



INCOMPLETE

**THE FEMINIST
POSSIBILITIES
OF THE
UNFINISHED FILM**

EDITED BY

ALIX BEESTON & STEFAN SOLOMON



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*The Feminist Possibilities of the
Unfinished Film*

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Pathways to the Feminist Incomplete

An Introduction, a Theory, a Manifesto

ALIX BEESTON AND STEFAN SOLOMON

We could begin in the living room of *ESFIR*, a 16mm film made in 2020 by Cynthia Madansky. Within its paint-stripped walls, five young women are set in motion by minor rituals and routines (figure 0.1). One woman gets up from her chair, goes to one of the windows, and selects three roses from an assortment of plants on the sill. Gathering them together, she moves to the center of the room and lays the little bouquet on a table. At the other window, meanwhile, another woman takes up a cloth and scrubs the glass, before walking the length of the space to dust the steps of a ladder in its corner. She crosses the room again and puts down the cloth; reaching her arms above her head, she interlaces her fingers, stretching toward the ceiling.

One woman paces back and forth for a while, her heels beating time on the bare floorboards. One sits at a desk, shuffling mail, cups, other small objects. One perches on the ladder and flicks through an album of photographs. Skirting the furniture as well as one another, the women are consumed in their tasks, and they never look directly at each other. Yet their actions are no less purposeful, or coordinated, for their air of improvisation. After the woman lays the roses on the table, another woman soon picks them up, arranging them in a vase; papers get passed from one pair of hands to another; again and again, the women swap places as they track incomplete, iterated circuits of the room. The tableau keeps its equilibrium in static long shot through this incidental choreography, this choreography of incident.



FIGURE 0.1 The group of women prepare the room at the opening of Cynthia Madansky's *ESFIR* (2020). Image courtesy of the artist.

The women are preparing for something—but for what? Or for whom? A provisional space, separated from another by a gauzy white curtain and full of moveable objects—chairs to flowers, papers to dust—the room resembles what it is: a film set. Which is perhaps to call housework a kind of stagecraft, or filmmaking a kind of hospitality. Figuring the material conditions of her own work through the women's shared, quasi-domestic labor, Madansky makes arrangements for the film we're watching, the film we're about to watch. But she also makes arrangements for a film that has never been made and that isn't exactly being made now. For *ESFIR* is an interpretation of an unrealized film titled "Women," conceived between 1932 and 1934 by the Soviet filmmaker Èsfir' Shub.

"I want to make a film about women to demonstrate that only the proletarian revolution, the new conditions of labour, the new social practice completely closes the account of the history of 'the women's question.'"¹ Shub's words, from a 1933 article describing the aims and methods of her project, interrupt *ESFIR*'s housekeeping (filmkeeping) at intervals, given in a Russian voiceover and translated to English on inter-



FIGURE 0.2 The kitchen-table reading of Èsfir' Shub's screenplay "Women" in *ESFIR*. Image courtesy of the artist.

titles. After its opening scenes, the long middle section of Madansky's film is composed of portraits of four women in various cities in Russia and Siberia. Yet while these portraits loosely follow the model Shub devised for her film—in which particular women's lives, their struggles and their hopes, were to represent the experiences of the modern woman in the Soviet Union and her liberation from class oppression and sexual objectification under the Bolsheviks—*ESFIR* preserves "Women" as an unfinished project, poignant in its failure as well as its promise. Not realizing Shub's film, not completing it, Madansky's work enacts *and* disrupts Shub's plans. Occupying a register of feeling vastly different to the many rejections Shub's proposals received from film industry officials in Moscow in the 1930s, it entails a kind of refusal nonetheless.²

The script will always be unmade by Shub, an object lesson in the exigencies of all film work—and, indeed, of the gendered valences of cinematic (un)production, along with the histories we tell of the same. Is it for this reason that *ESFIR* concludes with a table reading of Shub's scenario? Four of the women who once rearranged the living room now sit, sharing a pot of tea, at a table crammed into a narrow kitchen

(figure 0.2). They take turns reading excerpts from Shub’s script, beginning and ending with its opening scene, a montage of female figures drawn from painting, film, and news media. The treatment of “Women” opens with a parade of “multi-colored Madonnas, Venuses, Gretchens, and Susannas,” portraits framed with the question, “What is a woman, this sphinx, this riddle of a century?”³ By contrast, *ESFIR* closes with this question, its answer endlessly deferred. Reading the scenario, the women make further preparations for a film that is both past and future, never quite present. We might even say that they await the arrival of Shub herself, a guest who won’t show up.

Like the script’s relation to the complete film it imagines—the script as itself an open question, an invitation that elicits no response—*ESFIR* is somehow precursory to the unrealized project that inspires it. Still, as the women pause from their reading, pick up their pens, and scrawl notes we can’t read on the papers lying before them on the dining table, *ESFIR* evinces historical incompleteness as rich potential, as raw materials for contemporary film practice—not to mention film scholarship.

• • •

Or we could make a different beginning—a beginning that is also an ending, or many endings—in a different place and time. In downtown Portland, Oregon, in the summer of 1996, Miranda July juggled a tape recorder and a camera, approaching women and girls on the street with a simple question: “If you could make a movie, what would it be about?” July typed up the answers and compiled twenty-four of them in a large black-and-white poster, four feet long, two feet wide (figure 0.3). Above the responses she pasted mug shots of the interviewees, grainy or oversaturated images that do and do not identify their subjects. Passing judgment on Hollywood fare for being sexist or racist or simply boring, the imagined movies cast women in new guises, revising the archetypes of mother or action star—or even, in one case, taking on the wider cultural logic that produces these archetypes. An anonymous woman describes a movie about “the double standard. You know how men can do whatever and women are, excuse my language, their sluts and whores.” As the cars pass behind her, she smiles into the camera, an air of defiance conveyed by her up-tilted chin.

The Missing Movie Report announces that crimes have been committed and are being committed still. These movies go missing before they’ve been made; they go missing *because* they’re not made. Often it’s the simplicity and clarity of these notional productions, patterned after the lives

THE MISSING MOVIE REPORT 6-10-96

IF YOU COULD MAKE A MOVIE WHAT WOULD IT BE ABOUT?

The collage features numerous small portraits of people, each accompanied by a short text box. The text boxes contain questions and answers related to the 'Missing Movie Report'. The questions are often variations of 'If you could make a movie, what would it be about?' and the answers are creative and varied, ranging from 'I'd make a movie about a person who is a genius but is also a criminal' to 'I'd make a movie about a person who is a genius but is also a criminal'. The text boxes are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some overlapping. The overall layout is a dense collection of small images and text.

THE BEST MOVIES OF 1996 WILL NEVER BE MADE. BUT THAT'S NOT A REASON TO FORGET ABOUT THEM.
FOR MORE INFO VISIT: THE RED PINE PENNOLA PROJECT P.O. BOX 14287 PORTLAND OR 97214

FIGURE 0.3 Miranda July, *The Missing Movie Report* (1996), *Joanie & Jackie* records. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2016.M.20) © Miranda July.

of those who conceive them, which gives the strongest indictment of the commercial US film industry and its narrow range of subjects. Mauria, fifteen years old, would make a movie “about what it’s like to be a young gay woman.” Lisa Boyd would make one “about having a child when I was really young.” Eva Marie, “about young Chicanas living in the 90s.” When July’s question elicits confusion, it flags the unwritten rules about who can or should make films. “I don’t get to make movies,” responds one elderly woman. “I’m too old for that kind of thing,” says another.

So there are missing movies and there are also missing moviemakers. “I am starting a Missing Movie Search Party and Fan Club,” July declared in a handmade zine sent in 1997 to the members of *Big Miss Moviola* (later *Joanie 4 Jackie*), a community of women filmmakers established by July two years earlier. “We, the Missing Movie Fan Club, pledge to build a thirst that can’t be quenched by *Clueless* or *When Harry Met Sally*.”⁴ Recognizing every passerby as a potential filmmaker, *The Missing Movie Report* represents one of a number of inventive strategies developed by July in the late 1990s and early 2000s to, in her words, “propel the transnational seizure and employment of cinemagic to fulfill the diverse purposes of girls and women from all economic, artistic, and geographic locations.”⁵ The report produces a desire for what is absent, a thirst for the unmade that is also a thirst for making. It asks those who identify as women and girls to look on the world with the “reel eyes” that, July believes, they already have.⁶

The zine in which July advertised *The Missing Movie Report* accompanied one of July’s Chainletter Tapes, VHS compilations of video art sent through the post to *Big Miss Moviola* subscribers. In this context, the grid of photographs in the poster visualizes the network of support, skill sharing, and encouragement facilitated by the circulating tapes. More than that: the missing movies are affiliated with the works of video art, becoming caught up in the “distributional promise” of the Chainletters, in Frances Corry’s phrase: a guarantee that all movies sent to July would be seen by other women.⁷ Just as July encouraged subscribers to bootleg and pass on the compilation tapes to others, so too *The Missing Movie Report* was designed to proliferate. July suggested her readers should go out and make their own reports where they lived—a practice she placed on a continuum with, even a substitute for, the creative labor of making movies. “This is an especially good thing to do,” she wrote, “when you can’t make your movie either. (Trade in your personal frustration for big big inspiration.)”⁸

What's the difference, then, between the video works in the Chainletter Tapes and the missing movies that ghost Portland's streets? *The Missing Movie Report* makes us miss all the movies that don't get made, but it also works to radically expand our sense of what the making of movies entails—of what counts as a movie. In the same zine that describes *The Missing Movie Report*, July writes that *Big Miss Moviola* movies “are not always made—some of them stay in ladies [*sic*] heads until those ladies die and if they never told anyone, then I guess those movies are gone forever. If they told even one person then that is enough.”⁹ Understanding film as an essentially communicative form—an idea broached in conversation, a missive sent through the mail—July's model of production stretches it out, making it capacious enough to hold glimmers, whispers, hopes, possibilities, however faint or indistinct. As the film object dilates and diffuses, it materializes in variable, contingent forms. A Xeroxed poster, a zine, a note scrawled on the back of a napkin: the paratext might not refer to a text, but for July it's still enough.

The unmade film is in these terms *merely* an unfinished one, its measure of incompleteness not diminishing its value. A beginning that is an ending is, for July, nevertheless a beginning. Such an expansive view of film admits that its histories are constituted in its exclusions, that its labor conditions are skewed along the lines of gender, race, class, age, and other forms of social difference. At once, however, it turns away from the melancholy associations of the missing or the lost, accounting for—and stimulating—the agency and activity of those whom film industries marginalize. The reel eyes of women and girls hold latent visions, if only we know how to see them.

• • •

But there are always other pathways we might take, other streets we might travel, as we feel our way haltingly into this book. Here, then, one more beginning, this time in a taxicab in Renée Green's *Some Chance Operations* (1999) as it makes a circuitous journey through Naples, Italy. The taxi plots the locations where the filmmaker and actress Elvira Notari made and screened more than sixty features and around one hundred shorts and actualities in the early decades of the twentieth century. There are two passengers in the backseat. One is the (mostly) unseen “Filmmaker,” who moves through the city with a handheld camera; a proxy for Green, the Filmmaker searches for Notari, who is herself a filmmaker displaced, disappeared, from the history and life of the city she represented in her *film tratti dal vero*, a cinema based on

life. The other passenger is an Italian woman named Clara, who seeks after the evidence of Notari's work. A figment of the film, Clara is nonetheless modeled on the scholar Giuliana Bruno, whose pathbreaking 1993 study of Notari, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, motivates the Filmmaker to travel from New York City to Italy and teaches her to conceive of "journeys of interpretation . . . as travel stories."¹⁰

Notari earned the nickname "The General" for the sheer force of will she exhibited in leading Dora Film, the production company she founded with her husband, Nicola Notari.¹¹ And yet her prodigious work is also marked by incompleteness in several senses. Curtailed in 1930 by the censorship of the Fascist regime, which objected to Dora Film's realist depiction of urban poverty, violence, and class inequality, Notari's films are now almost all lost. Apart from three features that exist in their complete form, Notari's archive represents Bruno's "ruined and fragmentary map," the uncertain coordinates of which are found in cinematic paratexts such as photographs, film stills, written synopses, newspaper articles, and reviews.¹² In Naples, traveling by car or on foot, the Filmmaker and Clara find signs not of Notari but instead of her absence. Although when Notari began making films, we hear in voiceover, "it probably seemed as if she were creating something monumental, something made to last," now virtually nobody in Naples knows of her or her work. All that remains are bare traces, tantalizing glimpses of a vanished and vanishing past—flashes, flickers, like the effect of the footage Green incorporates of Notari performing in one of her films, in which thick, horizontal black bars move swiftly across the screen, cutting up the image of Notari's face.

In the final part of *Some Chance Operations*, Green uses footage from Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (1960), recasting Clara—already a character, a persona—as Claudia, the central figure in Antonioni's film. Played by Monica Vitti, Claudia spends *L'Avventura* searching for her best friend Anna, who has gone missing during a vacation to the Aeolian Islands north of Sicily. Rather, Claudia spends the film searching for Anna and not searching for her: after Claudia begins an affair with Anna's fiancé, Sandro, Claudia's efforts to find her friend dwindle to nothing. Antonioni's cinema dwells in the distances between people, his characters drawn in detachment, and this theme culminates in *L'Avventura*'s unfinished—abandoned—quest. Forgotten long before the film ends, Anna never returns; it's almost as if she was never there at all.

Routing her doomed pursuit of Notari through *L'Avventura*, Green marks out the chasm left by Notari's lost and unremembered films without attempting to fill it in. She, like Bruno in *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, confronts the *horror vacui*, the fear of empty spaces, by "exposing the blank, the limit, and the edge of discursive formations and creating a system of interconnections with textual remanence" out of history.¹³ Their Naples is a field of voids and gaps in the aftermath of loss. Green thus enacts a mode of feminist film history as strategic incompleteness, responding to the contingency and arbitrariness of historical knowledge with more contingency, more arbitrariness. Comprised of a series of relatively autonomous sequences, *Some Chance Operations* presents itself as several idiosyncratic versions of a story that may be told in a variety of ways.¹⁴ As Notari's face appears on the screen bracketed by the repeating black bars, her mouth opens as if to speak. Seeming to freeze and stutter due to the strobe effect of the bars, her movements seem effortful, her speech somehow prohibited or resisted. Just when the words might, we think, escape her lips, the picture suddenly duplicates, and images of Notari's face are superimposed in a rapid rhythm, their divergent expressions jostling for space and attention (figure 0.4). Notari remains unheard, inhabiting her ruined and fragmentary map. But she manages to make her presence felt.

The voiceover in this moment describes Scheherazade, the Queen's consort in the Middle Eastern folktales *One Thousand and One Nights* "who thinks of a fresh story whenever her tale comes to a stop."¹⁵ Spinning stories to the Sultan night by night, deferring their endings to preserve her life, Scheherazade is a stand-in for Notari, she who told so many tales in celluloid. She is also a stand-in for Green, and for Bruno before her: women who keep Notari alive, in a sense, by adding their own tales to hers. Indeed, like Scheherazade's unending narration, *Some Chance Encounters* is part of a larger body of work by Green that forms, as Nora Alter has argued, "a continuous structure that is not complete but integrates each video as yet another variation on a labile and changing theme."¹⁶ This is an aspect of Green's practice emphasized in installations in which her video works are shown alongside one another, projected in different, interconnected chambers in the gallery space.

In *Some Chance Operations* and across her oeuvre, Green begins again and again, assembling incomplete and fragmentary texts that remain open to reordering and recomposition. And so too do we, the



FIGURE 0.4 Elvira Notari's face masked and multiplied in Renée Green's *Some Chance Operations* (1999). Film still courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.

editors of *Incomplete*, as we share Green's commitment to feminist film history as itself an unfinished project, an ongoing and active process that maps our ineluctably gap-ridden knowledge of the past in the terrain of the present.

• • •

Incomplete is the first study to establish the feminist possibilities of the unfinished film, broadly defined, across the history of the medium and in various global contexts. Whether abandoned, interrupted, or lost, unfinished films are usually dismissed as unworthy objects of study. They are seen as minor works, of marginal importance to film history: they may be only partially realized as moving images, and so be marred by gaps and flaws; or they may never materialize as images at all, and so obviate even the feeling that those gaps and flaws might have been filled or fixed in the production process. By contrast, this collection of essays enacts a feminist transvaluation of the unfinished film's signs of deficiency, recasting them as signs of possibility. Unfinished projects, we and our collaborators argue, offer ideal sites for examining the lived

experiences, practical conditions, and institutional realities of film production and consumption, especially in relation to the work of women filmmakers and film practitioners.

Our focus on the unfinished allows for the recovery of projects and practitioners marginalized within film industries and scholarship alike. At the same time, we conceive of incompleteness as constitutive of women's film and media history at a number of levels. We turn to the archival gaps that register, through their absent–presence, women's contributions to cinema history (part 1); the refusals and interruptions of women's creative labor, which reflect wider structural inequities within particular film industries and cultures (part 2); the cultivation of unfinishedness as an aesthetic and political strategy for feminist filmmakers (part 3); and the posthumous reworking or recuperation of women's film materials, along with the vexed ethical questions that attend such textual intercessions (part 4).

In certain respects, incompleteness can be seen as a general condition of all film—indeed, of all texts. It is manifest as filmmakers and other practitioners work with and against cinema history, and as their labor is embedded in economic, cultural, and political systems. It is manifest, too, as films and their ancillary forms circulate in the world, subject to varied practices of distribution, exhibition, and curation, not to mention the involved attention and intervention of viewers and scholars—especially but not only in the digital age.¹⁷ Conventionally, films that are branded as “unseen” or “orphaned” are said to have led only a half-life until they are projected for a waiting viewership, but even after reaching the point of exhibition, the trajectory of such films continues on in their reception.¹⁸ As Dan North has argued, following the distinction Roland Barthes makes between “work” and “text,” “no film text is truly finished: it keeps on operating in a circuit of interpretations and re-readings that are not fixed definitively to a work.”¹⁹

Indeed, considering the unpredictable life cycle of the film object itself, replete with its restorations and director's cuts, Vinzenz Hediger has gestured to the impossibility of obtaining a “complete set of facts” about a film and suggests that in time we might even witness a “rhetoric of the open series of multiple versions” supplanting “the rhetoric of the original.”²⁰ In the context of contemporary digital production and dissemination, this rhetoric of multiplicity is also a rhetoric of incompleteness. As Nicholas Rombes has pointed out, given the “ongoing production” of films across platforms in the digital era, the moment of final “release” is “really only a technicality.” “How,” he asks, “can a film—

or any text—ever be considered ‘complete’ when it is forever being re-released in different versions?”²¹

Incompletion is thus a functional reality of film production and spectatorship, both now and in the past. The affordances of incompletion extend to our work as film scholars as well—not least because historical objects “are scattered pieces of a puzzle that we can never hope to complete.” We borrow these words from Monica Dall’Asta and Jane Gaines, who offer a feminist critique of historiographical approaches that assume the neutrality, objectivity, and comprehensiveness of existing frameworks for understanding film objects and processes. Dall’Asta and Gaines caution us over an “historicist faith in filling by addition,” a faith expressed in efforts to “restore totality” to narratives of film history. Gaps and silences in film history, they suggest, “might better be seen as prompting multiple narratives, none of which can ever pretend to exhaustiveness.”²² We see these gaps as corollaries to filmic incompletion in its various forms, even as unfinishedness offers a rich seam for reimagining the incomplete and incompletionable puzzle of feminist film and media history. We therefore apprehend filmic incompletion as not—or not only—a phenomenon to be regretted or mourned. For feminist scholars the unfinished film encompasses more than failure or missed opportunities; it is rather a zone of potential that can transform our received understandings of cinema and media production, reception, and circulation.

In explicating the feminist possibilities of the unfinished, *Incomplete* works to uncomplete film history: to make it available to further generative, not only melancholic, acts of undoing.²³ Although our study of the unfinished film contributes to the important project of feminist recovery within film studies, which centers neglected or “forgotten” women filmmakers and their works, ours is not an attempt to simply round out existing film-historical narratives. Rather, the unfinished film is primed for denaturalizing these narratives, including as they relate to the properties of the film object, the processes and conditions of film production and circulation, and models of film authorship. Since “general history is still a masculine history,” writes one of our contributors, Maggie Hennefeld, in a recent essay, “feminist histories that offer new information without conceptual invention—without breaking through the walls that sideline feminist works—will be doomed to obscurity.” Hennefeld continues: “It is the project of feminist film history not just to recuperate missing or forgotten archives, but to wrest these findings from their parallel tracks.”²⁴ As is demonstrated by the essays collected

in this book, the study of the unfinished film allows us to jump the parallel tracks of general and feminist film history, finding new modes and routes of travel that circumvent or break through the masculinist norms that define the status quo of film and media studies.

Despite the denaturalizing effects and feminist potential of the unfinished film, most existing work on incomplete film projects and materials assumes that film history is essentially complete as it is and so tends to leave its terms essentially intact. In fact, it's often the case that the unfinished film is freighted with valences of disappointment and failure to the degree that it is contextualized within an auteurist frame—a view of film authorship that is highly circumscribed in gendered terms, as feminist scholars have demonstrated.²⁵ The unfinished film is frequently presented as a thorn in the male auteur's side, evidence of the obstacles—financial, artistic, interpersonal—preventing this romantic, solitary genius from his self-realization on screen, as well as of his dignified struggle in facing down those obstacles. Whether the object of inquiry is *Napoleon*, Stanley Kubrick's "greatest film never made," Federico Fellini's "white whale," *The Journey of G. Mastorna*, or the many incomplete works of Orson Welles, the unrealized masterpiece acquires the significance its canonical creator has already been afforded elsewhere—a point that Jane Gaines makes eloquently in the first chapter of this book.²⁶ It is proof of failure that returns to the auteur as more proof of his (thwarted) success; it is an addendum to an already coherent, and essentially closed, artistic career. While such studies perform worthwhile work in making present for the reader an archive of concealed film production labor, it's the sense of value or even knowledge conferred a priori by the proper name of Kubrick, Fellini, or Welles that generates this scholarly interest in the first place.

The recent essay collection *Shadow Cinema* (2021), edited by film historians James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge, makes some effort to move beyond the traditional focus on the unfinished works of male auteurs. In their introduction to the volume, the editors suggest that the cultish appeal of the auteur—and the emphasis it generates on "the role of personalities in filmmaking" instead of the film projects themselves—is insufficient for the purposes of scholarly inquiry.²⁷ The chapter contributed to *Shadow Cinema* by Lucy Mazdon, on Henri-Georges Clouzot's unfinished *L'Enfer*, is notable for its critique of characterizations of Clouzot as "a Promethean figure, the creative genius whose overarching ambition could ultimately only lead to failure," which Mazdon makes via a discussion of the misogynist "exploitation

and cruelty” that marked the director’s treatment of his lead actor, Romy Schneider.²⁸

Yet *Shadow Cinema*—like Dan North’s earlier collection of essays on unfinished British films, *Sights Unseen* (2008)—primarily focuses on the works of male directors, producers, and other practitioners working in mostly Anglophone or western European contexts. In doing so, it largely preserves the discourse of the auteur, most overtly in a section devoted to “directors who could be considered the most important auteurs of their respective national film industries”—Jean-Luc Godard, Ken Russell, and Ritwik Ghatak.²⁹ This isn’t to say that the essays in question are especially egregious versions of masculinist auteurism; to the contrary, the authors are careful to avoid some of its common fallacies, including by clearly locating the directors in question within their historical and industrial contexts. However, they still manage the often overwhelming volume of textual and archival materials represented by unfinished projects by subsuming them under the sign of the auteur—betraying a desire for coherence that closes off other potential lines of inquiry as well as alternative conceptions of creative labor.

What allows the auteur to inveigle himself into scholarship that seeks to draw attention away from this time-worn figure? It’s not by chance but instead a function of how the unfinished film is positioned as an object supplemental to, rather than disruptive of, established film history. “This is not a history that replaces the existing knowns,” write Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, “but rather adds shade and complexity to our established interpretations and knowledge.”³⁰ As feminist scholars, we don’t share this confidence in established versions of film history, including its models of authorship; nor do we view our task as making the finishing touches to a picture set—complete—in permanent ink. We believe that the unfinished film can be used in more radical ways to redraw and recalibrate our sense of what film is and has been, how it has been (un)made and by whom.

Bearing the signs of the networked and interdependent processes of film production in various contexts, the unfinished film promotes anti-auteurist, feminist approaches to authorship, such as those developed by Judith Mayne, Catherine Grant, Jane Gaines, Patricia White, Isabel Seguí, Karen Redrobe, and others.³¹ Understanding authorship as, in Janet Staiger’s terms, “a technique of the self, creating and recreating the individual as an acting subject within history,” these approaches accommodate the creative agency of minoritized and marginalized subjects, including women, without falling back on a romantic view of the

singular, stable author/auteur.³² The unfinished film reveals precisely that, as Gaines has written, “films do not spring fully formed from the minds of authors” but instead from the cooperative labor of agents working out of their shared “desire to make films.”³³ We can see this “team arrangement” reflected in the movements of the five women around the living room at the opening of Cynthia Madansky’s *ESFIR*, in Miranda July’s circulation of VHS Chainletter Tapes among *Big Miss Moviola* producers and subscribers, and in the depiction of traveling companions, the Filmmaker and her friend Clara, in Renée Green’s *Some Chance Operations*.³⁴

And so we, also working collectively, call for an activist, revisionist, and multivalent approach to a wide range of unfinished film projects. Some of these projects can be used to understand the labor of known filmmakers; others, as dispersed archives bearing the traces of many hands, may require us to jettison the singular filmmaker as the organizing principle for our work. In the shared efforts that shape *Incomplete*, we contribute to an emerging body of scholarship that uncovers properties by women practitioners that were left unfinished or unreleased for a range of financial, political, physical, psychological, or aesthetic reasons. Alongside previously published work by our contributors, notably Mathilde Rouxel’s significant account of the unfinished films of the Lebanese filmmaker Jocelyne Saab, we learn from Samantha Sheppard’s research into online crowdfunding and the problems of circulation for Black women filmmakers, Monika Kin Gagnon’s writing on Joyce Wieland and “posthumous cinema,” and Eugénie Zvonkine’s on the films of Kira Muratova that were subjected to Soviet censorship.³⁵ Sarah Keller’s *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control* (2015), meanwhile, represents a major study of the experimental filmmaker through her many unrealized and fragmentary projects. For Keller, Deren’s unfinished works serve as evidence of artistic or professional disappointment and, importantly, as vital and speculative texts that gesture toward alternate horizons of possibility. “Unfinished, contingent, or liminal states appealed to Deren and her aesthetic exploited these conditions wherever possible,” Keller writes. “Not benighted by failure, she in fact depended on an aesthetic of open-endedness. Even her long-unfinished projects . . . indicate an aesthetic that respects a rejection of closure and completion.”³⁶

Keller’s theorization of the unfinished as process, strategy, and aesthetic is foundational to this book, where we adapt her approach toward explicitly feminist purposes and a wider view of women’s diverse

contributions to film history.³⁷ Keller asks, “What does cinema studies do to account for lost work or the details of the process, as well as the runoff, the excess, the clips on the cutting-room floor, the performance of an actor or the color palate of a designer that changed a director’s vision, the contributions (potential or actual) of creative personnel?” *Incomplete* offers a series of (incomplete) answers to Keller’s question, which we take as a challenge not only to attend to the leftovers generated by unfinished film projects but also to elevate the processual elements of film work, even when those elements do not result in “a final product.”³⁸ It’s one thing to follow the lead of genetic criticism and read the various “avant-textes” of a finished film—storyboards, outlines, treatments, and other draft materials devised for the shooting of the film—or to try to identify the “cinematic idea” that “does (or does not) survive its multiple, material elaborations at all levels” of film production.³⁹ But it’s quite another to pursue such documents and ideas without an end product in sight, nor even, perhaps, an authorial signature with which to validate them.

Though in some cases our contributors examine screen media in projection—including rushes, fragments, and outtakes—or keep in view “complete” and exhibited films where they usefully inform the analysis of incomplete works, the majority of unfinished film projects manifest as materials beyond or other than screen media. In engaging process over product, incompleteness over completion, our investigations routinely lead us to the detritus of the archive rather than moving images (and lead us away from the comforts of film studies as a home discipline). So we draw on the tools of genetic criticism, production studies, archive studies, star studies, oral history, and other fields of inquiry—not least literary studies, a discipline with a longer history of analyzing unfinished textual materials—as we develop practices of research and analysis adequate to the occulted existence of unfinished film materials.⁴⁰

We inhabit, in other words, a vast paracinematic archive of ideas, writing, and realia. This is an archive filled with the items of furniture, bundles of flowers, cups of tea, and loose pages of Shub’s unmade screenplay in *ESFIR*; with the eidetic words of July’s interviewees, leaning toward the screen but preserved in typewritten form in *The Missing Movie Report*; and with the traces of Elvira Notari and her lost films that collect in the Neapolitan cityscape in *Some Chance Operations*. Like Madansky, July, and Green, we pursue the unfinished through a variety of creative gestures that refuse to foreclose its possibilities, knowing that fragmentary and film-adjacent documents and memories—not

yet, and maybe never, films—need not be forced to yield to a totalizing vision.

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In searching out the feminist possibilities of incompleteness, particularly as they recast the history of women's film practice, we participate in a well-established tradition of feminist film and media scholarship that, by necessity, engages fragmentary, lost, or vanishing artifacts and archives. Feminist film studies is an ideal location for an analysis of unfinished films, insofar as such projects raise theoretical issues and methodological challenges to which feminist scholars have long been habituated. Devalued within film and media studies, and existing as a collocation of diverse, dispersed, and often degraded textual materials, the unfinished film shares certain characteristics with the materials of women's film history more generally—as those materials, and the creative labor they register, have conventionally been coded as secondary and nonessential within masculinist understandings of film authorship and narratives of film production. Early in Renée Green's *Some Chance Operations*, we hear in voiceover the following words from Eduardo Cadava's 1997 study *Words of Light*: "The possibility of history is bound to the survival of the traces of what is past and to our ability to read these traces as traces."⁴¹ The search Green stages is not only for the traces of Elvira Notari, then, but also for a way of reading those traces as traces. Following Giuliana Bruno's "inferential walks" through Notari's fragmentary archive in *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, Green's film models an important strain of feminist film scholarship that has sought over several decades to develop methods sufficiently supple, provisional, and creative to deal with texts and archives defined by contingency and equivocality.⁴²

We too are inspired by Bruno's *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, published some thirty years ago, as we pursue, without capturing or stilling, a range of unfinished projects, fragmented works perpetually in motion; and we are delighted that Bruno has taken the opportunity to reflect on the long life of this study in the postscript to this book. In *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, the condition of Notari's archive—a paradoxical site of paucity and abundance, limited in terms of Notari's very few extant films and yet also sprawling, unwieldy, in the distributed paratexts of her many nonextant films—turns the scholar's work into "a game of textual pleasures."⁴³ This is a game played between index and inference, situating the scholar as an active and desiring

subject within the space of history. Bruno argues that the case of *Dora Film* bears out Michel de Certeau's claim that, given the unbridgeable divides between reality and discourse, the present and the past, "historians can write only by combining within their practice the 'other' that moves and misleads them and the real that they can represent only through fiction."⁴⁴ Like Cynthia Madansky's arranged and rearranged living room at *ESFIR*'s opening, the "chance operations" of Green's film—her puzzle of (at least theoretically) moveable, autonomous sequences—extrapolate a form of feminist film history from the chancy but politicized nature of historical knowledge. Bruno's work anticipates both of these films in its affirmation of the need for feminist historiography that draws on the resources of fiction in its encounters with, or on, the ruined map of history.

Over the past two decades, scholars working across feminist, queer, and postcolonial studies, and especially in relation to Black history, have innovated methods of "critical fabulation" and informed speculation in response to archival incompleteness, including as the absences of the archive register and reiterate the oppressions of a violently white supremacist world order.⁴⁵ Saidiya Hartman's influential and important work interrogates the archives of slavery and its afterlives in the United States in order to narrate the life-worlds of African American people, and particularly women and girls, as "historical agents." In her recent book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019), Hartman positions herself in "intimate proximity" to her subjects as she undertakes close and imaginative work with historical documents, writing "from inside the circle" of Black social life.⁴⁶ Her scholarly practice is, as she writes in the 2008 essay "Venus in Two Acts," "an impossible writing which attempts to say that which resists being said. . . . It is a history of an unrecoverable past; it is a history written with and against the archive."⁴⁷

Similarly, major new work on early Black cinema by Jacqueline Najuma Stewart and Allyson Nadia Field has demonstrated how, as Stewart puts it in *Migrating to the Movies* (2005), "reconstructive work" of this period and its cultures of spectatorship "must be performed creatively."⁴⁸ Field's *Uplift Cinema* (2015) argues for a reformulation of film history via the sustained study of lost or nonextant films, which, she points out, represent more than 80 percent of films made in the silent era.⁴⁹ Analyzing films that can no longer be projected or viewed involves speculation and conjecture, as Field acknowledges, but it is a kind of speculation that is grounded in institutional, publicity, and media materials. She advocates for scholarship that—much in keep-

ing with Bruno's method for plotting Notari's nonextant works within a larger cultural and textual field—"looks adjacently" across extant materials, "connecting the dots across disparate sources" so as to provide a "composite picture" of the experiences and effects of historical film cultures.⁵⁰

The essays in *Incomplete* test out a range of methodologies and theoretical frameworks for analyzing filmic incompleteness, which we use as an umbrella term that covers the phenomenon of nonextant films and fragmentary archives along with aborted projects, aesthetically unfinished and deliberately open-ended works, and the vital—and fraught—ongoingness of film texts and star personae in adaptation, circulation, and reception. The incomplete film is not always a lost film, and yet Field's articulation of the challenges posed by nonextant films to film history and its methods is highly relevant to our expanded field of incompleteness, which we theorize primarily through the unfinished film as material, concept, and (non)event. As Field shows, the nonextant film brings into view the status of the extant film print, and usually the theatrical feature, as the privileged object in film and media studies, against which all other filmic materials are measured. "Almost as a rule," she writes, "the further from mainstream theatrically screened productions we get, the scarser the surviving evidence becomes" and the slighter the scholarly attention such evidence receives.⁵¹

Notions of completion play an unstated but essential function in this sliding scale. By contrast to, for instance, Miranda July's capacious view of film from idea to circulating object, the value and attention given to certain projects, texts, and archives by film and media scholars tends to track with their relative degree of finishedness—their (our) sense of closure, coherence, or comprehensiveness. If, as Field claims, it is "irrational to perpetuate extant-centric film history" given the sheer volume of nonextant films, we might also say that it is irrational to focus on finished or realized film projects, which are also vastly outnumbered by unrealized or unfinished ones. This seems especially important at a moment when film and media scholars are reappraising erstwhile "minor" works; as Elena Gorfinkel has recently written, "the field must attend to how failures, unfinished works, amateur works, and never-produced and illicit films are the majority of films that constitute the constellation we call cinema in its totality."⁵²

We, like Field, want to shift away from—or at least to reflect on critically—the language of loss and destruction that dominates existing work on fragmentary films and archives and further reifies the complete,

extant film. “Absence is defined by the object it regrets; it is marked by the location, position, positing, and emplacement (both in time and space) of the missing piece,” Field observes. “It is just as temporally and spatially situated as is presence.”⁵³ Field’s description of the lost film’s absence as a form of presence is especially germane to the essays in part 1 of this book, which approach absences as not incidental or accidental but rather as intrinsic to the film archive (and to feminist labor in and around the archive). But this description also resonates with the larger project of *Incomplete*, as we reconceive of signs of deficiency and failure as signs of possibility for feminist film scholars and, as is evident especially in part 3 of the book, feminist film practitioners.

However, whereas Field quite rightly emphasizes the study of the nonextant film as a means of understanding exhibition practices, spectatorial experience, and wider cultural life, the forms of incompleteness we discuss often do not, by definition, open onto histories of exhibition and viewership. For us, the unfinished film’s absence makes present its conditions of (non)production, the institutional, economic, political, and sociocultural landscape in which a given project was conceived and developed, to a greater or lesser extent. Such absences also make present the active labor of women filmmakers and practitioners—demonstrating what Monica Dall’Asta and Alessandra Chiarini have described, in their work on women’s contributions to the history of found footage film, as “women’s tenacious will to make cinema at all costs . . . under conditions of limitation and lack of means.”⁵⁴

In many cases, it’s as if the creative and critical agency of (prospective, imagined) viewers is transferred to us as scholars as we negotiate incompleteness between its archival paucity and abundance, as well as between its solid materiality—its existence in physical objects, in notebooks, screenplays, industrial documents, unfinished film fragments, photographs, magazines, and more—and its immateriality, its notionality. Occupying “an ambiguous space of imaginary plenitude” and excess, as Sean Braune has written of lost, burned, or unfinished literary texts, the unfinished film is the “remaining trace of a larger writing that exists as an imaginary supplement . . . as pure potential in a sort of libidinous energy catalyzing in the mind of the reader and critic.”⁵⁵ Like the creative–industrial genre of the screenplay, which engenders in its reader, in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s terms, an “intense” form of engagement that seeks “a ‘visual’ completeness which it does not have, but at which it hints,” the incomplete projects we study grant to us an “agentic force” by their precursory or intermediary attributes.⁵⁶

We can understand this agentic force with reference to the critical interpretative power of film spectators as demonstrated in feminist and queer reception studies, or else via “possessive” or “introspective” models of cinephilic viewership and scholarship. “As we watch a film,” Maya Deren wrote in 1960, “the continuous act of recognition in which we are involved is like a strip of memory unrolling beneath the images of the film itself, to form the invisible underlayer of an implicit double exposure.”⁵⁷ Deren’s double exposure expands our sense of the affordances of incompleteness in her work and beyond: there is the image track, and there is also the invisible track of remembrance, which continues to unspool in the viewer’s mind long after the projection ends, transforming the images over time. For Catherine Fowler, Deren’s observation foreshadows the work of scholars such as Stanley Cavell, Victor Burgin, and Christian Keathley to acknowledge and accommodate the role of memory in the experience of film.⁵⁸ Fowler contextualizes this scholarship alongside gallery films made in the 1990s that reenact or remake images from the history of cinema. The films she discusses—which do not include *Some Chance Operations*, although Green’s film sits with them—perform a “look backward” that “goes beyond the visible image track of cinema’s past because it is formed collectively from both the ‘there’ of cinema, or the real screened images, and what artist Pierre Huyghe ingeniously calls the ‘elsewhere,’ or the reactions to, feelings from, and desire for, remembered films.”⁵⁹

Fowler calls for scholarship guided by the movement of these films away from a retrospection of the *there* of cinema’s past, with its negative structure of loss and mourning, to an introspection located in the *elsewhere* of the viewing process: from that which is gone, interred in the past, to that which endures in the present. We, of course, can’t exactly remember many of the unfinished films we study—and many of them can only be “projected” to the degree that they are fundamentally reconstituted, as with Madansky’s filmmaking with or around Shub’s unmade screenplay (or equally with that of one of our contributors, the filmmaker and scholar Karen Pearlman, whose own recent work to reimagine Shub’s “Women” suggests the many paths opened up by incomplete film materials).⁶⁰ Even so, we occupy this dynamic, ongoing elsewhere, the space of film as it exists beyond or outside of projection. After all, as Fowler suggests, this vantage allows us to “[remember] cinema’s past as ‘undead,’ unfinished, and unfixed.”⁶¹

Indeed, the incomplete objects and projects we examine are a site of projection in a different sense, since their defining measure of lack

produces and reproduces our desire for them—as for those who (partially) made them. Notari’s fragmented archive and nonextant films clarify for Bruno the “fantasmatic scene” of identification, (mis)recognition, and dislocation that organizes feminist scholarship, especially when it constitutes female subjects—and scholars—as creative agents or authors. “As a female voice speaking to another female voice, the authorial function is produced in a mirroring effect,” Bruno writes, and so “feminist writing ingrains a (double) authorial desire and libidinal exchange.”⁶² More recently, Dall’Asta and Gaines have elaborated the fantasmatic scene of feminist historiography in describing the “constellations” of feminist film scholars with the subjects of their historical research. As we “find” women filmmakers and practitioners, they write, through our work with the remaining traces of their labor and lives, we “create a temporal wedge in our present that makes us momentarily coincident with the historical past.”⁶³ We thus become imbricated with our subjects, able to locate ourselves in history and, at once, to evoke historical agents—more precisely, their images or signs—“in and for the present.”⁶⁴

Women’s incomplete or unfinished films catalyze the erotic and affective impulses of feminist scholarship in a particular way. Hinting at a completion they don’t have, resisting closure like Scheherazade, these projects open a space—an elsewhere—for projection and fantasy, speculation and conjecture. As filmic incompleteness calls attention to our subjective, ethical, and political investments in the past, and how these investments shape our writing in the present, we partake in the processual pleasures of remembrance and transformation experienced by the spectator of complete films, extant or not. And filmic incompleteness reveals to us, at once, how our objects of study have shaped us and will continue to shape us. Reflecting on the ideas she collated toward *The Missing Movie Report*, Miranda July reflected: “Some of the answers were interesting, some weren’t. But was I feeling the absence now? Now that I’d called upon them, were those unmade movies changing me, like ghosts?”⁶⁵

The cajoling ghosts of incomplete films are, in a sense, only ever elsewhere, unmoored—or suspended—in space as well as in time. This leads us to ask: *when* is the missing movie or unfinished film? Is it past, or present, or future—or somehow all of these at once? For Fowler, the gallery films that model the elsewhere of film operate in “a subjunctive mood,” a grammar of doubts, wishes, and hopes that is also paramount in unfinished films, which unsettle our sense of the fixity of the past as they generate speculation about “what might have been.”⁶⁶ Whereas the essays in this book aren’t primarily invested in imagining unfinished

projects as they might have been, the conditional tense of this question evokes the qualities of life and art that are revealed, we argue, through filmic incompleteness: the contingency, unruliness, and irresolution of its unfolding. Anthropologists João Biehl and Peter Locke refer similarly to how the concept of unfinishedness unveils “worlds on edge and the open-endedness of people’s becoming.”⁶⁷ For our purposes, though the incomplete is suspended elsewhere and *elsewhen*—and this space is broached and to some extent structured by our work on its cast-off, incongruent materials—the incomplete nevertheless offers resources for understanding the past in its specificity and strangeness. It is a window, however smudged or cracked, onto the past in its *presentness*—the past as a series of moments whose future isn’t set, when things could (still) be otherwise.

In this way, the incomplete licenses counterfactual thinking, not only in a tragic mode—as in, *we wish this film had been completed, we wish these filmmakers’ efforts hadn’t been interrupted or curtailed*—but also in service of interpreting the historical moment “on its own terms,” from within its horizon of possibility. By refusing to “reduce all events to a single stream flowing toward some projected *telos*,” as Benjamin Wurgaft has argued, counterfactual thought experiments can augment our sense of causality by allowing us to work through the alternative trajectories of a given historical moment or event.⁶⁸ By *side-shadowing* historical events as opposed to *backshadowing* them—by inhabiting a moment and proceeding outward, sideways, from its location in time and space—we can “[restore] a sense of possibility even to a story whose outcome we already know.”⁶⁹ We can resist a tendency to interpret historical events in the light of their outcomes—a particular challenge when those outcomes are a source of regret or lamentation, as in the failure of a film’s production or the death of a filmmaker or star. We know how the story ends, and we don’t pretend that it can be changed; but we don’t allow our foreknowledge of the future to overshadow the liveness of the past and of actors within its environments. The incomplete allows us to have it both ways: we encounter the past in its locatedness, its tensile now-moments; and yet we retain some measure of latitude from time’s dictates and inevitabilities.

The unfinished film is a concatenation of texts that emerges from the embodied, diffuse, and networked processes of film production—and that bears the signs of these processes in its state of disruption or abortiveness. For this reason the energy of *what ifs* are valuable for feminist scholars concerned to account not only for the gendered and racialized conditions of film labor but also, importantly, for women’s agency and

activity in negotiation of those conditions. Though, as existing scholarship has suggested, the question of what might have been can distract us from the implications of such films for histories of production in specific cultures and contexts, it's also true that this order of question has been productive for feminist scholars and scholar-activists working toward a more just and less violent world.⁷⁰ In her telling of impossible histories, for example, Hartman adopts “the conditional temporality of ‘what could have been,’ a temporality that allows, in Lisa Lowe’s words, a “productive attention to the scene of loss, a thinking with twofold attention that seeks to encompass at once the positive objects and methods of history and social science and the matters absent, entangled, and unavailable by its methods.”⁷¹ Meanwhile, for a range of scholars, including Elizabeth Grosz, Tina Campt, and Domietta Torlasco, a feminist politic finds its temporal home in the future anterior or future perfect tense, which describes nonactual events, *what will have happened*, or even the future real conditional, *what will have had to have happened*.⁷²

The future anterior is “the time in which the future can look at this present as its superseded past,” as Grosz puts it.⁷³ It is the time of radical political change; it is the time when the past loses its hold over the present. In this vein we conceive of unfinished projects as both projections and *projectiles*, pitched forward in time and space to new worlds—even as they manifest so clearly how the old worlds could not, or would not, sustain their development. We don’t seek to confer completion or wholeness to the incomplete, nor do we forget our work as also partial and unfinished—since we view our scholarly labor on a continuum with women’s labor in film cultures and industries across the history of the medium. As Dall’Asta and Gaines put it, “We are constellated with women makers, then and now, in relation to the unfinished business of world feminism.”⁷⁴

Constellated with one another as collaborators on this book and with the subjects of our study, we turn—backward and forward in time, sideways and elsewhere in space—to unfinished film in its possibilities, its *prospects* for feminist film history and practice. We turn backward and forward to Ėsfir’ Shub, whose unrealized screenplay “Women”—and its reconstitution in Madansky’s *ESFIR*—appears in a new light in the context of Shub’s extraordinary efforts, across her career, to restore and archive historical footage for the sake of future filmmakers and spectators: creating a “historical document for the future,” as she wrote in 1927.⁷⁵ We turn backward and forward to Miranda July, whose *Big Miss Moviola* zines were distributed to women and girls as “a challenge

and a promise.”⁷⁶ And we turn backward and forward to Renée Green and the continuous, incomplete structure of her film practice—wherein history remains in the present, a lost city not to be restored but explored.

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Incomplete is organized in four parts: “Unfound Objects,” “Refusals and Interruptions,” “In Process,” and “Posthumous Returns.” Part 1, “Unfound Objects,” accounts for the gendered politics of the film archive—its material formation, its means of conservation, its technologies of dissemination, and its uses for scholars—from the vantage point of filmic incompleteness. Discussing early cinema, a period in which the archive is especially fragmentary and in which women played especially prominent roles in film production, the chapters emphasize the archive’s provisionality as it interacts with the unfinished business of feminist scholarship of the silent and classical eras.

“Unfound Objects” thus responds to Paula Amad’s claim, in her 2010 study *Counter-Archive*, that “the glaring gaps in cinema’s historical record do not constitute a handicap for history but a challenge to produce a more sensitive historiography that moves beyond the historicist myth of the all-knowing sovereign archive.” Like Amad, our contributors resist “the fantasy of awakening the sleeping documents with the (death) kiss of finite interpretation” as they devise “models of creative and critical empiricism” proper to the unsovereign, uncompletable archive.⁷⁷ Jane Gaines begins this work in chapter 1 by reflecting on the varied semantic possibilities of the term “never.” For film history, as Gaines notes, this term can invoke the notion of a lost object that is to be “*never* again,” or an idea that never came to fruition, and so “*never* having been.” Such distinctions bear crucial implications for silent cinema, a vast archive of works that will be mostly “never again,” but that also reveals a number of works conceived by female producers that were not realized on screen. Rather than bemoaning these missed opportunities, Gaines offers a speculative approach to these unfinished projects: a “never made” but also a “what if?”

In chapter 2, Maggie Hennefeld takes up the unarchival and the unwritten in relation to silent film comediennes who have yet to be identified by name. Driven to discover the identity of the enigmatic French figure Léontine, Hennefeld finds instead a model for embracing the thrill of the (unfinished) moment in Léontine’s performances, which, in their impulse toward destruction, take no account of the future. Katherine Groo also seeks out the historiographical implications and artifactual

expressions of archival fragmentation and anonymous women in chapter 3, where she offers a feminist interpretation of the nitrate film clippings that make up the Davide Turconi Collection Database. Groo contemplates the absent presence of thousands of unidentified women in this archive of fragments and the forms of feminist knowledge produced in and by these images—not least by the embodied traces of the labor of women who worked as colorists in early film industries.

Building on these insights about the structuring reality and historiographical opportunities of unfound objects in film history, part 2 studies “Refusals and Interruptions” of women’s film labor in various national contexts. Focusing on experimental and oppositional filmmaking in Latin America and the Middle East from the 1970s on, the contributors in this section make inventive use of archival materials and oral histories in examining projects stymied by the systemic sexism of film industries and cultures, the effects of censorship, and the violent disruptions of global and local conflict. Their chapters make room for the creative affordances of refusal and interruption, along with the adaptability and resourcefulness of women filmmakers and practitioners. Given these scholars’ personal encounters and close relationships with those whose work they study, these affordances are multiplied through the labor of feminist scholarship and archiving itself.

In chapter 4, Isabel Seguí attends to the work of the Peruvian filmmaker María Barea and the Bolivian filmmaker Beatriz Palacios, who in the 1990s both conceived of projects that remained unrealized despite the successes of their male contemporaries in this period. For Seguí, the study of unrealized films is essential for understanding the history of Andean women’s oppositional filmmaking, given pervasive inequalities of access to resources and opportunities. Similarly, Elizabeth Ramírez-Soto finds new ways into and through the archive of women’s unfinished film work in chapter 5, which explores *Tres por tres*, an omnibus film conceived by three women in Chile—Marilú Mallet, Valeria Sarmiento, and Angelina Vázquez—in the final year of the nation’s Popular Unity government. Progress on the film was thwarted following the establishment of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1973, and its three filmmakers went into exile shortly afterward, continuing their careers separately. By reconstructing the film from a combination of its surviving written documents and oral histories, Ramírez-Soto reveals how this collaborative project would have explored the lives and problems of middle-class women in an otherwise masculinist film industry and political landscape.

In chapter 6, Mathilde Rouxel offers testimony of her working relationship with the Lebanese filmmaker Jocelyne Saab, focusing especially on the major projects that occupied Saab in the decade before her death in 2019. These projects were stalled or redirected due to a lack of funding, conflicts within the production teams, or the conditions and pressures of local and international politics. Yet Saab's notes, interviews, research materials, scenarios, and rushes for these projects disclose her creative process of "metamorphosis" and "variation," in Rouxel's terms, which emerged out of Saab's desire not only to tell stories that no one else wanted to tell but also to construct an unconventional mode of historical narration.

Saab's adaptive, multistage work across various projects serves as a bridge between part 2 and part 3 of *Incomplete*. Each of these parts uses the unfinished film to unveil the material, commercial, and interpersonal conditions of filmmaking for women in various times and places. However, whereas part 2's attention to refusal and interruption subtends a generally hostile and combative account of film production, part 3 shifts focus to projects by women filmmakers in which qualities of unfinishedness materialize through deliberate aesthetic strategies. Complicating narratives of artistic progress and "finished" achievements, incompleteness serves feminist ends as it exceeds or reimagines its associations with loss and failure.

Part 3, "In Process," begins with chapter 7, Leo Goldsmith's interview with the experimental filmmaker Peggy Ahwesh, who has built much of her work around the use and reuse of found footage. In conversation, Ahwesh theorizes the possibilities of incompleteness for the film object—through her reworking of older images, her updating of films in flux, and, recently, her curation and exhibition of alternative versions of her work alongside incomplete works by her forebears, including Maya Deren. In chapter 8, Stefan Solomon reads two film works that remained intentionally open-ended for decades: Leslie Thornton's *Peggy and Fred in Hell*, a cycle begun as an intended feature film in 1983, spanning seventeen different episodes over the following thirty years and (ostensibly) concluded in 2015; and Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Electronic Diaries*, a confessional film begun in 1984, "finished" in 1996, but then reopened in 2019. What is the significance, Solomon asks, of formally completing a project that has remained open-ended for more than three decades—or, conversely, of adding new material to a long-completed project?

Chapter 9 features filmmaker-scholar Karen Pearlman's meditation of the experiences, practices, and functions of incompleteness, focusing on the role of the editor as one who in reality always works with unfinished film materials. Pearlman discusses her work-in-progress—on the unbroken connections between dance and editing in the work of the US experimental filmmaker Shirley Clarke. For Pearlman, Clarke's training in dance established "one long electrical cord" that passed a current from her choreography through to her filmmaking and kinaesthetic sensibility as an editor—and remains live, ongoing, as it activates Pearlman's current creative practice.

Chapter 10 concerns "Shirkers," a film shot in 1991 that was poised to be the first independent English-language feature film in Singapore since the 1970s—before its director, Georges Cardona, absconded with the 16mm film and sound reels. Nearly three decades later, the film's writer and star, Sandi Tan, reimagined the work in a different form as the major Netflix documentary *Shirkers* (2018). In this chapter Sophia Siddique, the producer of the original "Shirkers," reflects on her overlapping roles as producer, interview subject, spectator, and scholar of the unproduced and reproduced film. Through a series of creative-critical "epitaphs" for the unfinished film of her youth, Siddique explores how this project recasts Singaporean film history and asks us to come to terms with the ghosts of the past.

Extrapolating from Siddique's sense of the haunting "afterlives" of filmic incompleteness, part 4 of this book, "Posthumous Returns," analyzes the unfinished film under the sign of its posthumous completion or recovery. Earlier chapters are situated more or less expressly within a feminist recovery mode, working to restore to the historical record the authorial and creative presence of women film practitioners—albeit to restore without seeking to complete the historical record. Although the recovery framework is highly usable for the study of unfinished projects, filmic incompleteness prompts us to confront the limits of recovery as a method, particularly in its positivist assumptions. As Genevieve Yue has recently argued, the "assertion of [women's] neglected or forgotten presence in various aspects of filmmaking" in feminist film studies rests on a theory of the medium's history derived from its representational functions.⁷⁸ This means, Yue notes, that feminist recovery paradigms treat film as a medium of presence rather than one formed in its absences, by all the material (bodily, technological) that remains off-screen. When it comes to incomplete or unfinished films, such material may comprise the entirety of a given project. The final part of *Incomplete* therefore

accounts for posthumous returns and reworkings of film materials that counsel us against a fetishization of presence—and, differently, of absence—within film history and studies of spectatorship.

In each of the cases studied in this part of the book, which center on US cinema in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the death of a woman filmmaker or star has arrested or interposed on the course of film production, and the decisions about whether and how to complete or otherwise contribute to this unfinished work carry significant ethical and political implications. The contributors unpack these implications as they reckon with the public, textual, and technological afterlives of women filmmakers and actors, meditating on what is lost—not only found—through certain efforts to revitalize or recuperate the incomplete. Chapter 11, by Alix Beeston, concerns the posthumous dissemination and reception of the work of the Black filmmaker and writer Kathleen Collins, which was largely undistributed, unproduced, or unpublished when she died from cancer in 1988. The posthumous recovery of Collins has enabled her work to find a wide audience in recent years, but it has also, as Beeston argues, freighted that work with associations of loss and failure that obscure the dedicated, iterative, and collaborative labor that defined Collins's creative practice across her life. Drawing on archival research and oral histories, Beeston advances an alternative view of Collins's unfinished film work—specifically the unproduced screenplay “A Summer Diary”—which seeks to honor “the vital rhythms and continuities of her work-in-process.”

Likewise, in chapter 12, Karen Redrobe situates the experimental animator Helen Hill within the communities and traditions in which she was working prior to her death in 2007. When Hill was murdered during a wave of post-Hurricane Katrina violence in New Orleans, she left behind an unfinished project called “The Florestine Collection.” Rather than focusing on the posthumously “completed” version of the film, made in 2011 by Hill's partner, Paul Gailiunas, Redrobe examines the archive of the project to reveal Hill's place in the histories of experimental film and animation and her efforts, as a white woman in New Orleans, to grapple with racial injustice and to cultivate communities devoted to “reimagining and repairing the world in continuous, contestable, and unfolding ways.” Finally, in chapter 13, Katherine Fusco explores the posthumous career of Marilyn Monroe and the issues of publicity, consent, and copyright raised by her numerous resurrections as a CGI “deepfake.” Drawing on case law and feminist star studies, Fusco faces the violent side of fan and industry desires, and their

gendered dimensions, in the *elsewhere* and *elsewhen* of film cultures—as stars’ images such as Monroe’s are put to uses to which they cannot possibly consent.

Incomplete concludes with Giuliana Bruno’s postscript, which casts backward and forward, marking a pathway into and out of this book. Staging her own act of return, Bruno reflects on the journey of *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* in the three decades since it was first published: the process of developing an innovative, subjective method for writing a history of lacunae, the subsequent reception and use of the work within feminist film studies, and the enduring (after)life of the book—and of Elvira Notari’s work and memory—for Bruno personally. Like the several openings of this introduction, in which beginnings are also endings and endings are also beginnings, Bruno’s postscript embeds *Incomplete* in a history of feminist scholarship that encompasses the past as well as the future: the feminist project as a continuous, incomplete structure, a challenge and a promise, an archive of possibilities for the future.

NOTES

1. Èsfir’ Shub, *Zhizn’ moia—kinematograf* [*My Life—Cinema*], ed. A.I. Konopleva (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972), 286, cited in Graham Roberts, “Èsfir Shub: A Suitable Case for Treatment,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 11.2 (1991): 149–59, 155.

2. On the circumstances of the screenplay’s incompletion, see Roberts, “Èsfir Shub: A Suitable Case,” 155–56; and Graham Roberts, “Èsfir Shub,” in *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia*, ed. Derek Jones (London: Routledge, 2001), 2235–36.

3. We cite the English translation of “Women” used in Madansky’s film, which is credited to Jessica Mroz and Anastasia Karkacheva. The first of the script’s seven chapters has also been translated and published by Vlada Petric as “Esther Shub’s Unrealized Project,” *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3.4 (1978): 449–56.

4. Miranda July, “U-Matic Chainletter” (July 1997): 8; digitized at www.joanie4jackie.com/chainletter/u-matic-chainletter/.

5. July, “U-Matic Chainletter,” 1.

6. July, “U-Matic Chainletter,” 4.

7. Frances Corry, “‘LADY U SEND ME YR MOVIE’: Constructing *Joanie 4 Jackie*’s Feminist Distribution Network,” *Feminist Media Studies* (2020): 1–17, 2.

8. July, “U-Matic Chainletter,” 8. For a useful discussion of the intersectional feminist goals of *The Missing Movie Report*, see Cara Smulevitz, “‘Girl, If You Make the Movie, I Promise You Somebody Will See It’: DIY, Grrrl Power, and Miranda July,” PhD dissertation (University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016), 140–50.

9. July, "U-Matic Chainletter," 4.
10. Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 4.
11. Stefano Masi and Mario Franco, *Il mare, la luna, i coltelli. Per una storia del cinema muto Napoletano* (Naples: Tullio Pironti, 1988), 49, cited in Kim Tomadjoglou, "Elvira Notari," in *Women Film Pioneers Project*, ed. Jane M. Gaines, Radha Vatsal, and Monica Dall'Asta (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-zdmp-rs37>.
12. Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 3.
13. Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 150.
14. See Renée Green's remarks on this aspect of the film in "Survival: Ruminations on Archival Lacunae," in *The Archive*, ed. Charles Merewether (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 49–55, 52–54.
15. The voiceover is a citation of Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn and ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), 83–109, 98.
16. Nora M. Alter, "Beyond the Frame: Renée Green's Video Practice," in *Shadows and Signals*, by Renée Green, Alexander Alberro, Nora M. Alter, and Nuria Enguita Mayo (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2000), 155–73, 172.
17. Digital technologies have radically expanded the senses in which we might think of the unfinished, giving rise, for example, to the idea of the "boundless media" that manifests in "new forms of durational recording, storytelling, imagemaking, and data visualization." See Erika Balsom, Mary Ann Doane, Kris Fallon, Kaitlin Clifton Forcier, and Tess Takahashi, "Boundless Media," *Afterimage* 48.2 (June 2021): 33.
18. See Dan Streible, "The Role of Orphan Films in the 21st Century Archive," *Cinema Journal* 46.3 (2007): 124–28.
19. Dan North, "Introduction: Finishing the Unfinished," in *Sights Unseen: Unfinished British Films*, ed. Dan North (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 1–18, 7. See Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 56–64.
20. Vinzenz Hediger, "The Original Is Always Lost: Film History, Copyright Industries and the Problem of Reconstruction," in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, ed. Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 135–49, 147, 148.
21. Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age* (London: Wallflower, 2009), 43.
22. Monica Dall'Asta and Jane M. Gaines, "Constellations: Past Meets Present in Feminist Film History," prologue to *Doing Women's Film History: Reframing Cinemas, Past and Future*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Julia Knight (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 2015), 13–25, 18.
23. Likewise, theories of failure in queer studies offer useful contexts for revaluing the unfinished; see especially Jack Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

24. Maggie Hennefeld, "Film History," *Feminist Media Histories* 4.2 (2018): 77–83, 80.

25. See Priya Jaikumar, "Feminist and Non-Western Interrogations of Film Authorship," in *The Routledge Companion to Cinema and Gender*, ed. Kristin Lené Hole, Dijana Jelača, E. Ann Kaplan, and Patrice Petro (New York: Routledge, 2017), 205–14; and Janet Staiger, "Authorship Approaches," in *Authorship and Film*, ed. David A. Gerstner and Janet Staiger (New York: Routledge, 2003), 27–57, especially the discussion of authorship-as-personality, 33–40, and the scholarship cited at note 34.

26. The largest body of scholarship devoted to a director's unfinished works belongs to Welles, owing as much to Welles's critical reputation and the academic industry around his work as to the predominance of unfinished projects across his career. Not all scholarship is hagiographic; for example, Catherine Benamou's appraisal of the unfinished Mexican–Brazilian docufiction film *It's All True* interrogates the impression of mastery afforded to Welles. For Benamou, "the aborted text returns as a scar or 'wound' on the auteur's body: a blemish rather than a creative turning point in the director's film work as a whole." Catherine L. Benamou, *It's All True: Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 150. On Welles, see also Marguerite H. Rippey, *Orson Welles and the Unfinished RKO Projects: A Postmodern Perspective* (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 2009), and Josh Karp, *Orson Welles's Last Movie: The Making of The Other Side of the Wind* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015). Other key studies of male auteurs' unfinished works include Alison Castle, *Stanley Kubrick's "Napoleon": The Greatest Film Never Made* (Cologne: Taschen, 2017), and Federico Fellini, Dino Buzzati, Brunello Rondi, and Bernardino Zapponi, *The Journey of G. Mastorna: The Film Fellini Didn't Make*, ed. and trans. Marcus Perryman (New York: Berghan, 2013).

27. James Fenwick, Kieran Foster, and David Eldridge, introduction to *Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts of Unmade Films*, ed. Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 1–14, 3.

28. Lucy Mazdon, "Clouzot's *L'Enfer*," in *Shadow Cinema*, ed. Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, 185–98, 193, 194. The other substantive feminist contribution to *Shadow Cinema* is Hannah Hamad's analysis of how feminist activism halted the production of two films based on the Yorkshire Ripper murders in the early 1980s. In keeping with our own efforts not to fetishize presence, which we discuss later on, Hamad shows how the incompleteness of a film project may well serve feminist ends. See Hamad, "The Movie Producer, the Feminists and the Serial Killer: UK Feminist Activism, Misogynist 70s Film Culture and the (Non) Filming of the Yorkshire Ripper Murders," in *Shadow Cinema*, ed. Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, 235–50.

29. Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, introduction, 8.

30. Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, introduction, 7.

31. See Judith Mayne, *Directed by Dorothy Arzner* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Catherine Grant, "Secret Agents: Feminist Theories of Women's Film Authorship," *Feminist Theory* 2.1 (2001): 113–30; Jane M. Gaines, "Of Cabbages and Authors," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press,

2002), 88–118; Patricia White, *Women's Cinema, World Cinema: Projecting Contemporary Feminisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Isabel Seguí, “Auteurism, *Machismo-Leninismo* and Other Issues: Women's Labor in Andean Oppositional Film Production,” *Feminist Media Histories* 4.1 (January 2018): 11–36; Seguí, “Beatriz Palacios: Ukamau's Cornerstone (1974–2003),” *Latin American Perspectives* 48.2 (March 2021): 77–92; and Karen Redrobe, “Thinking Like a Holy Girl: A Philosophy of Grandma's Bedroom,” in *On Women's Films: Across Worlds and Generations*, ed. Ivone Margulies and Jeremi Szaniawski (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 346–67.

32. Staiger, “Authorship Approaches,” 50.

33. Gaines, “Of Cabbages and Authors,” 108, 110.

34. Gaines, “Of Cabbages and Authors,” 110.

35. Mathilde Rouxel, “A Filmmaker's Words: A Journey through the Archive of Jocelyne Saab's Unfinished Work,” in *ReFocus: The Films of Jocelyne Saab: Films, Artworks and Cultural Events for the Arab World*, ed. Rouxel and Stefanie Van de Peer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 70–84; Samantha N. Sheppard, “I Love Cinema: Black Film and Speculative Practice in the Era of Online Crowdfunding,” *Film Quarterly* 71.2 (2017): 25–31, and Sheppard's forthcoming book *A Black W/whole: Phantom Cinemas and the Reimagining of Black Women's Media Histories*; Monika Kin Gagnon, “Unfinished Films and Posthumous Cinema: Charles Gagnon's *R69* and Joyce Wieland's *Wendy and Joyce*,” in *Cinephemera*, ed. Zoë Druick and Gerda Cammaer (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 137–58, and Gagnon's forthcoming book *Posthumous Cinema*; Eugénie Zvonkine, “‘Watch Your Films Attentively’: Kira Muratova's Unrealised Script as a Key to her Oeuvre,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 8.1 (2014): 41–50, and “The Unfinished Gesture: Kira Muratova's *Long Farewells* (*Dolgie provody*, 1971),” *East European Film Bulletin* 98 (October 2019), <https://eefb.org/retrospectives/kira-muratovas-long-farewells-dolgie-provody-1971/>.

36. Sarah Keller, *Maya Deren: Incomplete Control* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 2.

37. See also Erin Hill, *Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016).

38. Keller, *Maya Deren*, 7.

39. See Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden, eds., *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); and Adrian Martin, “Where Do Cinematic Ideas Come From?,” *Journal of Screenwriting* 5.1 (2014): 9–26, 16.

40. For literary studies approaches to textual variants and unfinished works, see Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); John Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Sean Braune, “How to Analyze Texts That Were Burned, Lost, Fragmented, or Never Written,” *symplokē* 21.1–2 (2013): 239–55; James Ramsey Wollen, “What Is an Unfinished Work?” *New Literary History* 46.1 (2015): 125–42; and Matthew Harle, *Afterlives of Abandoned Work: Creative Debris in the Archive* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019).

41. Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light: Theses on the Photography of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 64.

42. Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 3.

43. Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 4.

44. Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 3; Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 14.

45. Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 26 (June 2008): 1–14, 11.

46. Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), ix.

47. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 12.

48. Jacqueline Najuma Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), xviii.

49. Allyson Nadia Field, *Uplift Cinema: The Emergence of African American Film and the Possibility of Black Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 23.

50. Field, *Uplift Cinema*, 26–27. For examples of this in practice, see the essays collected in a special double issue edited by Field and released while *Incomplete* was in production, “Speculative Approaches to Media Histories,” *Feminist Media Histories* 8.2 and 8.3 (2022).

51. Field, *Uplift Cinema*, 25.

52. Elena Gorfinkel, “Microhistories and Materiality in Adult Film History, or the Case of *Erotic Salad*,” *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 58.1 (2018): 147–52, 152.

53. Field, *Uplift Cinema*, 25.

54. Monica Dall’Asta and Alessandra Chiarini, “Editor’s Introduction: Found Footage: Women Without a Movie Camera,” *Feminist Media Histories* 2.3 (2016): 1–10, 4.

55. Braune, “How to Analyze Texts,” 252, 248.

56. Pier Paolo Pasolini, “The Screenplay as a ‘Structure That Wants to Be Another Structure,’” in *Heretical Empiricism*, ed. Louise K. Barnett, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 187–96, 189; “agentic force” is Braune’s phrase in “How to Analyze Texts,” 241.

57. Maya Deren, “Cinematography: The Creative Use of Reality,” *Daedalus* 89.1 (1960): 150–67, 154–55.

58. Catherine Fowler, “Remembering Cinema ‘Elsewhere’: From Retrospection to Introspection in the Gallery Film,” *Cinema Journal* 51.2 (2012): 26–45, 37. See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); Victor Burgin, *The Remembered Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004); and Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or the Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

59. Fowler, “Remembering Cinema ‘Elsewhere,’” 36; Pierre Huyghe, interviewed in Fabian Stech, *J’ai parlé avec Lavier, Annette Messager, Sylvie Fleury*,

Hirschhorn, Pierre Huyghe, Delvoye, D.G.-F., Hou Hanru, Sophie Calle, Ming, Sans et Bourriaud (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2007), 144. On the suspension between the past and the present in *Some Chance Operations*, see Giovanna Zapperi, “Women’s Reappearance: Rethinking the Archive in Contemporary Art—Feminist Perspectives,” *Feminist Review* 105 (2013): 21–47.

60. Made simultaneously, Madansky’s *ESFIR* and Pearlman’s *I want to make a film about women* (2019) each drew on Anastasia Kostina’s English translation of Shub’s script. Whereas Madansky’s open, observational film takes its temporal sense from the lives of the women it documents, Pearlman borrows a rapid editing style from the Soviet women Constructivist filmmakers of the 1920s and makes more overt her attempt to discover strategies for responding to incomplete film materials.

61. Fowler, “Remembering Cinema ‘Elsewhere,’” 28. Fowler borrows the term “undead” from Thomas Elsaesser: “Because of its undead nature, the cinema perhaps does not have a history (of periods, styles, modes). It can only have fans, clans and believers, forever gathering to revive a fantasm or a trauma, a memory and an anticipation.” Elsaesser, “Specularity and Engulfment: Francis Ford Coppola and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,” in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), 191–208, 206.

62. Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map*, 236.

63. Dall’Asta and Gaines, “Constellations,” 19.

64. Dall’Asta and Gaines, “Constellations,” 21.

65. Miranda July, *It Chooses You* (San Francisco: Canongate Books, 2011), 159.

66. Fowler, “Remembering Cinema ‘Elsewhere,’” 36; Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, introduction, 2.

67. João Biehl and Peter Locke, foreword to *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming*, ed. Biehl and Locke (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), ix–xiii, ix.

68. Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, “Walter Benjamin and the Counterfactual Imagination,” *History and Theory* 49.3 (2010): 361–83, 380.

69. Wurgaft, “Walter Benjamin,” 370.

70. On the limits of speculation about what might have been, see Fenwick, Foster, and Eldridge, introduction, 1–4.

71. Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 11; Lisa Lowe, “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 191–212, 208.

72. See Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 71–89; Tina Camp’s theorization of the tense of the Black feminist present and future in *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); and Domietta Torlasco’s discussion of digital film works that “open the past of the archive to mutations that belong to the future,” “dispossessing the past of its priority over the present” as it “remembers not only what happened but also what did not happen in our cinematic past (and yet might have, under different conditions), what ‘will have happened’ by virtue of these eccentric appropriations,” in *The Heretical Archive: Digital*

Memory at the End of Film (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), xiv. Torlasco's work is especially relevant to our project; similar to the works discussed in the third part of this book, Torlasco examines "fundamentally incomplete projects, without a clear beginning or a definitive end." Torlasco, *Heretical Archive*, xii.

73. Grosz, *Time Travels*, 74.

74. Dall'Asta and Gaines, "Constellations," 22.

75. Èsfir' Shub, "From My Experience," in "Èsfir Shub: Selected Writings," trans. Anastasia Kostina, intro. Liubov Dyshlyuk, *Feminist Media Histories* 2.3 (2016): 11–28, 18.

76. This phrase was used in *Big Miss Moviola* zines and advertisements from 1996 on, as Smulevitz notes in "‘Girl, If You Make the Movie,’" 18n8.

77. Paula Amad, *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 19.

78. Genevieve Yue, *Girl Head: Feminism and Film Materiality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 17.