

Queer-ing Texture: Tactility, Spatiality and Kinaesthetic Empathy in *She Monkeys*

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“The body’s texture is spatial; and reciprocally, the texture of space is corporeal.”¹

“Orientations are tactile.”²

“It is this tactile quality [...] that is essential to any lesbian aesthetic.”³

The concern with texture and tactility in some recent writing on cinema has provided a range of fruitful insights, while also opening up spaces of possibility for further exploration – analytically, methodologically and conceptually. From Jennifer Barker’s call for a “textural film analysis”⁴, to Ian Garwood’s focus on the sensuousness of narration⁵ and Lucy Donaldson’s account of *Texture in Film*⁶, this work variously accounts for cinema’s corporeality and provides “a better impression – in the physical as well as intellectual sense – of what and how [...] films *mean*”.⁷

Building on this work in drawing on a largely phenomenological framework, this article explores how a focus on texture and tactility might speak to contemporary debates around queer cinema. Through a textural encounter with Lisa Aschan’s *She Monkeys* (*Apflickorna*, Sweden, 2011), it proposes ways of accounting for the “queerness” of queer cinema through a consideration of embodiment, intercorporeality, kinaesthetic empathy and a phenomenological understanding of “orientation”. Specifically, I explore the links between texture and spatiality – the textural qualities of spatiality and the spatial qualities of texture – in order to account for the corporeal encounters on offer in *She Monkeys* and how these might speak to, and resonate with, queer habits, alignments and tendencies. Notions of *orientation*, *habits*, *alignments* and *tendencies* as affective, sensuous and embodied are key throughout – for understandings of queerness *and* for understandings of cinema’s draw and its resonances – and developed centrally from Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenological body of work. For Ahmed, our (sexual/phenomenological) orientations towards certain (inappropriate) others shape and are shaped by our bodily tendencies. Depending on how we are

orientated and which way we “face”, certain object or others come into view and become reachable within the “bodily horizon”.⁸ In turn, encounters with certain (inappropriate) others can re-orientate who we habitually tend or turn toward, who we are “drawn” to. There is thus a specifically spatial and orientated dimension to gender and sexual embodiment for Ahmed – a point I return to in more detail below.

In employing such a queer phenomenological frame, I gesture beyond concerns around representation, in-/visibility, identity (politics) and appropriation that have been at the forefront of gay and lesbian film scholarship. Instead, I locate *She Monkey’s* queerness, not exclusively but centrally, in the realms of embodiment and the affective resonances of its “twisted” *sense-ibilities* – a concept, developed throughout, that aims to foreground the sensorial and corporeal dimensions of the seemingly ineffable notion of “sensibility” that makes various re-appearances in the kind of queer (film) scholarship that explores questions of appeal and recognition (for instance in debates about “camp”).⁹

A “twisted” *sense-ibility* is one that is not straightforward, one that is not aligned with (hetero-)normative habits and tendencies. It thus gives shape to, and makes graspable, the spatiality of queer embodiments. Ahmed reminds us of the “etymology of the word ‘queer’, which comes from the Indo-European word ‘twist’” and notes that “[q]ueer is, after all, a *spatial* term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a *twisted* sexuality that does not follow a ‘straight line’, a sexuality that is bent and *crooked*.”¹⁰ I use “twist”/“twisted” throughout in this sense, with a particular emphasis on the kinds of “twisted” orientations, habits and tendencies that might be embodied *in* and *by* cinema and that might evoke embodied and affective resonances with certain “twisted” spectatorial leanings and orientations. My intentions are thus broadly aligned with Lauren Berlant’s in that “[t]he key here is not to see what happens to aesthetically mediated *characters* as equivalent to what happens to people but to see that in the *affective scenarios* [of cinema] we can discern claims about the situation of contemporary life”.¹¹ The central concern is *not* with the gender and sexual identities as they may be inscribed on certain characters, but with the cinematic

incarnations of a twisted sensibility as they may shape the affective scenarios and orientations of certain films and imbue them with variously queer resonances.

It is worth noting that *She Monkeys* emerges from a larger cinematic context of recent female-centered queer films in which movement, spatiality and contact arise as key (thematic, affective) concerns, including *Cracks* (dir. Jordan Scott, UK, 2009), *Waterlilies* (dir. Céline Sciamma, France, 2007), *The Gymnast* (dir. Ned Farr, US, 2006), *Tomboy* (dir. Céline Sciamma, France, 2011), *Of Girls & Horses* (dir. Monika Treut, Germany, 2014) and *Girlhood* (dir. Céline Sciamma, France, 2014). These films' sensuous appeals variously hinge on the centrality of athletic activities that foreground processes of embodiment (of becoming orientated, attaining balance, finding one's feet and a sense of direction) and thus offer particularly fruitful opportunities for "grasping" – in a rational and tactile/muscular sense – cinematic queerness via phenomenological approaches to film *and* to gender and sexuality.

In what follows, I begin by contextualizing my argument in relation to key concerns in gay and lesbian/queer film criticism to highlight how a bringing together of *film* phenomenology and *queer* phenomenology might push these debates in a different, more corporeally-grounded direction. After accounting for the textural register of *She Monkey's* opening sequence and the spectatorial "stance" it invites, I elaborate on the phenomenology of both queerness and cinema, before tracing key tendencies of *She Monkey's* corporeally affective trajectory.

Queer Cinema and Lesbian Sense-ibilities

Initial key concerns in gay and lesbian film criticism include the re-presentation of gay and lesbian identities, particularly their historical invisibility in mainstream cinema, as well as critiques of gay and lesbian stereotypes and "negative" images – and these debates are embedded in, and broadly motivated by, questions of identity politics. There has also been continued critical interest in the ways in which invisibility, coded signs, innuendo and subtext have provided particular kinds of appropriative pleasures for queer audiences. This work tends to employ semiotic and psychoanalytic

approaches in order to account for homosexuality as the uncanny, the repressed or the “uninvited”.¹² In relation to lesbianism in particular, it also includes considerations of non-heteronormative economies of looking and the ways in which a “lesbian visual economy”¹³, for instance, might destabilize the (hetero-)normative male gaze of mainstream cinema. It additionally includes critiques of the heteronormative assumptions of psychoanalytic approaches to desire and identification, oddly, without leading to a substantial move beyond these conceptual frames and their binary underpinnings – which is precisely what a queer film phenomenology makes possible.

What also emerges within this context are debates around “camp”, which frequently draw on Susan Sontag’s notion of camp as “a *sensibility* (as distinct from an *idea*)”, as appealing to a certain “*taste*”.¹⁴ While these debates highlight the difficulties to define and analyze something that is “almost, but not quite, *ineffable*”¹⁵, they also begin to gesture towards ways of accounting for particular queer sensibilities and tastes that resonate poignantly with the argument developed here. Andy Medhurst, for instance, writes that camp “is primarily an *experiential* rather than analytic discourse”; it is “a set of *attitudes* [...] an inventory of *postures*”.¹⁶ While asserting camp’s elusiveness by locating it in the realms of the experiential, Medhurst also, perhaps inadvertently, hints at the specifically *sensorial* dimensions of sensibilities and tastes – and this is, as I will show, something a queer phenomenological approach is capable of grasping. There are also important resonances here with Pierre Bourdieu’s work where *tastes* and *preferences* are linked to (bodily) habits, dispositions and tendencies via the concept of “*habitus*”.¹⁷ we prefer and tend toward what makes “sense” to us, which, in turn shapes our preferences and tendencies. We are drawn towards what is somehow “*familiar*”.¹⁸ It is precisely this corporeal, spatial and orientated notion of sensibilities and tastes that I want to hold onto here.

Crucially, phenomenological approaches to *film*, concerned as they are with tactility, sensuousness and bodily empathy open up possibilities for exploring how *sense-ibilities* might manifest themselves *cinematically*. Conceptualizations of the “body of the film” in particular allow us to grasp how modes of embodiment (including postures, stances, orientations, leanings and

tendencies) take shape *in* and *through* film. This work accounts not only for filmic materiality but also for the *phenomenological “likeness”* between human and cinematic embodiment (especially via notions of the *Skin of the Film* and “cinematic musculature”) that facilitates “sensuous empathy” between film and viewer.¹⁹ It posits an understanding of the cinematic experience as an embodied encounter (a corporeally affective relation that includes the bodies *in* film, the body *of* the film and the body of the spectator) – and film phenomenology enables a grasping of the resonances between those bodies, via notions of tactile/kinaesthetic/muscular empathy. It allows us to put the senses back into *sense-ibility*, as it were, and consider the affective implications of the embodied relations – variously marked by alignment, friction, contact, jarring, dissonance, mutuality and resistance – that might surface in the cinematic encounter.

When combined with phenomenological understandings of *queerness*, film phenomenology thus begins to open up important ways of accounting for (queer) cinema’s queer draw and appeal. This is because a queer phenomenology conceives of queerness as collectively embodied; as experiential and sensuous; as a particularly “twisted” mode of *being-in-the world*; as a shared orientation; as a habitual tending towards certain (inappropriate) others. When combined with film phenomenological concerns – and this is one of the central points I want to put forward here – this makes graspable the ways in which a queer *sense-ibility* might be articulated in and through cinema, *without*, importantly, recuperating “queer” in relation to an essentializing character- or narrative-based realism or identity (politics).

What is also notable here is that gay/lesbian film scholarship has highlighted the crucial role played by cinema and certain film stars in the *cultivation* of a certain queer sensibility. For instance, in the absence of explicit representations of gay male identities in (classical) Hollywood cinema, the camp sensibility of certain films and stars is said to have provided a shared reference point that gay men could be orientated towards and that put them “in touch” with each other.²⁰ This echoes arguments about the importance of cinema, and certain female stars, to the formation of (public) lesbian identities in the 1930s and 40s.²¹ Although underpinned by conventional psychoanalytically-

based notions of spectatorship, identity, identification and desire, this work acknowledges the *reciprocal* relations between film and viewer and, perhaps inadvertently, gestures towards the significance of lived experience. As Ahmed suggests, “‘becoming lesbian’ [is] a very social experience”. She links her own “becoming lesbian” to her contact with lesbian literature, especially Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), the “lesbian bible” that “acquired its sociality by being passed around, by *changing hands*”, and by providing queer women an object to “gather around” and “tend toward”.²² Such an understanding of lesbian/queer tendencies, orientations and contact, and the ways in which they shape and are shaped by “*what is reachable within the body horizon of the social*”²³ allows us to rethink notions of “recognition”, “appeal” and “cultivation” as they feature in writing on gay and lesbian film and spectatorship. They encourage us to go beyond disembodied conceptualizations of subjectivity and looking, and to account for the corporeal and sensuous dimensions of our encounter with film.

Of course, *She Monkeys* emerges in a very different context, one not shaped by censorship but by the legacy the New Queer Cinema (NQC), which coincided in important ways with the arrival of queer *theory*, its anti-essentialist, anti-identity stance and poststructuralist emphasis on performativity and discourse. Within film studies, this evoked a crucial shift away from concerns with re-presentation and towards cinema’s ability to deconstruct rigid frames of identity and investigate questions of desire and deviance through formal and aesthetic means. At the same time, however, the NQC legacy also includes the more general queering of Western popular culture, the commercialization and re-packaging of queer for mainstream audiences, and the proliferation of lesbian visibility in the mainstream media landscape.²⁴ This is variously problematic – and not only because lesbian sexuality in particular is often re-appropriated for a heterosexual male gaze in ways that raises important questions about viewing pleasures and about who mainstream films with gay and lesbian content are “for” and who they appeal to (and why).

What emerges here, then, are a number of important tensions around (in)visibility, realism, identity, performativity, identification, desire, aesthetics, politics, (viewing) pleasure and meaning –

and *She Monkeys* can be read both as an articulation of and a response to these tensions. The film embodies an ambivalent stance towards identity (politics). While centrally concerned with non-normative embodiments of gender and sexuality, it largely refrains from inscribing *specific* sexual identities on its characters, yet manages to speak to and resonate with certain kinds of queer female embodiment. It is relatively easy on the mainstream eye, yet gives shape to a lesbian/queer *sense-*ibility that remains *out of reach* for a re-appropriating gaze, located, as it is, in the film's tactile, kinaesthetic and muscular register.

Precarious Orientations: Finding one's feet in *She Monkeys*

The significance of tactile, muscular engagement is foregrounded from the outset and shapes our initial contact with, and entry into, the film. *She Monkeys* opens with a static shot of trees and bushes, with leaves rustling in the wind and brushing against each other, giving the image a patterned and textured feel. The young protagonist, Emma (Mathilda Paradeiser), steps into the frame from behind a tree from the left, framed in mid-shot, and immediately steps backwards and out of the frame. This unexplained movement is repeated three times.



[Figure 1: Entry1.jpeg] *She Monkeys* - opening shot

[Figure 2: Entry2.jpeg] *She Monkeys* - Emma's entry

Emma's posture and comportment remain unchanged each time she steps into the frame, facing forward, looking straight ahead. The crunching sounds of branches and dry leaves snapping are similarly repeated with each step. The spatio-temporal dimensions of the filmic world remain ambiguous, positing an unsteady, yet not necessarily unpleasurable, entry into the film. As viewers, we might struggle to "find our feet". It might take effort for us to gain our bearings within the world of the film and to find a sense of alignment with the film's (and the character's) modes of movement and comportment. Adjustment is aided by the subsequent shot in which the initial disorientation is rectified and an unambiguous, more *familiar* relation between time and space is established. At the third repetition, Emma keeps moving forward and walks through the frame. This movement is clearly marked as different, with Emma's head slightly tilted this time as she looks down on the

ground. The static shot becomes a tracking shot, as the camera's movement is aligned with Emma's. We then see a dog walking alongside Emma's feet and the previous movement is retrospectively made "sense" of: Emma moved backwards and forwards (in space) in order to train the dog to follow, and mirror, her movement. We then see the dog perform various behaviors in response to commands that Emma articulates through gestures and sounds (sitting down when Emma stops walking; barking when she touches her upper lip with her finger). This gestural mode of communication also links in important ways to the more general scarcity of dialog in the film, especially where Emma's developing relationship with Cassandra (Linda Molin) is concerned, the various queer resonances of which are located primarily in the realms of corporeality, sensuousness and bodily contact.

In *She Monkey's* opening, taken-for-granted modes of movement, directionality and perception are made strange and we have to "work out" our muscular alignments with (the relationship between) the body of the film and the body in it – if, indeed, we want to get "into" the film and let its corporeal, affective resonances get (in)to us. The opening shot is ambiguous and fraught with (muscular) tension, its teasingly opaque directionality leaving the viewer hanging (on). A stable reference point in relation to which we might orientate ourselves is withheld. The disorientating muscular tension is released by the movement of the camera, the shift from static to tracking shot, which allows us to make (bodily) "sense" of the spatio-temporal relations in and of the film. Like the dog, we are encouraged to align our bodily movements, gestures and comportment with Emma's – and our reward is, not a chewy treat, but a return to a more conventionally comfortable viewing position, a state of re-orientation, that makes "sense".

This opening encounter might thus evoke a heightened awareness of the embodied dimensions of spectatorship and our "feeling of the body" more generally.²⁵ As Adriano D'Aloia argues: "as the point of reference is lost, we realise that our body can be the only point of reference. When the implicit 'filmic gravitational pact' [that allows us to *gain our bearings* by linking the world of the viewer and the film] is suspended or invalidated, the spectator seeks a new point of reference

and finds his/her own body".²⁶ In *She Monkeys*, the entry into (the world of) the film is tactile and muscular before we can make cognitive "sense" of it, and the intensification of the "feeling of the body" from the onset serves as a primer for the various sensuous encounters still to come. While the opening does not *force* us into taking up a particular "stance", it conjures a certain spectatorial "attitude", a sense of preparedness for the unexpected, of having to be "on our toes" so we can adjust to unpredictable twists and turns. It thus foreshadows the frequent clashing of corporeally affective registers – tenderness and sensuous proximity vs. cold, detached violence and startling aggression – that shapes *She Monkey's* sensuous trajectory.

Once the phenomenal dimensions of the filmic world are established, the images accompanying the opening credits continue to function as a reminder of the tactile "attitude" the film "expects" from the viewer. The credit sequence consists of a tracking shot that traces, in close-up, a metal wire in front of a hazy, depthless background of various shades of green. The wire moves in and out of focus as the contours of its surface shift from clear and sharp (demarcating specks of dust and a fluffy dandelion seed shivering in the wind) to blurry and indistinct. The flattened yet textured image is overtly haptic (recalling Laura Marks' description in *The Skin of the Film*²⁷) and overtly links movement and touch. The movement of the camera traces/touches the surface of the wire, which vibrates ever so slightly, moving across the surface of the screen and encouraging our eyes to do the same, while the movement of the lens (in and out of focus) blurs the distinction between the object and its background and highlights the muscular and kinaesthetic dimensions of the process of (visually) "grasping" an object. The film's sensuous register and the tactile engagement it invites are further foregrounded. The cold, metallic hardness of the wire also conjures a tangible contrast with the soft, lush greenness surrounding it, while the loudly screeching static noise that increases in volume towards the end of the tracking shot adds a visceral sense of discomfort and eerie suspense that is likely to get *under our skin*. We are not really allowed to get comfortable and find a secure sense of (corporeal, affective) balance.

The sequence following the title credits links notions of tactility, movement and spatiality

back to Emma's body and its surface and textures. It opens with a shot of an old-fashioned portable fan in front of floral-patterned wallpaper. Attached to the grid at the front of the fan are differently colored strips of paper that flutter in the whirl of air. The subtly intense soundscape in this sequence consists initially of the noises emerging from the movement of air and the quivering strips of paper. An unnervingly monotone, vibrating layer of noise (a combination of organ and string sounds) is gradually added to the film's sonic texture (and re-appears throughout the film, invoking an ambiguously alluring "sense" of tension and suspense). The materiality of space is made tangible here through the visual and aural emphasis on the moving, flowing, vibrating and encircling substance that "fills" space, but tends to be invisible: air.





[Figure 3: fan.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – fan

[Figure 4: EmmaSweatySkin.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – sweaty skin and muscular shoulders

[Figure 5: EmmaWithFan.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – Emma and fan in context

In the following low-level shot, the fan is not visible but remains audible. We see the top of Emma’s muscular shoulders, with her head slowly emerging (in close-up) as she assumes an upright position. Unruly strands of hair flutter in the stream of air produced by the fan as Emma raises her stretched-out arms to either side. Other strings of hair stick to her sweaty neck. The close framing and the heavily textured soundscape, make the contact between sweaty skin (on Emma’s neck and muscular shoulders) and moving air palpable, especially following the incitement of a “sense” of hapticity in the preceding scene. This articulation of the *experience* of cool air against sweaty skin, as well as the tactile, muscular responses (i.e., goose bumps) this might evoke, encourages in the viewer a heightened sense of awareness of the surface and texture of the body and its tactile, muscular contact with the world. The subsequent wide shot (of Emma practicing various movements and postures in front of a mirror in her bedroom) puts the preceding images into context and provides us with the “bigger picture” of the scene, which only makes tactile and kineasthetic “sense” up until this point. Bodily alignment and contact are given priority over other (psychological, narrative) forms of identification, although these forms of engagement are also important in what is, overall, a fairly conventional narrative film, providing fairly conventional viewing pleasures, at least in part.

What this textural account of *She Monkey's* opening scenes demonstrates, however, is that the film invites a specifically sensuous, tactile and muscular spectatorial engagement through a foregrounding of texture, movement and contact (in addition to more conventional narrative and psychological points of entry that are subsequently provided). While Emma and Cassandra are characterized as lesbian/queer in fairly familiar terms throughout the film (they spend time almost exclusively with each other; they are physically close; they hug and touch; their verbal exchanges, although infrequent and sparse, are heavy with double-meaning and innuendo; and they kiss in one scene), *She Monkeys'* more profound queer resonances lie in the ways in which those *signs* of queerness are given texture and substance through the film's tactile and muscular registers and the sensuous viewer engagements they invite. The queer implications of the textural register, simultaneously cold and intensively affective as it is, hinge on the relations between the protagonists, the world that unfolds around them and the continually shifting, twisting and turning orientations that take shape in and through the film and that make our spectatorial engagement far from straightforward. It conjures particularly poignant (corporeal, affective) resonances with the "lived" experience of finding one's way in a world that does not easily accommodate the kind of "twisted" modes of gender and sexual embodiment that Ahmed accounts for so vividly in her queer phenomenology.

Grasping Queerness: Cinema, Tactility, Empathy

In thinking about queerness in these terms – texture, movement, spatiality – I am profoundly indebted to Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, which shows us what happens if we "pose the question of 'the orientation' of 'sexual orientation' as a phenomenological question" and what it means "for sexuality to be lived as orientated?"²⁸ How we are orientated *sexually* is profoundly a matter of "*how we extend through our bodies into the world*", which means that different orientations equate to "*inhabiting different worlds*".²⁹ What takes (visceral, affective) shape in *She Monkeys* is the stirring/unnerving/twisted "world" that unfolds around its young female protagonists who are

orientated towards each other and thus fail (refuse?) to extend the shape of straight-forward heteronormativity. It is precisely through an appeal to our “sense” of tactility and spatiality – and, importantly, though an unsettling of conventional orientations and modes of embodiment – that *She Monkeys* invites us into this world and enables a getting “in touch” with its “twisted” protagonist(s).

One way of grasping *She Monkeys*’ queerness is therefore through a focus on modes of *being-in-the-world* as taking shape via the sedimentation of experience that manifests itself in the textures of the body – on the surface of the skin where experiences leave marks, impressions and scars, and where, in turn, we make contact with the world; and beneath the skin where musculature constitutes a manifestation of our spatial, kinaesthetic relations to the world and of our bodily habits and tendencies that result *from* repetition and *in* a bodily “I can”. Bodies “take shape” through contact and through what they “do” – “which in turn affects what bodies *can* do”.³⁰

Queerness thus manifests as a shared corporeality, a mutually affecting tending towards who/what is near and familiar. How, then, might we “grasp” this sense of queerness in *cinematic* terms and how might we conceptualize the spectatorial resonances it enables.

The burgeoning literature on cinema, texture and tactility proposes ways of accounting for our embodied relations to film. For D’Aloia, for instance, “watching a film is an experience of a relationship between bodies in space”.³¹ including the bodies of characters, of spectators and the filmic body. The cinematic experience takes shape through the alignments and tensions between these bodies that are enabled by processes of (embodied) identification, empathy and simulation. Barker’s work is particularly crucial as it identifies the various corporeal “levels” of our engagement with film via the notion of *cinematic tactility*, which is

a *general attitude* towards the cinema that the human body enacts in particular ways haptically, at the tender surface of the body; kinaesthetically and muscularly, in the middle dimension of muscles, tendons, and bones that reach toward and through cinematic space; and viscerally, in the murky recesses of the body, where heart, lungs, pulsing fluids, and firing synapses receive, respond to, and re-enact the rhythms of cinema. The film’s body also

adopts towards the world a *tactile attitude* of intimacy and reciprocity that is played out across its nonhuman body: haptically, at the screen's surface [...]; kinaesthetically, through the contours of on- and off-screen space and of the bodies, both human and mechanical, that inhabit and escape those spaces.³²

Based on such an understanding of the "likeness" between film and viewer, Barker accounts for the "*resonances and reverberations* of tactile patterns between the human body and the cinema" via processes of tactile and muscular empathy.³³ Resonances (and thus empathy) might emerge because film and viewer share "*deep-seated muscular habits*": we are inclined to move and look forward, assume an upright posture and "face things directly".³⁴

D'Aloia explores this "likeness" via Merleau-Pontyan ideas about the human "sense" of space: "our relation to space is bodily, rather than primarily reflective". We only "know" what space is, because we "live" it.³⁵ Our film experience is grounded in the fact that the world of the viewer and the world of the film (even though different in nature) "both have the same basic orientation: head up, feet down, as in ordinary life".³⁶ In other words, cinema "offers an orientation that can be called 'natural', because it is 'common,' usual,' 'habitual,' 'ordinary,' 'normal' and *readable without any effort*, and because it obeys the laws of nature [i.e., gravity]".³⁷ The parallels between human and cinematic orientations are foregrounded when they are *not* aligned – as in the opening of *She Monkeys*. In those moments of *disorientation* human and cinematic bodies tend to "rectify the situation with a gesture, such as the twisting of the neck and camera".³⁸ In *She Monkeys*, this occurs through the provision of (narrative and spatio-temporal) context, as the movements of camera and character are aligned. Another example of shared gestures is the shot-reverse-shot pattern used in the filming of conversations: it mirrors our habit of turning our head from speaker to speaker when following a discussion. This illustrates the more general tendency for the film to "adopt our proprioception, the sense we have of our bodies in space; it may confirm it or thwart it by its own movements, but *always it is indebted to it*".³⁹ Crucially, these "standard" bodily orientations and tendencies (upright, straightforward), that we share with film and that film shares with us, provide

the “grounds” for muscular empathy and kinaesthetic identification. As Vivian Sobchack’s writes, “common structures of embodied existence [and] similar modes of being-in-the-world [...] provide the *intersubjective* basis for cinematic communication.”⁴⁰

Social Positionality, Sedimentation, Difference

What is problematic about the work briefly surveyed here is its dependence on paradoxically universalising and ahistorical understandings of embodiment, spatiality and perception. This is reflected, for instance, in relation to Barker’s “general attitude”, D’Aloia’s “basic orientation” or Sobchack’s “common structures of embodied existence”. Questions of gender and sexuality, intimately tied to the body as they are, are suspiciously marginalized within these debates.

Ahmed takes issue with Husserl’s phenomenology in particular, which seems to involve an “ease of movement” that implies a “mobile body”, one that “can do” things⁴¹ – without accounting for social positionality and systems of oppression that might be constitutive of consciousness in the first place. Recent feminist and queer critiques have highlighted more generally the need to account for the embodied dimensions of difference that structure subjectivity *without being universal*. It is important to assert here that the aim is clearly *not* to somehow re-introduce essentialist understandings of gender, for instance, but to point to ways in which social positionality might be *constitutive* of consciousness. What is intrinsic to conventional phenomenology, as Alia Al-Saji argues, is a “profound forgetting of embodied dimensions of difference – sex, race, gender, culture, class – which, without being universal, already structure subjectivity”.⁴² For Al-Saji, phenomenology is “stuck” with(in) the rigid distinction between the transcendental and the empirical ego – and this is something recent feminist re-readings of Husserl in particular have sought to challenge by accounting for gender and race, for instance, not just as worldly, mundane, empirical facts, but as “operative dimensions that are constitutive conditions of experience (without assuming their universality or ahistoricity)”.⁴³ The phenomenology of *touch* is particularly important in this context as it allows us to understand “the interplay between subjective, felt embodiment and social-

historical context”⁴⁴ – and it is precisely an acknowledgement of this “interplay” that I want to bring to the forefront of concerns with texture, tactility and spatiality in film.

Johanna Oksala also calls for a kind of phenomenology that “is better able to deal with the constitutive importance of the social and cultural world”;⁴⁵ one that understands the transcendental ego not as an empty pole but a “process of habitation” in the sense that “experiences build upon each other [and] are sedimented, so that the ego gains a certain temporal depth and an integration into its past”.⁴⁶

This sense of habitation and sedimentation links in important ways to tactility, musculature and spatiality: Muscles are built through repetitive, habitual movement; they shape, and are shaped by our, worldly encounters, and, importantly, they are what enables movement, and *perception*, in the first place. Of course, muscles are also crucial markers of gender. As Richard Dyer claims, “muscularity is the key term in appraising men’s bodies [...] Muscularity is the *sign* of power – natural, phallic, achieved”.⁴⁷ It is our habitual acceptance of the paradoxical tensions between muscularity as both “natural” and *at the same time* as the “end product of [the] activity of muscle building”⁴⁸, that allows for gender and sexual binaries to remain safely in place. However, muscles are not just a “sign” of power or “end product” of activity. Rather, musculature is “lived”, a continuous process/becoming, and the vehicle for our tactile, kineasthetic contact with the world – and with cinema.

Phenomenological understandings of habit(u)ation and sedimentation are thus capable of grasping the resonances between cinematic modes of *being-in-the-world* and the ways in which those modes are “lived” (within the textures of the social). They go some way towards explaining why and how certain cinematic registers, orientations and stances might be more “familiar” and thus make more “sense” to some (“twisted”) spectators than others, while also potentially cultivating a shift in what is, or makes, common “sense”.

Queer-ing Textural Analysis

These considerations, then, allow us to think through the twisted “resonances and reverberations” that particular cinematic embodiments might provide. In *She Monkeys*, it is a certain *athletic* physicality that is central to its textural qualities – and the same is true for *Cracks*, *Waterlilies*, *The Gymnast*, *Tomboy*, *Of Girls & Horses* and *Girlhood*. The films’ tactile, muscular registers provide possibilities for embodied engagements that disrupt normatively gendered modes of embodiment. Various, athletic practices and spaces are of narrative significance in these films: vaulting in *She Monkeys*; diving and swimming in *Cracks*; synchronized swimming in *Waterlilies*; acrobatics in *The Gymnast*; football in *Tomboy*; horse riding in *Of Girls & Horses*; American football and dancing in *Girlhood*. They provide opportunities for contact between queer female bodies, and touching (rather than looking) is used explicitly to articulate queer/lesbian desire and eroticism, especially in *She Monkeys* and *The Gymnast* (both films feature numerous close-ups of hands, of hands holding hands, and of hands touching objects, fabric and skin). However, their more profound significance lies in their articulations of queer embodiments, re-orientations, and bodily becomings. Various, the “working out” of queer embodiments through physical activity is made explicit in these films. Athletic practices make overtly graspable how queer orientations and tendencies take shape through bodily habits and how those orientations and tendencies in turn shape what is ready-to-hand/reachable and what the body “can do”. They give shape to the sense that “it takes time and work to inhabit a lesbian [or queer] body”.⁴⁹

On one level, female athleticism constitutes a symbolic transgression of gender norms (in terms of how the body *looks*). More profoundly, however, it disrupts heteronormatively gendered modes of *being-in-the-world*, negating the “inhibited intentionality” of normatively gendered feminine comportment.⁵⁰ The films’ queer implications are located in their unruly modes of embodiment, their opening up of bodily horizons, their unmooring of normative bodily habits and tendencies – and the possibilities for variously “twisted” corporeal encounters thus provided. This does *not* mean that female athleticism *necessarily* makes a “sense” of lesbianism or queer femaleness graspable. Neither does it mean that female athleticism is the only mode of embodiment

that can make lesbianism or queer femaleness “appear”.⁵¹ However, and as Judith Butler notes, athletic activity does provide a particularly poignant context for the *foregrounding* of processes of gendered embodiment – and a space in which normative modes of gendered embodiment can be re-shaped.⁵² Those films that center on the athletic female body – not by putting it on display and exposing it to a recuperative male gaze and commercial exploitation, but by making its “lived” corporeality graspable – thus constitute particularly useful case studies for queer film phenomenological inquiry.

In *Texture in Film*, Donaldson highlights the need to understand film as a layering of textures: texture *in* film, texture *of* film and the textures *surrounding* the film, including genre (histories), viewing habits and expectations, as well as larger socio-cultural structures and contexts. “The film becomes a layered object which readers and their experiences add to. The kind of echoes brought about by a film, which add to its layers, relate to certain conventions (of genre, of performance, of gender), the use of a particular location that recalls other films [...] or visual/aural references to other films”.⁵³ I have already traced, albeit briefly, the ways in which *She Monkeys*, *Cracks*, *Waterlilies*, *The Gymnast*, *Tomboy*, *Of Girls & Horses* and *Girlhood* can be situated in relation to the larger historical trajectory of gay/lesbian and (new) queer film. In this intertextual context we might additionally consider how *Cracks*, situated as it is in a 1930s girls’ boarding school, draws on “the schoolgirl genre, a staple of lesbian film”⁵⁴, with *Mädchen in Uniform (Girls in Uniform*, Germany, 1931) as a central reference point. Moreover, the jealousy-fuelled death/murder ties *Cracks* to the “lethal lesbian” subgenre⁵⁵, which also includes *Heavenly Creatures* (New Zealand, 1994) and *Sister My Sister* (UK, 1994). The threat of the “lethal lesbian” also lingers beneath the surface of *She Monkeys* (as I elaborate below). The growing reputation of Céline Sciamma as a queer auteur adds a further potential layer of textural resonances to *Tomboy*, *Waterlilies* and *Girlhood*. In *The Gymnast*, the presence of Dreyya Weber, who also plays a lesbian character in *A Marine Story* (US, 2010), a film about the US’s don’t-ask-don’t-tell military policy, provides some important intertextual layering, with Weber’s overtly muscular physicality adding further substance to *The*

Gymnast's thickly corporeal texture. Eva Green's performance as a closeted lesbian boarding school teacher in *Cracks* similarly gains traction by her status as a burgeoning lesbian icon. Finally, Monika Treut's extensive body of lesbian/queer cinematic work constitutes a crucial intertextual context for *Of Girls & Horses*. More generally, the films' incorporation of elements of the coming-of-age and/or coming-out genres links them to established conventions of lesbian film, evoking a potentially wide range of intertextual echoes. The depictions of sport and athletic activity in all of the films also gain significance in the context of the wider socio-cultural associations, readily available as they are, of female athleticism with tomboyism, female masculinity and lesbianism. Sport constitutes one of the few public/media spaces in which lesbians have gained (often affirmative) visibility in recent years. Female athleticism thus *can* make a "sense" of lesbianism "appear".

The textural layering surrounding a film also includes more generally the "viewing body's physical texture" (that is shaped by the sedimentation of "lived" experience) and its responsiveness to certain kinds of cinematic tactility.⁵⁶ It is precisely in relation to this overall textural layering and the "resonances and reverberations" between film and viewer thus enabled, that we might grasp the lesbian/queer implication of *She Monkeys* – as well as *Cracks*, *Waterlilies*, *The Gymnast*, *Tomboy*, *Of Girls & Horses* and *Girlhood* – and potentially a range of other films, including superficially "straight" ones.

Queer-ing Texture in *She Monkeys*

Returning to *She Monkeys*, I want to illustrate what a queer textural analysis (a queer reading of texture/a textural analysis of queer) might *do*, by tracing the film's corporeal tendencies via selected key scenes and patterns.

The relationship between Emma and Cassandra develops, at least initially, within the context of vaulting, an athletic activity that is very much about mutually dependent relations between bodies (human and animal); it is about attaining balance and defying gravity (i.e., disrupting the body's conventional relation to the *ground*). We develop a "sense" of the characters primarily

through their tactile and kinaesthetic relations to each other and the environment, including contact with animals (the horses, Emma’s dog, a jelly fish) and water (a public swimming pool, the sea, and the bathtub in Emma’s home). These tactile relations are never comfortable, however, as they oscillate fairly unpredictably between intimacy, tenderness, and (erotic) sensuality and violence, hostility, and aggression, blurring affective boundaries in the process.



[Figure 6: stretching.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – stretching

[Figure 7: headstand.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – headstand

[Figure 8: suspended.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – suspended

The riding hall in which training takes place is marked as a particularly flexible, malleable and textured space. The grittiness of the sand that covers the floor is foregrounded through numerous close-ups (often in slow-motion) of the horses' feet, swirling up big clouds of dust that give a sense of materiality to the space and the movement (of bodies) within it. The sonic foregrounding of the horses' heavy rhythmic breathing and of the hooves' weighty pounding on the sandy floor (while all other environmental sounds are drowned out) adds a further layer to this already densely textured space. The grittiness of the sand is equally central to a training scene in which the members of the vaulting team sprint across the sand and perform push-ups and various strengthening exercises on the grubby floor. The dust surrounds the characters and sticks to their sweaty bodies, adding *substance* to the muscular relations between bodies, and between bodies and space. The palpable emphasis on sweat, heavy breathing, veins on necks and foreheads, and red, flustered cheeks further highlight the bodies' lived materiality.





[Figure 8: feetandsand.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – feet and sand

[Figure 9: hooves.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – hooves

[Figure 10: exercises.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – sweaty bodies and sand

While this sense of corporeal texture is made most explicit in athletic sequences, tactility constitutes a central mode of affective engagement throughout. For instance, Cassandra takes Emma's hand (framed in close-up) to show her how to greet a horse, conjuring an encounter that takes shape via mutually responsive movements and gestures. When Emma fails to make the vaulting team (while Cassandra does) she seeks comfort, not in conversation, but in physical contact with her dog, hugging him tightly. In an earlier scene, Emma lets herself be blindfolded by Cassandra, who guides her through a green, leafy area towards the seashore and into the water. The characters move through a heavily textured space of leaves and branches swaying in the wind, with pollen floating through the air, while the now familiar noises of rustling leaves, the eerily vibrating musical sounds and the rhythmic aural patterns of the sea washing up on shore add to the textural layering of the scene. In the water, an ambiguously playful "dance" ensues as Emma, still blindfolded, tries to keep up with Cassandra, arms outstretched, carefully probing the space in front of her, moving warily on what is wobbly, unfamiliar ground. In a way, this bodily back and forth – stumbling, reaching, hesitating, turning – resonates with the embodied, intercorporeal encounters offered by the film itself and further encourages spectatorial alignment with the queer tendencies and orientations embodied by the characters.



[Figure 11: blindfold.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – blindfold

[Figure 12: hands.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – hands

[Figure 13: jellyfish.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – squashed jellyfish

When Cassandra tells Emma to hold out her hands, a lengthy close-up frames Emma's hands in front of the depthless surface of blurry, rippling water. Cassandra's hands enter the frame and gently move Emma's palms together. The camera lingers on this moment just as Cassandra's hands linger on Emma's, caressing and exploring the surface of her skin in small, almost imperceptible

movements, before Cassandra places a jellyfish on Emma's palms. Emma explores the squishy texture with her fingers, carefully probing at first, and suddenly more forceful, violent even, as she squeezes the jellyfish so hard the spongy, slimy substance squelches out from between her contracting fingers.

This sequence is indicative of the ways in which tactility and contact function in ambiguous and often unpredictable ways throughout the film. While touching is used in explicitly sensual and at times erotic/desiring terms, bodily intimacy often turns suddenly aggressive and violent and produces a clashing of affective scenarios. This kind of corporeally affective "whiplash" is similarly conjured in a scene in which Emma gives her younger sister a bath, at first gently playing, then suddenly pushing her head under water until she is desperately struggling to breathe. The (physical) violence always lurking beneath the surface erupts without warning. The intermingling of playfully benevolent and threateningly sadistic tactility is equally brought to the fore in a scene in the public pool. Emma and Cassandra daringly climb the diving tower to the dizzying heights of the top platform, jumping down together holding hands. When they climb back up for a second time, Cassandra spins Emma around on the top platform, with a giggling Emma initially enjoying the playful encounter. However, Cassandra refuses to stop when Emma asks her to and a dizzy, disoriented Emma stumbles off the platform (or does Cassandra push her?) and plunges into the void, her rotating body and dangling limbs signaling a loss of bodily control. An extreme long shot reminds the viewer of the height of the platform and thus the severity of the fall, while the close framing of Emma being spun around by Cassandra (with close-ups of Emma's rotating feet and of her increasingly concerned and dizzy face) heightens the sense of bodily disorientation. *She Monkeys* seems to challenge us to stay on our toes, as our tactile, muscular and affective alignments (with the characters and the film) are constantly threatened to be pushed off balance.

Other examples of this include a scene in which Emma and Cassandra sit next to each other on the floor in Emma's house, drinking and giggling. They are surrounded by layers of textured fabric and drapes in warm, earthy colors that hang from the ceiling and take up almost the entire screen,

evoking a sense of closeness and intimacy. The affective tone of the scene shifts rather startlingly, however, when Emma picks up a rifle. She shows Cassandra how to load the weapon and then (playfully?) aims the rifle at both her sister (who appears in the frame) and Cassandra. Nothing happens, but the tension, always lingering beneath the surface, is intensely palpable.

Emma and Cassandra's evolving relationship is not, first and foremost, articulated in narrative terms or through (psychological) character development. Instead, their tending and being attracted to(wards) each other is made graspable via the escalating visceral intensity of their encounters. Following the scene with the rifle, they engage in a drunken playfight that is always at the brink of turning serious/violent, before Cassandra helps an inebriated Emma to bed and undresses her. What follows is the film's most explicit depiction of lesbian desire/sexuality, as Cassandra slowly traces the contours of Emma's arm (with the hazy light and close framing of the hand moving across the skin adding a distinctly haptic feel) and then kisses her. A palpable sense of danger and threat thus frames the sexual intimacy, imbuing it with an ambiguously cold and detached tone. We might also add here that Emma seriously injures Cassandra by hitting her knee with a shovel in an act of ambiguously athletic/romantic jealousy just before the vaulting competition (which means that Cassandra cannot compete, with Emma taking her place on the team). A sense of queer sexual awakening is thus linked to the visceral trajectory of the film and its contradictory resonances that does not necessarily follow a narrative logic, but a corporeally affective one.

If this account of *She Monkey's* conflicting corporeally affective scenarios reads/feels like a series of disconnected moments or events, it reflects adequately the film's structure, which adds an additional layer to its overall texture. Director Lisa Aschan describes her film as a "modern Western".⁵⁷ *She Monkeys'* nod to the genre as well as its historically queer connotations⁵⁸ goes beyond the shots of tumbleweed that is blown along dusty country roads (albeit in Sweden), Emma's unexplained fascination with a rifle and the generic Western music in the soundtrack of the opening title sequence. Aschan explains: "I wanted every scene to be a duel [...] I wanted to investigate how

people behave together”.⁵⁹ While the film is characterized by a fairly conventional story about the coming-of-age/coming-out of two teenage girls and their competitive engagement in sport, the narrative is loosely structured and develops slowly, almost incidentally, around the staging of the various encounters or “duels”. Overall, narrative development, and, by extension, the development of character psychology, cause-and-effect relations and temporal progression, take a backseat, as the articulations of particular modes of comportment and spatiality, of motility and contact, alignments and tensions, orientation and disorientation are foregrounded in the series of more or less loosely connected scenes, that are carefully staged, frequently in minimalist, tableaux-like fashion.

What *does* provide an overall sense of coherence, and what weaves the affectively corporeal encounters together, are a number of different transitioning shots that function as a kind of *textural glue*. Each of these shots provides an overtly and palpably haptic image, linking texture, movement and touch. In addition to the shot of the wire in the opening credit sequence, this includes, for instance, a shot of a rope with a metal hook swinging in the wind and dangling against the metal bar of a fence; the previously mentioned shots of tumbleweed blown along a dusty country road; a close-up of grass and flowers swaying to the rough sounds of the wind; a shot of big, heavy rain drops drenching the sandy ground; and a wide shot of brittle dry grass covering the ground between bushes and trees. In each of these transitional moments, the aural foregrounding on the substances that “fill” space (wind, rain), and that touch and move that objects within it, add to the visually textured images’ densely haptic feel.





[Figure 14: rope.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – textural glue: dangling rope

[Figure 15: tumbleweed.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – textural glue: tumbleweed

[Figure 16: swayingflowers.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – textural glue: swaying flowers

[Figure 17: raindrops.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – textural glue: rain drops and mud

[Figure 18: drygrass.jpeg] *She Monkeys* – textural glue: dry grass

This links in important ways to the sense of time and placelessness in the film, that Aschan aimed to achieve, for instance through the conscious removal of any indicators of branding or advertising (on clothes or in public spaces). “I wanted the whole world [of the film] to be neutral”, she says.⁶⁰ It is precisely this neutrality (albeit a particularly white one), this sense of the world of the film as a heavily textured yet minimalist, malleable yet unmarked space, that allows for the various sensuous encounters and their tactile, spatial and muscular dimensions to come to the forefront of the film.⁶¹

Conclusion

What this account of *She Monkeys*’ textures offers, I hope, is “a better impression – in the physical as well as intellectual sense” – of the film’s queer resonances and possibilities.⁶² The phenomenological dimensions of becoming queer, of inhabiting a queer body and of acquiring queer tendencies and orientations through queer habits is made graspable, at least in part, through the interweaving of the film’s various textures. They provide a tactile, kinaesthetic sense of how

orientations shape what is reachable, ready-to-hand and within the horizon of the body, while continuously foregrounding the hard work, effort and bodily labor involved in acquiring certain habits and tendencies that, in turn, shape the body and its orientations.

She Monkeys invites, demands even, the viewer's tactile and muscular recognition of, and empathy with, this "working out" of the various relations, frictions, alignments and tensions, especially those ensuing between the protagonists, between the characters and their environment, and between the bodies *in* the film and the body *of* the film. *She Monkeys*' tendencies might resonate particularly intensely with certain "viewing [bodies'] physical texture"⁶³, orientations, habits and tendencies, while others' orientations might be shaped as a result of the habitual turning towards films such as *She Monkeys* and the tendencies they embody. Or the film might not really touch us at all. In her call for an acknowledgement of social positionality in the context of phenomenological inquiry, Al-Saji writes:

The receptivity of my body – the affections towards which I turn – are a matter of contextual contrast and interest [...]. The affective relief of the world can be understood as a sedimented social space. This space has not only been configured by the repeated movements, actions and gestures of multiple bodies within it – mapping out possible routes for my body while foreclosing others – it is also a space mediated by representations, discourses, and structures of power.⁶⁴

She Monkeys not only makes graspable the ways in which bodily movements and gestures shape spaces and reconfigure bodily horizons. Through its cinematic comportment, tactility and spatiality, the film also opens up, and reshapes, the "affective relief of the world", the "sedimented social space" in which certain orientations, habits and tendencies are more easily lived than others. This is the more general potential benefit of a queer textural analysis: a more profound grasping of cinema's role in the "shaping of bodies and worlds".⁶⁵

Notes

¹ Jose Gil, "Paradoxical Body," In *Planes of Composition: Dance, Theory and the Global*, ed. Andre Lepecki and Jenn Joy (London: Seagull Books, 2001/2009), 95.

² Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 54.

³ Barbara Hammer, cited in Jacqueline Zita, "The Films of Barbara Hammer: Counter-currencies of a Lesbian Iconography," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 24-25 (1981): 31.

⁴ Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2009), 25.

⁵ Ian Garwood, *The Sense of Film Narration* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

⁶ Lucy Fife Donaldson, *Texture in Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁷ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 26, my emphasis.

⁸ For a discussion of "facing" as a "somatic mode of attention", see Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 200.

⁹ See Andy Medhurst, "Batman, Deviance and Camp," in *The Many Lives of Batman: Critical Approaches to a Superhero and his Media*, eds. Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio (London: BFI, 1991); Richard Dyer, "It's Being So Camp as Keeps Us Going," in *The Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 1977/2005).

¹⁰ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 67, my emphases.

¹¹ Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 9.

¹² Patricia White, *UnInvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

¹³ *Ibid*, 174.

¹⁴ Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp,'" in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Penguin, 2009), 275/6, my emphases.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 276, my emphasis.

¹⁶ Medhurst, "Batman, Deviance and Camp," 155, my emphases.

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

¹⁸ Ahmed's account of the familiar/familiarity highlights the spatiality of *what our bodies already know*: "Familiarity is what is, as it were, given, and which in being given "gives" the body the capacity to be orientated in this way or that. The question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we "find our way" but how we come to "feel at home" [...] Familiarity is shaped

by the “feel” of space or by how spaces “impress” upon bodies [...] The familiar is an effect of inhabitation; [...] the familiar is shaped by actions that reach out towards objects that are already within reach” (7). This also offers possibilities for grasping how we might (come to) recognize certain cinematic embodiments and affective figurations *as familiar*.

¹⁹ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 77. Marks, *The Skin of the Film*.

²⁰ Medhurst “Camp”. Dyer, “It’s Being So Camp”.

²¹ White, *UnInvited*.

²² Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 102 & 104.

²³ *Ibid*, 103.

²⁴ Michelle Aaron, “The New Queer Spectator,” in *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michelle Aaron (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

²⁵ Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra, “Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies,” *Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image* 3 (2012): 193.

²⁶ D’Aloia, “Upside-down Cinema,” 166.

²⁷ Laura Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment and the Senses* (London: Duke University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 1.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 68, my emphasis.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 54, my emphasis.

³¹ Adriano D’Aloia, “Upside-down Cinema”, 155.

³² Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 3, my emphasis.

³³ *Ibid*, my emphasis.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 81, my emphasis.

³⁵ D’Aloia, “Upside-down Cinema,” 157.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 155.

³⁷ *Ibid*, my emphasis.

³⁸ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 81.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 81/82, my emphasis.

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- ⁴⁰ Vivian Sobchack, Vivian, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 5.
- ⁴¹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 138.
- ⁴² Alia Al-Saji, "Bodies and Sensings: On the Uses of Husserlian Phenomenology for Feminist Theory," *Continental Philosophy Review* 43 (2010): 15.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 15/16.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid, 15.
- ⁴⁵ Johanna Oksala, "A Phenomenology of Gender," *Continental Philosophy Review* 39 (2006): 237.
- ⁴⁶ Sara Heinämaa and Lanei Rodemeyer, "Introduction," *Continental Philosophy Review* 43 (2010): 5.
- ⁴⁷ Richard Dyer, "Don't Look Now: The Instabilities of the Male Pin-Up," *Screen*, 23/3-4 (1982): 67.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, 71.
- ⁴⁹ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 102.
- ⁵⁰ Iris Marion Young (1980) "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility and Spatiality," *Human Studies* 3 (1980): 144.
- ⁵¹ See Amy Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule: Cultural Criticism and the Value of Desire* (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-25, on the question of lesbian visibility and "appearance".
- ⁵² Judith Butler, "Athletic Genders: Hyperbolic Instance and/or the Overcoming of Sexual Binarism," *Stanford Humanities Review*, 6/2 (1998).
- ⁵³ Donaldson, *Texture in Film*, 46.
- ⁵⁴ Barbara Mennel, *Queer Cinema: Schoolgirls, Vampires and Gay Cowboys* (London: Wallflower, 2012), 6.
- ⁵⁵ Rich, *Director's Cut*, 103.
- ⁵⁶ Donaldson, *Texture in Film*, 45.
- ⁵⁷ Rosie Swash "She Monkeys Director Wanted Coming-of-age Movie to Be "Like a Western," *The Guardian*, 28 April, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/apr/28/she-monkeys-lisa-aschan-interview>.
- ⁵⁸ Rich, *Director's Cut*, 185-201.
- ⁵⁹ Swash, "She Monkeys Director"
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ What has been sidelined in this discussion is how normative whiteness underpins the affectively corporeal foundations of the world of the film. Whiteness functions as a kind of textural “base layer” that is so normative, habitual and familiar as to, perhaps, go unnoticed. This is problematic in the sense that only very particular kinds of (white) queer/lesbian orientations and forms of contact take shape within the film, based on the kinds of bodies and spaces that are (not) accessible and within reach.

⁶² Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, 26.

⁶³ Donaldson, *Texture in Film*, 45.

⁶⁴ Al-Saji, “Bodies and Sensings,” 33.

⁶⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 2.