Abstract — In taking the body as the first locus of subjectivity and intentionality, 20th-century phenomenology specifically focused on its motility, and in particular on its ability to approach, grasp, and appropriate the objects around it — an ability that for Maurice Merleau-Ponty ensures “our power of dilating our being-in-the-world, or changing our existence by appropriating fresh new instruments”. However, such a successful perspective raises a number of questions when it comes to bodies whose motility is amputated by race, gender, and class discrimination. When we look at contexts where the partition of space and the unequal circulation of objects is institutionalized, as in apartheid South Africa, how does a subject’s understanding of the world change? Examining two short stories by Nadine Gordimer and their filmic adaptations through the lenses of Iris Marion Young’s and Sara Ahmed’s feminist and anti-racist critiques of Merleau-Ponty, this paper aims at showing a pervasive ‘phenomenology of negation’ at play in literary and cinematic accounts of women’s lived experiences under apartheid.

**Keywords:** Nadine Gordimer, Iris Marion Young, Sara Ahmed, phenomenology, apartheid