

Viewer and Reader Questions: *The Gleaners and I*, a film by Agnès Varda

- ◆ “People think it’s a cluster of junk. I see it as a cluster of possibilities.” Louis Pons, artist
- ◆ “Where does play end and art start?” Agnes Varda

Chapters in the film

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. The origins of gleaning | 12. Along the shore |
| 2. Gleaning today | 13. Dance of the lens cap |
| 3. Using mini-DV | 14. E.J. Marey’s legacy |
| 4. Gleaning potatoes | 15. Eating garbage |
| 5. Claude’s story | 16. Art from trash |
| 6. The gleaning chef | 17. Salomon’s story |
| 7. Burgundy: the vineyards | 18. Fridge exhibition |
| 8. Gleaning vs. picking | 19. Along the Rhône |
| 9. The laws of gleaning | 20. About salvaging |
| 10. Gleaning souvenirs | 21. Alain’s story |
| 11. Artists who glean | 22. Last revelation |

Questions on the film:

1. In ancient times, who did the gleaning?
2. What do you think the film director means when she calls herself a gleaner? What does the film director glean—and why?
3. What do the lives of the potato gleaners seem like to you?
4. Does Varda want us to view these people sympathetically? How can you tell?
5. What is the effect of following Claude’s story (Claude is the potato gleaner) with the story of the gleaning chef? Why do you think Varda edited the film to place these two stories next to one another?
6. What kinds of salvaged materials do the artists in this film use in their art?
7. What reasons do people give in this film for gleaning?
8. What examples of the film maker’s sense of humor do you see in this film?
9. What person whom she encountered impressed Varda the most?
10. What person or story impressed (or interested or appalled) you the most in this film? Why?

**Questions on Background Reading:
Helen Carter, "Agnès Varda," in *Senses of Cinema*, at**

www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/02/varda.html

1. How old was Agnès Varda in 2002?
How long has she been making films?
2. How familiar was the writer Helen Carter with Varda's work before Carter saw *The Gleaners and I*?
3. When Carter looks for biographical information on Varda, what information can she not seem to find?
4. How does Carter explain Varda's not having the acclaim and recognition that one might expect from a film maker of Varda's experience?
5. Carter summarizes several of Varda's films in this article. What main ideas or "themes" has Varda explored in her films?
6. From your reading of this essay, what are some of the techniques Varda uses in her films that seem unusual to you?