it? Difference in such a context is that which undermines the very idea of identity, differing to infinity those layers of totality that form I.

Hegemony works at leveling out differences and at standardizing contexts and expectations in the smallest details of our daily lives. Uncovering this leveling of differences is, therefore, resisting that very notion of difference that is defined in the master's terms and that often resorts to the simplicity of essences. Divide and conquer has for centuries been his creed, his formula of success. But a different terrain of consciousness has been explored for some time now, a terrain in which clear-cut divisions and dualistic oppositions such as science versus subjectivity, masculine versus feminine, may serve as departure points for analytical purposes but are no longer satisfactory if not entirely untenable to the critical mind.

I have often been asked about what some viewers call the lack of conflicts in my films. Psychological conflict is often equated with substance and depth. Conflicts in Western contexts often serve to define identities. My response to questions about this "lack" is: let difference replace conflict. Difference as understood in many feminist and non-Western contexts, difference as foreground in my film work, is not opposed to sameness nor synonymous with separateness. Difference, in other words, does not necessarily give rise to separatism. This concept of difference can encompass differences as well as similarities. One can further say that difference is not what makes conflicts. It is beyond and alongside conflict. This is where confusion often arises and where the challenge can be issued. Many of us still hold on to the concept of difference not as a tool of creativity to question multiple forms of repression and dominance but as a tool of segregation used to exert power on the basis of racial and sexual essences. The apartheid type of difference.

Let me point to a few examples of practices of such a notion of difference. There are quite a few, but I'll select just three. First, there is the example of the veil as reality and metaphor. If the act of unveiling has a liberating potential, so does the act of veiling. It all depends on the context in which such an act is carried out or, more precisely, on how and where women see dominance. Difference should be defined neither by the dominant sex nor by the dominant culture. So when women decide to lift the veil, one can say that they do so in defiance of their men's oppressive right to their bodies. But when they decide to keep or put on the veil they once took off, they might do so to reappropriate their space or to claim a new difference in defiance of genderless, hegemonic, centered standardization.

Second, the use of silence. Within the context of women's speech, silence has many faces. Like the veiling of women, silence can only be subversive when it frees itself from the male-defined context of absence, lack, and fear as feminine territories. On the one hand, we face the danger of inscribing femininity as absence, as lack, and as blank in rejecting the importance of the act of enunciation. On the other hand, we understand the necessity of placing women on the side of negativity and of working in undertones, for example, in our attempts at undermining patriarchal systems of values. Silence is so commonly set in opposition with speech. Silence as a will not to say or a will to unsay and as a language of its own has barely been explored.

Third, the question of subjectivity. The domain of subjectivity understood as sentimental, personal, and individual horizon as opposed to objective, universal, societal,