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Female cinematographers focus: The Male and Female Gaze

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ABSTRACT

This present theoretical thesis research intends to explore and investigate the work of female cinematographers who are emerging in this classical and contemporary cinema. By analyzing some of their selected works along with the theoretical context of the feminine gaze. The cinematographer stands as an artist who has interpreted the story visually according to their social and cultural context. The research focuses on the works of three female cinematographers; *Claire Mathon*, *Agnès Godard* and *Babette Mangolte* who are different in terms of visual style, subject matters and their cinematography approach. The intention of this thesis is to reflect on the female cinematographers' works and to adore and reminisce on all the female artists in all fields.

ABSTRAKT

Tato teoretická diplomová práce má za cíl prozkoumat a prostudovat práci kameramanek v klasické a současné kinematografii, a to analyzováním některých z jejich vybraných děl v kontextu teorií ženského pohledu. Kameramanka zde figuruje jako umělec, který vizuálně interpretuje příběh podle svého sociálního a kulturního kontextu. Výzkum se zaměřuje na práce tří kameramek – Claire Mathon, Agnès Godard a Babette Mangolte, které se liší vizuálním stylem, tématy a přístupem k filmové tvorbě. Cílem této práce je připomenout a reflektovat práci kameramek a též ocenit umělkyně ve všech oborech.

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Chapter 1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

a. Intention of the thesis

“One can understand that women have no originality of thought, and that literature and music have no feminine character, but surely women know how to observe, and what they see is quite different from that which men see, and the art which they put in their gestures, in their toilet, in the decoration of their environment is sufficient to give is the idea of an instinctive, of a peculiar genius which resides in each one of them.”¹

This is the excerpt from a book *‘Perspectives on Morisot’* by Kathleen Adler; T. J. Edelstein; in which encourages my studies on female artists and contemplates on how important their works and crafts, including the stories and subject matter they selected to portray in each era. *Berthe Morisot*, a French Impressionist, who has never been taken as seriously as the other Impressionists, as mentioned by *Sylvie Patry*, co-curator of the Barnes exhibition.² She gave a comment on Morisot’s works that, *“Her subject matters, focused on domestic activities, motherhood, and children, have been regarded as a mere expression of her gender, but rarely considered as modern topics or depiction of a new urban bourgeois lifestyle.”* These significant works of Morisot provided some diversity and different perspectives, especially from women artists, towards the social and cultural circumstance during that era.

Even the trend of acknowledging female filmmakers has been raised in the past few years. But still present, according to the statistical studies from the Academy Awards, Cannes Film festival, or even other A-List film festivals, the number of female filmmakers who have made their names into the festival circuit and industry are still insufficient in percentage, considering the gender inequality and diversity issue. It’s not only about the artistic potential approach but also, the demanding market that those female filmmakers can reach up to.

¹ Adler, Kathleen. *Perspectives on Morisot*. Edited by T. J. Edelstein, 1st ed., Hudson Hills Press : Rizzoli International Publications distributor, 1992.

² Chernick, Karen. “Berthe Morisot Brought a Radically Feminine Perspective to Impressionism | Artsy.” *Berthe Morisot Brought a Radically Feminine Perspective to Impressionism | Artsy*, 13 Nov. 2018

In a recent study on, "*Boxed In 2017-18: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes in Television*," by Dr. Martha M. Lauzen presents the statistics across all platforms including the major television networks and streaming services. Among those considered: Women accounted for 3% of directors of photography working on all of the programs considered in 2017-2018. This represents no change from 2016-17. ³

Focusing on the cinematography field, *Joan Churchill*, who is a member of ASC (The American Society of Cinematographers) once mentioned in her interview with *Deadline* that, '*A few years ago, when I was the cinematographer-in-residence at UCLA, more than half my students were women. Few of them, however, will ever make it into the ASC, which over the last decade has added, on average, fewer than one female member per year.*' ⁴ All these certain facts accentuate my question towards imbalance gender equality and the diversity in perspective among the film industry. Even though not considering the short-term timeframe, but more of the long run progress, will the historic lack of female filmmakers get any better in the near future?

Speaking of a more contemporary era, with the emerging of the new technology from the camera and lighting manufacturer, filmmaking seems to be an accessible and alternative medium that anyone can attain. The equipment itself is smaller, lightweight and cheaper in cost. Therefore, it has become an available option as a medium for an artist in the past decade. However, *Laura Mulvey*, a feminist film theorist, has some arguments that it is not only about the accessibility to the film medium. But it is also about diversity of the film crews that could contribute different perspectives in terms of content and artistic apparatus. It is not about the camera as a tool in itself but more of the person behind the camera, who would direct the spectator's gaze and the mise-en-scene of the film. As Mulvey mentioned, "*the camera, by its very nature and the good intention of its operator, can grasp essential truths and by registering typical shared experiences can create political unity through the process of identification.*" ⁵ Mulvey also raised this issue regarding of female crews by referring to *Women and Film* comments by *Susan Rice* on Kate Millet's film *Three Lives*;

³ Dr. Martha M. Lauzen, *Boxed In 2017-2018: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes in Television* (Center for the Study of Women in Television & Film, San Diego State University. 2018), 15.

⁴ Robb, David. "Female Cinematographers a Rarity in Hollywood." *Deadline*, 23 Sept. 2015, deadline.com/2015/09/american-society-of-cinematographers-asc-women-members-1201546540.

⁵ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 122.

*“...it is the only feature film I know of that not only takes women as its subject-matter, but was produced, directed, shot, recorded, lit, and edited by women. What makes this more than a stunt is the intimacy that this female crew seems to have elicited from its subject. The element I find most compelling about the film is that it captures the tone and quality of relationship and significant conversation between women.”*⁶

As Mulvey mentioned about the process of identification, it is quite convincing that to have some kind of heterogeneity of the crews on set; regardless sex, generation or ethnicity - due to their diversity in background and perspective in life - this could contribute to a different aesthetic in the film itself.

However, after a tremendous trend of female filmmakers booming, as such the gathering of Collectif 50/50 at *Cannes film festival* in 2019 and #metoo movement in 2017, there is a better acknowledgement of undertaking the balance of diversity and providing more space for female filmmakers to stand in the front roll. Nevertheless, sadly speaking, they are still considered representatively inadequate corresponding to the actual figure that comes out.

Ari Wegner, who has just been nominated for an Academy Awards for Best cinematography in 2022 for a film *The Power of Dog*, directed by *Jane Campion*, is rated as the second female cinematographer who made her path into worldwide success. She pointed out the statistic throughout the history of Academy Awards in the cinematography section that; *“In a survey of the top 250 films of 2021, only 6% had female cinematographers - a number that hasn't budged since 1998. And only two have ever been nominated for an Oscar in the 94 years of the awards. The first was Rachel Morrison, in 2018, for 'Mudbound.’”*⁷

From all these statistics, they emphasize that the number of female filmmakers, especially cinematographers, are still underrepresented in the overall industry. As a result, the intention of this thesis is not only to look deeply and reflect on the works of female artists, but also give tribute to all their essence and their courage in pursuing their dreams and expressing a diverse point of view to the spectators.

⁶ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 121.

⁷ “Oscars 2022: Meet Ari Wegner, the Other Woman Behind ‘The Power of the Dog.’” *The Economic Times*.

b. Theoretical Framework

Before going into a in-depth studies about female cinematographer and the feminine gaze. As a cinematographer, whose works seem to be directly involved with gaze in order to identify what is going to be looked at and how it is going to be captured on the screen, it is significant to study and recognize the theoretical framework of Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*.

Mulvey has analyzed the aesthetic pleasure of visual and narrative cinema that could be rooted from the study of psychoanalysis - in which helps to understand what the human subject is and how the human subject thinks by imposing this theory on to the film medium.⁸

According to the article on psychoanalysis by the Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, who provide the definition of psychoanalysis, which is "*psychoanalysis, method of treating mental disorders, shaped by psychoanalytic theory, which emphasizes unconscious mental processes and is sometimes described as "depth psychology."*"⁹ Furthermore, the article also suggested that initially the term, psychoanalysis, was conceived by the well-known Austrian psychiatrist named *Sigmund Freud*. It could be associated straightforwardly that the examination of Freud's psychoanalytic theory established the starting point to 'the unconscious mind', which is the essence of psychoanalysis.

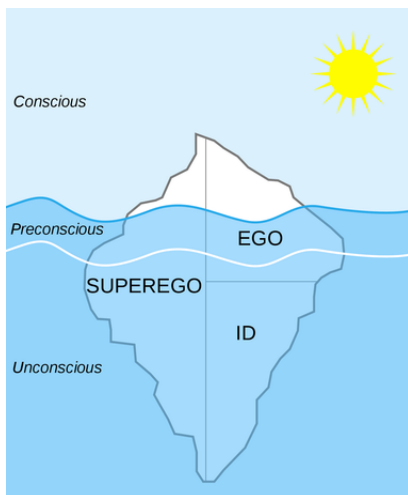


Fig.1 Diagram of Freud's psychoanalytic theory

⁸ "Introduction to Laura Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.'" *YouTube*, 26 Feb. 2021

⁹ "Psychoanalysis | Definition, Theory, and Therapy." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Mulvey supported the idea of 'the unconscious mind' which could be associated with the study of visual pleasure and the pleasure of looking unconsciously by saying that "*The 'trigger' images say more than can ever be put into either descriptive words or realistic imagery. The unconscious too, due to censorship and repression, cannot 'speak' itself literally or rationally and the achievement of this kind of art is to create a poetics of 'unspeakable'.*"¹⁰ From the study of psychoanalysis, it would reveal how the narrative film structure is linked to human subjectivity and the way people think and see according to the field of thought.

However, in order to start the exploration about the feminine gaze, it is well connected to get a glimpse of what identifies the masculine gaze. From Mulvey's analysis about the gaze, she is most likely emphasizing the male gaze, in which is involved in a sexual political way of looking. From the research, the camera often objectified the woman's character and empowered the male protagonist.

The psychoanalysis term that Mulvey referred to is 'scopophilia' which means the sexual pleasure involved in looking. She argued that most of the traditional Hollywood movies are filmed in the way that satisfies the masculine scopophilia.¹¹ In addition, those films are dependent on the active and passive voyeuristic mechanism of gaze, which later delays the film narrative progress.

Mulvey presents a convincing example of the voyeuristic masculine gaze in the case of *Hitchcock's Vertigo*, a ballroom scene. The camera lingers the spectator's view by slowly panning from the male protagonist, Scottie, who basically holds and represents the gaze. By establishing the shot with his present in the beginning, the spectator could easily identify whose gaze it belongs to. Later, the camera glides at a slow pace until spotting the woman protagonist, Madeleine, dressed in green against a red background. However, Madeleine does not look back at him which escalates the inequality of the gaze. Therefore we could obviously say that she is distinctly the spectacle of that gaze. By applying mise-en-scene of the camera movement, the color theory, and the use of contrast in lighting, the image is clearly an objectification of the woman.

On top of that, Mulvey raised the possibility of self-identification among each individual spectator within the cinema environment. She suggested the initial link of

¹⁰ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 19.

¹¹ Loreck, Janice. "Explainer: What Does the 'male Gaze' Mean, and What About a Female Gaze?" *The Conversation*, 5 Jan. 2016.

self-awareness and the similarity between the screen and the mirror. Mulvey pointed out what is enhancing the voyeuristic fantasy is; *“the extreme contrast between the darkness in the auditorium (which also isolates the spectators from one another) and the brilliance of shifting patterns of light and shade on the screen helps to promote the illusion of voyeuristic separation.”*¹² As in the narrative film is the creation of fictional fantasy, the camera is there to build and enhance the spatial and temporal illusion. By applying the camera technology; as such, the mobility of the camera movement, the depth of field of the cinema lenses, could help eliminate camera presence, blur the limit of the screen space and in the end, create the illusion of reality.

Combining the psychoanalysis theory of masculine scopophilia and the self-identification within the cinema environment, Mulvey broke down the role of gaze associate with cinema in three different roles, which are; *“...that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event, that of the audience as it watches the final product and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion.”*¹³

From Mulvey's study of male gaze, we could say that there is always the gaze involved in every aspect of visual art. From the Renaissance era, where the male painter always objectified the female model as the to-be-looked-at-ness. For example, the series painting of Susanna at her Bath by Tintoretto. The perspective, the contrast of light and shade, the illumination, and the line that enhance the curve and form of the female figure, lead the eye of the spectator through figuration of femininity and intensify their fantasy within the spatial illusion.



Fig.2 Susanna at her Bath by Tintoretto

¹² Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 17.

¹³ Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 26.

Because visual art is involved in the way of seeing and looking, we could not refuse that the gaze is always there; either the director's gaze, the cinematographer's gaze, the colonials' gaze, the male gaze, the cast gazes back to the filmmaker, the spectator's gaze, or even when the gaze does not exist, could even emphasize that gaze within the image. Despite that, we, as a filmmaker, can guide and convey the perspective of the gaze, depending on the language of the film and whose point of view the camera is representing.

c. Selected films and cinematographers for comparison and analysis

This theoretical research tries to present a hypothesis and understanding of the gender politics in cinematography by representing works which convey through the gaze of female cinematographers in the classical and contemporary era. By applying the example of Mulvey's studies of male gaze and indicating what is on the contrary or other alternative ways of looking through the lens. The thesis presents the works of three promising female cinematographers including; *Claire Mathon*, *Agnès Godard* and *Babette Mangolte*. The three of them have different approaches and styles in narrative and experimental storytelling. However, their works somehow embrace the element of feminine gaze, either in terms of contents or visual representation.

The later chapters explore in-depth studies of each of the selected cinematographer's crafts. Starting with *Claire Mathon* whose works mostly associate with female protagonists and touch on women's desire in a gaze-related way. Mathon's cinematography on the period film *Portrait of A lady on fire*, directed by *Céline Sciamma*, is the most suitable guide to introduce the utilizing of gazes towards political gender point of view. The film depicted the equal way of looking, not only in between the characters but also between the character and spectator, rather than portraying the woman character as an object of 'to be looked at ness'. On the contrary, *Agnès Godard's* cinematography on the film *Beau Travail*, directed by *Claire Denis*, encircles intimacy and sensibility among the male characters. The use of Gogard's fluid camera movement enhances the flow of action and the tactful compassion inside the character. Ultimately, *Babette Mongolte's* cinematography presents us with one of the most remarkable feminist aesthetics that has hardly been made in history. *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* directed by *Chantal Akerman* investigates the true language of women around the concept of unspeakable emotion. As compared with the cinematography of *Godard's Beau Travail*, the camera leads the gaze of the spectator in

the radical observational way, yet far from a voyeuristic point of view. *Jeanne Dielman* resonates unconsciously the protagonist's interiority by utilizing extensively the visual language that belongs to feminine gaze.

As these selected works of the three cinematographers have some similarities in terms of contents and bringing feminine sensation, each of them bring into play a different technique in film language in order to convey the emotion and the mise-en-scene of the scene.

Chapter 2 Portrait of a Lady on Fire by cinematographer *Claire Mathon*

a. Claire Mathon's biography and her collaboration with the director

Claire Mathon, has been internationally acclaimed to be an outstanding cinematographer in the past few decades, achieving across documentary and narrative storytelling. Working across the diversity of collaboration, she has collaborated, as a cinematographer, with many established and upcoming directors including *Eric Baudelaire, Céline Sciamma, Pablo Larrain, Alain Guiraudie, Mati Diop and Alice Diop*. Mathon's works have been focused on the sensibility, delicacy and intimacy, within oneself and in-between human character. Many times, her works reinforce around feminine subject matters, such as; the story of two girls in *Petite Maman (2021)* which executes on the childhood grief and wonder, and *Spencer (2021)* that unfolds the struggling motherhood tragedy of *Diana Spencer*.

Mathon graduated from the film school *École nationale supérieure Louis-Lumière* in 1998. She started as an assistant camera. Together with her passion and intuitive impetus, she began shortly as cinematographer. Since then, she has worked on several shorts, documentaries, and feature films. In Mathon's earlier career, nurtured around documentary storytelling, she tends to embrace the use of natural lighting in realistic style and fluid handheld camera movement. Her documentary style of cinematography consequently reinforces some influences on her craft in narrative fiction storytelling.

Mathon's masterpiece has been notably accepted among A-list film festivals such as Cannes Film Festival, Venice International Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, etc. She has been nominated for three films

at *César Awards* for Best Cinematography including *Stranger by the Lake* (2013), *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2020) and *Saint Omer* (2023) where in the end she received the Best Cinematography awards for a film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*. Mathon joined the French Cinematographic Society (AFC) and has been an vice-president and active member since then.

Portrait of a Lady on Fire brings Mathon many reputations as she received the Best Cinematography Awards from many acclaimed associations and film festivals including *César Awards*, *Boston Society of Film Critics Awards*, *Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards*, *New York Film Critics Circle Awards*. Together with the director *Céline Sciamma*, the film received over 59 awards including *Golden Globes awards 2020* in Best Motion Picture - Foreign language film and Best Screenplay at *Cannes Film Festival 2019*, and 157 nominations across the world. Mathon first met Sciamma on the shooting of her second feature *Tomboy* (2011) but at that time it did not work out. However, as she mentioned in her interview with cinematography.world website that “...Later Céline offered me the chance to work on *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*. It was obvious that we had a very strong common desire to collaborate, and *Petite Maman* is our second production together.”¹⁴

Portrait of a Lady on Fire explores the relationship between the artist and her muse through their gazes. It is a period piece, set in the end of the eighteenth-century on an isolated island in Brittany, France. The film circulates around the act of observing, the exploratory and caressing gaze. As Marianne (Noémie Merlant), the artist, was commissioned to paint a wedding portrait of Héloïse (Adèle Haenel) secretly. Marianne has to obscurely glance at Héloïse in order to remember her face, gesture and even her persona, without her acknowledgement. As the mission goes, the growing passion gradually emerges between them intimately. The film vibrates with the sense of sensibility, longing, grace and warmth.

Masterfully crafted by cinematographer Claire Mathon, she deliberately paints the image by utilizing the camera and lighting technological possibilities. After doing some testing between analog 35mm and digital options. Mathon mentions in her interview with *the Criterion Collection* at 2019 Cannes Film Festival that, “*With Céline*, we chose to shoot digitally for the actual resonance it gave to the film, combining memories and period films. We are talking about re-inventing and enhancing our 18th century image to current

¹⁴ Hazlewood, Kirsty. “Q&a With DP Claire Mathon AFC About the Spellbinding *Petite Maman* - Cinematography World.” *Cinematography World*, 16 Feb. 2021.

realities...The era that is seen from today's perspective. It's better to invent our own 2018th century.”¹⁵ As a result, as Mathon and the director wanted the image to have a more contemporary look in which echo the past, she decided to go for RED MONSTRO 8K VV camera with Leitz THALIA lenses, and enhance the softness texture by putting a satin filter. This combination provides her the ability to capture the precise rendering of faces, texture and color.

As the pre-production stage, Mathon, together with the director Sciamma, and the contemporary painter, *Hélène Delmaire*, who created most of Marianne's paintings in the film, made their visit to Louvre gallery in Paris for the pictorial inspiration and developed the film look from there. Mathon noted that for her part, she was struck by the rich colors in day time and night, and the nuances that were very present. They were impressed by the works of *Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (Fig.3)*, the nineteenth-century French painter whose well-known for his landscapes and intriguing personal portraits which conveys intimacy and sensibility. Mathon states in the interview with Film Comment magazine that, “*Seeing those paintings in person made us aware of their more subtle qualities, like their texture and finish, which inspired us to invent our own painterly touch.*” Apart from the rendering of texture and color, as the film is related to painting, it has something to do with the framing and composition in cinema, Mathon also intended to mostly have one frame in every scene in order to resonate with the paintings in the gallery.



Fig.3 Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot painting; portrait Portrait of a Woman, Camille (1796 - 1875, French)

¹⁵ “Cinematographer Claire Mathon on Portrait of a Lady on Fire (Subtitled, Interview From 2019).” *YouTube*, 24 July 2020.

b. An exploration of gazes

“Filming the dialectic of gazes, the force of attraction between the two women, was one of the subjects of my work. I had to try to be the camera that looks, that peers and to always find the correct centering of the faces within the frame. Celine wanted to make this proximity palpable. We had to look at these faces and not to frame them. To be with them,” : Mathon’s statement from the interview with *the Criterion Collection* at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival.¹⁶

Portrait of a Lady on Fire is considered to be a film that structure around the exploration of equivalent gaze. The film provokes and opposes the concept of male gaze and tries to give some suggestion of the neutral and feminine frame of gaze. Without any doubt, Mathon discussed with the director deliberately about the gaze of the camera. As she is responsible for another gaze that is, at the same time, looking at the pro-filmic event, staging in front of her. For Mathon, the camera is like another human being who is observing the event and moving as the character moves.

The director, Sciamma has mentioned in her interview that she very much understands that even though the director and the cinematographer are women, but that cannot be clarified they will not produce the replication of the male gaze again, as we were fostered and educated through the majority of the former cinema. She is aware and keeps in mind that Mathon and her have to be very careful about how the gaze will be portrayed in this film.

The opening scene starts with Marianne as an ‘object of being looked at’ by her drawing students (Fig.4). This built up a statement and introduced the concept of equivalent gaze in the beginning of the film, since later on, she will be mainly the person who holds the look.

As referring to the study of male gaze from Mulvey’s visual pleasure and narrative cinema from chapter one. One of the roles of gaze associated with cinema is ‘...that of the camera as it records the pro-filmic event.’ *CJ Sheu*, mentioned in his article on The News Lens that, *“The gaze. Equality. The male gaze of cinema, the safely hidden*

¹⁶ “Cinematographer Claire Mathon on *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (Subtitled, Interview From 2019).” *YouTube*, 24 July 2020.

voyeur, is revealed to be an illusion: the gaze is reversible as long as the camera is present.”¹⁷



Fig.4 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

Mathon's style of framing the character conveys a sense of personification rather than objectifying the subject. Her shots express a straightforward and neutral point of view and look at the subject mostly from eye-level instead of some twisted angle in close up shots that accentuate the camera's voyeuristic way of looking. As the film is set in the eighteenth-century, the aesthetic of Mathon's frames refer to the way most paintings in the historical era have been produced (Fig.5). As Mathon wrote in her interview with *afcinema.com* that *'painting and the work of painting are very present in this film.'*¹⁸

¹⁷ Sheu, CJ. "Portrait of a Lady on Fire' Defies the Male Gaze in Cinema - the News Lens International Edition." *The News Lens International Edition*, 24 Dec. 2019.

¹⁸ "Claire Mathon, AFC, Discusses Her Work on Céline Sciamma's Film 'Portrait De La Jeune Fille En Feu', by Céline Sciamma – *Afcinema*." *Afcinema*, 16 Apr. 2023.



Fig.5 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

In the revealing sequence of the character, Héloïse. The camera holds the painter Marianne's point of view, secretly following and glancing at Héloïse from behind. In this case, Héloïse has become the subject who is to-be-looked-at. In the scene, Sciamma designed Héloïse's appearance that resembles Madeleine in Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, a comparison suggested by her blonde chignon and emerald-green dress.

Comprehending Mulvey's role of gaze, '...that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion,' the gaze of Héloïse and Marianne goes equally in two ways. As Sciamma says, *"In our atelier, there is no muse. There are only colleagues who mutually inspire one another. The theme of equality grows bigger as the alluring relationship among the artist and her muse has been presented."* However, Imogen Sara Smiths mentioned in her essay on *Film Comment* that, *'neither one is the pursuer or the seducer; they meet in terms of equality, in their physical attraction as much as in their intellectual communion.'*¹⁹ Mathon's cinematography has proved this concept by remaining the balance between two characters through their gazes. She says, *'Our main concern was indeed to portray the exchange of gazes between the two women and render their attraction palpable on screen, which is particularly true of the cliff sequence... The strength of that panning shot lies in the fact that the camera becomes a human observer there and moves in rhythm with the actresses.'*²⁰

¹⁹ "Phantom Light: Portrait of a Lady on Fire and Little Women." *Film Comment*, 23 Dec. 2019.

²⁰ "Interview: Claire Mathon." *Film Comment*, 22 Jan. 2020.

During the cliff sequence, Mathon decided to use steadicam in order to retain the flow and the rhythm of the character's movement. The camera served Marianna's point of view, observing Héloïse, then cut back to show whose point of view that camera belongs to. The camera also serves as Marianne's duty to observe Héloïse, as it leads the audience to get to know this character as well. In this case, the camera presents the actual temporal moment and does not linger, nor delay the narrative compared to Scottie's point of view shot in a ballroom scene of Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. Mathon mentioned in her interview with AFC that, *"I remember the long takes (the film is often filmed with long takes) of the two actresses which were extremely choreographed, down to the millimetre of the position of their faces in relation to one another, such as the shot of them in profile, on the cliff, where Marianne cannot see Héloïse because of how close they are to one another."*²¹ Mathon's choice of Leitz THALIA 70mm T2.6 Prime was one of her favorite focal length in order to capture the looks and the proximity of these two women.

c. Break the fourth wall technique

Another role of gaze from Mulvey's study is "...that of the audience as it watches the final product." As mentioned in chapter one, the circumstance in the cinema has an ability to enhance the voyeuristic fantasy and promote the voyeuristic separation between the spectators from one another, and the spectators and the characters appearing on screen. The spectator tends to lose themselves within the screen illusion. The act of looking from the spectator toward the screen identifies the one-sided gaze. However, when the character looks back at us, it breaks the illusion of the scene's reality. It emphasizes the equality of exchanging the gaze between the spectator and the character. This could be resonated with the technique of 'breaking the fourth wall' in cinematic studies.

Breaking the fourth wall technique has been one of the tools that has been applied a lot in contemporary film. *SC Lannom* from Studiobinder.com gives a good definition of the fourth-wall which is *"....an imaginary wall that separates the story from the real world. This term comes from the theatre, where the three surrounding walls enclose the stage while an invisible "4th wall" is left out for the sake of the viewer. The 4th wall is the screen we're watching. We treat this wall like a one-way mirror. The audience can see and comprehend the story, but the story cannot comprehend the existence of the*

²¹ "Claire Mathon, AFC, Discusses Her Work on Céline Sciamma's Film 'Portrait De La Jeune Fille En Feu', by Céline Sciamma – Afcinema." *Afcinema*, 16 Apr. 2023.

audience. If you break that wall, you break that accord. This is called “Breaking The Fourth Wall.” It can also be described as the story becoming aware of itself...”²²

In the film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*, it happens several times during the key moments that the character, Héloïse, seems to look back at the audience (Fig.6, Fig.7, Fig.8). The director applied breaking the fourth wall technique to promote the concept of feminine gaze. This technique in the film could also refer to Mulvey’s role of gaze to enhance the equality of gazes. It reminds the audience who, at the same time, has power as a spectators to decide where and how to look, resulting in the looker being the looked at. In this context, the technique allows the spectators to acknowledge that they are a part of the fictional world and project the equivalent relationship between the character and the spectators.



Fig.6 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*



Fig.7 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*



Fig.8 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

Breaking the fourth wall technique has been utilized in many of the films that focus on female gaze, or the story that revolves around female characters and feminine subject matter. A good example would be an innovative British comedy-drama television series *Fleabag* (2016), created and written by *Phoebe Waller-Bridge*, who herself acts as the protagonist in the series. The most iconic of fourth wall breaking by the protagonist

²² “How to Break the Fourth Wall With Impact.” *StudioBinder*, 21 June 2020.

seems to be one of the essential elements in this storytelling style and pushes the limit beyond conventional comedy genres. The character not only looks back at the audience, but also talks to the audience. The character progressively narrates her inner state of mind, comments on the consequence, and sometimes, forecasted the further action of what likely is going to happen later. This gives the spectators the character's inside thought, just like they reside in the mind of the screenwriter. In this case, this invisible wall also blurs the line between the realm of fiction and reality.

Another prominent example would be from the feminist cinema of *Chantal Akerman*. *Le Chambre (1972)* is an early short film directed by *Chantal Akerman*. The film simply captures a portrait of Akerman herself, staring back at the spectator in her small apartment. Akerman seems to exhibit and provoke the concept of the woman who normally is the subject of 'to-be-looked-at-ness', however, she looks right back to us, the spectators, and defeats the camera's voyeurism. Without any narrative structure, the camera linger slowly across the room in a circular panoramic shot, without drawing any attention to any movement of the character. The camera travels without any respect of whose point of view it belongs to, as if the camera has its own soul.

Breaking the fourth wall technique in film allows the audience to recognize the illusion that leads to self-awareness while watching the screen. It breaks up the dynamic and space between the screen and the spectators. Lastly, it empowers the acknowledgement of the spectator that the protagonist has the same mutual potential of being-looked-at-ness.

d. The landscape of the faces

Another aspect that was considered to be a very interesting point to study about the film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* is the evolution of the face-facelessness captured throughout the film. The film explores the faces of the characters in many possible ways, however keeps the distance and concedes into female subjectivity on screen. Along with the narrative of the film, the director Sciamma and cinematographer Mathon, distances the spectator from their character and suggests the allusion of an uncompleted face; just like Marianne who could not have a full glance of Héloïse since she has to keep her act of painting hidden. For the first quarter of the film, the spectators were obscured to see the definite images of both Héloïse's face and portraiture. Recurrently, her face has turned away from the camera (Fig.9) and in profile angle of view or somehow was covered with some objects regarding her costumes and props (Fig.10). The filmmaker

intended to build the yearning emotion on the spectators and the desire to see Héloïse's face. It could be said that the camera seemly represent Marianne's point of view, as well as the artist or the filmmaker's point of view.



Fig.9 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*



Fig.10 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

Raymond De Luca's article on *Portrait without a Face: Faces and Facelessness in Céline Sciamma's Portrait of a Lady on Fire* provides a remarkable reflection on how the filmmaker implements the use of close-up of faces on the screen. He mentioned "*The most up-close-and-personal shots in Portrait of a Lady on Fire are a few of ears, fingers in armpits, and saliva clinging to lips. These intimate images draw us into a sensual appreciation, but they don't ask for psychological identification. They give us portraits of embodied women without countenance, faceless close-ups.*"²³ Sciamma and Mathon's collaboration aims to give the perspective of how delicate the faces have been captured, at the same time, keep some certain distance between the characters and the spectators. The close but not too close images provide some space to the gaze which is not to intimidate into the character's privacy. As Raymond mentioned later in his article that, "*Portrait of a Lady on Fire imbues the close-up with an ethics. Permission must be granted by the spectated before any sort of spectatorial identification can occur. The relationship between the looker and the looked-at should be one of mutual consent.*" This proximity of close up in this film enhances the subject of gazes in which opposed to the studies of male gaze that has been explained in the previous chapter.

To be able to capture such a delicate and sensual facial expression in close up shot, Mathon cited the film *Persona* by director *Ingmar Bergman* who collaborated with cinematographer *Sven Nykvist* that it was used as a reference for the capturing and the lighting for woman's faces in this film. Nykvist has been considered to be the master of composing faces in unique and inventive way. Mathon said in her interview, "*We worked*

²³ "Portrait without a Face: Faces and Facelessness in Céline Sciamma's Portrait of a Lady on Fire", by Raymond De Luca – *Bright Light Film Journal*, 20 Mar. 2020.

a great deal on the rhythm of these shots (the cliff shot). The film is first and foremost a love story: Céline wanted to embody “desire and the thought of desire.” We had to look at these faces and not frame them. The length of the takes participates in that desire. We re-watched some of Bergman’s films, as he was magnificently able to film women with a unique proximity and intimacy.”²⁴ In Fig.11 and Fig.12 is the comparison side by side on the power of obscuring the face by the two cinematographers. The face that the spectators cannot be fully seen and covered by another character suggested the hidden of psychological projection on emotion and guided the curiosity and attempting to find out how the character would feel and at the same time, what emotion the character would like to hide from the spectator. In conclusion, Mathon and Nykvist deliberately composed the faces in such poetic-like images. Their magnification of human faces allows the spectator to be with them, to feel them and this directly affects emotionally how we feel towards the character as the face is one of the dramatic tools that are used in film medium.



Fig.11 Stills from *Persona*



Fig.12 Stills from *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

In summation, the film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* has reached up all the criteria of how the gaze is portrayed as opposed to the male gaze. The film conveys the perspective of feminine gaze from either; the gaze of the camera, the gaze between the character and lastly, the gaze of the spectator. The theme of mutual gaze has been put in attention seriously and delicately, and strongly emphasized throughout the narrative. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* could be considered as a film that represents the feminine gaze in the contemporary aspect.

²⁴ “Claire Mathon, AFC, Discusses Her Work on Céline Sciamma’s Film ‘Portrait De La Jeune Fille En Feu’, by Céline Sciamma – Afcinema.” *Afcinema*, 16 Apr. 2023.

Chapter 3 Beau Travail by cinematographer *Agnès Godard*

a. *Agnès Godard's biography and her collaboration with the director Claire Denis*

Agnès Godard is an established French cinematographer working across many European countries. She is one of the remarkable female cinematographers in French cinema. Her distinguished reputation included a César Awards for best cinematography in 2001, a recipient of the 2021 Pierre Angénioux Tribute at this year's Cannes Film Festival, Best Cinematographer by the National Society of Film Critics, Chlotrudis Award 2010, the Special Prize CST 2009 and the Marburger Kamerapreis 2012.²⁵ *Godard* has been collaborating with many acclaimed directors; among them are *Wim Wenders*, *Agnès Varda*, *André Téchiné* and *Ursula Meier*. Nevertheless, her most out-standing body of work comes from her long-running collaboration with director *Claire Denis*.

Born in 1951, *Godard's* interest in images started with the family photographs and analog film, captured by her father. She says in one of her interviews that, "*it was my father who gave me a taste of photography.*"²⁶ After her father's death, *Godard* has inherited many thousands of photographs including a mundane routine, family and friends, animals and life which later inspired her career path in working with images. As she says, "*images are a witness of life*". For her, those images are very precious memories and it is another sort of love expression from her father. She added, "*I realised he was very shy and didn't talk much but that these images were like a gigantic memory and a kind of conversation. They were also all taken under a certain contract – that of love.*"²⁷ As shy as her father, *Godard* found that cinema could be a medium for her to dare the look of someone through the viewfinder. She says, "*I felt more comfortable trying to capture that look [on camera] than going and speaking to people.*"

Godard originally started with journalism studies according to her parents' desire, however, her motivation towards images, rather than words, compelled her passion and lead her way to pursue film school. After studying cinema at the French university Censier in Paris, she continued her study at one of the most prestigious French film school which is IDHEC, later known as Le Fémis, and graduated in 1980. Following, she got into the industry as a camera assistant to *Henri Alekan*, a French cinematographer, who is mostly

²⁵ "Defining Distance: The Cinematography of *Agnès Godard* | Berlinale Talents.

²⁶ "Meet Agnes Godard." *Artsper* | ŒUvres D'Art Contemporain En Vente | L'art Vous Appartient.

²⁷ Pennington, Adrian. "*Agnès Godard*." *British Cinematographer*, 15 Nov. 2021.

known for *Wings of Desire* (1987). Alekan's cinematography turned out to be one of the significant impacts on her work throughout her career. Later, Godard assisted a notable cinematographer *Robby Müller* for a film *Paris, Texas* (1984) by director *Wim Wenders*. And this was the beginning of her career where she met her life-long collaborator *Claire Denis*. Since 1991, she has been closely associated as cinematographer with *Claire Denis*; starting as the camera operator for *Denis's* first feature *Chocolat* (1988) and carried on over 30 years, with the succession of 15 features. Along with *Denis's* belief in images, their collaboration consisted of a mutual symbiotic relationship where camera echoed the sensitivity and soulfulness of images.²⁸ *Denis* has confessed in one of her interviews that, to experience the take on a physical and sensorial level, she would grab *Godard's* shoulders while she is filming, in order to feel synchronized and inhabit her perspective.

Denis and *Godard's* collaboration process would be based on sharing trust and curiosity. They would work together to embrace the ingredients they had, ranging from locations to actors. Instead of cultivating seriously on storyboard and shot illustration, they prefer to extensively experience the materials on location scouting. *Godard* appreciated the moment of the freshness and immediacy in which she would feel very liberated. *Godard* expressed in her interview with *Film Comment* magazine that "*I've always experienced this way of shooting as one of looking at things for the first time. When you look at things for the very first time, you look at them with a particular sense of discovery and curiosity; you dare to look.*"²⁹ *Godard's* belief in the first gaze leads to spontaneity and fluidity of moving, framing and capturing the scene. For her, this could provide some sort of unique and fragile gaze toward the scene. And by being present, it could produce some earnest emotion and profound feeling unlike anything that happens afterwards. She believes by discovering this first impression, the spectator will discover also.

Consolidating together between *Denis's* belief in images and *Godard's* faith in cinema, they inaugurate this collaboration for over 15 features; from *I can't sleep* (1994), *Nénette et Boni* (1996), *Beau Travail* (1999), *35 Rhums* (2008), until the recent one *Let the Sunshine in* (2017) (which is their first collaboration shooting digitally). Their distinctive approach of collaboration results in the most captivated, naturalistic with sensual imagery which in the end, contributed to the world cinema today. *Godard* once says that "*It's by*

²⁸ "Interview: Agnès Godard." *Film Comment*, 3 Aug. 2018.

²⁹ "Interview: Agnès Godard." *Film Comment*, 3 Aug. 2018.

*working with Claire that I have been able to better understand what the camera means to me.”*³⁰

Denis's works are mostly focused on human beings and the relationship among them. The disguised internal feeling and psychologically strong emotion of characters plays a big role in Denis's narratives whether in more surreal or realistic circumstances. This is where Godard's challenge comes to play - to be able to bring out those emotions and express them through her camera. By employing the subjective point of view, Godard articulates her love of the human face and body. Whether she is on the handheld, in fluid kinetic movement, or even still long takes, her camera sensually contemplates those emotions with curiosity and affection. She noted; *“I like to look at people, to look at them in order to love them.”*³¹ For her, the faces of actors are like the richest landscape. It is essential for her that the visual narrative of the film is interpreted and conveyed through the emotion of the actor's face, as well as the perspective and distance of the camera.

b. Contact and Intimacy

“For me, the magic of cinema is the moment when sensation and feeling flow into one another, the alchemy of a visual experience, seen and lived, which brings the images life”, stated by Agnès Godard at the 2021 Pierre Angénieux Tribute awards ceremony.³²

Beau Travail (1999) has been considered to be the master stroke of this remarkable collaboration between director *Claire Denis* and cinematographer *Agnès Godard*. With the renowned inventiveness in camera decision and a tactile in cinematography, this masterpiece brought Godard many acclaimed awards for Best Cinematography including the 2001 César Awards and the 2001 National Society of Film Critics Awards. Recently, in 2022, Sight & Sound critics' poll ranked *Beau Travail* as the 7th best movie of all time.

The story is loosely based on the novel *Billy Budd* by *Herman Melville* in 1888. The film tells the story mainly through the point of view of the ex-French Legion officer Galoup, played by an astonishing actor *Denis Lavant*. As the film goes on, the voice-over of Galoup is narrated along, stating his fear and jealousy in his interiority. The film reflects

³⁰ “Dancing With Light: The Cinematography of Agnès Godard | BAMPFA.” *Dancing With Light: The Cinematography of Agnès Godard* | BAMPFA, 28 June 2001.

³¹ “Dancing With Light: The Cinematography of Agnès Godard | BAMPFA.” *Dancing With Light: The Cinematography of Agnès Godard* | BAMPFA, 28 June 2001.

³² Hazlewood, Kirsty. “Pierre Angénieux Tribute Awarded to Agnès Godard AFC - Cinematography World.” *Cinematography World*, 15 June 2021.

on Galoup's life from his home in Marseille. Set in the gulf of Djibouti, east of Africa. Galoup led the military practice for a troop of legionnaire, under the command of Commandant Bruno Forestier (*Michel Subor*) whom Galoup establishes his affection and admiration on. All of a sudden, the arrival of the promising young recruit named Gilles Sentain (*Grégoire Colin*) joined the troop, and later planted the seed of jealousy inside the mind of Galoup. Through the carefully constructed images, the conflicting nature of the protagonist Galoup is accentuated to contrast Galoup's solitariness while being amongst unity, with the remarkable use of repetition of shape and pattern in this film. With the background atmosphere of a physical masculinity, Godard brings to screen a restrained homoerotic figure who is inside immensely sensitive and fragile.

As the film is set in the African landscape, its location *Djibouti* puts the bodies of the male soldiers against a boundless terrain, which allows the viewers to empathize with the subjects' isolation and loneliness (Fig.13 and Fig.14). The film shot on 35mm with Aaton camera, as Godard insisted on the angle of view provided by 35mm format that could amplify the perspective of the landscape. She mentioned it is very spiritual and significant for her to see the body of men against this vast landscape. Godard noted that, "*There was the sky, the land, the volcanos, the sea, salt, heat, and then tiny humans in the midst of it all, so I wasn't sure whether it was the beginning or the end of the world.*"³³



Fig.13 Stills from *Beau Travail*



Fig.14 Stills from *Beau Travail*

On the surface, the cinematography as a whole puts forward what appears to be a documentary style with the repetition of the images of humdrum military drills. Considered extensively, the key message could go beyond what Denis set as the foregrounded, of military exercise. The film initially explores the complex feeling behind Galoup's desire; the affection, the jealousy, the loneliness, and memory, which are instinctively inherent in every human nature, regardless of gender, age and race. The vital elements that the

³³ "Interview: Agnès Godard." *Film Comment*, 3 Aug. 2018.

filmmaker wishes to convey are very sensual and intimate. This is why it is interesting to study this film as an example of the contrast between the dimension of masculine tangible element and the intangible visual experience that is sensitive, sensuous and expressed through the feminine gaze.

Beau Travail is considered to be the film that visually focuses on physical body, and cinema of sense. The images are presented mainly through the body and tactile maneuver. In the first sequence (fig.15), the camera is handheld, lingering in medium close-up shots of faces, hands and backs. The scene reveals two groups of people in the harmonic atmosphere of dancing bodies stirring in the space; the legionnaire, dressed in plain-colored military uniform, and the local Djiboutian girls, dressed colorfully. Their bodies somehow merge and blend through the subjective camera gaze, which is through the point of view of Galoup, as he attentively puts his effort to unite with the group surrounding. This is in the juxtaposition with the last scene (fig.16), where it is the same nightclub setting. Galoup confidently dances alone and camera serves the full shot size with observational point of view, leaving Galoup being seen in the empty space in order to accentuate the feeling of solitude and loneliness, residing deep down in Galoup's mind.



Fig.15 Stills from *Beau Travail*



Fig.16 Stills from *Beau Travail*

For Godard, the perspective of the image is defined by the proximity - the distance at which the camera would be positioned. This is the motivation for the possibility of having a different point of view to the image. As such, when the camera is further, it is more of an observational point of view, on the contrary, when the camera is very close to the character, it is an intimate point of view. Godard added, *'It's something very important, as it's the distance from which you come into contact with the characters of the film.'*³⁴

³⁴ "AGNÈS GODARD on PERSPECTIVES - cine-fils.com." *YouTube*, 13 Aug. 2014.

Nevertheless, regarding the perspective of the image, Godard was concerned about reproducing, for her, some forbidden perspectives. She elaborated on her unwanted perspective that, '*...the observational gaze that provides a sense of capturing, of being a voyeur, or put in simply, to look at others without them aware of being looked at.*'³⁵ Agnès Godard's way of looking tends to focus more on something that cannot be seen, the internal significance, rather than appearances. Her tendency to experience the proximity in the scene is more as a sort of curiosity, but never as a sort of surveillance. For her, what perspective that is not a representation of being a voyeur is something that the cinematographer attentively concerns about how to watch '*in order to create, reconstruct or recreate the notion of a person's existence.*'

As the film emphasizes on the cinema of sense, Godard established the texture of bodies, figures and objects through the distinctive style of handheld camera with the kinetic close-up shots. As Laura McMahon mentioned in her books *Cinema and Contact*, '*Agnès Godard's camerawork invites us 'to touch and feel' the bodies of the Legionnaires.*'³⁶ Godard's fascination with faces and bodies also has something to do with the fact that Denis mostly collaborates with the same actor throughout many films. This gives Godard opportunities to explore the evolution of each actors' faces and figures. Godard has mentioned in her interview that these actors have a very intimate relationship with her, that is through the visual link of her filming them. She also believes in the mystery of human beings that maintains regardless of the time passing. She added, '*When I film someone, I always film them with this slight hope that I'll be able to see things that you can't see with the naked eye, things that pertain to the mystery of existence. And perhaps we might say that a successful image is one that manages to capture something of that mystery.*'³⁷ While filming, and gazing at those actors through the camera's viewfinder, Godard enjoys being so close to the actor, almost feel like touching them. She mentioned '*it's about feeling completely contained with her own gaze, to be nothing but a gaze.*' According to this, the camera does not seem to exist anymore. On the other hand, her technique diminishes and eradicates the space in between the spectator and the cinematographer.

Beau Travail also explores the feeling of intimacy in both physical surface and mental state-of-mind. In the early sequence, the film conveys this concept by showing the contradictory dimension of intangibility and tangible materials. As the camera slowly pans

³⁵ "AGNÈS GODARD on PERSPECTIVES - cine-fils.com." *YouTube*, 13 Aug. 2014.

³⁶ McMahon, Laura. *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis*. 1st ed., Modern Humanities Research Association and Taylor and Francis, 2012. xxx.

³⁷ "Interview: Agnès Godard." *Film Comment*, 3 Aug. 2018.

from the silhouettes figures of the Legionnaires on the dusty ground (fig.15) to their bodies in the upright position (fig.16), followed by the tranquil kinetic movement searching through each bodies, ending the shot with the medium close-up of the main protagonist Gilles Sentain. The shot designates to juxtapose the realm of the tangible collective bodies and the intangible abstraction in which presenting complex sensory inside the protagonist's mind.



Fig.15 Stills from *Beau Travail*



Fig.16 Stills from *Beau Travail*

As in most of Denis's films, they have some mutual interests in the sense of touch. In *Beau Travail*, Godard pushes its limit and intensively elaborates the sense of touch by emphasis on the details and texture of human bodies (Fig.17). Whether through the visual of sameness as is constructed through bodies in separation or the contrast in color of skin tone and racial nonidentical bodies (Fig.18). As suggested by *Emma Wilson* in the book *Cinema and Contact* that, Godard's cinematography '...offer a new geography of the body, a new reckoning with scale, perspective and, in particular, proximity, touch and contact.'³⁸



Fig.17 Stills from *Beau Travail*



Fig.18 Stills from *Beau Travail*

³⁸ McMahon, Laura. *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis*. 1st ed., Modern Humanities Research Association and Taylor and Francis, 2012. 115.

As the film goes until its apotheosis, where the tension between Galoup and Sentein accumulate, leading to fractures in communal unity. Godard's visuality depicts the sense of touch and division in a troop as the camera pans through the bodies of those Legionnaires performing a military exercise. Bare-chested bodies repeatedly crash into one another and move apart intensively (Fig.19). The act of clasping exposes the affection and desire whereas the breaking apart of bodies reveals the impossibility and fracture of character's interiority. The shot follows by the close-up of Bruno Forestier, the command of Commandant, whom Galoup develops his crush on, revealing that the point of view belongs to him. In this close-up, Bruno's gaze is as if somehow slightly direct into the camera, almost ambivalently breaking the fourth wall. This could be interpreted that the director would like to somehow balance the power of gaze and call up some awareness of the 'being-look-at' to the spectator.



Fig.19 Stills from *Beau Travail*

To sum up, Godard's delicate camera movement, proximity in distance between the camera and character, together with the decision in shot size and the arrangement of shapes and patterns, brings to screen the cinema of sense where the touch is elaborately presented with the uniquely sensitive and fragile interiority of Galoup's character.

c. Bodies as tool - A Subjective camera

Joey Soloway, an American writer, producer and director who focuses on the critical feminist concept of the female gaze, once mentioned in her Masterclass at 2016 Toronto International Film Festival that, '*...the female gaze might be a way of feeling, seeing. As a subjective camera, one that attempts to get inside the protagonist... it used the frame to share and evoke a feeling of being in feeling, rather than looking at the character.*' Soloway brings up some examples of a cinematographer *Jim Frohna* that

*'when the cinematographer holds the camera, the body is not feeling, not capturing, but is actually playing an action like one of the actors...In between takes, he is playing the action of melting, or oozing, or allowing.'*³⁹

This statement of Soloway also relevantly underpin the concept of Godard's attempt to inhabit the character's interiority by utilizing the subjective camera point of view. In *Beau Travail*, the cinematographer Agnès Godard is being close to the actors in proximity and performing an action as one of the military legionnaires.

As more than half of the portion of the film is exhibiting the military training of the troop, the actors were trained for six months in Paris with the choreographer, *Bernardo Montet*. Godard observes the rehearsal several times with her actual camera to film, and to experiment the best way to capture the masculine advantage. For Godard, with the music in the background, this body movement in military training becomes a kind of dancing.

With the supporting statement of the earlier topic, *Contact and Intimacy*, in *Beau Travail*, Godard visually focuses on masculine physical body and movement. She tends to avoid the voyeuristic camera perspective by being internal and staying close in proximity to the character. Godard's decision of a hand-held camera is considered to be one of the significant elements of the visual language in this film. Her preference on putting the camera on her shoulder, rather than dollies track or steadicam, strengthen the fact that she utilizes her body as one of the tools in filmmaking. Besides, she prioritized the body, as a tool, over others camera or grip equipment. To support this argument, Godard noted, *"I like to shoot dance sequences because it's done handheld. It's like you are dancing, also. That means there is also music when we shoot, so this is just fantastic because you forget everything, the weight of the camera, technical difficulties and everything."*⁴⁰

Dance scenes are often explored by Claire Denis's motivation to convey the rhythm in related to tactile terms. The signature of Godard's handheld camera movement has been seen in many of Denis's films; such as, *US Go Home (1994)*, *J'ai pas sommeil (1994)*, *35 Rhums (2006)*. Godard shared her first impression of this discovering handheld camera on *No Fear, No Die (1990)* as she was the camera operator for cinematographer *Pascal Marti*. She said, *"When I discovered an over-the-shoulder camera on No Fear, No Die, I was very exhilarated because I had the feeling of filming with my entire body and*

³⁹ "Joey Soloway on the Female Gaze | MASTER CLASS | TIFF 2016." *YouTube*, 11 Sept. 2016.

⁴⁰ "Dancing With Actors: Agnes Godard | KQED." *Dancing With Actors: Agnes Godard | KQED*, 19 June 2013.

*being. I noticed the actors were playing off the camera a lot, and after eight or nine days of shooting, I said to myself that I was like a character in the film we never see.”*⁴¹

Godard's camera movement stimulates the rhythm in the scene, as she dances with the camera on her shoulder. Godard mentioned in one of her interviews that she encounters a film as in volumes. She put it as a comparison with a sculpture that provides dimension and perspective - that is 'in motion'. She emphasizes that, *“It's a movement of time, a movement of images. One has to be in motion.”* Godard's intrigue during her handheld camera is the proximity that makes the spectator feel the absence of the camera. The camera seems to disappear, so that *“there is nothing in between the image and the audience.”* Godard allows herself to feel the omission of the camera, and forget about all the cinematography technique and physical efforts. With this realization, she utters, *“it's a question of having a global perception of things, of taking position both physically and mentally.”*

In conclusion, *Beau Travail* is admirably considered to be a film that not only visually manifest the organic camera perspective and movement, but also an infinitely pleasurable and liberating way that the cinematographer, Agnès Godard, come across the rhythm of her gaze within the actor's rhythm. This combination constructs those sensual images that deliver the conflicting nature within the protagonist Galoup. At the same time, it accentuates the contrast between Galoup's solitariness, while being amongst unity, and the alienated French Legionnaires alongside the Djiboutian local community. The remarkable collaboration between director Claire Denis and cinematographer Agnès Godard is one of the masterpieces in this contemporary cinema.

Chapter 4 Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles by cinematographer Babette Mangolte

a. Babette Mangolte's biography and her collaboration with the director Chantal Akerman

Babette Mangolte is an French experimental filmmaker and photographer who is internationally known. Her works are mostly focused on the experimental and female-driven kind of cinema. Not only does her practice expertise in cinematography

⁴¹ “Interview: Agnès Godard.” *Film Comment*, 3 Aug. 2018.

but she, herself, is also a film director. She had been directing a number of films including *What Maisie Knew* (1975) and *The Camera: Je* (1977). However, she mentioned in the conversation with The Criterion Collection that, '*I was always focusing on visual matters, so that led me to become a cinematographer.*'⁴²

Graduated in cinematography from Paris in the early 1970s, Mangolte shared her experience in being a female filmmaker during that era. She was rejected as a cinematography student from *Institut des hautes études cinématographiques (l'IDHEC)* since they claimed that '*no woman could do that job.*' However, her passion in making images did not let her down and carried her forward to another film school, *L'École nationale supérieure Louis-Lumière*. She added, '*..at that time, in cinematography section, there were two female students and twenty-eight men.*'⁴³

Due to the difficulties and struggles she frustrated in the French male-dominated film industry, she decided to immigrate to New York City in order to pursue her ambition in filmmaking and to explore more of an Avant-garde scene. Lived and worked mostly in New York City since 1970, Mangolte has collaborated with many notable artists including, *Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown and David Gordon*. Most of her early works are the documentation of the performance by these talented dancers and choreographers. This influence later embedded her style of framing and capturing the movement and gestures, as well as, the sense of observation.

One of Mangolte's significant inspirations is from *Dziga Vertov*, a soviet pioneer film director, whose works included a well known film, *Man with a movie camera* (1929). She claimed that this film made her decide to become a cinematographer.

"Seeing this film several times between 1961 and 1964 led me to apply to film school, giving up on the predictability of an academic life in mathematics for a life of uncertainty and adventure. In the 1960s, women and film cameras just didn't mix and I was warned against pursuing my dream. But Utopia and joie de vivre (Enjoyment of life) were at the core of Man with a Movie Camera and I was unafraid." - Babette Mangolte, "Life in Film: Babette Mangolte"⁴⁴

⁴² Weston, Hillary. "Through Her Eyes: A Conversation With Babette Mangolte." *The Criterion Collection*, 30 July 2018.

⁴³ Weston, Hillary. "Through Her Eyes: A Conversation With Babette Mangolte." *The Criterion Collection*, 30 July 2018.

⁴⁴ "Life in Film: Babette Mangolte." *Frieze Online Magazine*, 9 Sept. 2008.

Mangolte admitted that the early cinema, especially silent films, had a massive impact towards her body of work and perspective. Even before attending film school, she would spend most of her evening in the cinema and see every possible film she could. She mentioned once she saw *Lola Montès (1955)* by Max Ophüls, with her mother who was a feminist, ‘...the way the film looked at the fate of a woman in the nineteenth century was a topic we could discuss.’ With this background, Mangolte decided to pursue her career in filmmaking and prioritized in expressing the female voice in the form of images.

The collaboration between *Babette Mangolte* and *Chantal Akerman* was a very inspiring and impressively memorable one. They first met at Chantal’s first trip to New York City in October 1971. Mangolte shared her impression honorably in the book *Camera Obscura On Chantal Akerman*, “We had the same sense of exclusion from a film world controlled by man and the same fascination for New York City, with the discovery of experimentation in theater, films and music.”⁴⁵

Unlike working in France, the possibility of making independent film in New York City seems to be much feasible; for example, in order to rent the film equipment, there is no need for the production company to be involved in the project. Their first collaboration was a short film, *La Chambre (1972)*, where the camera 16mm Arriflex S was borrowed from Mangolte’s friend. The visualization of the film was inspired by *Michael Snow’s La Région centrale (1971)*, an experimental documentary which is considered to be one of the most influential films in Avant-garde cinema. The film was shot in one of Akerman’s friend’s apartment. Akerman, herself, acted as a protagonist in the film. Referring back to Chapter two, this film has been mentioned as an example of utilizing the breaking the fourth wall technique and how the camera’s gaze/perspective has liberated and lingered on its own, regardless of any protagonist’s point of view. The image somehow is reactive to be looking at. This was considered an exceptional body of work where the filmmakers sought to introduce an intuitive kind of cinema with a female perspective, which they found lacking on-screen, and negate the traditional male’s gaze.

With this common passion of story-telling from a female perspective and their distinctive aesthetic, Mangolte and Akerman are bonded to collaborate on their later films including *Hotel Monterey (1973)*, *News From Home (1976)*, and the most landmark of feminist film, *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975)*.

⁴⁵ White, Patricia. “Camera Obscura and Chantal Akerman.” *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, Duke UP, 2019. 53.

b. The language of women and Female-driven kind of cinema

"I had my own stories of feeling excluded and ignored by men in the film industry. The two of us (Chantal and I) had a common goal to make films that would reflect the world in which we lived. We shared a sense of being ignored, and realized that if we worked together, we might communicate experiences that had not yet been told. We discussed what we could and should do, and articulated the need to invent our own language devoid of references to a world dominated by men" - Babette Mangolte, Art Forum, January 2016 issue. ⁴⁶

This definite annotation Mangolte shared with us signifies her forceful eagerness and her craving to put across visually the language of women, in the form of cinema. For her, she had an idea that, as women, they also have their point of view to the world, and that instantly needs to be expressed. However, by that time, this hasn't seemed to unfold yet.

Before mentioning the film *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), it is beneficial to take a look at one essay written by *Laura Mulvey*, in the book *Afterimages*. Mulvey has articulated her idea revolving around women's stories and women's film, focusing on the 1970s feminist movement era. As well as, she gives some opinion on the embarkation of how the language of women needed to be emanated.

Deliberately, the concept of 'ineffable' and 'unspeakable' rooted the idea of women's cultural silence, which is embedded at the foundation of patriarchal society. Mulvey analyzed meticulously the idea of women's silence which focuses on the unspoken emotion according to, as she brings up, '*the difficulty of finding adequate words to express emotions and experiences outside and irrelevant to male and mainstream culture.*' ⁴⁷ Mangolte expressed this mutual impression and mentioned in her interview, "*I had my own stories of feeling excluded and ignored by men in the film industry.*" ⁴⁸ Ultimately, this leads to the emerging of a wide range of communicative systems that can be spread out. Therefore, the other means of expressive mode come into play and the idea of representing the silence and emotion seek their way and move away from the traditional mode of expressing meaning. Taking into account, the form of speech has been mutated into other forms of 'mute signification' - including gestures and images.

⁴⁶ Mangolte, Babette. "Babette Mangolte." *Babette Mangolte - Artforum International*

⁴⁷ Mulvey, Laura. *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times*. 1st ed., Reaktion Books, 2019. 93.

⁴⁸ Mangolte, Babette. "Babette Mangolte." *Babette Mangolte - Artforum International*

As this defamiliarization of film language generates alternative means of expressing its meaning, that is different from the classic Hollywood film. Consequently, due to this unspoken emotion and 'mute signification', the cinematic language has to hunt for other possible means through filmic value; including the camera movement, sound, framing, lighting, color, object. Mulvey has, in the end, concluded that, *'the cinema, changed by the challenge of finding new ways of representing women and their lives, would, in the process, be liberated into new forms, images and mode of expression.'*⁴⁹

Jeanne Dielman, a feminist avant-garde film, totally supports this concept of a new language of women that evolves the silence and the unspoken emotion. The film explores the impression of silence and the new ways of depicting the unspeakable and ineffable in human communication. It is a film that reflects on women's relation to language and story-telling, and as Mulvey suggested, *'how to find voice for woman's interiority, for the inside of the mind itself, as well as for the silence.'*⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Mangolte proclaimed about the making of *Jeanne Dielman* that *'it is also Akerman's desire to communicate, in her film, what it is to be a woman.'*⁵¹

Mangolte and Akerman challenge the way of making film during that era where the film industry is considered to be a male-dominated industry. By doing that, Akerman recruits all female crews to collaborate in this production. This contribution offers a dynamic shift in the film industry, which later definitely results in an alternative and fresh perspective on set.

The film is set mostly in the interior of an apartment, which is representing the interior mind of the protagonist, *Jeanne Dielman*, played by the prominent actress *Delphine Seyrig*. Throughout the film, Dielman performs her daily ritual as her everyday domestic routine; washing dishes, peeling potatoes, making coffee and running errands. These mundane, yet inevitable, actions seem to be something that have not really been captured in any other classic Hollywood cinema, where the plots are more focused on 'action' and narrative dramaturgy. Or if it is, there is a possibility that they are only located as a transition scene. Anyways, as human beings, living our lives, we engage in those actions inevitably, and these actions seem to occupy our time each day, compared to any other drama stories. As Director *Akerman* once mentioned, *"I made this film to give all*

⁴⁹ Mulvey, Laura. *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times*. 1st ed., Reaktion Books, 2019. 95.

⁵⁰ Mulvey, Laura. *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times*. 1st ed., Reaktion Books, 2019. 102.

⁵¹ Mangolte, Babette. "Babette Mangolte." *Babette Mangolte - Artforum International*

these actions typically undervalued a life on film.”⁵² Akerman keenly manifested that these undervalued domestic gestures could become ‘a center of art.’



Fig.20 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*



Fig.21 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

Jeanne Dielman is 3-hours and 21 minutes long. Most of the shots are shot in real time which is provoking the spectator of the sense of living out the same experience with the temporal rhythm of the protagonist's life. The static wide shot was mostly Mangolte's choice in order to place the spectator in some sense of observing, without being voyeuristic. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the observational gaze could be on the edge of entrapping the sense of voyeurism. However Mangolte's cinematography achievement is far from that. She carefully rendered some intimate actions that were left mysterious and on an empty frame without any character existence. For example, in the first part of the film, as Dielman earned her living as an occasional sex worker, when the client visited her apartment, and as they walked into her bedroom, the camera decided not to follow but instead, staying at the hallway in an empty frame (Fig.22). The camera's position of emptiness also intensifies the emotion of Dielman's interiority, as there is also an emptiness in her mind.

Mangolte's interview supports this idea that, “*We become Dielman, trapped in an apartment with only duties and chores, caught in a routine that stifles the possibility of pleasure; ultimately, resignation erupts into sudden violence. The total unpredictability of the final outcome is what is so shocking; as in life, you didn't see it coming.*”⁵³ Mangolte suggested that with Akerman's approach, the spectator is often in the position of observer. In order to directly identify what is happening on the screen, the camera's point of view is

⁵² “The Greatest Film of All Time: Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai Du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles.” *BFI*.

⁵³ Mangolte, Babette. “Babette Mangolte.” *Babette Mangolte - Artforum International*

rather suggesting than showing, as well as, not giving infinite interpretation that tells the spectator what to see and how to look.



Fig.22 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

To support this idea above, Mangolte's decision came to the choice of the neutral and very flat visual style in the cinematography. The use of very deep depth of field provides the spectator the ability to see every detail in the frame, without any manipulation and exploitation of the character. However, Mangolte's framing employs the sense of depth by putting together the double space within the same frame (Fig.23). This made the images's capability to be contained and stand on its own. Additionally, referring to the book *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times*, Mulvey also gives her thought on this use of double space that, "The image of doubled space might suggest the incompatible worlds of housewives and prostitute." ⁵⁴



Fig.23 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

⁵⁴ Mulvey, Laura. *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times*. 1st ed., Reaktion Books, 2019. 110.

One of the crucial cinematic tools that Mangolte utilizes in *Jeanne Dielman* is the use of on and off lighting and the flickering neon flash light from the exterior. The lighting establishes Dielman's routine as she regularly turns on and off the light switch every time she enters or exits the room, in the first part of the film. And later when the malfunction settled in Dielman's mind, the light in the room was left on as she failed to perform her action accordingly. Mangolte intends to light the scene with diffuse lights for the purpose of softness and less contrast. She intentionally avoids dramatic lighting sources from the interior domestic space, in order to enhance the flickering of the external neon flashlight source that intrudes into the space. This external flickering light in the dining area, executes as one of the significant motifs in the film. It is considered to be the most unrealistic motif above all other elements in the film. This motif lights movement unsettle the interior space of Dielman and the apartment. There are some extended shots after the character leaves the space, the filmmaker deliberately accentuates the existence of this motif by extending the duration of the still empty frame and letting this flicking light shine in time. It is the tactic to make the motif become even more significant in the film language. In terms of interpretation, the flickering light occurred in the dining area where the soup tureen is set in the middle of the dining table. Put that side by side, this could resemble the two elements that intrude on Dielman's life.



Fig.24 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

The plot of the film can be broken down into three days where Dielman performs her ritual daily routine. First part of the film is the first day regarding the film time. Dielman performs all of her daily routine deliberately and flawlessly. Every single movement goes on mechanically. Everything seems to be in control and organized. The cinematography style presents the static and the long take, refusing to have multiple cutting in between shots and different shot sizes. The pacing of the film at this moment is very slow and contained. With this cinematography style of long take and wide shot, it encourages the spectator not only to observe, notice, inhabit a sense of observer, but also keep an eye on

and pay attention to every single detail in the frame. This could resemble the way the spectator spends their time in the gallery or museum, intentionally stare at the painting and pay attention to every detail. The long take with nothing happening challenges and provokes the spectator's curiosity and endurance, in which payback later in the second half of the film.

The second act of the film is considered to be the moment when things started to break down. The gestures of Dielman suggest the spectator of something that is missing in the very small details, such as she forgot to turn off the light in the corridor, the lid of the soup tureen is not closed. With these little hints, the cinematography enhances Dielman's interiority and emotion by the incomplete and imperfect framing. For example, the head of Dielman is cut off in the shot.

Towards the end of the film is the moment when the chaos approaches. Those details we get used to in the beginning seem to be disintegrating and breaking apart until it reaches the climax of the film where Dielman stabs her scissors at the client's neck, right after their sex action. Dielman's emotion in this part seems to be disordered and lost in control. She seems to lose her mind, walking all over the room without any purpose and failing to complete her household task. The pacing of the shot gets faster as it is more coherent with the action of Dielman. With this choice of cinematic apparatus, the spectator unconsciously feels threatened and unable to breathe, just like Dielman. The temporal and rhythm of the film plays a big role in creating the awareness of time for the spectator, as well as, resembling the time of the protagonist, Dielman. The power of this neutral static shot, combined with the slow tempo cinema challenge the spectator's emotion and stir up the dramaturgy in the scene.

As in chapter one, "the process of self-identification' among each individual spectator within the cinema environment. Mulvey suggested the initial link of 'self-awareness' and 'the similarity between the screen and the mirror.' The use of mirrors in this film is very significant in terms of how the protagonist is psychologically related to her inner self. In the earlier part in the film when we see Dielman in front of the mirror, we never see her through the reflection of the mirror (Fig.25) However, in the last scene where she realizes herself. Mangolte decides the camera position where the spectator can see her reflection as she sees herself in the mirror (Fig.26). The use of mirror which represent the self-identification of the protagonist is powerfully presented in the film.



Fig.25 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*



Fig.26 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

Lastly, the extended shot in the end scene presents the seven-minute long static shot of Dielman sitting alone in the dining table, with the blood covering her hand and blouse (Fig.27). This shot comes off as an aftermath sequence, presenting the silence both inside the mind of the protagonist, as well as, the interior space. This depiction of a flux of time encourages the spectator to breathe silently and let the time speak to you. The speechless and unspoken emotion perfectly represents what Mulvey has mentioned above as, 'the idea of woman's cultural silence.'



Fig.27 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

c. Filming gestures

As mentioned in the earlier topic, the presentation of gesture in the film, *Jeanne Dielman*, appears to be the center of attention that drives the whole plot, rather than a speaking dialogue. Mangolte said in her interview with *Artforum* that, '*Akerman knew how a small gesture could make a large impact.*'⁵⁵ And *Jeanne Dielman* is the result of that. With these daily domestic gestures of woman that were captured and shown in this way, and almost never seen in any other film, Mangolte believes that *Jeanne Dielman*

⁵⁵ Mangolte, Babette. "Babette Mangolte." *Babette Mangolte - Artforum International*

deliberately delivers the feminist aesthetic, and provides women's perspectives to the world.

Mangolte's earlier background in cinematography is the collaboration with many artistic choreographers. This provided her some opportunity to film a theatrical performance and dance. Therefore, the concept of movement and gesture in capturing body language bring into play when she works on the cinematography of *Jeanne Dielman*. Additionally, Mangolte's interest in silent film also contributes to her visual style as she would observe the physical acting and gesture. Her perception on the silent film reveals how the gesture is done mechanically, in the kind of naturalistic rhythm, as well as, the interpretation that reflects out of how that gesture is done. The visual style of *Jeanne Dielman* is very simple, yet unique in the way that it totally holds the gaze of the spectator in the position of an observer.

Akerman already conceptualized how the film is going to look like in the script writing phase in which every detail of the gesture was perfectly described. Mangolte mentioned that, as Akerman wrote her script, she already knew that the gestures will not be cut in pieces, or in different shots. The principle of having a camera in one position, and not cutting into another shot in the same action, has already been established in the script writing. As the choice of having absolutely perfect and steady images in each frame, Mangolte decided to go for a studio-shooting strategy and used a heavy-weight camera; Mitchell BNC 35-mm camera.

The choice of framing of Mangolte's cinematography in *Jeanne Dielman* is very significant to the film. As Mangolte once said, '*The framing is the essence of what the film is about.*'⁵⁶ As the film is about one woman and nothing else, the camera position and height could deliver the protagonist's interiority and unconscious emotion. Mangolte was interested to keep the camera, not the eye-level camera but lower, approximately around the character's waist. She suggested that this would add the subject's prominence and enrich the character's body to be more majestic. This Mangolte's cinematography style gained a lot of influence from when she filmed the dancer. She mentioned, '*The legs of a dancer are very, very important, and so much of the movement is actually anchored around the torso and the leg. You don't want to minimize the leg because it's so much of the choreography.*'⁵⁷ However, with this style of framing, the gestures of the character were captured ideally.

⁵⁶ "Babette Mangolte on Jeanne Dielman." *YouTube*, 3 Dec. 2022.

⁵⁷ "Babette Mangolte on Jeanne Dielman." *YouTube*, 3 Dec. 2022.

One concrete example is the scene when the client leaves the apartment. The moment when Dielman took the clients' coat and her blocking closed to the camera's position, Dielman's head was cut by the framing (fig.28). The camera refuses to follow Dielman's face but rather stays static. Mangolte argued that, *'It was not the face of Jeanne that is relevant to me. It's a gesture. You ever create what is not essential, and you privilege what is essential which is the gesture. The gesture is really what is important.'*⁵⁸ Mangolte's camera decision has heightened the way these gestures were captured on the screen.



Fig.28 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman*

With Mangolte's achievement in visual style and Akerman's uncompromising vision in telling the story of women's domestic life is considered to be the window of the emerging approach to the language of women in cinema. Akerman triggered this idea in her interview that, *'The difference is I don't think a man would have made this film. From birth, men are taught different values. A woman washing dishes isn't art. It wasn't a conscious challenge. I simply told a story that interested me, and this is the result.'*⁵⁹

In 2022, *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, a masterpiece of feminist cinema, has been ranked up by *Sight&Sound magazine*, who organizes an international poll of critics, to be *the Greatest Film of All Time*.

⁵⁸ "Babette Mangolte on Jeanne Dielman." *YouTube*, 3 Dec. 2022.

⁵⁹ Gallus, Maya. "Dazzling Beauty the Cinema of Chantal Akerman - *POV Magazine*." *POV Magazine*, 6 June 2021.

5. Conclusion

As the idea and the intention of this theoretical thesis focuses on how the feminine gaze can bring into play and providing an alternative way of cinematic possible approach, the study of each individual selected female cinematographer offered an ultimate thought and concept behind each cinematographer's decision of framing, lighting and camera movement. By implementing these cinematic tools, these cinematographers focus on delivering the subconscious emotion that could touch on each spectator's feeling and emotion.

The introduction of this thesis presents the reader some significant information of why this study of a feminine gaze should be concerned and not to be taken for granted. As the figure shown, the voice of underrepresented groups of people including females, queers, and minorities still need to be heard. And their subject matters need to be taken into account in the society in order to achieve diversity and a different perspective towards social and cultural circumstances.

The theoretical framework of Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* demonstrate that, as the cinematographer, our task is not only capturing the information and the action of the character, but more importantly, the subconscious emotion of the scene and the character can offer an immersive influence on the spectator's mind. The examination of Freud's psychoanalytic theory proves that the unconscious mind is the essence of psychoanalysis. And this establishes the questions of why we need to understand the human subject and how we could implement this theory on the film medium. Because, as Mulvey says, the images could trigger the subconscious emotion of the spectator more than the descriptive words. Therefore, the spectator's pleasure of looking becomes a significant responsibility that the cinematographer holds.

In the first chapter, the study of male gaze has been raised in order to give an idea that opposes to the feminine gaze. We could summarize that the convincing approach of cinematic tools that offer the passive voyeuristic mechanism of gaze could be considered to be the masculine gaze, as the given example of *Hitchcock's Vertigo*. The masculine gaze could occur in a way that the female character is objectified as the 'to-be-looked-at-ness.' Besides, the possibility of self-identification of each individual spectator could enhance the illusion of voyeuristic fantasy.

Considerably speaking, Mulvey comprised the role of gaze in film and visual art into three different ones; which are, the gaze of the camera, the gaze of the audience/spectator and the gaze in between characters. As a filmmaker, we have the ability to guide and convey the perspective of the gaze, regarding the language of the film and the point of view the camera is representing.

Mathon's deliberately cinematography style on the film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* delivers unique and meticulous crafts that focus on the sensibility, delicacy and intimacy. With her background in documentary storytelling, she embraces the use of natural lighting and realistic style of camera movement. As the film circulates around the exploration of gaze and the act of observing, at the same time, the role of the cinematographer in order to portray the gaze is at the essence of the film. Mathon often puts the role of the camera as another human being in the scene, confessing and observing the event, and moving as the character moves.

As the film also provokes the concept of male gaze, the concept of equivalent gaze often appears as one of the film elements. The implementation of breaking the fourth wall technique indicates the mutual way of looking between the spectator and the character in the film. This helps to promote the concept of the equality of gazes which integrate in one of the elements of the feminine gaze. The sense of proximity of the close up shot in this film also enhances the subject of gazes in contrast to the studies of male gaze. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* has ultimately represented the perspective of feminine gaze in the contemporary aspect.

While Mathon's cinematography centers around the exploration of gaze, Godard's cinematography puts forward the course of subjective camera point of view which explore the sense of tactical and intimacy in the film, *Beau Travail*. Camera, to her, is considered as a medium where she could feel comfortable approaching others and the images could speak through itself instead of descriptive words. Godard's belief in the first image that could bring her the specific sense of discovery and curiosity. And the profound feeling and emotion of experiencing the first impression in the scene could be passed on to the spectator. *Beau Travail* situated the atmosphere of a physical masculinity, however, the film initially explores the complex feeling behind Galoup's desire. This is the moment where Godard's cinematography brings to screen a restrained homoerotic figure of the protagonist, who is inside immensely sensitive and fragile. The study of this film allows us to recognize the contrast between the dimension of masculine tangible elements and the

intangible visual experience that is sensitive, sensuous and expressed through the feminine gaze.

As *Beau Travail* concentrates on the cinema of sense, Godard's perspective of image is defined by the proximity and the camera's position. The distance of the camera coming into contact with the character is a very important decision for her. However, the concept of voyeurism is at the forefront in her decision as she always puts her awareness in the notion of a person's existence in order to avoid producing some sort of surveillance perspective. Godard's intimate camerawork allows her to stay so close to the person she is filming. She would execute the absence of the camera by diminishing all the technique that could eliminate the space in between the spectator and the cinematographer. This could allow the spectator the perception to touch and feel the character in the scene. Her decision of the handheld camera is considered to be her approach regarding the subjective camera point of view which allows her to inhabit the character's interiority. Godard's achievement comes across the rhythm of her gaze and the sensual images that deliver the interiority of the protagonist's mind. The distinctive collaboration of Godard and Denis results in the most captivated, naturalistic with sensual imagery which in the end, contributed to the world cinema today.

Last but not least, this theoretical thesis would like the reader to take note of one of the most momentous feminist films across the era, *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*. The particular collaboration between director Chantal Akerman and cinematographer Babette Mangolte expresses the same sense of acquiring the eagerness to deliver the female perspective in cinema, in which they found lacking on-screen, as the film industry hovers around the male-dominated profession. The film offers the feminine aesthetic which centers on the language of women both story-wise and cinematic language.

The concept of unspeakable emotion from Mulvey's *Afterimages* book presented the women's silence which is implanted in the patriarchal society. The inability to find the words in order to express one's emotion generates the emergence of a wide range of human communication, including the form of gestures and images. This put forward the possibility to explore the women's emotion and express it in another way in which one of them is the cinematic language.

The filmmaker intentionally presents the undervalued domestic gesture that has never been captured in most of the classic Hollywood films. Mangolte's uncompromising

cinematography of static long take put the spectator in the shoe of observer, and challenge the spectator to stare at every detail in the frame. However, to avoid the sense of voyeurism, Mangolte decided not to neither manipulate the images, nor exploit the character. Her use of deep depth of field offers the flat and neutral visual images that bring the sense of suggestion, rather than showing. Her believed in the essence of images that they could stand on their own. Despite that choice of Mangolte's framing, she retains the sense of depth in the image by putting together the double space in the frame - in which Mulvey also implies that this could suggest the incompatible worlds of housewives and prostitute.

The development of different styles in cinematography supports different stages of the film. By executing the temporal and rhythm, as well as, the aesthetic of the framing, the cinematography provokes the spectator's sense of curiosity and durability. As the last shot of the film that is considered to be the spotlight in which resolve all the story. The shot is intentionally extended to let the flux of time be held beyond the normal expectation. This helps accentuate the moment of silence and having the spectator appreciate the idea of women's cultural silence.

The cinematography approach of Mangolte in order to capture the gesture in the film is a very noteworthy one to study. Combining her background, as when she filmed the performance and choreographer, with the observation of how the action/gesture in silent films has been brought to the screen, the concept of movement and body language play an immersive influence on the cinematographer's choice. As the framing is the essence of what this film is about, the camera position and height determine the character's interiority and express the unconscious emotion. This achievement in visual style and uncompromising story telling of domestic life, *Jeanne Dielman*, is considered to be the spotlight and emerging of the language of women in the history of cinema.

The short overview of Laura Mulvey's study of male-gaze, together with the distinctive cinematography approach from these three promising cinematographers, presents us the alternative means of visual language and representation. This defamilization of the feminine gaze has focused more on the visual that represents the unconscious emotion, as in the study of psychoanalysis in chapter one, rather than the concrete 'action'. By expressing the feminine perspective, the visual aesthetic encounters the gaze of the spectator not only one-sided gaze, but rather the mutual way of looking. Woman, as a subject matter in the film, has chosen to be depicted in a way that is not an object 'to-be-looked-at'. But rather the feminine gaze most likely encourages the spectator

to be aware of what they are looking at on the screen. At the same time, it fosters the emotional response individually. By implementing the cinematic tools of camera's movement, position, framing, as well as the lighting atmosphere, the feminine gaze emphasizes on evokes the spectator's sensory and emotion, rather than getting the information from the story only.

The purpose of this theoretical thesis is not about the differences in actual sexuality of the male-female cinematographer, but rather explore and understand an alternative way of visual representation that focuses on the feminine point of view (regardless the gender; male or female cinematographer). What is significant is that the cinematographer can elaborately adapt and apply this so-called 'feminine gaze' and perspective on different kinds of cinema, depending on the story and subject matters.

Even though nowadays we could say that the female filmmakers and their audience have been more active compared to the past, the study of this distinctive feminine gaze could be the basic foundation that would inspire and guide the intuitive cinematography approach in this day and the future.

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Fig.1 Diagram of Freud's psychoanalytic theory "Id, Ego, and Super-ego - Simple English Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia." *Id, Ego, and Super-ego - Simple English Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Id,_ego,_and_super-ego#/media/File:Structural-Iceberg.svg.

Fig.2 Susanna at her Bath by Tintoretto Oonops. "Susanna at Her Bath | Musée Historique De L'environnement Urbain." *Susanna at Her Bath | Musée Historique De L'environnement Urbain*, www.mheu.org/en/timeline/susanna-tintoret-02.htm.

Fig.3 Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot painting; portrait Portrait of a Woman, Camille (1796 - 1875, French) "File:Corot - Portrait of a Woman, Circa 1850-1855.jpg - Wikimedia Commons." commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Corot_-_Portrait_of_a_Woman,_circa_1850-1855.jpg.

Fig.4-12 Stills from the film *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

Fig. 13-21 Stills from *Beau Travail*

Fig. 22-30 Stills from *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*