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Chapter 6

Women on the Move: The Persistence of Nouvelle Vague and the Politics of Walking in Agnès Varda

In the final pages of *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, Gilles Deleuze detects a continuity in the voyage form from Italian Neorealism to French Nouvelle Vague. He writes,

> It is here that the voyage-form is freed from the spatio-temporal coordinates which were left over from the old Social Realism and begins to have value for itself, or as the expression of a new society, of a new pure present. [1]

Among the examples Deleuze gives are "the return journey from Paris to the provinces and from the provinces to Paris in Chabrol (*Le Beau Serge* and *Les Cousins*);" the "wanderings which have become analytical instruments of an analysis of the soul," such as in Rohmer's *Moral Tales*, Rivette's "investigation-outing" in *Paris Nous Appartient*, the "flight-outing"[2] of Truffaut in *Tirez sur le Pianiste* and of Godard in *À Bout de Souffle* and *Pierrot le Fou*.[3] In these films, Deleuze sees the birth of a new race of characters on the move, barely concerned by the events that happen to them, and who "experience and act out obscure events which are as poorly linked

[1] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: Movement-Image* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 217.
[2] The French term Deleuze uses is "promenade-fuite," which connotes "ligne-de-fuite," the line of flight.
[3] Ibid, p. 217.

as the portion of any-space-whatever that they traverse."[4] As a continuation of his theory of neorealism, Deleuze contends here that the voyage-form in French Nouvelle Vague takes on an autonomous value as the expression of a new society, and the stroll sometimes functions as the analysis of the souls of the protagonists, carried away by conditions and events without actively acting on them.

As I have argued in the previous chapter, Deleuze's analysis of neorealism fails to make a distinction between the walking-shot in early neorealist films and in later ones from the 1950s and 1960s. He justifies the continuity he sees from neorealism to nouvelle vague on his argument that the perambulatory characters in neorealism are no longer *agents* but *seers* caught in purely optical situations, to which they do not, or cannot, react. For Deleuze, just like in neorealism, the perambulations in nouvelle vague are neither active nor consequential; instead, they float in the present. "Here again," he argues, "the cinema of seeing replaces the action."[5] Even though he makes a slight distinction between acts of wandering and looking in Godard and Rivette, for example, he contends that the perambulatory protagonists of nouvelle vague are caught in purely optical and sound situations, which blurs the distinction between subjective and objective realism further than neorealism.[6] In his argument, he cites Labarthe's contention that *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961) appears to be the final great neorealist film, [7] blurring cinematographic boundaries between past and present, memory and the real.[8]

In this chapter, starting from Deleuze's argument on the links between Italian Neorealism and French Nouvelle Vague, I will explore pedestrianism as a spatial act that reveals and acts on the political structuring of the public space. As I have shown

[4] Ibid.
[5] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 9.
[6] ibid, p. 7-9.
[7] Ibid, p. 7.
[8] Andre S. Labarthe, "Marienbad, Year Zero" in *Cahiers du Cinéma* (September 1961).

in the previous chapter, the Italian neorealist walking-shot was a political act of reclaiming the streets in the post-fascist period rather than always a passive observation of everyday life. Here, I will similarly investigate pedestrian acts that politically claimed and transformed everyday urban spaces in French Nouvelle Vague. I argued in the previous chapter that the European Recovery Programme marked a turning point in the aesthetics of the walking-shot, transforming it into an expression of displacement against a background of massive unemployment, the restoration of power to the dominant classes, and thus the end of post-fascist revolutionary politics. However, I also contended that the walking-shot nevertheless retained its quality as a spatial practice that revealed and acted on the dominant structures of space in the works of Rossellini and Antonioni in the second half of the 1950s and 1960s. Kristin Ross argues that, in France, the European Recovery Programme triggered a modification and redefinition of everyday spaces. According to Ross, the Marshall Plan primarily brought about a transformation of everyday spaces in both cities and countryside – streets, workplaces, and homes – with the acceleration of Fordist production and French modernisation. As a result, displacement finds strong political expression in the French films set in Paris around the 1960s – the years leading to May '68. According to Ross,

> The newly arrived Parisians of the postwar era are likely to be provincial French women come to work as shopgirls as in Chabrol's *Les Bonnes Femmes*, or Elsa Triolet's *Roses à Crédit*; village boys such as Charles who come to take an advanced degree at the moment when higher education is no longer the prerogative of a tiny elite; or Algerian immigrants seeking work at the car factories on the outskirts of Paris as in Claire Etcherelli's *Élise ou la vraie vie*.[9]

[9] Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), p. 2.

This influx of immigrants to Paris resulted from accelerated Fordism, according to Ross. She argues that "the consolidation of a Fordist regime in France in the decade or so before 1968" was a period of "growth without precedent of capitalism in France," occurring at the cost of a "relentless dismantling of earlier spatial arrangements, particularly in Paris, where the city underwent demolitions and renovations equivalent in scale to those Haussman oversaw a hundred years earlier."[10] This re-construction of urban space depleted the countryside, which resulted in the migration of villagers to cities seeking employment and other opportunities. Thus, similarly to *Shoes,* which I analysed in Chapter 3, there is a significant influx of young women workers into the city. From the standpoint of Deleuze, it can be argued that Paris in these films becomes a spectacle to look at, turning the displaced subjects into perambulant seers floating through purely optical and sound situations. However, this fails to account for the pedestrian acts of the displaced as a spatial practice in certain nouvelle vague films, or to acknowledge the political function of such pedestrian acts in 1960s' France, leading up to the street riots of 1968. Thus, cinematic pedestrian acts that reclaimed, subverted, and reinvented the public space demand academic scrutiny.

While images of walking are abundant in nouvelle vague films, this has not been the focus of substantial academic research. Furthermore, within the large body of academic work on French Nouvelle Vague, the absence of consideration of women as both pedestrians and filmmakers is striking given the rise of feminist activism and

[10] Ibid. For Kristin Ross, May '68 marks the end of this accelerated transition into Fordism: "a protest against the Fordist hierarchies of the factories and the exaggerated statism that had controlled French modernisation."

politics around that time in France.[11] From this perspective, it is important to examine female pedestrian acts through a gender-sensitive approach for two reasons.

As Genevieve Sellier shows in her book *Masculine Singular: The French New Wave Cinema*, women characters of the Nouvelle Vague are mostly masculine creations, embodying the fantasy of the male gaze. Sellier argues that this was also observed by Pierre Kast in an article he penned for the "Women and Cinema" issue of *Cahiers du Cinema* in 1953. Kast claims that "Cinema is exclusively made by men. Woman, in cinema, is thus very precisely woman as she is seen by men," adding, "Women in the cinema are not only made by men, they are women made for men." [12] Sellier notes that, with the departure of Kast and Doniol-Volcroze from the editorial group, *Cahiers du Cinéma's* political sensitivity to gender relations also tended to disappear; instead, along with an all-male editorial team, a fetishistic and voyeuristic perspective prevailed in the journal's analysis of women characters in French cinema.[13]

It was against this social and cultural background that Agnès Varda made her first feature length, *La Pointe Courte*, in 1954, completely outside commercial circuits, becoming the earliest and only woman filmmaker of the nouvelle vague. Her second feature, *Cléo de 5 á 7*, filmed in 1962, is one of the few films that constructs the female character as a subject, a consciousness, and not as an object of the story.[14] Because its young starlet protagonist goes out for a walk in the streets of Paris, it is possible to see this film as a response to the connection established by the

[11] Exceptional instances are Nicoleta Bazgan's "Female bodies in Paris: iconic urban femininity and Parisian journeys," *Studies in French Cinema*, 10:2; 2010, pp. 95-109; Susan Hayward's "The City as Narrative: Corporeal Paris in Contemporary French Cinema," in *Spaces in European Cinema*, ed. Myrto Konstantarakos (Exeter: Intellect Books, 2000), pp. 23-35; and Genevieve Sellier, *Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema*, trans. Kristin Ross (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[12] Sellier, p. 29.
[13] Ibid, p. 31.
[14] Ibid, p. 150.

contemporary media between French female stars and the city of Paris. Nicoleta Bazgan shows in her article "Female Bodies in Paris: Iconic Urban Femininity and Parisian Journeys" that on and off-screen stories about French female stars, such as Brigitte Bardot, Jeanne Moreau, and Catherine Deneuve, are "tightly woven into the scenery to the point that they become icons of the city, in a type of urban femininity intimately connected to the filmic metropolis."[15] Susan Hayward demonstrates that Paris is typified as female since the Haussman-led restructuring of the city in the 19th century. Against the backdrop of rapid urban change and the increasing participation of women in the public space, Hayward sees here a reassertion of masculine identity, control, and the gaze.[16] In light of this discussion, *Cléo de 5 á 7* stands out as a feminist intervention since the film's protagonist is a young female star that shatters the fetishising male gaze as she walks and walks in the streets of Paris.

Secondly, even though it is widely acknowledged in both contemporaneous and recent writings that nouvelle vague introduced a new woman figure,[17] the film historiography of French Cinema has largely privileged male *auteurs*. Therefore, a gender-sensitive approach that investigates the corporeal engagement of women with the public space as represented by women could reveal overlooked aspects of French filmmaking of the era.

In light of the discussion so far, the filmography of Agnès Varda offers a strong object of analysis within nouvelle vague for its feminist contemplation of the forces that shape the everyday experience of women in various spaces, such as city streets, the domestic realm, and the countryside. Varda's filmography constantly enriches this feminist perspective with its diversity of genres and time-span, which includes decades of filmmaking from nitrate-based film to digital, and, recently, to

[15] Ibid, p. 96.
[16] Hayward, p. 25.
[17] See Sellier, p. 145 for further discussion.

mobile phone technologies, such as Instagram. Furthermore, the self-reflexive style of Varda's filmmaking allows her to comment both on social and cultural changes and filmmaking.

I will focus below on three films that allow me to analyse how pedestrianism functions on these levels in Varda's cinematic aesthetics. A fiction film that shares many resemblances with the Nouvelle Vague films of the era, *Cléo de 5 á 7* contests normative definitions of flânerie and the male gaze, shattering the fetishised image of the female body through its protagonist's endless walks across Paris streets. *Vagabond*, on the other hand, focuses on a nomadic traveller, Mona, driven to die in the French countryside. A *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) in the feminine, *Sans Toit Ni Loi* comprises interviews with the people who have come into contact with Mona during her endless wandering. Actively engaging with different mobilities conceptually and aesthetically, such as immigrant workers, goatherds, ambulatory scientists, or vagrants, the cinematography of *Sans Toit Ni Loi* is a manifestation of Varda's cinécriture, which constantly experiments with cinematic aesthetics to reinvent a cinematic language in the feminine. Finally, a recent documentary, or a self-portrait of Varda, *Les Plages d'Agnès*, includes pedestrianism as a practice that interweaves various spaces and times, enhancing the signification of pedestrianism as a metaphor for the filmic medium, the art of filmmaking, and remembering. In this film, Varda complicates the cinematographic boundaries of the past and the present, and subjective and objective experiences of space.

Both the political and philosophical dimensions of pedestrianism in these films can best be discussed through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of nomadology in *A Thousand Plateaus.* In these films, the activity of walking can be formulated as a corporeal practice that interweaves 'striated' and 'smooth spaces,' to

use the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari. From this perspective, it is possible to show how pedestrianism also functions as an analytical instrument that offers a gender-sensitive political contemplation of the forces of striation and smoothing. Finally, I will use this framework to explain how cinematic pedestrianism functions as an act that subverts and re-invents the stratified spaces presented in these films.

Defining Varda's Nomadic Filmmaking

In an interview on the cinema of Agnès Varda, film critic Jonathan Romney underlines a major trait of Varda's filmmaking:

> She is re-inventing herself all the time. She seems a thousand different filmmakers but one filmmaker at the same time. Whether working on a document or fiction, there is a sense that she is going out into the world to find something new. There is always a readiness to invent.[18]

Agnès Varda's continual becoming as a filmmaker is most evident in her filmography, which comprises an immense variety of films from documentary to experimental shorts, from video manifestos to auto-portraits, and some others that hardly fit any definition. Varda's nomadism in re-inventing both her cinematic and cinematographic languages repeatedly resonates with her feminist activism in innovatively challenging dominant paradigms of feminine identity. If Varda cultivates a new visual aesthetics in her films on an artistic level, this undertaking is always in line with discursively questioning those dominant paradigms of identity. Hence, nomadism here is a political attitude that implies a consciousness to resisting settling into socially-coded modes of thought and behaviour. Nomadic shifts thus designate a creative sort of *becoming*, defined by Rosi Braidotti as "a performative metaphor that allows for *otherwise unlikely encounters* and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience

[18] Jonathan Romney, BFI Live: Jonathan Romney on Agnès Varda (video conversation), 2010. <www.bfi.org/live/video/333> Last accessed May 21, 2016.

and of knowledge."[19] This makes possible explorations of new forms of political subjectivity. From this standpoint, Varda's cinema becomes "a vector of deterritorialisation," whereby established notions (of femininity, social order, and cinematographic language) are levelled at every step to give way to new ones: a new narrative of the self, a new language of cinema, a new (temporary) identity, a new politics of disagreement, and a new politics of aesthetics.

One of the ways Varda achieves such nomadism is through the embodiment of a female character on the move. The mobility of the woman protagonist is a perfect figure for Varda to convey nomadic consciousness of feminist activism and filmmaking as sites of resistance to fixating and sedentary tendencies. Hence, Varda brings about *a politics of walking* in her cinema. From this standpoint, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), *Sans Toit Ni Loi* (1985), and *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008) deserve particular attention to analyse the different forms of walking Varda has created. If the urban flânerie of Cléo, the circular travelling of Mona in *Sans Toit Ni Loi* (, and Varda's own walking backwards in *Les Plages d'Agnès* share a common trait, it is that the very activity of walking in these films not only connects striated spaces to smooth ones but also *smoothes out* striations to re-invent the lost, or suppressed, multiplicities of spaces.

Defining the Nomadic Body

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari maintain that smooth spaces are wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity, one that "can be explored only by *legwork.*"[20] This emphasis on corporeality and mobility is important for two main

[19] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 6; emphasis mine.
[20] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 409; emphasis mine.

reasons. Firstly, it follows that bodily contact is a precondition for getting to know the multiplicity of a smooth space. And secondly, mobility underscores the *process* of striating and smoothing forces, which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is more interesting to probe:

> What interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emit new smooth spaces.[21]

The three films considered within the scope of this chapter contemplate various passages and combinations whereby striation and smoothing slide into each other. Furthermore, the films posit the peripatetic body as the site of these passages and combinations. The effects of place on both social relations and characters is a recurrent thread in Varda's work, and she mostly reflects on a dynamic between stasis and mobility as well as the interaction between character and environment.[22]

When Deleuze and Guattari contrast nomad space with sedentary space, they point to such a corporeal mobility. Even though they claim that nomadology does not require movement, walking appears as a significant activity in their writing, which not only connects striated and smooth spaces but also possesses the advantage of elusiveness by virtue of which the body flows within striated spaces, smoothing them out. In *Anti-Oedipus,* they propose the "schizophrenic out for a walk" as a better model than a "neurotic lying on the analyst's couch." Hence, they present walking as "a breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world," a political activity with transformative qualities.[23]

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[21] Ibid, p. 551

[22] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently: Feminism and French Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 224-237.

[23] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 2.

Given its powers to construe diverse spaces and fluid bodily movement, cinema is the most eloquent field to philosophise smooth and striated spaces as well as the ways they slide into each other through the body. When Deleuze writes, "it is through the body (and no longer through the intermediary of the body) that cinema forms its alliance with the spirit, with thought" he refers to the power of the body to stand as a figure that has reflections on the thought, and particularly creative thought that reinstates the multiplicities suppressed by striations.[24] Similarly, the cinema of Agnès Varda construes the stroll as a way of resisting the fixating tendencies of striations. With its feminist agenda, Varda's cinema explores the smoothing forces of rebellious female bodies in movement that are walking without a pre-determined, targeted destination: "Voyaging smoothly is a becoming, and a difficult, uncertain becoming at that."[25]

Varda's three films analysed here all exemplify walking in striated spaces: the city of Paris in *Cléo de 5 à 7*, and smoother spaces like southern France's countryside in *Vagabond* and a Belgian beach in *Les Plages d'Agnès.* Deleuze and Guattari's proposition that the city is the striated space par excellence while the sea is the smooth space par excellence[26] invites us to investigate how striated space opens itself to be smoothed and how smooth space allows itself to be striated in Varda's cinema. Yet, Deleuze and Guattari also warn the reader against thinking about these spaces through binary oppositions: "Nothing is ever done with: smooth space allows itself to be striated, and striated space reimparts a smooth space."[27] The process is never simply a clash of two binary oppositions. In Varda's films, this dynamic is eloquently translated into her own *cinécriture*.

[24] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugo Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 182.
[25] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 532.
[26] Ibid, p. 529, 531.
[27] Ibid, p. 537.

Cléo de 5 à 7: A Newfound Flânerie

Cléo de 5 à 7 takes place on 21 June 1961 in Paris from 5 pm to 6:30 pm. The film concerns a young starlet, Cléo, who is waiting for the results of a biopsy to learn whether her abdominal tumour is malignant or not. We follow Cléo from the apartment of a tarot-reader through the streets of Paris to a café, to a hat shop, to her apartment, and then along a lonely walk in the city with a number of spontaneous stops and 'otherwise unlikely' encounters. Varda structures the film on a number of oppositions, such as superstition and medical science, documentary reality and fiction, objective time and Bergsonian duration.[28] One can also add gaze and look, life and death, a healthy body and a sick body. All these oppositions are unknotted, further complicated, and destroyed via the peripatetic body of Cléo. Constantly on the move, Cléo's body becomes the site where corporeal, spatial, and temporal striations are smoothed.

One of the major oppositions listed above, *gaze and look*, points to the primary striation taken up in the film, which, according to Janice Mouton, is mainly structured on the transition from "being looked at" to "learning to look."[29] This transformation from the gaze to the look, according to Mouton, also underlines Cléo's passage from an object to a subject. Yet, by taking Mouton's argument to another level, one can also argue that Cléo actually sheds the striations imposed on her fetishized starlet's body through the society of the spectacle. By opening her body up to outside interactions, she discovers a long-lost or even never-possessed multiplicity in herself. This is why many critics and scholars interpret Cléo's flânerie as a journey

[28] Roy Jay Nelson, "Reflections in a Broken Mirror: Varda's *Cleo de 5 à 7*", *The French Review* 56:5 (1983), p. 735.
[29] Janice Mouton, "From Feminine Masquerade to Flâneuse: Agnès Varda's *Cleo in the City*", *Cinema Journal* 40:2 (2001), p. 3.

of self-discovery.[30] However, the main point about Cléo's flânerie is that it has no defined end, nor aim to unveil a supposed hidden self. On the contrary, Cléo's flânerie leads to a further fragmentation of her self, perhaps to reach a Body without Organs by smoothing most of the striations. With respect to these dynamics, the most important element that the film employs is the mirror, as the first forty minutes are dominated by mirrors and other reflecting surfaces as well as reflections of Cléo in random spaces.[31]

The spectators are made aware of the constructedness of Cléo's image in the opening sequence, which begins with body fragments. A close-up of hands moving in an out of frame on the tarot table present a fragmented body while the characters in the film are introduced via close-up shots of tarot cards. Before we even see the real Cléo, we see an image on a tarot card associated with her. The framed, unified image contrasted with body fragments establishes the discourse of mirrors as early as the prologue. Similarly, the very first takes of Cléo are far from establishing the perfect image of a star. Instead, she is shattered by what the cards reveal: a series of close-ups show her face ridden with fear. As she leaves the tarot reader's apartment, we shift from a close-up of Cléo's face in a series of jump-cuts to subjective shots that flow unsteadily down the stairs. She descends the last set of stairs only to face a huge wall mirror where she pulls herself together. She ceremonially passes the mirror, pauses elegantly, and reveals an endless mise-en-abyme of her reflection (Image 1). The camera then zooms into her face accompanied by the following internal monologue: "Being ugly, that's what death is. As long as I am beautiful, I am alive." The scene

[30] See for instance, Jim Morrissey, "Paris and Voyages of Self-Discovery in *Cléo de 5 à 7* and *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*," *Studies in French Cinema* 8:2 (2008), pp. 99-110; and for the figure of the flâneuse in cinema, see Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (California: University of California Press, 1994); and Giuliana Bruno, *The Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London: Verso, 2002).
[31] Mouton, p. 3-6; and Flitterman-Lewis, p. 268-283.

marks a threshold: aware as we are of Cléo's fragmented being, we witness her transformation into a complete fetishised object of the gaze. Varda here portrays an instance of striation, which intentionally or unintentionally, recalls Lacan's Mirror Stage. In this scene, "she becomes the woman she is not," writes Mouton, "a fantasy, a fetishized object, someone to be looked at."[32]

Image 1: Cléo before the mirror, mise-en-abyme of reflections - still from *Cléo de 5 à 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962).

It can be argued that Varda's cinema of body here shows a striated form of a ceremonial body, as described by Deleuze:

> It is no longer a matter of following and trailing the everyday body, but of making it pass through a ceremony, of introducing it into a glass cage or crystal, of imposing a carnival or masquerade on it which makes it into a grotesque body, but also brings out of it a gracious and glorious body, until at last the disappearance of the visible body is achieved.[33]

From this moment on, the image of Cléo's body takes on an adventure precisely in the way that Deleuze here formulates the cinema-body-thought link. Varda firstly presents us with the ceremonial procession of Cléo's body from the hallway of the fortune-teller to the café. She is tall and bright, wearing a floaty dress and with a

[32] Mouton, p. 4.
[33] Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Time-Image*, p. 183.

highly-stylised coiffure. By placing her body against darker backgrounds and contrasting her image with modest attire of her secretary, Angèle, Varda ensures that Cléo catches the eye. At the same time, however, the masquerade imposed on her as a striation becomes grotesque with her excessively stylised outfit. Indeed, the first thing Cléo sheds after singing *Cri d'amour* is this look along with her flashy garments and coiffure. Until the moment she bursts onto the street in a simple black gown and undone hair, Cléo has to look almost every reflecting surface she can find to reassure herself about her image. Among these, the hat shop sequence deserves particular attention with regard to Deleuze's body-thought link.

On the way home with Angèle from the fortune teller, Cléo stumbles on a hat shop. Allured by the hats, Cléo wanders around the shop trying on unusual hats like a feline stalking its prey. We see multiple reflections of her in multiple mirrors, sometimes superimposed with reflections of the street. With its massive shop windows, the store recalls an aquarium – a milieu designed to be looked at from the outside. The scene, with all its elements and components to reflect or be displayed, becomes a huge mirror or a multi-faceted voluminous crystal, symbolic of Cléo's self-absorption. Varda's formula in the script for this scene is "l'eau + le cristal = le mirroir."[34] This formula, as well as the aesthetics of the sequence, point to the main striation the film addresses: consumerism and the spectacle. Cléo's fluid desire from one commodity to another, her dependency on the image of her own body as both a capital and a fetishised object,[35] and the surrounding mirrors maintain the continuity of the spectacle (Image 2). The mirrors and reflecting surfaces gradually disappear in the last forty-five minutes of the film, which is marked by Cléo's flânerie around Paris.

[34] Steven Ungar, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 49.
[35] See Jean Baudrillard, "The Finest Consumer Object: The Body," in *The Body: A Reader*, ed. Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco (New York: Routlegde, 2005), pp. 277-282.

Image 2: Mirrors in *Cleo de 5 à 7* (Agnès Varda, 1962).

The pivotal moment that triggers Cléo's transformation is a singing rehearsal, where she performs the love song *Cri d'amour*.[36] The sequence is an intermezzo with respect to its cinematography, in which the camera mimics the music and travels between territories, ultimately bringing about a deterritorialisation. From this standpoint, the scene with all its elements works as an abstract machine to smooth the stratifications of the society of spectacle. After singing, Cléo no longer maintains her doll-like look and questions the meaning of the song's success ("What is a song? How long does it last?!"). Through an allegory of lack and extinction with symbols of loneliness, ageing, and death, *Cri d'amour* carries Cléo away, or in more Deleuzian terms, she experiences an uncalled-for line of flight that music can provoke.[37] This line of flight and deterritorialisation are embodied in the unsettling ninety-degree pan of the camera whereby various levels, such as diegetic, non-diegetic, and meta-

[36] See also Claudia Gorbman, "*Cléo from 5 to 7*: Music as Mirror," *Wide Angle* 4:4 (1981), pp. 38-49.
[37] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 329-341.

diegetic, are folded into each other. Slowly zooming in and isolating Cléo's face against black, the camera shifts to non-diegetic as a full orchestra joins Cléo's voice. In this "glossy studio effect," in Gorbman's terms, we see Cléo's stage persona;[38] however, when the song ends with tears flowing from her eyes, the camera makes a vertiginously quick zoom-out from the close-up of her face, which embodies the song's deterritorialising effect. We fall back into the diegetic, yet the world of the film is now completely altered – it is a different territory. The transformation is triggered by Cléo's (as well as the camera's) becoming-music. The next moment, Cléo revolts, takes off all the accessories that constructed her doll-like image and rushes out onto the streets of Paris. If the first half of the film is dedicated to how the striae impose a spectacle on Cléo's body, the second half is dedicated to desecrating the gracious body. While walking, Cléo gradually sheds the masquerade imposed on her, further smoothing out those striae. Mirrors begin to distort, break, and fragment their reflections before gradually disappearing from the narrative as tokens of fixating tendencies. Simultaneously, smoothing forces start to appear as Cléo chances on them during her flânerie.

On the streets, Cléo encounters three peculiar images of the body that are emblematic of smoothing forces. These images are but war machines that attack the striae internalised by Cléo and trigger a mutation in her subjectivity. The first instance that marks the desecration of her body is a public performance Cléo comes on: a man swallowing frogs. The figure of the frog is encountered many times in the film: Cléo wears a ring which has a small frog clutching a pearl, Cléo is called a pearl several times, and the handsome soldier Antoine later associates himself with the frog. One may therefore claim that Varda uses this figure to indicate the outside forces that

[38] Gorbman, p. 46.

transform Cléo's subjectivity. The second image is again a public spectacle: a man is sticking a sword into his arm. Again contributing to the desecration of the body, this image is soon followed by an incident where a man is shot dead. His body then disappears but only to be reborn. The third special image Cléo encounters is that of a premature baby in an incubator, which can be seen as a metaphor for the fragility of Cléo's newfound corporeality (and subjectivity to some critics). The striations on her body are smoothed (there are no more mirrors after this scene) and the body returns to a stage of new beginnings. This image also smoothes out the metaphorical meaning of *glass cage* established in the first half of the film. It was used to indicate the restrictions imposed on the body by the society of the spectacle but now it becomes a symbol of re-birth. At the end of the film, still walking, Cléo is no longer afraid for her diseased body.

In light of the analysis up to here, it is possible to conclude that female flânerie in the film functions as a pedestrian act that contravenes and subverts the aesthetic striations imposed on women's bodies. In her improvised amble across Paris, Cléo gradually overturns the gaze and look-oriented paradigms of commodified spectacle. The film thus re-defines female flânerie as an emancipatory pedestrian act that subverts the commodified definitions of it.

Sans Toit Ni Loi: Nomadic Wandering

Walking as a metaphor for continual resistance and transformation is portrayed in *Sans Toit Ni Loi* in closer contact with nomadology than flânerie. The original French title translates as "without a roof or law," connoting fixating striae like sedentary living and the State. Reading Varda's masterpiece through Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology as described in *A Thousand Plateaus* brings about several insights

regarding a highly political conceptualisation of the activity of walking in cinema. In this film, Varda again works through oppositional pairs, but this time with a deeper complexity on a multitude of levels. Documentary and fiction, absence and presence, nomadic and sedentary living are interweaved and smoothed by the character of Mona. In many ways, Varda envisions Mona as a mythical feminine character (she emerges from the sea like Venus in the beginning of her story) and creates a nomadic persona out of her that allows us to "think through and move across established categories," as Braidotti puts it.[39] Mona constantly eludes capture throughout the film, thereby becoming a token of the nomadic existence. Through non-stop loitering, Mona not only becomes a "vector of deterritorialisation" but also a nomadic war machine disturbing the laws of the State.

The film starts with the discovery of Mona's dead body in a ditch before proceeding to present the testimonies of those who encountered her in the last few weeks before her tragic death. Comparable to *Citizen Kane,* but in the feminine, the film follows (and subverts) the style of a documentary, where the direct accounts of several people reveal their encounters with Mona. While each narrative strives to define Mona, the spectators are well aware that she has never stayed long in any of these people's territories so the definitions actually reveal their internalised stratifications. However, what these narratives share is that Mona has brought a change in their territories as a force of the outside. What Varda calls the "Mona Effect" is a transformation in the striated territory triggered by the nomadic war machine.[40] Therefore, Mona is never a part of the striated territories concerned but always a smoothing force coming from the outside. She is sent back to the outside several times when the State cannot tame her into the territorial striae. Thus, her

[39] Braidotti, p. 5.
[40] Flitterman-Lewis, p. 314.

smelliness and uncleanliness, which are referred to multiple times in the film, become sensuous tokens of her resistance to being appropriated and internalised by the sovereignty of the State. Deleuze and Guattari write, "From the standpoint of the State, the originality of the [wo]man of war, his [/her] eccentricity, necessarily appears in a negative form: stupidity, deformity, madness, illegitimacy, usurpation, sin."[41] Almost all of these allegedly negative qualities and others are pronounced by those who Mona encountered. However, Varda's dialectics is not at all simple in *Sans Toit Ni Loi* because she complicates almost every concept, matter, and medium that structures the film. Mona's mobility is contrasted not only to stasis (for example, the mansion of Tante Lydie) but also to striated forms of mobility. Mona encounters a goatherd, an immigrant worker, and an ambulatory palaeontology professor. It is possible to read these forms of mobility through the social types that Deleuze and Guattari counterpoint with nomadology, in a similar fashion to Varda.

The first instance is the goatherd episode. A goatherd, who is later revealed to hold a master's degree in philosophy, picks Mona up on the road and offers her accommodation. In their first dialogue, in which they discuss ways of existing in the world and agree on the position of pursuing an alternative lifestyle, Mona and the goatherd seem to share a revolt. The goatherd gives Mona a piece of land to grow potatoes on and a caravan to manage her own living. However, Mona is unwilling to take up farming; she hardly leaves the caravan where she spends all her time reading. The two have a long dialogue where the difference between the striated goatherd and the smoothing nomad come to the surface. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "the sedentary's relation to the earth is mediatised by something else, a property regime, a State apparatus." Similarly, the itinerancy of a goatherd or animal-raiser is only

[41] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 390.

secondary: "Transhumants only secondarily follow a land flow … [They change] land after it is worn out, or else seasonally."[42] Highlighting the distinction between itinerant and nomad, Deleuze and Guattari stress that "the primary determination of nomads is to occupy and hold a smooth space: it is this aspect that determines them as nomad."[43] Mona's nomadism is contrasted with another mobile figure, a migrant worker named Assoun. As a reterritorialised inhabitant, Assoun is an itinerant figure whose labour power has been settled, sedentarised, and restricted. Mona, however, rejects any sedentarising tendencies: she is on the move and is not beguiled by a piece of land.

After leaving the goat shed, Mona is taken up by the ambulatory palaeontology professor, Madame Landier, who is researching a contagious disease that is killing the plane trees. The two women's similar attitudes regarding the trees recalls what Deleuze and Guattari name "royal science" in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In their chapter on nomadology, they associate the retreat of the forest with the emergence of smooth space: the trees disappear and the rhizome spreads.[44] However, Mona fails to defeat the arborescent striae in the end since she is (quite literally) attacked by tree-people – villagers in tree costumes for a traditional festival, a burlesque attack on somebody that does not fit into the community, and which leads to Mona's death.

Mona's nomadism is further enhanced at the level of the filmic medium by Varda's cinécriture. Varda states that "the whole film is one long tracking shot" and, according to Susan Hayward, "the tracking shot is Mona's sign."[45] Yet Varda complicates the tracking shot as a straightforward epitome of wandering through

[42] Ibid, p. 452.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid, p. 420.
[45] Hayward, p. 272.

several techniques. Firstly, she subverts the conventional spatial logic of the tracking shot by moving from right to left, which also subverts the shot's temporal logic. That is, the camera's sliding backwards signals going back in time and keeps the motif of death alive at all times. In short, the camera not only glides spatially but also temporally. Secondly, Varda allows an unsettling dynamic to occur between the movement of the camera and the movement of Mona, who mostly eludes framing. Either she walks out of the frame or the camera continues tracking after accompanying her for a while. According to Hayward, this style points to her contingency.[46] It also accentuates Mona's ephemerality as a force of the outside, as a nomadic war machine, and her unfixability by striations. The fluidity of the tracking shots is contrasted with the stasis of scenes where Varda interviews the people who encountered Mona. Varda counterpoints mobility and stasis on the level of the medium by allowing Mona's body to flow smoothly in and out of the striations of cinema. On the level of the story, she achieves a similar smoothing effect by denying information and subverting conventional storytelling techniques through discontinuity, non-linearity, and causality. *Sans Toit Ni Loi*, and its protagonist Mona, thus become epitomes of nomadology, both aesthetically and politically.

It is worthwhile to note at this point Varda's decision to set the story in the French countryside, which symbolically functions as the image of a smooth space that is infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction. While Mona encounters and moves in and out of striated territories in this vast landscape (farmland, roads, vineyards, estates, small villages, roadside diners, etc.), the film's long shots and fluid long takes construct the larger expansive fields as a signifier for the underlying smoothing forces (Image 3). Deleuze and Guattari remind us that a smooth space is occupied by

[46] Ibid, p. 273.

"intensities, wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities, as in the desert, steppe, or ice."[47] In *Sans Toit Ni Loi*, the nomadic pedestrianism of Mona is complemented by the infinite desert-like countryside to signify smoothing forces and the smooth space *vis à vis* the striations at play and the striated territories. Thus, Mona's nomadism is articulated as a pedestrian act that constantly transgresses, transforms, and shatters these striations.

Image 3: Vast empty landscape as smooth space, stills from *Sans Toit Ni Loi* (Agnès Varda, 1985).

[47] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 529.

Les Plages d'Agnès: Walking Backwards

From the body of Cléo to the body of Mona, we have travelled from flânerie to nomadology and considered both forms of mobility with regard to their powers of resistance, transgression, and transformation. In her book *Nomadic Subjects*, Braidotti writes, "Nomadic consciousness is a form of political resistance to hegemonic and exclusionary views of subjectivity."[48] In line with Braidotti's standpoint to "take the nomad as the prototype of the man or woman of ideas," I shall focus on the body of Agnès Varda herself in her quasi-documentary auto-portrait, *Les Plages d'Agnès*.[49] In this film, Varda's body becomes a multi-faceted crystal, which blends the smooth and striated spaces of subjectivity (the self), cinema, history, and memory through an immense multiplicity of folds. As the setting for this self-reflexive meta-narrative, Varda chooses the beach: "If you opened people, you would find landscapes; if you opened me, you would find beaches," she says. The beach becomes a crystal image which re-appears between episodes and includes deterritorialised objects from Varda's other films or her memories. The beach also serves as a milieu for musings on cinema to take place. Thus, the beach is created on the screen as a milieu of creativity and multiplicity.

Varda films herself walking backwards, creating herself as a wanderer on the beach. This is the first trope that allows her to contemplate the smooth and striated through her own body and cinematic aesthetics. The film opens with a tracking shot from left to right, reminiscent of the travelling Varda used in *Sans Toit Ni Loi.* After panning across an empty beach, the camera catches and starts following Varda herself, walking backwards. Her hair has several inches of white in the roots, with the dye remaining only at the tips – an embodiment or image of time. In her auto-portrait, she

[48] Braidotti, p. 23.
[49] Ibid, p. 22.

associates walking backwards with remembering, delving into her own history; hence travelling back in time. Varda here complicates once again several binaries, such as past and present, procession and retrocession, extensive and intensive movement. However, the activity of walking backwards here is not the opposition of process or of a line of flight but a movement that smoothes the conventional distinctions of past, present, and future, as well as the conventional sense of movement as an extensive act that occurs in an extensive space. Varda's backward march expresses an intensive movement that delves into the present in search of time passed.

The second most important contemplation on the smooth and striated concerns the striations and smoothing forces of cinema itself. In the opening sequence, Varda sets up a maze of mirrors at different angles to reflect fragments of the beachscape. This play of a proliferation of frames is, first of all, a way to contemplate the unavoidable striations in filmmaking. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the sea is the archetype of smooth space but also the archetype of all the striations imposed upon the smooth space.[50] From this standpoint, all of Varda's experiments with travelling shots and the sense of space that have been analysed previously are taken to another self-reflexive level through multiple explorations of time and space. Secondly, the multiplicity of mirrors is also a metaphor to reflect on the fragments of identity. The multiple memory pieces, personal connections, spatial fragments, and lost objects that are reflected, reproduced, and re-enacted in the film are the bits and pieces that make up Agnès Varda: her image dispersed in "a plurality of ways of being present in the world, of belonging to sets, all incompatible yet coexistent."[51]

[50] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 427.
[51] Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 196.

Image 4: Multiplicity of mirrors in *Les Plages Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2008).

The cinema of Agnès Varda proposes a political agenda through the figure of walking in favour of nomadic consciousness. The image of walking, in Varda's films analysed here, is a multilayered one that resonates at both the level of the story and at the level of aesthetics and politics. By being on the move, her female protagonists not only constantly elude fixating and sedentarising powers but also trigger a transformation in the territories they travel. Rosi Braidotti defines nomadism as "vertiginous progression towards deconstructing identity; molecularisation of the self."[52] Hence, challenging sedemented systems may be emancipatory yet also painful. The nomad, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is deterritorialised on the deterritorialisation itself. Her line of flight, as in *Cléo de 5 à 7*, *Sans Toit Ni Loi*, and *Les Plages d'Agnès*, is rhizomatic, without a defined itinerary or end. The smooth space and the smoothing forces of the moving body are the site of revolution against the sedentarising powers of the State. If the State operates by controlling the pace and movement of bodies (via public ways, gates, barriers, borders, filters, etc.), these sites

[52] Braidotti, p. 16.

of movement can be claimed to give birth to a nomadic potential, which in turn occupies them as if they were smooth. While discussing this potential, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Paul Virilio, who indicates the importance of the revolutionary theme of holding the street.[53] From this standpoint, one can also locate Varda's nomadic personae within feminist struggles and the women's movement, which Varda actively participates in. Regarding the revolutionary potential of smooth spaces, Deleuze and Guattari claim that "smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life constitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us."[54] Varda also never believes that a smooth space may save the politically, socially or economically underprivileged. Her cinécriture, however, is a form of striation dedicated to showing how the smooth may transform the striated, and how the striated may allow smoothing forces. The smoothing forces she brings to our attention are those of her cinematic aesthetics and the philosophy of movement embodied by her female protagonists.

Conclusion: The Persistence of Nouvelle Vague

In this chapter, I explored the transformation of cinematic pedestrianism from a gender-sensitive approach. Beginning with *Cleo de 5 à 7*, I investigated how female pedestrian acts have evolved from the height of French Nouvelle Vague to more recent images of walking that reveal women's experience of public spaces. In *Sans Toit Ni Loi*, Mona's nomadic wanderings are counterpoised with both the settled life and other forms of mobilities, such as a migrant worker, a goatherd, and a wandering palaeontology professor, through interviews with people that have come into contact

[53] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 426.
[54] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 551.

with her. This also enriches our understanding of the various forces that shape women's experience in public spaces, such as streets, roadsides, cafes, train stations, and diners. Finally, scrutinising the image of walking in *Les Plages d'Agnès* reveals the use of pedestrianism as a self-reflexive tool in a documentary that ruminates on the limits of the self. In a fashion similar to the pedestrianism in early Nouvelle Vague films, such as Alain Resnais's *L'Année Dernière á Marienbad* and *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, pedestrianism in Varda's self-portrait blurs the boundaries between past and present, and between memory, dreams, and the real. By focusing on Agnès Varda, one of the few filmmakers that have been making films since the peak of nouvelle vague, this chapter offers significant revelations regarding the persistence of nouvelle vague's image of walking as an analytical tool to explore the underlying politics of space in women's everyday experiences, from walking in the city to hitchhiking, as well as to consider filmmaking in a male-dominant sector.