

## SOBCHACK ABRIDGED AND REVISED TRANSCRIPTION

Kathleen McHugh: My name is Kathleen McHugh. I'm a professor in the Department of Film, Television, & Digital Media at UCLA. It's April 1st, 2016, and I'm at SCMS in Atlanta, Georgia to interview Vivian Sobchack, an Emerita Professor also in that Department. At the outset, I should mention that, along with teaching, writing, and administrating, she has also made significant contributions across our profession, among them serving as the first woman president of SCMS (1985-1987). In 2012, she was the recipient of SCMS's Distinguished Career Award.

Vivian has made substantial scholarly contributions both within and beyond media studies. Her key monographs include *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, and *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. She has also edited *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*; *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identity, Politics*; *Meta-Morphing: Visual Transformation and the Culture of Quick Change*; and co-edited (with me) 'Beyond the Gaze,' a special issue of *Signs* on new film feminisms.

Vivian's countless essays address a range of topics: historiography and media archaeology, genres such as sci-fi and film noir, animation, screen acting, and digital media, as well as signal films that capture the cultural and technological zeitgeist of their production. Her original, unexpected, and often hilarious take on things we thought we knew (but clearly didn't) is apparent in many of her titles:

'The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film'; 'Revenge of the Leech Woman: On the Dread of Aging in a Low-Budget Horror Film'; 'Beating the Meat/Surviving the Text, or How to Get Out of this Century Alive' 'Thinking through Jim Carrey'; 'Assimilating Streisand: When Too Much Is Not Enough'; 'The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic, and Electronic "Presence"'; 'When the Ear Dreams: Dolby Digital and the Imagination of Sound'; 'Love Machines: Boy Toys, Toy Boys, and the Oxymorons of A.I.'; 'Animation and Automation, or, the Incredible Effortfulness of Being'; 'Being on the Screen: A Phenomenology of Cinematic Flesh, or the Actor's Four Bodies'; and 'Sci-Why? On the Decline of a Film Genre in the Age of Digital Wizardry.'

All these texts indicate both Vivian's range and her attention to and serious 'play' with language as a key component of scholarly thought. With that, let's turn to the interview.

Kathleen McHugh: So, Vivian, what led you to become a film scholar, and what was your relationship to film prior to your university study?

Vivian Sobchack: A good opener...but, first, let me thank you for that extraordinary introduction!

Kathleen McHugh: You're welcome.

Vivian Sobchack: So, my becoming a film scholar was in some ways accidental. Here you need to know I was born in 1940. From an early age, I actually wanted to be a creative writer. So, in 1957, I entered Barnard College in New York as an English major. At the time, 'film studies' wasn't taught as such, although the major professional film schools--Columbia, NYU, UCLA, and USC—had some 'studies' courses that served as ancillary "support" to the focus on production. So I just grew up going to the movies a lot, and also reading a lot of reviews.

I lived in the city from 1957 until 1966, when all these amazing foreign films were coming into the country. Right near Barnard and Columbia was a small theater called the Thalia that was much like the Paris Cinematheque and showed a wide range of films: older ones, obscure ones, foreign films, you name it. And there were also several nearby art houses that showed the newest foreign imports from Satyajit Ray, Fellini, Kurosawa, Bergman, Godard and others. Before that I had mainly seen American movies but my movie-going in New York gave me an extraordinary cinematic education!

Then, in 1966, my then husband finished his PhD in English lit, and we moved to Salt Lake City when he accepted an offer from the University of Utah as an assistant professor in their English department. A few years later, like many young academics across the country, he decided to offer an undergrad intro to film class, at first okayed only for summer session. He expected around thirty students but over a hundred showed up—a lot of student credit hours for the department if the course were integrated into the regular curriculum, and so—around 1968 or so—it was. While there wasn't much respect for film studies itself, there certainly was for the 350 student enrollments in the intro classes.

However, my first teaching experience wasn't in film, but in freshman composition. The department didn't have enough grad students to staff all their comp classes, and since I had published a few things, and was a 'responsible' faculty wife, they asked me to teach. After that, I began part-time teaching of sections of the large film intro or history classes as a sort of 'glorified' T.A.

Kathleen McHugh: You started teaching before you'd ever taken any film studies classes?

Vivian Sobchack: Yes! I began the M.A. program at UCLA in 1973-74, when my husband, 3-year-old son, and I spent a year in Los Angeles for my husband's sabbatical. (You could complete the M.A. coursework in a year then.) A lot of exciting things were going on at UCLA—including the rise of the group of young black filmmakers now associated with the L.A. Rebellion. It was also the first year of UCLA's PhD program in film studies. Afterward, we went home to Salt Lake, and I wrote my M.A. thesis, *The Limits of Infinity: The American Science Fiction Film 1950-1975*, first published in 1980, and later updated with a lengthy new chapter, and republished in 1987 as *Screening Space*.)

Kathleen McHugh: What classes did you take at UCLA, and who taught them?

Vivian Sobchack: What made the greatest impression on me was Steve Mamber's Classical Film Theory. Reading these early theorists was so exciting to me—and still is. I find bringing their work together with contemporary developments very heuristic, and also a great pedagogical strategy. I also took an American Film History seminar with Steve, and Documentary seminar with Howard Suber.

This seminar really piqued my interest in documentary and made me want see more than the canonical films—and, a year later, I got the opportunity. I'd returned to UCLA from Salt Lake to file my M.A. thesis. I'd had a lot of teaching experience by then, and Suber asked if I wanted to fill in for a UCLA Prof on leave who'd regularly taught the grad seminar on Film Criticism. However, I was also scheduled to teach in Salt Lake, and that meant flying back and forth each week, and also a hotel overnight. I could only break even financially if they gave me another class. As it happens, I'd planned to teach an undergrad class in Utah on documentary, and scheduled the films, emphasizing Werner Herzog docs and other non-traditional works. I had a small budget and, like most of us at the time, rented films from 16mm agencies. When UCLA heard this, they said, "Great! You can teach documentary as a grad seminar here and bring the films with you." And that's what I did!

Kathleen McHugh: Bring the films from Utah?

Vivian Sobchack: Yes, and then take them back. The rental companies charged for a single class showing but we'd try to see them again over weekends because we had no other way to study them more closely. Moreover, the analyzer projectors we used often broke down. Remember, there were no VHS tapes or DVDs then! Anyway, this particular teaching arrangement at UCLA was a one time thing. I didn't teach there again until, in 1992, I was recruited away from UC Santa Cruz, where, by then, I was a full professor and Dean of the Arts. UCSC was my first tenure track job. I was hired in 1981 as an "Acting " Assistant Professor in the film area of Theater Arts, the "Acting" removed in 1984, when I finally filed my dissertation and was granted the Ph.D. from the University of Southern Illinois-Carbondale.

Kathleen McHugh: We'll get to the Ph.D., but can you first talk a bit about how you put together those courses at Utah, early on, in the 1970s?

Vivian Sobchack: Well, there were some scholarly books on film out there, but so few you could read them all, and all the film journals too. Initially, the most useful were the intro to film books pitched to undergrads. Most of their authors were in English departments. The main focus in these courses was on aesthetics and thematics. Initially, as a new academic 'discipline', film studies got little respect, and there was a need to demonstrate that film was a legitimate art form, so those intro books were all pretty similar. We tended to use the chapter 'units' as such, but how you structured courses and what films you showed were basically up to you. I showed some films discussed in the books, but I mixed them with more

contemporary films that students might know. I wanted to show all kinds of films.

Kathleen McHugh: What were some of the films you used for the undergrad classes?

Vivian Sobchack: Mainly, I structured screenings through interesting pairings—and still do. For the intro, I often started off with two short films: Chuck Jones' animated *Duck Amuck* for its accessible "in your face" reflexivity about cinema, and then Robert Enrico's *Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, for its compendium of cinematic techniques: slow motion, jarring angles, changes in rhythm and film stock, and so on. I'd show it twice, and talk over the second screening, pointing out what was happening cinematically and its effects.

I also regularly paired American and foreign films, popular and canonical films, contemporary and silent films. In a unit on editing, I'd contrast montage and long takes with Eisenstein's *Potemkin* and Miklos Jancso's *Red Psalm*, its 26 long shots almost wholly dependent on camera choreography, and this long before Steadicam or GoPro. And for genre, I'd show chronological reworkings of—for example—a horror film. I'd screen *Nosferatu* and the Bela Lugosi *Dracula*, then *Love at First Bite*, in which *Dracula* comes to New York in the late 70s and falls in love with a supermodel. It's really funny in its send-up of the genre. Then, I'd show a re-romanticizing of *Dracula*—this time John Badham's with Frank Langella, and Kate Nelligan as a very independent and sexually aware heroine. This kind of progression demonstrates the historicity of genres relative to when they were made, as well as the variety of ways genres can be played with or reinvented.

Kathleen McHugh: You also taught at the University of Vermont, right before you began your Ph.D.

Vivian Sobchack: Yes, for one year. That was in 1978-79. I had become very unhappy Utah about my professional prospects despite being very active in shaping the city's film "culture." There was only one art house when we got there. A group of us began a film club or society of sorts, and soon we got the local commercial theater chain to mount a film festival and we programmed it. It later became the U.S. Film Festival and then the Utah Film Festival, and eventually it was replaced by Robert Redford's realization of Sundance and its festival. We also successfully lobbied for a media center in the city's new concert hall. I was very much involved in all these things, but local others were hired to head them up even though I was told outright by those doing the hiring that I was more qualified. So, when I got an offer to teach in Vermont for a year while someone was on leave, I went! It was liberating... I was treated as a 'real' faculty member even if I was 'visiting.' Along with intro and history classes, I was asked to teach their first 'third world' film course, and my exposure at UCLA to 'third cinema' and films from Cuba, South America, and Africa was invaluable. At the end of the year, I drove back to Utah, but stopped along the way at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, which is where I ended up getting my PhD.

Kathleen McHugh: Why, of all places, there?

Vivian Sobchack: Well, knowing how much I resented the idea of getting a Ph.D. in a film program where I'd have to take courses I'd been teaching for years, a friend suggested checking out SIU's large Speech Communication department. I'm now embarrassed by how arrogant I was when I met with the chair. He looked at my CV and said, "You're obviously accepted," and my response was "Great, but I don't want to teach. I've plenty of teaching experience, but I need money for living expenses. And also to take as many courses as I can, so I can finish very quickly." He actually approved all this, but, until I had to register for the following fall, I never even looked in the catalog. That's how annoyed I was at having to start a Ph.D. program when I was forty and had tons of experience, and, by then, a good many publications.

Anyway, when I finally looked in the catalog, there was this one intriguing sub-area called 'Philosophy of Language.' And that was where I got an extraordinary education, particularly as compared to Film Studies PhD programs at the time. Given the politics and theoretical bent of the times and its critique of dominant cinemas, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, structuralism, and semiotics ruled. Film grad students were reading Baudry on the cinematically colonized spectator, Metz on cinema's 'imaginary signifier,' and Saussure on his binary semiotics. In contrast, I spent a whole semester on 'semiology.' Saussure was covered in a week, as our major focus was on the complex semiotics of Pierce, Eco, and Jakobson. In hermeneutics, we read Foucault and some Derrida, but also Levi-Strauss, Ricoeur, and social philosophers such as Durkheim, Habermas, and Gadamer. Emphasis was always on the connections between philosophy, theory, and qualitative methodology. Overall, this program gave me the most immersive and exciting opportunity to clarify my own thought processes. And best of all, each student's specific object of inquiry was their choice. For me, of course, it was film.

As to Merleau-Ponty, I discovered him in a seminar on phenomenology. His *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and Invisible*, provided me a grounded existential philosophy and empirical method that have been central to not only to my work but also to my life. When I first read him, what came to mind was the opening scene of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, in which a group of people roar up in jeeps to a lone house in the Mexican desert to interview an old man sitting on the porch, one half his face reddened, the other not. A translator speaks to him in Spanish, and then tells the waiting group, "He said the sun came out last night. He said it sang to him." That's how I felt in my first encounter with Merleau-Ponty: he sang to me.

Kathleen McHugh: So where and when did you first publish on film? Wasn't it well before your books on sci-fi and phenomenology?

Vivian Sobchack: Yes. The very first 'essay' on film I published was actually a 'letter' I wrote in 1973 to the editors of *Journal of Popular Film* (later *Journal of Popular Film and*

*Television*). It was a critique of one of their articles, which focused on *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* 'trilogy,' and trashed the last film, *The Creature Walks Among Us*. I made the case it was the most interesting of the three. Who in the world writes letters to the editor of an academic journal, but they actually published it—and asked if I had anything else. This led to their 1974 publication of my first 'legitimate' academic essay, *The Violent Dance: A Personal Memoir of Death in the Movies*, a meditation on why I had this sense of 'needing' to sit through a double feature of *The Wild Bunch* and *Straw Dogs* even though I hate watching violence on screen.

1974 seems to have been the year that signaled my "arrival" as an academic scholar. That year, along with *The Violent Dance*, my "Tradition and Cinematic Allusion," relating film genre to T.S. Eliot's work on tradition and the individual talent, appeared in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, and "The Alien Landscapes of the Planet Earth," in *The Film Journal*. Then, in 1975, I published *The Leech Woman's Revenge, or a Case for Equal Misrepresentation* in the *Journal of Popular Film*, and was invited to become an Associate Editor. So, by the mid-70s, I was off and running.... I must have had a lot of energy because I was teaching, delivering conference papers and revising them as essays, writing a successful intro textbook with my husband, and also finishing my book on science fiction film. The first versions of both *An Introduction to Film* and *The Limits of Infinity* came out in 1980.

Kathleen McHugh: What was it that drew you to sci-fi as the subject of your first 'scholarly' book?

Vivian Sobchack: I've always been a bit of a science junkie. As a kid I wanted to be a writer, but I also wanted to be an astronomer. I loved thinking about 'outer space' and planets and alien life forms, and saw all those 1950 sci-fi movies. I also read a lot of science fiction. But my later interest had to do with genre. When I was at UCLA, serious study of film genres was relatively new and pretty much limited to the western and gangster film. There was Jim Kitses' 1969 *Horizons West*, Colin McArthur's 1972 *Underworld U.S.A.*, and Will Wright's *Six Guns and Society: A Structuralist Study of the Western*, also 1972. I was interested in science fiction as a genre you couldn't historicize so neatly, that didn't have a set range of iconic objects, landscapes, and costumes which identified the genre as such. Science fiction's temporal possibilities and its iconic objects took no single or consistent form. So what shaped the genre and made it cohere as such? That question informed *The Limits of Infinity*. What I realized was that the genre was contained formally by aesthetic and narrative 'strategies' that privileged estrangement of all kinds—and created it by juxtaposing the strange and the commonplace in its images and use of sound—each a chapter in the book.

Kathleen McHugh: You've already spoken a bit about your introduction to phenomenology and Merleau-Ponty, who is central to *The Address of the Eye* but also to much of your later work. To use your earlier analogy, what made him "sing" to you?

Vivian Sobchack: Well so much of his attention was on perception and vision as embodied, multi-sensory, and always materially situated and hence perspectival. It seemed natural to use his work. In my dissertation and *Address*, my goal was to phenomenologically describe the general structure of the film experience, the conjunction of spectator and film, and Merleau-Ponty provided me an expansive and existential framework for responding to 'apparatus theory' as well as to other theorists such as Baudry and Metz, who at the time described spectators as infantile, passive, and literally vacuous. I found this infuriating! A non-sequitur by Metz just oozes contempt: "Spectator-fish, taking in everything with their eyes, nothing with their bodies." As a spectator himself, how come he was somehow exempt from his own description? All you had to do was go to any movie and you'd hear people talking back at the screen, or about what was on it! Spectators were hardly passive and empty receptacles. Even at its most banal, their talk was engaged, curious, judgemental, dialogic. *Address* was my attempt to redress what I felt was not only insulting but also empirically wrong!

Kathleen McHugh: Your focus on spectatorship leads to my next question. Throughout your career, you've written really substantive pieces on a variety of films. You also have an unerring sense of selecting films that illustrate or propose the intersection of some of your central interests. For example, you bring together embodiment and technology, or genre and gender, or animation and human exhaustion, and so on. Can you talk about what draws you to certain films?

Vivian Sobchack: I really go to movies with a willingness for it to 'do it to me,' whatever that might be. Like all of us, there are times I'm not in the mood for a serious film, or I feel too tired to read subtitles, or that, particularly on my television, I watch somewhat distractedly. But I really don't go looking for films to write about. Instead, certain films solicit me in the watching. They suddenly bring those intersections you speak about into being. The films I write about always present a question or a problem or a response from me I need to think about. They pick me rather than the other way round.

A major example in *Carnal Thoughts* is my essay on Jane Campion's *The Piano*, a film you've discussed at length in your wonderful book on Campion's films. For me, it was the strange experience I had watching the two opening shots and somehow sensing the first blurry and almost abstract image as fingers a second before I actually saw them clearly as such in the reverse shot that followed. How could that be possible? These two shots led me to try to answer that question in "What My Fingers Knew."

I wrote about *Detour* and became fascinated with its excessive use of back projection. The film's reliance on it prompted me to think about its use in the genre, and how its particular spatial permutations literally visualized the characters' psychic and social entrapment, their lives 'going nowhere.' As I thought and wrote, I realized that both formally and thematically, back projection was not merely an often-dismissed cost-cutting measure for low-budget noir films. Rather, whether used consciously or not, back projection was

to film noir space what flashbacks were to film noir time. This was an exciting insight! But I never went to *Detour* expecting to write about it. It's always something in the particular movie that calls upon me to respond and doesn't let go until I do.

Kathleen McHugh: I find it especially interesting in light of your emphasis on methodological rigor, that you've tended to privilege the contingent and the accidental in this interview--i.e., the film finding you; a road trip that led you to phenomenology in a Ph.D. program focused on philosophy of language...and then writing *Address of the Eye*. Can you talk a little about the contingent and the accidental, and how they relate (or not) to methodological rigor?

Vivian Sobchack: Well, the 'contingent' or 'accidental' are not methods. They are different experienced attitudes toward and judgements about unplanned events. Each is a subjective mode of experiencing certain objective events, but not the process through which inquiry about them is conducted. Phenomenological method would involve a rigorous description of both these events and attitudes, a bracketing of our habituated assumptions about them, and examination of those variations that distinguish them from each other in experience, since each of these judgements and words are not simply synonymous.

Kathleen McHugh: A really interesting point—and again your attention to the nuances of language. You've given us a sense of the rigorous observation and thought processes entailed by phenomenological method. However I'm also curious about your method of reading since you do refer to other scholars and source materials in your work. How do you decide what to read?

Vivian Sobchack: That's an interesting question—particularly these days.

Kathleen McHugh: Yes. The dilemma of what to read has certainly changed. Once, as you suggested, there was not enough material to draw upon, and now there's too much. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Vivian Sobchack: It may be hard to believe, but once you could read everything in the field—at least every scholarly book or journal in English! I remember when there was only one book on Ingmar Bergman, and only one on Hitchcock. When someone tried to publish a second book on Hitchcock, the initial response from publishers was "Do we really need another one?" I'm exaggerating, but only a bit. Today, of course, you can't read it all—and, because there's so much, too much, you often come across scholarly material that is, in effect, 'reinventing the wheel,' because the author missed earlier work on their topic. But the really terrible thing about this glut of material, is that there's a tendency, particularly with students, to often self-destruct. Thinking they can't read enough, they either read very little—or they keep reading and reading but it's never enough, and so have major problems finishing their dissertations.

I always do my homework but I also can't read everything, so my strategy or 'method' has been to read 'piece-meal'—that is, on a very present-tense need-to-know basis throughout my work on a specific project. I need to be interested in finding out something specific—more about a concept, the broader set of meanings of a word I think I know, a question or problem that emerges as I write. This specificity leads me to books and materials both in and out of our field. I tell students and myself, "This is a way to manage what and how much you read. Have it project-based and question-based. Don't try to read everything. Read some things."

Kathleen McHugh: An added reading and research dilemma is that our field has greatly expanded, but it's done so through increasing our specializations. This tends to close down forays into other areas rather than encourage them. Your interdisciplinary background and training seem to have allowed you the freedom to read and refer to research out of our field and that's added dimension to your work within it. How do you manage that?

Vivian Sobchack: In this regard, I think students who come into graduate film and media studies from other disciplines have an advantage—although initially they may not see it that way. But all of us have broader interests and life experiences that can be useful in our research and lead us to resources relevant to our particular projects. Having broad interests has led me to a range of scholarly and popular materials important to my work. But I also have some regular "go to" sources! I always read *The New York Review of Books*, which has really good essays on relatively new work across disciplines, many of which often provoke or help crystallize my ideas. When I don't know or are not sure about a concept or word, I regularly head to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and read definitions that change their meanings over time and often contradict each other. That, in itself, often leads me to thoughts I hadn't had, and sparks more complex questions and argument in what I'm working on.

In my classes, I also regularly assign relevant texts from other disciplines along with those in our own field. For example, when I teach historiography, I integrate books by historians who don't write about film and media, but who present a range of methods and philosophical ideas about the histories they write. What this does is open up a creative space in which to think about what history is from a variety of perspectives, and the many ways one might write about it.

Kathleen McHugh: Along with the dilemma of reading, the increase in specialization, and, of course, the major change in the technologies we use as well as now write about, are there other transformations in the field have been particularly significant for you?

Vivian Sobchack: Well, most certainly one would be feminism's changing but constant influence on the field over the years, both theoretically and critically. For example, early on, feminist concerns about 'sexual difference' on and off the screen were

central to the increased interest in and application of psychoanalytic theory and spectatorship. Today, concerns focus on intersectionality, race, gender, and, dare I say, 'embodiment.' Feminist film and media scholars were particularly important to the positive reception of *Carnal Thoughts* and my phenomenological emphasis on 'embodiment' rather than on 'the body,' as I've punned, "held at arm's length," as if it were a distant or abstract object.

Another major transformation was the field's embrace of cultural and culture studies—particularly the American version which was much looser ideologically than the British cultural studies from which it emerged. Its influence was such that fewer and fewer scholars were—or are—focused on aesthetics or close readings of individual films as was the case earlier on in the field. I think the advent of cultural studies was central to the 'turn' from what Hayden White in *Metahistory* described as "formism" to "contextualism."

And then, impossible to elaborate here but most obvious in terms of transformation of the field in all sorts of ways has been the electronic digitization of not only our field but also our culture and world. It's transformed and added to our objects of study, our theories and methods of study, and the ways in which we communicate our research.

Kathleen McHugh: As we're coming to the end of this interview, I'm wondering if we've left anything out of our discussion that you think important to your scholarly development or to the development of the field?

Vivian Sobchack: Yes, there is! It's writing! Writing is our medium—and yet the field hardly talks about it and rarely, if ever, teaches it. Writing and all that it entails—scope, organization, voice, style, rhetoric—is supposed to just rub off, or be absorbed through osmosis or by imitation. As a result, student papers are often organizationally all over the place, don't develop an argument, don't have a voice (other than overuse of the passive). And it's sad since many of our students with great ideas just don't know how to develop and elaborate them when they write. They don't know how to make, let alone sustain, an argument or what is meant by structure, or how to effectively integrate examples and quotations. This certainly has to do with writing on computers, but it also emerges from our secondary educational system with its larger classes and fewer and fewer writing assignments. And most faculty don't think it's our discipline's responsibility to offer courses in writing—our primary medium! Out of frustration, I often end up 're-writing' student papers and then adding copious comments as to why I'm changing or moving around this or that so they'll begin to see and understand the difference.

Kathleen McHugh: We've talked about this a lot over the years, haven't we?

Vivian Sobchack: Yes, and you're actually a colleague who has put together 'extra-curricular' workshops on writing, and finally been able to offer something in the regular curriculum that helps students revise papers with an eye to publication.

Kathleen McHugh: It seems appropriate to close this interview with a 'softball' 'big' question: so: Why is it important for anyone to study film and media at the university?

Vivian Sobchack: Probably not to get a job! For me, and I think for many others in our field, many many individual films have taken me on an incredible variety of meaningful journeys and provided me experiences and thoughts I might otherwise never have had. But the medium of film itself has also served as an anchor of sorts—letting us dwell for a while in a specific place and time in our travels before we once again move on and change our settings. A film can for a while anchor my interest and thoughts in the fine arts, or in American history, or astrophysics. It can make me read! I first became really interested in history and historical consciousness because of film. For me, films open up myriad possibilities for thought and emotion and wonder—and, dare I say, interdisciplinarity.

Kathleen McHugh: All that through film....

Vivian Sobchack: For me, yes! And particularly, film—best experienced on a big screen and in the dark.