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**Sensible Bodies:
feminist experimental cinema and embodied subjectivities**

By

Maria Ramadori, B.S.Sc.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in
Canadian Studies

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**The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research acceptance of the thesis**

**“Sensible Bodies: feminist experimental
cinema and embodied subjectivities”**

submitted by Maria Ramadori, B.S.Sc.

**in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts**

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January 2001

Abstract

This paper locates the experiences of the body within Canadian feminist experimental cinema. It evokes sensory perceptions and expressions that enable viewers to come to an understanding and knowledge of both their own lived world and the film's cinematic world. The theoretical application of this paper encompasses a movement through Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to Luce Irigaray's French feminism. In Chapter Two I explore the relationships between the human eye and the technological eye. The main focus is to ground the experiences of vision in the body and to expose the power relations invested in looking. Chapter Three probes the spectator's role by engaging in an embodied auditory experience of film; sounds and words are examined in the search for a female voice. In the fourth, and final chapter, I illustrate the haptic qualities of cinema; its focus is to engage vision, sound and touch as physically embodied on the screen.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Cinema is one form of entertainment and expression in which the filmmakers and the spectators discover one another. Both the spectator and the filmmaker engage one another as equal participants in the film experience. Consequently, as a filmmaker's ideas and/or styles are open to interpretation, the spectator's experience of that film can alter the filmmaker's own impressions of his/her film. Accordingly, the experience of the cinema allows for a multitude of sensations, perceptions, cognitive responses and experiences from both its viewers and filmmakers. It is this reciprocal exchange of ideas that enables viewing participants to engage each other as persons.

A phenomenology of film encourages the participation of both mind and body. It is a holistic interpretation and engagement of film experience; actively exchanged between spectator and filmmaker. For example, sensory experience is one way that the spectator communicates her/his knowledge of the world. As such, acts of sensation facilitate an understanding and discovery of the lived world. Consequently, as the viewer and the film experience one another, they reciprocate and exchange this knowledge. Filmic perception, therefore, is a physical, emotional and cognitive process; whereby the understanding and discovery of the film experience is multi-faceted. Awareness of a phenomenology of film recognizes that it is okay to use our minds, as long as we understand that cognition is part of our body. As a result, sensation, perception and cognition are given over to the film, encouraging an engagement between bodies. Watching and making film becomes a process of coming-into-the-world where the spectator expresses and perceives film experience as life experience. In fact, because

expression and perception exist within the lived world, they work to enhance and contribute to the imagination and interpretation of the spectator's film world.

The purpose of this thesis is to locate Canadian feminist experimental cinema within the experiences of the body, and to illustrate that the experiences of a sensible body are bonded to and impacted by identity. This thesis will draw from various experimental films with the intention of pinpointing the physical and theoretical aspects of women's embodiment. In the exchange between distinct, yet interrelated, theoretical perspectives I intend to form a theory of women's embodiment that allows for the interplay between experience and signification, expression and perception, and subject/object positions.

Experimental feminist filmmakers work to create a forum where women can explore experiences that affect their bodies. For example, birth, violence, death, sex and abortion are but a few of the many areas where the notions of identity, subjectivity, imagination and body are both celebrated and critiqued. As a result, a key focus of experimental feminist filmmakers' work has been the attempt to illustrate that identity and subjectivity are not fixed or stable categories of representation. Using phenomenology as the main theoretical tool to explore the experiences of embodiment and the lived body, I hope to illustrate that a phenomenological approach can best describe the ways in which Canadian women's experimental cinema represents experience and identity as changeable and shifting. The incorporation of French feminist writer Luce Irigaray and her theories on the creation of a feminine language will help to define identity, as well as subjectivity, as elements of the body that are changeable and shifting.

These theories enable discussions of female embodiment; however, it is the films themselves that best describe moments of changeability, mobility and flexibility with regard to women's life experiences. Throughout this paper, I will ensure that the films remain the focus of my discussion of embodiment. Letting the films 'speak for themselves' and illustrating their ability to 'touch upon life' are key factors in this phenomenological exploration of film analysis.

Methodology

The processes by which I came to choose Canadian experimental feminist cinema as my thesis topic reflect a concern for and interest in examining both the positions of women in various social, political and economic contexts and the impact of cultural technologies and techniques. As such, cinema presented me with the opportunity to explore representations of women with an emphasis on how these representations affect women's lives and identities. Due to the abundance of Canadian cinema that has been produced over the past fifty years, it was necessary to narrow the focus of my research to a specific genre of film.

Hoping to narrow down this body of work to a specific genre of Canadian film that reflected my concerns and questions regarding both Cultural Studies and Women's Studies; I decided to examine a body of work that challenged the dominant male discourses surrounding the female body, subjectivity, spectatorship and the gaze. The process by which I have come to describe this research echoes what Barbara Sternberg (1991) states in her article "Tending Towards The Horizontal": female, experimental and Canadian share a common bond - they are all marginalized. My research is situated in

Canadian experimental film made by women not because of their marginalization. Rather, my research is situated in a discourse that supports a resistance to male definitions of the female body. As well, the experimental tradition grounds my work in questions surrounding spectator engagement, film techniques and the meanings that are generated from this analysis. Experimental feminist filmmakers have created a genre that visually, sonically and tactilely engages the female body and the conditions around which those bodies exist in the world. The corpus of films I have chosen for this paper, therefore, comprise works made by women who are experimental filmmakers.

In order to limit the number of films that will be analyzed I have chosen to focus my interest on English-language experimental films. For the purpose of this paper 'English' will refer to a traceable community of filmmakers whose work has its roots within English Canada. However, it is important to note that in narrowing this body of work, I also limit the definition of Canadian experimental cinema. By eliminating Francophone films from my body of work, I run the risk of excluding significant cultural and historical moments that define Canadian experimental cinema as a whole. For example, works made by French Canadian experimental filmmakers, their traceable communities, festivals and/or publications.

Within English Canada, this experimental tradition includes the creation of film festivals, for example, The Images Festival of Independent Film and Video and the Making Scenes Gay & Lesbian Film Festival (both in Toronto). Experimental filmmakers have also collaborated on films, i.e. Isabelle Auger and Wrik Mead's (ab)NORMAL (1995), Ann Marie Fleming and Mike Hoolboom's films The New Man (1992) and Man (1991), and as early as Joyce Wieland and Michael Snow's Dripping

Water (1969). As well, there are organizations, such as the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre and Cinematheque Ontario (a division of the Toronto International Film Festival group) that distribute and view filmmakers work.

According to Mike Hoolboom's (1991) "A History of the Avant-Garde in Film" the experimental community can be divided into what he terms "four distinct generations" (pg. 30). The first generation of experimental film in English Canada started in the 1960's with Michael Snow, Jack Chambers and Joyce Wieland. All three were artists who began experimenting with film as a new medium of artistic expression. The second generation of experimental filmmakers ends late in the seventies, with a division between East Coast and West Coast filmmakers. In the West Coast Al Razutis and David Rimmer worked independently. In the east, Jim Anderson, Tom Urquhart, Keith Lock and Anna Gronau founded a group called The Funnel (Hoolboom, 1991). The Funnel was the first experimental film workshop, theatre, production and distribution centre to be established in Toronto. Unfortunately the Funnel shut down soon afterwards, but it had created enough momentum to encourage new co-ops to emerge throughout the Toronto area.

The third generation of English Canadian experimental filmmakers takes place from the late seventies to the early 80's (Hoolboom, 1991). Again the division is located regionally, with Ellie Epp, Patricia Gruben and Chris Gallagher emerging from the West Coast. In the East, the Funnel is revived with filmmakers such as Ross McLaren, Anna Gronau and Midi Onodera. The fourth, and final, generation to date deals with the disparity between filmmakers and videographers. The split between film and video has many political and social ramifications. I will discuss this in greater detail further in the

chapter. By tracing a history of Avant-Garde film within Canada, one can locate a body of work and a community of filmmakers within English Canada that have established themselves separately and distinctly over the past forty years.

As my research scope is limited by space I have also chosen to focus my work around film and not video. This is an important factor in considering the social and economic factors involved in access to filmmaking in Canada. Although the number of films made by women is far less than that enjoyed by many male experimental filmmakers, it is important to situate feminist experimental filmmaking in a place of privilege. Video is a medium that is far more accessible to many women who face the challenges of economic and social oppression. As Dot Tuer (1987) writes in her article "From the Father's House: Women's Video and Feminism's Struggle With Difference", video, as a more accessible medium, creates more opportunities for woman to subvert and infiltrate the video screen. For many disenfranchised and minority women video is not only more accessible, but also functions as an alternative to mainstream film techniques. Furthermore, video is a medium that has been regarded as encouraging a grassroots approach to change; film, on the other hand, has been linked to a more theoretical and academic approach to representation and experience.

There are twenty-two films that I have chosen to analyze throughout the course of this paper. The list of films is as follows:

- 1966 - Joyce Wieland's Water Sark
- 1975 - Ellie Epp's Trapline
- 1977 - Patricia Gruben's The Central Character
- 1980 - Kay Armatage's Speakbody
- 1982 - Barabara Sternberg's Transitions
- 1985 - Midi Onodera's Ten Cents A Dance
- 1987 - Ellie Epp's notes in origin
- 1988 - Susan Oxtoby's All Flesh Is Grass

- 1989 - Anne Marie Fleming's You Take Care Now
- 1990 - Gail Mentlik's Migraine
- 1990 - Kathy Daymond's Nice Girls Don't Do It
- 1992 - Cindy Carroll's passages
- 1992 - Fumiko Kiyooka's Creation
- 1992 - Gail Mentlik's Glimpses Of My Mother In The Garden
- 1992 - Gariné Torossian's Visions
- 1993 - Helen Lee's Sally's Beauty Spot
- 1995 - Tracey German's Where
- 1996 - Michelle Mohabeer's Two/Doh
- 1996 - Julie Wilson's yet blooming purple...
- 1997 - Sarah Abbott's Froglight
- 1997 - Barbara Sternberg's midst
- 1998 - Tracey German's A Private Patch Of Blue

There were three criteria used to determine which films became part of my body of work. First, each film was selected on the basis of a chronology. That is, I wanted to provide the reader with a representative view of Canadian experimental feminist film as it has been practiced for the past thirty-five to forty years. Pooled together, the films can be addressed by a time-line that reflects the changes surrounding the technical apparatus. For example, there have been changes in the use of various film stocks, particularly with the creation of Imax. As well, different emulsions have affected the look of film, which is particular relative to the look of video. Most recently, video quality has been perfected by Digital Video technology. There have also been significant advances in computer-generated images and editing procedures. Last, developments in portable sync and surround sound have been significant to sound quality.

As well, this chronology parallels a distinct pattern among the historical changes in Canada's social movements, specifically with the feminist movement. In this manner, the second criterion would be that each film addresses the conditions and concerns of women's lives. There are a few filmmakers whose works have been included that span

over a portion of this thirty to forty year period. This is important because it attempts to establish the connections between Canadian women's experimental films and the impact of the feminist movement on experimental filmmaking. As a result, these filmmakers are utilized to detect changes or similarities between their own films and other films at different points in time.

The third, and final, criterion that each film was subjected to was its explicit representation of an embodied experience. Embodiment is used within this paper to refer to the lived experiences of the body; it consists of those perceptions, expressions and actions that exist within and through bodies. Each film elicits a bodily response from its viewers and every response belongs uniquely to the spectator's body and to the film's body. It is an embodied dialogue between spectator and film (Sobchack, 1992). As a result, the criteria for embodiment are the physical, emotional and intellectual manifestations of bodily responses between the human body and the technological body.

Although most of the films fulfill all three of these criteria, there are some films that only fulfil two of the criteria. The films that meet all these criteria best describe embodiment as a process of coming-into-the-world. Each film varies in length, technique and story line (some do not even tell a direct story). Some films include the presence of bodies; whereas, it is the absence of bodies in other films that speaks to an embodied experience. Sounds, colours and textures differ and change throughout many of the films. However all seem to describe, in one way or another, a theory of female embodiment and of female desire that is experienced and reciprocated within the lived world. This 'model' of embodiment, therefore, is based on the notions of multiplicity,

diversity, openness and difference because embodied experiences are necessarily multiple and diverse.

It should also be noted that throughout this paper I refer to the experiences of the spectator, myself, in the third person. As such, moments that are described encompassing all spectral experiences refer, specifically, to my own experiences of actively viewing and engaging with these films. It should be understood, however, that this in no way diminishes the importance of experimental films made by women and their commitment to raising issues that affect women's life experiences.

Theoretical Perspectives

The focus of this paper is to determine a pattern of embodiment in Canadian experimental feminist film. To do so there must be specific theoretical and historical precepts that make up the core argument of this paper: first, a brief description and analysis of phenomenology; second, the addition of feminist theories and counter theories; third, a brief history of experimental cinema, particularly as it has developed in Canada; and fourth, an overview of feminist cinema, its history, mandate and importance. To ground this paper in a more philosophical manner, I will formulate an argument that moves between phenomenology and French feminism, focusing on the body as a social, political and cultural entity. Theorists such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Luce Irigaray will be used to illustrate the ways in which embodiment can be experienced within feminist experimental film. As well, the more sociologically oriented theorists Iris Marion Young, Michel Foucault and Thomas Csordas add to a discussion of the body as a medium of power. Although it appears that Foucault, and in some ways, Irigaray do

not fit neatly into a phenomenological inquiry, it is important to situate the body within a structure of power struggles.

Phenomenology is a theory based on the primacy of the lived body. It is this body, as the centre of the experiencing subject, which elicits experience as the beginning of all knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Access to knowledge, and thus to the world, is the property of a living and experiencing body; it is the body as “I” experience it and live it and as it shapes my experiences (Grosz, 1995). As an experiential philosophy, phenomenology gives much weight to the sensible world, and how individuals function and reciprocate that world through sensory experience. As such, it is important to situate coming-into-the-world as a process, a discovery of sensual experiences. However, it is equally important to locate lived experiences with perceptive and cognitive functions. As a result, the body facilitates relations between the physical world and how that world is processed in the mind. Phenomenology, therefore, is the coming-into-being of an embodied consciousness; it works to restore the link between the body and the lived world and it opposes the notion that subjectivity inhabits a disembodied consciousness. Consequently, it is at the juncture between emotion/reason, cognition/physicality and mind/body that an embodied consciousness begins to emerge. To live in and co-exist with the world, therefore, is to use one’s full potential as a thinking and an experiencing being.

Complementing Merleau-Ponty’s description of phenomenology, Elizabeth Grosz (1995) states in Volatile Bodies that the body is defined by its relations with other objects. In turn, the sensible body gives meaning to those objects. The relationships that exist between bodies are based on meaning, direction and perception. It is a reciprocity between the living body and the world, between ‘self’ and ‘other’, between subject and

object positions that enables human beings to engage in the things around them (Abram, 1996). According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), each time the body engages in an act of perception, the body is marked by that experience. In this instance, perception facilitates experience; it is the interplay between the senses that encourages action and agency within bodies. Perception, however, can also result from experiences; it is through and in action that the senses communicate an experience of being-in-the-world. As a result, it is this meaningful communication between bodies, between subject and object positions, which enables experience and thus, knowledge, to remain changing and in constant flux. Perception, experience and knowledge are based on a reciprocity and an exchange between the bodies and the world they encounter. Experiences inter-weave and grow with others, yet bodies remain grounded to a common world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Phenomenology, therefore, not only explores a reciprocity between subject and object positions; it also makes indivisible the relationship between mind and body. The re-joining of these dichotomized entities creates a union, where the body is one with the experiences of the sensory world. In this manner, perception would require the experiences and expressions of both mind and body (Grosz, 1995). What is useful about a discussion of the relationship between mind and body is that it enables perception to take up the spaces between these dichotomous terms; creating a union between mind/body and encouraging a reciprocal relationship between the senses. Merleau-Ponty (1968) refers to this as “the intertwining”: a process by which the senses crisscross (pg. 134). In this manner, sensory experiences both share in and cross over one another. That is, every movement, sensibility and/or intention of the body has its place in the lived world, and may be explored, simultaneously, by multiple senses (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

In one instance, an exercise of vision can also be a discovery into tactile relationships. Merleau-Ponty (1962) uses the model of a cube. The meaning of a cube cannot be understood as a static natural category that exists for itself, rather the cube's meaning is ever changing and multiple. For example, I can look at the cube and see its three dimensional shape; yet when I hold the cube between my fingers, its shape and presence are felt. The cube is "experienced one side at a time", as I look upon it and turn it in my hand, until "the whole of the cube is known" (pg. 205). As a result, whenever the cube crosses one sensory field into another (i.e. vision into touch), the experience of that cube is changed.

It is the physical movement of the body, as well as the mental recognition that the cube exists, where the meaning of that object can be fully understood. Both vision and touch are given to a person in a living connection with their body. The movement of the cube within different sensory fields has meaning only in relation to that person; every experience of the cube is different. How then is there any real knowledge of the cube? The knowledge and meaning of the cube are experienced on and through the body. Therefore, the body is the common link between the world and what a person knows and understands.

In phenomenology, the lived body and its embodied consciousness are described not only in the structures of perception, movement and gesture, but also in desire and eroticism. I would argue that desire is inextricable from being-in-the-world; that each act of perception is motivated by a desire to know and interact with the world. This interaction between an individual and the world, in their acts of becoming, can be thought of as an erotic experience. Contrary to this, linguistic structures inform what one can or

cannot do in Lacanian psychoanalysis. This view assumes that desire refers to a need to fill a lack or void that is fundamental to being. Unlike phenomenology, Lacan's psychoanalysis experiences the world through the structures of language; it is not about the need or desire for physical embodiment in experiencing the world. Rather, desire is entirely a negative experience. Within phenomenology, however, the self is described in a positive understanding of desire.

What is problematic about phenomenology is that its idea of the self assumes the lived body to be a neutral body, but it is not. Although phenomenology attempts to unite the divisions between the mind and the body, the ways in which this division has marked the human body is not neutral. For example, men are equated with the functions of the mind, reason, culture and exteriority and women are linked to the processes of the body, emotion, nature and interiority. These divisions create differences between women and men that function to establish codes, mores and divisions of power. For example, the female body is viewed as an instrument; it is experienced as a thing and is looked at and acted upon (Grosz, 1995). As a result, the female body retains distance from the experiences of her body and from the world's possibilities (Young, 1990).

In order to counter weight phenomenology with a perspective on gender, Iris Marion Young's work attempts to converge a theory of the lived body with a theory of the conditions of women. What is useful about Young's (1990) work in Throwing Like A Girl, is that it takes a phenomenological approach to women's experiences. At the same time, Young proposes that experience and subjectivity must take into account the historical, cultural, social and economic conditions that challenge women. It is a theory based primarily on a concern for the "corporeal emancipation of women" (pg. 142). The

main difference between Merleau-Ponty's embodied consciousness and Young's embodied liberation is that she situates all bodies within the constraints of ideology. Thus, she insists that there is no experience or meaning that is unmediated by language or by symbols. As a result, Young moves away from a discussion of the neutral body to a more complete discussion of marked bodies.

Bringing together Merleau-Ponty's embodied experiences with Young's gendered corporeality enables a discussion of identity and power to emerge. Interestingly enough, Michel Foucault's (1978) theory of power addresses the historical construction of marked bodies. Foucault's theory describes power as that which informs the relations of bodies, their experiences and the language used to describe them. He also states that power is omnipresent, because it is "produced from one moment to the next" (pg. 93). Accordingly, there is no all-encompassing opposition between ruler and ruled, powerful and powerless, instead, ironically, we each embody the very power that constrains us.

Many phenomenologists and feminists have criticized Michel Foucault's interpretation of power because it does not address the importance of experience, particularly the experiences of women. Within a Foucauldian interpretation of power structures (and, it is important to note, that there are feminists who embrace this interpretation) experience is completely determined by power. Contrary to this, phenomenologists, as well as many feminists, believe that although power may inform experience; experience is not completely controlled by power. Instead, power is relative to and dependent upon the experience in question.

In contrast to what he states earlier, Foucault (1978) also insists that "where there is power, there is resistance" (pg. 95). That is, because we are never outside of power

structures and can never escape from them, the average person has the ability to undermine, expose and thwart oppressive knowledge systems (Foucault, 1978). From a phenomenological perspective, therefore, if power is dependent on a multiplicity of points of resistance; then the body, experience and language are also part of the processes of resistance. Accordingly, this phenomenological interpretation of Foucault enables a discussion between marked bodies, their lived worlds and identifications.

In contrast to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, French feminism, on the other hand, has had as its basic position to problematize the subject, to undermine the logical unity of male identity and to raise the possibility of a unique feminine discourse (McCallum, 1995). In brief detail, Luce Irigaray's work argues that the idea of a female subject has only been useful for the continued domination of the male subject. According to Irigaray (1984), the category 'woman' has been constructed as servant and sexual inferior, her "one particular work [being] the family: home, wife and children" (pg. 62). As well, she has argued that it has been through language that 'woman' has been excluded from the lived world. It is a language that is deemed neutral but is entirely male-defined; where only men have the capacity to create meaning in their world.

Irigaray (1985) believes that women must come out of men's language and create their own language with which to speak. This 'parler femme' or 'speaking as woman' focuses on how woman speaks, not experiences, her sexual body. That is, Irigaray distinguishes between the acts of verbalizing a subjectivity and identity, as opposed to living physically in the moment of that identification. For Irigaray, it is a language spoken between women, remaining fluid and circular, never being limited by one

definitive meaning. As a result, 'speaking as woman' remains in flux, changing to accompany a woman's gestures, movements and stories.

Irigaray's theoretical positions are problematic in two ways. First, she sets up a construct of woman for her own theory. Irigaray criticizes male-discourse for imposing all encompassing and universal rules, regulations and codes onto the female sex. Yet as she describes how woman has been excluded from male discourse, and that there must be a language for all women to speak with, she creates her own construct of woman. Irigaray essentializes all women, categorically lumping them together according to the oppressive nature of all men. As a result, she fails to take into account the many ways in which both women and men are marked by their differences.

The second problem with Irigaray's theory is that she does not allow for action or agency outside of a female language. What she creates is another dichotomous existence for women. Either women exist within a male-defined discourse, servant to and at the whim of an all-powerful male; or, women can escape such an existence by virtue of being a 'woman' and 'speaking as woman'. In effect, you either belong to Irigaray's club or you do not. Irigaray's offers no sense of agency or resistance within a male-defined system of knowledge. Ironically, Foucault's notion of power can be very useful here. If one were to overlap these two theoretical positions, what would emerge is a theory that explores the conditions of women, their struggle for voice, as well as the possibilities of resistance and power that can occur both inside and outside this system of knowledge. The creation of a feminine language within the already established discourse of male speech would provide resistance to and infiltration in an existing system that has not allowed women a chance to speak. The difficulties in accepting either Irigaray or

Foucault completely without question, is alleviated in the process of combining the strengths of their prospective theories.

In a similar way, phenomenology and French feminism would also appear to be in opposition to one another. The former explores how the subject is formed through experiences. The latter is an exploration of the subject within language. Consequently, the differences between these two theories are located on the body. For example, phenomenology lacks a discourse of marked bodies, i.e. of language. It does not provide the reader with a discussion of power and phallocentrism. Contrary to this, Irigaray examines the marked body of 'woman', but does not provide the reader with an understanding of women's life experiences. As such, what Irigaray dismisses as mere experience, phenomenology utilizes to explore the relations of subject and object positions and the possibilities of these reciprocal relationships (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In return, French feminism provides phenomenology with a gendered perspective on woman's words and voices, as well as their desire for subjectivity through a tangible female language.

The above analysis, of both complementary and contradictory theoretical perspectives, informs the position from which I will examine how embodiment is experienced and expressed in this body of work. I have attempted to create my own theoretical position from which to analyze these films. The predominant and, I would say, grounding force of this analysis, therefore, becomes my own tailor-made interpretation of phenomenology. As a result, it is the embodied exploration of the senses that premise all of my film analyses.

Experimental Cinema

Mainstream film has dominated the big screen for over one hundred years. However, along side the invention of the more popular Hollywood movie has developed a critical cinema that questions the intentions of the filmmaker and the spectator. As a result, much of the research distinguishing a critical, as opposed to a mainstream film, has insisted on the creative and critical examination of vision and visibility; where critical film focuses on various subversive and unconventional methods of this sensory perception (Wees, 1991). Throughout the course of time, critical cinema has adopted many names to represent itself, for example; avant-garde, revolutionary, poetic, trash, punk, abstract, independent, experimental (Mac Donald, 1998). For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to this critical genre as experimental film.

According to Scott MacDonald's (1993) Avant-Garde Film: Motion Studies, experimental cinema has its roots in the fine artists of France and Germany. These artists began using "cinema as a tool to expand their repertoire" (pg. 2). Two streams of visual perception in cinema were developed during the 1920's in Western Europe. One form of visual perception involved focussing the viewer's attention on shape, motion, colour and rhythm, where visual abstraction became the filmmaker's intention. Many of the films examined in this paper utilize similar film techniques. The second form of visual perception involved using the acceptable elements of plot, character and location. The filmmakers would alter and manipulate these commonly valued characteristics of the film and use them to undercut the viewer's understanding of his/her reality. As a result, this surrealist critique of visual perception engaged the viewer in questioning his/her individual, social, cultural and political surroundings (Mac Donald, 1993). As well, this

surrealist method of filmmaking is utilized by many of the filmmakers I incorporate throughout this paper.

Although these two streams have been useful in creating a forum to question visual perception, it is important to understand that they are not the only forms of critical practice. P. Adams Sitney's (1974) Visionary Film explores certain film techniques involved in avant-garde cinema. Specifically, he focused his attention on Stan Brakhage, who is considered to be very influential in shaping experimental film technique. MacDonald (1993) concurs that Brakhage's films describe the gap between the world as it is generally constructed and "the world as it is seen by untutored human vision" (pg. 6).

Some of the techniques used by Brakhage and other experimental filmmakers that Sitney (1978) notes are outlined as follows: first, the flicker effect makes viewers more aware of their perceptual processes as they convert flickering light into visual images. This is thought to induce states of consciousness similar to that experienced in meditation. Second, optical printing works to transform a few simple images into seemingly limitless permutations of colours, textures, rhythms and patterns of sound and image. Third, the placement of the camera challenges our perceptions of things in movement, spatial coordinates and relations of cause and effect. Fourth, rapid camera movement evokes repeated images and superimpositions that mimic a dream-like state. These and many other techniques have been useful in transforming visual discourses of spectatorship, image, identification and representation. Throughout the past fifty years, many experimental filmmakers have developed techniques for presenting images and for extending the manner in which these images are seen.

Michael Snow's (1967) Wavelength has been considered one of Canada's first critical films to deal with some of these visual, spatial and auditory manipulations. In fact, it is also considered to be a 'first-wave' of phenomenological film. The film is forty-five minutes long and is shot in an apartment in New York City. The film moves ever so slowly from its widest point to its most narrow. Movement in the film occurs through a zoom lens, where the trajectory of Snow's camera becomes the focal point. As a result, towards the end of the film the viewer becomes cognizant of the image the camera is zooming in on; it is a postcard of a picture of waves. Similarly, the audio track in Wavelength mimics the visual experience. That is, as the zoom moves in closer, the sine waves that rise in pitch shorten continually until the end of the film.

The visual and audio experience of Wavelength demands patience. At the same time, the film becomes an exploration into bodily response and awareness. In many ways, Wavelength is a phenomenologically based film; engaging the spectator in the sensory perceptions and expressions that make up the film. It is an embodied experience of the manipulations of space, lighting and sound. Many of the films chosen for this paper engage in both abstract and surrealist interpretations of, not only visual perception, but also auditory and tactile perceptions.

Women's Cinemas

The primary initiatives for many feminists interested in film has been to reclaim the lost history of women filmmakers and to celebrate the contribution made by these women; as well as to revamp the traditional, already orthodox male canon (Banning, 1987). As a result of these initiatives, women began to take up production of their own

images. Canadian feminist filmmakers have been polarized between two traditions of filmmaking: documentary and experimental cinema. Both have their roots in the 1960's, where they began to address women as social subjects and engender that subject as political. As such, documentary and experimental films have become part of a feminist cultural production that "emphasizes women's enforced silence, women's unspeakability and women's marginalization from the dominant discourse" (Armatage, 1990, pg. 21). Although both forms express the need to tell a story, it is the manner in which the story is told that differs.

Experimental and documentary films are the two most prominent film traditions within Canada. The National Film Board of Canada has been making documentaries since 1939, when it began to film the stories of 'Canadians'. However, it was not until the late 1960's that women became predominant figures in the documentary tradition; for example, Bonnie Klein's Powwow at Duck Lake (1967), Anne Claire's Mother-To-Be (1967), Joan Henson's Standing Buffalo (1968), Evelyn Lambert's Fine Feathers (1968) and Alanis Obomsawin's Christmas at Moose Factory (1971).

Such films as the Working Mothers (1973-74) series for the Challenge for Change program, directed and produced by Kathleen Shannon, generated such a strong reaction among their viewers that in 1974 the National Film Board of Canada created a separate studio for women. Studio D was formed, headed by Kathleen Shannon, to meet the needs of women interested in making documentary films (NFB archival document, 1994). The documentary style of filmmaking concentrated on raising concerns about mass media's portrayal of women and of creating positive images made by and for women. At that time (and what is still a common theme of most documentary films made today), the

opportunity to illustrate 'real' images of women and to carve out role models for young women was crucial. The documentary was regarded as a window onto the world where women lived. As well, it was seen as a form of resistance against dominant Hollywood images that bombarded women in their everyday lives (Banning, 1987).

Studio D's feminist manifesto on the documentary was not to be a simple replacement of the traditional methods of filming (NFB Archival document, 1974). Rather, this 'alternative' form of filmmaking was believed to emphasize a feminist consciousness, whereby women filmmakers could articulate the struggles many women faced. The feminist documentary was believed to express a concern for the common oppression of women and to make visible and validate women's experiences and voices. It was seen as a means to define and construct women's experiences and histories in ways that challenged their marginality. Central to this was representing women as active subjects (Armatage, 1990). These new methods of expressing women's experiences in film were founded on the 1960s slogan 'the personal is political'. As a result, the feminist documentary examined ordinary women in their everyday lives, their achievements and their relationships with other women, men and society.

Already by the mid 1970s, however, many feminist filmmakers were problematizing the documentary as a method of representation. This critique led to an examination of both technique and content in feminist filmmaking. What each of the following feminist film critics have in common is the desire to articulate women's experiences and subjectivities within the context of a politically informed aesthetic. However, many of these feminist film critics are demarcated by their critical examination of representations and their meanings.

B. Ruby Rich's (1990) "In the Name of Feminist Film Criticism" explores the nature of language; she is critical of naming and representation. Her concern is for the naming of a feminist film practice; legitimizing women's contributions to the film world. Thus, she is critical of a feminist film practice that is more an area of study and not a sphere for action. Contrary to this, Claire Johnston (1986) articulates in "Towards a Feminist Film Practice" a feminist film criticism by examining representations of women through a sociological lens. She argues that myth has been the major influence in transforming the ideology of sexism as invisible and natural. She points out that cinema is also an ideological construct that must be de-mystified in order for women to begin producing images that are 'true' to their experiences. Thus, she articulates a deep concern for feminist filmmakers who do not challenge the tools and techniques of cinema that are part of a dominant culture. Although Rich's and Johnson's critique of representations are dissimilar, both express a need to do more than capture the truth of women's oppression with the innocence of the camera (Johnson, 1986).

Laura Mulvey's (1975/1990) Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema also proposed that feminist filmmaking needed to constitute itself as an oppositional practice. Unlike Johnston but similar to Rich, Mulvey located the structures of representation in the unconsciousness and, therefore, language. Such a practice, she argued, should work to question issues of representation, examine the relationship of the spectator to the text and locate the play of language within the text. Here, both Mulvey and Rich agreed that a counter-cinema of both artistic and political work would engender and facilitate new meanings in feminist film analysis.

Christine Gledhill (1984) discusses in “Developments in Feminist Film Criticism” the impact and methodology of a realist cinema. Arguing for a clearer distinction on how women’s cinema derives knowledge from realism, Gledhill’s concern is the status of women’s lived experiences and phenomenal appearances. She questions whose reality is taken into account on the screen, and whose is not. As a result, Gledhill is critical of psychoanalytic, social constructionist and ideological arguments towards representations; her position is to inform a feminist film practice through a political materialism. That is, locating a feminist film practice that focuses on the political, social and economic experiences of women.

Joyce Wieland’s Water Sark (1966) is one of the first experimental films made by women in Canada. The film is an exploration of both technique and content. It is a film that explores the visual perceptions and expressions of the private sphere; and questions spaces within the home, particularly but not limited to, the kitchen. Water Sark creates a visual dialogue by engaging the viewer in an exploration of identities and subjectivities. The film addresses women as social and political subjects by representing women’s experience within the home. Barbara Sternberg (1991) articulates in her article “Tending the Horizontal”; that experimental cinema is about questioning identity and expression through the exploration of the visual (and here I would add, the audible and tactile) medium(s).

Water Sark is filmed with a hand held camera over the space of a kitchen table. The film begins as water is gradually poured into a glass. The image refracts and reveals what lies behind: contorted representations of a teapot and a vase of flowers shimmer through the water-filled glass reflection. The light hanging from the ceiling begins to

swing, back and forth, towards the camera. As the light moves, the images refracted through the glass change in shade and contour. The distorted images of the teapot and flowers move over the screen, getting larger and smaller with the sway of the over-head lamp.

These visual manipulations continue as a mirror is placed to the side of the water-filled glass. As Wieland tilts the mirror in various directions and at different angles and speeds, the glass begins to change its shape in the mirror's reflection. What the spectator sees are two water-filled glasses: one moving and the other stationary. The kitchen light continues to swing back and forth and the glass images fade in and out from the camera's lens. Periodically, more water is poured into the glass, filling it up. During these moments, Wieland films the scene from above. The movements of the camera and the mirror, as well as the manipulations of lighting and rhythm, change the characteristics of and relationships between the camera, the spectator and the glasses of water.

Water Sark exemplifies the manipulation of image and technique. Wieland questions the reliability of visual imagery not only through the camera lens, but also through the use of a magnifying glass and a mirror. Each technique engages the viewer in an alternative and obscure viewing of the kitchen table, the filmmaker's body and the embodied exploration of the private sphere. This film becomes meaningful as Wieland begins to question the space that is filmed. Consequently, the spectator and the filmmaker become vehicles through which representations of the female body and its place within the confines of the kitchen are regarded as an oppositional aesthetic practice.

The auditory experience of Water Sark is composed of diegetic sounds from the kitchen; running water, clinking noises of glasses and pots and pans banging can be heard

over one another. This kitchen clamour is heard almost simultaneously with a loud screeching background noise. Pooled with the visual representations and manipulations of Wieland's camera, the auditory orchestration of Water Sark engages the viewer in a critical understanding of women's place and subscribed role within the kitchen. It is this absence of language that connects the position of women's bodies with the questioning of the private sphere.

Feminist experimental cinema attempts to re-engage the theoretical positions surrounding the formation and articulation of subjectivity and desire by exploring a cinema of difference and of self-consciousness. As a result, this paper is inspired by a theory that embodies a multiple, shifting and contradictory exploration of identity (de Lauretis, 1990). This is a theory informed by the body and the perceptions and expressions experienced on that body. Within the context of this paper, the experimental films that I will examine reflect and re-discover the world of sensory experiences. Accordingly, each subsequent chapter explores vision and visibility, sound and the spoken word, and tactility and touch, respectively. In the next section, I will give an overview of each chapter combined with a brief summary of each sensory experience.

Chapter Summaries

The majority of theory and film analysis written about experimental film has tended towards a visual inquiry. What I propose to do in the next three chapters is relatively new to the discussion of experimental film. That is, my inquiry is theoretical and experiential, phenomenological and feminist, visual, as well as, auditory and tactile.

Before I begin these film analyses, however, it is important to situate each chapter in its corresponding theoretical framework of sensory perception.

Chapter Two: Vision and Visuality

Visual perception can engage cognitive, physiological, bio-chemical and behavioural responses from the body. Often these responses remain ambiguous and vague to the perceiver. That is, as an object moves across our visual field, we, as perceptible beings, often take for granted the processes that make up that act of perception. For example, vision would not be possible if light entering the eyes through the pupils and a movement of light over the retinal cells ceased to occur. Consequently, there must be “changing patterns of illumination within the eye in order for the world outside to communicate with the processes of the brain” (Burnett, 1995: pg. 21). However, my aim, and the aim of phenomenology as a tool of visual perception, is not to focus solely on light, movement or time, but to emphasize the role of the perceiver in making sense of their world.

A phenomenology of vision is grounded, as well, in Gestalt theory; this attempts to explain the everyday experiences as they happen for the perceiver. When we open our eyes to see, we see objects and surfaces, not sensations of light and movement. In this manner, a film becomes understood when it conveys meaning beyond the material presence of light, movement and time (Sobchack, 1992). A phenomenology of visual perception allows the viewer to explore different ways of seeing than would occur under ‘normal’ viewing situations (Gordon, 1997). As a result, to understand ourselves as viewers there needs to be a recognition that the visual universe is only one form of

intellectual communication; that our lived experiences extend beyond one's sense of sight to include all other perceptible encounters.

In Chapter Two, I explore the relationships between visual perception and film technology, examining the similarities and differences of embodied vision and visual images, as they are experienced by the spectator, filmmaker and film, itself. Within a phenomenological context, vision is examined as an act of discovery that allows for shifting and multiple perspectives of the lived world. As a result of these multiple perspectives, a dialogue of power structures and relations emerge between the positions and experiences of subject/object, private/public and inside/outside. The focal point around which vision both engages and embodies the above dialectics, is the female body. Accordingly, the power relations invested in looking and the meanings that are created from this politics of visibility, remain grounded in embodiment.

Chapter Three: Sound Sensations and Written Text

Sound can be defined as sensations, impressions and/or utterances that can be heard "due to vibrations in [one's] surrounding air or other medium" (Allen, pg. 718). At the same time, sound is not limited to its perceptible field; rather, sound can be heard through what is visible. Similar to vision, sound explains the everyday occurrences of life. Beyond this, however, sound is enveloping and enfolding; and as such, it touches upon and gives meaning to both the visible and the tangible. Particularly within film, sounds bring life to visual images; gestures, rhythms or noises become animated on the visual landscape (Abram, 1996).

Some auditory perceptions engage the viewer in the symbolic system of language. According to Murray Singer (1993) in The Psychology of Language, language perception and language comprehension are very distinct phenomena: where perception becomes necessary prior to any understanding of language. Language is a medium of communication where ideas are conveyed among members of a cooperative and understanding community (Singer, 1993). As a process, language is physically uttered in speech. That is, a thought or a physical gesture needs to be articulated, perceived and then comprehended.

Phenomenologically, language is a system of communication based on bodily perceptions. It is not a purely mental phenomena; rather, language belongs to the body and the world. As such, the discourse of language, and the meanings that are shaped and re-shaped through it, occurs simultaneously as the body becomes continuously re-experienced through this lived world. Language is never a fixed or determinable form. Rather, language is seen as an evolving medium (Abram, 1996). As a result, language moves beyond presenting or representing the visible world. It is the exchange of reciprocal events that shares in the material presence of that world. Consequently, without the world one would not be able to experience or engage in language (Abram, 1996).

The purpose of Chapter Three, therefore, is to locate sound and voice as an embodied expression and assertion of identity within feminist experimental cinema. Within a phenomenological context, the verbal expressions of sound, music or words (to name but a few) are given over to the body in the process of coming-into-the-world. As a result, an aural exploration of the interaction between the body and the world becomes

necessary. More specifically within a feminist reading of phenomenology, sounds and words can elicit or forfeit the experiences of women's desires and subjectivities.

Accordingly, this chapter explores women's potential for speaking in their own language, and giving voice to their own experiences.

Chapter Four: Tangible Qualities and Tactile Perceptions

Touch is one sense that is often overlooked in exploring the perceptible experiences of cinema. The primary focus on vision, and later on sound and language, has effectively disengaged the spectator in any haptic or tactile film experience. As a result, our reliance on touch goes unnoticed because of the attention given to visual and auditory perceptions. However, the inclusion of tactility can involve varied methods of perceiving and representing the world that vision and language are not capable of doing. For example, tactile sensations on the skin's surface (such as goose bumps or shivers) are different sources for perceiving the world that can not be experienced simply through visual or auditory stimulation.

Essential to tactile perception is the role and function of bodily movement. Previously, body parts (i.e. hands or feet) were only considered for their performatory role. However, haptic perception involves the sensory functions of body movement (Heller & Schiff, 1991). As such, a tactile experience encourages a general understanding of form and materiality, emphasizing the spatial and temporal nature of the body in motion. In a similar manner, the film experience affords bodily perceptions that elicit responses from the outer most reaches of our senses. Both the spectator and the filmmaker can locate the film experience, not only in vision and sound, but also in touch.

Chapter Four will examine the qualities and characters of touch, as they function to create different film experiences of being-in-the-world. Both the physical and psychical interpretations of touch are expressed through the readings of these experimental films. Using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of the Flesh, this chapter will also seek an understanding of the cinema as a tactile experience that comes in contact with the lived world. Textures, colours, montage sequences and optical printing illustrate the erotic character of such a haptic cinema. Although this chapter focuses on the physical manifestations of tactility, the tangible quality of emotion is also explored as an embodied perception and expression of film experience.

Conclusion

Embracing the diversity of theory proposed throughout the above sections, I am able to facilitate a film analysis that articulates both differences and similarities within perceptible experiences. From phenomenology to French feminism, documentary to experimental cinema or visual to tactile perceptions, there is a need to discuss the experiences of women's lives that reach far beyond the mere categorization of theories. What I will attempt to do is bring into discussion the possibilities of knowing, understanding and experiencing these twenty-two films. As a result, what remains key to my exploration of embodied subjectivity are the films, themselves. As each film examines different ways of coming-into-the-world, I will utilize analyses of both film technique and content. What makes this filmic journey cohesive and unified, therefore, is the will to grow in knowledge and understanding of female subjectivity, desire and imagination.

Chapter 2: Vision and Visual Perceptions

Vision and visual perception are one way that our knowledge of this world is created and facilitated. As one aspect of sensory perception, vision can be used as a tool through which this world is expressed. Visual experiences, therefore, are the expression of both the body and the world, joining; where knowledge exists as the reciprocal exchange between subject and object positions. In a similar way, the experience of watching a film is also an exploration of sense experiences. Cinema, it is generally believed, is already premised on the spectator's ability to visually engage with what is on the screen. As a result, the inquiry into the importance of vision in cinema may seem to be redundant. However, because of its multi-sensory experiences, a spectator may experience other effects of a film. What establishes the viewer as both a subject and object of visual perception, nonetheless, is her/his participation in looking. At the same time, this act of viewing also establishes subject/object relations within the film.

Although the film and the spectator may interact with one another on multiple levels (i.e. sound, texture, image), the assumption remains that vision is a key to cinematic experience. Experimental cinema is no exception to this rule. Vision has been one of the primary considerations in both the theoretical and technical underpinnings of this genre. Theoretically, film is a way of seeing that resembles visual perception; to have the viewer see as the film sees and the film see according to the spectator. However, experimental film goes beyond questioning how an image is perceived; "its visual focus is two-fold: a recognition of the visual world that includes all ways of seeing and an extended sense of sight that is produced within the cinematic apparatus" (Wees, 1992: pg. 3).

Tracey German's A Private Patch Of Blue (1998) communicates a visual experience that encourages the spectator to broaden her/his scope of visual perception. In one particular scene that lasts for only a few moments, the film cuts to the image of a birch tree, covered in ice and snow. The camera follows the tree's peeling bark, focussing on its folds. Moving closer and closer into the folds, the camera reveals the pinky-white flesh that is hidden within the tree's bark. The film cuts to fast montage shots of the birch tree, each shot possessing new and differing angles and lighting situations. In this instance an extended sense of sight is produced through film techniques such as montage scenes and slower, closer movements of the camera over the images. As a result, German is able to provide the viewer with a snapshot of the visual world that includes many different ways of seeing.

Experimental cinema engages visual perception as a form of art. Aesthetically, how the spectator visually responds to a film determines its function as art. In this manner, art is not only what we see but also how we see: it is a cinema premised on the epistemological construction of the image. That is, experimental film examines the trustworthiness of the picture and challenges the notion of truth and knowledge that reside within that image. Technically, experimental cinema goes beyond these theoretical and aesthetic applications and questions how the cinematic apparatus is manipulated to change, alter or subvert the spectator's perceptive and expressive experiences of an image (Wees, 1992). Furthermore, examining the act of viewing and questioning 'how we know' is necessary in a world where images dominate our experiences. Consequently, challenging the notions of truth and knowledge also puts into question the way we form impressions of identity and memory.

It is at this juncture, between theoretical and technical precepts, that this chapter begins to explore the dialectical relationships between visual perception and technology. The cinematic apparatus and visual perception are set together in a tension that works to question the relationships between vision and image. It is a tension created among film and spectator, between an embodied existence and the world and from the positions of subject and object. The relationship between the human eye and the camera eye is both dialectic and dialogic, both contradictory and communicative. This chapter seeks to explore a politics of visibility by, first, locating experiences of embodiment in the structures of passive and volitional vision. Towards those ends, visual experience is explored as an act of discovery and active participation that allows for multiple viewing encounters. Included in this visual dialogue are the experiences of the spectator, the filmmaker and the film. Second, a dialectics of visual perception is examined, where the similarities and differences of various kinds of embodiment are celebrated. It is here that a dialogue emerges between subject/object, private/public and inside/outside. Last, a politics of the female body is introduced through a discussion of these dialectics. The power relations invested in looking and the meanings that are created from this politics of visibility remain grounded in embodiment, specifically, the female body.

Structures Of Passive Versus Volitional Vision

Within a phenomenological context there are two forms of vision, each meeting in a communication and reflection upon the world, where both are intentional and embodied in consciousness (Sobchack, 1992). First, passive vision is a seemingly pre-given vision that is drawn upon in a non-active and taken for granted manner. It reflects that moment

when our visual experiences appear to be pre-conscious and devoid of any meaning. Second, volitional vision takes up “visual experience in a deliberate act of consciousness” (Sobchack, 1992: pg. 92). It is a visual action that tends toward and in relation to something or someone. In this instance, intentionality is defined as “the need for consciousness to be conscious of something other than itself” (Sartre, 1956: pg. 38). It is in this second context that vision will be explored, where intentionality, meaning and power will begin to form a phenomenology of film viewing. Throughout this chapter the intrinsic qualities of a passive vision will be questioned, as we utilize volitional vision to build a theory and practice of women’s embodiment.

Creation (1992) by Fumiko Kiyooka is a story of progression. It is a collection of images that tells the story of a woman’s journey through marriage, intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood. This mostly silent film begins as a woman dressed in white, facing the wall, turns and walks into a sheer, lacey-white covering; her hands begin to move over her face, contorting and stretching both her face and the white lace material. Within seconds the woman releases the cloth and stands poised in a shroud of white sheer material. As the film continues, the camera moves to the side profile of a woman’s face. The woman is breathing heavily, she turns her head away from the camera; the camera moves slowly down her neck and shoulder, toward her breasts.

In a series of quickly edited shots, the film cuts to the image of an erect penis. The image is filmed looking up towards the penis. The head of the penis is cut off from the top of the screen; it moves, twitching in its erect state. An image of the woman dressed in white appears, her body jerks back and forth against the wall, her mouth open in a silent scream. The film cuts to the image of a woman sitting on top of a man, facing

each other, having sex. Again, the film cuts to the side profile of the woman lying on her side; then back to the woman in white, doubled over, holding her legs, facing away from the camera. Quickly, the camera moves back to the couple having sex and then back to the woman in white thrashing around, throwing her head back.

The film continues with this montage of repeated images, however, as the film progresses images of a woman's dilating vagina emerge on the screen's surface. Shot by shot the images become clearer and larger. As her vagina continues to dilate further, the montage scenes become faster and faster; each series of quickly edited shots merge into one another, culminating in the birth of a child. Kiyooka not only includes shots of the birth, she deliberately and consciously focuses in on the after-birth. For example, the film cuts to the mid-wife delivering the placenta; she grabs hold of it and gently turns to break it loose. The placenta comes free and is placed in a tray. The camera moves closer, panning down toward the bloodstained sheets, moving up and holding its position on the swollen and twitching vaginal lips. The film cuts to the image of a mother and baby playing, and then back to the midwife gently wiping and cleaning the vaginal lips. Once again, the film moves to the image of the placenta: the midwife holds it up, turning it over in her hands, unfolding it, removing the outer casing and revealing the porous texture of the inside.

The technical and artistic construction of Creation facilitates a vision for both the spectator and the film that is deliberate. Passive vision has no place in this film where the bombardment of images and the applications of vision are repeated, doubled and sped-up. The filmmaker's own intentions are reflected in the conscious effort to facilitate an embodied visual experience of and awareness to the spectator's bodily responses toward

the film. As well, Creation is the embodied story of the female protagonist; each bodily action and re-action that accompanies the film's images speak to a particular part of this progression. As a result, the film not only tells a story of progression through the various states of a woman's sexual life; it becomes an embodied praxis of the woman's lived experiences within her body.

An embodied vision allows for the interaction and reaction of the spectator's and the female protagonist's bodies with the world. It enables visual perceptions and expressions to open up onto the world of tactile and physical embodiment and thus, shapes the knowledge and understanding of women's potential for experiencing, simultaneously, pain and joy. Although vision plays a crucial role in the constitution of subjectivity, "sight is never merely sight, [the] entire body is implicated in [this] vision" (Sobchack, 1992: pg. 78). The female protagonists in Creation become the foundation through which an embodied vision and understanding of women's lives are communicated. Volitional vision engages an interactive and reciprocal relationship that allows both spectators and protagonists to grow in their understanding and knowledge of women's experiences of childbirth, pregnancy and the loss of virginity.

Phenomenologically, this film experience is a "system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of consciousness perception"(Sobchack, 1992: pg. 9). In this context, Creation relies on a volitional vision that is intentional and subjective. It inhabits a space where direct experience is a condition of singular embodiment, but where this experience is accessible and visible to more than the single consciousness who live it (Sobchack, 1992). For example, as the baby's head emerges from the dilated vagina, the mother directly experiences childbirth as a condition of her body. At the

same time, this experience of childbirth is shared and, to some degree, knowable to many women who watch the film. As such, both viewer and protagonist share in, negotiate and contribute to the film space. What opens up is an embodied film experience that is both individual and communal: where the experiences of intercourse, pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood begin to merge at the intersections between filmmaker, film and spectator. A phenomenology of film vision, therefore, permits the viewer to experience the world in its acts of becoming.

Barbara Sternberg's midst (1997) is one example of the moments of discovery given over to the body. As a silent film, midst is a wholly visual experience that ignites one's senses and triggers one's imagination. The film is an array of colours, as well as black and white footage. It combines fast moving montage with slower, more detailed close-up pans across landscapes, cities, communities and bodies. As a silent film, midst works to create a visual noise for the spectator. In one particular scene, the camera moves quickly across the forested landscape, cutting to images of trees and fast, alternating repeat shots of leaves and branches. This flicker effect is important in creating a tension between the human eye and the technological eye. It infuses the viewer with a sense of hallucination, leaving the visual experience of the landscape unstable. The viewer's response to the film is felt upon the body through the tension and anticipation that are left by the onslaught of contrasting images between day and night, young and old. The repetitiveness of the leaves, trees and branches make contact with one's visual senses. However, the speed at which these images occur allows for only a brief encounter with the film's content. The spectator's ability to capture the experiences of these landscape

scenes, and to attain a full understanding and knowledge of them, are questioned by the rate at which Sternberg is able to edit her shots together.

In midst many of the scenes are composed of constant, repeated images that change according to camera angle, lighting and editing. For example, in the landscape scenes, what changes most dramatically is the speed at which the images change colour. Coloured filters of yellow, orange, red, blue and green run quickly over the forested landscape at a faster rate than the forest images appear on the screen surface. The result is the continuous changing of seasons on the screen. The film allows us to experience the continuous passage from one instant into another, and in the inter-locking of these moments in time (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Consequently, the impression of time passing crosses the multi-coloured spaces between the film and the spectator. Although this 'manipulated time warp' lasts for only moments, the washed over coloured leaders on the film's lens, pooled with the repeated and fragmented images of the landscape, visually touches the viewer. The spectator sees and feels the trees' leaves and branches as the colour washes through her/him. midst is an intense visual experience that makes the spectator's eyes become an extension of the camera. One's eyes, therefore, are not simply the 'site of vision'; they stand for a part of the whole, a synecdoche in which the eyes embody vision, similar to how the spectator's whole body engages with vision.

When practicing a phenomenology of vision the filmmaker interrogates the coming-into-being of images. Within a phenomenological context, therefore, an experimental filmmaker is more likely to consider her/his artistic medium to be sight, rather than film (Sobchack, 1992). Visual perception is an act of possessing the world that facilitates an examination between the lived body and the world. Ellie Epp's notes in

origin (1987) works to re-engage the viewer with her/his visual experiences and returns vision to a materiality of the body. notes in origin is a film separated into ten different and unique shots, each varying in light, movement, duration and image. Each segment explores how the image comes-into-being, and how the visual experience of the viewer is placed into question. Although every shot is independent of every other, the film works as a whole to provide the viewer with an experience of embodied viscosity.

notes in origin places vision back into visual experience and encourages both passive watching and active looking. The third shot in the film, for example, is approximately ninety seconds in length. The image is composed of a farmer's field in late autumn. The relevance of the season becomes significant to understanding the coming-into-being of images. Autumn is a season of change, growth and renewal that can impact how the viewer interacts and reacts with the discovery of visual images. In this particular scene, the ground appears frozen, desolate and cold; fog moves slowly across the field towards the viewer and then disappears. Throughout this scene the fog changes density, direction and speed. How the viewer experiences these changes appears to depend largely on the course of nature, as the natural environment determines the density, direction and speed of the fog. In this manner, the film screen is a continually changing experience of the landscape. As the images come to life on the screen the viewer becomes aware of her/his own place within that vision. Our senses become heightened in this silent film, as our imagination fills the theatre with the sound of the wind as the fog moves through the screen, or the smell of the dirt beneath our feet. notes in origin is an exercise in passive watching as the viewer allows the experience of the film to unfold. As well, Epp's film is an exercise in active looking because the viewer

actively participates in the experiences of the farmer's field. notes in origin returns the viewer to an awareness of her/his own materiality, in addition to, the materiality of the field.

Epp demonstrates the coming-into-being of images again, in the fifth shot of notes in origin. This scene is approximately thirty seconds in length and is composed of what appears to be the photograph of a waterscape in autumn. This black and white image consists mostly of water with a shoreline, lined with shrubs and trees, in the top half of the screen. Nothing moves in this photographic-like image. What does change, however, is how the filmmaker films the image of the waterscape. That is, Epp holds the camera to her chest, so that the image shakes and pulsates, up and down, as if it were moving to its own heartbeat. As a result, it is the film screen, and not the image, that comes-into-being in this segment. As the image of the lake pulsates, the viewer becomes aware of her/his own heartbeat. In this manner, the image changes as the viewer's body discovers her/his own experience of the lake. Again in the silence, the activity of looking envelops the viewer, enabling an embodied visual expression and perception of notes in origin to be explored.

Visions (1992) by Gariné Torossian, is a short film that illustrates the embodied nature of visual expression and perception. This film works to capture the viewer's attention by combining two or more filmstrips on the screen. Throughout, the film screen is split in two; each side shows different filmstrips moving in opposite directions. What the spectator observes are fast moving images of women, their breasts and legs and bodies dancing, travelling upward and downward and then disappearing after only moments on the screen. Seconds later the filmstrips change direction. The speed and rhythm at which

these images appear force the viewer to focus on only fragments of what is moving through the screen. The film induces a state of confusion and tension for the spectator, as s/he struggles to understand what s/he has just seen. Visions works to situate the film and the spectator in simultaneous positions of subject and object. A spectator may be in control of one's viewing position, however, the speed and rhythm at which these images are produced puts the film in control of the viewer. The spectator is both the subject of her/his viewing experience and the object of the film's own vision. As subject and object of the film experience the spectator is located as both intentional and embodied in consciousness.

Torossian's Visions embodies the movement and flux of the spectator's, the filmmaker's and the film's vision. The tension that is created by the changing speed and direction of the film's images affects one's ability to 'see clearly'. The film makes use of the observation that "despite the characterization of vision as atemporal and stable, the eye functions most optimally when in almost constant motion" (Jay, 1993: pg. 5). In Visions, the spectator's eyes move quickly across the visual field, jumping from one briefly fixed point to another. The rapid movement and flux of images in Torossian's film characterizes the embodied physical and theoretical understanding that our vision is in constant motion. Both the spectator's and the film's eye have a certain power of making contact with things; they are not just screens on which subject and object positions are projected (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Dialectics/Dialogics Of Visual Perception

Embodied vision not only focuses on the similarities between subject/object and body/film; it also marks off their differences. The problems and pleasures of embodiment are located in an awareness of 'otherness' that exists for both the body-subject and the body-object. These problems and pleasures are self-contradictory in that what makes vision problematic is also what gives it its greatest pleasure. When differences of the body are marked off, dialectics of the body begin to appear. This awareness of difference, of otherness, necessitates the separation of the subject from the object, the mind from the body and nature from technology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). However, there is a pleasure found in creating a dialogue of embodied vision between the body-subject and the body-object. The pleasure is in the union of these dialectics and in the coming-into-being of the whole visual experience.

Susan Oxtoby's All Flesh Is Grass (1988) addresses the interchangeability of subject/object positions. Oxtoby creates a private viewing event as the spectator follows her throughout the film. Because each shot is closely tied to the filmmaker's point of view, the film emphasizes that this is a world seen through the filmmaker's eyes; and that it is the only perception of the world that Oxtoby has to offer the spectator. In these moments the spectator is both subject and object of the filmmaker's intentions. In a series of shots, the viewer is witness to the filmmaker's visual exploration of her surroundings. For example, the spectator follows as the camera pans across a landscape of trees and bushes, follows the dirt on the ground and then enters an abandoned building. The film cuts to a shot of the head of a horse. The spectator looks closing in its eyes and mouth, fixing her/his gaze. Moments later the film cuts again, and the spectator is now

looking from inside the building. The camera moves slowly over the dark walls, up to the glass ceiling, revealing the brightness of the day. Oxtoby continues to walk with the camera towards the door and slowly descends the stairs that lead to the outside. The film cuts to the image of kids playing in a school yard: it is winter and the kids are bundled up. The spectator looks on as the kids run around hugging and embracing one another; they turn and run in the opposite direction.

All Flesh Is Grass is composed of many moments where the filmmaker is holding the camera at chest level throughout an abandoned building. This film is an exploration of the inside and outside world and how these two worlds merge together in our everyday lives. As Oxtoby and her camera experience the world, the viewer experiences alongside her. Although the film's images visually speak to the spectator, the spectator is engaged in her/his own intentional acts of perception. In this manner, visual perceptions and expressions are both passively acquired and actively sought after. Although Oxtoby leads the viewer throughout the film, All Flesh Is Grass is experienced differently from spectator to spectator. As a result, it is the spectator's cognitive, emotional and physical experience of the film that determines the relationship between subject and object positions. The spectator becomes, simultaneously, viewing subject and viewed object of the filmmaker's, the film's and their own curiosity.

Oxtoby creates a viewing experience that elicits perception as a gift: it is a gift from the filmmaker to the spectator, between subject and object positions. Throughout the film there is an awareness of the interconnectedness of the images on the screen and a growing knowledge and understanding that everything belongs to this world. It is the realization that the body and the world, both private and public, inside and outside, exist

in harmony and that the experiences of the world reciprocate one another as both subject and object of this world. It is a system where both the body-subject and the body-object move toward each other and not in opposition to one another.

Perception is the active interplay between a perceiving body and that which it experiences (Abram, 1996). Perception, like consciousness, is never empty; it is always the perception of something or someone. It is always open-ended and unfinished. Perception entails a logic of the lived body, it requires placing one's belief in a world but never guarantees its future (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Perception is embodied in three ways: "[first, it] presents itself to the world as the concrete manifestation of intentionality, [second, it] connects intentionality with the world [and third, it] represents itself to itself and to others in the world" (Sobchack, 1992: pg. 72). An embodied film experience, therefore, is constituted by the inter-subjective and intra-subjective exchange between perception and expression and the communications that emerge between them.

In passages (1992) by Cindy Carroll, the visual world emerges from the communication of our body with the moving picture. The film communicates an embodied experience through the movement of both the film's frame and the film's content. It is this movement that allows for a continually changing perception and expression of the film. In one particular scene the image that appears on the screen is a window frame that is covered by horizontal blinds. Within seconds, the optically printed image of the window moves diagonally across the screen, to the upper left corner. The remainder of the screen appears in dark green and has a slight movement in its background, similar to blades of grass moving in the wind. In the minimized window, light streams in through the slits in the blinds. A hand moves across the blinds, catching

the rays of sunlight. The hand continues to move, rotating and dancing within the streams of light, over and across the blinds. The window briefly envelopes the entire screen, then moves back to the left corner and the image of the hand dancing in the stream of light is replaced by a blue sky with white clouds moving past. Throughout this scene both spectator and image are, simultaneously, subject and object to one another. They exist for the film and the filmmaker in that moment of coming-into-the-world and of coming-into an embodied vision. As a result, the body simultaneously engages with the screen, the optically printed image of the window and the images that move through them.

The spectator's vision and the film's vision begin to move in unison, where the screen and the act of looking envelop one another. passages enables the viewer to find pleasure in the union of her/his vision with the film's vision. The relationship between the spectator's vision and the film's vision obscures the distinction between the human eye and the technological eye. As a result, the spectator's embodied experience of looking moves between two frames: the window and the film screen. The sporadic and disrupted movement of the window creates an awareness for the spectator, of being part of the film experience, yet somehow remaining separated by the optically printed image. The viewer experiences passages as both a dialectical and a dialogical visual perception and expression.

Tracey German's A Private Patch Of Blue (1998) explores a visual dialogue of the female body through the movements of the filmmaker's own body. As is All Flesh Is Grass, the filmmaker of A Private Patch Of Blue is seen by the viewer. As the camera moves slowly across the room, the viewer sees only fragments and sections of the walls and the filmmaker's body. The camera explores the landscape of the female body,

panning across the bathroom walls and cutting to shots of her arms, legs, belly and breasts. The viewer never sees the entire picture; that is, s/he experiences the inside of the bathroom in bits and pieces. What is revealed to the viewer, however, is the small and limited space in which the filming occurs. What this film communicates is the dialectical relationship between inside/outside, private/public and space/time.

A Private Patch Of Blue explores how the female protagonist has closed herself off from the outside world, enjoying the peace and serenity of the space she has created for herself in the bathroom. The activity inside the bathroom is limited to the woman's routine of bathing and the camera's exploration of that space. At the same time, the woman and the viewer become aware of the noise of activity that takes place outside the bathroom walls. The female protagonist never appears to be fully at ease, she is constantly moving up and down out of her bath, listening for noises and answering to the world outside of the bathroom. Juxtaposed against the slow movements of this inside world are the fast paced montage clips of the outside. German films changes in the natural environment; focusing on snow and ice covered trees, cutting to images of melting streams and summer meadows. The changing of the seasons connects the viewer to a changing world outside of the bathroom. As such, there is conflict between the woman's experiences of the inside and outside, the private and the public. The film speaks to the viewer in a dialogue of potential tension where although the outside world changes and time passes, the inside moves slowly and appears stationary. At the same time, however, the outside and inside worlds are connected by bodies and experiences of being-in-the-world that create a dialogue between theses dialectics.

The embodied experience of time and space is particularly present in A Private Patch Of Blue. For example, the camera pans slowly across the gendered landscape of the bathroom, over breasts and under arms, revealing warm flesh and soft hair. The film cuts to shots of a kettle slowly boiling in a kitchen, to the image of a baby in its crib; the viewer's attention is drawn to the nature of time and space in this woman's life. It is here that a gendered exploration into private/public and inside/outside becomes paramount. This woman's identity as mother, caregiver, nurturer defines the parameters of the space in which she lives and in which she feels allowed to live. In addition, time is made physically present by the visual presence of digital timecode inscribed at the top of the film's screen. Contrary to this, the images of the bathroom scene move so slowly that time appears to stand still. For the woman in the bathroom, however, time is a precious commodity that is cherished. This embodied experience of space and time are key to understanding how the viewer and the female protagonist perceive their visual environments.

Visual Politics Of The Female Body

Feminist experimental film locates a politicization of perception not only through the filmmaker and the film, but also in the experiences and perceptions of the viewer. It is a collective exploration into the lived experiences of woman's bodies. One major feminist argument is that identity has a direct relationship with sociality and subjectivity, and consciousness is a specific mode of knowledge that is political (Armatage, 1989). Within this context, identity is based on multiplicity and self-contradiction, dialectics, as well as dialogics. In yet blooming purple... (1996) by Julie Wilson, vision dialectically

address the spectator's perception of two women engaged in a sexual encounter. The camera-eye dialectic that exists in this film is one in which both camera and eye are embodied and both camera and eye serve as technical apparatus. Perceptually, vision is embodied in yet blooming purple... through the use of two instruments: Wilson's camera and a second camcorder. Wilson explains to the audience that her girlfriend brought the second camcorder along in order to capture Wilson on camera. The use of these two film devices contributes to the visual dialogue because it enables multiple views and multiple voices to be seen and heard. The camera and the camcorder work in conjunction with one another, reciprocating the experiences that they record.

yet blooming purple...'s dual film technique allows for the experiences of both the filmmakers and the participants to be challenged. As a result, Wilson becomes both the subject of her film medium and the object of her girlfriend's camcorder. The film begins as the image of three women fades onto the screen. Wilson's girlfriend uses the camcorder to introduce the players in the film. The woman in the middle is Wilson; she is fully clothed. On either side of her sits the two female participants; Cheryl and Jay are naked, joking and teasing Wilson. The camera moves slowly back and forth, up and down, across the scene of the three women sitting together. As the film continues, Wilson moves behind the camera, giving Cheryl and Jay direction and instruction: where to sit, what to do, when to do it – all captured by the camcorder. Dialectically, Wilson embodies both her camera and her eye, as subject/object positions become fluid. The film begins to question: who is holding the camera, who is performing for the camera, and who is absent from the camera's lens? The movement and fluidity of the cameras allow for fluctuations in the power dynamics between filmmakers, viewers and

participants. The film works to create an atmosphere where power is fluid, and where no one person has total and constant control of the film's viewing position. At any time, the filmmakers, viewers or participants may function as both subject and object for the film's intentions.

The film cuts back and forth between the grainy black and white images of Wilson's camera to the over-exposed, green-on-white images of her girlfriend's camcorder. The second last scene of yet blooming purple... plays between these two visual experiences: black and white, grainy images of Cheryl and Jay caressing one another are interspersed with over-exposed shots of the two women moving slowly on the floor, entwined. With each shot and each edit Wilson creates a reciprocal relationship between the two cameras. As a result, perception, like the flow of the cameras and the power dynamics invested in them, is in constant flux. At the same time, however, one must be aware that the use of dual cameras does not necessitate a more objective perception of this sexual experience. On the contrary, multiple film instruments allow for a greater freedom in manipulating and altering the viewer's visual experiences. As a result, the spectator functions to dialectically address the perception and expression of the use of multiple cameras. In this manner, the viewer embodies both a human eye that participates in the act of viewing, and a technical eye that processes the dual film images from both the camcorder and the camera.

yet blooming purple... gives expression to the bodies of the filmmakers as they exist both on-screen and off-screen. Wilson is physically embodied by both her presence on-screen in the camcorder images, and in her absence, through the technical apparatus she wields. Because the viewer knows the filmmaker is present throughout the making of

the film, Wilson is embodied as the camera's eye. As a result, the viewer becomes aware that, whether present or absent, Wilson is able to control the visual dialogue. This is even more true for Wilson's girlfriend. Although the spectator is aware of the girlfriend's presence, the viewer remains unaware of what she looks like. In a more traditional style of filming, the other filmmaker remains an anonymous contributor to the film.

The spectator also serves as a technical apparatus throughout the film, piecing her/his own perception of the film's expression together. Wilson creates a visual experience that engages the spectator as an active participant. That is, there are times when the spectator identifies with Wilson, manipulating and directing the scene and its characters. At other times, the spectator is removed from Wilson; s/he watches Wilson, watching the scene and becomes aware of the controlled environment that Wilson has produced.

The eroticism of the film's content encourages both a passive and an active involvement with the film. The viewer responds passively to the visual images of Cheryl and Jay having sex because s/he is removed from the act itself, being more aware of the visual manipulations that make up the film. Actively, the viewer responds to the sex act in two ways: first, the visual manipulations engage the viewer in a more complete and whole understanding of the political nature of yet blooming purple.... The sex act becomes an act of agency and subversion for the filmmaker, the film, the female protagonists and its spectators. The sexual encounter that the viewer watches is the creation of Cheryl and Jay, their fantasies, desires and pleasures. The film creates an exchange between these women and attempts to demystify and give voice to the

experiences of lesbian sex. Second, the eroticism of two bodies, moving together, caressing and kissing, touching and holding engages the viewer in her/his own sexuality. The images of sex turn the viewer on, actively engaging him/her in the sexual dynamics on the screen.

yet blooming purple... is an expression of performance and play. Cheryl and Jay sit on the floor, talk, move closer to one another and begin to caress and touch each other. The viewer anticipates their first kiss and the screen fades to black. As the image cuts back, the two women are intertwined, their arms and legs moving in slow, methodic motion, as the camera pans slowly across the sexual landscape of breasts, buttocks and vaginas. Cheryl and Jay are more than sexual objects of a visual dialogue between bodies, more than subjects of their sexual experiences; they embody the film, and the film embodies them, as whole and complete agents of their sexual subjectivities. yet blooming purple... creates a dialogue between passive and volitional visual experiences. It is the work of dual expressions and perceptions made possible by Wilson and her girlfriend; where both spectator and film serve as both subject and object to one another.

Passive and volitional vision establish relationships between spectator, filmmaker and film that encourage both a physical and mental perception and expression of the film. As the spectator comes-to-know the films, her/his vision becomes more volitional, than passive. That is, volitional vision emerges in the processes of viewing. (Although I am speaking in the context of experimental film, this is also true for different genres of film, e.g. Hollywood films, animation, documentary). As the spectator actively engages with the film material, s/he reciprocates a power dynamic between film, filmmaker and protagonists. However, passive vision is also subject to these power dynamics, including

passively accepting a conventional position of power. For example, looking can encompass the act of turning one's eyes purposefully and with the knowledge of the effects of that look; or, it can be the casual glance that innocently catches the eye. Whether intention is present or not, looking establishes relations between subjects and objects in a visual field (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Helen Lee's (1990) Sally's Beauty Spot establishes an "informational gaze", a "relational gaze" and a "possessive gaze" with the viewer (Barthes, 1980: pg. 274). First, an informational gaze requires that the look give some form of information; its function is to optically seek out and know. Thus, looking establishes an understanding and knowledge of the world. Second, in a relational gaze, looks are exchanged between people. Like an exchange of words, its focus is to build connections and contradictions. Last, the possessive gaze attempts to hold the look. It is not a look that builds knowledge or connections; rather, it is a look that owns and apprehends what is in its sight. In Sally's Beauty Spot these forms of looking are neither fixed nor determinate. Rather, the film engages with looking relations and the power dynamics invested in them. The film combines three or more different story lines that are not uniformly set out for the viewer. The story lines, like the looks themselves, merge into one another illustrating the historical and cultural connections among them.

Sally's Beauty Spot gives us information about the main protagonist Sally Lee. Sally has a mole on her right breast. This mole is the focal point of the film, yet this is no ordinary mole. It is through the story of Sally's beauty spot that the viewer comes to understand that Sally feels uncomfortable with her mole. In fact, she spends most of her time in the shower trying to rub the mole clean. The anxiety with which Sally attempts to

remove or hide her mole is intensified by the images and constructs of Asian beauty that occur throughout the film. The informational gaze in Sally's Beauty Spot allows the viewer to participate in the experiences of the protagonist's anxiety. Sally's actions toward her body are more than skin deep, they embody the erasure of Sally's Asian culture. As such, the anxieties she experiences are based on an ethnicized and colonized notion of Asian beauty. The repeated rubbing and pressing, up and down, across the breast, signifies Sally's desire to rid herself of the negative images associated with these racial stereotypes.

Both Sally and the viewer establish relational gazes with/in the film. Sally's experiences with looking occur in multiple ways. A self-reflective gaze empowers Sally to look back at herself in the mirror. The significance of the mirror provides truth in the look and in looking back. That is, in looking back at herself, Sally confronts the racial constructs of her ethnicity and the nature of her desire to remove her mole. For example, as Sally watches The World of Suzie Wong (1950), images of her rubbing and pressing her mole are intercut alongside. This montage sequence becomes accelerated as the urgency with which she attempts to remove or hide her mole increases. In this instant, Lee is able to establish the cultural and ethnic connection between the experience of Sally's mole and the young Chinese woman's experiences with her white lover. The link between these two story lines enables the historical and cultural relevance between these two women to be explored. There are many questions that Lee proposes to the viewer. How is beauty ethnicized? Do we, as viewers, judge beauty based on its proximity to whiteness? Or, do we find the exotic a more appealing impression of beauty? Sally's attempt to remove and hide her mole epitomizes the search for these answers.

Sally's Beauty Spot establishes a relational gaze between Sally, the mirror, the viewer and the screen. For Sally the mirror symbolizes looking as an act of truth in self-reflection. Similarly, the film screen works as a mirror of self-reflection for the spectator. Thus, as the viewer watches Sally look back at herself, s/he sees the truth of her/his own position, looking in on Sally. It is the experience of being caught looking that enables the viewer to situate her/his own place of viewing in relation to Sally and the anxieties she experiences. This position of viewing, like all embodied experiences, is in constant flux and motion. However, what determines the spectator's place of viewing largely depends on her/his own identity. In this manner, a politics of identity will dictate our place of viewing, as well as our embodied experiences of the film.

Sally is not the only woman in the film to establish a relational gaze with the viewer. Throughout Sally's Beauty Spot, Lee juxtaposes images of Sally's mole alongside clips of The World of Suzie Wong; interspersed among these shots are various images of different Asian women. These images range from frontal to side-profile faces, and fragmented shots of lips, eyes, ears and noses. Accordingly, each time the film cuts to an image of a different Asian woman, the relationship between the viewer and the film alters the experience and knowledge of beauty and ethnicity. The visual experience of each woman allows the film and the viewer to engage in a dialogue between bodies. Specifically, the differences that each woman brings to the film allows for a more diverse knowledge and understanding of beauty to be realized. It is this diversity that enables cultural stereotypes and beliefs regarding Asian beauty to be demystified.

Sally's Beauty Spot illustrates a possessive gaze that works to apprehend an object and holds it in our visual field, initiating a power structure that can induce, seduce

or disrupt the one being held in the gaze. This occurs most often as Sally and her grandmother watch the story of Suzie unfold in The World of Suzie Wong. In this movie a young white artist paints his muse, capturing the essence of her exotic beauty on canvas. Yet, when she decides to dress in 'white' clothes, her lover gets angry, calling her 'American trash'. Afterwards, the viewer and Sally see the young woman dressed only in her traditional Chinese costume. The young white artist prefers to look at his lover this way. It is through this look that he is able to capture, colonize and own her. At the same time, this possessive gaze is thrown back to the viewer, as we observe Sally in the shower, attempting to rid herself of these ethnic stereotypes.

Helen Lee enables the viewer to become aware of her/his own viewing position and encourages a discussion between story lines. For example, kissing scenes between an Asian woman and a white man are juxtaposed along side images of Suzie Wong with her white lover. These scenes move back and forth, between the film screen and the television movie, engaging the viewer in an exchange of looking relations that effectively makes the connection between the historical and cultural constructions of Asian women. Accordingly, the historical and cultural implications of these two scenes place into question the relationship between beauty, ethnicity and ownership. That is, does the viewer feel comfortable watching another Asian women and white man kiss after having been witness to the actions of the white artist in the movie? In Sally's Beauty Spot looking relations are only as fixed and determinate as the viewer's own embodied experiences of those looks.

Being looked at also invites the opportunity of returning, reversing or subverting these dynamics of the gaze, allowing for traditional looking relations to be displaced and

re-negotiated. In Nice Girls Don't Do It (1990) by Kathy Daymond, the spectator's gaze is reversed. Daymond creates a film experience that empowers its female protagonist. She is in control of both her sexual experience and the gaze of the viewer. Nice Girls Don't Do It is a powerful example of returning the gaze, of subverting beliefs regarding female sexual pleasure and performance. It is a bold film about sexuality, desire and power. The focal point of this film is female ejaculation: how it looks, how you do it and how it can be utilized by women, for women. In one particular scene, the camera moves to Shannon Bell, a performance artist, lying on a mattress, on the floor, masturbating. As she looks toward the camera her hand moves in circular motions around her clitoris. The film cuts and a closer image of Bell's vagina fills the screen. Her hands move quicker and quicker over the pointed top of her clitoris. Once again, the film cuts and the entire screen is enveloped with the image of her vagina. The hand pauses and fluid shoots up and out from her vaginal lips. The scene ends as a final shot of Bell's vagina is shown, pulsating up and down, as if out of breath. Daymond offers the viewer an instructional video that allows women the opportunity to realize their ejaculatory and orgasm potential. She not only empowers the female sexual body, but also creates an atmosphere of visual sexual embodiment that elicits excitement, anticipation and sexual tension.

Nice Girls Don't Do It is composed of repeated shots of Bell masturbating. From various angles and positions the viewer watches as she pleasures herself. Throughout the film there are various close-up shots of her vagina, clitoris and labia, as well as her projectile ejaculations. Unlike Sally's Beauty Spot, Daymond does not engage in a dialogue of looking relations. Rather, the film speaks to the viewer, rendering the viewer speechless. The sexual content is invasive and pornographic. The visual images of

throbbing vaginal lips, erect clitorises and projectile ejaculations bombard the viewer. The intensity of these visual images astounds and excites the viewer. Daymond creates a visual image of female sexuality that is powerful and phallic. At the end of the film words flash across the screen: "Girls Do It Nice". What is witnessed in this experimental feminist film is a visual exploration of embodied sexual identities. It is a movement of identities and subjectivities, where the questions of vision, visual experience and visual pleasure are located both on the body and in embodied spectatorship.

Conclusion

Visual perception and expression engage the viewer with the life world. The experiences given over to the viewer encompass film-specific techniques, such as montage, panning motions and changes in colour filters, light, camera angles and editing. This chapter has intended to address various forms of perception that challenge typical ways of seeing. Its focus has been on specific types of vision; for example, passive versus volitional experiences of the world, how these visions are re-negotiated and reciprocated between subject and object positions, and the dialectical and dialogical exchanges that occur between these positions. As a result, the experimental films that make up the body of this paper question the relationships between and roles of the spectator, the filmmaker, the film's protagonists and the film, itself.

Feminist experimental film not only functions to challenge visual perception, its role is to challenge the ways that women's life experiences can be expressed. Vision, therefore, acts as an art form, engaging the viewer in a political dialogue of these issues. Thus, the films I have examined throughout this chapter give a visual voice to women's

experiences of motherhood, caregiver, object and subject of sexual desire and any identifications that these women may embrace. This has been an exploration and movement of identities and subjectivities that reflect the power dynamics in looking relations, in subverting and returning these looks and in the process of coming-to-know yourself.

Chapter 3: Sound Sensations and Written Texts

Sound, speech and voice are only three ways in which knowledge of the world is aurally created and facilitated. Not unlike vision, sound is a tool for expression and an instrument in perception. Although there are many experimental films that have relied on the importance of images, verbal expression has been equally important in communicating knowledge of being-in-the-world. As a result, film relies on the spectator's auditory experiences and her/his ability to interpret those experiences within the context of aural communication.

Sound belongs to an understanding of sensory experiences that can be heard through vibrations, impressions, expressions and bodily actions. Sound manipulations, sound effects and sound quality are all part of experiencing and understanding the world around us. Film sound, as a perception and expression of the lived world, fills space, where notes, melodies, rhythms, rhymes and words embrace and envelop the spectator. The transition from silent to sound cinema has been significant because it has changed the dynamics between film and spectator and, their subsequent relations between film space and film time (Wees, 1984). For example, the introduction of sound and speech within many documentary film productions has encouraged a clearer understanding of the world's reality. As well, many Hollywood narratives have benefited from the union of film space and film time; imparting entertaining anecdotes that provide an alternative to the spectator's reality.

Contrary to this, the focus of experimental film has not been to engage the viewer in film reality; rather, it has been to place into question the notions of 'truth', 'reality' and 'knowledge'. As a result, the introduction of sound, voice and speech in experimental

film becomes another way of examining the film and the filmmakers' intentions. But what function does sound have when it is merged with a theory of embodiment? How does the spoken or the written word enable feminist experimental film to explore an embodied female subjectivity? More importantly, what emerges when a theory of embodiment is pooled with a theory of the female voice?

Throughout this chapter I will examine various aspects of soundscapes and soundtracks. However, the primary focus of this chapter will be the utilization of the female voice. The connections between phenomenology and feminism become much more paramount because each theoretical perspective delineates a particular view and import of sound and voice, respectively. That is, for phenomenologists sound evokes an embodied understanding of the lived world. For many feminists, voice elicits understandings of subjectivity, identification and agency. Before the above questions can begin to be answered, however, I must first outline three key concepts: sound, speech and voice.

Although all three share an agenda with and affinity to embodied perceptions and expressions, each one has varying degrees of function and form. First, sound is something that is heard, usually caused by vibrations or sensations in the ear (Allen, 1985). However, sound can also require the conveying of an impression. For example, a bell may sound - the bell is both heard and emits a noise. Second, speech constitutes the action in which words are verbalized and expressed; it is a manner of talking (Allen, 1985). Lastly, voice is the exercise of both sounds and words. It encompasses a physicality of verbal expression, where words and sounds are formed in the larynx and uttered through the movement of muscles in the throat and mouth (Allen, 1985). In this

instance, voice can be comprised of non-word forms, such as crying or laughter. Within the context of experimental film, therefore, a spectator learns language bodily, how words sound and feel on her/his tongue and how words can induce states of friction, anticipation, panic or pleasure.

Largely, the theoretical focus of this exploration of sound, speech and voice will trace a line from Maurice Merleau-Ponty to Luce Irigaray, from the discourses of embodiment to the discourses of language, using the ideas of Iris Marion Young to bridge the gap between the two. Phenomenology, as discussed in the previous chapters, describes the reciprocity of subject and object positions. However, Merleau-Ponty lacks a discourse on power and the gendered body, and therefore, focuses attention on sound and language as embodied. French Feminism, on the other hand, explores the discourses of power and phallogentrism with the belief that the creation of a feminine language will afford women agency and change (Assiter, 1996). Yet, Irigaray dismisses the experiences of the body with the lived world. Although Irigaray writes about women's bodies as a source of language (i.e. two lips that are in constant contact), the difference is that she concentrates on linguistic, rather than embodied experiences. An approach that combines phenomenological and French feminist understandings is offered by Young's work in Throwing Like a Girl, which attempts to situate women's bodily experiences within a framework of liberation and change, utilizing both embodied experiences and the words that facilitate those experiences.

The purpose of this chapter is to locate sound, voice and the written word as central to feminist experimental cinema. As such, it is equally important to illustrate how sound and voice are utilized to locate embodied experiences of desire, identity and

subjectivity. Within the following films I will investigate how women begin to speak to one another, how they begin to build a community for themselves, where writing and speaking can be used to “declare war on the image” (Jay, 1993: pg. 528). All of the films in this chapter share at least two important qualities: voice and agency. Although I have attempted to divide this chapter into three distinct sections, many of the films spill over into different sections. First, I will explore how sound and speech affect the interaction of the body with the world. Specifically, I will examine the spectator’s bodily responses to the film and to its protagonists. This will illustrate that although speech, especially, often regulates the sensory world, its meanings and gestures remain in flux with the lived world. Second, written words and soundtracks are utilized in examining the connections between women’s subjectivity, their prescribed roles and the need to speak in their own voice. Last, a commentary on sexual subjectivities and desires is placed within the context of multiple voices, soundscapes and speaking as woman.

Speech And Sound In Interaction With The Body

Any discussion of language and the body will appear contradictory and confusing, for when we utilize speech we generally do not think of ourselves as embodied. Rather, we think of the words we utter and how our minds come to verbalize what we are thinking. That is, speech has been viewed solely as an intellectual process that occurs in the mind and not through the body. From a phenomenological perspective, however, it is “the sensible world that provides for the deep structures of language” (Abram, 1996: pg. 71). In Chapter Two I illustrated that meaning does not exist in isolation from lived experiences. The discourses of language and the meanings that are shaped and reshaped

through them occur as the body continuously re-experiences the lived world. As such, language, like experience, is constantly re-made; it is never fixed nor determinate. It is seen as an evolving medium (Abram, 1996).

Words have the power not only to influence the body, but also to regulate our sensory experiences of the world around us and to affect the interaction of the body with the lived world (Irigaray, 1984). Migraine (1990) by Gail Mentlik is a film that depicts one woman's experiences of migraine headaches and how these migraines impact both the body of the protagonist and the body of the spectator. The film image is composed of multiple shots of a roller coaster. For example, the camera pans, at various speeds, across the roller coaster landscape: there are moments of fast montage sequences of different angles and sections of the roller coaster, as well as various film exposures throughout. The film images, themselves, create an experience of anticipation and excitement, coupled with fear. However, it is the dialogue that sets the tone of the film and changes the spectator's experience of the roller coaster.

Migraine is a very literal example of how words sound and feel on the tongue as they are spoken. The dialogue, together with the visual images, creates an awareness of how the woman feels:

Not again, oh god I feel it...no, it's not just the whim of my imagination, it's real. 'Why not just take a couple of aspirins... You don't look like a migraine personality', one doctor told me... Actually doctor my apartment is more un-kept than my hair... oh, the only thing that can help me now is a lobotomy. Where can I find a neurosurgeon that makes house calls... oh, concentrate on the pain.

The soundtrack is mechanically manipulated in order that the spectator's experiences of the words mimic the experiences of a migraine. For example, throughout the film the dialogue is slowed down and drawn out, the voice is low and there are periodic short flute

sounds in the background. Both words and sounds are combined together to create an atmosphere of distress and tension. As the female protagonist speaks the spectator can feel the heaviness of the words uttered, the pain the woman must experience in speaking and the tension of having the dialogue drawn out and strained. The low, dull and painful sound of the woman's voice triggers a bodily response of frustration, annoyance and anger.

The dialogue alters the viewer's perception of the roller coaster images. Where at one point the roller coaster may have signified anticipation and fun, pooled with the dialogue the images take on a completely different meaning. As an analogy to her migraines, the film becomes a manifestation of her physical experiences of pain. As the protagonist speaks she affects the interaction of her body with the migraine and the spectator's bodily experiences of that migraine. In this instance, language facilitates, changes and disrupts the spectator's own experiences of the roller coaster and of what that roller coaster represents.

The manipulation of the soundtrack triggers a tension in listening, but it is the words themselves that create an atmosphere of frustration and anger. It is an anger directed toward how women are regarded within the medical community: the view that women must be the cause of their own pain, that it is all in their imagination or that women, by their very nature, are less able to cope with the world around them and the stresses that come from this world. The feelings that Migraine induce take shape in the sensory world, but the meanings and reactions to those feelings occur within a discourse that either medicalizes or trivializes women's bodily experiences. Mentlik's film combines a visual experience with personal and political dialogue to create a filmic

atmosphere that speaks to women's experiences. It is when women attend to their experiences as sounding and speaking bodies that they begin to understand the power they have to change their own lives. In this manner, agency occurs when women begin to sense that they are heard and listened to by other bodies. Mentlik's Migraine imposes a dialogue that insists on being heard by manipulating the spectator's auditory senses and, as a result, her/his bodily and political reactions to the film.

The spoken word can be described as a gesture and its meanings can be located in the lived world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). You Take Care Now (1989) by Ann Marie Fleming is a second person narrative of events that have taken place in the filmmaker's life. The use of the second person is important in two ways: first, it attempts to create a distance between the woman who was raped (i.e. the filmmaker) and the images on the screen, and second, it forces the viewer to identify with the "you" that the filmmaker refers to. Ironically, the sharing of these experiences encourages the filmic presence of the protagonist, Fleming, herself. Thus, despite the distance the filmmaker tries to maintain, she comes-into-being for us in the course of the film. The coupling of the filmmaker's presence with the spectator allows both of them to claim the film as their own, as part of their own identity, their own self and their own subjectivity. Furthermore, it insists on corporeal bodies being present within the film, especially and specifically Fleming's presence.

The images that create the film reflect representations and fragments of the filmmaker's memories and stories. For example, in one sequence, the camera pans down still photographs of Italian architecture, and then a shot of the Canadian flag flying in the wind appears on the screen, referencing Fleming's Canadian citizenship. Next, the

camera is looking up to the top deck of a large boat; there is a cut to black and then the image of a moving car appears. The camera follows from inside the car, taking the viewer on a journey down the road. Each of these images represents certain aspects and experiences of Fleming's journey to Italy. These images not only reflect and illustrate Fleming's experiences, they also function as clues to locating a subjectivity that is linguistically embodied and constituted:

... The next bit is a little hard to explain, you get the idea don't you, you get raped. Now, you're lying there, waiting for something violent to happen... to be beaten or ... to do something like scream or fight or pull out the ever-handy Swiss army knife. But nothing like that passes because you're afraid you might hurt him or he might get angry and hurt you.

You Take Care Now is both a visual and a linguistic journey, in which the female protagonist is able to talk about and through her body, illustrating the importance of speaking and experiencing the sensory world. For Fleming, the primary source of these experiences is the physical body, although her own body is hardly ever seen.

The visual images in the film represent not only events and memories, but also symbolic gestures of the emotions surrounding these life traumas. For example, there are blurred images in brilliant shades of blue, black and white, with flashes of red and orange, which move quickly across the screen. In the background a woman's body appears from the right side of the screen, and the spectator hears the muffled sounds of fighting. The screen fades, jerks and shakes and the image of two men boxing is seen from behind the shades of blues and blacks. The dialogue continues,

... and you lie there passive and violated, feeling like someone told you, you were going to win an award and didn't get it. Except the award was your dignity, your sanity, your middle-class inviolability...

These images, together with the narrative, project feelings of fear, powerlessness and defeat.

In another scene, the image is of a hand holding up a rectangular mirror. In the mirror the spectator sees a figure down on its hands and knees, crawling. The image is very dark and is set in fast motion. This image, pooled with the dialogue, creates a visual of humiliation and fear. Even after disclosing the experience of rape in a strange country, Fleming continues to tell the story of fear and humiliation. After leaving the apartment where she was raped, the woman encounters a midget who accosts her. In the silence of the film, with only the image of a short man jumping up and down in front of the camera, the spectator hears the muffled cries of “bitch, slut, putana... bitch, slut, putana” repeated over and over again. Fleming’s violent and humiliating experiences are presented, indirectly, in images but they are altered and subverted in the filmmaker’s own voice.

In Chapter Two I wrote about the visual experiences of Julie Wilson’s yet blooming purple... (1996) where the filmmakers, the protagonists and the spectators all participated in a reciprocal meeting of subject/object relations (i.e. a mutually filmed sex scene) and the changing power dynamics that occurred between them. The linguistic experience of Wilson’s film works in much the same way. The language spoken in yet blooming purple... allows the women that participate in the visual experience of the film to be heard. For example,

The implications of making the film are just starting to hit me now. It didn’t occur to me until I met Cheryl and Jay that the indifference the print was referring to adds something impure to the person controlling the image, shaping their experiences to fit my narrative... after a while I knew little of what I had got myself into... I began to feel like there was no other way to ostensibly be out of the closet, but could only write about being in, and be in these strained and compartmentalized ways. To complicate things further I decided I wanted Cheryl and Jay to do more than just pose for me. I never asked them to have sex in front

of the camera, but now I want to see the sex that I am defending... on some level we are hoping that a parent or a priest will pat us on the head and say 'there, there, I understand'...

Wilson's dialogue also articulates the contradictory nature of subject/object positions and their changing power dynamics. She illustrates that speech is not only semiotic, but also works to create and alter the bodily experiences that it speaks of and from. Thus, the spoken word must both describe and liberate the film, the filmmakers and all of the participants involved. In viewing yet blooming purple..., the spectator enters language through a reciprocated endeavor of actively intertwining his/her own experiences of the body with that of the lived world and the film world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Thus, the spectator is embodied both by the act of looking and the descriptive dialogue. It is this intertwining of the senses that enables the spectator and the filmmaker to move within subject and object positions, never being wholly defined by one look, one word, one sentence.

Text And Voice As 'Women's Language'

The utilization of voice has been particularly important to some feminist experimental films because it articulates the possibilities of women's identities and subjectivities. It is through the verbalization of women's enforced silence and the need to speak from that silence that many of these films become part of a feminist genre. Patricia Gruben's (1977) The Central Character tells the story of a shift in one woman's experiences from the kitchen to the outside world. The film begins as a woman's voice recites a grocery list. The voice is slow, methodic and consistent as she lists the contents:

swiss, cheese, emery, board, mineral, water, juice, tomato, sauce, dip, chocolate, chips, oatmeal, ivory, snow, cream, puffs, oil, chicken, dried, milk, powder, cabbage, rolls

Each word is enunciated clearly, with a pause that follows after each word. This pause in speech articulates a fragmentation between the grocery items and the female protagonist's experience of her private sphere. The female narrator appears disjointed from her experiences; she is simply going through the motions, dis-embodied from her lived world. However, voice is experienced as one extension of the body. As a result, the woman's voice, as heard by the viewer, and the space within which those experiences occur become fully embodied within the film.

As the woman recites her list, the black screen is filled with a written text that moves slowly from the bottom, upward.

Tight as she can squeeze those two
bulging bags of groceries. The hard circle
of her arms the fingers of the right hand
leaving white marks on the left wrist as her
arms stretch to enclose temporary paper bags...
kick the car door shut race up the steps
fumble keys from teeth to burglarproof lock.
The car illegally parked but far behind
Shut the door

The words move toward the top of the screen disappearing from the viewer's vision, being cut off by the physical limitations of the film's screen. As both the vocal and written exchanges come to an end, the sound of a door slamming fills the spectator's ears. The film continues as the sound of the door shutting is heard once more; this time the spectator can hear footsteps running to answer a ringing phone. The female protagonist is unable to answer the phone on time, the ringing stops and the woman sighs heavily in frustration. The film moves to an image of a well-defined and outlined mark of a

muddied foot print. Again the film cuts quickly and the viewer sees the fragmented arm of a woman, reaching into the screen, scrubbing the footprint from the floor. In addition, the auditory experience of the woman cleaning captures the viewer's attention. For example, the sound of a hard and brittle brush, scrapping back and forth along the muddied mark of the footprint, scratching the hard texture of the ceramic floor fills the theatre. In this particular scene, both the visual images and the diegetic sounds function to embody the female protagonists prescribed roles and duties within her space.

Another scene in The Central Character begins as the images of brick patio stones cover the screen, the viewer can hear the sounds of a broom running over the patio stones, swishing back and forth against the bricks. The shadows of a moving tree fall across the stones, making it difficult for the viewer to determine where the shade begins and the dirt ends. This shot cuts to a sequence of four shots in which images of the brick stones move closer and closer on the screen. Alongside the visual images the female protagonist's voice is heard, again she narrates in a methodic monotone:

sweep up the dirt, put it in a pot, take it to the plants, make more pots, dump out those old bottles under the sink... put the plants right in there with some dirt, give it some water, give some light, better go get some more bottles...

As the image fades to black and the narration ends, the sound of the broom scratching against the stones is heard in isolation. The broom sounds fade and are replaced with sounds of a CB radio: the words are unintelligible, but the pitch, tone and level of sound remain consistent. Here, Gruben renders voice as sound, alone. Layered over these indistinguishable utterances, is the voice of the female protagonist as she begins to count in the same slow, methodic and monotone voice:

one, two, three, four, seven, thirteen, thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-four, forty-four, fifty-one...

As the counting continues the black screen is filled with written text moving from the bottom up:

she walks into the woods, looking for
containers to hold the uncontrollably
growing plants. She takes with her a
little bag of seed, leaving a trail
to help her find the way back home.
But she is never to return, for the birds
Will come upon her trail of seeds and eat them

Space, according to Merleau-Ponty, can be explored in two ways; first, it can be viewed as a setting where one lives amongst things (1962). This is the co-habitation between subject and object positions, sharing in the experiences of the lived world. Second, space can be regarded as something that is sustained, where things only exist through a subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In The Central Character, Gruben identifies the female body as immanent in the space she occupies. That is, she is both defined by that space and defines her own space. The female body, transformed from a thing, an object that is looked at and acted upon (Young, 1990), now gains access and agency to the world outside by becoming one with nature. The Central Character blends written text with speech and sound, linking the experiences of the female body and how these experiences exist within certain spaces, to the potential for diverse and changeable subjectivities. Once more grounding ourselves in the physical body and the articulation of this body, it is through the merging of these sounds and words that women are able to move out of confined and inhibiting spaces.

In Speakbody (1980) by Kay Armatage, the experience of the female body is the focal point of the film. The visual experience of the film tells the story of one woman,

any woman. The film is composed of ten scenes. Speakbody begins as the camera slowly moves down from the side of a woman's face, to her neck and shoulder and across to her breast; the woman's hand appears from the bottom of the screen, fingers open, covering her breast but displaying the nipple. The film cuts to a woman sitting at her kitchen table, flipping through a day calendar. The shot is filmed on a downward angle, closely behind the woman. The spectator watches from behind as the faceless woman continues to flip the pages, back and forth, looking for dates, counting days. She closes the book and the film cuts to a close-up of a hand dialing a phone number. As the camera holds its position, the woman briefly speaks, inaudibly, to someone on the other line. She makes a second call and the camera cuts to black. Pooled with the visual experiences of Armatage's film is a collection of various women's voices overlapping and fading in and out of one another. From the beginning a voice is heard stating "it's 1979"; other voices begin to speak:

I found out...I couldn't believe it...I was in denial...I didn't know what to do...the test came back...all the doctors and hospitals...how do you decide...you feel depressed...alone...you have no money...your body starts to change...you talk to your friends...you have no one to talk to...

Speakbody is an docu-experimental film that attempts to work through some of the social, political and emotional issues that women face as they confront the decision to have an abortion. The film does this by utilizing multiple first person narrations of various women's memories and stories, their fears and concerns and above all their dignity and humiliation. Multiple voices explore female subjectivity and identification by enabling many different women to speak about their own experiences; suggesting that between women's lips there are "several voices, several ways of speaking that resound endlessly... never separable from one another" (Irigaray, 1984: pg. 209). Speakbody is a

film of many voices, many bodies and multiple experiences that speaks to all women's hopes and fears concerning abortion and the ability to care for their children.

Traditionally, a documentary film will utilize dis-embodied voice-over to endow the film and the person speaking with a certain authority. However, *Armatage* challenges the male voice of authority that is dominant in most traditional documentaries by enabling women's voices to be heard simultaneously, making them authorities of their own lives, their own experiences as embodied in their voices.

A personal and intimate identification with a feminine discourse emanates from the utilization of these various audio techniques and manipulations. It is this subversive and excessive use of traditional filmic and verbal tools that give women the opportunity to speak to one another, to find their own position within the debate and to come into a subjectivity that includes many possible identifications and expressions of the female body and those experiences that have become connected with womanhood. Speakbody opens a dialogue into female identity that includes motherhood, caregiver, breadwinner, homemaker and lover. However, it has been within these identifications, as wife, mother and other, that women have lost their identity, their subjectivity and their desire. Identification with these prescribed duties and expectations consumes women, placing them in rigid and constrained roles.

Armatage addresses the female spectator and the position of all spectators as a necessary identification with female subjectivity (Bernstein, 1989). This subjectivity is based on a connection with the female body and the physical and verbal experiences and expressions of those bodies. However, in order for women to find a way to speak as both subject and object of their own experiences and to articulate their own desires, there must

be a change in how women inhabit and embody these identities. In Speakbody this change in perception occurs through the use of multiple voices, where women's experiences of abortion are expressed as both embodied and collective. As a result, Speakbody also explores the experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, daycare, low-paid work, attitudes regarding the public versus the private sphere, and the role and responsibility that men must assume as part of these decision making processes. In this manner, Speakbody allows for a conversation between women: between the many bodies in the film, between the spectator and the filmmaker, the spectator and the dialogue and the dialogue and the filmmaker.

Earlier I stated that the integration of image with speech has created the impression that film more closely resembles reality. However, the important question to ask is: whose reality is this? For women, speaking their experiences is a way to find the words that accompany their own gestures, movements, stories and memories (Irigaray, 1985). When women begin to speak within a community of one other, they begin to enter language with and through their bodies, they begin to move within language (Abram, 1996); rather than be alienated from language, as Irigaray would argue.

Where (1995) by Tracey German explores the visual and verbal search for memory, identity and time. Visually, the film is composed of independent shots that appear to have no connection with one another. For example, a pan across a lake cuts to scenes of mountains and the countryside, as they are filmed from the inside of a car. The next shot is of a horse race and then there is a fast montage scene of trees, flowers, fruits, shrubs and leaves. What connects these images is the sporadic and faint voice of a woman trying to speak. As the film progresses the voice grows stronger and becomes

clearer, more articulate. Initially the voice is heard stuttering, “Who... to... I... am... where” and later in the film the voice continues, “who... I... am”. Where is an audiovisual exploration of memory and identity and the dialogue is the connective tissue that pulls the images together, creating a story, a history of this woman’s life. The presence of an unseen voice indicates that off-screen space is an extension of on-screen space. As such, the voice-off is anchored to a body and functions to embody the film’s images.

Towards the end of the film there is a fast montage scene of fragmented images of flowers, fields, houses, a dog barking and an older man talking: these images appear in split seconds on the film’s screen and the voice emerges one last time, uttering: “Who am I?”. The film ends with a pan across the lake. Mirroring the images of trees and shrubs, a reflection appears in the water. Where is a journey that re-creates or re-captures one woman’s memory and the time she seems to have lost. “Who am I?” is spoken in an attempt to retrieve her identity, to speak in her own tongue and to articulate her sense of belonging. Her voice is an extension of her body which allows her experiences to become fully embodied within the film’s screen space. Yet, the difficulty with which the voice strains to speak is reflective of the woman’s inability to speak and be heard within a male-defined language.

Speaking Sexual Identities

Ten Cents A Dance (1985) by Miki Onodera explores the experiences of meeting, encounter and desire. This film is composed of three scenes, each illustrating a particular experience of sexual encounter and exploration. Each scene consists of two similar shots

printed side by side. Each scene represents a different perspective on sexual relationships and each is characterized by a stereotype of what it means to be, first, a lesbian, second, a gay man and third, a heterosexual man and woman. Each of these scenes also illustrates that phenomenologically, speech is lived and shared by humans in social interaction. As a result, the speech uttered in Ten Cents A Dance offers an alternative to dichotomies that define and limit one another by a process of exclusion.

The first segment of Ten Cents A Dance films at eye level the profiles of two women, apparently facing each other, seated in a Japanese restaurant. Initially there is no dialogue, but there is an acute awareness of the diegetic noises that occur around them. There is soft, low dinner music in the background, the voices of other people in conversation, the clanking of dishes as they are brought to and removed from the other tables. However, what the spectator is witness to are the awkward silences that occur between the two women and the gestures that accompany these silences. For example, the lighting of their cigarettes and the pouring of the saké occur as the women avert their eyes, shyly avoiding one another. There is a feeling that something will happen or that something has already happened of which the viewer is unaware. The time frame is unclear because the spectator does not know where in the story the scene takes place. Onodera begins this scene as if it could be the beginning of the two women's encounter or the end of their meeting in the restaurant. Tension is created in the film as a result of the silence, the lack of dialogue and the uncertainty of the time-line.

The fact that the two women are not actually in the same space is significant because it illustrates the uniqueness of each of their experiences and insists on more than one perspective of this encounter. Onodera engages the viewer in two slightly different

visual experiences. However, it is the presence of dialogue in the film that gives perceptive to each shot:

“Can I ask you a personal question?”

“Sure”

“Have you ever made love to another woman?”

“Once, it was a long time ago, and it got very complicated because she wanted to have a relationship and I... didn’t. Why?”

“Well, um ...because I find you very attractive”

“Well, I find you attractive too...”

“Well I would really like to spend some time with you, but I’m not sure how that would affect our friendship...”

“This is very strange” both women laugh nervously

“I always thought you were essentially straight”

“Essentially!” both women laugh again

“Um, basically, ah, ah, straight”

“Well, ah, I am, um. Mostly, I’ve slept with men, except for that one time”

It is through this dialogue that the viewer becomes aware that the scene can, in some ways, dispel certain myths about lesbian relationships and, at the same time, strengthen other myths about these relationships. As a result, the lines between myth, fiction, stereotype and reality are blurred. Onodera paints a picture of two women realizing their attraction for one another and, through the use of split screens, includes a dual perspective of this encounter. The dialogue, pooled with the visual imagery, illustrates the awkwardness that accompanies this engagement of sexual encounter and play. The importance of their friendship indicates the women’s sensitivities to their feelings and the directness with which these feelings should be dealt with, making their relationship methodic and political. From one perspective this disables the stereotype of lesbians as sex driven. At the same time it enables another myth, that lesbian sex is too political to be passionate or ‘real’. Lastly, the dialogue provides a comic relief, a humorous look

inside one experience, one encounter with two women who reveal their desire and attraction for one another.

The second scene of Ten Cents A Dance is stylistically the same as the first one, a split-screen image that appears to represent a continuous space. The images are filmed from overhead and consist of two bathroom stalls beside one another, separated by both a black vertical line (drawn into the film's emulsion) and a wall dividing the stalls. A man walks into one of the bathroom stalls, sits down and waits. A second man enters the bathroom and sits in the adjacent stall. Each of the men sits on his respective toilet, waiting. After some time has passed trying to get each others' attention, the men attempt to engage in oral sex through a hole in the wall that divides the stalls. After being interrupted by a third man entering the bathroom, and having become frustrated with these failed and uncomfortable attempts, one of the men enters the other's stall (i.e. the other image) and continues to perform fellatio. Bent over and contorted in the small space of the stall, the two men offer each other a mutual gentleness that reflects the intimacy of their sex act.

Again Onodera creates a tension through the forced silence and the potential disruption of that silence as someone else enters the bathroom. Although the viewer does not see the third man entering the bathroom, it is his aural presence that initiates feelings of anxiety, anticipation and fear. As a result, what becomes pronounced in this scene is both the absence of dialogue and the presence of diegetic sound. The meeting between the two men is mostly silent, with the exception of background noises: the two men moving about in their stalls, the third man entering the bathroom and relieving himself, and the flush of the toilet. The lack of dialogue emphasizes the wordlessness that

characterizes a stereotypical casual encounter between gay men. Therefore, the actual utterance of one of the protagonists seems to disrupt the viewer's experience of the bathroom. At the end of the scene there is only one exchange of words: "Can I give you my number?". This dialogue appears forced and superficial, creating a distance between the intimacy of the two men and the viewer's experience of their sexual encounter. However, the film embodies the two men, as they come together, overcoming the separation of the two images. Throughout this scene Onodera plays with the myths, fictions and realities of casual homosexual sex, engaging the viewer in its embodied visual dialogue.

Unlike the first two scenes in this film, where the characters share the same experiential space, the last scene does not attempt to represent a continuous space. As the scene begins a woman is lying on her bed making a collect phone call. The background on her side of the screen is blue. As the phone rings a young man enters from the left of the screen, without a shirt. The background on his side of the screen is red. The phone-sex scene begins as the characters introduce themselves to one another: "Bob" wants "Sarah" to describe herself to him. "Sarah" tells "Bob" that she is 5'5", 125 pounds with long blond hair down to her waist and green eyes. In actuality "Sarah" appears before the spectator with short brown hair and brown eyes. "Bob" then asks "Sarah" to describe what she is wearing; she describes her outfit as a "pink frilly sexy negligee with crotchless panties". In actuality, "Sarah" is lying on her bed wearing comfortable pants and a sweater.

As the scene progresses “Sarah” describe in detail the size and shape of her breasts and nipples, the state of her pussy and what she would do to “Bob” if they were together:

“I would kiss your mouth, suck on your tongue, work my way down to your crotch and lick all over. I’d go down on that nice cock and lick all around.”
 “It’s nice: big and hard. I’d like to fuck your wet pussy, Sarah.”
 “That sounds nice, mm, hmm.”

The conversation that takes place between “Bob” and “Sarah” is evidently contrived, as the viewer is aware of the discontinuity between how “Sarah” looks and what she says about herself. As a result, the scene emphasizes the fabricated nature of the sexual encounter that transpires between “Sarah” and “Bob”. At the same time, the level of intimacy between “Sarah” and “Bob” is different from the last two scenes. For example, the viewer knows the names of these two characters. As such, the connection between the viewer and the protagonists may appear more convincing; however, it may also create a greater level of detachment from the scene. That is, the more the viewer knows of the scene’s protagonists, the less s/he may want to engage with the sexual experience. Furthermore, “Sarah” uses the word ‘nice’ throughout the scene and qualifies her statements and responses to “Bob” by saying “mm, hmm”; her actions are disguised by her words. In this instance, Onodera suggests that words are often misleading compared to the more immediate aural and gestural communications offered by the film. For example, while “Sarah” sounds and looks disinterested and bored, “Bob” gratifies himself by masturbating. Onodera critically explores the myths and realities of the heterosexual sex act. She focuses on women’s and men’s experiences and their subsequent roles within that encounter.

To say that Ten Cents A Dance is a reflection of reality or a window onto the world of sexuality would be to deflect the work of experimental film. Rather, the film functions to question sexual identities and the subjectivities that are placed upon individuals. The dialogue, or lack thereof, in Ten Cents A Dance supports a multiplicity of meanings that refuse to define one another. As such, sexual identity is placed into question and subjectivity becomes defined by flux, movement and a parody of differences. On the other hand, Ten Cents A Dance may simply be a commentary on the distances animating sexual relationships. Onodera creates a filmic atmosphere that engages in, is critical of and pokes fun at the stereotypes, myths and possibly, the realities, that make this film a commentary on the difficulties of embodying an experience that is already coded and clichéd. Ten Cents A Dance seems to offer a counterpoint by saying that not everything can be easily embodied.

For French Feminism, the focus on the body is not how it is lived; rather the focus is how women speak, symbolize and represent their bodies. Accordingly, this theoretical perspective purports that language has been structured in such a way as to exclude women from participating in conversation and discourse. As such, this language which excludes women is not neutral. In fact, it is a male-centric language that omits women's voices, experiences, stories, memories and histories. The creation of a feminine language, therefore, is an important condition of women coming into subjectivity. The main criticism, however, of French Feminism is that the creation of a feminine language works to essentialize 'woman', where she becomes a truth and icon of feminist thought (Fuss, pg. 20). 'Woman' would exist as stagnant and never-changing, representing only select experiences, voices, histories and subjectivities of all women.

However, there is more to French Feminism than an essentialism based on the sameness of women's bodies. Rather, because women's bodies have always been mediated by language, writing the body empowers women and enables them to speak in a language in which they can be heard. By speaking and writing the body women may reverse the hierarchy of male/female sexuality, where female sexuality becomes the general mode of sexuality (Irigaray, 1985). Yet, it is not my intention to reverse a system that would make male sexuality silent. Indeed, it is in my best interest to focus on desire, sexuality and subjectivity as they are lived by the bodies in the films I have chosen. An essentializing of feminine bodies would only work to silence all other bodies that do not fit neatly into one category, making them deviant and unreal. How, then, do women use language? Women must choose words and signs that acknowledge and speak to our own experiences. I do not mean to specify a vocabulary of words that pinpoint a feminine language; rather I would suggest a vocabulary that celebrates women's stories, histories and experiences. It is a language that recovers and re-discovers historical events, public and private memories and that challenges the possibilities of subjectivity and identity (Bernstein, 1990). It is a language that does not take stock in the words used, but has a certain way of using those words.

Michelle Mohabeer's film Two/Doh (1996) is one example in which experimental feminist film incorporates the written word within a visual dialogue. The film is composed of two significant story lines: one is the events of the 1992 Toronto Gay/Lesbian Pride Parade, the second is the intimate moments between two lesbian lovers. Interspersed between these two events, hand-written text crosses the screen. Two/Doh begins with a fade-in to the image of two women facing one another. The

music is slow and methodic, hypnotizing and sensual. Initially the viewer may think that s/he is looking at a mirror image of one woman: the two women face one another at forty-five degree angles and one of the woman's profiles is enclosed in a frame.

However, as the spectator continues to gaze upon the scene, s/he realizes that the two women are different, from the length and style of their hair, to their clothes and their faces. Moments later the woman in the frame blinks her eyes and smiles. The screen fades to black and these words appear on the screen:

my tongue
exploring
the earth...
parting her
lips
to the dawn

Again the image fades to black and cuts to the images of the Toronto Gay/Lesbian Pride Parade. The music changes to the loud, fast beating of drums, as people walk and dance in the street, carrying banners and posters, declaring their sexuality to the community.

Two/Doh is a multi-faceted display of how music and words are utilized to build connections between experiences and people. First, the music in the film works to connect the sensible to the sentient, the body-subject to the body-object. It establishes the cultural connections between two lovers. Music enables language to move within the film's space, undermining and displacing the visual space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). For example, the first musical piece in Two/Doh is a melodic Indian instrumental that sets an intimate and sensual mood; the second is a rhythmic Egyptian celebration piece that runs throughout the scenes of the Gay Pride Parade. The change in tone and rhythm of each musical piece allows the spectator to separate and link the experiences between the

private and the public spaces of pleasure and sexuality. At the same time, the connections between the musical pieces brings the experiences of sexual identity and subjectivity into a community and celebration of differences; where the film speaks to a community of women and enables women to speak to one another.

In the final scenes of Two/Doh the two lovers hold a pomegranate between their hands, forcing and squeezing the pomegranate open. The pomegranate breaks in two separate halves and each woman caresses the inside of the other's half. The hands feel along the texture of the pulp, the juice and the seeds, as they are released and fall to the floor. Later, the camera cuts to the lovers feeding one another the pomegranate seeds. One woman cups the fruit in the palm of her hand and the other tilts her head back. Waiting for the sweetness of the pomegranate, the woman takes the fruit in her mouth, leaves the peel in her lover's hand and looks up into her lover's eyes. The camera fades to black and on the screen is written:

I am like a jackfruit in the tree
To taste, you must plug me quick, while fresh

The second manner in which connections between the spectator, the filmmaker and the protagonists are made is through the written text. Two/Doh illustrates that a writing of the body celebrates these two women as sexual subjects and not objects of male desire. Words that appear on the screen are revealed to the spectator, the film and the filmmaker, where the protagonists' most intimate expressions are exposed. However, it is in this exposure that both the female protagonists and the spectator become subject and object of their own pleasures and desires. Yet, pleasure and desire entails more than a reciprocal relationship between subject and object positions. Rather, they are a

doubling and a crossing over of the body subject and the body object (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Desire and pleasure, therefore, form an intertwining where subject/object move towards one another and come back to themselves. The two lovers in Two/Doh embody whole and encompassing, yet separate and distinct, their experiences of pleasure and desire. As well, each works to bring an awareness of her own embodied subjectivity to the film's screen.

Pleasure is experienced between and within these female bodies and is expressed through written text. It is this process of writing the body that serves as both speech and praxis (Dallery, 1985). For women to write and speak in the feminine we must position ourselves in the structures of our own language, where words become the embodiment of subjectivity. Thus, it is in writing the body that agency and change are possible, where speaking in the feminine becomes subversive. Two/Doh is the blending of seductive visual imagery and sensual written text that exposes the viewer's gaze and produces an embodied sexual tension between the film, filmmaker and spectator.

When women begin to question phallogentric language and the structures of interpreting their experiences, they create a shift in a paradigm that works to pre-determine gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. The tools that women use to question, deconstruct and re-construct their experiences and memories are "the very tools that have been used to trap women's voices and make them silent" (Tuer, 1987: pg. 19). The re-writing of women's culture, therefore, takes place through an alternative framing of women's enforced silence and their marginalization from the dominant discourse (Tuer, 1987); where speaking and silencing are intertwined with both privilege and difference and where agency entails speaking from that silence. When women begin to use multiple

discourses and voices they begin to function in a way that is different from the conventional means of communication. Thus, women are placed back into a language where they are able to speak to one another.

In Chapter Two, I examined how the visual experience of Kathy Daymond's Nice Girls Don't Do It (1990) challenged traditional looking relations and how it displaced and re-negotiated female sexual pleasure and performance. Daymond's film is equally important to a discussion on language. This film combines overlapping vocal narration with written text, creating a disjunction between the words spoken by Shannon Bell and the words as they are seen by the spectator. As well, the voice-over phrases overlap so that the spectator cannot distinguish all of Bell's words. Accordingly, the words merge and become sound. These three uses of discourse within Nice Girls Don't Do It illustrates the embodied sexuality of women's subjectivity, their desire for autonomy within fantasy and their expression for power through ejaculation. The use of speech moving, blending and fading into one another is significant because it demonstrates the fluidity through which Daymond is able to speak and write her body. Women's language occurs in waves that overlap and spill into one another; "when a woman speaks she steps aside from herself, like a sentence left unfinished" (Irigaray - 1985, pg. 29). In such a way, women speak as if they are in a process of weaving themselves. Therefore, "to speak in the feminine is to play with words and cast them off, to remain in a continuous flow and fluidity of words" (Assiter, 1996: pg. 68):

Forty percent of women ejaculate... the difference between equality and being in control of your ejaculation...ejaculating when you want to... women do it as something that happens, not as an activity of power...an appropriated aspect of it...

This notion of excess constitutes women's language, challenges a unitary sense of self and refuses a singular identity by multiplying names and bodies. Within Nice Girls Don't Do It a multi-vocal discourse speaks to women's sexual power and disrupts the traditional notion of a stable subject/object relationship that places women as mere objects of male desire.

The question, therefore, is not: can women write their own bodies, their own experiences and speak in their own language? Rather, the question is: how can writing be utilized to situate itself between representation and materiality, between bodies and the discourses which circumscribes them? In answer, Bell states:

To accept female ejaculation one has to accept sameness and the equality of male and female bodies...female ejaculation is an erroneous but widespread concept...

For women language exists in excess, in fluids, where words and their meanings cannot be frozen. As an analogy, women's fluids are powerful symbols of a female language, in which neither language nor the body can be fixed. Female ejaculation, therefore, would appear to be a most powerful expression of feminine language:

Female ejaculation can only serve one purpose: pleasure. Because women have historically been absent from the realm of pleasure... the knowledge of ejaculation has not been accepted... and socially appropriated by professionals and the public.

Kathy Daymond's Nice Girls Don't Do It is a contradictory film filled with moments of agreement and disagreement for the spectator. Although the film is useful in demonstrating specific tools of a female language and appears successful at achieving sexual autonomy and subjectivity, it does so by using those very tools, that very language that has silenced and oppressed women's voices, sexual identities and sense of selves.

Daymond bombards the viewer with scientific data, arguing for example, that female ejaculation has little to no urine content, and she provides the viewer with a step-by-step guide to female ejaculation fulfillment, insisting that you can do it to. Daymond wants to give the spectator the power to achieve and participate in this phallic demonstration of sexuality, but by doing so she strips away that very part of women's sexuality that is different from men's. That a "woman is always and already two" and that "she exists as other onto herself", demonstrates the autonomy with which women can experience and express their sexual autonomy (Irigaray – 1985, pg. 24). However, sexual equality for Daymond is based on the importance of ejaculation; it is not about celebrating the differences of the female body.

Nice Girls Don't Do It is a phallic representation of feminine sexuality and feminine language. Both the film's visual and its dialogue speak of creating an atmosphere of equality between the sexes; however, this equality is based on androcentric ideals that only work within a male system of language. Although Daymond illustrates the power of female ejaculation and female desire, she does not convince the spectator that the only purpose of female ejaculation is pleasure. Rather, the purpose of female ejaculation is to gain access to a male dominant system, to speak the same language as men and to demonstrate an aggressive and oppressive sexuality that now includes women as subjects of that oppression. In fact, Bell explains that her current sexual partner gets "pissed off [because] his penis gets pushed out, so that [she] can spray". This androcentric experience of female desire fashions women's bodies, making them into a product, a symbol of male sexual prowess. Women's desire becomes male desire and female pleasure is substituted for the experience of power.

Conclusion

There are three questions I proposed to the reader at the beginning of this chapter. First, what is the function of sound within embodiment? Second, do the spoken and the written word enable feminist experimental films to explore a female subjectivity? Last, what emerges when a theory of embodiment is pooled with a theory of the female voice? A fourth question emerges now from this reading: can we acquire the knowledge of an embodied system of sound and words outside the scope of this paper?

Many of the films I have chosen discuss various aspects of women's roles, their duties, and the potential for re-locating these ideals in more embodied subjectivities. Although these films explore differing views and values concerning women's active participation in making sounds, words and voices, there is an underlying understanding that these films do 'speak' to women's embodied experiences. The inclusion of women's stories, their memories and histories, their voices and writings encourage a greater dialogue among women. Accordingly, verbal expression is important because we can communicate with the lived world. In addition, an embodied verbal existence entails a richer understanding of being-in-this-world. The crux of this chapter has been to locate voice and the written word within female desire, identity and subjectivity. At the same time, these films seek to bridge a new level of communication between women and men. I do not want to suggest that there is a necessary reliance on or commitment to these exchanges and experiences. Rather, I am suggesting that similar to the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, that the coming-into-knowledge and coming-into-the-world of identities and subjectivities can be shared and celebrated between the sexes.

Chapter 4: Tangible Qualities and Tactile Perceptions

Perception and expression exist within an ever changing and a living exchange between the senses. Within the cinema the art of expression and the experiences of perception allow for a communication that reaches far beyond visual and auditory exchanges. The cinema, therefore, is premised on the experiences of all the senses. Tactility, in many ways, is regarded as a culmination of the interplay between vision and sound, as well it may function to induce experiences of taste and smell. However, it should not be thought that touch is considered above all other sensory experiences. As a visual and auditory exploration of experimental cinema has revealed, touch can also point to the limits of any single sensory-based knowledge. As such, tactility must play between the senses, attempting to create a total sensory environment.

The ability to feel an object and be felt by that object enables us to expand our sense of being-in-the-world. Touch requires both direct and indirect contact with an object. To be touched physically is to use the body as a tool, a mechanism for which the surface of the body is explored. Tactility, therefore, is a sense located on the surface of the skin, where textures, temperatures and contours are experienced on and through that body. The physicality of touch enables and encourages a direct link with the lived world. It is the active interplay of body movements and bodily sensations. However, touch can also be experienced from within the body. To be touched spiritually or emotionally is to use the body as a dwelling place, to house one's inner thoughts and feelings and to explore deep within the surface of the skin. Emotions, like the experiences of the physical body, are perceptible perceptions and expressions of events that belong to the

lived world. As such, emotions are ways of discovering and re-discovering one's being-in-the-world.

For the purposes of this paper, it becomes necessary to distinguish between a psychic emotional response and a physically embodied emotional response. Emotions imply more than expressive and subjective internal states, they also have a physiological component. That is, "bodily changes follow directly from perception" (Cornelius, 1996: pg. 60). An embodiment of emotions can be defined as the way in which feelings or emotions impact the physical body in an expressive behaviour (crying), and instrumental action (striking) or a physiological change (shivers). The exploration of embodied emotional perceptions and expressions will reveal the physical manifestation of these experiences. For example, crying is the bodily response to sorrow, anger, happiness, confusion (to name but a few). Laughing is the physical display of happiness, delirium, anxiety, nervousness (also, only a few emotions are addressed here). Emotional embodiment, however, should not be limited to physical forms such as tears or the movement of the mouth and larynx. Rather, I hope to illustrate that emotional responses are tactile; that a viewer can experience an emotional connection to a film beyond cognitive or intellectual experiences.

In order to engage in a dialogue on the embodied qualities of touch, the notion of haptic perception must be defined. Haptic perception is a combination of "tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive functions [that occur] both on the surface of and inside our bodies" (Marks, 1998: pg. 332). It is the form and material function of body parts, body movements and bodily sensations. In cinema, haptic perception is the bodily response of the viewer, haptic image the material property of the film. Furthermore, a haptic

perception encourages a tangible relationship between participants, and a haptic expression enables an embodied emotional journey. A haptic cinema, therefore, would encourage an embodied and emotional relationship between the viewer and the film (Marks, 1998).

In the following chapter I shall explore how the qualities and characters of touch function to create different film experiences of being-in-the-world. This exercise in haptic perception will begin by first, examining the manner in which touch comes to express itself within the film experience. In addition to this, Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'the Flesh' will be utilized to examine the tactile expressions that take place between the sensory world, the filmmaker, the spectator and the film. Then, I will illustrate the eroticism of haptic cinema by exploring the diverse and multiple layers of textures and forms that touch upon the film's screen. Last, I will examine touch as an emotional signifier, illustrating how emotions reveal a tactile character, and how displays of emotions are embodied throughout the films.

The Expression of Touch In Film

As sensing subjects we always have a visual, auditory or tactile field before us. However, there are moments when one or more of these experiential fields are unavailable. For example, the sense of sight has limitations within its visual field; an object can be out of range, out of focus or, simply, out of sight. This does not mean that one would stop seeing. On the contrary, the visual field becomes extended to include all other sensory experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). For example, music playing in a room next to us is not seen but it still remains part of our sensory field, for we hear and feel the

music. That is, our auditory system enables us to experience the combinations of notes and melodies, and our kinesthetic system allows us to feel the movements of vibrations in the floor and through the speakers. Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes another similar experience of sitting in a dark concert hall listening to an orchestra. Although the visible space is limited by the walls that make up the actual structure of the concert hall, the music itself is not limited by the physical presence of the walls. In fact, Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes the change in experience as “stealing through a dark space where other presences are possible”(pg. 222). In this manner, to touch upon a thing occurs in and through space and requires the interplay and unity of all other senses. These musical experiences become blended combinations of the senses. Although each sense experience exists in and of itself, they are all unified, through their interplay, within one space, one experience.

The experience of the cinema also takes place within the restriction or limitation of walls, in a dark and often cramped space. The darkness of the theatre allows the film to infiltrate one's senses, touching the viewer. However, darkness is not an object with which the viewer reciprocates an experience; it is neither subject nor object of perception. Rather, the darkness engulfs the viewer and enables the film experience to be felt both inside and outside the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). From a phenomenological perspective, the darkness of the theatre is a shared space where the spectator, the film and the filmmaker become enjoined. It is an embodied, tactile space of perception and expression. Within the following experimental films this relationship is fostered between the bodies of the filmmaker, the film and the spectator.

In Chapter Two, I examined Susan Oxtoby's All Flesh Is Grass (1988) and illustrated the dichotomous nature of subject/object positions and their interconnectedness with the lived world. In this final chapter I want to explore the lack of distinction between this film's form and its content. All Flesh Is Grass blends concrete moments of sense experiences with film technique, producing a film experience that touches upon and within the skin's surface. This is a film that pools visual and auditory occurrences together and creates a film experience that touches the spectator, leaving him/her emotionally and physically charged. The film is composed of a combination of film techniques: there are fast edit montage scenes, long and slow pans across the landscape, freeze-framed shots that attempt to capture a moment, as well as what appears to be the casual stroll of the filmmaker as she walks about, camera chest level, filming at whim. The musical pieces that accompany these scenes mimic the visual experiences. In this manner, the music in All Flesh Is Grass describes a balance within the film's foundation, between the film's physical presence and its ability to be expressive (Wees, 1984). The soundtrack becomes a site of activity and expression that enables the viewer to consider the text as plural. As a result, the viewer cannot assume that the meaning in music is stable. Indeed, as music is listened to and heard it creates its own public memory and its own meanings.

All Flesh Is Grass begins as a woman walks with her camera, slowly through an old abandoned building. The contrast between light and dark punctuates this scene and in the background we hear the combinations of notes play out from a cello and a violin. The woman approaches a window and as the camera closes in, the spectator looks through the glass and sees the woman's reflection staring back. Oxtoby begins the film by imprinting

the viewer with a shared sense of feelings of introspection. This particular scene works to engage the viewer in her/his own search for these feelings. As a result, the filmmaker makes contact with the spectator, pulling her/him into the scene, capturing her/his attention and her/his presence within the film. The window reflection, together with the classical piece, speaks to the viewer: is Oxtoby introducing herself, or is she letting the viewer know that she is aware of the spectator's presence in the film?

As the film proceeds the woman holding the camera moves from the inside to the outside, where the pace of the film changes. The film cuts quickly to the side-profile of an old man standing on the side of the street; it then cuts to the woman re-entering the building, freezing the shot momentarily. In the next scene we see a street performer playing with a string puppet: the camera moves closely over the puppet's strings and again the shot is momentarily suspended and frozen in time. The woman re-enters the building and the camera pans across the darkness of the inside, moving back to the outside steps, revealing the brightness of the day. Again, the film cuts to the outside focussing on children in a playground. As the children run around playing with a ball, the camera follows and freezes the moment, locking them into the experience.

The music that accompanies these combinations of shots is a loud organ piece that is echoed and distorted. The combination of lighting contrasts, fast montage and slow, methodic walk-about with the camera, pooled with the distorted sounds of the organ music, become tactile expressions of the film. That is, as the spectator sits in the dark theatre, surrounded by the screen and the speakers, as they pound out the sound of the film, the darkness overtakes the viewer, making contact with the skin's surface. The beauty of All Flesh Is Grass imprints itself physically onto the body as it encourages an

embodied emotional response to the notes and melodies of the hymn. That is, the music can inspire feelings of uplifted-ness, contentment and happiness, leaving the physical trace of goosebumps and shivers. Oxtoby's film techniques, pooled with the music, creates a spiritual atmosphere, where the contrasting and complementary images of young and old, inside and outside inspire and humble the spectator. The film is a movement of images and sounds that facilitates the spectator's physical and emotional journey throughout the film. Accordingly, the spectator's encounter with the film's audiovisual images adds to the embodied consciousness of the film.

midst (1997) by Barbara Sternberg is distinguished in Chapter Two, by its vibrant and intoxicating visual images, as well as its absence of sound and music, yet it is also characterized by its tangible qualities. The ninety minutes of silence that accompany the film's images crawl through the viewer's veins. The rapid movement and manipulation of the camera, as well as its editing, are so constant, pooled with the silence, the spectator needs an escape from the film experience. The escape s/he seeks must be corporeal, for there is no auditory or visual escape to be sought. As such, the spectator becomes aware of her/his own bodily responses to the film. S/he can feel her/his body respond to the silence of the film; the hair on the spectator's arms begins to stand on end. In one moment the spectator shifts in her/his seat, in the next s/he is so mesmerized by the brilliance of the colours that invade the eyes that s/he is unable to move. The colours are so expressive, the viewer experiences them haptically; they settle in and on the skin. This critique of the film's surface engages an embodied perception in which the viewer responds to the film as if it were a body and the screen as if it were another person's skin (Marks, 1998). One of the features of haptic cinema encourages the spectator's look to

be brought back to the surface of the film's images, questioning the illusory quality of the film's reality.

One particular scene that engages a haptic perception occurs as images of an open field and sky above are filmed from the inside of a moving car. The scene is edited three times. With each edit the camera moves with the direction of the car, travelling leftbound on the screen. The scene is approximately thirty seconds long. It begins as a day setting and then gradually shifts to what appears to be sporadic changes in the skyline. Sternberg, however, plays with and manipulates the film's light and colour exposure, altering the viewer's perception of time and space. For example, the scene moves from its 'original' shot of daylight to a moment when the sky appears drenched in brilliant deep blue and the fields appear yellow and red. In the next shot, the exposure changes and the screen is filled with various shades of green. Here both field and sky merge into one another creating a vast and open space that encompasses the screen. The manipulations in light and colour are set in fast motion and everything within the scene moves quickly. The speed with which the exposures are altered changes the perception and expression of each experience of the field and sky. As a result, the colours emerge from brilliant deep blue to lighter shades of blue and green combined with streaks of yellow and red, imitating the coming of dawn. Eventually the shot is almost whited out but then gradually moves back to daylight. This scene depicts the constant play of time running through on the screen: daylight moves into night and in seconds breaks back into day. The speed and rhythm with which the scene changes pushes the viewer's gaze back to the surface of the landscape images and forces the viewer to engage in a reciprocal

play with the film (Marks, 1998). In this manner, the spectator is moved by the physicality of the experience. S/he touches the image and is touched by that image.

Haptic cinema invites a deliberate, volitional vision between the filmmaker, the film and the spectator that encourages an embodied and reciprocal relationship. In midst the senses not only reciprocate, they double and cross over into one another, exchanging information. This exchange occurs as the brilliance of blues, greens, yellows and reds moves between the surfaces of the film's screen and the spectator's body. The change in colours communicates a perceptible tactile experience that gives itself over to the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). This filmic intertwining enables a mutual recognition between subject and object positions that touches lightly upon and folds between surface textures. That is, in midst the tactile impressions of swirling colour combinations and the visual emergence of day into night work to create a tangible relationship of inter-corporeality: the film and viewer being both sentient and sensible to one another.

Merleau-Ponty's Notion Of The Flesh

The medium of exchange through which this inter-corporeality is made possible is referred to as "the Flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: pg. 139). It is something that "comes to touch lightly upon" and to join subject and object (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: pg. 139). Unlike the skin, which affords a tactile relationship and physically exists between subject/object positions, this notion of the Flesh is all encompassing. Flesh envelops both interior and exterior. "Flesh does not belong to matter or mind; it is an element of being", like water or air, it is essential for being-in-the-world (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: pg. 139). It is something that makes contact with and incorporates both spectator and film

into its fleshy being. This inter-subjectivity that results from a reciprocal relationship between subject and object positions enables a cooperative and complementary exchange between the spectator and the film world. In midst, the tactile impressions that evoke such a relationship are experienced as a connective tissue that is felt between the filmmaker, the film and the spectator. As experimental cinema works to question our visual responses to a film, haptic images encourage a more complete embodied experience that links the spectator's film experience to the tangible world. Therefore, the Flesh binds both the spectator and the filmmaker in the experiences of being-in-the-world and of being-in-the-film.

An Eroticism Of Haptic Cinema

An exploration of cinema that is tactile must examine perception and expression as "instrument-mediated techniques", and focus on these techniques as embodied experiences (Sobchack, 1992: pg. 173). In the context of experimental film, where the distinction between form and content becomes blurred, haptic cinema has worked to further critique the limitations of a purely visual experience. To modify what Stan Brakhage once said about his films: a haptic cinema arises from "visions and needs that can not be verbalized" (Sitney, 1974: pg. 186). Although Brakhage was speaking strictly of his own avant-garde work, I will extend this expression to include those films that explore and critique both the spectator's haptic perceptions and the film's haptic images. A haptic cinema, therefore, opens up a tactile dialogue that works to bridge the distance between the filmmaker and the spectator, and addresses the mutual and erotic character of perception and expression.

The eroticism of haptic cinema comes from the tactile, not the visual, and from embodiment, not identification (Marks, 1998). Haptic cinema can be viewed as a feminine form of spectatorship, or it can be understood as a feminist strategy of perception and expression. As a feminine form of viewing, haptic cinema must be justified as an essential component of women's ability to interact with a film. From a French feminist perspective, therefore, women would take more pleasure from touching than from seeing; where, in a phallogentric community, "looking would entail women's entrance into passivity" (Irigaray, 1985: pg. 26). As a feminist strategy of perception and expression, however, those techniques particular to experimental cinema, techniques such as montage, overexposure, optical printing and changes in focus, lighting and camera, would place into question looking and seeing as functions of a male-centered genre.

Yet, haptic cinema is not merely a theoretical concept to be used for the analysis of film. Rather, that tactility requires a body in action suggests that a haptic system is useful for developing "a sense of agency among its bodies, both individually and communally" (Cataldi, 1993: pg. 57). As a subject and object of expression and perception, the body acquires both access to and agency within the lived world. Thus, haptic cinema involves the erotic play and examination between viewer and screen, filmmaker and audience. An erotic sense of agency, on the other hand, would involve the active participation and exploration of identity and subjectivity within spectator, film, filmmaker and protagonists. In fact, an erotic dialogue is the result of these inter-subjective relationships and how these relationships unfold over the film's screen and the spectator's skin surface (Marks, 1998).

Julie Wilson's (1996) yet blooming purple..., discussed in previous chapters, is one example of such a sensuous dialogue: it is both the film's form and its content that display the erotic agency of haptic cinema. For Wilson the film's content is an exploration of "body image, nudity and ...sex, as in your gender and anatomy...and sex as pleasure, desire and action." However, it is the form of Wilson's film that enables the content to engage in a sensual exploration of visual haptics. yet blooming purple... captivates the spectator in a visually tangible dialogue; there are two cameras, two sets of images and two experiences of touch that are each reciprocated and embodied by the erotic quality of the film's content.

It is in the third scene of yet blooming purple... that the use of the film's form is clearly evident. The two film experiences are distinguishable to the spectator by the use of black and white film in one camera and the technique of over exposure in the other camera, with the content of each filming device varying slightly. Wilson creates an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement, as the viewer waits for Cheryl and Jay to begin having sex. However, Wilson's film technique works to further increase feelings of anticipation by editing the film in such a way that the scenes move continuously back and forth from grainy black and white film, to white on green over-exposed video images. Beyond a film technique distinction, the two scenes also differ in their content. The over-exposed images consist of Wilson directing the two female participants: where to sit, when to start and what to do. The black and white footage consists mainly of foreplay and sexual footage: Cheryl and Jay sit on the mats, talking, caressing, kissing and eventually having sex. This sensual dialogue plays itself out between the two sets of images and provides the spectator with an impression of how the scene is manipulated

and altered to fit the filmmakers' expectations of the film's content. But how does yet blooming purple... engage the viewer, the filmmakers and the film in a tactile expression of embodiment? Again, the answer lies in the film's form, as well as its content.

The last scene of yet blooming purple... consists of all black and white footage. The camera fades in and out of darkness to the naked bodies of Cheryl and Jay intertwined. The camera slowly moves across the landscape of legs, arms, breasts and buttocks, following their hands as they caress one another. The film cuts to a side profile of the women's nipples nearly touching each other. There is a distinct sensation of anticipation and pleasure as the camera holds its position, and the women's bodies begin to move, nipples erect and grazing one another. The film cuts once more to Cheryl and Jay having sex. Again the camera holds its position as they rock back and forth, slowly, sensuously.

The sexual nature of the film's content engages a carnal perception that leaves the spectator turned on by the images. However, it is the erotic nature of the film's form that encourages a haptic reading of yet blooming purple.... That is, the tactile images invite a sense of touch into the film's description. For example, the extreme close-up shots of fragmented body parts, the camera moving slowly, closely over the skin surface and the graininess of the black and white images expose the spectator to her/his own ability to touch and be touched. These techniques create a tangible relationship between the film images and the spectator. The film invites the spectator to take part in the film's eroticism. Both its sexual content and its sensual technique incite the spectator's own desires to be touched. As a result, the spectator is no longer a voyeur, but becomes

implicated in the sex act, taking part in the erotic play between Wilson, her girlfriend, Cheryl and Jay.

The tactile impressions of film and video techniques such as over-exposure, grainy footage, extreme close ups and slow pans across scenes, draws out the eroticism that exists in the film's incompleteness and its ambiguity. In yet blooming purple... the whole of the sex act can never be known. The film, itself, can never depict the sex act in its entirety. The content of the spectator's sight and the film's sight is never complete. Eroticism occurs through these experiences of incompleteness, where the incompleteness of women's sexuality allows her to touch herself all over, never being sexually defined by one sex organ (Irigaray, 1985). The pleasure elicited in Cheryl and Jay's embodied and erotic playfulness and sex, as well as the viewer's participation in the sex act, becomes an infinite expanse that touches and unfolds in the desire of the moment.

Part of this erotic exchange between Cheryl and Jay is denied for the viewer at the boundaries of her/his vision (Sobchack, 1992). However, it is in this denial, this incompleteness, that the spectator engages in an eroticism of the film. That is, as spectators, we must access our other senses in order to participate in the experience of this sensual dialogue. It is in yet blooming purple...'s ambiguity that the spectator comes to touch upon and be touched by the film's screen. The tactile impressions of the film - its incompleteness, grainy texture and close-up shots - become an embodiment of the spectator's desires.

It is this erotic play between the filmmaker, the film, its protagonists and the spectator that encourages a sense of agency from yet blooming purple.... It is an agency based on the coming together of subject/object and mind/body. It is the creation of a

perceptive and expressive environment that allows for all sensory and sensual experiences to be explored. Phenomenologically, the visible world exists for us beyond the confines of our sight. yet blooming purple... is an exchange between the visible and the invisible worlds that inform the spectator's senses. Just as the spectator touches lightly upon the film's surface, the film becomes a fold in the erotic expression and perception of the spectator's embodied experiences. It is similar to a Mobius Strip in which two sides overlap and merge into one another, never fully determining where either side starts or finishes (Irigaray, 1985). The relationship between the spectator and the film becomes a joining between the inside and outside worlds.

The collaboration between the visible and the invisible and what forms is known as a Chiasm. Although Merleau-Ponty (1968) refers to "the Chiasm" as the unity between the sensing body and the sensing world, I would like to use it here to also refer to the interplay between the spectator, the filmmaker and the film (pg. 127). Where Flesh is an element of being that belongs to and facilitates the unity of the body and the world, the Chiasm is the process through which this inter-corporeality takes place. For example, in yet blooming purple... the film and the spectator create an experience that "chiasmatically reverses and responds to the experiences of perception and expression" (Sobchack, 1992: pg. 295). However, it is the film's form, its use of two cameras, two looks, that heighten an awareness towards all the bodies involved as part of one Flesh. It is this sense of manipulation and of playfulness that attracts the viewer back to the film, leaving her/him feeling aroused, desired and touched by the film's body.

The seductiveness of haptic perception also occurs in films whose content is non-sexual. Sternberg's (1997) midst uses many of the same film techniques as Wilson does;

for example, combining extreme close ups and slow camera movements over skin surfaces with a grainy film texture, creating an experience of haptic cinema that acknowledges the folds between the filmmaker, the film's body and the spectator. One particular image that repeats itself periodically throughout the film is of an older man talking. However, because midst is a silent film, the viewer is unable to hear the conversation that takes place. In the first scene, the man sits and talks as the camera gradually moves closer into the room, glancing over the walls and taking in fragmented views of the floor, the chair and settling on him. The film is edited frequently and cuts to various close up shots of the man's face. The camera moves across the face, from the ear, to the nose and lips, panning down over his hands and going over the fine details of his fingers. Sternberg focuses in on the lines and wrinkles that are the make up of this man's features. The detail of the texture and pattern of his hands and face encourage a long caressing gaze, seducing the viewer to continue looking at and touching the surface textures and finite details (Marks, 1998).

The second time this image appears, a blue haze covers the screen. The camera once again focuses in on the man's hands as they move over one another, caressing their own wrinkles and lines, but eventually pulling and stretching them down in an attempt to create a smooth, flat skin surface. The film cuts to the same image of the hands, but the image is again altered by a change in the colour of the film stock. This time the hands are covered in a yellow hue and the movements of the hands are slowed. The camera moves over the details of the lines and wrinkles, fading to black and re-appearing. The last shot of the older man takes in more details of his arms; however, the camera moves so closely to the image that it becomes indistinguishable and blurry. In midst, haptic perception

combines two contrasting experiences of pleasure: first, the details of the images reflect an ability to touch the touch, experiencing the screen as the skin surface of wrinkles and lines and all the folds between them. The second pleasurable experience consists in the camera's attempt to get so close to the image that no details are possible to see. The extreme close-up leaves traces of film imagery imprinted on the spectator's body. In this manner, a tactile experience comes from the inability to 'see clearly'. As such, the viewer relies on other sense perceptions to experience the tangible relationship between her/his own skin and the film's screen.

Similarly, in Sarah Abbot's (1997) Froglight it is the black and white graininess of the image that seduces the spectator, who becomes lost to an image that remains incomplete and ambiguous. The film begins with a close-up shot of a sunflower, the wind blowing through its petals. The film cuts to a garden scene, moving slowly, closer over the landscape, and a hand appears gently brushing through the blades of grass. Repeat images of the garden appear on the screen, fluctuating from black and white to negative exposure. The film cuts to black and the distorted croak of a frog echoes repeatedly. There are two kinds of sensual, tactile perceptions that take place within Abbott's film: first, the spectator identifies with the hand as it touches the grass. The erotic nature of the film's grainy quality is experienced by the spectator as the hand moves through the grass. Again, the tactile images invite a sense of touch into the film's description. Second, Froglight describes a touching of the touch. As the camera closes in on the images in the garden and then backs away, the touching hand metaphorizes the tactility and sensuality of the grain. Tactile impressions of the film are constantly made and un-made by the changes in focus, lighting and grainy exposure. As such, tactile

expressions and perceptions felt by and on the spectator are in constant flux with the changes in the film's form. The spectator becomes a fold in the textures that make up the garden scenes. It is the ambiguity with which the flower and garden scenes are filmed that position the spectator as both subject and object to the film (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Rather than attempting to master knowing the whole of the garden experience, the spectator begins to delight in its anonymity, its incompleteness and the eroticism that arises from these film techniques.

The Textures of Embodiment

One acquires knowledge of the world through the experiences of touching textures, shapes, temperatures, thicknesses and weights (Cataldi, 1993). Within experimental cinema our knowledge of this world takes shape through these and other tactile impressions. The following set of films will begin to address the presence of various textures, thicknesses, shapes and weights that belong to an embodied film experience. Visions (1992) by Gariné Torossian was examined in Chapter Two of this body of work. There, Visions was examined for its visual characteristics and how the film manipulated the viewer's visual perceptions. A tension was discussed between the film's form (the fast movement of filmstrips running vertically over the screen) and the spectator's embodied experiences of those movements. A haptic examination of Visions explores not only the visual components of the film but also the tactile impressions that the film achieves and how these impressions are embodied on the film's screen. In order for this exploration to begin, we will need to examine which tactile impressions create this embodied experience.

In Visions the film's screen is divided in two by vertical lines that are drawn onto the film. On either side of the vertical lines are filmstrips that move over the screen, in opposite directions. These strips move quickly over the screen, merging into one another and at times over-lapping. The images are difficult to decipher, but appear to be fragmented views of arms, legs and breasts, as well as shots of women dancing. The first image that is distinguishable is of a man standing with his eyes scratched out of the film's emulsion. The scribbled texture that appears over the man's face has been added by the filmmaker, as if Torossian does not want him to see something. Further along in the film Torossian scratches over the body of a woman. These tactile images invite a sense of touch onto the film's description. As a result, the tangible qualities of these drawings engage more than a visual dialogue with the film. In fact, these drawings encourage both an erotic and a violent encounter between the screen, its bodies and the body of the spectator.

A violence is done to the film, and those watching the film, as the scratches in the emulsion touch back. It is the caress of textured lines over bodies that create a tension between the film and the spectator. More than a technique of haptic cinema, however, the drawings imply a violence toward bodies. The eyes of the man and the body of the woman fall victim to the film and the filmmaker. The return of this touch implies a vulnerability to the haptic image and of haptic perception. As such, the spectator becomes compliant to and aroused by the scratches in the emulsion. The lines scratched into the emulsion are more than the textured layering of the film's content. They represent an addition to or complement of the presence of bodies, faces, looks and

actions. In Visions a dialogue is created in which the tactile expressions of the film become the embodied experiences of the spectator.

Visions is a collection of images that appears in layers. It is a restructuring of a palimpsest that functions to add new meanings and experiences to the film's body (Harcourt, 1984). Layer over layer, Visions is a work of tactile impressions. The incorporation of various colours of film stock also functions to add emotion and depth to the film's tangible character. That is, tactility emerges as an emotional signifier through colours. Initially, one might think that colour is a purely visual experience, however, sight is not the only sense that is important to the experience of colour. Although each sense creates its own perceived world, each sense also contributes to an integrated world of colour experience (Jay, 1993). As such, the meanings in colour are discovered and re-discovered through the body. For example, dark colours of deep purple, blue and green run over the film, giving it a foreboding tone. However, red is the dominant colour throughout the film. It suggests an emotionally charged film experience, bringing more tension to the screen. Colours are not merely signifiers for emotional responses that are experienced intellectually. Rather, emotions are felt upon the body; they surrender to and apprehend the body, allowing for an embodied emotional experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1968).

The speed with which the images move into one another, combined with the drawings scratched into the emulsion and random change in colour, creates an atmosphere of frustration and anticipation. The corporeal character of Visions is multi-leveled and appeals to a whole body experience. The tactile impressions of the film induce a haptic perception that is felt both on the body surface, as a bodily reaction to the

film's form, and inside the body surface, as an emotional reaction to the film's tension. The spectator touches and is touched by the film's surface and responds to these tactile expressions through an embodied perception. However, it is not only the spectator that comes to touch upon Visions. That is, through its layers the film touches itself within the fragmented images, random colour leaders and textured drawings. Visions experiences an auto-eroticism of the tangible. Layer upon layer Torossian creates a haptic cinema that engages a haptic perception.

Trapline (1976) by Ellie Epp also explores various film layers such as shapes, depths, reflections and colours. The film is a collection of images taken at an indoor pool. The first set of images is shot from a high angle as the camera looks through the water. Inside the pool the spectator sees the reflection of the glass ceiling. The steel beams from the ceiling form horizontal lines in the water's reflection. At three-second intervals a bird appears in this reflection, flying upward from the bottom of the screen. The reflections of these images in the pool move with the rhythm of the water. What appears in the water's reflection is the constant sway and flow of the beams, back and forth, matching the water's tempo. The background sounds consist of the playful screams and bellows of children that are distorted by the echoes of the walls surrounding the pool, as water laps and splashes about. The film cuts to black.

In the next set of scenes the camera again angles downward. However, the images on the water are closer and more detail of the water is visible. The camera holds its position on the water. The images that appear on the screen are the distorted outlines of the grids that are painted on the bottom of the pool floor. Light from the glass ceiling shines down onto the water, shimmering. The light reflects onto the surface of the water

creating various shades of blue-green and changing the pattern of the pool's floor. The coloured texture of the pool's floor varies according to light surfaces, shadows and reflections. It is Epp's manipulation of these variables that allows surface colours to be embodied by the film's screen. The blue-green visual fields promote a peaceful and caressing gaze over the water surface, allowing the spectator moments of introspection. An intense concentration of the movement and rhythm of these shapes and shades turns inward; where time, depth, weight and breadth seem endless. Trapline elicits a visual dialogue that forces the spectator to touch with her/his eyes. Within a haptic environment the viewer feels the presence of the film's images within and on her/his body.

As the film cuts quickly to black and returns to the water image, a splash of water is heard in the background. A space of water fills the screen: what the viewer sees is the constant merging of these textured shapes and shades, in and out, folding over onto one another, layer upon layer. The splash heard moments earlier begins to move the water faster and the reflections of shapes and shades moves with the rhythm of the pool. As shades of blue-green move through the film's surface, new layers and images are created on the screen. Although the viewer does not see bodies in the water, Epp is able to create an embodied film experience from the movement and flow of the water reflections. A haptic perception develops as the layers of texture, water and reflection capture the viewer's attention. The depth of the pool and the weight of the water are transcribed onto the screen. Trapline becomes a discovery of tactile layers that touch lightly upon the perceptive and expressive experiences of the viewer. As images dissolve and resolve into one another, the viewer loses her/himself in the experience of the film. Moreover, Trapline elicits a Flesh that covers, thick and encompassing, embodying and making

contact with the viewer. The proximity between the film's figure and its ground become obscured, and the relationships between camera, filmmaker and viewer form a Chiasm. As such, there is no distinction between the separate-ness of these positions.

Haptic cinema is not a matter of relationships between individuals, of "who I am or who you are, rather it is the ways in which we fold and unfold the lines between us" (Probyn, 1991: pg. 120). As such, identification becomes less of a concern than the processes of embodiment. However, it should be understood that as embodiment brings about an individual's sense of being-in-the-world, it also contributes to her/his knowledge of her/himself as a social and cultural being. An engagement with this world is offered to us as sensing and sentient beings and our contribution to this world comes from our lived experiences. However, in phenomenological terms, a consciousness of the world is not restricted to one's knowledge. Knowledge is only one form of consciousness (Sartre, 1956). What other forms of consciousness allow one access to the world?

Emotion As Embodied Experience

Emotion is one other form of consciousness that has been explored throughout this chapter. It is a perceptible experience, a way of discovering the world and of breaking into the world (Sartre, 1956). Similar to the embodied experiences of textures, shapes, colours and words, the world responds to and reciprocates a person's emotions and feelings (Abram, 1996). In this manner, emotions are not static. Rather, they become another link between the body and the world. The role of emotions, therefore, is essential to an understanding of embodied existence (Cataldi, 1993); and as emotion is

necessarily embodied, it functions within social and cultural processes as a basis for agency.

Is every emotion experienced on the body? According to Cornelius (1996) in The Science of Emotion: Research and Tradition in the Psychology of Emotion, emotions rely on bodily changes that arise directly from perception. So, although not all experience is necessarily emotionally embodied, all emotions are physically embodied. That is, we may experience a multitude of various perceptions (i.e. looking both ways before we cross a street, listening to the radio or playing touch football), however, there is no emotional response to these events. On the other hand, if there is a specific emotion that elicits any one of these experiences (i.e. you are afraid that you will be hit by a car, the song you are listening to has some special meaning or you are competing for the championship) then the experience will be felt on the body.

These differences in meanings are important because they establish the specificity of an experience. Thus, the meaning of a particular emotional gesture, conduct or expression also emerges in specific social, cultural and political contexts. Emotions exist in spaces where meanings are always re-bordering. As such, emotions rest on diversity. For example, crying can be the physical manifestation of sorrow, happiness, anger, fear and these emotions are embodied by the physicalness of the gesture. Although emotional expressions may not be universal, they are recognizable to a general embodied understanding of emotional depth (Cataldi, 1993).

Barbara Sternberg's (1982) Transitions explores the expressive spaces that exist between the film and the spectator; it is the continuous flow of images, superimposed on the screen. Similar to Epp's Trapline, Transitions is composed of tactile impressions,

images that fold and envelop each other, engaging the viewer in a haptic visuality. The tangible quality of Sternberg's film relies on the motion of its images, repeatedly layering both visual and auditory exchanges. Not unlike Torossian's Visions, Transitions also uses optical printing to offer the viewer an experience of two films that overlap. It is through these superimposed shots that the spectator comes to know and understand the protagonist's memories and dreams. This film explores an embodied existence of being-in-the-world for the viewer, the protagonist, the filmmaker and the film. However, Transitions is also an emotional exploration. That is, as a haptic perception encourages a tangible relationship between participants, haptic expression enables an embodied emotional journey. Transitions illustrates the emotional possibilities found in expressive space (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

The film begins as a woman dressed in white lies on her bed, tossing and turning. She gets up, sits on the edge of her bed and then moves back to a lying position. The film consists of repeated shots of this movement, back and forth from the bed. Superimposed over these bedroom images are various scenes of the outside world. The visual experience of each image is short and intense, they are constantly changing, running over one another at different rhythms and speeds. In the background the viewer can hear the whispers of two distinct voices, speaking over one another, melding together. Mimicking the images, the voices also change rhythm, speed and volume. Similar to the repeated images on the screen, the voices are heard repeating phrase upon phrase. Transitions combines layers of embodied perception and expression with motion. That is, the voices and images are constantly and rapidly moving and changing throughout the duration of the film.

The embodied experience of Transitions becomes a collection of tactile impressions. Layers of visual and auditory expressions fill the film's screen. The embodied nature of Sternberg's film relies on this collection of tactile impressions. For example, as the woman lies in bed, the images of roads, rushing water and waves travelling on top of her, the voices are heard, uttering:

winds of change, in change, by change, changing your clothes... I can still see you; smell, warm where your body was... I think I'll go to bed... time is measured in its passing, I think I'll go to bed... sheets warm where your body.. what did you do today?... I think I'll go to bed...

The images travelling on top of the woman's body, pooled with the dialogue creates a filmic atmosphere of embodied distress. As the density and texture of images and words come together, the emotional surge of fear, loneliness, loss and pain are physically and tactilely embodied on the screen's surface. As well, these emotions become the tactile expressions and perceptions of the female protagonist and they are bound to the spectator in an embodied consciousness. Therefore, when the protagonist experiences her being-in-the-world as an embodied emotional exchange, the spectator feels the presence of these emotions; s/he is touched by the physical exhaustion of this emotional release. The spectator's and protagonist's bodies are instruments of a tactile desire that seeks comfort and pleasure through each others' bodies. In this manner, emotion is central to an understanding of agency and action as embodied praxis.

The superimposed images of the outside world vanish from the screen and are replaced with a secondary image of the woman in white lying on her bed. The lighting in the bedroom is very bright and at times the film screen fades to white. The colours change, moving from extreme white to lighter shades of blue-gray to black. Transitions captures a moment where two of the same images are superimposed onto each other. The

woman continues to toss and turn, moving into images of herself. She is doubled: touching and folding over onto her own body. She moves about between two worlds, asleep and awake, restless for peace. Sternberg's protagonist is the connection between these two worlds. She embodies that flesh which is both interior and exterior, subject and object to the film. The film invites the spectator to merge with the shifting positions of the female subject. Transitions is more than a tactile dialogue that moves over the spectator's skin, rather it seeks a connective tissue, an all encompassing flesh that covers over and blends into the lived world.

In the next set of images the woman sits on the edge of her bed, smoking. The film cuts to multiple shots of her movements from a sitting to a lying position, each one doubled over onto the next. Again images of the outside world appear over the woman's body: streetcars pass by and the image of a man walking with a child appears moving through her. The woman moves once again into a fetal position and a swarm of bees overlaps onto her body. Sitting on the edge of her bed, smoking, drinking and waiting, the images of houses begin to travel through her. The film cuts to a sequence of superimposed images: a family dinner, a stream flowing rapidly by and the fast movement of rapids rushing over her agitated body. The contrast between the woman's passivity, as she sits and lies, and the overlying images of activities evokes a sense of loss, of trance and of memory. It is a space where the spectator is emotionally 'in-touch' and open to the lived-world. Both the spectator and the protagonist become agents of emotional and tactile impressions.

Similar to Transitions, Glimpses Of My Mother In The Garden by Gail Mentlik (1992) reflects and plays between the senses. Like many of the filmmakers' work I have

analyzed throughout this chapter, Mentlik utilizes sight, sound and touch while exploring the space of emotional significance. Visually, the film is a collection of images brought together to tell a story. It is the story of celebration, time, memory and identity. The opening shot of the film reveals an empty lawn chair placed outside. The film cuts to the image of an older woman, presumably Mentlik's mother, sitting in the chair. As she sits, the camera begins to move quickly around her in circles, each rotation becoming faster and faster. The woman holds a hand-held mirror close to her face and applies a bright red lipstick to her lips. Almost instantaneously the montage scenes begin, as flashes of a home movie from a wedding invade and cover the screen. Shots of flowers, people gathering for pictures, dancing and laughing become blurred as the fragmented images move faster and faster over the screen.

Flashes of Mentlik's mother applying bright red lipstick are repeated throughout these montage scenes. The film moves over fragmented images of her hands, lips and the lipstick tube. Each shot varies in angle, lighting, duration and closeness. This sequence of images creates a tactile impression throughout the entire film. However, what touches the viewer directly is the redness of the woman's lipstick, and through application, her lips. The colour red connects the spectator's embodied space to the embodied space of Mentlik's film. That is, as the swirl of montage images dance around both the spectator and Mentlik's mother, the redness of the lipstick grounds and situates them physically within the film. As a result, the meanings that belong to red are discovered as the colour invades the spectator's eye. In Glimpses Of My Mother, red signifies the excitement and anticipation that surround the day's events. Its brightness and vibrancy suggest an emotionally charged film experience that arouses and animates the spectator. The

combination of rapidly changing camera angles, fragmented images and vibrant colour renders the spectator at the mercy of the film.

Pooled with the montage of images is the upbeat tune of The Chiffons' 1963 song "One Fine Day". The pace and movement of the film's sequences match the rhythm of the song. The visual images begin and end with the song's melody. The duration of the song, and as a result the film, is approximately two and a half minutes long. Aurally, the film is an expression of love, of 'one fine day' that shapes both the filmmaker's and the mother's life. The song mirrors the memories that the film captures, it reflects the woman's experiences, her emotions and feelings, who she is - a mother. The upbeat tune of the song engages the viewer in a sing along, where both the visual and the audio encourage the viewer to re-visit past memories with the filmmaker. In this manner, as the viewer participates in the verbal and musical imagery of the film, s/he is pulled in bodily.

Glimpses Of My Mother is an emotionally tactile experience of perception and expression. The use of colour inscribes the film with a tangible quality that makes contact not only visually and aurally, but spiritually and emotionally. The film explores the relational process between self and other, subject and object, filmmaker and mother. Emotionally, Glimpses Of My Mother is the creation of Mentlik's embodied consciousness, where feelings of nostalgia, happiness, peace and joy are shared, re-discovered and remembered. As the film's form and content move in unison, the spectator's senses merge together, becoming blended in an embodied journey of memory, celebration and identity.

Conclusion

Tangible qualities of a film are captured in moments of sensory immersion and loss. To have experienced a haptic perception or to encourage a haptic expression entails allowing yourself to feel beyond the physical limitations of the screen. Haptic cinema and all other possible film expressions of tactility require the letting go of visual and auditory categorizations. Textures, colours, depths or layers can elicit emotional, physical and psychological desires and needs from both the spectator and the filmmaker. The films discussed in this chapter each allow for this extended sense of perception and expression. But what they create and facilitate is the rhythm and flow through which embodied subjectivities and identities can emerge.

Conclusion

Throughout this body of work, I have explored many facets of embodiment: from emotional stimulation, visual signification and tactile representation to auditory and linguistic communication. My goal has been to re-introduce the spectator and the reader to her/his sense of embodied self. The focus of this work has been to understand and synthesize how representations of the body, particularly the female body, unfold in the context of relationships between the person, the community and other bodies.

In phenomenological terms, these relationships require experience and knowledge of the lived world; those that belong to and extend beyond the senses. In order to facilitate this understanding, a phenomenology of film also involves the reciprocal exchanges between the filmmaker, the spectator, the film's protagonists and the film, itself. This is a community where sound, dialogue, vision and touch engage the spectator with the lived world and allow for learning about that world which is connected to and inseparable from their sensual experiences. Embodied experience is both inter and intra personal communication, where the spectator's identity becomes connected within the movement and flux of bodies and relationships.

The films that I have identified and examined throughout this writing, are but a glimpse into a much larger arena of filmmakers whose creativity and energy continues to grow. The question remains: where are feminist experimental filmmakers headed? In the introduction I outlined four generations of experimental cinema in English Canada (Mac Donald, 1993). Throughout each decade changes to this community of experimental filmmakers reflected a combination of regional and creative differences. However, as both

Canada, and the world as a whole, seem to be converging in a global village, are differences between these filmmakers dependent exclusively on geographical concerns?

Within the context of a community of filmmakers, the search for and responsibility to a Canadian identity seems less important as globalization brings the world together in a much smaller space. National borders and boundaries merge together, and national identities become less rigid, as an identification with a global community emerges. As a result, generations of experimental filmmakers blend together and an international community of feminist and experimental media makers may begin to find one another. As globalization alters this exchange of and participation in communications, it also functions to create new opportunities to engage with and borrow new technologies.

Another concern for feminist experimental cinema, therefore, is grounded in the current political climate and changes to the technological medium and the effect of each on the body. The growing movement of a backlash against feminism and the subsequent increase in right-wing attitudes, has been and will continue to be an important catalyst for some experimental filmmakers, both women and men. In addition, as funding for the arts decreases and the medium of film becomes only accessible for those with lots of money and time, the differences between who makes film and who makes video will continue to surge. Although I have been writing exclusively about film throughout this paper, it may indeed be in video that new experiments in feminist representation of embodiment take shape. As well, access to technological improvements in sound and picture quality, special effects and editing, though currently limited, may change the nature of embodiment in experimental media.

Within the specific context of embodiment, technological improvements and advances may prove to both contradict and confirm the presence of the body in film experiences. For example, the impact of virtual realities and virtual bodies has created an anti-body; where the power of the mind prevails over the existence of the body. In this instance, the body is viewed as a vessel, a tool through which the mind explores other realities. At the same time, interactive computer generated games, music videos and movies encourage the coming together of the intellectual and physical manifestations of the body. Embodiment and the physical conditions of the body, therefore, are no longer mere inconveniences that impede the mind. In fact, media makers also explore the ways that digital media evokes embodied states.

Global communities and global bodies: is there a place for an embodied exploration of the senses? Has experimental cinema run its course? Is it significant to only a brief historical period in time, or is it part of a larger movement that seeks to re-claim the body? I hope so. My wish is that experimental cinema, as a whole, continue exploring and critiquing representations of marked bodies, and that feminist experimental filmmakers continue creating new and innovative films that are visually, aurally and tangibly stimulating, engaging and evocative.

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