

"Working for Delphine": images, words, gender equality, and sustainability in Agnès Varda's *Documenteur*

A recurring image in Agnès Varda's *Documenteur* consists of three main elements: sand, water, and sky. Often, there is a series of additional elements: Emily (the protagonist), a typewriter, and the window of the house where she works, facing the ocean. But sometimes also: people on the beach, walking, sunning, driving a truck, picking up trash, operating heavy machinery. The images that frame the ocean are rich in connotations, partly through the multiplication of what we find within the frame, partly through repetition of similar images. The theme of sustainability emerges through the kinds of activities that are represented on the beach. In contrast, the framing of faces and of bodies thematizes both sexual difference and interpersonal relationships. The film suggests that the beach is not self-renewing, that it requires maintenance. It also suggests that some interpersonal relationships are not sustainable, that some can be maintained without being together all the time, and that some take the form of being in the same place at the same time.

Varda repeatedly makes use of voiceovers, both at the beginning of the film, where the voiceover seems to represent Varda's own point of view, and within the remainder of the film, where the voiceover seems to represent the protagonist's thoughts. After a dialogue between the diegetic director and her assistant, we hear, "I like this work, I like the view out there, here, it's like being nowhere, a beach, like a private property, a sand colored carpet, they're always cleaning it, picking up dust, raking it, or else, they're passing the plow and tilling the soil, and the ocean washes away the footprints of separated lovers." Here, thematization takes place through language, but it also happens through the embodiment of the voices and through the editing of the images.

In this paper, I will analyze the ways in which *Documenteur* encourages us to make connections between words, between images, between words and images, and between words or images and themes, particularly the themes of gender equality and sustainability.

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