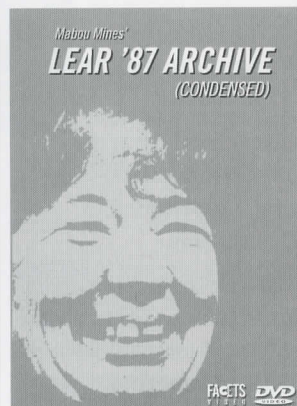
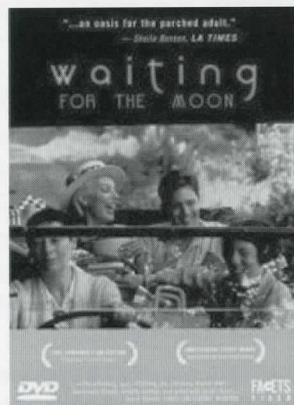

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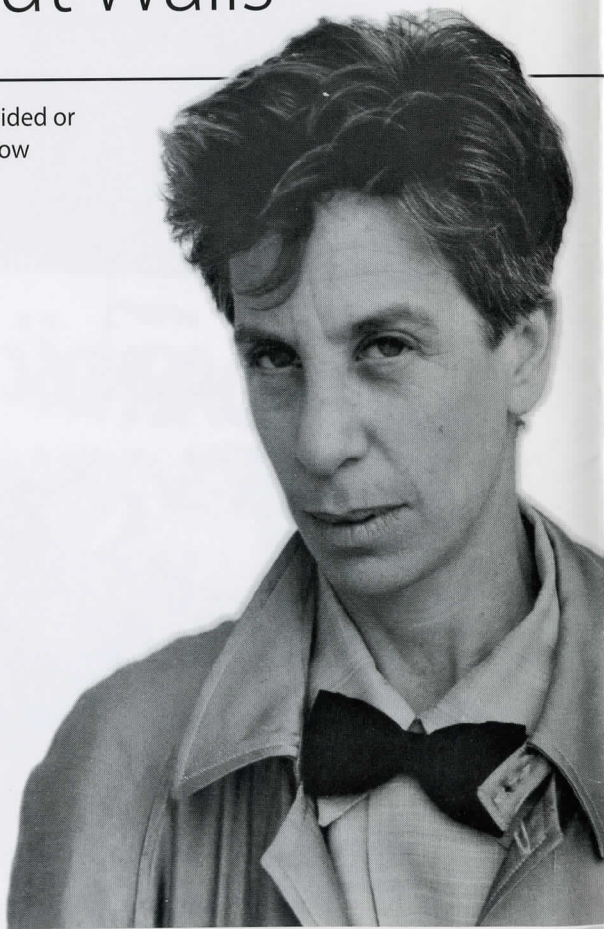


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Jill Godmilow



"I've been thinking for a long time that what is commonly understood as the progressive or liberal documentary is an inadequate form—a relatively useless cultural product, especially for political change. Its basic strategy is description and it makes its argument by organizing visual evidence, expressive local testimony and sometimes expert technical testimony into a satisfying emotional form.... Though the liberal documentary takes the stance of a sober, nonfiction vehicle for edification about the real world, it is trapped in the same matrix of obligations as the fiction film: to entertain its audience; to produce fascination with its materials; to satisfy, to assure the audience of informed and moral citizenship; to achieve closure. My question is: Is that of any political use?"

—JILL GODMILOW, FROM "WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE LIBERAL DOCUMENTARY"

Considered one of the primary theorists and practitioners in documentary filmmaking, producer-director Jill Godmilow continually explores and pushes the boundaries of both nonfictional and fictional modes.

Her early career can be characterized as a well-traveled road, from fiction filmmaking to documentary, back to fiction, then back to documentary. At a certain point it became clear to her that both of these seemingly opposed genres, each with different claims to "reality," produced essentially similar texts—texts that are constructed by a filmmaker out of bits and pieces of image and sound to tell tales, whether they are narratively structured or not, yet both forms have become stale and stymied for the most part by their traditional roles... one to entertain, the other to inform.

Since then, she has worked in dramatic fictional forms using nonfictional material, as well as in nonfictional forms using fictional

material. Operating with directness of means and without any claims to be revealing the truth, she is interested in expanding both genres and in fashioning new "functionalities" for the cinema.

Godmilow's substantial reputation rests on four decades of filmmaking. Her first major film, *Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman* (1973), became the first independently produced documentary to enjoy extensive theatrical exhibition in the United States. It was also broadcast on television in 11 foreign countries. Its numerous honors included an Academy Award™ nomination, an Independent New York Film Critics Award for Best Documentary, the Mademoiselle Award, the Christopher Award, and the First Prize and Emily Award at the American Film Festival. In 2003 *Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman* was added to the National Film Registry at the Library of Congress.

In 1984, her nonfiction feature *Far From Poland*, about the rise of the Polish Solidarity movement, was heralded for breaking important new ground in the documentary genre. The film employed a radical deconstructive approach, replacing conventional reality footage shot in Poland (there is none in the film) with soap-opera-

like dramas between the filmmaker and her boyfriend, flash cards, Polish jokes, imaginary conversations with Fidel Castro, and letters from friends in Poland, all of which collectively served to completely rework documentary representational practices, especially in the presentation of "other peoples' struggles."

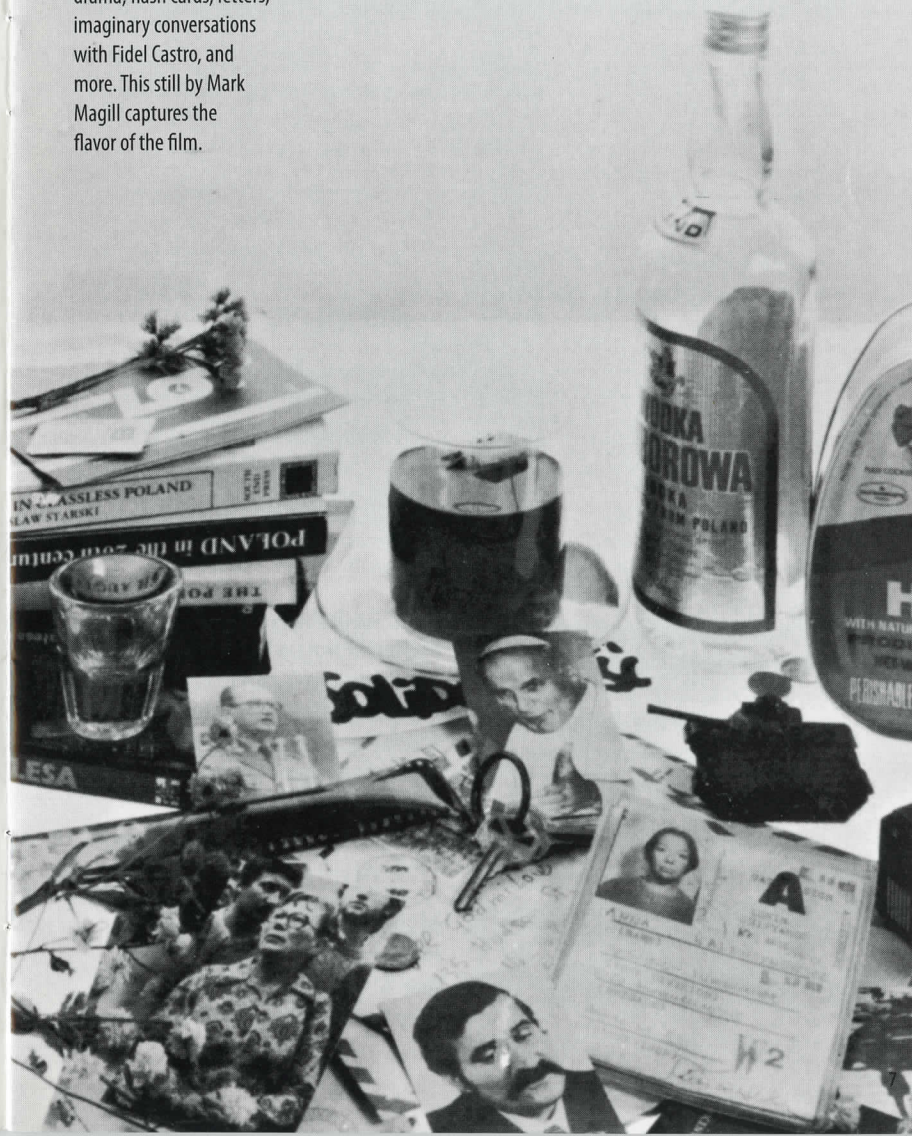
These techniques, in reverse, led to the genesis of her 1987 dramatic feature, *Waiting for the Moon*, a feminist fiction about the lives of the famous literary couple Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. A paradoxical and impossible lovers' tale in the literary spirit of Stein herself, the film also depicted some of the couple's famous friends who frequented their Paris salon at 27, rue de Fleurus. Produced for PBS's *American Playhouse*, *Waiting for the Moon* was later released by Skouras Pictures for art house runs in over 50 U.S. cities. It was honored at numerous national and international film festivals, including the Sundance Film Festival, where it won Best Feature Film, and the Houston International Film Festival, where it won first prize. The film was theatrically distributed or broadcast in France, Germany, England, Australia, Sweden, and Japan.

In 1995 she completed *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*—a cinematic representation and interrogation of performance artist Ron Vawter's extraordinary solo theater piece about the infamous and closeted homosexual lawyer Roy Cohn and the equally infamous but flamboyantly gay underground filmmaker/performance artist, Jack Smith. Cohn was "in the closet" his whole life, and protected himself by performing himself as a straight man. For extra protection, he performed himself as red-baiting, reactionary racist and as a homophobe... a vicious gay-hater who could protect the country and the American family from the pernicious disease of homosexuality. Smith, in flamboyant harem drag, performed his homosexuality so large and so broad, so bizarrely, so dazzling, so rich in the details of delirious fantasies about homosexuality, that he destroyed the possibility of the closet—by dancing furiously, but ponderously slowly, outside its walls. Both Cohn and Smith died of AIDS in the late 1980s. *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith* premiered at the Toronto Film Festival and then traveled to Berlin, Turin, Jerusalem, Sydney, Lisbon, Galway, and many others invitational film festivals. The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis ran the film for six months in an

installation of artifacts from the original stage production of *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*.

In 1998, Godmilow produced and directed a short film titled *What Farocki Taught*, which contained a perfect replica—in color and in English—of a 1969 German film, *Inextinguishable Fire*, by Harun Farocki. Farocki's black-and-white original was concerned with the production of napalm by the Dow Chemical Company. Godmilow felt that Farocki's agit-prop film provoked essential questions about the uses of labor. In the film, the labor of the Dow chemists and engineers who constructed "a better napalm" for the war in Vietnam... one that was inextinguishable, and would stick better to human skin. Because *Inextinguishable Fire* had never been available in the U.S., Godmilow's replication project was conceived as a gesture of pedagogy, film history, and film distribution, taking up a short, 29-year-old German film—a tiny unread and forgotten footnote to a war—and flicking it forward to see if the radical potential of the documentary film project could be revived. *What Farocki Taught* premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival, was featured in the Whitney Museum of American Art's

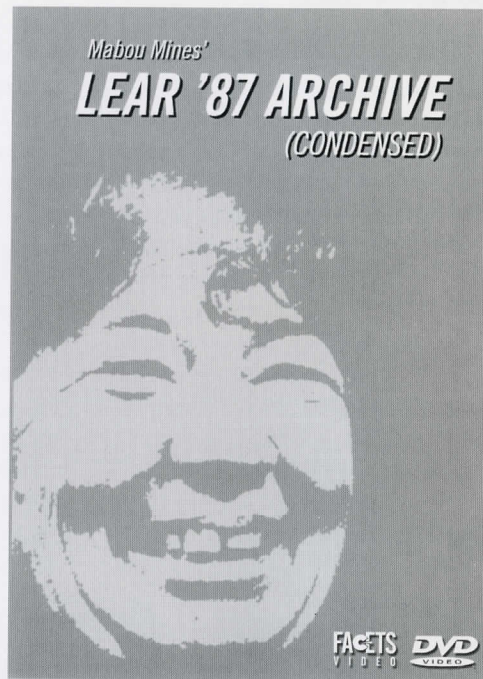
Far From Poland employs a radical deconstructive approach, replacing documentary footage with soap-opera-style drama, flash cards, letters, imaginary conversations with Fidel Castro, and more. This still by Mark Magill captures the flavor of the film.



Biennial Exhibition in 2000, then traveled to the Verbindungen/Jonctions Festival in Brussels, the Oberhausen International Film Festival, and the Locarno, Edinburgh, Graz, Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal International Film Festivals. In the U.S., it won Best Documentary at the Athens International Film Festival and also appeared at the Big Muddy, Carolina, Margaret Mead, and Chicago International Film Festivals.

Commenting on the film's strengths, Michael Renov, from the USC School of Cinema and Television Studies, stated that it was "... a bracing exercise in political film-making and pedagogy for the late 1990s—resurrecting the Brechtian frontal attack, both on an economic system intent on the manufacture of death and on the complacency of documentary realism."

In April 1999, the Center for Culture, Media and History at New York University showed Godmilow's *Far From Poland*, *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*, and *What Farocki Taught* in a mini-retrospective. Under the banner "Prevaricating the



Lear '87 Archive (Condensed) chronicles the work of theater collective Mabou Mines.

Real," Godmilow discussed with invited scholars her critique of the documentary's truth claims and representational systems. In 2002, there was a full retrospective of Godmilow's work at Febiofest in Prague, Czech Republic.

In 2001 she released the six-hour, three-disc DVD *Lear '87 Archive (Condensed)* on the work of the renown and venerable New York City theatrical collective, Mabou Mines, at work on a fully gender-reversed production

of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Scholars of avant garde theater as well as directors and performers can study this extraordinary work of political theater-making in the raw. With support from the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, the *Lear '87 Archive* is available for free to libraries at universities and colleges with major theater and performance studies departments and to theater companies in the U.S. and Canada.

Godmilow has received two Rockefeller Fellowships and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Her work has been supported by numerous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Institute for the Humanities, New York State Council for the Arts, and many private foundations.

Currently a professor in the Department of Film, Television, and Theater Studies at the University of Notre Dame, Godmilow continues to work as an independent film and video-maker while teaching courses in film production and film criticism. She is currently working on an experimental, nonfiction film about the lives of animals in the cinema.

The films of Jill Godmilow

- 2002 *Lear '87 Archive (Condensed)*
- 1998 *What Farocki Taught*
- 1995 *What's Underground About Marshmallows*
- 1994 *Roy Cohn/Jack Smith*
- 1987 *Waiting for the Moon*
- 1984 *Far From Poland*
- 1980 *The Odyssey Tapes*
(with Susan Fanshel)
- 1979 *The Vigil*
- 1979 *With Grotowski, at Nienadowka*
- 1977 *The Popovich Brothers of South Chicago*
- 1976 *Nevelson in Process*
(with Susan Fanshel)
- 1974 *Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman*
- 1969 *Tales*
(with Cassandra Gerstein)
- 1967 *La Nueva Vida*
(with Joaquin Mercado)

Kill the Documentary As We Know It: Dogma 2001

1 Don't produce "real" time and space—your audience is in a movie theatre, in comfortable chairs.

2 Don't produce the surface of things: Have a real subject and a real analysis, or at least an intelligent proposition that is larger than the subject of the film. If you forget to think about this before starting to shoot, find it in the editing room, and then put it in the film somehow.

3 Don't produce freak shows of the oppressed, the different, the primitive, and the criminal.

Please don't use your compassion as an excuse for social pornography*. We have not yet evolved beyond tendencies toward hatred, violence, and exploitation of the poor and the weak. Leave the poor freaks alone.

4 Don't produce awe for the rich, the famous, the powerful, the talented, the highly successful. They are always everywhere, and we feel bad enough about ourselves already. The chance to envy, admire, or hate them in the cinema doesn't help anybody.

* Pornography: the objectifying of a graphic image (turning it from a subject into an object), so that the thing or person depicted can be commodified, circulated, and consumed without regard to its status as a subject.

5 Don't make films that celebrate "the old ways" and mourn their loss. Haven't you yourself enjoyed change? How are the "old ways" people different from you?

6 Keep an eye on your own middle-class bias and on your audience's. Don't make films that feed it. Remember that you are producing human consciousness in people who are very vulnerable... and alone in the dark.

7 Try not to exploit your social actors—just being seen in your film is not enough compensation for the use of their bodies, voices, and experience.

8 Don't address an audience of "rational and compassionate animals." We (that is, your audience) have not yet evolved beyond the primitive tendencies toward hatred, violence, apathy, and exploitation of the poor and the weak, so don't address us as if we have.

9 Whatever you do, don't make "history." If you can't help yourself, try to remember that you're just telling a story—and at the very least, find a way to acknowledge your authorship.

10 Watch that music. What's it doing? Who is it conning?

11 Leave your parents out of this.

Solidarity and the End of the Communist Government of Poland

Far From Poland references the Polish Solidarity movement, which began in 1980. A timeline was constructed by director Jill Godmilow to facilitate an understanding of Solidarity's emergence and its subsequent role in the fall of communism.

JUNE 1976 Workers' strikes break out in factories in Radom and Ursus. They're supported by intellectual dissidents, many of them associated with KOR, the Committee for the Defense of Workers. (This alliance between intellectuals and workers proves to be of major significance for the success of the Solidarity movement a few years later.)

OCTOBER 1978 The Bishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, is elected Pope John Paul II.

JUNE 1979 Pope John Paul II visits Poland. He attracts crowds in the

millions, calling for respect for national and religious traditions and advocating for freedom and human rights, while denouncing violence. He becomes an important symbol—and supporter—of changes to come.

JULY 1980 Price hikes and static wages lead to strikes throughout the country.

AUGUST 1980 At the huge Gdansk shipyards, Anna Walentynowicz, a popular crane operator and activist, is fired and the entire shipyard goes on strike, demanding her rehiring as well as Lech Walesa, an electrician who had been fired in 1976. The government sends representatives to try to negotiate with (or buy off) individual shipyard units until the Inter-factory Strike Committee, under the leadership of Walesa,

emerges as a representative body for the entire shipyard and soon for the national work-stoppage wave. After ten days of negotiating, the strikers force the government to accept the *Gdansk Agreement*, which authorizes the creation of a free trade union, Solidarity (free of Communist Party control), and acceptance of the union's 21 specific demands, including the right to strike, better wages, fairer rationing, relaxation of censorship, freeing of political prisoners, improvements to the national health service, and other social issues.

Solidarity quickly turns into a broad, anti-communist, nonviolent, social movement that, at its height, united some ten million members. It also sparks the Independent Student Union and Independent Farmers Trade Union as well as many other free, independent organizations.

FEBRUARY 1981 General Wojciech Jaruzelski is named Prime Minister.

MARCH 1981 Talks between Solidarity and the government slow to a stop. Solidarity organizes a four-hour national warning strike calling out half a million people, which paralyzes the country and forces the regime to continue negotiating.

APRIL 1981 Ration cards for meat are introduced.



Anna Walentynowicz

The economic crisis worsens and various local Solidarity chapters start uncoordinated local strikes.

Tygodnik Solidarność, a Solidarity-published newspaper, starts publishing.

OCTOBER 1981 Prime Minister Jaruzelski replaces Kania as First Secretary of the Party.

DECEMBER 1981 Solidarity warns of a 24-hour strike if the government is granted additional powers to suppress dissent.

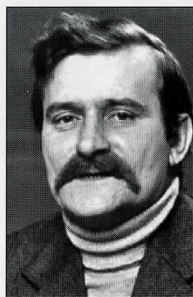
Martial law is declared; Solidarity is outlawed; approximately 5,000 people are arrested; 6,000 to 10,000 people emigrate; nine people are killed when police attack striking miners in Silesia. Censorship is expanded and military forces appear on the streets. About 200 strikes and occupations occur, chiefly at the largest plants and at several Silesian coal mines, but are

broken by paramilitary riot police. By December 28, the strikes have ceased, and Solidarity appears crippled.

APRIL 1982 Solidarity leaders in hiding, including Zbigniew Bujak, Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, and Bogdan Lis, announce the creation of the *Provisional Coordination Commission of Solidarity*. *Radio Solidarity* begins broadcasting.

AUGUST 1982 On the anniversary of the signing of the Gdansk Agreement that created Solidarity, demonstrations are held all over Poland; four people are killed, over 5,000 are detained. The international community outside the Warsaw Pact condemn Jaruzelski's actions and declare support for Solidarity. U.S. President Ronald Reagan imposes economic sanctions on Poland, which eventually force the Polish government into liberalizing its policies. Meanwhile the CIA together with the Catholic Church and various Western trade unions, such as the AFL-CIO, provide funds, equipment, and advice to the Solidarity underground. Solidarity perseveres as an exclusively underground organization, with its activists dogged by the Security

Service. A series of anti-government protests bring out thousands of participants, especially in Gdansk.



Lech Walesa

NOVEMBER 1982 Solidarity announces an eight-hour warning strike, but the appeal is generally ignored.

Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev dies.

Lech Walesa is released.

DECEMBER 1982 Most internees are released.

MAY 1983 Grzegorz Przymek, the 19-year-old son of a KOR activist, is murdered by police.

JUNE 1983 John Paul II visits Poland for the second time.

JULY 1993 Martial Law is lifted, though many heightened controls on civil liberties and political life, as well as food rationing, remain in place. Amnesty is declared for political crimes.

OCTOBER 1993 Lech Walesa is awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Arrests of Solidarity and KOR members continue, as do protests against the arrests, beatings, and occasional killings.

1985 Mikhail Gorbachev becomes General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The worsening economic situation forces him to carry out economic,

social, and political reforms that are reflected in most other Eastern Block countries, including Poland.

SEPTEMBER 1986 The last 225 of those Polish political prisoners connected with Solidarity during the previous years are released.

FEBRUARY 1988 The government hikes food prices by 40%.

APRIL 1988 A new wave of worker strikes hit the country.

MAY 1988 Workers strike at the Gdansk Shipyard. Soon the strike is broken by the government, but only temporarily.

AUGUST 1988 The strikes start again in the Silesian Mines. Eventually the Gdansk shipyards join. The government decides to negotiate.

FEBRUARY 1989 The *Round Table Talks* begin between the weakened Communist government and the banned trade union to diffuse growing social unrest, economic malaise, and runaway inflation that has depressed Polish living standards.

APRIL 1989 In partly free parliamentary elections, the re-legalized Solidarity party, to its own surprise, wins all but one of the seats it had been allowed to contest. On August 25, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a veteran

Catholic newspaper editor and Solidarity adviser, is sworn in as prime minister. Solidarity's example leads to the spread of anti-communist ideas and movements throughout the countries of the Eastern Bloc, weakening their communist governments, a process that eventually culminates in the Revolutions of 1989 (the Autumn of Nations).

NOVEMBER 1989 The Berlin Wall comes down.

DECEMBER 1990 Lech Walesa is elected President of Poland. The communist governmental system is dismantled and Poland begins transformation into a modern democratic state.

MAY 2001 General Jaruzelski and eight other men are tried for manslaughter for the shooting of striking workers in 1970—31 years earlier—when government troops had shot demonstrating workers in the Baltic port cities of Gdansk, Gdynia, and Szczecin.

AUGUST 2005 At 82, former Polish President Wojciech Jaruzelski apologizes for the role he played in the 1968 Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia. He said he was still tormented by the decision to send in Polish troops to crush a pro-democracy movement, known as the Prague Spring.