

This article was downloaded by: [Western Kentucky University]
On: 23 May 2013, At: 06:28
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number:
1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer
Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Southern Speech Communication Journal

Publication details, including
instructions for authors and subscription
information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rsjc19>

The rhetoric of film: Toward critical methodology

Jerry Hendrix ^a & James A. Wood ^b

^a Professor of Communication, American
University, Washington, D.C.

^b Associate Professor of Speech and
Film, University of Texas, El Paso

Published online: 01 Apr 2009.

To cite this article: Jerry Hendrix & James A. Wood (1973): The rhetoric of film: Toward critical methodology, Southern Speech Communication Journal, 39:2, 105-122

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10417947309372221>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

THE RHETORIC OF FILM: TOWARD CRITICAL METHODOLOGY

JERRY HENDRIX and JAMES A. WOOD

The rhetorical critic of film should develop critical methodology which includes a means for examining immediate viewer responses along with a deductive or inductive critical construct selected as most appropriate for revealing the suasive dimensions of a particular instance of filmic persuasion.

Downloaded by [Western Kentucky University] at 06:28 23 May 2013
THE rhetorical critic of filmic persuasion needs means of analysis which will enable him to focus on the specifically suasive aspects of the film while being fully cognizant of the particular nature and techniques of the film medium. The means of analysis should enable the critic to deal with both fictional and non-fictional films in which the persuasive purpose is calculated or fortuitous, direct or covert, primary or secondary.

To meet these requirements we propose that this critic develop and apply two major complementary modes of analysis. The first is an examination of the likely or actual responses, both conscious and unconscious, of the viewer as he watches the film. It is in this immediate on-going reaction that the peculiar properties of the medium become most salient. The second major mode of analysis consists of adapting and applying established frameworks of rhetorical and communication theory in order to reveal the suasive elements of the film. Such frameworks will

Jerry Hendrix (Ph.D., Louisiana State University, 1964) is Professor of Communication at American University, Washington, D.C. James A. Wood (Ph.D., Cornell University, 1967) is Associate Professor of Speech and Film at the University of Texas, El Paso. This paper is an outgrowth of a panel discussion on the subject presented at the 1971 convention of the Speech Communication Association.

permit assessment of the success with which the film was adapted to a target audience, the apparent validity of logical reasoning in the film, the functional value of emotions aroused by the film, the suasive utility of organization and message elements in the film, and other such concerns of persuasion and communication theory. For this second sort of analysis we shall consider in some detail two frameworks: one based on classical rhetorical theory, and one based on a contemporary communication model.

After describing adaptations of the classical and communication models, we shall briefly note some further possible approaches to rhetorical analysis of film. While for the sake of brevity these additional approaches will be described in terms of overall frameworks, it should be noted that in most cases their application could be corroborated or refined by analysis of immediate on-going viewer reactions.

IMMEDIATE VIEWER RESPONSES

Concern with immediate reactions during the film viewing is predicated on two assumptions: film communicates in ways which are in some respects radically different from the ways of other media, and even the apparently passive viewer is actively responding to the film on a number of levels. Both experimental research and reasoned theory amplify these assumptions in random, but richly suggestive ways.

Forty years ago the Payne Foundation studies provided reliable experimental evidence that filmic content affects pulse rate, perspiration, and other physiological reactions of apparently passive viewers.¹ Elliott McGinnies' research on perception of "dirty words" suggests interesting ideas on how viewers may suppress conscious perception of emotionally unpleasant film content.² Recent research at Stanford University indicates that very young children perceive continuous film content in fragmentary bits rather than overall structures, and that adults some-

¹W. W. Charters, *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 25-29.

²"Emotionality and Perceptual Defense," *Psychological Review*, 56 (1949), 244-251.

times exhibit sub-vocal "refutation" of film content.³ Various studies in psychology indicate that emotionally disturbed people may react to film content in different and often more extreme ways than do normal people.⁴ Other studies have refined our understanding of the attributes of film characters and situations which elicit conscious or sub-conscious identification from the viewer.⁵

Reasoned theory provides a broader range of ideas concerning immediate viewer reactions. Siegfried Kracauer suggests that the film operates as a vicarious experience with which the viewer associates, often sub-consciously, his prior experiences and attitudes to arrive at new interpretations and conclusions.⁶ The varying responses of two critics to the Maysles brothers' film *Salesman* provide an illuminating example.⁷ Other theoretical concerns include the degree to which the viewer consciously monitors the validity of filmic assertions and content, the degree to which he is emotionally disturbed by offensive or shocking content, and the degree to which he consciously or unconsciously perceives the content as realistic—and "realistic" can

³Remarks by Henry Breitrose on panel, "The Rhetoric of Film: Toward a Critical Method," Speech Communication Association national convention, December 30, 1971.

⁴Leonard Berkowitz, "The Effects of Observing Violence," *Scientific American*, 210, No. 2 (February, 1964), 35-41; Ingran Bokander and Kerstin Lindholm, "The Effects of Aggressive Films on Minors," *Nordisk Psykologi*, 19 (1967), 56 ff., as summarized in *Psychological Abstracts*, 41 (1967), 1355, entry 3438; Michael J. Goldstein and Charles W. Acker, "Psychophysiological Reactions to Films by Chronic Schizophrenics," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 72 (1967), 23-29.

⁵Charles F. Hoban, "Determinants of Audience Reactions to a Training Film," *Audio Visual Communication Review*, 1 (1953), 30-37; U. S. Naval Special Devices Center, "The Effect of Mental Hygiene Films on Normal and Abnormal Individuals" (Port Washington, Long Island, 1955, Technical Report SDC 269-7-46); W. D. Wall and W. A. Simson, "The Emotional Responses of Adolescent Groups to Certain Films," *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 20 (1950), 153-163, and 21 (1951), 81-88.

⁶*Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 160-166.

⁷Harold Clurman, "Salesman," and Joseph Morgenstern, "God and Country," in *Film 69/70*, eds. Joseph Morgenstern and Stefan Kanfer (New York: Simon and Schuster, n.d.), pp. 199-204.

mean several different things, such as plausibility of plot action or verisimilitude of social environment.

Technical devices in the film can influence the viewer's reactions in ways of which he is often not conscious. Suggestive theory here ranges from Sergei Eisenstein's remarks on the effects of conflict in montage and in tonal and overtone qualities in composition⁸ to Charles Barr's distinction between manipulative editing to control viewers' interpretations and open composition on the wide screen to permit the viewer some latitude in interpretation.⁹ Ernest Callenbach has suggested that camera angle and choice between editing versus traveling shots have significant effects on viewer responses.¹⁰

We are far from a comprehensive theory for assessing immediate viewer reactions. Here we have simply suggested the sorts of things to be considered in this mode of analysis and some of the areas for further research.

A CLASSICAL FRAMEWORK

A classical framework has three advantages: it is complete and systematic, it focuses on the distinctly suasive functions and qualities of the message, and it is richly suggestive of detailed points for analysis. For our classical framework we shall use the five skills which should be evident in any persuasive message: memory, invention, arrangement, style, and delivery.

Memory we interpret in the broader classical sense, as the amount of information and background knowledge which the persuader brings to bear for his specific purpose. Questions which the critic can ask include the following: How complete and accurate is the knowledge of the specific topic manifested in the film? Several drug abuse films in current use have been attacked for deficiency in this regard. How broadly and thor-

⁸"The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," "The Filmic Fourth Dimension," and "Methods of Montage," in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1949), pp. 28-83.

⁹"CinemaScope: Before and After," *Film Quarterly*, 16, No. 4 (Summer, 1963), 4-24.

¹⁰Remarks on panel, "The Rhetoric of Film: Toward a Critical Method," Speech Communication Association national convention, December 30, 1971.

oughly has the film maker explored various aspects of his topic? The BBC-TV documentary *Vietnam: People and War* and Fernando Solanas' Latin revolutionary film *The Hour of the Furnaces* appear to represent reasonably thorough and resourceful explorations of topic. Has the film maker gone beyond his immediate topic to bring other information and allusions to bear? Peter Watkins' *The War Game*, made for BBC-TV in 1967, is an excellent example in point.

Invention, or the discovery of lines of appeal to the audience, received primary emphasis in all the sounder classical rhetorical theories. In the Aristotelian view of invention, the speaker must establish his credibility, or *ethos*, and he must manipulate the emotional state of the audience; these in turn pave the way for the logical appeals which are the core of persuasion. Classical theory provides several additional points for critical analysis, such as the success with which the film faces the key issues which must be satisfactorily resolved to gain acceptance of the proposition, and provision of lists of means for validating assertions and for establishing source credibility and emotional appeal.

The importance of source credibility of the film itself as messenger has been demonstrated experimentally.¹¹ In addition, the rhetorical critic can apply the concept of *ethos* to the sponsoring agency and director of the film, to narrators and characters in the film, and to acknowledged sources within the film. Examples of more detailed frameworks for assessing invention in regard to *ethos* are found in Aristotle's suggestions for exhibiting those virtues which are highly regarded by the audience and for demonstrating good will to the audience (*Rhetoric*, I, 9 and II, 4).

For assessing the invention of suasively functional emotional stimulation, classical theory provides three major avenues of analysis: the situations in which creation of each of the emotional states is appropriate, the assertions which might be made about an object to secure emotional reaction toward that object, and the techniques for expressing those assertions. Aristotle's

¹¹Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, and Fred D. Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 85-103.

treatments of the means for producing anger and other emotions (*Rhetoric*, II, 2-11) provide criteria for the first two avenues of analysis. Insight into the potential use of copious and varied content and other means to secure emotional appeal can be gained from Cicero's remarks in *De Oratore* (especially II, 42-52 and III, 27-30).

In classical theory, logical appeal functioned to convince the audience through acceptable lines of argument built on acceptable premises and to link overtly the proposition to the motives of the audience. Hence, classical theory provides a wealth of detail for evaluating the resourceful invention of logical appeal in terms of four qualities: adaptation to the motivational framework of the target audience, adaptation to and incorporation of the audience's generalized "truths" and factual knowledge, utilization of acceptable evidence, and provision of apparently valid lines of inference.¹²

Arrangement, superficially viewed, is concerned with the selection and appropriate patterning of the materials in the message, and certainly these provide important points for analysis by the rhetorical critic. Just as useful, however, is the classical provision of a set of standards for evaluating the achievement, or lack of it, of functions for each part of the message. Typically, classical theory recognized four main parts of the message: introduction, narration of facts, argument, and conclusion. Of particular value to the film critic are the distinction between narration and argument and the recognition that, while narration and argument might be interwoven, narration had its own requirements, such as selective efficiency, plausibility, and depiction of moral purpose in the message.¹³ While these sources generally assumed a direct and open pattern, they did specify the occasional and appropriate utility of less direct patterns. See, for examples, the treatment of the subtle introduction in *Rhetorica*

¹²The best classical treatment of logical appeal is found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, especially I, 2, 5, 6, 7, 15, and II, 19-25. See also Cicero's *De Oratore*, II, 39-41.

¹³Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III, 13-19. Although *Rhetorica ad Herennium* follows a six part, rather than four part, division of the speech, useful suggestions for functions and methods of each part can be found in I, iii. 5-x. 17 and II, xxx. 47.

ad Herennium (I, vi. 9-vii. 11) and of emotional digression in Cicero's *De Oratore* (II, 77). 经典修辞理论要用于电影需要进行转换

The film critic must transform classical theory on *style* into terms appropriate to the vocabulary and syntax of the film medium, and in doing so he can utilize some classical theory on delivery (for example, the treatment of the modes of delivery in *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, III, viii. 23-xiv. 25) as well as on style. Classical theory provides three major categories of critical analysis in regard to style: the basic qualities of good style, such as clarity, appropriateness, and forcefulness; the appropriate use of a multitude of stylistic devices, such as metaphor, climax, antithesis, and the like; and various types of style, such as plain, elegant, forceful, and grand. It would seem, for example, that camera distance, relative symmetry in pictorial composition, and editing rate and rhythm all contribute to the distinction between a nervous, forceful style and a stately style. The touchstone for all these considerations is suitability for audience, topic, and intended suasive effects. For classical treatments of style such as major works as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, III, 2-12, Cicero's *De Oratore*, III, and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, IV are well supplemented by such relatively minor works as Demetrius' *On Style*.

Admittedly, the application of *delivery*, as a separate skill, to filmic persuasion becomes somewhat tenuous. However, if we equate delivery with the actual presentation of the film to a specific audience, we can find some helpful points of analysis in what is frequently an overlooked aspect of filmic persuasion. The need to be easily heard in delivery seems applicable to the need for a good print, projection equipment, and viewing conditions. The distinction between an explicative or conversational tone and a hortatory tone of delivery, for example, seems applicable to the tone established in the viewing situation by introduction and discussion accompanying presentation of the film.

More complete transformation of classical theory into filmic terms is needed, and one impetus for such transformation can come from the application of research on immediate viewer reactions. For example, close examination of viewer suppression of content, physiological stimulation by content and editing, and other reactions will no doubt refine our use of classical theory on emotional appeal, just as the classical theory will ex-

pand our sense of the range of types of content that can be used to arouse emotions and will add insight into the optimal uses of emotional arousal to distort or reinforce cognition. Application of tension arousal-reduction theory to film has already opened up this area.¹⁴ Also, the transmutation of classical stylistic devices into cinematic "language" raises a host of subjects for theoretical inquiry and experimental verification. How, for example, does overt artifice in camera angle and editing affect the viewer's immediate sense of the veracity of the film? Are significantly different reactions produced by a film in the plain style of a typical "CBS Reports" film versus a film in the grand style of Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* or the forceful style of Solanas' *The Hour of the Furnaces*? And if kinesthetic or other immediate reactions vary according to different styles, exactly what cinematic devices and qualities account for those varying reactions?

A COMMUNICATION MODEL

As one alternative to the canons of classical rhetoric we propose a standard communication model as a framework to reveal the rhetoric of film. The most widely accepted communication model seems to be the Berlo source-message-channel-receivers construct.¹⁵ We shall therefore structure some suggestions for film analysis around the four Berlo categories.

交流模式 Within his analysis of the "source" element, the critic should, we believe, try as his central objective to determine and describe the film maker's apparent suasive intent. Ideally, the critic might exhume a published statement in which the film maker publicly revealed his purpose in making a particular film. Failing this,

¹⁴John Otto Fritz, "Film Persuasion in Education and Social Controversies: A Theoretical Analysis of the Components Manifest in Viewer-Film Involvement as They Affect the Viewer's Urge to Further Inquiry into Social Controversies," Diss. Indiana University 1957. See also Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1959), pp. 293-295.

¹⁵David K. Berlo, *The Process of Communication* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 72. Berlo's model has appeared frequently in the literature and textbooks in speech communication. A modified version of it is used by William J. McGuire, "The Nature of Attitudes and Attitude Change," *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, 2nd ed., ed. Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), III, 177-265.

or perhaps in addition to this, the critic can base his analysis of intent on the film maker's background and on indications of specific suasive intent within the film itself. These sorts of questions can be asked about the film maker's background. What is the nature of his training and previous experience and his reputation as a film maker? This question might also shed light on the amount and the type of skill which the film maker can bring to bear on his task. What subjects does he usually deal with, and what major attitudes or social philosophy does he usually express in his films? What are the significant factors in his personal and professional background which may have influenced his choice and treatment of subject matter, his attitudes, and his philosophy in this film? In regard to both his film making generally and this particular film, does he see himself in the role of change agent, or does he shun this for a strictly creative, artistic role? Internal evidence, augmented by knowledge of the film maker's background and perhaps by other critics' suggestive comments, will help determine the film maker's apparent suasive intent in the film. Specifically, the critic will determine what central thematic statement the film seems to make and what are the suasive dimensions or implications of this statement.

Since most films are dramatic in nature, we propose that the rhetorical critic define the "message" element of the communication model in terms of the standard units of dramaturgy: theme, characters, plot, dialogue, and setting. These categories are as viable for the many non-fiction or "documentary" films involving or implying conflict as they are for fiction films. The rhetorical critic may analyze the nature of each of these elements and then estimate the contribution each makes to the establishment of the film maker's apparent thematic statement. Theme we have already dealt with.

The critic would describe the nature, relative importance, and contribution to the film's suasive intent of each significant character in the film: protagonist, antagonist, and supporting characters used to illuminate leading characters and theme or to advance sub-plots as parallel or counterpoint to the primary conflict. Note that these "character" roles may be in the form of social groups and institutions, physical and social environment, natural and political forces, and the like, as well as individual

persons. The critic should determine the physical and psychic dimensions of the character roles and the degree to which their development is stereotyped or multi-dimensional. In dealing with plot, the critic first describes the stages in the primary plot development: the sequence of events producing and depicting conflict between protagonist and antagonist; the climax as ultimate confrontation between protagonist and antagonist, after which protagonist must either win or lose; and the denouement as resolution, exposition, or foreshadowing of what will happen to central characters after the film. Then he determines the relative importance and contribution to suasive intent of the total plot line and of each stage therein.

Dialogue can be analyzed as to its uses—for example, as direct exposition of theme, or more indirectly as exposition of plot and characters—and as to its relative importance and its appropriateness to the other dramatic elements of the film. Likewise, the setting can be analyzed in terms of its appropriateness in substance and treatment to the other elements and its contribution to the film's apparent suasive intent.

In his summary evaluation of the message category the critic will determine which were the dominant message elements in regard to the film maker's apparent suasive intent and how effectively these elements were manipulated, singly and in concert, to advance that intent.

We define the "channel" category of the communication model as the usual cinematic elements: visual images, editing, natural sound, and background music. Dialogue has already been treated, and narration, except as it partakes of the functions of dialogue, is not germane to the present application of the model. As with the preceding aspects of the communication message, the critic here describes the use of each element of the channel construct, then evaluates the relative importance and the functions of each element as a contributing factor to apparent thematic development and suasive intent. The visual aspect of film, the "plastic material," includes such matters as pictorial composition, use of conventional or unconventional camera technique, tonal use of light and color, and pictorial symbolism. Analysis of editing would draw the critic to such matters as selection of materials, tempo of the film overall and within major segments,

各种元素都是服务于劝服的

and various uses of cutting rate within scenes and sequences. The critic would be attentive to points of emphasis in the film achieved by editing in especially forceful visuals and by duration of particular visuals as these devices revealed and contributed to suasive intent. Normally, natural sound operates relatively unobtrusively to support other dramatic and cinematic elements of the film. In addition to observing this function, the critic would note the suasive functions of special uses of natural sound, as to heighten and influence interpretation of the environment, or setting, or to emphasize a particular bit of dramatic action. Background music would be analyzed mainly as it contributed to suasive intent by influencing emotional tone and interpretation of various other dramatic and cinematic elements of the film. Music used as part of the story, as in the musical comedy, might best be considered as a part of the message category, similar in functions to dialogue.

The final category of the communication model, "receivers," may be defined for our purposes in terms of three fairly distinct sorts of audiences: the general audience who sees the film, the film's apparent target audience, and the major critics who reviewed the film. In any case, the two major items of interest to the rhetorical critic are the characteristics of the film's audiences and their reactions to the film. Rough descriptions of the general audience can sometimes be made in terms of predominant age groups attending and whether the film is distributed more popularly or is more limited to college campuses, "art house" clientele, and the like. A rough idea of the response of this general audience, barring the unusual availability of opinion surveys on the film, can be derived only from box office returns and degree of continued distribution. Ideally, the critic would seek more detailed information as to both the characteristics and the responses of target audiences, even in those situations in which target audience would be roughly synonymous with general audience. He would want to know the ages, sex ratio, educational level, socio-economic status, values and attitudes, and needs and wants of this audience, including both intended and actual viewers. And, again ideally, he would use questionnaires and other instruments for measuring and analyzing responses. Last among the receivers are the major critics who review the film. While

summarizing, analyzing, and employing their reviews, our critic would need to be aware of the characteristics even of this specialized audience. Are they objective and soundly grounded in film and/or rhetorical theory, or are they mainly intuitive and subjective?

The primary purpose for analyzing the film in terms of a communication model is to determine how well the film maker used the tools of his medium to communicate his statement to his intended audience. A comprehensive analysis of the communication model elements should prepare the critic to make this kind of judgment and to support his opinion with a detailed analysis and evaluation of the contributing elements. For any particular task the critic will surely find it helpful to set up an individually tailored critical hierarchy of these various elements according to his judgment of their importance in a given film.¹⁶ In a fiction film, for example, the message element of characterization might be the most significant in establishing the film maker's thematic statement. Thus the quality and implications of characterization in this film might receive the major emphasis in the rhetorical critic's support of his overall evaluations. In a documentary film, on the other hand, the channel element of editing—particularly the capacity for selection and emphasis of specific materials to create a desired effect—might assume top position in the critical hierarchy. In some cases various points of analysis we have proposed may be modified or omitted altogether. In many cases germane points of analysis drawn from the model could be further refined and confirmed by assessment of immediate viewer responses to the film. Further, there is no sanctity in the Berlo communication model. The critic may decide that a different model—of the plethora available—is better suited to his purposes.¹⁷

除了Berlo模式外，也许可能有更好的模式

¹⁶For an elaboration of the procedure for establishing critical hierarchies, see John F. Wilson and Carroll C. Arnold, *Public Speaking as a Liberal Art*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968), pp. 365-366.

¹⁷For an up-to-date review of the most widely accepted communication models, see C. David Mortensen, *Communication: The Study of Human Interaction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), pp. 29-65.

FURTHER APPROACHES

As cursory methods of assessment, the critic might merely evaluate the film on the basis of box office receipts and other gross evidences of popular acceptance, or he might provide an interpretative summation of reaction of major critics to the film. We divide the more analytic approaches into deductive, which apply previously established constructs or standards, and inductive, which focus on a given film as an essentially unique phenomenon generating its own basis for analysis.

In one sort of deductive criticism the critic will adopt an ethical viewpoint as his evaluative criterion.¹⁸ This kind of criticism could involve a comparison of the ethical nature of the film maker's purpose, underlying premises, and techniques of appeal with the value system (s) of his society or particular societal unit. Or the critic might adopt less relative ethical criteria. For example, Richard M. Weaver's view that rhetoric should function to establish civilizing values based on a Platonic ideal might guide the critic toward a neo-Platonic evaluation of filmic persuasion.¹⁹

There are numerous critical constructs that might be chosen as alternatives to the canons of classical rhetoric or to the categories of a communication model in deductive analysis. In the realm of contemporary rhetorical theory, Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad—act, scene, agency, agent, and purpose—might serve as a useful point of departure, especially for ascertaining why a film is as it is. The critic could, for example, study the causal influence, both conscious and unconscious, on the film of each factor in the pentad: the film maker's self-justification and personality (agent); the material conditions affecting actual production and/or presentation of the film (act); the cultural situation, including "truths" and arguments which might be encompassed or used in the film (scene); the nature of the medium in terms of both technical capacities and prevailing theory

¹⁸See Wilson and Arnold, pp. 361-364 for a discussion of pragmatic, ethical, and artistic viewpoints in rhetorical criticism.

¹⁹Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Regnery, 1953). Also see Richard L. Johannesen, *Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric: Selected Readings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 163-195.

肯尼斯伯克的5元素模式

(agency); and the intent of the film maker or sponsoring agency (purpose). As Burke's remarks suggest, this is only one of several possible levels at which the pentad could be employed. The critic could also apply Burke's complex concept of "identification" to both the aims and the techniques of appeal in the film. For example, among what groupings of men is consubstantiality sought, and at the expense of what corollary divisions of this group from other groups? What means—common premises, symbols, stylistic characteristics, and the like—are used in the film to develop a sense of consubstantiality among groups or to achieve identification of viewer with filmic content?²⁰

A second major contemporary rhetorician worthy of attention by the film critic is I. A. Richards. Richards' definition of rhetoric as "a study of misunderstanding and its remedies"²¹ and his several constructs designed to get at the meaning of language show rich potential for analysis of various dimensions of meaning conveyed through a film. His remarks on language as signs used both to recall and to generate experiences in the viewer, especially his detailed examination of metaphor as a central vehicle of communication, and his distinction between the referential and the emotive dimensions of sign-meanings would seem highly applicable to visual images, music, and other elements in film. Indeed, from Richards' body of theory we might well derive a readily applicable system for combining close examination of immediate on-going viewer responses with a larger framework encompassing intent and inventiveness of source with ultimate effects on receivers.²²

Other contemporary writers whose central or tangential views on rhetoric merit attention by critics of film include Chaim Per-

²⁰Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1945) and *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952). For an excellent discussion of Burke's theories of rhetoric and criticism, see Marie Hochmuth Nichols, *Rhetoric and Criticism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963), pp. 79-92. Also see Johannesen, pp. 75-113.

²¹I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 3.

²²For extensive treatments of Richards' views on rhetoric and criticism see Paul R. Corts, "I. A. Richards on Rhetoric and Criticism," *Southern Speech Journal*, 36 (1970), 115-126; Nichols, pp. 93-107; and Johannesen, pp. 117-159.

elman, Stephen Toulmin, and Marshall McLuhan. Both Perelman and Toulmin are concerned with argumentation as the central aspect of rhetoric. The combination of Perelman's attention to orientation of argumentation to audience²³ with Toulmin's unique framework for analysis of arguments²⁴ offer the critic still another pattern for close rhetorical analysis of film. McLuhan's contention that the **means or instrument of communication** is of more significance in contemporary consumption of communication than is the traditional message factor might lead the rhetorical film critic to focus his attention on the peculiar impact of the **channel itself—or "medium,"** to use McLuhan's term—in filmic persuasion.²⁵

根据麦克卢汉的g
理论,对于电影劝服
而言,方式或工具
媒介比传统的
的信息更为重要。

The case for an inductive critical orientation is forcefully stated by Golden and Reike:

材料和理论的关系:

The so-called traditional approach to criticism . . . could be called deductive in that a particular theory such as Aristotle's is used as the major premise for all conclusions drawn. The criticism tends to become a test of the scholar's ability to adjust his material to fit his theory. A more useful approach would seem to be one in which the scholar seeks to adjust his theory to fit the material as he finds it. This could be called inductive criticism. With this method, the critic begins with his observations and then searches among available theories or other data to find those which help him to understand, describe, or otherwise deal with the product of his observations.²⁶

调试材料让其适合于理论;
调试理论让其适合于他发现的
新材料。前者是演绎的批评, xiany
生有个理论前提, 让材料
证明理论, 后者是归纳的批评方法, 没有理论预设, r
朝向材料本身, 寻找解释
材料合理论。

It may well be that, given the objective of illuminating suasion in the recently developed medium of film, the critic will want to venture into the relatively uncharted seas of inductive criticism.

One increasingly popular method in criticism of public address is that of applying a metaphor which happens to fit a par-

²³Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969). Also see Johannesen, pp. 199-238.

²⁴Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1958). Also see Johannesen, pp. 241-270.

²⁵Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965). Also see Johannesen, pp. 273-308.

²⁶James L. Golden and Richard D. Rieke, *The Rhetoric of Black Americans* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1971), p. 37.

ticular speech. The "quest story," for instance, has been used as a device for the exegesis of an address to the nation by President Richard Nixon.²⁷ The potential critic might search mythology and the literature of other disciplines such as criticism of printed fiction to find unusual yet appropriate points of departure for the inductive rhetorical criticism of particular films.

A broad range of films, from such fictional films as Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* and Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* to such non-fiction films as Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* and Bunuel's *Land Without Bread*, deal with serious matters and may have significant impact on viewer attitudes; yet the nature and intent of such films seems seriously distorted if we attempt to analyze them in traditional terms as calculated instruments of persuasion. We will use the term "self-expressive" for this broad sort of film. Essentially, a self-expressive film is one in which the suasive dimension derives as a by-product from the film maker's urge to reveal a chunk of reality or his urge to express a personal, perhaps highly idiosyncratic, philosophy or comment. The film is not guided by calculated adaptation to a target audience and use of persuasive techniques. The film maker may not even be much concerned that his thematic point emerges clearly for the mass of viewers. In this sense, the purely self-expressive approach in film making may be regarded as opposite from that which we traditionally regard as rhetorical.²⁸ Yet such films may alter our perception of things, and hence may be suasive in function.

In practice, there are many degrees to which, and levels on which, a film may be self-expressive. Typically, the self-expressive film will ignore or even run counter to the existing premises of viewers. Specific materials in the film will further the film maker's revelations rather than deliberately providing evidential support, maintaining attention, manipulating emotional state for persuasive purposes, and the like. However, a film may be

²⁷Hermann G. Stelzner, "The Quest Story and Nixon's November 3, 1969 Address," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 52 (1971), 163-172. Also see Jerry Hendrix, et al., "Rhetorical Criticism: Prognosis for the Seventies—A Symposium," *Southern Speech Journal*, 36 (1970), 101-114 for some additional suggestions regarding critical approaches to rhetoric.

²⁸See Franklin Fearing's concept of "intent" in "Toward a Psychological Theory of Human Communication," *Journal of Personality*, 22 (1953), 76-78.

self-expressive in its theme and basic interpretations of content, while being quite calculated in use of techniques and details to hold interest and manipulate emotional state.

Because the purposes, levels, and degrees of self-expression are so varied, and because a given film may register significant suasive impact with one social group with whom it is in tune while failing entirely with other groups, no one present construct of analysis can be applied to all such films. Hence, we suggest placing rhetorical analysis of such films in the inductive category: each film generates its own standards for analysis and evaluation.

Some tentative guidelines for rhetorical analysis of self-expressive films can, however, be suggested. Analysis will tend to focus more on the relation of film to film maker than to audience. Questions can be asked in regard to the film maker's integrity to the raw material, his value premises inherent in the film, his insight into and his perspective on the subject, and the resourcefulness with which he uses details of material and filmic technique to reveal his subject or make his comment. The critic may even seek to determine the extent to which the film reveals the film maker to be a good man skilled in film technique. The critic need not avoid concern with audience response. He may, for example, determine the extent to which the audience perceives significant meanings in the film and the extent to which the audience likes the film and regards it as honest.

CONCLUSIONS

We have provided guidelines and suggestions for initiating the critic's task as he approaches an act of filmic persuasion. Our fundamental proposition is that rhetorical criticism of films should combine recognition of the unique nature of the medium and of its various sub-types with selective application from a broad range of persuasion and communication theory and critical methodology. Furthermore, the critic is likely to be most effective if he combines analysis of immediate viewer responses with some larger perspective such as ethical standards, options for persuasive appeal, or message variables which can be manipulated. The critic might, for instance, consider how specific choices as to cinematic treatment and content affect immediate

viewer responses and how these in turn influence effectiveness of the larger dimensions of suasive appeal in the film.

Beyond this, we cannot offer any single construct for rhetorical analysis of films. Indeed, the hope for such a single master system of analysis may be a hopeless ideal, a delusion. The choice of approach, standards, and constructs for analysis and evaluation of films may depend ultimately on the nature of the particular film and on the particular purpose of the critic. If the critic views the film as an act of communication and the film follows a dramatic form, then our interpretation of Berlo's communication model may best serve his purpose. If the film seems a distinct attempt at calculated persuasion, then the classical framework may prove to be the critic's best approach. If the critic's primary concern is with the relation of film to film maker, then our remarks on the self-expressive approach may prove his most fruitful point of departure. And so with the other approaches and constructs we have discussed.

Some approaches are broadly inclusive of factors surrounding the film itself—for example, those drawn from Berlo and Burke. Others, such as those drawn from Toulmin and Weaver, have a narrower focus. Even in those with a narrower focus, a significant distinction can be made between what the critic's close analysis reveals to be in the film and what the viewer actually experiences as he watches the film.

Just as orators arise to meet our social crises, film makers continue to show us their representations and interpretations of social reality and thus to influence our perceptions and attitudes. Film has become one of the most significant media for communicative transactions in our time. It is axiomatic that suasion—intentional or unintentional—will typically be present in even the more subtle creations of our film makers. Much attention has been given film's aesthetic dimensions. We assert that film's suasive dimensions merit increased critical attention.