

Dear –empyre- subscribers,

My name is Reina Min Seo Shin, a first-year B.F.A student at Cornell University. As an aspiring artist, my interests surround painting, filmmaking, and semiotics; through my interest in evoking and exploring multiple senses in art, I am drawn to attempting multidisciplinary approaches in filmmaking, such as incorporating painting and drawing into films. In order to develop my understanding of filmmaking, I am currently enrolled in Professor Renate Ferro's Introduction to Digital Media course. Through Professor Renate's introduction to –*empyre*–, I have the opportunity to share my research online of Agnès Varda, one of my favorite filmmakers. As a cinephile, I am grateful for this experience because I have always wanted to be part of an online platform where I could discuss female filmmakers and share my interest in the French New Wave.

Agnès Varda was a Belgian-born French artist, film director, and a photographer. In terms of her educational background, she received a bachelor degree in literature and psychology from Sorbonne University and studied photography at Vaugirard School of Photography. In her early career, she studied art history at École du Louvre in order to become a museum curator. However, as she began to develop her interest in photography, she focused her career in becoming a photographer and later a filmmaker. Varda is known as the grandmother of French cinema; as one of the pioneering members of the French New Wave movement, she had 67 wins and 31 nominations from various renowned film festivals. Her active involvement in the field should be noticed as she produced more than 20 films, working as a director, editor, writer, cinematographer, actress, and producer. Her notable films are *Le Pointe Courte* (1955), *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962), *Le Bonheur* (1965), *Vagabond*(1985), and *The Gleaners and I* (2000).

Learning the history of the French New Wave is crucial in understanding many works of Varda; the French New Wave was an essential French film movement during the late 1950s and 1960s. Notable pioneers of this movement include Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Andre Bazin, and Claude Chabrol. They were against the classical French film and Hollywood's classical state of filmmaking. Even though many French artists were intrigued by American filmmakers, such as Alfred Hitchcock, they were against the commercialized culture of Hollywood. French New Wave artists advocated the practice of hyper experimentation to the form; they would break conventional style by presenting jump cut, long shot, shooting on location for a cheap budget, and developing a new caméra stylo. Auteur Theory is one of the key elements of the movement, and this theory refers to the camera as the pen of the director. In other words, the theory suggests that the director should be the author of the film, where the director has the freedom to present his or her unique style through the art form. Within the movement, there were Right Bank and Left Bank Cinema artists. Varda was part of the Left Bank; although these groups of artists were not in opposition to each other, they had different preference in terms of style and focus. For

instance, the Left Bank artists were more concentrated on finding the connection between cinema and other forms of art, such as literature.

Many of Varda's works revolved around themes, such as presenting the inter-related connection between photography and film, capturing the outsiders, and showing her local life. As a multidisciplinary artist, Varda implemented photography in film and vice versa; this is clearly shown through her Cuban Photography series and her film *Salut les Cubains* (1963). When she was traveling to Cuba to produce a new film inspired by Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), she attempted to work on a new photography series that portrays the local culture of Cuba. Moreover, the artist often shed light on the people, places, and cultures that are apart from the mainstream culture. For instance, filming her travel to rural areas of France in *Faces Places* (2017) accurately supports this theme. The artist reminded the audience about the things we do not often easily recognize or appreciate. Aside from this theme, many backgrounds of Varda's works located in France, where the artist narrated her local life. In order to portray these themes, she effectively utilized documentary visuals and diegetic sound. Also, there are vivid color schemes in multiple films, where they are shown through the characters' clothing.

One of my favorite works by Varda is *Faces Places* (2017); in this film, the artist collaborated with another artist, JR. They traveled around the countryside of France and documented people's stories and their production of murals in different villages. Inspired by the film, I plan to travel through the villages of rural South Korea, interacting with the villagers and the Korean traditional artists, and recording the challenges artists face as female South Korean artists. Besides making a 30-minute documentary, I want to form a network among these artists, so that we can support each other and provide opportunities to display our work in Seoul. Although Varda recently passed away due to cancer, her works, intellectual, and artistic achievements will continue to impact numerous aspiring artists around the globe.

Many thanks for allowing you all to share my research with you.

Best,  
Reina Shin