

## Document Citation

Title	<b>The gleaners and I</b>
Author(s)	Agnès Varda
Source	<i>Ciné Tamaris</i>
Date	
Type	press kit
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	13
Subjects	Varda, Agnès (1928), Brussels, Belgium
Film Subjects	Les glaneurs et la glaneuse (The gleaners and I), Varda, Agnès, 2000

CINE TAMARIS present

# THE GLEANERS AND I

a film by AGNES VARDAs



**COLOR DOCUMENTARY**

82 minutes  
(English subtitles)

**DIRECTED AND COMMENTED** <sup>by</sup> Agnès VARDA

**PHOTOGRAPHY** Stéphane KRAUSZ

Didier ROUGET • Didier DOUSSIN

Pascal SAUTELET et Agnès VARDA

**SOUND** Emmanuel SOLAND • Nathalie VIDAL

**ORIGINAL SCORE** Joanna BRUZDOWICZ

**EDITING** Agnès VARDA et Laurent PINEAU

**SHOOTING** from Sept 99 to March 2000,  
in DV CAM and Mini DV, in various regions in France.  
Transferred onto 35 mm image and sound negatives  
(GTC laboratories)

**PRODUCED** by CINE TAMARIS  
with the help of  
Centre National de la Cinématographie  
and of PROCIREP

and with the help of CANAL +  
which will broadcast the film in July 2000  
(TV format 77 minutes)

les glaneurs et la glaneuse © ciné tamaris MM  
visa d'exploitation n° 98 147

**DISTRIBUTION** and ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ <sup>SALES</sup>  
**CINE TAMARIS**

86-88 rue Daguerre - 75014 - PARIS

ph : (33) 1 43 22 66 00 - fax : (33) 1 43 21 75 00

**color photos and slides are available on demand**

# THE GLEANERS AND I

## SYNOPSIS

Here and there in France, Agnès has come across gleaners, foragers, rummagers and scavengers. Through necessity, purely by chance or out of choice these people pick up left-over items discarded by others.

Their world is a surprising one.

It is a far cry from the world of yesterday's gleaners, peasant women who rummaged for bits of wheat left after the harvest.

Potatoes, apples and other discarded foodstuffs, things without owners, clocks without hands are the fare of today's gleaners.

But Agnès herself is just as much a gleaner, and her documentary is subjective

There's no age limit to curiosity.  
Filming itself is gleaning.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This film is a documentary through its subject matter. It was woven from various strands -from emotions I felt when confronted to precariousness; from the possibilities offered by the new small digital cameras; and from the desire to film what I can see of myself - my aging hands and my grey hair. I also wanted to express my love for painting. I had to piece it together and make sense out of it all in the film, without betraying the social issue that is set out to address - waste and trash. Who finds a use for it? How? Can one live on the leftovers of others?

Films always originates in emotions. This time, that of seeing so many people combing the market place or rummaging through the trash containers of supermarkets for leftovers. Seeing them made me want to film them and specifically that which cannot be filmed without their consent. How can one testify for them and yet not hinder them.

During the wheat harvest in the summer of 1999, I saw on TV (but can't remember on which channel) a farmer sitting on top of his combine harvester. he was explaining that if the machine was badly adjusted, and left one grain on each stalk, he would end up losing a staggering amount of wheat and an equally staggering amount of money.

This grain on a stalk struck me. It reminded me of gleaning in the old days, a rural custom which has now disappeared (for obvious reasons), and of the paintings of woman gleaning. I also wanted to roam around. To meet people. To seek them out.

Rather than a "road movie", I would say a "wandering-road-documentary".

I first had to investigate in the rural world (gleaning and picking), and then in the urban world (salvaging) , and I permitted myself digressions only indirectly related to the topic.

This is why are included in this film a winegrower who descends from the extraordinary Etienne-Jules Marey, the owner of a vintage wines who is also a psychotherapist, the anecdote of a couple who run a café, a class for illiterate adults.

I wanted to glean images as one jots down travel notes and feel free to show a funny dog I met on the way (why is it wearing a red boxing glove around this neck?). Or the Dard overflowing. Free to linger over a painting by Van der Weyden. To observe couples. But always coming back to the gleaners, trying to win their confidence, listen to them, converse with them rather than interview them, and film them.

My intention became clearer to myself throughout the shooting and editing stages. Little by little, I found the right balance between self-referential moments (the gleaner who films one of her hands with the other) and moments focused on those whose reality and behavior I found so striking. I managed to approach them, to bring them out of their anonymity. I discovered their generosity. There are many ways of being poor, having common sense, anger or humor.

The people I have filmed tell us a great deal about our society and ourselves. I myself learned a lot as I was shooting this film.

It confirmed my idea that documentaries are a discipline that teaches modesty.

## WORK METHODS

Shooting, editing etc.

Thanks to the freedom granted to me by a production company I more or less control (Ciné Tamaris), I can start shooting for two weeks and then immediately proceed to edit. Meanwhile we keep locating new sites. Then we start shooting again and editing more.

Then the commentary text is beginning to take shape, words give rise to new ideas and call for new images. New information comes up, new contacts.

We then go back on the road again.

And comes the last editing, music, mixing and finishing touches.

The definition I gave to film writing (*cinécriture*) applies more specifically to documentary films. The encounters I make and the shots I take, alone or together with a team, the editing style, with echoing or counter pointing moments, the wording of the voice over comment, the choice of music, all this isn't simply writing a script, or directing a film or wording a comment, all this is chance working with me, all this is the film writing that I often talk about.

A.V.

## TRUCKS and A DOG



While I was filming on the road the trucks I like or even capture with or without my hand, Léo, Manuel, Marina or Didier sat behind the wheel and listened to my suggestions. Or to my orders rather : "Slow down, let the two little cars go by, I'm not interested in them. Step on it ! Pass the truck ! Slow down as you pass ! There, quick ! I saw a tank truck !" etc.

Marjolaine was driving when we were coming back from Dijon and followed the beautiful trucks transporting cars. The chauffeur from the City

Hall of Angers was when I caught the painted eye on a mail order delivery truck, and Fanny was behind the wheel when I came across the dog with a single cocked ear and a red boxing glove around his neck.

Many thanks to my drivers and my driveresses.

A.V.

## They say...



### **Du Bellay**

We would see the gleaner  
Tramping along the way  
Gathering the relics  
Of that which is falling  
Behind the reaper...

### **Claude, unemployed, living in a caravan**

"We are not afraid of  
getting our hands dirty,  
you can always wash  
your hands".

### **Josiane, who used to glean**

"My mother would often tell me : "pick up the last bits, don't let them go to waste".

### **François, the man with the big rubber boots on**

"I live 100% on things I retrieve from trash. I have eaten 100% trash  
for 10 years, I've never been ill."

### **Robert, a gleaner of many crops**

"That's nature, it shouldn't go to waste.

To fill a whole basketfull, it takes us a while. Gleaning is not a piece of cake,  
it's hard work".





### **Agnès, gleaning images on the road**

"Again one hand filming the other hand  
and still more trucks...  
I feel like capturing them.  
To try and stop the flow ? No, just to play."

### **Salomon, a gleaner of food**

"It's like a lottery. Sometimes you get good cold meats, sometimes fowl,  
sometimes both".

#### **and of domestic appliances**

I patch and fix fridges, and once the machine works again, I sell it,  
or I give it away to my neighbors".

### **Louis Pons, a painter**

"It's small streaks that I pick up around, that I glean, and that become  
my paintings (...)  
Skirting boards, frames, things like that. This is... a windshield wiper.  
But to me, they're just streaks (...) Horizontal statements, nothing else".

### **VR 2000, a gleaner cum artist**

" All you need to do is wonder about the streets, locate heaps of objects and then  
help yourself like in a real department store.  
It's like a present left on the street, it's like Christmas, these leftovers".

## RURAL

### Information gleaned on the right to glean

"The community at large has various rights on private lands : right to glean ears of wheat left over or forgotten by the croppers, a right derived from the Holy Scriptures and implemented by Saint Louis. This right was reserved to the old, the young, the sick, the widowed, couldn't lease their hands during the harvest. Right to pick grapes left over by the harvesters. Right to rake up dried grass. Right to pick up wild berries in the bushes,. And also right to graze, every other day, one's herd along the roads so as to allow for transhumance."

A History of Property, by J-Ph. Lévy (Que sais-je collection)



Mr. Dessaud, "our country lawyer" flicked through his books before coming in the fields, in his robe, to tell us about the right to glean. The harvest has to be over, and the gleaner is only allowed to come from sunup until sundown. See criminal law article R26.10. Mr. Dessaud found a decree in an old law book from 1554 which allowed the poor and the destitute to pick in the fields after the harvest.

The uses and regulations regarding gleaning come from even further ago, from the Old Testament, see, for instance :

Leviticus, 23, 22

"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest : thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger".

Deuteronomy 24, 19

"When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgotten a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it : it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow".

I asked Mr. Dessaud : "What about those who glean for the fun of it ?"

His answer was : "If they glean for the fun, they need something to provide the fun. If the rules and hours are adhered to, they can glean like the poor used to".

## URBAN

### Information gleaned on the right to salvage objects

*Res Derelictae* are ownerless goods. Their owners' will has been clearly expressed : they deliberately left them. Mrs. Espié, "our city lawyer" commented on the Penal Code : "these objects cannot be stolen since they have no owner. People who come to retrieve these objects become their legal owners. They acquire this piece of property in an original manner, since they acquire it from no one. They come, take the object, and it belongs to them, irrevocably".

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

### **ON TECHNIQUE**

The team work has been done with the help of a digital SONY DV CAM DSR 300 and SENNHEISER 416 mike.

Agnès shot using a MINI DV SONY DCR TRV 900 E (3CCD) + mike ECM-77B by SONY, plugged into the camera (the cord is visible at various moments!)

Agnès filmed 15 out of the 80 minutes of the film on her own.

Editing was done on AVID X PRESS.

### **ON SHOOTING**

The film was shot in the North of France, and in Beauce, Jura, Provence, Pyrénées Orientales, and in Paris and its suburbs.

Between september 1999 and April 2000 we shot for 29 days in teams, going on for 4 to 7 days at a go. And Agnès went on traveling alone or often filmed for 2 or 3 hours regularly, especially at the close of markets, between 2 and 4 pm.

### **LUCKY DRAWS**

We never cheated when filming abandoned objects on the streets, or what the rummagers found in the garbage cans.

We really enjoyed the stroke of luck when we found a painting on gleanings exhibited in a curiosity shop. And we immediately filmed it.

A hotel among the olive trees. Its boss met Agnès 50 years ago. And so, he really helped us seek out people, introduced us to his friends at the Café du Centre and to Robert, a gleaner of many crops, the one who knew good areas for leftover fruit.

It was on the way back from filming leftover objects on the sidewalks of a suburb that Agnès stopped at the flea market, just as a man was dumping TVs and another destroying them. If the scene had taken place 10 minutes earlier, it wouldn't have been in the film.

### **AS TIME GOES BY**

#### **THE ABANDONED VINEYARD**

Harvested by a singing family after the 1st of November - since after that date it is allowed - the vineyard in the hills around Apt has been dug out since.

THE MOLD on the ceiling at Agnès's, filmed with delight, has since disappeared. The roof terrace was fixed and the ceiling painted anew.

AGNES dyed the graying roots (of her hair) after the shooting.

TIME still holds its flow on the clock without hands.

## **ADDITIONAL CREDITS**

**Sound** Emmanuel SOLAND

**Sound assistants** Raphaël SOHIER • Thaddée BERTRAND

**Foley effects** Nicolas BECKER

**Mixing** Nathalie VIDAL

**Assistant editor** Laure-Alice HERVÉ

**Temporary assistants and trainees** Léo VINDRY

Marjolaine GRANDJEAN • Pierre André GARCIA • Manuel IRNIGER

**Friendly Help** Jacques ROYER • Rémy BATTEAULT

Claudia IMBERT • Anne V. THAURONT

**Post-production assistant** Marina LOUBET

**Production secretary** Anita BENOLIEL

**GTC** Laboratory (digital, vidéo, cinéma)

Conformation NOTNEM

Sound CINE STEREO • AUDITEL • ARCHIPEL • LES TROIS ARTS

TDS stereo SR

Equipment OVNI

Credits EXCALIBUR • Subtitles TITRA FILMS

Press book Atelier PATRIX

### **Thanks to**

Claude M. • Guilène M. • Marc, Matilde,

Michel, Benji, Philippe, Céline et Cédric de Prades

François L. • Charlie P. • Salomon G. • Alain F.

ainsi qu'à tous les anonymes que l'on voit dans ce film

**This film pays homage to their energy**

### **Also thanks to**

Coopératives La Garance et Agrinégoco en Beauce

Les Restos du Cœur d'Etampes • Foyers Sonacotra

Trouvailles d'Arras • Le Café du Centre à Maussane.

### **And thanks to**

Josiane BEGARDES • Huguette et Bernard JOUSSAUD • Michel LEGENGRE

Eric GENTY • Nicolas ROUSSEAU • Edouard LOUBET • Raphaël DUBOIS

Frédéric GAILLARD • Jean et Nadine LAPLANCHE • Me Raymond DESSAUD

Alain GENDRON • la Famille NENON • Jérôme NOEL-BOUTON

Me Martine SIROL • Claude GERARD • David GRANDPERRIN • Jean Luc DALLE

Robert MASTRANTUONO • Me Brigitte ESPIÉ • François WERTHEIMER

Brigitte LAURENCON et Julie SOLLY.

### **Thanks to the artists**

Louis PONS • Sarah SZE • Bodan LITNANSKI • Gino RIZZI

VR 2000 et Théâtre TERRAIN VAGUE de Villeneuve-sur-Lot

**and to the museums** d'ORSAY • d'ARRAS

de SANNOIS et de VILLEFRANCHE sur SAONE

les Hospices de BEAUNE • la Fondation CARTIER • le Musée en Herbe

les Musées E. J. MAREY and the exhibition MAREY from the Cinémathèque Française

PATHE CINEMA Archives • La Halle St Pierre Publishing

## MUSIC SCORE

**Joanna Bruzdowicz** had composed the score for VAGABOND, KUNG FU MASTER and JACQUOT DE NANTES. I asked her to write a music theme for THE GLEANERS (and told her jokingly that the theme would be Aging-Agnès).

Yves CORTVINT (alto) ... interpreted this theme and the variations on it, such as the little fugue. We even did an electronic version.

**Pierre BARBAUD** did the twelve-tone music for LA POINTE COURTE in 1954. In 1964 he worked on a Bull Computer to compose the score for CREATURES.

I chose to borrow from his homage to Newton, *Apfelsextett* (1977), a music we often hear when filming on the road.

**OCEAN** This band headed by Isabelle OLIVIER has released a CD (*Funny Streams*) from which we borrowed beautiful moments, such *Cinq à Quatre* which she composed and a duet between Sébastien TEXIER and Nicolas KRASSIK.

**François WERTHEIMER** did the Jérôme theme for L'UNE CHANTE L'AUTRE PAS and a little ditty he was still humming along 24 years later.

He plays a little harmonica. He does it For Alain.

**RAP** - why rap ?

Rappers are familiar to denunciations of injustice, racism and everything going wrong. The moment on those who rummage through leftovers from the market was sad. It appeared to me I had to express sadness and revolt with energy and rhythm.

In short, with rap.

I suggested the theme and a few lyrics to two rappers

**AGNES BREDEL and RICHARD KLUGMAN**

But I still wonder whether it isn't more staggering to watch them in utter silence picking up food after the market has closed (since silence slows down one's visual pace) ; rather than join together with the rappers' rhythmic denunciation (which speeds it up) ?

I also wanted to give credit to the Trombone Concerto by Luciano

**BERIO**. I never managed to reach the rightful owners of the recording, despite BERIO's agreement.

## GLEANERS IN PAINTINGS



### **Orsay Museum - Paris**

Les Glaneuses, (Women Gleaning) by Jean-François MILLET (1867)  
Le Retour des Glaneuses, (the Return of Gleaners) by Jules BRETON (1859)

(ps : 12000 postcard reproductions of Millet's paintings  
are reported to have been sold in 1998)

### **Arras Museum of Fine Arts**

La Glaneuse (Woman Gleaning), by Jules BRETON 1877

### **Nantes Museum of Fine Arts**

La Petite Glaneuse (The Little Gleaner), by Hugo SALMSON (1864)

### **Museum of Villefranche-sur-Saône (in the reserves)**

Glaneuses à Champbeaudouin  
(or Glaneuses fuyant l'orage, Gleaners Fleeing Before the Storm)  
de Pierre Edmond HEDOUIN (1852)

### **Philadelphia Museum of Art**

Les Glaneuses (the Gleaners) by Léon L'HERMITE

### **Amsterdam Rijkmuseum**

Femmes de Schewinger glanant dans un champ de pommes de terre  
(Women gleaning in a potato field) by Ph. Saade

and other paintings and sketches... that need to be spotted.



# AGNES VARDA

Agnès Varda was born in Brussels, Belgium in 1928. Sometimes called "the grandmother of the French New Wave," she has been making films for more than 40 years.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- 1954 LA POINTE COURTE (89 mins)
- 1957 O Saisons, O Châteaux (22 mins)
- 1958 L'Opéra-Mouffe (17 mins)
- 1958 Du Côté de la Côte (24 mins)
  
- 1961 CLÉO DE 5 A 7 (CLÉO FROM 5 TO 7) (90 mins)
- 1963 Salut les Cubains (30 mins)
- 1964 LE BONHEUR (HAPPINESS) (82 mins)
- 1964 Les Enfants du Musée (7 mins)
- 1966 Elsa la Rose (20 mins)
- 1966 LES CRÉATURES (105 mins)
- 1967 Uncle Yanco (22 mins)
- 1968 Black Panthers (28 mins)
- 1969 LIONS LOVE (...AND LIES) (110 mins)
  
- 1970 NAUSICAA (90 mins) [Vanished]
- 1975 DAGUERRÉOTYPES (80 mins, documentary)
- 1975 Réponse de Femmes (8 mins)
- 1976 Plaisir d'Amour en Iran (6 mins)
- 1976 L'UNE CHANTE, L'AUTRE PAS (ONE SINGS, THE OTHER DOESN'T) (120 mins)
- 1977 Quelques Femmes Bulles (58 mins, video)
  
- 1980 MUR MURS (MURAL MURALS) (81 mins, documentary)
- 1981 DOCUMENTEUR (AN EMOTION PICTURE) (63 mins)
- 1982 Ulysse (22 mins)
- 1982 Une Minute Pour Une Image (170 two-minute spots for TV)
- 1984 Les Dites Caryatides (13 mins)
- 1984 7P., cuis., s. de b... (27 mins)
- 1985 SANS TOIT NI LOI (VAGABOND) (105 mins)
- 1986 T'as de beaux escaliers, tu sais... (3 mins)
- 1987 JANE B. PAR AGNES V. (97 mins)
- 1987 KUNG-FU MASTER (LE PETIT AMOUR) (78 mins)
  
- 1990 JACQUOT DE NANTES (JACQUOT) (118 mins)
- 1992 LES DEMOISELLES ONT EU 25 ANS  
(THE YOUNG GIRLS TURNED 25) (63 mins, documentary)
- 1994 LES CENT ET UNE NUITS (ONE HUNDRED AND ONE NIGHTS) (100 mins)
- 1995 L'UNIVERS DE JACQUES DEMY  
(THE WORLD OF JACQUES DEMY) (90 mins, documentary)
  
- 2000 LES GLANEURS ET LA GLANEUSE  
(THE GLEANERS AND I) (82 mins, documentary)