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PHENOMENOLOGY AND FILM

1. Peritore, N. Patrick. “Descriptive Phenomenology and Film: An Introduction.” *Journal of the University Film Association* 29, no. 1 (1977): 3–6. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20687349.

As the title itself states, the article is an introductory one that aims at presenting phenomenology as a valid method and approach for film analysis. According to Peritore, the merits of phenomenology when it comes to pedagogics lie in the fact that it is able to provide a clear process of discovery, something that is emphasizes from the first paragraphs of the article. Presenting cinematic phenomenological research as a method not only for analysis but also for film historians, the text, employing—among others—key concepts from the philosophy of Edmund Husserl, such as *Noema* and *Noesis*, argues for “the use of phenomenology as descriptive method”, dividable in procedural canons and paradigms. Given the fact that artistic experience is “patterned in the temporal structures of consciousness,” the phenomenological method provides a basis for discussion that can adapt and grow not solely on the experience of the phenomenologist as film critic or historian, but also on the contribution of other experiences, other gazes, other interpretations. According to the author, whether one is an academic or mere film viewer, engaging with phenomenology, namely phenomenology according to Husserl’s philosophy, can result in a comprehensive understanding not only of the film as artistic object but also of its subjective undertones, of its conditions and context.

2. Yacavone, Daniel. “Film and the Phenomenology of Art: Reappraising Merleau-Ponty on Cinema as Form, Medium, and Expression.” *New Literary History* 47, no. 1 (2016): 159–185. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24772802.

The phenomenological approach to cinematic art is outlined in Daniel Yacavone's article in relation to the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Monty, more precisely, to the philosopher's writings on phenomenology and cinema, as many others before it, yet the author makes the distinction between the proposed method and what is called "first-generation phenomenological film theory and criticism," hinting at the fact that even if the source is the same, Merleau-Ponty, the interpretation differs in aspects that are more than historical ones. The article gives an overview of first-generation phenomenological approaches to cinema and also of contemporary phenomenology of film and Vivian Sobchack's *The Address of the Eye*, a book described (by quoting Dr. Jane Stadler) as serving to define the field of film phenomenology. Analyzing Merleau-Ponty's "The Film and the New Psychology," Yacavone speaks of the work of filmmakers as akin to that of certain philosophers, especially in terms of being aware and making use of the phenomenological method. Overall, the text proposes an alternative reading of Merleau-Ponty writing on cinema and phenomenology, a reading that can establish a new understanding of film, but also of the philosopher's text as an integral part of his overall philosophy and writings on art.

3. Pallasmaa, Juhani. "Space and Image in Andrei Tarkovsky's Nostalgia: Notes on a Phenomenology of Architecture." *Chora 1: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* (1994): 143-166

Through the lens of Tarkovsky's camera, the essay offers an interpretation of space and architecture that emphasizes the importance of the artistic act, or rather, of the phenomenological approach to the artist. Divided into sections covering architecture of imagery, symbols, images, poetry, the poetics of space and light, architecture of sound, and more, the text becomes itself a multi-sensory experience, not through its form, which aside from the insertion of some film captures, remains of course textual, but through that which it evokes. Juhani Pallasmaa places *Nostalghia* at the center of this evocation, but also other films by Tarkovsky in which he uses the imagery of water and fire, and, through a parallel between Gaston Bachelard and the iterations of fire in *Nostalghia*, makes a connection between cinematic language and architecture as something that must remain in a constant interrogative state and question "its functionality and existence on the level of materiality and practicalities." In doing so, Pallasmaa argues, architecture will be able to also achieve an understand of the deeper levels of existing, such as "consciousness, dream, and feeling." The presence of architectural metaphors in the films of Andrei Tarkovsky, as remarked by Ingmar Bergman,

strengthens the director's contribution to the cinematic world as one in touch with one's surroundings, and also the argument of the author that the poetics of space and image and a phenomenological understanding of them play a vital role in understanding and bettering architecture and its development.

4. Chamarette, Jenny. "Embodied Worlds and Situated Bodies: Feminism, Phenomenology, Film Theory." *Signs* 40, no. 2 (2015): 289–95. https://doi.org/10.1086/678144.

In "Embodied Worlds and Situated Bodies," Jenny Chamarette discusses film phenomenology as a philosophical field that also reverberates into fields such as cultural studies or political theory, a field developed and presented not through traditional philosophical or even phenomenological methods, but rather through a plurality and flexibility that is meant to improve the field and not simply contradict the current means and methods of discussion. According to the author, film phenomenology, feminist but not exclusively, provides an interrogation of the relationship between cinema and experience. Rooted in an introduction of phenomenology's "conceptual location" and its heritage in the Western philosophical tradition, as a means of providing context, the essay delves into feminist film phenomenology by presenting field research from the US and the UK. Chamarette also discusses her book, *Phenomenology and the future of Film*, in which she presents an analysis of French cinema "via the Merleau-Pontian notion of the enworld." "Film and the body are mutually involved," argues the author, and it is through this *enworldment* that one must think phenomenologically about cinema. That is, through an attention to the living body and images that become bodies themselves. The concluding argument offers the idea that it is not only film and filmmaking that are bodily practices, but also thinking and writing about film.

5. Hanich, Julian, and Daniel Fairfax, eds. "The Film Experience." In *The Structures of the Film Experience by Jean-Pierre Meunier: Historical Assessments and Phenomenological Expansions*, 69–151. Amsterdam University Press, 2019. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvpbnq82.7.

Part two of *The Structures of the Film Experience* preoccupies itself with aspects of film consciousness, the film as object of perception, and also the experience of movement in cinema, and it does so by discussing fiction, documentary, and amateur films. Structured around the idea of film as an object of perception, the chapter delves deeper into the matters of how the

major aspects of film and of the *filmic attitude* can be analyzed from a phenomenological perspective, with spectatorial behavior as its main focus. If film is an object to be perceived, argues the author, then it can be interpreted in the same manner in which we interpret other objects of our perception, while keeping in mind that film as a whole and film as a succession of images are meant to be interpreted differently. That is, the meaning of a singular image, and then another, is not the same of the meaning that drawn from these images coming together as one film. Referencing Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Michotte, or Jean-Jacques Rinieri, the text debates the real-unreal structure of film and cinema, through what it means to give an impression of reality by way of film, but also perception of film and film screenings while keeping in mind that the reality depicted by the filmic medium is not a reality in its full physical body. Employing the concepts of *distance* and *absence* in relation to the spectator, the world perceived on film, and the actual world that is represented, Jean-Pierre Meunier proposes it is precisely in this where one of the essential characteristics of film consciousness lies: in the absence of the perceived world. The concluding remarks of this chapter shed further light on how bridging the gaps and imperfections between spectator and film, between world present and world filmed is not a question of obliterating said impediments, but rather one of understanding them and seeing them as an integrant part of film consciousness.

6. McHugh, Kevin E. "Touch at a Distance: Toward a Phenomenology of Film." *GeoJournal* 80, no. 6 (2015): 839–51. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44076338.

Introduced with the help of Maurice Blanchot and Michel de Certeau, the argument of "Touch at a Distance" that "modulating distance lies at the heart of perception and filmmaking" takes shape as an all-encompassing thought on aspects of life and distance and the image, through the lens of film phenomenology, more so, a particular aspect of film phenomenology, that of the paradox of cinema: the image conceals and reveals at the same time. Kevin E. McHugh centers the text around the Italian neorealist film *Umberto D.* by Vittorio De Sica. A film about alienation and isolation, it appears to be the perfect example for what the author is stating, that is, the fact that "cinema incites affect," and there is no better way of analyzing this than through phenomenology. The gesture of the filmmaker and the gesture of the audience, the hand and the gaze, come together in the experience of film, in *touch at a distance* as means of becoming one with the cinematic vision before us. Aside from essential thinkers such as Blanchot, de Certeau, or Merleau-Ponty, the essay also cites Giorgio Agamben or Jenny Chamarette, with the help of whom simple or complex concepts such as the *gesture* and *enworlding* provide a

more throughout vision on how they can be applied to the specifics of film and image, more so, to the specifics of the relationship between film and its spectator.

7. Vasudevan, Ravi. “Time, Memory and History in the Work of Andrei Tarkovsky.” *India International Centre Quarterly* 21, no. 2/3 (1994): 163–84. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23003643.

The films of Andrei Tarkovsky have inspired numerous philosophical works, and, as the introduction of the essay itself states, his preoccupation with time and memory is not only integral to how we think and speak of the work of the director, but also to how we speak of the cinema and its philosophical implications. It remains a contemporary preoccupation, to think of time and how we inhabit it; to think of memory and how it inhabits us—to think of history and how our dwelling shapes it, and Tarkovsky’s contribution to this, to the project of memory as something interlocked with the other two, to the three of them eternally connected, has given shape to a wide array of philosophical arguments, such as the one at the root of Ravi Vasudevan’s essay: the presence in cinema of images that “communicate rather than mean something” is a not only a vital part of the field itself, but also one without which no exegesis could be created around it. By presenting the work of Andrei Tarkovsky with an emphasis on his most important films, the author also provides an understanding of the elements that reside at the foundation of how the director presents the themes of time, memory, and history. Whether it is Tarkovsky’s plays with texture, or with time itself—through nonlinearity or dream sequence, what is presented comes also with a sort of counter-argument, meant to do lessen the work of the director, but rather to provide a contextual interpretation for the spectator, and thus for the “formation of a universal, human memory.”

8. Totaro, Donato. “Time and the Film Aesthetics of Andrei Tarkovsky.” *Revue Canadienne d’Études Cinématographiques / Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 2, no. 1 (1992): 21–30. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24402079.

In Totoro Donato’s “Time and the Film Aesthetics of Andrei Tarkovsky” the most important of Tarkovsky’s concepts, that of *time-pressure*, is presented almost as if through a moving camera that captures and gives back to us the manner in which the director makes use of time. Referencing passages from *Sculpting in Time*, the essay discusses the act of recording time

through a recording of its own: that of the act of film and the mind of the artist who creates it. As the most significant aspect of Tarkvosky's cinema, time is present in the text through numerous references and multiple interpretations, all converging towards Tarkovsky's vision of *time-pressure* and its presence within the shot. According to Donato, there are not many film directors that can portray a sense of duration in the manner in which Tarkovsky portrays it, and it is from this, from the duration that the audience becomes imbued with a sense of internal time—time that belongs not only to the film and its creator, but also to the spectator. Time and rhythm, woven together in the shot, inside the frame, through the art of editing, become, in the final iteration, a flow that is perfectly apt at depicting life processes as we know them, as we live them, and as we think them. With a brief presentation of the director's films intertwined with passages from the director himself, that is, from his writings, Donato's essay provides a comprehensive view on personal time in relation to memory and consciousness and the universal, and how they can be depicted on film and made into a time aesthetics that itself becomes testimony of Tarkovsky's thought and ideals.

9. Petric, Vlada. "Tarkovsky's Dream Imagery." *Film Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1989): 28–34. https://doi.org/10.2307/1212806.

Vlada Petric's essay discusses the presence of dreams in the films of Andrei Tarkovsky's, more specifically, *dream imagery* and its impact on the audience. What Tarkovsky himself called *oneiric air*, which he renders in the technique of presenting dreams and dream-like images as beautiful and meaningful cinematic experiences, is being examined in the text through a myriad of ways, including that of the dicrector's camera movement, and also through references to *Sculpting in Time* and Tarkovsky's own presentation of the notion of time, notion which leads to the rendering of the dream sequences. It is time that guides the hand of the director, time that demands to be visible not solely chronologically, not simply as it passed, but also through nonlinearity, and dreams, and interpretation, and it is time that guides the sentences and paragraphs of Petric's essay as it moves almost in the same rhythm with that of the director's through his films and traces of through. Making use of the works of other directors as well as of art references, Petric portrays the phenomenological signification of Tarkovsky's oneiric vision, more so, the manner in which rests on the connection between the real and the surreal and how it can be represented, especially the later, since, according to Petric, when watching Tarkovsky's films, sometimes the audience feels that "something is 'wrong' with the way things appear on the screen." And it is precisely in this sensation that the dream imagery roots

itself, creating a symbiotic relationship with its viewer, no longer being able to tell if it is the dream that creates the sensation, or the sensation that creates the dream. With the help of Tarkovsky, concludes Petric, we know that it is possible to "achieve poetic dream imagery within the narrative genre."

10. Ince, Kate. "Feminist Phenomenology and the Film World of Agnès Varda." *Hypatia* 28, no. 3 (2013): 602–17. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24542005.

Agnès Varda's contribution to cinema and the world she has created not only through her films but also through her presence on the film scene is analyzed in this essay through the perspective of a feminist phenomenology. Focusing on films such as *La Pointe Courte, L'Opéra-Mouffe, The Gleaners and I,* and *The Beaches of Agnes,* Kate Ince discusses the connections between "Varda's filmmaking and her femaleness" not solely through her portrayal of the feminine and of female embodiment, but also in relation to her portrayal of geography and geographic locations, which, according to the author, is one essential to the blurring of lines between the fiction and the documentary that is so present in the works of Agnès Varda. Citing *The Skin of the Film* by Laura Marks in the introduction, Ince proposes the concepts of *haptic images* and *resistant bodies* as something to observe in Varda's films, especially in her portrayal of Jacques Demy in *Jacquot de Nantes,* and notes how the manner in which the body of her husband was film is only present in Varda's work in relation to herself ten years later. Merleau-Ponty's essay "The Philosopher and His Shadow" is wonderfully used in a parallel with Varda's close-up of a hand in *The Gleaners and I,* providing a cinematic understanding for the concept of the *reversibility of flesh* that can be extrapolated to other films but Varda as well, from the manner in which she portray the body and the body's place in time and space. Varda's personal geography is presented in the text as a subchapter that traces female subjectivity and embodiment through her films and the locations she uses for them, such as the Mediterranean port of Sète, in one of the early shots of *La Pointe Courte*. As concluding remarks, the artist restates the remark that Varda's work can be viewed and interpreted as a performance of film phenomenology.

11. Sobchack, Vivian. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton University Press, 1992. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvzsmfbq.

Vivian Sobchack opens the first chapter of *The Address of the Eye* with the question: "What else is a film if not 'an expression of experience by experience'"? which echoes The Merleau-Ponty epigraph from *The Visible and the Invisible*, where he refers to 'an expression of experience by experience' as residing at the foundations of the whole of philosophy. It is thus from early stages that we understand what the book will offer, we understand perhaps even what phenomenology itself offers, at least from a Merleau-Pontian interpretation. And then, according to Sobchack, if this is film, then film theory is what we use to restore the original powers of the motion picture and its meaning. The book is structured into four chapters focusing as the titles of the chapters themselves, suggest, on phenomenology and the film experience, the act of being with one's own eyes, the body of the film, and the address of the eye, with the latter chapter including an analysis of split vision and its dialectics. The arguments throughout *The Address of the Eye* are primarily based on the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, but the author also makes use of the works of Jacques Lacan, for instance in the second chapter when discussing the act of viewing, of the writings of Christian Metz for aspects of film experience in chapter four, and others. The central idea of the book is that the meaning of film experience "originates in the embodied experience of perception and its expression," which is what the author calls the *address of the eye.*

12. Johnson, Vida and Graham Petrie. *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue.* Indiana University Press, 1994.

Divided into three parts, the book is a comprehensive study on the director's body of work, encompassing not only critical thought but also a through summary for each of the films under discussion. The first part—aside from biographical aspects—covers Andrei Tarkovsky's influence on the Soviet film industry, his working methods and aesthetics, as well as his relationship with actors, cinematographers, and scriptwriters. The second part of the book focuses on each individual film, including *The Steamroller and the Violin*, his student film, and this where the core of this study lies, as each discussion offers a complete analysis of the work and its context and circumstances, both from a cinematographic and philosophical point of view. The fact that the films are not just analyzed and interpreted but also presented with ample descriptions of their scenes makes for a thought-provoking assessment, as it offers its readers the possibility to gloss over aspects of the film through another medium, on the page, bringing the reading experience close to that of a screenplay, and also highlights that which might have been missed upon viewing. Part three of the book is a revisiting of Tarkovsky's main themes

and motifs, and while some had already been discussed in the second part, this final chapter brings them together into what can be seen as a summary of the director's work, vision, and influence.

13. Hanaway-Oakley, Cleo. *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

As the introduction itself states, the book aims at providing a path that crosses and unites the writing of James Joyce, phenomenology, and film, reminding the reader from the very first lines of Bloom, *distinguished phenomenologist*, and his engagements with phenomenological reflection. Divided into four chapters, the first of which is not only a more comprehensive introduction into the thought behind the text, but also offers an overview of film theory and its interpretation *Ulysses*, especially the 'Nausicaa' episode. Chapter two cements the influence of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on the text and context of this crossing through literature and the phenomenology of film, but does not fail to mention other thinkers, such as Henri Bergson. The third and fourth chapters delve into the author's interpretation Joyce's Ulysses and cinema, an interpretation that strives to distance itself from the early views of film as a mechanical and impersonal means of portraying a story. The final chapter analyzes the ways in which one can touch something with the gaze when no common language is present, employing sources such as Merleau-Ponty and Descartes' *Optics*. When it comes to the gaze, the main idea of the book is that in support of a *reciprocal gaze*, and thus a form of film that does not render the spectator as mere purpose, nor does it render the film as mere mechanics. In fact, according to Hanaway-Oakley, through the embodiment of film, one can delve deeper into the embodiment of the self, making cinema an excellent means of seeing existence and experience.

14. Casebier, Allan. *Film and Phenomenology: Toward a Realistic Theory of Cinematic Representation.* Cambridge University Press, 1991.

In *Film and Phenomenology*, Allan Casebier proposes an interpretation of film through the lenses of phenomenology that returns to its roots, that is to Edmund Husserl, with its first chapter being on phenomenological theory and the ontology of cinematic representation, of which the author affirms that it needs to be "at the bedrock of any theory of film," speaking in the introduction but also throughout about the many issues that spring from the idealist/nominalist account of representation, arguing in favor of a phenomenological realism. The first part of the book occupies itself with presenting the proper phenomenological

framework in support of Casebier's thesis regarding how knowledge of the real and perception are better served by a phenomenological approach. Chapters two and three, focusing on fictional representation, the second, and documentary representation, the third, discuss also about cinematic sound, and offer insights on feminist film theory, as well as the documentary, and Derridean deconstruction in relation to the documentary. According to Casebier, phenomenology provides the viewer with a film experience that is not only all-encompassing, but able to help them recognize the exemplification of universals, as stated in the concluding part of the book, which renders cinema as one of the many "loci of experience facilitating our knowing the world and ourselves."

15. Walton, Saige. *Cinema's Baroque Flesh. Film, Phenomenology, and the Art of Entanglement.* Amsterdam University Press, 2016.

Rooted in the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the book provides a detailed analysis of baroque artwork by bringing together film, phenomenology, environment studies, semiotics, and others. Divided into four chapters, aside from the introduction and conclusion, the text travels the length of philosophy, cinema, and the art of entanglement, by making use of examples like Merleau-Ponty's analysis of Cézanne, and films such as *Trouble Every Day* by Claire Denis, towards a grasping of *baroque excess*—which, in the words of the author, "needs to be understood in more precise spatial, emotive, and inter-sensory terms." In chapter three, the term *baroque flesh* is presented as "an intertwining of the figurative with the literal," term that is present throughout the book as precisely that: the link between the concepts and theories and disciplines evoked by Walton. The final chapter returns to Merleau-Ponty and employs his text on touching, namely the hand that touches the other, in order to argue for a haptics of cinema. While the works of Merleau-Ponty and Denis are not the only ones presented in the text, it can be said that the Walton relies heavily on them in introducing and dissecting a baroque aesthetics, leading thus the way for other texts to interact with works that fall under the same category.

16. Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film – Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Duke University Press, 2000.

The Skin of the Film opens with three cinematic images that, as stated by the author, will be present throughout the book, giving the reader from the very first lines not only an idea of what the text will concern itself with, but also a formidable visual representation of its argument.

The same can be said about the title of the book, which is explained by Laura Marks in the second paragraph of the introduction, leaving no room for interpretation: "a metaphor to emphasize the way film signifies through its materiality, through a contact between perceiver and object represented." When speaking of film as a skin, Marks invokes not only the various audiences that film address and how they come together in relation to that film, but also of the many who work on a film, again, coming together, like skin over tendons and muscles and bones. For Marks, cinema is tactile, almost to the point that one can brush up against it as one would another body. The book's interdisciplinary approach is dedicated to the intercultural works that it discusses and to the aspects that connects them, with many of the works being videotapes. What the author calls *intercultural cinema* is characterized by an attempt to "represent the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge." As it is discussed throughout its chapters, the skin of *intercultural cinema* is never a screen, but rather the membrane that brings together the work with its audience; the meaning and memory of the work with that of the spectator, which is also evident from the titles and arrangement of the book's chapters as focused on the memory of images, of things, of touch, and of senses.

17. Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. 1st ed. University of California Press, 2004. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnx76.

Rooted in the idea that human existence is an embodied existence and thus meaning—making meaning, understanding meaning—needs to be thought of together with *bodily sense*, Carnal Thoughts proposes a phenomenological interpretation to the moving image. The text is divided into two parts, the text is dedicated to *carnal senses* and how they relate not solely to the experience of watching a film, but also other experiences and activities in our daily lives. The first part speaks of embodiment from the perspective of being lost in space, where maps and orientation and the sense of the body as a body in the world are what cement the further notion that to be is to be animated. Examining spatiality and positionings and various forms of being lost, Sobchack connects embodiment, with the sense of *in the flesh,* with culture and cinema as phenomenologically experienced. *Carnal Thoughts* is a book that lies heavily on the aspect that a body of *flesh and blood* is also a body that lives in a constant state of fragility—a fragility that can never be separated neither from the body nor form its objectification. Leaning on film and literature and philosophy, on thinkers such as Susan Sontag, Simone de Beauvoir, Sigmund Freud, Kathleen Woodward, Jean Baudrillard, Elaine Scarry, and others, Sobchack constructs

the body of her book in the image of the human body, but also in the image of both the body on film and the body of film. That is, *Carnal Thoughts* is tactile and fragile same as a body is, dependent on its own means. In the third chapter of the first part, which draws its epigraphs from Merleau-Ponty and Barthes, Sobchack mentions the discrepancy—the gap—between film experience and film theory, something that it is often left out even from writings on film phenomenology. What is important to note is that the author makes clear the fact that when speaking of touching and being touched in relation to film, it is not a metaphor but rather an *actual* touch. Film touches the viewer not metaphorically, theoretically, but in a way that the senses can recognize. The book trails many paths, same as a body in search of knowledge would, presenting aspects of various mediums, such as photographic, cinematic, electronic, in many of their material conditions and representations; as well as those that lead to aspects of the digital/virtual world, and how we are living in times when, even though the body is most visible, most exposed, it is also fairly easy to lose touch with it. Preoccupied with images, argues the author, we tend to lose track of the fact that behind the image of the body lies something with "lived dimensions that are not reducible to the merely visible."