

## Following In The Footsteps Of Cléo<sup>1</sup> Cléo'nun İzinden

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### Abstract

This study aims to chronologically analyse the film *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962) of Agnes Varda, by following in the footsteps of the main character Cléo, who is regarded as a great representative of modernist flâneuse. In the context of urban and feminist studies, the figure has been revisited, especially in this film of Varda. The film mainly traces the flâneustic traces and explores how possible illness urges the heroine to dismiss her role as a cliché of femininity and to seek out spatial contexts that favour a more fluid female subjectivity once interwoven with the city. Within all trademarks of her peculiar *cine-creature*, how Varda blurs the thematical and technical boundaries, by attributing dialectical meanings to them, will be put on the agenda.

**Keywords:** *Agnès Varda, Cléo from 5 to 7, Feminist Films, Woman Directors, Urban Studies*

### Özet

Bu çalışma, Modernist flâneuse karakterinin temsilcisi olarak kabul edilen Cleo'nun adımlarını takip ederek, Agnes Varda'nın *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962) filminin kronolojik olarak detaylı bir analizini yapmaktadır. Şehir ve feminist çalışmalar ekseninde, figür özellikle Varda'nın filminde yeniden tartışılmaya açılmıştır. Film, flâneuse ait tartışmaların izini sürmekte ve klişe feminenlikten kadını çıkarması yönüyle tartışılmaktadır. Kadın kahramın bir hastalık vesilesiyle, bu klişelerden sıyrılıp şehirle iç içe geçmesinin onu nasıl özgürleştirdiği ve özneleştirdiğini anlatmaktadır. Bunu yaparken, Varda'nın kendine has *cine-creature*'ında, tematik ve teknik sınırların onlara diyalektik bir anlam katarak nasıl silindiğine odaklanılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Agnès Varda, 5'ten 7'ye Cléo, Feminist Filmler, Kadın Yönetmenler, Şehir Çalışmaları*

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## Introduction

In her long-lasting career spanning more than six decades, Agnès Varda has created myriad works varying from short to feature, documentary to fiction, even some of uncategorised. Despite mostly regarded as hybrid, they are unswervingly revolving around two contexts: women and their experience of everyday urban life. In this study, within the main scheme of gender and urban studies, I will try to shed a general light on the film *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1962) through the perspective of Cleo's Parisian strolling and how it has transformed her towards the authentic female subjectivity, aka a flâneuse, which is a retrospectively coinage word from the modernist flâneur who was originally a 'male' figure, introduced to the literature by Baudelaire in *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863). Walking alone freely and aimlessly only to observe and report the nascent reflections of modernity, the flâneur, was utterly a city-aesthete, a dilettante, a 'child-like passionate spectator', who 'set up house in the heart of the multitude' (Baudelaire, 1964: 9). The figure has been conceptualised by Walter Benjamin in his posthumously published book *the Arcades Project*, reconsidered this figure and brought him into academic discussions. yet, most recently, feminist scholars have coined the word flâneuse to search for the practical possibilities of women strolling around the city spaces. Overall, this study handles Cleo as a flâneuse

## Methods

The overall approach of the study is interdisciplinary as Varda makes use of different genres such as poetry, paintings, and dancing among them (as she claims). The excerpt employs qualitative methods. The theoretical framework of the study incorporates concepts and modes of analysis put forward by mainly feminist film theorists. So, feminist critical discourse analysis as well as the elements of semiotics and psychoanalytical theories are used to shed light on visual narratives as well as characters.

## Body

Binary structures have always been inherent in Varda's works; however, in the film *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962), it is by far the most explicit. When expressing her motivation to make the film Varda states: "I wanted to make a film of a young and beautiful artist who forces to think about death" (Varda, 2018). Detailing where she got the initial inspirations, she addresses to a painting by Hans Baldung called "Death and the Maiden" (executed in 1517). In the painting, a skeleton (representing death) seizes the hair of a young and naked woman, and drags her down to a tomb. Above the painting, it is written: "Here you must go". Varda states that she put this picture on the walls of the film set throughout the shooting in order to be constantly reminded by the dichotomy of death and life, which is the main thematic contrast of the film.

*Cléo from 5 to 7* is about a young chanson starlet who confronts with a possibility of stomach-cancer, yet what is worse to her, with the possibility of disfigurement and ugliness. The striking binary oppositions are thus established around the themes of life (youth) and death, beauty and ugliness. In Cléo's representation (Corinne Marchand), the norms society impose upon the female body are already invited for a discussion at the very beginning. The constructed image of Cléo (externally beautiful, but internally sick), which is seemingly quite fitting to the society's beauty standards, is deconstructed as the awaiting death is foreshadowed by a tarot reader, only suggesting another dichotomy: medical science vs superstition. Announcement of a possible death by a surgeon would be typical to a director, but not so Vardian for sure. The film mainly explores how possible illness urges the heroine to dismiss her role as a cliché of femininity and to seek out spatial contexts that favour a more fluid female subjectivity once interwoven with the city.

Before seeing Cléo herself, we see her body fragments; her hands waving in and out of the frame restlessly. Before even seeing her face, we are introduced with a tarot card which is to be substituting her. In a couple of seconds, when the whole image of Cléo is depicted, we will be asking for whom she is herself substituting. This immediately deconstructed 'constructedness' of Cléo's image is reflected in the 'emphatically fragmented' techniques of jump cut close-ups of both Cléo's and the tarot reader's

hands accompanied by disembodied voices, all in all creating a disorienting feeling of segmentation (Mouton, 3). Subsequent to the coloured tarot reading session, the film sharply turns to be black-and-white, wherein the reality and fiction are replaced. Shocked and shattered by the death card (albeit interpreted as a profound transformation) of ‘the flesh and blood image of skeleton’ (with Varda’s expression), Cléo is rendered far from a star image, but rather overwhelmed with a fear when leaving off the clairvoyant’s.

The notable scene of descending the stairs-shot in a series of jump-cuts-follows, which is interpreted as a reference to “Nude Descending a Staircase” by Duchamp (Haskell, 2000). Cléo stops in front of a gross mirror, revealing a *mise-en-abyme* of her reflection only to pull herself together (literally and metaphorically). Meanwhile, we hear her inner monologue announcing the main thematic contrast of the film: ‘Being ugly, that’s what death is. As long as I am beautiful, I am alive’. According to Janice Mouton, who has analysed the film as a flâneusian transformation, in this scene Cléo is “doubly fragmented” since her consciousness is split between the inner reality (a possibly upcoming death), and her outer masquerade (beauty mask she wears to hide behind). As Mouton claims, “A fragmented and adorned object, she is a substitute for something that is both there and not there. She becomes the woman she is not-a fantasy, a fetishized object, someone to be looked at” (Mouton, 4). Indeed, her *being-looked-at-ness* is the outcome of male gaze as Mulvey has claimed (Mulvey, 62). One can claim that for the first part of the film, Cléo, assuring John Berger’s claims too, seems to be watching herself being looked at; the surveyor in Cléo’s psyche can be claimed to be a male, surveying her outer appearance and objectifying her, making her a vision, a sight (Berger, 47). As Lewis approves “the first half of the film installs and reinforces a conventional, fetishised image of female beauty in the ways that objectify Cléo as a spectacle for erotic contemplation” (Flitterman-Lewis, 1996: 272). This is well represented with the recurrent deployment of mirrors, which serve as ‘a reassurance of identity’; an identity which is entirely based on image, outer beauty and what others see, rather than her actual being. Cléo indeed seems to be chronically followed by the mirrors. One can easily claim that between her and the world is mirror as if her body is on display for others. However, Varda is so witty to prove there is something wrong, something fragmented and distorted in the way of Cléo’s self-looking. Thanks to Vardian techniques, we are rendered far from any possible identification with Cléo. Indeed, Varda keeps us away from ‘easy sentimentality’ or sympathising with the heroine. Rather, we are bestowed with a critical viewing that comes from ‘unsettling effect’ of the techniques of repetitive cuts and fragmented close-ups on her body image. In other words, while her artificial, meticulous look seems like a fetishised object, the mirrors on which this masquerade is reflected are wittily and repeatedly deployed either fragmented or distorted, thus we are made to feel that there is something missing or wrong about this woman; something hidden under her ‘masquerade’. Instead of empathising with her, we cannot stop asking “What is she hiding from?” or “What is she hiding inside this constructed look?” Quite intuitively we are rendered with a desire of her cracking this ‘shell-like covering’ (via Virginia Woolf), which she will eventually do in an epiphany of the famous song-scene.

Following the tarot session, we accompany Cléo and Angèle in a cafe, where the mirrors take the leading role. Indeed, it really does not seem possible for Cléo ‘to be there’ in the real ‘moment’ in ‘the real place’; her mind as well as her body seem to be uncomfortably displaced and restlessly disoriented. As Engeln has mentioned in her recent TED Talks: “You cannot chronically monitor your body’s appearance and be engaged with the world.” Not giving an ear to the people on her table, Cleo overhears a nearby couple’s conversation -who are supposedly having an affair, like Cléo herself does, which proves she is even not real enough to have a real, intimate relationship. This self-absorbed unawareness and indifference of Cléo is well accentuated in the following taxi sequence, as well. Cléo is reluctant to listen to her own song and even seems to be irritated by it although verbal harassment of two guys passing by do not bother but amuse her (interestingly enough she giggles for the very first time). Only is the compliment about her appearance what she can obviously take, which assures that nothing but her look does matter to her, though it is doomed to be annihilated soon.

Followingly, there comes the hat-shopping sequence which is befittingly chosen as it proves how obsessive Cléo is with her appearance. What is for sure that how the world sees her does matter to her, which leads to her urgent need to hide behind something, a commodity, which is also a fetishised object, just like herself. Some critics see this sequence as a stage for Cléo's spectacle where she can demonstrate her performance to her chaperon Angela (Dominique Devay), to the shop-assistant and to herself, who is her 'best audience'. The shopping motive of Cléo has also been read as a way of 'visual intoxication' or a 'retail therapy', which refers to a way of comforting oneself through buying small things. Even more assertively, the sequence has been associated with the notion of 'commodity fetishism' coined by Karl Marx, who defines commodity as "an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind" (Marx, 125) only to be later exchanged for something else. The external and internal dualities reach to the culmination as Cléo tries on hats to decorate her persona. She knows inside she has a possibly awaiting death, yet illness which is internal needs to be hidden behind a metaphorical cover of hat. Meanwhile, while her femininity is exchanged with a fetishised object, death is 'exchanged' with life, metaphorically putting. At least, she supposes it would be so.

What is so remarkable for me about the shopping sequence is the reflection of Cléo's image on the windows of the store, where it intertwines with the outside reflections of Parisian human configurations, parades, daily hassle, which does not catch the attention of the protagonist as she is too self-obsessed with her reflection. As Haskell states: "Varda's photojournalistic instincts are apparent in the way she turns Paris into a hall of mirrors—windows and faces that reflect the heroine back to herself" (Haskell, 2000). Although the city seems to be beckoning her, still spectacle, *before-Cléo* is so self-indulged in her outlook that she does not even really realise what is going on out there. Another prominence of this scene is the fact that consumerism and spectacle come together herein. Özgen likens the store to "an aquarium which is designed to be looked at from the outside (and which) becomes a huge mirror or a multi-faceted voluminous crystal symbolic of Cléo's self-absorption" (Özgen Tunç, 108).

Like the mirrors, masks are also a recurring motif, standing for the fetishes as a disguise of her femininity. It is important to note down what Mouton adds as one more aspect to this identity-covering metaphor of masks. She states that "once, in their original context, they represented elements in a belief system; now, like Cléo, they are simply objects on display-beautiful but devoid of a life or meaning on their own" (Mouton, 6). Cléo feels nauseous once she notices the African masks on a window-shop, which is both a reminder of her inescapable denouement and her being a mere decorative to be displayed. Indeed, her occupation as a performance singer does strengthen this objectification of hers. Once having encountered the female taxi driver, Cléo repeatedly asks her (indeed three times) how come she is not 'afraid' to drive on her own, even at nights. To me, this repetitive questioning makes it clear that Cléo herself does have fears inside against driving on her way. Her fear has been generally associated with a fear of 'annihilation' and 'desecration'. However, it makes me feel that Cléo is hiding herself in a fear of being fully seen. This fear of opening up her real-self leads to disguising it behind a mask of spectacle, which is to be shocked when encountered with an outer force to unhide. Following the masks (as an outer reminder), the scene of street performance of art students intervenes in Cléo's self-escape. With their faces and bodies covered in paintings, these students add up Cléo's intimidation. The scene of 'public intervention' is paralleled in the film *Vagabond*, only this time in a different context of Mona's social exclusion. However, in Cléo's case, it signals her intimidation of not only outside world, but also of her inner world; both of which *before-Cléo* is definitely not ready to welcome.

The taxi sequence is also significant as we begin our journey towards the Parisian streets of the early 60s, where means of transport have increased in number, making it difficult to be a pedestrian. As mentioned, Varda's camera has always been curious about quotidian urban life, and what is going on out there in the public spaces has always caught her attention. As Benezet suggests: "In Varda's work, space is neither objective nor topographic, and often it is invested by someone's presence and by his or her embodied subjectivity" (Benezet, 344). Varda does believe "lived or inhabited space is known phenomenologically through participation in or inhabitation of the world" (Benezet, 222). So, in her cinema, 'the poetics of space' (via Gaston Bachelard) as an integrated component serves as a useful

material for the academic studies. Here, we see the very first samples of her interest in Parisians' everyday life through wandering around the city through the embodiment of Cléo. In this sequence, our experience of film-viewing is doubled as city-viewing. While the camera (like Cléo herself) is detached in this long sequence -not yet intimately involved in the 'sensory streets of Paris'-, this documentary-like style of shooting will turn out to be *voyageur* by the time Cléo is -both physically and psychically- involved in the city streets through her solo walking.

The oeuvre of Varda could be seen as hybrid; documentary and fiction, social and personal are intertwined. She successfully brings the opposites together, and ties them only to untie later. Polarisation and depolarisation, construction and deconstruction are all trademarks of her peculiar *cine-creature*. Not only technically, but also thematically does she juxtapose the binaries, attributing dialectical meanings to them, whereby we are rendered with questions; instead of a feeling of catharsis as in classical Hollywood films. Specifically, in *Cléo from 5 to 7*, while technically she combines the documentary style with fiction, thematically she combines the social commentary with personal issues. In Cléo's case, for instance, in the video-like short documentary shot after 40 years than the film *Cléo from 5 to 7: Remembrances and Anecdotes* (2005) where Varda reunites the actors in the film's exact locations and explains that Cléo's illness (cancer) was a common disease at that time, which makes it non-personal but more of a social concern. In addition to the common disease, on the radio voiceover, we are also informed about the Algerian war, which seems to be in a contrasted parallel between the everyday life of metropolitan and the war. Life and death seem to face off each other one more time in a different aspect. In fact, this dialectic of contrasts is an intrinsically recurring element throughout the film as suggested above. Towards the end of the film, Cléo meets a soldier to be on charge in the mentioned war, which has also been read as a foreshadowing beside the social commentary. Cléo is probably not giving an ear to the news at that time; however, it will matter to her by the time her possible lover sets out to the war. It proves me that what is social (political) is also personal, and vice versa. Thus, the boundaries between social and personal are subtly blurred. "All life is about borders. Language borders. Ethnic borders etc., and in the cinema, I try to erase the borders or make them smooth between documentary and fiction, black and white" reclaims Varda in a very recent interview of her made by *Criterion* (Varda, 2015). Definitely, she likes to *dance* between the borders.

Following the taxi sequence, we are invited to Cléo's domestic terrain where she is portrayed similar to a fairy-tale princess, a snow white in her coffin, or Cléopatra to her so-called lover. Yet, instead of being a living space, her drawing room is more like 'a replica'; delicately decorated with white and beautiful furs and objects, but it seems to be devoid of life -just like the masks and the protagonist herself. Her bed is positioned like a stage, a performance field; or in a psychoanalytic reading, it could be a place for Cléo to hide from her inner fears and anxieties. The repetitive motifs of mirrors are still following her, even accompanied by non-stop ticking of clocks placed at almost every corner of the flat. They seem to remind us time is passing, and death is approaching. Like in the film's motivational painting, death seems to be getting ready to grasp her wig (even her hair is a replica, indeed). Cléo's beautiful body is about indispensably to be desecrated and annihilated, and the fear is escalated as there will be nothing left of her because her entity has only been *corporeal*. She cannot even disclose her anxiety to her so-called lover, who irritably keeps calling her "My Cléopatra". As later we will learn, even her name is a replica, it is Florence indeed, referring to flowers.

The film has a real-time structured narrative (only almost with a half-hour missing) which is punctuated into thirteen chapters labeled by the minutes of real passing-time. Through the means of the tick-tacks of clocks and the divided-chapters, we are constantly reminded of what time it is in Cléo's world, and that time is running against her. More importantly, this time motif (and technique), adds a temporal stratification to the narrative besides the spatial. Undoubtedly, time is as important as space in Varda's films. And she reminds us that it is 'relative'. In most of her interviews, Varda seems to like talking about the contrasts between what she calls 'objective time' and 'subjective time'; and in Cléo's embodiment, she combines both. The former refers to mechanical time, the clock-time; the latter refers to what we perceive/sense -which can be called as Bergsonian duration, or what Pascal Bonitzer calls

‘passionate time’. Just like space, time is also defined by our experience and interaction with it. It can contract and expand depending on how we feel it. When awaiting a biopsy result, like Cléo, it can even contrast and expand at the very same moment.

As for the critical scene of the melodramatic song, which is an ‘intermezzo’ with respect to cinematography where the camera imitates the music and it is a ‘sharp, clean-cut’ (with Varda’s words) and generally accepted ‘turning point’ of the plot by critics. Flitterman-Lewis sees this scene as a moment of self-awareness in which Cléo turns away from the self-fetishising masquerade of womanhood to a voyage of discovery of herself in relation to others. Having identified with the lyrics (“I will be buried/ alone, ugly, ashen”), and severely reminded by the upcoming reality of her death, Cléo comes to realisation of all the superficiality of her surroundings: Angela, two musicians and her lover, who treat her either like a doll or an ‘idiot’. As she sings the song, the camera’s unsettling ninety-degree pan creates a deterritorialisation as Özgen Tunç suggests where diegetic, non-diegetic are folded onto each other (Özgen, 109). When zooming in Cléo’s face against black, a full orchestra joins, which moves to non-diegetic, creating “glossy studio effect” to put with Claudia Gorbman’s words, who scrutinised the music usage in detail (see Gorbman, 46). It is the moment when we are introduced to Cléo’s stage persona. Towards the end of the song, Cléo is left with a tear, and a quick zoom-out brings us back to the diegetic; however, the song has already created ‘deterritorialising’ effect, and the territory of the film has already been sharply shifted. “Everyone spoils me. No one loves me” admits Cléo out. With an epiphany, she seems to awaken from her dream-like-world, like in the fairytale of snow-white (which will be referred towards the end of the film with a premature in a box, only this time referring to a re-born). Technically speaking, we can observe this “profound transformation” (as foreshadowed by the tarot reader) of Cléo’s psyche reflected in the sharp shifts between black and white in this sequence. Ripping her wig off, Cléo seems to get away from her masquerade. From that moment on, Cléo takes on her performative observant role of a city stroller, and her odyssey, her voyage through the Parisian streets starts off, which will eventually lead to her real ‘profound transformation’ towards her subjectivity, wherein a transformation from “being looked at” to “learning to look” (Mouton, 3) has namely started off.

Summoned up with the courage towards her subjectivity and having left her fears and anxieties behind back at the domestic sphere, with all her curiosity and courage, Cléo finally dares to walk out in the city and look around in a real sense. Just stopping next to a healthy store (ironically enough), she stands before a public mirror (once and last time) where in her voice-over, she admits she cannot even see her fears hidden behind the mask. Taking off the last piece of her masquerade (the hat she has bought), she utters “I think others look at me. I look at no-one but myself. It wears me out”. From that moment on, the mirrors, the reflections, inner monologues, melodramatic scenes do disappear, only to give their place to “visual, aural, and imaginative realisation of film” (Mouton, 11). We are also invited to responding to the sights and sounds together with Cléo, and the very early traces of Varda’s *cinécriture*, in which she seeks ‘visual emotion, sound emotion, feeling’, are thus to be declared. We zoom out from Cléo’s face, and a street performance of a man swallowing frogs catches the attention of Cléo’s and ours. With that ‘haptic imagery’ of swallowing and vomiting frogs, we seem to make a parallelisation with Cléo’s case, who has also long been a bodily performer, and now seems to take out her illness (or her fears). Staring right at the camera, “Come here froggy. Time to change aquariums” says the performer, who is shot three times with close-ups, only to repulse Cléo. She clearly needs to change her ‘aquarium’. In fact, the frog is another repetitive motif Varda deploys throughout the film; once in Cléo’s ring and once later as Antoine identifies himself with the frog. It can basically be a symbol of change, a transformation like in the snow-white fairytale; not like a prince-charm model of happily-ever-after, but more like a Vardian model; a liberation of female subjectivity, who dares to look around (as well as inside). It seems that as Cléo comes to terms with her surroundings and her inner self, the camera (along with our way of seeing her) seems to make a compromise, as well.

Subtly enough, Varda’s using subjective shots increase in number from that moment on, letting us watch the quotidian life of Parisians from the very subjective perspective of Cléo. Soundscape is also worth

mentioning here, especially when she enters in the Cafe Le Dome in which she plays one of her singles (La Capricieuse) on the juke-box, only to realise everyone is indulged in their own cafe activities - conversing, drinking, smoking, looking about. As she moves through the cafe (with her black sunglasses, still a small-pieced covering to hide behind), she gives an ear to the people's stories who are talking about the current war, poetry, surrealist paintings and their private life. Everyday life of common people with all its variety has been unfolded before the ears, and subsequently the eyes of Cléo, who seems to get 'lost in the crowd' like the flâneur. Finally, she takes off her black sunglasses -the last piece of optics between her and the real world. Indeed, in the pastiche short film where Godard and Anna Karina have a cameo role, there is a direct reference to black sunglasses, suggesting that they distort the reality, which is practically a sum of the whole story: the matter is ways of looking, i.e. how you look at the world. Meanwhile in the cafe, Cléo seems to discover the fact that neither her song nor her appearance does matter to the others all of whom are respectively and authentically engaged in themselves, practising their own subjectivities. Not only everyday city inhabitants but also every tiny detail -from surreal pictures and bulletins on the walls to the newspapers- does catch the attention of Cléo, who is no more interested in the reflections, but rather the flesh-and-blood reality. Sitting alone at a small table, she does not look into a nearby mirror mosaics for the first time.

Overhearing her friend Dorothée's name, she leaves the cafe (a semi-public space) and embarks on her journey in the public space through the crowded streets of Paris. That sequence of Cléo's free-walking (without an itinerary and all by herself) has been read as a remarkable sequence of a new-born flâneuse of the twentieth century. With Cléo's peripatetic body, we also wander through the same pavements of Baudalarian flâneur (only with a century-delay) as well as through Cléo's psyche which is overflowed by the still-images of the people she has interacted with. Had she seen this film, Virginia Woolf -the forebear of flâneuses and inventor of the technique of stream-of-consciousness- would definitely admire this sequence where the eye and the mind seem to be dancing; one resting, and the other pausing, not dominating, but accompanying each other. Left with the question of what is memory (or past) and what is reality (or now) like in the text *Street Haunting* by Woolf, we are gently invited to Cleo's 'mental movie-theatre', accompanied by Parisian images and sounds. As Cléo keeps walking, she is still aware of her being looked at. Not ignoring this fact, Varda even seems to highlight the fact that a woman is 'too visible to be seen'. The parades of men and subsequently women crossing the streets directly fixate their looks on Cléo (and on us). Yet, Cléo seems to respond with her own looks back. To put with Varda's words, she seems to say "Ok. They look at me, but I can also look at them", which is the first feminist act according to Varda's self-claim (Mandy, 2000). It can even be claimed Varda has employed the female gaze as she suggests a 'responsive gaze' which gives feedback of how it makes the woman feel to be looked at. This film takes the gaze-discussion to an equal paradigm where 'how the woman is seen by the world' is no more important than 'how the woman sees the world'. Not ignoring the former, the latter is put on the agenda, even on a double-discursive level as combined with the former in this scene. In this employment of female gaze, there is neither a subject/object dichotomy, nor a hierarchy of the looks (as in the case of male gaze). It is not a vertical, rather a horizontal discourse in which both the elements can look and being looked at, at the same time as long as there is a communication between, which enables transformation.

The forms of communication is being established between the city spaces and Cléo as she steps forward through its streets. Like 'geography of passage' as Bruno mentions, the city is being unfolded before Cléo, who seems to be moved by the surroundings; as she moves through the city, the city seems to move through her. In other words, Cléo's wandering involves an intimate interaction with the city -both physically and emotionally. She is not merely a detached observer of the city surroundings like Baudalarian flâneur, but evolves into being an involved 'participant-observer' of the city. Cléo gradually learns the language of the city with which she used to be unfamiliar. Indeed, that is how she starts to learn her own language, as well. That's why, Cléo's perambulation has been interpreted as a journey towards self-discovery; a transformation from a non-identity (of a woman) to identity, from an object toward the subject gifted by urban experience.

The flâneuristic perambulation of Cléo has been taken into a new dimension once the city is involved in the experience. Paris-of the early 60s- with all its photogenic, and somehow still nostalgically scenic air presents itself. Undoubtedly, Paris turns out to be such a lead actor as important as Cléo that we can claim the film is about “the portrait of a woman painted onto documentary about Paris” (Martin, 2008) as self-claimed by Varda. She uses the Parisian landscapes in a realistic way as natural settings. Symmetrically, the thirteen chapters of the narrative track Cléo from the first arrondissement to the thirteenth at the end. Along with Cléo, we are taken from the busy shopping street Rue de Rivoli, Cafe le Dome and to the natural space of the Pare Montsouris with various means of transport, seeing the daily Parisians from all walks of life, with mix of bookstalls boulevards and Haussmann’s “long perspectives down broad straight thoroughfares” (Benjamin, 11). Paris is said to be made up of thousand villages. Each arrondissement with its own town hall, local government, and its high street shops, yet on the other side they are much like each other as the post-Haussmannian arrondissements confirm with its spiral layout. Elkin proposes “it is as if the first one was taken as a sample for all the rest as they spin outward from the centre, self-replicating until they hit the périphérique” (Elkin, 322). Nonetheless, each of the micro-neighborhood has its own unique feeling that makes itself evident once you step out of your own neighbourhood, you can feel it. ‘The sudden change of ambiance in a street within the space of a few meters; the evident division of a city into zones of distinct psychic atmospheres’ (ibid., 324). We can feel these sudden changes of the air reflected in Cléo’s psyche, too. She waves from one emotion to the other as she walks through. As Martin accentuates, the locations are such scrupulously chosen that “a viewer can draw a precise map of Cléo’s path and consider touristically re-creating her journey, down to the last second, in the Left Bank as it exists today (Martin, 2008). Thus, our film-watching experience is intertwined with the act of flânerie thanks to Varda. Hardly can a spectator stop feeling like wandering through the Parisian streets, along with Cléo.

Back to the film, as Cléo meets her friend Dorothee, she also questions her ideas about body and nakedness, both of which are recurrent themes in Varda’s works. Body is the very first space we inhabit in. Yet, the female body (and her nakedness) has been always related to shame, sin or as a consumption by the patriarchy. Those ideas have clearly been internalised by Cléo, leading to her alienation to her own body -just like many of us. So, as a woman, the first space we need to conquer is our own body, and the way we look at our body. Varda, clearly aware of this, takes Cléo to the art studio where Dorothee poses naked to a couple of people, just after she is repulsed by a guy piercing his body. Cléo is being beckoned by the real and intimate bodily performances. What she confesses to Dorothee highlights the boundaries between herself and her own body: "I would be more naked than naked in front of people. They might see a flaw". If there is something worse than being imperfect, it is the visibility of this imperfectness, to Cléo. Indeed, she is clearly more pleased for her illness to be in her stomach, somewhere invisible to the public. Whereas, Dorothee is like her antithesis; she seems to accept her fallacies, quite reconciled with her body and her surroundings alike. She says “I am quite happy with my body, not proud of it”. This studio is the last domestic space Cléo has been to. From that moment on, opening up her body to public interventions, she is by far the most mobile, peripatetic and on move in city spaces. Ironically enough, as soon as Cléo meets Antoine in the park scene, like the lovers of Cléopatra and Mark Anthony, we learn that her real name is not Cléo, but Florence, which can indicate that she has come to terms with her subjectivity. Some feminist scholars have criticized the last encounter of Antoine as a cliché of ‘and the girl meets the boy’, or ‘happily ever after’. However, it can also be read as a means to show how Cléo has come to compromise with a real contact, sincere intimacy. The straightforwardness and open-hearted approaches of Antoine somehow helps Cléo take the last shells off and get away from the black clouds in her mind. It is clear from the shooting techniques as Varda situates them equally side by side, with no supremacy, but only a close and mutual intimacy. Even though Cléo learns she has the cancer, it seems she has taken the last steps through her subjectivity, and nothing else matters to her whether she has the cancer or if she will be with Antoine or without him. She is not a Cléopatra in the end. She is Florence; her own subjectivity thanks to the city experience and its full of surprises, who has become “an active social participant, rupturing the oppressive unity of identity and vision and appropriating the gaze for herself in a new appreciation of others in the world around her” (Flitterman-Lewis, 1990: 268). From that moment on, she seems ready to embrace whatever the city (and life) will offer to her.



## Contribution to The Literature

This study mainly intends to call for a second thought of the modalities of our (women's) interaction with the city spaces and to search for the possibilities cinema offer for the representations of women who have established their authentic female subjectivity, as well as hopefully, to trigger a motivation for more literature adaptations for the sake of women.

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