

ABSTRACT

TOWARD A RHETORIC OF FILM: THEORY AND CLASSROOM PRAXIS

by Benjamin James Bickel Wetherbee

This thesis examines the rhetoric of film from both theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. It provides a summary of prior scholarship on film in composition classes and film as rhetoric, and, from that foundation, builds a series of theoretical heuristics on the rhetoric of film. This theoretical section relies mainly on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism and on classical rhetorical theory attributed to Aristotle, Cicero, and others. Provided, also, is a close rhetorical reading of the movie *Blade Runner*, which demonstrates how this theory might be applied to specific films. Finally, this paper discusses the uses of film in rhetoric-based composition curricula, providing two sample writing assignments that integrate film and rhetorical theory.

TOWARD A RHETORIC OF FILM:
THEORY AND CLASSROOM PRAXIS

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by

Benjamin James Bickel Wetherbee

Miami University

Oxford, Ohio

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Advisor _____
Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson

Reader _____
Jason Palmeri

Reader _____
John Heyda

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INTRODUCTION: A RHETORICIAN GOES TO THE MOVIES

“The words, too, ought to set the scene before our eyes; for events ought to be seen in progress rather than in prospect.”

– Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (3.10, 1385a27-35)

“[S]ight engraves upon the mind images of things which have been seen. And many frightening impressions linger, and what lingers is exactly analogous to [what is] spoken.”

– Gorgias, “Encomium of Helen” (§ 17)

“Weight, grandeur, and urgency in writing are very largely produced, dear young friend, by the use of ‘visualizations.’”

– Longinus, *On the Sublime* (15.1)

“The goddam movies. They can ruin you. I’m not kidding.”

– J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (136)

In 1896, during cinema’s infancy, filmgoers struggled to come to terms with the screen before them. That year, the premiere of Auguste and Louis Lumière’s 50-second, one-shot film, *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, terrified its audience, who feared that the locomotive before them would burst from the screen, plowing through the theater and over its patrons. They could not imagine the moving picture before them to be just that—a picture. The lesson, it would seem, is that it can be nearly impossible to imagine what one hasn’t already experienced.

If early moviegoers could hardly imagine the medium of the film, even as it flickered and animated before them, one could hardly expect classical rhetoricians—skilled as they were in the arts of imagination—to do the same. Yet, in this project, I presuppose that rhetorical theory, dating back to the ancients, can fruitfully inform the way we look at movies. The ancients lacked our technology and many of our forms of expression, but they lived and deliberated by the same set of senses we do, and the epigraphs I provide from Aristotle, Gorgias, and Longinus illustrate that they clearly respected the suasive power of visualization; Aristotle, especially, seems almost to prophesize the rhetorical power of the moving image “seen in progress.” His emphasis on movement, on the importance of the unfolding moment wherein an audience encounters and

“sees” another’s discourse, highlights a valuable distinction I wish to draw between rhetorical analysis of the movies, and what might be called “mere” textual analysis. Rhetorical analysis, namely, must account for this moment of encounter between the film and spectator, and the conditions surrounding the encounter: Rhetorical truth is not implied in the film text; it emerges from the moment of spectatorship. Thus *Time Magazine*’s pick (much to the chagrin of many horror buffs) of *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* as one of its “Top 25 Horror Movies” of all time makes good rhetorical sense (“Top 25”). In popular iconography today no innocuously puffing and chugging steam engine emblemizes horror like, say, Freddy Krueger, with his melted face and razors for fingers, or Jason Voorhees, with his chainsaw and hockey mask, but the Lumière brothers’ titular locomotive, threatening to bulldoze through the theater, likely inspired a more intense moment of fear than any either of these horror icons ever has. That horror, again, existed not in the image itself, but the cinematic encounter.

Today, as increasingly spectacular, computer-generated images embellish Hollywood narratives, audiences react less viscerally than the Lumières’ viewers did. We are used to the movies. We surround ourselves with movies. We surround ourselves with computers, cell phones, iPods, and other gadgets, too—but we still travel to the theaters to immerse ourselves in cinematic narratives, and we install increasingly big and sophisticated “home theaters” in our living rooms to better mimic the cinematic experience. That we no longer react like pre-1900 film audiences does not mean that the movies no longer affect us; it means they affect us more subtly and deeply. We internalize the discourse of film. We use film to understand our world and our own lives. When J.D. Salinger, via Holden Caulfield, warns that “the goddam movies ... can ruin you,” he means what I have just stated—that they can warp their audiences’ way of viewing the world, and themselves. Salinger’s memorable quote follows an equally memorable, descriptive passage: Holden imagines himself as the romanticized hero of a hard-boiled film noir who sits bleeding to death, talking tough, while the girl he likes tends to his wounds. Without the movies, the scene would never have been imagined.

Just as *The Catcher in the Rye* remains influential among first-year college students, movies continue to affect students’ lives and their ideological engagement with the world. It is this effect, and this perpetual dialogic encounter between viewer and film text that I will examine both in the light of rhetorical theory, and through the application of that theory to the first-year composition classroom. I come to this project mainly as a rhetorician looking at film, not a film

scholar looking at rhetoric, and the points of emphasis in my work likely reveal this disproportion; but still, I intend this to be a cross-disciplinary project, and my interest in film is more than cursory. I have always, since high school, been interested in film; I wrote movie reviews for a college newspaper; I took undergraduate courses in film and television. As a college sophomore, I wrote a rhetorical analysis of *The Deer Hunter*, which remains the piece of undergraduate scholarship I'm most proud of, and the one I sent off in my applications to MA programs in rhetoric. This project, thus, is at once academic, theoretical, and personal—and can be read as an argument for the integration of personal experience and response into academic writing.

I divide my work into four chapters. The first briefly examines the parallel development and coexistence of English departments and film studies, and then reviews the work that rhetoricians and compositionists have done in relation to film from the 1960s through the present. I examine how composition scholars in the '60s, '70s and '80s used films primarily as stimulants and visual analogues to student writing, and how '90s and postmillennial scholars put greater stock in students' responses and multimedia literacy—though perhaps at the expense of film's individuality as a medium. I examine, too, a number of works, beginning in the '50s, that examine film from rhetorical perspectives, though they are often divorced from composition studies. I conclude, based on this literature review, that rhetorical studies still have not approached film as thoroughly as they should; most of the compositionists' work leaves rhetoric in the periphery, while the rhetorically intensive works, taken together, leave much ground uncovered.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I begin to develop a theoretical approach to the rhetoric of film. Chapter 2 begins by setting the rhetoric of film apart from other areas of new media and multimodal studies; it then applies the rhetorical theory of Mikhail Bakhtin to film and film spectatorship, approaching film as a type of *utterance*—a rhetorical entity whose meaning is negotiated dialogically between the text and the viewer. I then analyze the role of *ethos*, or the emergent persuasive character, in filmic rhetoric, drawing from Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, and classical rhetoricians.

Chapter 3 analyzes the role of emotional responses in filmic rhetoric from a number of theoretical directions, including Longinus's idea of sublimity and Susan Miller's discussion of *paideia*. I then examine the role of *logos* in film, relying heavily on the classical enthymeme, as

well as Sharon Crowley's theory of ideology, "ideologic," and commonplaces. Finally, at the end of Chapter 3, I provide a concrete rhetorical analysis of the movie *Blade Runner*, which demonstrates how the theory I've developed in Chapters 2 and 3 might be applied in reference to a specific film text.

Chapter 4, finally, focuses on movies and in the first-year writing classroom. I argue that, while composition classes don't *need* film, just as filmmaking need not replace written composition, the classroom can benefit tremendously from using movies as objects of rhetorical inquiry. I then explain my approach for presenting movies to a class, emphasizing that students can both enjoy movies and watch them critically—and, indeed, that the reexamination of one's own responses constitutes a crucial part of rhetorical analysis. Last, I offer two sample assignments designed to help students think and write about the rhetoric of film and its surrounding discourse.

If my discussion of rhetorical theory dwarfs that of classroom praxis, it is not because I prize theory over pedagogy, but because the need to develop a theoretical foundation for the rhetoric of film seems to me the most pressing objective in pursuing this project. I will be delighted, of course, if those outside rhetoric and composition find my theory useful, but many of my ultimate interests are pedagogical. My goal is to affect how our students, and ourselves, think about the movies—and in turn, how the movies affect our lives. Film, put simply, remains an intensely popular medium; that popularity, in itself, warrants our attention as rhetoricians and teachers.

1.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FILM, COMPOSITION, AND RHETORIC IN THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

I. GETTING PAST “FILM AS LITERATURE”

The relationship between college English departments and film studies has spurred decades of ambivalence. Film studies, which has existed in a fledgling state since the creation of moving pictures, but wasn't widely recognized as a concrete discipline until the 1960s, has raised ire among conservative literary scholars who would dismiss the movies as both the popular, dumbed-down stepchild of “real” literature, and a catalyst for the perennial woe that “students don't read anymore”—or at least that they no longer appreciate the great books. Those, as James Berlin describes them, subscribing to the ideological premise that “the university [is] a place of experts” wherein “the expertise of members of the English department is in literary criticism” (*Rhetoric* 52), have treated film (not unlike composition) as another unwholesome side dish to the main course of *real* literature. However, alternative approaches to literary criticism—those derived from psychoanalytic, Marxist, semiotic, structuralist, and postmodern schools of thought—have allowed English studies and film studies an easier coexistence. In more recent years, especially, film studies has helped vitalize a cultural studies approach to literature, concerned less with high-low and major-minor distinctions, and more with a holistic view of literature as an enduring commentary on and means of understanding human cultures. Here, film, the omnipresent and influential medium it is, constitutes a large and necessary piece of the literary puzzle.

Since the '60s, in any case, film has gained traction as a subject of inquiry within English studies. From a certain scholarly perspective, that of “film as literature,” the role of movies in English studies has occasioned perennial discussion fueled by college literature courses that integrate film, anthologies like Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo's *Film and Literature: A Guide to Theory and Practice of Film of Film Adaptation*, and journals like *Film/Literature Quarterly*. English studies persistently inquires into film as literature, while scholars in film studies, as David Bordwell illustrates in *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the*

Interpretation of Cinema, reciprocate, often applying the same interpretive models to film that have historically dominated English studies' approach to literature. Such methodology, Bordwell notes, raises its own problems of interpretation outside of context; thus, he himself advocates a "historical poetics" of cinema, one that rejects hyper-interpretive acts that "drill into a film at the standard junctures and mine out examples which can be sorted into the standard bins" in favor of a more historically situated approach (260). But while attention to a film's cultural context implies attention to its rhetorical situation, even Bordwell confines rhetoric itself only to "the shaping of [verbal] language to achieve one's ends" (206). He applies the term only to film criticism, not to film itself.

Less prevalent than studies of film as literature, then, and speaking to Sharon Crowley's characterization of literature and composition as "not separate but certainly unequal" (*Composition* 79), is scholarship addressing film in relationship to rhetoric and composition. For every book or article on the rhetoric of film or composing with film, there exist scores, if not hundreds, on film as literature. While the latter category certainly deserves attention, I find such lopsidedness disquieting. It seems unwise, in the first place, to ignore Terry Eagleton's admonition that "[l]iterature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist" (9), and that adherence to such a belief reflects a politically conservative elitism: *We* recognize great literature; *they* do not. I agree with Eagleton that English departments need to "undo the damage" of literary theory's excessively "in-group and obstructionist" trends (vii), and that a return—an apt noun, given rhetoric's roots in antiquity—to a rhetorical criticism that studies how "discourse is structured and organized, and examin[es] what kind of effects these forms and devices produce in particular readers in actual situations" can help alleviate the harm of literary elitism by demystifying the tacit codes of "high" culture (179). In the interest of film studies I would pair "viewers" with Eagleton's "readers."

Of course, it would be wrongheaded to suggest that all literary discourse stems from elitism or ignores rhetoric, or even that such practice constitutes the dominant trend in contemporary literary study (especially in subfields like postcolonialism and queer theory). Moreover, a binary of film-as-literature versus film-as-rhetoric poses its own

oversimplifications: alongside Eagleton, Mikhail Bakhtin¹, Kenneth Burke, Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, and others have amply demonstrated the vast overlap between rhetoric and literature; some (Chatman, *Coming*; Harrington) have written studies that examine film explicitly through the vocabularies of both rhetoric and literature; and still others (Stam, *Subversive*; Flanagan) discuss film and literature in terms that translate fluidly to rhetoric. The point stands, though: that which explicitly foregrounds rhetoric in the study of film remains a minority discourse.

My purpose here, then, is to sketch a short history of this discourse on film, composition, and rhetoric, and from that foundation to posit my own suggestions for further consideration and use of film within rhetoric and composition.²

II. FILM AND COMPOSITION: A SHORT HISTORY

The Evolution of Film Studies

While I ground this project primarily in theories and histories of rhetoric and composition, it helps to quickly examine the parallel development of film studies. The term “film studies” itself, though, invites confusion, as the academic study of film has risen up within a number of disciplines; “film studies,” thus, refers to a historically disparate and heterogeneous array of inquiries into film, both interpretative and productive, sorted under various academic headings (media studies, communications, drama, etc., alongside more film-specific bynames like “filmology” and “cinematology”). “English,” however, has been among the most prominent of these headings, and Dale Adams, in a report commissioned by National Council of Teachers of English report in 1987, offers a succinct historical overview of film study within English

¹ As I discuss in Chapter 2, Bakhtin rejects “rhetoric” as oppressive and monological; yet his conception of the term differs vastly from that of contemporary rhetoricians. By contemporary standards, his work rhetoricizes the novel as a web of ideologically motivated utterances.

² In writing this first chapter, I owe much to three texts especially: Joseph Comprone’s 1976 bibliographical essay “The Uses of Media in Teaching Composition;” the *Report on Film Studies in American Schools* (1987) prepared by William V. Contanzo and others for the National Council of Teachers of English; and David Blakesley’s thorough summary of scholarship on rhetoric and film found in the introduction to *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film* (2003). Taken together, these three documents vividly illustrate the intersections of film, composition, and rhetoric that have occurred in the academy, and speak to academic and cultural climates surrounding such discourse.

departments. He begins by highlighting that, since its inception over a century ago, film has attracted the attention of academics and English teachers:

By 1911, when the [NCTE] was formed, the motion picture, both as an art and an industry, was already recognized as a medium of tremendous sociological, educational, and artistic possibilities. As such, motion pictures[,] primarily because of their affinity with other narrative literature, came under the varying degrees of purview of teachers of English and [have] remained so until the present time. (“Historical” 4)

The earliest years of film studies (1911-1920), saw English departments employing films as stimulants for student writing, but subordinating both films and student compositions to the study of “legitimate” literature. Adams notes that “[w]here film study was given any positive artistic consideration, it was done by energetic but maverick teachers of English” (4). Consideration of film in secondary English curricula swelled in ‘20s and ‘30s, though chiefly motivated by a concern that film was “having negative effects on students;” moving pictures found their way into the classroom, ironically, in order to “keep children from attending movies and to raise standards in film appreciation” (4-5). An enterprise known as The Payne Fund, which between 1929 and 1932 sponsored this moralizing inquiry into the effects of cinema on youths, sought, like Hugh Blair a century and half before it, to cultivate *good taste* (4).

The intellectual atmospheres accompanying World War II and the Cold War posed additional hurdles for film studies. Adams explains that interest in film

abated with the coming of World War II. Then, after the war, interest in film study continued to decline—first because the war-time use of film had created a new view of film as a “visual aid” and just one of several media in a whole “audio-visual aid” movement in education. Secondly, the *coup de grace* to the study of film came with the Sputnik era, which dealt the fatal blow to anything that even hinted at being academically frivolous. In fact, as late as 1968 film study was virtually dead ... (5)

Many film scholars identify that same year, 1968, as the official “beginning” of film studies, though further inquiry reveals a more complex evolution amid the rocky intellectual climate

Adams describes. As early as 1959, Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson note, a “central professional organization for English-language cinema studies” had been founded, known then as the “Society of Cinematologists” (xi). In 1964, as film studies began gathering momentum, many members of this society attended a momentous film studies conference hosted by Dartmouth College. This conference, both in its symbolism and subject matter, strongly mirrored English studies’ own Dartmouth conference two years later—an event often cited as a milestone in the development of composition as we know it today. Joseph Harris, though, describes this latter conference as less “the scene of a heroic shift in the theory and practice of teaching” than “a moment when many of the conflicts that drive work in English ... were dramatized with unusual clarity” (*Teaching* 3). Something similar seems true of the film studies conference. The book *Film Study in Higher Education* (ed. David C. Stewart, 1966), a report of on the Dartmouth conference, reveals only one concrete conclusion—the necessity of further conversation and publication on the teaching on undergraduate and graduate films studies (3)—but, to borrow Harris’s phrasing, *dramatizes with unusual clarity* a series of conflicts about the academic study of film, conflicts articulated through film professors’ teaching outcomes and course descriptions alongside rebuttals from other academics, plus *New Yorker* film critic Pauline Kael, that question the methods and purposes of teaching film in the academy. If, as Harris notes, the English studies conference highlighted “two opposing ideas of English” (literary study vs. composition pedagogy) (13), Stewart’s book reveals similar ambivalence about the meaning of “film study.” If good writing has been labeled “unteachable,” the same has been said of film. If composition has struggled for legitimacy against the yoke of literary studies, so has film. If composition has embraced the values and methods of its surrounding humanities departments, despite psychological and scientific countercurrents, film studies has gone a similar route: the Society of Cinematologists renamed itself, in 1968, the Society of Cinema Studies, a choice that “clearly signaled the link between studying cinema and the remit of humanities disciplines, jettisoning the scientific tinges of ‘ology’” (Grieveson and Wasson xiii).

While I lack the space here to further explore the rich history of film studies outside the English department, I do want to emphasize the remarkable similarities in the evolution of film studies and rhetoric and composition—similarities especially pronounced in the ‘60s and ‘70s when compositionists began to seriously consider film in the classroom.

The 1960s-70s: Film Grammar and “Generating Papers”

Adams identifies that, by the end of the ‘70s, “a renaissance of film study was in its zenith,” one fueled by an increasing highbrow interest (especially among French critics and theorists like Andre Bazin and Christian Metz) in Hollywood cinema; a discovery and newfound availability in the United States of intellectually challenging foreign cinema (e.g. the French new wave and Italian neo-realism); the Marshall McLuhan “*zeitgeist* of media awareness;” a sudden proliferation of classroom-friendly short films; and the rise of the film-as-literature movement (6-7). Amid this “renaissance,” one that coincides with what Berlin calls the “renaissance of rhetorics” (*Rhetoric* 120) within composition classrooms, compositionists’ interest in film emerged.

Contemporaneous with many of the first compositionists to publish on film, too, was Metz’s famous cine-semiotics project, which reopened the question of “film language” and allowed writing instructors a way into the academic conversation on film. In a sense, though, the ‘70s compositionists trailed a step behind Metz, whose landmark 1964 article “Cinéma: *Langue* or *Langage*?” (followed in greater detail by the book *Film Language: A Semiotics of Cinema*) famously concluded that cinema is a language without a *langue* (language system). While it lacks the fixity of alphabetic text, cinema is a language for Metz, and not just metaphorically; its patterns of shots and scenes constitute “a discourse or signifying practice characterized by specific codifications and ordering procedures” (Stam, *Film* 108, 112). The formalism implicit in Metz’s writings meshed with many dominant trends in English studies; Michel Foucault, writing in 1969, notes that Western literary analysis, specifically, “takes as its unity ... the particular structure of a given *œuvre*, book, or text” (*Archeology* 5). And while composition had branched away from literary studies by this point, many compositions followed Metz’s suit. Beginning with William D. Baker, these scholars, in their eagerness to draw parallels between written and filmic composition, generally exercised less caution and specificity than Metz, some paying scant attention to the numerous *dissimilarities* between the two media. The symmetry, though, is self-evident: Just as Metz posited a “uni-directional textual system” of film language rooted in Saussurian linguistics (Flanagan 25), some ‘70s compositionists perceived this Metzian cinema as a viable analogue to written current-traditional rhetoric.

One can pinpoint Baker’s “Film as Sharpener of Perception” (*College Composition and Communication*, 1964) as the published beginning of this minor but important movement in

composition theory that would span the 1970s and linger through the '80s. Baker argues that students who analyze film

will begin to see that neither a collection of long shots nor a jumble of close-ups, by themselves can convey the message. There needs to be an assembly according to predetermined principles of rhetoric. Unity, coherence, emphasis. Shun the generalization, use the detail, limit the topic, focus on a significant aspect. The words have been in rhetoric texts for centuries, and film analysis is but a new twist to the old tried-and-true principles. (45)

Baker may characterize his rhetorical approach as centuries old, but his equation of rhetoric with “unity, coherence, emphasis” stems directly from composition pedagogy developed by Harvard literature professor Barrett Wendell, whose 1891 textbook *English Composition* offers a paragraph-centered rhetoric based around the same three criteria that Baker espouses through analogy to film. Wendell’s name endures among a select group of New England professors who Berlin and Sharon Crowley both cite as instrumental in introducing trends that would dominate twentieth-century current-traditional rhetoric. The “positivistic” approach Berlin ascribes to Wendell and his compatriots A.S. Hill and John F. Genung led to a paradigm wherein “truth in written discourse is conceived exclusively in empirical and rational terms, with emotion and persuasion relegated to oral discourse” (*Rhetoric* 8), and, as Crowley quips, “revision [takes] place only at the sentence level, thanks to the forecasting wizardry of the outline” (*Methodical* 87). It would seem unfair to suggest that Baker prescribed wholesale to Wendell’s pedagogy based on the repetition of one phrase, but the former’s methods do share with current-traditionalism a preoccupation with correct form, and a disregard for both audience and Aristotelian invention. Other compositionists would examine film vis-à-vis expressivist and process rhetorics, but many '70s compositionists, like Baker, would continue to subscribe to turn-of-the-century current-traditional ideology.

Operating under the syllogistic premises, then, that A) students are well-acquainted with film, B) filmic composition is analogous to written composition, and C) that we should therefore exploit students’ knowledge of and penchant for film in order to teach writing, much of the '70s scholarship attempts to tie film and writing together conceptually through discussion of film

grammar and the rhetorical elements of both genres. Thelma Altschuler's article "Using Popular Media to Achieve Traditional Goals" (*CCC*, 1968) voices this rationale, first explaining that film "equalizes" the classroom by placing the teacher and students "on the same level" (341).

Altschuler argues that the use of film circumvents the teacher-as-expert, student-as-layman hierarchy that often hobbles the teaching of print literature, enabling the class to focus, with increased comfort and enthusiasm, on descriptive observational writing, and style. She posits film as a subject for the former—"Seeing and recording on paper what he actually saw in a picture may give [a student] his first success in being very detailed"—and an analogue of the latter: "Style in films can be—if not a parallel for style in writing—at least a reminder that the *way* something is said is important" (342). She asserts, also, that, in using film to teach writing, "you are not teaching a film; you are fostering alertness, expression, judgment—all good, old-fashioned qualities which existed even before Tennyson" (341). The warrant below this thesis, though, is that film, as a medium, possesses no new, unique rhetorical or narrative qualities; film literacy requires only "traditional" skills that predate moving images.

This conservative assumption resurfaces, ironically, in the article "The Case for Filmmaking as English Composition" (*CCC*, 1971) by Richard Williamson—a self-proclaimed anarchist. Williamson opens with an anecdote about an unnamed female student, in a fit or rebellion against "prescriptive and restrictive" academic practices, hurling a brick at the face of a pseudonymous professor of literature and prematurely terminating his lecture on Kafka (131). For Williamson, the whole academic infrastructure of the early '70s had become anachronistic, out of touch, ill-suited to cultivate the "common good" among a new breed of free-thinking (and projectile-hurling) college student: "What is needed," he writes, "is a counter-education for what has been called the counter-culture of youth" (132). Williamson's modest breed of anarchism that asks "schools to offer alternatives to traditional courses" works under the observation that America has become "a culture of film-freaks" (133, 136), and suggests moviemaking replace alphabetic composition for those students who so desire. Because he summarizes the extreme position among film-as-writing compositionists better than I could in my own language, I quote Williamson's rationale in detail:

Clearly the making of a film parallels the writing of a paper. Both a paper and a film require some central notion or "parent idea" if they are to move an audience. Both

involve the collection of material to be presented. Both involve the logical ordering of this material. Filmmaking has an advantage over written composition, though, in that it does not seem esoteric to the student who has been watching television and movies all his life. He may fear writing because its discipline lies in the hands of the experts; but he is not afraid to pick up a camera and aim it at his friends in his own environment, which, after all, is what he really has to talk about. (134)

A paragraph later, he caps off the assessment: “The parallels between writing and filmmaking are so many and so obvious that we need not examine them in depth” (134). Though few echoed Williamson’s wish to largely *replace* writing with filmmaking, his ideas of one-to-one correlation between writing and film, and film’s miracle-working powers against the tyranny of professorial expertise in the classroom, did circulate with some currency.

Unsurprisingly, though, Williamson’s essay invited criticism. Two replies, one by C.F. Angell and the other by Joseph Comprone, appeared in the pages of *College Composition and Communication* in 1971 and -72; Comprone himself notes that “[t]hese three articles, read in succession, can provide useful summary arguments of how film might be used in teaching writing” (“Uses” 176). Angell levels a series of fair criticisms at Williamson: to begin, he notes that Williamson stereotypes teachers and students alike; the former are no literary Gestapo, the latter no pack of neo-Marixist vandals—and neither group, by and large, would condone brick-throwing as a way to inspire educational reform (256-257). Angell also highlights Williamson’s failure to account for the high expense and technical difficulty of filmmaking (less the case today, but still a viable concern): “The change from a viewer of films to a maker of films does not parallel the change from reading to writing” (257). Finally, for Angell, the “almost totally visual” nature of film challenges easy analogies between onscreen and print discourse;³ film, thus, “can be a valuable compliment to the writing and literature instructor, but it cannot be a substitute for his discipline” (257).

Comprone shifts the discussion slightly to focus on what he calls “self-discovery,” but, for reasons of connotation, I would rather term invention. Refusing to subordinate film to writing, or vice versa, Comprone suggests that “metaphors ... are just as important for their

³ The thrust of Angell’s argument here is, in my view, correct, though his characterization of film oversimplifies the medium’s multimodal construction, which prominently features elements of audio and even print.

differences as they are for their similarities,” and that the differences between the two media can help instructors and students better understand the strengths of each (Response 56). Both, he asserts, can function as inventional space *and* systematic communication; thus Williamson’s emphasis on film as “self-discovery” shortchanges the power of written invention, while film ought to do more than, as Angell says, “compliment” writing (55). Capping off his argument, Comprone details several key differences between the two media, variations in semiotic makeup, sense of motion, verisimilitude, and chronology (56-58) that echo similar observations by film scholars like Metz, Bazin, and Gilles Deleuze. Of the three articles in this chain, Comprone’s offers the most incisive critique, and the most evenhanded discussion of both film and writing. His also is one of the minority of articles published in the ‘70s that noticeably pushes back against the confines of current-traditionalism by giving invention and communication equal priority. Most important, he charges that, really, “Williamson is just not radical enough; he tries to impose the organizing conventions of writing directly onto film” (56)—a common misstep in the ‘70’s scholarship.

Several others deserve recognition for comparable insights into the similarities and differences between film and writing. Robert E. Probst’s article “Visual to Verbal” (*The English Journal*, 1972), for example, astutely notes that “[t]here is no doubt that audiovisual materials are helpful in presenting information, but to think of them only as attractive packaging to make a body of information more palatable is to neglect much of their potential” (71). Set on supplying students with the “linguistic power” (72) to translate between cinematic imagery and print literature, Probst recommends that English teachers instruct students to each interpret a common scene, “[t]hen, when all have had the opportunity to see the multitude of descriptions, [to] return to the film, with instructions to spot, as best we can, those phrases, gestures, intonations, facial expressions, or whatever it was, that pushed us most strongly toward our various conclusions” (73). Probst’s exercise constitutes a valuable introduction to the workings of “film language”—and one that avoids the mistake of conflating filmic and written modes of composition.

And Jack Kligerman’s intelligent essay “Photography, Perception, and Composition” (*CCC*, 1977) offers similar emphasis on reflective self-criticism. The author recounts asking students to write descriptions of a certain photograph comprising dirt, cans, abandoned cars, and, in the foreground, a cross bearing the inscription “Jesus Is Coming Soon” (175). Students, however, wrote *interpretive* responses: “Jesus will return, even to this desolate area and these

poor peoples;” “Jesus will not come;” etc. (175-176), spurring Kligerman’s conclusion that “what these and other students ‘saw’ was that they ‘wanted to see’” (176). “Unless we can get students to record what they see in the most unmetaphorical, uninterpretive way,” he asserts, “then as teachers we are merely helping them confirm what they already believe” (176). In a sense, Kligermann presages Berlin’s claim that postmodern rhetorics must consciously evaluate their own ideologies (*Rhetorics* 88), though he also risks dislodging the student from her own subject position by insisting on pure, descriptive objectivity—an impossible paradigm. Either way, Kligermann adds a particularly valuable insight to the study of rhetoric and film: the existence of “clichés of vision, as well as clichés of language” (177).

The subject matter of most of these articles, though, is predominately theoretical, dealing with the *idea* of film and writing, or intensely specific, paying primary attention to individual assignments. In contrast, Edward Recchia’s “America on Film: A Humanities Composition Course” (presented at the National Convention of The Popular Culture Association, 1975) offers, of the literature put out in the ‘70s, perhaps the most comprehensive and concrete vision of how film might work in the composition curriculum. Recchia describes a specialized, and well-received, film and composition course taught at Michigan State University; it was designed

(1) to develop the students’ knowledge of the film medium and through that knowledge a critical appreciation both film and other artistic media; (2) through the use of films and related readings to make the students aware of their cultural heritage; (3) to teach students writing skills by directly dealing with the principle of writing in the classroom and by using film materials and related readings both as subject matter and models for student writing. (2)

The “America on Film” course, thus, attempts to meld cultural studies, film appreciation, and writing instruction into a single curriculum, examining films as artifacts of American history and mythology—encouraging, for instance, reflection on why Westerns treat killing as a matter of “honor” whereas movies like *West Side Story* “regard such killing as wasteful and tragic”—while also teaching “how the elements of filmic ‘language,’ such as lighting, editing, focus, camera angles, and so on affect the what a film says and the way it says it” (3-4). Such attention to cultural ideology and filmic composition, I would argue, elevate Recchia’s thinking a tier above

most of his contemporaries. Like Williamson, though, he tends to subordinate writing to film. If the former is an autonomous “form of modern art” (2), the latter becomes relegated, once again, to unity, coherence, and emphasis, with no discussion of audience consideration, and scant room for invention (5-6). The model student paper that Recchia describes, by denouncing *My Darling Clementine* “as a lousy film,” stands as a defense of the student’s own “taste and judgment” (7). Composition and cultural studies curricula, in my view, ought to help students past the frameworks of *good vs. bad* or *high vs. low quality* and into realms of more complex critique. I intend my own work here, especially that in Chapter 3 on film *logos*, to move that direction.

Dale Adams and Robert Kline’s “The Use of Films in Teaching Composition” (CCC, 1975) also represents a broad-scoped perspective, discussing in relative detail the advantages, drawbacks, and complications of using film in the composition classroom. The authors enumerate a list of “barriers” to using films—matters of length, cost, quality, logistics, and English instructors’ lack of expertise (258-259)—but an equally strong list of perks. Adams and Kline’s arguments here largely reflect those of other ‘70s compositionists, as they highlight the “natural appeal of films to young people,” and suggest that “*all* the major rhetorical elements of written composition (connotation, denotation, the methods of discourse, cliché, comparison and contrast, deduction, induction, etc.) may be illustrated visually by cinematic equivalents” (260). The authors do make explicit one important counterclaim, though: “Although film does offer something which can improve student writing, this something does not lie, as some would have it, in the simple equation of frame to word, shot to phrase, and sequence to sentence” (260). Adams and Kline, ergo, epitomize ‘70s discourse on film and composition perhaps better than anyone, but, in some ways, think more progressively than many of their peers about film as an autonomous medium.

Alongside H.R. Struck’s article “Twenty Well-Tested Films for Freshman Writing Courses” (CCC, 1976), Adams and Kline invoke another recurring facet of the ‘70s scholarship: how “films can be used to generate papers” (Struck 48). Adams and Kline “suggest that films may be discussed profitably in essays or themes using the moral approach, film and moral ideas; the psychological approach, film in light of psychological theory;” or through any other admittedly “literary” critical lens (261). They also suggest a number of “purely cinematic approaches, including, among others, themes on montage, genre, camera movement and editing, color, sound and music, acting, cine-structuralism, and *auteur* theory” (261). Struck, a professor

at Michigan State, conceivably working under the same curriculum Recchia describes, speaks mainly to the virtues of specific movies, but he also describes a more student-centered series of writing prompts known as the “critical incident” project:

For the first paper (usually an in-class), a student chooses a single scene and recalls it in as much detail as possible. Then, taking the same scene or a different one, he extends his discussion in an outside paper by explaining what the scene tells about the main characters or characters and how it contributes to the film as a whole. Third and finally, the student describes a key event in his own life and explains why it was significant for him. The last assignment is of course simply a variation on the old and frequently unreadable autobiographical paper, but because of practice with the film scene, students usually employ more and sharper details, and the word *critical* reduces the risk of getting a vacation narrative without a point. (48)

Each brand of writing assignment has its apparent advantages and drawbacks. Despite Struck’s use of the word “critical,” Adams and Kline veer closer to direct critical engagement with film texts; yet, in simply plugging films into preconfigured academic formulas, they risk the current-traditional rite of, in Crowley’s words, “shift[ing] discursive authority away from the students and onto the academy” (*Methodical* 13). Struck opens up inentional space by encouraging students to view their lives in the framework of a film narrative, but he seems primarily concerned with remedying “unreadable” student prose; the “critical” component of the critical incident project remains undeveloped.

Three other ‘70s articles deserve note, primarily for their resistance to strict categorization. Joy Gould Boyum and Gordon Morrel Pradl’s “The Necessary Balance in the Teaching of Film” (*EJ*, 1974) intelligently advocates “the continual dialectic between the student’s expression of his perception of a film and his increasing awareness of what shaped that perception”—in essence, a “necessary balance” between personal response and critical understanding of film composition (55). The authors’ methodological insight into film instruction, however, feels disjointed from their lengthy and untenable conclusion that film instruction should foster a “refinement of taste” and appreciation of “great art” (57).

Robert Primeau's "Film-Editing and the Revision Process: Student as Self-Editor" poses a particularly enlightening analogy between print and film. Students, Primeau argues, usually regard print revision as a dull, remedial process, while film editing is almost universally accepted as creative and inventive. Thus, through analogy to film, students can begin to see revision as not just an afterthought, but a process of invention: "It is the editor's job to fix the sequence of the film shots, which are rarely taken in the order the finished film reflects. Similarly, the student editor must be reminded at the outset that he need not draft pages in the order he expects to achieve in final copy" (407). For a discipline that still struggles with teaching revision, Primeau's thoughtful comparison deserves attention.

Verle Barnes's "Eight Basic Considerations for the Teaching of Film" (CCC, 1976), finally, emerges as cautionary statement against the "snapping up of" film studies by "various academic departments in the mad rush for students and for the attractive courses which can draw large numbers of students" (32). Barnes echoes many of Adams and Kline's concerns, but in greater detail and seriousness. His eight "considerations" are:

1. *Preparation*: "Having seen a lot of movies does not, by itself, automatically qualify an instructor to teach a film course" (32).
2. *Independence*: "Care must be taken to ensure that film gets scholarly and critical treatment as film, and not just an adjunct to literature" (33).
3. *Quality*: "Naturally, quality means different things to different people [and i]n teaching film courses, we can consider quality from any number of angles, depending on which aspect of the film is being discussed" (33-34).
4. *Relevance*: Film courses should make obvious sense in part of a larger curriculum (34).
5. *Enjoyment*: "Since entertainment and enjoyment are positive attributes of film study, they should be maintained as much as possible in any film course" (34).
6. *Time*: Film courses will simply require more hours per week than "average lecture courses" (35).
7. *Assignments and Outside Activities*: "Do not kill the films as films by too many 'outside' activities and associations in film courses—too much reading, too much 'forced' discussion, too much 'significance searching,' too much 'meaning'" (35).

8. *Budget*: Films are expensive to show; instructors should think ahead to cut costs (35).

Barnes's reasoning is occasionally flawed—in discussing “enjoyment,” for instance, he makes a dubious distinction between “quality ... and non-quality” films which reflects, though to a lesser degree, Boyum and Pradl's elitism, and in censuring “too much ‘meaning,’” he risks undermining the very purpose of critical inquiry—but overall, his admonitions make good sense. Especially important, in my view, is the insight that even in the classroom we should encourage students to enjoy films—that, indeed, we stunt film studies as a discipline when we deaden movies' affective power. With minor qualification, Barnes's article could stand as essential reading for teachers of film within English departments today.

The 1980s (A Revision of the '70s): Process and *Double Exposure*

Adams notes that, following the '70s, the Regan era saw film become “one of the first casualties of a ‘back-to-basics’ movement that ... also eliminated many phase-elective curricula that nourished film study” (“Historical” 7). Film, however, had “achieved tacit acceptance as a proper concern of the discipline, and the question of film in the ... classroom for film-oriented English teachers [became], in general, no longer ‘why’ but ‘how’” (7). Again, brief research confirms Adams's narrative: the *amount* of scholarship on film and composition in the '80s pales in comparison the small boom seen a decade prior, but what there is, in general, improves noticeably on the '70s' methods; it bears the mark of a discipline no longer straining to declare self-legitimacy, but meditating and reflecting on its own methods.

Three '80s publications deserve recognition here. The first belongs, again, to Joseph Comprone, who argues in “Using Film within the Composing Process” (*Freshman English News*, 1981) that instructors can fruitfully integrate film into process-centered writing pedagogy. “Work in heuristics,” writes Comprone, “indicates how an initial response, in our case to a film or element in a film, might be probed by systematic sequences of questions, sharpening and focusing the writer's grasp of the conflict at the center of the concept” (21). Students then share and respond to each other's “tentative proposition[s] and hypothes[es]” in order to develop an acute sense of audience in the prewriting stage, before drafting essays, and revising (22). Comprone suggests screening one short film several times in class. When watched and re-watched with attention the both the details and the whole, asserts Comprone, short films “[help]

us as teachers to treat composing as an extended act of preparation and invention, through every stage in the writing process” (23). Comprone’s concrete attention to audience, invention, process in this short essay, thus, far exceeds that in previous scholarship on writing and film.

Brian Gallagher’s “Linguistic Structures and Filmic Paradigms: Notes Toward a Visual Pedagogy of Writing” (*Freshman English Resource Notes*, 1982) offers little insight that Comprone, Adams and Kline, and others hadn’t already published, but usefully condenses a wealth of pedagogical information into one article. Citing, like those before him, students’ enthusiasm toward and solid comprehension of film texts, Gallagher rehearses a number of familiar arguments about film’s efficacy in relation to comparison and contrast, descriptive writing, interpretive analysis, and writing as a process. His novel contribution is a section on argumentation, wherein he recommends that students write a “cause-and-effect summary” of a movie (his suggestion is Hitchcock’s *The Thirty-Nine Steps*) that “rethink[s] the whole story in rational terms and to separate the significant events from the ... false clues” (11). Gallagher concludes that “students become aware that argument papers rest on the justification of nearly every sentence they contain” (11)—an interesting heuristic, certainly, but one that evinces an unabashedly logocentric version of how argumentation works.

William V. Costanzo’s joint composition textbook and academic study *Double Exposure: Composing thorough Writing and Film* (1984), finally, stands as the most substantial work on film and composition from the ‘70s or ‘80s. Costanzo’s book, describing a curriculum he designed and taught at Westchester Community College in New York, draws widely from not only film, but manifold visual texts: advertisements, series of photographic stills, drawn diagrams and graphs, icons, optical illusions, etc., in order to build on and draw from “what [students] already know about visual literacy” (32) for use in composition instruction. He quickly notes in the introduction, though, “I hesitate to introduce a film, a commercial, or an essay prescriptively, as a model to be copied for its elements of composition.... It’s more important, I believe, for students to learn principles of composition by observing them in action: as they watch a film or rearrange a set of photographs, or as they write the script for a commercial” (4). This bridge-building between visual and verbal literacies stands as the primary outcome of Costanzo’s numerous assignments, exercises, and pedagogical units. He cites cognitive psychological research, even, to justify the claim that “[i]f picture and words are stored

separately in the brain, it makes sense to link these centers by forming ambidextrous habits of mind” (204).

Costanzo’s teaching methods received praise from fellow scholar Jonathan H. Lovell. Having observed one of Costanzo’s classes, Lovell emphasizes how particularly effective the methods in *Double Exposure* are in explicating “style”: Costanzo played for his students two ads, one in which “we see and hear Jimmy Breslin extolling the virtues of Piels as a ‘drinking man’s beer,’” and another wherein “Orson Welles compar[es] Paul Mason wines to great works of literature.” Costanzo, Lovell assesses, “has presented his students with not only a vividly memorable example how two contrasting styles influence our response to the products they promote, but also an extremely useful ‘key’ to recalling and making sense of the concept of ‘style’ itself” (16). In another exercise from *Double Exposure*, one Costanzo also sees fit to bring up in his CCC article “Film as Composition” (1986), students analyze the short film “An American Time Capsule,” which presents 3000-plus still photos in several minutes: “The general subject, America, is obvious, but it usually requires some class discussion of the filmmaker’s selection of material in order to arrive at the subjective statement about America implied by his choice. The discovery of thematic patterns in a loosely-structured film thus becomes a useful exercise for gauging the coherence of a composition” (“Film” 81).

Costanzo’s wealth of practical assignments, long and short, along with his attention to both similarities and differences between visual and verbal media and emphasis on “free play [in] visual thinking, particularly during the exploratory process of ‘invention’” (*Double* 205) elevate his work among the best that relates film to rhetoric and composition—probably *the* best of the ‘70s and ‘80s. Others, too, from this era deserve another look, though—Comprone, Primeau, and Barnes, certainly—for their yet-relevant insight into film and composition. At its best, this body of scholarship helped revitalize composition studies in a new visual context, drawing valuable links between writing and film, but respecting the integrity and independence of each medium. Teachers today would do well to return to film with this level of enthusiasm and insight. At its, worst, though, this scholarship effectively conflated the two media, trivializing both, and usurped the popularity of film to reinforce current-traditional writing pedagogy.

Nineteen-nineties and post-millennial scholarship would improve on the methods of the ‘70s and ‘80s in many ways, but as a film-enthusiast working within rhetoric and composition

one has to admire the zeal these teacher-scholars brought to the study of film and writing. It will likely never be matched.

The 1990s-Present: Cultural Critique, Viewer Response, and Multimedia Literacy

In *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Reconfiguring College English Studies* (1996), Berlin advocates a composition course that “focuses on reading and writing the daily experiences of culture, with culture considered in its broadest formulation. It thus involves encounters with a wide variety of texts, including advertising, television, and film” (124). Berlin’s cultural studies approach, which recognizes that “the interpretive act is situated in ideological conditions, in representations of what really exists, what is good, and what is possible,” signifies a shift of perception in the composition field from film as analogue/stimulant to film as cultural text. This shift in large part characterizes the second wave of scholarship on film and composition.

The posthumous publication of Berlin’s book came amid a small upsurge through the mid- to late ‘90s in work on this critical nexus, including the edited collection *Cinema-(to)-Graphy: Film and Writing in Contemporary Composition Courses* (1999) and articles by Richard H. Fehlman, Joseph Harris, Winifred J. Wood, Ellen Bishop, John Heyda, and others. This scholarship belongs in two larger contexts: first, a cultural studies approach to film that first arose in the ‘70s had begun, much belatedly, to gain footing in composition/media scholarship thanks largely to the rise of what Berlin calls social-epistemic rhetoric, a theory that sees composition as a culturally critical and democratizing force; and second, the rise of digital capabilities through the ‘90s and especially post-2000 had spurred a mounting interest in visual rhetorics at large. This latter framework has, arguably, been both a boon and a curse for the study of film and composition; the renewed interest in various media occasioned a small wealth of scholarship on film after a long dearth, but the consideration of film *only* as one more breed of visual media again shortchanges the independence and complexity of film as its own medium.

The ‘90s scholarship that does pay especial attention to film, though, has much to offer. Fehlman, in a pair of articles published in *The English Journal*, echoes Berlin’s sentiments in his advocacy for teaching film through cultural perspectives and viewer response, as an “explor[ation] of ideology and zeitgeist” (“Teaching” 43). He also stresses of the importance of filmic literacy through introduction to technical vocabulary and viewing skills (“Teaching” 39, “Viewing”). Harris, by contrast, deemphasizes film terminology, but employs film as a tool to

teach critical response as that which “draws on and responds to the comments of others, that is public rather than private, that is argued for rather than simply asserted” and academic writing as entering oneself into “an ongoing critical conversation” (“Reading” 71, 82). Both scholars, though, fundamentally value, as Harris says, “tak[ing] the talk and writings of ... students ... seriously” (“Reading” 83). So, too, does Wood, whose article “Double Desire: Overlapping Discourses in a Film Writing Course” (*CE*, 1998) shares many common points with both Fehlman and Harris. Wood, based on case studies from a women-only course on writing about film that she taught, stresses the importance of mediating between a “critical language that separates the viewer from the action on the screen” and “the comfortable language of experience” (284).

The lessons of Berlin, Fehlman, Harris and Wood add much to conversation surrounding film and composition. Where ‘70s scholars often employed a simplistic lexicon rooted in rhetorical conventions of universal composition (“transitions,” “completeness,” etc.), Fehlman and Wood’s advocacy for a specifically filmic vocabulary begins to respect the genre’s complexity and autonomy. Film, here, is no mere analogue to writing. Moreover, Daniel H. Wild and others cite David Bartholomae in pointing out that the lexical tools of film vocabulary allow students to write themselves into academic discourse spheres that focus on film. Finally, Berlin and others’ insight that both individual and epistemic variables shape the way a film is viewed has further pedagogical importance. Acknowledgement of this reality in the classroom enables the student writer to compose beyond current-traditional constraints, to, in responding to film, draw from her unique cultural and temporal circumstances to analyze both the composition of film and its viewing experience. The student then—true to Harris’s ideal of writing oneself into a larger conversation—not only develops a more acute comprehension of aesthetics and surrounding ideologies in film, but can self-consciously write herself into the discourse surrounding film.

Others writing in the ‘90s, too, have added valuable points and qualifications to discussion around film and composition. Ellen Bishop, in the introduction to *Cinema-(to)-Graphy*, foregrounds the difference between “using” and “integrating” films in the composition classroom, asserting that “the relationship between film and writing is much more complex and interesting than the simple ‘use’ of one in the other’s territory would suggest” (vii). Patricia Caillé suggests inquiry into “the unexamined assumptions about authorship in film” and warns

against the culturally vacuous consideration of film as “a self-contained and autonomous rebus waiting to be deciphered” (2, 3). By a similar token, Wild warns against “resort[ing] to symbolism of the crudest kind” in “reading” films (“a white dress [as] purity or virginity,” a “black car [as] death and evil,” etc.), while also entreating instructors to draw from students’ pre-existing filmic literacy (27). The hope, then, is that the classroom will welcome students’ insights, not quash them under expectations of trivial symbolic analysis.

Perhaps the most incisive synthesis of the aforementioned points is John Hedy’s article “Challenging Antiwriting Biases in the Teaching of Film.” Heyda, who draws from a background in both composition and film studies, quotes Pauline Kael’s objection to “classes in which students who interpret a movie’s plot as a mechanism for producing audience response were corrected by teachers who explained it in terms of a creative artist working out a theme” (154). The anonymous teacher’s perspective not only oversimplifies the authorial presence in film, but it preempts the rhetorical agency of both the student and the film. That is, the film is not allowed to appeal directly to its audience, and its audience—here, the students—is not permitted a personal response. Heyda traces this attitude through a series of textbooks for writing on film, all of which espouse composition approaches that “closely resemble the current traditional rhetoric of writing themes about literature guides” (156). The necessary measures, Heyda argues, to combat such antiwriting policies are smaller, better-scheduled classes, student-led discussions, a democratic process of choosing films to watch, and, most importantly, more open-ended writing assignments that grant students rhetorical agency.

Since 2000, the amount of scholarship on film and composition has again tapered drastically, though several works bear recognition. Bronwyn T. Williams’s *Tuned In: Television and the Teaching of Writing* (2002) stands as one of the most thorough and student-centered studies on audiovisual media in relation to composition instruction. His book, though it focuses on television, has much to offer film enthusiasts, especially in its novel discussion of how students come to understand narrative conventions from watching TV and movies; while composition classes tend to privilege the “‘narrative of revelation’ that is not interested in solving the problems of plot” but “[revealing] the nature of the world they inhabit,” students are generally used to plot-driven “narratives of resolution” that characterize most television and Hollywood film (136, 137; Chatman, *Story* 48). Williams calls for writing instructors to acknowledge and address such preconceptions. For Williams, like Costanzo and others before

him, multimedia literacy can be an asset if instructors harness its assets for the composition classroom, but instructors must also remain cognizant of the strong differences between audiovisual and written media, and the strengths of the two: “If we acknowledge what students already know and feel—that images are powerful and offer rich levels of information quickly—we can make a stronger case for the limitation of those same images and for the distinctive power of print: Print can offer depth, interiority, recursiveness, room for extended reflection and analysis, and a sense of an individual writer’s consciousness that is not available in print” (81).

Williams ends his book with a sweeping call for composition curricula that appeal to multiple literacies—print, visual, and digital—as a way of resurrecting the rhetorical canon of delivery (181). Both Williams and Joe Essid liken audiovisual media, also, to hypertext. Where Williams notes that hypertextual reading may have more in common with “zapping” through TV channels than reading a book (177), Essid’s article “Film as ‘Explicator’ for Hypertext” finds a new slant. The author re-imagines the “film grammar” scholarship of the ‘70s in a new light by suggesting that montage films like *Koyaanisquatsi* provide a valuable analog to the non-linear process of reading hypertext. The analogy, surely, has its limits, since even the most avant-garde montage films follow a chronological linearity, but Essid’s insights merit attention.

Equally noteworthy in pioneering the nexus between filmic and digital rhetorics is Bonnie Lenore Kyburz, whose article “‘Totally, Tenderly, Tragically’: Godard’s *Contempt* and the Composition Qu’il y Aurait (that Might Have Been)” (*Composition Studies*, 2008) functions both as a rhetorical analysis of French New Wave filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard’s aesthetic style and an expressivist manifesto that calls for a composition curriculum “seeking to work beyond the bounds of our discursive conventions” (41). Godard, who, in his jump-cuts, “invented *an available means of persuasion in his given situation*, and it worked, magically, ambiguously so” (44, italics Kyburz’s), represents both a model rhetor-composer-artist⁴ and a *role* model for beginning composers: “[Godard] worked fast, cheap, and, for the most part, without studio intervention. The parallels to early Composition are striking, it seems to me” (52). For Kyburz, the use of digital filmmaking in composition classes is one way to break down discourse conventions, and allow students to compose art. “[T]his textual analytical work *about* film is fine, except that it’s not,” she writes (49); we need to *make* film, she argues, in order to get past

⁴ “Godard wanted to see *film-as-rhetoric-as-art-as-action*,” writes Kyburz (53).

“what is, what has been,” and look ahead in the spirit of Godard. The sort of work Kyburz has in mind, conceivably, can be witnessed in her own digitally published short films, dealing with the topics of social media (“status update”), the “punk ethos” of “do-it-yourself filmmaking” (“i’m like ... professional”), and academic conferences (“bones”).

One need not agree with Kyburz’s vision of the ideal composition curriculum to admire her specific attention to the film medium. Such attention has become rare. As new media studies continues to enjoy a primary position among rhetoric and composition scholarship, film easily becomes subsumed in a discourse of the “digital” and “visual,” often receiving mention alongside advertisements, photographic stills, website, YouTube videos, etc., but less likely than any of these to receive sustained attention from rhetoric and composition scholars (Schlib 182). The feature-length theatrical film, a markedly different entity than Kyburz’s experimental shorts, remains popular and influential, though. And thus, it deserves attention in terms of its specific rhetorical makeup.

IV. THE RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In sectioning off “the rhetorical perspective,” my purpose is not to erect a binary between rhetoric and composition. This pair, in my view, remains linked for a reason, and that reason is not mutual exclusivity—though it might be argued that *some* of the methods applied to film and composition fail to constitute “rhetoric.” Crowley has argued convincingly that “any theoretical discourse that is to be called ‘rhetoric’ must at minimum conceive of rhetoric as an art of invention, that is, it must give a central place to the systematic discovery and investigation of the available arguments in a given situation” (“Composition”), a definition that would exclude much of the ‘70s scholarship, even some of the smarter work like Boyum and Pradl’s. Still, though, I have discussed many above—Comprone, Costanzo, Williams, and certainly Kyburz—who *are* doing rhetoric under the heading of composition, and I have no intention to detract from their work. What I will outline in this section, however, is the body work that self-identifies as exploring the rhetoric of film.

But I will renege on that criterion just once. George Bluestone’s in-depth study *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (1957) deserves mention for its early

publication date and, if not direct engagement with, strong relevance to the rhetoric of Hollywood film. Bluestone's book is primarily a work of literary/film criticism, and the bulk of its pages discuss specific literary film adaptations: *The Informer*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Ox-Bow Incident*, and *Madame Bovary*. In the first chapter, however, he speaks to one of rhetoric's most important critical facets: audience. Bluestone, rightly in my view, credits the literati's indictment of the movies to an economic reality: "The product of a commercial society, the Hollywood commodity must make a profit, it must please consumers. Where a novel can sell 20,000 volumes and make a substantial profit, a film must reach millions" (34). While the means and standards of filmmaking have changed substantially since Bluestone's book was published, something in the author's statement that "[e]very innovation is greeted with the cry, 'The box-office won't stand it,' even after innovations again and again prove the cry wrong" (38) still rings true. The phenomenon of the mass audience, one should keep in mind, has everything to do with the importance of ideological inquiry into film and with Bluestone's intelligent assessment (still true in my thinking) that "[i]n the film, more than in any of the other arts, the signature of social forces is evident in the final work" (35).

Fast-forwarding several decades, one finds John Harrington's *The Rhetoric of Film* (1973), a college-level textbook that, somewhat like *Double Exposure*, doubles as an academic study. Harrington's book was panned in a CCC review as "evidently a compilation of sketchy course notes ... artificially arranged under banal and tiresome heads, e.g., Structure and Organization; Theme and Unity; Point of View; Idea and Example" (Lichter 99); Comprone also criticizes Harrington, stating that his book "often uses awkward or inaccurate descriptions of several basic film techniques" ("Uses" 178). Frustrations with *The Rhetoric of Film* are understandable; the book emerges from an intellectual tradition similar to much of the '70s work on film and composition, dwelling on abstract compositional ideals and analogies between film and literature (indeed, the book arguably has more to do with literature than rhetoric), and it also condescends to its reader (even to undergraduate readers), presupposing almost no basic comprehension of filmic terminology or technique. Thus its analyses, in general, are little more than perfunctory. Harrington does, though, have scattered moments of insight, stressing, for instance, the differences between film, novels, and television in establishing emotional tone (114), and discussing "theme and thesis" in relation to film rhetoric: "Thematic points bounce off other ideas, creating a dynamic tension allowing the implications and complications of a message

to be considered and revealed” (98). This narratological buildup of ideas in film is an idea that still warrants further attention from rhetoricians.

More rhetorically intensive than Harrington’s book, though, were a series of articles from ‘70s and ‘80s addressing film in the context of classical rhetoric. Jerry Hendrix and James A. Wood’s “The Rhetoric of Film: Toward a Critical Methodology” (*The Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 1973) was the first, giving the filmic medium a cursory examination in the areas of *invention*, *arrangement*, *style*, *memory*, and *delivery*, but also through a “communications model” of “source-message-channel-receivers-construct” (112) and Burkean identification (118). The depth of Hendrix and Wood’s analysis is limited, but they do cover much methodological ground in a short space, and they deserve heavy praise for composing the first article to deal seriously with film through the lens of classical rhetoric.

Myles P Breen’s “The Rhetoric of the Short Film” (*Journal of the University Film Association*, 1978) and Laurence Behrens’s “The Argument in Film: Applying Rhetorical Theory to Film Criticism” (*JUFA*, 1979) also tackle film through the rhetorical canons, but each with specific emphasis on *invention*, and filmic appeals to *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. They make the self-evident connections: *ethos* with “the speakers in the film” or, borrowing from Wayne Booth, the “implied auteur” (Breen 9; Behrens 7); *logos* with the “message” of the film and its ability to “[argue] inductively toward conclusions” or deductively “demonstrate . . . *a priori* truth” (Breen 8; Behrens 5); and *pathos*, both authors seem to agree, works on such obvious terms that it needs little explanation (Breen 8; Behrens 6). Both authors, too, write, in a checklist fashion, short paragraphs addressing the other canons.

Robert Arnett’s “The Enthymeme in Contemporary Film Criticism” (presented at the International Communications Association’s conference, 1986), finally, expands on Breen and Behrens’s theory by introducing the Aristotelian enthymeme into the discussion. Audiences fill in the unstated (or unvisualized) premises of the filmmaker’s enthymemes, asserts Arnett: “The audience participates [in filmic rhetoric] by making certain assumptions prompted by the consistency of the premises implicitly [put forward] by the filmmaker, and from previous exposure to similar filmic scenes” (6). Barring Bluestone, Arnett thus took audience more seriously than any of his predecessors.

Writing a decade later, Colleen Tremote, in “Film, Classical Rhetoric, and Visual Literacy” (*Journal of Teaching Writing*, 1995), also discusses ancient rhetoric, this time in the

classroom setting. While her students excelled in recognizing appeals to ethos and pathos in filmic technique, reports Tremonte, they had trouble engaging with and critiquing a film's ideology, or its implied logos (6). Her remedy is classical stasis theory, method by which "rhetors in the classical world identified an area of disagreement, the point to be argued, the issue on which a case hinged.... [I]ts most recognizable feature was the set of questions that established the nature of the issue as [fact, definition, or quality]. By literally seeking a standstill or impasse, rhetoric could evaluate an issue from multiple perspectives and decide on the best course of action" (7). Tremonte's students, she testifies, began to write more incisively and critically, with more textual evidence from the films in question, after examining the issue of female sexuality in the films *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *Some Like It Hot* through stasis theory. This method deserves special recognition for its innovative fusion of classical rhetoric with the ideological critic's approach to film best exemplified in communication studies by the work of Thomas S. Frentz, Janice Hocker Rushing, and Barry Brummet, and in film studies by the likes of Robert Stam and Robert B. Ray.

This same ideological approach, alongside a number of others, resurfaces in the intensely interdisciplinary collection *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film* (2003), edited by David Blakesley. Blakesley divides his contributors into three sections, "Perspectives on Film and Film Theory as Rhetoric," "Rhetorical Perspectives on Film and Culture," and "Perspectives on Films about Rhetoric," the foremost of which, for its heuristic approaches to examining the rhetoric of film, deserves the most attention here. The essays of especial significance are Ann Chrisholm's, Byron Hawk's, and Ekaterina V. Haskins's. Chrisholm, in "Rhetoric and the Early Work of Christian Metz: Augmenting Ideological Inquiry in Rhetorical Film Theory and Criticism," revisits Metz's cine-semiotics, suggesting that rhetorical critics examine the rhetorical ramifications of Metzian grammar—the sites in the films where filmmakers either uphold or reject these semiotic conventions for purposes of ideological resistance or complacency. Hawk, in "Hyperrhetoric and the Inventive Spectator: Remotivating *The Fifth Element*," offers a heuristic examination of the spectator's role in creating a film text's meaning. Providing his own ironic ("hyperrhetorical") reading of the sci-fi film *The Fifth Element* as an example, Hawk explains that the rhetorical canon of *memory*, the sum of one's real-world and intertextual experiences, profoundly shapes the filmgoing experience. Finally, Haskins, in "Time, Space, and Political Identity: Envisioning Community in *Triumph of the*

Will,” fruitfully applies Burke’s notion of identification and Bakhtin’s idea of the “chronotope,” or narrative time-space, to examine a Nazi propaganda film. The movie, Haskins argues, persuasively “mythologizes” Germany’s history and did, at its kairotic moment, help engender an intense feeling of community among Nazi Germany—a rhetorical maneuver that critics write off at their own risk as mere “irrational” fascist coercion (99, 102). Haskins’s methods share much in common with my own in Chapters 2 and 3, which also rely on Bakhtin and deal with the “mythologizing” effect of ideologically loaded images. The remainder of Blakesley’s collection sparks interest throughout for rhetoricians and film enthusiasts alike, but one might lament that more of its chapters don’t take up a macro perspective, instead of focusing chiefly on individual films.

Following *The Terministic Screen*, which remains the most substantial publication on the rhetoric of film to date, two final essays bear mention. One is Wayne Booth’s “Is There an ‘Implied’ Author in Every Film?” (*College Literature*, 2002), wherein Booth examines his own coinage from *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in the context of film criticism. After conducting a case study of *American Beauty*, his conclusion—a commonsensical but valuable one for inquiries into filmic ethos—is that “every *successful* film does have what might legitimately be called an ‘implied author,’ or if you prefer, an ‘implied center’—that is, a creative voice uniting all of the choices” (125). Booth suggests, further, that attention to the “implied author” or “center” in film is an essential criterion for film criticism, and can help deter both self-righteous complaints about “how audiences or critics have misread [a film],” and the dominance of “corrupt, cheaply commercial voices . . . that too often shout down the voices of serious artistic authors and directors” (130). Booth’s article contributes to the discussion of filmic rhetoric by highlighting how audiences perceive authority and credibility in complex, multi-authored film texts.

The second is John Schlib’s “Constructing History in a Film about Rhetoric: The Black Female Chorus in *Good Night, and Good Luck*” (2009), which poses both an interesting rhetorical analysis of George Clooney’s film about newsman Edward R. Murrow’s confrontation with Joe McCarthy, and a call for rhetoricians to examine “the marginal elements” of mainstream cinema with more vigor frequency (193). Schlib admires the artistry and rhetorical acumen of Clooney’s film, but sees the use of the African American chorus figure—played by jazz singer Dianne Reeves, whose singing comments on the mood and events of the movie—as a reassertion of peripheral roles for blacks in American film (191, 193). I will touch on this film

again in Chapters 2 and 4, examining the construction of *Good Night's* ethos, as well as its pedagogical values in teaching rhetorical analysis.

There is, of course, also a wealth of criticism from within film studies that either comments on rhetoric, or makes itself relevant to rhetorical studies. Seymour Chatman's *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (1990) is an excellent, wide-ranging study, though its focus is grounded much deeper in narratology than rhetoric. David Bordwell's aforementioned *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (1989) also contains great insight, and treats rhetoric less cruelly and reductively than some have said (Blakesley 6), though it is frustrating to the rhetorical film critic that Bordwell refuses to apply the same rhetorical-analytic methods to film itself as he applies so happily to written film criticism. His final chapter, though, on "Why Not to Read a Film" has, thanks to its attention to historical and social contexts in interpretation, a great deal to offer rhetorical criticism.

I lack the space here to map out film theory and film criticism's intersection which rhetoric, which, as the next chapter will demonstrate, is immense. The above, though, offers a fairly comprehensive picture of intellectual work that English and communication departments have put into exploring the rhetoric of film. It is an admirable list, if brief, incomplete, and in the some cases simplistic. Rhetorician Ulrich Wicks's call, that is, that "[t]he study of film ... ought to be put within the province of rhetoric, along with reading and writing, as methods/media by which others seek to influence our behavior" (53) has only been partially answered. Within rhetoric and composition, as this survey shows, film has been paired with composition far more often than rhetoric. Our colleagues in communications have written more than we have on the rhetoric of film, moreover, but not by much. We still lack a sweeping, heuristic approach to the rhetoric of film that pays due attention to film not as literature, not as one facet of visual media, but as *film*—an independent rhetorical medium. Drawing from the research that has been done on the rhetoric of film, along with relevant scholarship in composition studies, critical theory, and film theory, the objective of my next two chapters will be to work toward this goal.

2.

THE RHETORIC OF FILM: BAKHTINIAN APPROACHES AND FILM ETHOS

I. FILM AS ITS OWN RHETORICAL MEDIUM

Much of the composition scholarship mentioned in Chapter 1 makes use of the word “rhetoric.” That from the ‘70s and ‘80s often equates rhetoric with compositional conventions; here, transitions, attention to detail, topic sentences, etc., constitute the elements of rhetoric, and students are meant to learn good rhetoric by mimicking the rhetorical conventions visible in film. Most ‘90s and post-2000 scholars use the term in a deeper sense. For them, compositional and organizational coherence are an element of rhetoric, but rhetoric more importantly implies a rhetor-audience relationship (here, film-viewer) where the former is attempting to persuade, inform, or in some way influence the latter. Many of the more recent scholars, too, insist on a rhetorical consciousness of the discursive situation, upholding Berlin’s assertion that “for a postmodern rhetoric, the writer and reader or the speaker and listener must likewise be aware that the subject or producer of discourse is a construction, a fabrication, established through the devices of signifying practices” (*Rhetorics* 82).

In the study of film and composition, modern perspectives like Berlin’s suggest that especial attention must be paid to the medium of film and its particular rhetorical devices (“signifying practices”) that attempt to gain credibility among audiences, while stirring their emotions and advancing ideological premises. Composition scholars have pointed out the rhetorical potency of film, but—despite the efforts of Costanzo, the neo-Aristotelians of the ‘70s, David Blakesley, and others—the body of work exploring heuristics or specific rhetorical vocabulary, in order to analyze *how* films persuade and inform, remains limited. Here, I want to work toward a rhetoric and pedagogy that seeks to fill this void, one that begins by retooling the syllogistic justification behind much of the ‘70s composition scholarship (see pg. 11). Employing a more complex idea of rhetoric, we can claim that A) students are at least familiar with film, and will continue to watch films in- and outside the classroom, B) that films are rhetorically constructed and use rhetorical devices parallel to, but perhaps formally divergent from, other

persuasive texts, and C) that we can therefore teach film as part of an effort to instill students with a comprehensive rhetorical consciousness that extends beyond both the written text and the classroom.

In enacting such pedagogy, however, I want to recognize several potential missteps. The first, and most apparent is to teach film as consistently analogous to a written essay, composed by a single author according to a preset list of language conventions. A more pressing concern today, though, may be to address the reductive impulse to lump film in with other genres under the now popular headings of “new media” and “visual rhetoric.” Film’s definitive factors of audio, editing, cinematography, and large-scale narrative offer a medium that differs from other multimodal and visual genres. Even media like the YouTube video, webpage, blog, and other paradigmatic modes of cyberspace, while frequently audio-visual, are usually designed for rapid hypertextual consumption, and thus incongruent with film, the rhetorical potency of which has much to do with its spatial and chronological immersion of the viewer; that is, even the online video, for its lack of *cinematic* quality, may have more in common with the blog post than the feature-length movie.⁵ It is just as wrongheaded to rhetorically equate film with the typical YouTube video as it is to map filmic composition onto writing.

I will continue the discussion of film in the composition classroom in Chapter 4, where I provide a far more detailed account of the pedagogical uses of movies in rhetorically based composition curricula. In this chapter and the next, however, I move beyond the classroom in order to further examine the rhetoric of film through a broad-reaching theoretical scope, one drawing both from classical rhetorical theory and that of the Soviet linguist and critical theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. This chapter will focus on Bakhtinian theory alongside the classical idea of *ethos*; the two prove, thanks to Bakhtin’s understanding of how the rhetor and audience dialogically interact to create meaning, to be mutually enriching topics. Chapter 3 will focus on the classical concepts of *pathos* and *logos* as they apply to film, and will conclude with a rhetorical case study of the movie *Blade Runner*, which applies the macro-scale theory of both chapters at the micro level.

⁵ I will certainly concede that film and digital media have begun to merge in new ways due to the likes of Hulu and Netflix—and even via digital production techniques that filmmakers often use in feature-length products. Such treatment of film, by my thinking, deserves its own rhetorical study. I do, though, agree with David Lynch that the experience of watching a film on a smaller, non-immersive screen like an iPhone’s cannot rhetorically match the cinematic experience one receives in a movie theater (“David”).

II. BAKHTINIAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE RHETORIC OF FILM

Film as Bakhtinian Utterance

In categorizing and exploring the rhetoric of film, Mikhail Bakhtin's critical work on language and literature provides several valuable lexical and conceptual tools. While rhetoric and composition scholars have written extensively about Bakhtin, primarily in the 1980s and '90s (much of Bakhtin's work wasn't translated into English in the '80s, meaning his was a critical voice unavailable to the '70s compositionists), this scholarship features very little application of his ideas to the audio-visual, and almost no application specifically to film. In the field of film studies, too, the scholarly corpus on Bakhtin is scant. Two book-length studies on Bakhtin and film deserve strong recognition: Robert Stam's *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (1989) and Martin Flanagan's *Bakhtin and the Movies: New Ways of Understanding Hollywood Film* (2009).⁶ While both these excellent studies contribute indirectly to discussion of rhetoric and film, neither places primary emphasis on the Bakhtinian concepts I find *most* helpful in discussing filmic rhetoric: "utterance" and "speech genre."

The utterance, Bakhtin explains in his essay "The Problem of Speech Genres," is the individual speech act, anything "from a short (single-word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise," bounded "by a *change of speaking subjects*." Bakhtin insists that the utterance, not the word, sentence, or paragraph, "is the *real unit* of speech communication" (*Speech* 71, italics in text). In doing so, he defines speech acts as meaningful only in contextual relation to other speech acts, or as Thomas Kent puts it, "Bakhtin's conception of the utterance accounts for the dialogic and collaborative nature of language-in-use by merging the speaker/text with the other" (36-37). This analysis, taken to the furthest extent by rhetoricians like Don Bialostosky, even suggests that a Bakhtinian model of language can be elementally grouped into units of rhetorical encounter, each comprising the canons of invention, arrangement, and style ("Bakhtin" 20).

If the utterance can be assigned a rhetorical definition, then the speech genre can be deemed this structural makeup of the utterance based on rhetorical expectations. Speech genres,

⁶ Sue Vice's book *Introducing Bakhtin* (1997) also deserves a nod for its use of filmic examples in illustrating several of Bakhtin's key concepts.

emphasizes Bakhtin, may also be simple as the one-word rejoinder or complex as the novel, which contains a multitude of simple speech genres such as the rejoinder, question, exclamation, taunt, etc., in its whole: “During the process of their formation, [complex speech genres] absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communication. These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones” (*Speech* 62). While this analysis asserts the heterogeneity of the rhetorical utterance, equally important for rhetoricians is the revelation, based on the speech genre model, that genre itself is a rhetorical construction. That is, genre is not only a retroactively assigned set of defining conventions. Rather, because every utterance is dialogically situated, “the genre constitutes the public form an utterance must assume in order to be comprehensible” (Kent 42). Genre, then, is not merely assigned but *designed* for rhetorical effect.

Stam, though the majority of his book focuses on other Bakhtinian concepts, examines speech genres in relation to film in a brief section of *Subversive Pleasures*; though he resists the explicit application of speech genre theory beyond verbal utterances, he offers an excellent description of how movies can exhibit and dramatize the social interplay of speech genres:

A translinguistic⁷ approach to speech genres in the cinema would correlate the primary speech genres—familial conversation, dialogue among friends, chance encounters, boss-worker exchanges, classroom discussions, cocktail party banter, military commands—with their secondary cinematic mediation. It would analyze the etiquette by which the classical Hollywood film, for example, deals with typical speech situations such as two-person dialogue (usually by the conventional ping-pong of shot and countershot) and dramatic confrontations (the verbal stand-offs of western and gangster films), as well as the more avant-garde subversions of that etiquette. Godard’s entire career, for example, might be seen as a protracted attack on the conventional Hollywood decorum for handling discursive situations in the cinema. (65)

The step I wish to make, though, is to apply the theory of speech genres to *all* the rhetorical elements of cinema, not just the verbal. Stam is right to draw attention to the presentation of

⁷ “Translinguistic,” here, denotes Bakhtinian linguistic theory that accounts for the drift between different languages in the same social sphere.

verbal exchange between characters, but if cinema is—as Metz and other cine-semiologists have shown—a language and a discourse, then the “etiquette” surrounding verbal exchange also conforms to cinematic speech genre⁸ conventions, the rhetorical importance of which can easily match or exceed that of the characters’ speech. Likewise, film “language” communicates and attempts to persuade even in the absence of verbal speech. While nonverbal filmic construction rarely mimics the sentence or paragraph in any exactness, filmic units like the long-range establishing shot, the makeover montage scene, or the swelling musical cue, do function as speech genres. They are units of communication designed for specific rhetorical effect in accordance with larger frameworks: first, the parameters set by the complete complex utterance (the larger scene, or the film as a whole) wherein the elemental speech genres “assume a special character” as they are “absorbed and digested”; and second, the far-reaching cultural-rhetorical conventions in place surrounding the movie’s production.

That is, it is important to note that a cinematic speech genre designed for the reception, say, of an American audience in the 1940s would not, in all likelihood, elicit the desired response from a present-day audience. Confusion can arise when this historical specificity of genre conventions is overlooked, as David Bordwell notes: “One critic claims that the ending of [the film] *Humoresque* creates a ‘disturbance of codification’ when radio music wells up unrealistically as the heroine walks to her death; but such a move from diegetic⁹ to nondiegetic music is quite permissible in the classical Hollywood cinema” (268). The inferred “disturbance in codification,” then, stems from the critic’s attempt to map an established speech genre from latter-day film (the reflexive use of music for emphasis) onto the corpus of a classical Hollywood film that was constructed within the context of different speech genre conventions. The crescendo of initially diegetic music would not have signaled a rift in orthodox narrative structure to audiences in the ‘40s, but rather that the movie is concluding.

I might, however, disagree with Bordwell in asserting that this historical-generic disjunction does not necessarily imply that the critic commenting on *Humoresque* is *wrong*; rather, she is interpreting the film as a rhetorical anachronism, which, to an extent, all classical

⁸ While only some of their varieties function through literal speech, I am comfortable referring to filmic or cinematic speech genres because such units, in their rhetorical/communicative nature, are at least symbolic of speech.

⁹ *Diegetic* is a narratological term denoting the elements of the narrative contained within the world where the plot takes place; omniscient narration and most film scores, that is, are *nondiegetic* because they exist outside the narrative’s literal world.

Hollywood works are when viewed in the present. Because the rhetorical expectations behind filmic speech genres change through time, classical Hollywood speech genres will have altered effects when screened before a temporally displaced audience. “The speaker,” writes Bakhtin, “strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system that determines this word, within the alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver” (“Discourse” 282). The meaning of a filmic speech genre—a movie’s analogue to the “word” discussed here—is thus negotiated through the merging “conceptual systems” of the filmmakers and viewer as the latter watches the movie. As Flanagan puts it, “It is possible to speak of film as a kind of utterance because ... it is not only the producer of meaning but also the site and recipient of meanings projected back onto it by its dialogic communicant and adversary, the spectator” (21). Such a framework necessitates “what Bakhtin calls ‘the rights of the reader’ and the ‘rights of the listener[.]’—that is, for the possibility of ‘aberrant’ readings that go against the grain of the textual discourse” (Stam, *Subversive* 42).

The rule that emerges from this discussion is that audience consideration is invariably written into the construction of the filmic speech genre. By examining film under a framework of “historical poetics”—a term invoked by Bakhtin and Bordwell alike—one can analyze the culturally and temporally specific makeup of filmic speech genres, and even infer how initial audiences might have responded to these films. But here, it benefits the rhetorical critic to recall Gilles Deleuze’s critique of cinema as a static text, his argument that cinema does not “happen” until the spectator encounters the cinematic “time-image”: “It is not quite right to say that the cinematographic image in is the present. What is in the present is what the image ‘represents,’ but not the image itself, which, in cinema as in painting, is never to be confused with the image itself” (*Cinema 2* xi-xii). Because Deleuze’s cinematographic “representations” differ from the images themselves, Bakhtin again provides a valuable framework: the filmmakers’ intended reading of their images may be reflected in the images’ historically specific generic structure, but, ultimately, the rhetorical impact of the images occurs within the “alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver.” This is where representation happens. In turn, this is where rhetoric takes effect. And while Deleuze discusses the time-image specifically, I see the same theory applying to other filmic speech genres: the adrenaline-raising musical cue, family dialogue, the

voiceover, etc.¹⁰ Each genre is constructed with intent, but enters into an external “alien” context as the spectator watches the movie. Thus, while poetic discourse on film may concern itself only with filmmakers’ aesthetics and intent (historically situated or not), rhetorical criticism that does the same risks effacing one half of the rhetorical equation: the audience. “Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances,” writes Bakhtin, and rhetorical film criticism ought to treat the film as just that: not as a static text, but an audio-visual utterance embedded in a larger conversation and pieced together from micro-utterances attempting to “account [for] the addressee’s perception ... that will determine his active responsive understanding of [the] utterance” (*Speech* 69, 95). And in the long term, the rhetorical critic must remain cognizant of what Bakhtin calls “the life of the text”: “The event of the life of the text, that is, its true essence, always develops *on the boundary between two consciousnesses, two subjects*” (*Speech* 106; italics Bakhtin’s). When the creator’s (or in film’s case, creators’) and receiver’s “consciousnesses” lie decades or cultures apart, rhetorical critics must account for these cultural-temporal rifts; the “essence” of *Casablanca* to a college student today is not what it was to a World-War-II-era moviegoer.

Heteroglossia in Film

Bakhtin’s neologism *heteroglossia* derives from his famous essay “Discourse in the Novel,” a frequently cited essay among rhetoricians, but one that draws an untenable binary between poetical and rhetorical genres, privileging the former and often condemning the latter. Thus, before discussing further applications of Bakhtin’s theory to the rhetoric of film, one needs to deal with the irony of Bakhtin’s recurrent and pronounced contempt for rhetoric. Bakhtin, an intellectual persecuted and exiled by Stalinist authoritarianism, perceived a rhetoric that insists on “the unconditionally innocent and the unconditionally guilty,” on situations where “there is complete victory and destruction of the opponent [while] [i]n dialogue the destruction of the opponent also destroys that very dialogic sphere where the word lives” (*Speech* 150). For Bakhtin, rhetoric is artificially absolute. It demands propagandism, agonism, and forced closure whose “posture ... forsakes the dialogic quality of the word” (Halasek, “Starting” 3). Such

¹⁰ It is worth stressing here that I don’t recommend that Bakhtian or classical rhetorical terminology supplant the existing filmic lexicon; the matter to consider, rather, is how filmic concepts function in the context of rhetorical concept and terminology. The two sets of vocabulary should, as Bakhtin might say, work in dialogue.

thinking leads Bakhtin to valorize the novel for its democratic application of heteroglossia, a term the theorist coins to denote “a diversity of social speech types ... and a diversity of individual voices.” The novel, for Bakhtin, is “artistically organized” heteroglossia; the genre is defined by its multi-voicedness (“Discourse” 262).

Here, however, it is worth noting that Bakhtin’s characterization of the novel as heteroglossic itself rhetoricizes the novel by contemporary standards—a realization that highlights the vastly different conceptions of “rhetoric” employed by Bakhtin and most rhetorical critics today. Bakhtin observes that the authorial voice and those of the narrator, characters, and other novelistic speech sources are each ideological, and thus compose nothing short of a web of rhetorically motivated utterances. Kay Halasek, in turn, notes the “seeming contradiction” in Bakhtin’s simultaneous veneration of rhetorical genres within novelistic heteroglossia and disdain for those without, while conceding that “[i]n Russia during his day, however, the novel—not public oratory or debate—was the preeminent genre of ... subversion, hence, Bakhtin’s privileging of the novel” (“Starting” 2, 5).

Regardless, Bakhtin’s bridging of rhetoric and poetics, whether or not he would have accepted such a characterization, helps elucidate the rhetorical makeup of film. Film is heteroglossic insofar as it comprises an amalgam of contiguous, often palimpsestic, micro-level utterances, each ideologically motivated, that together compose a complete complex utterance. Where Bakhtin identifies components like “authorial literary-artistic narration” and “individualized speech of characters” as the elements of novelistic heteroglossia (“Discourse” 262), one might compose a parallel list for film, including but not limited to: spoken dialogue, voiceover narration, the body language of the actors, costume design, sound effects, the musical score, specific musical cues, camera movement, the establishing shot, etc. These verbal, auditory, and visual utterances abut, overlap, and color each other’s inferred meanings. To pose an obvious example, the Vera Lynn recording of “We’ll Meet Again,” an audio utterance meeting the speech genre specifications of feel-good Western popular music (simple chord patterns, hummable melody, sentimental lyrics, etc.), assumes an ironic meaning in the conclusion of *Dr. Strangelove* as it overlies a separate visual utterance: the movie’s concluding montage of nuclear holocaust. In a different film, the same song might have been used to unironically punctuate lovers’ reunion, or the end of a war, or any number of other happy endings. The difference in meaning as inferred by an audience, then, depends on the micro-

utterance's situation within the heteroglossia of the complete utterance. Such overlapping of utterances—be they for ironic effect, emotional punctuation, visualizing a verbal thesis, or any number of other rhetorical ends—characterizes the rhetoric of film, and a Bakhtinian perspective in particular highlights the importance of anticipating, as well as possible, the “alien conceptual system” of the audience when piecing together filmic utterances.

Bakhtin, Classical Rhetoric, and Film

I have begun this chapter by building off Bakhtin's discourse theory rather than the rhetoric Aristotle or Cicero for a number of reasons. One might critique the very act of mapping classical rhetoric onto film—and for multiple reasons. Aside from the temporal and ideological rifts that separate Greek and Roman culture from the latter-day social milieus of filmic production and consumption, the boldfaced point remains that classical rhetorical theory deals almost exclusively with public oratory, a genre of speech-act often featured *within* filmic heteroglossia, but whose formal-rhetorical conventions have little to do with those of film as a whole. Previous applications of classical rhetorical theory to film, moreover, have led to a “checklist” approach: each rhetorical canon or appeal receives one or two paragraphs drawing too-obvious connections between classical oratorical composition and filmic composition. These are not wrong, per se, but they necessarily oversimplify.

Do I ignore classical rhetoric, then? I could try, but this choice would be very un-Bakhtinian—that is, artificially monologic—because classical rhetorical theory, especially Aristotle's, is ingrained so deeply in the ideology surrounding contemporary rhetorical scholarship that anything I write here will enter into at least tacit dialogue with Aristotle. I invoke Bakhtin, then, not to replace classical rhetorical theory, but, aptly, to put the two in dialogue. Bialostosky has already suggested that Bakhtin's language theories, both of rhetoric and poetics, build from and revise Aristotle's: “Bakhtin does not merely deconstruct Aristotelian hierarchies by making marginal Aristotelian topics central; he articulates a world of artistic practices beyond the boundaries Aristotle established with the same thoroughness with which Aristotle settled the territory within these boundaries” (“Aristotle's” 394). Where Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, then, focuses on the affluent, male, public orator, Bakhtin's theory of utterances and speech genres extends the same theoretical care and thoroughness to other avenues of discourse: common speech, poetical discourse, etc. Bakhtin, moreover, “rehabilitates the most abjected part

of Aristotle's rhetoric, delivery" (394) a crucial canon in the discussion of film.¹¹ Above, I have indicated already how filmmakers use certain filmic utterances to frame or "deliver" other utterances; for instance, a certain camera angle and musical cue delivers a character's speech in a certain tone, and as Bialostosky via Bakhtin notes, "Tone, indeed, *is* an argument, a minimal enthymeme in which the intoned expression calls up the unstated premises and moves the listener to share the speaker's evaluation of the subject in question" ("Aristotle's" 402). In addition to the useful vocabulary of *utterance*, *speech genre*, and *heteroglossia*, then, a Bakhtinian perspective decenters and reorders classical rhetoric in a way that aids its application to film. We needn't restrict *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* solely to the canon of invention, when, for instance, filmic ethos has a great deal to do with delivery, style, and even arrangement. The persuasive character that emerges from *Pulp Fiction*, for example, has much to do with the nonlinear arrangement of its plot.

And yet, classical rhetorical theory often applies well to film—uncannily well, in fact. Consider Cicero's populist admonition about the assessment of oratorical style: "The truth is the orator who is approved by the multitude must inevitably be approved by the expert. What is right or wrong in a man's speaking I have the ability and knowledge to judge: but what sort of orator a man is can only be recognized from what his oratory effects" (*Brutus* xlix.184). Compare that quote to, for example, James Agee's assessment of *Casablanca* in a 1943 review: "*Casablanca* is still reverently spoken of as (1) fun, (2) a 'real movie.' I think it is the year's clearest measure of how willingly, *faute de mieux*, people will deceive themselves" (50). From a rhetorician's perspective, Cicero's respect for popular opinion and affect makes him appear the better—or at least more even-handed, and less stodgy—critic of the two. Agee may rebuff *Casablanca* as no fun, but sixty years later, the movie still attracts fans, brings joy, and informs American cultural mythology; to a great extent, we must assess what kind of movie it is not by the critical elite's assessment, but, as Cicero says, by its effects.

Still, thinking literally, we must keep in mind that Cicero's topic is not film: it is the orator, the affluent, male Roman politician or attorney. Thus, I hope my often explicit, but sometimes tacit reliance on the Bakhtin's discourse theory throughout this chapter will help

¹¹ Hendrix and Wood, for instance, reflect the Aristotelian position, asserting: "Admittedly, the application of *delivery*, as a separate skill, to filmic persuasion becomes somewhat tenuous" (111). They discuss delivery in terms (continued on next page)

loosen the problematic underpinnings of the classical rhetorical theory I rely on in the remainder of this chapter, and in Chapter 3, by dislodging its classism, racism, and sexism. A popular medium requires a populist rhetoric, and Bakhtin, I believe, helps provide this.

III. FILM ETHOS

Ethos, Auteur Theory, and the Author Function

The subject of ethos in conjunction with film is especially interesting, and troublesome. Ethos, for Aristotle, constitutes the persuasive force of the speaker derived from his credibility and perceived goodwill (*Rhetoric* 1356a5-10). Aristotle's definition of ethos as a self-contained, autonomous phenomenon linked to a single rhetor lingers in latter-day criticism, tethered to Enlightenment assumptions about the sanctity of the individual. Largely neo-Aristotelian in its methodology, the most noteworthy and influential examination of ethos in relation to narrative texts probably remains Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, which posits the concept of the *implied author*. Booth coins this term to carve out a middle space between the real flesh-and-blood author and her literary constructions—the narrator, characters, plot, etc. The implied author represents the rhetorical self-presentation of the real person; “[he] chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his choices” (74-75). Behrens commandeers this term for application to film, declaring, “It is but one step further to the implied auteur, whose arguments are acceptable or not as we respond to the implied sensibility behind his films” (7).

Behrens's theoretical step may be an obvious one, but a Bakhtinian perspective reveals it, potentially, to be in the wrong direction, since the ideology surrounding auteur theory often betrays the dialogic nature of both film spectatorship and filmmaking. For the rhetorical critic, two dangerous assumptions undergird auteur theory. The first is that, in the analysis and evaluation of texts, the film's author/director deserves primary, if not exclusive, attention. The novelist and filmmaker Alexandre Astruc “prepared the way for auteurism” in 1948 with his essay on the “camera-pen,” a metaphor “valorizing” the creative and artistic act of filmmaking,

of theatrical presentation, which seems to me an important connection, but a Bakhtinian perspective reveals that there's more to be said.

and insisting that “[t]he filmmaker ... should be able to say ‘I’ like the novelist or poet” (Stam, *Film* 83). While the movement that followed deserves heavy praise for defending the merit of American B-movie directors against “literary high-art prejudice,” and helping to elevating film in general from its subservience to literature (Stam, *Film* 92), I want to resist the New Critical trap implicit in a theory that values the genius of the individual artist over the audience-specific rhetorical encounter. We can acknowledge, that is, the rhetorical importance of auteurism in the evolution of the cinema, but also the need for a bilateral rhetoric of cinema that examines spectatorship as well as filmmaking.

The second assumption—perhaps obvious, but important nonetheless—underlying auteur theory is the supremacy of the director to the other filmmakers: The “camera-pen” is not the producer, scripter, actors’, but the director’s. This perspective makes some, limited, sense in the case of the writer-directors like Godard, Ingmar Bergman, and Orson Welles, but less in the cases of many commonly referred to as auteurs—those like Hitckcock, John Huston, and John Ford, who worked primarily from others’ screenplays. Seymour Chatman, for instance, maps out the “authorship” of Huston’s adaptation of *The Red Badge of Courage*, noting that the “real authors” include Huston, yes, but also the MGM executives, producer, musical composer, and of course Stephen Crane—not to mention the actors, cinematographer, set designers, etc. The music, notably—an added set of utterances beyond the director’s control—was commissioned by MGM to connote glory and bravery, thus undercutting Huston’s intended message of cynicism toward war (*Coming* 92-94). Even in the case of the writer-director auteur, though, the filmmaking process is profoundly collaborative, and its authorship always plural. As Stam puts it: “The filmmaker is not an untrammled artist; he or she is immersed in material contingencies, surrounded by the Babel-like buzz of technicians, cameras, and lights of the ‘happening’ which is the ordinary film shoot. While the poet can write poems on a napkin in prison, the filmmaker requires money, camera, film. Auteursm, it was argued, downplayed the collaborative nature of film” (*Film* 90). If we take this reality seriously, it becomes impossible to ascribe ethos solely to the director.

From a rhetorical perspective, though, I may be skirting around the real question, which is how the director’s inferred presence shapes the audience’s understanding of or reaction toward a film. To answer, I want to backtrack to Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault’s critiques of the romanticization of print authorship. In “The Death of the Author,” Barthes denies the legitimacy

of the individual, autonomous authorial presence, “as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the *author* ‘confiding’ in us” (143). He insists, rather, that “[t]he reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but its destination” (148). Foucault, in “What Is an Author?” offers a complimentary analysis, but one centered more on social-discursive taxonomy than readership: “[U]nlike a proper name ... the name of the author remains on the contours of texts—separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterizing their mode of existence” (123). For Barthes, alongside Bakhtin, then, the final point of meaning-making agency belongs to the reader or viewer, the receiver of discourse, while, as Foucault would have it, “the function of the author is to characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society” (“What Is” 124).

Foucault’s analysis, though, certainly doesn’t strip the director’s name of any consequence; in film, as in writing, it means that the attachment of an authorial moniker to a text carries with it a certain set of assumptions that color the audience’s preconceptions toward a movie. “Hitchcock” connotes certain expectations of *style* and *delivery*—playful camerawork, for instance, capable of recasting the mundane activities of common people into the realm of the “psychological thriller.” When the opening shot of *Rear Window* pans from the wheelchair-bound Jimmy Stewart’s cast-bound leg to his character’s various photographic paraphernalia, one can’t literally detect Hitchcock, in the flesh, at the helm of the movie camera, but, because the director’s name is attached to the project, one projects the Hitchcock author function onto the scene: the narrative camera-eye is *telling us something* about Stewart’s character, providing a visual utterance which makes sense, thanks to its categorization as “Hitchcock’s,” as both establishing the backstory and adding psychological commentary. It meets expectations, but largely because viewers project expectations onto the shot. The process is dialogic.

But again, we oversimplify to ascribe the author function only to directors. While Bronwyn Williams, referring to his research interviews, notes that “even students who are not film buffs can name and describe the jobs of Stephen Spielberg or George Lucas, and more than half of the students I spoke with could name other well-known filmmakers” (113), it seems likely that the same students would have been able to identify and discuss many more famous *actors*. A movie like *Casablanca*, for instance, has come to iconify its stars Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid

Bergman, though I doubt a large percentage of Americans could name or comment on its director, Michael Curtiz. Stam notes that, in accounting for the collaborative nature of film, “some [have] argued that producers like [David O.] Selznick, performers like Brando, or writers like Raymond Chandler could be seen as auteurs” (91). By a similar token, we have to account all clout-carrying monikers attached to cinema when thinking of the filmic author function. The name “John Wayne” suggests the ideologically right-wing western, “Robert De Niro” the socially conscious gangster film, “Paul Walker” the contemporary high-octane action film. In the case of literary adaptations of the name of the print author colors, to some degree, the audience’s expectations of the film, and doubly interesting are features like *Lifeboat*, directed by Hitchcock and scripted by John Steinbeck. Each example above could be opened up, the author functions examined in great detail, but the point to stress here is that, despite Foucault’s warning that “[t]he *œuvre* can be regarded neither as an immediate unity, nor as a certain unity, nor as a homogeneous unity” (*Archeology* 24), the attachment of an authorial title—a director’s, actor’s, writer’s, or producer’s—to a film text does rhetorically affect how the audience interprets the utterances at play in the film.

Ethos and Verisimilitude

Film is frequently referred to as a poetical medium, and, looking back to Aristotle, the rationale makes sense. Poetry, and art in general, for Aristotle is “mimetic” of human reality; it “represent[s] people in action,” and presents people as “either elevated or base[,] ... [as] better than our normal level, worse than it, or much the same” (*Poetics* 1448a1-5). Film uniquely excels at these criteria; its photographic quality implies strong mimesis, and the stylistic utterances that accompany a film’s presentation of a character—camera angles, lighting, music, and the other elements of what Stam calls “etiquette”—give a movie the means to easily cast its figures into heroic, villainous, or moderate roles.

Yet, film’s ability to mimic reality, to achieve verisimilitude, is also a matter of rhetoric—specifically ethos. If a film can convince viewers that what they see accurately reflects the “real,” then the arguments or theses implicit in the text will be easier to accept. The French film critic Andre Bazin, writing in 1945, asserts that “[n]o matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the

model” (14). Bazin seems to evince the rhetorical presupposition crucial to film’s ethos of realism: that filmgoers carry a tacit, subconscious knowledge that what they see on film has to have *happened*, and that they are more willing to trust the photographic image than the word, painting, illustration, etc., because the photograph, by “embalm[ing] time” verifies itself (Bazin 14). Its credibility is self-evident.

There is certainly some truth to Bazin’s analysis. Williams, for example, reports that “[t]he students I talked with implied a mistrust for the slipperiness of language compared to the hard objectivity of the image” (118), and also suggests that “[w]hat we see on television does not seem to be mediated through a single consciousness the way an article in print does” (119). Fair enough. Yet Barthes poses a compelling distinction between the photographic still and the moving image. He writes, “Film can no longer be seen as animated photographs: the *having-been-there* gives way to the *being-there* of the thing” (“Rhetoric” 45), and also, “[I]n front of the screen, I don’t have time to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity ...” (*Camera* 55). This “voracity” Barthes speaks of, the perpetual consumption of images that gives way to a process more immersive and present-tense than reflective and past-tense, begets its own sort of realism—a powerful one hinging on the power of the film narrative to submerge the viewer in sensory appeals. But most filmgoers are also smart enough to pick up on the artifice of this process, especially amid the sprawling use of CGI and 3D imagery in the mainstream cinema.

Photography, and filmmaking especially, doesn’t merely capture or “embalm” reality; it stages reality, manipulates and sequences it. In a film sequence, a shot of a man smiling warmly could be cut together with that of a sleeping infant to suggest fatherly kindness, or with a mutilated animal to suggest sociopathy. The only self-evident “reality” is that the man and infant (or dead animal) were at one point poised before a movie camera; the rest we comprehend through narrative sequencing, or, in rhetorical terms, *arrangement*. If capturing reality were the be-all-end-all of filmmaking, then Andy Warhol’s *Empire*, an eight-hour recording of the Empire State Building with a stagnant camera, would define the medium. But this film is thought avant-garde because it allows time to pass literally, and refuses any cinematic narrative conventions. It bores the average viewer.

Film audiences disfavor “pure” realism; they expect realism filtered through what Deleuze calls “the economy of narration” (*Cinema 2* 128). Costanzo notes that

early moviemakers ... at first ... thought it was necessary to show every step of a filmed action. First they showed the hero opening a door, then his walking down a flight of steps, then another door, a taxi across town, the door of the taxi opening, and so forth. Soon, however, film directors realized that they could leave out certain steps; if they cut directly from shot 1 to shot 4, the viewer would fill in what happened in between.
(*Double* 50-51)

Such narrative convention has become, of course, not only an economical convenience for the filmmakers, but codified requirement in comprehensible film language. A movie's ethos, then, does hinge in part on the movie's ability to appear "real," but also on its manner of filtering and arranging that realism. The Hollywood action film, generally, compresses the plot into as little screen time as necessary, with quick cuts and spectacular visuals; such breakneck pacing and style acts as a marker to the genre's ethos. Most American viewers accept these conventions without a second thought, but some find them trite and overused. A film like *The Deer Hunter* reacts against standard Hollywood "realism" through the use of long shots and drawn-out scenes; for many viewers, this movie has been able, through its realistic attention to the passage of time, to achieve a stronger, truer sense of realism and emotional intensity than other Hollywood fare. Others still, of course, have found it dull and plodding. And, as Kyburz notes, directors like Godard have experimented successfully with techniques like the jump-cut as a way of resisting the traditional grammar of film narrative ("Totally" 41). Some have appreciated this innovation; others have found it incomprehensible or sophomoric. Each of these examples constitutes, to return to Bakhtin's terms, a set of filmic speech genre conventions, designed to trigger a certain response in a certain audience—and, in the process, to establish a certain "character" or ethos for the film.

Barthes, Connotation, and the Chronotopic Ethos

It may be ironic to again invoke Barthes in this chapter because most of his work on visual rhetoric focuses deliberately on photographic stills. "Far from being a film specialist," writes Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Barthes could even be considered somewhat *cinophobic*.... He certainly distrusted the hypnotic spell exerted by cinema, and the attendant problem, for an analyst, of

having to reconcile this continuity of appeal with a discontinuity of what he called signs” (50). However, this problem—one analogous to Bakhtin’s ambivalence toward rhetoric—fails to hamper Barthes’s importance in the discussion of filmic rhetoric, especially when one treats film as an utterance. On occasion, Barthes’s skepticism toward film seems even to sharpen his analytic blade.

Barthes’s essay “The Rhetoric of the Image” seems a natural starting point for analyzing visual utterances. Here, Barthes decodes a photographic still advertising Panzani brand food products into both denoted and connoted “signs.” The denoted sign, which Barthes also dubs the “linguistic sign,” is what the ad attempts to make explicit: notions of freshness and domestic cooking. The connoted sign is of “Italy or rather *Italianicity*,” spurred by the “bringing together of the tomato, the pepper and the tricoloured hues (yellow, green, red) of the poster.” This second sign, Barthes explains, “stands in a relation of redundancy with the connoted sign of the linguistic message (the Italian assonance of the name *Panzani*) and the knowledge it draws upon is already more particular; it is a specifically ‘French’ knowledge ... based on a familiarity with certain tourist stereotypes” (34). For Barthes, then, the connoted meaning of an image hinges on the semiotics of its audience’s ideological framework. Bakhtin makes a similar point, noting, for instance, that the image of the hammer and sickle takes on especial meaning in Soviet ideology, while the image of bread and wine does the same in Christian ideology (Vološinov 10).¹² The connoted meanings of Soviet nationalism and communion are ideologically and contextually specific. I, for instance, as a non-Christian American, recognize the symbolism of the hammer and sickle but lack the emotional response it might instill in a Soviet nationalist; nor does the image of bread and wine evoke “communion” to me without some intellectual effort. Similarly, the Panzani ad’s intended evocation of “*Italianicity*” would clearly fall flat when presented to a real Italian audience, who would likely interpret the image, if anything, as a feebly parodic representation of their own culture.

Later in the essay, Barthes clarifies his equation of an image’s linguistics with its denotation:

¹² Many Bakhtin scholars credit Bakhtin with full or partial authorship of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, a book formally attributed to the critic’s friend and colleague V.N. Vološinov. I cite Bakhtin in my own prose for consistency’s sake.

Today, at the level of mass communications, it appears that the linguistic message is indeed present in every image: as title, caption, accompanying press article, film dialogue, comic strip balloon. Which shows that it is not very accurate to talk of the civilization of the image—we are still, more than ever, a civilization of writing, writing and speech continuing to be the full terms of the informational structure. (38)

Whether or not one buys Barthes's assertion about the primacy of verbal utterances in Western discourse, the point is well taken that filmic images require the contextualization of other utterances (verbal or not) in the establishment of a denotative sign. For instance, an aerial view of New York City and a clip of a car driving on a nondescript urban street each signify only what is self-evident, but, juxtaposed, denote that someone is driving through New York City. This example reiterates Bakhtin's principle that all utterances make sense only in relation to other utterances, and though construction according to speech genre conventions. The generic construction of the two shots would be designed to move the viewers intelligibly from broad to specific.

The connotative sign in film is more complex and, in my view, a more interesting matter for rhetorical studies to take up. Here, the 2005 film *Good Night, and Good Luck* poses an interesting example. Set in 1953, this movie dramatizes the showdown between TV newsman Edward R. Murrow (played by David Strathairn) and Senator Joseph McCarthy (represented via archival footage). Before analyzing this movie specifically, I want to call up a comparable analysis of Barthes's, focusing on a different historical film:

In Mankiewicz's *Julius Caesar*, all the characters are wearing fringes. Some have them curly, some straggly, some tufted, some oily, all have them well combed, and the bald are not admitted, although there are plenty to be found in Roman history....

What then is associated with these insistent fringes? Quite simply the label of Roman-ness. We therefore see here the mainspring of the Spectacle—the *sign*—operating in the open. The frontal loch overwhelms one with evidence, no one can doubt that he is in Ancient Rome. (*Mythologies* 26)

Good Night, certainly, recreates its historical era less crudely, but we see something comparable. Within the mosaic of moving images that composes the movie's visual element, a number of obvious cues emerge: the cinematography is black and white, everyone smokes all the time, the men all neatly comb their hair, etc. Following Barthes, we might say that these visual utterances, taken together, connote '50s-ness, not a documentarian's reproduction of the decade, but a rhetorical reconstruction of that time building off post-millennial stereotypes and archetypes. It is a '50s-ness akin to *Julius Caesar's* Roman-ness or the Panzani ad's Italianicity.

Barthes distinction, though, of film as a “*being-there*” rather than a “*having-been-there*” again proves important. Where one perceives the Panzani ad as a visual *record* of Italianicity, film, especially in its fullest cinematic presentation, is an immersive experience; ideally, it brings the viewer into its world. Here, movies attempt to create a strong degree of verisimilitude, but not to merely ape reality. Rather, they create other worlds rooted in familiar ideological signs from our own world: in addition to historical films, there is, for instance, the high-tech future-ness of *Minority Report*, borrowing familiar images—*topoi*, we can call them—of touch-screen interfaces made available by then-recent advances in digital technology; or the dystopia-ness of *Blade Runner*, borrowing visual *topoi* of urban poverty and scientific innovation.

A couple other examples, from differing genres, prove enlightening. The phenomenon I have described—the ubiquity of realisms built of clichés—explains feminist Vietnamese director Trinh T. Minh-ha's commentary on her own pseudo-documentary filmmaking, using interviews with women from her home nation:

In the reenacted interviews, we (the art director and I) were partly going after the feminist “natural look”; thus, the women involved are clad in very simple clothing, which is what they would wear in socialist Viet Nam. But in the “real-life” shooting situations where they had a choice, they would all prefer to wear makeup and to dress up with showy colors. For the viewer, especially the Western viewer, this has been misleading in terms of class, because of the habit of attributing fancy garments to the bourgeoisie and practical, if not drab clothes to the working class. (45)

Such connotations and “habits” of association among viewers require the attention of filmmakers and rhetorical critics alike. Here, a rift emerges between Western cinematic realism, which

recognizes the “natural look” as a “true” representation of Asian peasantry, and “real-life” realism, wherein the peasants wish to dress lavishly for the occasion of filmmaking. Minh-ha’s final remark speaks to her own thoughtfulness toward audience consideration, and also toward the ethical dilemma of which connotative “realism” to represent.

Returning to Hollywood cinema, consider also this testimony of Howard Zinn’s:

I watched [*Saving*] *Private Ryan*’s extraordinarily photographed battle scenes, and I was thoroughly taken in. But when the movie was over, I realized it was exactly that—I *had been taken in*. And I disliked the film intensely. I was angry at it because I did not want the suffering of men in war to be used—yes, *exploited*—in such a way as to revive what should be buried along with all those bodies in Arlington Cemetery: the glory of military heroism. (243)

Zinn’s anger materializes against an ethos that uses wartime clichés to create an ideologically familiar world American audiences will enter into and accept. He admits to having been “*taken in*” by the world the movie creates, and only mounts his criticism retroactively, after he has distanced himself from the movie’s immersive experience. To analyze the rhetorical methods of mainstream cinema, thus, one has to remain vigilant toward the devices that create ideological familiarity, just as one should consider the manipulation of and resistance to such prevailing clichés, connotations, and assumptions in subversive cinema like Minh-ha’s.

Flanagan, finally, articulates a very similar idea to Barthes’s ethos of connotation through Bakhtin’s concept of the *chronotope*, or narrative time-space; Flanagan identifies the chronotope as “a device not only for [analyzing] methods of narrative construction, but also for measuring the relationship between text and reader; how the world of the reader ‘creates the text’ and how the text completes the dialogical circuit by feeding back into the world of the reader” (55). The chronotope of the 1950s western, for instance, which Flanagan analyzes at length, presents ideologically laden imagery—open plains that suggest the virtues of freedom, stars like John Wayne who suggest “real” manhood. These images and their connotations, of course, say as much about the expectations and beliefs of Americans audiences in the ‘50s as they say about the actual Old West. Flanagan’s analysis squares, too, with Bakhtin scholar Michael Holquist’s reading of the chronotope’s place in ideology: namely, that groups of people possess “not only a

‘political unconscious,’ but what might be called a ‘chronotopic unconscious,’ a set of unspoken assumptions about the coordinates of our experience so fundamental” that they underscore ideological thinking (142). Holquist and Flanagan compliment each other especially well because film, perhaps more than any other medium, can be seen as the *fleshing out* of the chronotopic unconscious, the manner in which ideological premises take form in our visualizations of the world.

Thus, while Hendrix and Wood rightly assert that “the rhetorical critic can apply the concept of ethos to the sponsoring agency and director of the film, to narratives and characters in the film, and to acknowledged sources within the film” (109), this ability to create an immersive world, a chronotope, at once novel and familiar to the viewer, seems to me the most vital component of filmic ethos. A movie’s persuasive character, that is, emerges largely from the collective utterance’s ability to create a space the viewer is readily willing to enter into; as Longinus says in *On the Sublime*, “For the effect of genius is not [only] to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves” (1.4). Many films, even those helmed by famous directors or featuring Oscar-winning stars, fall flat on their backs for their failure to do just this.

The Emergent Ethos: The Implied Filmmaker

Ethos, thus, proves a difficult topic in relation to film. We cannot equate ethos with the director’s persona, nor the stars’, but we falter in failing to account for the effects of the author function on the filmgoing experience. Ethos has much to do with realism, verisimilitude, but just as much to do with how a film structures, arranges, and tampers with reality—and how, as Barthes reveals, “reality” is structured into an ideologically recognizable form that audiences will accept.

Aristotle’s prescription that persuasion through ethos “should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of [his] character before he begins to speak” (*Rhetoric* 1356a5-10) cannot hold in application to film; we cannot deny the profound effect of social and cultural forces at play outside the film text, and that those forces influence our spectatorship.

Yet Aristotle’s prescription is not completely inapplicable, either. In watching, filmgoers do perceive each movie as a relatively autonomous rhetorical entity, complete with its own persuasive character that emerges from the text. We see evidence of this every time a critic speaks of a film as if it were a thinking, decision-making person: “But the movie I cannot like, because the movie doesn’t know how to be liked” (Ebert), or, “I was lost at first but the movie

won me over” (Vancheri). Roger Ebert doesn’t claim, exactly, that the *director* doesn’t know how to be liked; nor does Barbara Vancheri say that the movie’s *stars* won her over. Both critics understand the phenomenon screened before them to be an amalgam of creative voices, decisions, and appeals. It’s there in their wording: the agency lies in the film itself.

I criticize Behrens’s use of “implied auteur” above, but I do, in a sense, think he was on the right track. Booth himself suggests that “every *successful* film does have what might legitimately be called an ‘implied author,’ or if you prefer, an ‘implied center’—that is, a creative voice uniting all of the choices” (“Is There” 125); and Seymour Chatman correctly asserts that even in film “[t]here is always an implied author, though there may not always be a single real author in the ordinary sense,” and that the viewer reconstructs this implied author from the text (*Story* 149, 148). One more qualification comes from rhetorician Roger Cherry, who warns against muddying the lines between ethos and persona in rhetorical and literary criticism, and I’ll try not to here. “The persona,” writes Cherry, “is a stylized mask confined to the role of narrator and is intended to have an imaginative life—literally a personality—of its own,” while the ethos derives from “image of the historical author that emerges from the text itself” (263). Cherry’s distinction is helpful; it highlights the need discern filmic ethos from the personality of the film’s central character or the “narrator,” if it has one. A movie can center itself around an unlikable character whose values differ from those the movie, as a whole, espouses. For obvious reasons, though, one cannot reconstruct a film’s ethos from its “author” alone, so I posit instead the emergent ethos—the “implied filmmaker,” it could be called—that, as Chatman advises, the viewer constructs from the film text. It is not a “personality,” per se, but an amalgam of values and appeals to credibility coded into the film text, and eddying thorough the discourse surrounding the text. Like Booth’s implied author, it is “the sum of its choices,” but is also works in dialogue with extraneous variables; the “alien conceptual system,” as Bakhtin would say, from where the viewer watches affects a film’s ethos. A simpler definition of film ethos would, perhaps, be more satisfying, but anything simpler would oversimplify.

This chapter, after briefly setting film apart from other rhetorical media, has begun with Bakhtin and progressed toward inquiry into filmic ethos, a trajectory that should help rhetoricians interested in film build from a solid theoretical foundation, and move into more rhetorically specific inquiries. I find it helpful to begin with a Bakhtinian attitude or philosophy toward the

rhetoric of film—particularly, that movies comprise a multitude of rhetorical voices and devices that interact dialogically with each other, and spectators—and then apply this theory, explicitly or tacitly, in analyzing the rhetorical mechanics of film. Above, Bakhtin’s theory applies most directly to filmic ethos in the discussion of the chronotope, but I hear Bakhtin’s scholarly intimation at every turn: We must think of ethos not only as the filmmakers’ self-presentation, he says, but the negotiation of identity and credibility between the rhetors and audience in a specific historical context; this is the essence of film-as-utterance.

I hope that Bakhtin’s voice, that is, remains a steady one in *this* text’s heteroglossia. His theory has lingered in the background as I’ve explored ethos; it should, as well, as I further explore the mechanics, devices, and appeals of filmic pathos and logos in the following chapter.

3.

THE RHETORIC OF FILM: PATHOS AND LOGOS IN THE MOVIES

I. PATHOS IN THE MOVIES

Pathos and Logos

In more ways than one, the grouping together of pathos and logos—the primary subjects of this chapter—feels counterintuitive. Much accepted wisdom, dating back to Aristotle, sees logical proofs as the laudable core of good rhetoric, and emotional appeal as at best secondary, and at worst the basest of pandering. By juxtaposing the two, however, I hope to highlight how logical (and ideological) proofs are bound up, especially in media like film, in emotional commitment—and how our emotional responses reveal our ideological predispositions. In the close rhetorical reading of *Blade Runner* that concludes this chapter, moreover, I intend to reveal how ethos, pathos, and logos work in close interdependence in the rhetoric of film.

Heretofore, the general attitude among rhetorical film critics has been that the importance and function of emotional appeals in the movies is so obvious that they hardly need even bring it up. Breen, for instance, writes, “[The] *pathos* or the emotional force inherent in the medium of film is so widely accepted it is almost a truism” (8)—and, following that, has little else to say on the subject. Breen is correct, of course: film, by virtue of its sensory appeal and ability to construct broad, immersive narratives, excels at stirring emotions like few media can. But while I’m not a hardened enough academic rationalist to suggest that we can, through critical discourse, explicate even a fraction of the power stored in the filmic pathos appeal, I regret that others haven’t even tried. I will try here. On the topic of “sublimity,” though, I will apply a more unapologetically subjective analytic approach than elsewhere, drawing from my own experience as a filmgoer. Following that, I will examine the topic of pathos more traditionally, relying on the classical concept of *paideia*.

But one can begin, again, with Aristotle. Classical rhetoricians understood the power of pathos, though to varying degrees. Pathos appeals, for Aristotle, should be designed to “[put] the audience into a certain frame of mind” appropriate to support the rhetor’s argument (*Rhetoric*

1356a1-5). The method Aristotle describes here emerges recurrently in Hollywood films via emotionally connotative images or the palimpsestic overlapping of filmic utterances. If a film wants to convince an American audience that one of its characters—say, the villain in an action film—is a “bad guy” it might play an ominous musical cue in minor key atop his image, a rhetorical move that accounts for both the Western ideological connotations surrounding hero-villain binaries and certain musical chord structures. A recent psychological study suggests, moreover, that the placement of musical cues either simultaneous with or after a character appears onscreen will not only affect viewer’s own emotions, but affect how they interpret the characters’ emotions (Tan, et. al). Viewers, in sensing that their own emotions while watching a film correlate with one of the character’s emotions, will begin to indentify with and develop an emotional investment in that character. Filmic speech genres like the musical cue can be instrumental in bringing about this kind of response.

If, though, Aristotle is roundly dubbed a logocentrist—subordinating pathos appeals to logos—then Cicero may have been a pathocentrist. He sees the rousing emotions as an end in itself. Cicero argues that every rhetor must meet three criteria, “instruct his listener, give him pleasure, and stir his emotions” (*Brutus* xlix.185), the latter two of which chiefly concern pathos. He testifies, also, that “it is no great intellectual gift, but a vigorous spirit which inflames me to such an extent that I am beside myself” (*Orator* xxxviii.132). While I agree with Aristotle’s assessment—an argument will have no sway in an emotional vacuum—I want to stress a further point, one which Cicero’s writings seem to suggest: that even matters of logos, of logical reasoning, will fail to persuade unless the audience emotionally invests itself in the premises such reasoning employs. Crowley, for instance, notes that, among American audiences, “the word *evil* can excite a network of emotions habitually associated since childhood with the devil” (*Toward* 59); hence the power filmic topoi such as images of Nazis or Arab terrorists that we have come to associate with *evil*. Action films may “argue” the heroism and moral superiority of American GIs against the forces of evil, but the process is by no means purely logical. When a film succeeds in humanizing the “evil” enemy, conversely, then the audience’s emotional ties to the abstraction of *evil* come undone, and the film’s perceived argument shifts. The process depends completely on emotional commitment.

Pathos and Sublimity: “What’s Your Favorite Movie?”

Many well-made, critically acclaimed films fail to affect certain audiences because, despite whatever else they do well, they stir few of the necessary emotional responses. This was my experience with the film *United 93*, a documentary-like retelling of one of the 9/11 hijackings, which I saw in theaters when it premiered in 2006. I appreciate the realistic atmosphere this movie is able to achieve through its pseudo-documentarian fly-on-the-wall perspective, and that it takes steps to both contextualize the 9/11 hijacking and humanize the hijackers. But the anonymity of the characters, none of whom the narrative spends much time with, created for me a rift: I felt no emotional ties to the film, and thus was unable to immerse myself in its narrative. Thus, while I admire much about *United 93*, I can’t say I *liked* it. It had the surreal effect of presenting me with the story of the most traumatic day in American history in my lifetime, and making me feel nothing.

Others, of course, felt differently. The movie was a critical success, garnering numerous four-star reviews, Oscar nominations, and making many “best movies on the year” lists. Doubtlessly, the movie rhetorically *worked* for many. My example, though, highlights the both variability among spectators that the rhetorical critic must account for, and the need, in filmic rhetoric, to achieve emotional investment: those who adored *United 93*, to be sure, were able to emotionally invest themselves in the picture in a way I was not.

I will continue, here, to rely on my own example in discussing the theoretically difficult topic of pathos via sublimity because, defeatist as it sounds, it seems all but impossible to concretely theorize sublimity in the universal—except to say that, like pornography, every individual knows it when she sees it. The rhetorical importance, though, of sublimity on this basis is easy to identify and discuss. The disaffection I felt in watching *United 93* represents its opposite. In complete contrast to this experience, a movie that, every time I watch it, stirs within me an intense emotional response—something I can only articulate as a “love,” as in, “I *love* that movie!”—is the 1982 science fiction film *Blade Runner*, which I analyze below in greater detail. For now, though, I will focus on what I perceive as its sublime effect: I find its characters, narrative, and aesthetics so engrossing, so intensely *interesting*, that the movie meets the specifications Longinus posits in *On the Sublime*: “For the true sublime naturally elevates us: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, we are filled with joy and pride, as if we had ourselves produced the very thing we heard” (7.2). I feel a personal stake in this movie, to the extent, even,

that I can become defensive when someone criticizes *Blade Runner*. In writing academically about this film, of course, I've had to create and maintain a critical distance; I accept criticisms of *Blade Runner* and, below, identify on my own a number of its ideological shortcomings, of which there are many.

Yet, even as I admit its flaws, I recognize *Blade Runner*, when asked, as my favorite movie, and would identify my most sublime filmgoing experience as seeing *Blade Runner* at on a big screen when it was rereleased in 2007. On a certain level, I can explain why: I admire its intellectual bent toward complicating the way we define "humanity"; I am dazzled by the movie's pre-CGI cityscape and the mood it creates; I love, especially, Rutger Hauer's strange, animalistic performance as the villain. Yet, these observations do not sum to sublimity. Sublimity, rather, is Burkean identification *par excellence*: the phenomenon occurring—and occurring as often through film as any medium—when the text affects the viewer so deeply and fully that the viewer feels a common understanding with and self-investment in the text even after the act of viewing ends. One can posit criteria for filmic sublimity: the viewer must find the film's performances effective, the aesthetic style attractive, the narrative engrossing and memorable. Many action movies, for instance, are fun, but supply most viewers only a fleeting experience. The ideological premises undergirding the narrative, also, must not run too contrary to the viewer's own belief system. *Saving Private Ryan* fell far short of sublimity for Zinn because it offended him ideologically. Still, though, the complete equation that would explain sublimity escapes definition; it may be impossible to articulate.

I can list, of the top of my head, many other films, of various genres from various eras, that I have found sublime in some capacity: *Kramer vs. Kramer*, *Mulholland Dr.*, *The 400 Blows*, *The Third Man*, *Raising Arizona*. Another filmgoer would supply a different list. One can, though, almost always equate the question, "What's your favorite movie?" with, "Which film has had the most sublime effect of you?" Frustrating as it may be, then, I think the rhetorical film critic must willingly accept the enigma of sublime response—and accept that its terms, like the lofty, longwinded, and often contradictory terms Longinus attempts to set up in his treatise, will never fully concretize.

Pathos and *Paideia*: What Rhetoric Tells Us about Sex, Violence, and Emotion

To examine a more tangible pathos of cinema, one can begin with a quote of Burke's. Burke writes only rarely about the movies, but when he does, his insights deserve careful attention; thus I quote from *A Rhetoric of Motives* (published originally in 1950) at length:

Taken simply at its face value, imagery invites us to respond in accordance with its nature. Thus, an adolescent, eager to “grow up,” is trained by our motion pictures to mediate much on the imagery of brutality and murder, as the most noteworthy signs of action in an ideal or imaginary world. By the time he is fifteen, he has “witnessed” more violence than most soldiers or gunmen experience in a lifetime. And he has “participated in” all this imagery, “emphatically reenacting” it. Thus initiated, he might well think of “growing up” (that is, of transformation) in such excessive terms. His awareness of himself as a developing person requires a vocabulary—and the images of brutality and violence provide such a vocabulary, with a simple recipe for perfecting or empowering of the self by the punishing and slaying of troublesome motives as though they were wholly external. One can surely expect such imagery to have disastrous effects There is no difference, in photographic style, between the filming of a murder mystery and the filming of a “documentary.” Nor should we forget the possible bad effect of the many devices whereby such brutality is made “virtuous,” through dramatic pretexts that justify it in terms of retaliation and righteous indignation. (17-18)

What Burke describes, and laments, here is a form of emotional conditioning and education that filmgoing adolescents underwent in the '50s, and undergo even more rigorously today. It has become clichéd to suggest that media “desensitizes” us to sex and violence, but as Burke explains, there is much truth to the cliché—even in 1950. We are not shocked to see a man run down in the street onscreen, and we are only slightly shocked to see the same happen to a woman. As Williams observes, “It is no longer possible to comprehend the real referent of [an] image of a person hit by a speeding car” (121). To see such an event in the real world is life-alteringly traumatic; to see it at the movies is, well, just another day at the movies. George Bluestone, writing not a decade after Burke, notes, “Everyone knows that houses have toilets, love gets physically consummated, childbirth is a biological function, and marriages frequently

end in divorce. But this information may never be explicitly conveyed on the screen” (37). It is no small irony that ‘50s audiences were expected to, and did, sit tranquilly through scenes of machinegunning and deadly car chases, but balk at an onscreen lavatory.

Susan Miller’s discussion of the classical Greek concept of *paideia* helps explain this phenomenon of seemingly arbitrary “correct” emotional responses. Miller writes, “*Paideia*, a formal curriculum in liberal arts, has since classical Greece tied its usually male recipients to history, to each other, if less often noted, to a particular range of emotional responses”; it is “the standard example of a broadly conceived emotional education that is woven from shared sessions of rigorous attention to oral and written texts” (21). Yet *paideia*, in practice, belonged not only to the cultural elite of Greece:

[I]nsofar as the method of this curriculum is primarily repetition and imitation, another *paideia* is available outside elite groups. Since the standard of manly and gentlemanly behaviors is displayed, observed, and regularly emulated, dedicated onlookers can assimilate it—women, slaves, the poor, and unsophisticated rural groups are also its common foils. With varying entitlement across that range, it is a cultural signature. (Miller 22)

With Miller’s analysis in mind, we can apply *paideia*’s conventions to the contemporary filmgoing public. The cinema constitutes a body of texts infused with cultural values and subject to mass consumption; the emotional education filmgoers receive, thus, serves as an excellent tool for ideological inquiry, as emotional responses will reflect audiences’ ideological presuppositions about what types of imagery and language should “correctly” correspond to what emotions. This model, too, helps us past the somewhat limiting readings of the Althusserian model of ideological inquiry, derived from his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” which see ideologies as functionalist constructions tethered to state apparatuses (schools, churches, etc.) that interpellate individuals affiliated with those same apparatuses (Althusser 104). “[P]aideia,” Miller explains, “is neither a state institution nor a centralized system equivalent to a titled ideological apparatus” (29), though we can, if somewhat abstractly, think of the Hollywood cinema as an ideological apparatus. Caution must be taken, though, not to assume ideologically homogeneity—or even *a* dominant ideology—across the corpus of

Hollywood cinema, which spans decades, cultures, and influences. Even two relatively contemporaneous films like *Little Big Man* (1970), a didactically leftist revision of *The Battle of Little Bighorn*, and *Dirty Harry* (1971), a macho right-wing fantasy about “cleaning up” the city, differ immensely in their ideological underpinnings, though they do, by virtue of their shared medium and time of origin, rely on many of the same emotional responses from viewers; they “share the same mythology,” as Robert B. Ray puts it, relying on audience investment in the virtues of individualism (300). Both subscribe to the grammar of ‘70s Hollywood paideia, even if they use that grammar for different ends.

The point to stress, then, is that emotional responses can be used to heuristically examine the ideologies of films and viewers alike. Returning to the examples posed by Burke and Bluestone, for example, one can infer that American audiences have been educated to accept violence, to a high degree, as a worthwhile and honorably masculine way to resolve conflict: images of violence usually elicit at worst moderate emotions of alarm or disgust, and at best satisfaction and joy. As Pauline Kael says, “[T]he tendency of thoughtless movies—especially *action* movies in which violence has become routinized, conventionalized—is to make you *want* the brutality. You’re waiting for it, practically ready to cheer in *Dirty Harry* or *The Cowboys*” (“Pauline” 33). This analysis implicates form and genre themselves in the conveyance of ideology and the emotional education of spectators. “Form,” as Burke says, “having to do with the creation and gratification of needs, is ‘correct’ in so far as it gratifies the needs which it creates” (“Lexicon” 138), and the form of the action film raises and gratifies the need for stylized explosions and death just as other genres raise expectations of humor (comedies), romantic separation and reunion (romantic melodramas), and legal comeuppance for criminals (courtroom thrillers). In this sense, all genres are not ideologically equal because they intersect differently with the prevailing paideia; they rely on different “correct” emotional responses. A movie like *Avatar*, then, even as it didactically posits an environmentalist message, defies the labels of “liberal” or “progressive” in its reliance on violent death for its villains to gratify audiences. In this sense, its use of paideia is no more “liberal” than *Dirty Harry*’s; its action-movie form sends the message that violence is productive and acceptable.

A final note on the topic of paideia: It has also become commonplace to say that, like violence, the movies have desensitized us to sex, but a rhetorical analysis of filmgoers’ emotional responses suggests otherwise. Certainly, times have change since the ‘50s when, as

Bluestone notes, “physical consummation” of love was barred wholesale from the screen, and today sexually suggestive onscreen images of women and couples meet relative passivity in the mainstream audience. Yet the graphic images of violence, gore, and mutilation that pass the censors have no equivalent in sexuality: sex, to stir the “acceptable” range of audience emotions, must remain at least partially implied. Comedy director and producer Judd Apatow, after witnessing the outrage spurred by his inclusion of male genitalia in the movie *Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story*, declared his intention to “get a penis in every movie I do from now on” because “America fears the penis and that’s something I’m going to help them get over” (qtd. in “Judd”). Whether one admires or censures Apatow’s attempt to shift the trajectory of cinematic paideia depends on the individual’s own ideological preconceptions, principally their attitudes toward what constitutes “vulgarity.” In any case, though, the extreme taboo of exposed genitalia emotionally outweighs its counterparts in the realm of “violence,” and says much about the lingering tenets of puritanical ideology that still hold a hegemonic position in America.

I, moreover, can verbally critique such ideology, but I can’t willingly dislodge myself from the sway of cinematic paideia: It shocks me at first, too, to see exposed genitals on the big screen. As Williams puts it, in slightly subtler terms: “We may be able to understand and criticize a program as a text in terms of form, audience, irony, and so on, but at the same time we may be completely swept along by its affective power. Just because we know swelling music is manipulating the climax of a drama doesn’t mean it doesn’t bring tears to our eyes” (159). By the same token, I habitually recoil at frontal sexuality when I know intellectually that I shouldn’t, and remain unaffected by intense gore, even when I know should be. These filmic speech genres—“swelling music,” sexual imagery, violent imagery—come prepackaged in ideological-emotional connotation which the savvy rhetorical critic can identify, but not necessarily immunize herself against.

II. FILM LOGOS

“I suppose, though I am not altogether sure, there is barely a society without its major narratives, told, retold, and varied; formulae, texts, ritualised texts to be spoken in well-defined circumstances; things said once, and conserved because people suspect some hidden secret or wealth lies buried within.”

– Michel Foucault, “The Discourse on Language” (220)

Examples as Enthymemes

“In my view, there are two narrative rhetorics,” writes Chatman, “one concerned to suade me to accept the form of the work; another, to suade me of a certain view of how things are in the world” (*Coming* 203). Filmic ethos, in general, concerns itself with the former, the establishment of a credible world for the viewer to enter, and a credible “implied filmmaker” whom the viewer trusts. Filmic pathos seems to apply ubiquitously: all meaningful persuasion and trust requires emotional commitment. Filmic logos correlates primarily with the Chatman’s latter rhetoric. Because films are not self-contained entities, because they interact dialogically with other texts, spectators, and ideologies, they then implicitly and explicitly posit arguments about “what exists, what is good, what is possible” (Berlin, *Rhetorics* 84). As Ray explains it, “Ideology is not a thing that dictates such formations as the cinema, but rather a set of social relationships fought out in different arenas of which film is among the most prominent” (9). “Film logos,” in this study, will refer to the rhetorical mechanics allowing film to interact ideologically with its spectators—who, as Foucault suggests in the epigraph, often read into the movies for “secrets,” “wealth,” or at least ideological affirmation.

For Aristotle, the logos appeal comprises two rhetorical devices: the 1) inductive example and 2) the deductive enthymeme—a syllogism truncated for audience consumption (*Rhetoric* 1357a14-23). Behrens suggests that films can be categorized, based on their rhetorical techniques, as either inductive, those wherein film’s “conclusion (or one of many conclusions) that logically follows from the visual and aural evidence has been presented to us,” or deductive, which Behrens pejoratively describes as those “that seem primarily to demonstrate the *a priori* truth of some general proposition” (5). I appreciate Behrens breaking the ground in this application of Aristotelian logos to film, but I find his binary unstable. I will argue here that all

films employ both inductive and deductive logoi and, moreover, that especially in relation to filmic rhetoric, the boundaries even between example and enthymeme begin to break down.

The relevance of the inductive example to film rhetoric seems self-evident; Aristotle even explains that in the *Topica* that “[i]nduction is more convincing and clear and more easily grasped by sense-perception and is shared by the majority of people” (105a15-20). The ability of movies to present, or “describe” an “example” in vivid sensory detail—film “cannot help describing,” notes Chatman (*Coming* 40)—equips the medium with intense power to posit memorable images of characters and events from which audiences can induce broader “truths.” Hence we have bell hooks and other progressive critics’ just concern about “representation” of minorities and women in the cinema. Yet such examples, really, function as enthymemes themselves. If an enthymeme argues by gluing premises together using an unstated, audience-supplied warrant (or middle premise) as the resin, then the warrant justifying most inductive arguments is that the specific example can be treated as a synecdoche, a representation of a larger generality. When hooks, for instance, critiques Hollywood cinema for suggesting that “[t]here is collective cultural agreement that black death is inevitable, meaningless, not worth much” (35), she objects to the enthymematic argument that, if it were concretized into a syllogism, would read: A) many movies depict black characters dying, with little effect on the movie’s narrative progression or outcome; B) these examples of black death represent a larger “truth”; C) ergo, we infer that blacks dying has little bearing or meaning in society in general. This argument, like all enthymemes, is dialogically constructed: the audience supplies part of the argument. I agree wholeheartedly with Flanagan that “what must be avoided, as ever, is an opportunistic promotion of dialogism as a corrective for all the ideological inadequacies of Hollywood film” (38)—any film depicting death as meaningless deserves criticism—but also, I want to stress that, for the rhetorical critic, the audience-supplied premises of enthymemes should also be subject to critique. The filmgoing public willing to accept black characters’ deaths as representing a larger cultural truth are complicit in the perpetuation of regressive ideology. Part of a rhetorical education should be the cross-examination of the assumptions one brings to bear while interacting with texts like movies.

Enthymemes and Audience

All movies contain “examples” capable of inductive transformation, but all movies also narratively progress between premises as well; if no film is ideologically innocent, there is no such thing, as Behrens seems to suggest, as a movie bereft of “*a priori* truth.” Discussion of enthymematic reasoning in film, however, often proves a difficult subject to broach because, as Chatman notes, didacticism is a quality that “some find *in itself* antifilmic,” and “[rare] are those films whose whole structure—visual as well as verbal—constitutes an argument in the traditional rhetorical sense, complete with premises and proofs” (*Coming* 60, 56, italics in text). Yet, Chatman continues, “Films are expensive to make, and socialist no less than capitalist societies have devoted the lion’s share of their production to films that will appeal to large audiences—narrative-fiction films” (58). With this in mind, it seems naïve to dismiss film, especially Hollywood fare, as argumentatively inert. Indeed, if we buy Bakhtin’s contention that “[t]he ideological becoming of a human being ... is selectively assimilating the words of others” (“Discourse” 341), it seems a foregone conclusion that well-funded texts like Hollywood films will be ideologically saturated with speech-acts ripe for assimilation; that is, if not propagandistic like the films of Soviet socialist realism, they will be at least ideologically suggestive.

“[A] speaker,” as Chaim Perelman puts it, “can develop his argument only by linking it to theses granted by his auditors” (253). To posit enthymemes that audiences will comprehend and accept, thus, movies have to rely on familiar ideological premises, and given the large target audience of many films, this can pose a challenge. On this topic, Graham Greene, who was a successful film critic and screenwriter as well as a novelist, brings up several valuable insights in his 1937 essay “Ideas in the Cinema”:

The artists needs an audience to whom it isn’t necessary to preach, in whom he can assume a few common ideas, born of a common environment. I don’t mean a small intellectual *avant-garde* public, but a national public, the kind of trench kinship which isn’t a matter of class or education, but of living and dying together in the same hole. The cinema, of course, should be a popular medium, but need that popularity be worldwide? (422)

Greene's warning against "preaching" and his affinity for the idea of a national *doxa*, or localized belief system (Crowley and Hawhee 22), helps explain the common aversion to didacticism that Chatman refers to. It isn't so much that viewers dislike films that pose arguments; rather, viewers tend to react against movies that they perceive as condescending in their argumentation. On this topic, the Aristotle's pupil Demetrius puts it best:

[Y]ou should not elaborate on everything in punctilious detail but should omit some points for the listener to infer and work out for himself. For when he infers what you have omitted he becomes your witness and reacts more favorably to you. For he is made aware of his own intelligence through you, who have given him the opportunity to be intelligent. To tell your listener every detail as though he were a fool seems to judge him one. (*On Style* § 222)

Thus, the tacit application of shared knowledge, in affirming the intelligence of the audience, dismantles the hierarchy between filmmaker and viewer; when a film refrains from preaching, from what Burke calls a "syllogistic progression" that explicitly lays out each successive premise ("Lexicon" 124), the viewer feels "in on it" and thus able to "identify" with the implied filmmaker of the text. "You persuade a man," writes Burke, "only insofar as you talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (*Rhetoric* 55). If the viewer infers a common *doxa*, a common set of tacit ideological premises with the implied filmmaker, then such identification can occur.

The attempt to identify with too large a public, as Greene identifies, can lead to a cinema of intellectual oversimplification: "[T]he huge public has been trained to expect a villain and a hero, and if you think you're going to reach the biggest possible public, it's no good thinking of drama as the conflict of ideas; [it's] the conflict—in terms of sub-machine guns—between the plainest Good and the plainest Evil" (422). It isn't literally the case, of course, that "good vs. evil" isn't a "conflict of ideas"—it is, though a conflict of oversimplified ideas that most of the global filmgoing public has some familiarity with. Aristotle himself identifies such stark binaries as one of the most fundamental argumentative topoi: "Where of necessity only one of two predicates must be true ... , if we have a supply of material for arguing with regard to one of

them that is present or not, we shall also have a supply of material also regarding the other” (*Topica* 112a24-28). Hence, protagonist A is Good; ergo, antagonist B must be Evil.

Many films barely exceed this sort of intellectual puerility.¹³ These are the sort that Jean-Luc Comolli and Jean Narboni, who taxonomize the cinema into different categories depending on its relationship to “dominant ideology,” refer to as “imbued through and through with the dominant ideology” (689). Though, as Stam notes, “a Bakhtinian approach ... reject[s] the defeatism implicit in the monolithic conception of ‘dominant ideology’ and ‘dominant cinema’ which leads us to view cultural products undialectically” (*Subversive* 54), Comolli and Narboni’s categorical system proves a useful heuristic in examining films in relation to hegemonic ideologies, many of which, as Crowley explains, can coexist in the same society (*Toward* 5). Other categories that Comolli and Narboni identify are film which appear subversive but “do not effectively criticize the ideological system in which they are embedded because they unquestioningly adopt its language and imagery” (691), which describes films like *Avatar*, which posit a “liberal” message, but justify it through conservative topoi like violence and maverick individualist heroes. An especially interesting category is “films which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner.... The films we are talking about throw up obstacles in the way of the ideology, causing it to swerve and get off course” (691). Here, Comolli and Narboni seem to describe the type of film that posits a *thesis* in the Aristotelian sense of the word; that is, “a reasoned view contrary to received opinions” (*Topica* 104b24-25). Such theses include arguments like the movie *Traffic*’s, that the “war on drugs” is unwinnable, or *Blade Runner*’s (which I will discuss below in greater detail), that personhood shouldn’t be confined to humans. To gain traction within a hegemonic ideology, though, and appeal to a sizable audience, a movie has to erect such a thesis on at least some ideologically familiar ideological commonplaces and topoi (vocabulary I will discuss in detail in the next section). As Burke says, “True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience’s opinion in one respect; but he can only succeed insofar as he yields to that audience’s opinion in other respects. Some of their opinions are needed to support the fulcrum by which he would move other opinions” (*Rhetoric* 56).

¹³ Though, as always, the dialogic critic should account for active spectatorship: Viewers can form ironic or resistant readings toward even the most egregiously simplistic Hollywood films. See Hawk’s “Hyper rhetoric” for more on this topic.

Finally, the rhetoric of avant-garde cinema deserves attention. Rhetorically, we can define avant-garde cinema as that which somehow breaks free from the casing of hegemonic ideological connotations. Deleuze calls for an extreme avant-garde that “jam[s] or break[s]” our “sensory-motor schemata”: “[T]hen a different type of image can appear: a pure optical-sound image, the whole image without the metaphor, brings out the thing in itself, literally, in its excess of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustifiable character, because it no longer has to be ‘justified,’ for better or for worse” (*Cinema 2* 20). If Deleuze’s description feels abstract, it’s because he uses ideologically situated language to describe a phenomenon that attempts to exist outside ideology. This may be an impossibility, an extra-rhetorical ideal in a rhetorical world, but bell hooks, looking at the avant-garde as a libratory model of production, is correct in her assertion that “black artistic production will be severely damaged if the values of the marketplace overdetermine what we create.” hooks continues, “When we embrace the avant-garde as a necessary matrix of critical possibility, acknowledging that it is a context for cultural revolution, new and exciting representations of blackness will emerge” (107). The type of avant-garde which hooks advocates, at the expense of a large immediate audience, would seek to disrupt hegemonic ideology as often as possible in a effort to create new discursive space, new “truths” unseen in previous ideology, and overcome what Paulo Freire calls the “limit-situations” of the extant hegemonic thinking. Such radical filmmaking is only likely to immediately reach a select few, but it can pave the way for progressive ideologies to gain momentum. This rhetoric of the avant-garde is not the focus of my present study, but it seems an important avenue for rhetorical criticism to explore.

Ideologic, Topoi, and Commonplaces

In any case, the rhetorical critic’s role is not only academic, but political, and I agree with Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frenzt that “[t]o practice criticism from an ideological viewpoint ... is to perform the morally significant act of fighting oppression by unmasking the rhetorical strategies that maintain it” (385). But I would assert, further, that a rhetorical investigation into ideology also should supply the critic with the conceptual and lexical tools to analyze ideology at the micro level via the interconnectedness of individual argumentative devices and ideological premises. Film, as Ray says, is one of the chief battlegrounds of ideological conflict, and thus one of the ripest media for such investigation.

Here, two rhetorical terms, *commonplace* and *topos*, both prove useful. Though they are often used interchangeably, I will take advantage of Crowley and Debra Hawhee's useful distinction between the two: "We adopt the term [*topos*] to refer to any specific procedure that generates arguments, such as definition and division or comparison and contrast. We use the term *commonplace* to refer to statements that circulate within ideologies" (96). These terms can enter rhetorical film theory in order to explicate the processes by which movies compose arguments within ideological frameworks. Topoi, in film, can correspond to the audio-visual versions of the argumentative devices Aristotle enumerates in the *Topica*, but also the various filmic speech genres that movies use to convey arguments: genres of images, lighting, music, etc. Commonplaces designate those arguments, assumptions, values, and beliefs that such topoi either connote or denote. The two, the topos and the commonplace it corresponds to, are often difficult to separate. When Kligerman reports, in his *CCCC* article, that students have difficulty writing literal, uninterpretive descriptions of photographs, the problem is a failure to disassociate the commonplace from the visual topos. In Kligerman's sample photograph of a cross amid a scene of rural decay, the most easily connoted commonplace—a commonly accepted one among American audiences—is the Christ will save even the downtrodden. When, therefore, Kligerman identifies "clichés of vision," he refers to the tacking-on of commonplaces to visual topoi, an ideological process people do constantly and often involuntarily.

Deleuze, too, speaks pejoratively of the cinema in terms of clichés: "[T]hese floating images, these anonymous clichés, ... circulate in the external world, but ... also penetrate each one of us and constitute the his internal world, so that everyone possesses only psychic clichés by which he thinks and feels" (*Cinema 1* 208). These circumstances Deleuze describes mirror Bakhtin's description of "ideological becoming" as "assimilating the words"—or here, images—"of others," and when Deleuze speaks of American film and spectatorship as under "the reign of clichés internally as well as externally" (*Cinema 1* 209), he seems to identify that the common, often overused, visual topoi of the American cinema correspond to culturally shared and internalized belief systems, networks of commonplaces, that dialogically tie up the circuit between film and viewer.

Is this "reign of clichés" unique to American film, though? I doubt it. Much of the best work on the ideology of film, after all, has come from the French, primarily observing their own national cinema. Cinema can resist clichés to a degree, as Godard, the Italian Neo-Realists and

others have, but as much as Deleuze might wish so, I don't think it can divorce itself from ideology, from the commonplaces of its culture of origin. The ideal orator, writes Cicero, "finding certain definite 'topics' enumerated, will run rapidly over them all, select those which fit the subject, and then speak in general terms" (*Orator* xiv.47). The successful filmmakers, I think, must do something analogous; even independent or avant-garde cinema must initially draw from *some* ideologically familiar topoi and commonplaces in order to remain comprehensible, even if it seeks to subvert these commonplaces as the film progresses. When filmmakers develop new, unfamiliar topoi, moreover, "the American [Cinema has a] consistent ability to assimilate formal devices originally conceived as critical departures" (Ray 17).

Subversive or submissive, the cinema relies on topoi, and rarely reasons through hard syllogistic proofs, so we need a rhetorical framework to examine its ideological and enthymematic reasoning. Here, as a last nugget of useful rhetorical theory, I turn to the description of logos, ideology, and "ideologic" outlined in Crowley's *Toward a Civil Discourse*. Crowley writes,

I coin the term *ideologic* to name ... connections made between moments (positions) that occur or are taken up within ideology. For example: a worker who defends capitalism has taken up a position, has articulated ... a discursive moment that could be otherwise, although the potential for alternative readings is limited by the present hegemony of capitalism. (60)

Crowley also elaborates on the purpose of the commonplace as a point of rhetorical-ideological interconnection. For Crowley,

[c]ommonplaces are part of the discursive machinery that hides the flow of difference, that firms up identity and sameness within a community.... The commonplace serves the in-group identity (*we* practice fiscal responsibility; *they* do not) at the same time as it reduces a range of available ... possibilities to a binary. Commonplaces generally become available for discussion when (a) believers wish to solidify identity and community or (b) they encounter unbelief—that is, they become aware of counterclaims. (73)

Crowley's framework of ideology and commonplaces can aid the rhetorical study of narrative fiction films insofar as such texts, due to their narrative breadth, include webs of ideologically loaded speech genres. In order for their narratives to progress in a manner (ideo)logically appealing to a target audience, and thus inviting, again in the Burkean sense, audience identification with the film's ideological construction. In *Toward a Civil Discourse*, which deals directly with the ideological discrepancies between American liberal humanism and right-wing religious "apocalypticism," Crowley cites Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins's *Left Behind* novels, which are set on Earth in the wake of the apocalypse as described in *Revelations*, as examples of narrative texts infused with ideologically linked commonplaces. One character from the series, Chaim, "is a Jew who will not convert to Christianity. As a result he suffers terribly during the tribulation and eventually commits suicide in an attempt to kill Antichrist" (114). Here, one can easily discern the enthymematic cause and effect implicit in the plot progression: because Chaim will not convert, he is "left behind" to suffer the apocalypse. The tacit middle premise that would complete the syllogism is that one's immortal wellbeing and salvation in the afterlife requires faith in the Christ as savior during one's earthly life. This, of course, is a commonplace of right-wing apocalypticism, one invoked to "firm up" readers' common identity, and in appealing to readers of this identity, the books structure their narratives around ideological nodes that evoke other identity-affirming commonplaces.

In the mainstream cinema, as Greene notes, many commonplaces are embedded in the narrative to appeal to a large, marketable audience. One of the most noticeable and potent genres of filmic topoi is the construction of the film's characters, which occurs visually, through their actions, and through their words. Flanagan, for instance, describes the quintessential action hero: "Physique supersedes psychology, and broad sentimentality replaces emotional complexity or depth. A prime example of the cinematic hero with no discernable interior life is James Bond who, especially in Sean Connery's incarnation, is almost cruelly physical and emotionally sterile" (71). Character such as Bond, John Wayne's cowboy, Bruce Willis's renegade cop, all speak to a commonplace about the definition, in the Aristotelian sense, a conveyance of "the essence of something" (*Topica* 101b35-40), of masculinity. Vin Diesel and Paul Walker's characters in the recent *Fast Five*, for example, display a saccharine reverence for the sanctity of family life, but also abide unflinchingly to the codes of their criminal lifestyle. They uphold the

commonplace that “nothing is more important than family,” but they don’t *overthink* things, an attribute which accords with other commonplaces about how the ideal man should behave. Regarding female characters, to pose another example, Laura Mulvey identifies the commonplace belief that women are characterized by the Pandora myth, “a split between an inside and an outside, between a seductive surface and a dangerous depth” (5). Such a commonplace, popular among male viewers especially, manifests itself in femme fatale characters like Barbara Stanwick’s in *Double Indemnity* or Kathleen Turner’s in *Body Heat*. The duality between the visually explicit surface and the narratively exposed interior is a cinematic reenactment of Aristotle’s *topos* of the either-or binary.

Such character-based commonplaces often act as departure points. Audiences identify ideologically familiar characters, accept the commonplaces they tacitly evince, and agree to proceed with the narrative. Usually, masculine American heroes prevail against the less masculine or improperly masculine villains, thus forming simple enthymemes that mass audience will accept uncritically. When Bruce Willis’s character in *Die Hard* defeats the European terrorists, for example, most American viewers gladly infer the superiority of American muscle. Such seamless ideologic characterizes most Hollywood film, progressing from one premise to the next, all of which circulate in a common hegemonic ideology—though it should be noted that some movies appropriate hegemonic *topoi* and commonplaces, but later subvert or reject them as a way to challenge existing ideology. The theory of ideologic and commonplaces is not itself a wholesale indictment of the cinema as ideologically conservative, but a means of examination and analysis.

III. *BLADE RUNNER*: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

A rhetorical analysis of an individual film can help concretize the theory this chapter has put forward. The 1982 sci-fi dystopia *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott and loosely adapted from Philip K. Dick’s novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, is a film I greatly admire, as I indicate above. I select it for analysis here, though, not because I *like* it, but because I find it rhetorically compelling, and in no small part because of its complicated history with the Hollywood studio system and the viewing public. The original version—including, due to studio

pressure, patronizing voiceover narration and a saccharine ending contrary to the intentions of the director, screenwriters, and stars—debuted to commercial failure and a lukewarm critical response that generally “praised the complexity of the film’s aesthetics but maintained reservations about the narrative” (Bukatman 32-34). Since then, however, the movie developed a cult following, a proliferating fan culture, and attention from scholarly film critics (Bukatman 36); it was recut and rereleased in 1991 and again in 2007; today, its top-tier position in the sci-fi canon is secure. Most film critics, I am guessing, would name it among the most important and influential films of its genre. While the history of *Blade Runner*’s rhetorical reception and impact could itself occupy a book-length study, I will simply note here that the film, from a rhetorical perspective, cannot be treated as a static text, but only as a dialogically situated utterance whose meaning and worth have been negotiated at different times by different audiences under different conditions. While the same is true of film generally, the “life of the text,” as Bakhtin calls it, is especially discernable in the study of *Blade Runner*.

The movie’s ideologic is directly relevant to this relationship with audiences. If *Blade Runner* makes a novel argument, an Aristotelian “thesis” that challenges what Comolli and Narboni call “the dominant ideology,” it is that modern technological societies must reevaluate what it means to be human. Since *Blade Runner*, and before, to a lesser extent, there has been a good deal of speculation on this thesis, ramified in studies like N. Katherine Hayles’s *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. The point worth stressing, though, is more rhetorical than academic: that *Blade Runner*, in reaching a mass audience, undoubtedly affected many individuals’ thinking about the relationship between humanity and personhood. This was its effect on me when I first saw it as an adolescent.

Blade Runner’s thesis emerges within a meticulous visual construction of a dark, gloomy, perpetually raining Los Angeles in the year 2019, after Earth’s elite have evacuated the planet in favor of the off-world colonies and humankind has created lifelike androids, known as replicants, to assist in off-world manual labor. Harrison Ford’s character, Rick Deckard, is a “Blade Runner,” a specialized police officer assigned to hunt down and “retire” (that is, violently execute) renegade replicants who have returned to Earth. The movie grounds its narrative in a number of familiar commonplaces that are linked to the topoi of Hollywood action and film noir movies. For instance, that the ideal American “hero” is a white, handsome, rugged, heterosexual male who speaks no more than necessary and does his unpleasant job with businesslike

efficiency. In playing this archetype, Harrison Ford evokes a familiar ethos reminiscent of his performances as Han Solo and Indiana Jones. Here, most certainly, we see the mark of Ford's "author function"; one expects certain things from a Harrison Ford movie, and *Blade Runner* delivers many of them. The female lead, Rachel (Sean Young), is a replicant who becomes romantically involved with Deckard; she is an android, but she illustrates the dominant commonplace of what the ideal woman should be: loyal, submissive, beautiful, young, and white. The main villain, Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), is a cruel, articulate, and intelligent replicant bent on obtaining "more life" (his model of replicant lives only four years) from the company that created him. His construction as a character depends to a degree on anti-intellectual commonplaces that circulate within American discourse, especially when contrasted to Harrison Ford's "man of few words" paradigm. Apart from those visible in the characters, one can discern other commonplaces that offer a familiar chronotope of ideological nexus points for the progression of the narrative: the city is a locus of corruption and moral decay; science should not attempt to "play god." Bakhtin notes that "[t]he force and persuasiveness of reality, of real life, belong to the present and the past alone"; thus, to persuade, the otherwise "ephemeral" futuristic chronotope must root itself in the images and ideology of the "real life" past and present ("Forms" 147). We see this sort of chronotopic construction in *Blade Runner*, which shares with other "[d]ystopian and utopian [texts] ... a certain chronotopic identity based on their particular attitude toward their own present and how they project a future based upon it" (Vice 208). The tacit invocation of familiar beliefs and topoi allows many American viewers to make ideological sense of *Blade Runner*; the commonplaces evoked square with viewers' ideological presuppositions.

Due to the prevalence of such dominant commonplaces in *Blade Runner*, I would hesitate to call it an ideologically progressive or subversive movie. *Blade Runner*, at best, makes itself vulnerable to and deserving of critique on grounds of antifeminism and Orientalism (the movie features hundreds of anonymous, exoticized Asians in its cityscapes), and, at worst, actively contributes to what bell hooks calls "racist white patriarchy" (215).¹⁴ Such criticisms are warranted, and, as Flanagan reminds us, dialogic criticism cannot inoculate ideologically deficient films against their own shortcomings. *Blade Runner's* final scenes, however, unfold in

¹⁴ hooks also rightly notes that "[t]here are no black people in [*Blade Runner*]. ... The implication of that, if we take that logic to its fullest extent, is that black people have no relation to a concept of the future" (175-76).

a manner that confounds dominant ideology. Before the climactic duel between Deckard and Roy Batty, the latter, in an evocative visual speech genre connotative of human qualities, kisses the corpse of his replicant love interest whom Deckard had “retired.” Batty then pursues the protagonist, systematically outmuscling and outwitting him, once maiming him but deliberately sparing his life. More than this, Batty ends up *saving* Deckard’s life, catching him as he falls from a high-rise rooftop. The supposed antagonist then sits down facing his defeated foe, before uttering the film’s most famous frequently quoted bit of dialogue: “I’ve seen things you people wouldn’t believe: attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I’ve watched c-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.” And he does die; his four years have expired.

The implications of this pathos-laden verbal utterance and the events that precede it effectively obliterate a number of ideological binaries that the movie had formerly set up: good vs. evil, hero vs. villain, human vs. replicant. Despite his violent and murderous impulses illustrated earlier in the film, Batty dies having evinced distinctly human qualities—the ability to feel love, remorse, sensitivity to beauty—that transcend the mere will to survive. In the movie’s final scene, Deckard, having received a hint that he may be a replicant himself, finds Rachel and flees with her, presumably in fear that other Blade Runners will be after her, or both or them. At this conclusive moment, the biological definition of a human as a purely organic, flesh-and-blood entity is no longer tenable in the world the movie sets up. The inference that synthetic beings can indeed be as (or more) human than organic ones runs contrary to ideological presuppositions about the nature of man and machine, but, in order to attain this subversive argument, the movie has to engage beforehand in a long and complex strand of orthodox ideologic that exploits American cinematic paideia to establish the necessary emotional ties with the characters. This is not to say that a film must be sexist or racist in order to challenge the binary between human and machine, but in *Blade Runner’s* case, the appropriation (and, in some cases, subsequent subversion) of archetypal commonplaces from more ideologically submissive cinema helps “throw up obstacles” in the way of dominant ideology, as Comolli and Narboni would put it. By emotionally committing themselves to the “villain” as the movie winds down, many viewers find that *Blade Runner’s* ideologic has led them to previously unfamiliar commonplaces that they are then forced to seriously consider.

In sum, then, *Blade Runner's* ethos materializes through its expertly crafted futuristic cityscape, a chronotope of the movie's own, but one that draws from many familiar topoi. It also exploits the Harrison Ford "author function" by raising expectations of excitement derived from intertextual connections to the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* movies, among others. Ridley Scott, too, is a highly respected, Oscar-winning director (in 1982, he was less well-known, though he had made the highly successful *Alien*), who helps draw high expectations. The movie contains numerous emotional appeals, but the most powerful are those linking the audience to the characters—mostly Deckard and Rachel, initially, though the emotional connection to Roy Batty builds as the narrative progresses, and reaches a crescendo toward the end. Paideia dictates that viewers sympathize with Roy Batty as he shows sensitivity and mercy just before dying. And *Blade Runner's* logos comprises a complex web of mostly hegemonic topoi and commonplaces, though it builds from that foundation a counterhegemonic thesis against the familiar dichotomy of human versus machine. The foundation of familiar ideologic, though, is crucial for its ability to, as Burke would say, "support the fulcrum" by which the movie potentially changes viewers' minds about other premises.

This is but one rhetorical reading of one film, an example—though an important one, I think—used to illustrate how the theory I've developed in Chapters 2 and 3 might be applied to specific film texts. This theory, of course, hardly exhausts the topic of rhetoric and film, though its breadth does exceed other published application of rhetoric to film. It is my hope, thus, not to have written the rhetoric of film bible, but to have significantly developed the conversation and methodology surrounding the topic—and to rekindle interest in film, alongside web videos, blogs, advertisements, and the rest, as a vibrant and relevant rhetorical medium. I hope to see the ideas from Chapters 2 and 3 developed further by myself and others—to see them evolve, improve, and dialogically mix with other theory—both in the pages of critical journals and the discussions that drive classroom inquiry. This latter venue, perhaps the most important of all, is my focus in the final chapter.

4.

FILM AND RHETORIC IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

I. WHERE DOES THE RHETORIC OF FILM FIT IN THE COMPOSITION CURRICULUM?

The theory I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3 should serve as a toolbox that rhetorical critics can bring to bear in the analysis of film and film spectatorship. Were departments of English, rhetoric, or film to introduce higher-level courses on the rhetoric of film—a course I would delight to be a part of, either as an instructor or student—my theory might even lend itself to semester-long application. For the purposes of this chapter, though, I will consider rhetoric and composition's more pressing site of interest, the first-year composition class, and how inquiries into the rhetoric of film might apply in this setting.

I will deal, first, with an obvious but important question: Given the daunting task first-year composition instructors face in teaching rhetorical production, rhetorical analysis, critical thinking, prose style, sentence-level correctness, and, increasingly, multimodal/digital rhetorics all in the course of a semester, *why teach film?* Why toss movies into the fray when compositionists' plates are full, our resources stretched, our class sizes widening along with our workloads? Is it *that important* to address one more medium?

The question is complex—and perhaps best addressed, initially, by what film *doesn't* need to do in a composition curriculum. I argue that it doesn't need, for starters, to replace the written word. A composition class can succeed without integrating film, just as, for that matter, it can without integrating digital media or visual rhetorics. I know from experience—from taking composition at a technologically low-key community college—that some of the most effective writing instruction available in higher education, in terms of both rhetorical consciousness and prose style, takes place in classrooms that focus almost exclusively on the discussion, production, and analysis of print texts. What is at stake, ultimately, in the choice of textual modes that a composition class integrates into its curriculum is the variety of rhetorical skills students will develop; and even today, I would argue that a composition class succeeds wonderfully if it improves its students' writing abilities at the levels of the sentence and paragraph, aids their ability to structure arguments, and fosters a critical awareness of how

rhetorical texts interact with audiences. Those three criteria, in themselves, are a tall order. I recognize the importance of multimodal awareness in the composition classroom—film is, after all, an intensely multimodal medium—but I also believe we disserve our students by diverting too much attention from the written word. In the age of Twitter, Facebook, and the blogosphere, the written word has become, if anything, more ubiquitous than ever, and its power more intense. (Think of “Change We Can Believe In” or “Drill, Baby, Drill!”) Technology, most certainly, can fruitfully inform our discussions of writing, but it should not distract from them.

Thus, I do not advocate that filmmaking replace written composition. Certainly, the case for filmmaking-as-composition, thanks to increased access to portable digital technology as well as the proliferation of online video, would be easier to make now than when Richard Williamson tried in 1971, but still I doubt, even today, that many compositionists see filmmaking as a viable curriculum-wide substitute for writing. Bonnie Lenore Kyburz, whose work I praise in Chapter 1, argues for digital filmmaking within composition curricula, quipping that “textual analytical work *about* film is fine, except that it’s not” (“Totally” 49). It’s easy to follow her argument: there’s something about the medium of film that students can only properly learn through making movies, and not analysis alone—something, I’ll add, that I don’t consider myself fully qualified to teach. But I don’t think this something needs to be the focus of a first-year composition curriculum. Self-defeating logic arises from the argument that, in order to engage a certain medium, students must produce texts within that medium; the same logic suggests that all the best film critics must also be filmmakers (most aren’t), just as all the best literary critics must also be poets and novelists (again, many aren’t). We can teach our students to be rhetorically aware, critical filmgoers without teaching them to make movies. I should note that I like Charles I. Hill’s “utopian proposal” for “multidepartmental *rhetoric* programs . . . built on the recognition that writing, visual literacy, and oral communication are essentially skills, but that, in the real world, they work together in complex ways, not in isolation” (128; italics Hill’s), and I think a video production course informed by rhetorical theory would be a fascinating and worthwhile experiment. Such an experiment, though, needs its own venue. More important in the short space of first-year composition is a discussion of how writing derives meaning dialogically from intertextual relationships with other works, verbal and nonverbal; or as James Porter puts it, students “need to see writers whose products are . . . evidently part of larger processes and whose

work ... clearly produces meaning in social contexts” (44). Such social contexts, students should understand, are shaped profoundly by media like film.

Also, while film may legitimately parallel literature, the integration of film into composition curricula need not resurrect the debate between Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate about whether literature belongs in the composition classroom.¹⁵ My attempt to revive film studies within rhetoric and composition is not a roundabout call to reinstate literary inquiry into composition classes, but a call to view film through a different critical lens than English departments generally have heretofore. Film may resemble literature, and literature and rhetoric may coincide (I would argue so, certainly), but our discursive conventions for addressing rhetoric and literature differ drastically; if my extensive theoretical discussion of filmic rhetoric in Chapters 2 and 3 does anything, it provides a lexical and conceptual framework for engaging film as rhetoric. And as I point out in Chapter 1, plenty is being written already on film as literature, but little on film as rhetoric. This is the lopsidedness I wish to combat, and I see a rhetorical perspective as more valuable than a literary one in the composition classroom.

This consideration of film as rhetoric meshes with a cultural studies approach to composition that, as James Berlin would have it, “examin[es] ... the ways discursive formations are related to power or, alternately, ... language’s uses in the service of power” (“Composition” 100). Berlin sees rhetorical and cultural studies as “mutually enriching” in their common concern with the role of language in social settings (“Composition” 100), and I agree; an examination of filmic utterances via rhetorical vocabulary like *topoi*, *commonplaces*, and *ideologic*, for instance, reveals how rhetoric circulates in cultural texts like films, and interacts with viewers within a social sphere. Within a framework of liberatory education like Paulo Friere’s, such examination of cultural rhetoric is essential. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire espouses liberatory education as a means to analyze and debunk the “myths” (a term of Freire’s very similar to Crowley’s “commonplaces”) inherent in hegemonic ideologies: “All of these myths[,] ... the internalization of which is essential to the subjugation of the oppressed, are presented to [students] by well-organized propaganda and slogans, via the mass ‘communications’ media—as if such alienation constituted real communication!” (140). Most films may fall short of “propaganda” in the most censorious connotations of the word, but film does occupy a dominant position among the mass

¹⁵ See Crowley’s *Composition in the University*, 19-29, for an excellent synopsis of this exchange.

communications media, and all films, most notably the popular and mainstream, evince networks of ideological premises that are persuasive to large audiences. Freire, I think, would agree with Ulrich Wicks that rhetorical analysis of film in culturally investigative composition curricula is important because, through movies, “others seek to influence our behavior” (53).

Berlin, though, makes an important qualification to Freire’s pedagogical theory, which one needs to consider when discussing curricula in American universities:

It is true that classroom difficulties in the United States are different from those in Freire’s Brazil. Far from seeing themselves as incapable of reading and interpreting culture, students from the United States commonly regard themselves as free agents who are completely in charge of the conditions of their experience. While Freire had to convince Brazilian workers that they were capable of seizing greater control of their own destinies, we have to remind our students that they are not as free and independent as they have been led to believe. (qtd. in Gere 206)

In a certain sense, then, the American student and the Brazilian worker are both “oppressed,” but the means and methods of oppression differ. Americans, as Berlin notes, tend to bow before the commonplace that the autonomous, independent action of heroic individuals is the best way to achieve results. This commonplace, which devalues the role of America’s large and ever-growing working class, can be seen at work in virtually every Hollywood film—even those that function largely through left-wing ideologic (*Avatar*, *Enemy of the State*, *Runaway Jury*, etc.). Ostensibly progressive arguments can rest upon conservative commonplaces; this is not unique to film, but moviemakers’ desires to appease mass audiences certainly perpetuate such rhetorical maneuvers.

If we take Freire and Berlin seriously, then, we have to value the sort of pedagogy that sees critical thinking as the dismantling and assessment of rhetoric and ideology. Any effective process of social action, Freire reminds us, requires critical reflection beforehand, and, in this sense, “[c]ritical reflection is also action” (Freire 128). It is this sort of reflective action—an intellectual primer, we might consider it, for engaging with rhetoric and ideology in a democratic society—that the composition classroom is well-equipped (and obligated, I would argue) to undertake. Because, as Crowley points out, commonplaces only become explicit in rare

circumstances when they are called into question, and because our emotional reactions to films stem largely from emotional investment in the commonplaces they use, the examination of filmic rhetoric becomes a valuable tool in the cultivation of critical thinking, prompting both questions about what commonplaces underscore a film's narrative and self-reflective inquiries into one's own emotional responses. As I argue in Chapters 2 and 3, a rhetorical analysis should account not only for textual rhetoric, but also receptive rhetoric: rhetorical and ideological potency arises from the encounter between the movie and the viewer. This is true of texts in general, of course—again, composition curricula don't *need* film—but film's rhetorical intensity and popularity can certainly aid compositionists as a subject for critical analysis.

This, in my view, is the most immediately relevant and useful role of film in the composition classroom: they can serve as powerful examples of specific rhetorical texts exemplifying a specific rhetorical medium. As an autonomous medium, of course, film requires unique in-class considerations.

II. HOW TO WATCH MOVIES RHETORICALLY IN THE CLASSROOM

“If you think movies can't be killed, you underestimate the power of education.”

– Pauline Kael, “It's Only a Movie” (137)

Here, we reach an obvious dilemma: movies are supposed to be fun, or at least emotionally stirring; yet it has become a truism to say that academic study “ruins” things. Countless students have complained that, for example, *The Catcher in the Rye* was their favorite book before their Intro to Literature professor made them reread it on a rigid timeframe, analyze it, and write a paper about it—thus sucking all the joy from the reading process. The same syndrome threatens the academic study of film. And while some of their arguments appear simplistic in hindsight, we err in ignoring the '70s compositionists' warrant that films are a boon to writing classroom because students enjoy them and can discuss them somewhat comfortably. This warrant remains, to a strong degree, true. We don't want to “ruin” movies for our students.

Of course, tight schedules, critical engagement, and written response are necessities the classroom; I don't wish to dispute that. I do wish, though, when studying the rhetoric of film, to

minimize the deadening effect academic study has for so many students on cultural texts. This effect stems largely from students' reluctance to enter into a certain critical space privileged in the academy and almost nowhere else: that of the detached, elite critic who stands above and analyzes texts, but remains unaffected by their rhetoric (Williams 166). The performance of this role, asserts Pierre Bourdieu, essentially demarcates class: "The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural—enjoyment, which constitutes the sacred sphere of culture, implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, disinterested, gratuitous, distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane" (7). Rhetorical analysis in the first-year composition classroom should resist this culturally polarizing stance for two reasons: 1) as Berlin, Terry Eagleton, and others would claim, rhetorical education should not be about the individual—teaching a privileged few to bear the mark of the cultural elite—but about equipping the student to function within the rhetorical milieu of a democratic society; and 2) especially in the case of film, requiring critical detachment asks students to ignore one of rhetoric's most central tools: emotional appeal.

Thus, instead of critical detachment, I would advocate what might be called critical engagement. Of course, when I show movies in the classroom, I'm not looking for "visual aids" or for students to be "merely entertained"; I want students to watch critically and actively. But, as Flanagan and Stam point out through Bakhtin, spectatorship is rarely as passive as many (especially the cultural elite) would assume, and to properly reflect on the rhetorical experience of watching a film, a student has to, first, do just that—experience it. Accordingly, I suggest that instructors project movies on large screens when possible in order to approximate the cinematic experience of filmgoing as well as possible. (A two-and-a-half-foot TV set just isn't the same.) I suggest also that instructors explicitly tell students that they're encouraged to enjoy this in-class spectatorship, and that they won't be tested on trivialities. Though we should certainly expect students to pay attention, and should invoke critical response assignments after the movie has been screened, I think composition instructors should refrain from administering literal-minded quizzes about movies ("What year is the movie set?" "What is such-and-such character's name?" etc.) that solidify a stark hierarchy in the classroom. Here, text is the instructor's to *know*, much like a biology instructor knows the equation for photosynthesis, and the students' to learn—or remember. This relationship creates an artificial breed of spectatorship that has little to do with

how the viewing public rhetorically experiences film outside academia. Classwork, put simply, should pertain to real life.

Contrary to rote memorization or aloof textual analysis, then, the ideal I'm driving toward closely resembles what Wayne Booth calls "listening-rhetoric." Booth coins this term in regard to individual disputants engaged in direct dialogue, but the application to film spectatorship comes easily. "Here both sides join in a trusting dispute," writes Booth, "determined to listen to the opponent's arguments, while persuading the opponent to listen in exchange. Each side attempts to *think* about the arguments presented by the other side.... Both sides are pursuing not just victory, but a new reality, a new agreement about what is real" (*Rhetoric of RHETORIC* 46-47). When applied to film and spectators, listening-rhetoric is more than a metaphor because, as Bakhtin would remind us, students view film dialogically, projecting meanings back onto the film text as they watch (Flanagan 21). Part of this active spectatorship process, though, has to correspond to Booth's "listening": students should watch movies receptively, engage with them emotionally, and then critically reflect on those responses as well as the film text itself. Rhetoric, again, lies in the encounter, not the text itself, and if a movie helps a student perceive "a new reality," that might very well be a good thing. We should not and cannot ask our students to immunize themselves against a movie's rhetoric.

I attempt to conduct this sort of critical-but-affected analysis when I write about *Blade Runner* in Chapter 3. While I could mount monolithic critique of the film for its ideological shortcomings in the areas of race and gender, I am equally concerned with affect and effect: What does the movie *do* to me as I watch it? How does it guide my viewing experience? And what are the results in my own thinking? Only in reflecting on my own emotional responses am I able to recognize how *Blade Runner* uses topoi like the archetypal action hero to guide me to its revelatory conclusion that unsettles the hero/villain and human/replicant binaries. Intellectually, I object to the commonplace that heroes should be white and male, but I recognize, also, that I possess a deep-seated emotional identification with Harrison Ford's character—and that, for me, this identification is crucial to the film's rhetorical progression. I am, after all, the product of the same culture that produced the movie.

I would like to see this kind of analysis gain traction in composition classes. While I cite Berlin more often in these pages than the "expressivists" (Berlin's term) he defines his own social-epistemic rhetoric against, I have no qualms with the expressivist platitude of "writing

about what you feel”—as long as students then critically reflect on their emotional responses. This sort of inquiry, indeed, is crucial to rhetorical analysis because it begins to critically probe not only the rhetorical maneuvers of the text, but also the viewer’s own ideology.

III. WRITING ABOUT THE RHETORIC OF FILM

In *A Pedagogy of Possibility: Bakhtinian Perspectives on Composition Studies*, Kay Halasek discusses the complicated dialogic relationship between students’ identities as writers and filmgoers. She observes, “Our students’ notions of writing and real writers are informed by images from television and film. To them, writers are people who write creative texts such as plays, poetry, or other types of fiction. Writers write for a living and without external motivation” (47). Indeed, films like *Finding Forester*, *Midnight in Paris*, and *Barton Fink* “realize” or “materialize,” as Bakhtin would put it, the prevailing “ideological environment” that represents the writer as a certain kind of creatively driven artist (Medvedev and Bakhtin 14). This ideological assumption, of course, must be dislodged, or at least amended, in order for students to see *themselves* as writers. Thus, while I don’t think Bakhtinian terminology itself needs to enter the first-year writing classroom, a general Bakhtinian theory of discourse that encourages students to analyze their own “ideological becoming” via filmgoing, and to critique filmic rhetoric when appropriate, proves invaluable. We have to help students validate their own voices as they enter into the dialogical sphere surrounding a film and its social contexts.

Because of the conceptual and lexical complexities surrounding both rhetoric and film, written assignments on the rhetoric of film require scaffolding. I recommend, generally speaking, that composition instructors introduce and define a series of rhetorical terms prior to engagement with film texts; the list, if instructors wish to use classical terminology (I find it very helpful), might include: *rhetoric*, *rhetor*, *rhetorician*, *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*, *audience*, *sylllogism*, *enthymeme*, *kairos*, *topoi*, *commonplaces*, *discourse*, *invention*, *arrangement*, *style*, *memory*, and *delivery*.¹⁶ I suggest, too, that instructors, when introducing rhetoric, refer first to more overtly rhetorical texts than movies—for example, editorials, speeches, or recorded political debates—

¹⁶ I encourage a strong familiarity with these terms, but do not require their memorization. It is helpful to provide students with a handout listing and briefly defining these terms.

and discuss how many of the aforementioned terms play out in those texts. Film proves a more complicated medium for rhetorical analysis.

I outline below two sample writing assignments below that approach film rhetorically. The first, a rhetorical analysis of *Good Night, and Good Luck*, serves as a low-stakes, introductory assignment that asks all class members to examine the same text, and then compare insights. It is designed to help students cultivate understanding of rhetorical terms and concepts before beginning heavily weighted self-directed rhetorical analyses. The second assignment, a critical movie review, also asks students to rhetorically analyze a film, but to consider, as well, their own audience and rhetorical choices more explicitly while writing.

Sample Assignment 1: Rhetorical Analysis of *Good Night, and Good Luck*

The 2005 movie *Good Night, and Good Luck*—the same film that John Schlib analyzes in his “Constructing History in a Film about Rhetoric” and that I discuss briefly in Chapter 2—has proven a useful one in first-year composition. I appreciate this movie because, as Schlib’s title states, it is *about* rhetoric--its narrative centering on the historical showdown between CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow and Senator Joseph McCarthy—and its *own* rhetoric is more easily discernable than that of many movies. *Good Night*, that is, clearly favors Murrow and his team over McCarthy, and makes a clear argument about the necessary role of television as a social watchdog.

I have screened *Good Night* for three sections of first-year composition students during the second week of a five-week segment on rhetorical analysis. In accordance with my suggestions above, I devote the week before this screening to a general introduction of rhetorical terms and concepts, and apply these terms to a selection of explicitly rhetorical texts through a series of in-class activities and short assignments. (Most recently, students read “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and watched excerpts from the Obama-McCain debates.) One class session before I screen *Good Night*, too, I allocate fifteen minutes of class time to viewing a short movie clip (most recently I used a speech Denzel Washington’s character delivers in *The Siege*) and discussing with the class how different filmic devices like camera angles, musical cues, and actors’ performances correspond to rhetorical terminology. Lastly, some historical discussion and reading is necessary in order to familiarize students with the figures of Murrow and McCarthy, and the cultural-political phenomenon of the Red Scare.

The assignment prompt I provide, also before the screening, poses three questions; students can, in 600-800 words, respond to any two, or all three of them. The prompt reads:

1. **Analyze the use of rhetorical appeals and devices by Murrow and McCarthy during their televised debate.** Do the two figures rely on different kinds of appeals? How are matters of ethos particularly important in this debate, and what influence does the medium of television have on the respective ethos of each rhetor?
2. **Analyze the rhetorical devices and appeals of the film of itself.** How does George Clooney, as director and co-scripter, garner audience sympathy for Murrow? Does the movie develop an ethos of its own, apart from Clooney's? If so, what role does this ethos play in the film's arguments? Consider, too, that McCarthy "plays himself"—he is represented through archival footage—while Murrow is played by an actor, David Strathairn.
3. **Examine the significance of kairos as it applies to *Good Night, and Good Luck*.** Keeping in mind that the movie was released in 2005, to what degree does the movie make itself kairotic through relevance to trends in news media and American politics?

These questions are leading, but intentionally so. In posing them, I hope to steer students away from some of the easier missteps in applying rhetorical theory to film: namely, the confinement of *ethos* to only the credibility of the director and actors, and the conflation of the rhetoric *in* the movie with the rhetoric *of* the movie. *Good Night*, that is, isn't exactly arguing that we should censure McCarthy—that fight is in the past—but it is rehashing that narrative in order to make a larger argument about the necessity of the media in fighting against the politics of fear. Hence, I juxtapose questions 1 and 2 in order to tacitly draw a distinction between the rhetoric the movie dramatizes and the movie's own rhetoric; and I invoke *kairos* in question 3 to encourage consideration of *Good Night* within its cultural-historical setting of origin. Within the Operation-Iraqi-Freedom-era United States, the vaguely defined "terrorist" had (and still does) come to occupy a similar role as McCarthy's "communists."

I also require students to post their responses to an online forum, and then to engage in conversation, responding briefly in writing to each others' insights—not just to say "nice job,"

but to build from each other's points and develop a conversation. This helps build an exchange of ideas about rhetoric and film that can continue into classroom discussion.

This assignment has gone very well each time I've used it. To my delight, most of my students have seemed to have greatly enjoyed the movie, but more importantly, the use of a film that both showcases rhetoric and applies its own powerful rhetorical devices has helped students to develop a more complex understanding how rhetoric functions outside the gamut of texts regularly assumed "rhetorical" (speeches, editorials, debates, ads, propaganda posters, etc.). Students I interviewed about the assignment agreed that writing analyses of *Good Night* helped complicate their own thinking about rhetoric, and aided their self-directed rhetorical analyses that cap off the rhetorical analysis unit. (I allow students to pick their own rhetorical texts for this assignment, but many chose, again, to write about movies, or scenes from movies.)

The following excerpts come from student responses to *Good Night*:

(1) By making the whole film black and white, Clooney makes you feel as if you were really back in the time during the Red Scare and adds to the movie's appeal to pathos.

(2) The fact that in the film McCarthy "plays" himself, through archival footage, lends an added sense of authenticity and credibility. Being able to really see the senator speak in his defense gives the audience the full experience that many received at that time.

(3) There were many instances of long dramatic pauses when the camera was pointed directly at Murrow's face. I believe these were intentional moves on Clooney's part because it is very hard to look at the face of anyone who is hurting and not sympathize with them. Murrow was shot to look defeated and dejected and Clooney wanted us to feel bad for him. It worked for me. I felt awful for Murrow. He was made to be the kid who got kicked down by the bully on the playground who we were all supposed to look at and go, "aw, poor guy."

(4) This movie is very kairotic [in the] relevance it had to trends occurring in the news media and American politics of 2005. ... This movie hits at the heart of it that there are

too many scare tactics in today's media and politics. Just as communism was the scare back during McCarthy's time, terrorism is the scare of today.

Excerpt 1 mentions the black and white cinematography as a pathetic appeal; this aesthetic choice perhaps functions most directly an appeal to ethos, but I admire the connection the student makes between matters of credibility and emotional investment: ethos, pathos, and logos should not be seen as a rigid trichotomy, but a mutually dependent triad, as this student's insight suggests. The second and third excerpts strike me, respectively, as brilliant analyses of how ethos and pathos can function in the cinema. I doubt that I could articulate either point better myself, and I like, especially, how the author of Excerpt 3 employs her own emotional responses as evidence for her analysis. Excerpt 4, finally, nicely summarizes the movie's relevance to post-millennial media and politics, employing rhetorical analysis not only a method of textual critique, but also cultural critique.

These samples, certainly, represent some of the best work I received. Other responses weren't as strong; some included few insights and little detail, and others displayed confusion about basic rhetorical terminology. These, though, were the exceptions. In general, students excelled, and many articulated ideas that I, myself, hadn't thought of.

If I were to use the assignment again, I would make two main adjustments. The first stems from a student's comment. This student, who I spoke with in an interview, suggested that it would have been helpful for her and her classmates to discuss the movie as a class or in small groups after watching it, and before writing responses. I didn't oversee such a discussion previously because of time constraints. In the future, though, I'll readjust, because my student is right: Part of the rhetorical experience of filmgoing—a crucial part—is the conversation that occurs after the movie. Filmgoing is a profoundly social act, and the immediate discussion with friends and acquaintances that stems from going to the movies in groups shapes how we understand and react to films. The composition classroom should recognize this.

Second, I would devote slightly more time to discussing not only rhetorical terminology, but also filmic terminology. When students write rhetorical analyses using classical terms, they are forced to, as David Bartholomae puts it, “invent” the discourse of scholarly rhetorical analysis they are entering into. Bartholomae asserts, to pose a parallel example, that his own students' papers on Dickens “are not wrong or invalid” but “approximate”: “They are evidence

of a discourse that lies between what I might call the students' primary discourse ... and standard, official literary criticism (which is imaginable but impossible to find)" (69). Students writing about the rhetoric of film, then, face the twofold challenge of approximating the discourses of rhetorical analysis and of film studies—neither of which most students are familiar—but the grounding of such discourse-invention in rhetorical terminology and concepts, as I believe my students' excerpts show, helps students convincingly approximate the conventions of scholarly rhetorical analysis. I believe further grounding in filmic concepts and terminology—*shot, scene, lighting, camera angle, cinematography, mise-en-scène*, as well as the roles of the director, scripter, producer, and actors—can help students better approximate the intersecting discourse of film studies. I do not, I should add, expect student responses to do more than approximate “official” scholarly discourse, if such a thing exists (I think my own writing is only such an approximation), but building discourse-specific concepts and vocabularies helps students gain rhetorical confidence as they “invent the university” (Bartholomae 60).

Even barring these two important considerations, though, rhetorical analysis of *Good Night, and Good Luck* proves a rewarding assignment, one that I would heartily recommend to anyone teaching a rhetorical analysis unit and possessing the means to screen a movie. I would advise, too, that as years pass composition instructors keep a lookout for other, preferably somewhat contemporary, films that both showcase rhetoric and make their own arguments.¹⁷ Such films are powerful assets in our classrooms.

Sample Assignment 2: Critical Movie Review

This second assignment I have designed, though I have not had the opportunity to test in the classroom, could work well in succession to the *Good Night* analysis. This assignment asks students to write a more conventional movie review that doubles as a rhetorical analysis, commenting, as most movie reviews do, on what sorts of arguments the film makes (logos), and how well the movie succeeds in making them (matters of ethos, pathos, and kairos). Here, too, a thorough introduction to rhetorical and filmic terms and concepts, and prior discussion of their application, is necessary. In crafting this assignment, though, I take guidance both from

¹⁷ In this category, I might suggest *The King's Speech*, *Thank You for Smoking*, *Malcolm X*, *The Insider*, and *Network*, among many others. The website *American Rhetoric* also features a list of compelling movie speeches (see “Movie”).

Bartholmae and Bruce McComiskey's *Teaching Composition as a Social Process*. While I find the goals of critique and rhetorical consciousness (the primary objectives of the previous assignment) tremendously important, I think there is truth to McComiskey's assertion that "[c]ritique alone ... leaves students with the helpless feeling that their world is less than perfect, yet there is no way to change it" (98). McCominsky, too, values critique, though he advocates coupling that skill with "the ability to *compose* empowering representations, advantageous subject positions, and yet remain inside the scope of 'legitimate' discursive practices within any given institution" (116; italics McCominsky's).

One way to work toward this goal is to imagine¹⁸ a specific venue for the delivery of one's writing. I recommend that students read a variety of popular film criticism, from canonical critics like James Agee, Roger Ebert, Pauline Kael, and J. Hoberman (who differ greatly among themselves) to web-based critics who publish on blogs and movie websites—paying, always, special attention to where and when these critics publish, or have published. (Note that the website *Rotten Tomatoes* links to a copia of online film criticism, and the brevity of the average film review allows the instructor to reasonably assign many examples.) Students will come to recognize different writing styles and vocabularies, among the different reviewers, which in turn correspond to different expectations among their readers. Readers of the *Village Voice*, for example, will likely value different qualities in a film review than those of the *Detroit Free Press*, who will differ from pop culture connoisseurs who frequents movie websites. A helpful supplement to this discussion of the styles and *ethoi* of different film critics can be found in Crowley and Hawhee's *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*; the authors analyze two different reviews of *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, one by Ebert (who publishes in the *Chicago Sun-Times*) and the other by e-critic Mark Ramsey of the semi-satirical website *Movie Juice*. The authors analyze how Ebert bolsters his ethos "as a serious film critic" with "references to the history of film ... that assure readers he knows what he is talking about" while asserting that "he liked the *The Two Towers*, but ... wishes it were truer to the book and less like action films that feature spectacular scenes of fighting and war" (178-79). Crowley and Hawhee contrast Ebert's review with Ramsey's, observing that "[i]f [Ramsey] has good will toward his

¹⁸ Students might also do more than "imagine" venues, too: they might create publically accessible blogs to display their film criticism. This practice, however, should be at most optional, as many first-year composition students find the prospect of going public with their work understandably intimidating.

audience, he achieves it by making them laugh, rather than by providing details about the film, as Ebert does” (180). Students should take up this sort of cursory, comparative analysis of different reviewers’ ethoi before writing their own reviews. Here, students might write short responses similar to Crowley and Hawhee’s analysis, comparing and contrasting two or more reviews from different publications in terms of rhetorical criteria like ethos and audience.

Accepting Bartholomae’s claim that “[i]t is difficult to imagine ... how writers can have a purpose before they are located in a discourse, since it is the discourse with its projects and agendas that determines what writers can and will do” (64), I recommend that students pick a publication or venue that they would be interesting in writing for, and read a number of its reviews, preferably, if possible, by different critics. They then compose a 500-800 word review (a standard range for popular movie reviews) of a film they choose. This shouldn’t be an imitation assignment, exactly, but a composition based on the discursive conventions students observe in their hypothetical publications. Here, students face not only the interesting challenge of translating their rhetorical-analytic insights back into “regular” English (movie reviews almost never invoke classical terminology, even in “high culture” publications like *The New Yorker*), but also the challenge of crafting a writing style and marshalling a vocabulary that suit the publication. (A *Village Voice* review, for example, might very well use a term like *mise-en-scène*, which would be rare in the *Free Press*, or even in an Ebert review). I envision students workshoping their papers in small groups—after reading not only each other’s work, but samples of film criticism from each other’s hypothetical publications—and subsequently revising with their hypothetical readerships in mind. Students should append short reflections to their final products, addressing what venue they are writing for, what audience expectations they observe in that venue, and how they have adapted their own rhetorical analyses to communicate effectively with and demonstrate good will toward to that audience.

The ideal outcomes of this assignment are many. In addition to Bartholomae’s criterion of “[t]eaching students to revise for readers [in order to] better prepare them to write initially with a reader in mind” (64), the critical movie review assignment should help students become more critical and active spectators, further understand rhetorical theory and application, and comprehend how rhetorical analysis often circulates in popular media, though shrouded in non-academic terminology. In turn, the assignment should also help students adapt their insights for expression within different discursive communities—a supremely important skill both inside and

outside the academy. If students enjoy the process slightly more because they get to write about film, that's a welcome bonus.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It is fitting that my exploration of the rhetoric of film finish by discussing concrete pedagogical application because, even as I sort through decades' worth of scholarship; as I struggle to connect the dots between brilliant but often disparate books and essays from those in film, rhetoric, and composition; and as I attempt to erect theory based, if tenuously, on the insights on the ancients, though about a medium the ancients could scarcely have imagined; even then, I try to keep one eye on the composition classroom. Bronwyn Williams, a tremendous advocate of "new media" studies and multiliteracies, nonetheless begins his book on television and writing with a valuable disclaimer that I find *sublime*, in Longinus' sense of the word, for its clarity, elegance, and power:

I believe in the value of teaching thoughtful and engaging with complex and challenging pieces of writing and engaging with complex and challenging pieces of reading. I believe that writing offers a medium for conveying profound, nuanced, and provocative information that cannot be replicated in images. I believe that writing can be the basis for invaluable explorations of the self, of the society, of the world. I love to write and I love to read. I am a teacher of writing. I am a writer. (4)

These words affect me because they articulate something essential about my identity as a writing instructor and a scholar in rhetoric and composition: I came to my job and my field not through a love of digital media, imagistic composition, or even movies, but because of my love for and belief in *writing*—the sort that more and more *CCCC* presentations refer to every year, with a hint of condescension, as "print texts." I believe, perhaps a shred irrationally, that good writing—writing that makes important arguments, pleases its readers, respects their intelligence, and constructs a relationship of good-willed listening-rhetoric—will always be vital in carrying public discourse and shaping democratic societies. For these reasons, I take intense pride in

teaching writing. I am, in short, uninterested in composition pedagogies that do not concern the teaching of good writing.

But I also love film—and I believe that the incisive analysis of other media is a strong characteristic of good writing, as is its self-conscious composition in intertextual dialogue with other media like film. I am far from the first to demonstrate that the studies of film, rhetoric, and writing can benefit from each other, but I hope to have built off the insights of others, tied up loose ends others have left, and left loose ends of my own for others to grab hold of. Chapter 1 should be useful for those interested in the history of rhetoric and composition's engagement with film—with understanding what we learn from previous pedagogies, and how we can improve on past methods. Chapters 2 and 3 should help further a theoretical discussion enriched already by many important contributors, but that is still young and largely unexplored. The rhetoric of film and Bakhtinian inquiry into film are mutually vitalizing topics that have a tremendous relevance to the average citizen's comprehension of and interaction with the discourses and ideologies that dominate everyday life. In this final chapter, I attempt to harness that relevance for use on my own turf, the composition classroom. Film, I hope to have demonstrated, is not fading or anachronistic: its influence persists, as does its integrity as a medium. For these reasons alone, it warrants rhetorical inquiry—and the composition classroom remains an invaluable hub of such inquiry. It is my sincere hope, as a rhetorician, a writing instructor, and a lover of movies, to see further cross-disciplinary study between those in film, rhetoric, and composition.

Roll the credits.

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