

articles based on discussions with the maker, and current critical-theoretical fads, fashions, and posturings.

"SHOW US LIFE"

Toward a History and Aesthetics
of the Committed Documentary

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Chapter 12

FEMINIST DOCUMENTARY: AESTHETICS AND POLITICS¹

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The unrivalled doyen of American feminist film scholarship, Julia Lesage here presents a work that is simultaneously a case study of two exemplary feminist documentaries, a comparison of the two divergent branches of feminist film practice already established by the dialectic of *The Nightcleaners* and *Harlan County, U.S.A.*, an encyclopedic chronology/evaluation of the first decade of independent feminist filmmaking in the United States, an analysis of the political and theoretical base of feminist media activism, and a political and aesthetic manifesto whose implications range far beyond the borders of the feminist community--all inflected by the author's concrete experience as teacher, activist, and editor.

Feminist documentary filmmaking has developed as a cinematic genre related to a political movement, the contemporary women's movement. One of that movement's key forms of organization is the affinity group. In the late 1960s and early 1970s in the United States, women's consciousness-raising groups, reading groups, and task-oriented groups were emerging from and often superseded the organizations of the anti-war New Left.² Women who had learned filmmaking in the anti-war movement and previously "uncommitted" women filmmakers began to make self-consciously feminist films; and other women began to learn filmmaking specifically to contribute to the movement.³ The films these people made came out of the same ethos as the consciousness-raising groups and had the same goals.

Clearly the cinematic sophistication and quality of political analysis vary from film to film. Here I offer an in-depth discussion of two feminist documentaries which are dissimilar stylistically, and each of which I value politically and cinematically. One, *Self Health*, follows that artistic tradition in painting, literature, and film that can broadly be characterized as "realist."⁴ The other, *Rape*, comes out of the politically motivated avant-garde, and it can be characterized as an "experimental" film. To consider more works in detail would be beyond the scope of this article. My main concern is to describe the emergence of the feminist documentary as a genre, the aesthetics, use and importance of this genre, and its relation to the movement from which it sprang--a discussion important to any consideration of the aesthetics of political films.

The Realist Films

Many of the first feminist documentaries used a single format to present to (primarily female) audiences the ordinary details of women's lives, thoughts--told directly by the protagonists to the camera--and frustrated but sometimes successful attempts to enter and deal with the public world of work and power. Among these films are *Growing Up*, *Female* by Julia Reichert and Jim Klein, *Janie's Janie* by Geri Ashur, and *The Woman's Film* by the women of San Francisco Newsreel. Other films dealing with women talking about their lives include Kate Millett's *Three Lives*, Joyce Chopra's *Joyce at 34*, Donna Deitch's *Woman to Woman*, and Deborah Schaffer and Bonnie Friedman's *Chris and Bernie*. Some films deal with pride in the acquisition of skills, such as Bonnie Friedman's film about a girls' track team, *The Flashettes*, or Michelle Citron's study of her sister learning the concert violin from a woman teacher, *Parthenogenesis*. Others have more political analysis and are often collective productions; they have provided a feminist analysis of women's experience with the following: (a) prison (*Like a Rose* by Tomato Productions; *We're Alive* by California Institute for Women Video and UCLA Women's Film Workshop); (b) the health care system (*Self Health* by San Francisco Women's Health Collective; *Taking our Bodies Back* by Margaret Lazarus, Renner Wunderlich, and Joan Fink; *The Chicago Maternity Center Story* by Kartemquin Films; and *Health-caring* by Denise Bostrom and Jane Warrenbrand); and (c) rape (*Rape* by JoAnn Elam).

It is no coincidence that films about working-class women show their subjects as the most confident and militant about their rights in the public sector, and their willingness to fight for those rights. Yet even these films, from Madeline Anderson's *I Am Somebody* to Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, USA*, focus on problems of identity in the private sphere--how one strikeleader's husband views her union organizing unenthusiastically, or how mothers' wives reach a new solidarity only by overcoming sexual suspicions and jealousies. As feminist films explicitly demand that a new space be opened up for women in women's terms, the collective and social act of feminist filmmaking has often led to entirely new demands in the areas of health care, welfare, poverty programs, work and law (especially rape), and in the cultural sphere proper in the areas of art, education, and the mass media. And if many feminist filmmakers have deliberately used a traditional "realist" documentary structure, it is because they see making these films as an urgent public act and wish to enter the 16mm circuit of educational films, especially through libraries, schools, churches, unions, and YWCAs, to bring a feminist analysis to many women it might otherwise never reach.

Biography, simplicity, trust between woman filmmaker and woman subject, a linear narrative structure, little self-consciousness about the flexibility of the cinematic medium--these are what characterize the "realist" feminist documentaries of the 1970s. The films' form and their widespread use raise certain questions. Why are they patterned in so similar a way? Why are these films the first ones thought of whenever a group of women decide they want to "start learning something about women" and set up showings in churches, public libraries, high schools, Girl Scout meetings, union caucuses, or rallies? Why do activists in the women's movement use the same films over and over again? What is the films' appeal?

These films often show women in the private sphere getting together to define/redefine their experiences and to elaborate a strategy for making inroads on the public sphere. Either the filmmaker senses that it is socially necessary to name women's experience, or women together within the film do so, or a "strong" woman is filmed who shares her stance with the filmmaker and, by extension, with the women who see the film. Conversations in these films are not merely examples of female introspection; the filmmakers choose not to explore the corners of women's psyches as the hero does in Romantic art. Rather, the women's very redefining of

experience is intended to challenge all previously accepted indices of "male superiority" and of women's supposedly "natural" roles. Women's personal explorations establish a structure of social and psychological change. The filmmaker's and her subjects' intent is political. Yet the films' very strength, the emphasis on the experiential, can sometimes be a political limitation, especially when the film limits itself to the individual and offers little or no analysis or sense of collective process leading to social change.⁵

Example: Self Health

Among "realist" feminist documentaries, Self Health stands as exemplary in terms of its cinematic style, the knowledge it conveys, and the self-confidence and understanding it gives women about themselves. The film presents women in a group situation, collectively learning to do vaginal self-exams with a speculum, breast exams, and vaginal bimanual exams. Such groups are conducted by women who are part of an informal "self-help" or "self-health" movement in the United States; sometimes their work is connected with the home-birth movement and sometimes with pregnancy testing and abortion referral services. As the health care industry grows like a mushroom under capitalism, the general North American public has become more and more aware of the poor quality of the expensive services offered to them. The women in the self-health movement form part of a large, often informally constituted radical movement to improve health care delivery for the masses of people instead of for an elite.

The place where such a self-health session takes place is usually someone's home or a women's center, rather than a medical clinic. In the film Self Health, the locale is a sunny apartment or informal women's meeting place. Although we see two women giving most of the explanations and demonstrations, no one is distinguished as nurse or doctor. As important to the film as the conveying of anatomical information is the fact that all the women discuss together their feelings about and experiences with their bodies and their sexuality, and that they very naturally look at and feel one another's bodies. To gain knowledge by looking at and feeling each other is acknowledged, perhaps for the first time cinematically, as woman's right.

Such a film attacks both the artistic and the medical tradition of viewing women's bodies. These traditions, as

well as the mass media's use of women's image to sell consumer goods, have robbed most women of a real knowledge of both their own and other women's bodies. Furthermore, many women have little personal sense of rightfully possessing their own bodies, little sense of what's "normal" for themselves physically, and little sense of what sexuality on their terms or on women's terms in general might mean.

Doctors, male lovers, photographers, artists, and filmmakers have taken woman's nude body as their "turf," especially as an object of study. John Berger, in his film series and book, Ways of Seeing, has described the tradition of female nudity in oil painting and the presentation of women's bodies in advertising. He understands how the fact that women are "an object of vision, a sight," has affected women's view of themselves: women constantly "survey" themselves to judge how they appear, to try to gain some kind of control over how they might be treated in a circumscribed, patriarchal world.

In the art-form of the European nude, the painters and spectator-owners were usually men, the persons treated as objects, women.... The essential way of seeing women, the essential use to which images are put, has not changed.⁶

In a sequence in Self Health showing one of the women demonstrating how to do a bimanual exam, the women gathered around her express surprise about the "walnut-size" of the uterus and about its location. Medical textbook drawings have traditionally drawn large the female organs associated with reproduction, demonstrating the ideology of that kind of representational art. They show the uterus as big and near the navel, with large fallopian tubes winding around prominent ovaries. The clitoris, until Masters and Johnson's studies, was not "taught" in medical school as women's organ of sexual sensation. Although I was raised in a doctor's family, I faced similar ignorance, for I learned only three years ago--after having a vaginal cyst cauterized without any local anesthesia--what was to me a startling fact, that the vagina has relatively little sensation because it contains few nerve endings. Why, women are asking, has such ignorance about women's sexuality been promoted in our society--especially since both pornography and modern medicine pretend to be so liberal about sex? That so much of the basic physical information conveyed by the film is very new

for women viewers (e.g., the film lets us see the cervix and the os, or the normal sebaceous secretion from the nipple) indicates just how colonized a space women's bodies still are. Self Health goes a long way toward reconquering that space.

Cinematically, the film is characterized by its presentation of women in a collective situation sharing new knowledge about their physical sexuality. About fifteen young women are gathered in a friendly, mundane environment rather than in a clinical white office where the woman patient is completely isolated from her ordinary social context. As the women do breast self-examinations together, they sit around in a circle in what might be a living room; hanging on the wall we see a Toulouse-Lautrec reproduction of a woman. Warm brown-red and pink tones predominate. As the women remove their blouses, we notice them as individuals--some with rings and other jewels, some with glasses, many with different hairstyles. The group is young, they look like students or young working women in flowered peasant blouses and dresses, shirts and jeans. In sum, the colors and the mise-en-scène create a sense of warmth, intimacy, and friendliness.

Even more important to the mise-en-scène is the women's collectivity. Women look at and touch each other; they see their own sexual organs and those of others. They learn the variety of physical types and the range of "normality" in sexual organs in look, color, texture, and feel. For example, they and we notice and let ourselves deliberately look at the variety of women's breasts. The women themselves feel each others' breasts to learn what normal breast tissue is like. Women's breast tissue is fibrous and also varies with the menstrual cycle and the individual; as a result, women often do not know what is normal or what a "lump" might be. A doctor can spot such phenomena from having had the opportunity to feel many women's breasts. Why should such knowledge not be made available to, or seized by, women themselves?

The fact that almost any woman would feel shy and embarrassed about doing such overt exploration is mitigated by these women doing it in a group where everyone feels the same way. The women realize that their fears and doubts about their bodies do not originate from their individual situation as much as from women's physical and psychological colonization. Self Health does not provide an

institutional analysis of the health-care industry, as The Chicago Maternity Center Story does. This limits how much this one film can achieve in directly promoting a different kind of health care for women; yet, because of the wide range of discussion and kinds of challenges to the established order it encourages women to formulate, it is useful in a wide range of women's struggles.

Visually and in terms of its overall structure, the film moves as far away as you can get from pornography, yet the cinematography also captures that kind of nervous tension and excitement of discovery which the women themselves undoubtedly felt. The film opens on a close-up of naked skin, the surface moving to the rhythm of a woman's breathing; there is a pan to a breast and a shot of either pubic or axillary hair in close up. As it starts out, the film could be porn. For most women audience members, the initial sequence provides a moment of tension--"Do we dare to or want to look at this?" The voice-over assures us of what we want to hear: "We're learning from our bodies, teaching ourselves and each other how each of us is unique . . . and the same. . . . We see it as reclaiming lost territory that belonged to our doctors, our husbands, everyone but us." As the title comes on, we hear the excited voices of women speaking all at once, a device also used at the end of the film over the credits. The voices of discovery, talking in a simultaneous outburst of sharing observations, needs and experiences--these are the tension-breaking devices, the part of the film that an audience unfamiliar with such a situation first identifies with. And these voices imply an outburst of discussion that cannot be contained, that begs to be continued after the film is seen.

At one point, a high-angle long shot shows three women lying on the floor against pillows and sleeping bags propped up against the wall. Their legs are spread apart and they are all doing vaginal self-exams with speculum, flashlight, and mirror. A pan shot shows the whole group of women on the floor, lined up along the wall, doing the same thing with some women looking at or helping each other. A mixture of voices exclaims and comments on what they see, especially on the variety and uniqueness of the genitalia. This sequence is a first in narrative cinema in the way it presents women's sexuality. Women occupy the whole space of the frame as subjects in a collective act of mutual, tangible self-exploration. As one of my students said of this sequence, "It has none of the 'Wow!' of Candid Camera and none of the distance of

medical or so-called sex education films." Particularly in this one section of *Self Health*, women filmmakers have found a way to show and define women's sexuality on their terms--not with the thrill of possession and not with objectification, but with the excitement of coming to knowledge.

The anatomy lesson, the sharing of feelings, and the learning about others all have equal importance in the film. Close-ups demonstrate specific examination techniques or show individuals talking and listening; long shots convey the sense of a communal experience in the self-health group. No woman is filmed as an object; everyone is a subject who combines and presents physical, emotional, intellectual, and political selves. The women filmed seem amazingly unconscious about the camera, particularly given the close range at which the filming was done.

Self-health groups and this film itself both function in an explicitly political way. Reclaiming "the lost territory" of women's bodies and health care is a personal act that has a strong effect on women's identity, emotional life, and sense of control. This film also directly attacks the medical establishment. Women who see the film immediately want to talk about two things--sex education and health care--mainly in terms of what patriarchal society lacks.

In one sense, the film is utopian. It shows a new, collective form of women learning together. It would be an ideal film, for example, to show in high schools. But when I showed the film on the university level to women's studies classes and to film students, both sets of students agreed that the idea of such a collective form of learning about sexuality would have been viewed as "pornography" in their high schools, by the teachers, the school boards, and many of the parents. In cinematic terms, the film's vision of women's sexuality, of their being total subjects to one another and to the audience, is also utopian. Women's very physical presence is defined here in women's terms, collectively. And some might ask, in referring to documentary film alone, why haven't these images and these concepts of women's united physical and intellectual selves been presented by filmmakers before?

Feminist Documentaries and the Consciousness-Raising Group

Cinéma vérité documentary filmmaking had features

that made it an attractive and useful mode of artistic and political expression for women learning filmmaking in the late 1960s. It not only demanded less mastery of the medium than Hollywood or experimental film, but also the very documentary recording of women's real environments and their stories immediately established and valorized a new order of cinematic iconography, connotation, and range of subject matter in the portrayal of women's lives. Furthermore, contemporary feminist filmmakers, often making biographical or autobiographical films, have used cinéma vérité in a new and different way. They often identify personally with their subjects. Their relation to that subject while filming often is collaborative, with both subject and filmmaker sharing the project's political goals. The feminist documentarist uses the film medium to convey a new and heightened sense of women's identity, expressed both through the subject's story and through the tangible details of the subject's milieu.

Yet why do so many feminist filmmakers choose to film the same thing? Film after film shows a woman struggling to story to the camera. It is usually a woman struggling to deal with the public world. It seems that these feminist documentarists just plug in different speakers and show a certain variation in milieu--especially in class terms--from the aristocratic home of *Nana*, *Mom And Me* by Amalie Rothschild to the union organizers' photos of their younger days in *Union Maids* by Julia Reichert and Jim Klein. In fact, the feminist documentaries have as a narrative structure a pattern that is as satisfying for activists in the contemporary women's movement to watch as it is for women just wanting to learn more about women. That is, these films evince a consistent organization of narrative materials that functions much like a deep structure, the details of the individual women's lives providing the surface structure of these films.⁷

Such an organization serves a specific social and psychological function at this juncture in history. It is the artistic analogue of the structure and function of the consciousness-raising group. Furthermore, it indicates to the filmmaker a certain reason to be making the film, a certain relation to her subject matter and to the medium, and a certain sense of the function of the film once released. The narrative deep structure sets the filmmaker in a mutual, non-hierarchical relation with her subject (such filming is not seen as the male artist's act of "seizing" the subject and then presenting one's "creation") and indicates what she hopes her relation to her audience will be.⁸

In the consciousness-raising group, self-consciously a group of about a dozen women would reevaluate any and all areas of their past experiences in terms of how that experience defined or illuminated what it meant to be a woman in our culture. It was an act of naming previously unrelated knowledge, of seeing that knowledge as political (i.e., as a way of beginning to change power relations), and of understanding that the power of this knowledge was that it was arrived at collectively. This collective process served to break down a sense of guilt for one's own problems and provided a sense of mutual support. It was and is a political act carried out in the private sphere.

Often such a group elaborates specific strategies to make inroads on, help its individual members enter, and change power relations in the public sphere. They may, for example, discuss tactics for helping one of their members to say no to making coffee at work, or to demand that the department hire a woman in an executive position. They may strive to get gynecological services at a school clinic. They may help a member of the group insist at work that no more clerical staff be hired and that all women be up-graded, which would mean that everyone in the office do both writing and typing. But consciousness-raising groups cannot be idealized as revolutionary structures. Their problems have been well analyzed by women who have used them and learned how much more organization and economic power is needed to make major changes in the public sphere.⁹

In many ways--for feminists and all the rest of the women in the United States--the private sector of society is uniquely women's space. In that private space, the home, middle-class women of my mother's generation were systematically robbed of their sense of being the possessors of their own bodies. Throughout patriarchy, women have been men's possession and the reflection of men's desires in the sexual act, especially in marriage. Mothers are the child-bearers and self-sacrificers, which is the constant theme of soap operas and domestic melodramas in film. The sense of self for women under capitalism has traditionally had to come from their children, home, and clothes. All the physical, peripheral extensions of themselves that they've been allowed to "possess" have been a mock analog of the real patriarchal possession of themselves, their families, and the sources of economic power that they and their families have had to depend on.¹⁰

In testimony to the psychological condition of living

out one's life in a state of mental colonization and in a sphere where one's labor is not rewarded socially by either an equitable salary or public power, many women's narratives are about identity, madness, and the fluidity or fragmentation of woman's ego. Yet the very act of writing a diary, of writing poems, or of consulting a neighbor woman about how to get along when times are hard--all these are testimonies to the struggle women wage to create a language, to formulate a stable sense of self, and to survive economic dependency on men or low-paying jobs. Just as women's domestic labor and ways of relating to each other are disdained, so too their forms of resistance in the domestic sphere tend to go unnoticed and unvalorized in a world where the hegemonic male culture, the public culture, has established the socially acknowledged "rules," appropriated women's bodies, and institutionalized the modes of discourse, especially through the Church, education, literature, the medical profession, the law, and the state.

Because women's identity is shaped and sustained in a sphere where men are largely absent, and because girls grow up in an emotional continuum with their mothers and the other women in their intimate environment (unlike a boy's Oedipal development), their emotional ties to other women are deep.¹¹ Women have traditionally consulted constantly with each other about domestic matters. One of the functions of the consciousness-raising group of the contemporary women's movement is to use in a new way an older form of subcultural resistance, women's conversation. Knowledge is there about domestic life, but it has not necessarily been spoken in uncolonized, women-identified terms. Women's art, especially the feminist documentary films. Like consciousness-raising groups, strives to find a new way of speaking about what we have collectively known to be really there in the domestic sphere and to wrest our identity there in our own terms.

A Shift In Iconography

Much has been lost in women's iconography as it has been purveyed in films, advertising, and television. We have, in fact, maintained a rich photographic history of women over the last hundred years, yet this source is not tapped in its richness and variety in patriarchal narrative film. For example, the women that Dorothea Lange photographed do not "speak" to us either visually or verbally in mainstream cinema.

In the United States in the early 1900s, many strikes were led by working women dressed in their best clothes and striding down city streets arm in arm. Why did that iconography get lost?

In the cinematic portrayal of contemporary life, we must question how the details of child-rearing, women's crafts, service work, subsistence agriculture, and women's intellectual endeavors are or are not presented in films, news, or ads. We rarely see media images that match the variety of clothes women wear in daily life, women's varieties of weight and age and tone of voice or accent, and women's varieties of gesture according to their mood and the specific moment in their lives. The patriarchal visual iconography of female figures in film includes the following: mother, child, virago, granny (variant, old maid), ingenue, good wife, and siren. Good wives are blonde, sirens dark-haired; erotically eligible figures of both sexes are slender and not yet old. An occasional comic figure escapes the classification by body type. Women's gestures in cinema are rigidly codified, and women characters, *mise-en-scène* predetermined by the connotative requirements of previously established narrative conventions.

There are both psychological and economic reasons why the domestic world is devalued in our culture.¹² It is rarely seen or interpreted by hegemonic patriarchal culture for what it is and contains, and its elements are named and defined primarily within the context of a seemingly powerless women's subculture. The domestic sphere, except in melodrama, is rarely depicted in film as an interesting place or the locus of socially significant, multiple, interpersonal relationships. Rather, the domestic sphere is the place where a woman is possessed and a man possesses a woman; a man's castle; a place that the woman runs. Feature films often judge the woman in the home as narrow, as having a stance morally inferior to the male protagonist's commitment to public duty, or home many become the projection backward to the security and presumed moral strength of the mother, which the man regains through his alliance with a good wife. The home lies out of history; cinematic heroes go out into the public sphere to do whatever it is that makes them the hero.

Connotative elements in cinema--here the connotative aspect of film's portrayal of the domestic sphere--are shaped both according to a film's narrative and to what people already know and have seen and experienced. ¹³ What the

elements of the domestic sphere suggest is already conventionalized, already thought about before it gets in a film. But traditional filmmaking has drawn very narrowly even from the pool of conventional knowledge about domestic life.

One of the self-appointed tasks of contemporary feminist art is to articulate, expand, and comment on women's own subcultural codification of the connotations of those visual elements and icons familiar to them in their private sphere. Thus, painter Judy Chicago paints "Cent" flowers, and other artists, notably sculptors, have elaborated sculptures or artifacts of paper crafts, sewing, quilting, feathers, enclosed spaces and cubicles, and family photos, such materials being used for the suggestive value they bear from the domestic sphere.

For feminist writers and filmmakers, autobiography and biography provide an essential tool for looking in a self-conscious way at women's subculture, their subordinate role in or exclusion from the public sphere, their fantasy life, in their sense of "embeddedness" in a certain object world. In other words, autobiography and biography become the way both back and forward toward naming and describing what woman really is, in that political and artistic act that Adrienne Rich calls "diving into the wreck."

Feminist films look at familiar women's elements to define them in a new, uncolonized way. Among the connotative elements to which feminist documentaries draw our attention and give an added complexity are the visual cues that define womanliness in film. The women characters' gestures, clothes, age, weight, sexual preference, race, class, and embeddedness in a specific social milieu elicit our reflection on both the specificity of the subjects' lives and our own, and on the difference between these cinematic representations and those of dominant cinema. As a result of these films, a much broader range of and more forceful and complex women characters now engage our interest as cinematic subjects, and they are shown doing a wider range of activities in greater detail than ever before in narrative cinema. The biographical documentary serves as a critique of and antidote to past cinematic depictions of women's lives and women's space.

In the film *Self Health*, two whole areas of visual imagery are challenged: the portrayal of women's sexuality and nudity, and health care. Domestic space in this film becomes the locus for a collective coming to knowledge

about women's bodies and simultaneously the locus for a new kind of health care delivery. The Chicago Maternity Center Story, contrasting home delivery with hospital care, valorizes the same iconic contrasts: health care at home is more "human."

Talking Heads/New Rules Of The Game

The visual portrayal of the women in "realist" feminist documentaries is often criticized for its transparency (film's capturing reality) or for the visual dullness of talking heads. Yet the stories that the filmed women tell are not just "slices of experience." These stories serve a function aesthetically in reorganizing women viewers' expectations derived from patriarchal narratives and in initiating a critique of those narratives. The female figures talking to us on the screen in Janie's Janie, Joyce at 34, Union Maids, Three Lives, The Woman's Film, and We're Alive are not just characters whom we encounter as real-life individuals. Rather, the filmmakers have clearly valorized their subjects' words and edited their discourse. In all the feminist documentaries, the sound track, usually told in the subjects' own words, serves the function of rephrasing, criticizing, or articulating for the first time the rules of the game as they have been and as they should be for women.

The sound track of the feminist documentary film often consists almost entirely of women's self-conscious, heightened, intellectual discussion of role and sexual politics. Received notions about women give way to an outpouring of real desires, contradictions, decisions, and social analyses. After I showed Kate Millett's Three Lives to an introductory film class in 1972, a woman student came up to me gratefully after class and commented, "I'll bet that's the first time a lot of those guys have had to sit and listen uninterruptedly to women talking for ninety minutes. I wonder what it means to them to listen to women without having a chance to butt in and have their say."

More than what it means for men to listen to women's self-consciously told "stories," what has it meant for us women in the course of the contemporary women's movement--what have we learned? We have learned what our sexuality is, how mothers can hate and need and love their children, how we can tell off a boss or a lover or a friend or a sexist fool, how "it's not our fault," and where our

personal struggles are located in and contribute to and are supported by the larger forces that define our historical period. These "realist" documentary films both depict and encourage a politicized "conversation" among women; and in these films, the self-conscious act of telling one's story as a woman in a politicized yet personal way gives the older tool of women's subcultural resistance, conversation, a new social force as a tool for liberation.

The Experimental Films

JoAnn Elam's Rape represents perhaps a new trend in feminist documentaries. Coming out of an experimental film tradition, Elam uses both Brechtian intertitles and a symbolic iconography intercut with a video transfer of a conversation she taped with rape victims one night in the apartment of one of the women. The women's conversation forms the sound track of the film, and Elam both heightens and comments wittily on their points by repeating some of their lines in the intertitles. The film is an angry one that elaborates a whole new film style adequate to treating the subject of rape with neither titillation nor pathos. The women filmed are impassioned and intellectual. They are discussing their experiences with the group's support and within the security of domestic space; most of them are political activists in organizations against rape, and all saw the making of the film as an explicitly public act.

Rape rejects voyeurism and pathos. It rejects showing women as powerless. The women dare to speak the unspeakable, to restore to themselves their own identity, and to attack those cultural and economic institutions which make rape likely and those legal institutions which oppress the victim.

The meeting takes place in one woman's living room. It is woman's " turf." Visually, the videotaped milieu conveys a sense of solidarity and security as the women sit around, in a circle talking. The videocamera was passed around, and a number of women did the filming, so we cannot identify the filmmaker in that group. There is a sense of warmth and enclosure. The women constantly interact as equals. The filmmaker's relation to her subject is participatory and non-hierarchical. The entire form of the film as well as Elam's participation in that group reveal her identification with and enhancement of the group's analysis rather

than the more typical male filmmaker's "domination" of a difficult subject presented as a tour de force to an admiring world.

The Ideology Of Rape

Elam's cinematic technique, her relation to both subject and audience, and her non-voyeuristic depiction of rape all work in an original way to combat what Susan Brownmiller in *Against Our Will* has called "the ideology of rape."¹⁴ This ideology is a main support of patriarchy, and it is especially visible in cinema.

Usually a "sympathetic" depiction of rape on film presents the victim in terms of pathos, horror, or individual tragedy. In such a case, the audience response may be one of both titillation and catharsis. Both males and females in the audience may respond--for different reasons--with a reaction such as this: "She's dead and beautiful and out there. Lucky it's not me." Either as titillation or catharsis or both, such a response has an adverse social effect in that it serves to limit people's capacity for self-awareness and their impulse to effect social change.

Far worse are the movies where women cry rape or enjoy rape, or movies where a sexual act inflicted by force is ultimately enjoyed. These film portrayals treacherously reinforce the prevalent social myths about rape that are enacted in the legal system of most countries in the world. These myths make the victim the one who must prove that she is not guilty. They include: "All women want to be raped. She asked for it. A woman shouldn't bring up the fact of having been raped as a public statement but should hide it as a shame." Such myths encourage violence against women, indeed make it legal, as in the British Supreme Court decision to free two men who violently raped a woman; in this case, the court ruled that because the woman's husband told the rapists that forceful sexual relations only excited her all the more, the two men could not have known that they were committing an act of rape.

How cinema perpetuates an ideology of rape is far more complicated than the way it depicts actual rapes. An attitude of contempt for women is often inescapably built into a film.¹⁵ This is especially true of a film that shows violence being done to a woman, but it is the case with

many other films as well. Woman as victim, woman as object, woman getting fucked, woman getting shot, woman's body as object of public contemplation (only "beautiful" when young, of course)--all these are the staple of narrative cinema and of television as we know it.

Feminist film theorists have currently undertaken the massive task of explaining the mechanisms of how cinema both directly and indirectly oppresses women. Much of this analysis is from a psychoanalytic perspective. Thus, according to Pam Cook and Claire Johnston, women in film, especially fictional film, are generally used as markers in a male fantasy.¹⁶ In their roles, costumes, and ways of being filmed, women in patriarchal narrative film have functioned primarily as fetishized objects of desire, objects that are really feared. According to this psychoanalytic perspective, such a use of the female figure derives from the original male oedipal fear of a lack or castration, an overwhelming Other that may swallow him up, an Other whose traits he must suppress in himself as the locus of power, the male. In his adult life, to possess or desire the woman, not as she is but as he imagines her, guarantees to the man that he is a man.¹⁷ In a similar vein, in a study of the oppressive mechanisms of voyeurism in narrative cinema, Laura Mulvey describes the figure of woman as "an indispensable element of spectacle" in narrative film, where woman functions both "as erotic object for the characters within the screen story and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium."¹⁸

However, the relations of a woman audience member to that voyeurism, to looking at beautiful or suffering women characters in film, is more complex than men's and has not been adequately analyzed.¹⁹ It probably involves a mixture of pleasure, identity, and distance. For example, in watching narrative cinema I can, and in fact usually do, identify with both the male protagonist from whose perspective the story is told and whose values are explored, and also with the beautiful women whom he loves. I can be both Bogart and Bacall. However, although women viewers do not have the same psychological predisposition to view female images as male viewers do, in almost every film they see, women viewers are forced to respond to female images in films, both the minor characters and the "stars," through the filter of patriarchal artistic concerns and conventions.

It is precisely because Joan M. Elam challenges both

patriarchal film content and the conventions with which women and the topic of rape have been filmed that Rape is important, especially to women. In watching this film, viewers must respond in a specifically political way to the facts of women's oppression, and they are also led to reflect on the cinematic treatment of that oppression. In this way, Elam's feminist cinema leads viewers to challenge what they had taken for granted before, especially the treatment of women in film.

Rape

The visual track of Rape consists of three types of footage: a kinescoped videotaped conversation among a group of rape victims and the filmmaker, handwritten intertitles (white on a black background), and symbolic illustrations--filmed in 16mm--of the concepts discussed by the women on the sound track. For the women who met this one time to speak to each other and to make a film, this filmed discussion meant for each of them a coming to knowledge, a healing, a reaffirming of their right to inhabit their own bodies and most intimate selves.

While there is no story line or narrative development in the film, there is a deliberate progression from the women's telling of victimization--by both rapists and the legal system--to an analysis of rape culture, to an indication of possible collective action. For example, the group discusses the ordinary strategies women adopt when going out in the public sphere. These involve paranoia, disguise, and conforming to social expectations about women's roles--e.g., stay at home or go out only with a man or look like you are expecting a man to meet you any minute--none of which has guaranteed women safety. There is also a sensitive discussion of class and racism, as the women (who are all white) respond honestly to these issues in terms of their own lived experience. The group arrives at a political analysis through this one evening's group interaction, which, in fact, is the political analysis of rape that Elam presents in her film.

The visual image of the conversation is that of a grainy video transfer, with foreground and background collapsed. The low resolution of the image plus the "unprofessional" framing as the participants pass the video camera around from one to the other de-dramatizes the stories that

the women have to tell. Pathos and personality are so minimized that often the viewer cannot remember which person had had which rape experience or took which political stance. The group finally is remembered as speaking with one voice. For political reasons, Elam clearly has eschewed any portrayal of a tragic individual. She films no one with sculpted lighting and shows no acts of rape and no women breaking down in tears. The women's "stories" are experienced only in a situation of collective sharing and protest.

The sound track, the women's conversation, sets the pace of the film. Elam intercuts the video image with symbolic filmed material and Brechtian-style titles which serve to heighten and make memorable what the women say. The viewer must respond to the film politically. There is no other way to deal with the women presented in the film except in the intellectual and analytical way in which they deal with themselves. In particular, the symbolic sequences force an intellectual response. I use the term "symbolic" here to refer to a constructed relation between thing filmed and topic signified in a particular sequence.²⁰ Elam's visual symbolism is reminiscent of the post-'68 Godard/Gorin films. For it is combined with Brechtian-style intertitles which "explain" or anchor the signification of the concepts expressed explicitly on the sound track. As with Brechtian distancing devices, this 16mm filmed material provides an intellectual wit which expands the resonance of the film and also raises our political understanding of what we see and hear. For example, toward the end of the film, Elam inserts an intertitle which lists potential solutions and collective actions that have been taken by women against rape. The intertitle passes by too quickly for it to be absorbed as a worked-out formula to end rape. Rather, it suggests areas for discussion that the film as a whole opens up, indicating ways women might act, rather than ways women must act. The inserted material, both intertitles and symbolic sequences, suggests an analysis but leaves it up to the audience to make the connections for themselves.

Sometimes the cinematic technique has an evocative effect deriving from the simplicity of the image or from the editing and camera movement. Elam's panning across the tops of skyscrapers and court buildings (to represent institutional male power) elicits a sense of paranoia and claustrophobia because of the visceral response it evokes. Other times, Elam uses a *vérité*-type of on-the-street filming. She combines here a number of shots of women

walking, or men's glances, or people walking together. She edits these shots so as to bring out their most salient common feature (i.e., "woman walking down city street"), but she uses a "spontaneous" filming style to demonstrate the real threat women face in public situations and their constant awareness when walking down the street that they could be harassed at any time. You could, the film implies, film scenes like that on any city street on any given day.

To break tension and to make political points in a witty, memorable way, she flashes on at various times a shot of a screw, a pigeon (meaning women are sitting ducks), or columns which are carved into figures of grinning women (meaning women are the pillars of society). She also uses humorous images of classical painting, showing unhappy or beheaded wives. The images of classical art, especially a painting of the rape of the Sabine women, a statue of a man abducting a woman at sword's point, and a Minerva-type goddess with arms upraised represent a number of concepts--women's traditional roles, the constraints placed on women, and what happens when they confront men or social institutions. These images are used in different combinations with the other symbolic images in a carefully crafted way to evoke the precise kinds of complexities and contradictions that affect or have a bearing on the situation the women are talking about on the sound track in voice-off.

Some of the symbolic sequences are more complex than a one-to-one equation of image with idea. For example, in the children's games, which broadly symbolize "the battle of the sexes," the audience has to attend to the switches in who is chasing whom--the boys or the girls. Certain visual sequences depict an extended metaphor, in particular a hand game where a man's hands hit and grab a woman's hands. Another time we see a hand moving a glass of water around rapidly while a person's hand, with forefinger extended, tries to stick a finger in the glass. Here the women's voices on the sound track discuss how hostile judges have used this very trick to prove to a jury that a woman could never be forced to have sex against her will.

Elam's visual style in both the filmed 16mm inserts and in the video-taped sequences of the women partly derives from a tradition in U.S. experimental filmmaking that is in opposition to mainstream documentary and feature film style. The "home-movie" experimentation of the New

American Cinema movement is characterized not only by spontaneous filming done in the filmmaker's own milieu, but also by a hand-held camera and a seeming lack of concern for the "rules" of narrative cinematography. Thus, in *Rape*, we often face seemingly erratic camera movement, horizon line askew, or unpredictable kinds of visual repetition. Such a visual style originally functioned as a cheap form of filmmaking and as a protest against the aesthetic structures of commercial film. Even now, because audiences are generally unfamiliar with this type of cinematography, it may be perceived as crude or inept.

Here, in fact, such a style serves a political purpose. Elam has striven to create new cinematic tactics for exploring and explicitly analyzing the topic of rape without being co-opted into using that subject matter for visual voyeuristic pleasure. Furthermore, the intellectual and symbolic nature of her style makes a statement about the women being filmed and makes demands on the audience. The women filmed and the film itself are angry, intellectual, and politically aware. The responses to the visual symbolism must be analytical. The imagery never evokes a feeling, "How tragic!" "How sad!"

The major way in which Elam proceeds from the consciousness-raising filmed conversation to a useful public statement about and attack on rape--to forging a real teaching tool, if you will--is through the intertitles. Some of these are summary statements; they usually follow the mention of a theme or concept by one of the women on the sound track. Often the intertitles define the symbolism of the inserted filmed sequences. More often, they are heavily ironic, underscoring the false consciousness and everyday assumptions that are the major prop of rape ideology. Such assumptions make rape not only a "thinkable" act for the rapist, but for both the rapist and the non-rapist these assumptions reaffirm and institutionalize the notion of men's social and personal right of access to the female body. Some of these titles include the following: "say yes and consciousness of which I hope will be obvious: 'say yes and mean no'; 'you're so cute when you're mad'; 'it's because they like you'; 'victim precipitation'; 'she claims that she was raped'; 'the woman behind the man'; and 'it's your burden in society to say no.'" Other times words such as myth or ravish are used with their dictionary--i.e., patriarchal--definition. There are repeated shots of the Illinois rape statute's definition of rape. Frequently, the intertitles

Interitles from JoAnn Elam's film, Rape

TEROR--a state of intense fear caused by the systematic use of violent means by a party or faction to maintain itself in power:

Rape is a perfect example of control.

go out and do it again

They think that rape is just a simple screw.

male supremacy

Rapists do not differ from ordinary men.

motivation

women are vulnerable

legal system

consensual intercourse

justified sexual assault

felonious gallantry

assault with failure to please

rape is socially sanctioned

Men think that women want to be raped.

They just do it to be pricks.

They just have a ball.

That's not treating me like a human being.

take it out on someone

You get to a point where you can't stand to live

that way.

express women's anger and the resolution expressed in the titles, as well as the political analysis the titles provide, bring great satisfaction to women viewers. I have seen the anger expressed by the titles divide the audience, as Brecht said a good political film should do, along class lines--in this case along feminist lines. Women in the audience usually respond more vehemently and to different issues than male viewers do; and I've had women students call one title "realistic"--"telling it the way it is," while male students characterized the same title as "polemical" or "rhetorical." Elam validates women's anger in this film by raising it to a conceptual level in which that anger becomes part of the most appropriate political response.²¹

The film does not have a beginning, middle or end. There is a process of moving from a personal to an institutional analysis and of ending on a sense (not an answer) of what is to be done and what steps women can take. The

film cannot be either received or remembered like a story. There isn't a main point or event that was led up to, no chain of inevitable cause and effect. Women exploring issues of rape--or indeed of the larger, complex subject of their sexuality and their relation to their bodies--need something beyond stories where either something good happens (the woman is "won"; she finds Mr. Right) or something bad (the woman gets raped or shot; woman is vanquished). Elam's film opens on to women's experience in a new way by its very eschewal of a story form. The only "story" is what the group explored in a social act of affirming its members' identity and of fighting rape and the factors that cause rape. After seeing the film, the viewer will remember little about the characters, who are neither cinematically beautiful nor tragic. We will remember snatches of the told experience, some of the titles, and some of the symbolic filmed sequences. The film has forced us to witness women speaking the unspoken, and the film itself is a rare cinematic act in making the unspoken speakable. It shows women in a community of women breaking through guilt, isolation, silence, and alienation from self. The women depicted in the film and the filmmaker's own style create a sense of women as intellectuals and social actors. They are doing--even in the act of conversation--rather than waiting, suffering, and sacrificing, which are patriarchy's notions of women's roles. Elam uses the film to examine and attack oppressive ideological structures and to reinforce women's sense of just outrage and their capacity to act. It is an intellectual film that has a role to play in helping women forge both their own identities and a more equitable world.

Contribution To Public Struggle

The feminist documentaries speak to working women, encourage them in their public struggles, and broaden their horizons to make demands in other spheres as well. To define structures of patriarchy is as important to women workers as to define structures of capitalism. Existential or gut-level militancy becomes refined by a political movement as the movement offers an analysis and provides a way to see both parameters and details within the struggle as a whole. Yet because of male competitiveness, aggressiveness and bluff are not skills women usually learn as children (and many women do not necessarily want to learn these tactics as adults either); the women's movement seeks to create new structures to facilitate women's entry into the

public sphere of work and power, and to make that public sphere one they would want to inhabit.

Clearly, the powerless will want power, especially once they define specifically the ways they have systematically been robbed of it. But women also want to imagine what the power would be if executed in a form commensurate with feminist goals. Although it is seemingly filmed in domestic space, Self Health is a powerful public document in the model for sex education and the vision of collective, community control that it presents. And its sense of women together, coming to (creating, seizing) knowledge, is subversive.

The realist feminist documentaries represent a use of, yet a shift in, the aesthetics of cinéma vérité, due to the feminist filmmakers' close identification with their subjects, participation in the women's movement, and sense of the films' intended effect. The structure of the consciousness-raising group becomes the deep structure repeated over and over in these films. Within such a narrative structure, either a single woman tells her story to the filmmaker or a group of women are filmed sharing experiences in a politicized way. They are filmed in domestic space and their words serve to redefine that space in a new, "woman-identified" way. Either the stance of the people filmed or the stance of the film as a whole reflects a commitment to changing the public sphere as well, and for this reason, these filmmakers have used an accessible documentary form. In the "surface structure" of the films, a new iconography of women's bodies and women's space emerges that implicitly challenges the general visual depiction of women in capitalist society, perhaps in many socialist ones, too. The sound tracks have women's voices speaking continuously; and the films' appeal lies not only in having strong women tell about their lives but even more in our hearing and having demonstrated that some women have deliberately altered the rules of the game of sexual politics. All cinéma vérité is not the same, and much of the current discussion of and attack on the cinematic realism dismisses the kind of documentary film style that most people are used to.

Both realist and experimental documentary forms have been politicized by feminist filmmakers who see their work as coming out of and having an audience in the women's movement. And in return, the exigencies, methods, and forms of organization within that ongoing political

movement have profoundly affected the aesthetics of documentary film.

Notes

- 1 Portions of this essay appeared as "The Political Aesthetics of Feminist Documentary Film," Quarterly Review of Film Studies, Fall, 1978; and "Disarming Film Rape," Jump Cut, No. 19 (December 1978).
- 2 For a theoretical discussion of feminist consciousness-raising, see Catherine A. McKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory," in Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology, ed. Nannerl O. Keohano, Michelle Z. Rosaldo, and Barbara Gelp (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
- 3 Many of the feminist documentaries (I have given only a representative list of them) are described briefly in Linda Artel and Susan Wengraf's Positive Images: Non-Sexist Films for Young People (San Francisco: Booklegger Press, 1976). Interviews with feminist filmmakers often appear alongside reviews of their films in Jump Cut. And Patricia Erens' Sexual Stratagems (New York: Horizon, 1979) contains an extensive filmography of both fictional and documentary films by women.
- 4 For a discussion of realism in painting, see Realism by Linda Nochlin (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972); for an analysis of these issues in film, see Realism and the Cinema, ed. Christopher Williams (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).
- 5 An activist in health care struggles criticizes the political analyses offered in feminist health-care films in Marcia Rothenberg's "Good Vibes vs. Preventive Medicine: Healthcare from Our End of the Speculum," Jump Cut, No. 17 (April, 1978), p. 3.
- 6 John Berger, Ways of Seeing (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), pp. 63-64.

- 7 Such an idea loosely derives from the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss in Structural Anthropology, trans. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1967).

8 Cinéma vérité films in the United States made by male filmmakers are characterized precisely by the film's ironic distance from the subject and the filmmaker's presentation of his vision of the subject as his "creation." Films by Frederick Wiseman, Richard Leacock, Don Pennebaker, Tom Palazzolo, and the Maysles brothers fall in this category.

- 9 For an extended discussion of consciousness-raising groups, see Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: David McKay, 1975).

10 For an overview of the discussion of these issues in Marxist, feminist, and anti-racist terms, see Michelle Barrett, Women's Oppression Today (London: Verso, 1980); and Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis, Common Differences: Conflicts in Black and White Feminist Perspectives (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1981).

- 11 Nancy Chodorow, "Mothering, Object-Relations and the Female Oedipal Configuration," Feminist Studies, 4, No. 1, (February 1978); "Family Structure and Feminine Personality," Woman, Culture and Society, Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974); "Oedipal Asymmetries and Heterosexual Knots," Social Problems, 23, No. 4 (April 1976)

12 Sheila Rowbotham, Woman's Consciousness, Man's World (Baltimore: Penguin, 1973); Eli Zaretsky, Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life (New York: Harper, 1976); Juliet Mitchell, Woman's Estate (New York: Pantheon, 1971).

- 13 Lesage, "S/Z and Rules of the Game," Jump Cut, No. 12/13 (1976).

14 Susan Brownmiller, Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape (New York: Bantam, 1976). A further analysis of intercourse itself as reflective of the same power relations that Brownmiller sees operating in pornography can be found in Ti-Grace Atkinson's perceptive

and witty essay, "The Institution of Sexual Intercourse," Amazon Odyssey (New York: Link Books, 1971). To quote Atkinson: "The argument goes something like this: man has a sexual instinct, and we know this because men like to have sexual intercourse so much. Since male desire for sexual intercourse is not determined by the recipient, it must be the activity itself which is desired. The activity is defined essentially as the penetration by the penis into the vagina. But the man may have an intense experience, called orgasm, caused by some activity of his own within the particular environment of the vagina. The completion of his experience, or orgasm, is indicated by certain signs, e.g., ejaculation. This experience has been judged by society to be pleasurable [in a similar way for both men and women]." (p. 17)

15 See Barbara Halpern, Martineau's "Documenting the Patriarchy: Chinatown" in Women and the Cinema, Eds. Karyn Kay and Gerald Peary (New York: Dutton, 1977); originally in Jump Cut No. 3, September-October 1974. Martineau examines the ideological implications of reviews of Chinatown which ignore the violence done to the female protagonist, ignoring "the fact that while the male star only gets his nose slit open, the female star gets shot through the eye."

16 See especially Pam Cook and Claire Johnston's analysis of Mante Stover in "The Place of Women in the Cinema of Raoul Walsh," Raoul Walsh, Ed. Phil Harvey (London: Vineyard Press, 1974). Also Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Countercinema," Notes on a Women's Cinema, Screen Pamphlet No. 2, 1974.

17 For a psychoanalytic discussion of these issues see Susan Lurie, "Portraiture and the Dread of Women," Take Back the Night, ed. Laura Lederer (New York: William Morrow, 1980); Jessica Benjamin, "The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination"; Feminist Studies, 6, No. 1 (Spring 1980); Ethel Spector Person, "Sexuality as the Mainstay of Identity," Signs, 5, No. 4 (1980).

18 Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen, 16, No. 3 (Fall 1976); reprinted in Women and the Cinema.

19 This paragraph reflects a discussion between feminist literary and film critics in "Women and Film: A

Discussion of Feminist Aesthetics," *New German Critique*, No. 13 (Winter 1976). For a useful discussion of these issues, see Gertrud Koch, "Why Women Go to the Movies," tr. Marc Silberman, *Jump Cut*, No. 27 (July 1982); Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1982); Ann Barr Shiltow, "Mass Market Romance," *Radical History Review*, 20 (Spring-Summer, 1979); Linda Williams, "Women in Love: Personal Best," *Jump Cut*, No. 27 (July 1982); Chris Strayer, "The Lesbian/Feminist Audience and Personal Best," *Jump Cut*, No. 29 (Fall 1983).

20 I draw here on Peter Wollen's application of Charles Pierce's semiotic categories--icon, index, and symbol--to cinema. "A symbolic sign demands neither resemblance to its object (the definition of icon) nor any existential bond with it (the definition of index). It is conventional and has the force of law." *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 123.

21 In showing the film I have encountered two types of negative responses, worth mentioning here. Some viewers find the film visually crude, either because they are hostile to the use of video transfer in experimental filmmaking, or because they do not like a film style that differs from TV documentaries. Another negative response, and it is often combined with the above response as a "cover," comes from those who do not want to look at rape in both personal and political terms and who thus reject the type of response insisted on by both the style and the content of Elam's film.

As a friend of the filmmaker and as a critic trying to establish a broader audience for women's films, I have shown *Rape* in women's studies classes, film classes, and film conferences, and also had it shown to women and police staff working in the area of rape. "Naive" audiences do not seem to have much difficulty with the formal innovations; film students either like its experimental strategies or find it lacking in production values; people in rape-crisis work either accept or argue with its politics. Often this last group is looking for a film that would serve as an organizing tool in a specific anti-rape campaign. *Rape's* open-ended form and

symbolic sequences make it suitable for starting discussions, but it is not prescriptive in terms of strategy and tactics.

Rape may be rented from Canyon Cinema Cooperative, 2325 Third Street, Suite 338. San Francisco, CA 94107 (415/332-1514) or Film-Makers' Co-operative, 175 Lexington Avenue, New York NY 10011 (212/884-3820); in Canada, D.E.C. Films, 121 Avenue Road, Toronto, Ontario, M5R 2G3 (416/964-6901); in England, The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WC2 H7J. Rental charge--\$35; Purchase price--\$250. For purchase apply to the filmmaker JoAnn Elam, PO Box 41864, Chicago, IL 60641.

Self Health is directed by Catherine Allan, Judy Eroia, *Allie Light*, and Joan Musante. Made in 1974, it's in 16mm, 23 minutes, color. Rental from Multi-Media Resource Center, 1525 Franklin Street, San Francisco, CA 94109 (415/673-5100).