

**Ideology and Rhetoric in the Classical Hollywood Movie Trailer**

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## ABSTRACT

### Ideology and Rhetoric in the Classical Hollywood Movie Trailer

Ryan Alexander Diduck

Auteurist criticism is among the most enduring methods of film scholarship, and many significant directors including Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford have been exalted, by audiences and academics alike, to the prestigious status of auteur. This thesis aims to investigate how the trailers for their films functioned, in an industry that continually navigates the territory between art and commerce.

Rooted in preceding research on advertising in both film and print, this thesis investigates the development of the trailer form as a parallel text, or paratext, intended to shape audiences' conceptions about the feature film, and the experience of cinema in general. Rhetorical methods of appealing to consumers were honed in print publications beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and particularly, in their advertising. These methods crossed over into the trailer, functioning to draw spectators into theatres based on conceptions that the Hollywood industry held of their potential audiences. The textual analysis of Hitchcock's and Ford's classical-era trailers offers insights into those industry conceptions, and affords an opportunity to trace how visual marketing techniques have carried into the present context of media-saturated culture.

This thesis reveals how Hollywood appealed to spectators' assumed desires for quality and prestige through film, and how both Hitchcock and Ford were positioned as exemplary auteurs. It also offers a glimpse of how capitalist ideology was served through the promotion of specific narratives and thematic tropes in classical American cinema.

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## Table of Contents

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Introduction: The Greatest Stories Ever Sold   | 1    |
| Methods  | 6    |
| The Motion Picture Trailer: A Historical Context   | 12   |
| Advertising History  | 14   |
| Theoretical Context  | 21   |
| Previous Research  | 25   |
| Trailer Studies  | 30   |
| Aristotle's Enthymeme  | 32   |
| Chapter I: Drawn Curtains, Drawn Spectators:<br>The Classical Trailers of Alfred Hitchcock | 37   |
| Chapter II: How the West was Sold:<br>John Ford's Trailers and the Frontier Myth           | 61   |
| Chapter III: Conclusions and Directions  | 84   |
| Bibliography:  | 95   |

## Introduction: The Greatest Stories Ever Sold

In a world where flicks were king, in a land where dreams became reality on a silver screen, in a time before the boob tube (much less YouTube), the movie trailer changed advertising – and visual culture – forever. Movie trailers remain among the most identifiable and formative models of advertising to emerge in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> Century mass media. Nearly every form of moving image promotion – from television commercials, to the Nasdaq MarketSite Tower, to animated pop-up web advertising – owes to stylistic and formal precedents set by the movie trailer.<sup>1</sup> Until films saw home distribution on video and DVD, the trailer's function, and often its material existence, lasted only until its theatrical run. Yet despite their apparent disposability, there are now dozens of links to online archives, and scores of sites in the digital community now devoted to trailers, old and new.<sup>2</sup> They appear as special features on home releases of films from every genre, containing every star, and from every major and minor studio in Hollywood. Throughout the history of motion picture advertising, trailers have become coded into recognizable form, though they have varied in structure, aesthetic, and persuasive technique. Yet one commonality can be found among all trailers: they sell movies. Simply, when functioning to their highest potential, they argue, coerce, and attract an audience to see a film. In the context of the marketplace, films are equivalent to any other product, regardless of function or materiality.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, trailers for television shows that appear on television. Recent examples can be found in the televised marketing for video game cycles: see *Guitar Hero*; *Grand Theft Auto* franchises. Also, video game franchises based upon film franchises: *Star Wars*; *Indiana Jones*; *The Bourne Ultimatum*; *Spiderman*; *The Incredible Hulk* et al.

<sup>2</sup> The Internet Movie Database, for example, includes a trailer section searchable by name and/or title, and frequently links 30 or more sites and file formats for trailers of films in past or current release.

In addition to viewing as many trailers as possible from the classical period, I also found it helpful to discuss them. During the course of this research I have come upon varying opinions from colleagues, friends and family alike, about movie trailers. However, all those I spoke with when recounting this project had, to varying degrees, conflicting views of these unique forms of advertising: “they’re annoying;” “the movie was nothing like the trailer;” “the trailer gives away the whole movie.” Perhaps it shall serve to explain this project to begin with relating my personal interest in movie trailers, and why I believe them to be of value to critical inquiry. I am personally fascinated by coming attractions; as a young cineaste, I looked forward to the announcements for new movies slated for imminent release. They were like little isolated worlds. And still, I frequently find myself visiting myriad trailer websites under the auspices of research.<sup>3</sup> I wanted to find out how this singular form of advertising functioned during the classical era, and how it has contributed to our current ad-savvy media culture.

We are now familiar with the formulaic standards that many announcements of coming attractions still retain. Often, a booming, masculine voice-over introduces the physical space and temporality within which the referent film exists (“in a world,” “in a time,” “in an unfinished nuclear power plant”), and the characters through whom the story shall unfold (“one man,” “one woman,” “two dogs”), and the story itself (“a tale of deception,” “a love so strong,” “an adventure that nothing could prepare them for”). At times, there are appeals to the audiences’ implied memories of previously enjoyable movie-going experiences (“from the studio/director/producer that brought you...”). Finally, there is frequently an appeal for the unprecedented experience of the film in question (“the most original adventure of the summer”). These conventions have become

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<sup>3</sup> trailersfromhell.com is a personal favorite.

so ingrained into the cinema-going experience as to instigate self-conscious parody (see, for example, the trailer for *Comedian* [2002]). Conventions shift and sway: note the current move to replace the booming, masculine voice-over with inserts of dialogue from the film, which themselves, act as voice-over. My research goal is to trace from where these conventions were honed, and identifying how trailers for successful films and filmmakers looked, sounded, and functioned commercially, during the height and fall of classical American cinema. In addition to moving toward an illumination of the dominant techniques employed in these trailers, my intentions are three-fold: 1) to trace a brief history of the trailer form; 2) to investigate the methodology of previous critical investigations of film trailers, and their findings; and particularly 3) to expand evidence of the communicative functioning of these findings in the context of a multiplying consumer culture, through close analysis of specific trailers for selected works of Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford as functioning both parallel and perpendicular to contemporaneous industrial conventions.

Ford and Hitchcock sat on opposing ends of the Hollywood prestige spectrum: on one hand, Ford was an Oscar-winning filmmaker who was bestowed with authority by his guild; on the other, Hitchcock had a reputation for grisly sensationalism, even before his move to the U.S. Neither director boasted the highest box-office figures, but their respective films were consistently considered critically and commercially significant.<sup>4</sup> Those successes ensured that they could operate at a distance from studio involvement, assigning the status of “auteur” to each, rather than mere journeymen or metteurs-en-scènes. Should the advertising function of trailers necessarily betray the implied artistic

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<sup>4</sup> According to [filmsite.org](http://filmsite.org), Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954) ranks #89 of the top 100 earning films, adjusted for inflation, at the time of writing. Ford’s films are absent.

standing of their works? In seeking a response, we shall look to trailers for films by filmmakers which have achieved considerable attention from layman audiences and scholars alike, in hopes of coming to an increased awareness and understanding of how our current, and ever-expanding, moving image advertising functions.

The trailer portion of the film-going experience serves to ease viewers into the practice of film watching. It is an interstitial block of time where audiences are encouraged to participate in commentary that might otherwise be shunned during the feature. Trailers invite discussion also because of their frequent modes of directly addressing spectators. They are a distinct genre of filmmaking, adhering more or less to conventions that formed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are a singular form of entertainment, or what might be comparable to “infotainment.” In much the same way that celebrity TV shows like *Entertainment Tonight*, behind-the-scenes documentaries, or magazine interviews are positioned to dictate how and what audiences are encouraged to think about stars’ on- and off-screen personas, trailers assume an instructive role about the full-length film, about its appeal to quality, its value to potential consumers. Trailers do inform, they often offer samples, they tease, they make promises, and they construct expectations of the cinematic experience. Though ultimately, they try to sell.

The development of the trailer form roughly coincided with the emergence of the feature-length film presentation format. Unlike consumer products, the products of cinema are not commodities proper; they are not tangible in the sense of, for example, appliances, mouthwash or chewing gum. Nonetheless, observable similarities exist between promotion of the material object, and that of the cinematic text; namely the hyperbolic language of persuasion, and the focus on key features of the object that are

considered desirable to the imagined consumer. We can draw parallels to Ford's and Hitchcock's trailers from the early 1940s in the combined story and star appeals favored in the 1938 trailer for *Only Angels Have Wings*: "Each day a rendezvous with peril / Each night a meeting with romance! / Every moment a breathless adventure / Combining the superb talents of two of the screen's brightest stars ... With the directorial genius of Howard Hawks ... In the year's outstanding dramatic triumph." In trailer language, the brighter stars are always better; directors are not "skilled" or "talented;" they are "masters" and "geniuses." Stories are not merely stories, they are categorically the "best stories ever." In an example that we will later examine in detail, the trailer for John Ford's 1945 film *They Were Expendable* heralds typically: "The Greatest Adventure Ever Filmed!"

However, trailers' modes of address are unique to the form. Consider how conventions of classical Hollywood filmmaking eschew a direct acknowledgment of the audience. Methods of crosscutting and eye line matching, as two examples among many, are devised specifically to minimize an audience's awareness of the artifice of narrative cinema; intra-diegetically, actors do not – unless in deliberate opposition to convention – look directly into the camera, much less make an address to the audience. In the trailers we will look at, the opposite is true, with actors, voice-over, or titles frequently inviting audiences to "come," "enjoy," "get swept away." Varying combinations of inter-titles and/or voiceover alternately perform this function. The direct address mode, through participatory invitation, theoretically encourages investment in the persuasive rhetoric of trailer language. In addressing the spectator, trailers additionally demystify the apparent impenetrability of Hollywood production. With the direct address mode of trailer

construction, audiences are often offered an inside look at the world behind the camera's lens. We shall examine this mode later in more detailed discussions of the trailers for Alfred Hitchcock's films.

## Methods

It shall serve our inquiry to first define a method of thinking about movie trailers in relation to the products they represent and endorse. Certainly, the classical trailers in question would not have existed independently of their referent film texts. However, they are not the films themselves. Trailers are semi-autonomous texts that influence and shape the way audiences are intended to think about the feature films they represent. In the introduction to his work entitled *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, literary scholar Gerard Genette maps the locations of extraneous elements surrounding a literary work, and how they function to illuminate or alter the reader's understanding of the original work:

It is an 'undefined zone' between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or, as Phillippe Lejeune put it, 'a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text.'<sup>5</sup>

Genette's work is concerned primarily with paratextual elements of literary works, yet his opus signals the possible adaptation of his ideas in the study of devices, elements and components surrounding a work of art, which contribute to the meaning, interpretation or function of that work. This is an interesting angle of inquiry, which could easily be transposed onto analysis of autonomous paratexts surrounding *any* work, but is especially

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<sup>5</sup> Genette, 2.

significant for our examination of trailers. By the film trailer, a template for viewing is proposed: the audiences' conceptions about the film are being shaped before they view the actual film, in much the same way that the jacket copy printed on the back of a novel, or an interview with the author, is intended to frame or orient the reader's understanding of the text housed therein. Also, trailers work in exchange with other film paratexts: posters, print ads, magazine articles, and interviews, among others. In this way, trailers are paratexts, existing not quite parallel to the official text – often in advance of its release – but operating both within the context of film exhibition (viewed from inside the physical site of the movie theatre), and external to its referent film text (not viewed in conjunction with its original referent). Therefore, trailers perform the dual function of both endorsing the film, and of constructing certain conceptions and expectations of the original work, and of cinema-going in general.

Advertising urges us to actively participate in the regulation and perpetuation of consumption of the advertised object. Yet it is not any precise object that is commodified in the movie trailer (there is no tangible product to be obtained); it is, rather, the experience of movie-going that is being sold, and implicitly, ideology itself. The film industry of the classical period conceived of its audience (as it does today) not only as spectators, but also – and arguably more importantly – as consumers of its products, and thus, sought (and seeks) to discover increasingly effective strategies of aiming its future productions at specific markets.

Most commonly, trailers are a distillation of the assumed salient features of the film, stitched together in such a way as to draw a contract with the intended spectator: If you see this movie, you will experience *x*. Trailers announce to audiences the

characteristics of their parent film, assuming those characteristics to be desired in the practice of film spectatorship. But how do they navigate this transaction? Trailers carve into interstitial advertising territory, weaving techniques both present and absent in other forms of general advertising. Trailers often contain pieces of the original film – imagery, lines of dialogue and other sounds – and attempt to recreate the general look and feel of the feature text. In selecting images and scenes from the feature, trailers offer a sample of the product. Looking to Nelson Goodman’s work in defining exemplification vs. denotation, the dislocated scenes that most often compose trailers are similar to a gym instructor, demonstrating the action to be undertaken by his class.<sup>6</sup> It is a piece of the routine, but is not itself the routine. It may be a crucial portion of the routine, among its most difficult maneuvers. Similarly, the selected scenes in trailers are most often those that trailer producers consider as most indicative of the desirable (saleable) features of the referent film. Implied therefore, is that the scenes excluded from the trailer will be as entertaining, or will convey, produce, support or contribute to the same feeling or experience that the trailer samples construct. For example, in trailers for typical comedies, humorous scenes or lines are shown as an anticipatory demonstration, with the implication that the feature film will connect the dots, and deliver upon the expectations set up by the trailer.

The trailer also in part reflects Goodman’s example of pantomime: in the first instance, feature fiction films perform actions.<sup>7</sup> So we can see how the performers in films have their performances removed one level further in trailers: the trailer performs pieces of the whole, as the gym instructor performs segments of a routine. Just as the

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<sup>6</sup> Goodman, 63.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 64-65.

mime performs climbing a ladder, the mime is not actually doing any physical climbing; John Wayne may even physically portray a cowboy, but John Wayne is not that cowboy. Secondly, the trailer for the feature may exemplify and/ or denote the feature; but cannot, itself, *be* the feature. Just as the word “red” denotes a colour, it is not the colour itself (unless it is written in red ink, in which case the red word red would clearly both exemplify and denote “red”). So, the trailer can exemplify the film by providing sample scenes of what experiences an audience might anticipate; and/ or, the trailer can denote the film, or represent it by aesthetic association, simulation, and by announcing factual details such as title, director, stars, story, genre, et al. But by virtue, the trailer cannot reproduce, in its entirety, the experience of watching the film. In practice, trailers are sometimes edited before the feature film is complete, limiting the access to footage for trailer producers. Trailers of this regard are similar to advertisements for products that can only offer a referent sample of the product being advertised. Thus, the trailer must approximate the experience of the film, rather than replicate it.

By way of another example, with an ad for a sports car (in print, on television) the audience cannot physically drive the car. There is no sample of the product being offered to experience. Rather, images are invoked that exemplify and/ or denote the sports car that is represented, or the aura and mystique that the sports car conjures – the image of wind blowing through the driver’s hair; the first-person view of a curved road traversed at high speed. In much the same way, exemplary trailers offer the intimation of the film viewing experience; the trailer spectator is shown a glimpse of what the experience of watching the feature film might feel like. In trailers for horror films for instance, frightening scenes and sounds are often selected to intimate the experience of the entire

film – to initiate but not deliver upon the entire event. What the trailer’s spectator should then assume is that their anticipated frightening experience, set up by the trailer, will be rewarded when subsequently viewing the feature.

Trailers from the classical period are often regarded as awkward or kitschy artifacts of a relatively new industry’s trials in appealing to an as-yet ill understood audience. As North American audiences became accustomed to film going as a leisure activity, new methods of promotion became necessary in the midst of heightened output, competition from a growing number of producers, and facilitated by increased centralization and industry organizations. Initially, American studios conceded little knowledge of how to anticipate and ensure financial success of films. Yet, developments in trailer rhetoric – specifically, between the late 1930s and early 1960s – signal an increasingly acute and strategic targeting of audiences by film advertisers. The trailers for films from the transitional period have been studied aesthetically, for their deployment of technological devices, such as optical printing, sound and colour; and textually, for hyperbolic rhetoric, crafted to appeal to spectators’ assumed tastes and desires. But more significantly, the classical era movie trailer serves as a site of origin to trace the discursive formation of capitalist ideology, represented through saturated marketing imagery in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

My assertions are as follows: taking cues from advertising strategies formulated rapidly during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, trailers were largely informed by those strategies, and still show effects in other forms of advertising – including magazines, newspapers, radio, television, Internet, mobile devices, et al. Advertising, functioning as ideologically capitalist mass-media, trumps any contradictory discourse advanced

through the advertised object. (I am thinking here, for example, of mass-produced Ché Guevara t-shirts.) In this instance, ideology itself becomes commodified, co-opted, as varying and competing ideologies in cinematic works become homogenized into the ideology of consumption. Therefore, the (implicit or explicit, symbolic or symptomatic) ideology of any given film is secondary to the ideology of consumption urged through its marketing. And if it is the most commercially successful films (i.e. classical Hollywood studio productions) that have had the most influence or impact on other film works – and within the discipline of film studies – should it follow that the trailers for these films were most significant within the realm of film advertising? One aim of this investigation is to select trailers for formative films, by canonized filmmakers such as John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock, to analyze their rhetorical methods – how they make claims, how they attempt to entice spectators into theatres – in an effort to determine whether their promotional materials encourage similar creative valence to their referent texts. Clearly, both Hitchcock and Ford have been pedagogically exalted to the status of auteur; do their trailers occupy similarly artistic territory, or merely perform a commercial function? Authorship allows another important method of framing this analysis, throwing light onto this implicit divide between art and commerce.

The classical period that shall be examined here was a significant timeframe for the expansion of cinema's Western influence, as well as for the proliferation of consumer products throughout North American markets. And advertising played a central role in creating a mass-demand for both. The method for the next section on film and print advertising is predominantly historical material, but shall move toward a rhetorical and ideological analysis of the trailers themselves. In addition to marketing individual films, I

argue that these trailers also promote discourses of commodity consumption, and of Western ideals of progress and modernity, mediated by the experience of cinema.

### The Motion Picture Trailer: A Historical Context

Throughout the 1910's, the evolution of the trailer form coincided roughly with that of the feature film, adopting similar strategies of narrative and plot construction and continuity editing. Later, technical innovations arrived through the advent of sound, and the introduction of the optical printer to generate visual effects such as superimposition of title cards, wipes, dissolves, et cetera. During the first decade of cinema, advertisements for films were simple in content, appearing in daily newspapers, handbills, or on posters stationed outside theatres, and pitching little more than the title of the film in question.<sup>8</sup>

The trailer form to which we are now accustomed – sampling images from the film, flashing titles, condensed narrative – did not exist before the mid-teens; the spectacle of the moving image (and its support by variety-style programming) was assumed to be enough to draw audiences. The motion picture “trailer” claims its origin from its initial exhibition placement – at the end of short serial features – often alluding to plot elements in subsequent episodes.<sup>9</sup> Edison films such as *The Adventures of Kathlyn* and *What Happened to Mary?* around 1912-1913 are early examples to use the cliffhanger template, thus hooking audiences through a pattern of withheld information.<sup>10</sup> The audience would be posed a question as to the heroine's success, and told to return next time to receive the answer. The serial was well tuned for trailer promotion, implying a

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<sup>8</sup> Staiger, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Coming Attractions, DVD.

<sup>10</sup> Hediger, Vinzenz. *Verführung zurn Film: Der amerikanische Kinotrailer seit 1912*, (Marbourg: Schüren), 2001, (unpublished translation), Chapter 2, p. 2.

chain of consumption by offering regular patterns of film-going behavior as established fact. With some serials printed simultaneously in newspapers, the trailer's self-referential practice proved particularly effective, as a cross-promotional vehicle for other media – namely print and later, radio and television – while effectively differentiating the product of film and its modes of consumption from those media. Film scholar Vinzenz Hediger notes that one could call the episodes “self promoting story events” in a double sense: on the one hand, the individual episodes promote one another by means of the “intermedial feedback effect,” and on the other hand, the serial format also promotes its own medium because the episodes are connected, with each one always referring to the next.<sup>11</sup> As with newspaper ads for the print versions of serial stories, trailers had the attention of its target-market, as spectators would already be in the process of consuming the promoted product-object.

The production of trailers quickly became centralized, superficially for the sake of efficiency, as a method of consolidating films' promotional traffic. Paramount Pictures was the first company to offer trailers for each of their productions, but by 1919, the newly-formed independent company National Screen Service became the sole producer of trailers for all major studios, and monopolized the distribution of these trailers to exhibition sites.<sup>12</sup> The majority of Hollywood studios embraced this practice as it provided freedom to concentrate solely on feature production, although it included a complicated relationship between the service and the studios. National Screen Service set up production offices at each of the major studios, employing members of each organization to assemble the trailers. The editors of studio trailers were on the National

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Coming Attractions, DVD.

Screen Service payroll, not that of their parent companies generating a parallel film production, distribution and exhibition industry. The model of National Screen Service was nominally to facilitate the process of obtaining promotional materials for exhibitors, though ultimately, it further reinforced the economic domination by its participants of the American film industry.

### Advertising History

Before we move towards our analyses, let us briefly examine some of the historical conditions under which mass advertising emerged as a dominant practice in announcing products into the expanding North American marketplace. As economic conditions shifted in the U.S. during the 1870s due to accelerated population growth, rapid urban development, expansion of geographic habitation, and a swell in average household income, producers of a widening variety of goods were faced with the concern of how to market their wares in a national, rather than strictly regional context. Railways became intercontinental, facilitating distribution and exposing local markets to increased competition from distant producers. Consumers were becoming accustomed to an unprecedented variety of goods, revealing an opportunity for retailers of all stripes to capture ever-larger portions of their specified markets. Manufacturers thus encountered the challenge to “homogenize tastes and to convince these consumers to purchase items produced by faraway manufactures.”<sup>13</sup> One of the most effective methods of accomplishing this was to – figuratively and literally – brand their products into the imaginary of the consumer. Through the repetition of exposure to signifying imagery in terms of corporate logos, brand names, and slogans, consumers were offered a pattern of

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<sup>13</sup> Norris, 2.

instant recognition with the products that they often already consumed, and many that were subsequently created to supply previously nonexistent and otherwise artificial demands. Historian James D. Norris cites U.S. Patent Office records which indicate that the number of trademark registrations rose from 121 in 1871 to 50,000 by the dawn of the 1920s.<sup>14</sup> In the span of 50 years, American consumers had come to easily recognize products such as Heinz 57, Singer sewing machines, and Fleishman's yeast; moreover, they had gradually incorporated their wares – and their brand identities – into daily life.

The emergence of mass markets and national branding brought the necessity of uniform promotional dissemination to corporate entities wishing to acquaint potential customers with their products. Along with the burgeoning homogeneity of commodities and products came the flourish of national media during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, convenient for advertising these wares to the new nationwide markets – themselves made possible through vast transportation and distribution networks. In this way, culture industries such as newspapers and magazines seized on the opportunity that advertising revenues implied for their own profit. Advertisers, alternately, influenced and shaped the needs and desires of consumers. Daily newspapers played a significant role in successfully bringing consumers in line with patterns of “national” brand consumption. During the 1880s, syndication of columns became common practice, ensuring that readers of dailies nationwide were exposed to similar experiences of the news.<sup>15</sup> But, it was the emergence of widely distributed magazines that accompanied and encouraged a rapid shift in mass patterns of consumption, through the standardization and consistency of print advertising for everything from soap to small engines to shotguns. Monthly

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Ohmann, 21.

publications such as *Harpers's* and *Atlantic* already possessed steady readership, but at a cost of 35 cents – and including articles regarding matters of interest solely to the bourgeois elite – these magazines relied heavily upon subscription, and had a national circulation of no more than 200,000 by the early 1890s.<sup>16</sup> Soon, rival publications – notably, *Munsey's* – realized that they could undercut the competitions' cover prices and create their own market share by drastically increasing the number of advertisements contained within their pages. Historian Richard Ohmann explains:

These entrepreneurs ... had hit upon a formula of elegant simplicity: identify a large audience that is not hereditarily affluent or elite, but that is getting on well enough, and that has *cultural aspirations*; give it what it wants; build a huge circulation; sell the magazine at a price *below* the cost of production, and make your profit on ads.<sup>17</sup>

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, *Munsey's* monthly publication boasted the highest circulation of any monthly, due in large part to the practice of seeking revenues from the sale of advertising space, rather than from the cost of subscription or of individual issues. As previously mentioned, the shift from specificity in advertising and local dailies to national branding and mass-circulated monthlies took place rapidly – in the span of a less than a quarter century – fuelled by the ability to quickly, efficiently and regularly distribute these publications, and the products marketed within their pages.

The rise of mass cultural publications, and specifically magazines, signals a shift in the modes of thought of publishers as well. Instead of thinking about their readership as inquisitive, desiring of culturally significant information and upward social mobility, the need for advertising revenues required an attitude of strict and quantitative enumeration. Advertising dollars were contingent upon readership statistics which, in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

turn, were dependent upon monthly cover (or subscription) price, and of course, the nature and quality of the content within. Therefore, the copy and editorials became a mere vehicle to facilitate exposure to ads. Testifying to a Congressional hearing in 1907, one forthright adman puts it bluntly: “A magazine is simply a device to induce people to read advertising...”<sup>18</sup> The separation in 1883 of *Ladies’ Home Journal* from the women’s’ pages of the *Tribune and Farmer* bore two significant innovations. It is unclear whether *Ladies’ Home Journal* was indeed the first magazine to embed advertisements amongst its contents instead of housing it in segregated compartments, but it was certainly one of the earliest publications to forge this practice. In this way, its readers were forced to notice advertising, rather than stumbling upon it in the front and back pages. With this innovation, the lines blurred between information and advertising, and mass producers reaped the benefits of the illusion of legitimacy by public service.<sup>19</sup> It was becoming increasingly difficult to discern advertising from content. However, it is the second innovation that resonates most profoundly in the profession of advertising, and is felt well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: the recognition of women as the primary target market of mass culture.

When attempting to differentiate mass audiences, even more than the delineation of class or race, the distinction of gender arose as the single-most defining factor in targeting salient habits of consumption. Appealing to ostensibly feminine traits such as emotion above reason, or glamour above functionality, became common practice for advertisers by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. According to advertising scholar Roland Marchand: “The advertising trade journals commonly attributed 85 percent of all

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<sup>18</sup> Ohmann, 367 cites Lears, 201.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Lysol or Listerine ads from the period, which are touted as products for well-being and self-improvement. (Marchand, 15, 19).

consumer spending to women.”<sup>20</sup> It was assumed by the overwhelmingly male advertising constituency, that most women led “rather monotonous and humdrum lives... (craved) glamour and color...” and that advertising should thus function as a dominant form of escapism from the trappings of a “natural inferiority complex.”<sup>21</sup> The content of monthlies such as *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *McCall’s* fused advice-style columns, fashion instruction, and interior design tips seamlessly with advertisements for sewing machines, cosmetics, hygienic products, and home furnishings. Clearly, assumptions were made about the desire and necessity of women to synchronize trends that were perceived as culturally significant – and profitable. More and more, new publications – particularly aimed at a female readership – cropped up on the landscape of periodicals publishing, at once inventing and fragmenting markets, and expanding the powerful role of advertising in the formation and perpetuation of mass culture into the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

At the beginning of the 1920s, two tiers of magazines were launched, which capitalized upon the implied feminine mind of the mass consumer – the tabloid and the confessional. *True Story Magazine* and *Daily News* debuted almost simultaneously in 1919.<sup>22</sup> Containing sensationalized stories and “true confessions” of “ordinary” women, often telling of heartbreaking heroines and tragic adventures. In particular, *True Story* was at the forefront of circulation for national women’s magazines; throughout the decade its circulation had steadily rivaled the more sober *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *McCall’s*, and by 1927, it was boasting sales of two million copies per month.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Marchand, 66.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 66-67.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 53.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 54.

Advertisers were slow to adopt the tabloid and confessional publications as vehicles for their marketing campaigns due to the seeming indecorousness of editorial content. It was commonly held that the image of national brands would be sullied through their association with publications of ill repute; their tempestuous readers could not be relied upon to regularly consume brands of refinement and prestige. Yet by decade's end, at least 20 national brands including Lysol, Wrigley, Camels and Jell-O held court in the advertising pages of these magazines, affirming a new parable of the "democracy of goods."<sup>24</sup>

Coupled with the overall assumption of feminine audiences comprising the base of mass cultural production, other more pejorative postulations crept into the dominant practices of advertisers. The masses, according to the leading admen for the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, were ultimately lethargic and unintelligent, opting for the paths of least resistance when confronted with consumer-related choices. In identifying the tastes of these scores of less-than-lettered readers, advertisers felt themselves at odds with their own penchant for perceived high culture, and the apparent lack thereof in the tabloids' lowbrow and pedestrian audiences. Advertisers were encouraged by their parent agencies to restrain their own instincts and values, and generate copy that would resonate with the lowest common denominator of consumers. Audiences were regarded as "them," as opposed to "us." Marchand's research indicates that the average adman was significantly better educated than his average consumer constituent.<sup>25</sup> This divide is most lucidly manifest in the headlines and advertisements that appeared in tabloid publications of the 1920s and 1930s – papers which, as we shall examine, took their cues directly from

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 70.

the matinee movie audience. Marchand notes: “Advertising agents might [have wished] to take themselves and their business more seriously, but the people, as represented by movie audiences, wanted ‘more romance and less reality.’”<sup>26</sup>

In tracing the developments of marketing strategies for advertisers – whether in print or in theatres – it is important to note that shifts occurred unevenly, and not in a linear or causal fashion. Advertising in tabloid and periodical publications, to an extent, mirrored the industrially assumed mentality and desire of movie audiences; movie advertisers – particularly trailer-makers – borrowed methods from tabloid publications. Strategies of Hollywood and mass-cultural publications ultimately functioned together in a dialectic of increasingly specific persuasive rhetorical appeals. Tabloid papers initially had difficulty attracting large advertising accounts from major national brands, because their apparent readership consisted of the lowest common denominator of public consumers. Yet it was precisely this demographic that supplied the base of consumer spending in the decade leading up to WWII. Well-educated advertising executives took issue with pandering to the common masses, yet it was those masses who were most likely to lay down their voting dollars in the emergent constituency of consumer citizenship. More frequently, advertising agents were tapping into the consciousness of the mass audience by using many of the aesthetic strategies used in Hollywood films – as one advertising executive cynically appraises, a consciousness comprised of “incredibly shallow brain-pans.”<sup>27</sup>

In seeking to identify and better target their audiences, tabloid advertisers looked no further than the matinee crowds. If it was the common mind that held the key to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 67.

consumer spending, it was the (Hollywood) movie, the most commanding of new media, which held that key. Aesthetics of print advertising would eventually reference cinema directly, as Marchand notes of the depression-era Post Bran Flakes “real life movies” campaign.<sup>28</sup> Advertisers took careful note of the public’s interest in the spectacle of close-up images, the swaying power of the movie star phenomenon, and the sanitized conventions of cinematic representation (a toilet did not appear in a Hollywood film until 1960), in addition to the obtuse subject matter of popular American movies such as early genres of slapstick comedy and melodrama. Clearly, the ultimately capitalist ideology of advertising must be called into question, particularly as it relates to abiding the more depreciatory assumptions about spectators’ desires.

#### Theoretical Context

I have framed this inquiry philosophically in the writings of Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser and Jean Baudrillard, (among others) – thinkers who may initially appear theoretically disparate. However, the common thread that binds them is their Marxist ideological critique of mass-culture, be it through the production of object-commodities for mass-consumption, or through the mass-consumption of images through art or advertising. It is my enduring hypothesis that movie trailers as advertisements act as mass-communication and corroboration of film consumption itself – higher in the ideological order than the content of the given texts to which they refer. And so it seems apt to colour this analysis with some of the collected philosophical fragments of the above-mentioned thinkers.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 62, 297-8.

The cultural power of images to formulate and reinforce ideological discourses has been exhaustively investigated and well documented. However, at the time of writing, this power seems overlooked or conveniently forgotten. Adorno notes in *The Culture Industry* the relationship between advertising and the perpetuation of generic cultural reproduction: “The poetic mystery of the product, in which it is more than itself, consists in the fact that it participates in the infinite nature of production and the reverential awe inspired by objectivity fits in smoothly with the schema of advertising.”<sup>29</sup> Here, the reproduction of the real object becomes, itself, the reproduction of the ideology that produced it.

As Terry Eagleton notes in his survey *Ideology: An Introduction*, there is no comprehensive definition of ideology, or rather; all of its definitions in play compose an interwoven network of occasionally contradictory and competing conceptions. For the purposes of functionality, I shall loosely define my use of the term to: “the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life.”<sup>30</sup> Eagleton offers us other tertiary definitions (“ideas [true or false] which help to legitimate a dominant political power;” “the process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality”<sup>31</sup>) although I believe these definitions fold into and support the larger process mentioned above. For Althusser, ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” but must eventually, necessarily, manifest itself in “material existence.”<sup>32</sup> So, for example, we may say that we believe in religious doctrines, or subscribe to Marxist philosophy, but these beliefs or subscriptions do not, in themselves,

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<sup>29</sup> Adorno, 63.

<sup>30</sup> Eagleton, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Althusser, 36-39.

involve a set of prescribed or conditional actions. The flow into material existence arrives when we actively participate “in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which ‘depend’ the ideas which [we have] in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject.”<sup>33</sup> In practical terms, subscribers to a given ideology not only believe in that ideological mode of conception, but also are prepared to act in such a manner as to continue the functioning of its ideological mechanism. So, Marxist philosophers may subscribe to the theories of Marx; they must also be prepared to act upon their beliefs, by membership in political organizations, et al. It is similarly insufficient for Catholics to believe in God; they must attend Mass, take communion, pay tithe, and the like.

In Hollywood during the classical era, the condition of its industry’s production ultimately served to reproduce its own conditions of reproduction. Simply, the object of making movies was, above all else, to ensure the conditions to continue making movies. So, for industrial producers, the object of its advertising was to create a belief in the entertainment value, the symbolic value, of products and of cinema, and to encourage action: the regular and consistent consumption of the cinematic product. One of the most common strategies of perpetuating this cycle was to “brand” productions, whether according to studio, genre, story, star, or for the ensuing analysis, according to director. This is where movie marketing, and especially, the trailer, serves capitalist ideology, as it encourages the regulation of the activity of movie-going, repetitive consumption by the illusory and immaterial promise of a higher quality, more prestigious cinematic product. It was the promise of consistent and increasing entertainment value that assumed, and so, ensured the film industry’s conditions of reproduction.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 41.

Baudrillard situates these ideas further within the context of the brand as producing and legitimating the social subject via capitalist ideology, through one's commodity consumption. He proposes a system of commodified objects, or "hierarchies" of products and objects which constitute: "a range of distinguishing marks more or less arbitrarily keyed to a range of stereotyped personalities [and] thus come to play precisely the same role as that formerly played by a range of distinct values: they become the basis, in short, of the group's ethos."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, we can infer the concept of brand-identity as a determinant of subjective identity, and further, ideological identity. However, it is insufficient to say that the advertising for cinematic works constructs individual identities without acknowledging a discursive relationship; the spectator/ consumer interacts with the advertising material, being already effectively formed through a matrix of social, political, and economic conditions, among many other factors.

As previously mentioned, and unlike the system of product-objects, there is no object proper to consume, to possess, in cinema. Baudrillard addresses this in his later analysis of the function of "advertising as the mass-medium *par excellence*," noting the tautological codes that visual media articulate:

It is not, then, its contents, its modes of distribution or its manifest (economic of psychological) objectives which give advertising its mass communication function; it is not its volume, or its real audience (though all these things are important and have a support function), but its very logic as an autonomized medium, i.e. as an object referring not to real objects, not to a real world or a referential dimension, but from *one sign to the other*, from *one object to the other*, from *one consumer to the other*.<sup>35</sup>

It is through this discursive interaction that real spectators, real consumer identities, are imagined and projected by the advertising industry. As we shall see, this process can be

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<sup>34</sup> Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, 208.

<sup>35</sup> Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 125.

located within the syllogistic rhetoric commonly found at work in the trailer text. So, the classical trailer attempts, through a series of recognizable but empty signs, to sell the myth *about* the myth of the filmic experience.

Furthermore, the object of film advertising ceases to carry with it any intrinsic use or exchange value, as in traditional theories of capitalist production. Trailers for cinematic works, rather, exchange signs (the rhetorical appeals made to imagined spectators) that refer to other signs (the feature film for which the trailer is advertising), and remotely endorse ideological activity through selling normative images of lifestyle and culture. Baudrillard further notes that: "Sign-form seizes labour and rids it of every historical or libidinal significance, and absorbs it in the process of its own reproduction: the operation of the *sign*, behind the empty allusion to what it designates, is to replicate itself."<sup>36</sup> Film audiences are being urged to continually consume the primary sign of the image, which provides no conventional value, and has only symbolic value as its residual. This illusory notion of value harkens back to Althusser's premise of ideology as the imaginary force between belief and action. Through trailers, spectators are urged to believe in the symbolic value of specific cinematic products, and to act by returning consistently and regularly to the box-office, thus ensuring their reproduction.

### Previous Research

Given their ubiquity in theatres, and now as supplementary features on DVD, online and increasingly, across new and portable media, trailers have received only scant critical attention from film, communications or advertising scholars. There have been a handful of articles, some in larger edited publications, and a smattering of dissertations

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<sup>36</sup> Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 10-11.

devoted loosely to the subject of film advertising, with the majority focusing on issues of film spectatorship. In 1980, Jeanne Allen contributed an article to *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* entitled “The Film Viewer as Consumer.”<sup>37</sup> Allen succeeds in arguing that early film production practices relied upon an economic and social dialogue between the film industry and its spectators. Allen stresses the ideological function of cinematic representation in offering an idealized image – and thus, the motive – for participation in the American capitalist mode of consumption. She marks the similarities of the Hollywood industry with other assembly line modes of mass production, at once equating the products of film with those tangible products in the marketplace, and sketching the reinforcement of desire for such products – as well as the lifestyle that implicitly accompanies them – through their filmic representations. Allen also emphasizes the simultaneous interdependence of the viewing subject and social or cultural behavior.

In her dissertation entitled *Motion Picture Advertising: Industrial and Social Forces and Effects, 1930-1948*, Mary Beth Haralovitch investigates the changing visual representations of women in film advertising through the era of the Production Code, and its analogue in print advertising. Haralovitch hypothesizes that Hollywood advertising: “[...] works not only to attract an audience to a particular film but also to maintain the attraction of Hollywood cinema as a social institution, a fundamental part of American leisure time.”<sup>38</sup> According to Haralovitch, her evidence is “ideologically-loaded” – implicating ideology as that which produces the necessary preconditions for mass culture’s existence.<sup>39</sup> Haralovitch argues that coming attractions reproduce the pleasures of cinema in a cyclical fashion; spectators purchase admission, only to be encouraged to

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<sup>37</sup> Allen, Jeanne. *The Film Viewer as Consumer*.

<sup>38</sup> Haralovitch, *Motion Picture Advertising*, 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

repurchase admission at regular intervals, echoing the assertion of the self-referring, self-regulating modes of mass cultural production. Key to Haralovitch's method is the acknowledgement by the Hollywood apparatus of its exclusive economic dependence upon its audience. Yet, during the classical period, it was most often the industry's generalized supposition about the assumed desires of a homogenous audience that dictated which films were produced, which genres would pander to audiences' appetites for illusion and spectacle, which stories would resonate with the majority of spectators, and which actors would attain star status.

Stars have long proved reliable as being desirable to film audiences. Clearly, there is a significant body of material devoted to celebrity, the star system and its functioning within the marketing apparatus of Hollywood. Richard Dyer's *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, and Christine Gledhill's anthology *Stardom: Industry of Desire* both represent the exhaustive corpus of theoretical thinking on the star as a social phenomenon. Specifically in terms of advertising, Cathy Klaprat's section "The Star as Market Strategy: Bette Davis in Another Light" examines the operation of Davis' star persona in direct communion with the promotion of her motion pictures. Klaprat identifies the star as a significant tool for effective and efficient product identification and differentiation.<sup>40</sup> Ultimately, stars perform an invaluable service in the measurement of a projected film's financial potential: "[...] if a star could generate and fix demand, then star differentiation offered a method of standardizing and predicting success [...]"<sup>41</sup> Klaprat also rightly remarks upon the discursive trajectories of story and generic appeals, employed in conjunction with the formation of Davis' star persona. As her image shifted

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<sup>40</sup> Klaprat, 353.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 354.

from coquette to prototypical femme fatale, so too did the narratives and genres of films in which Davis starred. Klaprat concludes that the classical star operated as an indentured servant to the studio system, but most importantly, as a signifier of distinction, a mark of quality – and qualities – that audiences could easily recognize.

Film “paper,” or print advertising supplied to exhibitors, including handbills, posters, ‘one-sheets’, has also been well documented. A fascinating study of the images of spectators is undertaken by Kathryn Helgesen Fuller in her chapter “Viewing the Viewers: Representations of the Audience in Early Cinema Advertising,” included in editors Melvin Stokes and Richard Maltby’s anthology *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era*.<sup>42</sup> Fuller investigates the actual appearance of captivated and well-mannered (and exclusively white) audiences within the paper for early traveling exhibitions, noting: “the benefit the advertising image had on future ticket sales was more important to exhibitors than representing the actual movie-going experience.”<sup>43</sup>

It is Janet Staiger’s efforts, though, that have brought the critical study of film advertising together through ideological and historical examination. Staiger’s important and influential 1990 *Cinema Journal* article “Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising” is among the primary comprehensive analyses of paper, print and trailer advertising, and serves as a benchmark for the bulk of subsequent research into this arena. Staiger examines how principles of general advertising were adapted to meet the specificities of the film industry. Her methods generally parallel the Frankfurt School approach to industrial mass

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<sup>42</sup> Fuller, 112-128.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 117.

cultural productions, stating that traditionally held economic laws of commodity supply and demand do not apply, or rather, are transcended by American capitalistic advertising practice, because advertising effectively shapes, alters and augments consumers' demands.<sup>44</sup> Staiger outlines five appeals: genre, star, plot, spectacle and realism as the nodes around which virtually all classical Hollywood advertising centred. Functionally, these would become the classifications which differentiate Hollywood's products from each other, and which signify marks of distinction to anticipated audiences – along similar lines that brand identification would for both cinematic and physically manufactured consumer products. Establishing these distinctions streamlined both audiences understanding of, and desire for specified types of film, as well as the output of every major Hollywood studio; if spectators' desires for the above five appeals – in varying combinations – were satiated, the industry had effectively determined a loose yet enclosed sphere for its own operation. Yet, because films are not standardized in the same way as manufactured goods, film advertising – including posters, trailers, print ads – had to position each film in opposition to all others in the marketplace, but also against other forms of mass cultural entertainment. Staiger's work points to a larger question of cultural representation in film advertising that is more forthright, less ambiguous, and autonomous from representations in the films themselves. Staiger's position supports the hypothesis that trailers ultimately communicate capitalist ideology –that is largely immaterial to the ideological implications of their parent texts.

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<sup>44</sup> Staiger, 20.

## Trailer Studies

In terms of academic research specifically on trailers, the relatively small body of literature is credited chiefly to two scholars: Vinzenz Hediger, and Lisa Kernan.

Hediger's 1995 thesis looks methodically at the form, predominantly through combined structural, historical and theoretical approaches. Hediger observes that during the late teens, the "classical" structure consisting of 4 parts begins to dominate: Introduction; Film Title; Exposition; and End Title.<sup>45</sup> Similarly emergent are the types of plot revelation dominant in the exposition: "riddle vs. suspense." Hediger asserts that in the riddle plot structure, the audience is posed a series of questions (i.e. "What was the strange attraction that brought these two together; what will tear them apart?") Thus there are significant events missing from the plot-discourse, though spectators are either recognized to understand, or are made aware of their absence.<sup>46</sup> The suspense plot, by contrast, consolidates these questions into a single, focused issue: ("Will the hero/heroine win?") Therefore, we can associate four basic types of trailers during the classical period: Classical structure: yes/no; suspense plot: yes/no.

Archivist and trailer scholar Lisa Kernan notes the emblematic persuasive strategies that became conventional appeals in early film trailers, which served to differentiate the products of individual films from each other, as well as from other media. These strategies are wielded in conjunction with one another, and function to project desirable qualities upon an unidentified audience. The film industry, through these rhetorical appeals, sought to address an undifferentiated spectatorship in terms of race, class, gender and socio-economic status. Particularly in the classical period (before

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<sup>45</sup> Hediger, Chapter 1, p. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

1960), the aim of industrial producers was to cast the net wide, claiming that desirable features to all audience members would be offered in each specific film text. The paradox of distinct products in filmmaking practices during this period is exemplified in the generic rhetorical appeal, offering spectators something at once new and familiar – a narrative posited within a specified and recognizable set of boundaries, yet promising an original and unprecedented execution.

Kernan has focused her research upon the rhetorical appeals employed in a significant portion of trailers from across Hollywood's advertising history. Through this method of inquiry, Kernan has refashioned spectators as implied by advertisers' notions, rather than clearly defined in terms of race, class or gender. According to Kernan, her method is more indicative of the industry's conception of their audience, as opposed to an attempt to identify or examine actual viewers. How the industry thinks of its audience – rather than who actually comprises that audience – is reflected in the modes of address employed by trailer producers. Alternately, who the "industry" is, and how it operates can be examined, in addition to other methods of historical research, implicitly through the tropes evident in the trailers themselves.

Kernan proposes that trailer rhetoric is suggestive of a unique relationship between two imaginary camps: the filmmakers and their audience. She asserts: "Trailers attempt to position spectators within the imaginary, in an illusory security of unitary identities constructed for us as audiences by the film industry (of which, in turn, we construct an imaginary identity)."<sup>47</sup> That is to say, the trailer-makers project a hypothetical audience whom they attempt to attract/ construct through the association with fictional characters and situations, while spectators in turn construct an imaginary

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<sup>47</sup> Kernan, 38.

mechanism which caters to their entertainment desires and demands. Kernan continues: “Rhetoric is the means by which movie trailers appeal to spectators’ assumed desires and interests, displaying industrial assumptions about our lives and our identities as individuals within (imaginary, ideological or mythical) communities.”<sup>48</sup> The key word here is “assumption,” as a necessary condition for the classical trailer’s rhetorical function, and as a clear idea of precisely what one is actually looking at in a trailer.

### Aristotle’s Enthymeme

Kernan aptly employs the enthymeme, a concept of Aristotelian logic, to discover the significance of assumption in the workings of the movie trailer.<sup>49</sup> An enthymeme, or what Aristotle referred to as the “substance of rhetorical persuasion”<sup>50</sup> can be thought of as a syllogism that assumes either its conclusion, or one of its premises. For example, if I assert that “wine makes me drunk, and I just drank wine, therefore, I am drunk;” it is safe to replace this with “I *must* be drunk since I just drank an entire bottle of wine.” What is implied or assumed here is the corollary of “drunk” from “wine.” The trailer enthymeme thus elicits from the spectator an intellectual familiarity with the film to which it refers, in addition to using rhetorical statements to entice the spectator to consume (and presume) its referent.<sup>51</sup> We can therefore use this rhetoric when analyzing trailers, not just in terms of assumptive statements made through the trailer’s form and content of narration, and what the audience is implied to assume in return, but also through *what* is strategically placed within the frame, and *how* these strategic frames relate to each other. Kernan’s

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 40.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Bitzer, 408, quoted in Kernan, 246.

<sup>51</sup> Kernan, 42.

methods shall figure largely into my analyses, in addition to the examination of ideological discourses implicit in the trailer texts.

Furthermore, for an argument to be made for a film-product, certain suppositions must be allotted more gravitas, representing further assumptions on behalf of trailer and film producers. Based on Janet Staiger's inquiry into film advertising, research presented by both Kernan and Hediger propose three dominant rhetorical appeals that are fundamental to the functioning of classical trailer logic: Star, Story, and Genre.<sup>52</sup> These three categories, frequently working in various combinations, comprising what Kernan has ascertained to be the salient features that the Hollywood industry has assumed to be most desirable and therefore most persuasive to its spectators. Generic features have been used to sell narrative texts not limited to film. However, genre is arguably the broadest central feature that audiences take into account when choosing one film over another. Embedded in the desire for generic adherence is a dual expectation in the implied spectator – the desire for a familiar yet new experience of cinema going. Distilled to its most basic appeal, the generic trailer's appeal can be summed up as follows: "You may have seen this before, but not like *this*." Generic rhetorical appeals rely heavily upon spectators' assumed desires for recognition. Kernan notes: "Generic worlds are instances of a particular kind of cinematic place where we want to go again and again, whether by re-viewing favorite genre films or by revisiting such a place via a new film of the same genre."<sup>53</sup> Therefore, genre signifies a defined or contained cinematic space where something familiar will happen – audiences will feel something they have felt in previous cinematic excursions – though their experiences will somehow be reconfigured through

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<sup>52</sup> Kernan, 41; Hediger, Chapter 2, p. 7-10.

<sup>53</sup> Kernan, 45.

an unexpected or unanticipated redeployment of generic conventions. Genre also serves the function of product differentiation among audiences; for example, one comes to expect that a gangster film be unlike a romantic comedy, but like other gangster films that one may have previously enjoyed. In this way, genre simulates the iconography of branding in consumer culture. The idea of film-as-brand has significance when thinking about how consumers make decisions regarding which products (in this case, films) to consume.

Genre can be tied back to Baudrillard's concept of advertising cum objects as one of the distinguishing characteristics of brand-identification. Brands serve to differentiate products within a larger context of similarity. By way of metaphor, the boiling water in a pot never travels in the same directional trajectory, but never leaves the pot either. We may say that we prefer a Coke to a Pepsi, but we know that they are both caffeinated and carbonated cola drinks. Indeed, we may prefer a suspense film to a western, but fundamentally, they are both celluloid strips, wrapped around a core and running through a projector at 24 frames per second. What is important, though, is how trailers emphasize genre to spark immediate recognition in spectators as to what classification or type of film is being advertised. Here, we can observe seemingly conflicting forces at work: Hollywood studios at once assume the desire for an audience's familiarity with the object, as well as the desire for a sense of newness within that familiarity. Film scholar Thomas Schatz specifically discusses genre and star power as key methods of "stabilizing marketing and sales, of bringing efficiency and economy" into studio production.<sup>54</sup>

The rhetoric of story fits with that of genre in that its concern is with the experience of the object that is object-specific. Where genre provides the possibilities of a

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<sup>54</sup> Schatz, 656.

generalized space within which the narrative will exist, the story framework pinpoints specific experiences – i.e. particular plots including romance, suspense, or characters – that are promised through the cinematic referent of the trailer. These experiences are once again enthymemically linked to trailer logic, in that they are assumed by the trailer makers to be the types of experience desired by the spectator. The familiarity/ difference dichotomy is again expressed here, as the desire of the spectator to experience film-specific events in the space-time of narrative, but also for the possibility of experiences that may have never been felt by the spectator-subject. Thus, where genre delineates similarity in narrative, story tends to offer familiar *and* unique encounters with not only cinematic texts, but also the cinema as a whole.

Likewise enthymemically linked to the rhetorical structure of the trailer's argument is that of star-power. Of course, Hollywood studios were safe – as they are today – to assume a desire in the audience to see stars on film. But there is a more complex relationship between audiences and the rhetoric of star than that of genre or story: stars are the most ultimately specific of the three areas of appeal, in that they are singularly associated with certain spectatorial notions of quality and distinction. For example, the consumer of the cinematic object may be more likely to see a film that contains an award-winning star (or is directed by an Oscar-winning filmmaker) despite being less enthusiastic about genre or story, though not necessarily vice versa. Indeed, this is a generalization posited for the purposes of simplifying *my* rhetorical argument, in addition to acknowledging that star-rhetoric in trailers – whether applied to actors or filmmakers – is perhaps the trailer's most nuanced petition. Indeed, the concept of stardom is a multifaceted one, encompassing notions of sexual and scopic drive,

presence/absence and sameness/difference discourses, style, extra-filmic personae, current fashion, intertextuality, et cetera.

However, it is altogether unlikely that a given trailer from the classical period should rely upon one single aspect of the above three rhetorical appeals. Rather, they work together as a mesh of complementary or competing devices that figure a perceived whole in the nexus of the trailer – itself referring to an as-yet-to-be-defined object. Schatz further notes the “melding of institutional forces ... [of] the studio’s production operations and management structure, its resources and talent pool, its narrative traditions and market strategy” as driving forces behind the image of authorial or generic brand unity.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Kernan draws from Staiger’s historical inquiry to include spectacle and realism to the list of secondary rhetorical arguments invoked in the trailer.<sup>56</sup> These too shall figure greatly into the warp and woof of our subsequent textual analysis of trailers for the films of Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford. Let us now look at some of these examples in the context of star-as-brand-identity pattern recognition and rhetorical inquiry.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Staiger, quoted in Kernan, 41.

## I – Drawn Curtains, Drawn Spectators: The Classical Trailers of Alfred Hitchcock

Perhaps the most enduring model of film study and criticism has been that of authorship. Auteur theory emerged widely during the 1960s as a method of investigating similarities across the bodies of work of established Hollywood directors – most prominently among them, Alfred Hitchcock and John Ford. Auteurist criticism suggests that directors reveal their artistic intentions through linkages between their works – familiar tropes of story and style. Furthermore, the linkages between works, which are, of course, often unintentional, construct patterns of recognition over the body of a filmmaker’s work – patterns which ripen for analysis and criticism. A hefty volume of literature has been devoted to tracing aesthetic, narrative and thematic trajectories through the oeuvres of these two directors.<sup>57</sup> But how does the advertising for auteurist cinema look, and what differentiates the trailers for Hitchcock and Ford films from other works – from other directors – of the period? Although they differentiate their respective brands in diverging ways, the trailers for Hitchcock and Ford films increasingly suggest the filmmaker-as-author, in command of the text, as well as of the filmmaking apparatus, and the implied and intended spectatorial experience. Their films work within generic conventions, and also gradually favor filmmakers’ stardom in their marketable arsenal. And auteur-star power provides an assumed measure of quality, of status and class – an appeal that transcends an actor’s presence, or the plot or genre of the film. Working within appeals to genre, story and star, a unique director-brand identity is forged that

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<sup>57</sup> See, for example, on auteurist criticism of Hitchcock: Bazin, André et al., *La Politique des Auteurs*. (Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile), 1984.; Truffaut, François, *Hitchcock*. (New York: Simon & Schuster), 1985. On Ford: Lehman, Peter. *John Ford and the Auteur Theory*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin), 1978.; Budd, Michael N. *A Critical Analysis of Western Films Directed by John Ford: from Stagecoach to Cheyenne Autumn*. (Iowa City: University of Iowa), 1975.

audiences are anticipated to recognize, and desire.<sup>58</sup> If auteurist criticism is a project to discover signature traits within and surrounding directors' works, it also exposes a built-in selling strategy, reinforcing patterns of regular and participant consumption. Hitchcock and Ford's trailers encourage and cultivate the aura of the filmmaker as star, by assuming the audience's fluency with – and desire for – their quality brands of cinema. It becomes assumed, as well, that their films will consistently deliver upon promises to alter and enrich the cinematic experience – to provide intelligent, dignified, artistic entertainment. Still, as televisions entered more homes throughout the 1950s, cinema going also had to compete with a new, successful model of home-entertainment. Trailers then placed emphasis upon advertising features specific to the medium of cinema – colour, size, aspect ratio – to distinguish its product from television. This was the appeal to the unique experience of cinema, the practice of film going, and the ritual of consuming the larger-than-life image. The task of the following two chapters is to select trailers from across each filmmaker's career, examining them chronologically for their evolving methods of persuasive appeal, and identifying strategies of ideological representation that suggest regular and patterned consumption.

The collection of trailers selected for the analysis of Hitchcock's trailers consists of *Saboteur* (1942), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), *Rope* (1948), *Rear Window* (1954), *To Catch a Thief* (1955), *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), *Vertigo* (1958), *North by Northwest* (1959), and *Psycho* (1960). We can group these trailers loosely through chronology, as well as trace the arc of their rhetorical features to suggest a link between

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<sup>58</sup> By the late 1960s, as trailer conventions increasingly favored advertising the filmmaker as the star of the show, authorship in film criticism, especially in the U.S. gained momentum. See Sarris, Andrew. *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions, 1929-1968*. (New York: Dutton), 1968.

*Saboteur*, *Shadow of a Doubt* and *Rope* as relying predominantly upon story; *Rear Window*, *To Catch a Thief*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much* on star-power; and *Vertigo*, *North by Northwest* and *Psycho* on a star/story synthesis. We shall also clearly see how the Hitchcock-as-star marketing strategy developed over time, particularly in the trailers for this last group of films. (These groupings are meant more as fluid tendencies, rather than cut-and-dried classifications.)

Both *Saboteur* (1942) and *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) immediately refer to story: *Saboteur* invoking “the unexpected,” and *Shadow of a Doubt* employing liberal hyperbole in its introduction scene. *Saboteur* promises “a significant story of today,” suggesting the enthymeme of a discourse on timely and contemporary issues. We then have a direct address toward the audience by “Barry Kane, American,” and in character. Already, we see the underlying rhetorical appeal to realism, as the film’s central character seemingly transcends the diegesis, and delivers a message designed specifically for the (trailer) audience. And the message he delivers is Kane’s story. We now have an invitation to experiences unique to the cinema, through this projected identity. Another title further on states: “You’d like to say it can’t happen here, but every jolting scene is true!” Given that *Saboteur* is not a documentary, what can we infer is true about the film? Perhaps the trailer and filmmakers were concerned that the film be believable to audiences, or worthy of investment, despite the exaggeration of character and circumstance. Note also that generic language, later so associated with Hitchcock – like “suspense” – is not yet heavily employed, focusing rather on emotional terminology: jolting, thrilling, great, terror. Additionally, these trailers flourish under the riddle-plot, rather than the unitary suspense structure. Finally, we can observe that although both

films feature Hitchcock's name, Alfred Hitchcock was not yet a recognizable brand-name director, and not given such prominence in these early American trailers as he would in those for his subsequent works. Neither could stars Pricilla Lane and Joseph Cotton in *Shadow of a Doubt* match the clout of, for example, Grace Kelly and Cary Grant, hence the attenuated focus on star-power.

*Rope* (1948) marks a departure from the strict story appeal. Now audiences are assumed to be familiar with cinema in general, but specifically, with "Hitchcockian" cinema. The trailer begins by focusing on location and story elements; a title card reads: "New York, One Spring Afternoon." Contrary to the sampling convention (in which actual scenes from the film are assembled), the ensuing scene with characters David Kentley and Janet Walker was shot specifically for the trailer, and does not appear in the finished film. Since Hitchcock was the producer of *Rope*, the implication is that these scenes would have been shot if not by Hitchcock, than with his expressed consent. So, in addition to being offered a new experience in the film, we are now offered still a newer experience through the extension of extra-filmic material into the trailer's diegesis. We are provided back-story elements that are intended to generate interest in characters. But our expectations are cut short by the introduction of Jimmy Stewart, again, in character, informing us: "That's the last time she ever saw him alive." Stewart's introductions would emerge in later trailers as well, though this marks its first appearance and mirrors that of Barry Kent, in *Saboteur*.

The trailer is formally further unlike the film; though *Rope* is shot in long takes with baroque camera movement, the trailer is edited in line with classical cinematography, employing shot/ counter-shot and close-ups, in addition to the initial

high-angle shot establishing the location of New York's Central Park. Six close-up shots of each character follow Stewart's monologue, with one stressed medium close up of Brandon and Philip, followed by a separate close-up of each (punctuated with orchestra hits). Acute deployment of the optical printer figures into the trailer's mise-en-scène, as we see a wipe, reminiscent of drawn curtains, dissolve into an exterior shot of a window obscured by curtains, while screams are heard on the soundtrack. We are assumed first to be interested in the character of David Kentley, and then, to infer that what we are hearing and experiencing – in foley and score – are the sounds of treachery and violence.

Star-power is eminently more recognizable in the trailer for *Rope*, as James Stewart is recruited to narrate the exposition. Hitchcock's name appears in the title card, now as with *Shadow of a Doubt*, in full possession of the object: "Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope*." The name of Hitchcock furthermore assumes a specific, proprietary relationship with not only the film, but also the genre of suspense. This is supported through the plot structure of suspense over riddle; we are left hearing only the sound of a pistol's discharge, literally questioning whether Jimmy Stewart's character lives or dies. Quickly, a brand-identity has been established between Hitchcock films and the audience, implicitly assuring a standard of combined generic, plot and star appeal. Hitchcock the director becomes as important to the marketing of his works, if not more so, than his leading actors, a strategy that would be carried further with his television persona. Still, the focus upon story elements by these trailers – such as characterization, plot, and emotional experience – place the above three examples loosely in the "rhetoric of story" category, sustained by classical narrative structure, while effectively establishing brand-like familiarity with the filmmaker.

With *Rear Window* (1954) we catch a glimpse of Hitchcock-as-director in his promotional material. (It is important to note that the specific text examined here is for a re-release of the film, as it makes several mentions of *Psycho* [post-1960]). The opening shot of this trailer – as the anonymous voice-over narrator tells us – “is the scene of the crime.” What we, the audience see is in fact more; we are situated behind the apparatus of cinema, behind the camera, the lights, the boom, and significantly, directly behind Hitchcock himself. At this point in his career, the star-power of Hitchcock functions parallel to story rhetoric, as he literally rises out of his chair, to challenge the voice over: “filmed in a way you have never seen before, and as no one else would dare attempt but the screen’s master of suspense.” We are assuredly presumed to know who Alfred Hitchcock is, what he looks like, as well as the nature of his previous works. Importantly, Hitchcock’s name and figure appear markedly before his star, James Stewart.

The voice over leads us to the interior of L.B. Jefferies’ apartment, the camera panning and tilting over a series of photographs. The images represented in these photographs are worthy of note – race cars, a nuclear explosion – as they perpetuate the rhetoric of modernity through scientific rationalism, and the persuasive power of the “new.” We now enter into a sequence of shot/ reverse shot introductions of Jefferies’ neighbours. As with the film itself, we can infer here not only the metaphor for cinema, or even Hitchcock’s cinema, but also the new, competing medium of television. Jefferies has the choice of which “programme” he wishes to watch, though not an infinite choice, yet with the potential for active manipulation. Two of the voice-over introductions contain a double-entendre, each with specific reference to Hitchcock – Ms. Hearing Aid, who is an “artist of a very odd and strange art;” and “The songwriter, who plays the same

melody over and over again.” We can read this statement parallel to an authorial model of criticism – the filmmaker who makes the same film over and over again. And if the spectator is to make this implicit connection, we can observe a fairly subtle enthymeme embedded in this seemingly story-orientated rhetorical appeal. The question is asked in voice-over: “genius or insane?” If the observer is intended to also think of Hitchcock, the former is, no doubt, assumed to be the response.

When Jimmy Stewart addresses the audience, he does so again in character, but with a perceptibly lighter tone than in *Rope*. Now we have the star-performer assuring us of the appeal of the film: “At first, I watched them just to pass the time, now I can’t take my eyes off them... just as you wont be able to.” We then have a particularly tautological title card (par for this course) which reads: “The suspense masterpiece from the master of suspense.” This is an instance of airtight trailer logic. By this time in Hitchcock’s filmmaking career, trailer-makers regarded the director as the ultimate attraction to his works. This is evidenced by Hitchcock’s name book-ending the trailer structure – his is the first and last name that we see. The rhetoric of the star diretor is now functioning in advance of story, as it is assumed that the spectator has developed a rapport with the differentiated Hitchcock brand. The ending title card for this re-release trailer reads: “See it!” – a direct order, offering no choice for argument. We can see this method operating in current television commercials for DVD films, which tell us to “buy it now” or “own it today” rather than the more ambiguous “starts Friday” or “only in theatres,” which merely suggest behavior, rather than command it. The subsequent title: “and see it from the beginning” assumes our knowledge not just of *Psycho*, but of its promotional material (which shall be examined shortly). There is a discernable deviation from classical

convention here, as the trailer refers to another trailer, rather than merely its referent film, or previous films featuring the director or star.

The ad for *To Catch a Thief* (1955) abandons any rhetorical inhibitions the previous examples may have held. Hitchcock's name appears solidly, occupying the entire frame, as the host who invites us to join the stars, playing on implied audience desire for presence and association. There is a refinement of address in this trailer intended to draw the widest possible field of spectators, given offerings from all three rhetorical appeals: whereas previous trailers narrowed into the niche of story or star, *To Catch a Thief* offers romance (=star-story/female); intrigue (=genre-story/male); travel and exoticism (=spectacle-realism/tertium quid). The Academy Award is invoked to reinforce audience notions of quality and distinction in reference to the star, Grace Kelly. (Interestingly, Hitchcock was also nominated but lost to Elia Kazan for *On the Waterfront* (1954). Conventionally, trailers did not yet readily announce Academy Award nominees.) However, the true star of the picture is clear. As with *Rear Window*, a title card assures us of specific features we have become accustomed to associate with a specific brand-identity: "no one but Hitchcock" can deliver this particular, new-yet-familiar experience.

Indeed, the experience is flaunted as "perfect" several times by the voice over narrator. As with the word "game," there are no necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of "perfect," though the spectator nonetheless immediately conjures a conceptual pattern – implicitly, an extended differential facet of the Hitchcock brand identity. This, some say, is true for all aesthetic predicates.<sup>59</sup> Here, the word acts as

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<sup>59</sup> Kant seems appropriate here: "the subjective conditions of the judgement, as regards the relation of the cognitive powers thus put into activity to a cognition in general, are the same in all

performative guarantor that the imaginary and indefinable desires of the spectator – any spectator – will be satisfied in full. In a line of dialogue delivered by Grace Kelly, she asks: “Have you ever had a better offer in your life?” There are several competing rhetorical claims at work, though chiefly, the correlation can be drawn between the diegetic offer, and that of the trailer, and referent film. We, the audience, have never had a better offer to be satisfied by a motion picture. Just following this scene, a title card appears – accompanied by an almost sarcastically up-tempo score – which reads: “Who could ask for anything more?” Adapting the Gershwin tune: “I’ve got genre, I’ve got story, I’ve got stars (in very close contact).” And given that star-power – collectively, Cary Grant, Grace Kelly and Alfred Hitchcock – is the fundamental driving force of the trailer’s rhetorical appeal, *To Catch a Thief* represents a thorough application of the dominant argumentative devices employed to attract the broadest possible viewership.

*The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) similarly adheres largely to the star model, though with a more conventional introduction by Jimmy Stewart, appearing now as himself. Here, he is simultaneously referring to his own star-persona both on and off screen. We are meant to remember that he appeared in *Rope*, and *Rear Window*, and can confidently anticipate a product in line with the quality of those works. Stewart assumes that we “know by now” what to expect from the cinematic brand of Hitchcock. If we were paying attention, those qualities are assumed to be suspense, the uncanny, the unusual, the unexpected – romance, international intrigue, et cetera. The negative prefix serves to distance and further differentiate the film plot from realms of the ordinary and predictable, though the anchors of star and genre reassure basic fluency.

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men. This must be true, because otherwise men would not be able to communicate their representations or even their knowledge.” (Kant, §38).

It does seem to the contemporary viewer that this trailer is suspiciously lacking in technical veneer. In the opening shot, the voice of the announcer is overdubbed – the actor originally saying “Jo Conway” and not Doris Day. The shots of Marrakech appear haphazardly tacked on, including a process shot of Jimmy Stewart and Doris Day walking through the crowded street. One interesting formal element is the manipulation of colour, used during cuts demarking surprise. This is a particularly subjective cinematographic technique that implies an altered state of perception at the hands of plot elements, as if a physical reaction will be experienced through consumption of this film. Similar lighting techniques can be observed in *Rope* and *Vertigo*, which we shall examine shortly. Unfortunately, the specimen available during my research is missing end titles, suggesting that it is either incomplete, or is ultimately a lack-luster deviation from the classical structure. According to researcher Alain Kerzoncuf, the end title should appear: “Alfred Hitchcock strikes the highest note of suspense the screen has yet achieved!”<sup>60</sup> This statement also stakes the highest claim for Hitchcock’s star-appeal, until he begins appearing in the promotions himself.

In the third phase of classical Hitchcock trailers, *Vertigo* (1958) represents a shift back toward story, thereby enthymemically assuming knowledge of the Hitchcock brand identity. The trailer opens on the cover of a dictionary, opening to the definition of the word “vertigo.” It is noteworthy that other prominent words in the frame are “Vespers” – from the Latin “Vespera,” meaning evening star, especially Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty, thus alluding to characterization in story rhetoric. Vespers also refer to the 6<sup>th</sup> of the 7 canonical hours of prayer in the Catholic tradition. “Verve” appears

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<sup>60</sup> Kerzoncuf, Alain and Nándor Bokor. "Alfred Hitchcock's Trailers." *Senses of Cinema* [http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/05/35/hitchcocks\\_trailers.html](http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/05/35/hitchcocks_trailers.html), 31/01/2007.

below, defined here as “vigorous,” intimating the manner in which the story of *Vertigo* is to be told. The voice over is rife with ironic hyperbole, promising “A story that gives new meaning to suspense.” This implies that the vernacular, of which Hitchcock is assumed to be master, will be extended and transcended through the story of the film. Consistent with the riddle plot structure, we are posed a series of questions through voice over narration: “What was the strange attraction” or more generally: will this romance survive its obstacles? The experience of story is also alluded to with the employment of words such as “dark,” “strange,” “powerful,” “compulsive;” stressing the character’s inner emotional states. Only near the end do we witness the emergence of star persuasion, as the trailer insists on seeing James Stewart “as you have never seen him before.” Here, Stewart and Kim Novak operate in conjunction with elements of narrative construction, and are subordinate in the order of rhetorical appeal. However, as now is conventional in Hitchcock trailers, we end with the assurance that this film could be realized only by Hitchcock. The last shot is significant as it quite literally leaves Stewart, and the audience, hanging. As implicit in the film’s title, the trailer conveys less a specific site of association, and more a generalized feeling that will be conveyed in the text. The trailer for *Vertigo*’s re-release demonstrates the post-modern shift toward nostalgia, focusing on the words: “revisited,” “remembered,” “restored.” It is comprised of a conventional montage sampling structure, unremarkable when viewed against the classical version. The key to this trailer is more rhetorically generic in its appeal to re-experience something that is ultimately familiar. The technological advancements of restoration, 70mm projection and DTS digital sound also function on the level of recontextualizing

the cinematic, offering the possibility of new meanings gleaned from old elements of character and story.

Among the most remarkable examples of Hitchcock trailers are those created for *North by Northwest* (1959). The first title card proclaims: “The master of suspense weaves his greatest tale!” Reminiscent in these continued promises for increasing greatness is the pattern of consumption implied in trailers, dating back to the earliest for the serial. It is assumed that the audience has seen every Hitchcock film up to this point – if not, they certainly should have. The next title reads: “It’s a deadly game of tag.” If we think back to the uses of the word “game,” what is implied here is the built-in ambiguity, or the subversion and playfulness of language and meaning in the Hitchcockian universe. The commentator announces, “Cary Grant becomes...” eliciting a combination of star-appeal and story exposition. The star here is transformed, by a unique set of circumstances, into a literal character within the narrative fabric of the film, effectively doubling or confounding his role as performer. Supporting this layered theme of theatricality, the trailer features a line from James Mason, alluding to Grant’s convincing portrayal of a dead man. Again, as with *To Catch a Thief*, the theme of international intrigue is integral to the appeal of story. Romance – another key feature of the Hitchcock brand – is introduced through the appearance of Eva Marie Saint in the train car berth. Again, we hear the word “perfect” used to describe elements of the story. Furthermore, the appeal to the verisimilar is redeployed, assuring the spectator that “Every sight and sound is real.” We can observe a notable and conscious competitive thrust against television in this trailer, offering the experience of the film in “The magnitude of VistaVision and Technicolor – that only the big theatre screen can bring you.” It is

implied here that the spectacle of cinema, and its various emotional renderings, are irreproducible on a small, consumer black & white TV set. And though this trailer appeals concurrently to story and star rhetoric, it is the second trailer for this film that is most innovative, if not for Hitchcock's appearance alone.

Hitchcock indeed appeared in the trailers for the re-release of *Rear Window* and *The Wrong Man*, but the promo for *North by Northwest* (1959) is the first instance of his popular persona identified with his introductions for the famous television programme *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-1962). The personal guided tour – through the trailer, as well as the story – hinges upon an unprecedented ironic tone of narration. Hitchcock appears in a travel agency, offering a “quiet little tour” of the American Northeast. Though the images presented work in direct opposition to Hitchcock's assertions, creating a marked disconnect between description and diegetic fact, the device of irony resonates with the enthymeme of awareness in the spectator of Hitchcock's sardonic delivery, and the expectations of established Hitchcock vernacular. The film and trailer begin in New York: “Where Cary Grant can go places and do things.” Embedded in this ambiguous statement, as with *Saboteur*, is the discourse of modernity, alluding to Grant's implicit ease of mobility and navigation through the urban sphere. The train is alluded to as an “old-fashioned” way to travel, again involving the discourse of modernity, with a complex self-awareness of cinematic signification. (If we recall the Lumiere brothers' first films, the train was shown as the pinnacle of modern transportation; now, it is but a romantic and nostalgic signifier of the past.) Much like *To Catch a Thief*, the spectator is invited to accompany the stars in their abundant mobility. Paradoxically, Roger O. Thornhill is trapped in the identity of a non-existent character, thus problematizing his

mobility. It is significant that Grant is mistaken for a secret agent, suggesting that he is literally, though unintentionally feigning his own agency. Again, Hitchcock's narration invokes incongruity as he refers to a "tasteful little murder." Here, the language functions on the level of black humor, as murder should not, morally, be tasteful. However, these are story elements that are assumed desirable by the Hitchcock brand promotion machine: suspense, romance, intrigue and the macabre are all part and parcel of the differentiated Hitchcock experience.

A final enthymeme comes from Hitchcock himself at the end of the trailer. He provides a promise that the film will bestow "nothing but entertainment [...] a vacation from all problems." This is set in stark contrast to the image of Eva Marie Saint hanging – much like Jimmy Stewart in *Vertigo* – from the cliffs of Mt. Rushmore. The "Great American monument [of] serene nobility" is assumed to produce a series of connotations in the mind of the spectator – uprightness, honesty, American value systems all – while these implications are effectively sullied through sample story exposition. Yet another comparison can be made between Hitchcock's and the earliest serial trailers: consistent with suspense plot construction, and regardless of evidence of the analogous riddle plot, we are left hanging at the end of this trailer, wondering if the heroine will live or die. Implicitly, it is only by the hand of the director that the spectator will have an answer.

Entering into the post-classical period of the early 1960s, with mounting competition for box-office dollars from the self-contained lure of television, movie marketing was forced to reinvent strategies of product differentiation in an effort to lure spectators out of their living rooms, and back into theatres. Rather than borrow from the generic four-part formal structure, or divulge narrative and plot elements through sample

scenes, *Psycho*'s is less a traditional trailer, and more a paratextual short – a minimovie – starring Alfred Hitchcock as himself (or rather, as his star persona). It contains no footage from the feature film; the promo instead features Hitchcock guiding the audience on a tour through the film's location (referring back to the promo for *North by Northwest*). This atypical format emphasizes the espoused singularity of the feature film: if the trailer appears different from others, it must follow that the film differentiates itself above other films, too. With this departure from classical trailer rhetoric and structure, the ad functions to destabilize spectators' conceptions about the cinematic space within which the film exists. More than the invocation of "great," "breathtaking" or "spectacular" experiences promised by other trailers, that for *Psycho* intends to redraw the borders between diegetic and extra-diegetic spaces, between fiction and reality. It is arguable that the trailer's rhetoric favors space above all else, although genre and story are also key features of the film's marketing appeal – in addition to the director's star status. In this trailer, spectators are appealed to think about the film by way of the fictional motel, and also about Hitchcock's authorial role in the filmmaking process. Here, multiple assumptions are being made about audiences: viewers *should* know Hitchcock – from his previous films and their trailers, and from his television appearances – as well as the nature and content of his works. The trailer rests on the Hitchcock brand identity, and its relationship with committed spectators – its inertia in the marketplace. Forgoing the classical "something for everyone" routine, the trailer's rhetoric is strategically targeted; its address is to those who have already confirmed their brand loyalty. It assumes and encourages interest supported through enthymematic logic. But this text situates itself beneath the film, amongst the proverbial sewer pipes of its referent text. After viewing all

the previous examples from Hitchcock (and Ford, and dozens from the period), there is no doubt to this trailer's importance, its innovative and successful methods, and its significance to film advertising. Thus, some questions arise: How does this trailer ask the audience to think (differently) about the film? What information does the trailer deem important to impart to potential spectators? And what assumptions does the trailer make about its spectators, and about their desires? Partly because it is three times longer than most trailers from the period<sup>61</sup>, partly because it marks a departure from classical Hollywood filmmaking, and partly because of its un-trailer-like structure, this case warrants some extra space for analysis.

There are earlier precedents for deviations from classical trailer conventions, and specifically, the director's direct appeal to cinema audiences, as in the trailer for *Cleopatra* (1934), in which Cecil B. DeMille delivers his didactic speech from behind his officious desk; or for *Citizen Kane* (1940), in which we hear but do not see Orson Welles as he introduces the cast. Hitchcock, too, appeared in several of his trailers prior to 1960, but the text in question charts new territory in the deployment of the auteur-as-spokesperson. Recalling Lisa Kernan's discussion of trailers' specific modes of address, this example is six and a half minutes of sustained direct engagement of the audience by the biggest star of the film.<sup>62</sup> The trailer begins with a high angle long shot of Hitchcock on the set of the Bates Motel. A superimposed title reads: "The fabulous Mr. Alfred Hitchcock is about to escort you on a tour of the location of his new motion picture, 'PSYCHO'". From the opening shot, the audience is already assumed to have familiar awareness of the Hitchcock personality, and importantly, to believe him to be fabulous. A

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<sup>61</sup> *Psycho*'s trailer clocks out at six and a half minutes; the previous and ensuing examples are in the one to three minute range.

<sup>62</sup> Kernan, 20.

major part of the director-as-star rhetoric is to communicate the filmmaker's ability to manipulate and control space – both the cinematic spaces which the films occupy, as well as the metaphorical spaces of story and narrative that convey implicit ideology. We see this operating in the trailer for *North By Northwest*, and we see it here, too. But even more than in the trailers for *North By Northwest* (where Hitchcock guides us on a tour of the film's locations), the director is in complete control of these surroundings – they are, after all, the sets for his new motion picture. Here, Hitchcock further embodies his subversive star-director persona, upending conventions of the “making-of” trailer pattern.<sup>63</sup>

Given that the viewer should anticipate this film to be a suspenseful, frightening experience, the presence of Hitchcock's playful persona diffuses the completed delivery of these emotions, investing anticipation in spectators. As Hitchcock guides us through the set, his ironic tone betrays the macabre subjects of crime and murder – details revealed by him about the film's narrative content. But, aside from “making-of” and “behind-the-scenes” insight into the process of filmmaking, as witnessed in the trailers for *History is Made at Night* (1937), or *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), there is no evidence of film apparatuses: there are no cameras, cranes, lights, or any mention of studios, producers, or anything at all filmic by Hitchcock.<sup>64</sup> In fact, even his directorial role is suppressed by Hitchcock's recounting. He describes the narrative events as one would recount the most quotidian of details – as if they were *real* events. In each expository statement delivered by Hitchcock, there is an equivalent piece of information held back,

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<sup>63</sup> According to Janet Staiger, by 1917, “making-of-the-movie” trailers were becoming commonplace, and were referred to as “Little Journeys.” (Staiger, 9).

<sup>64</sup> Hitchcock will later give audiences his take on the apparatus from behind the scenes, for example, in the trailer for *Marnie* (1964) where he descends toward the camera on a crane, to introduce his “latest motion picture.”

presumably to encourage intrigue from the audience. This *modus operandi* reveals itself throughout the trailer, beginning in the initial moments when Hitchcock describes the motel. We see a wide, high-angle shot of Hitchcock standing in the lot in front of the motel, as his dialogue begins: “Here we have a quiet little motel / tucked away off the main highway / and as you see, perfectly harmless-looking / when in fact it has now become known as ‘the scene of the crime.’” Spectators are urged, at this point, ask: “what kind of crime?” We should also be intrigued by the simple transfiguration of the commonplace, with the seemingly innocuous motel characterized as a potentially threatening locale. Here, the function of the music is also significant, alternating between the jokiness of a major melodic structure, and ominous minor chords, which punctuate the graver story elements. (The only content taken from the feature and included in the trailer are snippets of Bernard Herrmann’s original score.)

Next, the camera cranes down and tracks in on Hitchcock as he walks toward the house, foregrounding him in an American shot, with the house framed in the background. His dialogue continues: “This motel also has, as an adjunct, an old house / which is, if I may say so, a little more sinister-looking / less innocent than the motel itself / and in this house, the most dire, horrible events took place / I think we can go inside because the place is up for sale, although I don’t know who’s going to buy it now.” This is intended, again, to cue the audience to follow the director along – to ask: “What kind of dire, horrible events?” Hitchcock’s rhetoric plays upon the assumed desirability of violent and transgressive psychological story elements, both onscreen and within the realm of the spectator’s imagination. The trailer first establishes space – the hotel and adjacent house – and then implies the narrative trajectory, but withholds specific details, inviting the

audience to interpolate independently. One of its predicates can be rephrased as: you want to see dire, horrible events; and the second, as: you will see those events by coming to this movie. And by excluding any sample footage, the trailer suggests two important points: the events are too graphic to reproduce in the context of the film's advertising; and, the trailer needs not reproduce the events but only suggest them, invoke them, to entice spectators to see the feature film. Here, the trailer is organized upon assumptions that its audience will fill in the blanks with regards to their own desires for specific cinematic experiences; boundaries of genre and story are established and, in effect, the audience works to complete the advertisement's open-ended logical equation. As we have seen, this theme of initiating but leaving incomplete features of assumed desirability is emblematic not only of this trailer, but of the more broad operatives of trailer syntax.

We then are invited to follow Hitchcock into the sinister-looking house. Again, the music oscillates into the major key, playing on the ironic trope that exemplifies this trailer's rhetoric. As Hitchcock enters the house, he leaves the door open, and the camera (we) follow, quite literally, over the threshold. In this way, the trailer ensnares us in the actual physical, and the figurative generic spatial construct. Hitchcock points out that: "even in daylight, this place still looks a bit sinister." This is consistent with the trailer's generic appeal to space as indicating the feel, mood or the aura surrounding the film. Hitchcock then describes how a murder victim had fallen down the flight of stairs: "in a flash there was the knife, and in no time, the victim tumbled and fell with a horrible crack / I think the back broke immediately..." To favor the trailer's implicitly subversive and amusing treatment of ultimately violent tropes, he gestures with his hands, and continues: "It's difficult to describe the way the ... twisting of the... well, I won't dwell upon it..."

What is implied here is that the film *will* dwell upon it, and that, moreover, this is among the most pleasurable features of the text – its graphic depiction of human destruction.

We now see a head-and-shoulders shot of Hitchcock, as he directly addresses the camera – a technique that has been in operation throughout, but is employed here to augment the spectator’s interest in his recounting of plot elements. Hitchcock now begins to illustrate the characters of the narrative, again using the mode of initiation and incomplete resolution. The trailer only offers characters in sketchy descriptors, such as “the victim(s),” “the woman,” and “the son” or “the young man,” deliberately avoiding proper names, and exemplifying the understood absence of specificities within obtuse trailer language assumed to be familiar to audiences. Next, Hitchcock takes us into the most apparently intimate locations for each character: first, into the woman’s bedroom, where we see the imprint of her form on the bed. He also opens her wardrobe, inspecting her old clothes. Here, two more significant trailer tropes are revealed: first, the trailer’s appeal to realism functions through the presentation of the woman’s private space; second, the audience is prohibited from seeing what is deep within that space (the implication here is that perhaps you may find out by coming to see the film). Once again, the spectator is invited into the generalized space, but denied access to certain specificities in regards to its subjects, thereby inviting a degree of curiosity – of anticipatory suspense – from the audience.

Hitchcock exits the bedroom, and walks down to the end of the hallway, opening the far door only enough to identify it as “the bathroom.” We shall return to the site of the bathroom as a locus of particular assumed interest to the audience. What is hinted at here, and later brought to fruition, is that the space within which the feature story shall unfold

is one which spectators are traditionally denied access in previous cinematic works. It is the signifying power of the Hitchcock brand trademark – the private-made-public sphere – that calls our attention to fantasy spaces as those which effectively generate such mass-fascination, such potential for “hidden persuasion.”<sup>65</sup>

Hitchcock then leads us to the hideaway behind the motel’s office, with this preface: “This young man, you had to feel sorry for him / After all, being dominated by an almost maniacal woman was enough to drive anyone to the extreme of...” By this point in the trailer, the audience is expected to be onto the game of open-ended postulations, and likely enjoying completing Hitchcock’s unfinished statements. He glibly informs the audience about the young man’s hobby of taxidermy, then states: “An important scene took place in this room; there was a private supper here.” Now we see another direct reference to an actual plot element from the film, however, because the audience has become accustomed to the lack of sample footage, we must once again only infer the nature of these scenes.

Hitchcock is effectively dropping clues that can only be redeemed by attending the feature film; spectators are advised to later retrieve these clues to make sense of the big picture. And without abandoning the motif of interpreting images, Hitchcock brings our attention to a painting on the wall, a representation of “Susanna and the Elders.” Here, we see the trailer’s most densely loaded symbolism at work, punctuated by Hitchcock’s contention: “This picture has *great* significance, because...” Were he only referring to the picture itself, we could agree that it does possess great significance – in the mythic order, and the order of iconographic, mass-reproduced images. However, in the context of advertising the referent film, if the spectator is to recognize the work, and

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<sup>65</sup> Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 146.

be aware of its subject matter, one infers that there must necessarily be some allusion to its representation of sexual violence *behind* the painting. Hitchcock also invokes a canonical work of art as a sly rebuke of officially polite and bourgeois culture, further inverting notions of class and taste. It is the context, the location of the cinematic, imagined space – which is further removed by trailer space – that sanitizes implied fantasies of deviance, and underscores a kind of harmless, pop psychological appeal assumed to be desired by, and therefore targeted toward, mass-consumers, toward the matinee crowd.

Hitchcock then takes viewers into cabin number one, while (not so) subtly dusting off and tidying his hands. We are immediately ushered into the bathroom, which is now “all tidied up,” having recently appeared “covered in blood” and “too horrible to describe.” The bathroom space serves as the buttress point of several assumed fantastic desires of spectators: preoccupations with the body, excreting, cleansing. Hitchcock opens the toilet lid and informs us that a “very important clue was found ... down there.” He then recounts how the murderer crept into the bathroom, while the shower was on, and drew the curtain. And although there is the implicit appeal to fantasy throughout, if we were to apply Baudrillard’s words: “The real fantasy is not representable. If it *could* be represented, it would be unbearable.”<sup>66</sup> The methods of the trailer are to insinuate that unrepresentable fantasy, and furthermore, to imply that the fantasy *will* be represented, and *will* be unbearable. As Hitchcock approaches the shower, his silhouetted profile cast on the bathroom wall reminds spectators of the paramount importance of the Hitchcock brand, and the consumable images, the consumable narratives, attributed to it.<sup>67</sup> The

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

silhouette gives spectators yet another recognizable symbol of the Hitchcock trademark of quality and distinction. In addition to implying a tie-in between visual media, the graphic of Hitchcock's television series silhouette "logo" also suggested to contemporary audiences that the popular treatment of violence in cinema should entice spectators (back into theatres), through the invocation of an image perpetuated through, but unavailable to this measure, on television.

It may seem ironic that such attention has been devoted here to a trailer whose film referent is concurrent with the ushering in of post-classicism in Hollywood. But it is clear through analysis of this trailer that Hitchcock did much more than merely cling to classical conventions of trailer narrative construction, exposition, aesthetic and rhetorical appeal; he ineradicably altered those very foundations. Hitchcock's films are among those most studied along the authorial models available to film criticism, those suggesting that signature traits of filmmakers manifest through identifiable but often-latent tropes in their works. The trailers for these films, too, lend themselves to auteurist investigation and interpretation. But more than auteur, Hitchcock was also the brand that increasingly drove the marketing campaigns for his films – much more so than those for his contemporary filmmakers. With his earlier trailers resembling more traditional promos, employing varying combinations of genre, story and star rhetoric, Hitchcock's trailers quickly distanced themselves from the ballyhoo and trailer hyperbole typical of the classical era, thereby distancing his films from those of his contemporaries, and further carving the differentiated appeal of his works. Increasingly, Hitchcock was the star of his films, and the trailers presented him accordingly. This strategy masks the ultimate outcome, however, of the mass consumption of these images in conjunction with

other media (newspapers, magazines), and of their consumerist ideological implications to the social, cultural and political orders.

Whatever their other appeals, and despite their primary function of promotion, spectators become conditioned by the machinery of these advertisements to replace living desires with their fetishized and sanitized consumable signifier counterparts. The cinema of Hitchcock, and its parallel advertising, represents unstable emotional states, horror, and the macabre from the relative safety of the screen. I would further argue that a society reliant upon commodity and capital exchange also benefits from the reassertion of these emotional states into the popular cultural vernacular, laying conditions favorable for the re-production of cycles of production and consumption. Baudrillard notes of consumed images of violence:

[...] the affinity between violence and the obsession with security and well-being is not accidental: 'spectacular' violence and the pacification of daily life are homogeneous, because they are each equally abstract and each is a thing of myths and signs.<sup>68</sup>

This is the realm of ideology served by advertising generally, and trailers specifically, seemingly overshadowing any contradictory ideological narrative content of their referent texts. Because Hitchcock and his films have been claimed through scholarship for the lofty categories of film art, it is interesting to see how these trailers negotiate the exalted status of the director himself with the ultimately commercial aims of the film industry.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 174.

## II – How the West was Sold: John Ford’s Trailers and the Frontier Myth

We turn our attention now to the trailers for several seminal John Ford films between 1939 and 1960. The purpose of this section is to focus strictly upon the trailer paratexts themselves, and not necessarily to provide a critique of John Ford the man, the director, or his works – topics which have already received ample critical attention elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> Here, I must clarify that moral judgment of any particular ideology is not the subject of this analysis; it is, rather, the mode of deployment of arguments in trailers that is central to this inquiry, and with that, how significance was produced through suggesting or illuminating the symbolic value of onscreen events, and of the institution of cinema-going in general. Although both Ford and his frequent leading man John Wayne were known to be actively involved in the political order (though, on opposing ends of the spectrum, mind you), my task is not to champion – or deny – their political force. Nonetheless, Ford’s films – like those of Hitchcock and other such auteurs – were co-opted into the ideological sphere of industrial production and mass-consumption.

By the end of the 1930s, Hollywood had institutionalized self-censorship, and studios were operating under the watchful eyes of Will Hays and the Production Code Association. Richard Maltby notes that the institution of censorship in Hollywood was ultimately about “[...] the cultural function of entertainment and the possession of

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<sup>69</sup> In addition to the Lehman and Budd dissertations noted earlier, see for example: Baxter, John. *The Cinema of John Ford*. (New York: A. S. Barnes), 1971.; Stavig, Mark. *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 1968.; Sarris, Andrew. *The John Ford Movie Mystery*. (London : Secker & Warburg), 1976.; Place, Janey Ann. *John Ford and a Semiology of Film*. (Los Angeles: University of California), 1975.; Studlar, Gaylyn and Matther Bernstein Eds. *John Ford Made Westerns*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 2001. At the time of writing, there is yet another forthcoming anthology due: Stoehr, Kevin L. and Michael C. Connolly Eds. *John Ford in Focus: essays on the filmmaker's life and work*. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co.), 2008.

cultural power.”<sup>70</sup> This power, and the obsessive desire to wield it for ideological ends, is acknowledged in the 1938 Code addendum proposed by publisher Martin Quigley, as reproduced by Maltby:

No motion picture shall be produced which shall advocate or create sympathy for political theories alien to, and subversive of, American institutions, nor any picture which perverts or tends to pervert the theatre screen from its avowed purpose of entertainment to the function of political controversy.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly, the core message here is that Hollywood film is for “entertainment purposes only,” but if it must, it must espouse only those ideals synonymous with the institutions and ideologies of America – and not just America, but conservative, capitalist, Catholic, and white America. The task at hand in this chapter is to investigate how the films of Ford were marketed to the masses, and how these above-mentioned ideological discourses were implicitly or explicitly endorsed and perpetuated within their advertising. Again, leading off from the model of analysis put forth by Lisa Kernan, we shall select specific trailers for their dominant rhetorical appeals to audiences, and the assumptions made by advertisers as to spectators’ imagined and real desires.

Through the 1930s, the newsreel format was all too familiar in form and style to movie audiences across North America. Leading up to the US’s involvement in WWII, these brief “documentaries” were the earliest instances of motion picture newscasts, running prior to feature films, (and occupying the same pre-feature time slot as contemporary movie trailers). They invariably consisted of a booming voice-over describing events implied as current, overlaying an ensuing montage of corresponding images. Borrowing from the newsreel format, we find the trailer for John Ford’s

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<sup>70</sup> Maltby, 41.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 68.

*Stagecoach* (1939), employing similar iconic voice-over narration and montage imagery consistent with, for example, *March of Time*'s reportage. Regarding the trailer, straight away, viewers are anticipated to recognize the newsreel mode of address, with a title card reading "TRAIL BLAZERS" overlaying stock footage of airplanes, trains – modern prototypes of travel and transport. The voice-over is densely packed with a throng of persuasive appeals – simultaneously to viewers' conceptions of both progress and nostalgia. The voice-over authoritatively narrates: "In our streamlined world today, adventure takes wing!" Here we have the rhetoric of the modern: using the words "streamlined" and "today." Indeed, "streamline" appears three times in the voice-over of the introductory one minute-long montage. This repetitive designation situates the film's marketing campaign inside discourses of modernity, technology, mobility and speed. The transportation technology shown in the trailer is new, clean, and purely mechanical – that is, absent of the human form. The appeal being made here is to viewers' implied wide-eyed wonder with a utopian, technologically advanced and industrialized society capable of conquering the natural obstacles of vast and rugged geography.

A significant portion of the rhetoric toward modernity is tasked to hype the new pace of exchange. In this trailer, we witness trains traveling neck-in-neck at great speed, and see "planes roar at 400 miles an hour" – the "snorting machines" of Marinetti's Futurist paradigm.<sup>72</sup> In the late 1930s, streamliners were high-speed trains in operation connecting major urban centres; but they were also emblems of progress, and function here as a metaphorical link to the past – the stagecoach as the "streamliner of its day" – and as an ideological endorsement of the much-mythologized American pioneering ethos.

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<sup>72</sup> Marinetti, F.T. "The Futurist Manifesto". 1909. 04/01/2007.  
<<http://www.cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/T4PM/futurist-manifesto.html>>.

Audiences were expected to be versed in the signifying cinematic language of progress, but were also assumed to possess a nostalgia for the era before these modern advances carved the American landscape – or, more specifically, how parallel narratives of progress were constructed in previous generations. As well, in 1939, the era of the stagecoach would still have been in living memory for many spectators.

Scholar Richard Slotkin notes in “Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America” that: “The sources of myth-making lie in our capacity to make and use metaphors, by which we attempt to interpret a new and surprising experience or phenomenon by noting its resemblance to some remembered thing of happening.”<sup>73</sup> These metaphorical narratives invariably included story elements of adventure, often through a form of hegemonic conquest. The voice-over then invokes the frontier of the “uncharted, rugged west,” a site which implicitly demands to be charted and pacified – presumably, the action to take place through the film’s plot. Of course, the contemporary viewer of this trailer would be well aware that the west had since been charted; the appeal being made here is to the audience’s instilled interest in the harrowing stories behind that taming process. The voice-over invokes the stagecoach “bringing new people to a new country.” Again, we can witness an address to discourses of the new – the clean lines of modernity – aimed at elimination and revision of multiple histories. It is apparent that neither the characters nor the country is new, yet in advance of the feature film, the trailer charges itself with the role of sanitizing – streamlining – the legend of expansion in the national mass imaginary.

The focus then shifts to story and character elements, the “fascinating” lives of the stagecoach passengers “who found romance in danger, and understanding in strange

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<sup>73</sup> Slotkin, 6.

companionships.” But before we are too embroiled in the ensuing montage of sample scenes, we are reminded of the orator’s character – director John Ford has created “a truly great motion picture” from the “lives of these American frontier characters;” its qualities: “as forceful and as true as *The Informer*, and as gripping as *The Hurricane*.” And reaching back to what Aristotle saw as the most persuasive argumentation, “[...] character contains among the strongest proof of all [...]”<sup>74</sup> Verily, by 1939, audiences were likely to be familiar with the look and feel of Ford’s previous works. Indeed, *The Informer* had furnished Ford with his first directorial Oscar in 1936, (and had been recognized internationally in 1935, nominated for the Mussolini Cup in Venice). Now, we have a film – *Stagecoach* – which combines the most salient features of both of Ford’s most previously successful films; how could the film be anything but “truly great” as the narration promises?

The trailer then moves into sample technique territory, selecting and assembling key scenes in roughly chronological order, to give the spectator an idea of what to expect from the film. The purpose of this sampling structure is to communicate the character and story archetypes, as well as to situate the film within generic conventions – the type of film in which one can expect *x*. For example, *Stagecoach* is the type of film in which long shots of Monument Valley will figure prominently; John Wayne will be pitted against three men in a shootout; Apache arrow attacks will be quelled with shotguns, and so forth. The final shot depicts the stagecoach racing endlessly across the “uncharted, rugged” terrain, as the final titles announce the film’s players and remind us of John Ford’s command: “John Ford who made *The Hurricane* and *The Informer*.”

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<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, 75.

What we can observe in this trailer is how the discourse of modernity is flouted to invoke nostalgia for a mythologized time and place in American history, apparently brought to screen by a reliable director with a proven record for delivering high quality entertainment of generic appeal. The nostalgic appeal of *Stagecoach*, too, located in 1939 America and its post-Depression, prewar expansion, gives reference and credence to then-current ideologies of consumption through conjuring mythic historical representations of hegemonic violence. Furthermore, Ford's stock in the pitch as a star director continued to rise in his subsequent trailers.

With *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), authorship crosses the threshold of significant topics of appeal; and, it is the author of the film's story – not its director – who is given the lion's share of marketing pull. This trailer is an anomaly of literary adaptations in that the original text, Steinbeck's novel, precedes the announcement of the filmic text; there is very little sample footage from the actual feature included in the trailer. It is predominantly an optical montage of fading iconographic images. We open on that of the U.S. map, which is superimposed by patterned crosshatching *Grapes of Wrath* paperback covers. Again, voice-over narration is employed, telling the audience – who are supposed to *already know* – about the novel that is “sweeping across the country.”<sup>75</sup> The images of the book covers occupying the literal geographic space do not betray this metaphor; yet, there is a more telling, more indicative allusion at work: the re-patterning of the nation across political and territorial lines. Steinbeck's novel is assumed to reformat and convert the map – *The Grapes of Wrath* is not only “the book of the nation,” it *is* America.

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<sup>75</sup> It is significant that in the ensuing newspaper montage, the “Evening Standard” reports: “‘Wrath’ Hits 300,000 Mark!” Several of the other displayed headlines further boast the book's popularity in terms of sales rank, though official sales figures data are difficult to obtain or verify.

Upon the book's release in 1939, and its subsequent film adaptation the following year, North America was hitherto on the cusp of recovery from the economic, social and political shocks of the Great Depression. Given that the story's subject matter was directly concerned with those still-recent social problems, and that Steinbeck was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for the novel, the trailer generously makes the claim that it "instantly becomes the most discussed novel in modern literature." Another appeal being made here is to the elevated dignity, the class appeal, of Steinbeck's "literary achievement," signifying the superior status of this film's origins as a prominent work of literature. Here, movie watching offers audiences literary status at box-office prices. So, what we have are the combined images of the map transforming into a patchwork of book covers, with the voice-over narrator trumpeting the popularity of this "human, revealing, soul-stirring story." What this fragment of narration suggests is the likeness, or the acquaintance, of the narrative to the assumed audience's prior experience, both in the theatre and out – there are others who have already once consumed the story, "just like you."

The trailer then proceeds with an uncomplicated enthymeme, etched into the ensuing montage: in order to have been discussed, the book has to have been *read*; if the book cannot be borrowed, it must be bought; and if it can't be bought (if the retailer "can't supply the demand") then it must be wildly popular, worthy of the search – and of the adapted film's ticket price, too. The straightforward economic language only serves to reinforce the implied value of the text at hand. To illustrate this, we see a young, modern woman in her unsuccessful pursuit of a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* – the elusive object of desire – from the library, to one bookstore, then another. Masculine voices then repeat

the title with ascending urgency, accompanying the young woman's search. (In fact, we hear the title spoken a total of fourteen times during the trailer, which spans less than two and a half minutes). During this repetition of "*The Grapes of Wrath*", we see two shots obscured within each other: one of pages turning, the other displaying crowds forming outside of shop windows – seemingly clamoring for a copy of the book.

If the object of production is to guarantee reproduction, the functioning of the network of mass-culture industries – books, newspapers, films – must be portrayed as established fact, already in motion, gaining momentum. The frenzied pace of a montage sequence of newspapers moving toward the lens links the hysterical consumption of the book to the urgency of its production as a motion picture. The voice-over booms: "everyone, everywhere joins in the discussion of its vital problems." Here, we have two of the most effective modern appeals at work: the desire for inclusion, and the fear of being barred – disenfranchised – from discourse. Two words that crop up in this montage sequence lend their weight to these appeals: "best-seller" and "skyrocket." Both these terms take their origins from late-19<sup>th</sup> Century cultural production and designate the conference of value by popular decree. In the system of capital, it is with currency that the subject expresses socio-economic agency – analogous to the understood expression of democratic agency through voting. This is particularly significant in relation to the subject matter of the book and its film: these works were marketed to the masses (or, the classes, like our young, modern woman and her search for the elusive novel object) who were economically enfranchised, and therefore could claim marketplace citizenship – unlike the characters and circumstances remembered by the audience, and depicted in narrative form in *The Grapes of Wrath*. There is a further difference between the film

(and novel) and other consumer products: the text is also a discourse. I propose that the trailer seeks, through its imagery of consumer fervor, to emphasize the film's commodity aspect to the detriment of its discursive narrative function.

Buying a ticket meant participating in the economic system of exchange, paying for the resources marshaled by the studio, for the star director, star author – to the understood financial gain of itself, and other interdependent media industries. If the narrative is positioned first and foremost in the appeal to spectators, and the story seems to endorse populist socio-political sentiment, the very nature of mass advertising undermines its intended symbolic function. The objective of this trailer's discourse is not only to sell the singular product; it is also to sell products – systematically, and over time. And these products rely upon consistent and regular consumption, thereby reporting to an altogether different ideology. Thus we have observed an instance of what Baudrillard termed “consumer totality:” by invoking the particular object, in fact, the totality of objects – and, I argue, the totality of their modes of production and dissemination – is simultaneously being glorified.<sup>76</sup> So, it can be debated that any ideological advances made through the proliferation of politically motivated texts are at least in part neutralized by their re-absorption into the ideological order of commodity exchange. The capitalist narrative espoused by this trailer charts the movement of cultural productions: from novel to consumer, from newspaper to consumer, from novel to newspaper to motion picture, again back to consumer. The spectator is offered a glimpse of the machinations of the culture industry: the achievement of *The Grapes of Wrath's* popularity is constituted as the critical mass necessary for its realization in film form. What this trailer advocates is not only the rhetoric of story, star or genre, but also that of

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<sup>76</sup> Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 125.

the cyclical and self-reinforcing modes of cultural production and consumption: the tragedy, but furthermore, the irony of commodity capitalism.

We move now to the trailer for *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), or more specifically, for its theatrical re-release “from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox Hall of Famous Triumphs.” In an era before affordable home distribution, the re-release of films initiated the rhetoric of “see it again, for the first time,” invoking strategies inviting repeat consumption. The initial title card transcribed above is meant to invoke the picture’s already-achieved success, as if the studio was not merely attempting to capitalize on second-run ticket sales, but was providing a public service by releasing the work back into the public sphere. Another title card appears calling audiences to: “Thrill again to its unforgettable story ... to its brilliant performances!” Ostensibly, we can identify the initial appeal to story and stars, yet behind the title, there is the latent image of a (vacant) director’s chair. Audiences conversant with the work would be assumed also to be familiar with Ford as its director – Ford as its invisible star.

Although there is this brief and enshrouded reference to Ford’s role, it is the dominant rhetoric of story which drives the trailer forward. Ensuing, we are presented with another familiar device often used in literary adaptations: successive screen wipes that mimic the turning pages of a book. We have already seen this at work in the trailer for *The Grapes of Wrath*, and elsewhere (for example, in the credit sequence for Hitchcock’s *Marnie* [1964]); but in this page-turner, spectators are symbolically urged to take an emotional interest in the characters, their relationships, and the film’s story elements at large. The trailer voice-over launches into hyperbole-laden, alliterate language: “the minister who sacrifices his great love for ... the Welsh girl whose beauty

sets songs swelling in men's throats ... the lovely and lovable Bronwyn ... the gentle tyrant of a father ..." – character types presumed admirable and decent. Now, dominant, patriarchal ideology is advanced through the virtuous portrayal of the nuclear family, and again – as with *Stagecoach* – through an implicit strain of nostalgia within the then-current discursive context of modernity.

The trailer then jauntily cuts to a slightly canted angle shot of one Oscar award statue, casting six shadows – replications, simulations – to represent its established success, its credentials in the motion picture business. We then see the hackneyed, tautological super-title: "Great with all the greatness that won six Academy awards..." The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences was far from an arbitrary organization, founded in March 1927 by Louis B. Mayer, and 36 of the most influential actors and directors in the American film industry. On of its more cryptic mandates: "It will take steps to develop greater power and influence of the screen."<sup>77</sup> Though, one of the key functions of the Academy was to thwart efforts at labor organization among Hollywood artists, actors, writers and directors.<sup>78</sup> The point is, though, that this was the kind of "official" language that advertisers in film – but also in monthlies, dailies, and later, in television – imagined that the totality of their audience would interpret in the singular intended manner. If the product has been bestowed with Academic accolades, it is worth the price of admission, and is distinguished as preeminent in its own marketplace, and that of other entertainment products. Here, a brand identity, an ongoing relationship of production and consumption, is forged between the audience and producers – both director and studio – through the authoritative guild of the Oscars.

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<sup>77</sup> Levy, 19.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 20.

We come upon our next trailer of interest in Ford's cannon: *They Were Expendable* (1945) released mere months following the end of WWII. Here, we can see the transposition of Ford's Western tropes of heroism and conquest onto a contemporary narrative. And if the communication of ideology through advertising was riding shotgun in our previous analyses, here, it most certainly takes the driver's seat. There is no mention of John Ford whatsoever, although this signifies the immateriality of a directorial presence to this "powerful document of fact." There was no apparent urgency to sell to the public on a war which had already seen its brutal and violent end; rather, what was crucial was to immediately mythologize its American participants as heroic martyrs.

The trailer begins with a series of four shots of PT boats careening in formation. In each of these, a billowing American flag is the predominant fixture within the composition, leaving no question as to the iconographic appeal for national pride from spectators. We then have a soundtrack of rising, frenetic strings, and a title crawl superimposed over a shot of the fast-approaching nautical vessel. The text boasts: "Metro Goldwyn Mayer proudly presents the most significant – the most glorious adventure story of our time." By this time, audiences had heard this line several times before, but rather than it becoming tiresome or prompting skepticism, it merely resembles itself, thereby anticipating its own response to its (invented) demands of precedence.<sup>79</sup> There is no doubt that the story – based upon apparently real events – had significance to an entertainment-seeking audience, whom had been in the midst of global conflict on an unprecedented scale. But it is the end of this passage that makes a critical, social

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<sup>79</sup> Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 62.

difference: “of our time.” The utopic streamlined technology that figured so famously in the *Stagecoach* trailer had now borne its ultimate destructive fruit.

WWII was fought using modern technologies: airplanes, tanks, submarines, ships, torpedoes – and PT boats. Western technology and consumer ideology, which were already in full swing with North American filmgoers, were the ultimate victors. The trailer encourages spectators to believe that the human casualties of war are at once unacceptable, and necessary, for the advancement of ideology that ensures a certain way of life: “freedom.” Seemingly, the symbolic value of human destruction would prove to be worth far more than the human lives themselves; and, rather than appear as propaganda, its signifying authority manifests here as “docu-fictional” entertainment – entertainment which spectators are not only expected to believe, and desire, but also to pay for. Baudrillard again speaks of violent and catastrophic death which: “... moves us so profoundly only because it works on the group itself, and because in one way or another it transfigures and redeems in its own eyes.”<sup>80</sup> But convincingly selling the image of wartime heroism and profound sacrifice requires trustworthy faces – recognizable, familiar faces. (Think of Elvis Presley, or Prince Harry in uniform, nowadays.)

After an announcement of the film’s title, the trailer moves to an introduction of its principal stars: Robert Montgomery and John Wayne. Over a shot of seamen readying boats for combat, the voice-over narration begins: “*They Were Expendable* is a powerful document of fact, more thrilling than any fiction.” Here, the audience is reminded of the truth behind the story’s appeal, providing far superior entertainment value to trite works of fiction. Naval soldiers are depicted, rushing on the dock to board their vessel. One officer in particular, on frame-right, appears preoccupied with the care of the U.S. flag –

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid,164.

the most effective symbolic weapon in the trailer's rhetorical arsenal. The voice-over narration continues: "Filmed with the co-operation of the United States Navy, the Army, and the Coast Guard." This declaration assumedly takes aim at convincing the audience of the story's authenticity, and of its approval by this holy trinity of institutions that it contends to honor through the feature film. The ensuing montage condenses a sequence which depicts Montgomery's and Wayne's respective PT boats, under fire, torpedoing and demolishing an enemy battleship. The choice of this sequence is indicative of two key assumptions on the part of advertisers: the audience's desire to witness action in the form of spectacular yet glossy technological violence; and the necessity to select an apparently victorious battle scene.

Fanfare music then begins on the soundtrack, as we are reintroduced to the stars, and the title of the film is again overlaid, filling the frame with block-lettered text. The final hyperbolic superimposition declares: "The *Greatest* Adventure Ever Filmed!" The appeal at work is to "great" and "adventure," sanitarily, vicariously deriving pleasures from the heroic escapades of militarism, violence and eventually, death. The trailer ends in deliberate ambiguity as to who, exactly, was "expendable." What is more, the director's role in the filmmaking practice is now all but ignored. Instead, the trailer reveals the assumed draw to the box-office of war stories and their heroic stars, and mounting post-war nationalism that would preclude yet another binary ideological crusade.

If *They Were Expendable* broke briefly from generic and director-as-star appeals, the trailer for *My Darling Clementine* (1946) drew once again upon the stayed Western genre, placing Ford at the helm of its marketing campaign. Although researchers have

noted that *My Darling Clementine* moderately alters or reverses the social, cultural and sexual dichotomies found in *Stagecoach* less than a decade earlier, the trailer still banks upon the draw of the mythic and salacious characterizations of the wild west.<sup>81</sup>

First and foremost, however, we again witness the assumed credence of the Academy award, signifying quality and artistic merit consistent with the desires of a class-aspiring mass-audience. The first image that appears is the stoic and squarely framed Oscar statue. Like *How Green Was My Valley*, there is a single statue casting three shadows – corresponding to Ford’s three prior Oscar wins – across a curtained backdrop. Beyond the idea of replication and simulation, there is something interesting about this casting-of-shadows motif: the seeming ability of Ford (in this instance) to willfully reproduce previous successes, both in the minds of critics and audiences, and also in the field of film commerce. In addition to lending authority, the award also signifies the director’s “bankability.” The appeal of the Academy award is primarily to quality and prestige, but is also similar to that of genre, signaling a tension between newness and sameness. The assumption being made about the audience is that they remember the quality of *Stagecoach*, and they shall now sufficiently enjoy this most recent refashioning of generic convention. The trailer thus assumes that through his academic canonization, it is Ford, and only Ford, who is capable of recontextualizing the Western for the post-war era.

The super-title crawl heralds: “John Ford / three-time winner of the Academy award for / *The Informer* / *Grapes of Wrath* / *How Green Was My Valley* / director of the unforgettable *Stagecoach* / now thrills the world with his *newest* triumph.” Here, the broadest possible address – undifferentiated socially, economically, culturally, sexually –

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<sup>81</sup> Kalinak, 177.

is made, not merely to the nation, but to the world. This is rather a tricky claim to prove, considering a) it is difficult to gauge whether the *entire world* will be thrilled, and b) the film has, upon viewing the trailer, yet to be released. We can also identify the rhetoric of modernity, coupled with that ubiquitous reference to repetitive consumption, in the word “newest,” implying that newer is intrinsically better.

Nonetheless, the first sample shot offered by the trailer looks strikingly like one from *Stagecoach*, with a stagecoach careening through Monument Valley, as the title of the film is overlaid. The film’s principle stars are then introduced with super-titles of their names and characters, accompanied by corresponding shots of each actor. Then, the trailer enters the sample form, selecting a montage of scenes strung together with baroque wipes and fades, representative of the classical era: Wyatt Earp announces that he is the ex-Marshall of Dodge City (signifying the west as a location where one escapes and reinvents oneself); a near altercation between Chihuahua and Clementine which cuts just before the appearance of physical struggle (signifying the type of film in which two females might come to blows); Chihuahua serenading and initiating a kiss (signifying the possibility of sexually oriented subject matter).

The final two shots demonstrate the implication of threats and violence, culminating as the voice-over begins: “Here’s mighty entertainment that combines the exciting action of reckless pioneer days, the romantic conflicts of men and women who led perilous lives, the lusty humor of those who dared America’s frontiers, and the breathtaking beauty of scenes filmed in the magnificence of the great southwest.” We can roughly identify the strategic appeals being made now as becoming subtly differentiated according to gender and economic status: the “exciting action” targets a male audience;

the “romantic conflicts” target the feminine; the “southwest” targets the tertium quid who are either disinterested in action and romance, or more fascinated by the exoticism of location cinematography. Perhaps the most telling shot from within this sampling segment is that which accompanies the appeal to lusty humor, as Chihuahua gets thrown into a horse’s water trough. As with the previous shot of Clementine and Chihuahua (almost) becoming embroiled in confrontation, the aim of this fragment is presumably to sell to spectators on the type of film where scenes of scorned women dunked by men into horse troughs equates to comic relief.

Following is a rapid succession of gun battles, discharging pistols and shotguns, intended to show that, for all its broad star, story and generic appeal, the weight of the film’s desirable features rests in its ample scenes of combat. With the doubling of his name, the final super-title harkens to the Classical trailers for Hitchcock’s films, reaffirming the filmmaker as in command – in possession – of his text: “John Ford’s *My Darling Clementine* / Directed by John Ford.” In the trailer for *My Darling Clementine*, the dominant rhetoric is to genre and story, as evidenced by the content of the voice-over narration, and the montage of sample scenes; however, with the introduction of Ford and his multiple Oscar victories, there is also a powerful appeal to the star-director, and his artistic ability to reshape the Western genre into *new* forms – forms both familiar and contemporary to audiences versed with his previous works.

Ford again pairs with John Wayne for *Fort Apache* (1948), for the adaptation of a story by James Warner Bellah, based on the legend of General Custer’s demise.<sup>82</sup> However, there is little indication of any overt reference to specific events of U.S. history in its trailer. Instead, and with generous fanfare, the trailer opens with the appeal of the

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<sup>82</sup> Rieuepyrout, 123-7.

Western genre, and its familiar story elements of adventure and romance on the wild frontier. After an announcement of the film's title, the voice-over narration begins by illustrating the fort's locale, and its characters: "... last Western outpost / Here live the long, lean cavalymen who fear no living soul / Here, too, are their women: wives, mothers, sweethearts." Beneath the narrator, we are offered sample scenes – first, of lines of horse-mounted officers; then, a square dance, followed by a kissing couple, corresponding to the word "sweethearts." As with *My Darling Clementine*, the trailer initially privileges its sexually differentiated appeals to masculine and feminine audiences, as well as to those whose curiosities lay in the temporal and spatial distance of the garrison's locale. The audience is then introduced to the filmmaker, although spectators are no longer reminded of past triumphs: "Brought to the screen with dramatic intensity by director John Ford." Audiences are expected to require no such reminders of previous triumphs as were witnessed in the promos for *Stagecoach*, *How Green Was My Valley*, and *My Darling Clementine*: it was understood that John Ford not only made Westerns, but also resolutely mastered the genre.

The trailer then introduces each star in identification shots, separated with screen wipes, an aesthetic that typified trailer montage of the classical era. We are then offered achronological sample scenes that implicitly indicate the extratextual political and personal relationships between stars Wayne and Henry Fonda, and also with Ford himself. Whether ironically or not, the first sample scene of the montage displays Fonda and Wayne arguing about the morality of trickery in warfare. One of Wayne's key lines here is: "Nobody's going to make a liar out of me, sir." It was at this time that John Wayne was actively involved in the explicit reinforcement of western (Western) ideology

through cinema – as the President of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals.<sup>83</sup> Comparatively progressive, Ford had been associated with anti-Fascist organizations prior to WWII, and later campaigned against the witch-hunts undertaken by the HUAC.<sup>84</sup>

The next scene positions Fonda's character as the embodiment of the American government, delivering the threat of attack. The final montage sequence shows the battle of the cavalymen and natives, with token appeals to generic attributes: "Undying Heroism / Adventure / Romance / Courage / Daring / A Nation's Pioneer Spirit." The hyperbolic text superimposed at the end of this trailer invokes the language common to previous generic examples, and promotes the concept of the generic sequel, conjuring equivalent thematic tropes to its anticipated spectators.

There are several additional assumptions being made at the end of this trailer about its assumed audience: the desire for vicarious violence against the Other, portrayed as sanitized under the aegis of audacious nationalism; the ultimate acknowledgment of the real enemy despite partisan differences of conduct and opinion; and especially, the rhetoric of modernity encapsulated by the inevitable conquest of civilization over savagery. Furthermore, it is the trailer's associative meta-montage structure – a structure that has seen little deviation in Ford's promos – that posits these assumptions about audiences, appealing now to politically and socially compartmentalized spectators, rather than the broader film going community addressed in trailers like *My Darling Clementine*.

Of the trailers for John Ford's works, that for *The Searchers* (1956) arguably relies most upon seamless and even distribution of the three dominant rhetorical appeals:

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<sup>83</sup> Day, 45.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

the generic identification schema of product differentiation, coupled with desire for heroic characterizations and romantic settings, all functioning through the audience's assumed understanding of the "[...] indexical relation [of stars] to the historical world."<sup>85</sup> It is also an early example of the new necessity for the motion picture industry's aggressive competition with television – advertising the technologies of cinema as superior attractions.

The trailer expands the temporal structure of previously examined works, moving from idealized characterization of the star, John Wayne, to extended iconographic sample scenes highlighting the presupposed story elements that would most affectively sway spectators. The introductory voice-over begins as we see an assortment of shots of Wayne galloping on horseback, discharging firearms, in the now-customary setting of Monument Valley: "From the thrilling pages of life rides a man you must fear and respect / A man whose incomparable will and boundless determination carved a lusty, rough and boisterous slice of history called *The Searchers*." Here, we glimpse the split between two key appeals, delivered simultaneously: first, of the man "delivered from the book," who identifies as intrepid Western hero, with which Wayne's on- and off-screen persona became synonymous; second, to the situation of the story within historical discourses of the American frontier, where the civilizing forces of modernity were still roughing out the terrain, through hostility, hegemony and violence.

Wayne's Ethan is visibly the central vehicle of the trailer's appeal, as the voice over unpacks a trove of adjectives: "courageous / unreasonably enduring / martyred / brave / hard / relentless / tender / passionate." Then, Ethan delivers the promise to Martin (Jeffery Hunter) to "find 'em in the end," a promise made equivalently to the trailer's

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<sup>85</sup> Kernan, 66.

audience, that their investment in *The Searchers* will too pay off. The narrator invokes the implied virtues of “people who dared to challenge a hostile land.” Spectators are positioned to identify with these people, their daring, and their challenges; or, they are anticipated to find their qualities desirable when applied to their own socio-cultural context. In the following sample scene, as Ethan informs: “what you saw was a buck wearing Lucy’s dress,” the audience is introduced to the idea that the enemy – the great Other – has committed some ultimate transgression (kidnapping, masquerade, possible sexual assault, murder) thereby justifying retribution to the fullest and most violent extent. Wayne’s character is constructed as one who submits to his own moral code (in some way, higher than any legislative code), signified here by the implication of honor killing. These selected scenes sell notions of mythic clichés: “the ends justify the means;” “desperate times call for desperate measures,” et al. Ultimately, Wayne exemplifies a measure of justice that had at once been deemed necessary in the context of the savage west, and usurped by the forces of modern civilization. This corresponds well to his extrafilmic persona as a crusader for the American way of life, and positions the spectator as either in alliance or at odds with that ideology.

The trailer’s succeeding segments take aim at the standard “cowboy and Indian” tropes of the Western genre, while capitalizing again on situated story elements: “Adventure from the sand-choked desert of Arizona / to the snow-swept plains of Canada.” The most romantic musical score of the trailer accompanies this final montage and character tableaux, suggesting aurally that the story and stars will satisfy the audiences’ desires. It is also left to the end of the trailer to announce the director,

although it is heavily assumed that audiences would, through now-familiar iconography and generic Western tropes, stars and locations, infer Ford's authorial presence.

Lastly, we can identify another appeal, to the technology of film, through the announcement of the "breathtaking panorama of VistaVision" and "Technicolor" trumpeted in the initial title exposition. With the onslaught of television, the film industry was charged with attracting audiences through new and increasingly spectacular means – those that were irreproducible on a 7 inch black and white screen. These are appeals both to the technological superiority of cinematic arts, and also broadly to the experience of movie going in general. This corresponds to the industry's grappling for audiences at the end of the classical studio period in Hollywood, as much as to diversifying identities and desires of spectators during the 1950s. Yet, if television briefly ruptured the film industry's hold on motion picture entertainment revenues, it would finally become co-opted into strategies of integration into a new studio system moving into the 1960s.<sup>86</sup>

In the period from 1939 to the mid 1950s, regardless of shifting fashions for film audiences, the rhetoric surrounding the works of John Ford shifted little. Tropes of modernity, heroism, and nationalism were interwoven within the texts, just as they were in their advertising. As with authorial models of criticism, tracing thematic strains through the oeuvre of filmmakers, so too can we trace these threads through their promotion, in terms of what trailer makers assumed to be desired by spectators, as well as the socio-cultural mores being overtly positioned as virtues tied to – and necessary for – western economic and political ideology. Audiences were encouraged to consume the filmic products of Ford (and of Hollywood) with regularity and consistency, as evidenced by the generic familiarity running through their productions. There is little variation from

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 29.

the classical address of the undifferentiated spectator, with films' advertising campaigns offering "something for everyone;" when it does arise, the address is to an imagined spectator who is predominantly sympathetic to strains of cultural and political conservatism in the face of mounting ideological binarism. Particularly Ford's Western works, and their generic and contextual contemporaries, arguably constitute what Slavoj Žižek (when describing Coca-Cola) refers to as a significant "'mass-media symbol' of America," one that "connotes a certain ideological experience-vision of America ... [which] achieves its identity by identifying itself with the signifier..." – in this case, the Western.<sup>87</sup> Here, it is not only Ford's works, but additionally their mores, their ideology, which constitute the *unattainable X* – that which is not suggested, but rather, sold to the public through modes and methods honed in the interrelated industries of mass-culture. If the object of production is to ensure the conditions for the maintenance (if not the expansion) of further production, then we can see this ethos in operation through the formal and rhetorical structures at work in these trailers.

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<sup>87</sup> Žižek, 96.

### III – Conclusions and Directions

What is important to think about is how these trailers made their arguments; what assumptions were made about audiences; what patterns and codes were associated with quality, prestige, and pleasure: how these codes were integrated into other systems of media, of culture, and entertainment and how these systems all tied into concurrent political and economic thinking. There is a unique trailer logic that functions within the form, which needs not adhere to, and often departs from (and supercedes) external codes of logic. The trailers we have looked at would have originally been seen in cinemas, as spectators were already settling in to watch a movie. Because these trailers were viewed in the context of viewing, consumed in the context of consuming, trailer makers could take for granted the desire of movie audiences for more movies. And so, much like the self-congratulatory Academy award providing a yardstick of quality and distinction for example, the claims made about films by their trailers are proven valid only inside the arena of cinema, and other self-reflecting culture industries.

Awards and other honors have since multiplied, to bestow marks of distinction upon films for ever-further specified markets. From Golden Globes to MTV, these industry concoctions are intended to support and augment media output under the guise of independent and arbitrary accolades. Syndicated film critics and columnists have entered the foray, allotting their own version of a “star-system” to foster the continued mass-consumption of cinematic works. Film festivals, too, provide one more level of quality and status to cinema’s claim as an elevated art form. Film’s highest aspiration is to an art, toward a cultural product that transcends the machinations of industry, or the implications of participation in commodity exchange and reproduction for profit. Even

the discipline of film studies relies upon film's institutionalized legitimacy as that cultural product, as a social artifact. But since the classical period, the marketing tactics of movie trailers have changed only superficially, and still tether the film industry to the sphere of ideological reinforcement through image reproduction.

The classical works of Ford and Hitchcock were at the forefront of the championing of cinema as an artform. Their respective oeuvres are academically canonized, with even their less successful titles looked to as outliers of their careers as cinematic auteurs. Theories of authorship are useful to delineate a corpus of trailers for analysis, and to provide an interesting method for criticism. Indeed, these directors are significant to the discipline of film studies, and to generations of subsequent filmmakers. But what we have seen through analysis of their trailers is that their works, like all other films and filmmakers from the classical period, were treated ultimately as products to be exchanged and consumed in the marketplace, often to the detriment of more liberal discourses contained in the film's narrative. And the rhetorical language invoked to sell their wares relied upon the steady construction of their respective brand identities as filmmakers, and the implied quality and prestige of their products.

According to Aristotle, rhetoric is not only the art of making the argument; it is also the art of knowing how the argument is made. And it was in a specific, historical and cultural context – early 20<sup>th</sup> century America – that these practices were being formed for visual media. Lisa Kernan aptly regarded Aristotle's enthymeme as a key to understanding the assumptions made by Hollywood about audiences' desires for cinematic products and experiences. Yet one important point Kernan may have overlooked is the origin of Aristotelian rhetoric as a litigious discipline – namely as a

comprehensive technique of manipulating public opinion within the legal arena. If rhetoric emerged as a means of persuasion in the legal order, then the employment of rhetorical appeals also enters the sphere of the political.<sup>88</sup> And if the employment of rhetoric is inherently political, it is also essentially ideological, supposing that the aim of emotionally swaying one's audience – whether internal or external to the structure of governance – is intended to bring about mass-theoretical or practical agreement. Baudrillard further notes that public opinion, divided and subdivided indefinitely, is no longer public nor opinion: “[...] not an unreal but a hyperreal political substance, the fantastic hyperreality which survives only by editing and manipulation of the [multiple choice] test.”<sup>89</sup> So, the definition of governance can here be expanded to include the regulation of leisure or public activity; this is precisely what trailers intend to accomplish. In addition to selling the experience of individual film works, trailers sell seats, for an amount of time, housed within an architectural venue, which is in proximity to other sites of consumption. They are an economical and effective strategy to generate revenue for movie studios, and, as I have argued, for a complex array of peripheral industries (newspapers, magazines, fashion, popular music, home entertainment and electronics, and others). They are campaign advertisements. Even the term “campaign,” often applied to advertising, carries with it military and political connotations. OED defines campaign as: “The continuance and operations of an army ‘in the field’ for a season or other definite portion of time, or while engaged in one continuous series of military operations constituting the whole, or a distinct part, of a war.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Aristotle asserts that rhetoric, as “a kind of *offshoot of dialectic and of the study of ethics* [...] is quite properly categorized as political [...] as are those who aspire to it [...] (Aristotle, 74).

<sup>89</sup> Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 64.

<sup>90</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., s.v. “Campaign.”

I hope to have revealed through my analyses of advertising and mass-media, trailer history, and the rhetoric of Ford's and Hitchcock's trailers from the classical period, is how movie trailer advertising has interacted with and been shaped by other forms of advertising, and has contributed to cycles of commodity reproduction. They have shaped notions of quality in viewers, and have constructed expectations for subsequent cinematic works. Through the narratives of their referent films, these trailers have sold expectations for experiences, for lifestyle, and the consumer products/ objects that implicitly accompany them. Beginning with the emergence of mass media in North America the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, manufacturers aimed their wares at growing markets, facilitated by increased transportation, and bolstered by rising average household incomes. It quickly became apparent that advertisers could effectively reach their potential consumers through mass readership of periodical publications such as newspapers, tabloids and magazines. The language and imagery of this early advertising was deliberate and simple, pandering to the "lowest common denominator" of consumers. The same language and imagery found its way into the earliest trailers for films, especially for serials. Trailer scholar Vinzenz Hediger noted how trailers, serials, and their published analogues functioned seamlessly together, promoting themselves, as well as their stories contained in peripheral media.<sup>91</sup> In this way, the trailer not only promotes the film, but also an array of other cultural products. Moreover, these classical trailers promoted the experience of cinema – an experience seemingly independent of an object. These trailers appealed to the intangible experience of cinema, but also to the tangible objects tied-in through cinema, and the ideologies behind both.

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<sup>91</sup> Hediger, Chapter 2, p.6.

I have framed my analyses of trailers in terms of Gerard Genette's discussion of paratexts, and how potential consumers are meant to think about potential expenditures through these analogous commentaries. Indeed, trailers are likely the most influential form of paratexts in terms of classical Hollywood film, but there is certainly room for more study. Janet Staiger's research into print and paper promotional materials has laid the framework for contemporary examination of the ocean of product tie-ins that are now prevalent, especially in regards to the Hollywood blockbuster. Witness how the *Star Wars* franchise reinvented the cross-promotion of film with everything from toys and magazines to fast food and candy. The current advertising of objects mirrors that for films: we are urged to formulate thoughts about the products – about their implied value to us – through their marketing campaigns, and with a particular kind of visual vernacular. If our object is marketed via the moving image – on television, on a public screen, across the Internet – it likely bears the earmarks of its lineage, with iconography, or emotional cues, or structure, from these early Hollywood trailers. In the case of objects (i.e. refrigerators, automobiles, chewing gum), there is a marked use value attached to the object in question. Refrigerators keep our food from rotting; cars get us where we want to go; chewing gum hopefully continues to reduce “flabby face lines.”<sup>92</sup> But increasingly, ads for products proper take cues from film advertising, positing the symbolic value of their wares, in addition to use or exchange value.

One current example (at the time of writing), which I'd like to briefly mention is the marketing campaign for “5” brand gum.<sup>93</sup> Its corporate motto: “stimulate your senses.” But what makes 5 gum's advertising similar to the rhetorical techniques and

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<sup>92</sup> Marchand, 224.

<sup>93</sup> <http://www.5gum.com/five/index.do>

hyperbolic language of classical movie trailers is its symbolic, unattainable appeal. On the website created for 5 gum, there is a link to its television spots (which redirects the visitor to YouTube). Below the link, a caption reads: “Watch the 5 Experience.” At this point, one may be compelled to imagine how uninspiring it might be to watch someone else chew gum. However, the ads portray, for example, a young man lying in a circle of ball bearings, which vibrate in sympathy with high-volume music. Another depicts a young woman suspended above a sea of hair dryers, signifying the heat of the gum’s cinnamon properties. Both of these examples invoke implicitly pleasurable sensations that are independent to those of physically chewing gum. Closer similarities to early movie trailers (and more recent trailers too) are also found in advertising for video games such as *Grand Theft Auto* and other “first person” wares. In the same way, classical movie trailers invoked the implicit pleasures of the cinematic experience that were independent of the sensory responses to film viewing. Indeed, a closer analysis of these more contemporary forms of advertising in relation to movie trailers would constitute important and interesting research.

As far back as the late 1930s with the earliest of the trailers analyzed, we can deduce that advertisers had little knowledge of the specificities of their audience, and thus made assumptions regarding what would be considered most broadly desirable about the cinematic experience. This is evidenced by the widest possible appeals being made, to spectators of all stripes – the “something for everyone” method. We saw this at work in the trailer for Hitchcock’s *To Catch a Thief*, which is the quintessential amalgamation of every possible appeal: romance, intrigue, exoticism, star, story, genre, and director. Branding was integral to classical cinema (as it was to other consumer products), as a

means of identifying its wares to potential viewers. Particularly, studios sought to stake emerging markets by touting their genres and directors (i.e. D.W. Griffith, Biograph). But these early efforts at branding were comparatively one-dimensional, and lacked the breadth and girth that would later mature with Hitchcock, Ford and others. As the film industry became increasingly aware of their audiences, and of the potential to target their markets more specifically, the techniques of branding as product differentiation played larger roles in trailer rhetoric.

While Hitchcock and Ford gained further acclaim, the marketing campaigns for their films progressively relied more upon their star-director appeal to entice audiences. This, like genre, gave their films a brand image, a qualifying mark of distinction. In both cases, I have shown how the rhetorical appeals to each filmmaker's works shifted toward the star appeal of the director. Hitchcock became the impish and ambiguous spokesperson of his trailers; Ford was touted for his multiple Oscars, and genre-specific films. The branding of star directors was initiated by only a handful of filmmakers (most notably, Cecil B. DeMille), but few had the direct advertising potential of Ford and Hitchcock. The trailers for both Ford and Hitchcock films generously contributed to the filmmaker-as-star marketing strategies of Hollywood cinema. And it was certainly they who set the precedent for the authorial model of film scholarship, linking Howard Hawks, Jean Renoir, Jean-Luc Godard, Stephen Spielberg, George Lucas, Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino, and scores of others. Auteurism, in addition to its steadfast place on the mantle of scholarship, remains a significant marketing strategy, to attract audiences to films with a star-director brand. It is the direct

marketing of the cinematic product through the implications of a consistent measure of quality, and of a repetitively consumable object.

It is important to recognize that cinematic pleasure is exchanged on many levels, and that cultural production is not merely a mechanism – an arm – of ideological apparatuses. But, it is *also* an arm. The narrative tropes contained in cinema are subordinate to its mode of exchange – its subjection to market forces – that supercedes ideological differences with capitalism streamlined. As with the example of Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the populist ideology espoused by the narrative is largely absent from the film's trailer, which concentrates almost exclusively upon sales of the novel, and the immense industrial resources necessary to produce the film. Evidence of the buttressing of advertising with ideology reveals itself in the very manner that we metaphorically, symbolically, use the language of economic exchange. When we hear an argument, we are typically asked to "buy in;" when making an argument, we "sell" the idea. And when we are convinced that an argument has convincingly provided sufficient merit, we're "sold" on it. How we habitually use economic terminology in relation to ideas betrays our underlying psychological associations between marketing and ideological discourse. Through the films of Ford, Hitchcock and scores of others, spectators were sold upon mythologized narratives: conceptions of modernity, economic, cultural and environmental hegemony, the institutionalization of mental health, and the powerful alliance between state and ideological apparatuses, among other narrative tropes. Appeals through cinema to genre and star reinforce the assumed merits of repetition, similarity and familiarity by cultural producers, and their advertisements. These virtues further suggest the necessity of maintaining some means of socio-economic stabilization to the

continuous functioning of capitalist ideology, and the preservation of industrial modes of production.

Another area of possible research stemming from this investigation is into the reinforcement of psychological states, which are friendly to capitalist ideology (i.e. shock, amnesia), through specific cinematic tropes, and their assumed marketplace viability. E. Ann Kaplan has noted both Hitchcock and Ford as contributing cinematically to our current preoccupation with vicariously experienced traumatic narratives.<sup>94</sup> In his analysis of the 9/11 attacks on the U.S., Jean Baudrillard brings his notions of the symbolic impact of duplication full-circle, in suggesting: “The countless disaster movies bear witness to this [death drive] fantasy, which [the West] clearly attempts to exorcise with images [...]”<sup>95</sup> Media and culture scholar Naomi Klein’s recent investigation into socio-economic “shock therapy” further notes that it is in the vulnerable state following chaotic events (I would add: real or simulated), that sweeping and otherwise deplorable “reforms” are initiated by those who are in the position to take advantage of catastrophe for their own ideological ends.<sup>96</sup> Baudrillard, too, notes the link between social anxiety and the stimulation of consumption in societies of relative affluence.<sup>97</sup> Suffice to say for our argument that the rhetorical modes of classical era trailers espouse the ideology of habitual consumption above all else, while subordinating any possibly contradictory ideological implications of the referent text.

One of the nonetheless substantial (and disturbing) conclusions to be drawn here is the link between film advertising and the environmental impact of industries, which

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<sup>94</sup> Kaplan, 74-86, 111.

<sup>95</sup> Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism*, 7.

<sup>96</sup> Klein, 552.

<sup>97</sup> Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, 177.

rely upon the moving image for their promotion. Film trailers have contributed to the socio-economic consolidation of vast networks and structures trading in image entertainment. These apparatuses refer to and rely upon each other to ultimately encourage the sale of objects. Some of the objects are elusive experiences, but those that are not (magazines, product tie-ins, DVDs, video games, websites, more advertising) need to be made *out of something*; they need to be manufactured *by someone, somewhere*. They require transportation. Already, we can infer dozens of industries that function as a result of rhetorically persuasive techniques honed in the movie trailer. Another possible area of additional research is into tying what scholars De Graff, Wann and Naylor call “the paper trail” to the industry of motion pictures, and their promotional rhetoric.<sup>98</sup> One of several staggering statistics noted in this article is that the U.S. consumes one third of the world’s wood resources. This investigation has potential for moral as well as theoretical and philosophical implications, and warrants further thought.

It is of great significance to expand our understanding of the function of trailer rhetoric, and in the broadest context, argumentative advertising, in order to be more aware of the social, economic and political structures that are at times reinforced and/or denounced by the culture industry.<sup>99</sup> The aim of these analyses is not to enjoy less the films we consume, but rather to be increasingly literate of the persuasive methods employed in their advertising, and our role in the maintenance or manipulation of their production. These classical trailers under evaluation both fit within the critically established methods of rhetorical analysis (genre, story, star), but also break new ground for future trailers’ appeals. And despite their initial functional disposability, resurgent

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<sup>98</sup> De Graff et al., 107-114.

<sup>99</sup> Kernan, 38-9.

nostalgia toward these early trailers is testament to their durability. The types of products, and the audiences' desires for those products were of interest and importance to trailer makers, and also to peripheral markets. And as these markets continue to subdivide and multiply, and self-replicate; their new modes of advertising invoke and adapt the familiar hyperbolic rhetoric refined by these trailers. By continuing to frame our current advertising-saturated culture into historical and ideological context, informed by research into print and film advertising – and with the case-specific examination of trailers for classical films made by canonized filmmakers – we can make further strides for film and media scholarship.

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