offers itself as an object for gleaning, a gift. These qualities contrast with the *flâneur*'s upright mobility, his gestures elevated in their elegance, his relative aloofness towards and objectification of his urban surroundings, his love of commodities. *Glanage*, like *flânerie*, signifies therefore as much a historical existence, a type, as a mode of perception and interaction with one's environment.

Varda has shown that film, as a medium of such interaction, can make use of the experience and principles of *glanage*. We may wonder about the effectiveness of such translations and extensions, but Varda's *Glaneurs* effortlessly performs the transitions from the literal to the metaphorical modalities of gleaning. In the latter sense, gleaning means salvaging from oblivion. It should be mentioned that Varda's film is an intrepid, far-from-nostalgic reflection on transience and historical/personal memory. Varda's "objects" – whether human, animal, animate or inanimate – represent, like the *chiffons* of the *chiffonnier*, not just things past but things forgotten, not merely the traces but the very debris of history.¹³ A clock emptied of its mechanism, one of Varda's "finds," is "my kind of thing. You don't see time passing."¹⁴ (She places it on her mantelpiece, her reflection passing behind this improvised *tableau* like a ghost.) Gleaning also has a mnemonic purpose: "And for forgetful me, it's what I've gleaned that tells where I've been" (*Glaneurs*).

Like the *flâneur*, the *chiffonnier* figures prominently in the writings of Charles Baudelaire, inspiring Benjamin's reflections in both his 1938 study of Paris and the 1927–40 *Passagen-Werk* [*Arcades Project*]. Baudelaire described the ragpicker as a creature living off the leavings of the city and collecting rubbish, what had been disposed of, lost, or broken (Wohlfarth 151). In Benjamin's reading, the category of *Lumpensammler* (German for *chiffonnier*) overlaps with that of *Lumpenproletariat* where *Lumpen* (rags) are concerned and with that of *Sammler* (collector) in the activity of collecting. (The latter is, in turn, contrasted with the *flâneur* with respect to the dominant sensory experience: "The *flâneur* optical, the collector tactile" (*Arcades Project* 207).) The *chiffonnier* is, nonetheless, easily distinguishable from the collector – a member of the upper classes, who liberates "things from the drudgery of being useful" and "pits uselessness against bourgeois utilitarianism," but does so by investing in private ownership (*Arcades Project* 209; Wohlfarth 152). Meanwhile, the *chiffonnier* "is the most provocative figure of human poverty. Lumpenproletarian in a double sense, both dressed in rags and occupied with them"

(qtd in Wohlfarth 147). Positional ambiguity seems to have been unacceptable to Marx and Engels, who in *The German Ideology* drew a fine line between the salvageable and the unsalvageable elements of society: the proletariat proper and the poor. Poverty is the lowest level to which the proletariat sinks, where it turns anti-revolutionary and ceases, for all intents and purposes, to be proletarian; it is a condition unique to the rabble (*ruinierte*) proletariat (183). Marx subsequently dismissed the unproductive, regressive, dangerous raggedness of the *Lumpenproletariat* as “the dregs, the refuse and scum of all classes” (*Eighteenth Brumaire* 63). The modern-day *Lumpenproletariat* (prostitutes, beggars, the chronically unemployed, the homeless – legalized or not, declared or undeclared) is regarded with a more sympathetic eye as the victim of socio-economic injustice or handicap.

Are, then, generic gleaners assimilable to the *Lumpenproletariat*? The answer is complicated depending on whether we understand gleaning as broadly as Varda does¹⁵ or historically as the activity of female peasants, as well as whether we take *Lumpenproletariat* in Marx’s original or in the current sense. Yet even the historical designation of *glanage* is open to debate: although epitomized by the stooped female form of the nineteenth century, gleaning leftovers was legally recognized in France as early as 1554, through an edict that allowed the poor, wretched, and otherwise deprived to glean post-harvest from sunup to sundown. This definition, unlike that of the nineteenth-century *glaneuse*, would certainly qualify *glaneurs* for the lumpenproletarian ranks. While traces of traditional gleaning still survive, a similar practice has also surfaced in the modern metropolis at the sites of waste disposal. Because the categories of *glanage* and *chiffonnage* overlap historically in posture and gesture, and nowadays also in object and objective, the gleaning of leftovers and out of privation is unquestionably lumpenproletarian.

As well, both the ragpicker and the gleaner share with the *Lumpenproletariat* the potential for subverting the hegemonic logic of the capitalist economy and property laws – a consequence of “gleaning [being] always on private property” (although Marx had calculated

its revolutionary potential as nil, Benjamin played up the affinities between the ragman and the revolutionary) (*Glaneurs*). Gleaners are often forced to cope with the law and, for the sake of order, sometimes made official via registration procedures required on the site of gleaning. Even then, however, they remain vulnerable, their tools clearly makeshift (as Varda notes, “I saw the gleaners arrive. You can tell them from their boxes, sacks and plastic bags which don’t look anything like the standard workers’ containers” (*Glaneurs*)). Like ragpickers, gleaners also demonstrate the usefulness of things discredited as waste, and, by the same token, their own usefulness and productivity. Gleaning is never idle. At the same time, as one *glaneur* notes in Varda’s film, “gleaners also discard” (*Glaneurs*). “We’re better off working in the fields than shoplifting,” another remarks. In this sense, gleaning can be a form of sublation. While, historically speaking, *chiffonnage* and *glanage* share social origins (they are both, to differing degrees, *déclassé*), and both may harbour socialist dreams (Wohlfarth 149), not all modern gleaners are poor and marginalized. Even among the poor ones one can see different forms of destitution. In Varda’s broad historical and functional interpretation, the connections between raggedness and gleaning run the gamut from the prosaic to the poetic.

The above comparisons show that we can speak of an analogy between *glanage* and *flânerie* as much as of the differently analogous and homologous relation between *glanage* and *chiffonnage*. Similar to literal and figurative *chiffonnage* for Benjamin, *glanage* exists for Varda on the metaphor–metonymy continuum. She expands the seasonality of gleaning to include not just the nature-bound cycle of traditional gleaning but also the year-round human-made cycle of exchange and consumption of modern gleaning.

Varda, a figurative gleaner, is also an occasional literal gleaner – though not quite as literal as some of the gleaners she encounters. Through *glanage* she is referring to her own work as part of the postmodern gleaner community, which she herself sets out to gather, name and construct. Apart from Varda, there are several other artists

whose work involves gleaning and is explored in its terms by the filmmaker. A similar relation existed between *la bohème parisienne* and *chiffonnage* in Baudelaire's day. As Benjamin observed, "The poets find the refuse of society on the street and discover their heroic model in that very refuse," so that "everyone who belonged to the *bohème* could recognize a part of himself in the ragpicker. Each person was in a more or less obscure state of revolt against society and faced a more or less precarious future" (qtd in Wohlfarth 151, 149). As Baudelaire the poet and Benjamin the materialist historian were drawn to the figure of the *chiffonnier*, so Varda the filmmaker is drawn to that of the *glaneuse*. Both "paradigms" involve members of the French artistic milieu being drawn lower, to the destitute, disturbing and dangerous, as models and *modi operandi* for their work.

It would seem that the gaze typical of *flânerie* would leave remarkable objects, seen up close and capable of leaving a lasting impression, decontextualized, stripped of their aura by the observer's voyeuristic desire, which then heightens the reproducibility of both these objects and their images. But decontextualization need not objectify; it can have a cleansing, restorative effect, which Benjamin terms "the emancipation of object from aura," as was the case in the seminal work of Parisian photographer Eugène Atget.¹⁶ The aura of a thing could be described as its appearance as distant, untouchable, enshrined in the moment of contemplation. Atget, however, "looked for what was unremarked, forgotten, cast adrift," working against the exotic and the ambient, the intimate and the romanticized (SW2 518). Varda's work, on the other hand, conjoins these two domains of perception.

[T]he difference between the copy [...] and the original picture is unmistakable. Uniqueness and duration are as intimately intertwined in the latter as are transience and reproducibility in the former. The peeling away of the object's shell, the destruction of the aura, is the signature of a perception whose sense for the sameness of things has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness – by means of its reproduction. (SW2 519)

Varda's own gleanings are incited by what is remarkable in being unremarked, and mediate between the *impression* and the *copy*. The filmmaker releases images of herself – images that effectively straddle the two domains – to underscore her role in this act of mediation. When Varda discovers the heart-shaped potatoes, she narrates: "I was glad. I immediately filmed them up close and set about filming perilously with one hand, my other hand gleaning" (*Glaneurs*). Her stooping posture, grasping gesture and zooming in are a form of reaction against the degradation of the copy vis-à-vis the original. We do not just see one unique spud; we see many, and their image adorns the French poster for Varda's film. Her rapport, communion even, with what she films is foregrounded through her commentary and active participation. She animates her gleanings with an inexhaustible curiosity and concern, even as she plays them off against one another, letting them reverberate with the effect of spontaneous montage.

Varda's thematic focus is on things that are known for their transience (often because they are not worth holding on to). On one serendipitous occasion, she finds a painted image that conspicuously "belongs in this film": a medley of postural motifs from the best-known French paintings representing gleaners (*Glaneurs*). Another time, she asks for a painting kept in storage to be taken outdoors in order to glean its image. It is a vast oil canvas by Pierre Edmond Hédouin depicting gleaners fleeing before a storm.¹⁷ Through Varda's intervention, the elements loose within the painting momentarily converge with those outside, where a storm is also gathering. As well, the painting functions as a backdrop to Varda's project, whose humanist concern is underscored by the atmospheric coincidence.¹⁸ The resulting image – recording the entirety of the painting within its frame before it returns to its recess in the museum's storeroom – is simultaneously original and copy (in Benjamin's sense).

Here, as in other places in Varda's film, the mediation between the two perceptual domains seems ultimately to rely on multiple framing. Perhaps the most *à propos* example of this technique is her visit to an estate housing a

modest museum devoted to the chronophotographer Étienne-Jules Marey – the forerunner of the cinematographer, “ancestor of all movie makers” (*Glaneurs*). She is shown the post where Marey’s stationary chronophotographic rifle, triggered by motion, once broke down (*a décomposé*) the movement of animals.¹⁹ The camera then, taking its cue from Marey’s images, records a series of his photographic sequences: it scans them vertically, films several “film bits” in motion, and mimics the effect of fluid cinematic movement by sliding across the frames. But, whether because of the fragmentation of the sequence or the gaps in motion as captured by Marey’s rifle, a corresponding narrative is withheld. Thus, the segment becomes a homage to film’s ingenious beginnings. It is a case of coming full circle.

“a gesture of survival, a posture on the margins”²⁰

Varda’s cinematic aesthetic of *glanage* is distinctive, intuitive, discreet. Coincidentally, Varda is also the first female auteur and a pioneer of the French New Wave. Her diverse oeuvre opens in 1955 with *La Pointe courte* [*The Short Point*], which de facto inaugurated the *nouvelle vague*; it encompasses Left Bank group projects of the 1960s (collaborations with Alain Resnais and Chris Marker); then comes into its own as *cinécriture*,²¹ with the establishment of Varda’s production company and studio Ciné-Tamaris (1977), which facilitated greater creative control over her films. In a career spanning nearly six decades, she has directed several feature-length and numerous short films, including dramas, docudramas, documentaries, and cine-essays. Many are notable for their experimental qualities and foreground the interplay between artist and artwork, as well as between visual media (painting, photography, and film). *Cinévardaphoto* (2004), for example, unites three films of various lengths: the 2004 *Ydessa, les ours et etc.* [*Ydessa, the Bears, and Etc.*], the 1982 *Ulysse* [*Ulysses*], and the 1964 *Salut les cubains* [*Hi There, Cubans*]. The project’s motto, “When Photos Trigger Films,” coincides with its *raison d’être*. *Ydessa*... was inspired by a photography exhibition; *Ulysse* is a meditation,

years later, on a photograph Varda took in 1954; *Salut les cubains* is an elaborate photomontage of some 1,500 photos taken by her during a visit to Castro’s Cuba. Despite these retrospective (and possibly sentimental) glances, Varda’s creative growth has not succumbed to stagnation and repetition. The two recent films about gleaning amount to an artistic breakthrough. As one critic put it, Varda’s reflection on the contemporary relevance of *glanage* has enabled her “not only to render visible economic practices most often concealed, but also to invent a cinematographic practice” (Halévy 85).

It has been noted that some of Varda’s narrative fiction films can be meaningfully interpreted in terms of *flânerie*. For instance, the 1961 feature *Cléo de 5 à 7* [*Cléo from 5 to 7*] is said to explore the “possibility of a female flânerie” as a transformation through walking and looking in city streets, and “how a woman walker – a *flâneuse* – lays claim to subjectivity” (Mouton 3).²² The prism of *flânerie* fails, however, to shed light on the inventive camerawork and social focus in her twin essay-films, let alone on the old practice of gleaning. But one need not despair, for nothing illuminates these better than the films’ own broad conceptual basis. The story of *glanage* as told by Varda is equal parts: fieldwork; mental activity (gleaning of images, impressions, emotions, information (*choses de l’esprit*)); ethos of pragmatism, altruism, modesty of means and ends, but also disruption and non-compliance; self-portrait (the titular *glaneuse* refers, of course, to the filmmaker herself – the one travelling and gleaning film images) (*Glaneurs*).

Varda’s philosophy of gleaning is, therefore, not purely aesthetic – it is ethical as well. It stands for oppositional action: we are advised not to glean, because it refracts the self-interested forces of capitalism, because it disrupts the social order of production, consumption, waste and its disposal; yet, in spite or because of this, we do glean – as it is morally imperative to. *Glanage* presupposes compassion and care for what is gleaned not only because it gives itself to us, or because of its use-value as charity or subsistence, but also because of its right to existence and memory.

Varda's filmic approach developed not with but alongside the French New Wave, even if her starting point was the New Wave aesthetic and its reinvention of cinephilia. The *nouvelle vague* was the cinema of a generation: ambitious, existentialist, anarchist, affected (positively and negatively) by neo-bourgeois desires, prosperity, and futility (Douchet 123). Their youthful aimlessness, foolhardiness and hedonism put a new face on *flânerie*. New Wave *flâneurs* (if we can call them that) were mobile, the motorcar at their mischievous disposal. Transgression and provocation were the essence of their playfully disillusioned or downright blasé lifestyle. The city remained their main terrain. The street, too, became stylized: the unusual as a rule went unnoticed. Its boundless indifference to even grotesque events and individual fate was the limitation of *la vie quotidienne*, as was a certain forfeiture of individuality.

The city street was the natural location for action in French New Wave films: it was both home and prison, world and province, changing its demeanour with the possibilities, aspirations, trials, failures, thrills, pleasures, and ironies of the lives and loves of the young. If before films were shot exclusively on studio sets with obvious dramatic or expressive value (city shots were deliberately picturesque or *outré*), the *nouvelle vague* filmed in the street, utilizing its "natural resources" (lighting, sound, traffic, crowd) to remake *mise-en-scène*. In their films urban landscape is seen merging with the action, harmonized with the characters' existential states (Douchet 124). The New Wave's image of Paris, its birthplace, was not a postcard but a snapshot. In this it aligned itself with flaneurist perception; in Benjamin's diagnosis, "[t]he great reminiscences, the historical *frissons* – these are so much junk to the *flâneur*, who is happy to leave them to the tourist" (SW2 263). The street ceased being a Hollywood cliché, envisioned from the outsider's point of view. In the wake of Italian neorealism, the French New Wave developed a veritable "philosophy of the street," which it saw as reflecting the status quo of a busy, bustling bourgeoisie (Douchet 123).

A critical outlook and an "objective and unflinching" depiction of the street constitute a

continuity between the *nouvelle vague* and Varda's filmic output (Douchet 123). Her two films devoted to gleaning speak, however, to an unmistakable transformation of the New Wave *philosophie de la rue*. The street sends an urgent socioeconomic message to which the filmmaker's ear is attuned: part road, part sidewalk, part gutter, it is a giveaway of any society. To Varda, it reveals itself as the receptacle of waste – symptom par excellence of consumerism run aground – a condition the *flâneur* is too self-absorbed to take seriously. Varda's Paris is a place interesting not in itself but because of traces left there by things fallen into desuetude, things unworthy of the tourist attraction but, nonetheless, waiting to be acknowledged, rescued, revived.

The characters engaged by Varda are never the real-life equivalents of New Wave heroes and heroines, sovereign and exhilarated by the spectrum of possibilities. As an enthusiastic observer and master of understatement, Varda is rarely content with lingering on the surface play of things and ideas. In *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* she focuses on the seemingly mundane, the plight of the subaltern, disenfranchised creativity, awareness campaigns and philanthropy, and reveals the heterogeneous inner life of the individuals she films. To Varda the *cinéglaneuse*, the car is not an indispensable dramatic device but a means of transportation; it lets the filmmaker expand the territory of her gleaning beyond the city's confines. Varda feels as drawn to the countryside as to the metropolis; in agricultural areas – vineyards as elsewhere in the provinces – the capitalist arm is also raking in the goods and leaving behind the scraps. There, too, food is overlooked by machines, rejected from trade if surplus or defective, and left to rot unclaimed by anyone save occasional gleaners. As Varda's encounter with agricultural gleaning shows, when machines malfunction, gleaners have a field day.

Varda's *cinéglanage* is decentering – the filmmaker's subjectivity is a tentative aggregate of her experiences, her gleanings.²³ The process is one of being confronted and transported with the objects (both mental and physical) gleaned in or prior to the process of filming. This, in turn,

translates into a less willed, more contingent trajectory. She gives free rein to detours and tangents (“I permitted myself only digressions indirectly related to the topic”) in what is a controlled experiment with chance (Director’s Note).

The definition I gave to film-writing (*cinécriture*) applies specifically to documentary films. The encounters I create and the shots I take, alone or with a team, the editing style, with echoing or counterpointing, the wording of the voiceover commentary, the choice of music – all this isn’t simply writing a script, or directing a film, or phrasing a commentary. All this is chance and I working together [...] ²⁴

When once asked about the making of *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*, Varda replied: “Very little was planned. What was planned was to meet this or that person [...] I didn’t have a list of gleaners handy. I had to find them” (GAV). Throughout her eight months on the road she tried “to win their confidence, listen to them, converse with them rather than interview them, and film them” (Director’s Note). Elsewhere, she expands on the role that luck played in the shooting schedule: “We never cheated when filming abandoned objects on the streets or what the rummagers found in the garbage cans. We were overjoyed when by chance we found a painting of gleaning in a curios warehouse. And we immediately filmed it” (Filming 4). “[W]hen I film,” she says about her filmic style, “I try to be very instinctive. Following my intuition [...] Following connections, my association of ideas and images [...] But when I do the editing, I am strict and aim for structure” (GAV).

Because she does not neglect to turn the camera on herself, Varda remains, as the organizing consciousness, self-reflexive. Of this habit, she says: “I let myself live in the film, and ‘let’ the film in. I thought that in making a film like this I wouldn’t want to be separate from it, to live in another world” (GPAV). Some of the most resonant images in *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* yielded by this self-inclusion are the close-ups of her own deteriorating bodily landscape – grey hair being parted, wrinkled hands marked by

liver spots – acting in her stead. “I mean, this is my project: to film with one hand my other hand. To enter into the horror of it, to find it extraordinary” (*Glaneurs*). Her grasping hand moving into the frame seems foreign, beastlike. When asked about the circumstances and rationale of these “self-gleanings” she explains:

[As for] the shots of myself, I was alone and I wouldn’t ask a cinematographer to take them; I mean I’d feel like I was being narcissistic or something. And I was speaking to myself, as if taking notes, filming myself speaking to the little camera, improvising the narration as I filmed one hand with the other. And I felt a little pleasure at both filming and being filmed [...] Filming one hand with the other one – it closes a kind of circle. (GPAV)

Varda does not only glean these unequivocal signs; she comments on them, her voice intermittent and poignant, seemingly self-indulgent, until it seamlessly rejoins the film’s central concern: profligacy and complacency on a massive scale. As her self-écriture with “the hand of the other [*la main de l’autre*]” intimates her own mortality, so her rendition of gleaning’s resurgence carries apocalyptic overtones, imbuing the film’s objects with sadness and pain (Bénoliel 62–63).

Many of Varda’s gleanings happen in spaces that are heterotopic: a flea market, a scrap-palace, a junk-haven, a trailer park, and museums. The resulting visual and thematic opulence in the two films can be striking. This is a signature of Varda’s entire output. She makes a range of allusions to the visual arts and their trappings. Embedding frames, in the manner of baroque *mises en abîme*, is a pervasive device that calls attention to the act of viewing. In addition to the serialized images of motion that captivated Marey, *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* includes a scene from Dovzhenko’s *Earth* (1930) showing gleaners at work. The filmmaker also travels to several museums to visit famous paintings of gleaners – the most iconic being Jean-François Millet’s from 1857. She even prompts the restoration of the Hédouin canvas, giving it a new lease on life.

As a *glaneuse*, Varda weaves a tapestry of idiosyncratic associations, pursuing an artistic connection with this unique though elusive group of people: workers in rubbish, scrap-diggers, garbage-aestheticians, trash-ethicists. In the process of layering her images, she empowers the men and women in them, inviting them to make meaning, bringing out the human side of their oddity. Her gleanings encompass scenes, agents, and acts of gleaning: juice-brimming vineyards, freshly ploughed fields, outreach volunteers gathering unwanted crops, appointments with a militant urban *clochard* (for whom gleaning is an ambulatory *idée fixe*, and who gives the capitalist economy a kick in the rear with his prominent rubber boots²⁵), discoveries of eclectic *objets d'art* composed from *objets trouvés* – amalgams of miscellaneous, useless things. Also gleaned in the two films are fresh oysters and figs, market produce, expired meat and dairy products, metal, postcards and brochures, *res derelictae* (things the ownership of which has been relinquished), bric-a-brac, souvenirs, opportunities, words, facts, stories . . .

In the course of her exploration, *glanage* emerges as something other than a hobby. As art it tends to be marginalized. Varda meets artistic personalities from all walks of life and learns how their work is also sustained by methodical gleaning. To them, junk offers a “system,” a past which can be given a second chance in a composition, a “cluster of possibilities” in “accommodating chance” (*Glaneurs*). In their cases, *glanage* appears as an exercise resembling *bricolage*; indeed, some of Varda’s gleaners are also self-described *bricoleurs*.²⁶

Even though it is Varda who sets the terms of *glanage*, and her exploration of it means continually experimenting with its boundaries, she does not take the flexibility of these boundaries for granted. Can we categorize as gleaners both those who are destitute and those who want for nothing? What about gleaning for pleasure? she asks. (*Au fond*, this is a moral question.) It should be said that not all forms of *glanage* featured by Varda are strictly communal: individualism has also made inroads into gleaning, so that each glean his or her own – if not literally, at least in spirit.

Nevertheless, modern *glanage* is clearly not an expression of modern individualism (and dualism) in the way *flânerie* has been. It retains redistribution and sharing as parts of its code.

It would seem that in an age of machine harvesting, urbanization, and specialization, gleaning in the literal sense has become superfluous, and lives on only as metaphor. Varda, however, insists on the ironic currency of the designation, seeing urban scrounging as a radicalized incarnation of the old custom: “Gleaning might be extinct, but stooping has not vanished from our sated society” (*Glaneurs*). The practice has spread from rural to urban environments, where it warrants a name other than the even more time-honoured “begging.” Although it still applies mainly to the poor and homeless, it is a way of fending for oneself, of making do with what remains rather than a reliance on alms or the mercy of others. Doubtless, gleaning for a living is hard work, and Varda’s empathy clearly extends to those forced to glean, but it is her broad interpretation of work that gives the concept of *glanage* such versatility, with *waste* as “the heart of our topic” (*Glaneurs*).

Varda not only exposes the callousness and underbelly of survival, and how little wherewithal is in fact needed to cultivate one’s garden; she also continually juxtaposes these realities with the opinions of the gainfully employed and the moneyed, the primary producers and consumers of capitalist society: landowners, viticulturists, farmers, city workers, estate managers, proprietors, curators, lawyers. Modern gleaners, in whom she discovers a deeply critical socio-economic and environmental awareness, philosophical or spiritual fraternity and continuity with the past, embody a gathering ethos: a reaction against waste as useless and harmful (and therefore against the very concept of waste), and against the stigmatization of waste-users (whether by choice or by necessity) by the skewed priorities of the market economy. Varda invests much of her energy in looking at forms of local environmental consciousness; in the world of pro-environmental sustainability activism, gleaning is the order of the day. She comes across a recycling/*bricolage* workshop for children and a

trash-art exhibit, both over-aestheticizing waste, which appears “small, cute, clean and colourful,” very unlike the trash urban gleaners must sift through (*Glaneurs*). Varda is generally open to different points of view, but it is evident where her true sentiments lie.

As she explores different avenues open to organized forms of *glanage*, Varda also inquires into gleaner’s legality. The penal code is consulted: a “lawyer in the field” is asked about “gleaning rights,” a “lawyer in the streets” about “salvaging rights,” and a judge about her judgment on a case involving vandalism on store property (*Glaneurs*). Inevitably, she comes up against the bitter reality of private ownership and the prohibitions, time restrictions, and formalities gleaners have to endure to glean legally. “Isn’t it a bit overregulated?” she asks an orchard administrator. “Well, it’s either that or nothing at all.” Reflecting on her own work among other things, she says: “On this type of gleaning of images, impressions, there is no legislation” (*Glaneurs*). This statement is, of course, less and less true. To be sure, the multifaceted confrontation between *glanage* and authority accounts in part for her fascination with the subject.

cinéglanage: taking a look

Varda’s approach to making *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* is, thus, not only motivated by but itself also a form of gleaning. She uses the camera to glean things/images that might seem offhand, even a “waste of time” – were it not for Varda who retrieves, who does not let go to waste.

It is true that filming, especially a documentary, is gleaning. Because you glean what you find; you bend down; you wander around; you are curious; you try to find things out. But you cannot push the analogy further because we don’t just film the leftovers. Even though there is some analogy with the people whom society pushes aside. But it’s too heavy an analogy. (GAV)

Varda the *cinéglaneuse* foregoes the *flâneur*’s panoramic vision for the omitted details also constitutive of landscapes (one might say she

reverses the kinesis of his gaze by moving from the specific to the general), and for the wonderment owing to closer – at times quite intimate – interaction with the things she encounters. Her two gleaning films involve tactile contact and prehensibility. The most vivid images in this respect are the potato and highway sequences. In the first, Varda sees the curiously shaped (officially “misshapen” and rejected) potatoes, picks them up, and brings them home, filming them “again and again” (*Glaneurs*). She monitors their decay in stages throughout the film. Her interactions with these symbolic growths do not, however, lock her into a fetishistic relationship with them (since they are not allowed to be commodities); they instead undercut the subject/object distinction as inflected by capitalism (potatoes are, after all, the staple of the poor man’s diet). In the second set of images, shot on the road, Varda closes in and closes her hand on large trucks that she is passing, thereby optically “gleaning” them through the windshield. As their size and cargo indicate, she is gleaning the wheels of commerce.

Varda’s cinematic method is, in this but also in a more elementary sense, manual or, as she puts it in an interview, “handmade” (GAV). She likens it “to artisan’s work, equivalent to cloth weaving and hand-sewing” (Oxtoby 31). The keys to visual *glanage* (as, indeed, to *flânerie*) are spontaneity and improvisation – transcending even what Varda calls *cinécriture*. In *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*, the *cinécrivain* inscribes herself into the *famille glaneur*: her ceremonial gesture is posing with a sheaf of wheat as the lone and noble *glaneuse* from the 1877 painting by Jules Breton. The scene, with Varda standing against a cloth backdrop held up by museum staff, occurs five minutes into the film. “There’s another woman gleaning in this film; it’s me. I’m happy to drop the ears of wheat and pick up my camera,” is her commentary, as she points her camera at the offscreen camera filming her in an arresting confrontation (*Glaneurs*). Most revealing of her intention are the reflexive sequences of her own hands. On the surface, the formula is simplistic: one hand gleanes the other, one hand films the other gleaning.

I have two hands. One holds a camera – the other one is acting, in a way. I love the idea that with these handheld cameras – these new digital things – very light, but, on the other hand, very “macrophoto.” [...] I like the idea that one hand would be always gleaning, the other one always filming [...] The hands are the tools of the gleaners [...] of the painter, of the artist. (GPAV)

When we compare figurative *flânerie* and *glanage*, we are fundamentally comparing traditional filmmaking, which bestows absolute primacy on the work of the eye and its objectives (visual representation, consumption, and enjoyment), with filmmaking which thematizes the “hands-on” process of making a film and whose *modus operandi* is conceived via the sense of touch: *image-taking* by using portable, handheld equipment (not to be confused with any handheld effect).

It was Marshall McLuhan’s belief that:

It’s always been the artist who perceives the alterations in man caused by a new medium, who recognizes that the future is the present, and uses his work to prepare the ground for it [...] We reverse the old educational dictum of learning by proceeding from the familiar to the unfamiliar by going from the unfamiliar to the familiar, which is nothing more or less than the numbing mechanism that takes place whenever new media drastically extend our senses.²⁷

An “extension and intensification of the eye,” the camera also works as an extension and intensification of the hand, manipulating things or the way they appear, and registering signs of haptic intelligence (57). The reconfiguration of film-essayism which this conceptual shift affords is not just a logical outcome of using digital video technology or a capitalization on its novelty; it is, rather, Varda’s unique, instinctual take on the technological change which leads her to explore its potential for a new technique and dimension. If the *gaze* of the *flâneur* was prototypical of cinematic innovation, the *take* of the *cinéglaneuse* is its by-product.

As I have tried to show, filmic gleaning is not primarily about aesthetics and the aesthetic

imagination. *Glanage* is a trope for transfiguration (we become what we glean). Varda’s film renders – through looping, breakaway narrative and both holistic and fragmentary illustration – the energy and thrust of *glanage* as ethical practice. In gleaning, aesthetics goes hand-in-hand with “ethical know-how.”²⁸ Instead of a system of normative rules and abstract judgement, the ethics of praxis as put forth by Francisco Varela is a project of being in the world, of *savoir-faire*. It arises from conceptualizing cognition as *enaction* (with the connotation of “bringing forth by concrete handling”): as perceptually guided, embodied and situated (8).

Varela’s philosophy is apposite for understanding humanity and its extensions: how the recognition of one’s “*selfless* (or virtual),” mediated self becomes manifested in action (53). The camera, as a technological extension simultaneously limiting and enhancing selected functions and selective patterns of vision, produces a reality shift in the perceiver. It becomes a conduit for action that, in turn, modifies its use; like the manipulatory cameras, “[v]isual perception and motions thus give rise to regularities that are proper to this new manner of perceptuo-motor coupling” (58). For Varda, it is the added lightness of an unobtrusive camera that propels her on a set of imaginative excursions, during which she discovers an alternative mode of perception, of taking in her surroundings, which in turn leads her to navigate differently the waters of history, art, work, self, other, and contemporary society. She sets up her film as a dynamic forum for critique, one that obscures the conventional dichotomies of the gaze and its object, the empowered and the disempowered.

Was it, then, Varda’s intention to engender an alternative to *flânerie* for cinema? What similarities and differences between the “types” of the *flâneur* and the *glaneuse* can justify such an assertion? We have already some indication of what they may be. Over time, *glanage* has become an activity of utilitarian, but also of bohemian, ilk. While rooted in a resurfacing rural custom, modern versions of *glanage* emerge as a fact of rural and urban landscapes alike. Gleaning belongs to and can be found wherever people are marginalized, downtrodden, and

destitute – unlike *flânerie*, which is historically linked to prosperity. Similarly to *flânerie*, however, gleaning delights in buoyancy and spontaneity amidst busyness. Yet *glanage* traces this state, at times circuitously, back to nature. The empathy that characterizes both diverges where their objects are concerned. *Flânerie* produces intoxication with crowds and commodities (and with crowds as commodities) to which the *flâneur* surrenders and without which his gaze would remain impossibly neutral (SW4 34). Yet (as is the wont of the intoxicated) his agency appears questionable and his ways automaton-like when compared to the *glaneur*, informed as *glanage* is by a penetrating empathy with a stark, unveiled social reality.

Unlike the *flâneur*, the *cinéglaneuse* does not transform the world at will and *in toto*, since she is herself subject to transformation. As documentarist-essayist, she is formally removed from classical cinema: she does not seduce the viewer with elaborate fantasies or sleights of hand but canvasses him or her with found images. Her inquisitive corporeal presence in front of and behind the camera endows her films with an aura of subjective honesty. Her conspicuous physical involvement in the image-seizing process evinces cognition beyond that of distracted and anaesthetized spectatorship. Gleaning means having your hands full; the *glaneuse* is compelled to work. The *flâneur*, meanwhile, is prone to leisure, an otiose seeker of meaning for himself and his art exclusively. Unlike the flâneuristic compulsion to immerse oneself in the cityscape and, in this presumed invisibility, to “reap aesthetic meaning and an individual kind of existential security from the spectacle of the teeming crowds,” *glanage* – literal and figurative – exchanges parasitism for symbiosis, for becoming the object of one’s perception, thereby rejuvenating personal expression in the visual medium (Tester 2).

A final area in which *glanage* and *flânerie* diverge is in their attitude towards solitude and domesticity. The *flâneur* is uncomfortable with domestic solitude, with being in his own company (SW4 27). He abandons himself in the crowd, without which he stagnates (watching the crowd is his *occupation*, a form of accrediting his

indolence) (SW4 31, 22). Repulsed by the insipid stagnation of domesticity, he looks at the public arena as his existential home where solitude is still bearable – even if in the street he remains “a man apart”; *the place called home* he finds nauseating (SW4 19, 27; Tester 4). The *cinéglaneuse*, by contrast, fills her dwelling with souvenirs from her travels. She is comfortable with domestic solitude, as if sharing it with another. This is the message of the several shots of the filmmaker’s apartment in both films.²⁹ Home is where she brings her gleanings, where she takes stock of and assembles them. At the same time as she seeks contact with the outside, she is content to glean alone in the open field. In both modes of experience, however, impulse and flux – the ceaseless, unplanned mutability of humdrum existence – play a major part.

The obvious aesthetic pleasure of mobility (no doubt heightened by the novelty of such portable equipment), the attention to manual gestures (variously communicated), the subject matter itself, and the visual analogues and philosophical metaphors drawn from it: these elements cohere into the rarely acknowledged, intensely sensory side of Varda’s filmmaking. It is this extra dimension, made available by her technique, which catalyses the original, “organic unity” of image, taker, and context: the image is eyed and grasped by a figure who is simultaneously director, cinematographer, producer, actor. Varda’s overarching *embodied* presence in *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* is tied intimately to the motion, rhythm, and objects that the hands and eyes command, so that it seems evoked, as much as evoking, in virtually every take.

“i like filming rot, leftovers, waste, mould”³⁰ (commercial value: zero?)

Although moribund to younger generations, irrelevant or discomfiting to the affluent, gleaning endures. There are general signs and countless social and aesthetic trends that suggest *glanage* may procure socioeconomic (if not directly evolutionary) benefits, signalling that the *flâneur*’s loafing may be out of step with the times. Though many of Varda’s gleaned images and ideas may strike one as not particularly

recherché, as *objets trouvés* or just simply *stuff*, the associations she makes frame these raw materials, in their rawness and materiality, resonate as a remarkable cultural resource. The world of waste that Varda shows us is at once multifarious and parsimonious. As a sentimental *glaneuse* appearing in the sequel to *Les Glaneurs* puts it, “I think that objects contain a part of us [...] There is a huge transfer in things that are lost and then picked up [...] things leaving wonderful traces” (*Glaneurs... deux ans après*).

It is from this vast, constant traffic and turnover of material culture, of recycled thing-images, that we may divine what is in store for the future of film and of the image generally. Varda’s films on gleaning seem to have tapped into the zeitgeist of technocultural transition. More recent events have, however, reconfigured the private and public spheres Varda negotiated with negligible legal obstruction in 1999–2000. The encroaching order of policies and policing, however, is not yet a *fait accompli*; it should not be taken as an impediment to – and certainly not as the inevitable end of – gleaning as Varda knew it. The filmmaker who gleans is not only the new artist of social conscience; she or he is also an anthropologist of a culture of *reclamation* – a culture in which this wasteland is all we have.



notes

I am grateful to Professor Angelica Fenner and to Kinohi Nishikawa of Duke University for their comments on this paper.

1 Agnès Varda, “‘Gleaning’ the Passion of Agnès Varda,” interview (hereafter GPAV); Varda, “Director’s Note,” *The Gleaners and I Press Kit 3* (hereafter Director’s Note). These and other translations from Varda’s interviews have been modified.

2 The 2002 film, with a running time close to the original, begins where the latter left off. It does not develop the theme of gleaning in a new way; rather, it is a follow-up, taking up threads from the previous project, revisiting its participants, examining its reception and repercussions. In it Varda also addresses her own oversights and

reactions (most notably the implicit, intimate visual reference to her 1991 film *Jacquot de Nantes*).

3 The film-essay or cine-essay is a hybrid genre of non-fiction film forms, often subsumed under the category “documentary.” Notable French film-essayists include Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, and Chris Marker (with all of whom Varda collaborated). Film-essays are traditionally open-ended and non-linear in structure and emphasize the subjectivity of the filmmaker/narrator.

4 Varda’s two films were shot on a mini-DV camera with the sporadic help of a small crew.

5 A representative bibliography of *flânerie* in cinema studies, most of it indebted to the writings of Benjamin, might include the following: Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994) and “*Les Flâneurs du Mall()*: Cinema and the Postmodern Condition,” *PMLA* 106.3 (1991): 419–31; Elizabeth Wilson, “The Invisible *Flâneur*,” *New Left Review* 191 (1992): 90–110; Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds.), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995), specifically the essays by Charney (“In a Moment: Film and the Philosophy of Modernity”), Schwartz (“Cinematic Spectatorship before the Apparatus: The Public Taste for Reality in *Fin-de-Siècle Paris*”) and Miriam Bratu Hansen (“America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer [and Benjamin] on Cinema and Modernity”); David Clarke, *The Cinematic City* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flânerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999); Vanessa R. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999); Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.), *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (eds.), *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002); Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002); Grahame Smith, *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2003); Maggie Humm, *Modernist Women and Visual Cultures: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, Photography, and Cinema* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003).

6 Walter Benjamin, “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” trans. Harry Zohn,

the glaneuse

in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 3–92 (30). Hereafter SW4.

7 Walter Benjamin, “The Return of the *Flâneur*,” trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 262–67 (265). Hereafter SW2.

8 Benjamin’s essay draws on a 1929 book *Spazieren in Berlin* [*On Foot in Berlin*] by Franz Hessel in recognizing *flânerie* in the capital during the Weimar Republic. In contrast to Benjamin’s earlier studies of the subject, Hessel’s essays on Berlin “both articulate and illustrate a theory of *flânerie* in the twentieth century” (Gleber 63).

9 Keith Tester, introduction, *The Flâneur* 1–21 (1).

10 See Charney and Schwartz, *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*.

11 There have been attempts to link it to recent adventures in psychogeography via the Situationist technique of the *dérive* (drift), or ostensibly aimless locomotion – more or less ironic, if we consider the critical, subversive nature of the original project towards the “society of the spectacle” in which the *flâneur* uncritically thrives.

12 Gleaning proper is not picking (or, for that matter, plucking); Varda takes care to distinguish these forms of gathering.

13 Her interest occasionally mirrors that of Benjamin, who saw himself as the ragpicker of history: see Wohlfarth 144.

14 *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse*, 35 mm, 82 min., Ciné Tamaris, 2000, DVD (French with English subtitles), Zeitgeist Films, 2002. Hereafter *Glaneurs* – all English quotations from subtitles.

15 While Varda’s selection includes traditional gleaners of both sexes, it also features people out of the loop of the wage-labour system, hoboes, struggling single mothers, owners of vineyards, farms, bars and restaurants, and those (often because of their own meek station) who wish to help others in dire straits.

16 Walter Benjamin, “Little History of Photography,” trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 507–30 (518).

17 *Les Glaneuses fuyant l’orage* [*Gleaners Fleeing before the Storm*] from 1852.

18 Another such foreboding moment occurs before Rogier van der Weyden’s altarpiece fragment of the *Last Judgement* (c.1450).

19 The chronophotographic mechanism recalls the *flâneur*’s reaction: the way he “catches things in flight” (which “enables him to dream that he is like an artist”) (SW4 22).

20 Bénoliel 62; my trans.

21 The method is discussed, for example, in Varda’s *Varda par Agnès et filmographie par Bernard Bastide*.

22 Feminism inflects most of the critical writing about Varda’s films. Whether or not her films can be called feminist, her express intentions have not been to contribute to feminist cinema: see Carter.

23 Her brief interview with “anti-ego philosopher” and psychotherapist Jean Laplanche echoes this somewhat “reckless” ethos.

24 Varda, “Filming the Gleaners,” *The Gleaners and I Press Kit* 4. Hereafter *Filming*.

25 Varda asks him his reasons for wearing such boots around the city:

Yes, rubber boots have two advantages, on this hostile ground they’re really good stuff. There’s a psychological aspect too, with my boots I’m like the lord of this town. All these idiots dump away, I come after them and rake in the chips. (*Glaneurs*)

26 In Deleuze and Guattari’s reading, *bricolage* is closer to a hobby, an amateur occupation that may indeed become an art – though limited to the objects at hand (7). The disposition to *bricolage* appears to be common to all those “types” who work with salvage, whether they are themselves underprivileged or merely sympathizers. There is a sense in which art that owes its technique to *bricolage* is humbled by its low origins. In his study Wohlfarth illuminates the *chiffonnier*’s “ambitions as a *bricoleur*” (149).

27 Marshall McLuhan, “The Playboy Interview: Marshall McLuhan” 56. Reprinted in *The Essential McLuhan*, eds. Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone (New York: Basic Books, 1995) 233–69.

28 Francisco Varela’s term.

29 The interior of Varda’s house appears in both films. At one point, she finds a florid stain from a

leak on her ceiling so enchanting that she immediately “frames” its reflection in a mirror.

30 *Glaneurs*.

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S.D. Chrostowska
178 Montrose Avenue, Apt. 1
Toronto
Ontario M6J 2T9
Canada
E-mail: sd.chrostowska@utoronto.ca

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