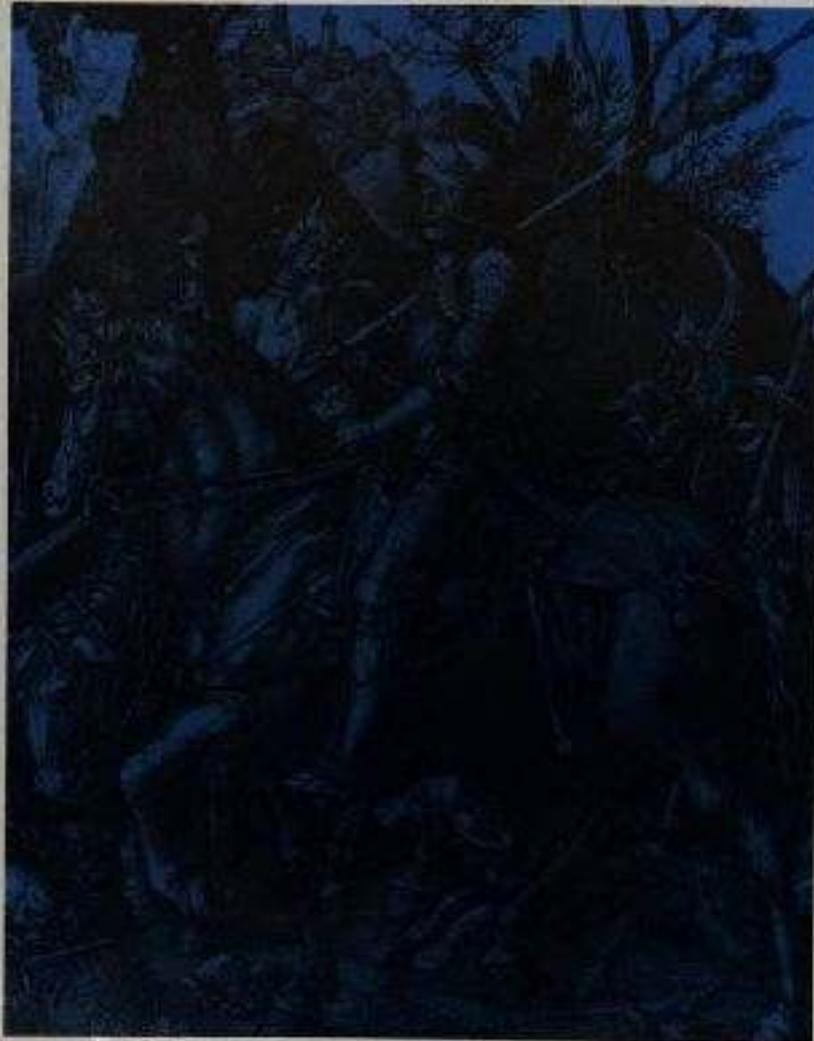


FILM and
PHENOMENOLOGY



TOWARD A REALIST THEORY
OF CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION



Albrecht Dürer's *Knight, Death, and the Devil*.

FILM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

FILM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Toward a Realist Theory of Cinematic
Representation

ALLAN CASEBIER

Associate Professor, School of Cinema/Television
University of Southern California



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK PORT CHESTER MELBOURNE SYDNEY

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521108546

© Cambridge University Press 1991

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1991

This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Casebeer, Allan.

Film and phenomenology : toward a realist theory of cinematic representation / Allan Casebeer.

p. cm. — (Cambridge studies in film)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-41132-7 (hardcover)

1. Motion pictures — Philosophy. 2. Husserl, Edmund, 1859–1938. 3. Phenomenology.

I. Title. II. Series

PN1994.C364 1991

791.43'01 — dc20 91-13678

ISBN 978-0-521-41132-5 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-40854-6 paperback



Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | page vii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| I Phenomenological theory | 9 |
| Husserl's theory of artistic representation | 9 |
| The concept of the noema | 26 |
| The ontology of cinematic representation | 34 |
| The epistemology of cinematic representation | 47 |
| Transaction, transparency, and transcendence | 62 |
| Husserl's epistemology as told by Jean-Louis Baudry | 73 |
| Notes | 78 |
| II A phenomenology of fictional representation | 83 |
| An oriental mode of cinematic representation | 83 |
| Cinematic sound | 91 |
| The fabula | 99 |
| The diagesis | 105 |
| The Imaginary | 112 |
| Feminist theories of cinematic representation | 119 |
| Notes | 132 |
| III A phenomenology of documentary representation | 137 |
| Rescuing the documentary | 137 |
| Derridean deconstruction and the documentary | 147 |
| Notes | 153 |
| Conclusion | 155 |
| <i>Selected bibliography</i> | 159 |
| <i>Filmography</i> | 161 |
| <i>Index</i> | 163 |

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to members of the Society for the Study of Husserl's Philosophy who shared their considerable knowledge of phenomenology – J. N. Mohanty, Peter McCormick, Barry Smith, David Woodruff Smith, Ron McIntyre, Izchak Miller, Arthur Szylewicz, Martin Schwab, and especially my colleague at the University of Southern California, Dallas Willard. In preparing the manuscript, thanks are due to Owen Costello and Jeanette Mitrano. Bill Rothman provided excellent guidance in drawing the manuscript together and comments on its content.

I also thank the editors and publishers of the following journals for their permission to reprint, in revised form, portions of the following articles of mine:

"Burch's Theory of Japanese Cinema," *Millennium Film Journal*, nos. 14–15, 35–41.

"A Deconstructive Documentary," *Journal of Film and Video*, 40 (Winter 1988), 34–9.

"Idealist and Realist Theories of the Documentary," *Post-Script*, 6(1)(Fall 1986), 66–75.

"Oshima in Contemporary Theoretical Perspective," *Wide Angle*, 9(2)(1987), 4–17.

"The Phenomenology of Japanese Cinema: Husserlian Intervention in the Theory of Cinematic Representation," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 12(3) (1990), 9–19. Courtesy Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH.

"Representation of Reality and Reality of Representation in Contemporary Film Theory," *Persistence of Vision*, no. 5 (Spring 1987), 36–43.

"Transparency, Transaction, and Transcendence: Husserl's Middle Road to Cinematic Representation," *Husserl Studies*, 5 (1988), 127–41. © Kluwer Academic Publishers. Reprinted by permission of Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Introduction

At the bedrock of any theory of film must be a viable account of cinematic representation. The view that a theorist holds about those experiences in which an audience apprehends what a motion picture depicts and/or portrays and/or symbolizes affects everything that is said subsequently in the film theory.¹ An adequate account of cinematic representation is yet to be developed. It will be the effort of this work to correct this situation. The effects of having had inadequate theories of cinematic representation on which to ground film theory may be felt in the deepest recesses of writing about film.

In conceptualizing cinematic representation, theorists must be alive to underlying epistemological and ontological grounds for their theories. In contemporary film theory this crucial dimension of philosophical activity had been absent. *Ontology* is the inquiry into the nature of being and existence. *Epistemology* is the inquiry into knowledge of being and existence. In each of these inquiries choices have to be made among possible positions, and justification has to be given for the choices. In contemporary film theory these conditions have not been satisfied. Where the underlying epistemological and ontological issues have been perceived, no really sound justifications for the chosen grounds have been forthcoming.

For example, contemporary film theory has unquestioningly been idealist with respect to epistemological grounds. An idealist holds that how the world is and how we know it are dependent on the activity of the knowing mind. Realism is the opposing position in a long-standing debate.² The realist holds that how the world is exists independently of the knowing mind. For contemporary film theory, with its

¹ In this discussion, Monroe Beardsley's¹ proposal for the use of the family of terms designating various types of representation will be followed. *Depiction* is representation of a type of object (e.g., Murnau's *Nosferatu*, *A Symphony of Horror* [*Nosferatu - Eine Symphonie des Grauens*] depicts a vampire). *Portrayal* is representation of an individual (e.g., Murnau's *Nosferatu* portrays Count Orlock). *Symbolizing* is representation via suggested, not literal, meaning (e.g., in Herzog's *Nosferatu, the Vampire* [*Nosferatu - Phantom der Nacht*] the German soul is symbolized by the vampire figure).

deep commitment to an unquestioned idealist account of cinematic representation, what a motion picture depicts, portrays, or symbolizes depends on the spectator's language, ideological beliefs, aesthetic sensibilities, unconscious processes, and so forth. According to idealism, none of the objects, real or fictional, depicted in, for instance, *Citizen Kane* exist independently of that motion picture or of the acts of spectators in apprehending them. This is so because our ideas about human life, early twentieth-century life, and of William Randolph Hearst govern an apprehension of the objects represented by the film; these objects do not exist independently of cinematic or other representations of our own subjectivity. Moreover, Charles Foster Kane as a fictional character is merely a construction out of the elements in our experience of the film (out of the visuals and sounds we experience at a screening of the film), not an entity existing independently of our acts of apprehending it.

As we shall see, both realist and idealist accounts of cinematic representation may be found in the history of film theory. Unfortunately, efforts to develop a realist model for cinematic representation have been, up to this time, largely unsuccessful. André Bazin is the most prominent exponent of realism.² His account, depending as it does on a notion of transparent relationship between camera and the real, has been justly rejected by film theory for its inability to take into account paradigm cases of cinematic representation. Though more sophisticated versions of realism that are critical of transparency accounts may be formulated, these have not been forthcoming – until this work. Into the void created by the failure of Bazin's realist model for cinematic representation have rushed a number of idealist theories of representation that obtrude upon a proper understanding of film experience because of the very idealism that is at their core.

With respect to ontology, contemporary film theory has adopted a nominalist rather than a realist position. In ontology, a theorist must hold either that only particulars exist or that particulars and universals exist. Contemporary film theory has opted for there being only particulars with spectators' constructive activity providing the cinematic representations. In linking the nominalist ontology of Nelson Goodman to the analysis of cinematic representation, J. Dudley Andrew says: "There is no primary real world which we subsequently subject to various types of representation [Goodman contends]. Rather it makes far more sense to speak of multiple worlds which individuals construct."⁴

There is a received wisdom about the short history of film theory. First there was a so-called classic period comprised of individual efforts to provide a totalizing picture of the nature of the motion picture medium (Munsterberg, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Arnheim, Balázs, Kra-

cauer, Bazin, etc.). Second there was a so-called contemporary movement, starting some time in the 1960s – the events of May 1968 are always mentioned as profoundly effecting the movement – which persists into the 1990s.

This contemporary movement has involved many currents from the beginnings to the present, interweaving patterns, temporary amalgams, common purposes: Barthesian textual analysis, Althussearean Marxism, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Metzian semiotics, poststructuralist synthesis, and so forth. Cinesemiotics gave way to psychoanalytic-semiotics, structuralism gave way to poststructuralism, and so forth. Entering the 1990s one finds a bewildering array of activities coexistent within the field. Feminist film theory holds a preeminent position, but there is vitality in ideological criticism, cultural studies, narrative theory, psychoanalytic criticism, even auteur studies. At first there was a unity felt in rejection of a prior form of criticism with a humanistic orientation. Now, no unity seems to bind the movement. The contemporary movement seems at a crossroads, seeking an identity, a successful approach, ways around theoretical blockages. What is required for film theory to gain its bearings is the presentation of a viable realist account. For the idealist/nominalist framework, not always acknowledged as such (many theorists think they are presenting "materialist" theories), is what is holding back the field.

One can hardly read a page of film theory without feeling the ever-present idealist/nominalist framework. Some examples should suffice:

The really important breakthrough... came in the rejection of the traditional idea of a work as primarily a representation of something else, whether an idea of the real world, and the concentration of attention on the text of the work itself and on signs from which it was constructed. – Peter Wollen²

Instead of seeing the activity of our own perception and the construction of an image's meaning, we see through our perceptual habit and the image's construction to an already meaningful world (without, in this case, "seeing through" the deception that is involved, the actual production or fabrication of meaning). – Bill Nichols³

Narration is a product of both a narrator and a reader; just as the text must create (inscribe) its reader, so a reader must create the text in its telling. – Edward Branigan⁴

Before a proper mode of representation or aesthetic relation to the "real" can be established, we have to have some idea of where the "real" itself is located, and how, if at all, we can have knowledge of it. At issue then is the status of "lived experience," of phenomenal appearances, their relation to underlying structures, the determining role of "signification" in production of the real, and the place of consciousness in this production. – Christine Gledhill⁵

By woman, I mean a fictional construct, a distillate from diverse but congruent discourses dominant in Western cultures... which works as both their vanishing point and their specific condition of existence. — Teresa de Lauretis¹¹

The text is not something "out there," an autonomous or completed source of meaning and value. Instead it is seen as a field, a site, a location, a confluence of technology, ideology, and the codes of representation. — Beverly Houston¹²

A poetics — derived from *poiesis* or "active making" — puts at the center of its concerns the problem of how art works are constructed.... In the process of narration, various aspects of the film become cues for spectatorial activity. Of these cues, the most salient are those proffered by the *synthet*, the substance and sequence of narrative events explicitly presented in the film.... The *synthet* prompts the spectator to build the *fabula*, or total system of story events. — David Bordwell¹³

As will become apparent, enormous conceptual difficulties plague the idealist/nominalist account of representation. Once one realizes the commitment of contemporary film theories to idealism/nominalism, one understands why adequate answers have not been forthcoming to fundamental questions of cinema, such as: What form should a feminist film theory take? What legitimacy if any does the documentary form have? How shall cinematic sound be conceptualized in relationship to images? What relationship exists between narrative and underlying ideological belief? These questions of cinema cannot be dealt with until the underlying idealist/nominalist theory of cinematic representation is expunged and replaced by a viable realist theory of cinematic representation that unearths the actual process involved in grasping what a motion picture represents.

Phenomenology provides the needed realist framework. Edward Husserl's phenomenological method for understanding the nature of perception and his theory of artistic representation, as extended and developed here, will illuminate the experience of film representation in a way not found previously in film theory. The phenomenological method, in Husserl's theory as practice, is a way of looking at the same time at both subject and object in the cognitive act while maintaining the object of the act as existing independently. Etymologically, phenomenology is the logic of phenomena. What we know of the world (including cinematic representation) has to do with our experience of phenomena, that is, the way things appear to us. There is a logic to the way consciousness relates to appearances in its acts, how it contributes to their constitution, how the appearances thus constituted mediate our apprehension of the object of the experience while leaving unaffected the object of the experience.

Whereas Bazin's unfruitful realist theory does not make proper room for *meditation* in the process of apprehending representations, Husserl-

lian phenomenology develops a highly sophisticated analysis of the role of consciousness in grasping an art object such as a film. Whereas Bazinian realism relies on transparency as central to the analysis of cinematic representation, phenomenology rejects transparency.

Whereas idealism makes the acts of consciousness actually determine the nature of, for example, a man's life, the fictional character Charles Foster Kane, or the parodied William Randolph Hearst, the phenomenological method allows us to recognize how these represented objects remain as they are, unaffected by our acts of consciousness, while mediation nevertheless obtains.

As we shall see, Husserlian analysis offers a realist epistemology by means of which we come to realize that the object of our perceptual acts in an experience of a film *constrains* or *limits* the direction of our consciousness in the act of apprehending representation. When we experience *Citizen Kane*, we do not have the kind of absolute freedom that contemporary film theory posits; when it takes spectators' acts in experiencing a film to be constitutive of the very object of perception.

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is properly described as the father of phenomenology. His influence on the course of thought in Continental philosophy in the twentieth century can scarcely be exaggerated. From the work of his most famous student, Martin Heidegger, through the existentialist philosophical movement, his influence is of the first importance. Kurt Gödel and Hermann Weyl ranked Husserl as the greatest philosopher since Leibniz.¹² Bertrand Russell described *Logical Investigations* (1901) as "monumental."¹³ Though the work of other phenomenologists (e.g., Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre) can no doubt illuminate film experience as well, the focus in this book will be on the theory of artistic and cinematic representation as it issues from a Husserlian perspective. Husserl's two early major works, *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas* (1913), will be the focus here.¹⁴

Ever since the publication of Husserl's major early works, there has been much interest among his followers in the contribution that a Husserlian conceptual framework can make to a variety of intellectual endeavors, but it has rarely been applied to the theory of film. Husserl's ideas have remained largely unavailable outside the small circle of Husserlian scholarship. No doubt an important reason has been the forbidding language in which Husserl framed his theories. Taking this problem into account, it will be a major effort herein to explain Husserl's analyses of representation in ways understandable to all readers.

As with many terms in a living language, the term 'phenomenology' is used in more than one way. J. Dudley Andrew, for instance, in

speaking of the sources for hermeneutics in phenomenology, claims that:

Stemming as it does from phenomenological roots, hermeneutics must clearly oppose any objectivist notion of truth or of the text. The point of departure for phenomenologists is not the text but rather the act of reading or interpreting. Indeed, they would surely assert that the text exists only as read and that [E. D.] Hirsch's program to discover the meaning of the pristine text, as it exists unread and eternal, is altogether phantasmic.¹³

Contrast this characterization of phenomenology with that of Husserl, the founder of the movement:

Truth for this or that species, e.g., for the human species is... an absurd mode of speech... What is true is absolutely, intrinsically true: truth is one and the same, whether man or non-men, angels or gods apprehend and judge it. (*LI*, 140)

Colors, Tones, Triangles, etc., always have the essential properties of Colors, Tones, Triangles, etc., whether anyone in the world knows such a fact or not. (*LI*, 165)

Though realism as epistemological doctrine differs from realism as ontological doctrine, there is an important link between the two for the phenomenological analysis developed here. In holding that how representation is does not depend on the activities of the knowing mind, Husserl held also that there exist universals that the spectators apprehend and utilize in recognizing what a work of art represents. Husserl's anticonstructionist stance with respect to our knowledge of representation is bound up with his contention that universals are exemplified in representations. We may know what an art object represents partly because we are able to grasp the instantiation of universals. The linking to be found in Husserlian phenomenology of these epistemological and ontological realisms will be followed here in developing a phenomenological theory of cinematic representation.

We shall start with an initial exposition of Husserl's theory of artistic representation, with illustrations of how it would be utilized to analyze representation in the motion picture. We shall compare and contrast Husserl's ontological position with the insupportable nominalism underlying contemporary film theory. Then we shall show that, even when theorists (e.g., Jean-Louis Baudry, J. Dudley Andrew, Gaylyn Studlar) have attempted to use Husserl's theory, they have inadvertently misrepresented it as an idealist theory of cinematic representation.¹⁴ It has not only been characteristic of film theorist commentary on Husserl that he be viewed as an idealist, but a sub-

stantial portion of Husserl scholarship has had a similar thrust." In Chapter I, on Husserl's central concept on the noema, a defense of a realist interpretation of Husserl will be presented.

Contemporary film theory rests upon grounds that cannot support it. It is the overall thesis of this book that the Husserlian model preserves the genuine insights of prior theories while evading their problems. It provides a solid foundation upon which fruitful approaches to the fundamental questions of cinema may be constituted. The advantages of a phenomenology of filmic representation will be developed vis-à-vis image, sound, narrative, documentary, content, and reception.

Notes

1. Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958), Part VI, "Representations in the Visual Arts," pp. 267-93.
2. R. J. Hirst, "Realism," in Paul Edwards, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1967), vol. 7, p. 77.
3. The major film theoretical work of André Bazin is *What is Cinema? Vol. I*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
4. J. Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 38.
5. Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 161.
6. Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 35-6.
7. Edward Branigan, "Subjectivity under Siege: From Fellini's *8½* to Oshima's *The Story of the Man Who Left His Will on Film*," *Screen*, 19(1) (Spring 1978), 27.
8. Christine Gledhill, "Recent Developments in Feminist Film Criticism," in Mary Ann Doane, Linda Williams, and Patricia Mellencamp, (eds.), *Re-Vision* (Frederick, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), p. 5.
9. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 5.
10. Beverly Houston, "An Old New Critic Look at the New Discourse," Annual Meeting, MLA, Los Angeles, 1983.
11. David Bordwell, *Gen and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 51-2.
12. G. C. Rota, "A Husserl Perspective," *Occasional Review*, no. 2 (Autumn 1974), p. 100.
13. Bertrand Russell, *Sceptical Essays* (New York: Norton, 1928), p. 100.
14. Hereafter, abbreviated *L1* and *J*, respectively.
15. J. Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 178. For other characterizations of phenomenology unconnected with Husserl's concept of the "method," see Christian Metz, "On the Idealist Theory of the Cinema," in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis*

and the Cinema, trans. C. Britton, A. Williams, B. Brewster, and A. Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 52–6.

16. Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Cinématique*, nos. 7–8 (1970), trans. Alan Williams, first printed in *Film Quarterly*, 28(2), (Winter 1974–5). Gaylin Studlar, "Reconciling Feminism and Phenomenology: Notes on Problems and Possibilities, Texts and Contexts," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, Special Issue "Phenomenology and Film," July 1990.

17. See Aron Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness* (Pittsburgh: University of Duquesne Press, 1964).

CHAPTER I
Phenomenological
theory

Husserl's theory of artistic representation

In explaining his theory of artistic representation, Husserl utilizes Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (see frontispiece) as illustration. He provides an account of the acts in which perceivers engage when they recognize what is represented by the engraving. It is Husserl's view that a flesh and blood knight is depicted by the engraving. As he puts it:

We are observing Dürer's engraving, "The Knight, Death, and the Devil." We distinguish...the perceptive consciousness in which, within the black, colorless lines, there appear to us the figures of the "knight on his horse," "death," and the "devil." We do not turn our attention to these in aesthetic contemplation as objects. We rather turn our attention to the realities presented in the picture - more precisely stated, to the "depicted" realities, to the flesh and blood knight, etc. (*I*, §111)

Thus, a cornerstone of Husserl's realist account of artistic representation is the capacity of perceivers to transcend their perceptual acts in recognizing what an art object such as the Dürer engraving depicts. In the case of the Dürer, the flesh and blood knight is a real knight existing independently of the spectator's perceptual act of grasping that he is the object represented by the engraving. He is not produced by the activity of the perceiver of the engraving. That he is the object represented by the engraving is discoverable by perceivers.

An example will illustrate how Husserl's theory would apply to the case of apprehending cinematic representations. In recognizing what de Sica's *Shoeshine (Sciuscia)* represents, Italian boys would be some of the depicted objects. The depicted Italian boys exist independently of our conscious acts of apprehending them as depicted objects. In one sequence we see two particular Italian boys, Giuseppe and Pasquale, sentenced to serve time in jail. These two fictionally portrayed characters also exist independently of our consciousness as we appre-

hend their representation. A symbolic object of the motion picture, freedom, also has an existence independent of our consciousness and of the motion picture. That is, the flesh and blood reality of immediate postwar Italian society, its young males, and freedom exist independently of the de Sica motion picture and our conscious acts of grasping them. Late-1940s Italian society (or, for that matter, the flesh and blood knight in the Dürer work) is not created or constructed by spectator activity.

By contrast, for contemporary film theory, the objects depicted, portrayed, and symbolized by an art object (whether a film or an engraving) are constructions made by perceivers. Sensations are the material used in this constructive activity; shared assumptions, expectations, codes, and so forth are the tools perceivers utilize in accomplishing the constructions. The depicted objects (e.g., the knight in the Dürer example) do not exist independently of the art object; most certainly they do not exist independently of the perceptual acts of perceivers, whose acts actually constitute them.

In this idealist vein, Bill Nichols writes about the nature of everyday life perception and perception of artistic representation:

The habitual or coded nature of perception obscures our own active role in perception and that obscuring is now compounded by the object-status of the image. . . . Photographic realism . . . works to naturalize comprehension; it hides the work of perceiving meaning behind the mask of a naturally, obviously meaningful image. This reinforcement . . . is ideological in its implication that the surfaces of things are already meaningful, that this meaning is objectively given rather than a social construct.²

Nichols elaborates the idealist view (that the nature of the things we perceive depends on the constructive activity of the mind) in the following passage:

Our perception of the physical world is . . . based on codes involving iconic signs. The world does not enter our mind nor does it deposit a picture of itself there spontaneously. Perception depends on coding the world into iconic signs that can represent it within our mind. The force of the apparent identity is enormous, however. We think that it is the world itself we see in our "mind's eye," rather than a coded picture of it. . . . Hence both cinema and perception itself share a common coding process involving iconic signs.³

The view that Nichols is urging is that consciousness, in knowing the world and the objects represented by photography, utilizes codes in constructing what it perceives. Though a process of naturalizing comprehension makes it seem that represented objects are objectively given, they really are only social constructs.

In approaching the question of the nature of artistic and cinematic

representation, it might seem obvious that there are at least two types. Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII has the real-life individual Henry VIII, the king of England, as the object represented by the painting. By contrast, if we wake up one winter morning in our New England cottage and the frost on the window seems to take on the shape of Henry VIII's face we see Henry VIII in the frost.

For contemporary theory, this latter case – representation *in* – has been made paradigmatic of all representation; that is, it is as if perceivers only read meanings into what they see. Whereas representation *by* is suppressed, representation is not depiction or portrayal or symbolizing of an object existing independently of my mind as in realism. When I see something represented in a work of art, I read it into that work; I do not discover what independently existing object is represented by the work.

Mediation

Husserl's core insight is that the depicted objects and events of a work of art exist independently of appreciators' perceptual acts in apprehending what is represented. He elaborates on this view by saying that apprehension of the knight as the object represented by the Dürer engraving depends on an apprehension of features of what appears to us in perceiving the engraving: "Within the black, colorless lines" as Husserl puts it, are what he calls small gray figures (the "knight on his horse," "death," and "the devil"). Our act of being aware of these appearances is the foundation of (is the condition for) our act of recognizing the real knight as the depicted object. In the experience of apprehending *Shoeshine*, what appears to us as we experience the performances of the boy actors *founds* (is a condition of)* our recognition that Italian boys are depicted, Giuseppe and Pasquale as well as Italian society is portrayed, and freedom is symbolized.

Husserlian phenomenology thus analyzes representation in terms of the experience of an art object, not simply in terms of a relationship between some object within the work of art and some object in the world, for example, not as a relation such as that between an icon and an object that it resembles. It is relationship between experiences of certain sorts that is the source for the representation. In this way, as

* In Husserl's theory, "founded" may be characterized as follows: An experience of an object *O* is founded on an experience of another object *C* only if the experience of *O* could not be intentionally related to *O* unless the experience of *C* occurred. Thus, the act of living through the appearances of the small gray figures in the Dürer engraving is a condition of apprehending the real knight as the object of the act of recognizing what the engraving represents.

we shall see, Husserl would be able to get around the objections to Bazinian realism in film theory. Husserl can acknowledge that there is no iconic or indexical relationship between the art object and the object represented yet hold that representation is nevertheless realist.

In analyzing the highly mediated way in which what appears to us in the art gallery and at a screening of a film such as *Shoeshine*, Husserl introduces the technical terms 'noema,' 'noesis,' 'hyletic,' 'appreciation,' and 'horizon.' In order to appreciate the complexity, sophistication, and power of Husserl's account of representation, it will be necessary to understand these difficult concepts, a matter to which we now turn.

Noema and noesis

Husserl uses technical terms such as 'noema' because many preconceptions attach to words ordinarily used in talking about perception and consciousness. A term such as 'appearance' has become so encrusted with associations that it is difficult to use it in setting out a new way of thinking about long-standing epistemological and ontological problems. Husserl goes back to the Greeks to find a term that has the capacity to reorient his readers' understanding.

In every act of perception, it is Husserl's view that there are three moments, which obtain simultaneously – noematic, noetic, and hyletic. These moments arise together as we perceive the object of our experience.

The term *noema* (plural, *noemata*) is a transliteration from a Greek term (*noein*) for thought, understanding, or perception. It emphasizes the product or medium of thinking; concepts, notions, or appearances. In the Husserlian system, *noemata* found (are a condition of) our apprehension of the object of our perception.

In the experience of the Dürer engraving, several *noemata* become formed. The appearances of the small gray figures are *noemata*. In the case of *Shoeshine*, we will see that the appearances of the Italian non-actors (e.g., how they look, how their faces are lit, etc.) as they go off to jail are *noemata*.

The process of mediation also involves *noesis*. Though drawn from the same Greek verb (*noew*) as *noema*, *noesis* emphasizes the process or mental act in which an object is apprehended. *Noeses* are the various ways in which the mind positions itself in relation to objects in order to know them.⁴

In the case of the Dürer engraving, the act of having the appearances of the small figures *guide and constrain* our perception of the real knight, death, and the devil constitutes the operation of *noesis*. With respect to *Shoeshine*, we reach beyond what appears to us as we

attend to the performances, *mise-en-scène*, and so forth, to apprehend Italian boys, postwar Italian society, and freedom in a way founded on the appearances, the noemata.

The third phase of the mediation process is what Husserl calls 'the hyletic' (I, §85). Hyletic data are what in Anglo-American philosophy have often been called 'sensa'.⁶ When we experience *Shoeshine*, we sense line, pattern, size and shape relationships, camera movement, camera placement, editing forms, sound textures, and so forth. In film experience, these features are hyletic data. The hyletic data experienced in looking at the Dürer engraving (the *sensa* correspond to shapes, volumes, etc.) are sources for the founding of the apprehension of the real knight.

Apprehension of the flesh and blood knight as the object represented by the engraving is founded not only on apprehension of these hyletic data but also on the appearances of the small gray figures. In identifying the mode of apprehension in which this process occurs, Husserl utilizes the concept of apperception.

Apperception

Apperception⁴ is a mode of apprehension different from perception but intimately bound up with it. When a perceiver apperceives, he or she "lives through" or "passes through" the *sensa* (or other object) without making them objects of perception. Suppose I wear eyeglasses. An object is coming toward me at an ever-quickenning pace, which I notice through my eyeglasses. Suppose also that I notice a smudge on my eyeglasses. I can focus on the on-rushing object, *passing through* (apperceiving) the eyeglass and its smudged surface, or I can shift attention to the smudge on the surface, making that smudge the object of my attention. Similarly, when attending a lecture, I might focus on the sound of the speaker's voice – its timbre, pitch, inflection, attitudinal "tone" – or simply live through it, experience it apperceptively, and make the meaning of what is being said the object of my action.

Thus, perceivers of the Dürer engraving can make *sensa* of the engraving – line, shape, proportion, and so forth – the objects of their perception. However, in the act of grasping what the engraving depicts, they live through or pass through the *sensa* in order to grasp what the engraving represents, the real knight. They pass through the hyletic data; the data are not objects of perception the way the knight is. In recognizing what is represented in the Dürer, we pass through line, shape, size, and so forth to apprehend the knight who exists independently of the engraving. In recognizing what *Shoeshine* represents, we pass through line, shape, camera placement, editing relationships,

acting, sound quality, and so forth to grasp the flesh and blood Italian boys of postwar Italian society.

The act of apprehending what the engraving represents is also founded in turn on the apprehension of the appearances of the small gray figures, an apprehension that is apperceptive in nature. It is at this point that the complex interaction of elements in the Husserlian system becomes palpable. The appearances of these small figures are the noemata; these noemata function in our consciousness as we apprehend what the engraving represents. The noemata are objects of apperception; the real knight is the object of the perception, the perceptual act as a whole. Apprehension of the appearances of the small figures mediates the grasping of the object represented.

In our *Shoeshine* example, a double process of passing through, apperceiving, occurs. In the first moment, we pass through the hyletic data – camera placement, actor's gestures, sound quality, and so forth – to grasp what appears to us (the boy actors performing), the noemata, which for contemporary film theory are alleged to function as signs from which as Peter Wollen puts it, "the [film] text was constructed." We have seen Nichols speak of how we "think it is the world itself we see... rather than a coded picture of it... Both cinema and perception itself share a common coding process." In another place, Nichols argues that:

The existential bond establishing the indexical aspect of the cinematic sign system provides a powerful inducement to awe... so much so that it is easy to forget completely that we are dealing with a sign system rather than a direct, unmediated duplication of reality.⁷

Though in the perceptual act in question the real knight is the object of perception, it should not be thought that such an object is a necessary terminus. It has often been thought, for example, that Dürer's knight symbolizes human existence. Francis Russell writes the following about the Dürer engraving and its symbolic meaning:

In *Knight, Death, and the Devil*, Dürer has presented the embodiment of the Christian resolution, the knight who makes his way to his goal in defiance of Death and Hell. The scene is a forbidding wilderness, the Devil a swine-snouted monster with bat's wings and a single horn. Death is no longer a skeleton but a sad-eyed, decaying corpse without lips or nose, who holds up an hourglass as he swings his sorry nag athwart the path. The knight rides straight ahead, impervious, his face stern under the raised visor of his helmet.... The formidable figure advancing along the abyss of life, contemptuous of lurking perils becomes the essence of human courage. Generations have found this quality in the engraving. The anti-Christian philosopher, Friedrich

Nietzsche, despite his conviction, saw the knight as a "symbol of our existence."⁴

In order to apprehend what the engraving represents (in the sense of symbolizes), perceivers of the engraving need to live through, apperceive, the knight in the process of grasping the fate of humanity as the symbolized object.

In *Shoeshine*, the white horse symbolizes freedom. In grasping freedom as the symbolized object, perceivers of the film pass not only through an awareness of qualities such as camera placement, editing form, sound quality, and so forth, through the appearances of the white horse, but also pass through the white horse as a flesh and blood creature and their conscious act of knowing that creature.

Moreover, Husserl thinks there is something special about the nature of the perceptual act involved in apprehending artistic representation, something not involved in nonart cases. In apprehending art objects, perceivers put aside the question of whether what they experience exists or not, or as he puts it, exists in any other positional modality.

We set aside the existential question to focus instead on how the appearances that we are aware of *guide* us to some other object, not here present, without regard for whether that other object exists or not. *Neutrality modification* is the term Husserl uses. As he puts it:

That which makes the depicting [in the Dürer engraving] possible and mediates it, namely, the consciousness, of the "picture" of the small gray figures ... is now an example for the neutrality-modification of the picture. This depicting picture-object stands before us neither as being nor as non-being, nor in any other positional modality. (*I*, §111)

Intentionality

It is characteristic of the Husserlian system that consciousness is always consciousness of something. Husserl uses the term 'intend' or 'intentional' to mark this relationship. 'Intention' in this sense is derived from the Latin term *intentio* meaning extending or stretching out to. The real knight is *intended* as the object of the perceptual act of recognizing what the engraving represents. Noesis gives the intentional direction, the ofness of the act, to the *sensa*. Without this intentional direction, the *sensa* would not mean anything to the perceiver.

Were we to consider how intentionality is present in the experience of *Shoeshine*, we may take the recognition of the white horse as a depicted object. The lines, shapes, camera placement, sound texture, and so forth, which are the *sensa*, the hyletic data, would be meaningless

sample content of Film and Phenomenology: Towards a Realist Theory of Cinematic Representation
(Cambridge Studies in Film)

- [download online Revelations \(Extinction Point, Book 3\)](#)
- [download The Unreal Life of Sergey Nabokov: A Novel](#)
- [Layover in Dubai pdf, azw \(kindle\)](#)
- [read online Politics in Minutes](#)

- <http://qolorea.com/library/Revelations--Extinction-Point--Book-3-.pdf>
- <http://test1.batsinbelfries.com/ebooks/Wolf-Among-Wolves.pdf>
- <http://kamallubana.com/?library/Layover-in-Dubai.pdf>
- <http://crackingscience.org/?library/Politics-in-Minutes.pdf>