Postmodernism and (Post)Feminist Boredom

by **Jodi Ramer**

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An impassioned case for the reclamation of feminism from a "postfeminism" that is unable to offer representational life to the concept and experience of boredom, this essay examines CHARLIE'S ANGELS *(2000),* HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH *(2001),* MOULIN ROUGE *(2001), and* LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA *(1978).*

The expression "postfeminism" alerts us to the need, even if we are to embrace this new variant, to reclaim the term at its root: feminism. Compared to the light-hearted ring of the former, *feminism* smacks of a rigid and humourless stance, a corner from which one hypercritically denounces and disapproves. Feminism is what hysterical women do in an attempt to be righteous.

It should go without saying that all this is nonsense, but it doesn't. Women, in this so-called postfeminist age, may passionately embrace girlpower, rock'n'roll and porn, and do it for gender-specific reasons, but they mustn't call themselves feminist—at least not without a string of apologetic mitigations. Perhaps it's not surprising that contemporary women would want to disown—or distance themselves—from a 70s brand of feminism that tended, and certainly not without good reason, to characterise issues of lifestyle and representation in bipolar terms. What often gets lost, however, is that feminism has never been a homogenous discourse, and that the peevish, frumpy, closed-minded feminist from which most of us are careful to distinguish ourselves is such a stock figure because of mainstream representation—reductive, *unsympathetic* representation. This media version of the tiresome feminist is so unfriendly that one is reminded just how relevant feminist critiques of representation still are.

But now such critiques are, certainly, critiques with a difference, and are coming from a less defensive, less beleaguered-feeling site. Postfeminism may be the best way of naming a discourse of feminist concerns that is informed by the postmodern era—with all the debates over definitions that this implies. This new feminism is perhaps one from which women may speak critically without having to defend themselves as properly positioned in relation to the cause. Though it is a pressure indivisible from the negative buzz 70s feminism has received, nonetheless, many women were left with the uncomfortable sense of being policed, of needing to justify everything from personal appearance to politics.

Indeed, postfeminism as a feminism without apologies would be something to endorse. But the term inevitably carries the sense not of thriving adaptation but of fracture, as though a break has been made with feminism itself—that feminist discourse is now outmoded and effectively *over*. In her article "Historical Ennui, Feminist Boredom," Patrice Petro addresses this present tendency to view feminist theory (specifically film theory) "as somehow exhausted or completed—merely a stage in the development of the next new thing" (188). And Anne Friedberg, in the post-script to her book *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, comments on "the theoretical moment periodized as 'post feminist,' when feminist critique (practiced by women) has lost its authority" (198). Concomitant with this notion that feminism has been a phase—an understandable, necessary one, but one now depleted—is the postmodern fetishization of the new. Within this theoretical framework, feminism is just another trend upon which we might look back with a smile and a shake of the head, with nostalgia and amused embarrassment. Or, if feminism is granted significance as far more than a passing fancy, it then becomes a meta-narrative of the kind that pomo thinkers describe as in crisis: "the Enlightenment, which Lyotard and others have cast as foreclosed in postmodernity, was a major source of many of the values—truth, equality, freedom—which have been central to feminist thought from Mary Wollstonecraft onward" (Friedberg 197). Of course, such values also have been interrogated by feminists as to the assumptions therein (especially the way in which feminism has tended to naturalise a white, middle-class, heterosexual address). In light of this expansion in discourses of marginalisation, postmodern theory may be seen to incorporate a sensibility (the destabilizing and decentering of traditional hierarchies) that is very promising for a feminist cause—that, in fact, feminist theory has been instrumental in delineating.

Too often, though, the (ostensibly) open playing field of our present moment is regarded as a relief from the strictures of feminism rather than an advantage obtained by it. "Postfeminism" can imply a refusal to acknowledge this crucially pertinent legacy, joined with a carefree intention to benefit fully from it. This current version of the-feminism-that-cannot-speak-its-name generally consists of a cheery, fashion-forward rebelliousness. CHARLIE'S ANGELS (2000) is a recent example of a utopian-girlpower film; it acts as though gender matters, but only because it wants to show us how much fun it is to be a girl. Avoiding any hint of female disenfranchisement, the film is not interested in launching a critique, or at least not one recognizable as such. Perhaps, though, by so insistently pretending that for a young woman life is a blast, it highlights the need for—and the dearth of—such edifying fare. In taking feminine fun as its theme, CHARLIE'S ANGELS also provides fun for the women in the audience. We just don't get to see many honest-to-goodness girlfriend movies, and the thrill of one is undeniable.

CHARLIE'S ANGELS works on the premise that an overload of style and kitschy intertextuality is liberating—these gals are not burdened by a history of sexual oppression. This text is so flattened as to suggest a surface with no underpinning: a surface of limitless play. Here is postmodernism at its most emblematic.

But it does need to be stated that the postmodern stylistic of textual and referential free-for-all is not commensurate with woman-friendly manifestations. The point, here, is not to root out all the "bad examples" of representation, but to suggest that discursive and stylistic reconfigurations often maintain hierarchies, even in the name of breaking them down. Friedberg, in noting the comparable discourses of the feminist and the postmodern, finds that the likeness of the two illustrates the "displacement of feminist critique by the discourse of postmodernism" (196). Much postmodern theory elides the issue of gender, with the implication that such concerns no longer apply since the foundations upon which these old debates were based have now shifted. But renaming and revamping dynamics do not necessarily alter them. Theories (such as Hayden White's in his article "The Modernist Event") that characterise the postmodern moment as "the end of history" and "a time without event" elide the fact that the material reality of women and other minority groups is very pressing and all too real: inequality is not something to be abstracted. Petro puts it this way: "history is also about what *fails to happen* (something about which female artists and feminist women in the twentieth-century have long been painfully aware)" (197). This painful awareness is the frustration at what does not or cannot happen because of ideological circumscription, a frustration at the tiresome and uninspiring array of options, representations and supposed gratifications.

The twentieth-century's proliferation of media—and the constant, disjunctive interplay among them—is often taken as offering increased choice while dismantling conventions of narrative and subject position. But in examining a filmic exemplar of pomo aesthetics like MOULIN ROUGE (2001), one sees how little really changes. Jim Collins, in his essay "Genericity in the 90s: Eclectic Irony and the New Sincerity," investigates postmodern film for what he sees as a conservative nostalgia. "Eclectic irony" is the obvious marker of a postmodern text, but popular films of the 1980s onwards also tend to incorporate a sensibility of "new sincerity [featuring] a move back in time away from the corrupt sophistication of media culture toward a lost authenticity defined as…the site of narcissistic projection, the hero's magic mirror…the fetishizing of 'belief' rather than irony as the only way to resolve conflict" (259). Certainly this model applies to MOULIN ROUGE, with its specious gestures towards love as the answer. The film energetically appropriates the dazzle of pomo aesthetics while longing for an old-fashioned era of heartfelt narrative and tragic romance.

Now, MOULIN ROUGE boasts a bewildering display of lavish visuals, hyper-kinetic editing and tongue-in-cheek intertextuality. The result is a giddy spectacle that would seem cutting-edge but manages to be about nothing, really, except nostalgia. The opening of Tom Gunning's essay "'Animated Pictures': Tales of Cinema's Forgotten Future, After 100 Years of Film" offers an anecdote that reverberates curiously when thinking of MOULIN ROUGE:

> In 1896 Maxim Gorky attended a showing of the latest novelty from France at the All Russia Nizhni-Novgorod Fair—motion pictures produced and exhibited by the Lumière brothers, August and Louis. The films were shown at Charles Aumont's Theatre-concert Parisian, a recreation of a *café chantant* touring Russia, offering the delights of Parisian life. A patron could enjoy the films in the company of any lady he chose from the 120 French chorus girls Aumont featured (and who reportedly offered less novel forms of entertainments to customers on the upper floors). Gorky remarked a strong discrepancy between the films shown and their 'debauched' surroundings, displaying family scenes and images of the 'clean toiling life' of workers in a place where 'vice alone is being encouraged and popularized.' However, he predicted that the cinema would soon adapt to such surroundings and offer 'piquant scenes of life of the Parisian demi-monde.' (316)

The setting of MOULIN ROUGE is, of course, the eponymous, infamous nightclub circa 1900, a Parisian *café chantant* featuring chorus girls/prostitutes, most notably the willowy consumptive Satine. And Gorky has been proven right—the dissolute environs of the Parisian demi-monde *have* come to be adapted for the cinema. In this case, however, the "strong discrepancy" is still apparent, though between the historical milieu of the film and its content. This adaptation is a remarkably chaste one—a family-viewing bordello, adult nightlife Disneyfied: the PRETTY WOMAN version of prostitution.

This film longs for a more innocent time. MOULIN ROUGE opens with an antiquated-looking illustration of a proscenium theatre arch; the red curtains draw back to reveal the opening credits in a script that recalls the intertitles of a silent movie. Though the nightclub landscape is an imaginary one (as anything rendered on film ultimately is, but here triply so through the additional filters of fiction and corny anachronism) the place itself, according to the extensive DVD commentary, is faithfully recreated—hardly a necessary gesture, one would think, for so self-consciously theatrical a film. I suppose it's one of the ironies of the postmodern: accurate period detail is sought, and at great expense, while historical narrative—for better or, more often, for worse—is heedlessly appropriated and reworked (think TITANIC (1997), or SCHINDLER'S LIST (1994)). The careful representation of the club/theatre itself—whereas the city of Paris is an intentionally artificial model, a sparkly framing for the real show—signals a reverie for the *fin-de-siècle* public spectacle which (we like to believe) so thrilled early audiences: the carnivals, exhibitions, and especially films which were, at one time, so novel, so exotic, so transforming. This spectacle, it is feared, is no longer so absorbing, what with jaded audiences being spoon-fed a cinema ever more empty, ham-fisted and commercial, and with the contemporary redistribution of viewing habits, such that one is likely to watch a movie at home, alone, with pauses and interruptions.

Both Gunning and Friedberg make the point that audiences of early cinema probably were not as dumbfounded and overwhelmed as we have been led to believe—just as movies may still be experienced as affective, engaging and exciting. MOULIN ROUGE, however, is symptomatic of a brand of postmodernism that despairs of the truly new while worshipping the kick of the novel. It is weary, and manic in the disavowal of this weariness. It is boredom sped up.

The frantic attempt of MOULIN ROUGE to ward off tedium reminds us that postmodernism's unmoored style may be hiding some longstanding affiliations; the concept of hierarchical destabilization has come up before, and with less utopian implications. Petro cites T.S Eliot as a prominent voice defining the modern condition, due to rapid socio-political and technological changes, as deeply unsettling and lacking in any orienting meaning. Modernist discourse, Petro reports, is rife with the complaint of lack and loss, a refrain also predominant in the more pessimistic postmodern theory. Cultural critics have spent the last century bemoaning the exhaustion of civilisation as we know it, and equating the signs of decadence with the 'monstrous' spread of popular culture. Whether generating doomed accounts or anarchistic glee, the discourses of modernism and postmodernism would seem to be a direct—and nervous—response to women gaining socio-cultural access. Just as women gain some purchase, the terms conveniently shift: technology will make soulless drones of us all, the masses will devalue anything precious, identity is unstable and open to reconstitution, the historical event no longer holds…

Tania Modleski, in her article "The Terror of Pleasure: The Contemporary Horror Film and Postmodern Theory," interrogates the aspersions cast on pleasure as a dupe of the masses, a suspicion that can be traced through Karl Marx, the Frankfurt school and even pomo critics such as Roland Barthes and Jean-Francois Lyotard. Mass culture is equated, disparagingly, with dominant ideology, and Modleski points up "the tendency of critics and theorists to make mass culture into the 'other' of whatever, at any given moment, they happen to be championing—and moreover, to denigrate that other primarily because it allegedly provides pleasure to the consumer" (693). She goes on to demonstrate that both pleasure and popular culture are discursively linked to the feminine, and comments that women are "denied access to pleasure, while simultaneously… scapegoated for seeming to represent it" (699).

MOULIN ROUGE seems to take delight in mass culture and the pleasure it offers, but pop aesthetics alone don't make for new representational tactics. In the reformulation, the modern update, of the bohemian hero and his doomed love for the beautifully-suffering courtesan we recognise the same old tropes. The hero goes slumming and becomes fascinated by a love object—and her feminized underworld. The loved one, however, must be destroyed; all the better to hasten the hero's succession to his rightful place in the symbolic realm. MOULIN ROUGE respects the formula, and makes sure the heart-tugging moments are undiluted by irony or stylistic excess.

Of course, in the midst of all the sentiment, the "new sincerity" and call for authentic feeling, nothing is really at stake. Or more accurately, all that is at stake is the maintenance of all-too-familiar representations. The nineteenth-century romantic artist figure so dashingly recreated in MOULIN ROUGE's protagonist recalls a time when one suffered with melancholy rather then boredom. Except that 'one' is always a man, and melancholy a condition that removes him, even if he dabbles with it, from the threatening fray of the masses, of the Other. Melancholy allows the male subject to grapple with the shifting cultural forces that unsettle and alarm him, to express discontent and discomfort, all the while cultivating the stance of a besieged centre, a repository of legitimate values and higher sensibility isolated within a degraded cultural wasteland:

> If melancholy and boredom are defined by a certain self-consciousness, in melancholy, self-consciousness is painful precisely because the perception of otherness comes at the cost of exclusivity. In boredom, by contrast, self-consciousness is…more apt to bring into representation women's experience of everyday life. Whereas melancholia is about loss, and about converting male losses into representational gains, boredom, at least in twentieth century, is about excess, sensory stimulation, and shock (generated as much by the existence of others as by the media and overproduction). (Petro 192)

The gambit of a film such as MOULIN ROUGE is to claim the hip credibility of a new aesthetic—to revel in the "excess" and "sensory stimulation" that signal novelty and cultural cachet—without giving up the model of "representational gains" that Petro describes. The depth metaphors of melancholy have been replaced by the dazzle of surfaces, surfaces slicked with irony (an irony that, in referring to nothing but a *mise-en-abîme* of the ironic, has lost any critical bite). The emotional content, however, still depends on a modernist schema of loss to produce tears—though now neither the text nor the audience really knows what they are supposed to be mourning. MOULIN ROUGE's nostalgia is not actually for a story that means something but for a mythical time before boredom, for the thrill of truly novel entertainment.

It seems that boredom, like mass culture, has spread and become inevitable, but neither has shed the taint of discursive feminization. Thus, "twentieth century boredom becomes both a 'democratic affliction' and a great leveller, bound up with changing definitions of work and leisure, art and mass culture, aesthetics and sexual difference" (Petro 192). If MOULIN ROUGE is an example of a postmodern text interested in toying with these "changing definitions" but ultimately overcome by its own sense of tedium, HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH (2001) presents the promise of postmodernist aesthetics when informed by critical strategies of representation. With campy, glam rock delight, the film tells the story of a pop culture-loving little boy from Communist East Berlin who suffers a botched sex-change operation and ends up singing her (broken) heart out across a tacky and largely indifferent America. This is not the gigs-in-grungy-holes, paying-your-dues version of a hopeful rock star's first cross-country tour. The romance of this American dream is submerged in the cheesy landscape of outer-urban franchise buffets, through which Hedwig storms, snarling and gyrating to a handful of patrons who couldn't be less interested in the show. Not only is Hedwig *not*—despite flashy get-ups and rather unusual gender affiliations—the shocking spectacle any good rock'n'roller *should be* to this middle-aged, middle-American crowd, she's there not for the love of it but as a gesture of bitter revenge: following ex-lover and song-stealer Tommy Gnosis on his stadium tour. Hedwig's performances are sensational; she should be a star, and the fact that she's not is a frustration, but no tragedy.

The work of rock'n'roll is just that, work, and though Hedwig imagines it as glamorous, and even makes it look glamorous with her hipster icon posturing, we see clearly that it is not; Hedwig, her manager and her bandmates are just slogging along. Here a band gig is not unlike a babysitting gig. This equation, however, does not make for a further deflation of the former vocation so much as an elevation of the latter. Though Hedwig's physical surroundings and cultural milieu are less than inspiring, her insistent performance of the glamorous life makes an *occasion* of all of her activities. By matter-of-factly (while voicing plenty of irony and dissatisfaction) dealing with the quotidian instead of brooding over life's tragic disappointments, Hedwig transforms boredom into creative self-definition.

Hedwig, we are told, embodies a "divide" (the metaphor here is the Berlin Wall) "between east/west, man/woman, top/bottom" and to this list we can add modernism/postmodernism. (Though ultimately HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH posits the concept of polarities and partitions to dismantle such categories. Hedwig is a kind of hybrid creature, a not-man who must contend with all the discontent this entails. Gender identity works best, the film claims, when self-consciously performed and fantastical, and tends to be constructed along the lines of desire, identification and narcissistic projection.) The (highly artificial) East Berlin of Hedwig's boyhood is much like the site of a self-consciously nostalgic and romanticised modernist past—a time and place in which existential angst and grand ideas like freedom really meant something. America turns out to be a postmodern setting extraordinaire: an alienating, featureless, commercial desert of stripmalls and motels. But as indifferent as America is to Hedwig, so, ultimately, is Hedwig to America. This late-twentieth-century cultural landscape is not rendered glamorous with ironic nihilism nor does it stand as a soul-deadening wasteland—it is just boring. If the "original"—male—Hedwig is a parodic melancholy hero, brooding and longing for another life, then the suddenly white-trash, female Hedwig abandoned in a trailer park is the disaffected postmodernist, the unhappy woman. Petro quotes literary critic Reinhard Kuhn on "Flaubert's Emma Bovary, [who] presents symptoms similar to those felt by the bored suburbanite […] The former [Flaubert] suffers from a metaphysical malady, and the latter [Bovary] only feels a superficial and bored disquiet" (191). HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH is about taking on just such gender-inflected assessments and pooh-poohing the implicit value system therein. Post-op Hedwig is like Madame Bovary, but without the male *auteur* to make her story tragic. Instead, the "superficial and bored disquiet" Hedwig experiences becomes a critique on the inevitable condition of dissatisfaction stemming from a dissatisfying quotidian existence, a lack of gratification and access to pleasure—"*what fails to happen*."

If we are now bored by the changes that have *not* occurred, the answer is not to give over to exhaustion, nor to fear redundancy. Revisiting the enthusiasms and critiques—even the misfires—of the past is always worthwhile, especially if we reject a teleological view of history, a view that constructs ruptures and failures where there are only cycles and flux. Boredom, according to Petro, is an issue in which feminist theory is inevitably invested. Most broadly, boredom matters because the concept of feminism is infected by it. Feminism comes across as tiresome from the outside; feminist theorists are tired of "the tedium of conventional representation (including what has now become a conventional representation of feminism itself)" (Petro 198). Boredom, however, can be a great motivating force: feminist film theory and practice of the 70s utilized this "tedium of conventional representation" to produce new paradigms, and took on boredom as a confrontation with the quotidian by presenting the mundane details of the so-called feminine sphere of activity—a realm otherwise belittled, or simply unrepresented. Chantal Akerman's landmark film JEANNE DIELMAN, 23 QUAI DU COMMERCE, 1080 BRUXELLES (1975) deals at length (most of its 200 minutes) with the domestic chores of its titular protagonist as she unceremoniously makes dinner and turns tricks in her home—the sex generally occurs offscreen, but not the protracted peeling of potatoes. Akerman's 1978 film LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA, also dealing with interstitial, banal moments, moves the female lead out of the home and into urban space.

Though the narrative of LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA is relentlessly linear, a kind of cyclical structure is at work. The film begins with Anna installing herself in a hotel room and aimlessly, vacantly wandering about the less-than-hospitable space; it ends with Anna in her apartment—alone again—a home that might as well be a hotel room for all the specific, cozy domesticity it offers. This combination of anticlimactic linearity and circularity conveys a sense that nothing adds up to anything, that (as Jayne Loader writes of JEANNE DIELMAN) "in the chain of rituals, of monotony, of the interchangeability of days and events" (336), boredom is the only outcome.

As professional filmmaker and single woman, Anna has mobility, but she is hardly fancy-free. A certain anxiety, an awkward discomfort, could be said to attest to her liminal status as flaneuse within the general condition of modern urban alienation. Her travels certainly appear boring—the tedium of the new when the strange is just more of the same. Anna's position is ambiguous: she seems neither happy nor unhappy. The apparent meaninglessness of events and encounters that she experiences afford her a certain liberation, facilitating her mobility.

The domestic sphere is almost entirely absent in LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA; interior spaces offer no buffering embrace. Instead, Anna is constantly travelling through urban space, a space marked by anonymity and accidental encounters. The narrative is aleatory. Events do not forward the action or ultimately tie in meaningfully with any overarching plot. The rendez-vous not only lack specificity in terms of the arbitrary nature of their order, they lack specificity in terms of the participants—except, of course, for Anna herself. Within her peripheral, peripatetic status, Anna functions as something of a sounding-board; strangers make use of her presence to unburden themselves. Ultimately, though, despite awkward attempts at connection, Anna ends up with her answering machine (as it pauses and beeps with an irritating/entrancing reiteration), a fitting substitute for the personal meetings that hardly offer her any more engaged or meaningful communication.

LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA eschews essence in order to present a destabilizing melange of the particular and the anonymous, the individual and the exemplar. In her book *Nothing Happens: Chantal Akerman's Hyperrrealist Everyday*, Ivone Margulies' description of JEANNE DIELMAN also applies to LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA, with the text "oscillating between concreteness and abstraction […] unsettl[ing] notions of type and of representativeness while suggesting a perverse compliance with these very notions…Jeanne [substitute "Anna"] can still be seen as a type, albeit in an unmapped, nonessentialist register. Akerman's main feat is her definition of a positive and political valence for singularity" (148). LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA works to establish its protagonist as a singular entity who is not merely replaceable or exchangeable: she demonstrates particularity and eccentricity; she occupies a specific place and time, which her story does not transcend; she is responsive, if inadequately so. However, the film's refusal of interiority, and Anna's function as effectively a blank slate (if Anna' encounters are interchangeable with her answering machine, so, in effect, is she) also relegates her character, and all the characters within the film, to anonymity and representative type. Within LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA's framework of estrangement and alienation nothing is particular, engaging or meaningful: "Nothing happens." Boredom, it seems, more then even necessity, is the key motivator.

Thematics of boredom are applied at the formal level as well, in the "detours" that Margulies describes:

> fixed, symmetrical framing and long shot duration clear the scene, and magnify the focus on single characters as they speak. Along with the fixed perspective, there are no reverse or point-of-view shots; the characters are always seen from the outside […] Akerman's dialogue-as-monologue structure displaces response onto the audience. With no reversal of perspective, she establishes a noncomplicit relation with her audience. (156-7)

Because the viewer is not sutured into the film, she is not afforded the illusion of engagement, of entertainment. Rather than comfortably absorbing the threat of boredom the viewer experiences, the film deflects this anxiety back. The viewer is encouraged to confront, perhaps to become comfortable with, boredom. In performing monotony, LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA comes to terms with, or possibly refutes, the twentieth century hysteria surrounding ennui.

Not unlike LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA, HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH represents a liminal figure without playing up the exoticism or victimization this status often entails. The other is not used as a clear-eyed cultural critic nor as someone who operates outside of the system: the 'system' is too all-encompassing and diffuse to be used to define a periphery and a centre: these entities all coexist. No one has any answers or any claims on meaning. But, for the protagonists, this destabilized condition in itself (counter to the "beyond gender" theories of postmodernism) is not a reason for exuberance nor (counter to a patriarchal discourse of lament) is it an acute misfortune.

Instead, these texts reframe ennui. HEDWIG uses knowing irony and a splashy pomo sensibility, whereas LES RENDEZ-VOUS D'ANNA utilises modernist aesthetics for an insistent representation of monotony; both work to deflate the tragic stance of melancholy while simultaneously foregrounding tedium and dissatisfaction as routine symptoms of cultural exclusion. For women and other minority groups there is no appreciable rupture between modernism and postmodernism, just a continuity of boredom. But if feminism does best to reject a discourse that denounces boredom while feminizing it, we hardly want to settle for boredom. Thus in cultivating a representational strategy that "challenges the assumption that *ennui* is a male condition and exposes its status as theatrical gesture or pose" (Petro 195)—in *performing* boredom—we create a critical distance that opens a gap for pleasure. Men, expecting privilege, have wanted to romanticize their suffering, to turn their backs on the commonplace and decry its polluting effects. But women, knowing that life is disappointing, must find creative ways of generating pleasure—which is why *truly* innovative, female-friendly representation can teach men a thing or two about surviving—and perhaps thriving—as postmodern subjects.

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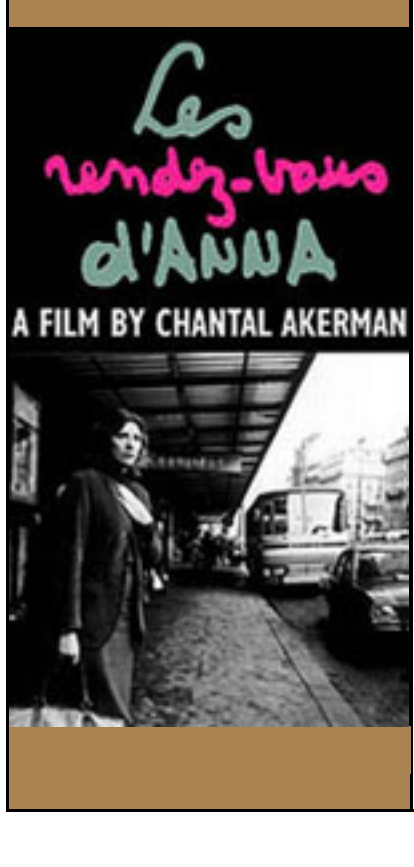

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