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THE EXPERIENCE OF "EXISTENCE" WITH THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC SCREEN: THE IDENTIFICATION CONTEXT

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*Abstract***.** The article provides a deep analysis of a vast range of human experiences by means of highlighting the mechanisms of identification and the ways of their conceptualization. The present study grounds on the assumption that contemporary screen theories regard screen experience as a broad concept rather than a bunch of processes of visual consumption. Consequently, a creative product is viewed as a means for enriching human experience through the interaction of two types of embodiment and subjectivity: a human and a screen one. Such experience is construed via games with material features of the environment. A game creates space that encourages convergence with the object and accounts for the identification with the film as an event rather than identification with characters that are in the centre of the plot development.

Drawing on contemporary touch aesthetics, the authors of the article reveal tactile features of screen experience proving that tactility deals not only with skin or screen but permeates through all the parts of viewer's body as well as the film body.

Keywords: identification, phenomenological perspective, touch aesthetics, tactility

Topicality of the research and formulation of the problem. There is no denying that screen space enables the creation of image of any human or transhuman experience. The key tools of the implementation of such experience are the mechanisms of identification or / and sympathy, empathy (Thomson-Jones, 2008).

Since the (in)ability for self-identification with screen images, characters, and events is one of the most essential things for a regular spectator while assessing the works of screen art, the analysis of identification procedures (psychoanalytic elements of the psychosemiotic approach, cognitive criticism, empathetic approach etc.) seems to be relevant.

First, let us have a closer look at the findings of the psychoanalytical theory that have become an integral part of poststructuralist theory on films (i.e. "the secondary semiotics" or "psychosemiotics"). We believe that they can be applied for elucidation of the role of identification in the process of attracting a spectator to screen (Buckland, 2000, pp. 1–25). One of the examples of grasping the phenomenon of identification may be the idea of the mirror

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stage suggested by Lacan and its further interpretation in contemporary psychoanalytical research on cinematography.

The representatives of the school mentioned above stress on the possibility of equation of psychological identification with a cinematographic one. This possibility is based on structural subconscious uniformity of child's self-identification at the mirror stage (the period between 6 and 18 months) and the identification of spectators with film characters (Лакан, 2009, с. 508–516; Thomson-Jones, 2008, pp. 114–117).

Developing Lacan's ideas, Metz stressed on the possibility of identification as a result of the ability of screen to evoke the mechanism of infantile identification. It is this mechanism that activates the subjective ability to make sense of the images on the screen and derive pleasure from the film content (Buckland, 2000, p. 6; Thomson-Jones, 2008, p. 115; Metz, 1983, pp. 42–57). Consequently, this mechanism is subconscious. At the same time, Lacan considers it as the basis for any social interaction, since psyche functions due to subconscious juxtaposition of the subject and object as well as constant transformation of the subject into the object through identification. It should be underlined that according to Metz "identification with the camera is the main form of identification in film, while identification with characters is secondary" (cit. ex Thomson-Jones, 2008, p. 115).

These claims were heavily criticized by the representatives of the cognitive film theory who rejected the role of identification in research on screen culture. For example, one of the outstanding cognitive film theorists N. Carroll emphasizes the role of empathy rather than identification, which is accounted by the fact that a spectator is always beyond the circumstances and situations of the characters, thus it never results in identification. Besides, spectators realize that they deal with a completely made-up story where characters are not even Others, but the images of Others, i.e. some shades. Consequently, no matter what happens on the screen, it does not influence spectators' destiny (see Carroll, 1988; Carroll, 2008).

R. Wollheim and B. Gaut are less critical of the concept of identification proving that screen is a means for overcoming the limits relevant for every subject. This overcoming is possible due to acquiring someone else's experience, as well as perception of actions, thoughts, desires, and feelings (Thomson-Jones, 2008, p. 119). According to these theorists, identification is not subconscious and automatic. In order to evoke it, we switch on our imagination reflecting on characters' experience and "trying on" their mindset.

Furthermore, one is to differentiate between the constructions of imaginary identification, as we can both speculate on our emotions that we might experience in the skin of characters and extract a character from film events and place him/ her inside ourselves (Gaut, 1999, p. 203). The constructions of imaginary identification are not exclusively visual, as spectators ascribe to the characters the affective power (characters can make changes and react to events and circumstances), motivation, religious beliefs, desires as well as likes and dislikes to film characters (Gaut, 1999, p. 205).

Reflecting on the problem of 'experience — boundary and experience beyond the boundary', a famous Uktrainian culturologist M. Sobutskyi claims that we can see things and events on screen that we would not like to experience in our real life. Our life experience is expanded through fantasms, which is obvious when actualization of borderline fantasies may be life threatening and inhibit the acquisition of any experience. Existence sets boundaries to experience that cannot be crossed, but experience in its turn draws boundaries for existence that cannot extend beyond these limits (Собуцький, 2003).

Another researcher on screen culture K. Thomson-Jones draws our attention to B. Gaut's idea of incompleteness of imaginary identification. The matter is that a spectator does not perceive a screen image as a whole, performing thus an imaginary identification with a certain fragment of character's image (their character traits, decisions, motivation, etc.). The variety of identification forms is limited only by the variety of others' experience that one can imagine (Thomson-Jones, 2008, p. 119).

Generally, empathy theories of identification are considered to be partial and those ones centered on feelings and emotions, evoked by emotions shown on screen. Such a treatment requires explanation: an empathetic response is not merely the reaction to screen images; it needs the reconstruction of circumstances in which the characters experience emotions. For this reason, contemporary researchers suggest differentiation between the notions "affective mimicry" and "emotional modelling" (Thomson-Jones, 2008, pp. 121–122).

Affective mimicry grounds on the assumption that

an empathic reaction is automatic. The main means applied in film to evoke identification through affective mimicry is focusing camera on human face and slowing down of audio and visual narrative (Plantinga, 1999, p. 239).

A number of studies on screen dwell on the notion of emotional modelling and state that an automatic affective mimicry is not sufficient for identification. Certain conditions are to be created so that spectators can understand characters' motivation, foresee their actions and grasp their thoughts. At the same time, image identification allows us to accept a different perspective and react from that standpoint, giving thus a certain reflective distance referring to our perspective and typical responses (Thomson-Jones, 2008, p. 122).

A renaissance of phenomenological views can be traced in contemporary screen studies. The usage of phenomenological ideas that describe the mechanism of consciousness related to perception and cognition is considered to be well-grounded, though the attitude to the possibility of correlation between phenomenology and film theory used to be negative for decades (Sobchack, 1992; Baracco, 2017).

Since the seventies of the last century, the application of the findings of phenomenology had been regarded as a dead-end approach due to its idealistic, essentialist, and antihistorical perspective (Sobchack, 1992, p. XIV). A renowned film theorist V. Sobchak claims that all attempts to analyse mental experience, pure consciousness, the essence of things without referring to social and scientific grounds in film studies by Husserl's followers seemed to be irrelevant to leading paradigms of that time (e.g., Lacan's psychoanalysis, neo-marxism, etc.) (Sobchack, 1992, p. XIII).

Lacan's structural psychoanalysis and neo-marxism reached considerable significance in their complementary points: inner existence of the subject and his / her social life was studied in language analytics as a part of mental and social life, language and discourse were regarded as generating structure within libidinal economy of the subject and political unconscious of social formation (Sobchack, 1992, p. XIII). Relying on this theoretical background, screen was to receive a versatile dialectical theory of cinema and overcome the boundaries between mental and social spheres (Sobchack, 1992, p. XIII). These strategies were spread among different schools of thought. One of the examples can be the application of Lacan's psychoanalysis to gender features of spectators in order to reveal the patriarchal functions of Hollywood narratives (Sobchack, 1992, p. XIV).

Contemporary theorists noticed a theoretical simplicity of the picture of social existence and the place of the subject there suggested by the schools mentioned above, which ensured understanding of the necessity to accept the ability of the subject to get autonomy from dominating structures and systems. Consequently, the analysis of mental mechanism as well as experience boundaries gained popularity in the philosophy of film.

The main concepts of phenomenology allow us to describe and study spectators' experience that has not been elucidated in other philosophical approaches. The existing theoretical bias against phenomenological grounds for screen studies inhibited the possibility to get a meta-position on screen and personal feelings evoked as a result of film watching.

A good example of a contemporary study that assumes the possibility to combine a phenomenological approach with film theory to analyze conditional real experience and film experience may be the book by S. Shaw (Shaw, 2008). According to him, phenomenology helps bridge the gap between formal analysis of expressive functions of screen material and real impression from the immersion into the fragments of real life represented on screen (Shaw, 2008, p. 22).

S. Shaw claims that screen technologies penetrating into the real life are not confined to the aesthetic sphere but can transform the reality via the influence they exert on spectators' consciousness. It seems to be strange that film theorists do not make use of phenomenological studies despite similarity between the concepts describing consciousness (Shaw, 2008, p. 22).

In our opinion, a phenomenological perspective takes into account and corrects the inaccuracies of instrumentalist approaches to screen studies and the analysis of the interaction between spectators and screen. An instrumentalist approach views screen as the sphere of technical fixation of audio and visual fragment of reality, making thus an esthetic effect seem trivial and denying the esthetic value of the technological artifact (Shaw, 2008, p. 35). The major disadvantage of this approach is overlooking of the need to study spectators' experience of overcoming the boundaries of consciousness via saturation of psyche with artificial screen images and emotional responses evoked by them with its further rational analysis.

Let us have a look at some key phenomenological ideas that may serve as a theoretical background

for further research on screen experience. One of the common features of screen technologies and phenomenological studies is the concept of "intentional act of perception". Fixing by a camera some fragments of reality seem to be similar to capturing reality in our reminiscences, dreams, daydreaming, etc. Nevertheless, there is a big difference lying beyond the boundary of assimilation. The difference is in the ability of screen technologies not only to fix experiences over time but also store them, generate a space of senses of esthetic consciousness, and transmit them from one person to another one.

Turning to two intellectual traditions, phenomenology and screen theory, we can state that phenomenology is the basis for screen studies development. Similarly, screen studies develop theoretical material that seems to be useful for the development of phenomenological concepts, e.g., the notion of intentional consciousness mentioned above.

E. Husserl used intentionality for the analysis of the experience of objects on body level and on the prereflective level where intentionality is the generator of thought (Shaw, 2008, p. 45). Referring to screen experience, it seems to be reasonable to study intentionality from a different perspective: theorists do not deal with a single intentional act but with a number of such acts that are related to film director's consciousness, are technologically processed, and penetrate into spectator's consciousness as an esthetic artifact.

The experience of different states of consciousness acquired throughout life is often embedded in screen narratives. The intersubjective aspect of artificial screen space allows spectators to be involved in events and experiences that are inaccessible in real life, e.g., other people's dreams. In intentional act a spectator rejects the awareness that the universe is artificial and it allows us to penetrate into the world of the Other (Shaw, 2008, p. 22).

Turning to the key phenomenological statement of intentionalist approach (consciousness always belongs to something, as it is constantly directed to the object), we observe the experience of consciousness, when it interacts with the object, in our case with screen material, and capture the character and content of experiences, a specific form of consciousness evoked by screen images (Shaw, 2008, p. 23).

One of the most widespread questions raised by spectators and film critics is about the sense of the screen material suggested. Referring to the findings of phenomenology concerning understanding of experience boundaries, one should underline the difference between the classical phenomenology and phenomenological screen studies on the issue of sense generation.

In Husserl's philosophy, the sense of reality is equal to the sense revealing the noematic component of psyche (Гуссерль, 2009, с. 286–309, с. 399–422). It happens inside psyche in the following way: sensuous intuition of perception act unites with categorical intuition, which results in visualization and presence through a series of projective assumptions leading to grasping the essence (Shaw, 2008, pp. 43–44).

S. Kracauer suggests another approach to understanding the possibility of making senses. Film producers and consumers have to give up ideas about construing senses within the framework of noematic processes of human psyche. According to the scholar, making sense is possible through self-disclosure of the phenomena of existence, in particular the screen existence, while spectators can only observe this process (Kracauer, 1997).

On the one hand, observing the material fixed by a camera is actualization of physical reality, living world that without a close attention of a spectator is just an immersion into dream and oblivion. On the other hand, screen experience is a means of overcoming anthropocentrism and egocentrism via temporary transcending the limits of conditionality of the existence and searching for new senses. As a result, a usual subjectivity is fragmented, and a spectator loses the illusion of control over the flow of events and his / her emotional states.

In order to provide a detailed description of the experience, S. Shaw draws our attention to the perception structure appearing as a result of a unique reflection of the outer world through its filmed reproduction (Shaw, 2008, p. 23).

The experience of screen perception lies in observation of the "demonstration zone" where "the visualization of the act of visualization" takes place along with time description. Such experience entails immersion into the created structure of another temporality (different from spectators' one). Thus, the material presented on screen does not only provide a chance to dive into esthetic experience but also gives a possibility to experience different situations on psychic and emotional levels (Shaw, 2008, p. 23). It is worth mentioning that it is the intentional nature of consciousness that ensures the similarity of experiences gained through screen with real life experiences.

S. Shaw suggests the introduction of the notion of "buffer zone" that describes the interaction between the screen world and the world beyond the screen. The screen is embedded into the world and the world is embedded into the screen. The screen saturates spectator's consciousness with images and situations, while a spectator "invests" his / her attention into the screen. Consequently, there is an exchange that is simultaneously public and intimate, the camera eye reveals the reality and it turns to spectators that later turn into active participants of visual and audio discourse (Shaw, 2008, p. 24).

Due to the possibility of filling consciousness with images that have nothing to do with our daily routines, a spectator grasps experience that was unattainable in history and culture. S. Kracauer's example seems to be a good illustration of this. Suffering from torture and beating, a prisoner of the concentration camp cannot immerse into grasping his / her experience as his fear and powerlessness disappear along with him / her. When producers of screen material try to show the picture of a concentration camp to spectators, the depicted suffering might develop humanization, as spectators can experience fear of the other as their own. Thus, the prisoner's experience turns into real one (Kracauer, 1997).

One of the key features of screen experience is living through intensity and concentration of meanings that are combined with routine experience. One can grasp meanings and the act of significance via screen. The embodied activity of perception and expression, making and creating senses are given to us as modals of single experience of presence and producing of meaning (Sobchack, 1992, p. 8).

The screen counts on a spectator as on an agent of perception of an anonymous but present Other. Screen products hide a forward-looking direct perceptual experience of subjects that created it. At the same time, it surpasses their experience because it has the power to accumulate the experience of spectators that perceive and interpret it. Spectators saturate screen with direct and indirect experiences as mediators (Sobchack, 1992, p. 9).

One of the cutting-edge directions of the present-day film studies is tactile aesthetics, which focuses on tactile characteristics of screen experience (Jennifer M. Barker, M. Beugnet, L. Marks).

Jennifer M. Barker claims that tactile characteristics, which she ascribes to cinema, enable grasping of screen experience as a personal one (not as a detached observation that regards watching a film as an immersion into a visual space) (Barker, 2009, p. 2). Touch is not connected with a single part of the body, e.g., skin, as the entire body surface can respond to tactile experience. Thus, cinematic tactility touches skin and screen and reverberates in the human body and the film body (Barker, 2009, p. 2).

The representatives of this newly-developed theoretical paradigm try to delineate and study specific tactile structures of perception and expression reflected in cinema that are used on screen (by humans or non-humans), viewers or films (Barker, 2009, p. 4). Their main statement is that relations 'spectator — screen' are grounded on generating and making senses not only on a rational level but also on a body level. When viewers are engrossed in a film, the screen absorbs their emotional, intellectual, and physical resources, and the film gives itself to viewers. Foregrounding the material part of cinema eliminates the borders between the subject and object, figure and ground as the basis for our perception of the Self as a separate entity. Tactility and denial of the perspective violate the visual hierarchy that shows a human as central and autonomous entity (Beugnet, 2007, p. 63).

A human being acquires screen experience as an embodied creature; cinema addresses humans as a material embodiment. Living body of cinema is a dynamic construal formed as a result of emotional and intellectual investment of spectators in film production and perception. The film body absorbs the material of perception and expression of those involved in its production, turning into something unique and authentic, as viewers refer to a work of art rather than to film director's psyche. When a film keeps our attention, captivates and inspires us, its body opens to us and invites us. It can even inhale us so that we can feel its pulse and breathing as ours. Film can acquire our forms of existence and at the same time revive us, feeding us with emotions and feelings (Barker, 2009, p. 147). Screen transforms spectators' view of reality they are in, meeting with screen gives thus a possibility to widen the range and increase depth of probable experiences.

According to M. Beugnet, among other kinds of art, screen experience ensures the closest possible distance to the phenomenological world of art, because a human being responds to screen with his / her body. The specificity of this new approach lies in refusal to

regard cinema exclusively as 'absorption of visual'. From this new perspective, cinema is viewed through the prism of attracting attention to tactile details and material surface where figure and ground converge, where sight resembles touch and can perceive the impulses that are usually associated with skin contact (Beugnet, 2007, p. 66).

Relying on the above mentioned phenomenological interpretation of cinema made by V. Sobchak, the representatives of touch aesthetics attempt to show that film is a living body that shares some ways of visual perception with us (Barker, 2009, p. 8). Thus, screen may be viewed as a subject and object; and during film demonstration two modes of existence, a human and technical world, merge in the acts of perception and expression. At the same time, anthropomorphic features should not be ascribed to screen as the subjectivity and body of screen are not equal to the subjectivity and body of a human being. They form a separate unique mode of existence.

Screen performs a self-representation and simultaneously hides something significant about itself (the process of its creation, technical characteristics, etc.), that is why there is always a thin layer of uncertainty, intrigue, as the contact of spectator's skin with film skin ensures a short partial possession of each other, which brings pleasure due to its inconstancy and incompleteness (Barker, 2009, p. 29). Films can touch spectators in different ways: amuse, beat, hurt, and caress. We can also touch the film 'with a gentle, calm and obliging look' and at the same time we can touch it aggressively, with keen eyes and ears, groping and examining it. This tangible touch may be tender when we focus on some film details with appreciation, or it may be tough when a spectator notices weak points of the film, some mistakes and implausibility (Barker, 2009, p. 37).

A spectator can stop watching the film, but it does not mean that he or she has the power over screen. On the contrary, a spectator has to trust screen and perceive it as the development of an intersubjective process in order to gain a richer and deeper experience. L. Marks describes this immersion into experience as an erotic one, as it involves a mutual desire of self-disclosure for the Other (Marks, 2000; Marks, 2002).

This process is not accompanied by the loss of the Self and identity. Moreover, it is characterized by a positive enrichment and a deep understanding of your own self. While watching and examining the film body, spectators observe themselves, their passion, imperfection, and hidden desires.

At first glance, it seems to be paradoxical that within the framework of touch aesthetics screen may not only satisfy human needs in communication but also in tactile experience. In relations between film and a spectator, tactile visuals satisfy the need in contact inviting a spectator to experience the desired, something that gives pleasure (Barker, 2009, p. 40).

CONCLUSION

Thus, a brief survey of present-day theoretical views of spectator's identification with screen provides grounds to claim that audio and visual content of screen can perform two functions at the same time: that one of an intersubjective communicator and a connector of senses. Referring to a phenomenological approach allowed us to refrain from a narrow understanding of cinema experience as a set of processes of consumption of visual material. On the contrary, we gained a new access to understanding of the ways for enrichment of human experience as a result of contact between human consciousness and art forms presented on screen.

From this perspective, we managed to prove that contemporary film phenomenology tends to interpret screen experience as a result of the interaction act between the two types of subjectivity and body: a human and screen one. We also found out that such experience involves the priority of spectator's identification with film as a kind of event. In other words, contemporary film phenomenology refuses from traditional patterns of film criticism that are grounded on the opinion that spectator's identification with film characters or admiration for plot lines are of primary importance.

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Чміль Ганна Павлівна

Досвід «буття» з кінематографічним екраном: ідентифікаційний контекст

Анотація. Статтю присвячено аналізу розширення діапазону людського досвіду через механізми ідентифікації та представлення концептуалізацій цих механізмів. З'ясовано, що в межах сучасних досліджень екрану здійснення теоретичної «реабілітації» феноменологічної перспективи уможливило відмову від вузького розуміння кінематографічного досвіду як сукупності процесів «споживання» візуального матеріалу.

Встановлено, що художній артефакт здатен на збагачення людського досвіду й у межах узаємодії двох типів тілесності й суб'єктивності: людської та екранної. Цей досвід конструюється через гру з матеріальними епостями середовища, яка створює простір, що заохочує до зближення з об'єктом погляду, віддаючи перевагу первинній ідентифікації з фільмом як подією, а не ототожненню з персонажами, які потрапили в сюжетний розвиток.

Ключові слова: ідентифікація, феноменологічна перспектива, «дотикова естетика», тактильність.

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Опыт «бытия» с кинематографическим экраном: идентификационный контекст

Аннотация. Статья посвящена анализу расширения диапазона человеческого опыта через механизмы идентификации и представления концептуализаций этих механизмов. Установлено, что в пределах современных исследований экрана осуществление теоретической «реабилитации» феноменологической перспективы позволило отказ от узкого понимания кинематографического опыта как совокупности процессов «потребления» визуального материала.

Установлено, что художественный артефакт способен на обогащение человеческого опыта и в пределах взаимодействия двух типов телесности и субъективности: человеческой и экранной. Этот опыт конструируется через игру с материальными эпостями среды, которая создает пространство, поощряет к сближению с объектом взгляда, предпочитая первичную идентификацию с фильмом как событием, а не отождествление с персонажами, которые попали в сюжетное развитие.

Ключевые слова: идентификация, феноменологическая перспектива, «осязательная эстетика», тактильность.

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