

**Women Directors on the Edge of Hollywood:
Agnès Varda/Shirley Clarke in and beyond *Lions Loves* (1969)**
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Abstract:

Set in 1968, *Lions Loves* follows three hippie artists living in a rental house in Hollywood, joined by New York underground filmmaker Shirley Clarke, who comes to Hollywood for a contract negotiation with a studio that fails (as inspired by Varda's experience with Hollywood). Moved to the US in 1967 to join her husband Jacques Demy (who secured a contract with Columbia), Varda was approached by a Columbia executive for her script *Peace and Love*. The film fell through as the studio refused to give her the final cut.

This essay challenges existing scholarships that foreground Varda's intermedia homage to Picasso/Magritte/Warhol and ask: Is it possible to see *Lions Loves* as where Varda/Clarke's experiences meet amidst the sociopolitical turmoil? Their on-screen collapse speaks to their off-screen fluidity and the macro-level obstacles women directors were facing. As a woman audience, I have held onto the precious interaction between these two working women directors who managed to release feature-length films in the 1960s commercial film industry albeit being at its periphery. I utilize interviews and autobiographies to weave Varda/Clarke experiences. Production culture, film history, and women studies are put in dialogue to unpack *Lions Love* as it speaks to women filmmakers' place in the 1960s when Hollywood attempted to flirt with the French New Wave and coopt the counterculture.

We can unpack how women filmmakers in the 1960s moved through *and* were trapped in-between industries and circles via *Lions Love*. This film is a liminal space through which we can address the interactions amongst the Hollywood, *la Nouvelle Vague*, youth counterculture, underground cinema, and Art world. It is also contact zone whereby we can explore the un-and-re/folding of women's times/experiences in the 1960s, and the collapsing of spaces experienced by alienated bodies in addressing the fragmented, continuous frustrations/trauma that women filmmakers experience.

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