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| Varda, Agnès (May 30, 1928--) |
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| Agnès Varda is a French filmmaker and visual artist. She is best known as the key female figure of the French New Wave. More recently, she has been a pioneer of the documentary genre known as the essay film. Born in Brussels, Varda began her career as a still photographer. Her first feature-film, *La Pointe Courte* (1955), shot on a small budget in a French fishing village, can be understood as a stylistic bridge between Italian Neo-Realism and the French New Wave. Her most important film, *Cléo de 5 à 7* [*Cléo from 5 to 7*] (1962), captures two hours in the life of a Parisian starlet as she awaits the results from a cancer biopsy. The film is notable for its innovative narrative structure, its treatment of existentialist themes, and its ground-breaking study of modern feminine identity. In the late 1960s, Varda and her husband, the director Jacques Demy, lived in Los Angeles, where she befriended key figures of the California counterculture. Her 1985 film *Sans toit ni loi* [*Vagabond*] employed a *Rashomon*-like multi-perspectival structure to explore the final weeks of an enigmatic and rebellious drifter played by Sandrine Bonnaire. Varda’s most important recent film is the documentary-essay *The Gleaners and I*, shot on an inexpensive camcorder, about the practice of scavenging. Varda’s voice-over suggests the film itself can be understood as an affectionate collection of gathered scraps. Throughout her work Varda has explored the relationship of the individual to society and the place of intimacy, happiness, death, and chance encounters in contemporary culture. |
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| Further reading:  (Smith) |