



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

- This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.
- A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.
- This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.
- The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.
- When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

# The Art of Anticipation:

The Artistic Status of the Film Trailer and its Place in a  
Wider Cinematic Culture

Daniel Hesford



PhD Film Studies

The University of Edinburgh

2013

# The Art of Anticipation: The Artistic Status of the Hollywood Film Trailer and its Place Within a Wider Cinematic Culture

## **Abstract:**

Close association with, and proximity to, a culture of commercialism means film trailers are often overlooked in academic analyses of cinema. Trailers are, for many audiences, simply adverts: disposable, consumable and not 'worthy' of the critical attention paid to their feature-length antecedents.

Yet trailers' undeniable impact on spectators generates a spectrum of reactions which contradicts the often dismissive and negative reception with which they are met. Trailers receive intense popular and critical scrutiny and are constantly compared to the films they represent. Despite negative associations with commercialism and advertising culture, trailers are archived, exhibited and produced and discussed in contexts very similar to film and seem to share more than just a receptive connection.

This thesis explores the artistic qualities of the trailer and examines its position as part of a wider cinematic culture. I will demonstrate the trailer's artistic status by arguing for a re-definition of the field of film studies and examining the trailer through a number of existing theoretical discourses, including auteur-theory and Deleuze's ideas for the Movement and Time Image.

My study will focus on Hollywood film trailers from a number of eras and cover an extensive body of case studies. Each era will be used to demonstrate that trailers are artistic texts and members of a cinematic - as opposed to advertisement - culture.

The first era focuses on the trailers of Alfred Hitchcock, which exhibit the early signs of innovation and artistic expression in a format still viewed overwhelmingly as an advertising context. Hitchcock himself intervenes in his trailers as an auteur - producing memorable and undeniably cinematic film texts. Hitchcock's trailers are spaces in which Deleuzian film theory is eminently visible and the trailers discussed offer the opportunity for greater understanding of Gilles Deleuze's work.

Following Hitchcock, the 'blockbuster' era covers high-budget, highly commercial films from the seventies and eighties. Blockbuster trailers see strong codification of convention and style - and a re-presentation of the affect as a unit of commercial and artistic value. Martine Beugnet's *Cinema of Sensation* is embodied in this group, in examples which fuse the artistic and commercial aspects of trailer identity.

The final chapter examines the 'postmodern' trailer. In this era, the trailer moves beyond its commercial origins to the point they are often no longer applicable. Examples include 'spoof' trailers with no feature film antecedent and no detectable commercial intent. Postmodern trailers, I will argue, can be pure artistic expressions - and even work in reverse, generating commercial interest after the original instance of artistic exhibition.

## Declaration of Original Work

I agree to the following statement:

- (a) that the thesis has been composed by the candidate, and
- (b) either that the work is the candidate's own, or, if the candidate has been a member of a research group, that the candidate has made a substantial contribution to the work, such contribution being clearly indicated, and
- (c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Signed:

Daniel Hesford

Date:

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my very great appreciation to those who have helped me through this long process. To my parents who supported me at every step, to my supervisor, Dr Kriss Ravetto, who offered seemingly-limitless patience and time - and to the many others who assisted me, including Dr Martine Beugnet, Dr Keith Johnston, Dr Jonathan Murray, Dr Pasquale Iannone and Dr Annette Davison, who provided generous assistance, reassurance and knowledge whenever I needed it.

---

## **Note on the trailers included in this study**

The trailers in this study are, at the time of writing, available online on the video site *Youtube*. In all instances, I have included a URL address for the examples cited, and have attempted to link to the highest-quality versions of those trailers. Due to the open-source nature of online video and the profligacy of commercial and user-generated content on the internet, it is possible that several different versions of these trailers exist - featuring varying degrees of quality, length and content. It also may be the case that legal and copyright issues prompt the removal of certain video files.

# Contents:

---

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	i
<b>Note on the trailers included in this study</b>	i
<b>Introduction:</b>	
The Film Trailer's Capacity for Artistic Expression	1
• A History of Trailer Analysis	3
• Reclaiming the Cinematic	9
• What is a Trailer?	10
• Case Studies: Hitchcock, Blockbusters and the Post-Modern	21
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
Hitchcock in the Trailer: Meaning and Rhetoric in Alfred Hitchcock's Film Trailers	27
• <i>Rope</i>	36
• <i>Psycho</i>	47
• <i>Vertigo</i>	53
• <i>Frenzy</i>	63
• Conclusion: Recalibrating the Auteur	68
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
Blockbuster Trailers: The Good, the Bad and the Affect	70
• What is a Blockbuster?	71
• Why the Blockbuster?	74
• <i>Jaws</i>	79
• <i>Star Wars</i>	107
• <i>Alien</i>	125
• <i>Rambo: First Blood Part 2</i>	137
• Conclusion: The Art of the Advert	153

<b>Chapter 3</b>	
Neo-Commercialism: The Trailer and the Post-Modern	154
• A New Way to Sell	158
• New Kinds of Narrative, New Kinds of Text	164
• <i>Lucky Star</i>	176
• 'Cine-adverts': The Trailer in other Media	187
• Homemade Trailers: The 'Spoof' and 'Fan' Trailer	197
• <i>Machete</i> : A Post-Modern Film Trailer	208
• Conclusion: The Trailer Eats Itself	219
<b>Conclusion</b>	
In the Age of the Trailer	221
• Is the Trailer Cinema?	222
• The Image Repurposed	225
• An Ending and a Beginning	231
<b>Bibliography</b>	248
<b>Filmography</b>	254
<b>Online Trailer References</b>	257

# Introduction:

## The Film Trailer's Capacity for Artistic Expression

---

All of us, I think, love trailers, with their promises of pleasures yet to come, their tantalising glimpses of new works by favourite auteurs. And yet the assumption remains that a trailer is something ephemeral, to be disposed of once the primary text - the actual film - becomes available.<sup>1</sup>

Brad Stevens, *In Praise of Trailers*

Film trailers are easily dismissed as consumable, disposable supplements to larger and artistically legitimate film texts. Their ephemeral status reinforces the notion that the trailer disappears, by necessity, to make way for the antecedent, future film text it advertises. Commercialism frames the trailer and, after a century of formative evolution, has come to define its presence in a cultural space which continues to differentiate between 'art': the feature film, and 'advert': a product sold on behalf of a studio.

The ubiquity of film advertising creates a public discourse which is on-going and all-encompassing: toy lines, videogames, fast-food gimmicks and promotional packaging constantly manipulate receivers and situate the trailer within a discourse of cynicism and commerce which seems a far remove from the artistic aspirations of the cinema. The film trailer's cinematic identity - or artistic worth - is lost in the sheer volume of commercial rhetoric that facilitates and surrounds it.

In this study, I intend to demonstrate that the trailer is more than just an advert. The ephemerality of the advertising format means critical or academic scrutiny is often fleeting and dismissive of the value of the advert-text - but the film trailer defies this preconception. The trailer-text endures in ways which other adverts do not, often exhibiting artistic and cinematic characteristics which go beyond the disposable. Furthermore, the trailer's place in a wider culture has only recently begun to be properly explored and defined. My aim is to demonstrate both the artistic qualities of the trailer and its position in a wider cinematic sub-culture. Following Charles Acland, who calls for the expansion of the boundaries of what constitutes film studies, I will argue that we can no longer rely on film as a medium to define

---

<sup>1</sup> (Stevens, 2007: par. 2)

the borders of the discipline, and must now consider trailers - and what critics define as the 'paratext' - to complete our understanding of cinema's place in visual culture:

It can be asserted that the problem with film studies has been film, that is, the use of a medium in order to designate the boundaries of a discipline. Such a designation assumes a certain stability in what is actually a mutable technological apparatus. A problem ensues when it is apparent that film is not film anymore.<sup>2</sup>

I will also look at spectatorship and the 'practice' of film-going in a modern context, addressing the altered contexts of reception, interpretation and exhibition that accompany the trailer - primarily its unnerving proximity to the commercial. Jonathan Gray points out that we need to consider both 'screen' and 'off-screen' studies in order to understand the 'wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television'<sup>3</sup>. While distinct both temporally (running-time) and aesthetically (visual and audio character), it is clear that trailers form a crucial part of this emergent cinematic landscape.

The temporal and aesthetic character of the trailer as a focus for artistic appreciation is not a new phenomenon. Short fiction and short films deliver well-documented and critically appraised artistic experiences over their relatively limited durations. Literary 'microfictions', like Jorge Luis Borges' *Ficciones*, emphasise the industry and skill that goes into the short - or 'micro' - work and display what Gene H. Bell-Villada calls a 'heightening of invention and imagination in literature'<sup>4</sup>. The internet and modern media forms, such as slash fiction, flash fiction and YouTube videos, contribute to the development and innovation of micro-literature as texts are exhibited, discussed and shared amongst thousands of readers. While the 'micro'-form seems modern since, as Holly Howitt-Dring points out, it 'looks so striking on the page', it is actually a product of 'centuries' of literary tradition, which deserves an equivalent recognition and legitimate reception as other texts<sup>5</sup>.

The microfiction, like the trailer, lends itself to modern distributive technologies, expressing the potential and possibility inherent in the format. Howitt-Dring notes the importance of this connection to the microfiction which 'survived because of its uses and possibilities, and is

---

<sup>2</sup> (Acland, 2003: 46)

<sup>3</sup> (Gray, 2010: 4)

<sup>4</sup> (Bell-Villada, 1981: 41)

<sup>5</sup> (Howitt-Dring, 2011: 48)

now developing further to fit on laptop and PC screens, on Twitter and on mobile phones"<sup>6</sup>. Trailers, like other stylised formats, have a huge part to play in the cultural and academic presence of cinema - to ignore or overlook the trailer as a consequence of its brevity is to overlook a significant part of cinema's history - and its future.

## A History of Trailer Analysis

Critical and theoretical analysis of trailers is a relatively new trend in the field of film study although discussion of the format is by no means unprecedented. Trailer studies is a field which is evolving and multi-faceted and contributes to a variety of screen disciplines. In my study, I intend to draw from established work in trailer study while taking my analysis in a new and previously overlooked direction.

Most critical and academic engagement with the film trailer is conducted from a historical approach, using the trailer to develop understanding of film production and the attitude of audiences in contemporary contexts. This historical approach is useful and rewarding and has led to two of the major contributions in this emergent field, Lisa Kernan's *Coming Soon: Reading American Movie Trailers* and Keith M. Johnston's *Coming Attractions: The Selling of Hollywood Technology*. Both Johnston and Kernan are prominent figures of trailer study, and use the format to describe historical phenomena exterior to the trailer-texts themselves. For Kernan, the trailer is a tool to analyze audiences in the three 'eras' she establishes as a framework: the 'classical', the 'transitional' and the 'modern'<sup>7</sup>. Kernan focuses on theories of reception to examine the relationship between studio and spectator, establishing 'who' the Hollywood film industry, 'thinks it is addressing'<sup>8</sup> when it comes to genre, narrative and style. Johnston's similar approach examines the way new screen technologies accompany and are featured in trailers over a century of cinema - using those advances to comment on cinematic and societal trends during the introduction of 'high-tech' phenomena like 3D,

---

<sup>6</sup> (Howitt-Dring: 49)

<sup>7</sup> The three rhetorical appeals, and their imbrication within one another, are highlighted. ... in an attempt to read in selected trailers of the three sound-era periods I treat (the classical, transitional and contemporary eras) key assumptions that Hollywood trailer producers make about audiences during each era. (Kernan, 2004: 77)

<sup>8</sup> My project of reading trailers to discern who the film industry thinks it is addressing within trailer texts is designed to invite a more critical approach to spectatorship itself – for the benefit not only of scholars but also of “rank and file” spectators. (Kernan: 3)

Cinemascope and Widescreen. Johnston picks up on the complications of the trailer format to the established reading of film, and goes on to note its relationship to other emergent media, like television, the internet and modern handheld devices:

Analyzing the trailer texts themselves revealed the recurrent phenomenon of new technology, a disruptive force that didn't fit conveniently into established film or trailer histories and which challenged some of the historical debates (e.g., the relationship between the film and television industries in the 1950s, the role of visual spectacle in the science fiction genre).<sup>9</sup>

Johnston points out how new cinematic eras are often heralded by technological advances - new technology in turn, prompting new discourses. His approach marks an attempt to conduct 'unified'<sup>10</sup> historical analysis on the format, with close reading used to legitimise the trailer as a short film (rather than a disposable 'wrapper' or inconsequential cinematic adjunct) relevant in a multiplicity of contexts and carrying 'text-specific meaning'<sup>11</sup>.

Janet Staiger's historical approach examines the reception of 'film advertising', during its emergence in the late 1890s and early 1900s<sup>12</sup>. She acknowledges the trailer's negative associations - the process of 'making misrepresentation tolerable'<sup>13</sup> - but also prompts a re-evaluation of the format. On the development of the trailer and the 'adjacent industry' of trailer production specifically engaged with making the format enjoyable, Staiger quotes Jesse L. Lasky:

...the tempo of a trailer is vastly different from the tempo of a feature. We cannot establish moods. We must get to the climax of a dramatic situation, to the peak of a comedy situation, to the very essence of dialogue.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> (Johnston, 2009: 21)

<sup>10</sup> "unified" because of the unification of text and context at the heart of this endeavour, as well as the attempt to "unify" these different approaches into one theoretical concept. (Johnston: 11)

<sup>11</sup> Unlike Jeffrey Richards' idea of "empirical cinema history" (defined as recovering evidence about contemporary values and attitudes ... entering the mind of the 'silent majority'), unified analysis is equally concerned with the creation of text-specific meaning as it is with the historical moment of production or reception. (Johnston: 11)

<sup>12</sup> *Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals* (Staiger: 1990)

<sup>13</sup> (Staiger: 4)

<sup>14</sup> (Staiger: 9)

Staiger's historical analysis of film advertising does not deal specifically with the textual effect of trailers (and other mediums), but is sensitive to the evolving presence of the promotional form during cinema's early period - its innovations and its relationship with audiences. She acknowledges the potential in the trailer for artistic expression as a result of its receptive need to appeal - and includes the technique of reframing the commercial as something other than a naked 'sell' by 'making advertising gimmicks part of the spectacle'<sup>15</sup>.

Sarah Street uses historical analysis as part of a discussion on the cultural identity of the promotional form. Street takes trailers from 1940-1960 to demonstrate the rapidly changing concept of "Britishness" in the film trailer and does so by examining how voice-identity was married to British culture. Street argues that although the voice of the trailer is almost always a 'male' one, female advertising executive, Esther Harris, was a crucial personality in the production of British trailers of the era. Harris' account of the trailer process hints at the poetry and aesthetic potential in the format:

What she described is a classic montage strategy of taking key shots or scenes from the entire film but then giving them meaning in the context of the trailer, which was not always quite the same as their purpose or impact in the main feature.<sup>16</sup>

Street, like Johnston, Kernan and Staiger, acknowledges the substantive textual effect of the trailer text but only as an affix to the exterior variable built by the historical discussion, in this case, national identity (and gender) in the promotional form. The trailer, used as a historical tool, is such a popular approach since, in large part, it offers such a well defined spectrum of texts from a century cinematic development. More trailers will be produced than feature films - since most films receive more than one promotional trailer-text (especially in modern contexts), the trailer is a visible, detailed and accessible resource for charting the progression of cinema in relevance to those variables set against it (technology, audience, gender). Johnston, Kernan and others who treat the trailer as a historical document, have in the format a framing device for those variables, with the capacity to deliver huge amount of information over time about how attitudes and exhibitivie trends change and develop.

Yet in the historical approach, despite moves towards deeper textual consideration by scholars like Johnston and Kernan, the promotional space is still treated as an adjunct, or a supplement to the cinematic experience. The trailer itself is not read as a space for genuine

---

<sup>15</sup> (Staiger: 4)

<sup>16</sup> (Street, 2009: 435)

artistic expression. It remains instead a catalogue to prompt discussion of exterior factors. Barbara Klinger argues for an expansion of accepted conventions of reading cinematic texts, pointing towards the para- and epitextual phenomena that spring up in reception, as legitimate corollaries of a film experience. Klinger argues that promotional forms 'exemplify a relation between intertextuality and aesthetic commodification':

A film's commercial status is, after all, more than a matter of money or profit. Films circulate as products, not in a semantic vacuum, but in a mass cultural environment teeming with related commercial significations. Epiphenomena constitute this adjacent territory, creating not only a commercial life-support system for a film, but also a socially meaningful network of relations around it.<sup>17</sup>

It is this meaningful network of relations that is providing such fertile ground for trailer study and the field has, in addition to its historical pedigree, plenty of alternative approaches. These alternatives accept Klinger's position that the commercial colouring of their source-texts is 'more than a matter of money or profit', instead carrying legitimate artistic, social and academic worth. Brad Stevens offers a variation on the historical approach, using the format as a lens to enhance an active comprehension of feature films via valuable contextual information, including alternative takes and scenes cut from the finished film-texts. Stevens positions the trailer as a way to inform auteur theory, arguing for the inclusion of the trailers of directors including Coppola, Godard, Hitchcock and Welles in any completist collection of their work. Stevens points out trailer scenes which were changed or missing from their feature antecedents as a way to 'better understand the choices'<sup>18</sup> their directors made in the editing process.

The trailer as an articulation of the auteur has seen a variety of approaches and has the benefit of moving the field of trailer study closer to existing theoretical discourses on cinema. In *Alfred Hitchcock's Trailers*, Alan Kerzonocuf and Nándor Bokor take particular interest in the director's trailer canon and establish a catalogue of his contributions to the format as a way to chart the changing character of his promotional presence<sup>19</sup>. Vincenz Hediger's account of Jean-Luc Godard's trailers deepens the auteur-connection to promotional strategies, by outlining Godard's special attitude towards the trailer and the

---

<sup>17</sup> (Klinger, 1989: 5)

<sup>18</sup> (Stevens: par 8.)

<sup>19</sup> (Kerzonocuf and Bokor, 2005)

emphasis on the temporal relationship the format has to the feature texts to which it connects. Hediger pays close attention to the ambiguous and frequently blurred borders between film and trailer, characterised as 'the infinite conversation'.<sup>20</sup>

Academic approaches to the trailer are diverse - and include disciplines which go beyond the conventional sphere of film studies. Mary Beth Oliver and Sriram Kalynaraman use trailers to study audience reception of violent and sexual images specifically in a 'preview' context - the analysis provides insight into the marketing of such imagery to certain demographics and the increase in those groups' 'anticipated enjoyment'<sup>21</sup>. Stephen Bruce Preece investigates the effects of trailer techniques borrowed by another discipline, in this case the marketing and promotion of live performing arts<sup>22</sup> - a similar project is presented by Christopher B. Stapleton and Charles E. Hughes for 'mixed reality' video games<sup>23</sup>.

In a significant contribution to the growing field of 'trailer study', Jonathan Gray takes trailers and other forms of promotional text (including action figures and video games) as indications of the need to re-evaluate existing definitions of what may be considered textual and non-textual. His notion of 'off-screen studies'<sup>24</sup> is a way of registering the multitudes of those promotional texts, created as part of a cinematic articulation, and how they fill cultural spaces. While not focussing specifically on trailers, Gray describes the receptive worth of the promotional text in all its incarnations - and the complex relationship formed by its 'meanings, interpretations, evaluations and all manner of audience and industry chatter'<sup>25</sup>. Like Gray, Catherine Johnson, in *Branding Television*, notes the importance of ephemerality to an experience of 'ancillary texts'<sup>26</sup>. Johnson characterises broadcast television as a continuous flow, facilitated by 'forms of promotion that contribute to the meanings

---

<sup>20</sup> (Hediger, 2004: 159)

<sup>21</sup> (Oliver & Kalyanaraman, 2010: 283)

<sup>22</sup> (Preece, 2010)

<sup>23</sup> (Stapleton & Hughes, 2005)

<sup>24</sup> while "screen studies" exists as a discipline encompassing both film and television studies, we need an "off-screen studies" to make sense of the wealth of other entities that saturate the media, and that construct film and television. (Gray: 4)

<sup>25</sup> (Gray: 48)

<sup>26</sup> scholarship has drawn attention to the role of the ancillary texts around television, from games, toys and magazines, to trailers, posters and other forms of promotion (Johnson, 2012: 116)

associated with individual programs<sup>27</sup>. Discussing the peculiar chronology of trailer production<sup>28</sup> and feature film release, Gray argues that trailers 'begin' the cinematic textual experience, implicitly emphasizing the strange temporal aesthetic effect of the promotional text:

We may in time resist the meanings proposed by promotional materials, but they tell us what to expect, direct our excitement and/or apprehension, and begin to tell us what a text is all about, calling for our identification with and interpretation of that text before we have even seemingly arrived at it.<sup>29</sup>

Johnson focuses on 'interstitial'<sup>30</sup> textual moments in television and their ability to construct a brand identity for a channel. Receptive contexts remain important to her work, which emphasises the importance of managing 'the flow of viewer attention'<sup>31</sup>. While Johnson does not focus specifically on film trailers, she closely examines the role of the promotional form in creating identity and brand to 'manage communication and activity' around products. Her efforts underline Gray's position, and chart the increasing artifice, industry and thought dedicated to promotional texts like the trailer.

Outside its variety of academic locales, the trailer and the discourses surrounding it, is - and has always been - especially available for journalistic evaluation, exhibition and consumption. Virginia Matthews examines the trailer's role as a space for the delivery of legitimate cinematic spectacle in *The Guardian*<sup>32</sup>, R. Howard Cricks comments on the industry behind the construction of the trailer as a component of the cinematic process in *Kinematograph Weekly*<sup>33</sup>, while Andy Medhurst, in *Sight and Sound*, looks at the trailer's relationship to its antecedent feature text, and how the content of the promotional text is rhetorically primed to appeal to certain groups<sup>34</sup>. In a more popular context, trailers provide

---

<sup>27</sup> (Johnson: 116)

<sup>28</sup> The term "trailer" is a hold-over from when trailers followed films (Gray: 48)

<sup>29</sup> (Gray: 48)

<sup>30</sup> breaks between (and within) programmes (Johnson: 119)

<sup>31</sup> (Johnson: 123)

<sup>32</sup> (Matthews: 1986)

<sup>33</sup> (Cricks: 1952)

<sup>34</sup> (Medhurst: 1998)

instant and impactful headlines for countless movie news websites eager to deliver exclusive glimpses of upcoming films and well known actors. Websites like *YouTube*, *Apple* and *Yahoo News* regularly advertise 'premieres' of upcoming trailers with attention-grabbing verve and volume. The presence of the trailer in public and academic spheres is widely accessible and available for immediate and rewarding analysis - yet the scrutiny placed on the trailer seems always to be either as a historical tool (see Kernan, Johnston, Staiger and others) or - often simultaneously - as a means to comment on other phenomena: the spectacular qualities of cinema, the effectiveness of the format as a promotional tool, the status of actors - and so on.

## Reclaiming the Cinematic

In my study, I will examine the trailer as a cinematic and complete textual unit - acknowledging the industry and skill behind the micro-text (highlighted by other forms of micro-art) and building on the body of work in trailer studies established by Kernan, Johnston, Klinger, Gray, and others. Most academics hint at the potential of the trailer to function as a legitimate artistic unit, carrying its own conceits of meaning and expression - I intend to focus on this part of the trailer's character and construct a new cinematic identity for the trailer in parallel with its relevance in historical and receptive contexts. Hediger recognises the affective power of the trailer to efface its feature film relation, emphasising the persuasive power the promotional text may have on audiences - who disavow the trailer when criticizing a particular cinematic experience:

Curiously, moviegoers hardly ever seem to blame the trailer if they end up not liking the film. The cardinal rule of trailer making in Hollywood... is that trailers simply have to be better than the film. Audiences seem to take it for granted that they are, at least judging by the fact that they let themselves be persuaded by trailers time and gain, despite the many tales of disappointments every moviegoer has to tell.<sup>35</sup>

The potential for direct artistic experience is explored further by Carmen Daniel Maier, who mentions explicitly the 'visual evaluative devices'<sup>36</sup> used in the trailer and how they are employed to control meaning and determine genre (the examples she uses relate specifically

---

<sup>35</sup> (Hediger: 153)

<sup>36</sup> (Maier, 2009: 160)

to 'romantic comedies'). Maier frames trailers as cinematic texts, involved in complex receptive strategies with audiences - and cites their formal elements, such as voice-over, pace and soundtrack, as fundamental to the 'semantic consistency of the film trailer'<sup>37</sup>.

I will examine the semantic consistency of the trailer through close analysis of a series of trailer texts. I will explore both the trailer's claim to an artistic identity and determine its position in a wider cinematic culture. My approach will be plural, applying both the apparatus of close analysis along with those elements of reception studies which have proved so useful in previous trailer studies. I will examine the trailer from a perspective largely overlooked by reception-oriented studies: instead of focussing on the point of connection with audiences and its consequences, I intend to look closely at the trailer itself and answer the questions: how do trailers perform their cinematic status and how do trailers fit into existing structures of cinematic thought, if indeed, they do? While reception studies examine *how* meaning is created, I will explore *what* meaning is created by the trailer - and subsequently, what effect that has on the format's relationship to theoretic discourses which have, until recently, been primarily associated with the feature film. I will present a number of trailer case studies, which best represent the format in those relevant ways: displaying artistic and cinematic qualities and demonstrating a potential to impact wider culture.

## What is a Trailer?

At this point it is useful to discuss what exactly is to be understood as 'trailer' - and how my technique of close reading will be applied to texts fitting that model. Defining the 'trailer', as I will go on to discuss, is an on-going process which many critics begin by employing Gerard Génette's analysis of the paratext. Génette defines paratexts as 'verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface or illustrations':

although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of the verb but also in the strongest sense: to make present, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> (Maier: 161)

<sup>38</sup> (Génette, 1997: 1)

Although designed to analyse the literary canon, paratextual gestures can be found in the way cinema and its associated texts are advertised and distributed. In fact, Kernan identifies film trailers as the equivalents of their literary counterparts:

To be precise, trailers are film paratexts. As Gerard Génette has characterized them, paratexts are those textual elements that emerge from and impart significance to a (literary) text but aren't considered integral to the text itself, such as all prefatory material, dust jackets blurbs, advertisements and review.<sup>39</sup>

But Génette also points to the ambiguity of the paratext in relation to the work of art it 'presents' since it blurs the boundary between the 'outside' and the 'inside'. As he puts it, the paratext is a world turned 'towards the text' or 'towards the world's discourse about the text':

More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather a threshold, or - a world Borges used apropos of a preface - a "vestibule" that offer the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. 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 towards the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or as Phillipe Lejeune put it, "a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text."<sup>40</sup>

Génette places value on 'possibility' - an ordinating factor of the paratext which incorporates the act of 'stepping inside or turning back'. In the trailer, this kind of 'product browsing' is so satisfying because of its experiential and temporal proximity to the 'real' thing - to watching a feature text. Génette's ideas for the paratext evoke the complicated distinction between what is considered 'art' and what is considered 'advert'. Reading the trailer in this way, and building on the growing corpus of trailer study, it is clear that paratextual content can be as affective and impressive as the textual. While so many critics work to separate the trailer from its antecedent feature, framing it as something *different* - 'para'-textual - I will move the trailer towards a more established body of theoretical discussion. The uncertainty and ambiguity which surrounds the trailer format along with the negative associations of commercialism are not difficult to find and are present in the now familiar reactions of audiences the world over, when comparing trailers to their feature texts: "It was funnier than

---

<sup>39</sup> (Kernan: 7)

<sup>40</sup> (Génette: 2)

the film", "I thought it was going to be a horror movie", "The trailer *lied*." Keith J. Hamel presents this aptly:

It seems most likely that the trailer was *conceived* by exhibitors wanting to attract customers, rather than by producers trying to sell films to exhibitors, but was *realized* by producer-distributors in an attempt to control the manner in which their films were sold to the public.<sup>41</sup>

Hamel exposes the paradox of the idea of the 'artistic' trailer, which has consequences for reception and reading. Before introducing details of my case studies, I will examine an example trailer which evokes this peculiar crisis of identity - that is, to maximise a viewer's momentum and desire to watch an upcoming film, without compromising the artistic appeal or subtle meaning sought after by its makers.

My example analysis will be useful in demonstrating the value of close analysis in readings of trailers. Previous trailer trends in Hollywood frequently emphasise the industry and business of the movies - featuring the apparatus of filmmaking and the hard work of the crew and cast involved in making a film. Johnston notes the emphasis on technological/industrial achievement in the Classical Hollywood-era trailer, commenting that the 'star' of a particular trailer was not the actors or the remarkable action on screen, 'but the technology... responsible for capturing them and projecting them onto the cinema screen'<sup>42</sup>. Kernan points out that the majority of Hollywood trailers, up to the 1960s, were put together by the National Screen Service, developing a recognizable trailer aesthetic for studio movies within a prescribed formula:

Setting aside subtle differences marked by studio imprimaturs or signifiers, the looks and structure of NSS trailers and the in-house studio-produced trailers are easily comparable during the classical era... they are characterized by lots of wipes; dazzling titles... frequent use of a narrator to augment title information; and the elaboration of formulaic rhetorical appeals to audience interest in stars, genres and story.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> (Hamel, 2012: 270)

<sup>42</sup> (Johnston: 27)

<sup>43</sup> (Kernan: 27)

Further common features include generating anticipation for a feature film by promoting previous hits, the studio logo and endorsements from stars contracted to the studio. Footage from the completed feature text was presented as a 'free sample' of the finished product, but little artistic intent was evident in its organisation and exhibition.



The trailer for *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), featured endorsements of previous Howard Hawks films, and shots of the filmmaking apparatus.



In *The Catered Affair* (1956) trailer, footage of an award ceremony for Ernest Borgnine, featuring star Grace Kelly, precludes shots of the actor reclining in a chair, praising the script, acting and all-round quality of his upcoming film.

In these early incarnations, the trailer seems not to have developed a solid, immutable identity and oscillates between the artistic and the advertorial. Yet the competitive dynamic of the commercial effort behind trailers has the effect of stimulating creative tendencies:

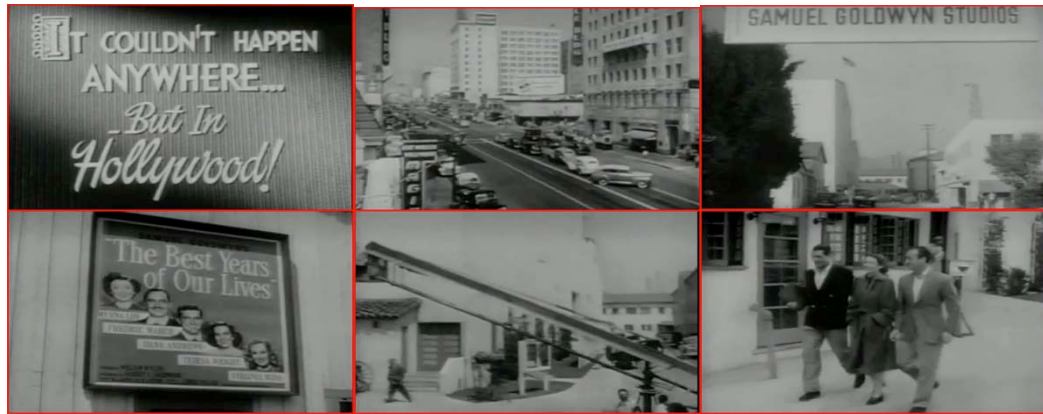
it seems logical that the new companies entering the industry at this time would try to distinguish their product by adopting advertising methods different from those already in use.<sup>44</sup>

*The Bishop's Wife* (1947) has a trailer which exhibits the artistic/commercial dichotomy of the format overtly. The trailer presents a useful introduction of the themes I intend to discuss and the close analytic methods I will employ in my forthcoming case studies. The trailer opens with a highly contrived sequence in which the stars: David Niven, Cary Grant and

---

<sup>44</sup> (Hamel: 271)

Loretta Young meet on the Samuel Goldwyn backlot to walk to a soundstage - with the intention of filming the trailer. On the way, they discuss the selling points of the film in what becomes a transparent sales pitch to prospective audiences. The trailer exhibits little artistic innovation: the pantomime-style of conversation is composed of a stilted dialogue between the actors as they explore past and present successes of the Samuel Goldwyn brand.



Shots from *The Bishop's Wife* trailer (1947)

NARRATOR: Hollywood, California-

The exterior of the Samuel Goldwyn Studios.

NARRATOR: -and the studios where the distinguished pictures that bear the name Samuel Goldwyn are produced.

A promotional poster for the film 'The Best Years Of Our Lives'.

NARRATOR: Such films as 'The Best Years Of Our Lives', winner of 9 Academy Awards.

A shot of the studio backlot.

NARRATOR: And it was in these very studios that they recently tried to make a trailer for a new and wonderful picture called 'The Bishop's Wife'.

Stars David Niven, Cary Grant and Loretta Young emerge from a soundstage, talking to each other. They walk along the street together.

NARRATOR: You know what a trailer is...? One of those little films that you see at your theatre which shows you scenes from some big picture that's coming soon. Well... we made the big picture – and it's on its way. But something happened to the

little one... It was on the day we finished all work on 'The Bishop's Wife': the stars were on their way home...

There is an overt effort to sell, not the film, but a brand associated with notions of quality and audience satisfaction. The professionalism and track record of the studio are vaunted by the voiceover in a manner similar to a commercial advert praising the efficacy of a product. Emphasis is placed on the notion of film as product - indeed, the word 'film' or the more idiomatic 'picture' is used frequently in the narrator's contributions and there is a narrative effort to conceive of the 'picture' as a physical entity - a product of significant artifice and skill. The trailer places its stars and the studio's historical record at the forefront of that process. There are overtones of a 'try before you buy' mentality - which opts for explicit reference to prior success rather than allowance for purely novel forms of expression. This strategy, of promoting and aestheticizing brand qualities, is documented by both Johnston and Kernan. For Kernan, it is the star who carries a sense of brand recognition, and evokes the extratextual framework associated with a given film:

stars implicitly bring to their representation in trailers an association not only with the corpus of their prior films and the typologies of all the characters they've played, but also with all of the extratextual knowledge that Hollywood promotional and publicity mechanisms have imparted about them.<sup>45</sup>

For Johnston, technology has a role to play in the strategy of brand rhetoric, which may be as significant as the star. The introduction of screen technologies and advances in exhibition, like widescreen, are factors in a 'distinctive trailer structure'. Johnston notes the 'positioning' of these features as part of a trailer aesthetic seeking to demonstrate, to audiences, the efficacy of a product<sup>46</sup>. As the trailer for *The Bishop's Wife* progresses, the explicit examination of the film as a verifiably high-quality product continues:

Cary Grant, Loretta Young and David Niven shake hands in the backlot.

YOUNG: Goodbye, Cary, wonderful working with you – goodbye, David, see you very soon.

NIVEN: Very soon, I hope.

---

<sup>45</sup> (Kernan: 63)

<sup>46</sup> (Johnston: 32)

GRANT: Goodbye, David.

NIVEN: See you tonight- Oh! I forgot about the trailer!

GRANT: Trailer?

YOUNG: I forgot all about it.

GRANT: Well, they must be set up somewhere. Where are they?

NIVEN: Stage 6-

YOUNG: No, I think they're on 8, David.

NIVEN: 8? Let's go, come on.

The actors join hands and rush to the stage. The scene is genial, good-natured and creates the impression that the actors are not only professionals but enjoy a friendship which goes beyond their role as employees. Although the scene evokes a sense of pantomime and is highly contrived, the overall effect is one of affable inclusiveness which borders on the subversive. The scene is theatrically composed to the point that Niven, Young and Grant are no more playing themselves than they are in their feature roles. Their presence appeals to associations of stardom and each star's allure to the spectator. They are still movie stars in the scene and still covered in and surrounded by the spectacle of cinema: meaning created in their trailer presence is to be correlated with their feature film presence.

The stars' attitude to the trailer is indicative of the regard in which trailers were held. The actors discuss the trailer as an afterthought - missed out, presumably in the wake of other, more pressing affairs. It is an honest mistake: the stars themselves are unsure of the role the trailer will play in *The Bishop's Wife's* distribution. Their naivety correlates with the expectations of audiences: these people are stars, not salesmen and their guileless approach to promoting their own film is endearing, if corny. Their remarks are almost an apology for the trailer - as if to say: 'We're sorry to have to do this but... this film really is worth your attention'. The overall confusion on the part of the actors reflects the uncertainty of audience and studio: the presentation of the actors, involved in their convivial chat on the backlot, itself part of a comical, fictional routine, suggests there was impetus to make the trailer an enjoyable, cinematic spectacle while at the same time, fulfil its commercial obligations to advertise its antecedent feature.

As a spectacle, the trailer offers no teasing glimpses of the feature film text. Indeed, the feature text is almost completely absent from the trailer. Referenced verbally and indirectly by our guide-stars, the only visual reference the audience receives is a brief coda: a scene from an ice-rink, almost obscured by superimposed film credits. Visual material from the feature film itself is not considered pertinent, or at least, far less important than the accounts of the trailer stars, who are happy to discuss it.



Diegetic shots from *The Bishop's Wife* feature-text at the close of the trailer

The strange dialectic relationship between cinematic enjoyment and commercial duty plays out in the following scene, in which the stars are stopped at the entrance to the soundstage by a security guard:



SECURITY GUARD: Just a minute folks! Sorry: can't go in without a pass.

GRANT: Oh, well, see we work here. That is, we just finished over there and now we're-

SECURITY GUARD: Alright, so you've finished – there's no-one stopping you from leaving.

NIVEN: You don't understand we still have to make the trailer.

YOUNG: I'm sure you wouldn't want to stop us telling people about a great picture like *The Bishop's Wife*.

GRANT (To YOUNG): Have you seen it?

YOUNG (Laughs): Well, no not exactly-

SECURITY GUARD: Then how do you know it's great?

YOUNG: Well, we had a lot of fun making it - that's always a very good sign.

SECURITY GUARD: That maybe so, but... I'm new here. I don't know you folks. Unless you had a pass on you...

NIVEN: I'm David Niven and I play the bishop.

YOUNG: I'm Loretta Young and I play the bishop's wife.

GRANT: And I'm Cary Grant and I play-

NIVEN and YOUNG hush GRANT into silence.

GRANT: Oh, that's right.

SECURITY GUARD: Now wait a minute – what's the matter?

GRANT: Nobody's supposed to know what part I play until they see the picture.

SECURITY GUARD: Then what do you need in the trailer?

YOUNG: Well, we'd like folks to come in and see the picture. It's very fine – and it's quite the most unusual picture Sam Goldwyn's ever made.

GRANT: Yes, it's full of surprises.

YOUNG: Oh, please.

SECURITY GUARD: Well... if you put it that way.

YOUNG: Thanks, officer.

The actors head off into the studio – Niven stops suddenly.

NIVEN: I've got an idea: if *The Bishop's Wife* is different, let's keep it that way. Let's have no trailer.

YOUNG: Oh, David, a picture without a trailer?

GRANT: No, that's it! Why take all the wonderful surprises out of it before people see it?

YOUNG: Alright, sold! No trailer!

NIVEN & GRANT: No trailer!

The actors shake hands.

While the trailer masquerades as a transparent and earnest 'announcement' of the *The Bishop's Wife* without any of the perceived cynicism of the fairground 'hard sell', it is clear thought has gone into its development as a rhetorical tool. The trailer operates with the dramatic conceit of the Hollywood system 'laid bare'. The cameras take the viewer inside the gates of a studio and display the apparatus and paraphernalia of filmmaking. Cinema is not presented as a magical world of illusion and unreality (apart from the brief coda from the feature's diegesis) but the result of the pedigree and hard work of cast and crew. Yet the paradox is obvious: Niven, Young and Grant are fooling no-one when it comes to their 'spontaneous' and serendipitous chat. The absence of material from the feature film remains conspicuous however, and points towards an emphasis on the body-presence of the stars to sell their film. An implied connection between audience and star suggests that the actors were more suited to this selling role than alternative approaches: more trusted and more familiar. It is their words and exhortations which comprise the majority of the trailer. They indicate a consideration of the need to deal with commercial stigmas carefully, and represent them - in this case - through the filter of voices and bodies. It is as if the studio is humbly asking the audience to 'look what we have made for you'.

The artifice of filmmaking is treated with reverence throughout the trailer. From the textual recollections of Samuel Goldwyn's previous hit films, to the stars' professionalism and goodwill towards each other, the trailer constantly promotes its own industry. And yet the attitude of uncertainty towards commercial promotion remains, creating a strange on-screen dichotomy - the dissonance plays out literally in the scene above. Neither the actors, nor the dubious security guard are certain of what they are dealing with - the security guard even worries that he should throw the actors out: if they are not acting, why are they here? The idea of role and function is emphasised strongly, the security guard is determined to do his job, while the actors are unsure of themselves outside their normal comfort zone. The degree of unease created by this problem delivers a level of humble politeness on the part of the actors, along with overtures of endearing modesty as they try to discuss the film with the guard. Tellingly, the security guard character is an anonymous element in the *mise-en-scène*. He is diligent and firm and seems to be prepared to turn the actors away - yet his face is never revealed and his back is turned to the audience during the entire exchange. He is there, like the audience, to watch the stars and they must impress him in order to gain access to the next stage of the film's development: the trailer. His role as security guard is twofold: on a

textual level, he guards the stage, but on a more figurative level, he provides a strict filter to what may pass from the screen to the audience. The guard's presence goes some way to removing the discomfort of the trailer's underlying commercial motivation. The actors have been cornered by someone both qualified and required to question them. Their gushing admissions of how *The Bishop's Wife* is a 'very fine' picture come after a degree of interrogation by the guard. The commercial sting is drawn by the probing nature of the questions, the stars seem genuinely embarrassed to sing the praises of their own work and do so only under after the insistence of the security guard.

In the absence of any extended footage from the film, the back-and-forth from the actors does a lot of rhetorical work. The actors announce their roles in the film, Loretta Young admits it is 'a very fine picture', Grant that it's 'full of surprises' - and Niven and Young's coy admonition of Grant's revealing of his role adds a level of intrigue to the narrative which echoes the paratextual efforts, seen in other trailers, to both to mislead and intrigue through absence or the withholding of information. In the end, Young's plea to the security guard is born out of a sense of benevolence: so sure are they of the film's quality and appeal that they want to film the trailer in order for people to become aware of it and not from any commercial desire created by financial need. Despite its contrived nature and ham-fisted style, the trailer highlights the 'battleground' boundary of art and commercialism - to the point of placing a security guard right on that border. The trailer itself climbs down from any attempt to inject a level of artistic worth into its own format by denying its own identity at its close. The punchline: that the actors decide not to film the trailer after all, fits the negative esteem in which advertising is held in relation to more 'worthy' artistic pieces designed for entertainment. Although we understand the trailer to be an advert, this knowing wink to the audience serves as both a denial and an apology for any discomfort caused.

*The Bishop's Wife* demonstrates the curious regard in which trailers are held and their potential to at least aspire to entertain. My close examination of *The Bishop's Wife* trailer, such as it is, is an example of commercial qualities handled as part of a rhetorical strategy - and balanced against ever-present notions of art. In my forthcoming discussion, I will apply these principles to trailer case studies and examine further the relevance of the art/advert dynamic in the development of the trailer and the establishment of its cinematic identity.

## Case Studies: Hitchcock, Blockbusters and the Postmodern

Following Johnston and Kernan, and given the effectiveness of historical approaches in organising discussion of the trailer, my case studies will comprise three broadly chronological groups. The grouping of the case studies is not intended to reflect a direct historical dynamic in the artistic character of the selected film trailers but instead frame the discussion and provide a means by which to establish a canonical aspect to each example. Three chapters will take in 'Hitchcock' trailers, 'Blockbuster' trailers, and 'Post Modern' trailers - the groupings are intended to better showcase particularly interesting trends in the development of the format and the claims of each group to an artistic status.

Applying close reading to trailer-texts is a way to demonstrate their textual status and their membership of a wider cinematic culture through availability to existing discourses and philosophies. Where some critics overlook the textual resonance of the trailer in favour of audience reception and the consequences of 'speculative consumption'<sup>47</sup>, much of the trailer's cinematic worth is missed. I want to remove the 'distance'<sup>48</sup> which Génette attributes to the paratext, separating it from the legitimacy of artistic and critical scrutiny and contributing to the view that it is necessarily 'always subordinate to "its" text':

the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d'être*. This something is the text. Whatever aesthetic or ideological investment the author makes in a paratextual element (a "lovely title" or a preface-manifesto), whatever coquettishness or paradoxical reversal he puts into it, the paratextual element is always subordinate to "its" text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence.<sup>49</sup>

In my argument to problematise and even overturn Génette's assertion, I will start with close analysis of the trailers of Alfred Hitchcock. As a starting point, Alfred Hitchcock's trailers represent a corpus of texts demonstrating the potential self-conscious and affective qualities

---

<sup>47</sup> close reading may tell us little about how a viewer *arrived* at a text. Why view this program, or this film, as opposed to the many thousands of other options? (Gray: 24)

<sup>48</sup> A paratextual element, at least if it consists of a message that has taken on material form, necessarily has a location that can be situated in relation to the location of the text itself: around the text and either within the same volume or at a more respectful (or more prudent) distance. (Génette: 4)

<sup>49</sup> (Génette: 12)

of the promotional space while also presenting an opportunity to introduce terms and theoretical concepts relevant to my discussion. Hitchcock's trailers go beyond a simple arrangement of shots, put together by a projectionist to deliver product information. The trailers evoke auteur theory and offer a depth of artistic character which distinguishes them from contemporary texts. While a body of trailer analysis and discussion exists relevant to texts prior to the Hitchcock case studies, his contributions to the format demonstrate the potential for the trailer to be positioned and considered as a part of cinematic culture.

Hitchcock's trailers are also an effective illustration of Gilles Deleuze's work on cinema which will be especially relevant to my analysis. In particular, Hitchcock's trailers (along with others) demonstrate Deleuze's notion of the Movement-Image and Time-Image: ways of depicting time freed from the subordinating filter of movement. Claire Colebrook summarises Deleuze's idea for cinema's capacity to depict real movement:

...if the camera itself moves while the moving body also moves, and then the camera creates another movement across another moving body, we no longer think of movement as the synthesis of points within a single line of time. We see movement itself, in all its diversity, *from which* single points of view are composed.<sup>50</sup>

Deleuze follows Bergson's aim of experiencing time freed from the perceptive constraints of calculable and divisible movements - and rendered instead a process of 'transformation or becoming'<sup>51</sup>. Deleuze saw the power of cinema to liberate the viewpoint, observing movement, and therefore more accurately depicting it, from a plurality of perspectives outside the single, interested position of the human eye:

By producing in this way a mobile section of movements, the shot is not content to express the duration of a whole which changes, but constantly puts bodies, parts, aspects, dimensions, distances and the respective positions of the bodies which make up a set in the image into variation.... It is because pure movement varies the elements of the set by dividing them up into fractions with different denominators – because it decomposes and recomposes the set – that it also relates to a fundamentally open whole, whose essence is constantly to 'become' or to change, to endure; and vice versa.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> (Colebrook, 2002: 32)

<sup>51</sup> (Ishii-González, 2004: 130)

<sup>52</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 23)

A closer inspection of Deleuze's ideas for cinema will be forthcoming but using a Deleuzian framework helps place trailers within the discourse of the cinematic. His comments on time and movement are particularly relevant to the trailer format, which is defined by its ephemerality and temporal position - of looking both backwards and forwards at the same time. Hitchcock's trailers introduce a discourse in these areas and demonstrate the strong relevance of the trailer to these areas of philosophy and culture.

In the second chapter of my study, I will continue my theoretical approach and focus my close analysis on the broad category of the 'blockbuster'. The blockbuster 'category' acknowledges the commercial motivation behind the trailer as an advert and selling-tool, while incorporating the trends seen in Hitchcock's more thoughtful and artistically noteworthy examples. I will demonstrate how the commercial becomes a coded part of trailer aesthetic and, consequently, re-frames readings of the format. Secondly, and more specifically, I will discuss an emergent and defining feature of the blockbuster - the affect, theorised in Deleuze's conception of the movement-image, as the 'affection-image'. I will demonstrate the importance of the affect and its function in the trailer - again incorporating existing theoretical discussion:

Eisenstein suggested that the close-up was not merely one type of image among others but gave an affective reading of the whole film. This is true of the affection-image: it is both a type of image and a component of all images. But... in what sense is the close-up identical to the whole affection-image? And why would the face be identical to the close-up, since the latter merely seems to carry out a magnification of the face, and also of many other things?<sup>53</sup>

Other theorists are relevant to the trailer's affective qualities. Martine Beugnet and Laura U. Marks explore the affective potential of the image and propose new ways to experience the substance of cinema's visual component which incorporate the sensuous, haptic qualities of the image: 'touching with our eyes'<sup>54</sup>, as Beugnet puts it. Imagery in the trailer, often jarring and contrastive, exhibits the 'staccato and chiaroscuro effect of Expressionism'<sup>55</sup> - a tendency which, Walter Schobert notes, invites a scrutiny of 'forms; surfaces; brightness and

---

<sup>53</sup> (Deleuze: 1986: 87)

<sup>54</sup> (Beugnet, 2007: 42)

<sup>55</sup> The leaning towards violent contrast - which in Expressionist literature can be seen in the use of staccato sentences - and the inborn German liking for chiaroscuro and shadow, obviously found an ideal artistic outlet in the cinema. (Eisner, 1969: 17)

darkness'<sup>56</sup>. Beugnet echoes this approach in her 'Cinema Of Sensation'<sup>57</sup> - pointing out that this type of imagery appeals to 'the fundamental qualities of the cinema' by playing on 'vision and sound's capacity to evoke the other sense and... invite a 'haptic gaze'<sup>58</sup>. This reading positions the trailer-text in an interesting intermediary, between the artistic and the commercial, where film is a thing to be admired, enjoyed and consumed.

Beugnet's and Marks' work is not intuitively associated with the 'mainstream' or the boldly commercial character of Hollywood cinema, but their separate discussions, in which they focus on the interpretation of the screen's affective powers, are useful in reframing readings of the trailer as legitimate academic enterprise. Marks points out the power of haptic images, to 'give the impression of seeing for the first time, gradually discovering what is in the image rather than coming to the image already knowing what it is'<sup>59</sup>. Reclaiming the sensuous in this counter-intuitive, promotional context dovetails well with similar qualities in the trailer:

The "see/hear/feel" imperative hyperbolically touts the sensory appeal of the film's spectacular elements, often including announcement of special technical features enabling this appeal, an often (in classical trailers and later ones that satirize them) actually hailing spectators with the words ("See!" "Hear!" or "Feel!") in spoken narrations or titles.<sup>60</sup>

The Cinema of Sensation also has consequences for narrative and here the trailer presents a dialectic - of its own storytelling ambitions and the sensory appeal of the image. The blockbuster is a space for highly recognizable markers of genre, in which storytelling conventions may be coded into the imagery in interesting and innovative ways - this trend is described by Geoff King as a series of oppositions between storytelling and spectacle. The reconciliation of those two poles leads to a multiplicity of narrative approaches - and this diversity is reflected by 'promotional discourses', like the trailer, which 'actively seek to play up such multiple appeals and distractions, to encourage 'diverse positions of viewing' and

---

<sup>56</sup> (Schobert, 2003: 237)

<sup>57</sup> The cinema of sensation is an approach to filmmaking (and, by extension, to the analysis of film) that gives precedence to the corporeal, material dimension of the medium. (Beugnet: 32)

<sup>58</sup> (Beugnet: 3)

<sup>59</sup> (Marks, 2000: 178)

<sup>60</sup> (Kernan: 21)

maximize potential audiences'<sup>61</sup>. Once again, the Cinema of Sensation and the haptic are helpful to analysis - Marks sees the haptic image as a 'Deleuzian' strategy, preventing 'an easy connection to narrative, instead encouraging the viewer to engage with the image through memory'<sup>62</sup>, while Beugnet comments on the presentation of narrative as a facet of the haptic and the sensory:

The loosening of the narrative causal chain and of the corresponding filmmaking functions simultaneously allows for, and grows from, the greater involvement with the sensual dimension of the pro-filmic material; visions born out of familiar perception are thus heightened and altered and the conventional narrative framework is overruled by, or combined with, more radical strategies.<sup>63</sup>

My third chapter moves trailer analysis into the 'postmodern', in which I will describe what the trailer has become and what it is becoming in relation to previous discussion. In this chapter, I will explain the term postmodern in the context of the trailer format and propose a redefinition of the paratext - a result of the changing functions and effects of the trailer. In the postmodern era, the trailer, I will argue, moves beyond its original purpose - becoming much more than a conventional advert in all contexts. My discussion will involve different incarnations of the trailer, as the format bleeds into other media, such as television, video games and internet video-hosting sites, such as YouTube. I will examine the trailer as a living, breathing text, available for consumption, reincarnation, alteration and deep contemplation by active viewers whose role is no longer restricted to mere 'recipients' but, in many ways, 'participants'. The postmodern trailer continues to have implications for existing cinematic discourse and critical theory - notions of spectacle, narrative and genre, informed by a century of industry development. The postmodern era brings a further scrutiny to the spatial/temporal character of the trailer and offers yet more readings of promotional discourses through the perspective of Deleuze's movement and time-images.

A result of the new permeability of the digital trailer is a trend of fans and amateur editors re-coding paratextual imagery to new purposes often dramatically different to original intentions. Gray notes the popularity of these interpretations which 'destabilize'<sup>64</sup> meaning:

---

<sup>61</sup> (King: 2000: 3)

<sup>62</sup> (Marks, 2000: 177)

<sup>63</sup> (Beugnet: 61)

<sup>64</sup> (Gray: 147)

By nature of its popularity, any popular text must have popular meaning, which in turn means that viewer-created paratexts will surround the text. Those paratexts may echo industry-created paratexts, but they might also... call for subtle changes in interpretation, valuing the text's various elements differently from industry-created paratexts, and opening up new paths of understanding.<sup>65</sup>

I intend to maintain a critical analysis on the artistic integrity of the trailer-text itself across all eras. In each chapter, close reading will act as the foundation for my analysis and demonstrate the availability of the trailer text for interpretation as a cinematic entity. Close reading may not, as Gray points out, produce a comprehensive historical/societal description of the trailer but it is effective in deepening the format's association with cinematic practice - Deleuze, along with other critics and theorists I will employ in my analysis, provide the appropriate tools for such a task.

My selection of Hollywood trailers as a sole category of trailer type allows for a level of analytic consistency, especially since my study proceeds along a loose historical framework in the vein of Johnston and Kernan's approaches. It should be pointed out that non-Hollywood trailers offer a vast field of opportunity for a close reading - for reasons of time and clarity, I will not include them in the body of my thesis but will examine their relevance to the field in my conclusion. Those case studies which make up the body of my thesis, are an opportunity to chart the genealogy and complexion of the trailer as a work of cinema - a product of the artistic and the commercial, combining to produce what might be characterised as a new type of film art - the art of anticipation.

---

<sup>65</sup> (Gray: 146)

# Chapter 1

## Hitchcock in the Trailer:

### Meaning and Rhetoric in Alfred Hitchcock's Film Trailers

---

Although he directed over fifty features, from *The Pleasure Garden* in 1925 to *Family Plot* in 1976, Alfred Hitchcock didn't just direct films. His active engagement in the media arts extended to radio, television and a large number of film trailers, connected to his own features in a promotional capacity. The trailers, produced alongside his films, are remarkable primarily because they established new rhetorical techniques which were unusual for promotional discourse. Even now, Hitchcock's trailers remain relevant to ways in which the advertising industry has grown around a culture of filmmaking.

In this chapter, I will carry out close analysis on a series of trailers for Alfred Hitchcock's films. My analysis will introduce the critical approach laid out in the introduction, that is - examining the artistic qualities of the film trailer and its position in wider cinematic culture, while also introducing terms and theoretical concepts which will be used to facilitate analysis in forthcoming chapters. Alfred Hitchcock's involvement in promotional texts means the complexion of his trailers is often unusual and divergent from the fairground-style hyperbole seen in other Hollywood promotional contexts. Kernan characterises the exaggerated promotional strategies in early cinema as 'vaudeville' or 'circus' modes - in which a trailer is presented as, 'having something for everyone'<sup>66</sup> (vaudevillian) and relying 'more on hyperbole than generalization'<sup>67</sup> (circus). Hitchcock's trailers mark a concerted move away from the single-minded promotional strategies and 'paint-by-numbers' formula of the National Screen Service.

Indeed, Hitchcock's trailers exhibit a wealth of remarkable features which complicate traditional notions of the role and cultural position of the advert. While still featuring (like the NSS formula) the filmmaking apparatus itself (film sets, cameras and lighting rigs, members of the crew), his strategies push the presence of the director as a promotional tool. Despite Hitchcock's efforts, his contributions to the format are largely absent - especially in terms of close analysis - from the corpus of academic work dedicated to the director.

---

<sup>66</sup> (Kernan: 18)

<sup>67</sup> (Kernan: 20)

Biographies of Hitchcock, like Thomas Leitch's *Encyclopaedia of Alfred Hitchcock*<sup>68</sup>, Truffaut's comprehensive and self-styled 'definitive', *Hitchcock*<sup>69</sup>, and Patrick McGilligan's *Hitchcock: A Life In Darkness And Shadow*<sup>70</sup>, go into great detail regarding the relationships, personal circumstances and prolific filmmaking career with which Hitchcock's auteur status was built and received. Yet critical analysis of Hitchcock does not treat his contribution to commercial and promotional strategies like trailer texts as an equivalent part of his auteur reputation - either by omission or indirect dismissal. But why should promotional texts be exempt from discussions of auteurism - especially when they evoke the notion of 'personal expression'<sup>71</sup> used by so many critics? David Boyd and R. Barton Palmer, noting Hitchcock's position of hitherto unparalleled pre-eminence<sup>72</sup>, frame his importance with specific reference to the commercial:

Specifically, any fair account of the medium's first century must acknowledge the many ways in which Hitchcock helped sustain and further filmmaking as a commercial enterprise - and as a respected art form.<sup>73</sup>

In Foucauldian terms, Hitchcock's authorial presence is well defined as 'outside and preceding'<sup>74</sup> his texts. The remarkable 'signature'<sup>75</sup>, sought after by critics, denoting a 'set of stylistic and thematic features' by which to identify the auteur, is represented by characteristics which were not restricted to the diegesis of Hitchcock's feature films - and spilled into promotional strategies. Andrew Sarris presents a helpful outline of the 'three premises of auteur theory', involving a pattern of concentric circles:

---

<sup>68</sup> (Leitch: 2002)

<sup>69</sup> (Truffaut: 1983)

<sup>70</sup> (McGilligan: 2003)

<sup>71</sup> 'auteurism': the belief that cinema was an art of personal expression, and that its great directors were as much to be esteemed as the authors of their work as any writer, composer or painter. (Lapsley & Westlake, 1988: 105)

<sup>72</sup> (Boyd and Palmer, 2006: 3)

<sup>73</sup> (Boyd and Palmer: 2)

<sup>74</sup> Foucault's consideration of the author relates to 'the singular relationship that holds between author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it. (Foucault, 1977: 115)

<sup>75</sup> an auteur possesses a sign(ature) marking out his own individuality which is legible in a film over which he has enjoyed sufficient creative control for that sign(ature) to permeate the film. (Phillips, 1996: 150)

the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning. The corresponding roles of the director may be designated as those of a technician, a stylist and an *auteur*. There is no prescribed course by which a director passes through the three circles.<sup>76</sup>

Sarris accounts for Hitchcock's relation to those characteristics, noting his technical aptitude for cutting scenes 'in his mind and not in the cutting room'<sup>77</sup>, while pointing out stylistic features such as 'paradoxes'<sup>78</sup> of tone, 'repeated invasions of everyday life with the most outrageous melodramatic devices'<sup>79</sup> and innovative 'intricate editing of objects and glances within a scene'<sup>80</sup>. Sarris' third premise, 'interior meaning', is harder to define: Sarris opts to approximate its quality to a 'soul', but goes further by attributing it to a director's personality:

Lest I seem unduly mystical, let me hasten to add that all I mean by "soul" is that intangible difference between one personality and another, all other things being equal.<sup>81</sup>

Sarris' emphasis on the director's personality is telling - and alludes to a further aspect of receptive experiences of Hitchcock. Hitchcock's personality and physical appearance was prominent in public contexts and a significant amount of effort went into its cultivation. Where these extra-filmic signatures are considered, critics highlight frequently the director's persona as fashioned by his television show *Alfred Hitchcock Presents...* Constantin Verevis notes the many appearances by the director, in the introduction and epilogues to episodes of the show, which made him a 'household name'<sup>82</sup> while Stephen Rebello points out Hitchcock's appearances in film trailers were often scripted by James Allardice who was generally responsible for the director's 'lugubrious, sponsor-baiting lead-ins'<sup>83</sup> to his

---

<sup>76</sup> (Sarris, 1992: 587)

<sup>77</sup> (Sarris, 1968: 57)

<sup>78</sup> Hitchcock's art is full of paradoxes. *The Birds*, for example reveals a rigorous morality coupled with a dark humour (Sarris, 1968: 57)

<sup>79</sup> (Sarris, 1968: 58)

<sup>80</sup> (Sarris, 1968: 58)

<sup>81</sup> (Sarris, 1992: 587)

<sup>82</sup> (Verevis, 2006: 18)

<sup>83</sup> (Rebello, 1990: 153)

television show. The collapse of auteur and celebrity in this capacity is obvious yet the artistic quality and complexion of Hitchcock's work is overlooked in favour of its receptive effect on audiences: Rebello sees Hitchcock's role in the *Psycho* trailer as a simple genre-indicator for audiences, prompting them to read the trailer text in certain 'sinister'<sup>84</sup> ways. Rebello's account of Hitchcock's presence specifically in the trailer, while revealing the great care and artifice that went into its construction, lacks the close analysis with which academic readings of the film would likely have been characterised:

The trailers were shot by cinematographer and special effects expert Rex Wimpby over three days at the tail end of production: for about three hours on January 28,, for five hours on January 29, and finally - using one of the leading ladies - on February 1.... By far the most innovative was the third trailer - Hitchcock's six-minute tour of the Bates house and motel.<sup>85</sup>

Close analysis of the famous *Psycho* 'tour' trailer is forthcoming - but Rebello's notes on its production reveal how the director's 'offbeat'<sup>86</sup> promotional presence complicates his status as auteur, framing him as 'equal parts geek-show carnival barker and House of Horrors tour-guide'<sup>87</sup>. Hitchcock's presence as auteur-celebrity is a constant reminder of the dialectic between art and commercialism. Indeed, his wielding of the auteur mantle even as he promoted his work is a prominent focus of analysis:

his film practice may be conceived as a dialectic that yokes entertainment and expressive forms of authorship. The instability of purpose and resulting rhetoric heavily marks his body of work and career. Specifically, any fair account of the medium's first century must acknowledge the many ways in which Hitchcock helped sustain and further filmmaking as a commercial enterprise - and as a respected art form as well.<sup>88</sup>

Hitchcock's visual and audio appearances correlate with the popularity of his television show which ran from 1955 to 1965. The program's title sequence prominently featured

---

<sup>84</sup> (Rebello: 155)

<sup>85</sup> (Rebello: 152)

<sup>86</sup> (Rebello: 153)

<sup>87</sup> (Rebello: 153)

<sup>88</sup> (Boyd and Palmer: 2)

Hitchcock's silhouetted profile in addition to those in-person appearances. As Hitchcock's image-'brand' became more recognizable, so too did his appearances in his film trailers, in ways which echoed the playful tone of those television introductions. Thomas Leitch goes so far as to add a fourth category to Andrew Sarris's three premises of auteur theory, one which posited the idea of the 'director as celebrity'.

Although Andrew Sarris is too kind to say so, there is a fourth circle outside the three he describes, and even more marginal area occupied by, among others, that darling of *auteur* criticism, Alfred Hitchcock: the director as celebrity.<sup>89</sup>

In the promotional context the director-as-celebrity is a selling tool - and the various interpretations of his image, his voice and his actions are consolidated as part of the dual artistic/commercial identity of the trailer. This process is a result of the trailer's paratextual status - it is G nette's border analogy through which a spectator looks both ways: in the promotional text the auteur sits on that border, encouraging audiences to bring together notions of advertising and art - and 'cross over' to see the film. The uncertain function of the auteur in this capacity has not gone unnoticed. Leitch comments on the 'shadowy' effects of auteurs used as paratextual symbols:

In this shadowy area, directors do not function as *auteurs* of interior meaning or visual stylists or even competent technicians but merely as public personages because they are not working as directors they are merely lending their name, their prestige and, in Hitchcock's case, their unmistakable image to the projects of others in order to fatten their market.<sup>90</sup>

For Leitch, the auteur-as-celebrity functions in a capacity warped from its artistic origin into a corrupted, or at least complicated expression of traditional notions of the role. Here, this 'shadowy' world translates directly into celebrity - and the excesses and indulgences that brings. Yet, it is clear that Hitchcock is aware of this negativity and, instead of pandering to it, uses it to create memorable cinematic texts which go beyond expectations for the conventional advert. Indeed, it is possible to argue that Hitchcock's auteur mantle is inextricably connected to his promotional presence: critics devote significant analysis to his promotional status, his famous silhouette motif forms part of the title iconography of his television show and even his visual appearance is a bridge between the television show and

---

<sup>89</sup> (Leitch, 2003: 59)

<sup>90</sup> (Leitch, 2003: 59)

elusive cameo appearances in his feature films. Verevis notes that viewers of Hitchcock's *Psycho* trailer, featuring the director prominently, would have 'every reason to believe'<sup>91</sup> the film would be in the style of the well-established television show.

With Leitch in mind, the auteur-sign shifts meaning, becoming less an indicator of artistic identity or expression, and more a signature of an established concept: a stamp of quality; a 'brand name' which Grainge frames as a 'distinctive'<sup>92</sup> aspect of a marketing strategy. It is the director presented *alongside* his or her film - not for interpretation, but for commercial effect: a product to be consumed rather than contemplated. But Hitchcock's brand was different - and not simply a 'logo' through which to prompt audience identification. By emphasising the connection of Hitchcock's promotional presence in the trailer to his television persona (itself a highly ephemeral phenomena), those texts promote what can be understood as 'the moment of Hitchcock' - evocative of cinema's competitive dialogue with television as a promotional medium - which Johnston points out is often perceived as an 'antagonistic relationship'<sup>93</sup>.

Yet, Johnston's work on the 'rival screen' points strongly to a different interpretation, in which television is a positive and innovative influence on promotional cinematic texts. Johnston documents television's exhibition of technological cinematic advances (such as widescreen and 3D), commenting that the trend of television advertisement used in other productions 'explodes the myth of Hollywood and television as arch rivals'<sup>94</sup>. With that in mind, the 'moment of Hitchcock' also represents a transmedial shift - in which advertising departs from the 'hawking wares', 'fairground' tradition of past convention and moves towards a more considered manner of audience address.

Hitchcock is a transmedial bridge between these two trends: taking the sales pitch style of the television commercial, and adapting it with great effect, for the cinema. The effect this shift has is immediately evident in the trailer for *North By Northwest* (1959), in which Hitchcock's presence manifests as a direct send-up of the salesman role (a conceit he would

---

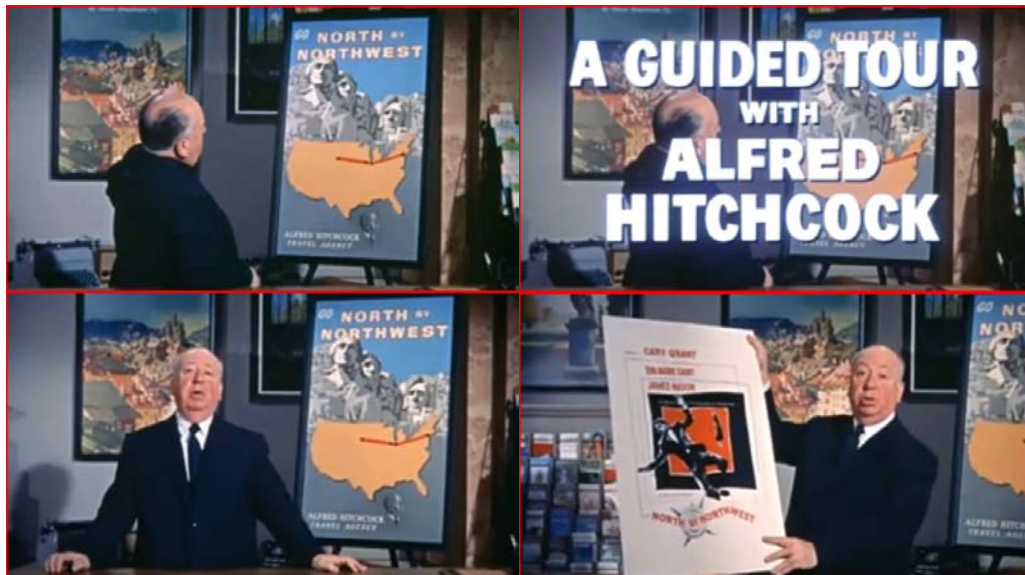
<sup>91</sup> (Verevis: 18)

<sup>92</sup> the idea of the brand relates in distinctive ways to the production and marketing of contemporary Hollywood cinema. (Grainge, 2008: 151)

<sup>93</sup> (Johnston: 62)

<sup>94</sup> behind-the-scenes features for *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* that advertised elements of that film (particularly the special effects and underwater photography) ... the historical detail is fascinating, and explodes the myth of Hollywood and television as arch rivals (Johnston: 62)

repeat in later trailers) - with the audience in on the joke. Hitchcock appears onscreen to discuss the film while, at the same time, holding a poster of the film in his hands. The overall effect is of a schilling salesman, however, it fits neatly with the auteur image-brand that Hitchcock developed and manipulated. He appears initially, arm propped against a desk, staring up at a poster for the 'Alfred Hitchcock Travel Agency'. His tone is playful, yet his words offer somewhat of a non sequitur when it comes to the idea of the trailer as promotion for a coming feature film:



HITCHCOCK: Have you planned your vacation yet? You've a choice between sand and sunburn or mountain climbing and the charley horse. I find it all very enervating but we should all have some kind of holiday. So, my suggestion is a quiet little tour. Say, about two thousand miles.

He produces a poster for *North by Northwest*.

HITCHCOCK: I have just made a motion picture, *North By Northwest*, to show you.

The scene has auteur-branding all over it. Hitchcock is literally presented as a salesman both of 'holidays' and of films, and his name - or brand - appears in text several times. Hitchcock's relationship to the text is playful: linking the film to tropes of entertainment and leisure. As auteur, he is expected to be intimately familiar with his work and yet, as a salesman, he effects a faux objectivity, approaching the film from an unexpected, comedic angle. Considering his level of celebrity, it is likely Hitchcock understood the consequences of his physical inclusion in promotional texts - and the problems of attempting to effect objectivity towards them. Hayden White's account of attempts to historicise nineteenth

century Europe, touched on these issues - and echoes Hitchcock's presence both *in and of* his own promotional text:

'The most important of these problems was created by the fact that the student of the historical process was enclosed within it or involved in it in a way that the student of the natural process was not. There was a sense in which one could legitimately maintain that man was both in nature and outside it, that he participated in the natural process, but that he could also transcend that process in consciousness, assume a position outside it, and view the process as manifested in those levels of natural integration which were demonstrably non- or prehuman<sup>95</sup>.

Hitchcock's wielding of a dual form of address is well-documented. Following the obvious send-up of the artistic/commercial contrast, James Naremore notices the tendency for humorous duality in Hitchcock's films, describing the experience of watching the director as being 'manipulated by a clever, behind-the-scenes entertainer'<sup>96</sup>. Specifically, Hitchcock's 'manipulative' presence adds complexity to the notion of the trailer as 'mere' advert. Naremore mentions Hitchcock's enjoyment of 'playing variations of tone within a given film' and his ease of shifting 'from light comic banter to melodramatic danger'<sup>97</sup> within a single scene - it is clear that this technique is carried over into his trailer presence.

Hitchcock's technique sends up the relationship between art and its crude commercialistic aspect and provides a representation of his complicated presence across his entire canon. Indeed, it is interesting to chart Hitchcock's appearance in his own trailers in order to demonstrate the growing prominence of the auteur-as-celebrity and resulting textual effects of that trend. His earlier trailer appearances are often simply references by intertitle or voice over - but this in itself indicates an auteur-brand becoming more and more recognizable:

---

<sup>95</sup> (White, 1975: 46)

<sup>96</sup> (Naremore, 2004: 23)

<sup>97</sup> (Naremore: 24)



*Foreign Correspondent* (1940)



*Saboteur* (1941)



*Shadow Of A Doubt* (1942)

The evolution of the auteuristic brand is evident: from the simple associative prestige of *Rebecca*, Hitchcock's presence grows more and more grandiose, culminating in a seeming 'ownership' of the film-text in *Shadow Of A Doubt*. The progression to physically appearing in trailers was a natural next step for a director whose personality is fused with the aesthetics of his films.

Below I will examine trailers which deal, like his features, with themes of eroticism and voyeurism, violence and death - and incorporate remarkable strategies of meaning and rhetoric, complicating accepted conventions of commercialism and art. The trailer seems to suit Hitchcock's intentions for filmmaking, offering a provocative and fertile medium for cinematic expression. The trailers selected as case studies for this discussion exhibit elements which bear out Hitchcock's approach to promotional texts - from the earlier stage of his Hollywood career with *Rope*, through to his penultimate film, *Frenzy*. My examination is not intended as a definitive impression of the 'Hitchcockian' movie trailer, or to singularly

redefine existing discourses regarding his auteur status - any gestures to this end are indirect. My larger purpose in selecting Hitchcock's trailers as a canonical group for close analysis is to use his contributions to prompt, generate and illuminate critical thinking towards the trailer form and express its potential for artistic and rhetorical character. In doing so, I intend to raise and apply existing critical approaches up to the trailer format and position my selected examples against a body of theoretical work. As such, I will also use Hitchcock's canon of trailer-texts to introduce discussions of these theoretical concepts.

## Rope

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=6HwSdsG0yYY>

*Rope* (1948) was released before Hitchcock's television series - his presence in the trailer is restricted to paratextual reference in one of the trailer's intertitles. Given the paratext's function to facilitate, or 'make present' the text, Hitchcock's written-visual presence, although restricted to superimposed text, signals a complicated and untypical trailer, which exhibits the characteristics of Sarris' auteur theory and many of the features which continue to distinguish Hitchcock's promotional work from conventional commercial culture. Those distinctive characteristics, well-established in Hitchcock's films, are a particular feature of Gilles Deleuze's work on the Movement and Time-Image. Indeed, Hitchcock is afforded a 'privileged place'<sup>98</sup> in the philosopher's work - one which, according to Ishii-González, positions the director at a 'juncture':

Hitchcock, for Deleuze, is at the juncture, or *is* the juncture, between the two representational systems that characterize the ninety-year history of cinema and which he calls the movement-image and the time-image.<sup>99</sup>

The description evokes Génette's notion of the paratext as a doorway or border - in this case, of space *and* time. In *Rope*, those aspects of the movement and time images - the affect, action and perception images - are on prominent display and, demonstrate the paratextual aspect of Hitchcock's auteur status.

---

<sup>98</sup> (Ishii-González: 128)

<sup>99</sup> (Ishii-González: 129)



The *Rope* trailer's opening involves is an establishing shot of New York's Central Park. We cut to a bench within the park itself and a seated couple, engaged in conversation. The scene will play out with a self-contained narrative and yet, it is worth noting, was never intended to form part of the feature film. The scene stands on its own as a unit of privileged, promotional information, a 'specifically shot ... backstory'<sup>100</sup> relevant only to audiences going on to see the feature film.

For an 'advert', the sequence is peculiar since it is a completed and discrete unit - not lacking in any way and not requiring any further audience action or extratextual information to facilitate comprehension. The scene involves the previously-mentioned couple meeting on a park bench. It turns out that David has just proposed to his girlfriend, Janet, who playfully declines the proposal. David jokingly insists and kisses Janet - who shies away again before walking off. The exchange between the two lovers is characterised by its affective power - and demonstrates the function of Deleuze's affection image. Faces are crucial to the affect and, in cinema, are more than commercial attraction-points: evoking the draw of the film's stars - they act as emotional anchors, standing out from the milieu. In *Mille Plateaux*, Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe the importance of the face:

faces... form the loci of resonance that select the sensed or mental reality and make it conform in advance to a dominant reality<sup>101</sup>

For Deleuze, 'the affection image is the close-up, and the close-up is the face'<sup>102</sup>. In more detail, the face is a plate upon which expression takes place - reflecting both a surface and

---

<sup>100</sup> It begins with an unusual sequence of specifically shot footage that actually provides audiences with a backstory that those who haven't seen this trailer never get. (Kernan: 112)

<sup>101</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 168).

<sup>102</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 87)

'intensive micro-movements'. Faces do not have to be human, or uniform - Deleuze uses the example of a clock:

On the one hand it has hands moved by micro-movements, at least virtual ones, even if we are only shown it once, or several times at long intervals: the hands necessarily form part on an *intensive series* which marks an ascent towards... or tends towards a critical instant, prepares a paroxysm. On the other hand it has a face as receptive immobile surface, receptive plate of inscription, impassive suspense: it is a *reflecting* and *reflected unity*.<sup>103</sup>

Crucially, the affect treats objects and things like faces - 'faceifying' them. Using intensive detail to reflect aspects of the whole, affects are gateways to interior meaning, reflective of a mental reality:

Each time we discover these two poles in something – reflecting surface and intensive micro-movements – we can say that this thing has been treated as a face [visage]; it has been 'envisaged' or rather 'faceified' [visagéifiée], and in turn it stares at us [dévisage], it looks at us... even if it does not resemble a face. Hence the close up of a clock.<sup>104</sup>

Affects can be logos, musical cues, spoken or written phrases. In *Rope*, the couple present an affect of relation: the romantic, erotic advances of the man - the shy, demure retreat of the woman. David's eager, attentiveness and Janet's blushing reaction raise the prospect of voyeurism - as his advances become more lascivious.



The active, affective presence of David is borne out in his swiftly-established proposal attempt, his erotic overtures towards Janet and, finally, his prompt departure from the shot

---

<sup>103</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 87)

<sup>104</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 88)

(and indeed, the scene). In communicating those active desires, the scene illustrates another aspect of the movement image- the perception-image -as it is revealed that the couple is being 'watched' by a narrator, James Stewart's Rupert Cadell:

CADELL: And that's the last time you'll see him alive.

The line marks a shift in objectivity - and indicates a perspective-presence as an ordinating element of the scene. The scale of subjectivity/objectivity is central to the perception image, and the presence of a subject - an agent of a 'look' engenders a percept:

the image is objective when the thing or the set are seen from the viewpoint of someone who remains external to that set. And this is a possible definition but one which is purely nominal, negative, a provisional. For what is to tell us that what we initially think external to a set may not turn out to belong to it?<sup>105</sup>

The tension between the subjective and the objective is integral to an experience of any trailer. It mirrors the same 'border' analogy of G n tte's paratext - organizing perception of the artistic and the commercial, evoking the dual scheme of narrative and metanarrative. Blurred, confused perception of the art/advert dialectic represents Hitchcock's attitude to the trailer: Cadell is indeed both external and internal to the *Rope* scenes. The dynamic fits with Deleuze's argument for a special cinematic perception:

if the cinematographic perception-image constantly passes from the subjective to the objective, and vice versa, should we not ascribe to it a specific, diffuse, supple status, which may remain imperceptible, but which sometimes reveals itself in certain striking cases?<sup>106</sup>

*Rope* demonstrates the potential of the trailer to use perception as a rhetorical tool - altering readings with changes in the subjective quality of the images. Moments of altered meaning continue throughout the trailer - and offer more opportunities to apply Deleuze's movement image. The affective quality of the opening, is delivered through a scheme of conspicuous action - in which David's romantic efforts are coyly rejected by Janet - the pattern can be interpreted as an 'action-image':

---

<sup>105</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 71)

<sup>106</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 72)

just as perception relates movement to 'bodies' (nouns), that is to rigid objects which will serve as moving bodies or as things moved, action relates movement to 'acts' (verbs) which will be the design for an assumed end or result.<sup>107</sup>

Deleuze outlines two formats for interpreting cinematic action.: the 'large' and the 'small' action image. The two formats are distinguished by both the nature of the action the depict - and its effect on the milieu:

As the action-image on all its levels always brings together 'two', it is not surprising that it should have two different aspects itself. The large form - SAS' - moved from the situation to the action which modified the situation. But there is another form, which on the contrary, moves from the action to the situation, towards a new action: ASA'... for convenience, we will give the name 'small form to [this] action image.'<sup>108</sup>

*Rope's* opening presents a large-form - SAS' - action image, in which a situation (S) progresses to a 'transformed situation via the intermediary of the action'<sup>109</sup> (A, S'). The initial situation: the meeting on the bench, receives modifying action: David's advances and Janet's modest rejection, establishing a new situation: David leaves Janet on the bench. The trailer's 'advert' status is overlooked in favour of an action-image which seems textually complete - until, that is, the narrator is introduced - altering the 'complete' reading and spoofing the playful, romantic tone with the ominous: 'That's the last time she ever saw him alive'.

As a sequence available only to trailer-audiences, and not appearing in the finished film, this 'twist' ending to the Central Park episode is a particularly relevant example of the trailer's on-going trend of privileging, concealing and unveiling information. Of course, the point at which Cadell reveals the on-going intrigue also marks a parallel shift in the action image structure, from the large format, changed situation - to the small-format, ASA' structure, in which 'it is the action which discloses the situation... which triggers off a new action'<sup>110</sup>. After the act of proposal, David's absence (a situational change), triggers new action: his murder and the subsequent search for the culprits. The verbal, visual and tonal shift

---

<sup>107</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 65)

<sup>108</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 160)

<sup>109</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 142)

<sup>110</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 160)

demonstrates Deleuze's theory as a way to think about the images in their promotional and artistic capacity - and foregrounds an ongoing rhetorical pattern of interpretation and reinterpretation throughout the trailer.

The spoken signal ('...and that's the last time you'll ever see him alive'), introduces Stewart's as-yet unknown off-screen narrator - and various signs from the movement-image emphasise his importance. Stewart is affective: the medium-shot of Cadell staring sternly into camera foregrounds his status as a contemporarily recognizable star, informing both the narrative and the audience's extratextual presence. James Stewart will play an invigilating role in both the trailer and the feature film and his trailer function exploits that. He governs action in the trailer from this point: questioning, informing, investigating - the agent of the actions driving the ASA' structure. In fact, Cadell's stance rehearses another format change, found in the openings of the television show *Alfred Hitchcock Presents...*



Cadell addressing the audience in the *Rope* trailer



Stills from the introduction to episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents...*

Although *Rope* predated the show, it demonstrates the function of the 'televsual' affect, invoking Sarris' auteur theory and an intimacy of address incorporated into a rhetorical scheme. Cadell is urgent, demanding and reflexive: the audience is both watching and being watched. Like television, there is a commercial undertone - pointing to a financial need for viewers. The film, of course, has not had to make the audience pay for a ticket - yet.

Cadell's presence, in both a visual and aural sense, at this point and the following sequence, continues the trend of privileging information in the trailer narrative: the initially

straightforward Central Park sequence discloses its sexual connotation: David's erotic advances towards Janet - before a second, more sinister aspect: Cadell's revelation of David's ultimate fate. David and Janet's conversation begins the trend *in medias res*:

JANET: I *do* want to. I just want to wait until after you graduate.

DAVID: I don't.

JANET: It's only a month!

DAVID: A month?!

JANET: (Sarcastic) Please...

DAVID: Sorry. I personally consider us engaged as of now - congratulations.

David's advances are aggressive, he leans over Janet, ducking in at one point to kiss her. Janet, by contrast, is poised and defensive, barely looking David's way. Traditional assumptions of a sexually predatory male are warranted and the spoken narrative between the two reinforces that. Yet the audience is left guessing as to the subject of the couple's exchange. The interplay is confusing and seemingly contradictory ('I do...' 'I don't...') and, while the apparent subject of marriage is mooted by David, even this is revealed to be spurious: it is merely *when* to get engaged which the couple cannot seem to agree. David's overt eroticism and aggressive overtures are subverted by this opaque dialogue and require constant reinterpretation. Only when 'engagement' is mentioned, does the exchange become specific enough to rule out other possible (and lurid) interpretive spins. The reveal and reinterpretation of information swings the trailer across the tonal scale - from overt sexual overtones to a more romantic, comedic scenario. With Cadell's accusatory introduction, breaking the fourth wall, the audience itself is implicated, or at least involved - 'the last time you'll see him alive'.

Indeed, according to Cadell, the audience has a part to play in this narrative. Viewers of only the feature film do not even see David alive: he appears only briefly, having just been murdered by the film's two antagonists, Shaw and Morgan. Salient information is playfully concealed: David's presence in the trailer narrative and image sequence is now defined by an *absence*. David's disappearance - his murder - comes in the wake of a situation turned on its head. A complete narrative becomes incomplete and a predatory, sexually motivated male attempting to seduce a female, becomes the victim rather than his blushing, retreating fiancée. This act - of unexpected disappearance - reinforces the trailer's overarching rhetoric:

the reinterpretation of situations, with privileged information. The situation (the absence of David) discloses new action, the murder, the search - and is part of the emergent ASA' structure:

This time it is the action which discloses the situation, a fragment or an aspect of the situation, which triggers off a new action. The action advances blindly and the situation is disclosed in darkness, or in ambiguity. From action to action, the situation gradually emerges, varies, and finally either becomes clear or retains its mystery<sup>111</sup>

David's absence emphasises Janet's conspicuous presence in the forthcoming stream of images: the other characters appearing in a prosodic montage, while Cadell announces each of their names in the fashion of a police 'roll-call'. This, alongside the constant references to David, results in a grand sense of dramatic irony in which the focus falls on the other character's ignorance of his murder. The montage consists of a series of affects - close-ups of the faces of the cast. Cadell lists them as they appear:

CADELL: What happened to David Kentley changed my life completely and the lives of seven others: Janet Walker, Henry Kentley, the boy's father; his aunt, Mrs Atwater; his best friend, Kenneth Lawrence; the housekeeper, named Mrs Wilson...



CADELL: And the two who were responsible for everything: Brandon Shaw and Philip Morgan.

---

<sup>111</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 160)

The faces provide affective accompaniment to the voice-over: close, match-cuts, appearing blank and unreadable - perhaps entertaining only the slightest hint of reaction to Cadell's words. Given the accompanying voice-over - delivered as an accusing roll-call - the overt restriction of expressive movement ('poker faces') creates a peculiar type of affect, reminiscent of police 'mug shots' exposed to the continuous interrogative gaze of the film camera. The perceptive quality of the images feeds into this pattern. Flat, close shots of characters' faces consolidate the invigilator ('police camera') perspective, and invite a subjective look - a percept of judgement - and render the faces affective. Yet, in keeping with this trend of reinterpretation, affective function is subverted: creating meaning becomes a process of intense study and effort - who is concealing information? Again, the peculiar treatment of information is highlighted when Cadell introduces the final two characters - and answers that question himself: 'the two who were responsible for it all'.

The framing of the faces is conspicuous - each stares at a point just off-screen, while the two culprits break this solo trend and appear together, looking at each other. While the single characters may be staring at each other, across shots, Shaw and Morgan present a complete circuit - mutually implicating each other. Their presence echoes the earlier image of David and Janet, seated on the bench during the opening scene of the trailer. The notion of a 'short circuit' evokes Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the faciality 'machine'. A machine assembled when all appropriate components are in place - and activated by subjectivity.

Concrete faces cannot be assumed to come ready made. They are engendered by an *abstract machine of faciality (visagéité)*, which produces them at the same time as it gives the signifier its white wall and subjectivity its black hole. Thus the black hole/white wall system is, to begin with, not a face but the abstract machine that produces faces according to the changeable combinations of its cogwheels. Do not expect the abstract machine to resemble what it produces, or will produce.<sup>112</sup>

The faciality machine requires an observer's presence - and their subjectivity - to activate. *Rope's* affective 'line-up' sequence creates an increasingly complex net, building on the relation between characters in each individual instance. In the image of Shaw and Morgan, however, the viewer sees a 'completed' circuit: an already functioning faciality machine. The viewer's presence in this affective structure is extraneous: affective relation is already taking place between the two characters. In this machine, the viewer is a redundant component. This redundancy is, of course provocative: the viewer *remains* an interested

---

<sup>112</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari: 168)

party - the effect of Shaw and Morgan's reciprocal look is to prompt a reinterpretation of the machine's effect and highlight any assumptions on the part of the viewer: these are the guilty parties, not the other guilty-looking characters.

The affective net serves to emphasise not only Shaw and Morgan's guilt in David's disappearance but also their romantic relationship. Part of *Rope's* subtext is Shaw and Morgan's implied homosexuality and the trailer uses this in its visual rhetoric: David and Janet's romantic clinch, re-presented here as an attempt to cover up a murder. The editorial positioning of the other characters reinforces the notion - coupled sequentially as 'woman, man, woman, man, woman', they form a pattern from which Shaw and Morgan are highly distinguishable. Once again the trailer privileges information before rhetorically subverting it - going so far as to explicitly reveal the culprits in a parody of David and Janet's more 'wholesome', heterosexual relationship.

The process of concealment and revelation continues. The roll-call cuts to an immobile, exterior shot of a window, looking into Morgan and Shaw's apartment, the curtains are drawn. The silence is broken by a bloodcurdling scream - presumably issued by David during his murder. The start of another ASA' action-image, the drawn-curtains hide the action as it is being perpetrated. Yet, while the visuals may be hidden, the meaning of the scene is not. Indeed any subterfuge has already been exposed - the audience already knows who is being killed and who the culprits are. Again, conventions of mystery are subverted; images of concealment and intrigue are devalued, almost to the point of redundancy (or pure rhetoric) while other, less conventional narrative components are given meaning (in addition to their rhetorical purpose). The trailer moves quickly to address the only remaining metanarrative question: 'will the mystery be solved?' Leading up to this, is an affective montage of narrative action-images: the camera sweeps into a close-up of Cadell's face before cutting to Morgan smashing a glass in frustration. Next, the guests sitting in the room - and then a shot of Cadell opening the trunk in which the body is hidden. Next, a brief shot of Cadell removing the rope from his pocket, cut against Shaw panicking:

SHAW: He's got it! He knows! He knows!

The sequence demonstrates explicitly Cadell's solving of the mystery and completion of the narrative. The presence of the murder weapon - a brief image of the rope - cut into the midst of the rapid montage offers another fragment of revealed information: the rope emerges tantalisingly from its place of hiding - a pocket - as if emerging from the celluloid itself. The shot is innocuous enough when compared to the frenetic montage, but the audience is, by

this point, informed sufficiently to infer its meaning in the ASA' structure. Indeed, it prompts a final action - as Shaw and Morgan attempt to overpower Cadell. Small-form (ASA') action images permeate the trailer in an accelerating cavalcade of images: specific actions are engendered by a series of transitional situations in which the mystery is played out in its entirety. Already set up as the 'chief investigator', it is Cadell who carries out these actions: opening the trunk, taking the rope from his pocket, and finally fighting over the gun. Each action is prompted by a dynamically changing situation as transitive as the images which parade through the closing montage. The final montage is mimetic of the metanarrative: an attempt to recreate the perceived energy and excitement of the film itself.

This final, emergent shot of the rope resolves any lingering obscurities over the nature of the mystery. The trailer's emphatic delivery of both the culprits and the fate of their scheme completes the strange narrative experience in which audience expectation is constantly piqued and then subverted. While the movement-images carry an appearance of conventional storytelling, it is clear this is no ordinary 'whodunit': the answers to 'who' and 'how' have been rendered irrelevant. Since he delivers his own metanarrative, Cadell's efforts to resolve the mystery are also somewhat redundant. His narration concerns his own part in the story and is a component of the objective facade of the metanarrative: its implied distance from the subject matter is compromised by its position as part of that subject matter. The trailer confounds expectation and shifts meaning at every turn. By its close, it is clear that the suspense and dramatic interest do not originate from traditional conventions of mystery but in the spectacle of a 'perfect crime'. Stewart's presence bears out this notion: his spoken contribution (voiceover) is both textual and paratextual. His paratextual contributions explain the plot in extensive detail, weaving the situational tapestry of a large form SAS', before the flurry of action unravels it. Addressing the audience, Cadell is stern and seemingly distasteful of his task, a consequence of his omnipresence - and access to every gruesome part the metanarrative and feature narrative.

Cadell is more than just a representation of the metanarrative, framed in a medium-close shot when he first appears, Cadell is affect - a loci of recognition. James Stewart - as himself and a character in the film - is the point of transition, the gateway for audiences, to the interior of the film. This, of course, is the effect of Cadell's breaking of the fourth wall, since it is Cadell, and not Stewart, who makes this address. Here is the essence of promotional rhetoric: presupposing a receptive audience, willing to receive textual insight. Cadell's role concentrates that insight into an affective image which governs interpretation. After that first appearance, his textual contributions are more localised and consist of actions which affect

small-form ASA' images. The final montage (an extended ASA') leads the audience, purposefully to the rhetorical conclusion that the real experience of the film is not to be found in any of the conventional mystery beats - but in the question of whether Shaw and Morgan will get away with their 'perfect' crime.

## Psycho

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=EzAnE4zuYuA&feature=fvst>

The *Psycho* (1960) trailer was released during the run of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents...* It is interesting to note the correlation of the show's previously mentioned popularity with the director's appearance in this and subsequent film trailers. His appearances were component parts of both a commercial 'branding', and a rhetorical pattern within his trailers.

Hitchcock's presence in the *Psycho* trailer is central to the metanarrative: he personally conducts a tour of the film's set - although this tour seems to take place within the diegesis of the film rather than a now-vacant backlot. Hitchcock's tour takes place in a curious temporal environment: he describes the events of the film as if they happened in the recent past, yet the emphasis is very much on a future experience of those events - specifically, the audience's. The tour inhabits three temporal spaces, the past, the present and a potential future and exemplifies the crystalline time-relationship trailers have with an audience.

Hitchcock's role echoes Stewart's in the trailer for *Rope*. His presence is affective, a recognizable gateway for audiences: allowing access to the interior of the film - its genre, its tone... Once again, however, Hitchcock manipulates the rhetoric of this approach. During the tour, an affable Hitchcock takes the camera around the grounds of the Bates' Motel - into the house and finally into the motel itself. The director engages the camera with a narrative concerning, as he describes it, 'the scene of the crime':

HITCHCOCK: Good afternoon. 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'.

His narration takes a highly objective tone, adding almost 'forensic' detail to descriptions of events. This time, however, Hitchcock is less explicit than Stewart's Cadell - and is instead more playful. He constantly hints at the 'dire, horrible events' which took place, without going into detail. There is a layer of irony at work here - and through the entirety of the

trailer - as Hitchcock creates a disconnection with the subject matter he is to discuss. He is conspicuously 'matter-of-fact' towards a series of events which are macabre and shocking to say the least. He appears as an invigilator or investigator - a detective - emotionally detached from proceedings to which he is, in fact, instigator.



Hitchcock touring the *Psycho* set/diegesis

The rhetorical effect of this quasi-forensic approach, contributes to the strange sense of time within the trailer. The trailer promotes audience anticipation for the future release of *Psycho* through a representation of 'past' time. In one sense of the word, the events of the film are in the past, this is the case for Hitchcock too, since he effectively authored them. Paradoxically, the perspective of the trailer looks forward, to the future, to what will happen. The eye cast by the camera on the trailer illuminates these facets simultaneously - the past, the present and the future - a crystalline image. Writing about the crystalline image, Deleuze argues that an image is a composition of its own 'present' and, at the same time, the 'past' that particular 'present' will imminently become. A component of the present is also the indeterminate past and future - the virtual:

The crystal image, which forms the cornerstone of Deleuze's time-image, is a shot that fuses the past-ness of the recorded event with the present-ness of its viewing. The crystal image is the indivisible unity of the virtual image and the actual image.<sup>113</sup>

This virtual facet of the crystal image incorporates the possibility of a potential future - spawning from its 'present' - this virtual will become both present and past when it falls under the crystal image. The virtual evokes events that could happen, or indeed have happened (whereas the 'actual' evokes events which are localised, consciously, in a past or future. Once more the trailer elegantly evokes the essence of the paratext - a border between two states or, as Totaro puts it: 'a constant two-way mirror that splits the present into two

---

<sup>113</sup> (Totaro, 1999: par. 2)

heterogeneous directions'<sup>114</sup>. The 'past-ness' inherent in the *Psycho* trailer is reinforced by Hitchcock's stroll through the film's now-vacant narrative space. The only forward narrative momentum comes in the form of his comedic narrative which he uses to relate the events of the film with a humorous faux disgust:

HITCHCOCK: ...and in this house; the most dire, horrible events took place. I think we can go inside because the place is up for sale... oh, I don't know who's going to buy it now.

Having moved inside the house itself, Hitchcock mentions one of the murders:

HITCHCOCK: It was at the top of these stairs that the second murder took place. She came out of the door there and met the victim at the top. Of course, 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 [sic] it hit the floor. It's difficult to describe the way... the *twisting* of the ... of the ... it's ... I won't dwell upon it.

The tour sets up the trailer as a large-format (SAS') action-image, fleshing out *Psycho*'s narrative environment through a series of sketched 'situations', presented by the director, and edified with innocuous moments of action on his part (walking, looking, investigating). The tour begins with Hitchcock standing in the parking lot of the Bates Motel and, after walking through the set, ends with him in the infamous bathroom. Since the film's narrative environment provides the setting and since Hitchcock's tour focuses on 'what happened', the physical and spatial elements of the trailer are rendered peculiar. The events making them relevant are part of the 'past' of the trailer's diegesis. The film is, in a sense, already 'over' and yet the trailer presents these past events as both 'not begun' and 'yet to begin' - imminent. David Rodowick sees this pattern as an effect of the crystalline image releasing time 'from its subordination to movements linked with physical action':

Once chronology is pulverized, time is fragmented like so many facets of a shattered crystal. The chronological continuum is flayed, shaving past, present and future into distinct series, discontinuous and incommensurable.<sup>115</sup>

Hitchcock's attitude to the events of the film - playful and coy, uses the disconnected, 'pulverized' aesthetic of time rhetorically. He describes the murder in very evasive terms,

---

<sup>114</sup> (Totaro: par 3.)

<sup>115</sup> (Rodowick, 1997: 3)

emphasising the virtual aspect of the crystalline gaze. Although the murder is very strongly implied, he is careful only to allude to aspects of it: 'there was a knife... the victim tumbled and fell... I think the back broke...' His account is deliberately disjointed, never describing the act of stabbing, nor providing an uninterrupted string of events leading to the victim dead at the foot of the stairs. On this aspect of the crystalline, Rodowick notes, 'the image is no longer useful in its analogical and spatial rendering of an object'<sup>116</sup>. In *Psycho*, Hitchcock uses these de-contextualised, affective moments ("the knife"... "the victim tumbled"... "the back broke") to rhetorical and metanarrative effect. Images in the *Psycho* trailer are cut loose from chronological anchors - and the tour theme is particularly suited to the strategy, as Hitchcock moves through a time-less diegesis, alluding constantly to the imminence of a virtual future, a coming experience, as part of the fabric of rhetorical appeal.

There is more to say about the *Psycho* trailer's exploitation of its status as metanarrative. As Hitchcock excavates this past, and often-virtual, narrative space, he evokes several taboo and voyeuristic overtones, delving into the more sinister aspects of the feature in great detail. In Norman's mother's room, Hitchcock begins to snoop:

HITCHCOCK: Here's the woman's room, still beautifully preserved.

The trailer is full of subtle, humorous references to its feature antecedent. Hitchcock's comments here obviously reflect the state in which Norman's mother is found at the film's climax (hardly 'beautifully preserved'). Hitchcock alludes to her actions within the film, positing a sexual tension around the woman we presume to be the murderess - tension which, obviously, will turn out to be somewhat misplaced:

Hitchcock walks to the bed and points to it.

HITCHCOCK: And the imprint of her figure on the bed where she used to lay.

He walks over to the cupboard.

HITCHCOCK: I think some of her clothes are still in this wardrobe.

He opens the wardrobe, the contents of which are not visible to the audience. He looks inside before throwing a quick, conspiratorial glance at the camera.

---

<sup>116</sup> (Rodowick: 80)



Hitchcock's tour takes the camera out of the Bates' home and into the motel itself. He ventures into the bathroom in which the notorious murder takes place:

HITCHCOCK: Well, they've cleaned all this up now. Big difference... you should have seen the blood. The whole place was... well, it's too horrible to describe. Dreadful.

He turns to the toilet.

HITCHCOCK: Now, I'll tell you, a very important clue was found here.

He lifts the toilet lid.

HITCHCOCK: Down there.



Again, his words are evasive and laced, this time, with a scatological humour. The 'clue' is simply 'a' clue, certainly nothing specific enough to create significant meaning within Hitchcock's narrative. His description of the murder itself is maddeningly incomplete - in stark opposition to the *Rope's* playful subversion of the idea of mystery - and indicating the divergent metanarrative strategies of both texts. Indeed, to even find the clue in this case, one would have the distasteful job of searching inside the toilet. Instead of providing explicit information on crucial aspects of a hidden murder, the *Psycho* narrative mentions explicit aspects of the murder while concealing important information like the culprit's identity.

It is worth mentioning the director's infamous silhouette - particularly evident in the above screenshot. The notion of Hitchcock-as-personality is connected, directly here, to his television show and his associated celebrity status. The metanarrative becomes explicitly extratextual here - referencing, not only Hitchcock's involvement in the film, but his involvement in other, similarly popular but independent projects.

The forensic quality of Hitchcock's discourse and the images that accompany it are constantly emphasised by frequent mentions of evidence, 'clues' and 'crimes' - yet this pattern is, at the same time, undermined by his darkly humorous interjections and voyeuristic overtures. The quasi-forensic, illusory objectivity is resoundingly shattered with the trailer's final shot. Hitchcock pulls back the shower curtain to reveal a woman, standing in the bathtub, who screams in terror.



The diegesis is broken in a humorous, self-referential fashion, which brings the narrative very much back into the present: was the woman waiting in the shower for the duration of his 'tour'? What happens to her now? By vaunting the lurid imminence of her fate, along with the question of her presence in the recent indeterminate 'past' of the trailer itself, Hitchcock renders even the narrative crystalline. David Bordwell's work is useful in interpreting the *Psycho* trailer - in which narrative is composed from disparate temporal moments, and rendered coherent by virtue of what is understood to be left out. Bordwell's notion of 'fabula' underpins the raw and chronological information behind the representation of a story:

The fabula is thus a pattern which perceivers of narratives create through assumptions and inferences. It is the developing result of picking up narrative cues, applying schemata, framing and testing hypotheses<sup>117</sup>

In the trailer, the fabula is shared between narrative and metanarrative. The void-space of trailer narrative, left by assumed or inferred components, appeals to Deleuze's ideas for the movement and time images' representations of 'becoming'. However, the fabula requires

---

<sup>117</sup> (Bordwell, 1985: 49)

representation - and Bordwell uses 'syuzhet' and 'style' to describe the 'actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula in the film':

Syuzhet... is a more abstract construct, the patterning of the story as a blow-by-blow recounting of the film could render it... "Syuzhet" names the architectonics of the film's presentation of the fabula... Style... mobilizes components - particularly instantiations of film techniques - according to principles of organization... "style" simply names the film's systematic use of cinematic devices <sup>118</sup>

Hitchcock himself manifests as syuzhet and style - as he guides the camera throughout the diegesis and delivers his own narrative account of events. In keeping with his established playfulness, his presence complicates any understanding of the narrative - and expectations of the trailer as an advert. The fabula, like the crystal image, doubles in the trailer, working on both narrative and metanarrative levels, but Hitchcock exploits the process of interpretation jumping back and forward through time while effecting moments of black humour and rhetorical flourish. Hitchcock wanted *Psycho's* trailer to be a way of 'outsmarting the movie-going public'<sup>119</sup> and his efforts to aestheticise and exploit time, narrative, action and his own celebrity, reveal the ambition with which he treats the advert.

## Vertigo

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=F2C4AKtrebs>

Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) appears, at first glance, a more conventional trailer than the stylised *Psycho*. No extratextual material is used, (almost) all content is derived from the antecedent feature (excepting numerous intertitles) and no omniscient voice-over makes narrative contributions (although the voice-over does make descriptive contributions). Yet the trailer still exhibits a remarkable, carefully calculated visual arrangement with a clear rhetorical intent - one which values the importance of the gaze, or the 'look', and its connection to the affect.

---

<sup>118</sup> (Bordwell: 49)

<sup>119</sup> (Rebello: 147)

The *Vertigo* trailer is comprised almost entirely of affect and perception-images and this trend facilitates the narrative. It is in the relationship between the actors - James Stewart and Kim Novak - that the appeal and meaning of the trailer is created, lending its 'story' a distinct visual character. These images frame the actors both individually and as a couple, in a pattern of affective moments - the first highlighting the stars' appeal. Stewart's Scottie, wakes from a dream, staring anxiously. In the following shot, Novak's Madeleine, stares wildly, backed against a wall - equally anxious. Then: both stars, locked in embrace while waves crash against rocks behind them. This montage establishes the characters' emotional relationship through parity and associative affection-images.



Like *Rope's* line-up sequence, the faciality 'machine' is activated by a reading of the scene. Meaning is ascribed to the star's expressions as a product of that machine and changes depending on the texture of surrounding images: Novak's positioning as second in the sequence imbues her affect with a sense of objectification - she is being looked at by Stewart's character - a trend echoed later in the trailer. In the shot where Stewart and Novak embrace, we observe a 'completed circuit' and the complexity of the affective sensation increases. We observe an affective circuit between two people - and, in this case, relate notions of eroticism and love. Waves crash in the background, mirroring the embrace of the stars and modulating the effect of that action with connotations of violence and conflict. The affectiveness serves a metatextual function. The characters appear to be looking at each other - or perhaps at the same thing. Either way, the emotive content of the images is interconnected and unknowable to an audience - the faciality machine does not create the person, or the body or the head - it is a de-territorialisation of the face:

A concerted effort is made to do away with the body and corporeal coordinates through which the multidimensional or polyvocalic semiotics operated. Bodies are disciplined, corporeality dismantled, becomings-animal hounded out,

deterritorialization pushed to a new threshold - a jump is made from the organic strata to the straits of significance and subjectification.<sup>120</sup>

This disconnection leads to confusion over the nature of the affect, which Eric Shouse points out is 'not a personal feeling' - but is 'prepersonal'<sup>121</sup> - and not a clear indicator of internal emotion, which may be 'genuine or feigned'<sup>122</sup>. This ambiguity is reflexive: there is also disorientation associated with the condition of vertigo. The third image in the sequence of the montage, the embrace, is an image of comfort, anchoring and security in a sequence otherwise representative of the chaotic effects of 'vertigo'. The affective quality of Novak and Stewart's relationship is experienced in turmoil - a crystalline image in the midst of a disorienting, vertiginous sequence.

Subsequent scenes - focusing on the changing roles of Stewart and Novak - foreground the affective and perceptive content of the vertiginous effect. Affects depict the stars in close-up and often together, while percepts depict Stewart looking at Novak's character. Deleuze mentions the 'double regime' inherent in perception images. This 'double system of reference' covers 'the perception of perception' and refers to the availability of percepts to both subjective and objective interpretations - although it may often be difficult to distinguish which is which<sup>123</sup>. While Stewart looking at Novak's character comprises the large part of the perceptive content, the trailer lacks a prominent, encapsulating narrative - excepting the voice over which functions in a limited and descriptive capacity. Instead, the SAS' action-image is woven around bodies, and specifically the faces, of Stewart and Novak, simply moving through environments. Since the vast majority of the perception-images in the trailer depict Stewart's subjective perspective, the 'visual' narrative is driven by him, with Novak frequently made the subject of both the camera and Stewart's gaze.

This trend is borne out in a detailed examination of the trailer. The opening shot is a close-up of a dictionary. The book opens on the page exhibiting the definition of the word 'vertigo'.

---

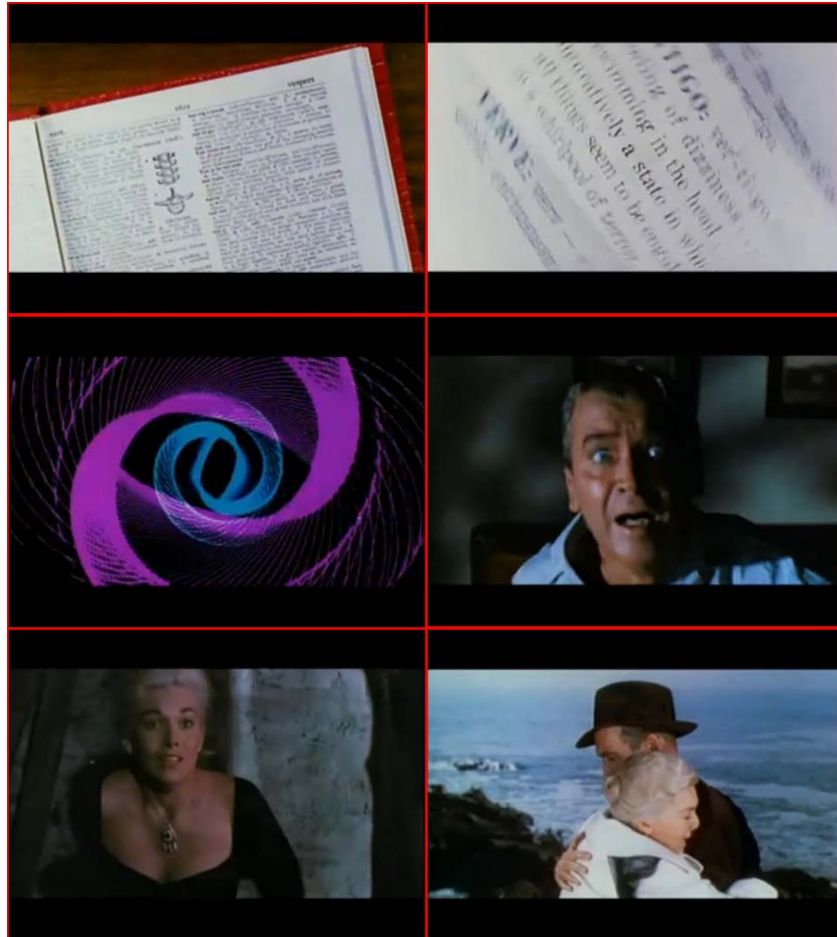
<sup>120</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari: 181)

<sup>121</sup> affect is not a personal feeling. Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*. (Shouse, 2005: par. 2)

<sup>122</sup> (Shouse: par. 4)

<sup>123</sup> Deleuze's example involves a character entering a room, followed by the camera. The two potential perception-images available are the character's own subjective perception of the room or the camera's objective interpretation. Deleuze notes 'this is the perception of perception, or the perception-image, considered under a double regime, in a double system of reference. (Deleuze, 1986: 67)

The shot is affective - the book serves as a face: it is, as Deleuze would put it, a receptive plate of inscription' on which the audience infers meaning. The close-up begins to spin - and match-cuts to a spinning, circular pattern - which cuts again to the close-up of Stewart's face, followed by the close-up of Novak:



The affective shots of disorientation in the *Vertigo* trailer

It is worth noting the status of written text within the trailer. The opening affect, depicts not just the open page of the dictionary but the word 'vertigo' itself. The word (and the book) begins to spin and takes on a decidedly vertiginous effect and the word itself becomes affective - the spinning text becomes unreadable and is replaced by the lurid, spinning geometric patterns which engender disorientation. Here is an early indication that faces, affects, will be untrustworthy at the very point at which the transfer of expression happens. While the affect itself cannot really lie since interpretation of the expression is located with its receiver, affects in the *Vertigo* trailer are highly transitive and discourage viewers from relying on what they may think they have seen in an on-going process of comprehension.

Faces in this and other trailers form 'syntagms'. A Metzian approach to film imagery - which organises homogenous sections of film and frames 'filmic images' as 'closer, all things considered, to a sentence than to a word'<sup>124</sup>. James Monaco offers a description of syntagma:

These must be either autonomous shots – which are entirely independent of what comes before and after them – or what he calls “syntagmas”: that is, units that have meaningful relationships with each other. (We might call these “scenes” or “sequences”, but Metz reserves those terms for individual types of syntagma.)<sup>125</sup>

The sequence of affects establishes the role of the face in the trailer on a syntagmatic level . In the trailer, each syntagma is structured around the act of looking or being looked at, perceiving or being perceived - understanding of this pattern relies on the discrimination of syntagmatic elements. The trailer format exploits syntagmatic structure to high rhetorical effect - in *Vertigo* we are encouraged to group scenes and shots in distinct syntagmatic order, despite the frequent complication of disorienting factors. The exercise is subversive: order and logic break down in the face of unreliable perceptive content. This pattern is demonstrated in the following sequence: Scottie climbs onto a chair, is overcome with vertigo and faints. Wide shots, part of the action-image of him clambering onto the furniture become affective and perceptive: a close shot of Scottie's face cuts to his disoriented view down towards the street before cutting to another close-up affect as he is overcome.

---

<sup>124</sup> (Metz, 1974: 66)

<sup>125</sup> (Monaco, 1981: 186)



Subsequent syntagma follows a similar formula: an action-image of Scottie entering Novak's bedroom, an affect-image as she is woken - and another affect of the two of them together. The following syntagma has Scottie approaching Madeleine Elster. A medium shot quickly becomes a perception-image - Scottie's - directed at Elster across a green and overgrown cemetery. In the consecutive scene, comprised, for the most part, of perception images, Scottie approaches Elster as she wanders perilously close to the water beneath San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. Each syntagma in this pattern is distinguished by a clear perspective and, following the narrative cues and the transitive affects, asks the audience to revise readings of that perspective repeatedly. Each time a revision is made, it is done so to a close-up, affect-image of one of one of the lead characters - most frequently, Scottie. Indeed, from the point after which the trailer depicts Scottie fainting as a result of his vertigo, every image of Novak is actually one in which she is the subject of Stewart's gaze. Although the image may not immediately be presented as a percept, Scottie's character is promptly established as doing the disorienting 'looking'.

Novak's character (or characters) represents a mysterious object, driving the narrative of the trailer as her image is chased by Scottie's perception. Novak's face literally changes over the course of the trailer, reflecting the moment (in the feature film) when Scottie believes he has seen Elster supernaturally resurrected as 'Judy Barton'. This involves a blurring effect to which Scottie reacts (with his own affective moment) within the diegesis of the trailer. Despite the metamorphosis, Novak remains the central image in a structure of images built around her. Here, again, is a transitive affective moment: Scottie, Elster and Barton's faces dissolve into each other in insubstantial, 'gaseous' manner. This gaseous perception is well-

suiting to the *Vertigo* trailer (and trailers in a broader sense). It evokes a 'gaseous' perceptive state, which Deleuze argues demonstrates cinema's potential to render perspective representative of the 'pure vision of a non-human eye' - an eye which 'would be in things'<sup>126</sup>. In the percept-image of Elster transforming into Barton, the shot connotes time, space and the supernatural. It presents a spatiality and chronology impossible to mundane human perception. The result is dizzying and overtly crystalline:



The trailer's focus on Scottie's vision and vertiginous perception is evident from the opening affect and its following sequence: the affective, spinning circular pattern, in which highly disorienting imagery is presented affectively. Trailer audiences are encouraged to focus on Madeleine, but the perspective through which that focus takes place is problematic - is it Scottie's? Our own? Even the descriptive narration encourages the pattern:

NARRATOR: A beautiful girl, haunted by the desperate, unexplainable urge to destroy herself!

When Scottie attempts - and fails - to overcome his vertigo in the chair sequence, a pattern is established which is echoed throughout the trailer, one in which movement-images rapidly segue towards subjectivity, interiority and a gaseous, insubstantive state. Scottie's role in the trailer is reactionary: he responds to what he sees. This is appropriate since his function is ostensibly to look at Elster, or the situation around her. A gender discourse is at work here - while, in the Mulveyian sense, the 'active/male' presence is one which looks at the 'passive/female' body as a 'sexual object... the leitmotiff of erotic spectacle'<sup>127</sup>, *Vertigo* twists our expectation by having Scottie become passive, overcome by what he sees. Indeed, the sequence ends with him fainting into the arms of his female companion. The prevalence of affective close-ups of Scottie's face and percepts rooted within Scottie's subjectivity

---

<sup>126</sup> In his discussion of gaseous perception, Deleuze evokes Vertov's notion of the cine-eye as one which 'couples together any point whatsoever of the universe in any temporal order whatsoever'. Deleuze notes that 'Everything is at the service of variation and interaction: slow or high-speed shots, superimposition, fragmentation, deceleration [demultiplication], micro-shooting...' (Deleuze, 1986: 80)

<sup>127</sup> (Mulvey, 1999: 837)

reinforce a trend of perception jumping around the environment in a gaseous montage of shots. After Scottie's fainting episode, the trailer cuts to a new perceptive sequence: Scottie hurries into Barton's bedroom before a cut to an affect/percept of Novak in bed. The focus quickly shifts from the objective - a shot of Scottie within a small-form action image - to Scottie's gaze itself: from an exterior to an interior. Although no visual cue explicitly implies Scottie's agency or position as subject, Barton's words and actions are sufficient to suggest it is she who is the object of the gaze:

BARTON: If I let you change me, will that do it? If I do what you tell me... will you love me?

SCOTTIE: Yes. Yes.

BARTON: Alright. Alright then, I'll do it. I don't care anymore about me.

Barton's remarks, concerning her intention to conform to his vision of her, points to a subjective assertion of Scottie's perception. Scottie maintains a passive presence throughout the scene, devoted wholly to perceiving Barton. In his interview with Hitchcock, Truffaut mentions this sequence specifically, drawing out the complicated question of agency as Scottie struggles with his own desire to objectify Barton:

AH: What I liked best is when the girl came back after having her hair dyed blond. James Stewart is disappointed because she hasn't put her hair up in a bun. What this really means is that the girl has almost stripped, but she still won't take her knickers off. When he insists, she says, "All right!" and goes into the bathroom while he waits outside. What Stewart is really waiting for is for the woman to emerge totally naked this time, and ready for love.

FT: That didn't occur to me, but the close up on Stewart's face as he's waiting for her to come out of the bathroom is wonderful, he's almost got tears in his eyes.<sup>128</sup>

Further sequences confirm this visual strategy - part of the rhetoric of confusion and disorientation. The sequence at the Golden Gate Bridge involves an action-image re-established as perception, once Scottie is revealed to be viewing Elster from a distance. The cemetery sequence is another good example:

---

<sup>128</sup> (Truffaut: 244)



Scottie explores the cemetery



Scottie watches Elster/Barton at the Golden Gate Bridge

During Elster's metamorphosis into the Barton character, over whom Scottie will begin to obsess, Scottie's gaze is again revealed incrementally. The close shot of a florist's window eases out to involve Scottie, who is looking at a display in the window. He turns his gaze out of shot - and camera cuts to an image of Elster which itself fades into an image of Barton. Michael Walker points out that the notion of voyeurism in flux is a characteristic of the feature film - while first depicting Scottie as voyeur, in retrospect we realise that Judy as 'Madeleine' was in effect an exhibitionist<sup>129</sup>. The trailer mimics the confusing effect this has on notions of agency and objectivity:

She knew that Scottie was following and observing her; she ensured that he always kept up with her and had a good view. But if this suggests that 'Madeleine' was the figure in control, leading Scottie, it should be qualified: 'Madeleine' was herself being controlled by the future murderer, Elster.<sup>130</sup>

The pattern of subjective transitivity and affective disorientation is significant and relevant to the trailer format in a capacity beyond *Vertigo*. The syntagmas of perception seem to jump into uncoordinated moments of time and space, and describing Deleuze's gaseous state - a framework with connective points to 'any-space-whatever':

Space is no longer a particular determined space, it has become any-space-whatever [espace quelconque], to use Pascal Augé's term... Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which

---

<sup>129</sup> (Walker, 2005: 171)

<sup>130</sup> (Walker: 171)

has merely lost its homogeneity, that is the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible.<sup>131</sup>

This effect is particularly resonant in film trailers, since the technique occupies space both in the narrative world of the trailer as film-text – and in the metanarrative sphere of the trailer as metafilm, moving from innocuous moment to moment, across linkages which seem obscure and unedifying - before disclosing their emotional or perceptual impact. In the closing shots of the *Vertigo* trailer, Scottie emerges from a doorway, again staring off-camera. The trailer cuts to a percept: Novak walking towards the camera, the subject of Scottie's gaze. The final shot returns to the action, affection and perception-image sequence seen earlier in the trailer. Across San Francisco rooftops a villain is being chased by a police officer, closely followed by Scottie - who slips and is forced to cling to a drainpipe for dear life. The final affective moment is reinforced by animated, dynamic intertitles which move rapidly across the screen-plate.



The rooftop backdrop emphasises the vertiginous quality of the shot - as does the presence of characters scrambling and jumping desperately across them. Animated text wipes horizontally across the screen, echoing the action set on the rooftops: a perilous, right-to-left chase. The animated text seems to 'push' Scottie from the roof until he is left dangling over the drop:

---

<sup>131</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 109)



The final affective moment echoes the disorienting opening, which also featured an animated version of the word 'vertigo'. In this instance, the sequence is mirrored: a series of affects and percepts precede a disorienting textual animation (the animated credits) - before giving way to the word 'vertigo'. There is a strong metanarrative drive to this final rhetorical flourish: the trailer is about a disorienting experience - and is a disorienting experience to watch. It takes us into a Deleuzian realm of gaseous perception, jumping across a multiplicity of perspectives and affective qualities intended to confuse and obfuscate. The irony here, is that an accurate reading of *Vertigo's* trailer, means factoring in this ambiguity.

## Frenzy

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=HuoBprPGpzA>

Hitchcock's penultimate film, *Frenzy* (1972) incorporates many of the innovative elements associated with his work in trailers. Opening shots are comprised of scenes extraneous to the feature film: a body floats in the Thames - which a close-up reveals to be Hitchcock himself. The director turns to the camera and begins to speak, assuming a communicative role in his own metanarrative. Hitchcock's presence establishes quickly the tone of the trailer: tongue-in-cheek, playful and assuming a faux objectivity in a similar vein to earlier trailers.

His presence is, more than any of his earlier appearances, conspicuously about him, exploring the meaning of his auteur-brand to the point that this opening scene is structured around his appearance, floating in the Thames. Indeed, there is a crowd/audience to the spectacle which, in this case, is Hitchcock himself. The twist here is that he mimics or

simulates his own death - and not some young woman's - and still garners a crowd. It is swiftly revealed Hitchcock is not dead, setting in motion his journey through the diegesis. This involves a swift change of role - moving from victim to invigilator and setting up the now-familiar conceit of his decidedly ambiguous presence in the trailer. Yet his role is more complicated than prior appearances and, as will be demonstrated, he literally moves in and out of the narrative environment:

HITCHCOCK: I dare say you are wondering why I am floating around London like this. I'm on the famous Thames River, investigating a murder.



In *Psycho*, Hitchcock cast a similarly 'investigative' eye over the images and events in the respective trailers. Walker notes that the investigator or 'police' role in Hitchcock's films is, in most cases a neutral one, 'to observe , not to show off'<sup>132</sup>. This approach emphasises his peculiar relationship with his own work - his efforts as a 'historian' imply a false impartiality and distance which play to the rhetoric of the mischievous Hitchcock brand. Here, the trend continues - he fills his narrative with informative sounding, didactic language, employing the same kind of understatement and satire found in those previous appearances:

HITCHCOCK: My investigation next led me to this innocent alley, of which there are hundreds in London, but I don't think we should stay long: something unpleasant is about to happen.



---

<sup>132</sup> (Walker: 177)

The commentary, as always, is misleading. He asserts that the alley is ‘innocent’ however the two people walking through may not be and he is evasive regarding what is about to happen, simply alluding to ‘something unpleasant’. His attitude to the event in the alleyway sets up his interesting relationship to the materiality of the film itself. He is able to move in and out of the diegesis of the film to deliver commentary and perform actions directly while, at the same time, affecting the metanarrative itself. As he shifts from commenting *on* events, and being *in* them, the narrative world of the film blurs with that of the trailer metatext. Hitchcock interacts with objects from the film diegesis and places himself *within* the mise-en-scène, rather than occupying a peripheral position or speaking from a point *after* the events took place.

A particular sequence places Hitchcock within Covent Garden Market in London, an environment from the feature film text and an overt subversion of the commercial/art dialectic associated with the film trailer. Using a back-projection and foreground 'stall' props, he moves within the market-diegesis and interacts with a sack containing a body - a prop from the film itself. His positioning is important: a table is in the foreground between Hitchcock and the camera, people move between the table and the camera, there are people moving around directly behind him and, even further afield, in the back-projection. When Hitchcock turns towards the table, the effect rendered is that he is within the diegesis of the scene - if not the antecedent film text. His narrative echoes this notion:



HITCHCOCK: Here is the scene of another horrible murder. This is the famous London wholesale fruit and vegetable market; Covent Garden. Here you may buy the fruits of evil and the horrors of vegetables.

A leg suddenly springs up from the potato sack which he has been inspecting.

HITCHCOCK: I've heard of a leg of lamb; a leg of chicken – but never a leg of potatoes.

He pushes the leg back down.

Guilt is, Michael Walker notes, a 'major Hitchcock preoccupation'<sup>133</sup>, and he uses the affective power of the trailer to enhance those effects here. The gruesome revelation and Hitchcock's subsequent black humour revive the guilt and culpability of voyeurism: taking place in a food market, the scene evokes notions of consumption both visual and literal, and involves guilt 'expressed through problems with handling or eating food'<sup>134</sup>. As the author, Hitchcock privileges the audience with information about the crime and implies a conspiratorial agreement: he replaces the leg in the sack with only that brief and darkly humorous aside to the camera. His discretion and the camera's voyeuristic privilege (and Hitchcock's 'investigation') serve a strong metanarrative purpose: we have not only seen the subterfuge but have shared in a joke (albeit one in extremely bad taste) about the crime. It is as though the audience has been made accomplice to the crime, our curiosity and inaction (we wait for resolution... the feature film) have 'authored' the feature film in the sense that we create the demand for it. We are 'shopping', as if in a market, for thrills. The scene is affective: Hitchcock physically straddles the line between interior meaning and exterior expressiveness - a level of intimacy an audience would not normally expect or receive. The guilt, associated with this relationship can be assuaged, presumably, with a future viewing of the feature film.

This idea of guilt in relation to the on-screen transgressions, makes a collective demand on an audience - to be party to a future experience (the film-text) which will allow us to capitalise on our knowledge and metatextual understanding. There are extensions to this notion: intertitles and voice-overs along with posters and other paraphernalia urge audiences to take action to be part of this cinematic relationship. This trend is present in a variety of trailers, from Hitchcock's era through to modern contexts - wherein audiences are asked to literally 'witness' or 'watch' or 'be a part of' the coming onscreen attraction. The market setting is appropriately reflexive for the trailer - by anticipating and playing with audience response, Hitchcock has viewers complete the circle of guilt, pleasure and downright curiosity piqued by a viewing, and weave it into a strange commercial-artistic discourse.

Hitchcock's interaction with the diegesis occurs again towards the end of the trailer. Police inspect a body, found inside a similar potato sack. Hitchcock, appearing in a separate shot, approaches and, cut into a scene from the feature-text, actually removes the tie - the murder weapon - from around the victim's neck and places it around his own:

---

<sup>133</sup> (Walker: 192)

<sup>134</sup> (Walker: 192)

Hitchcock appears from behind a tree.

HITCHCOCK: (Pointing) Look, she's wearing my tie.

He approaches the body and removes the tie from around the woman's neck. He puts on the tie.

HITCHCOCK: (To camera) How do you like my tie?

He turns to an off-screen presence.

HITCHCOCK: How do you like it?

Cut to a woman staring in horror.

WOMAN: My god, the tie!

The woman screams.



The tone and content of his narration, defies an emotional connection to the sinister imagery. Hitchcock's position is, like Hayden White's historian, *in* and - at the same time - *of* , and the subject of his commentary mimics the rhetoric of the trailer: faux impartiality and dark, schoolboy humour employed for comedic effect. Following earlier Hitchcock trailers, this distance is broken at the conclusion by a direct imposition on the diegesis of the film - in this case, the woman's hysterical reaction to Hitchcock's tie. Hitchcock is in every part of the trailer, performing metatextually each level of the auteur checklist and the extra, 'fourth circle' role his brand suggests for him. He is a victim, perpetrator, author and invigilator. The image of him floating on the Thames (almost impossibly, it is worth adding) represents a suitable motif: he becomes both *of* the trailer and *on top of* the trailer – delivering meaning as

part of a complicated discourse of objectivity and subjectivity which points towards the heart of the trailer as an advertisement format fused inextricably with artistic presentation.

## Conclusion: Recalibrating the Auteur

The trailers Hitchcock produced or was involved with provide an excellent resource for understanding the potential and the development of the format - and the ways in which it influences and prompts discussion of the wider cinematic landscape. From his growing status as auteur to his wide exhibition of theoretical concepts, Hitchcock's trailers remain demonstrably rich and interesting. It is perhaps, Hitchcock's status as auteur which carries the most significance in his contribution to a field of trailer study. The presence of Hitchcock, in his own trailers, represents a metatextual act which heightens awareness of the unfamiliar territory of reception and meaning in which peripheral texts are found. Hitchcock's promotional presence provides a remarkable example of the branding of trailers with an auteuristic stamp. They move from the intensity of the fairground vendor, to calculated appeals to the artistic and rhetorical sensibilities of audiences. Boyd and Palmer note this trend's contemporary significance, and point out credit for his prominence 'must go to Hitchcock himself':

The director-star who ceaselessly promotes himself as a brand name in order to market his films and solidify his place within the industry is a common figure on the contemporary movie scene. The prominence achieved today by many who remain behind the camera is arguably the most obvious sign of how moviemaking has changed its public face since the studio period, when directors, by and large, were more or less invisible craftsmen. Today, the director-star, above all else, plays an important role in the marketing of films as the sophisticated are regularly guided in their viewing by the director's name above (or immediately below) the title.<sup>135</sup>

The recalibration of authorial presence includes prominent textual branding - present, decades later, in modern trailer culture and credit titles such as '*From the director of...*' or (perhaps the more auteurist): '*From the maker of...*' The trend brings in rhetorical devices - both linguistic and cinematic - which separate it from the conventional commercial approaches seen in adverts for other brands.

---

<sup>135</sup> (Boyd and Palmer: 3)

The uncertainty resulting from Hitchcock's promotional auteur-role resonates in the narrative and metanarrative. It comments on the auteur as much as he comments on it - and positions him in the commercial/artistic discourse in a visible way. Hitchcock is aware of and exploits this dynamic: casting himself as salesman, murderer, victim, author, and guide. He becomes the affective centre for his trailers - the loci of recognition - even in contexts where does not feature physically. This shifting identity suits the tone of his trailers and their ambiguity of purpose. Although sharing an intimate visual and audio connection to its antecedent film text, the trailer experience is made problematic by metanarrative characteristics of perceived distance and objectivity. As a curious and sometimes naive commentator on the events of the trailer, Hitchcock embodies this strange relationship and exploits it to great rhetorical effect: comedic, playful, anxious to spare viewers more gruesome details while constantly hinting at their presence. Dark humour, guilt and privileged voyeuristic information are presented as objective components of Hitchcock's 'forensic' approach to his own work and indeed, become part of an aesthetic. When Hitchcock appears, in any form, we understand *how* to view him as part of an ongoing discourse of meaning creation.

Even those instances where authorial presence is visually diminished, the carefully coordinated metanarrative effect remains significant. The register of the metanarrative in the trailers for *Rope* and *Vertigo* is urgent and emphatic (see the revelatory and indignant 'line-up' from *Rope*, the lurid spinning titles of *Vertigo*), and it is qualitative affective experience (fear, disgust, lust) which Hitchcock's trailers present as a bridge between persuasive, commercial rhetoric and the pleasurable, artistic appeal of the film itself. In Hitchcock trailers, affects play into the incompleteness of the narrative as a calculated part of a visual/audio strategy. Hitchcock did not see the trailer's independence from an antecedent feature as a lack, but as an opportunity - one which could be exploited as for commercial and artistic gain.

Hitchcock explored the artistic identity of the trailer in a variety of ways - some more successful than others and the discourses and techniques he introduces resonate far beyond his canon. In the next chapter, I explore the development of the theories and concepts Hitchcock championed in the trailer as part of a 'Blockbuster' culture - and how an overwhelmingly commercial cinematic identity gives rise to a body of highly expressive, artistic promotional work.

# Chapter 2

## Blockbuster Trailers: The Good, the Bad and the Affect

---

Current discourse on the blockbuster can be characterised by a focus on explorations of the meaning of the term itself - specifically in the context of commercial cinema. This overriding impulse to situate the blockbuster in terms of critical, economic and historical contexts creates problems for its cinematic definition and reception. The term reflects a tension, as Mark Jancovich, sees it, between 'excessive action' and 'inaction':

On the one hand, the blockbuster is attacked for being too action centred and, on the other, the focus on spectacle is supposed to be incompatible with narrative drive. In this way, such criticisms relate back to more general concerns within film studies about the relationship between narrative and spectacle in which the two are seen as opposed terms so that narrative is about forward drive and spectacle is seen as something that threatens to freeze the action and disrupt its logic.<sup>136</sup>

This contrast echoes the art/advert divide established by traditional promotional forms - and subverted so effectively by Hitchcock. Yet, within this definition of the blockbuster is an acknowledgement of its commercial aspect. Whether by sheer volume - or the elaborateness of exhibition, the blockbuster's promise is one of novel experience and of 'getting your money's worth'.

The commercial character of the blockbuster is coded implicitly into its promotional aesthetic and this chapter will examine how this pattern is manifested in blockbuster trailers. The role of the star plays a significant role in the making of the blockbuster - specifically, the affective nature of star bodies: awesomely powerful both physically and commercially and, according to Yvonne Tasker, 'one of the most visible aspects of recent American action cinema'<sup>137</sup>. Viewing stars onscreen is an affective process. Barry King likens the affective quality of the star's presence as bridging 'what is expected' from the star (the plane of

---

<sup>136</sup> (Jancovich, 2004: 84)

<sup>137</sup> The box-office success of the white male bodybuilder as star has been one of the most visible aspects of recent American action cinema. The visibility of the built male body, in both film and advertising images, represents part of a wider shift in the male image, and in the range of masculine identities, that are on offer in western popular culture. (Tasker, 1993: 73)

reception and expectation) and, crucially, 'what is seen'<sup>138</sup> (the quality of expression). King points out promotional texts play a large part in this receptive process:

But what is expected is conditioned by frameworks established by publicity and promotion, which in themselves draw on general notion of type and the spectator's past experiences of the star.<sup>139</sup>

I will develop my discussion of the role of the affect in the trailer by examining its use in a range of blockbuster trailers. Deleuze's analysis of affect remains key to my exploration of the ways blockbuster trailers and their commercial/artistic strategies allow for new interpretations, including how affect extends beyond the face to 'equivalents' via analogies, comparisons and identifications:

The pure affect, the pure expressed of the state of things in fact relates to a face which expresses it (or to several faces, or to equivalents, or to propositions). It is the face – or the equivalent – which gathers and expresses the affect as a complex entity, and secures the virtual conjunctions between singular points of this entity.<sup>140</sup>

The affective character of the blockbuster underscores the importance of the star and the development of the body as a fetish device. In the blockbuster model, style and spectacle become integral to the promotional presence of a film - and we see this convergence in other areas: the promotional phenomenon of the star collapses into the character played onscreen to the point that boundaries between artistic fabrication and commercial reality become difficult to discern - and part of a new aesthetic identity.

## What is a Blockbuster?

The blockbuster 'era' might be characterised broadly as spanning the late seventies, eighties and nineties and the onset of 'saturation'<sup>141</sup> marketing, when media (including, poster,

---

<sup>138</sup> (King, 2003: 47)

<sup>139</sup> (King, 2003: 47)

<sup>140</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 103)

<sup>141</sup> Blockbusters are... heavily promoted and advertised, often well in advance... Large sums of money are devoted to saturation television advertising at the time of the cinema release. The contemporary blockbuster is also likely to be opened simultaneously in a large number of cinemas. (King, 2000: 50)

television and radio) begins to be used extensively by film studios to promote their output and maximise commercial success. Thomas Schatz characterises the 'business' of 'making and selling' blockbuster hits as:

calculated megafilms designed to sustain a product line of similar films and an ever-expanding array of related entertainment products, all of which benefit the parent conglomerates' various media-and-entertainment divisions.<sup>142</sup>

The notion of the 'megafilm' suggests an exaggeration of every aspect of the cinematic text's presence - including the paratextual. This includes an intensification of the cult of the star - in which 'star identities not only became known but also marketable'<sup>143</sup> - and aesthetically controlled by the studios. Paul MacDonald describes this trend - which began in the 1930s:

the studios... maintained public departments with responsibility for constructing and disseminating a star's image across the media of posters, photographs, newspapers, magazines and radio.<sup>144</sup>

The intensification of the star's public and artistic presence complements the affective reach of the blockbuster - which places the star at the centre of discourses of meaning, genre and commerce ('is this star worth my money?'). The blockbuster's appeal is also linked to its technological spectacle - which allows for the creation of fantastical onscreen images and impacts 'both production and formal-aesthetic protocols'<sup>145</sup>. Here the notion of the artistic collapses very obviously into the commercial - and is coded into the aesthetic of readings of the blockbuster through its textual and paratextual forms:

Films such as *Jurassic Park* and *Titanic* are, undoubtedly, sold to a large extent on the basis of spectacular attraction. The scale and quality of spectacle is a major factor in the advertising, promotion and journalistic discourses surrounding their release.<sup>146</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> (Schatz, 2009: 30)

<sup>143</sup> (McDonald, 2000: 52)

<sup>144</sup> (McDonald, 2000: 52)

<sup>145</sup> (Schatz: 30)

<sup>146</sup> (King, 2002: 42)

The sheer power of the blockbuster, to convince, to awe and to capture attention is a component part of its viewing experience: recognizable, famous stars, sensational high concept narratives and top-of-the-range special effects. Even a glance at any of the blockbuster's associated promotional texts, offers a vivid taste of this trend:



Even blockbuster posters emphasise the affective presence of star and spectacle, with a focus on the body and the power of special effects to create convincing affective monstrosities and spectacles.

The affective quality of the blockbuster, glimpsed in these posters, is determined strongly by extensive characteristics that juxtapose and extend themes of power in space and inscribe sexual appeal and the vulnerability of the human body. The facial affect - characterised by its lingering, fascination with the actor - is underscored, in the blockbuster, by the over-presentation of actor's names. Such devices point to the 'high premium' of the culture of 'circulation and signification'<sup>147</sup> attached to actor's names by the star system itself. With this in mind, it is helpful figuratively, to conceive of the trailer (or the poster, or the film *advert*) as the 'face' of the film itself. This characteristic is reflected in the poster artwork above but also, as will be demonstrated, in the blockbuster trailer's visual identity. It values relationships between actor, their connection to the film environment and the way those

<sup>147</sup> (McDonald, 2000: 44)

issues affect the spectator. These concepts go beyond advertising rhetoric - they are not used singularly as selling tools and, in the blockbuster trailer, are part of an artistic language which explores the spectacle and attraction of these affective components.

## Why the Blockbuster?

The term, 'Reagan-era action' is often used as a shorthand for films featuring expensive and violent action scenes, physically imposing male stars (Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger) and impressive special effects. These films are characterised by a bold style, articulating genre overtly and valuing qualities of strength and decisiveness over introspection and contemplation. In her analysis of the 'masculine performance' in the action cinema of the 80s, Yvonne Tasker notes:

The relationship between the body and the voice is central to the action cinema's articulation of male identity. Involving questions surrounding the ability to speak and act, which are also inevitably questions of power.<sup>148</sup>

Ronald Reagan even went as far as citing the first 'Rambo' film, *First Blood* (1982), as an influence on his presidency<sup>149</sup> in what Tasker calls a 'Reaganite' endorsement of a 'hawkish foreign policy' and 'a muscular lack of diplomacy'<sup>150</sup>. The body is evidently a strong locus of recognition for 1980s audiences and its affective quality a powerful genre tool. In the context of the *Rambo* franchise, it communicates strength and power, which collapses diplomacy into physical strength: a popular reproduced image depicts Rambo's body, with Reagan's head superimposed on his shoulders<sup>151</sup>.

This chapter will examine various affective strategies used by the blockbuster - and how these are presented in what has already been established as an era of significant commercialization. Strategies of commerce are coded into the aesthetic of the blockbuster

---

<sup>148</sup> (Tasker: 74)

<sup>149</sup> In the context of the Beirut hijacking, within which the film got its American release, President Reagan was reported as saying 'After seeing "Rambo" last night I know what to do next time it happens. (Tasker: 92)

<sup>150</sup> (Tasker: 92)

<sup>151</sup> A visual link was made in a much-reproduced poster image of the time which featured Reagan's head superimposed onto Rambo's torso and dubbed 'Ronbo'. (Tasker: 92)

and its many generic identities. Where the action film connotes strength and power, horror and 'monster' films (such as *Jaws* and *Alien*) deliver affects of unease and anxiety. Unlike the 'action' film however, in which spectacular physical bodies are constantly on show, we experience a different type of affect in which the subject of the gaze is elusive, unseen:

the pleasure in not seeing – the delayed, blocked or partial vision which seems so central to the strategy of horror cinema.<sup>152</sup>

Complementing the affective strategies of the body, I will also examine the affective use of special effects in the blockbuster trailer. The special effect is a major feature of the blockbuster's promotional presence and a representation of the blockbuster-as-product. The blockbuster-address frames a sensational commercial presence which functions, like the affective actor's body, by 'playing the star card by turning the effects themselves into a stellar phenomenon'<sup>153</sup>. The incorporation of the special effect into the blockbuster trailer, goes against the trend to conceal effects to promote the narrative experience in a feature film and avoid the 'flashiness'<sup>154</sup> and contrivance of high technology spectacle.

The exhibition of bodies and special effects constitute tropes of 'expense' in the blockbuster trailer, in which the very act of 'looking' is valued and aestheticised. The act of looking is coded into a reading of the blockbuster trailer: by encouragements to scrutinise its own spectacle and affective depictions of others looking at spectacle. This trend offers a visceral experience which is often accompanied by textual prompts to 'witness' and 'experience', but also involves the horrific impetus to 'look away at the last moment'. In any case, the audience is encouraged to develop a close engagement with a sensational affective strategy which values expense and artistry to differing extents.

Beugnet reflects on this affective power in cinema to connect to spectators in ways which complicate a purely visual relationships - collapsing commercial processes into the artistic. She notes the power of cinema's 'haptic' qualities, to defeat the 'distancing'<sup>155</sup> effect of

---

<sup>152</sup> (Giles, 1984: 41)

<sup>153</sup> (Medhurst: 24)

<sup>154</sup> These are effects that, on one level, aspire to the status of naturalistic 'invisibility' rather than the more overt 'flashiness' of the computer-generated effects found in a film like *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (1991) (King, 2000: 55)

<sup>155</sup> (Beugnet: 3)

perspective. The affective power of cinema is, in this respect, pervasive, establishing a strong connection to a spectator through 'transgressive' elements:

There is an inherently transgressive element to this kind of filmmaking; as we are reminded by Dieture and Grandieux's images, to open oneself to sensory awareness and let oneself be physically affected by an art work or a spectacle is to relinquish the will to gain full mastery over it, choosing intensity and chaos over rational detachment.<sup>156</sup>

In the blockbuster, the preponderance of affective elements sets up a complex structure of discourses, examining the spectator's relationship to notions of art and commercialism - and including ideas of space, time, gender and genre. The posters above share an affective characteristic of 'horror': black backgrounds emphasising a menacing intensive presence contained within more expressive centres - I will demonstrate how the blockbuster trailer communicates its own genre and artistic worth through its affective palette. The range of affective material in the blockbuster trailer is expansive - its usage ranging from the sweeping to the overt, the subtle to the specific.

The blockbuster trailer communicates with audiences at a location at which art and commercialism meet. The union emphasises that central definition of the blockbuster as a money-maker - a point at which money is exchanged for expensive spectacle. This linkage between commercialism and art is often ambiguous - effort is made to mask the perceived cynicism of advertising, collapsing it into the trailers' artistic profile. The 'roll up, roll up' exhortations of film advertising evoke the 'Cinema of Attractions' - a term Tom Gunning introduces to talk about the characteristics of early cinema - and its relationship with audiences<sup>157</sup>. The blockbuster alters The Cinema of Attractions' style of address, augmenting the clarion call for more calculated, subtler appeals: audiences 'witness' or 'experience' the film - or consume the compact taglines of *Jaws* and *Predator* (visible in the posters above): *See it before you go swimming, or Soon the hunt begins.*

These features join the highly visible, formal motifs of blockbuster trailer rhetoric- cutting-edge special effects, the 'mega-star' status of actors, the high concept narratives - which are integral to its appeal. These are points of transformation where the relationship between

---

<sup>156</sup> (Beugnet: 3)

<sup>157</sup> What precisely is the cinema of attractions? First, it is a cinema that bases itself on the quality that Léger celebrated: its ability to show something. Contrasted to the voyeuristic aspect of narrative cinema analysed by Christian Metz, this is an exhibitionist cinema. (Gunning, 1990: 57)

screen and spectator resolves - through affect. The trailers I will examine below show this range of affective styles and represent a number of genres: for horror (*Jaws*) affects of power of calamity, for science fiction (*Alien*, *Star Wars*) affects of space and fantastic movement, for the action film (*Rambo: First Blood Part II*), sexuality and physical presence. Beugnet comments on film's 'affective potential'<sup>158</sup> - and the effect of the medium's 'commercial sector' in inhibiting that factor. She notes that the bulk of feature film production is dominated by narrative and realism:

The *mis en abyme* thus stresses the desire to return to, but also the difficulty to reclaim territories that are still occupied by other art forms, but to which feature film in its rapid apporportion by the commercial sector, seems to have largely lost access. Set apart from experimental cinema on the one hand, and from pornography's and gore's cinema of 'excess' on the other, the bulk of feature film production appears to fall almost entirely into the province of narrative forms and photographic realism.<sup>159</sup>

The trailer style of audience address, however, favours aesthetic over narrative and conventions of pure abstract experimentation. It demonstrates the trailer's unique artistic identity and potential for artistic expression through powerfully affective techniques - even within the trappings of industry and convention. Indeed, the blockbuster performs its appeal to audiences in ways which return to the fairground-style register of early cinema, evoking what Gunning describes as 'exhibitionist cinema'<sup>160</sup>. The similarities to early cinema do not end with exhibitionist flair - and calculated techniques of audience appeal through peripheral devices were also evident:

the early showmen exhibitors exerted a great deal of control over the shows they presented, actually re-editing the films they had purchased and supplying a series of off-screen supplements, such as sound effects and spoken commentary.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup> Is it still possible to make art cinema, feature films, primarily as an exploration of film's material dimension; to develop filmmaking practices that bring forth the medium's specific formal and affective potential, as indeed was the project of early avant-garde filmmakers when cinema was still in its infancy? (Beugnet: 8)

<sup>159</sup> (Beugnet: 8)

<sup>160</sup> (Gunning: 57)

<sup>161</sup> (Gunning: 58)

The blockbuster trailer's resemblance to the tone and content of early cinema extends as far as the travel narrative - the experience of journeying to extreme and otherwise-inaccessible environments, filled with danger and excitement. Hitchcock lampoons the notion of film as a commercially attractive vacation or leisurely break from reality, but the blockbuster goes further, by inviting the audience to participate in a qualitative experience. The blockbuster trailer-journey is characterised by legitimate and impressive spectacle.. Gunning highlights the exploratory experience of early cinema, in which 'tour' films would depict train journeys shot from the train itself in auditoriums set up to deepen the 'viewing experience':

the theatre itself was arranged as a train car with a conductor who took tickets and sound effects simulating the click-clack of wheels and hiss of air brakes. Such viewing experiences relate more to the attractions of the fairground than to the traditions of the legitimate theatre.<sup>162</sup>

The importance of the experiential aspect of a trailer's identity cannot be overstated - and the way in which the format uses its content to appeal to the viewer's sensory and cultural awareness is remarkable - casting its 'fairground style' attractions as carefully considered aesthetic schemes. I will discuss the ritualistic (or religious?) nature of the trailer format, and the theatrical method of delivery (and reception) which contributes to its cultural impact.

This notion maintains the dialectic in the trailer format: the battle between art and advertising - the 'selling' of the experience versus the experience itself. The contrast is also highlights the role of the audience, encouraged to bear witness to the state of flux by powerful, affective rhetoric: impressive special effects such as motion-capture (*Star Wars*) and the exciting, portentous 'tag-phrases' like 'In space, no-one can hear you scream' (*Alien*), which resonate on textual and paratextual levels. These characteristics work as part of each trailer's artistic identity but also as cultural 'memes' to be lifted from their textual contexts and used in wider cultural theatres - as promotional materials or as shared cultural currency in discussions of cinema.

If Hitchcock's trailers expressed the artistic potential of the format to move beyond its associations with advertising convention and cynicism, the blockbuster trailer marks an attempt to actually change the nature of commercialism in order to bring it into line with the artistic possibilities of cinema. This chapter will examine trailers which best display these

---

<sup>162</sup> (Gunning: 58)

characteristics, presenting spectacle as subject to constant redefinition, scrutiny and affective consumption.

## Jaws

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ucMLFO6TsFM>

Violent conflict is emphasised in almost every frame in the trailer for Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and it is conceptualised through the dichotomy of man against nature. The trailer's rapid montage imagery serves to embody the constant clash of images - and emphasises a conflict which seems to intensify as its proximity to the ocean (a ubiquitous component of the trailer) grows.

In its opening scene, the most striking elements of the *Jaws* trailer are its quasi-religious tone and the eerie blue submarine environment, through which the camera moves. While the pompous, portentous nature of the trailer's voice-over narration is overtly 'sermon-like', the visual accompaniment to this narration - the figure of the woman, floating in the water, a sacrifice in a Christ like pose - augments the religious feel:



The camera travels underwater and closes on a swimmer

*Jaw's* opening is all the more remarkable given its 'blockbuster' credentials - and the wide perception that the film ushers in a new era of Hollywood commercialism:

The new blockbuster era is usually dated from the wide simultaneous release of *Jaws* (1975), which cost Universal \$12 million to produce, on 464 domestic screens, accompanied by a nationwide print and television advertising campaign.<sup>163</sup>

Despite the blockbuster's propensity for affective commercial gesture - with high value special effects and bankable stars, *Jaws* opens with a murky, near-impressionistic depiction of an alien environment, suffused with dramatic religious overtones. The effect is impressively foreboding and mysterious: a voice-over warns us of an 'evil' presence - an 'eating machine' - while the camera searches the alien environment before finally settling on its prey: a naked woman. The trailer poses as half warning (the tagline: '*See it – before you go swimming!*') and half indulgent eye on the promising reality of *Jaws*' horror characteristics. The confusion contributes to an elusiveness over what is being depicted - and the tone shifts between characteristics of documentary, horror and titillating voyeurism.

*Jaws*' subdued opening is curious thanks to the absence of a genre-defining 'horror' - indeed there are other, confusing generic markers. The contribution of the trailer's unseen, deep voiced narrator goes even further to reinforce the religious connotation - but blurs strong proselytising with sensationalising the threat posed by the shark.

NARRATOR: There is a creature, alive today, who has survived millions of years of evolution; without change... without passion... and without logic. It lives to kill: a mindless, eating machine. It will attack – and devour – anything. It is as if God created the Devil and gave him... jaws.

The narration accompanies these opening shots. The underwater sequence presents percepts: the perspective of the 'creature', moving through an underwater environment and a variety of contradictory associations with death, life, evolution and religious fury. The shot is an exploration of alien territory in a three dimensional sense: dark crevasses are hidden in shadow and murky water conceals the way ahead. The depth created is a religious statement, implying a fall from grace and the distance to redemption or salvation. In this primordial environment, the morality of religion - as brutal as the narrative makes it sound - is the only recognizable ideology with which to make sense of the disorienting scene.

The perceptive movement-image lets us see through the eyes of the shark as affective shapes reach out to us from the background - and the meaning of these shapes must be reconciled within this subjective framework as genre identifiers - are they threats? Targets? On the

---

<sup>163</sup> (Hall, 2002: 21)

other hand, the images exhibit documentarian characteristics: seeming to explore and analyse unknown territory. The narrator's contribution is equally ambiguous: when the audience sees from the shark's perspective, the sound we hear comes from a non-diegetic source.

The narrator's words are equally in flux: evoking a sense of futility in human achievement, charting its development towards technological mastery before returning focus back to a pre-scientific, pre-historic past - with associations to the 'fire and brimstone' overtures of the Old Testament. The notion of evil, raised by the 'sermon', is one which is tied to historical context, and based on a solid, immutable moral notion unchanged by 'millions of years of evolution'. It points to the implacable nature of the 'creature', which exists outside of a modern day moral system - and is instead a result of 'millions of years of evolution'. Here we see the blockbuster trailer's self-awareness: technological artifice developed over time has made possible the exploration of the deep but cannot protect from - and indeed exposes us to - the danger. The evil represented by the hinted-at presence of the shark is radical and uncompromising (as the voice-over mentions, it 'lives to kill'). The only deliverance from the implacable evil is the anchor provided by the percept and narration itself which attempts to make sense of the alien environment by reminding us of our trespass. The roving percepts, connected to the shark, seem to be urgently searching for something, while the narrator's words deliver cold certainty - reminding us that we should not be here: our technological reach has delivered us to danger.

While the images have at least the appearance of being documentary, every move made down here is dangerous and taboo. The camera's technological ability to chart space, time and movement is borne out by the roving exploration of the treacherous, expansive environment but its presence in this space is under the nose of the malevolent creature and indeed under its control - our grasp on the environment is tenuous and constantly at risk. Faced with an alien world which defies analysis, the religious overtones of the narrator struggle to explain the horror the shark represents. Its malevolence remains a mystery which seems supernatural to us, despite our technological prowess.

The camera's journey sets up a conflict and connection between the past and present. Its progress is an embodiment of evolutionary progress in that time: unstoppable and implacable and regardless of moral or social constraints. The potency of the virtual is embodied in this crystalline filter: focussed on the present while simultaneously exploring the past and the virtual future. The virtual in this instance is the formless, indistinguishable, amoral origins of this underwater world and the future the potential destination of the subjective percept implied by the roving camera.

The Jaws trailer puts huge importance on the 'look' - placing it in a state of constant uncertainty. Underwater photography - and cinematography - reminiscent of the documentary or educational films of Jacques Cousteau delivers a sense of scientific, even technological achievement, coded into the act of seeing. Yet this association, with the constructivist, humanist powers of the documentary is severed when our perception connects to the alien presence of the 'creature'. The objective, documentary feel of these initial images erode and it becomes clear that the underwater percept belongs to the 'creature', weaving purposefully between the underwater rocks and obstacles, before jerking sharply upwards, towards the swimmer floating just below the surface of the water. The look is no longer benign but predatory.

While the narrator introduces themes of morality and timelessness, this 'liquid' percept emphasises the flowing, transitive nature of those things. The journey through the murky depths is as ambiguous and insubstantial as the threat alluded-to by the narrator and the entire effect is incredibly disorienting. Yet, while the narrator's dramatic words are the single reconcilable element on which to hang cognitive experience of the trailer, this new subjective presence - the 'creature' - takes precedence. It is the camera's own machinic, perceptive presence which is the basis for this new element: weaving through the environment, charting a path, finding a route between subjectivity and objectivity. Establishing a subjective presence in the opening shots is problematic: are we in awe of the spectacle, anxious about the taboo - or driven by that same spirit of discovery and research to follow the camera to its destination?

Yet, as the destination of the shark's ambiguous subjectivity is eventually revealed, we understand that we are, via our own perceptive curiosity, about to be made complicit in a terrible act of violence. The shark has found its prey: a naked female swimmer. The titillating target represents a play on the audience's perceptual role: the timeless evil, having crossed centuries of evolution, has chosen to occupy the role of 'peeping tom' - the visual gag is itself a rupture of experience. Disorientation remains as new layers, of voyeurism and eroticism, are added to the already-confusing geographical and moral mix. Aesthetically, the camera navigates the confusion in a way which draws out its inner discourse, a middle path, between subjectivity and objectivity, a path Pasolini calls the 'free indirect':

a couple of words are necessary first in order to establish what I mean by "free indirect discourse". It is, simply, the immersion of the filmmaker in the mind of his

character and then the adoption on the part of the filmmaker not only of the psychology of his character but also of his language.<sup>164</sup>

Pasolini reflects on the power of cinema to depict a world of signs which he referred to as ‘im-signs’ (image-signs)<sup>165</sup>. These signs describe a world of ‘memory and dreams’ - evoking the prehistoric, primal environment in the opening of the *Jaws* trailer:

whereas the instruments of poetic or philosophical communication are already extremely perfected ... those of the visual communication which is at the basis of cinematic language are altogether brute, instinctive. Indeed, gestures, the surrounding reality, as much as dreams and the mechanisms of memory, are of a virtually pre-human order, or at least at the limit of humanity – in any case, pre-grammatical and even premorphological.<sup>166</sup>

Pasolini notes that a collection of meaningless, insignificant signs would be ‘monstrous’, indeed, this is the case in the opening of the *Jaws* trailer - in which the narration is a lone anchor in the gloomy prehistoric landscape beneath the surface of the ocean. According to Pasolini, this language of cinema was at the same time both ‘extremely subjective and extremely objective’, giving these opening images a fractious, unknowable quality which performatively reflects the trailer’s relationship to audiences: commercial yet artistic, technologically spectacular yet aesthetically intriguing.

cinema, or the language of im-signs, has a double nature. It is at the same time extremely subjective and extremely objective (an objectivity which, ultimately, is an insurmountable vocation of naturalism). These two essential aspects are closely bound together, to the point of being inseparable, even for the needs of an analysis<sup>167</sup>.

This dichotomy of conflicting elements will go on to characterise the *Jaws* trailer. By following the shark’s movement underwater, the trailer’s free indirect style - subjectively/objectively ambiguous - is reminiscent of a hunter tracking its prey. This

---

<sup>164</sup> (Pasolini, 1976: 549)

<sup>165</sup> in man, an entire world is expressed by means of significant images – shall we therefore propose by analogy, the term “im-signs” (*immsegni*, i.e. image-signs). *This is the world of memory and dreams.* (Pasolini: 544)

<sup>166</sup> (Pasolini: 544)

<sup>167</sup> (Pasolini: 548)

confusing moral perspective gives way to the sharp, upwards track - revealing the unwitting, swimming female victim. Here is the Cinema of Poetry - an interpretative series of im-signs, which allow the audience to 'feel' the shark and, by extension, become receptive to the concepts linked to its subjective presence: voyeurism, morality, violence, punishment. At this moment, the trailer foregrounds future references to death, violence and sex in the wake of any lingering expectations of a benign, didactic undersea environment. The shark's free indirect style is certainly not born of educational need. The sequence ends with the girl being dragged under the water by the shark and her scream becomes the high-pitched trill of a video game at a beachfront arcade - itself another jarring, disorienting inclusion to a scene set primarily underwater:



The trailer consolidates this pattern of dichotomies or, more accurately, conflicts: 'old versus new', 'technology versus nature', and even 'male versus female'. Given its focus on the naked woman and the overtones of punishment and sin, the percept's gender is not neutral but instead seems to be constructed as male, predatory and voyeuristic and connected to the creature's capacity for evil. At this point we still do not know the true purpose of the creature and notions that it will consume and 'eat' its victims are easily equated to a sexual drive.

The brief but traumatic attack cuts to the video game screen - another collision, this time the prehistoric, primacy of the undersea environment juxtaposed suddenly with an artificial representation of itself. We 'see' the shark for the first time but in this representation it is a video game sprite - along with the sea behind it. Even the girl's scream is absorbed into the technological artifice, becoming one of the sound effects of the game. It is a visual joke which makes the dichotomy all the more evident: a clash of man and nature. These dichotomies are made liminal by the movement-image: crystalline evocations of time and movement and the positioning of those percepts in any-space-whatevers. The brief action,

which facilitates the transfer of aquatic environment to beachfront arcade, evokes a further trauma: thrusting the viewer into the midst of a contemporary world. Here the creature has been cowed and re-presented by technology, as demonstrated by the video game machine. Interestingly, the real threat - the 'creature' - remains frustratingly absent. Instead we have only a miniaturised and highly pixellated image of the beast. While the technological spectacle and power of cinema is undeniable, as artificial as it may well turn out to be, the creature is constructed entirely in the subjectivity of the spectator. It represents an unknowable part of a narrative scheme - one which frames its absence as significant. Everyone looks for the shark (or in some cases, disavows it) and the pattern contributes to the subjective, formless potential of the trailer as a poetic cinematic text:

A dictionary of images does not exist. There are no images classified and ready for use. If by chance we wanted to imagine a dictionary of images, we would have to imagine an infinite dictionary, just the dictionary of possible words remains infinite... The cinema author has no dictionary but infinite possibilities.<sup>168</sup>

Once in the midst of civilisation, the camera pans from the artificially-rendered, video game shark to a wide-shot of the Amity Island beach, heaving with tourists on fourth of July weekend. The shark-as-machine is constantly made part of the pattern of contrast. After the description, by the narrative, of the creature as an 'eating machine', the video game shark-as-machine motif is repeated by Richard Dreyfuss' character, Hooper:

HOOPER: What we are dealing with here is a perfect engine... an eating machine.

Hooper's comments frame the shark as a dichotomy itself: two different types of technology, one industrial, an 'engine, the other, a biological machine focussed on 'eating'. Both use the idea of consumption as a 'fuel', in both a technological, industrial sense and, in a biological sense, as nourishment. The notion of technological spectacle collapsing into the acts of violence and horror extends the taboo raised in the opening narration and suggests a crisis of creation: for the image of the shark to 'be', we must die. The idea is reflexive: action rendered in graphic detail is a result of the capabilities of cinema - but this technological reach leads to treacherous waters, even producing the very danger which now threatens to consume. The relationship between viewer and violent image is potently traumatic and, according to Asbjørn Grønstad, must involve layers of interpretation extending to 'everything

---

<sup>168</sup> (Pasolini: 545)

that we know has been said about the particular image with which we are preoccupied.<sup>169</sup> Grønstad mentions specifically the reflexive nature of film violence, which appeals to the convincing effectiveness of the cinematic:

Seeing fictional violence as a representation of real violence is anathema to an adequate comprehension of both phenomena. As a system of mediation, cinema promotes deception through its seeming transparency. This viewer's acceptance of this transparency is more fundamental than a mere suspension of disbelief.<sup>170</sup>

The commercial appeal of violence - its 'realism' and its spectacle - is coded into the trailer. The perpetrator - the elusive creature - is constructed in the negative space of the trailer, in the space between shots or in the aftermath of a violent attack. Its presence is either imaginary or literally artificial yet its very-real effects are the singular focus of the trailer and the protagonists. Every effort is made to give the creature attributes and definable details and these are ascribed to its representations (the video game, verbal descriptions, a textbook), the shark is never directly represented in the trailer (aside from the affective fleeting glimpses of its dorsal fin cutting through the surface of the water). The shark is present only in terms of its 'potential' threat, existing partially in the objective reality of the milieu, the subjective ephemera of negative space and the spectator's imagination - an elusive affect.

The compartmentalised, organised representation of society is quickly contrasted with the opaque chaos of nature in a striking visual manner. The shot of the beach takes in hundreds of tourists and holidaymakers: a palimpsest - layers of human activity give way to the tips of the beach huts which give way to the expanse of the ocean and eventually the horizon:

---

<sup>169</sup> (Grønstad, 2008: 67)

<sup>170</sup> (Grønstad: 67)



The scene is a busy, complicated contrast to the flowing formlessness of the undersea environment. Elements seem strictly delineated, with every level exposed to scrutiny. Yet the disorganising, chaotic influence of the sea is always present and in the next shot the contrast is thrust to prominence again. Now the two levels are in direct opposition: the shoreline and water-line serving as horizontal partitions between order and chaos. Bodies crowd the sea in a writhing chaotic mess, whilst the beach seems serene by contrast: people lie still in ordered rows, above the tumult of the ocean. Deleuze highlighted comparisons to be made between 'perceptions, affections and action' on land and at sea:

where the captain on land is drawn back to fixed centres, images of the wife or lover, image of the villa facing the sea, which are all so many point of egotistical subjectivation, ... the sea presents him with an objectivity as universal variation, solidarity of all the parts, justice beyond men, where the fixed point of the tow-ropes, always called into question, no longer has validity except between two movements.<sup>171</sup>



The sequence which follows promotes notions of conflicting worlds further. Roy Scheider's police chief, Martin Brody, who must protect the Amity Island holidaymakers from the killer

<sup>171</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 79)

shark, experiences a disagreement with the town mayor who does not want to see a loss of revenue from public anxiety over an attack. This new situation sets up a series of oppositions between 'man and nature': the ocean, specifically the ocean surface - and what lies in its depths. The ocean surface is the location of most violent acts in the trailer (shark attacks), setting up this pattern of clash and collision in large format action images - each shark attack discloses a new situation (however slightly). The pace set by these intervening actions is swift and they draw out an emerging narrative structure which is pushed forward by frequent moments of incoherence. The surface of the ocean enables the theme of contrast, evoking notions of subjectivity and objectivity, montage - and the status of the trailer as both art and advert. The point of contrast in the trailer, from which both sides of the dialectic engage, is the surface of the ocean.

In a subsequent montage, Brody sits on the beach, watching the ocean for signs of the shark. Here, focus shifts back to the textual complexion of the 'look'. The affective sequence is structured around Brody's face - anxious and intent. A frenetic series of shots begins: Brody's face intercut with splashing, chaotic action from the swimmers in the sea. The perceptive quality of the shots is bewildering: jumping from a swirling, insubstantial fluid perception, to an energised, gaseous state. Fast paced, briefly glimpsed action, offers the spectator a multitude of shifting perspectives:



The film continues to think its morality in an ambiguous way. Below the water, the malevolent presence of the shark is, like the liquid environment, untrustworthy, fluid and

insubstantial. The discrete, structured world above the sea - crowded, chaotic and elusive - is equally confusing. Although Brody has a fixed vantage point from which to observe, his ability to recognise transgressions is hampered by the liquid component of his perception. As Deleuze notes, the qualitative contrasting perceptions of men on land and those on the sea are 'always drawn back to fixed centres':

on land there is not the same regime of movement, not the same 'grace' as on the sea, in the sea: terrestrial movement is in perpetual disequilibrium because the motive force is always outside the centre of gravity... while aquatic movement is like the displacement of the centre of gravity, according to a simple objective law, straight or elliptical.<sup>172</sup>

In this sequence, the shark returns to the montage and the surface of the ocean remains the focus point, seen from two contrasting perspectives: directly, from the shark's perspective and indirectly, through Brody's anxious fascinated look. When the attack occurs, flurries of action are juxtaposed with the comparative serenity beneath the surface of the ocean - and the rigidity of Brody's upright, attentive figure. Violent collision is facilitated by the dividing ocean. Outside and above the surface, the camera is energetic, moving through space instantaneously, taking a variety of perspectives and positions, reflecting the populous, frantic atmosphere of the beach. While so many figures feature in the scene, and while the camera movement is so rapid in its depiction of them, we are only given insight into two: Brody and the shark. The shark's physical form remains hidden, its presence left to the speculation of the audience, while Brody's form is singularly affective, staring in horror at the work of the unseen shark. Indeed, the montage itself is overwhelmingly affective, juxtaposed scenes constantly cut to the police chief's face - his punctuating expression our only access to any emotional truth in the milieu. The montage is characteristically Eisensteinian, emphasising conflict and shock:

A dynamic comprehension of things is also basic to the same degree, for a correct understanding of art and of all art-forms. In the realm of art this dialectic principle of dynamics is embodied in – conflict – as the fundamental principle for the existence of every art-work and every art-form.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 79)

<sup>173</sup> (Eisenstein, 1992: 138)

Eisenstein's montage ideals work well for the trailer format - which may draw from a spectrum of textual sources across time and space to achieve its desired effect. Here, the camera moves instantaneously across any-space-whatever: a liberated camera-consciousness, offering percepts which go beyond the flowing insubstantiality of liquid towards a sense of being 'in' everything. The 'gaseous' perceptive states, delivered in the montage, build towards the near-simultaneous perception of Brody and the shark in a framework of perception which goes beyond the restrictive locales of human ability:

What montage does, according to Vertov, is to carry perception into things, to put perception into matter, so that any point whatsoever in space perceives all the points on which it acts, or which act on it, however far these actions and reactions extend.<sup>174</sup>

Eisenstein's conception of montage takes the idea of conflict into greater detail, breaking down its relevance to art according to its 'social mission', its 'nature' and its 'methodology'.<sup>175</sup> Eisenstein notes that the conflict, embodied by art's social mission, involves its task to manifest the 'contradictions of Being' and refers to this ontological question as the conflict 'between natural existence and creative tendency'.

According to its nature *because*: Its nature is a conflict between natural existence and creative tendency. Between organic inertia and purposeful initiative... Because the limit of organic form (the passive principle of being) is *Nature*. The limit of rational form (the active principle of production) is *Industry*. At the intersection of Nature and Industry stands *Art*.<sup>176</sup>

He places art at the intersection of nature and industry, where it embodies conflicting concepts. Conflict exhibited by the trailer takes in spatial, graphical and voluminous contrasts and does so in an extremely performative sense: the fullness of any visual experience - the ability to take in and contemplate its texture and quality - is frustrated and permitted by montage. This echoes the concealment and confusion of the threat the shark poses to the human figures on the surface of the sea, while visualising those same things

---

<sup>174</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 81)

<sup>175</sup> According to its social mission *because*: it is art's task to make manifest the contradictions of Being. To form equitable views by stirring up contradictions within the spectator's mind (Eisenstein, 1992: 139)

<sup>176</sup> (Eisenstein, 1992: 139)

energetically. Brief action which discloses new situations is often incoherent but we internalise and experience its significance as a result of its affective quality: Brody (and other holidaymakers' anxious, staring faces). Like Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, in the Odessa steps sequence, where faces of the White Army soldiers remain concealed from view, the shark's physical form is similarly hidden. In Eisenstein's sequence, the montage is overtly rhythmic, representing the irresistible advance of the marching soldiers as they descend the steps. In the *Jaws* trailer, it is affective moments which dictate our experience of the montage and direct our emotional response.

While the unfolding attack on the beach, is disorienting, it takes place in an arrested moment of narrative. In that moment, the only relatable, spatial constant between both extremes of the conflict, remains the ocean surface itself. The dichotomy is clear: beneath the surface, perception is fluid, serene and focussed, above, chaos reigns as water is churned by the thrashing limbs of panicking swimmers. Movement describes this central point of conflict, without any coherent sense of space - the Deleuzian movement-image, with its plurality of perspective is prominent. This plurality ensures violence's imminence - but rather than spectacularise violent acts, it expresses the hidden. Something concealed takes place amidst the disorienting chaos of the ocean surface, almost - if not completely - obscured by the action around it. A swimmer is dragged beneath the surface while the opposing perspectives of Brody and the shark, look on. The idea of violence is effaced but, in an Eisensteinian gesture, we are shocked into understanding what has happened.

This montage is accompanied by a line from the mother of one of the shark's victims. It plays in a counterpoint to the beach attack, the character of the mother never appears yet her words are directed at the watching Brody, admonishing him for not closing the beach:

MOTHER: I just found out that the girl got killed here last week and you knew it. You knew there was a shark out there. You knew it was dangerous but you let people go swimming anyway.

The lines run over the images of bathers swimming in the ocean, Brody looking on anxiously. Her contribution reintroduces morality to the conflict along with a pervasive sense of maternity - or parental responsibility. The diegetic sound also makes a contribution to the counterpoint scheme: sounds of children laughing and screaming on the beach run beneath the sombre delivery of the bereaved mother. The shark is represented too, but its presence is non-diegetic, taking the form of the now-famous, two-note musical signature theme. Again the shark's presence is difficult to define: it is constructed differently to the other

protagonists and a spectator's experience of it is complicated by its habitation of the trailer's negative space and its constitutively alien personality. The sounds exhibit a distinctive character - to the point that they take on their own sense of dynamic purpose, carrying substantial meaning for the montage of which they are a part<sup>177</sup>. The mother's contribution - of morality and responsibility - resonates protectively with the sound of the children - and the musical cue of the shark provides the conflicting side of the spectrum, expressing danger and predatory instinct. The only silent visual referent is Brody, who again simply watches (or listens): his affective presence again the gateway for the audience. He mirrors the shark: while the creature inhabits a visual negative space, Brody positions himself in an audio negative space. He is set up formally as combatant and match for the shark (yet to reveal its visual presence).

The trailer, by this point, has developed into a layered, carefully composed text focusing on the threat and instance of hidden, concealed violence - without actually delivering a direct representation of those concepts. The trailer instead focuses on indirect reflections of the violence and its effects on the people who watch it. As the structured organisation of the beach descends into a flurry of movement and action once the shark attack begins, Brody himself is literally lost in the confusion. The deterioration of the idyllic, leisurely above-sea order is, evidently, dependent on the proximity of the creature and the beachgoers to the surface of the sea as the point of conflict.

The contrast of a fluid, insubstantial undersea world, and the beach, ordered, structured, organised in layers: (sunbathers, beach huts, sand dunes and amusements) continues. When the shark encroaches on the ocean surface - the boundary between the percept-worlds - chaos reigns. The reversal is jarring and represents a regression, towards the primal, uncivilised brutality hinted at in the opening narration. In this circumstance it is the undersea environment, calm and serene, which assumes the characteristics of a more ordered reality: the camera's movement is, by comparison with the above-sea action, measured and deliberate. Formal components emphasise the contrast: above sea, wider angles capture the action, taking in sweeping views of the beach environment. The below-water camera is a tighter-angled lens, its view noticeably restricted and narrower. Montage features more frequently above the sea than below: suggesting a bewildering multiplicity of perspectives as opposed to the singular, liquid perception below the water.

---

<sup>177</sup> Sounds are integral objects, not mere attributes of their visual correlates, hence need not be synchronised "realistically" with the latter. The sequences of sound should be used as expressing their own content (i.e. as having their own integral values). (Harrah, 1954: 169)

The affective horror in this process is the brutality of the shark's domain as it transgresses the ocean surface, into the human world, with chaotic consequences. Within the chaos, faces, especially that of Chief Brody, emerge as relatable affects. So frequently does the trailer feature staring, frozen human faces that the effect becomes a motif, permeating the entire text. The instance of these startling affects, punctuating a montage of violence and action is an important component of the trailer, in which a lot of the violence and horror is obscured by that horizon line - the ocean surface, both opaque and transparent in different contexts. Indeed, looking more closely at the ocean surface we experience another affective presence - which functions in the same way as the multitude of human faces: the ocean itself. The horrifying violence and mayhem taking place in the churning waters of the bay is facilitated by the ocean (surface) - an intensive screen on which extensive movement takes place. Stretching out, limitless towards the horizon, it represents possibility and potential, on which anything may happen. It is present in almost every shot in the trailer and implicit in the percept shots which take place in the murky aquatic depths. The sea is a border, a dividing line between the 'sides' involved in the trailer's conflict pattern ('good versus evil', 'man versus nature' and so on). The border is permeable - things go into and come out of it - and shifting: its liquid-state prevents any observation of a fixed point. It is also, when viewed from land, opaque, a screen. Although events above water are clear, visible and discrete to each other, they are also frantic, unpredictable and chaotic:



The ocean is a two-way mirror, which can only be seen *through* from beneath. When Brody stares at the surface, his gaze is frustrated, the ocean only returns it - in the affective actions playing out above. The surface is deceptive, its insubstantial, shifting face plays tricks on Brody, making him see things that aren't there and fracturing the swimmers he is trying to observe, obscuring bodies beneath. In contrast, when the camera descends beneath the surface, perception may be murky and blurred, but movement is smoother, calmer and less confusing. Underwater perception is privileged, voyeuristic - from below, the surface doesn't obscure what is above in the way it frustrates vision from the opposite direction, the land.

When the two sides of this dichotomy meet, there is violence, whether that be the shark attacking humans or later, humans attacking the shark. The violence is almost always

horrifically affective and faces feature prominently in any meeting of the two sides. The face is a narrative tool in the trailer, its expressiveness used to translate the qualitative nature of the images around it. In the trailer, the affective face extends to its surroundings, constantly reacting to them and communicating that reaction in a paratextual, metanarrative way - lending meaning. In its narrative capacity, the face reacts to events or sets up future events. The affect in the trailer is still the emotive, jarring movement-image of the Deleuzian model but it is also a facilitator of the commercial ambitions of the promotional text. It does not tell us what to feel, but *when* to feel, how to parse the disparate paratextual information in a way which translates to *value* - it demonstrates the trailer as cinematic product:



A collection of the frequently occurring affects from the *Jaws* trailer.

The face articulates emotive concepts - according to Deleuze and Guattari, it is the very mechanism of signification, in that it ‘makes sense’ of the rest of the body.

the face is produced only when the head ceases to be part of the body, when it ceases to have a multidimensional, polyvocal corporeal code – when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be *overcoded* by something we shall call the Face.<sup>178</sup>

Making ‘sense’ is a frequent task for trailer audiences. The trailer’s paratextual rhetoric may involve the withholding of information to the point that the prosodic (textual) narrative is actively undermined. Consequently the aesthetic or poetic aspects of the trailer are emphasised and in a search for recognition within the milieu, faces stand out in relief amidst the chaos. This is certainly the case in the *Jaws* trailer - amidst the churning seawater and thrashing bodies, faces pop up and disappear with striking frequency. The sheer volume of faces, in the trailer, ensures there is enough material to engage an audience in a rapid,

---

<sup>178</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari: 170)

incoherent affective stream - it is, as Deleuze and Guattari note, 'faces that choose their subjects'<sup>179</sup>.

How is the non-presence of the alien shark a part of this affective trend? The shark represents an affective source of power amidst the disintegrating upheaval of the Amity Island beach. It is worth looking more closely at the quality of this affective 'deluge', which prescribes a climate of fear and anxiety in what is, after all, a horror film. The multitude of human faces, strung together in the affective pattern, deliver a variety of subtle different expressions of concern, trauma, pain, and confusion. Their search for the elusive and menacing shark is an ordinating, unifying theme and raises its own affective contribution to the milieu. The disparate images of the shark stand out from the other affects: either the pixelated form of the video game shark, the frozen documentary picture in Brody's text book or the sharp fin cutting through the water, the shark's presence is decidedly different from the human affects: unemotional, implacable and relentless. Where the humans are anxious and erratic both in the sea and on the beach, the shark's affective contribution is calm and measured, digitally precise in the videogame, timeless in the photograph and (hydro)dynamic (and even arrogant) in its movement through the water (a huge impediment to movement for the human characters). Since movement is such a problem for the human characters, the shark's ability to turn up everywhere, in visual form or simply through indirect verbal reference, exacerbates its horrific potential: the shark can strike, unexpected and unseen, and do so with impunity, in defiance of all notions of morality or evolutionary order raised by the narrator at the opening of the trailer.

The faces of the beachgoers, Brody, Hooper and Quint are so appealing because they allow for indirect experience of the more important and more elusive affective presence of the shark. The fear and anxiety on the faces of the characters is a prerequisite of horror: the precept, which establishes the situational space of the beach, quickly deteriorates into the traumatising psychological effects of the shark on the people and their alarming looks towards the ocean. These effects are delivered in the near-bewildering Eisensteinian montage, rhythmic and mimetic of the uncoordinated, frenetic chaos of bathers desperately trying to leave the water and reach the safety of the beach. Wreathed in visual uncertainty

---

<sup>179</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari: 180)

and fleeting in their impact, the faces in *Jaws* justify Deleuze and Guattari's opinion of the face as a 'horror story'<sup>180</sup>.

The 'web' of faces woven through the trailer offers more than just individual moments of impact: their presence is an affective 'net', and becomes a spectacle in itself. Faces are in a complex relationship with each other and the trailer lays those connections bare: some faces intimidate, some cower away, some stare helplessly, some react to prompts from other faces, some concentrate angrily or urgently. All relate to the maddeningly elusive shark. This indirect spectacle, looked-at by the faces, is itself a part of the elaborate affective presence (the hidden shark). The relationship between affects evokes what Deleuze referred to as 'thirdness' or the 'mental image' which allowed for the symbolic interpretation of relations:

Thirdness gives birth not to actions but to 'acts'... not to perceptions, but to interpretations, not to affections, but to intellectual feelings of relations such as the feelings which accompany the use of the logical conjunctions 'because', 'although', 'so that', 'therefore', 'now', etc....<sup>181</sup>

Interpretation of the affective 'web' becomes a part of *Jaws*' appeal, the viewer looks for the shark vicariously, effectively participating in the verisimilitude in which threat has to be spotted before it can be interpreted and evaluated. Given the value placed on the look in the *Jaws* trailer, the notions of 'threat' and 'face' become almost inseparable, attention is constantly being pushed towards the void-space at the edge of the frame or the limits of temporal experience: we are driven by what *has* happened to the shark's victims and the visceral possibilities of what *will* happen in the future.

The affects in the trailer seem to emphasise the notion of male over female participation. The erotic element involves the almost-voyeuristic tendencies of the shark - again, mirrored by Brody on the beach - to watch its victims before attacking them. Brody's act of interested looking, watching the scantily clad revellers on the beach and in the ocean strays towards the realm of sexual taboo. Yet his role is that of protector, in this case against the intentions of another 'evil' predator. The majority of violence in the trailer is perpetrated against young people, with children at the centre of danger. Indeed, it is a distraught mother who confronts

---

<sup>180</sup> Deleuze and Guattari point out that 'faces' can appear anywhere, cropping up 'when you least expect it': 'Sometimes faces appear on the wall, with their holes; sometimes they appear in the hole, with their linearized, rolled-up wall. A horror story, the face is a horror story.' (Deleuze and Guattari: 168)

<sup>181</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 197)

Brody on the pier. With such complexity of interpretation, placed upon the look in schemes of gender, action and violence, the experience of watching the trailer offers a particular kind of spectacle - one involving a participatory aspect. The cinema audience is 'looking' for the shark, like Brody, although our reasons for looking may not match his. Vigilance, attention and patience are themes constantly evoked by the trailer and valued highly in its rhetoric: faces stare at the ocean, the shark seems to 'search' for a target - and everyone waits for opportunities to take action. These notions are connected to those of 'power': to 'see' is to be powerful and to have power over others. The shark, who cannot be seen, remains the most powerful and dangerous element in the milieu. This dynamic powerfully evokes this - and other - blockbuster trailers' commercial aims. Audiences come to see the shark - a goal only achievable by buying into the diegesis of the film and investing in the narrative. Indeed, the trailer becomes highly metatextual once the motivations of Amity Island's local government are taken into consideration: finding the shark means a resumption of their all-important tourist trade: the shark's position must be resolved in order for them to get paid.

The shark as a visual element is not entirely absent. Brody, reading a book about sharks, comes across a picture of a Great White, the species which Hooper suspects is terrorizing the island. The photographic representation, like the earlier video game, is another affective element, frozen in time and subject to dual examination - by Brody and the audience. The photograph references that vaguely educational spin on the 'undersea world' imagery of the trailer's opening, but like the opening, also hints at the more uncontrollable and violent nature of the beast - its containment in the frame of the book is not a permanent solution. Indeed, the photograph cannot even depict the entirety of the shark: it settles on eyes and a gaping, tooth-filled mouth. The photograph, like other representations, is filtered through the affective presences of protagonists - like Brody and Hooper - who are cut in frequently, to stop and stare in horror or awe at the shark. Even in this playful exposure, the shark remains largely absent, its presence is both static and a varying consequence of human speculation (the book is a natural history text - and the video game a technological spectacle). While the shark can be talked about, studied, simulated and even made a part of a framework of leisure, it remains essentially unknowable.

Experienced indirectly only as discrete, separate durations, through the eyes of the trailer's multiple protagonists, the shark is the embodiment of the potential for becoming within the trailer. Constructed, almost entirely, from affective responses, the shark is the crystalline heart, beating towards an undefined future. The shark is affective because it is built *by* affects: the human characters', the sea itself etc... Its non-presence in the trailer emphasises

its potential for becoming - it is always in the process of becoming, perpetually *about-to-become*, and in doing so, serves the metanarrative, promoting evaluations of a virtual future.

While the shark may be visually elusive, it carries a strong indirect audio presence - in sound effects and dialogue. Frequent use of these audio 'percepts' is a characteristic of the trailer - diegetic dialogue provides descriptive and often melodramatic fragments - in abstract ways:

Mayor Hamilton talks to Brody about the potential threat:

HAMILTON: It's all psychological. You yell 'barracuda', everybody says: huh? What? You yell 'shark'... We've got a panic on our hand on the fourth of July.

In a following scene, Brody and Hooper sit at the dining table:

BRODY: Is it true that most people get attacked by sharks in about three feet of water, about ten feet from the beach?

HOOPER: Yeah.

Then, Hooper describes the shark in greater detail:

HOOPER: What we are dealing with here is a perfect engine. An eating machine.

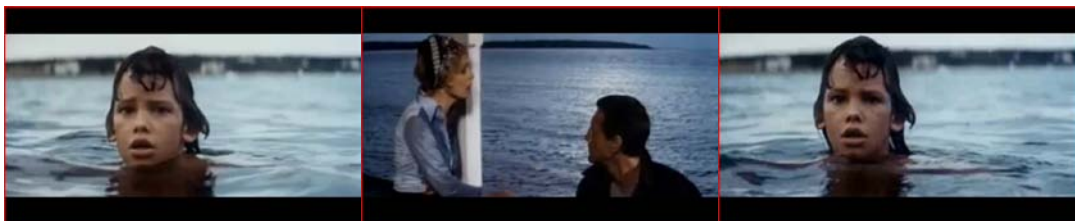
The dialogue becomes increasingly specific and focussed upon the perceived behaviour of the shark itself. The iconic sentence, 'an eating machine', bears out the trend of the shark as a composition of attributes derived from its effects on the world without revealing a diegetic image. The camera's inability (or unwillingness) to show the shark focuses on the aftermath of its violent behaviour. The subjective human part of the shark's non-appearance focuses instead on the nature of the shark: its internal workings and behavioural characteristics. The first contribution, from Mayor Hamilton, concerns the commercial impact of the shark. The second is a more benign, almost-educational one - a documentary, behavioural 'fact' about sharks which echoes the earlier visual associations with underwater marine photography. The third is a conceptual association, raising the notion of consumption and evoking metatextual notions of film as an entity to be consumed by an audience. Associations with technology are also raised: the shark is an eating 'machine' - and the audience enacts a mechanical consumption by viewing the film. Even in an audio sense, the shark remains perceptual - violent, episodic and incomplete.

Audio contributions continue to be important to the *Jaws* trailer as it moves towards the eye-catching montage sequence with which it will end. The montage is rhythmic, layers of visual

and audio information overlap, often using counterpoint sound to direct the rhetoric and meaning of the images. The carefully edited counterpoint sound is an important part of the pattern of collision and clash promoted by the montage - and sustains the theme of anxiety over child safety and imminent violence lurking at the point between above and under-sea environments. A sequence involving Brody's son Michael, depicts the boy submersed up to his neck in water. Voice-over dialogue from Brody's wife, 'Ellen' (Lorraine Gary) counterpoints the scene:

ELLEN: Did you hear your father? Out of the water now!

The voice over runs over three shots; Michael, up to his neck in water, staring off camera, then a shot of Ellen speaking animatedly to Brody, then back to the shot of Michael:



The combination (of affect, action-image and counterpoint sound) works towards the synthetic of imminent danger. In the feature film - all elements, both visual and audio take place separately - in the trailer, in its paratextual incarnation, it is delivered as a taut, tense scene which deepens the prevailing metanarrative effect. Blockbuster trailers are an exercise in re-presentation: synthetic moments which carry undeniable affective power. This power is strongly representative of Deleuze's ambitions for cinema. The audience understands that the image is about the presentation of potential rather than prosodic 'present-ness' and so restrictions of logic and chronology on the fabula are disregarded in favour of the enjoyment of affective metatextual sequences in which, an experience of temporality is coded.

Issues of responsibility and parental care are raised again in this synthesised effect. The notion of children being exposed to the danger extends the performative, commercial power of the trailer and qualifies its generic associations. Is it safe to expose children to the film? Why is it unsafe? The frequent and intense interludes to violent acts destroying images of leisure and recreation articulate an exploration of the limits of entertainment and taboo. The destruction of 'safe environments' is a motif of horror films which Robin Wood characterises as a desire to 'smash the norms that oppress us and which our moral

conditioning teaches us to revere<sup>182</sup>. *Jaws* is no exception to this paradoxical aesthetic of horror: adults look on powerless as the shark threatens and attacks innocent young people, engaged in recreation<sup>183</sup>. Vera Dika notes that the important factor in distinguishing victims from ‘heroes’ in these scenarios is characters ability to return the gaze of the stalker<sup>184</sup>: this is certainly the case in *Jaws*, as Brody searches desperately for the shark.

The final montage-dominated section of the trailer draws liberally from the diegetic timeline of the feature narrative. It features shots from Brody, Hooper and Quint’s hunt for the shark in the third act of the film, before switching to shots of the chronologically-earlier beach attack. The montage is a sign of the relevance of the movement-image - as a large-format action image (SAS), framed by situational scenes: the quiet town, attacked by the shark, becomes the anxious, fearful town. In the end-montage, the action shifts to the small form as a series of acts, proceed blindly: attacks on the beach, men hunting the shark, the shark attacking the boat... In each episode, situations prompt new actions - which become more and more un-coordinated. The attack on the beach prompts a mass flight from the ocean. The attack on the boat, prompts a new hunting strategy from the hunters:



---

<sup>182</sup> (Wood, 2002: 32)

<sup>183</sup> Vera Dika comments on the ‘transitional’ function of the ‘young victim’ group in horror films and how they are often ‘punished’ by the malevolent force. ‘The young victims of the stalker film are often presented as sexual objects. Portrayed by attractive, energetic actors who radiate good health and normality, they engage in activities that facilitate the spectator’s voyeuristic enjoyment. The soon-to-be victims may bathe, frolic, make love, or participate in sports.’ (Dika, 1987: 89)

<sup>184</sup> Dika notes that characters who cannot return the ‘stalker’s’ gaze ‘are quickly dispatched, punished in terms of the film’s formal logic not only because of their inability to see but also because they have allowed themselves to be seen.’ (Dika: 89)

The trailer places the camera within a pattern of action that is left unresolved and maintains the trope of conflict, begun at the opening of the trailer - right up to its end. This montage is a carefully coordinated sequence which performs metanarratively, using crystalline conceptions of time, drawing from multiple points in the feature-text time-line, to evoke the themes of the trailer text: the Orca fishing boat's hunt for the shark and a violent attack on the Amity beach. The shift in action-image format, also heralds another change - the shark is now a locus of conflict itself - it becomes the object of hunters. Yet again the battle will play out on the surface of the ocean:

*Quint sits in a town meeting.*

QUINT: This shark... will swallow you whole.

*A man is pulled from a small rowing boat – shots of Hooper and Brody watching in horror.*

BRODY: We're going to need a bigger boat.

*Hooper, Quint and Brody watch the approaching shark from the Orca.*

HOOPER: It looks like a twenty-footer...

QUINT: Twenty-five... three tonnes of him.

Like the opening scenes, the situation is primed as a hunt, this time however it is the academic curiosity of the hunters and their interest in facts and statistics which takes precedence over the more mysterious and sinister machinations of the 'evil' creature itself. The situation which discloses the changed actions of the protagonists, is established now as above the water, a stark contrast to the mysterious, gloomy depths of the opening shots - and the environment is populated by machinery and the technology of the hunt. Interestingly the scenes of action which begin to characterise the montage, seem to occur without agency - especially without *human* agency. As battle with shark is joined in the exciting, rapid montage, the equipment and apparatus of the hunt begins to turn against the human hunters - another gesture to the historical, regressive power of the primitive, elusive and 'evil' shark. The power of the unseen and near-supernatural creature creates action in the technologically-reliant, real world. Barrels fly from their hoardings, ropes spring tight against bodies and wood and metal disintegrate into splinters. From the act of the hunt, new situations disclose new actions:

- The hunt begins
- SITUATION: Brody, Hooper and Quint watch the sea
- The shark arrives
- Brody loses his footing
- Quint fixes a harpoon,
- Hooper vaults a piece of equipment
- Quint and Hooper yell
- Brody tightens a knot
- The shark swims past
- Hooper releases buoys
- Quint shoots the harpoon
- Buoys are dragged into the water
- SITUATION: Brody watches the sea from the Orca's cabin
- Hooper steers the Orca
- Quint shoots a harpoon
- Brody pays out rope
- Rope tightens painfully against Hooper's leg
- A buoy hits Brody in the face
- The Orca is pulled into the water
- Explosions aboard the Orca
- The Orca is torn to pieces
- The shark attacks bathers on Amity beach

Visual cogency is reduced to snatches of action and movement in which perspective and chronology are obliterated. The rhythm and duration of each component of the montage grows in prominence the more incoherent it becomes. As visuals become less comprehensible, their duration becomes their defining feature, their very becoming offered as a direct representation of time and potential. When the focus of the images shifts from the Orca to the attack on the beach, it becomes clear that the nature of the action images has changed, becoming small-form - ASA':

- The shark attacks bathers on Amity beach (action)
- SITUATION: a lifeguard surveying the Amity Island beach
- Bathers panic and rush to exit the water

The reversal, from large to small, of SAS' structure has been seen before, in Hitchcock's trailer canon, and signifies the encroaching lack of cohesion that occurs when the line separating the ocean from the surface world is transgressed - by human or non-human. The foundation provided by a situation, the moment in space and time with which we assess and comprehend the world, is removed here - the only way to restore sense is to establish a new situation. Doing so, in the *Jaws* trailer, is extremely difficult given that action (violent action) now dominates the milieu and proceeds blindly - without coherent, relatable 'looks'. The technique signals the growing paratextual articulation of the trailer, and a need to increase the volume of 'announcement' as it draws to a close. The final shot involves dozens of people, running out of the sea, towards the camera, echoing previous images in which swimmers enter the water. The affect becomes one of panic with the sea, again, the blank receptive plate on which expressions are made:



In these closing images, we are able to metatextually see perception degrade - and subsequently confront the frightening prospect of not being able to see the shark. Gaseous perception - the energetic depiction of sight being 'in' everything, propels the camera to any number of spaces - not resting long enough to permit extended contemplations of image. Liquid perception is evoked by the churning ocean but even this is distorted by movement -

no longer the fluid tranquillity of the opening scene. In its closing, we experience a free indirect style once again - this time a memory - and mirror-image - of the opening sequence.

The trailer's peculiar attitude towards time and narrative is especially prominent in this montage, created from disparate textual moments. By the end of the trailer, the shark is everywhere, between every shot - the reason for every action and reaction, even as notions of cause and effect are difficult to extrapolate from panic and violence. Richard de Brabander comments on the time-image's tendency to no longer follow 'the chronological order and narratological representation of actions and reactions':

Time-image makes past, future and present indistinguishable. Crucial for the time-image is the existence of several levels of duration. As such the time-image breaks with the Aristotelian *principium contradictionis* that defines something as not being *simultaneously* its own opposite: it is to be or not to be. According to Deleuze, their coexistence defines the imaginary.<sup>185</sup>

Time here is expressed in a series of connected durations which point towards a 'past-ness' (the narrative prosody of the trailer) and an imaginary future (the metanarrative comment on the future experience of the film-text). The simultaneity of the shots in the montage, linked by the presence of the shark establishes a multitude of durations which, while coherent on a paratextual narrative level, carry a more resonant meaning on the timeless, metanarrative level in which the trailer performs awestruck presentation of its own spectacle - and an anticipation of the future reconciliation of its parts. The final voiceover returns to quasi-religious themes raised in the opening. The narrator's words, melodramatic in the extreme, turn once more to good and evil, life and death:

NARRATOR: None of man's fantasies of evil can compare with the reality of...  
*Jaws*.

The closing shot of the trailer underlines its status as commercial-artistic entity. The film itself, based on a novel by Peter Benchley, was the subject of an unprecedented marketing campaign. The artwork for the film's poster, displayed prominently is also used as cover for the paperback edition of the novel on which the film was based. After the poster imagery rose to prominence, the commercialisation of *Jaws* reached 'saturation':

---

<sup>185</sup> (Brabander, 2002: par. 6)

*Jaws* was the first big-budget Hollywood film to be given both saturation television advertising and to be released from the start in a large number of cinemas. Both are now standard... The aim was to squeeze the maximum profit from a film quickly, before poor reviews or bad word-of-mouth had time to inflict any damage.<sup>186</sup>

The poster image, which makes up the final shot of the trailer, depicts the killer shark rising from the depths to attack an unsuspecting swimmer. Adjacent to that image, shots of the lead actors are superimposed. The final shot drops the artistic, rhetorical innovation which previously featured, becoming purely an advert, a visual catalogue feature text's selling points. The commercial branding here is obvious - the film is directly and visually associated with actors and their popularity is used to boost to the film's financial attractiveness. The sense of branding has been seen before and echoes the way in which Alfred Hitchcock would use his own recognisable appearance to promote a film - as product rather than experience.

Using *Jaws*' by-then extremely recognizable poster as a promotional tool is the only point at which the *Jaws* trailer explicitly flaunts its paratextual and commercial identity. Where Hitchcock's trailers exhibit branding throughout, *Jaws* leaves this explicit device until the very end. At this point, the voice-over too becomes a commercial device - the narrator reads out the names of the lead actors and then delivers a final line:

NARRATOR: *Jaws*. See it... before you go swimming.



In the poster's final affective gesture: the shark becomes a predator again, although this time, we see it from the outside, preparing to attack a female swimmer from below. This is the first time we see the creature and get a sense of its scale compared to its human quarry. It is freakishly large to a point which seems to defy the earlier pseudo-scientific commentary ('It looks like a twenty-footer') and even goes as far as to confirm suspicions of a supernatural force driving the huge shark. Its designs on the oblivious swimmer, including its voyeuristic tendency to watch its victims before attacking, echo the sexual anxiety raised earlier in the

---

<sup>186</sup> (King, 2000: 55)

trailer while the ocean and its surface as a dividing line are similarly emphasised. These notions, bundled together so evocatively: swimmer, sea, shark, constitute the *Jaws* 'brand' and became iconographic of the film and its themes. Even the physical presence of the creature in the poster image echoes the affective quality of its previous representations: it is almost indistinguishable from the sea in which it is depicted. With the exception of its open mouth, the shark is concealed by the dark blue of the ocean. Its mouth gapes, like an abyss, sucking people in whole and evoking its affective appeal (the ominous warnings of danger and death contained within the lines from the film).

There is a cyclical nature to the images, returning the spectator to the beginning of the trailer. The exploration of a foreboding undersea environment with the creature stalking a female swimmer, returns in the final situational affect - the poster. Indeed, the movement image is also affected - the poster repairs the large-format action structure with an important coda: it is an SAS image - the shark's progress is unbreakable (hence the unaltered 'S' at its conclusion) and maintains a situation which does not degenerate or evolve over the course of its duration: the shark is relentlessly powerful. The gesture is mimetic of the trailer: the shark exists most overtly in the minds of the people outside of the ocean in which it dwells - those who struggle with its affective presence - which relies on anxiety for actualisation. In order for it to become threatening, we must distinguish the shark from the water. Once the shark is sufficiently visually defined, the trailer's warning 'See it before you go swimming' becomes relevant and imperative: the poster image lays bare this collapse of artistic and commercial affectiveness. One need not see the title of the film to recognise the brand, given the ubiquity of the image and the film's saturation advertising campaign. The line carries commercial rhetoric also - the lurid font, the warning tone, the imperative 'see it'. The warning 'before you go swimming' represents that bridge between commercialism and artistic intent which, up to now, has been used as rhetoric concerning devastating power of the killer shark.

*Jaws* as a 'blockbuster' trailer occupies an intriguing position between a commercial and artistic perspective. The style and presentation of the imagery seems to turn away from the constant commercial rhetoric of trailers from earlier eras. No reference is made to Steven Spielberg, or his pedigree as a director (the rise of his contemporary popularity still a few years away). Nor is any upfront reference made to the actors involved in the film. In its effort to marry and mix a commercial identity to an artistic one, the trailer strips away indices that refer to artifice versus verisimilitude. Yet the trailer relies on a limited conceit: a shark attacking swimmers, and uses a limited array of methods with which to performatively

deliver that conceit. The methods are showy, flamboyant and spectacular, valuing the risky experience of taboo in a diegesis of leisure and relaxation (the holiday spot location of the film). This is a new and improved, non-self-conscious way of delivering the commercial attraction of a film to a potential audience. The *Jaws* film is a series of performative episodes which sketch out a peculiar narrative over a metanarrative framework. Unlike Hitchcock's propensity for playful teasing, the *Jaws* trailer exhibits strongly affective, intense moments of violence and terror while never closely exploring the cause of those moments. The emphasis falls on mental images to suture the chasms and holes in the trailer's textual story. In *Jaws*, we return from 'crisis' narrative, in which problems and traumas are highlighted and left unresolved, to a narrative which relies on these components as integral to its aesthetic and metanarrative identity. The technique is often confused - and confusing - and sometimes crudely manipulative but it seems integral to the pitch itself that the trailer produce and provide its own version of the 'goods' offered in the antecedent feature itself. While we could always 'take Hitchcock's word for it', the *Jaws* trailer performs for the audience in a curiously explicit way.

## Star Wars

[http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vP\\_1T4ilm8M](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vP_1T4ilm8M)

The 1977 release of George Lucas' *Star Wars* was, following the 'saturation' promotional model established by *Jaws* two years earlier, an unprecedented commercial success<sup>187</sup>, changing approaches not only to film making but film marketing. 'Saturation marketing' insures the film-text reaches a level of cultural awareness unavailable to films of earlier eras (prior to release) and fuses - commercial/promotional avenues with a film's artistic presence.

The trailer features themes of action and violence - in similar aesthetic and affective strategies as *Jaws*. Like *Jaws*, the trailer employs an extended central montage, which constitutes the majority of the trailer while an accompanying voice-over narration, expounds the virtues of the film. Rather than lingering shots of the films' stars, it is the presentation of spectacle, the achievements of make-up and special effects which are emphasised as part of a

---

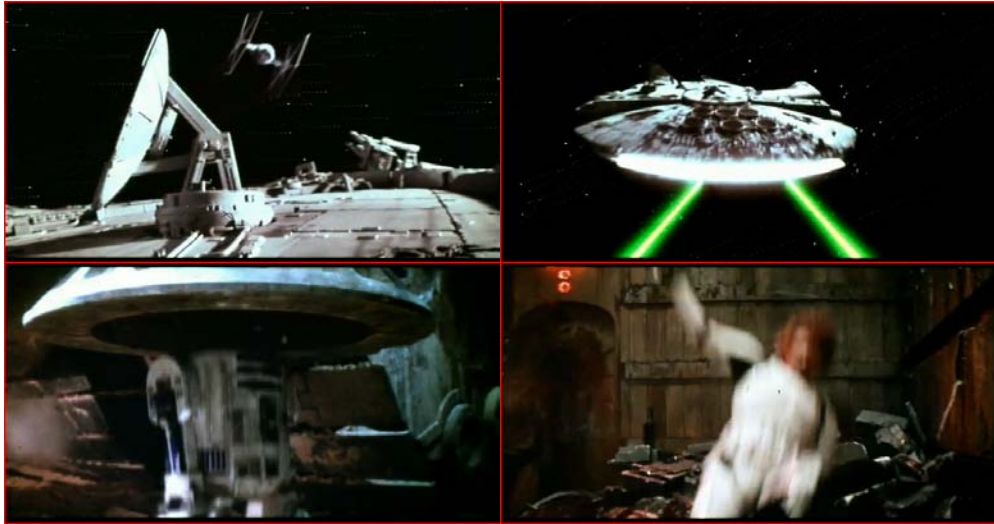
<sup>187</sup> We now know that when *Jaws* opened at 464 cinemas and went on to become the biggest grossing film of all time (well, for two years, until George Lucas's *Star Wars* came along and topped it) we entered the era of high concept and summer hits. (King, 2004: 23)

pattern of action. Each shot contains camera movement or special motion tracking techniques, constituting an ASA' action-image: action, rather than situation providing the framing referent. This establishes a generic difference: while *Jaws* emphasised an implacable, unseen horror, lurking off-screen along with unarticulated threats of violence and death, the science fiction genre-identity of *Star Wars* values the spectacle of impossibility and does so by capturing extraordinary movement in extraordinary locations. The opening shots establish a pattern which continues across the trailer:

- An escape pod rockets away from the camera
- A spaceship flies towards the camera



The mirroring effect here is obvious and the demonstration of dynamic movement effective - showing off the film's special effects and emphasising their capabilities. The mirroring device becomes a motif throughout the trailer. The effect is relevant to the presentation of time and space within the diegesis. The depiction of objects, moving impossibly through space, defying gravity, had - at that point - never been rendered so convincingly. In developing *Star Wars*, George Lucas developed a method of inserting individual components of an image into others - and removing unwanted parts of the image (such as supporting rods or strings). The film heralded a new era of visual composition where the limits of time and space could be manipulated with an unprecedented clarity. The trailer aestheticises both the diegetic spectacle of those achievements and the remarkable industry behind them.



With such value placed on the creation and artifice of the images, involving spectacular effects and action and constant movement towards and away from the camera, the *Star Wars* trailer evokes early cinema - in particular the Cinema of Attractions. Gunning comments on a characteristic of the Cinema of Attractions: the 'recurring look at the camera by actors':

An aspect of early cinema which I have written about in other articles is emblematic of this different relationship the cinema of attractions constructs with its spectator: the recurring look at the camera by actors. This action, which is later perceived as spoiling the realistic illusion of the cinema, is here undertaken with brio, establishing contact with the audience... This is a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator.<sup>188</sup>

While the fourth wall is not transgressed in quite the same way, that same self-awareness is in trailers - especially blockbuster trailers, which seem to appeal to a recognition of their own capabilities to impress spectators. Those early films showcase rudimentary aspects of film: 'exoticism, 'magic' or the 'realistic illusion of motion... offered by the Lumières'.<sup>189</sup> but it is the exhibition of those things which constitute the spectacle. The Lumières' films demonstrate the fascination with novel capability, recreating a spectrum of dramatic movements: a train pulling into a station or workers leaving a factory at the end of shift. The movement into and out of the camera lens was remarkable at the time - a recreation of reality, realised on the cinema screen:

---

<sup>188</sup> (Gunning: 57)

<sup>189</sup> (Gunning: 57)



Shots from the Lumières' *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1896)

Popple and Kember comment on the appeal of the Lumières' novel cinematic exhibitionism and the allure of the 'spectacle':

for early audiences, the spectacle of the Cinématographie itself and of the wonder of moving images projected onto a screen was more significant than the content of the films themselves.<sup>190</sup>

The wonder of movement is rendered all the more remarkable in the *Star Wars* trailer by the apparent impossibility of the shots, a feat of special effects. Spaceships fly into and around each other, performing manoeuvres which seem intuitively impossible to capture on film. This turns exhibition into a genre articulation - the notion of the fantastic was one enthusiastically explored by the Cinema of Attractions. Another pioneer of early cinema, George Méliès, depicted fantastical journeys in *Le Voyage Dans La Lune* (1902) and *Le Voyage à Travers L'impossible* (1904).



*Le Voyage Dans La Lune* (1902) and *Le Voyage à Travers L'impossible* (1904)

In Méliès' films, images emphasise perspective and landscape, using distance as a way to increase spectacle. In the shots above, the illusion is deepened by the background paintings, which fabricate the sense of depth so integral to the visual effect. Layers are important - in *Le Voyage Dans La Lune*, the crowd, the mountains and finally the distant sky contribute to the distance-effect, in *Le Voyage à Travers L'impossible*, multiple rock formations create a similar effect. Like *Jaws* (and the horror genre), *any-space-whatever* is important but it is the spectacular rendering of objects before that space which is significant: what those objects

---

<sup>190</sup> (Popple & Kember, 2004: 36)

look like, and what they physically do - and the capability of being able to capture those things on film. In the Star Wars trailer, we see a resurgence of that fascination with mechanical, industrial capability as a vehicle for affective experience:

Nor should we ever forget that in the earliest years of exhibition, the cinema itself was an attraction. Early audiences went to exhibitions to see machines demonstrated (the newest technological wonder, following in the wake of such widely exhibited machines and marvels as X-Rays or, earlier, the phonograph), rather than view films.<sup>191</sup>

The contemporary exhibition of a film is lent a strong sense of occasion by virtue of the fact that it is experienced in the theatre, for a limited time period. While modern viewing methods may differ, the once-transitive, time-dependant aspect of popular cinema fits well with trailer rhetoric. With the advent of home video and digital technology, the opportunity to experience films outside of a theatrical setting increased but the rhetoric of 'film as event' persisted. Douglas Kellner comments on the power of spectacles to become 'defining events of their era'<sup>192</sup> and how the aesthetic of the spectacle evolves and is influenced under the auspices of 'new technological developments'<sup>193</sup>. Kellner points out the tendency of spectacle to seep into different spheres of reception and exhibition - including the promotional:

Under the influence of a multimedia image culture, seductive spectacles fascinate the denizens of the media and consumer society and involve them in the semiotics of an ever-expanding world of entertainment, information and consumption, which deeply influence thought and action.<sup>194</sup>

The often fantastical and magical qualities of the spectacle of film render a promethean, even religious, undercurrent to the viewing experience which makes appropriate the melodramatically articulated rhetoric that cinemagoers 'witness' rather than mundanely 'watch' or 'view' a film spectacle. Blockbuster trailers reinforce this sense of spectacular event by seeming to only atypically fit into 'normal' or generic processes of consumption and reception - hence appeals to viewers to 'witness', 'prepare' or 'experience'. Blockbuster

---

<sup>191</sup> (Gunning: 58)

<sup>192</sup> (Kellner, 2005: 24)

<sup>193</sup> (Kellner: 24)

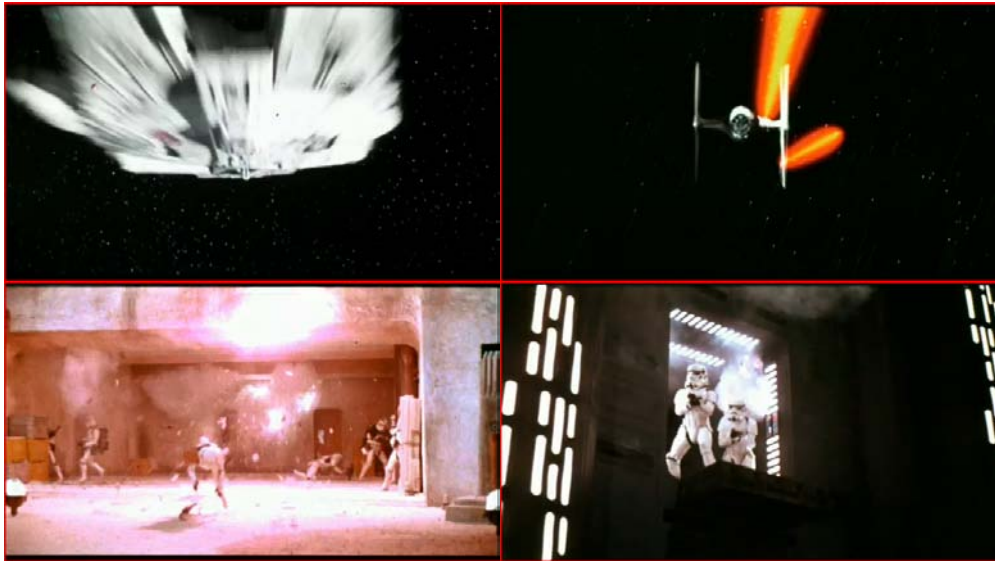
<sup>194</sup> (Kellner: 25)

films, like *Star Wars* and *Jaws*, harness the sense of occasion, using their unprecedented special effects to thwart existing expectations about the capability of cinema.

Deleuze continues to be relevant to trailers in the blockbuster canon. In *Star Wars*, any-space-whatever and the black backdrop of space combine for affective impact: space is an immobile plate, an indeterminate expanse, on which expressive elements form striking patterns of movement. The shots appeal to a sense of isolation and unknown, alien territory. Elements within them are active and energetic, involving peculiar shapes and erratic movement on the part of spaceships flying past the camera. Like, *Jaws*, the affective presence of combat and conflict is valued and this presence is made all the more evident as a result of its backdrop which, in another similarity with *Jaws*, is an isolated and alien canvas: space. The notion of exploration, or at least, discovery, is not as prominent here since nothing is 'hidden': space is not as riddled with concealed corners and niches as *Jaws*' underwater world and is instead a more open, inviting expanse in which affective action and movement is exposed explicitly for the spectator in all its dimensions - as a startling, jarring contrast to the immobile blackness of space. In these initial shots: spaceships travel through the void without recognizable or solid points of reference from which to establish observational or situational position. Outer space is a transitive context: objects within it are always travelling to or from their destination. The spaces are so indefinable that action occurring within the frame is emphasised markedly through those articulations of movement - and can be represented from any point whatever. The trailer suggests, by showcasing the movement of *things* against a background, that it is the spectacular, counterintuitive representation of bodies which forms its technological attraction. The embodiment of objects in the *Star Wars* trailer is crucial to its affective power. Depictions of speed and light (rocketing spaceships, laser blasts) are coded into each object's presence and even prompt associations with the *speed of light* as a way of deepening a generic, science fiction identity.

When the camera does cut from the indefinable expanse of space, it is to a series of more comprehensible locales: spaceship interiors and other limited, but fantastical environments. The move takes emphasis off the body as a spectacular object of affective recognition - but renders it as part of a catalogue of eye-catching and complex visuals. In this way, the exhibition of manufactured spectacle continues, but now with the limited situational focus on characters' remarkable make-up, extraterrestrial costumes and the exotic design of sets. Yet it is action which still defines situations as the ASA' pattern continues: often through depictions of combat or striking violent moments. So frenetic are shots paraded by the

audience that situations have no time crystallise from the milieu. Extended contemplation is impossible and it is spectacular affective action which continues to define movement images:



The voiceover for the *Star Wars* trailer distinguishes itself from its *Jaws* counterpart through its commercialistic gestures: it lists the multiple demographical appeals of the film ('It's a spectacle, an epic,' etc) along with its professional pedigree ('20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and George Lucas... bring you'). But the words of the narrator are also a demonstration of the trailer's representation of its commercial character in an overall artistic effect. The voice-over tone is deeply serious, urgent even, and it presses the listener/spectator to treat the images not as part of a gaudy advertising effort but as tonally necessary components of the trailer. The narrator's voice is slow, ominous, matching the visual 'crawl' of the *Star Wars* logo and the rhythm of the montage, while simultaneously referencing brand and value for money - ingredients raised so frequently by Alfred Hitchcock's trailers. Those commercial features are smoothed-in to the artistic identity with some effort:

NARRATOR: Somewhere in space, this may all be happening right now.

20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and George Lucas, the man who brought you *American Graffiti*, now bring you an adventure unlike anything on your planet: *Star Wars*.

A story of a boy, a girl and a universe.

It's a big, sprawling space saga of rebellion and romance.

It's a spectacle, light-years ahead of its time.

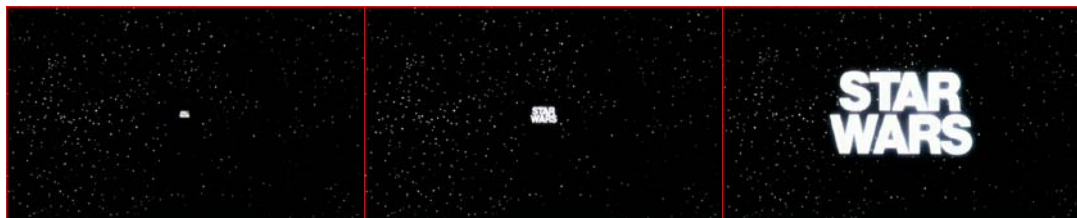
It's an epic of heroes...

and villains...

and aliens from a thousand worlds.

A billion years in the making: Star Wars.

From the opening shot, the trailer is cast not as a carefully-orchestrated glimpse of the feature film, but as a potentially documentarian take on a realistically-depicted set of events. The opening lines allude to the immediacy of the film as 'event', specifically as a filmic event, something to be witnessed in that context. By pointing out that events '*may all be happening right now*' the onus is on the audience to witness the spectacle, while that opportunity presents itself. It underlines the idea of possibility and potential, embodied by the any-space-whatevers of those opening shots. It evokes the historical and geographical indeterminacy of the film: when did it take place? Where did it take place? This initial claim against both time and space is strange since its relevance seems to be a non sequitur: the film is certainly not understood as a live broadcast of events - so to depict it as a 'real' moment in time seems peculiar and conspicuously focussed on the time-relevance of the experience - its 'present-ness'. The line even works as an attempt to cast doubt on the illusory nature of the effects, it blurs fantasy with reality by making bold claims about the nature of the verisimilitude. That the events are taking place 'right now' seems to place them within a period of time which requires a level of urgent action on the part of the spectator. Further descriptive assertions in the opening lines of the voice-over work towards the same end: recasting the film's commercial ambitions as part of the rhetorical address of the trailer. The disparate attributes, delivered in the dramatic, rhythmic monotone of the narrator imply a huge and varied range of thematic elements and seem to suggest a multiplicity of perspectives to the narrative, connected by a central theme - all handily evoked by the constantly approaching title 'Star Wars':



This fragmented perspective, represented by the multiplicity of narrative positions becomes purely aesthetic: it tells us everything about the film and at the same time nothing, describing

the 'appearance' of narrative - what the film 'looks' like. Like the *Jaws* trailer, there is a missing narrative element which, in this case, correlates with the central metatextual premise of the trailer: how can it be all these things at once? The answer falls within the wider strategy of the trailer as 'offering'. Indeed, despite the exaggerated, dramatic approach and extensive 'cataloguing' of narrative identities, focus remains very much on the notion of submission to an audience, for inspection and appraisal - the voice-over even says as much: '20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox and George Lucas... *bring you*'. The audience has a part to play in the relationship, one which involves their specific experience of the narrator's dramatic 'list' of spectacles and narratives - in exchange for money and attention. This relationship demonstrates the Cinema of Attractions' awareness of its own status, a product of showman-like directors and studios involved in a cinematic reading. Voiceover is an important part of that experience and is overtly derivative of the exaggerated sales patter found in the fairground-style environments of early cinematic exhibition<sup>195</sup>. By definition, novel spectacle offered by the Cinema of Attractions, becomes less appealing after a first viewing. The revelation of novelty and the prospect of potential experience is coded into the trailer register (the equivalent of the exhibitionist's cry: 'Roll-up, roll-up ladies and gentlemen!'). The commercial pomp combined with universal theatrical flair prominent in blockbusters, is part of a process of 'naturalization', categorised by Kernan as 'announcing gestures':

Trailers are both like and unlike the precinematic attractions to which Gunning compares early cinema. But their overall function to promote the experience of cinematic spectacle, naturalizing cinema as spectacle and creating expectations for it, has obvious echoes in precinematic attractions and their "announcing gestures".<sup>196</sup>

These articulations of commercial/artistic identity go beyond the verbal and textual. Like *Jaws*, the trailer for *Star Wars* evokes a theme of exploration, by presenting new possibilities for travel and the exploration of strange new environments. Chloe Chard, in an examination of advertisements for shipping companies as early as the 1930s, noted the use of rhetoric to entice travellers seemed to have the power to displace 'mundane reality'<sup>197</sup>. Those travel narratives evoke the dramatic description and rhetorical hyperbole of the trailer:

---

<sup>195</sup> The Lumières toured their Cinématographie across Europe in the early months of 1896, appointing agents in each country to represent their company and exhibit Cinématographic films. The magician and the shadow artist, Felicien Trewey, was appointed in the UK. (Popple & Kember: 35)

<sup>196</sup> (Kernan: 18)

<sup>197</sup> (Chard, 1999: 1)

One particular rhetorical trope plays a major part in representing the foreign as dramatically different. This is the trope of hyperbole... All [varieties of hyperbole] elide alterity with drama; in acclaiming the topography as dramatic, striking and remarkable, they affirm at the same time that it has supplied the evidence of difference expected and required of it. Travel writings often suggest that the perception of a need for hyperbole is one of the features that differentiate the traveller from those without experience of travel.<sup>198</sup>

Unlike *Jaws*, however, the prospect of travel and the exploration of new environments in *Star Wars* are exciting, thrilling spaces to be raced into energetically. Hyperbolic elements feature frequently in the voice-over and the actions of objects onscreen. The journey into outer space is not only part of the spectacle, but necessary in order to facilitate the actions of onscreen objects. While the ultimate destination of moving objects might be anchored to the more mundane locales of physical sets and soundstages, the act of travel is an exciting, thrilling and hyperbolic part of the experience. *Star Wars* echoes earlier genre iterations, mimicking the visual tone and register of theatrical serials of the 40s and 50s:



*King of the Rocket Men* (1949): an episodic serial from Republic Pictures

The voiceover in the *King of the Rocket Men* trailer similarly reflects *Star Wars*' register, dramatic and deep-toned:

NARRATOR: Bringing you a screen-full of pulse-pounding excitement!

The frequent re-definition of the film by the text and voice-over components of the trailer, augments the identity of the film and emphasises a string of changing narrative potentials. In *Star Wars*, the pace of these text and audio segments is slower, a consequence of the lingering shots of much improved special effects visuals. Indeed, shots from *King of the*

---

<sup>198</sup> (Chard: 4)

*Rocket Men* also demonstrate an affective desire to frame spectacle. In this case, an object - a 'rocket man' - soars across the white backdrop of the sky. While his movements are conspicuously more restricted than the high-tech capabilities exhibited in *Star Wars*, the affective sense of wonder is obvious:



Although hyperbole and spectacular objects are a strong affective component of the *Star Wars* trailer, both as part of a journey and in sheer physical presence, the trailer punctuates its alien environments with human affects. With an absence of established stars, the trailer for *Star Wars* is predictably fleeting in its focus on the faces of its characters. Far from the Hitchcockian propensity for lingering shots of stars and their faces, like *Jaws*, faces in the *Star Wars* trailer comprise characters seemingly observing action across consecutive shots - evoking strong Kuleshovian effect<sup>199</sup>, which Robert Stam characterises as a strategic management of the spectator's 'cognitive and visual processes through the analytic segmentation of partial views'<sup>200</sup>.

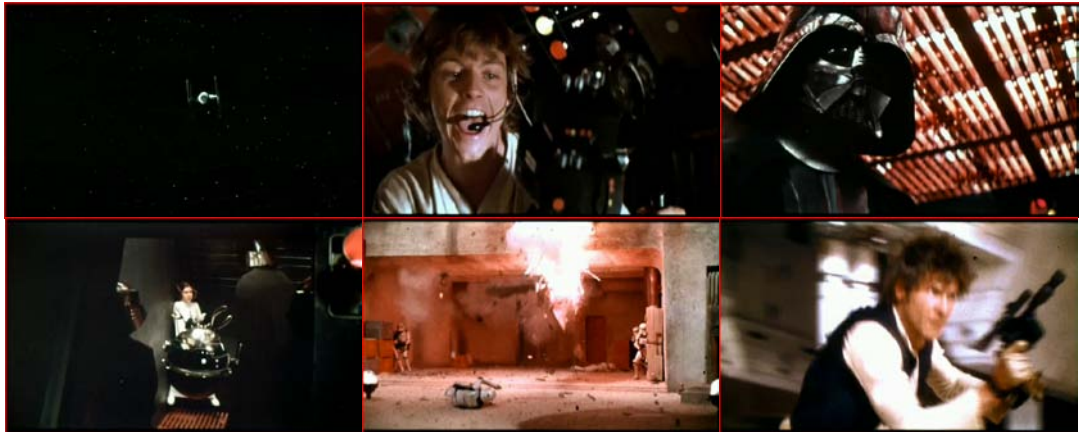
These affective close-ups are distinguished from earlier eras by their weaving into the tapestry of spectacle. The face *is* indistinguishable from situation: it occurs as a visual marker for the importance of some consecutive, or potentially upcoming shot in which spectacular action has taken, or is about to take, place. The object of the look may or may not appear but is immediately cast into the crystalline aspect of Deleuze's time-image. Faces 'look' at a point just off-screen and the audience is also directed towards that void - to the potential for becoming. This trend occurs in the *Jaws* trailer - as faces stare in horror at the oncoming shark or the disaster it has wrought or is about to wreak. This time, the look is met

---

<sup>199</sup> In the early 1920s Kuleshov devised a series of experiments to show that editing could engender emotions and association that went far beyond the content of individual shots. One experiments, later dubbed the "Kuleshov effect", juxtaposed the same shot of the actor Mosjoukine with diverse visual materials (a bowl of soup, a baby in a coffin, and so forth) to convey very different emotional effects (hunger, grief, etc). (Stam, 2000: 38)

<sup>200</sup> (Stam: 38)

by wonders: action in process, as it is being executed, detailed affective components or complex depictions of light, speed and sound:



The affective components of the blockbuster trailer form relatable anchors in what is, in the case of *Star Wars*, a series of fantastic images set against environments frequently difficult to reconcile with reality. The affective structuring of the faces follows a pattern which accentuates their role as situational markers: affective shots of ‘good’ characters often appear consecutive and oppositional to ‘bad’ characters. The grouping translates to a sense of moral opposition - although the film and its characters’ moral positioning is as yet, unknowable. The ‘moralised’ situation acts rhetorically on the forthcoming action - we don’t know why we should care about the action - only that we *should* care. The colour palette embellishes the trend, evoking the thematic polarity of black and white westerns. While good characters are often dressed in white, against black backgrounds, evil characters, are defined by their distinction from the darkness, in Darth Vader’s case, only the reflections of light on his black armour remove him from the darkness. Harrison Ford’s character, Han Solo (pictured above) represents moral ambiguity, as do the white armoured Storm Trooper soldiers. Each frame uses a deliberate composition of this polarity for rhetorical effect:



The movement-images in the trailer for *Star Wars* display little in the way of narrative causality and instead draw on their rhythm and visual quality to create an effect which is far more aesthetic and poetic. The Deleuzian any-space-whatever contributes to this end: the black expanse of space is immutable and characterless, a canvas on which movement and action is implicitly valued and pushed to prominence.

Like *Jaws*, the trailer develops an overt aesthetic of conflict: the mirrored movement, the oppositional faces. Set against 'outer space', the affects become reassuring flares of recognition in an otherwise formless cinematic environment. Interestingly, the villain, Darth Vader, stands out from the stream of affects as a jarring throwback to the *Jaws* trailer. Vader's face is just as motionless and immutable as the blackness of space and, jet black, represents the same void of understanding as the elusive shark from the *Jaws* trailer. Evoking evil (Nazis, Hell's Angels, even a robotic menace) Vader's presence, like the shark of the *Jaws* poster, is a startling visual depiction of the point of conflict between the known and the unknown, the expressive and the inexpressive - it highlights the trailer's poise between revelation and concealment. Even the trailer narration in its frequent, commercially-motivated, descriptive assertions on the nature of the film contributes to this end, posing the question: how can the film be all these things at once? While the surface of the ocean was the point of conflict in the *Jaws* trailer, space serves a similar function in *Star Wars* - and a similarly affective one at that. Negative space remains relevant in this conceit: blackness, darkness, a void of light. Space is characterless, empty and featureless - but, ever expanding. Its perceived mundanity is reversed here and becomes the stage on which feats of incredible spectacle take place. Space is no longer a 'nothing' or a void from which movement is arbitrarily shot, it is part of a spectacular scheme in which previously-impossible movements may be recreated on the cinema screen. It is another fairground attraction and, while we do not see anything new, we are seeing something quintessentially familiar used in a new way.

The blockbuster trailer differs from those of earlier eras in its appeal to audience expectation, particularly in terms of its invocation of genre. Early trailers work overtly to make the film as appealing to as many demographics as possible - with as many influences and generic markers as possible. Films were all things at once: love stories, thrillers, mysteries... the trailer's aim was to maximise audience interest without settling on a single, limiting generic identity. In fact, most Hitchcock films worked to subvert this kind of assumption: *Vertigo* was a mystery and a love story, *Rope* was a mystery without a mystery, *Psycho* a horror sold as a comedy - and so on. While this aim does not change at the advent of the blockbuster (a maximised audience still an obvious ambition) trailers' evocation of generic characteristics as

a means to this end, did. Where Hitchcock is playful and fleeting with the boundaries of genre, often remaining elusive to the point of absurdity (*The Birds* trailer, for example was presented as a humorous lecture on the history of man's murderous relationship with his 'feathered friends'), blockbuster trailers make explicit their connections to genre convention. Kernan comments on this trend:

Altman... has argued that movie-posters demonstrate that classical-era films were often promoted by invoking multiple genres. Altman offers the example of two generic promotional hooks frequently utilized for classical adventure films besides that of the adventure genre itself: these are "romance" and "travel".<sup>201</sup>

Kernan argues that this tactic is actually an attempt at promoting an inclusiveness: a sense that the film would contain elements which evoked a multitude of genres - hence expanding its appeal.<sup>202</sup> *Star Wars'* accompanying commentary echoes this fractured, plural approach to self-definition:

NARRATOR: A story of a boy, a girl and a universe.

It's a big, sprawling space saga of rebellion and romance.

It's a spectacle, light-years ahead of its time.

It's an epic of heroes...

and villains...

and aliens from a thousand worlds.

While, on the one hand, this approach is unwieldy, even scattershot, it is representative of the blockbuster as a commercial-artistic entity. Each line, delivered with deep bass hyperbole is an overtly melodramatic contribution to the imagery and yet also showcases the selling points of the film like a catalogue. The effect is awkward and transparent, but reveals the attempt to exhort the inclusivity of the 'science fiction' genre which may now, according to

---

<sup>201</sup> (Kernan: 46)

<sup>202</sup> In trailers, however, this multiplicity tends to play out more as an inclusiveness within genres. Once we look at trailers, elements that might appear as divisive or segmented appeals to different markets in print promotions can contribute to a perception that studios are offering audiences a more inclusive construction of individual genres by virtue of the trailer's inevitably more "holistic" presentation of these same diverse filmic elements within a single cinematic text (Kernan: 47)

the voice-over, include tropes such as: rebellion, romance, spectacle, an epic scope and technological achievement. The generic appeal of the blockbuster trailer is, in this instance, externalised. It is a dragnet of themes, elements, imagery and sounds intended to bring viewers in through sheer power of spectacle, over the enigma of discovery and contemplation. The benefits of casting a film trailer within a hybrid of genres are twofold. On the one hand, the combination aids artistic identification, and on the other, it is a way of exhibiting commercially attractive features. Tasker comments on the trend of 'diversity' in promotional paratexts:

The terms employed by film reviewer and movie magazines in describing contemporary action pictures indicate the diversity of the cinematic field within which they have to locate specific films for their readers. Thus descriptive phrases such as 'feminist road movie', 'post-apocalyptic thriller, or 'boys-behind-bars action' may refer to genre, but often in a qualified way, in order to function more effectively as a guide to the viewer.<sup>203</sup>

The constant re-evaluation, by the trailer of what the film is ('a saga', 'an epic', 'a spectacle') means a process of constant re-evaluation by a viewer. In terms of genre, this panders to what Tasker calls the 'suspicion of repetition and sameness'<sup>204</sup> which casts a shadow over generic association. The trailer for *Star Wars* seems to efface these concerns, again in a performative way, never dwelling on a narrative moment, moving constantly, both visually and narratively, into something different. Like the creature of *Jaws*, there is an elusiveness which seeks to escape scrutiny - in this case, it is the film itself. The trailer - and the film it advertises - still establishes the central generic anchor, 'science fiction', as a baseline for the further associations it seeks to engender but masks that sense of 'repetition' with the constantly shifting declarations about its own identity. By relying on an audience's ability to associate with generic markers, the film 'reassures' as it simultaneously provokes, within a paratextual field:

---

<sup>203</sup> (Tasker: 57)

<sup>204</sup> a suspicion of repetition and sameness is tied into the popularity of the big-budget cinema of spectacle that developed in the late 1970s and through the 1980s. In particular, they single out those films associated with Steven Spielberg and George Lucas... such films include *Star Wars*, the Indiana Jones films, *ET* and, in addition, the disaster movie (Tasker: 59)

The distinction, between cinemas of the past and present, has repeatedly been drawn in terms of a certain 'knowing' quality, a knowledge of cinema and popular culture which is shared between texts and the audiences which they address.<sup>205</sup>

Robin Wood notes the tendency of audiences to 'reread' cinematic texts in a way which is indulgent of this need for 'reassurance'<sup>206</sup>. Like the recognition of the affect, from a formless background, trailer texts rewards attention with reassuring recognition. Wood casts a negative light on this trend of 'reassurance' in Hollywood films:

The satisfactions of *Star Wars* are repeated until a sequel is required: same formula, with variations. But instead of a leap, only an infant footstep is necessary, and never one that might demand an adjustment on the level of ideology.<sup>207</sup>

His major concern is that these films encourage a lack of critical engagement and the suspension of critical tendencies - the sentiment that 'it's just a fantasy' frustrating close analysis to the point that they blunt or diminish more worthy 'movements'<sup>208</sup>. Wood's criticism of films, in particular the blockbusters of, what he refers to as, the 'Lucas-Spielberg Syndrome'<sup>209</sup> does not seem similarly applicable to the trailers which represent those films. While the film text's themselves may encourage a sense of passive, uncritical reception, the trailers disavow this apathy and work to prompt a degree of critical assessment at almost every juncture. Audiences watching a trailer constantly evaluate the film text based on its references to different genres and its similarities to others. If difference is established, further critical work is done to ascertain *why* it is different - the trailer has to persuade and the audience must be persuaded. Furthermore, it is not simply the delivery of persistent difference to prior generic examples which perpetuates critical engagement but the rendering

---

<sup>205</sup> (Tasker: 59)

<sup>206</sup> Reassurance is the keynote, and one immediately reflects that this is the era of sequels and repetition. The success of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T.*, and the *Star Wars* movies is dependent not only on the fact that so many people go to see them, but also that so many see them again and again. (Wood, 1986: 144)

<sup>207</sup> (Wood, 1986: 145)

<sup>208</sup> the particular satisfactions the films offer – the lost breast repeatedly rediscovered – can be at once indulged and laughed off. That the apology (after all, the merest statement of the obvious) has to be made at all testifies to the completeness of the surrender on another level to the indulgence. (Wood, 1986: 145)

<sup>209</sup> (Wood, 1986: 144)

of a complexity of visual themes and schemes of discourse. Trailers which attempt to subsume their commercial message into their artistic effect create often-striking aesthetic identities which engender active interpretation. The trailer must surpass the sense of 'reassurance' inherent in its own generic identity to succeed and can only do this by exploring and innovating with its own representation. While Hitchcock attempts to undermine the notion of the 'advert', the blockbuster manipulates expectations and associations of genre.

The lingering effect of the *Star Wars* trailer is not a narrative, but that of stirring action played out against the dramatic palette of the science fiction genre. The trailer's attempt to be one thing and, at the same time all things, creates a strange, fragmented identity in which narrative plays little part but which intellectual reconciliation of disparity is crucial. With the emphasis on form rather than the creation of a textual or narrative identity, a salient and standout element emerges in the form of the animated title 'Star Wars', which becomes a recurring motif throughout the trailer. At the opening, the title 'Star Wars' appears some distance from the camera and begins a slow crawl, closer and closer to the camera:



Although the title is a framing device it is the backbone of the trailer's identity: the small-format action imagery takes the crawl as its situation-referent, disclosing new action as it approaches. The text's approach, cut in montage with the live-action images from the film-text, quickly becomes situational: the mediation between the action of the textual shots. The affective presence of the crawling title is arresting and transitive: every time the screen returns to the titles, they have grown closer, larger against the black screen of space. The title's approach is a narrative tool in its own sense. Since it carries an affective power - an expressive element on a receptive surface (space) - its resolution is a concern of the spectator

who works to parse its place in the milieu by reading it as it grows clearer. The momentum built by the interspersed action seems to contribute to this resolution, drawing the image in closer - or is it the other way round? The approaching titles delivering more and more information and detail on their content? Until they grow close enough, the titles could even be another approaching spaceship. Either way, a circular, symbiotic process is taking place between the aesthetic effect of the approaching titles, with the affectively-presented text and the similarly affective bursts of action from the feature film diegesis. The effect - and the momentum - builds to the point that it becomes unsustainable and the title explodes. The narrative has reached a point where it cannot maintain its position alongside the film's commercial characteristics (and vice versa): the trailer story ends in such a spectacular fashion that both sides of its artistic/commercial identity are served. The crawl evokes a transitory state of meaning: the punctuating action is re-cast in each instance: again as a 'saga', a 'romance' etc. This is meaning which shifts in relation to both the expanding list of descriptive segments the voice-over provides and action from the film-text visuals. But 'meaning' here is peculiar and relatable again to the elusiveness of the concept of 'Star Wars' which defies complete identification by changing its character so frequently. The approaching title is a sign, but one which refuses to submit to identification and 'resets' during each brief interposed moment of visual action.

At the end of their approach the crawling title's sudden stasis seems to carry a powerful inertia, reinforced by the equally sudden end to the accompanying musical score. The letters then explode, signifying a literal and figurative deconstruction of *Star Wars* - as if it once again frustrated any kind of signification or definition. In the wake of the exploded titles, and empty void of the screen, the audience must similarly reassess its own conclusions - even in the face of this last on-going act of redefinition. The empty screen with which the *Star Wars* trailer ends, rehearses the pattern of open interpretive gestures which attempts to mask the 'something for everyone' commercial rhetoric of advertising. The trailer casts the perceived cynicism of the commercial as a carefully calculated artistic pattern in which genre and narrative is an on-going interpretive process. This process puts an emphasis on the novel - as the unfamiliar is framed within a familiar trope. Kernan examines this conceit:

The rhetoric of "something for everyone" is usually posited within the generalised framework of an individual genre. By quantifying or encapsulating aspects of the films' generic appeals in this way, such trailers construct genre at the same time as they construct genre-transcending commodity-units of spectacle (or attractions), aiming to land as broad an audience as possible to see a genre film by emphasizing

the range of different aspects that might appeal to audiences within the specific genre.<sup>210</sup>

In a parade of novel, undeniably spectacular images, the voice-over constantly reminds the viewer that this is part of familiar narrative convention, an inclusive boundary in which a multitude of generic signifiers play: 'It's a romance... an adventure'. Novelty is acceptable in this instance - as long as it takes place within the auspicious boundaries of the overarching generic convention. The *Star Wars* trailer is a catalogue, which flicks systematically through its wares... and the effect is a trailer which, although uncertain of its own identity - flitting between the commercial and the pompously dramatic - delivers a cinematic effect which attempts to turn one into the other.

## Alien

[http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=bEVY\\_lonKf4&feature=related](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=bEVY_lonKf4&feature=related)

The era of the 'blockbuster' would see a codification of the trailer format. A visual and textual grammar in the tradition of Metz's syntagma, which, in its simplest form, was a system of presentation and elaboration: the trailer presents novel concepts - images, narratives - and then codes meaning into them through systems of editing, affective flourishes, unfamiliar narrative and genre conceit.

The *Star Wars* trailer enacts this process via a strong visual rhythm - using the motif of its animated title crawl to assign and recast meaning. In the trailer for *Alien*, that grammatical structure is more complex, the trailer makes paratextual statements using footage which does not appear in its antecedent feature-text - and was shot solely for use in the trailer. Statements made capture a wide range of themes: sexual and reproductive anxiety, isolation and death - presented in more than a binary, concept/explanation structure. The *Alien* trailer is a multifaceted representation of film-text and non-film-text footage, and demonstrates the trailer's capability to make striking, creative/artistic statements outside a pre-filmed corpus of images. The communicative tendency of the trailer is emphasised in the blockbuster, which articulates statements about director, crew, cast and genre with a recognizable style.

---

<sup>210</sup> (Kernan: 19)

*Jaws* exhibits its genre membership with a sense of affective unease versus elusive but irresistible power. Carefully-coded notions of genre, in the trailer - work to reinforce those same notions out-with the format - and each trailer-articulation changes the exterior-thing it represents. In its role as 'paratext', the trailer acts as filter and magnifier for editorially-distilled source imagery, presented in a sensationalised manner. The paratext - the advert - sets the limits of genre in a much more salient way than the film-text - which does not share the trailer's commercial voice as a means to define itself. With novel spectacle, the trailer makes actual changes to existing concepts - using paratextual methods to codify those changes. Phrases like: "the scariest film you'll ever see" or "the most romantic love story..." are common. Kernan reflects on the tendency for 'generic recombination':

Trailers are a historical precedent for generic recombination and quotation, even as they illustrate the industry's attempts to force unusual or anomalous films into familiar generic moulds. In addition to repetition, which allows genres to be reinforced in close continuity with audience expectations based on prior experiences, trailers reinforce genres by bringing in "new blood" while making comparisons with earlier generic models.<sup>211</sup>

Science fiction is a genre with overt characteristic markers. The way the genre announces itself, evoking existing generic tropes, acts as an introductory framework for new elements: altering and expanding the understood fabric of 'science fiction'. This pattern ensures that the scope of cultural awareness surrounding future science fiction texts includes these new additions. It is paratextual markers which 'decide' what parts of a text constitute genre - these characteristics, like metamontage, function in what Kernan calls a 'policing' role:

Trailers highlight attempts at boundary-policing through their formal properties. As perhaps the most montage-driven signifying system in the regime of popular cinema, their discontinuity editing comprising a sort of "metamontage", the rhetoric of trailers trades heavily in boundaries, edges, and the spaces between where meaning happens (or is assumed to happen).<sup>212</sup>

Kernan comments on the trend of 'self-definition' in which generic awareness is so strong that the trailer takes the form of a mini-movie, a metatextual 'story', often including 'extra

---

<sup>211</sup> (Kernan: 51)

<sup>212</sup> (Kernan: 45)

footage' which promotes their antecedent film-text<sup>213</sup>. Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979) trailer, released hot on the heels of George Lucas' mega-successful *Star Wars* (1977), demonstrates a clear awareness of its generic characteristics and its need to identify itself with, and distinguish itself from, them<sup>214</sup>. The opening mirrors the affective 'screen' of the *Star Wars* opening: the backdrop of space. This time however, the colour is even darker, without even the multiple points of light from the stars:



Genre expectation is immediately foregrounded: a bewildering, geographically-unknown environment indicates the alien reaches of science fiction (or the paranoid loneliness of horror) and, continuing the generic associations, the backdrop transitions into what appears to be the surface of an alien planet. The camera tracks over a pitted surface of rises and craters. These images are cut against another surface, this one smoother in quality. The montage effect is clear: alternately a close-up and long distance depiction of what appears to be a planet surface. The imagery, reminiscent of the moon landings (no doubt still highly relevant for 1970s audiences), does not appear in the finished film-text *Alien*. It is a sequence designed to magnify generic associations - space, planets, exploration - through metamontage. The effected creation of the 'planet' is integral to the forthcoming manipulation of this genre expectation: the environment is not a planet's surface at all but instead an egg. The two surfaces are revealed: the smooth egg is resting on a craggy expanse of rock. The close-up of the 'planet surface' is actually a distance-shot while the distance-shot of the 'moon' is actually a close-up of the egg, which then cracks open:

---

<sup>213</sup> More recently, trailers also demonstrate awareness of their own generic status by presenting self-contained "minimovies" – such as the dialogue-free montage trailers for *Cliffhanger* (1993), *Desperado* (1995) or *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) – or using extra footage and telling their own "story" to promote their source films. (Kernan: 53)

<sup>214</sup> Both *Star Wars* and *Alien* were produced and distributed by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox.



Genre convention is manipulated to extreme rhetorical effect in this instance. The device emphasises the themes of the antecedent film-text without using any textual material from the film itself. This, like *Star Wars*, is very characteristically and effectively experienced as 'science fiction' but within the inclusivity of that genre - which now also includes these additional tropes, introduced by the alien egg and the content of the forthcoming trailer (violence, fear and anxiety). The main body of the trailer is a rapid-fire montage of imagery from the source-film which speeds along at such pace that images flash before the camera at an incoherent rate. At this point, like the chaotic montage of the *Jaws* trailer, the effect becomes abstract and highly affective.

This time, the science fiction genre's inclusivity receives an additional trope: 'biological anxiety'. The opening image of the egg, cast in foreboding, harsh light is a curiosity. This gendered, symbolic, biological component raises the possibility of the horrific in the trailer and emphasises accordingly the latent anxiety towards bodily harm or transgression - particularly against females - a trend Hunt characterises as 'a sadistic and misogynistic treatment of violence rendered into ultrachic spectacle'<sup>215</sup>. Notions of fertility and reproduction are ascribed to *Alien's* horrific affect - and set against the desolate backdrop of space. These notions are not cast in the natural light of human reproduction but carry a complicating, traumatic possibility of non-human, or even reptilian reproduction corrupting the process: the textured egg shell on the barren planet bears more relation to clutches born from snakes or crocodiles than the interior gestation of human childbirth. The violence with which the egg cracks open and the frenzied movement of whatever dwells within, exacerbate the sense of anxiety. The egg - and the sequence - are completely extraneous elements to the finished source-film *Alien*. Their function, as generic 'magnifiers', is significant since the egg itself is not reminiscent of the 'alien' eggs found in the feature film (the alien eggs of the feature film are far more fleshy and monstrous than the pristine white egg shells of the trailer), a gesture towards the manipulation of audience reception. The montage sequence,

---

<sup>215</sup> (Hunt, 2002: 325)

which seems to spill forth from the cracked egg in a stream of light, turns the associated spectacles of science fiction into something more reminiscent of a horror film.

The egg's affective expressiveness, harsh white against the blackness of space, makes a different statement to *Star Wars*' use of a similar visual component. The quality of 'space' in this instance is not a canvas on which expressive and spectacular movement takes place (ships flying past and performing manoeuvres before the camera). The void of space, in *Alien* is a screen, emphasising the same ambiguous horror of *Jaws* - but used to horrify rather than impress, Barbara Creed comments on the horrific implications of 'blackness':

The archaic mother is present in all horror films as the blackness of extinction – death. The desires and fears invoked by the image of the archaic mother, as a force that threatens to reincorporate what it once gave birth to, are always there in the horror text - all pervasive, all encompassing – because of the constant presence of death.<sup>216</sup>

Space, in *Alien*, is an oppressive blanket, representing death, oblivion, the annihilation of sight, body and all sensibility (I will discuss the film's tagline 'In space no-one can hear you scream', shortly). While evoking the anxiety of the horror genre, the black backdrop, necessary for the affective power (which is its reverse) is used as part of the trailer's complex grammatical gestures and statements, emphasising the power or figurative volume of each affective component of the trailer.

In this sense, the confrontation with death as represented in the horror film gives rise to a terror of self-disintegration, of losing one's self or ego – often represented cinematically by a screen which becomes black, signifying the obliteration of self, the self of the protagonist in the film and the spectator in the cinema.<sup>217</sup>

*Alien*'s affective components struggle against the blackness in a striking fashion, in a range of alarming and resonant articulations emphasising the unique potential of the trailer to use a peculiar grammar of visual narrative. The trend continues in a montage sequence, one which echoes the energetic pace of the earlier trailers, *Jaws* and *Star Wars*. Amplifying this metaphor of birth and reproduction, the egg 'hatches' the ensuing images, which flash past

---

<sup>216</sup> (Creed, 1993: 28)

<sup>217</sup> (Creed: 28)

the camera at an incoherent rate. The situational, simplistic potency of the egg, resting in silence on the rocky surface, is shattered by an event in which glimpses of action, violence and horror become available. The effect is intensely affective and very much evocative of the movement image. The egg, a blank, immobile, receptive plate, is biologically primed to 'express' its potency by hatching. A symbol of change and development, the egg's movement-image qualities of difference and its becoming are literally etched onto its surface as it cracks open. The egg-image is alien to us, not only because of its shape or associations with reptilian biology, but because of this act of 'becoming': bird or reptile eggs are precious objects, normally hidden away to gestate in safety. In *Alien*, the egg is exposed to the vastness of space, and we are able to witness the single articulation of its existence.

When the egg does hatch, the affective potency of the shot is fulfilled, and the film-text images begin in earnest, effectively spilling forth from the cracked egg. Absent again, like *Jaws*, is the (egg's) content: the monster - who is more elusive a threat here than the *Jaws*' 'creature'. What follows is a string of confusing montage images arranged very distinctly and accompanied by a scheme of contrapuntal sound. The imagery, edited at a breathless pace, is intensely affective: the stream of discrete images flashes by so rapidly that movement and action are emphasised over any chance of establishing coherent situational understanding - and the trailer segues into a small-format ASA'. The montage, which constitutes almost the entirety of the second half of the trailer is, like the *Jaws* trailer, a series of action-images that shift between the small and large format. Full of seemingly fantastical imagery, indicative of the alien planet on which the film is set, moments of energetic action occur in brief bursts. The montage echoes the opening shots performatively: denoting an interior and an exterior which are presented to the audience in a carefully-composed yet deliberately confusing manner. Like the trailer's opening scene, in which montage renders two surfaces as spatially and thematically connected, the individual shots of the trailer montage, combine with their more 'distant' sequential appearance, contributing to a cumulative, synthetic visual landscape which lends the trailer its generic identity.

Within the montage, which gives the trailer its generic complexion, affects stand out from the stream as relatable elements amidst the action-imagery and percepts. The affects, arresting and shocking, come in the form of human and non-human faces: actors, animals and unidentifiable, presumably alien, biological material. Like the *Jaws* trailer, the characters are looking for and at something. Indeed, the quality of the affects changes from curious interest to expressions of anxiety and horror as the trailer progresses. As the montage draws to a close, affects become the only characteristic of the imagery:



Selection of affects from the *Alien* trailer

The affective contribution of the face cannot be understated. It edifies generic characteristics without disrupting that careful balance of artistic appeal and commercial intent. These undoubtedly arresting and often-shocking affects prompt (and even encourage) contemplation, in this case, of the horror - leading viewers towards the trailer's identity before abandoning them to incoherence as the increasingly disintegrated 'faces' flicker across the screen.

But to what extent is 'the look' part of a trailer's generic make-up? In the case of horror, the look is characterised by a negative: the desire to look away, to 'not see'<sup>218</sup>. In the trailer for *Alien*, the effect is changed slightly, while the elusive creature is hinted at in every scene, the looks are a vicarious component to the trailer - and are to be enjoyed. We do not turn away from the look which, in this case, is an indirect filter for the unseen horror. Indeed, they are spectacular in every sense, faces pushed to extreme contortions, or expressing rapt fascination with the off-screen world. Indeed, the look in the trailer is often concerned with taking an image *just up to* the moment at which one might be compelled to look away. Each affective contribution made by the faces of *Alien*, communicates with others around it in an increasingly complex pattern. Creed details five broad 'looks' which define the 'screen-

---

<sup>218</sup>'I refer to those moments in the horror film when the spectator is unable to stand the images of horror unfolding before his/her eyes, is forced to look away, to not-look, to look anywhere but at the screen - particularly when the monster is engaged in the act of killing.' (Creed: 28)

spectator relationship'<sup>219</sup>. Her descriptions included the act of 'looking away' and the spectator looking at 'events on the screen', as those which might characterise horror – but the trailer posits a further look, one which involves the 'look at the look'. This sixth look is used frequently in trailers and points to the subtleties of the relationship between the screen and spectator which translate into notions of genre - communicating anxiety (horror) or wonder (science fiction).

While individual looks in the trailer may never be accurately interpreted since their object is always off-screen, it is their relationship with other looks that provides coherence. As they lose singular coherence, their affective qualities draw attention to the aesthetic integrity of the whole. Once more, genre is articulated by affective components. The affects, stretching the limits of facial contortion, challenging recognition of human (versus animal) appearance, and even presenting non-human biological material, exert control over the spectator's interpretation. The horrific, as Creed points out, involves the imminent threat of bodily disintegration with the transgression of boundaries: be they physical, mental or part of the cinematic image.<sup>220</sup> The *Alien* trailer studies the disintegration of the body as a symptom of its proximity to the edge of the shot and the quality of the look. The face becomes harder to distinguish as the montage progresses and the relationship between looks becomes more complex. Soon the face is transformed - from an image of composed calm, to one of duress and eventually extreme anxiety. Within the montage: shots of a cat and at one point an incomprehensible biological mass both accept and return looks (activating the faciality machine). One of the final images, Sigourney Weaver's face, literally begins to fall apart under the stress of the look. With an emphasis on individual disintegration, the spectator's relationship to the screen becomes a collective interpretation of the face. While each shot takes spectators' sensibility to the edge of tolerance, the avoidance of a final act of disintegration or looking away insures the trailer's novel future-potential is communicated.

---

<sup>219</sup> The three main 'looks' which have been theorized in relation to the screen-spectator relationship are: the camera's look at the pro-filmic event; the look of the character(s) in the diegesis; and the look of the spectator at the events on the screen. In his discussion of pornography Paul Willems (1980) has specified a fourth look, the possibility of the viewer being overlooked while engaged in the act of looking at something he or she is not supposed to look at. The act of 'looking away' when viewing horror films is such a common occurrence that it should be seen as a fifth look that distinguishes the screen-spectator relationship. (Creed: 29)

<sup>220</sup> Confronted by the sight of the monstrous, the viewing subject is put into crisis – boundaries, designed to keep the abject at bay, threaten to disintegrate, collapse. (Creed: 29)

Acts of 'looking' or 'non-looking' are significant to the trailer on artistic and commercial levels. The non-look is, paradoxically, crucial to generating audience interest and encouraging contemplation of artistic merit, genre-identity and commercial worth - a 'look away' is de-facto acknowledgement of an earlier 'look' and a consideration of questions like: has this trailer impressed me? Does it 'look' good? Will it be 'value for money'? Each stage of contemplation is based on an up to date readings of the trailer's cumulatively building identity and the way it uses its visual grammar in a collective, super-ordinating sense: the strangely paradoxical promise of images which, experienced in a non-paratextual context, will be literally unbearable to watch.

The montage of faces, like *Jaws*, makes its own contribution to genre-identity. Here, faces are meant to be misunderstood and are coded problematically: shot in darkness, blurred, non-human (in the case of the cat) or simply monstrous and incomprehensible. In *Jaws*, the threat was always known, lurking just at the edges of the frame, elusive but ever-present, to be avoided and, in some cases confronted or combated. In *Alien* the threat is enigmatic, its location puzzling, it is everywhere and potentially in anything or any space. An object can change, at any moment, into a threat and apparently benign objects become unrecognizable when placed within the montage of faces. Contemplation of faces is urgently necessary but emotionally undesirable.

This emphasis on scrutiny and contemplation facilitates further development of generic identity. *Alien* offers a series of modifiers to the science fiction genre: traumatic reproduction - hinted at in the opening 'egg-scene' - is complemented by additional tropes such as violence, sex and horror. The trailer's opening is echoed: eggs, or structures resembling eggs re-occur: a series of sterile white pods open to reveal sleeping astronauts, later, an alien creature bursts from a biological-looking egg. Imagery of sexual reproduction engenders and extends those themes. The shot of a large, vaginal opening along with a brief shot of Sigourney Weaver's Ripley, barely clothed, form part of the affective trend and further emphasise that this is a science fiction film containing novel and commercially-attractive characteristics, rendered highly salient by their placement in the metamontage.



Throughout the affective stream, brief situational episodes, appearing as fleeting but comprehensible moments, describe an ASA' structure: doors slam, bodies spin erratically while others convulse as if in seizure. Affects encourage the horrific reading of the trailer, as wide-eyed faces are placed amidst images and acts of violence, prompting jarring emotional reactions. The montage's climax is itself another affect perhaps the most jarring of all, as the frenetic stream of images gives way to implacable black space and the small spaceship floating in the distance:



While space's serenity contrasts with the quality of the previous montage, its unsettling nature perseveres. It reinforces the pervading isolation of outer space while also articulating its vastness: the ship is tiny in comparison to the leviathan planets. A scale is presented, large to small, in which the ship, the only man-made component, is at the smallest end. The image suggests a harmony, the planets are moving in some sort of gravitational sequence as the camera pans around, but also a serious disruption to the order: the ship stands out affectively from these heavenly bodies, and travels along a line of superimposed text, as if providing a locus for a reading of the words.

The affect stands as one of the defining characteristics of the blockbuster era: the hybridization of artistic, rhetorical effort and commercial ambitions into a neat 'packaged' metatextual product. The 'tagline' exemplifies this notion. In *Alien*, the tagline takes the form of the concise: 'In space, no-one can hear you scream'. The tone is elusive and multifarious: is it a warning? An admonition? A joke? It is telling that the tagline appears as written, rather than spoken, text: a strongly visual component, indicative of its status as both a commercial and artistic entity. Taglines are part of the paratextual effort to create an affective authorial tone, which, according to Gray, surrounds the text with 'aura':

numerous paratexts create an author figure, surround the text with aura, and insist on its uniqueness, value and authenticity in an otherwise standardized media

environment, thereby taking a heretofore industrial entity and rendering it a work of art.<sup>221</sup>

As an artistic device, the tagline's aura-effect sums up the tone and generic character of the film-text well: a dark, violent science fiction horror with themes of isolation and anxiety. As a commercial device, the tagline is a neat, easily transferrable package: memorable, repeatable and transferrable across a variety of mediums such as posters (or even television and radio). The tagline is dissimilar to the register of conventional trailer-text - it lacks the melodrama and the hyperbole so often associated with the format. A comparison with the tags from *Vertigo* show the disparity: 'Only Hitchcock could weave this tangled web of terror' - a comment on the verifiable quality of the film itself rather than a complex allusion to it. 'In space, no-one can hear you scream', is an elegant, slick, sound bite, an adjectival comment on the film's diegetic content.

The 'tagline' is not a novel innovation yet its blockbuster-era comparison with the way trailers previously talked about themselves and their source films is striking. Phrases, such as *Vertigo* and *Rope*'s ('*Alfred Hitchcock tells a story you will never forget!*'), demonstrate a preference for the theatrical flourish, the 'big-sell', in which subtlety is foregone in favour of sweeping statements designed to appeal to as wide a demographic as possible. While the taglines of previous eras comment on the film as a commodity, directly referencing its standout features, the blockbuster-era tagline does this, at most, indirectly. Kernan comments on the process of promoting a film's 'narrative world' - citing Metzian 'syntagma' as a way of offering 'atmospheric samplings' of a story environment<sup>222</sup>:

Promoting narrative worlds serves similar functions to the promotion of genres, including the presentation of a particular (in this case narrative) space evoked by the film. However, whereas the rhetoric of genre reminded audiences of the similarity of such spaces to ones experienced previously, the rhetoric of story promotes narrative worlds that tend to be unique to the film being promoted.<sup>223</sup>

---

<sup>221</sup> (Gray: 82)

<sup>222</sup> Trailer's frequent use of the bracket syntagma (again, Christian Metz's term for shots that relate to each other as a series of examples) contributes to the promotion of narrative worlds, where a trailer minimontage offers up an atmospheric sampling of the story's environment, rather than a linear sampling of story causality. (Kernan: 60)

<sup>223</sup> (Kernan: 61)

The tagline's power to descriptively summarise a source-film's narrative world is a reinforcement of the trailer's genre identity: it presents the film as a recognizable genre offering, while highlighting a unique selling point which differentiates it from similar works. The blockbuster tagline is experiential, pure metatext - the source-film itself distilled into a single, communicable 'meme', a unit of 'high concept', immediately connectable to the narrative world of *Alien*. Richard Dawkins coined the term, meme, shortened from the Greek root 'Mimeme', to describe genetic communication. The word spread into popular parlance:

Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.<sup>224</sup>

The tagline, or meme, is the perfect marketing device for the trailer, it teases and tantalises in the style of a commercial advert while presenting itself as an artistic, rhetorical embodiment of the source-film's metanarrative ambition. The notion of paralanguage is relevant here, concerning the issue of 'how' a message is delivered. Paralanguage involves information conveyed in a nonverbal capacity, it includes factors such as tone, pitch and other extraneous components. Guy Cook notes the capacity for language to 'carry other kinds of meanings' to those found in its 'physical substance':

In face-to-face communication, important meanings may be conveyed by eye contact, gesture, body movement, clothing, touch, laughter; in writing, the same is true of page and letter sizes, fonts and handwriting styles. These... carry meaning which may reinforce or contradict the linguistic meaning of the signs which they accompany. They are examples of paralanguage.<sup>225</sup>

In the case of *Alien*, the tagline represents a warning, paralinguistically performing the dark, threatening nature of the trailer itself. Superficially, the tag is a straightforward declarative, lacking adjectival reinforcement, plain and non-judgemental - an ominous factual suffix to the disorienting image just witnessed. The text, isolated and small along the bottom of the screen, presents clear coherence - starkly contrasting the previous montage. The tagline is a

---

<sup>224</sup> (Dawkins, 1989: 192)

<sup>225</sup> (Cook, 2001: 71)

final affect: the change in tone, from the breathless pace of the montage, to the serenity of immutable space is a bold visual gesture. Written language involves a level of coherence and reality unavailable for spoken language. Spoken language is time-transitive, fleeting. Written language is a crystalline indelible mark on a locatable position in space and time. Written language is, as Cook notes, freed from time and projected 'into space'<sup>226</sup>. Like the movement-image, written language is not subordinated to time and can be disconnected from its source-text in a way which permits detailed contemplation and reflection. In this way, the tagline becomes a fetish, a substitute for the film-text. The tagline, as a stand-in for the artistic statement made by the film, means it can be transferred across formats and across cultural representations, appearing on radio and television advertisements and merchandising tie-ins. The tagline is a marker of the artistic spirit or integrity of the film in its numerous commercial incarnations.

The blockbuster era heralds a change in the way trailers express and deliver commercial rhetoric. The montage, the tagline, notions of genre, combine to create a far more elegant appearance than the format took before. While 'fairground' tactics persist, they are concealed as part of rapid-fire montages which, while difficult to comprehend on a narrative level, engender arresting affective responses. These responses are finely tuned to the character of the film: the *Jaws* trailer delivered a powerful, menacing and violent creature, while *Aliens* coded an overt sexual edge onto its hidden horror. The trailer has to reveal affective character, to serve as a stand in to the film-text itself, in lieu of the fact that it constructs such an elusive and strange narrative. Affective identity, linked strongly to generic identity is crucial to the integrity of the trailer as an artistic/commercial entity.

## **Rambo: First Blood Part Two**

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=N1b8OxohWc0>

Sequels have a strong resonance with notions of the blockbuster as franchise. They represent a desire to further explore artistic possibilities of an original text but, by definition, remain dependent on commercial ambitions and the blockbuster's propensity to replicate for

---

<sup>226</sup> By freeing language from time and projecting it into space, writing enables more concise and less redundant expression, and creates time to choose words carefully for maximum effect. (Cook: 92)

commercial gain<sup>227</sup>. Indeed, the impact of the sequel consolidates awareness of the film 'franchise' and, in turn, film 'branding' - with its implicit connections to the trailer. The sequel's overt exhibition of underlying financial motivation poses a challenge to attempts to assert artistic worth over naked commercialism: Carolyn Jess-Cooke notes the sequel is often negatively defined by commercial characterization as 'a rip-off... a cannibalistic re-hash designed to milk a previous production for all its worth'<sup>228</sup>. While previous examples of genre trailers highlight differences to existing notions of horror or science fiction (or other examples of genre identity) the sequel must communicate similarities to at least one previous specific film-text. Instead of asking: 'How is this film different?', the spectator asks the commercially-loaded question, 'Is this film as good as the previous one?'. Crucially, a sequel's promotional identity involves the success of its original as part of what Jess-Cooke calls 'a major intertextual framework' - and the promise of a re-creation of a particular cinematic experience 'with carefully controlled predictive elements to guarantee audience turnouts'<sup>229</sup>. Those elements dictate a bold treatment of genre - rehearsed as new promotional material taking place against a pre-existing framework of previous film(s) in the franchise.

The sequel may appeal to a sense of nostalgia or anticipatory excitement - connected to previous experience - but its presentation works in a similar manner to how notions of genre are shaped and refined rhetorically. It establishes inclusiveness: an evocation of shared past-experience, coupled with the promise of novel, unfamiliar additions to the formula. Tasker uses the example of the 'Rambo' sequel *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) to highlight the level of penetration, by the blockbuster, of the cultural psyche:

*Rambo: First Blood Part II...* signalled a new visibility for the muscular hero of the action cinema. Breaking numerous international box-office records, Rambo achieved almost instant notoriety. Reference to 'Rambo' extended well beyond the film's enthusiastic audience and by 1987 both the British and American press had begun to speak of the 'age of Rambo'.<sup>230</sup>

---

<sup>227</sup> With each passing year... the studios' compulsive pursuit of franchise-spawning blockbusters has become more acute - and more successful - as the film industry at large has become more blatantly hit-driven on a global scale, and more intently focused on the coordination of the domestic, foreign and home-entertainment markets. (Schatz: 25)

<sup>228</sup> (Jess-Cooke, 2009: 1)

<sup>229</sup> (Jess-Cooke: 1)

<sup>230</sup> (Tasker: 7)

The blockbuster values the potency of the image, presenting it in strange, unfamiliar or altered ways before revealing recognizable and reassuring franchise motifs. The opening shots of the trailer for *Rambo: First Blood Part II* showcase this trend: the titular main character is depicted via fragmented shots of his body as he prepares for battle:



Images from the *Rambo: First Blood Part 2* trailer's opening sequence

Glimpses of Rambo are fleeting, minimally-lit fragments of a well-muscled, male body. The man's face is not shown and we view the body in pieces: arms, legs, back. Hands secure military equipment and wrap belts of ammunition around arms. This is the character, John Rambo, although an audience without the benefit of hindsight or indeed watching the trailer in the cinema for the first time, would be unable to make this connection. The images instead evoke generic themes associated with the first film, *First Blood* (1982) - masculinity, combat, violence, action - and present these as the novel elements. The imagery is strikingly affective, again, the backdrop a black screen against which the brief, staccato movement and 'expression' of Rambo's combat preparation plays out. The affects in *Rambo* represent another example of the notion of 'blockbuster spectacle' - which, Martin Flanagan notes, prompts exaggerated assumptions about star and genre

The stereotypical image of the muscles-for-brains protagonist, best embodied by Stallone's Rambo or the heroes played by Schwarzenegger in *Commando* (1985) and *Raw Deal* (1985)... continues to inflect perceptions of the genre. The image of the body in the 1980s work of such stars became another abstract space, a pumped up,

finely tuned locus of spectacle detached from most people's experience of a 'real' masculine body.<sup>231</sup>

It is the functionality of the body which delivers the spectacular affective quality, the impressiveness of the way it manipulates itself and adorns itself with the things around it. In this trailer, the affect occupies a strange position - somewhere between the spectacle of *Star Wars* and *Jaws*: between awe-inspiring depictions of embodiment and spectacular physical presence - and menacing power (the shark in *Jaws*). Like *Star Wars*, *Rambo's* objective presence becomes machinic - but in a different way. Here, it is the intricacy of Rambo's physical, machine-like presence which is of interest - the way things fit, slot or click together to construct an efficient and deadly whole. We see the minutiae, along with the bigger picture: Rambo's fingers, his head, his arms and legs alongside wide shots of flying helicopters and, finally, Rambo himself. Rambo's affective presence relies on both poles of recognition: a de-familiarisation, encouraging unease and even fear - and an awe-inspiring sense of spectacle at the recognizable physical presence of his physicality.

The affective resonance of images is overwhelming: audiences may contemplate, only briefly, their emotional reaction to each component of the montage, which rhetorically straddles the boundary between fear and awe. John Rambo's impressive physique and obvious bodily strength are equated with American military might: threatening, cocksure and non-negotiable. It is difficult to parse each morsel of visual information: the contours of exposed skin and body are wrapped in the darkness of the background, complicating the viewing experience: are they part of the darkness? Are they escaping from it? Shrouding Rambo in darkness evokes an essential part of the sequel experience: it mystifies, confuses and affects. This pattern characterises the sequel's propensity for de-familiarisation and the making-strange of an affective presence that we have already seen. Deleuze and Guattari point out the affect's often-frightening ambiguity is part of its nature:

In film, the close-up of the face can be said to have two poles: make the face reflect light or, on the contrary, emphasize its shadows to the point of engulfing it "in pitiless darkness."<sup>232</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> (Flanagan, 2004: 112)

<sup>232</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari: 168)

The unfamiliar, fragmented presence of this presented body goes beyond an optical understanding, appealing to a *haptic* experience. The trailer's mandate is to insure a novel experience of Rambo's once-familiar physical form. The black background behind Rambo's disconnected acts, renders his presence in a hyper-expressive limbo in which the movements of arms, legs and fingers - shot in close-up - take on a near-abstract identity, free from narrative or illusory paraphernalia. The space in which Rambo's affective and expressive movements take place is an inconsequential void, which combines the spectacular potency of *Star Wars* with the ambiguous menace of *Jaws*. The dark space takes Rambo's body out of any narrative context and makes affective articulations on the spectacle of his physical form in what Beugnet calls 'non-perspectival space':

Deleuze's study of Bacon's work is still based on the figure, but it is a figure that is initially caught in a grid that isolates it from a wider potentially narrative context. Furthermore, it is the figure presented in a non-perspectival space, where its relation to the background is not one of depth, but one of coexistence on the same plane.<sup>233</sup>

Beugnet's work describes a cinema in which focus is drawn away from the 'unified' body<sup>234</sup> - and the abstracted figure in the *Rambo* trailer is intended, if only briefly, as an instrument of defamiliarisation, whereby the component parts of Rambo's body are the only reference points. This is a statement of 'sequel status' and another attempt to re-present a known-element: Rambo's appearance. Beugnet remarks on the way haptic cinema prompts a collapse of the subject-background distinction, a 'fluctuation between figuration and figure':

What is at stake is the passage from or, rather, the fluctuation between figuration and figure rendered possible by the elaboration of a haptic regime of the gaze, and the multi-sensory perception and understanding of the cinematic matter.<sup>235</sup>

In *Rambo*, this fluctuation is played out visually, as the blackness of the void ebbs and flows around his body, concealing its fragments in darkness and revealing them, through the 'haptic regime of the gaze'.

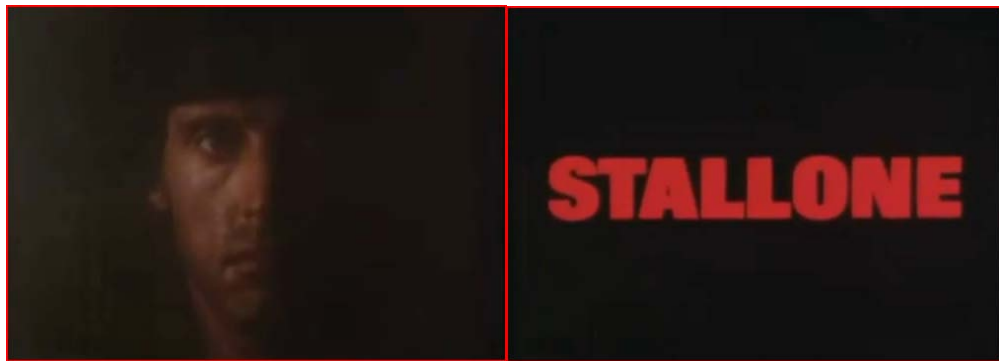
---

<sup>233</sup> (Beugnet: 64)

<sup>234</sup> when cinema becomes a cinema of the senses it starts to generate worlds of mutating sounds and images that often ebb and flow between the figurative and the abstract, and where the human form, at least as a unified entity, easily loses its function as the main point of reference. (Beugnet: 65)

<sup>235</sup> (Beugnet: 64)

The trailer voice-over complements efforts to re-present the familiar, adding descriptive information which is at first, unhelpful in establishing coherence - but serves a similarly affective function, drawing out peaks of jarring affective quality from the obscure narrative background of Rambo's character. In this way, the man is visually concealed by the darkness of the backdrop and similarly concealed by the indirect audio portrait of him, provided by the voice-over. Sound-objects are contrapuntal to imagery: they seem to describe a man but what we see onscreen are only parts of a man. The conclusion of the voice-over dovetails with those images to reveal the face of the unidentified figure:



NARRATOR: Joined army 6 June, '69. Accepted special forces.

Helicopter and language qualified.

Expert in light-weapons and guerrilla warfare.

Sylvester Stallone is back - as 'Rambo'.

Rambo's body is framed as the focus point of the trailer. Although depicted as fractured and damaged - figuratively and literally (scars run across his back) - Stallone/Rambo's physique is intended to be admired and the viewer is to associate the stylised physiology implicitly with strength, military aptitude and success. Rambo's particular association with those concepts is evident in the ready comparisons made with then-US president Ronald Reagan:

*Rambo* was read as... endorsing a hawkish foreign policy , a muscular lack of diplomacy. A visual link was made in a much-reproduced poster image of the time

which featured Regan's head superimposed onto Rambo's torso and dubbed 'Ronbo'.<sup>236</sup>

The notion is perpetuated in the trailer: Rambo's dramatically-weighted presence in the opening shots ensures his reveal carries the reassurance of familiarity, including what Rambo physically *looks like* (a throwback to the previous film). His body delivers that inclusive edge which signals the presence of genre: this is the same charismatic, energetic hero 'John Rambo' audiences enjoyed in the first film, simultaneously presented as unfamiliar and new.

The focus on Rambo's body in these opening shots is interesting. 'Stallone is back', intones the voiceover and it is clear that little distinction is being made between Sylvester Stallone as actor and Rambo as fictional character, including his representation as a composite of various sections of well-muscled physique. While the previous film in the series (*First Blood*) was a story of a forgotten soldier, struggling to find a place in a post-Vietnam America, the sequel's trailer distils any political or subversive message into a simple depiction of aestheticised physicality - a cult of both character and star. Rambo's body, filmed in such detail is inescapably Stallone's body. The trend of conflating star with character is a 'common convention of trailers'<sup>237</sup>, as Kernan notes, one which promotes audience identification:

assumptions that audiences will want to be or desire the star enable a direct promotional link between a star image and the lure of the movies. Thus through spectatorship, the rhetoric of stardom asserts, audiences can at once have their own familiar experiences validated and experience the impossible, through the figure of the star, whose iconic (or sometimes just "mediaphemic") characteristics often stand in for historicized questions or concerns about identity.<sup>238</sup>

Even the film's title, another affective component of the trailer, keeps the focus on the blockbuster's curious position between art and the flagrant commercialism of the sequel, by contributing to the confused status of star and character. Its announcement (of itself) as '*Rambo II*' is misleading after the fact there was no original *Rambo*-titled film. In this

---

<sup>236</sup> (Tasker: 92)

<sup>237</sup> Conflating stars with their characters is a fairly common convention of trailers that posit a quality or qualities of the star(s) as a film's primary appeal. ("The system gave Schwarzenegger a raw deal. Nobody gives Schwarzenegger a raw deal." – *Raw Deal* trailer, 1986). (Kernan: 70)

<sup>238</sup> (Kernan: 70)

instance, the resonance of the character has changed the identity of the franchise and led to the studio's attempt to retroactively characterise the previous film, presumably, as '*Rambo I*'. The emphasis and affective power of the character of Rambo, so heavily dependent on the physical appearance of its star, Sylvester Stallone, is enough to resonate extratextually, with consequences for past and future experience. This identification goes beyond the sheer idealistic allure of the star and ventures into a conception of the time-image. Although the star is depicted amongst highly familiar genre trappings, the emphasis on difference remains: how will the body of the star fit into this recognizable milieu in a way which will be distinct from previous texts?

The sheer spectacle of Rambo's physicality and how it is presented within both a sequel and a generic context cannot be understated. Like *Star Wars*, the trailer acts as a platform for exhibition of a spectacular object. Rather than presenting bodies in a way which emphasises the camera's technological capability, the body is the spectacle: highly aestheticised and even mystified by the camera, which is able to glimpse it concealed by shadow or fragmented by the frame like the components of a highly efficient machine. The body is recognizable and at the same time, alien: it looks like a human body, but one so exaggerated that its contours, texture and appearance become spectacular. Rambo is rarely depicted without the trappings of warfare or technology around him and the space he inhabits is indistinct, otherworldly, and affective:



Each shot of Rambo sees him framed by his environment which, in turn, is defined by its association with warfare, technology or the exotic landscape in which he fights. Rambo is an active subject, moving and acting energetically, often shouting incoherently (although he has little to no dialogue). His gaze normally carries with it some sort of violent act: explosions, gunfire and violent close-combat ensue wherever he looks - and yet the object of his gaze is highly elusive and often never revealed. His anger and power are all-encompassing but are directionless and, as his government 'handlers' point out, demonstrative of his resistance to control rather than a justified or righteous expression of action *against* an opposing force.

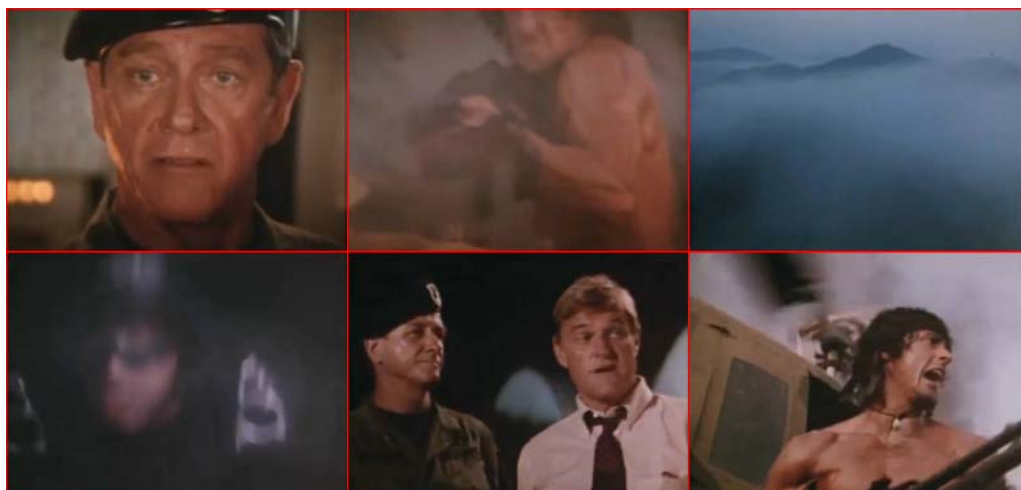
Framing Rambo's affective presence in the film is a paratextual expression, announcing the film's status as a sequel by offering Rambo's body as a spectacle contained within or anchored by the familiar. When he steps out of his familiar framing, *he* becomes the anchor, carrying a sense of affective power and purpose into the threatening exotic landscape. Here he overcomes challenges by either fighting them with violence and firepower, or becoming one with them, camouflaging to the point of merging with the background. The trailer's closing shot is mimetic of this trend: an attempt to capture Rambo within the confines of textual representation, pin him down in the familiar comfort of the original film (counter-intuitively titled '*First Blood*'). The attempt to limit Rambo literally triggers an explosion:



The effect gives the impression that the constraint of the textual representation has destroyed the stubbornly persistent image of Rambo, and leaves a lingering affective notion of conflict, danger and explosive tension. Yet, Rambo's presence is not destroyed at all and the explosion actually renders his textual representation all the more visible against the black background. The pressure has had the paradoxical effect of actually allowing Rambo to prosper metatextually.

Just as Rambo as star in the trailer is part of a constantly changing environmental constraints, so is he part of a shifting framework of relationships with other characters and other images. Each new image emphasises the potential inherent in its artificial and often time warping

connection - the suture - between images. In the sequel-trailer, this suture resonates as a connection to the time-image: in its role as a 'trope of repetition, difference, continuation and memory'<sup>239</sup> it promotes the virtual and codes images with specific narrative and metanarrative meaning. In Rambo's case, his body, cut against images of conflict, war and violence is initially an instrument of that trope: a tool, in a highly metatextual sense, literally wrapped in the equipment of war, evoking genre, Vietnam, the previous film, foreign policy and other elements.



The body as time-image is a highly liminal feature of the *Rambo* trailer: Rambo's physical body is depicted in a number of different roles, the difference and transition between these roles is emphasised significantly. The distinction of the body, from the indistinct chaos of the backdrop-canvas places value on these differing iterations - Rambo is depicted, as: the human, the weapon, and the journey (to exotic environments). But Rambo's roles are extremely hard to distinguish and any definition must come from the contribution of the other characters, the voice-over and the spectator themselves. Rambo's ambiguous affective presence carries with it the allure of fetishism and since his physical presence is such a blank slate, it is available for characterization by these external sources. The promotion of his presence in such a powerfully affective way prompts such fetishistic readings - and renders the spectator's association with the body unavoidable.

As supporting characters are introduced in the trailer, perspective on Rambo shifts. These characters offer insight into Rambo's personality, but their contributions still focus on his physical presence and body. Rambo is an empty space, a void in which fantasies of warfare,

---

<sup>239</sup> (Jess-Cooke: 3)

masculinity, exploration and adventure play out. But, at the same time, his body is the space in which meaning in the trailer takes place. He is an isolated figure, rarely sharing the screen, rarely talking. Indeed, his body often fills the screen, blotting out the peripheral environment while he either blends in with his surroundings or stands out violently from them. The viewer is encouraged to treat not only his body as fetish, but also his personality, other elements in the trailer facilitate this pattern. Rambo's CIA handlers constantly speculate on his character - what he has done in the past, what he will do. The voice-over narration attributes academic characteristics: which languages he is trained in, what vehicles he can operate. He represents a destructive, murderous power, but one which we understand far more about than the creature from *Jaws*: while the shark was a mysterious, incomprehensible force, Rambo's actions are very open to analysis.

Unlike blockbusters examined previously, *Rambo* contains much less diversity of affective content - the face of the hero is the singular consistent affect throughout. Its presence is a guide, which either directs meaning and relation to a background populated by adversaries, or represents an un-navigated space. Indeed, Rambo's ability to explore the unexplored and violently defeat adversity is a result of the commanding power of his affective presence. The background-canvas is not the dark, foreboding world of the shark's home, but nor is it the inexpressive blank slate of outer space. Rambo's 'empty shell' persona allows for a vicarious experience of the cinematic environment. The spectator reads Rambo's exploration of new places and expertise at overcoming problems by 'reading' his body. The act is cast as a positive, pleasurable experience, as opposed to the traumatic uncertainty of *Jaws* and *Alien* or the superficial exposed spectacle of *Star Wars*. The narrative, in a 'story' sense, is secondary here to the spectacle of impressive human physique. The effect is almost pornographic, given the perfunctory gestures made to link Rambo's body to his environment and to a narrative connection to the images.

The sequel values re-familiarisation - and does so affectively, introducing novel elements onto the background plate of the familiar. In the case of a sequel, this re-familiarisation involves an initial mystification of those authentic, original elements before a comprehensive representation. This pattern of affective re-familiarisation is the essence of the sequel aesthetic. The audience is rewarded for recognition, with the vicarious experience of affective empowerment that comes with the recognition of the familiar. Once Rambo is freed from his shadowy, concealment, he is re-framed as a highly charismatic, exhilarating affective presence: man, weapon and explorer collapsed into one entity. His release is euphoric - and in stark contrast to his initial appearance bound not just by the shadows but by

the machine gun bullets tightened around his arm. When he emerges from the darkness, he is energetic, active, articulate (to an extent) and cast in bright daylight in order to literally and fully embody the sense of euphoric power created by his 'return'.

Rambo's affective presence is by no means restricted to visual contribution. The entire trailer-text is geared towards casting John Rambo in a kind of relief: it attempts to 'suck' him into the background and cage him, while he fights enthusiastically against it. Rambo's handlers, seen only briefly in some sort of control room, exchange dialogue in which they comment on the limitations and the restrictions placed upon his mission in Vietnam:

VOICE OVER: His mission: to locate American POWs in Vietnam

Colonel Trautman and Marshal Murdock stand in a hi-tech control room.

COLONEL TRAUTMAN: Think he'll find someone?

MARSHAL MURDOCK: POWs...? Doubtful.

CUT TO: Rambo, standing in front of a helicopter, in the middle of a paddy field. A number of POWs lie prone on the ground around him.

VOICE OVER: His orders: not to engage the enemy.

CUT TO: Rambo firing rockets from a helicopter at a number of enemy soldiers.

COLONEL TRAUTMAN: He's got 36 hours to complete the mission and reach the extraction point!

MARSHAL MURDOCK: I'm telling you to abort!

CUT TO: Rambo screaming in rage at a departing helicopter.

Almost every element in the trailer is an attempt to restrict and confine Rambo, either physically, or conceptually. Rambo's symbolic presence (of power) is a strong statement against that - and pushes him, out of the darkness of confinement, into an acute affective position of power and potential. Images of explosions and conflict and Rambo perpetually firing his machine gun, reach an overwhelming crescendo and give the impression of an extended and large scale battle. Shots' relationships to other shots are largely incoherent in

narrative terms: the constant repetition of action motifs: Rambo in a helicopter, Rambo firing a gun, Rambo screaming, forms a series of striking action-images in the small-format: small situational fluctuations engender significant changes in action and almost always result in Rambo *doing* something: firing a gun, running, jumping from a plane, etc...

Rambo's action-image structure is the latest example of the pattern, embodied by the blockbuster. On a micro-level, relationships between actions are small-format, the connections between shots emphasises strong, violent action over any sense of situational context. On a macro-level, the blockbuster is a large-format action image and *Rambo* exhibits a recurring trailer motif: the return to an original situational context. Like *Jaws*, *Star Wars* and *Alien*, which featured abysses (of the ocean and space), Rambo returns its main character to the darkness from which he originated. As the final imposing title-card settles over the image of Rambo, he is figuratively confined, before being obscured completely by fire, which seems to destroy his physical image, and then darkness, which conceals what remains of his textual presence.

This return to an origin state is important on several levels. Like, the previous films, it suggests a conceptual situation which does not degrade as it goes through a series of transformative actions. A return to an original state suggests freshness, unused potential and novelty - an essential component of the appeal of the genre film and sequel. This appeal has implications for a film's financial and artistic success: the sale of unoriginal or stale products is obviously undesirable and the paratextual presentation of a product which, apparently, has not degraded and remains as fresh as it was upon its first showing, is a boon to a film's financial performance. It is unsurprising, therefore, that aside from *Rambo's* status as sequel, each of the film franchises mentioned above received a number of sequel films over the course of their commercial lifetime. Many of the sequels were more commercially successful than their originals.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, most are still viable and expansive commercial entities now, subject to a packaging and re-packaging culture which attempts to emphasise and constantly refresh their cultural relevance: 'digitally re-mastered' DVD packages and 'special-edition' versions of blockbuster films are regularly part of a studio's release schedule.

Breaking down the action image, shots in the *Rambo* trailer - and the way they feed into the metanarrative - mimic the beats of the character's affective presence and they way it

---

<sup>240</sup> 'Defying past industry wisdom, many blockbuster sequels in the 1980s and 1990s outgrossed their originals by a considerable margin, as for example in the cases of *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), *Lethal Weapon 2* (1989), *Die Hard 2* (1990) and *Terminator 2*. (Hall: 23)

communicates. The isolation of the character in opening shots encourages a palpable tension between the component parts of Rambo's body. The boots, the knife, the scars and the headband form an increasingly complex set of relations. The more fragmented parts of Rambo's body we see, the deeper the complexity of the dialogue between each shot and its object. Deleuze's discussion of mental images remains relevant, evoking the notion of 'thirdness' between an 'intermediary' second image<sup>241</sup> - and the 'feelings' which accompany 'logical conjunctions' (like 'because, although', 'so that', etc). *Rambo's* opening offers a perpetually changing set of mental images, in which connections and relationships between images prompt a sequential construction of the body and its place in the trailer. The trailer 'builds' a body, each image re-casting the function of the previous as Rambo's is revealed:



To interpret these opening image, it is necessary to constantly examine the relationship between them. The muscles of a shoulder and indeed the constant display of masculine physique are a recurring motif, and the source of the affective power in the images, their 'firstness' is the foundation from which meaning in the trailer is constructed: they embody agency and desirability (they are they to be admired and potentially feared). 'Secondness' is in the tools that Rambo wraps around himself, and the places into which he goes: the weapons, the exotic environments, the vehicles he drives. These represent his impact upon the milieu, his intentions, propensity for violence and ability to explore new and dangerous

---

<sup>241</sup> 'The point of thirdness was a term that referred to a second term through the intermediary of another term or terms. This third instance appeared in signification, law or relation. (Deleuze, 1986: 197)

places. Thirdness is the reconciliation of these elements - that Rambo as a physical entity can use these tools and enter these environments with an irresistible power. It is in this thirdness - the mental image - that the spectator interprets Rambo's affectiveness alongside his actions and determines a moral perspective from which to experience the images. Stallone himself is part of this thirdness, an abstract relation to the events of the milieu - reference to the name 'Stallone' is a dual connection to the metanarrative and narrative discourses in the trailer.

Indeed Stallone/Rambo's body, in this context is a performative stand-in - a focal point of delivery for the trailer's artistic designs. Displaying strength and power amidst the exotic locales of the film's setting, the body is an ideological articulation of notions of nationhood, masculinity and, in the case of Rambo, foreign policy – specifically Vietnam<sup>242</sup>. Its masculinity is significant, and the trailer echoes the sentiment (albeit negatively) by making no reference to the feature film's one female character. As such, a man's body, as super-powered as Rambo's, is able to operate in the arenas of the trailer (a jungle, a paddy-field, in the skies with a military helicopter) with powerful effect: irresistible, loud and righteous<sup>243</sup>. The ideological spectre of Vietnam and Reagan-era political boldness is characterised according to Tasker by its very 'obviousness'<sup>244</sup> in relation to *Rambo*. Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake note that a single image of Rambo does not signify 'Rambo', but rather 'Here is Rambo single-handedly defeating the Evil Empire'<sup>245</sup>. 'Obviousness' needs articulation and its imagery finds resolution in the mental-imagery of the trailer edit as a 'complex history of signification'<sup>246</sup> is created and relationships between flexing muscles, dark jungles and violent explosions forged. Given the self-evidence of any image of Rambo, in any articulation of the trailer - to explore those images, examining his body (placing him

---

<sup>242</sup> Rambo is seen to cinematically correct the national humiliation of Vietnam (Tasker: 93)

<sup>243</sup> Power and potency are constitutive discourses of masculinity. The figure of Rambo has often been taken to represent the (re-)emergence of a threateningly physical understanding of masculinity. (Tasker: 94)

<sup>244</sup> reference to 'Rambo is usually generalised by an assumption of the very obviousness of what is meant. (Tasker: 97)

<sup>245</sup> Eco suggested that the shot was much closer to an utterance than to a single word. A shot of Sylvester Stallone naked to the waist firing a rocket launcher does not signify 'Rambo', but rather 'Here is Rambo', or more probably 'Here is Rambo single-handedly defeating the Evil Empire'. (Lapsley & Westlake: 44)

<sup>246</sup> (Tasker: 97)

within a helicopter or in a jungle), is an enjoyable, recognizable and important process. Indeed, the trailer relentlessly displays the body-spectacle in almost every shot.

As the image of Rambo 'grows', mental images abound: 'firstness' and 'secondness' are constantly shifting elements which thrive on the (now-familiar) notions of conflict and division. The 'narrative' effect of the shots is swift and breathtaking - and even confusing. While there exists a semblance of meaning and self-contained narrative (Rambo is presented, sent on his mission - and is betrayed) the trailer offers its own incoherence as part of an aesthetic attraction. It is in this disconnection and dissonance that mental images are woven into the aesthetic of the trailer. Their lack of narrative connection exaggerates affectiveness and action as the audience works to ascribe interpretation to that central body-image. A sequel appeals strongly to these interpretations: a preponderance of mental-images enhances the novelty of a (paradoxically) already-familiar concept, on a textual and metatextual level.

The affective opening - Rambo's shadowy battle preparations - does not appear in the feature-text and is exclusive to the trailer, emphasising his presence physically and mentally. His body, symbolic of immense power and violence, presides over the action, and endures mentally in the moments when he is engaged in combat or subjected to extreme duress and trauma. A spectator doesn't *see* but rather *experiences* his body through the haptic effects of Beugnet's Cinema of Sensation. The trailer concedes narrative drive for a different cinematic experience - elevating the act of artistic interpretation:

Beyond the needs of narrative clarity, the cinema of sensation thus plays on the material qualities of the medium to construct a space that encourages a relation of intimacy or proximity with the object of the gaze, privileging primary identification with the film as event, rather than identification with characters caught in plot developments.<sup>247</sup>

The narrative locus of the trailer is delivered by Rambo's handlers, Murdock and Trautman, who comment on his physical presence and military purpose with a mixture of academic detachment and awe. Imagery of Rambo in combat completes the mental-image: he is both subject and object, *do-er* and *done-to*. The subject, Beugnet notes, 'affectively yields into its object'<sup>248</sup>. Characteristics are ascribed to him, while he acts. Interpretation comes in the form

---

<sup>247</sup> (Beugnet: 68)

<sup>248</sup> (Beugnet: 68)

of the mental images experienced by the spectator, reconciling time, space, narrative and metanarrative around the empty-active unit of Rambo's body.

## Conclusion: The Art of the Advert

*Rambo's* entry into the blockbuster canon emphasises the inventiveness, versatility and artistic potential inherent in the trailer format. As an intense, commercially-driven textual entity, the idea of the blockbuster would - initially - seem to smother artistic ambition beneath the financial need to sell, franchise and replicate. Yet, by contrast, the trailers examined above reject that trend - and demonstrate diverse stylistic identities which consolidate the innovation demonstrated by Alfred Hitchcock. Even as commercial interest becomes the overwhelming purpose of blockbuster film texts, their promotional texts become separate, colourful and remarkable cinematic expressions.

Hitchcock elevates the notion of the trailer - from fairground shilling, to legitimate artistic experience, worthy of critical reception. The blockbuster demonstrably deepens the richness of the promotional experience through careful use of affective strategies. Deleuze's theories expose the continuing relevance of the blockbuster to trailer study, while Beugnet's work on the affect, and its haptic potential, reveals new aspects of the discipline - and reflects the complicated receptive experience of the promotional text. The potential for artistic expression raised by the blockbuster trailer brings the format into new commercial territories which further blur - and even remove - boundaries between art and commercialism. Where the blockbuster trailer codifies a promotional 'grammar' of commercial-art, it raises the question of 'what' the trailer is: part of an advertising or cinematic culture?

To answer this question, it is helpful to look at trailers which don't fit neatly into preconceived artistic and commercial contexts. In the next chapter, I examine the trailer as a postmodern text, separated from its artistic/commercial origins and functioning in an altered capacity, in which both its purpose and effect are difficult to understand from conventional receptive positions.

# Chapter 3

## Neo-commercialism: The Trailer and the Postmodern

---

The postmodern trailer is a strange artistic entity. It is experienced, at the same time, as both a product of its own formal characteristics and as a century of cinematic history. A product of its own form because it delivers an aesthetic experience which uses (and in some cases, relies on) recognition of previous 'trailer' offerings - and a product of cinematic history because it is the beneficiary of decades of advances in editing techniques, formal styles and digital technology. As cinema and feature films develop over the course of the last century, so too do accompanying methods of self-announcement. Jonathan Bignell points out the tendency of postmodern discourse to act as a 'totalising' of history - and, simultaneously, acknowledge itself as a stage in a 'teleological progression' which has 'absorbed past, present and future'<sup>249</sup>:

So postmodern theory is both a grand narrative itself, and a means of claiming that such grand narratives have lost their legitimacy. The consequence of this... is that postmodern theory is marked by this 'paradox of self-referentiality' around historicisation and the power of theoretical discourse to produce it.<sup>250</sup>

The postmodern trailer is implicitly self-reflexive, drawing attention to itself through often-parodic approaches to shared knowledge of the format. Formally speaking, it combines the playful-yet-elusive narratives of Hitchcock and the bombastic, glossy aestheticism of the blockbuster era, aiming to reproduce and innovate simultaneously. But, while it evokes those aspects of previous eras, the trailer's function as 'selling device' also changes: the trailer no longer exists purely in the world of the commercial or the advert. After the blockbuster, conventions which once described 'value-for-money' have been repurposed and re-presented as worthy of artistic merit in their own right. The postmodern trailer is a singularly legitimate artistic unit: it no longer 'sells' but acts as a simulacra for cinematic experience. Any anticipation raised, or commercial interest created in the upcoming feature film, is an indirect result of its effectiveness.

---

<sup>249</sup> (Bignell, 2000: 5)

<sup>250</sup> (Bignell: 5)

In 1998, George Lucas was in the midst of production of the first of his *Star Wars* film prequels, *Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace*. While the film was not released until 1999, a trailer was released in the summer of 1998, attached to prints of the feature film *The Mask Of Zorro*<sup>251</sup>. Hundreds of people (thousands worldwide) queued, not to see the new *Zorro* film but the trailer for *The Phantom Menace* - and many fans would actually leave the auditorium after it played. Internet forums saw furious discussion of the footage and speculation on its content. Anticipation of the forthcoming film intensified and was matched by a level of unprecedented hype and saturation advertising. The trailer had become the main event, and brought with it a culture of spectatorship, authorship and reception which would not have been possible earlier in the lifetime of cinema. In short, the trailer had become an event, built up to be savoured and enjoyed discretely from the features it advertised. Unlike previous eras, the postmodern trailer falls under a direct, rather than indirect, cultural focus, it *is* the attraction. Postmodern trailers even move beyond cinema, exhibited and featured on television, online, on radio and even in the archival context of DVD special feature menus. They have developed a perceived cultural worth: one preserved in pristine condition as part of the commercial/artistic experience of a given film. Simply put, this is a process which Bignell characterises as a transference of value - facilitated by media - in which the 'reality-effect' of the feature film 'becomes an ideological effect of the sign form'<sup>252</sup> - in this case, the trailer:

So as the empire of signs expands, primarily through the media and especially television, everything undergoes a semiological reduction, and the code eliminates exteriority so that the model takes over from the real. Indeed the real becomes an ideological guarantee, the 'hyperreal'.<sup>253</sup>

In this chapter I will demonstrate the ways in which the trailer becomes a legitimately separate unit of cultural currency - an artistic object enjoyable both as a product of intertextual associations and as an independent artistic unit with formal and thematic conventions of its own. Gray, Johnston and Kernan's work to 'discern who the film industry thinks it is addressing' sets the foundations for trailer studies - focussing on receptive effects

---

<sup>251</sup> (Rule,1998: par.1)

<sup>252</sup> (Bignell: 30)

<sup>253</sup> (Bignell: 30)

and consequences of the trailer, in historical contexts<sup>254</sup>. My narrower, theoretical analysis allows for a clearer picture of what the trailer *is* and its place in cinematic culture - especially in its postmodern incarnation. Indeed, the postmodern trailer erodes its conventionally paratextual status, in some cases to the point of complete disconnection from the feature film. The paratextual characteristics (or artefacts) which remain do so as repurposed artistic components, having taken on new meaning. Postmodern trailers, whilst stylistically paratextual, no longer formally reflect that motivation. Their aim: to be impressive on their own terms, promotes textual rather than paratextual engagement in the attempt to achieve something more than simply 'selling' a feature.

The postmodern trailer wants to promote and aestheticize experience and brand - beneficial effects to the feature are indirect. A recent marketing trend, exemplifies this aim - the introduction of the 'red band' trailer (in contrast to the usual green MPAA certification-band preceding trailers in the United States)<sup>255</sup>. Red band trailers tend to come from feature sex comedies or hyper-violent action films. Rather than being deemed 'fit for all audiences', red-band trailers contain material considered to be risqué, explicit or overly violent and, as such, may only be viewed by restricted audiences. But the content of red-band trailers is highly variable and often qualitatively no more provocative than their green-band counterparts - what counts is the edgy, faux offensive cultural impact of the red band. A red band trailer carries with it the perceived idea that the filmmakers themselves waived the demands of broad commercialism (the 'safer' green-band) in favour of delivering what is seen to be a more artistically 'authentic' glimpse of their film. Writing in *Slate*, Josh Levin notes that while the trend might lend the films 'titillating' characteristics, the tactic is often misleading:

As an advertising medium, the restricted-audience trailer serves a handful of valuable functions. Similar to slapping an "unrated version" tag line on a DVD, putting a red band in front of a trailer promotes the idea that the content within is

---

<sup>254</sup> My interest in trailers and audiences lies more in the process by which audiences are implicitly defined by promotional discourses, as the studios attempt to know what "the audience" wants... My project of reading trailers to discern who the film industry *thinks* it is addressing within the trailer texts is designed to invite a more critical approach to spectatorship itself (Kernan: 3)

<sup>255</sup> Just a few years ago, the coming attractions were a safe haven for cinematic prudes. But this year, R-rated trailers - known as "red-bands" on account of the red, "Restricted Audiences Only" warning that precedes them - have become omnipresent. (Levin, 2008: par. 2)

highly titillating. (And as with unrated DVDS, that advertising can be misleading; Paramount produced an R-rated trailer for the PG-13 *Beowulf*.)<sup>256</sup>



Green and red-band trailer cards

Trailers have embraced the internet as a means to spread brand awareness 'virally', exploiting the medium's unique ability to deliver content on an unprecedented scale. Viral marketing is, according to Chuck Tryon, 'part of the expanded text of the film itself' but appeals specifically to individuals to 'create brand awareness'<sup>257</sup> - through personal recommendations and social network 'sharing' - of trailers and other promotional texts.

The versatility of the medium has given rise to a huge amount of experimentation. Viral trailers, seeking to deliver experiences independent of their feature antecedents, often contain no mention of the film itself and instead direct online viewers to a cryptic website. Neil Blomkamp's science fiction film *District 9* (2009), which depicted the imprisonment of extraterrestrials in a pseudo-concentration camp on earth. Jane Graham's interview with the trailer's director, David Stern, examines its curious narrative approach, which reveals only that 'something' is 'going on in District 9' and depicts one of the alien characters in a bleak interrogation room. In some versions the alien's face was blurred - as if censored by some unknown governmental group. Stern comments:

we actually ditched our first, more traditional, story-orientated, trailer for one that just implied that something is going on in *District 9* but we're not telling you what. We even made two versions – one blurred the alien and didn't subtitle his words, so it really made people wonder what was going on.<sup>258</sup>

---

<sup>256</sup>(Levin: par. 3)

<sup>257</sup> (Tryon, 2009: 141)

<sup>258</sup> (Graham, 2009: par. 8)

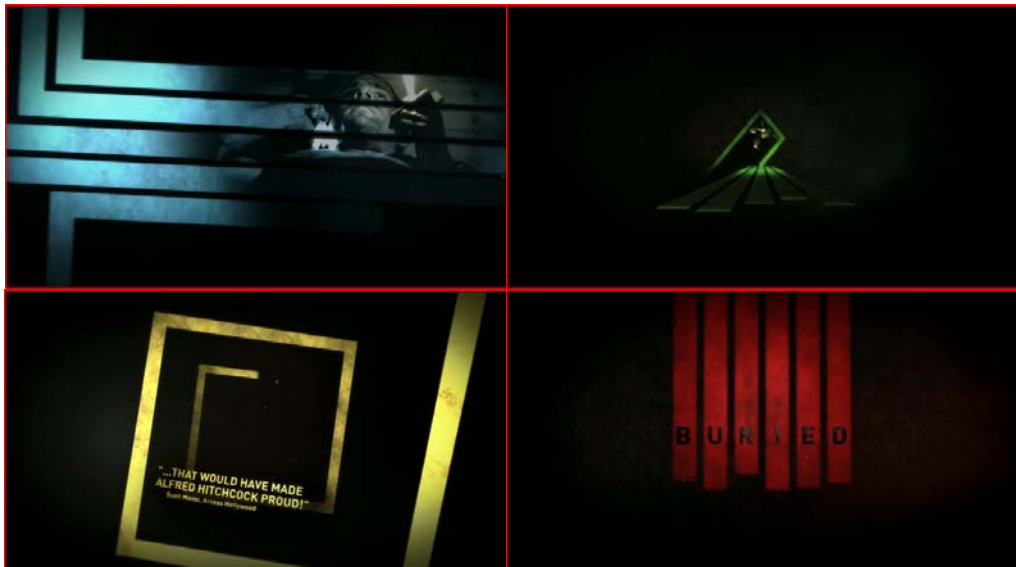


A shot of a prisoner alien from the *District 9* teaser trailer

The trailer raises themes of human rights abuse and racial inequality, defying formal and generic expectations of science fiction. Paratextually it evokes Blomkamp's antecedent film - a morality tale of an alien race, abused and institutionally discriminated-against in a modern-day Johannesburg, while situating the audience enigmatically: to decode the *District 9* meme, a viewer has to buy into the extensive online content and promotion surrounding the film, exploring virtual maps of the District, watching faux news reports and reading 'legal documents' relating to 'non-human activity'. The experience is entertaining and immersive but contains no information regarding the plot of the film itself - or even a mention of the film as a commercially-available feature.

## A New Way to Sell

The trailer's newfound artistic value emerges from a flux of commercial trappings. The 'roll-call'-style announcement of featured stars is gradually refined into elegant affective montages - dramatic intertitles are absorbed into the stylistic character of the metanarrative and short running-durations become an opportunity to forge an evocative, ephemerally-appealing 'mini-narrative' within formal and thematic confines. In a trailer for Rodrigo Cortés' 2010 thriller *Buried*, animated titles create a 3D impression of the buried coffin at the centre of the film's narrative, while an urgent, marching score and sound clips from the film itself play in the background. The intertitles and 'self-announcing conventions' of the trailer are used in a way which references the wooden boards of the coffin which trap the film's protagonist:



Shots from the teaser trailer for *Buried*.



A comparison of the *Buried* and *Vertigo* trailers show the ways in which conventions of intertiting, stylistic choice and incorporation of the film's star have changed.

In an example of the postmodern trailer's innovative use of duration and form, the teaser trailer for *The Dark Knight* (2008) relies heavily on audience awareness of its own fleeting duration - and used that to remarkable rhetorical effect. The trailer consists of a backlit version of the *Batman* motif, crumbling to nothingness over the course of 59 seconds. The effect is stunningly evocative of the Deleuzean time-image:



Shots from the original 'teaser' trailer to *The Dark Knight*.

Looking more closely at *The Dark Knight* trailer, it appears more as a work of conceptual - as opposed to commercial - art. This being the case, it seems appropriate that the trailer carries a boldly anti-commercial statement: the destruction of a trademark and universally recognised symbol. But the effect is subversive: as the image disintegrates, the viewer is forced into closer and closer examination of its resemblance to its intact, pristine origin. The image prompts a crystalline recollection of memory which, since this is a sequel to *Batman Begins* (2004), should mean a controlled *re-familiarisation* - similar to the *Rambo* sequel trailer, in which the character is affectively reintroduced from chaotic, insubstantial darkness. Instead, the image is a one-way *de-familiarisation*, affective as a result of the increasing sense of disorientation in which any sense of time or space is eroded by the disappearing trademark. Deleuze comments on this phenomenon, noting two different types of recognition: the *habitual* and the *attentive*. The habitual resonates on a sensory-motor level where the 'sight' of an object is enough to trigger a movement or action:

*Automatic or habitual recognition...* works by extension: perception extends itself into the usual movements; the movements extends perception so as to draw on its useful effects. It is a sensory- motor recognition that comes about above all through movements: motor mechanisms which the sight of the object is enough to triggers are constituted and accumulated.<sup>259</sup>

The attentive requires a more detailed examination of the object, a study of its 'characteristic features' in order to make a *description*:

*attentive recognition*, is very different. Here I abandon the extending of my perception, I cannot extend it. My movements – which are more subtle and of

---

<sup>259</sup> (Deleuze, 1989: 44)

another kind – revert to the object, return to the object, so as to emphasize certain contours and take ‘a few characteristic features’ from it... In the first case, we had, we perceived, a sensory-motor image from the thing. In the other case, we constitute a pure optical (and sound) image of the thing, we make a description.<sup>260</sup>

While it might seem the first level of recognition, the habitual, has far richer imagery behind it - given the amount of memorised material to draw from, it is the attentively recognised image for which this is the case. Deleuze notes that the pure optical image has the endless reference of ‘other descriptions’<sup>261</sup> to facilitate recognition. The implication for the deteriorating bat symbol is twofold. In the first instance it asserts itself as a sequel by appealing to the blurred line between habitual and attentive recognition: the sign is a recognised trope but is self-evidently different and new given the extra perceptive work required of the audience. In the second instance, extending from the first, the subversive aspect of the trailer means that the audience witnesses the destruction of a commercial trademark by examining, at every point, its similarity to that trademark: it appeals to what Deleuze calls the ‘recollection-image’:

A zone of recollections, dreams or thoughts corresponds to a particular aspect of the thing: each time it is a plane or circuit, so that the thing passes through an infinite number of planes or circuits which correspond to its own ‘layers’ or its aspects.<sup>262</sup>

The deteriorating bat symbol creates a succession of mental images, further and further removed from the original - and hence emphasising it more. The *Dark Knight* trailer is overtly self-aware, to the point that it allows its recognizable characteristics to be obliterated in a highly affective fashion. Both *Buried* and *The Dark Knight* trailers demonstrate a new approach to the promotional text: drawing on the habits of the past - but also generating new, jarring and contrastive associations and creative tendencies - self-aware and self-parodying narrative devices. Narrative patterns emerge from the generic milieu of the blockbuster era, incorporating commercial and artistic convention - trailers exhibiting a series of iconic

---

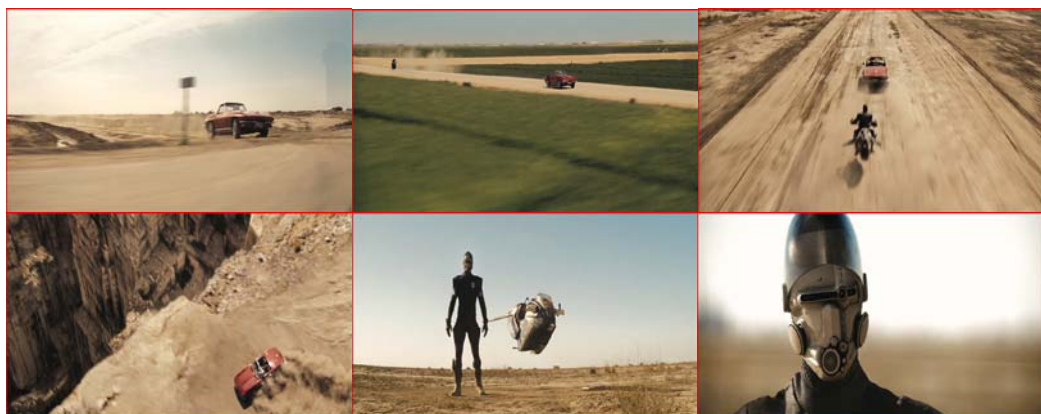
<sup>260</sup> (Deleuze, 1989: 44)

<sup>261</sup> While the pure optical image seems necessarily poorer and more rarefied: as Robbe-Grillet says, it is not the thing, but a ‘description’ which tends to replace the thing, which ‘erases’ the concrete object, which selects only certain features of it, even if this means making way for different descriptions which will pick out different lines or features, which are always provisional, always in question displaced or replaced. (Deleuze, 1989: 44)

<sup>262</sup> (Deleuze, 1989: 46)

narrative ‘nodes’, emblematic of larger schemes of storytelling and evocative of the formalist notions of Vladimir Propp. These emblems have imprinted on the cultural consciousness and can be recognised habitually, almost immediately in the ‘beats’ of a trailer.

These narrative nodes may take the form of strings of images or smaller, evocative components. A series of establishing shots announce genre: genres like science fiction or fantasy strive to create environments in which their spectacular or fantastical elements are a cogent part of the diegesis. Sweeping establishing shots habitually place individual, spectacular details within a wider milieu and normalise those outstanding details as part of the verisimilitude, clearing an attentive path for a narrative to progress (under the assumption of these conceits). J.J. Abrams' *Star Trek* (2009) opens with what appears to be a car chase set in a contemporary Nevada desert. A car drives at speed along a desert road, chased by a motorcycle policeman. As the policeman pulls alongside the car, it is revealed that his vehicle is not a motorbike but a futuristic flying machine, able to keep pace with the car, similarly, the policeman himself is clothed in a futuristic uniform:



Shots from the opening of the *Star Trek* trailer.

The *Star Trek* trailer exploits the known and the habitual. Establishing shots parody a crime-thriller in which a car chase introduces the environment and its generic characteristics: a desert, a fugitive and a pursuer. The revelation - that recognition of the policeman is misplaced - starts a chain reaction of cognition, and completes a visual trick in which the trailer's genre-identity and the spectacular reveal of its minutiae (the futuristic policemen) is absorbed into the milieu. Defining features of the trailer, which once rendered the format so recognizable, are indistinct - smoothed-in to the aesthetic. These moments - ‘the establishing shot’, ‘the close-up’- are difficult to recognise as indentifying features of a commercial advert and bear similarities to other forms, not least the cinematic. Indeed, scenes from a trailer are often put together with such sophistication and complexity, that both their appearance and function become problematic. Is the role of the trailer to sell or to entertain?

The success of these once-overtly commercial moments in the trailer is now judged by the extent to which their commercialistic intent has been masked or re-coded. Take, for example, *The Dark Knight* trailer: the trademark of the bat symbol, a highly valued commercial motif, has been rendered part of the trailer aesthetic, its presence inseparable from the delivery and reception of artistic effect. Any commercial intent is buried - or disguised - beneath an innovative and effective rhetorical scheme.

After nearly a century of development, representation and reception, so codified has the trailer format become that it penetrates deep into the shared culture of advertising convention and the cinematic psyche. Elements which may have struck flat notes in previous eras, flagging the trailer as a conspicuously commercial, have evolved into integral and creative components which prompt artistic relations of their own. Narration, for example, no longer takes the form of blistering, shameless, fairground-style address (“roll-up, roll-up!”) but is delivered in tones carefully modulated to the film’s genre: hence the deep-voiced gravitas of the action film narrator, hinting at the pseudo-seriousness of the narrative - or the lighter, perpetually amused timbre of the romantic comedy narrator, who is tickled by the very nature of the milieu he describes.

Viral advertising is a perfect embodiment of this trend. Adverts which purport not to be *adverts*, operating often under the guise of personal articulation on social networking sites, and assuming many artistic forms (including film trailers) not explicitly reflective of the interests or characteristics of a commercial identity. Indeed, viral efforts often obscure commercial intent with enigmatic aesthetic choices or narrative strategies. These pseudo-trailers also include motifs which, for the most part, fulfil traditional storytelling roles: establishing shots, introductory narratives, plot twists, action scenes, etc... The effect is undeniably different to those same devices in a feature film context: they just *look* similar. In the trailer, the motifs have obscure relational connections and often inhabit highly unstable positions on a through-line of narrative coherence. These trailer components function in highly expressionistic ways: bridging chasms between cause and effect and narrative logic, often with little more than poetic/aesthetic effect. In *Buried*, glimpses of the diegetic action can be seen within the stylised confines of the animated ‘panelling’ motif running through the trailer, reconciling narrative relationships between those highly expressionistic glimpses is left to the audience.

## New Kinds of Narrative, New Kinds of Text

Calculated codification of narrative motifs in the trailer is not unfamiliar. Vladimir Propp comments on the same trend in literature, specifically the fairytale, to establish narrative units or sections<sup>263</sup>. The placement of these units within a wider narrative created differing effects and story complexions. Stam identifies the relevance of Propp's approach to cinematic storytelling, noting the 'syntactic' approach:

Propp developed a sort of grammar of the fairytale in which morphological elements are arranged syntactically in order to facilitate narrative progression. He examined 115 Russian folk tales in order to discern common structures based on minimal units of action, called "functions", such as "leaving home". Propp discerned a relatively small number of 31 such functions, as opposed to a much larger number of persons, objects, and events (corresponding to the traditional "motif"). Propp's legacy for film theory is evident, for example, in Peter Wollen's analysis of *North By Northwest* and in Randal Johnson's analysis of *Macunaima*.<sup>264</sup>

The syntactic approach is particularly appropriate to the flexibilities of editing technology and the rhetoric of the postmodern trailer, in which habitual recognition is exploited. The placement of sections changes the syntactic complexion of the trailer, their morphological character evident in the way their function changes across contexts. The postmodern trailer uses these features in a highly sophisticated, self-aware manner. The intertitle, for example, is now not just as a means by which to deliver information about actors or release dates, but is an integral part of the metanarrative - used to deliver taglines and create aesthetic character or generic identity.



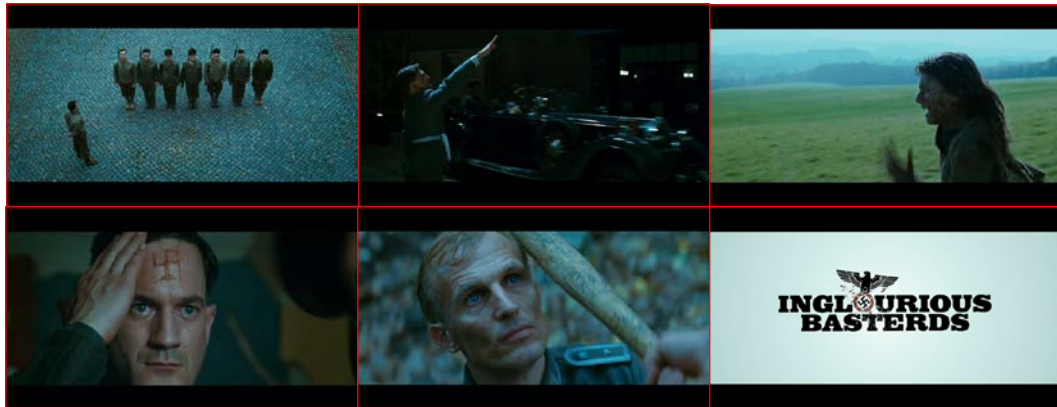
Intertitles for Quentin Tarantino's Second World War action film, *Inglourious Bastards* (2009) employed a strongly affective aesthetic, of military printwork, set into a vivid streak of blood.

---

<sup>263</sup> Since the tale is exceptionally diverse, and evidently cannot be studied at once in its full extent, the material must be divided into sections, i.e., it must be classified. Correct classification is one of the first steps in a scientific description. (Propp, 1968: 5)

<sup>264</sup> (Stam: 54)

In contrast to the fairytale, newly-introduced elements do not elucidate, clarify or facilitate narrative in the trailer (in the way that Propp's fairytale motifs do) but instead create a narrative situation which is increasingly vague and unfocussed. Emphasis falls far less on delivering story than emphasising affective qualities and motifs. In the postmodern trailer, facilitation of a prosodic narrative is eventually abandoned in order to emphasise the sensory attributes of the image.



The closing shot of the trailer for *Inglorious Bastards* featured an actor playing Hitler, banging his fist against a table in a rage, screaming 'Nein, nein, nein, nein!'. The coda is a decidedly light-hearted, near-slapstick foil to prior sequences which featured gun battles, military aestheticism, ultra-violence and trauma:



The 'punchline' finish adds a manic edge: a forced examination of relation between images which defies attempts at narrative cohesion and emphasises the unique appeal of the trailer. Kernan sees this as an exercise in 'imaginary' indulgence - in which trailers are 'the imaginary of movies just as movies have been characterised as the imaginary of everyday life'<sup>265</sup>. Trailers, Kernan argues, present an 'illusory unit'<sup>266</sup> of narrative and images, which invites a process of scrutiny and interpretation sensitive to the format's art/advert identity crisis. Indeed, Hitler's words destabilise the narrative connections themselves: ending the

---

<sup>265</sup> (Kernan: 38)

<sup>266</sup> (Kernan: 38)

trailer's illusion, stopping the narrative and articulating a sense of outrage at the illusory effect. Modern digital editing techniques allow trailers to employ eye-catching features to innovatively aestheticise their narrative conventions: fast-paced montages or impressively animated digital intertitles are often spectacular flourishes which constitute and deepen the paratextual crescendo of a postmodern trailer. Hitler's presence paratextually performs the implicit acknowledgement of the illusory mixing of art and advert.

A 2011 re-release of Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) was accompanied by a trailer. Slick digital editing techniques allow the new trailer to re-present the film as a precisely coordinated aesthetic experience which builds on and even challenges previous receptive experience of the film: a metric montage delivers images cut in time with the heavy beats of the percussion soundtrack. Brief snatches of dialogue introduce parts of the plot:



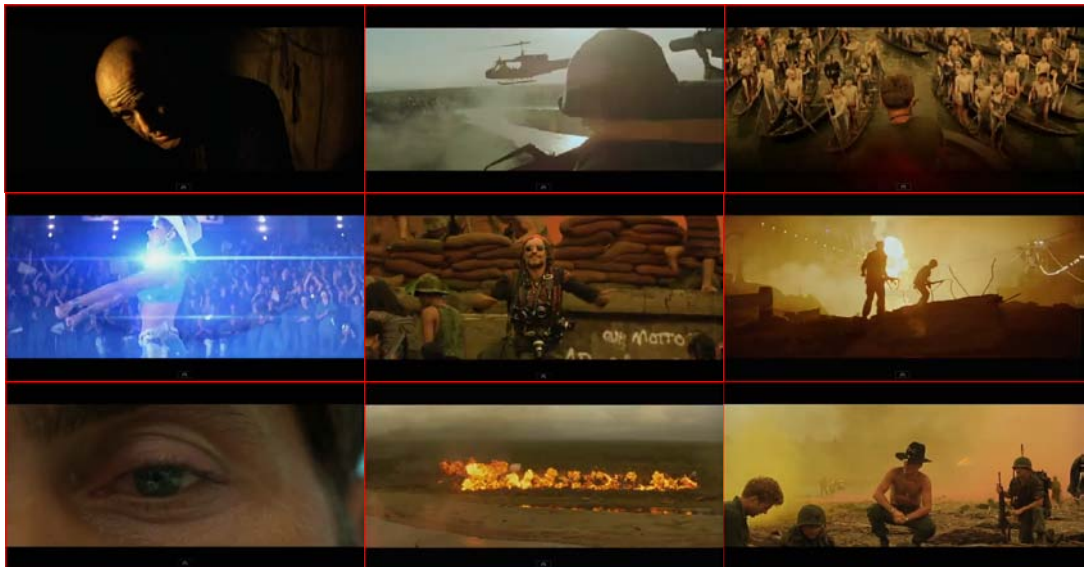
WILLARD (VOICE OVER): I wanted a mission... and for my sins, they gave me one.

Willard is handed a photograph of his target: Colonel Kurtz.

WILLARD: Terminate the colonel?

MILITARY OFFICER: Terminate... with extreme prejudice.

It is interesting that Willard's instructions, in the trailer, are not verbal: the spoken element is an elaboration, an indirect adjustment to the key image, the picture of Marlon Brando as Kurtz. The active 'handing' of the picture sets up a scheme of actions - a montage in which many scenes from the film are shown in rapid succession:



A selection of shots from the *Apocalypse Now* re-release trailer montage.

Plot information is contained in those brief lines of dialogue and seemingly releases subsequent imagery. The bewildering speed with which the actions within the montage assault the screen emphasises deterioration of classic linkages between situation and action - indicative of the crisis of the movement image and a gesture towards the time-image:

The first thing to be compromised everywhere are the linkages of situation-action, action-reaction, excitation-response, in short the sensory motor links which produced the action-image.<sup>267</sup>

Deleuze notes how the notion of a 'globalising situation' becomes disconnected from the image and the situation becomes 'dispersive', spread out over a multiplicity of features:

the image no longer refer to a situation which is globalising or synthetic, but rather to one which is dispersive. The characters are multiple, with weak interferences and become principal or revert to being secondary. It is nevertheless not a series of sketches, a succession of short stories, since they are all caught in the same reality which disperses them. Robert Altman explores this direction in *A Wedding* and particularly in *Nashville*, with the multiple sound-tracks and the anamorphic screen which allows several simultaneous stagings.<sup>268</sup>

---

<sup>267</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 206)

<sup>268</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 207)

The *Apocalypse Now* re-release trailer is a bold re-presentation of well-known, famous and iconic images. Their arrangement as part of this metric montage is a self-referential gesture: it acknowledges their pedigree, including the superlative intertitles, Marlon Brando as Kurtz and Robert Duvall as Kilgore, while forging them into a new piece of visual art, asking an audience to re-examine the linkages and connections between each image. The re-release trailer demonstrates the postmodern trailer as more than just a platform for parody and humour: it is a format through which imagery can be comprehensively explored and re-presented in bold and often strikingly artistic ways: it is a metatextual performance.

The postmodern trailer is a simulation of narrative motifs complete with genuinely affective gestures. After Baudrillard, we may think of this performance or simulation as hyper-real - it looks and behaves so much like the narratives and experiences it represents that differences between the two texts become complicated or indistinguishable:

[the hyperreal] no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance. It is no longer anything but operational. In fact, it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere... A hyperreal henceforth sheltered from the imaginary and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences.<sup>269</sup>

Fully conscious of its own lack of originality, the postmodern trailer foregoes a claim to creating a genuine metanarrative in favour of a direct narrative effect. What does this look like? The trailer's content is contained by and delivered in its surface appearance. Paratextual connection to its source text, the feature film, is subordinated to its effectiveness as a formal example of 'Trailer'. Yet the 'state of Trailer' maintains a complex relationship with that source - it has never been the reflection of a profound reality: it has always been, even in its earliest incarnation, a representation of a representation, using selective portions of a source text which best suit the artistic or commercial requirements of an editor/author(s). Already a representation of a source film (itself a coordinated arrangement of reality), the trailer deepens the images' representation and places them at a further remove from their source: two 'realities' of representation<sup>270</sup>. What is the nature of the distinction between the

---

<sup>269</sup> (Baudrillard, 1994: 2)

<sup>270</sup> Such is simulation, insofar as it is opposed to representation. Representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and of the real. (Baudrillard: 6)

two levels of representation? Baudrillard designates four 'phases' of the image in a simulation of the real<sup>271</sup>:

- It is the reflection of a profound reality
- It masks and denatures a profound reality
- It masks the absence of a profound reality
- It has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum

In the postmodern era, the film trailer is self-evidently more than a representation, and is produced as an independently enjoyable cinematic entity. It is a beginning and end of a cinematic experience. As a simulation, the trailer is similarly complex. Richard Lane notes three orders of Baudrillard's simulations

A first-order simulation would be where the representation of the real (say, a novel, a painting or a map) is obviously just that: an artificial representation. A second-order simulation, however, *blurs the boundaries between reality and representation...* the third-order simulation goes beyond these positions; third-order simulation produces a "hyperreal".<sup>272</sup>

Third-order simulations are 'hyperreal': when a reversal has taken place and 'the model precedes the real' it is produced without the restrictions of representation or mimesis. Since the hyperreal is not measured by how well it represents the real, it is instead judged by how well it 'performs' its role.<sup>273</sup> The postmodern trailer is a hyperreal concept: its relationship to antecedent text has become irrelevant and, in some cases, completely nonexistent. The performativity of its editing scheme, the presentation of its diegesis, and its metanarrative, amongst other elements, are the source of critical and artistic enjoyment irrespective of the trailer's context or relation to other texts.

---

<sup>271</sup> (Baudrillard: 6)

<sup>272</sup> (Lane, 2000: 86)

<sup>273</sup> in third-order simulation, the model precedes the real (e.g. the map precedes the territory) – but this doesn't mean that there is a blurring between reality and representation; rather, there is a detachment from both of these, whereby *the reversal becomes irrelevant...* The important and disturbing point to all this is that the hyperreal doesn't exist in the realm of good and evil, because it is measured as such in terms of its performativity – how well does it operate? (Lane: 86)

But the trailer is more than just commercial simulation. Deleuze points out the possibility of viewing 'difference in itself' - using a concept which distinguishes *itself*, rather than being distinguished *from* something else - something grounded only on its 'own becoming'<sup>274</sup>.

Deleuze comments on the possibility of 'unilateral distinction':

It is as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground. There is cruelty, even monstrosity, on both sides of this struggle against an elusive adversary, in which the distinguished opposes something which cannot distinguish itself from it but continues to espouse that which divorces it. Difference is this state in which determination takes the form of unilateral distinction.<sup>275</sup>

The trailer, as a simulation of the experience of watching a film, raises the possibilities of its own format - to entertain and be artistic. Its difference from the feature-text, marked formally by its commercialism and masked by the quality of its performative effectiveness, is about the unknowable possibility and potential inherent in uncharted connections between its own imagery, the audience and the future release of a related feature film. Colebrook comments on the potential of the simulacra:

For Deleuze the simulacrum or image is real, and life is and always has been simulation - a power of production, creation, becoming and difference... If literature is a power of the simulacrum, it is not because it merely quotes or parodies with no respect for the real; it is because it produces new simulations, a new expression of the real.<sup>276</sup>

The trailer gives us a direct image of difference in action, the space between the known and visible. The gaps between paratextual announcing gestures in the trailer are part of its identity and its appeal. By subverting its own format, presenting its own imagery as a new and enjoyable art form, the postmodern trailer presents difference *itself* - from the feature film, from other trailers - coded as part of its appeal. Moments which embody its difference, artistic flourishes (such as the 'panelling' effect of the *Buried* trailer) represent what Deleuze

---

<sup>274</sup> Colebrook notes that, for Deleuze, 'Literature is simulation or the power of the simulacra, the power to produce appearances, images and styles that are not grounded on anything other than their own becoming.' (Colebrook: 99)

<sup>275</sup> (Deleuze: 2004: 36)

<sup>276</sup> (Colebrook: 101)

calls 'catastrophes'<sup>277</sup>, where difference distinguishes itself and involves the viewer in an organic interpretive scheme<sup>278</sup>. Indeed, the metanarrative qualities of the trailer (such as the machinic imagery of *Rambo* or the histrionic universal appeal of *Star Wars*) have increasingly become the salient source of entertainment for audiences, independent of their contextual links to the antecedent feature film. The post modern trailer has taken on sufficient momentum that audiences may appraise its effects on purely artistic and rhetorical levels - without the complicating, and often jarring, inclusion of certain commercial overtures such as comments on price or availability of product. The postmodern trailer is often *only* accessible from a purely aesthetic perspective.

The rise of the independently enjoyable trailer, critical of its ancestor's propensity for explicit commercialism, coincides with a change in the way adverts are viewed and experienced. The contact point for trailers and indeed all cinema advertisement has, over the last century, expanded from the singular (the theatrical auditorium), to the multiple. Now the use of posters and other promotional strategies is widespread and instances of film advertising are found on billboards in almost every public space, radio, television and the internet. The aesthetic of a given film has become far more readily obtainable, regardless of a given film's budget. Gray notes the ubiquity of contemporary promotional texts:

On any given day, as we wait for a bus, for example, we are likely to see ads for movies and television shows at the bust stop, on the side of the bus, and/or in a magazine that we read to pass the time. If instead we take a car, we will see such ads on the roadside billboards and hear them on the radio. At home with the television on, we may watch entertainment news that hypes shows, interviews creative personnel, and offers "sneak peaks" of the making of this or that show. Ad breaks will bring us yet more ads and trailers, as will pop-ups or visits to YouTube online.<sup>279</sup>

---

<sup>277</sup> In effect, difference ceases to be reflexive and recovers an effectively real concept only to the extent that it designates catastrophes: either breaks of continuity in the series of resemblances or impassable fissures between the analogical structures. It ceases to be reflexive only to become catastrophic. (Deleuze, 2004: 44)

<sup>278</sup> As a concept of reflection, difference testifies to its full submission to all the requirements of representation, which becomes thereby 'organic representation' (Deleuze, 2004: 43)

<sup>279</sup> (Gray: 1)

Gray acknowledges the continual cynicism associated with the commercial history of the trailer<sup>280</sup> - but also highlights the ways in which paratexts contribute to an on-going process of how to watch, determining meaning and reception:

Today's version of "Don't judge a book by its cover" is "Don't believe the hype," but hype and surrounding texts do more than just ask us to believe them or not; rather, they establish frames and filters through which we look at, listen to and interpret the texts that they hype. As media scholars have long noted, much of the media's powers come not necessarily from being able to tell us what to think, but what to think about and how to think about it.<sup>281</sup>

The importance placed on trailers is reinforced by their discrete framing, which separates them from the feature-text experience. This may include the visual 'buffer' of adverts for other products or their physical transfer from a 'trailing' to preceding element. The commercial presence of film, separate from its cinematic exhibition, entails a wider cultural penetration: tie-in promotions, video games, merchandise are accepted as normalised signs of a film's presence. This variety includes the trailer (arguably the most culturally-visible sign) and contributes to the format's demarcation from its feature-text. Since the trailer is no longer the single access-point for audiences to gauge a film's potential, it is freed from the entire burden of negative associations with cynical commercialism. Instead, somewhat ironically, commercialistic qualities are subordinated to the artistic as a result of the steady success of the format-as-advertisement: it 'stands in' for the feature film. The trailer is cast as so reliable a simulacra that a viewer is able to establish both an attitude towards the feature film's 'look' - and the trailer's genuine emotional, affective and artistic impact. These two notions are linked: artistic potential is born from the past commercial success, involving the ways new technology (such as the internet and other avenues) allowed it to be diluted and distributed.

Modern cinematic reification of the trailer is widespread. Trailers are regularly granted online premieres in which every attempt is made to value the trailer as a visceral, artistic and cultural experience in and of itself. Websites count down to the trailer's release while news of a trailer premiere is distributed on other websites. Delivery of the trailer is accompanied by no little pomp and circumstance as attempts are made to recreate digitally the ceremony of theatrical viewing. Some websites exist as online archives for film trailers and catalogue

---

<sup>280</sup> many consumers deride the presence of hype and licensed merchandise as a nuisance (Gray: 3)

<sup>281</sup> (Gray: 3)

not just new releases but 'classic' trailers from earlier eras. The internet has become a vast resource for storing and viewing trailers and their presence online is testament to the regard in which they are held as significant effort is made to render the trailer a meaningful, artistic experience for the internet viewer. Sites like 'Movielist', 'Apple' and the ubiquitous 'YouTube' devote some or all of their efforts to the exhibition and archiving of film trailers. Motivations differ: Apple, for example, have an obvious commercial intent, showcasing new trailers in the glossy, popular 'Quicktime' format. YouTube and Movielist serve more archival goals, cataloguing a huge number of film trailers from the last century.

While this newfound cultural prominence does not preclude the trailer's commercial side-effects it certainly transforms both their form and the expectations of audiences towards any experience of that commercialism. The blockbuster modulated previous styles of 'fairground' rhetoric into assured promotional styles, weaving advertising convention with the colourful rhetoric of spectacle and attraction. The postmodern trailer is an evolution of the blockbuster form: neither pure advert nor art, it is a legitimised example of a new form of cinema. Genetic elements of blockbuster spectacle and commercial bombast are still present but even these sensational selling tactics have been transformed to fit the new approach. Where metanarrative techniques previously relied on explicit statements regarding the antecedent film text - superimposed intertitles or voice-over narration (*Vertigo's* 'a thrilling tale of suspense!') - these indirect, by-proxy textual components are now delivered directly (the animated wood panelling of *Buried*). The postmodern trailer is an artistically-complete text, emotionally engaging - and requiring no extratextual interpretive work to be artistically effective in the instance of reception. Gray notes the tendency for paratexts to supersede and even overwrite what is, conventionally, thought of as 'the text itself':

In such cases, these audience members may still consider themselves fans or at least viewers of the text, but here rather than simply modify or inflect the text, the paratexts may in time *become* the text, as the audience members take their cues regarding what a text means from the paratext's images, signs, symbols and words, rather than from the film or program's.<sup>282</sup>

Paratextual qualities in the postmodern trailer stand as artistic representations of feature films themselves. They allow the source-film to 'breathe' (to have a cogent, discernible presence) while permitting the trailer to express itself discretely, in an eye-catching and interesting way - after Deleuze, the postmodern delivers a context for trailers to distinguish

---

<sup>282</sup> (Gray: 46)

*themselves*. As notions of genre solidified and the discourse of meaning resolved between text and audience, trailer representations of source-films developed image-conventions. Horror films are accompanied by foreboding music and rapid, affective editing to create alarming montages. Romantic comedy trailers use editing schemes in which gags play out as reinforcements of a central premise: shots constitute a sequence of set-ups and punchlines (before moving on to the next gag). Science fiction or action films include remarkable special effect shots designed to impress both textually and extratextually - emblems of the spectacle of the feature source-text and the spectacle of technological achievement. In the trailer, special effects, subtle and overt, may transcend contextual and formal restraints: they may be interpreted as pure spectacle, on a decontextualised level unavailable to a feature film viewer - and as more than mere commercial 'selling points'.

The 1998 blockbuster film *Godzilla*, for example, directed by Roland Emmerich, was released after a series of trailers and a concentrated pre-release marketing campaign. Of the trailers that were shown in theatres across the world, prior to the film's release, several were 'teaser' trailers, shot specifically for the promotional campaign and including no footage from the feature film itself. In the example below, the teaser depicts a group of children in a museum, staring in awe at the skeleton of a Tyrannosaurus Rex before a gigantic reptilian foot crashes through the ceiling and crushes the skeleton beneath it.



The *Godzilla* teaser trailer.

The trailer takes the form of a short film. Its narrative is intact and no intertextual references needed to facilitate comprehension. The subtle commercial ambitions of the trailer have been worked into the aesthetic of the piece, the message - 'dinosaurs are passé' - an obvious reference to previous special effects blockbuster *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), which involved realistic, digitally rendered dinosaurs as part of its spectacular appeal. The huge reptilian foot crushing the dinosaur skeleton beneath it, is an eye-catching substitute for

the commercial overtures of the fairground-style sales pitches of previous eras. There is a discourse of 'old versus new' at work as the destruction wrought upon the historical display by the huge foot of the titular monster, 'Godzilla', is made possible only by advances in digital technology. The commercial message of the trailer has been not only aestheticised but absorbed into the narrative - its 'sales appeal' now part of the metanarrative fabric. Such is the status of the narrative in the postmodern trailer that some dispense with it altogether, preferring a purely semiotic, purely visual approach. The genetics of this trend are evident. For all the narrator's descriptions of 'story' in *Star Wars*, the trailer itself is an extremely non-narrative affair, the little storytelling offered proceeds in fits and starts before giving way to a montage highlighting the film's technological attractions. The experience of bearing witness to the capability of film is thus valued over a representation of its narrative. Trailer narratives resemble icebergs: small peaks of recognizable, analysable footage hint at a structure of mass beneath shifting, formally-indeterminate water.

Where the trailers of previous eras use sheer, commercially-attractive spectacle to sell films, the postmodern trailer places those same features within a self-aware paratextual structure. Reconciling narrative to spectacle in the postmodern trailer is no longer as important as it was. Now, narrative is received as part of the aesthetic of the trailer. Yet trailers tell a formal story - and involve motifs which communicate appropriate reactions to the audience. Formal convention in the postmodern trailer crystallises into a highly salient, culturally transferable unit, which, as Tryon notes, allows viewers to 'connect... and reflect on the practices associated with film culture':

Like film blogs, video sharing allowed audiences to discuss and debate their favourite films and television series with the added benefit of being able to upload edit and share video with unprecedented ease.<sup>283</sup>

This transferable value prompts a rapid expansion of the artistic 'tradition' of the trailer into other cultural spaces. Television adverts, internet memes, even feature films themselves have begun to utilise the trailer format and its myriad sub-conventions, for specific artistic and rhetorical ends. A brief search of online video archive website YouTube, reveals a huge amount of unofficial, spoof and amateur trailers for a wealth of films which often do not or will not ever exist. This trend towards art rather than pure commercialism is evocative of the Formalists search for 'Literariness' in the field of aesthetics - a trend Stam goes as far as to call 'scientific':

---

<sup>283</sup> (Tryon: 149)

the Formalists sought a scientific basis for what would seem to be a highly subjective field: aesthetics. The subject of this science was not literature as a whole or even individual literary texts but rather “literariness” (*literaturnost*), i.e. that which makes a given text a work of literature. “Literariness”, for the Formalists, inhered in a text’s characteristic ways of deploying style and convention, and especially in its capacity to meditate on its own formal qualities.<sup>284</sup>

In this section, I will look at contemporary trailers, made in the spirit of Hitchcock’s playful testing of the capabilities of the trailer and the blockbuster’s bombastic codifications of generic expectation. The postmodern trailer is slick and self-aware and able to exploit its own conventions, the ‘science’ of its own form, to the point that the boundaries between film, television and other visual media have blurred and bled into each other to create a constantly shifting and transforming creature, eminently identifiable as ‘Trailer’.

## ***Lucky Star***

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=YoCLxp2W9xE>

In the trailer for *Lucky Star*, a smooth-talking, streetwise banker-type, played by Benicio Del Toro, exploits his almost supernaturally imbued run of good luck to amass a fortune and frustrate the police and other sinister-looking characters on his trail. The advertised source-film, filtered through the trailer’s slick, impressively edited gaze, is styled as a cyber-thriller, set in the world of international banking, high-stakes gambling and exciting vehicle chases.

The trailer hits all appropriate genre and narrative beats - using motifs which fit sequentially to facilitate easy comprehension. It opens on an LA cityscape at night: glossy, bright lights punctuate the darkness - establishing shots creating an environment in which action is to play out. Rapidly edited scenes construct a unified tone - and a world populated by businessmen, police and cutting-edge technology - the film itself is shot in a high-resolution digital format. The audience is primed, even during these early shots, to begin making generic associations and bridging narrative gaps between shots - creating fabula from the inclusivity of perceived genre. The relationship between the business district skyline and emphasis on technology suggest the landscape of a thriller or science fiction film. Early shots depict a cityscape (keen

---

<sup>284</sup> (Stam: 48)

eyes may identify it as Los Angeles), cars, action on the stock exchange... the pace is frenetic and the editing disorienting. The camera moves and spins unnaturally and takes in a large geographical distance, including the locale of a satellite orbiting Earth.



Opening shots from the *Lucky Star* trailer

In the style of previous blockbuster trailers, little effort is spent telling or establishing a coherent narrative. Instead, evocative scenes represent narrative nodes and place the audience *in medias res*, ensuring the intellectual work required to construct the fabula hits the ground running. This approach gives the audience direct access to the flow of Deleuze's movement-image: images presented as implicitly connected but without immediate narrative relation reveal the powers of montage and the movement-image. Deleuze argues that montage is able to render a more accurate representation of time, by showing time in its 'smallest unit' and in its largest unified scope:

Whenever time has been considered in relation to movement, whenever it has been defined as the measure of movement, two aspects of time have been discovered which are chronosigns: on the one hand, time as a whole, as great circle or spiral, which draws together the set of movement in the universe; on the other, time as interval, which indicates the smallest unit of movement or action.<sup>285</sup>

The dichotomy echoes the trailer's register in which viewers recognise both individual affective moments along with a larger narrative effect moving beneath the surface. In the clip above, the disparate, fleeting durations of urban environment are paralleled with the enduring, 'smoother' and less hectic serenity of space: while the shots of the city seem shaky and handheld, furtive even, the satellite glides by the camera. These action-images present an

---

<sup>285</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 32)

incomplete meaning-relationship: while an overall connection is posited, individual links or individual symbolism is left as a matter of audience interpretation - how meaning is to be created is a process of reconciling the individual with the universal.

An emergent theme of the trailer is a sense of mystery surrounding Benicio Del Toro's unnamed main character. Often-bewildering imagery deepens this metanarrative function. His 'unknowable-ness' is frequently emphasised - the syuzhet is a meticulous police search for the character, while he remains perpetually one step ahead of authorities. The character is described frequently by others, not physically but by some aspect of his character or a behavioural trait. The omniscient voice-over narrator, already established as a staple of the modern trailer, offers one level of commentary, while diegetic characters provide the rest:



NARRATOR: He played the markets. He defied the odds. But no-one could guess his game.

A suited, officious-looking female (an investigator?) talks to a male colleague.

FEMALE: It happened again today: he shorted some stocks that crashed and bought an IPO nobody wanted. It's up 84%.

MALE: So?

FEMALE: So what? There's nothing: no insider-trading, no fraud.

NARRATOR: He had no past they could trace.

MALE: Explain to me what's going on.

FEMALE: I can't.

NARRATOR: No fear of losing. The one thing he did have – was everything he wanted.

Later, an off-screen character remarks on the main character's elusiveness and skill at evading the ambiguously-placed investigators.

O/S MALE: There was no network, no accomplices – he was acting alone. I got as much on this guy as I do on the Easter bunny.

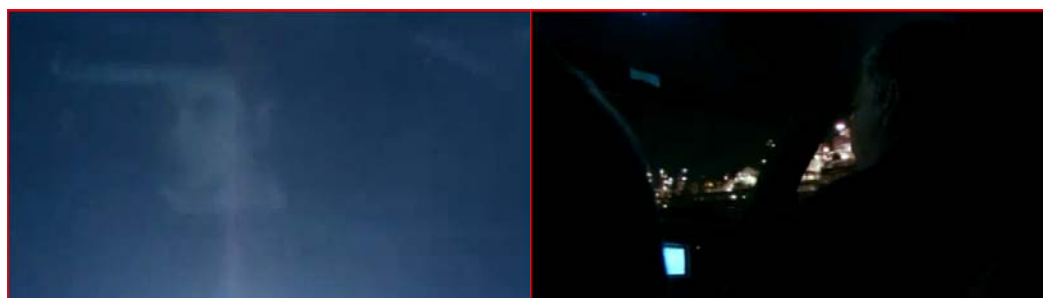
Del Toro's character is a cipher. His place in the trailer and in the mind of the audience is as a receptive carrier of viewer expectation. The impression of vagueness and uncertainty is created primarily in the trailer's voice-over but complemented by formal characteristics. The character in question is elusive and seen rarely. Phrases like 'played the markets' and 'beat the odds' instil a semantic field of 'play' or 'recreation' while names and places are omitted: placing the action in a determinate locale and time would erode the universality of the concept. The narrative depth of the fabula is dependent on the quantity of material, syuzhet-narrative: the more obscure the connecting elements, the richer the inference made by the viewer. Del Toro's character is having fun, the situation is a game to him - but we are at a loss to explain why, given the gravity of the scenes presented to us.

Indeed, Del Toro's character is established, by the spoken language of the trailer, in a sort of relief - defined by what he is not: 'no-one could guess his game', 'nothing, no-insider trading, no fraud', 'no past', 'no fear of losing' etc... The trailer's generic limitations act as the mould in which audience interpretation is cast: expectation is managed by the shared knowledge of generic markers onscreen. Yet those limitations seem as elusive as the identity of the character and the trailer evokes a huge number of tropes, including violence, romance and comedy. The only foil to the constant evocation of negative space, the vacuum *between* the subjects and shots in the trailer, is the equally indeterminable 'everything': while expectation may be shaped by generic convention, the notion of the potential that might be used to fill this space is constantly pushed to the forefront of a spectator's receptive experience. 'The one thing he did have, was everything he wanted' is a fitting summation of the trailer's elusive treatment of narrative - prompting an audience to ascribe its own motivations, interpretations and connecting sections to what it sees.

What is 'seen' in the *Lucky Star* trailer is interesting. The entire focus of the opening seems to be the search for the unnamed main character - on a number of different levels. His presence is hidden, both by the inability of the surveillance teams to track him and by the way the camera depicts him: fragmented, fleeting, through the windows of a moving car. The search acts as a unifying force, a dynamic which connects the insubstantial narrative: we are

treated to snatches of relevant action in the moments when we catch Del Toro - before losing him again and resuming the search.

Indeed the opening shots are solely concerned with surveillance: the camera roves the busy, vast environment of a city, changing direction quickly, searching hidden spaces, before cutting hundreds of miles upwards into low-orbit space, and a satellite, purposed to the same task. When we spot him, Del Toro is a blurred shape through the window of his car, then a silhouette, shot sneakily from the backseat of the vehicle.



When we eventually find Del Toro and settle on his image with any degree of satisfaction, he is at home. The affective presentation of his face is startling, given the playful elusiveness of previous shots. He appears, talking on the phone to another character, relaying instructions for a move on the stock-market. Even now, the viewer is not permitted to settle and the shot cuts to a sudden, jarring burst of fire: unexplained, out of context, its presence seems designed solely to disrupt our perception. Swiftly, the character is gone again, back in his car, under surveillance (by men in night-vision goggles), or being discussed by the frustrated investigators. Del Toro's presence is consistently highlighted as the only relevant component in the trailer: without him there can be no narrative. When he is glimpsed, so too is a 'node' of narrative, suturing the vacuum of information, before he disappears again amidst the sea of connecting images which make up the world of *Lucky Star*:



This technique - of giving nothing but promising everything - is especially effective in the case of *Lucky Star* thanks to the trailer's peculiar status: there was not - and probably never will be - a feature film, *Lucky Star*. The trailer itself was a sophisticated viral marketing strategy, planted in cinemas in 2002 as part of an advertising campaign for Mercedes cars: the Mercedes Benz features prominently in the trailer. The commercial intent of the piece was, as it turns out, the trailer's overriding purpose but certainly not its effect. The thousands of audiences who watched the trailer - played amongst formally similar (and authentic) trailers in cinemas in 2002 - found themselves speculating on the unknowable fabula, obscure character motivations and, more importantly, the upcoming date of release. All speculation would, of course, be frustrated: the fabula of *Lucky Star* exists purely in the theoretical and the ephemeral, aesthetic effect of the trailer itself.

*Lucky Star's* real achievement is the manipulation of the formal elements associated with its existing conventions to recreate synthetic narrative effect. The implied narrative content beyond the materiality of the shots is rich and detailed - it is easy to infer a theoretical plot on the basis of these mutually understood generic and aesthetic markers. The main character is treated like a fugitive - thanks, presumably, to his suspiciously good luck and large profits on the stock market. He is in a romantic plot which puts his female companion in danger, yet is able to avoid the police pursuit by utilising his near-supernatural powers to affect even the traffic lights. So comprehensive is the approach to 'trailer'-style mise-en-scène that *Lucky Star* goes so far as to introduce a subplots involving the support of a disadvantaged female character and even a hint at a science fiction or supernatural influence - some shots show an impressive planetary alignment coinciding with the hero's escape from police.

The generic tropes *Lucky Star* invokes, fabricate a narrative in the negative space between the components of the syuzhet - and the aesthetic markers contribute to the process. Opening shots primarily concern money: a stock-exchange setting, a city-scape of the Los Angeles business district and shots of Del Toro's character gambling - and winning - in a casino. Money is presented as an extremely liquid concept, a resource which, rather than being coldly logical, is negotiable and can be exploited in the right hands. Money is not an arduous concept, one which need be earned or worked-for, it passes easily from hand to hand, expanding the recreational overtones. Del Toro's character has an effortless approach to money, he acquires it at will, through the spoils of fate - and his expert control (his winnings and his ability to play the stock markets) is frustrating to other characters, who do not understand his angle.

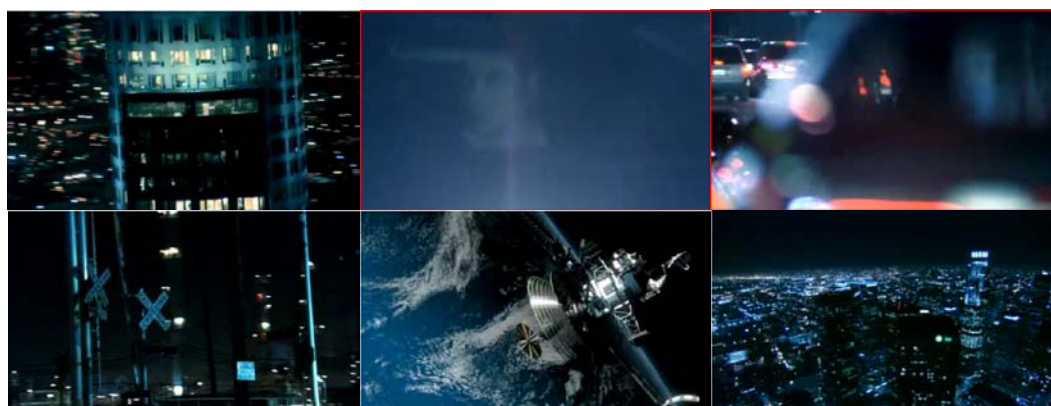
With a limitless supply of money, Del Toro's character is surrounded by the trappings of wealth, including the Mercedes car he drives. Yet his wealth is not an end in itself and he still cultivates meaningful relationships with the people around him. The affective narrative nodes satisfy this effect. His female companion alludes to a sinister plot, anxiously whispering 'They were right here in the house', while the mystery surrounding the main character's charitable donations to a '27 year old woman he refers to as his grandmother' insures that the emphasis and importance placed on money in the trailer becomes purely incidental. Money ebbs and flows, important only to the narrative in an indirect sense: flowing beneath the surface like a river (or a pulse). The idea of money, the presence or lack of it, becomes an issue of little import. It is instead presented, at best indirectly, through the actions of the charismatic, admirable main character. The idea of wealth is quickly sublimated and the emphasis placed on the physical actions and presence of the main character and his implied relationship with his world and the other characters.

While wealth, affluence and commerce - and one man's relationship to those things - are the foundations of the *Lucky Star* trailer, their presence is emblematic of its appeal. Here notions of commercialism place behind those of action and emotional connection - and yet, act as catalysts for everything taking place. The more curious and abstract the syuzhet, the more elaborate and convincing the fabula - and it is the potential of the fabula, to be whatever the viewer can conceive of it being, which provides the attraction. The irony, in this case: the more obscure and uncoordinated the onscreen narrative information, the more complex the fabula and deeper the level of interpretive work on the part of the audience.

The generic and aesthetic convention in *Lucky Star* makes bold communicative gestures to an audience. Its formal characteristics highlight a discursive, defining process - it is shot on

digital, rather than 35mm film, a format more closely associated with television and more readily identified as the domain of the commercial. The digital format is favoured by filmmaker, Michael Mann<sup>286</sup> (who directs the trailer), and makes for an immediately noticeable and remarkable visual effect when presented in widescreen. Shown amongst a number of formally-similar offerings, the glossy digital aesthetic indicates that the *Lucky Star* trailer thinks of itself, at least, as different, a special case, when compared to cinematic peers. Secondly, the trailer promotes an extremely low key, reserved visual style. From the low-lit exteriors of the nocturnal setting to the equally gloomy interiors, the obscured imagery reflects and hosts unknowable aspects of the peculiar narrative. The trailer lacks the pomp and bombast of typical thriller promotion, even the voice-over narrator is laconic and withdrawn. No intertitles appear, no announcements of actor's names, or mentions of director or producer and their prior achievements. Very little is done to emphasise a sense of spectacle within the trailer.

Yet despite the apparent lack of formal markers, the *Lucky Star* trailer makes itself known as a member of its commercial/artistic subgenre. Even without the theatrical trappings of the auditorium to contextualise it, markers of status emerge. The most evident visual marker is the pace of the editing. The trailer uses metanarrative motifs which indicate its paratextual status: fast and frequent cuts turn the flow of images into a staccato, rhythmic tapestry, evocative of the Deleuzian action-image in which perspectives are pluralised. Pluralised perspectives raise the presence of generic convention - exploiting an implied understanding of pre-existing patterns, by creating percepts and emphasising the presence of relational links between shots.

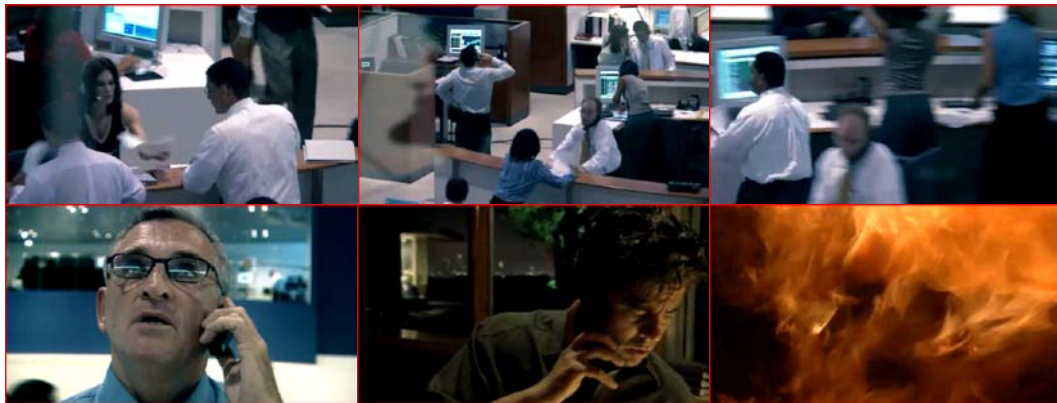


The opening shots: a cityscape, a satellite in orbit, traffic, a car interior - build an open world lacking in points of geographical reference. The effect is situational, this is the large format

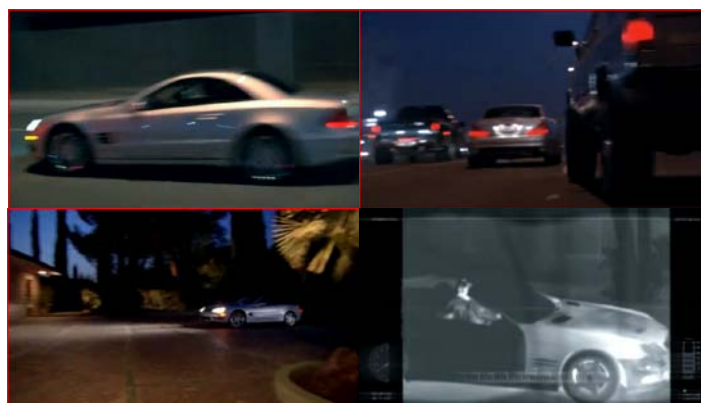
---

<sup>286</sup> Mann went on to shoot *Miami Vice* (2006) and *Public Enemies* (2009) in the digital format.

SAS' action image and, in this case, the sweeping movement-images leave a potent and unfulfilled situation ready to be transformed by as-yet-unseen action. The movement-image seems primed for narrative in this way, its emphasis on the plurality of perspective encourages connective elements, deepening the fabula and pushing the 'visible' narrative nodes to the forefront of audience experience.



When action eventually interrupts the establishing situational shots with the punctuating movement of the action-image, Mann's technique is again low key: movement is brief and fleeting and uncharacteristic of the sweeping, large-scale shots of traditional cinema, it is hard to characterise or separate from the environmental backdrop. Much of the situationalised, sublimated action involved in these early scenes constitutes characters sitting or otherwise stationary, talking to each other, or providing exposition and narrative cues. The only real decisive movement comes from the car, the secret subject of the trailer, driven by Benicio Del Toro's suspiciously lucky main character. In these scenes, the car is driven, at speed, down a highway, weaving between lanes while the camera moves adoringly across its shape. The car, it might be understood, facilitates the transition of situations:



The trailer's rhythm and use of action-images is not the only way it announces its identity. The presentation of a main character (although aided by the laid back delivery of the voice-

over narrator) is shrouded in the same level of textual indeterminacy and mystery as the incomplete wider narrative. He has no name, no motivation and no logical connection to the events of the story other than that ascribed by the spectator. Yet his important place in those events is never in doubt and he is frequently the driving force or motivation for the action-imagery: the opening montage reveals him as the driver of the car within the glossy cityscape, watched by the orbiting satellite, he is a blurred affective element through the windscreen of the Mercedes. The conversation between the two investigators concerns the details of supposed crimes he committed, although both remain unsure over the specifics. The voice-over narrator provides only fleeting commentary on one aspect of his character: his skill with money and finance.

The trailer's focus on the mysterious main character transfers emphasis onto the details of his external world - the impressions he makes on people, the relationships he has and, of course, the car he drives. The character's position in the narrative is a catalyst. While everything else onscreen is situational, his role is active: he moves and things happen. He begins narratives but doesn't finish them, leading the viewer, and the other characters following him, to infer based on previous (genre) knowledge. He prompts actions that lead to new situations, and facilitates new action-images. Del Toro's bizarrely lucky character is the driving force behind the more cinematic, large-form (SAS') action image at the heart of the trailer. Raising speculation over his true character or the need for a 'fuller' understanding of his persona and place within the narrative is the essential goal of the trailer. Del becomes an emblem of luck and enigma in a very stylised way: his presence onscreen is controlled and measured. The ethical aspect of his bizarre luck, whether he deserves it or not, is not addressed - what becomes evident is his skill at utilizing his 'talent' for monetary gain. Del Toro's performance is appropriately minimalistic and restrained: his gestures are subtle, his face inexpressive. He is as an occupant, a manipulator of events and the environment: he drives his Mercedes, he rolls dice, he sneaks elusively through the diegesis: at one point he even seems able to manipulate the traffic lights on the road in front of him. In what might be cast as an incredibly narcissistic premise (the world literally revolves around him) he carries out the character beats of the 'story' with a noble stoicism which comments on the real purpose of the trailer: the Mercedes car is not a flashy, trophy but a fashionable symbol of quality, reliability and individuality.

The trailer ends with another conventional and highly familiar cinematic flourish, displaying the credits for the film in traditional trailer style: production company information, along with credits for the director and cinematographer:



That the trailer is a car advert is never mentioned, explicitly, once. The notion that it *is* an advert is somewhat redundant since the trailer as a cinematic entity has always been implicitly linked to a commercial message. In this case however, that message is removed, or at least subverted. Only those wishing to discover more about the film *Lucky Star* would have the revelation that the trailer itself was a façade for the stealth advertisement of the new Mercedes Benz SL500. To explore the trailer further, by investigating the website displayed in the title card, was to have accepted its success as an intriguing, stylish paratext, with a metanarrative attractive to the neutral viewer (playing to genre conventions and expectations). The feature film's non-reality is a curious annex to the trailer's interpretation: since the commercial ambition of the trailer was never to create interest in a feature antecedent, its execution and reception are all the more peculiar.

Indeed, the final shot of the trailer, the alignment of the planets, playfully reveals the film's true nature: the emblem of the Mercedes Company (and the hood ornament of the car itself), a three-pointed star. The real subject of the trailer, the Mercedes Benz car, has been rendered commercially anonymous yet aesthetically distinguished. A trailer spectator is urged to admire the narrative and aesthetic characteristics of *Lucky Star* based entirely on their personal receptive experience and without ever being party to the complete picture. The film exists entirely in the virtual aspect of Deleuze's crystalline image, always in the future, always on the verge of its potential and actualization in the minds of the audience.

*Lucky Star* demonstrates the ambiguous status of the postmodern trailer by performing the relationship between the film's commercial and artistic ambitions in so explicit a style. While anticipation is still part of the appeal of the trailer, it is the aestheticism, style and effected narrative which are the most attractive and visible components of the piece. Commercialism is the underlying motive in this instance but, given its viral intent, is subordinate to its discretely enjoyable artistic identity. The commercial/artistic experience delivered by the postmodern trailer is more difficult to interpret than in previous eras. In some senses it is more complicated. Interpreting the relationship between *Lucky Star*'s

commercial aims and its artistic flourishes is not simple: the confusing absence of a saleable product insures this. On the other hand, the relationship is simpler: the postmodern trailer, more than any other era is available for interpretation completely separate from its commercial aspect and represents 'new models for thinking about intertextuality and film reception'<sup>287</sup>. In this sense, the trailer is readable more as short film than advert and readily admissible to a wider cinematic culture in which its peculiar narrative and stylised aesthetic characteristics offer a new and interesting opportunity for analysis.

## **‘Cine-adverts’: The Trailer in other Media**

Stella Artois, *Last Orders*: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=gO-RbhDxKLw>

Carling, *You Know Who Your Mates Are*:

“Space” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=wJg-ZIvsFO>

“Round” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=0gyD9zR8U3A&feature=related>

“Out” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?NR=1&v=YJy9nMjqm7g>

“Rescue” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?NR=1&v=Wz6zxSs05CA>

The theatrical trailer is not alone in its propensity to evoke cinematic convention in the context of advertisement. The devices employed by the trailer are found frequently in other settings, including a wide range of television advertisements which aim to evoke the trailer characteristics to fulfil commercial aims. As methods of production developed in terms of sophistication and budget, so has the television advert grown in prominence and, in recent years, achieved an unprecedented level of prestige - in production values and critical reception. Adverts on television are readily associated with the traditional idea of the ‘sales pitch’, overtly and explicitly stating the nature of the product or service, more often than not aggressively encouraging the viewer to purchase. This is the trope so successfully mimicked in Alfred Hitchcock’s salesman-style endorsements of his own films.

The television medium traditionally faces a more difficult task when it comes to delivering commercial messages. The smaller screen with its plethora of distractions, (outside noise, other people, other channels) results in a need for distinction which is difficult to attain in a

---

<sup>287</sup> (Tryon: 151)

usually-domestic setting. The 'auditorium state' - the captive audience, seated in a darkened auditorium, attention focussed solely on the screen is a situation harder to recreate for the television viewer. Narrative in the television advert is rare - constraints of time and format encourage a more direct announcement of any commercial message. Short and to-the-point, television advertising shares little with its cinematic counterpart: either lacking narrative or presenting, at most, a micro-narrative without a distinctive generic identity.

Yet television advertising is available for cinematic presentation, perhaps because of the formal and technological similarities between the two mediums. Recent televisual commercial trends exhibit features evocative of the style of film trailers and a wider cinematic culture. Indeed, the physical size and technical capabilities of television sets are growing and, as advances are made in image and sound quality along with features such as recently-introduced three-dimensional programming, television seems destined to closely imitate the technical character of cinema.

Many adverts assume a cinematic style, incorporating wide-angle shots, broader narratives and even the tenor, tone and deliverance of their cinematic counterparts. Film trailers themselves are exhibited on television, in smaller, time-restricted iterations of their theatrical versions. The length-limit imposed by television makes the 'TV spot' film trailer a more sales-focussed experience: imagery is delivered quicker and messages are announced louder. But it is the 'cinematization' of the non-cinematic, product-focussed, television advert which attests to the salience and identity of the trailer in a postmodern context. By evoking the narrative beats of cinema and other filmic devices, an advert exhibiting cinematic markers very quickly stands out from the more traditional 'sales pitch' approach. These markers don't have to be singularly visual, even though they are invariably the symptoms of the cinematic. As I have discussed, notions of space and the passage of time are highly characteristic cinematic markers and in a televisual context are often dealt with trivially: the clichéd 'before/after shot' of a cleaning product's effectiveness, for example. The cine-advert is distinct from this trend and shares more in character with its cinematic ancestors. The cine-advert treats time and space with reverence, using it to deepen narrative or aesthetic effect, and does not disrupt or violate the 'flow' of cinematic space and time. Wim Wenders notes the importance of this 'continuity of movement' to the cinematic condition:

I think it's really important for films to be sequential. Anything that disturbs or breaks up these sequences annoys me. Films have got to respect these sequences of

action – even highly stylized films.... The continuity of movement and action must be true, there mustn't be any jolt in the time being portrayed.<sup>288</sup>

Wenders describes the 'cut' as part of the process of duration which involves deciding what to 'show'<sup>289</sup>. The effect is crucial to the poetic coherence of time and space which constitutes the cinematic (as distinct from the televisual). Although Wenders' approach is vague, he captures an approach to time and space, in which artistic coherence is valued above a focus on the promotion of product - so often at the centre of commercial adverts. The cine-advert moves beyond a need to construct its product-subject within a time and space, into a space in which the advert constructs *itself* in time and space. In this new cinematic space, it is the formal appearance of the advert/trailer which commands analysis - rather than the thing being advertised.

An ancillary feature of the cine-advert's formal 'appearance' is its indirect usage of, and propensity for, technology - which embodies cinematic technique: the widescreen television, surround sound, high-resolution film-stock. The imminence of technology in the cinematic is emphasised by Stephen Heath, who notes that commercial cinema hinged on a diversity of 'technical understanding and development'<sup>290</sup>. The presence of technology seems to be a precursor to the creation of the cinematic and, more significantly, the embedded presence of the commercial in that framework. This incorporation enables the cine-advert to exhibit the cinema onscreen. We *see* cinema: film-stock, strikingly different to video footage of traditional adverts, alerts a viewer to the presence of the cinematic camera. Advances in technology deliver high quality audio/visual experiences through the television format, in which wide and flatscreen sets and high-definition sound and picture quality are commonplace. The technology itself is part of a reciprocal commercial relationship with the cinematic, in which the expressive possibilities of the cinematic are linked intrinsically to advances made. Technology facilitates the advertisement of the cinematic and the cinematic facilitates the advertisement of technology.

---

<sup>288</sup> (Wenders, 2007: 88)

<sup>289</sup> It's a problem at the screenplay stage, cutting off an action that you know is actually continuing. In the end, the film just cuts somewhere. Every action – everything continues, and what you show is actually just a part of it. That's the hardest thing for me, how to choose what to show. (Wenders: 90)

<sup>290</sup> It is usually said that the creation of commercial cinema hinged on the conjunction of at least three areas of technical understanding and development: photography, persistence of vision, and projection. (Heath, 1980: 7)

The introduction of the hold of the commercial in the conjunction of the technical areas is evidently crucial. Resting on an industrializable technological base, cinema, different to theatre, offers the possibility of an industry of spectacle. And spectacle is then evidently crucial with its introduction of the hold of meaning and vision and representation into, as a fact of the industry itself.<sup>291</sup>

The postmodern cine-trailer is self-sustaining, creating a critical mass of interest paralleling the cultural process of the theatrical presentations of feature films. The postmodern trailer is in this way, engaged in a dialectic relationship with its antecedent film-text: both concepts enter into a dialogue with the other - intrinsically invested in mutual success.

It is interesting to note, the preponderance of televised cine-adverts involve alcoholic products - a link perhaps residing in the connotations of recreation, socialisation or even escape, shared by alcoholic beverages and cinema. In an ethical sense, alcohol manufacturers cannot endorse the drinking of their products given the insobriety and addiction with which they are often associated. Instead the product is rendered conceptual, alluding to friendship, quality, sexuality, and so on. Unlike other commercials, the cine-advert does not focus on effects or results: an advert for a cleaning product would be concerned with nothing else but the effectiveness of the product compared to others on the market. The cine-advert does not concentrate on effectiveness, but instead sells recognizable experience and uses the cinematic form to evoke these patterns of recognition - such as readily available generic markers. The cine-advert encourages contemplation of a product in an extensive manner: in addition to genre, there is consideration of narrative woven around it, the relationships between the dramatic protagonists and the constantly-changing crystalline *virtual* of which the product is part. The message is not just 'buy the product' but 'share the experience' - that being a potential future, a facet of the time-image onscreen. The notion of the hyperreal is raised again: the onscreen model, the simulation, is judged by how well it performs in simulating the experience of the real, even if the real is an as-yet unrevealed aspect of the advert.

The narrative in 'cine-adverts' is perhaps the most striking characteristic of their makeup. Curtailed by time, cine-advert 'story' is a highly stylised concept - often involving, like the film trailer, a heavy reliance on an inferred fabula. Connections between characters are based strongly on links made to previously existing-generic convention and a focus on the ever-changing, 'virtual' of the crystalline image which points to a future experience. In this case,

---

<sup>291</sup> (Heath: 7)

the product takes the place of the feature film as the metanarrative subject of the images and experience. Stella Artois beer devised a series of famous adverts which clearly evoke cinematic influence. These adverts, exhibit a style overtly reminiscent of a Claude Berri film: a rural setting and archetypal characters who combine to facilitate a quirky, understated and humorous story in the style of *Jean de Florette*. While the product itself plays a highly visible part in the film, the driving force of the narrative comes from within the diegesis - the micro-narrative. In one example of the Berri-style advert, a dying father asks his son to carry out a series of tasks: his last requests. Each task increases in difficulty: the son has to climb a tree to retrieve a flower and brave a swarm of bees to collect honey. The most arduous task is a trek to get a glass of expensive Stella Artois beer, which the son is unable to resist drinking on the journey back to his father's deathbed.



The Stella Artois 'deathbed' advert.

The vast majority of the Stella Artois adverts, since the mid nineties, have followed this leitmotif: a protagonist engaged in some demanding task finds the quality of the beer too tempting to resist, despite its prohibitive price. Often the beer is bought against the protagonist's better judgement or at the expense of his efforts to complete his original task.

The trailer establishes itself as a cinematic relation by evoking other aspects of film theory. The cinematic character of the advert extends to the depiction of rural France, shot beautifully with a palette of golden yellow and vibrant green. The rural environment is a world rendered free from the technology and influence of digital manipulation, engendering a certain guileless naivety towards the concept of commercial advertising. The Stella Artois cine-advert speaks about issues of class: the family is poor and the cost of a beer will have to

be paid for by a collection from the assembled relatives. Religion too, enters the discourse as an unwitting priest is made to take the fall for the empty glass. Money is a narrative element in the cine-advert but, like the *Lucky Star* trailer, it is a liquid concept and the currency which is traded on is instead emotion: the dying father appeals to the sentiment of the dotting son and the assembled relatives, whose resort to their pockets to pay for the beer is signalled by a collective and audible sigh of resignation. The son's sacrilegious drinking of the beer on the journey home is another comment on the devalued notion of wealth: his wilfulness and the power of the beer overcome any concerns about its expense.

The Stella Artois cine-adverts share a common feature: their presentation of a condensed mini-narrative set in rural France which might have been lifted straight from the set of *Jean De Florette* - indeed each advert uses the same musical theme as Berri's famous film. The 'dying father' short takes the form of a large form action image - SAS' - a situation, the father's grave illness, is transformed via a series of actions, each time an action is completed, another is set in motion by the changed situation: the dying man requests a flower, honey and then beer, like the swiftly-paced narrative at the end of a film trailer, the cine-advert updates its narrative almost incoherently rapidly. Like a film trailer, the viewer has to deal with a potentially incomplete narrative faced, not least, with the language barrier and comprehension of the film-tropes required to appreciate the source of the homage/spoof. The format of the cine-advert's action image components is interesting. The large-format SAS' set-up is reminiscent of the blockbuster *Jaws* trailer but, instead of sustaining a circular identity (*Jaws* ends in the same way it begins, with an elusive depiction of the shark) the situation degenerates: the beer is drunk, the mourners are let down and the priest is blamed. The overt religious aspect of the new situation provides overtones of the Fall and another playful layer to the 'sinful' character of the alcohol advertisement.

The cine-adverts' trend of stylised, incomplete beginnings and endings is another characteristic shared with the film trailer. Establishing shots are infrequent and the end of these mini-films are understated and offer faint resolution, often leaving a situation in the midst of transit to another action. There are larger narratives at play here which the cine-advert, like the trailer, wants to subvert, by offering no conclusive ending. The narratives present iconic images, with extratextual allusions, such as *Jean De Florette*, or other cinematic archetypes. The crystalline effect involves these extratextual sources in its conception of the virtual: a viewer is encouraged to engage with the narrative on the strength of his or her familiarity with the extraneous influences and complete the fabula in the space between shots and syuzhet.

Unlike the trailer, the narrative is not missing components but the extent to which the fabula does the narrative work in the cine-advert is affected by its shortened run-time. Like the trailer, the super-concentrated narrative relies on genre and iconic imagery to deliver an experience. The cinematic iconography and cinematic narrative use genre in the same way as trailers - raising the prospect of difference and potential in a crystalline virtual future. The difference and potential in the cine-advert relates directly to the product: how it shapes and affects experience. This is not an intuitive 'sales' pitch, it features no encouragements to buy but constantly emphasises the cinematic worth of the protagonists and their relationship to the product.

Protagonists in the cine-trailer are drawn through their actions: dialogue is minimal and the narrative facilitated by the visual presence of its characters. In the Stella Artois trailer, the protagonist's worth is measured against his ability to carry out the tasks set for him. The irony: the relatively simple final task, retrieving the beer, proves his undoing by virtue of the beer's irresistible taste. The nature of each action, performed by the protagonist is subtly different, in the first he displays his physical nous, climbing a tree to retrieve a fresh blossom for his father. In the second, he withstands pain, braving bee stings to retrieve a measure of honey. The actions follow the Deleuzian sequence: A', A'', and finally A''' - as the protagonist fails to deliver the beer, his father's final request. The cine-advert, like other trailers, changes its format, to the point that it is actions which begin to frame situations - it moves from a large, to small-format action image. The final scene, in which the protagonist acts again, to shrewdly shift blame onto an unwitting priest, leaves the action unresolved, and a deteriorating situation in flux. A viewer's experience is directed towards a close examination of the 'priest punchline', in which narrative crashes to a halt and characters are left, mid-act, to face an unresolved and on-going situation.

The small-form action image values action as a framing device, putting the emphasis on the behaviour of the protagonists, their movements and actions within the piece - the cine-advert is, after all, selling the experience of a product as much as it is the product itself. References to the beer's taste or quality are only made indirectly and experienced through the actions of those onscreen. The cine-advert prompts viewers to make connections with the text on a very personal level - interpreting image's meaning, not on face value as with other adverts, but on their own set of individual parameters. While a 'conventional' advert might make assertions regarding the quality, taste or reliability of the product being sold, the cine-advert avoids this direct approach in favour of a more eloquently delivered narrative. It skirts around the issue of the direct appeal instead selling the 'effect' of the product through a cinematic mix of

aesthetic and rhetoric. It is an action-image - about the effect of Stella Artois on the thirsty customer - which transcends ideas of class, wealth and even mortality.

The 'cinematised' television commercials seems conspicuously limited to certain products: alcohol is particularly suited to the trend, while the advertising of cars and perfume frequently share the treatment. The notion of metanarrative is central to the cine-advert since the aim is to provide an experience of a lifestyle or the world, rather than the experience of a single product. Placing the product within a metanarrative strategy emphasises experience and function within a wider artistic pattern: it becomes part of a scheme which collapses the boundaries between art and life - and uses cinematic narrative techniques to this end. The product in the Stella Artois advert enjoys relatively little screen time, featuring visually only at the end of the advert story. Yet the metanarrative works towards its impending presence from the start: the nostalgic, film-stock feel of the visuals, the musical score and the rural setting encourages comparisons with Claude Berri's directorial style and the *Jean De Florette* series. The cine-advert puts human experience at the centre of its diegesis, close-ups on craggy, expressive faces amidst the open, agrarian landscapes of rural France, emphasise an economy not just of money, but of emotion: the characters are bound by social and familial bonds. The introduction of the notion of mortality as an ordinating social protocol draws out the metanarrative effect: the conflict with the perceived indulgence and luxury of the Stella Artois beer, which, it is implied, is worth transgressing social bonds and obligations to obtain. The beer is held, reverently by the protagonist, centre of frame, a shining gold symbol of indulgence and temptation amidst the bland trappings of farm life. Even the empty glass becomes a motif: a symbol of guilt and justified indulgence, still held in the hand of the protagonist. Its metanarrative role concerns the societal presence of alcohol, a 'sin' in any number of ways, but a justifiable sin nonetheless.

Products in cine-adverts are often facilitators for the behaviour or actions of the protagonists - as in car adverts where the vehicle dictates the cinematic space - or may only be featured in the narrative indirectly or not at all, as in alcohol and perfume commercials. In these latter examples - the notion of the hyperreal becomes acute: it is the lifestyle which fits the product, rather than the reverse. Perfume adverts do not appeal to their customer's desire to smell appealing but to perceptions of what kind of person they are and how the product might fit their particular life-narrative. The adverts make an assertion that 'this is how life is' before belying the presence of a commercial product within that larger narrative. Stella Artois is not alone in this approach to advertising. Notable examples include a series of adverts from Carling beer which take place within pastiches of famous genre films:



“Space”



“Round”



“Rescue”



“Out”

Carling beer adverts select a more directly comedic approach to their version of the cine-advert, as pastiches. Again, sweeping, iconic imagery is the first and most evident cinematic characteristic and the text relies on pre-existing knowledge, or acceptance, of certain genre conventions. Here we have films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Scott of the Antarctic* and any number of westerns adapted and represented as cine-adverts. The intention here is, undoubtedly, to parody the source texts: each micro-narrative concerns some trivial dramatic conceit which bears little relation to the grand backdrop of each cine-advert. Yet while the method is parodic, the intention of the cine-adverts is not purely to ridicule their source texts but engender the associations available to the film tropes contained within. This is a parasitic dynamic but one which allows for both humour and artistic expression. Again, brand is featured only minimally and, in this case, only as a suffix to the narrative. The cinematic model comes first, the simulation of a coherent diegesis which places value on certain qualities: in this case, the men’s loyalty to one another in the face of generic motifs of the transcendental and epic nature of the universe.

Like film trailers, the cine-adverts actively communicate with a perceived and receptive consumer, one who can be identified by the quality of the parodic source material. The *2001: A Space Odyssey* spoof, along with the other antecedent film-texts involve all-male casts and stories which evoke themes of exploration, bravery and the camaraderie of a close-knit group of friends, it is safe to assume that these are qualities the Carling company would have associated with its brand. While a predominantly male cast is a feature of *Stella Artois'* cine-adverts, in the latter, males are often placed within a family unit or within a wider social context. *Carling* features males together in isolation and, interestingly, the same group of male actors in each advert: they wear the genre of their surroundings as loosely as they wear their costumes. While the target demographic is very obviously male, their changeable contextual identity attempts to cast the next as widely as possible, suggesting Carling as a versatile, appealing drink for any situation in which males socialise.

The delivery differs to the Stella Artois cine-adverts, which evoke a sense of wider cultural experience and are certainly more artistically invested in their source material. Carling's cinematic prompts take a more personal tone: the viewer is clearly directed to identify with the protagonists individually - and their attitudes to the narratives in which they find themselves. The allure and seductiveness of the star actor onscreen is subverted here, and the effect results in misrecognition: the protagonists are unremarkable nobodies. Their presence, as substitutes for the traditional star figure, is a source of intentional amusement. In both cases, however, experience of the antecedent film world/text is crucial to the rhetoric of the cine-advert. Motifs present in the advert are aesthetically indistinguishable from those found in the authentic, cinematic trailer. Baudrillard mentions this connection in his discussion of simulation, insisting that 'simulating is not pretending.'<sup>292</sup> and that 'symptoms' of the real, indicate a collapse of the imaginary:

simulation threatens the difference between the "true and the false", the "real" and the "imaginary". Is the simulator sick or not, given that he produces "true" symptoms? Objectively one cannot treat him as being either ill or not ill.<sup>293</sup>

If the trailer is to be considered an artistic medium it must demonstrate potential for creative achievement - in the same ways that a genuine feature film does. Alfred Hitchcock saw that

---

<sup>292</sup> To dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence. But it is more complicated than that, because simulating is not pretending. (Baudrillard: 2)

<sup>293</sup> (Baudrillard: 3)

potential, elevating the trailer beyond its conventional status as fairground spectacle. The blockbuster offers a new complexion of commercialism, wedded to artistic effort. The postmodern, sublimates the commercial almost entirely - in favour of an exploration of cinema as a metanarrative performance - of feature text and, in the case of the cine-advert, product.

## **Homemade Trailers: The ‘Spoof’ and ‘Fan’ Trailer**

*Shining*: [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sfout\\_rgPSA](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sfout_rgPSA)

*Academy Award Winning Movie Trailer*:  
[http://www.YouTube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=WAG9Xn5bJwQ](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WAG9Xn5bJwQ)

Postmodern self-awareness exploits the format of the trailer and its accompanying historical and cultural pedigree but this trend of ‘pseudo-trailers’, whether viral advert, or cine-advert, is not restricted to the satirising or lampooning of previous contributions to the field. The postmodern trailer, like the blockbuster, relies on conventional associations but values the wider notion of reception as part of its appeal as a cultural phenomenon. The postmodern trailer marks an aesthetic presence in the world no longer necessarily be linked to an antecedent film text or any explicit commercial intent - and is enjoyable on levels beyond the purely paratextual.

Evidence for the creative possibility inherent in the trailer is seen in the internet-era trend of amateur or ‘fan-made’ trailers which function not only as homage to existing films but as speculative performances which exhibit an author’s emotional connection to the material depicted in the trailer-film. Tryon refers to the practice as ‘movie remixes’:

While movie remixes do not always embrace the original films, the recycling of the original is certainly connected to a desire for building community while also providing the video maker a venue for illustrating his or her skill in manipulating a familiar text.<sup>294</sup>

Crucially, fan-trailers are produced by non-professionals, or in a non-professional capacity and consist of shots cannibalised from existing footage re-arranged to suit the purposes of the editor or original material produced specifically for the purposes of fabricating a trailer.

---

<sup>294</sup> (Tryon: 152)

Henry Jenkins notes the tendency of fans to peruse culture selectively, finding 'treasures' which can be 'mined and refined for alternative uses'<sup>295</sup>. Jenkins was writing on the phenomenon of 'slash fiction'<sup>296</sup> and 'fan music'<sup>297</sup>, created shared and distributed in the pre-internet society of the late seventies, eighties and early nineties. Jenkins characterises this practice of 'textual poaching' as originating from 'a position of cultural marginality and social weakness'<sup>298</sup>. yet The onset of digital technology and social networking changes the cultural positioning of the fan-text - especially in regard to the trailer, placing it in culturally prominent spaces - and in front of vast audiences. Digital-age home computer software and the ubiquity of material on the internet mean the concept of the trailer, as an indivisible, static cinematic unit, is eroded. The borders of the trailer have, with advances in digital technology, become porous, allowing manipulation at the whims of millions of prospective editors with access to a computer editing suite. The result is the trailer rendered as an artistic statement, a cinematic entity severed of association or link to actual commercial intent and distributed to huge audiences of the creator's choosing..

Fan-trailers can be split into two categories: those which recast (re-edit) a film to reflect new meaning (after the predilections of an editor) and those which purport to be trailers for 'upcoming' but nonexistent films - yet are nothing more than the speculative editorial 'performances' of fans. Making a trailer for an as-yet un-made or never-to-be-made film lends a sense of legitimacy or substance to the ethereal nature of the endeavour - absent from mere verbal conjecture and in keeping with G n tte's notion that the paratext 'makes present'. In these instances, the existence of a trailer becomes entirely hyperreal. The aesthetic and narratives quality of fan-made trailers are complete simulations, posing as trailers formally-indistinguishable from their more commercially motivated 'legitimate' relatives.

What makes the trailer format such a popular form of self-expression? The notion is surely linked to the cultural niche and sense of occasion the film trailer developed - transcending original and theatrical settings. Jay David Bolter notes the tendency for advancements in

---

<sup>295</sup> (Jenkins, 1992: 27)

<sup>296</sup> "slash" refers to the convention of employing a stroke of "slash" to signify a same-sex relationship between two characters ... and specifies a genre of fan stories positing homoerotic affairs between series protagonists. (Jenkins: 186)

<sup>297</sup> Fan music-making(or filking, as fans call it) offers another point of entry into the cultural logic of fandom...Just as a fan writer may develop a story around the character ... a filker may develop a song (Jenkins: 252)

<sup>298</sup> (Jenkins: 26)

technology to ‘annihilate’ the separation of ‘viewer from event’<sup>299</sup> - and indeed, the film trailer, received by an audience as an advertisement, affectively appeals for special event-specific conditions (“This summer...”, “On May 4<sup>th</sup>...”, “Like nothing you’ve seen before...”) - which include exemptions from the cynicism associated with commercial promotional material.

Film trailers are distributed widely online, in contexts which ensure they are seen by a far greater number of people than will eventually see the film. They are frequently promoted as events in themselves, and production companies spend significant amounts of money promoting the online premiere of a trailer. Some trailers are even heavily promoted themselves, as television stations and websites vie for the exclusive rights to show the first footage from a highly anticipated film. In 2010, Disney ‘premiered’ the trailer for its upcoming blockbuster sequel *Tron: Legacy* online, to considerable media attention. The trailer debut was advertised long before the event itself, and was the culmination of a widespread, interactive viral campaign, involving fans from across the world<sup>300</sup>.

For a cinematic sub-genre so rooted in perceptions of commercial motivation, the latest iteration of the trailer is often born from motivations entirely rooted in a desire for artistic expression. Again, a certain postmodern irony is applicable: the use of the trailer as a space for pure creativity is already compromised by its formal and historical connections to commercialism. Disregarding those stealthy, indirect associations made by the cine-advert and its viral relations, there is no practical commercial motivation behind the fan-trailer other than its striking resemblance to its commercially-motivated relations. Indeed, these elements have become so ingrained in the aesthetic of the trailer that, were these visual representations lacking or absent, the ‘authentic’ effect of the trailer would be undermined. Adding commercial motifs to amateur fan-trailers doesn’t just deepen aesthetic similarities with their legitimate counterparts, but actualises their simulative presence. The commercial aspect of promotional art is so far ingrained in its artistic character that it is now indistinguishable from it and overtly a part the trailer’s artistic identity.

Fan trailers are often readily identifiable by an ‘amateurish’ aesthetic - a result of the untrained, non-professional hands behind their creation. These examples may suffer from poor resolution, poor sound quality and other inconsistencies. Their failings cast into relief aesthetic and narrative motifs that, in a more ‘professional’ iteration, would deepen the

---

<sup>299</sup> (Bolter, 2005: 9)

<sup>300</sup> (Wigler, 2010)

paratextual effect. Yet fan-trailers are just as often, virtually, if not completely, indistinguishable from their professional counterparts. This, again, can be attributed to the technological quality of home computer editing software and the general availability of filmmaking technology and know-how. The results are frequently impressive:



*Shining*: even the age-rated title card has been included to strengthen the paratextual effect.

In *Shining*, footage from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) is recut to an appropriated soundtrack. The result is a trailer purporting to advertise a light family comedy, starkly different from the unsettling horrific tone of Kubrick's original. In *Academy Award-Winning Movie Trailer*, by comedy troupe, Britanick, an amateur trailer masquerades as a blueprint for a successful award-winning film. The trailer is a literal interpretation of the metanarrative qualities and paratextual conventions of the format:



The Britanick trailer also uses paratextual convention for satirical and rhetorical purposes.

Both trailers use formal convention for rhetorical effect. *Britanick's* trailer, *Movie Title*, constructs a pure expression of creativity, which seeks to articulate multiple tropes (genre, acting, cinematography). The trailer is limited by the scenes depicted in the film and does not break with convention in its depiction of clichéd mental illness, (as per Barry Levinson's *Rain Man*), quirky romantic comedy, (Reiner's *When Harry Met Sally*) or anti-

establishment/post-colonial melodrama (*Dances With Wolves, Avatar, Good Will Hunting*). Its blurring of parody and homage creates a sort of 'super-trailer' which visually mimics many grand archetypes and their iconic narrative components - while laying bare the mundanity of their syntactic and rhetorical functions. Its multifarious nature moves effectively between an exhibition of the trailer's identity as art and its function as a tool, creating the effect of art within a carefully controlled context. *Shining*, on the other hand, simulates a specific genre. It uses misrecognition of commercial convention through re-purposed imagery and motifs to create a completely new paratext. Looking more closely at the trailer for *Shining*, it is clear just how important the voice-over narration is as a generic motif. Taken from Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), the trailer features images, removed from both their context and original soundtrack and transformed into meaningless building blocks which, when reassembled, strongly imply a hypothetical fabula quite different to the original text. When placed back into a coherent paratextual scheme, the pattern reveals a synthetic narrative, completely constructed by the viewer and using only the potential inherent in the shots as time-images.

It is not simply the mechanisms of montage which create this new identity but the aesthetic manipulation of established commercial techniques as part of a wider rhetorical effect. The re-packaging of a horror film as a comedy is a satirical endeavour, lampooning the way in which marketing techniques have rendered viewers susceptible to the desires of a commercially-minded editor. The effect is interesting: the commercial 'desires' have become so deeply assimilated into the viewing experience that they are almost guileless in their obviousness. Once-effective sales techniques - visual and audio - are transformed, re-purposed and presented to the viewer free of cynicism or subterfuge. It is a testament to their effectiveness just how well they work in *Shining*, to simulate the tale of a lonely boy and his directionless father in a heart-warming, family-friendly comedy.

Relevant issues of copyright and intellectual property which raise interesting questions on the notion of postmodern authorship. To what extent are the internet (spoof) trailers the creations of the amateur editor/directors who put them together - and how far can these individuals go in claiming authorship? The pieces themselves are cannibalised hybrid entities which draw on practical and thematic extratextual referents to achieve the effect of textual identity. Are they simply aping and repackaging the effects of the shots in their original context or does their reconstitution deliver a legitimately different artistic experience? Their 'sampling' certainly changes the meaning of the original work: denatures it, sometimes for humorous effect, sometimes for other affective purposes. The reconstitution of images

encourages a close consideration, at the point of reception, of each image's identity and its relationship with other images in every part of the newly constructed rhetorical schemata: its part in the narrative, its genre-identity and its aesthetic role in a montage-effect. A reconstituted image is more than just a simple referent.

Discussion of the legal ramifications of intellectual property law and copyright infringement has some bearing on the issues surrounding the 'fan-trailer' and raises interesting questions as to its status as 'art'. James Boyle discusses the question of text-ownership and the grounds on which an author should have this kind of unprecedented property right:

We do not think it is necessary to give car workers residual property rights in the cars that they produce – wage labour is thought to work perfectly well. Surely, an author is merely taking public goods – language, ideas, culture, humour, genre, and converting them to his or her own use?<sup>301</sup>

The internet-age renders all expression as communicable information: an ethereal and frighteningly available resource. Without getting into issues of moral obligation regarding the treatment of visual or audio information, the fact of the widespread presence of cheap, raw-material for the construction of fan-trailers points to a notion of 'assumed' authorship. Like Lev Kuleshov's 1929 experiment, the fan trailer as art is born from opportunity and innovation within the confine of restricted resources. Furthermore, the ramifications of using available resources, which may be restrained or stigmatised by certain laws or restrictions, is similarly relevant. Boyle notes the initial vilification of the VCR by film studios in the 1980s who mistakenly regarded the machine as the death knell of their commercial business - going so far as to attempt the legal restriction of machines which could be used to copy and distribute films:

VCRs were... used for copying that was clearly illicit... [they] also provided substantial gains, gains that far outweighed the losses. Ironically, had the movie companies "won" in the Sony case, they might now be worse off.<sup>302</sup>

Even a narrower interpretation of existing attitudes to intellectual property rights hints at the inherent creativity associated with the marshalling of existing materials to the end of creating the fan-trailer. Boyle points out 'authorship' is historically held in far less esteem than the

---

<sup>301</sup> (Boyle, 1996: 53)

<sup>302</sup> (Boyle: 64)

work of the ‘scribe and copyist’ and points to medieval culture, which values the discovery of potential over the act of original creation:

[Medieval writers] valued extant old books more highly than any recent elucubrations *and they put the work of the scribe and the copyist above that of the authors*. The real task of the scholar was not the vain excogitation of novelties but a discovery of great old books, their multiplication and the placing of copies where they would be accessible to future generations of readers.<sup>303</sup>

Boyle’s description of attitudes towards medieval writers is surprisingly prophetic for the way materials, such as the fan-trailer, are made for and exhibited by the internet. As notions of authorship change and legal frameworks are put in place to protect the original author, the idea of form gains prominence and becomes crucial to legal claims of ownership.

The buyer gets the physical thing and the ideas contained in it. *Precisely because the originality of his spirit was converted into an originality of form*, the author retains the right to the form in which those ideas were expressed.<sup>304</sup>

Yet the idea of form is subordinate to the idea of ‘originality’, which Boyle says justifies intellectual property claim. In the fan-trailer, we see a marriage of innovation in both originality and form<sup>305</sup>. Existing material is repurposed (‘re-coloured’) with new soundtracks or editing schemes - and re-presented. Sometimes the innovation is purely aesthetic, lacking any further textual depth - as in the Britanick trailer - or sometimes humorous - the *Shining* trailer. Authorship in fan trailers is rendered plural: they actively acknowledge the texts which made their existence possible and do so by evoking not just textual representations (*Shining*) but formal and generic connections. Authorship becomes a temporal, transitive concept, much like the time-image, it can shift depending on context: what an author *means* in one situation can be significantly different in another. Again the potential for artistic expression and reception is pushed to the forefront of experience.

---

<sup>303</sup> (Boyle: 53)

<sup>304</sup> (Boyle: 55)

<sup>305</sup> It is the originality of the author, the novelty which he or she adds to the raw materials provided by culture and the common pool, which “justifies” the property right and at the same time offers a strategy for resolving the basic conceptual problem... what concept of property would allow the author to retain some property rights in the work but not others? (Boyle: 54)

If the fan-trailers demonstrate the potential of the format to be used artistically, how are these effects achieved? In *Shining*, the time-image is an important component of experience. Shots in the trailer are poetic, too fleeting to contemplate in terms of anything other than their affective power. They become subliminal to the soundtrack, which involves carefully chosen excerpts between Jack Torrance, played by Jack Nicholson, and his son, Danny. The excerpts emphasise the father-son relationship, representing it as a source of sentiment and humour within the narrative. The paratextual arrangement favours this reading, and the opening of the *Shining* trailer features no 'hard' cuts between shots. Instead, it utilises flamboyant dissolves, fades and wipes, sliding different shots around like the bar of Jack's typewriter as it introduces and describes Jack and Danny who, in their original incarnation, embody a number of sinister and uncanny characteristics.

The narrative is delivered almost completely through the spoken words of the trailer's narrator. Accompanying imagery is highly affective and disparately taken from a variety of discontinuous sections of the original film. The audience-inferred fabula is influenced by the presence of the soundtrack which, in a montage effect, constantly lends meaning to the images. The opening features scenes of work and recreation - when combined with the voice-over, the effect is a comedic, sentimental narrative. Reception of the aesthetic quality of the trailer strongly connects to the motifs carried by its audio components. Here the audio has been added to the trailer from an extratextual source and serves a descriptive purpose.

NARRATOR: Meet Jack Torrance...

JACK: I'm outlining a little writing project.

NARRATOR: He's a writer looking for inspiration.

NARRATOR: Meet Danny... He's a kid looking for a dad.

DANNY: There's hardly anyone to play with around here.

The tone of the narration is alternately imperative and declarative. It involves the audience in a performative scheme: '*Meet Jack Torrance*'. The words are polite, congenial and delivered in a tone which is both affectionate and amused. This delivery 'tone' is a genre motif, established as a commercial device to indicate identity and register. The descriptive overtures, made by the voice-over and the dialogue of the actors, contribute little or nothing, to the progression of the narrative. Their effect is tonal and aimed squarely at a point of affective reception. The narrative is synthesised completely in the relationship between independently meaningless images and the lyrical audio contributions.

Music in a trailer is a crucial addition to the synthesis - and can skew reception significantly. Once again a reflection of the versatility of media in the postmodern, digital world, the availability and presence of musical tracks on media - even as non-professional as the fan-trailer - is prolific. The legitimate and non-legitimate distribution of music online allows for trailers to feature tracks exactly aimed towards specific rhetorical responses. In the past, accompanying music was not an instantly obtainable resource. The music of Hitchcock's and the blockbuster's era was anonymous, largely orchestral and professionally produced. The use of contemporary pop songs was unheard of. Many past trailers run with little or no accompanying music: a characteristic many Hitchcock efforts. Even trailers of the Blockbuster era do not feature music as a significant component of their rhetoric: *Jaws* features no non-diegetic music whatsoever. The accompaniment for the *Star Wars* trailer is not John Williams' famous composition but a far subtler, slower unobtrusive theme which plays beneath the images. In a postmodern, contemporary context, the inclusion of music as a rhetorical and artistic component of the screen composition is a trend followed almost without exception. Since it has become far more available and versatile, a specific music track may facilitate a narrow rhetorical aim, while another could result in vast difference. In *Shining*, the careful use of music (Peter Gabriel's *Solisbury Hill*<sup>306</sup>) results in the undeniably effective re-purposing of cannibalised footage: from a horror film to a family comedy. The effect is transformational and independently impressive but also comical, an ironic, satirical nod to the ease with which art is subverted by commercial influence.

That music, employed carefully to fit the onscreen images, matches the visual rhythm of the montage while dictating the tone completely. Eisenstein notes the powerful consequences sound has for montage, and its effect on the independence of any semantic momentum:

To use sound in this way will destroy the culture of montage, for every ADHESION of sounds to a visual montage piece increases its inertia as a montage piece, and increases the independence of its meaning – and this will undoubtedly be to the detriment of montage, operating in the first place not on the montage pieces, but on their JUXTAPOSITION.<sup>307</sup>

While this exposes the contribution accompanying music makes to a trailer, it also reveals the flimsy status of images-as-narrative, in a paratextual context. In *Shining*, images do

---

<sup>306</sup> “Shining” culminates with Peter Gabriel’s “Solisbury Hill” a song movie previews often include to market films with a romantic or emotional subtext (Tryon: 161)

<sup>307</sup> (Eisenstein, 1949: 258)

almost no direct work: it is their affective quality, rendered as a synthesis of commercial characteristic and artistic flourishes which communicates meaning to an audience.

*Academy Award Winning Movie Trailer* is an embodiment of the postmodern trailer both as a parodic device and a singularly ironic, creative entity. The trailer lays bare the commercialism inherent in every shot of the trailer while simulating the rhetoric and genre motifs in an incredibly convincing style. The trailer simulates the affective qualities and metanarrative devices of the trailer by pantomiming conventional components. Every scene is a literal interpretation of a paratextual element - and audio contribution to the images is a significant part of that strategy:

A dinner party: the host stands to give a speech while guests look on.

MAIN CHARACTER: At toast, establishing me as the wealthy successful protagonist.

Later, as he is caring for a mentally-disabled relative, the female lead meets the main character for the first time.

FEMALE LEAD: Admiration at your seeming selflessness.

MAIN CHARACTER: Interest in your bold rejection of social norms, as evidenced by your dyed hair.

FEMALE LEAD: My name.

MAIN CHARACTER: My name.

In this iteration of the postmodern trailer, the narrative is a superficial and constantly changing concept, its identity dependent on the contributions made by the dialogue. With its transitive nature and the comical devaluation of the narrative, affective elements are emphasised. Even after the exposure of the narrative as pure simulation, the trailer remains highly evocative and affective on a textual, rather than paratextual level. It is not the effect of a simulated text which is being attempted in this iteration, but the effect of a simulated paratext transformed into an artistic, textual experience in its own right.

Should the postmodern trailer be considered a simulation? Baudrillard suggests that the third order of simulation is one produced mathematically.

The real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control – and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these... it is no longer really the real, because no imaginary envelops it anymore. It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere.<sup>308</sup>

Lane equates this hyperreal to ‘the virtual reality of computer code’<sup>309</sup>. But while the Britanick trailer parodies certain cynical commercial schemes by slavishly recreating the rhetorical effects of previous trailers, the effect goes beyond satire and mockery and reaches impressive levels of creativity and artistic expression. The lines, expressed so literally, are delivered with convincing, emotive performances by the actors and the shots composed with an obvious flair for affective and eye-catching spectacle.

With the audience ‘incentive’ of the release of a connected source text absent from the trailer’s receptive scheme, its temporal position becomes extremely curious. Without the feeling of anticipation that comes with the knowledge of a forthcoming feature film, the Britanick trailer remains an appealing, pleasurable experience. The postmodern trailer is no longer situated in the same temporal perspective as examples from previous eras. The position of the postmodern trailer is not as anchored to the idea of ‘future and past’ as previous trailer texts. Notions of anaphoric and cataphoric reference, embodied by phrases such as ‘from the producers of...’ and ‘coming soon’, are subordinated to the performative qualities of the film itself:



The 1998 *Godzilla* trailer features glowing-green intertitles, a nod to the radioactive nature of the title monster, which float towards the camera before exploding in a flash.

---

<sup>308</sup> (Baudrillard: 2)

<sup>309</sup> Baudrillard suggests that hyperreality is produced algorithmically (or via mathematical formulae), like the virtual reality of a computer code; that is to say, detached from notions of mimesis and representation and implicated, for example, in the world of mathematical formula. (Lane: 86)



Michael Bay's *The Island* (2005), featured intertitles zooming rapidly down a corridor - a recreation of the actions of the film's fugitive protagonists.



John Lasseter's *Finding Nemo* (2004): animated intertitles ripple on the surface of the water, illuminated by moonlight, evoking the habitat of the character's undersea home.

References made to the previous work of directors and producers cannot be simply 'listed' in the postmodern trailer but need to be absorbed into an aesthetic/rhetorical scheme. The trend is an intertextual evolution of Klinger's notion of digressive reading and responses to 'filmic moments in excess of their function within the narrative'<sup>310</sup>. The trailer is no longer a list of information and can no longer be received and evaluated as one. In the postmodern, in all its incarnations, the trailer is a means to *perform* cinematically.

Deleuzian crystalline time remains crucial - devaluing conventional logic and heightening the sense of potency between the linked paratextual segments. Trailers now represent potential in a far more literal way than ever before, having moved on from an exhibition of purely commercial intent they have become archetypal examples or important representatives of particularly stylised narratives or genres.

## ***Machete*: A Postmodern Film Trailer**

<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=nbZDW8kIaw8&feature=related>

Perhaps the most recent and widely seen example of this trend is the Quentin Tarantino/Robert Rodriguez-directed double-feature, *Grindhouse* (2007): a tribute to the 70s-era subculture of B-movie, double-feature exploitation cinema shown in the low-rent

---

<sup>310</sup> (Klinger: 3)

‘grindhouse’ auditoriums of New York city<sup>311</sup> and designed for ‘thrill-seeking’ audiences with a ‘growing tolerance for ‘sex and violence’<sup>312</sup>. In *Grindhouse*, the double-feature gimmick extends to an in-film ‘interval’ between Rodriguez’s *Planet Terror* and Tarantino’s *Deathproof*. The interval comes complete with adverts for ‘local’ restaurants and other establishments and, notably, trailers for ‘upcoming’ features. The trailers are made by filmmakers specially invited to contribute trailers reflecting the look and feel of the era. The results include trailers for fictional films such as Edgar Wright’s Hammer Film pastiche, *Don’t*, Eli Roth’s exploitative slasher-horror, *Thanksgiving* and Robert Rodriguez’s *Machete*. The films exhibit many of the thematic elements of the grindhouse subgenre: extreme violence, misogyny and a variety of explicit scenes. None were linked to any exterior commercial entity upon the release of *Grindhouse*: their purpose was to deepen the aesthetic effect of a film which purported to recreate a historical cinematic experience.



Shots from *Grindhouse*’s diegetic *Machete* trailer.

The trailer *Machete*, directed by Robert Rodriguez, is particularly noteworthy since the success of the faux trailer in *Grindhouse* actually led to its development as a feature film, independent of the *Grindhouse* label. The trailer evokes the same shared associations and conventional expectations as other trailers yet the difference, in this case, is that the trailer is nothing more than the material realisations of those associations - which are, in this case, a consequence of the trailer created as a purely aesthetic, artistic endeavour. They include familiar and convincing characteristics: a melodramatic voice-over, a charismatic lead character built up by the narrative, and a carefully plotted editorial scheme which mimics the format of a conventional, commercially motivated trailer. Opening shots even deliver an

<sup>311</sup> (Hallenbeck, 2009: 168)

<sup>312</sup> (Waddell, 2009: 35)

affective locus, focusing on the person of Machete, an illegal immigrant played by Mexican actor, Danny Trejo.

The trailer is highly metatextual. It draws frequent attention to itself as advertising medium (albeit in a nostalgic style, reminiscent of 1970's production capabilities) not least in its emphasis on money. Machete is presented in a prominent socioeconomic context. His world is the dilapidated, shabby urban environment of the illegal labour market, where immigrants gather in the hope of receiving paid work from affluent, American citizens. Machete is approached by a senator, who promptly hires him to carry out a contract killing. The narrative plays out archetypally and clichéd: a simulacrum of the political thriller sub-genre. Yet it is the social economic discourse which features most prominently in this segment. Machete lives in a corrupted but recognizable version of the American dream. His humble beginnings take him down a path of unexpected opportunity: seemingly, he is presented with a job which will reward his particular skills in a highly proportionate way (a briefcase full of money). Machete, like his fellow illegal immigrants, is exploited, in this case, very literally, by the government of the United States. The senator, it is revealed, intends to double-cross Machete and have him framed for attempted murder. Machete is treated in a highly superficial way in these opening shots - rendered as little more than a commodity by those exploiting him. The notion of the human being as currency, or exploitable resource is at the heart, not only of exploitation cinema, but the Hollywood star system. McDonald comments on paparazzi websites which value the erotic lure of the star as part their promotional appeal to fans - and include payment systems which 'further locate the identities of stars in the context of commercial exploitation'<sup>313</sup>. *Machete* places these discourses at the forefront of viewer awareness: socio-economic factors mix with issues of race, class and history.

Yet the *Machete* trailer subverts traditional Mulveyian modes of presenting the male body as spectacle. Machete is an ethnic character, disempowered, de-voiced and far less vital than Caucasian equivalents in similar roles (see *Rambo*) and is announced without the pomp and circumstance which Tasker notes is normally reserved for other action stars.

Along with the visual pyrotechnics, the military array of weaponry and hardware, the arch-villains and the staggering obstacles the hero must overcome, the overblown budgets, the expansive soundtracks, is the body of the star as hero, characteristically functioning as spectacle. Such display provides a setting for... the display of the white male body. Such display generates a range of uncertainties, as

---

<sup>313</sup> (McDonald, 2003: 36)

traditional signifiers of masculine, colonial power are constituted as sexual spectacle.<sup>314</sup>

His body is ignored, dismissed until, that is, he becomes dangerous - which only occurs once he has been exploited by the white antagonists to too great a degree. Afterwards, he becomes a violent bodily force, one on which the trailer lingers indulgently. Like *Rambo* however, Machete's body, in particular his face, is prominent and is quickly equated to a tool, deployed to carry out a task. Machete's role is dictated by his surroundings: his status as illegal labour is without specific purpose. He waits to be assigned a role by an employer and is given one by the arriving senator. Even the name 'Machete', suggests practicality: a useful device for navigating the jungle, in addition to associations with violence: it is both savage and obsolete. Indeed, the purpose of the machete changes depending on context and the intention of its wielder. Machete waits, with the rest of the migrant workers, in an industrial environment - he is, in fact, part of that environment until he is 'activated' by his exploitative employer, played by Jeff Fahey, who has the first close-up of the trailer. Machete's opening emphasises what Steve Neale sees as the perceived 'ethnic bias in action-adventure' which constitutes a 'systematic project of marginalization, demonization and subordination *vis-à-vis* non-whites'<sup>315</sup>. *Machete's* immigrant workers perpetuate this trend: disempowered, disavowed, economically and physically redundant: part of the landscape. Compared to the stylised, dramatic way in which John Rambo is presented in the trailer for *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, the difference is striking.



---

<sup>314</sup> (Tasker: 76)

<sup>315</sup> (Neale, 2004: 73)

Like Rambo, *Machete* is a political construction. Tasker notes the 'performative', 'postmodern' qualities of the 'built male body' which seem to promote power, dedication and assertiveness<sup>316</sup>. *Machete*, by contrast, is a body covered up, disempowered and waiting for a place in society. The trailer is performative in a highly self-referential fashion. *Machete* is waiting to be actualised in a clearly defined power-hierarchy, and yet, to be a part of that system is to be exploited. Rambo, by contrast, appears from the darkness, firing a machine gun straight at the camera: highly assertive, powerful and determinate - a crisis for the existing power structure, which must react to him. The *Machete* trailer relies on the performative qualities of its imagery and the extratextual associations brought by an audience - the simulation of 'exploitation'. By watching the trailer, the audience submits to a simulation of an exploitative commercial scheme and, in return, receives it as a pleasurable aesthetic experience. *Machete's* body is a postmodern construct, damaged, self-aware and a poor fit for conventional expectations of a Hollywood star.

This metatextual performance is reflected in a number of ways. The trailer effects the 'cheap' aesthetic of the Grindhouse oeuvre: artificially added 'scratches' on the film-stock are mixed with a crackling, poor quality soundtrack. Camera movement is minimal and restricted - and does not extend to dramatic establishing shots or other flourishes. The trailer is comprised of brief shots accompanied by snatches of dialogue and the clipped delivery of a voice-over narrative. The film relies heavily on affective qualities: close-ups suit the restrictions of the low-budget aesthetic (eliminating expensive backdrops) and small-format action-images drive the narrative - the small-format emphasises action over situation (actions are cast as framing devices to situations), lending a dynamism which allows little time for sober contemplation of the content or quality of a situation. Indeed, this blurring of the semantic content of images and their narrative power, exaggerates the effect of the montage arrangement. Since the intention is only to effect the *presence* of a narrative, by creating synthetic, intellectual links between images, the fabula is deepened without being made subject to the heavier scrutiny slower pacing may engender. The aesthetic of *Machete* is primed for metatextual reading: its format ensures a viewer makes paratextual associations, including assumptions about metanarrative, in regards to a purely textual entity.

---

<sup>316</sup> The proliferation of images of the built male body represents for critics like Barbara Creed the kind of deconstructive performativity associated with postmodernism, whilst for others they articulate, in their 'promotion of power and the fear of weakness', traditional images are also 'deeply reactionary'. (Tasker: 74)

The character, Machete, contributes only minimally to the dialogue. A silent hero, his visual significance is emphasised: he is a blank canvas onto which the viewer ascribes internal expectation. His pervading silence throughout casts the character as a manifestation of the myriad social concerns raised by the narrative: political corruption, immigration, social and moral degradation - Machete's relational affective power evokes all these. The concerns have a strongly racial impetus, reflecting American anxiety over the influx of Mexican immigrants into the southwest and their potentially destabilizing influence on the fabric of American society.

Deepening this exploitative trend, Machete's employers are the suited, white bureaucrats of middle class America - and the demographic quickly becomes his target when he is betrayed. The dynamic of exploitation cinema is represented here: a hierarchy of power challenged by its disempowered members. The irony is that the disempowered group onscreen is being exploited in real life by the commercial ambitions of the film. The metanarrative focuses on the sense of guilt surrounding the exploitation of migrant workers or, more accurately, an empowering simulation of justice, carried out on their behalf. Machete's frequent violent acts are articulations of repressed outrage and strike at a society that has undervalued and brutalised him. Tasker notes the propensity for action cinema to play out 'fantasy' narratives, citing *Rambo* as a key moment in the 'revisionist, re-evaluation of America's role in Vietnam'<sup>317</sup>. In the *Rambo* trailer however, Rambo's body is a thing to be admired and fetishised - he is completely in control of his actions and operating within the known and comforting boundaries of genre. Machete's body, on the other hand, is to be feared and is far less pleasant to look at: his face is scarred, his clothes threadbare, at one point he is brutally injured by a bullet. The sense of indignation and traumatic objectification is palpable and suited far more to the trailer format where stylised, episodic moments of aestheticised violence occur without context or narrative connection. Machete is a postmodern hero, produced by the very system against which he fights. He exists purely in the trailer where he can perpetrate those episodes of violence without concern or contemplation of motivation - and provide instant, simulated satisfaction for an audience. Ernst Mathjis and Xavier Mendik discuss the trend, in European exploitation cinema, of dealing with issues of prevailing guilt, in addition to evoking notions of 'resistance, rebellion and liberation':

Much of alternative European cinema seems to address issues of guilt, confession and testimony. This seems to point, consciously or involuntarily, to their ability to

---

<sup>317</sup> (Tasker: 92)

function as sites of reconfiguration of the self, as attempts to explore possibilities of reconstructing cultural frameworks... A second, and connected, recurrent threat appears to be that of resistance, rebellion and liberation. Alternative European cinema sets itself not just against a mainstream culture, but also against a range of ways of thinking, politically and ideologically. <sup>318</sup>

The *Machete* trailer exploits its format in this manner: it is a brutal, unforgiving revenge fantasy and, at the same time, is not. It remains an incomplete narrative, dismissing explanatory contexts as issues which exist only in the virtual aspect of the crystalline.

Who is being exploited in *Machete*? Even the notion of exploitation is pulled into a postmodern context - given that exploitative narratives and aesthetics are rendered in such a parodic style. The trailer is as much a part of the cinematic experience of *Grindhouse* as the two 'features' which originally made up the film, *Planet Terror* and *Deathproof*. The paying audience is, ideally, sufficiently sophisticated and discerning to recognise the references and inter and extratextual overtures - ensuring irony remains intact and viewers are 'in on the joke'. This audience is willing to participate in the experience of being exploited and, in that sense, the *Machete* trailer is engaged in a reciprocal relationship. It has a similar effect on viewers as its exploitative cinematic ancestors while offering another level of enjoyment beyond simple parody - providing the viewer with opportunities to examine the mechanics of the trailer and, in a wider sense, the exploitation movement itself. But *Machete* behaves in a way dissimilar to other trailers - even from the postmodern era - in that it openly acknowledges the taboo nature of its existence and purpose. Taboo in the sense that it explicitly and audibly promotes (at least the illusion of) titillation, violence and 'cheap' thrills. Unlike other trailers, especially its contemporary relations, *Machete* features scenes of graphic bloodshed, nudity and strong language.



While undoubtedly a distilled and parodic consequence of its exploitation roots, the trailer attempts to mask those scenes which hint at aspects of the indulgent, voyeuristic pleasure of

---

<sup>318</sup> (Mathijs and Mendik, 2004: 4)

watching cinema: illusory representations of extreme behaviour unavailable in real life. As mentioned earlier, the trailer format is, for whatever reason, a perfect medium in which to play through these taboo representations - however explicit they may be - since its focus remains entirely in the virtual: it is up to us, the audience, to contextualise what we see.

Methods of censorship in 'real' trailers may include cutting away at a decisive moment, or rendering action implicitly through sound effects, montage or voice-over narrative. By including such explicit scenes, *Machete* exposes its postmodernity and massively undermines the synthetic potential inherent in the images. The tactic is reductive, eroding paratextual rhetoric by exposing more of the text itself. The narrative becomes about the repetition of generic norms rather than the promise of new ones. Showing these scenes in the trailer, to such an explicit degree, is a gesture to audiences that opportunities for taboo indulgence are available - and hence deepening *Machete's* inclusion as a part of a perceived cinematic canon or culture.

With this in mind, the focus of critical scrutiny falls on the trailer itself as a performative medium: how well were the violent scenes executed in connection to prior generic associations? How does the aesthetic character of the trailer compare to previous offerings? The location of analytic work applied here, is the point at which the receptive viewer comes into contact with the trailer. Its status, within the larger *Grindhouse* structure means that its artistic role is understood: no feature film will be forthcoming (at least, not in this iteration of the *Machete* trailer). As such, *Machete's* superficial 'incompleteness' is deceptive: it is an illusion, the text is complete - beginning and ending onscreen. The trailer as an empirical object is a novel concept. Art which defines itself through the aesthetic of 'absence': missing narrative, missing visuals, missing spectacle. Like a sculpture, the editorial *shape* of the trailer is one of its most salient features. *Machete* and other postmodern trailers are most effective when exploiting this editorial character. In *Lucky Star* the effect was a skilful mimicry of form, a double-bluff, a concealment of the absence of product (a feature film) while sneaking another product (Mercedes) into the frame. In the cine-adverts it was an assumed connection to a wider generic knowledge-base (genre), in *Machete*, it is a lampooning of commercial style: the trailer explicitly lacks a film - but audiences pay anyway. Each time, for varying reasons, the viewer evaluates the trailer, on its own merit, at that crucial point of reception.

Interestingly, *Machete's* effectiveness engendered the development of a feature production of the same name, directed by Robert Rodriguez and starring Danny Trejo. Coming several years after the release of *Grindhouse*, the *Machete* (2010) feature film is accompanied by its

own trailer, and offers the intriguing prospect of a direct comparison between a trailer made for purely artistic effect and one made with commercial need to advertise a real feature. The two trailers have a lot of similarities but also striking differences.

The 'real' trailer for *Machete* opens in the same way as the faux trailer, evoking a discourse on the influx of Mexican illegal immigrants and their effect on American society. The difference most immediately apparent in the feature is the scope of the film which, although pandering to the grindhouse aesthetic, exhibits a huge array of stars, a variety of locations and lacks the artificial microphone and film-stock scratches of its previous iteration. Another immediately evident feature is the treatment of taboo imagery. The explicit violence and viscera featured in the original, faux trailer is muted in this new iteration which reverts to the briskly edited cut-aways to render taboo implicit and confined to the fabula. The trailer isn't completely devoid of the grindhouse aesthetic (that its original incarnation tried so hard to simulate) but those elements are restricted now to intertitles and superimposed graphics:



The lack of resolution (narrative or otherwise) carried by the commercial trailer emphasises the notion of 'potential' and the time-image's ability to present direct-time. This emphasis is most evident in the action-images which still deliver memorable moments of the trailer: fights scenes, love scenes and chase scenes. In this instance, the consequences of Machete's frequent violent or extreme acts go unrepresented, unfulfilled in a chronological sense and the narrative is elaborated further by characters depicted in several sub-plots not explicitly reconciled with each other - this work is left to the fabula. A recognizable and familiar blockbuster trait is evident in this commercial trailer in which large-format action images segue into a small-format pattern once scenes of action become more frequent (towards the end of the trailer). The commercial trailer relies far more on the paratextual presentation of 'narrative' than it does pure aesthetics, elevating 'story' to a level of visual importance which dovetails with its editorial flourishes and flamboyant intertitles: the radioactive

anxiety of *Godzilla* translates to glowing green intertitle text, fast-paced chase thriller, *The Island*, prompts intertitles to race down a corridor. In *Star Wars*, the off-screen narrator literally *describes* the story, as if the visuals were not enough: 'it's a romance, an adventure, etc...'. The postmodern trailer does not deliver the same experience: narrative is subordinate to aesthetic, the *appearance* of the trailer above all is crucial to its enjoyment. Enjoyment of the original *Machete* trailer comes from the skilful recreation of a specific aesthetic and the positing of a generic narrative which might fit seamlessly into the 'grindhouse' canon. In the commercial trailer, aesthetic is still important but the new status demands a level of paratextual functionality: hence a number of plot-strands are featured along with scenes of spectacle which go beyond the subtle, knowing style of the original.

Interestingly, the presence of female stars is emphasised strongly in this new iteration and their presence is less superficial than the original, in which they constituted purely erotic spectacle. In the feature-trailer, female characters participate in the schemas of violence as much as they remain the objects of the camera's erotic gaze. Notions of sexuality are closely connected to the violent aspects of the imagery and in this version female characters are fetishised overtly with clothing and weapons. It is interesting that these images of femininity in the commercial trailer for *Machete* have effectively replaced images of explicit violence from the original trailer. Indeed female body-imagery seems to have absorbed some of that latent brutality and violence which was engendered by the original - in what Marc O'Day characterises as a series of 'transactions', 'thefts' and trades:

In the action-adventure cinema ... a series of gender transactions and, sometimes, gender thefts can be seen to take place, as qualities of masculinity and femininity, activity and passivity, are traded over the bodies of action heroes and heroines.<sup>319</sup>



The presence of the feminine in the *Machete* feature trailer

<sup>319</sup> (O'Day, 2004: 203)

For Tasker action films offer a ‘contradictory set of images of female desirability’, which collapse notions of sexuality and physicality<sup>320</sup>. This trend is embodied overtly in the female characters of *Machete*’s trailer, who have taken on the seemingly absent violent overtures. Jessica Alba’s character leads a band of riotous migrant workers (‘We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us!’), Michelle Rodriguez’s character suffers an eye injury - forcing her to wear a patch (reminiscent of Uma Thurman’s ‘Bride’ character in the similarly pseudo-exploitative Tarantino film, *Kill Bill*) and Lindsey Lohan’s character dresses as a nun while provocatively licking the barrel of a pistol. The commercial trailer places female sexuality high in its rhetorical strategy while absorbing violence and brutality into that same pattern. It is an interesting commercial difference: when *Machete* was in its original, purely artistic incarnation, the aestheticism of violence was the most prominent component. The female presence in the original was almost nonexistent - one scene involving an erotic encounter between Machete and two women. In a humorous postmodern gesture, the women’s breasts are exposed - both a parody to the prudish attitudes towards the Grindhouse canon and a performative foil to the surrounding, extravagant brutality. The inclusion of the feminine in the original trailer is a highly satirical, even political, gesture. In the commercial trailer, the postmodern effect is lessened and females fade into the aesthetic register, their sexuality and capacity for violence little more than an attribute of the trailer’s visual style.

Again, a discourse of power references not only violence but politics, law and religion. Power, authority and rebellion - as Mathijs and Mendik note of the exploitation film’s European relatives - are exemplified in almost every aspect of the trailer in both its original and commercial incarnations. Characters are shot from imposing, low angles, speaking in clipped, imperatives and interacting with each other in short, antagonistic vignettes. The viewer, by association, is part of the scheme of empowerment embodied in the narrative. The sense of connected irony is accentuated in the new version: commercial drive is genuine in this instance and enhances the parodic aesthetic which was, initially, only a part of the overall rhetorical appeal. The thinly-veiled pandering to perceived excesses of exploitation cinema and its low value rhetorical techniques has become a valid and appealing way of advertising films. The trailer form is part of the appeal of the advert itself.

---

<sup>320</sup> Tasker discusses the film roles of action star Brigitte Nielsen, commenting: ‘Nielsen embodies then a contradictory set of images of female desirability, a sexualised female image which emphasises physical strength and stature.’ (Tasker: 14)

## Conclusion: The Trailer Eats Itself

The trailer for *Machete* is, first and foremost, a cinematic entity. The original was a component part of the feature *Grindhouse* and therefore an unproblematically textual cinematic entity. The trailer was judged, not by how well it functioned intertextually, but how well it performed as a text. The postmodern trailer achieves a completeness which goes beyond commercial selling points or paratextual moments of impressive spectacle. It creates a 'cinematic artefact' left from a shared culture of genre, narrative and form. In this way, *Machete* is a striking example of the postmodern dynamic: what is *Machete*? Where is its reality? Is the feature film *Machete* to be judged as an affix - or is the real *Machete*, the feature film, born from the aesthetic ether of *Grindhouse*? The same might be said of *Lucky Star* and the viral adverts of Carling and Stella Artois: commercial reality subordinated to aesthetic effect. These postmodern trailers are composed from ethereal sources, managing to be both parodic and humorous and startlingly affective. The paratextual devices have become so refined that even their status as paratext is called into question. In many cases, paratextual devices only *resemble* paratextual devices and now serve textual purposes. Even the peculiar narrative of the trailer is pulled into a postmodern reading: existing only in the mind of a receptive audience, it is the metanarrative characteristics of the postmodern trailer which resonate with a viewer. Even commercialism becomes postmodern, as the spoof absorbs advertising convention to deepen the rhetorical address of the film.

In *Machete*, advertising convention collapses completely into art: the trailer has eaten itself. Metanarrative becomes indistinguishable from narrative, text from paratext. The postmodern trailer is so overtly metatextual that its form and content can now only be judged on their own merits - and serve as discrete entities. Assessment by viewing audiences is not '*does the film look good*' but, '*does the trailer look good?*'. A feature film is judged only indirectly against the cinematic simulacra of its trailer. The postmodern trailer's position within a feature's ubiquitous commercial presence is no longer pure 'advertisement' - and it no longer stands as the sole commercial representation of a film prior to its release. Indeed, it stands in for the film itself, simulating cinematic experience in a manner indistinguishable from the 'real' feature. On the power of the 'culture industry', Adorno describes the public as 'vacuous, banal or worse'<sup>321</sup>. Adorno's attitude to the *industry* behind culture is that it serves singularly to reinforce the status quo and, in doing so, conformity 'replaced

---

<sup>321</sup> 'advice to be gained from manifestations of the culture industry is vacuous, banal or worse, and the behaviour patterns are shamelessly conformist.' (Adorno, 1975:16)

consciousness'<sup>322</sup>. The trailer, and especially the postmodern trailer, eludes such accusations. While we see components of that 'industry' manifested, often cynically, as advert, the trailer is built around the notion of potential. It is an ability to aestheticise potential and evoke the negative narrative space between images which foments innovation and artistic behaviour – and does so at a receptive level. In these spaces, insofar as it stimulates thought and speculation, the trailer is anything but vacuous and banal. The postmodern trailer stands especially contrary to this position since it often represents commercialism itself - directly - for audiences to examine, appraise and judge as art (or not, as the case may be). Adorno's description of the constitution of the culture industry asserts that the 'customer' is a secondary concept, an 'object' of business and 'calculation':

although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object.<sup>323</sup>

Yet, the postmodern trailer is not targeted at 'customers' but at 'audiences' - and delivered to the audience member in as cinematic a way as possible. The commercial power dynamic is shifted - trailers no longer sell films: affective, spectacular, humorous and self-referential, postmodern trailers, first and foremost, sell themselves.

---

<sup>322</sup> The concepts of order which it hammers into human beings are always those of the status quo. They remain unquestioned, unanalysed and undialectically presupposed,, The power of the culture industry's ideology is such that conformity has replaced consciousness. (Adorno: 17)

<sup>323</sup> (Adorno: 12)

# Conclusion:

## In the Age of the Trailer

---

The trailer is neither an ending to the filmmaking process nor a simple preview of coming experiences - but a multifarious, versatile art form in its own right. In fact, the temporal position of the trailer is so intensely manipulated in its postmodern incarnation that it no longer carries the meanings traditionally expected from the advert. The word 'trailer' has changed significantly - in both meaning and function. Where once it was an extratextual event, occurring *after* a feature film had finished, that same textual experience no longer takes place at the end of an unconnected feature film but at a point before it.

Early trailers, playing after the main features for adventure serials (such as *The Adventures of Kathlyn*) were a promise of a continuing narrative that trailed or was 'dragged' behind a larger feature. This was itself a narrative act, implying plot points left hanging would be resolved in due course - and with a level of spectacle justifying their cinematic identity. Contemporary adverts conventionally point towards a moment in the future, often concerning products that the customer *will* buy or events that *will* occur given the information contained within. Expectations surrounding the trailer, at their simplest, are similar, pointing towards a future event and generating commercial interest: does the feature film the trailer advertises 'look' good and will be value for money?

I have argued that trailers can no longer be dismissed as an afterthought or ancillary experience. Indeed, trailers are 'dragged' behind a larger cinematic body no longer - and in some cases, it is the trailer which 'pushes' those cinematic bodies to prominence. In the case of *The Mask of Zorro*, popular buzz that a *Star Wars* trailer was playing prior to the film, actively helped sell tickets for the movie<sup>324</sup>.

The trailer is both a pre-text and a pretext. It comes before a corresponding work in a way which prepares an audience for forthcoming narrative. Kernan compares the trailer to the 'prenarrative systems' of early filmmaking<sup>325</sup> which Gunning notes, 'solicits'<sup>326</sup> spectator

---

<sup>324</sup> (Rule: par 1.)

<sup>325</sup> Trailers resemble a prenarrative system of filmmaking that evokes Tom Gunning's influential work on early cinema (Kernan: 7)

<sup>326</sup> Gunning notes the 'cinema of attractions' difference from future films' 'fascination in storytelling': 'this is a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator'. (Gunning: 57)

attention. For Kernan the trailer format is an empty frame in which to present a related text and through a distancing, disconnecting filter. What is the connection between prenarrative and paratext? The paratext exists alongside the antecedent text - after Génette, it presents that text in every sense - it makes it 'present' by carrying out 'announcing gestures' and affirming its place in a chronological sense. The trailer offers information on the 'where' and the 'when' of the feature text ('*coming soon*', '*only in theatres*', '*this summer*', *etc...*) as if to say: 'this text belongs here, now'. The paratextual characteristics are a vital component of the trailer's identity, they move time-influenced perspective (the pre-narrative, the pre-text) from a singular focus on the future (a future experience), to a focus on the imminent or the experiential present – the Deleuzian crystalline.

## Is the Trailer Cinema?

Not merely an example of cinematic endophora, the three historical eras I outline, and through which the trailer evolves, demonstrate its capacity for integration of artistic features and its potential to fit, and even enhance, existing theories of cinematic philosophy. Following Bergson, Deleuze argues for the cinematic 'emancipation of the viewpoint' - a trend embodied by the promotional form:

The evolution of the cinema, the conquest of its own essence or novelty, was to take place through montage, the mobile camera and the emancipation of the view point, which became separate from projection. The shot would then stop being a spatial category and become a temporal one, and the section would no longer be immobile, but mobile.<sup>327</sup>

This move, from spatial to temporal, from a single, interested (human) perspective to the multiple, is a consequence of cinema. The editorial capabilities of film and the versatile illusory effect it promotes is an advantage for the feature film but takes on further significance in the trailer, which abstracts both cinematic space and cinematic time. While trailers complement Deleuze's ideas for cinema, time and space and their commercial complexion persist as a crucial aspect of their identity. The trailers' commercial 'DNA' is obvious, but carefully managed and calculated. Trailers avoid the 'hard sell' technique: no

---

<sup>327</sup> (Deleuze, 1986: 3)

mention of price or financial value is ever made, nor are explicit references to cash value: no 'only 99c' or '2 for 1' deals are featured in the Hollywood trailer (such tactics would work against the artistic ambitions of the film). Commercialism persists in the trailer's highly codified, aesthetic, formal and narrative choices and, as we have seen in the examples above, actually generates innovative, if sometimes peculiar, artistic statements. Trailers use that peculiar cinematic and artistic status as a springboard from which to enhance spectator experience and areas of theoretical discussion.

This enhanced cinematic experience comes with an implied 'disconnection' or 'reframing', which draws on the polemic 'art/advert' aspects of the trailer's make-up, and promotes 'speculative consumer contemplation' as the overriding critical factor. Kernan's assessment of trailer viewing as 'shop window' cinema - which foregrounds notions of consumerism as film is experienced:

Much recent film scholarship has called attention to the relationships between film spectatorship and shopping, and specifically to the "shop window" analogy. Trailer spectatorship increases the implied distance of the speculative consumer contemplation involved in cinematic window shopping; it also removes the commitment to enter the familiar contract of "suspension of disbelief" entailed in the process of watching a complete narrative film (we aren't "buying it"), doubly distancing spectators from either a lived-world agency or an imaginary one.<sup>328</sup>

The trailer's commercial/artistic nature is abstracted from its origins - no longer entirely reminiscent of either pole. The best trailers manipulate skilfully elements of these two ideological approaches, creating the opportunity for highly artistic expression. It is the functionality and commercial purpose of the trailer which offers both the space and opportunity for this very specific kind of expression. Indeed, the trailer's commercial drive is always a result of artistic endeavour. Hitchcock's trailers mark a period of actualization and transition, in which the director explores potential for artistic expressiveness while dealing with negative associations of 'schilling' and the fairground-style of advertising convention. Hitchcock's relationship with the trailer reflects the mistrust that accompanies advertising convention - his presence outside and inside the trailer demonstrated the influence of his auteur-role in a wider and well-documented cinematic and commercial context.

---

<sup>328</sup> (Kernan: 6)

Hitchcock's presence in these examples is important, whether he appears visually or not. He is often accompanied by text exhorting his accomplishments ('*The Screen's Master of Suspense!*' etc...) with extreme hyperbole. Hitchcock's style pre-empts the way in which the trailer would use the auteur component of its identity, a pattern that would play a large part in constructing a public presence for the auteur. Trailers offer, not just a shop window disconnect from an antecedent film text, but a filter for all aspects of a film's cinematic identity - an avenue of rich communication between author and reader - or salesman and customer. In Hitchcock's case, the trailer offers an opportunity to see the man himself and share his perspective (albeit an often-unreliable one) on the films he made - including his awareness of a commercial stigma. His attitude towards his films (played out through his presence in the trailers) is entertaining and compelling: in *Rope* and *Vertigo* he is an awe-inspiring textual presence, in *Psycho* and *Frenzy*, a visual, bodily presence and an unreliable trickster who draws attention to the artifice of film, the relationship between director and film, and the relationship between director and viewer.

Hitchcock's work hints at the highly ambiguous receptive status of the trailer. Most significantly though, his trailers highlight the impact of the director/author within the paratext. How does Hitchcock's presence in the trailer affect existing notions of the auteur? Primarily, it complicates Kernan's 'distancing' effect. In Hitchcock's films, the trailer presents the peccadilloes and subtle mannerisms of the director in a visual and time-present sense - it resembles a dialogue and, indeed, Hitchcock's presence is often conversational. When it is not conversational, it is familiar: 'The screen's master of suspense... Alfred Hitchcock!'. The auteur's role is perceived very much as that of a dictator - in complete control both in terms of the technological artifice and artistic effect.

Hitchcock changes that perceived auteur complexion, illustrating his trailers with a sense of organic and very specific personality. The 'observer' character, assumed so often by Hitchcock, enables communication between 'author' and 'reader', but presents his narrative authority as unreliable and often deliberately misleading. Physically, he is a paratextual proxy for the audience, an affective conduit through which some of the feelings of shock and of being appalled are articulated. His curiosity and interest is endearing although his overt evasiveness and sheer peculiarity supersede literal readings of his presence: he is not there to guide but to obfuscate, not to reveal but to hide. His cinematic gestures, within the diegesis of the trailer-text serve to strengthen a brand which benefits from his metatextual contributions of ambiguity and mystery - however agitating they may be.

Even the trailers in which Hitchcock did not appear still utilise his 'brand name' - a mark of quality to reassure and impress. The trailers utilise pre-textual material, such as *Rope*'s 'prologue' and *Vertigo*'s, 'dictionary' opening, as eye-catching supplements to the film-text material - introducing a perspective on forthcoming imagery. *Rope*'s prologue is particularly lavish, a cityscape of New York, and a mini-narrative involving the soon-to-be-murdered character of David. *Vertigo*'s opening serves a similar function, casting the forthcoming, feature-text shots in a disorienting tone, symptomatic of the vertiginous character of the plot and imagery. Hitchcock's presence is felt keenly in both trailers, in directorial flourishes which free the cinematic text from the status of mere 'filmed advert'.

## The Image Repurposed

The transformation of the trailer from advert to art is a function of its cinematic identity. This includes the components of the cinematic sensory spectrum, the haptic. While commentators note the 'deeply, sensual, synaesthetic effect' of film<sup>329</sup>, the affective component of this sensual experience is thrust to prominence in the blockbuster - which appeals to audiences on an unprecedented scale. The blockbuster's association with mass-marketing is well documented<sup>330</sup>. *Jaws*, for example, is promoted not just in the trailer but in a national campaign of advertising, taking in posters and book jackets<sup>331</sup>. The blockbuster is, by definition, a cinematic articulation aimed at as many people as possible:

While most mass media suffer ever-faster spin cycles and increasingly fragmented audiences, [blockbusters] have enjoyed remarkable, enduring popularity... Clearly

---

<sup>329</sup> The deeply sensual, synaesthetic effect of the film image and sound-track reverberates through the eloquent *mis en scène* of the spectator's experience (Beugnet: 2)

<sup>330</sup> Despite appearances, however, the summer blockbuster has changed plenty since its birth – widely acknowledged as June 1975, when “Jaws”, the first movie to be treated to a full television ad campaign, began systematically terrorizing the nation... Remember, as early as April 1999, “Star Wars: Episode 1 – The Phantom Menace” and its product line were being flogged so relentlessly that the Force was with us even in our dreams (Hass, 2000: par 2, 4)

<sup>331</sup> Since the earliest days of the film industry, there have been attempts by makers, distributors and exhibitors to build audiences for their films. In today's film industry, building an audience is a sophisticated business: audience profiling, advertising and psychological testing are all incorporated... Since the release of *Jaws* (in 1975), concentrated national TV promotion – allied with saturation booking strategies – has proven a most effective way to promote big-budget films. (Kochberg, 1996: 38)

these films continue to fascinate and appeal to American audiences, making them tantamount to the myths and sacred narratives that anthropologists routinely study in other parts of the world.<sup>332</sup>

The blockbuster carries associations of devastating impact, of collective tickets sales and surging cinema attendance. Sutton and Wogan observe peripheral cinema's emphasis on shared experience and positive commentary:

If anthropologists were to find a culture that spent as much energy on myths as Americans do on Hollywood movies – constantly watching and talking about them, gossiping about their heroes – they would create a cottage industry exclusively devoted to unpacking the meaning of those myths.<sup>333</sup>

With this in mind, blockbuster trailers seem primed towards a similar type of audience address: broad appeal, 'something for everyone' - the fairground register of salesmen or traders - yet the reality of the blockbuster trailer is not necessarily as cynical a construct as those associations suggest. The blockbuster demonstrates a 'next step' from a style which Hitchcock pioneered. Blockbuster trailers examined in this study represent a fusion of the artistic-commercial identity of the format - an evolution of form and purpose into a hybrid style - while providing clearer examples of how the trailer claims and inhabits a section of cinematic subculture for itself - namely, through the affect. In the blockbuster trailer, the affect is an innovative, valuable and versatile commodity. Affective elements resonate on a range of areas: *Jaws'* images of child endangerment, violence and power and, along with *Alien*, the construction of a horrific genre-identity - *Star Wars'* feats of impossible aeronautical action (science fiction) - and *Rambo's* indulgent images of excess and physical, bodily achievement (action/adventure). In each case, commercial ingredients are overt, liminal elements. These blockbuster trailers demonstrate their function as bridges between commercialism and art, delivering highly specific affective qualities.

While the intricate patterns - of action scenes and action-images - are integral and frequent components of blockbuster trailers, they function as facilitation for the affective results which stand out from each promotional-text. The connection the affect has with the audience in these examples is a carefully coordinated strategy. Each blockbuster trailer examined, places value upon a resolution of image or object, from a contextual background. The

---

<sup>332</sup> (Sutton & Wogan, 2009: 1)

<sup>333</sup> (Sutton & Wogan: 1)

process is often traumatic, eye-catching and a frequently novel way of representing the sensorial and haptic character of images. Marks goes as far as to represent haptic cinema as a 'battle' between 'material significance' and 'representational power'<sup>334</sup> - this reading works well for blockbusters' affective ambitions. The emphasis on affect, its presentation and representation, is a recurring trend in the blockbuster. In *Alien*, the horror is an abstract, often disorienting depiction of extreme biological anxiety. *Star Wars* emphasises spectacular movement of objects. *Rambo* involves a gendered affect and an ambiguity between star and character aimed at creating a sense of awe. In each case, the affect functions very specifically, but in ways which reconstitute the commercial aspect of the trailer into the artistic - creating novel cinematic articulations which explore the format's capabilities. The repurposing of imagery, into novel material is a characteristic of the haptic which, Marks notes, is like 'seeing for the first time':

Haptic images can give the impression of seeing for the first time, gradually discovering what is in the image rather than coming to the image already knowing what it is. Several such works represent the point of view of a disoriented traveller unsure how to read the world in which he finds himself.<sup>335</sup>

The blockbuster offers up its central affect to differing sensory receptive experiences. Action images, just like those featuring in Hitchcock's trailers, are changeable schemes of narrative, where situations and actions often lose independent coherence, and a central affective motif gains resolution - but the affective component is a constant. It points to a bodily response in the viewer (a result of haptic appeal) - and a way of reading re-presentations as something new, interesting and artistic.

The haptic content of the blockbuster trailer reveals artistic worth, but its presence facilitates the strong commercial character of trailers by encouraging contemplation of the screen's 'texture' through a 'distanced identification' which responds less to narrative, and more to 'bodily' stimuli.<sup>336</sup> Indeed, commercialism remains at the forefront of the *Jaws* trailer: in a

---

<sup>334</sup> On the early cinema's haptic characteristics, Marks notes: 'Like the Roman battle of the haptic and the optical, a battle between the material significance of the object and the representational power of the image was waged in the early days of cinema'. (Marks, 2002: 2)

<sup>335</sup> (Marks, 2000: 178)

<sup>336</sup> The early cinema phenomenon of a "cinema of attractions" describes an embodied response, in which the illusion that permits distanced identification with the action onscreen gives way to an immediate bodily response to the screen. As the language of cinema became standardized, cinema appealed more to narrative identification than to body identification. (Marks, 2002: 2)

paradoxical twist, the shark's presence on the fictional Amity Island is a commercial disadvantage to its residents. Its presence saps the lifeblood of the island: tourism money. Conversely, the shark's presence onscreen is crucial to the commercialism of the blockbuster in a factual sense. Finding and seeing the shark is a hugely important part of both planes of experience and the affect is incredibly emblematic of the horror genre and the overriding compulsion to look or not look at the screen. In the case of the shark, to spot the creature is also to witness the horror of an attack and the incarnation of the film's commercial identity. The conceit is appropriately symbolic of the experience of the blockbuster, in which the compulsion to see is a shared experience. *Jaws* goes as far as to deliver an urgent warning to its viewers 'See it before you go swimming', as if the trailer-text has relevance on a community service level.

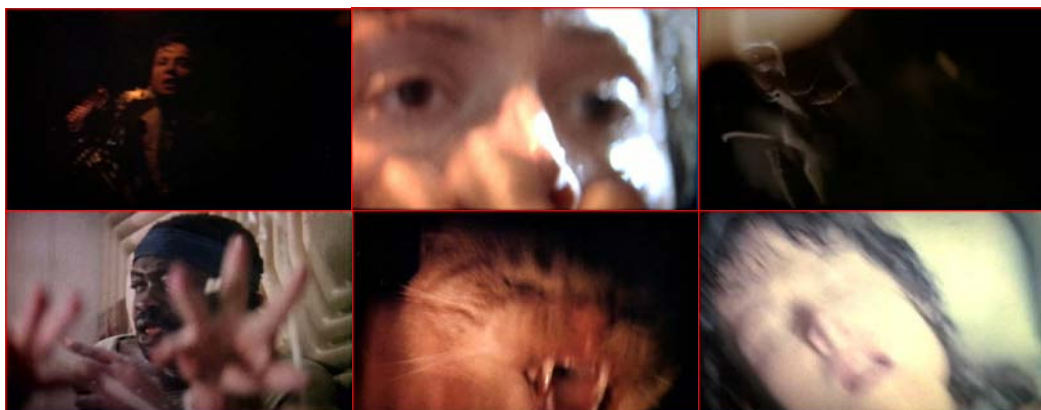
A meme, the parting warning from the *Jaws* trailer, is resonant in a number of areas. *Alien's* trailer includes another famous meme, or 'tagline': 'In space, no-one can hear you scream'. *Alien's* trailer features overwhelmingly haptic content, focussing heavily on texture and sensation. The planet/egg contrast in the opening sequence offers smoothness, fragility and the brittleness of an egg-shell - a jarring contrast to what spills forth from the egg: a torrent of active and violent biological material. The tagline completes the haptic constitution of the trailer, encouraging a juxtaposition of the insensate, space, the void, with the sensate: vocality and hearing: 'hear' and 'scream'. Indeed, the final sequence in the *Alien* trailer replaces cognition with pure sensation, as sounds become muffled, images become blurred and the duration of shots increasingly brief. Cognition is reliant on an interpretation of sensations rather than a following of narrative or logical pattern of signs (like the SAS/ASA format described by Deleuze).

The trailer both forces and challenges examination of such narrative or action-image linkages on every level of experience. Its ordinating existential clash involves the shifting boundaries of commercialism and art. Where Hitchcock sought to break down the links, with satire and lampoon, the blockbuster trailer reconstitutes them as new and essential parts of the aesthetic. *Jaws* offers a thematic approach, perspectives on the shark are governed by its financial impact on Amity Island. *Star Wars* showcases expensive special effects against the blank backdrop of space. *Rambo* offers a variation on another circus trope: the bodybuilder sideshow, presented in a context pushed to physical and geographical extremes. *Alien's* commercial/art clash is exhibited in the transferable tagline in which it trades.

A textual flux or clash forms part of the trailer experience. This is particularly evident in the blockbuster, which uses written and spoken text innovatively and proactively as part of the

artistic and semantic experience. Text is a commercial tool, logos, names, catchphrases (such as *Alien's* tagline) constitute the commercial presence of a film and are a large part of any paratextual identity. In the trailer however, the text's role is not as clear cut. Trailer text in the blockbuster is an important part of the diegesis, part of the aesthetic experience - in addition to its commercial purpose. *Alien's* text, aside from the cultural currency value of the tagline, appeals to a sense of linkage, of sensory connection with the visual content. Blockbusters often feature animated text, which does much more work than the hyperbolic sensationalism of Hitchcock's era. In *Alien*, an opening text-animation plays out a mimetic process, sequentially becoming more and more recognizable *as* text. *Star Wars* employs a similar motif. Its scrolling text involves a cumulative dialogue with the imagery, growing larger and almost being propelled by the growing illustrative work of the images. There is, again, a mimetic function: the animated *Star Wars* title echoes the acrobatics of the spaceships rocketing through space, and the black/white contrast evoked by characters' moral alignments. *Rambo's* use of text is minimal but intense, and again involves a focus on the film's title. In this case, the word 'Rambo' is a frame for Stallone's character, masking all surrounding action in black and allowing a glimpse of the diegetic film within the letters themselves. The effect is coded into the affective strategy: amplifying Stallone's spectacular presence within a camouflaging, concealing surrounding.

The third way in which the trailer enacts a reconstitution of linkages is in montage - the connections between images. Trailers make frequent use of Kuleshovian montage technique - simplistic associations are bold: Rambo fires missiles from his helicopter - explosions occur on the ground below. Similar sequences abound in *Star Wars*. More complex montage effects are readily available: the sequence at the end of *Jaws* takes the camera through a variety of perspectives and actions as the shark attacks bathers in the water. *Alien's* montage is even more impressionistic, cuts coming so quickly that the quality of the image seems to downgrade and hinder interpretations of the visual.



Linkages in the trailer go further than simple Kuleshovian association and inference, delivering meaning relevant to time, space and textual intent. Each link has a dual identity which covers both a textual and metatextual mandate. When shots in the trailer link consecutively, the connection communicates more than just an intellectual inference which serves an immediate narrative purpose. In addition to the cause and effect, 'push and pull' function of consecutive shots, the trailer edit's metanarrative aspect demonstrates the images' function in a space removed from their original feature-format. On a basic level, this effect is demonstrated by the focus on actors playing characters in the film. *Rambo* offers perhaps the best example in its bold intertitle: 'Sylvester Stallone is... Rambo'. Two shots serve an individual textual function, completing a narrative and aesthetic cause/effect structure within the trailer: *this actor is playing this part*. But they also have a coordinating, metatextual function and are emblematic of the trailer in a much more complete sense, prompting a close examination of every shot involving Rambo inhabiting the body of Stallone. That connection involves the spectacle of Stallone's muscular body, representing diegetic awe, and an appreciation of physical industry - the work taken to manufacture the physique. Mastery of weapons and warfare is also a part of the gap between character and star.

Blockbuster trailers *look* like cinematic narratives - and often include content highly reminiscent of narratives. Stories, and sections of stories, are told either by off-screen narrators, diegetic dialogue or visual motif. These represent clichés in which narrative cognition proceeds along a line of familiar association and interpretation. Discrete examination of the linkages between shots offers only a very limited narrative capacity - one in which connections do not complement each other in terms of a larger narrative and ultimately frustrate notions of story or comprehension. While linkages function with each other on a micro-level, on a macro-level their relationship is difficult to interpret as 'narrative'. In the blockbuster, 'emptiness' of narrative content is superseded by strongly affective paratextual contributions (special effects, stars, taglines) so as to maintain audience interest in lieu of narrative. In the blockbuster, the fairground appeal of Hitchcock's era (and earlier) is refined - and combined - with tangible artistic intent and purpose. In the context of the films studied above, we see a marriage of form and style: commercialism *become* art.

While the trailer stands as a space for artistic expression within highly commercial contexts (or vice-versa), its ubiquitous nature works against stagnation of form. Indeed, the blockbuster trailer creates a cinematic presence that attempts to render indistinguishable the line between art and advert. The postmodern trailer is a recombination of the format, capitalising on the inherent potential of the trailer to impact cinematic culture in novel and

expressive ways. As the blockbuster reconstitutes the commercial aspects of its being, weaving them with the artistic, the postmodern trailer takes this pattern to its conclusion, changing the nature of the trailer drastically. The postmodern trailer twists, and in some cases removes, commercial intent behind the format's receptive process. What results is an exercise in transcendental cinematic expression, which reframes conventional ways of experiencing promotional text and introduces new ways of seeing.

The most striking characteristic of the postmodern trailer is its separation from the film texts which spawn it. While trailers might well involve exhortations of auteur involvement, reference to franchised properties, and well-known stars, the trailer is, for the independent viewer, an experience disconnected from its antecedent text. The postmodern trailer is so strongly codified that it enjoys a comparable level of industry treatment and reception as its feature-text antecedents. Trailers are afforded prominent spaces in a variety of public forums: websites devoted to their exhibition, television space, radio time, and the well-known theatrical pre-feature period used in almost every cinema. More cultural value is placed on the trailer in journalistic contexts: magazines report on the premiere dates of trailers, and analyze them, frame by frame, upon their release. TV stations compete for the rights to show highly anticipated trailers first and advertise their trailers to draw in viewers. Effort put into promoting the trailer is now comparable with that dedicated to promoting the feature film. The commercial identity of the trailer has shifted utterly from its original purpose and taken on vastly new cinematic meaning.

## An Ending and a Beginning

In the postmodern trailer it is helpful to see both a beginning and an ending. The postmodern trailer is afforded such volume of plaudit and attention, that its experience is implicitly understood to be an event disconnected from its corresponding feature film. It is a complete experience - with a very well-defined place in cinematic and receptive culture. In the 'spoof' or parody, the power of the postmodern is felt directly. Trailers are the starting point from which artistic subcultures spring – meaning the postmodern trailer is no longer viewed as an end point. With such plurality of expression, each trailer-text is reproduced in multiple contexts and formats. The digital medium rendering the trailer a two-way street for meaning and expression, in which content can be added, taken away and manipulated by editing programs. The postmodern trailer may spring in a form virtually indistinguishable from

professional counterparts, from nothing - where 'nothing' is the basic capabilities of editing software on a home computer.

The 'Do-It-Yourself' trailer is a form which has been used for both parody and mainstream artistic expression. Parody trailers generally exist in two forms: those put together by amateur film makers, cribbed from existing footage with home editing software and those shot with original 'trailer' footage, intended to satirise the entire process of trailer construction including the textual creation of the feature film. *Shining* provides a great example of the former group, Britanick's 'super-trailer', the latter - but many other tropes exist. These spoof trailers often become memes, like taglines, reproducible units of cultural currency that spread quickly around online social networks. The trailer for Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) features a slow, beautifully restrained guitar soundtrack which slowly segues into a sweeping orchestral score, accompanied by striking visual moments from the feature film. The images fade in from black between intertitles which deliver poetic sentiments and critical accolades pertinent to the film.



The *Brokeback Mountain* trailer became the subject of an internet phenomenon in which footage from other film trailers was cannibalised and cut into new trailer texts. These spoof trailers are parodies of the *Brokeback Mountain* original but demonstrate innovative gestures of intertextuality. The most obvious characteristic, echoing the original, is the use of the

guitar soundtrack and the measured, slow fades, punctuated by poetic intertitles. A particularly resonant example is *Brokeback To The Future* which casts Robert Zemeckis' popular *Back To The Future* science fiction series as a new trailer text which references the *Brokeback Mountain* trailer for the purposes of humour.



The skilful miming of the affective components of the *Brokeback Mountain* trailer lends the visual material taken from the science fiction film a humorous aspect previously absent. The effect is more than Kuleshovian association: it relies on a close *performative* observance, by both creator and receiver, of trailer format - apparent in the intricate reproduction of the inclusion of the stars names and the controlled 'vacuum' of the syuzhet. Indeed, narrative speculation is an acute characteristic in the spoof trailer and creates a readable pseudo-narrative crucial to the affective power of the spoof. Kathleen Williams examines the formal aesthetic markers of what she calls the 'recut' trailer:

Recut trailers, while challenging the norms of what is considered an advertisement, function within a strict frame of reference: in their length, use of credits, text, voiceover in direct address to the audience, and editing techniques. Consequently, the recut trailer parodies and challenges the very tools of promotion by utilising the very methods that sell to a prospective audience, to create an advertisement that is

stripped of its traditional function by promoting a film that cannot exist and cannot be consumed.<sup>337</sup>

The *Brokeback Mountain* trailer became a popular meme, and was reproduced, intertextually in hundreds of different incarnations<sup>338</sup>. In each case, an understanding of an implied, but utterly ethereal narrative is a key component of the humour. Other examples of the *Brokeback Mountain* re-cut or ‘mash-up’, amongst many others, include a *Star Wars* version: *The Empire Brokeback*, a pastiche of *The Shawshank Redemption* (1993), *The Brokeback Redemption*, and James Cameron’s *Titanic* (1997), *Brokeback Titanic*. The tone and register of the original trailer was so affectively powerful that it drove the transfer of the format into countless other incarnations. The innovation and artifice generated by the ‘recut’ is, according to Kathleen Williams, indicative of the need for a ‘new critical approach to trailers’ which refutes their status as ‘low advertisement’ to feature films’ ‘high culture’<sup>339</sup>.

The conversion of old(er) film texts, into such recognizable and resonant pastiche, is a technique particularly suited to the material nature of film and its newfound life in digital format. The trailer offers such a suitable space for this process because it brings a facilitating, intertextual connectivity, which allows negative elements to use the void between shots for connective, rather than divisive, purposes. The mash-up isn’t just a tool for humour and comedy. The constructive and connective cultural power of the trailer has created a huge amount of ‘fan trailers’, trailer-texts which are made for films that don’t yet exist, or will never exist - and hence rely on the void-space, *absence*, as an essential element for cohesion. Examples of these trailers are often found in the guise of sequels (perhaps the connective power of the trailer manifests as a sort of ‘wish fulfilment’ for fans of original feature-texts). In the fan trailer, anything is possible, since the amateur editor is only limited by the extent to which he can cannibalise and manipulate existing cinematic footage for his trailer. Fan trailers exist for a huge number of un-made films, additional entries in the *Batman* series, the *Spider Man* series and countless action films, including *Rambo*. A fan-trailer even exists for a sequel for James Cameron’s (1997) *Titanic: Titanic 2*. This fan-trailer strikes notes which both reveal its character as a spoof or parody but also exposes the

---

<sup>337</sup> (Williams, 2009: par 2.)

<sup>338</sup> At the time of writing, the *Brokeback to the Future* trailer has over 6 million hits on *YouTube* – all uploads of the original *Brokeback Mountain* trailer have 2 million or less: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=8uwuLxrv8jY>

<sup>339</sup> (Williams: par 1.)

extraordinary level of editing prowess and awareness of intertextual sources - not just editing shots into sequence, but manipulating them with sophisticated digital special effects:



Titanic's 'sequel' trailer does not just stop at a cosmetic makeover of cannibalised footage, but uses intertitles to fabricate a 'narrative': the original film's tragic hero, brought back to life in the modern day. The suturing of shots and application of a musical score, create a plausible and convincing illusion: a science fiction thriller, completely synthetic and reliant on the integrity of its own form, not for narrative cognition, but rhetorical effect. The 'sequel' spoof demonstrates the extent to which the trailer is a powerful and expressive artistic tool which goes beyond mere joke. It embodies the essence of Deleuze's highest aspirations for cinema, infusing every frame with potential and possibility. It is a rapidly and perpetually changing medium, in terms of format and theme, mercurial in its absorption of social and cultural influences. Understanding this potential is best served by looking at what the trailer is becoming. The format and register of the trailer have been assumed by countless extratextual entities, video games, for example, display these trappings overtly. Rather than footage of the game-play involved in the product-text itself, videogame promotions involve 'cinematics' which play out like film trailers, involving famous stars, paratextual intertitle announcements and transferrable meme-like qualities. Grant Tavinor regards this trend as a Baudrillardian 'simulation of cinematographic effects actual cameras are used to achieve,

such as panning, close ups, craning and dollying<sup>340</sup>, picking out specific intertextual moments from the video game *Call Of Duty*:

In *Call of Duty*, the scene leading to Al-Fulani's execution has an obvious cinematic corollary in the sort of moving camera sequences used by Martin Scorsese to depict a world busy with detail in such movies as *Goodfellas* ... Cut scenes also use cinematic editing methods ... even artifacts of the filming process are sometimes simulated to achieve cinematographic effects, such as depth of focus variations or lens glare.<sup>341</sup>



Footage from the trailer for the action game 'Modern Warfare 3'

Even books now take on the promotional appearance of the trailer. While book promotion has always occupied a sensational area of advertising culture, modern novels now use the trailer format to facilitate commercial ambitions. Many novels paratextually announce themselves with vivid, highly visible online campaigns, arriving complete with melodrama, hyperbole and widely available filmed material, online and in theatrical contexts.

---

<sup>340</sup> (Tavinor, 2009: 112)

<sup>341</sup> (Tavinor: 112)



Book trailer for *A Dance With Dragons*, released on the internet by the book's publisher, Harper Collins. The cinematic trailer is complete with animated intertitles and meme-like 'tagline' *'The Great Game Goes On'*.

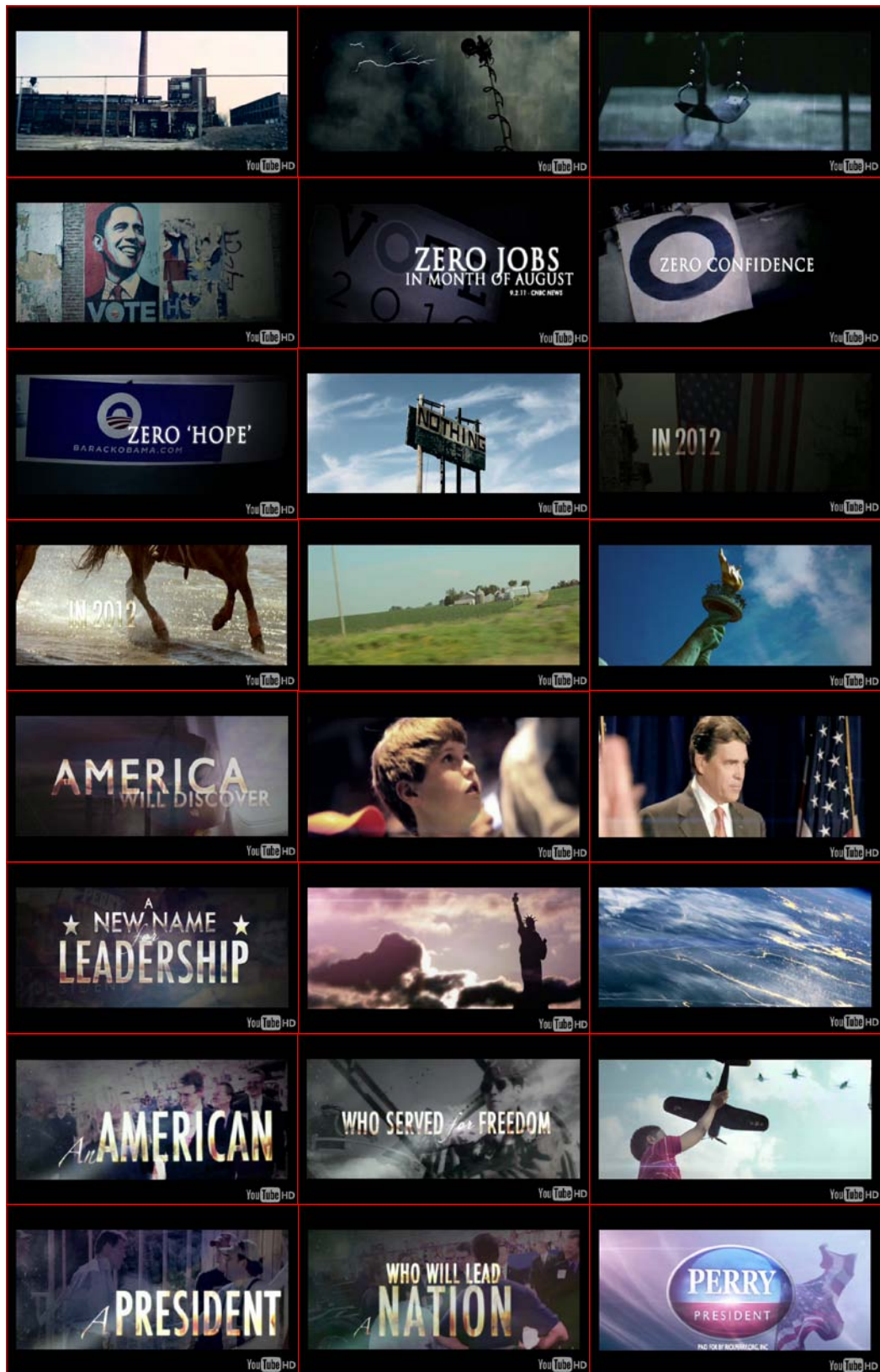
The trailer's ability to repackage, repurpose and resemble is a useful and highly evocative characteristic, leading it into contexts which, at first, seem counterintuitive. In his run for the Republican presidential nomination, Rick Perry produced a short campaign advert, *Proven Leadership*, resembling more a trailer for a dramatic Hollywood action thriller than treatise on the political ambitions of a potential president. Such a 'polit-trailer' may fit well, the pure aestheticism of film, which Walter Benjamin applied to propaganda:

Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested.<sup>342</sup>

But while the aestheticization of politics is, for Benjamin, a fascist strategy, reducing the capacity for critical contemplation, Rick Perry's trailer requires a narrative connection with an audience receptive to the prompts issued by the trailer format. It issues aesthetic and narrative cues which must be engaged with actively and processed cognitively:

---

<sup>342</sup> (Benjamin, 1992: 231)



Rick Perry's, *Proven Leadership*, campaign-ad

The *Proven Leadership* 'trailer' bears all the hallmarks of slick, Hollywood-produced cinema. Its narrative takes in an action-film storyline, involving an antagonist and a heroic

protagonist. The orchestral score is stirring and dramatic and animated intertitles, like ‘In 2012... American will discover...’ (and so on) create the paratextual impression of an ‘event’, much like the premiere-date for a film. Further discourses are at work, not least concerning genre identity and narrative coherence. The ‘trailer’ is so effective because it uses the same narrative techniques as the film trailer, inviting audiences to fit their own impressions onto the irresistibly affective framework. Perry’s polit-trailer appeals to a level of close analysis which many feature-trailers do not merit and evokes deep metatextual themes regarding its source text. In this case, however, and in the case of book trailers and video game trailers, there is no antecedent film text. In fact, in the case of many postmodern trailers there may not even be an originating text. The postmodern trailer is an original articulation, which renders visual material secondary to its status a cinematic act or performance. *Anything* can be a trailer and perform cinematically - the trailer defines and expresses itself through its own interconnectivity and affective power in a cinematic context.

Cinematic context is an expansive term which is redefined by technological artifice and mode of reception – prompting re-examinations of space and time in a Deleuzean sense. Sean Cubitt’s characterization of cinematic evolution evokes those dialectics and oppositions which accompany the move into modern and postmodern spheres of reception:

Slow motion, freeze-frame, steadicam, bullet-time: across three decades, cinema moves toward a spatialization of time. This process is refracted through other dialectics as well: order and entropy, local and global, analog and digital.<sup>343</sup>

As home entertainment’s capabilities for exhibition improve, the experience is more and more reminiscent of a cinema auditorium. The same goes for an online experience in which the cinematic space is mobile and constantly accessible and available. Commenting on the propensity for mobile technologies, like smartphones, and the iPod, Johnston notes the ‘crisp digital quality... presented in widescreen’<sup>344</sup> of downloadable trailers on Apple’s QuickTime website. Johnston evokes the wider receptive experience of the trailer as a cinematic performance, calling the experience the ‘coolest way to watch movie trailers’<sup>345</sup>. The new, mobile trend establishes a sense of perpetual dialogue, by the spectator, with the trailer. A dialogue in which the linkages established by the editorial process are not fixed concepts but

---

<sup>343</sup> (Cubitt, 2004: 8)

<sup>344</sup> (Johnston: 147)

<sup>345</sup> (Johnston: 147)

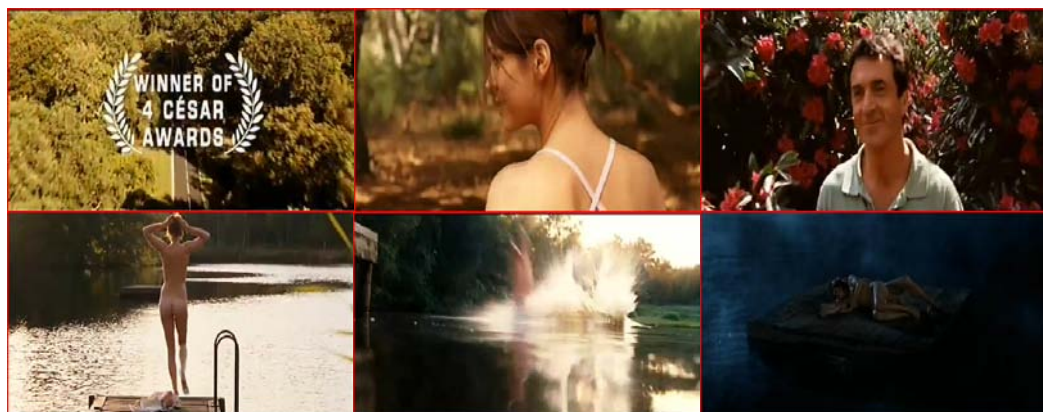
highly permeable and multipurpose connections. They govern the relationships between images - not with a finality of interpretation, but with a metatextual void, the negative space, in which a receptive spectator contributes to interpretative, narrative and aesthetic effect through speculative analysis of the visual/audio material.

This study has drawn conclusions on sets of criteria which warrant close and careful interpretations of trailer texts. By attributing existing cinematic theory, drawn from the prominent work of Deleuze, Beugnet, Marks and Baudrillard, amongst significant others, the trailers of a number of historical eras become available as artistic texts. Their place within wider cinematic theory has also been addressed: they enhance Deleuze's ambitions for cinema and his notion of the movement and time images. The trailer demonstrates a mutability which stresses construction and change over conception of film as a frozen, solid unit of expression. In its examination of linkages, the trailer enables and facilitates the sensory characteristics of cinema. Using affective sensation, as part of a metatextual receptive scheme, the trailer unlocks the hapticity of film - inherent in its visual, audio and linguistic objects. The haptic trailer delivers a mode of reception for textures, complexions and subtleties only available in the context of this highly stylised format. It allows images and cinematic articulations, perhaps not intuitively available for such discourses, to become widely available in those contexts.

The trailer's effect on existing cinematic thought should not be restricted to the areas examined in this study. In the postmodern, it is easy to characterise the trailer as a cinematic entity both elusive and mercurial. The postmodern defies the question 'what is a trailer?' because the trailer is a constantly changing concept. A basic description of the trailer would suggest it exists somewhere on the spectrum of art and commercialism - but as 'fan trailers', viral trailers and spoof trailers become more sophisticated and mimetic of the 'real' thing, even that criteria becomes unhelpful - and even more so when considering 'cine-adverts' in which the effect works in opposition, and commercials masquerade as cinematic texts.

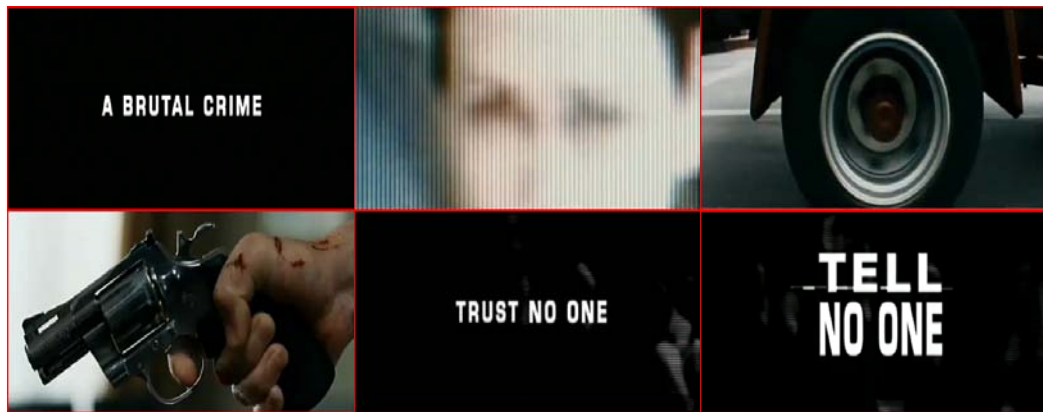
Rather than a compartmentalised study, the trailer's role in cinematic culture must be examined expansively. Wider, ambitious approaches, would take in a huge number of salient areas. A linguistic study of the trailer is a fertile area for discussion. While primarily a visual medium, the language of advertising warrants a wide array of critical approaches and analyses. The trailer demonstrates linguistic features overtly, both in the text of intertitles and the address of the voice-over narrators. This area of study has implications for genre and gender, as, like Kernan's work, scholars attempt to construct an audience for those words.

The restricted approach of this study is also a tempting issue to address. While a ‘history’ of the trailer was attempted indirectly and discretely (in Kernan’s analysis of consecutive eras, Johnston’s examination of technological application, and others’ studies of early cinema), the trailer presents an excellent opportunity to construct audiences within a periodic context. Trailer audience-address of the 1940s is demonstrably different to that of the late nineties and onwards, ‘postmodern’ trailer address, and the reasons for this change have only been hinted at. Also overlooked, is the foreign trailer and the complexion of advertising rhetoric from cultures other than the Hollywood model. The paratextual register of the trailer across different cultures is interesting to observe and has significant implications for translation studies, in which the devices inherent to the format change character across cultural contexts. Distributors for European (and most foreign) films, for example, employ trailers in British and American exhibitive contexts which feature little to no dialogue - presumably as a result of the less enthusiastic reception with which foreign language films are met in the west. In these cases, trailers often feature a high degree of visual innovation, and bold intertitle work. Narrative, expressed via haptic, sensorial contributions, is an evocation of the ‘inbetween-space’ in which Deleuze and Guattari assert ‘becoming’ takes place<sup>346</sup>. The trailer for *Ne le Dis la à Personne* (Guillame Caunet, 2006), the French-language version of Harlan Coben’s novel, *Tell No One*, features no dialogue across its 1:45 running time and relies, especially in its opening, on the sensuous qualities of its imagery. Flowers blow in the breeze, bodies float in water, or dive into it - sometimes in lingering slow-motion shots. While English intertitles situate the viewer in relation to the narrative, the editorial reluctance to feature a line of French dialogue is obvious:




---

<sup>346</sup> (Deleuze and Guattari: 272)



Shots from the *Ne le Dis la à Personne* trailer

In the case of foreign trailers, the paratextual presentation of an antecedent film text reveals differences not only in the commercial strategies of the text's authors, but in the predilections of its intended audience. A film which may be presented as a comedy in one culture is presented as a horror in another. The trailer for Sebastián Silva's *The Maid* (2009) has two different versions: one English speaking, the other Spanish. The Spanish trailer, which is cast as a drama, presents Raquel as a comedic character in a more quirky, light-hearted aspect. The Spanish version is more indicative of the tone and genre of the feature film, but the English version's focus on Raquel's sinister actions not present in the Spanish version - including a scene where she mistreats a cat, defaces family photographs and argues - draws comparisons with films such as *Fatal Attraction* and *Single White Female*:





The English-language version of the trailer for *The Maid*



The Spanish language trailer for *The Maid*

Nacho Vigalondo's *Timecrimes* (2007) is a Spanish science fiction/horror hybrid. The original Spanish-language trailer is a brief but intense montage delivering affective moments that communicate violence and horror. The Spanish version includes a voice-over narration, which is urgent and ominous and leaves no doubt about genre. The English version introduces narrative intertitles in a metatextual a vortex of spinning energy - a time-warp:



Spanish-language trailer for *Timecrimes*



English-language trailer for *Timecrimes*

The final title animation is also significantly different to the Spanish-language trailer, contributing to the science fiction rather than horrific effect. Those intertitles situate the visuals within a more coherent narrative and significantly reduce the specifically horrific affective qualities of the trailer text. The Spanish trailer communicates as a disconcerting horror film, the English trailer as a multi-genre hybrid. Studying foreign trailers is an interesting endeavour because it illustrates methods by which cinematic texts communicate with spectators. As is often the case in foreign-language trailers, screened in English speaking countries, when written and verbal language isn't available, montage, genre and

metanarrative take on increased significance. Trailers without words present fascinating exercises in metatextual expression: the foreign film must deliver information to a prospective audience while balancing commercial aims - selling itself with its artistic mandate to attract, affect and entertain. This perspective on the trailer has consequences for translation studies: does a trailer's tone of address construct a different audience in different languages and geographical contexts?

To extend focus on the trailer's linguistic components, there is more to say about the trailer as a unit of cultural currency. Film is a popular and versatile location for the meme - editing and illustration software allows for images to be captured and reproduced in a huge range of contexts and with differing rhetorical purposes. The linguistic content of a film trailer is a huge part of its receptive identity, and is a salient and residing artefact of any experience of a trailer. *Alien's* 'In Space No-one Can Hear You Scream', is a meme which proved incredibly transferrable: it appeared in the trailer, in posters and features still in modern day re-releases of the film. The line is spoofed, satirised and parodied regularly and behaves as a highly liminal, paratextual substitute for the feature film, wherever it is experienced. Stylistic, textual analysis of the linguistics of film trailers offers opportunities to chart the changing language of address of film to audience across a century of cinema. Trailers create a direct relationship with audiences (by addressing them directly), while *Alien* struck an advisory tone, *Jaws'* warning was an imperative, a warning, not to be ignored: 'See it before you go swimming!'. The stylistics of commercialism has a body of analytic literature already devoted to it - in a similar vein to Kernan's work, Guy Cook's offers analysis of the communicative quality of commercial adverts, with audiences:

Although the main focus of discourse analysis is on language, it is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation; through what medium; how different types and acts of communication evolved, and their relationship to each other.<sup>347</sup>

A stylistic analysis of trailer language reveals the nature of the voice behind the text and, subsequently, its artistic/commercial character. Trailer language, both spoken and written evolves from the hyperbolic clarion-calling of Hitchcock's fairground style, to the more stylistically-specific and codified blockbuster. In the postmodern era, the stylistics of trailer text is yet more intriguing since its appearance is so deceptive: the fairground style of a film

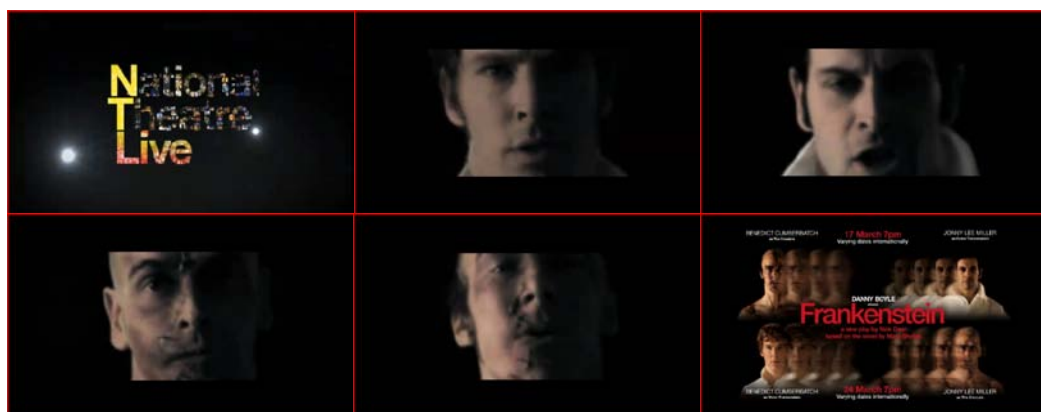
---

<sup>347</sup> (Cook: 3)

like *Machete* for example, might easily be an attempt to emulate and parody another era, for aesthetic and rhetorical effect.

Moving away from the formal elements of trailer composition, other opportunities for study are still available. Given the trailer's appeal to sensorial receptions and its overt and lurid treatment of stars and bodies, its impact reaches into the realms of psychoanalysis. *Machete* demonstrated, in the postmodern era, the erotogenic as both an important artistic and commercial component to trailer style. The psychological character of the trailer reflects its origin-era and provides insight into both contemporary authors and audience. Trailers, with their emphasis on the euphoria of unity and the traumatic and affective associations of the cut, appeal to a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach. They way trailers frame and introduce characters controls the way in which the audience views those bodies.

The trailer has become so versatile, so immediately recognizable and exploitable, that there seem few ends to which its rhetorical capabilities cannot be turned. The trailer format is used in such a wide variety of contexts, in both parody and non-parody. Even theatre productions now use the format to promote and performatively 'cinematise' their works.



The trailer for Danny Boyle's theatrical version of *Frankenstein*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller.

While the above text uses material from the theatrical production, the *Frankenstein* 'trailer' is built around cinematic conventions, involving affective close-ups and dramatic narration. A modern, synthetic music score and spectacular digital 'morphing' effects are used to impressive rhetorical ends and contribute to a memorable cinematic text. Trailer form has leaked even further across the extratextual spectrum, used for books, sporting events, political campaigns and video games. It facilitates humour, satire, and drama delivered in a highly evocative and specific space/time context. The receptive space provided for an audience is an opportunity for the product to articulate necessary commercial aims, while also demonstrating capacity for artistic expression. By emulating and performing the

cinematic and its tropes, products may use apparatus previously only available for films, to amplify their dramatic, generic, aesthetic and otherwise significant characteristics.

A trailer is restricted now only by its nomenclature, a term which has been thoroughly transformed by decades of evolution. 'Trailer' no longer means something which comes 'behind'. It is a vital and visible part of almost all entries to the cinematic canon. It represents a build-up of creative energy and often constitutes a 'beginning' as opposed to a 'winding down' of the artistic process - as innovation and self-expression give way to profit-making and commercialism. Of course, in its most mundane form, it is often indistinguishable from the advert and carries markers which many find synonymous with ruthless salesmanship but at its best, the trailer challenges cliché and convention by changing our expectations of the capabilities of film. It is a space in which potential is literally made visible and used as a conduit for the wider cinematic experience. More than just a substitute for its corresponding feature film, the trailer is a component part of the cinema's success and on-going appeal to audiences. As it bleeds into new areas of the cultural landscape, it provokes new discourses - with their own historical, social and philosophical significance. The trailer is, like the films it promotes, very much in a process of visible *becoming*, forging a new and constantly changing artistic identity. No longer an afterthought, or an ephemeral moment to be forgotten, the trailer justifies its persistence, and our patience, with a rich, expressive body of cinematic work promising to grow in size and quality for as long as the cinema itself endures.

## Bibliography

- Acland, Charles. Screen Traffic: Movies Multiplexes and Global Culture. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Adorno, T. "Culture Industry Reconsidered". New German Critique No.6 (Autumn, 1975). pp12-17.
- Baudrillard, Jean. Simulacra and Simulation. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bell-Villada, Gene H. Borges and His Fiction: A guide to his mind and art. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981.
- Benjamin, Walter. Illuminations. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Fontana Press, 1992 .
- Beugnet, Martine. Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Bignell, Jonathan. Postmodern Media Culture. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
- Bolter, Jay-David. "Preface". The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to 'Reality' TV and Beyond. Ed. Geoff King. Bristol: Intellect, 2005. 9-12.
- Bordwell, David. Narration in The Fiction Film. London: Methuen, 1985.
- Boyd, David and Barton Palmer, R. "Introduction" After Hitchcock: Influence, Imitation and Intertextuality. Ed. David Boyd and R. Barton Palmer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. 1-12
- Boyle, James. Shamans, Software and Spleens: Law and the Construction of the Information Society. London: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Brabander, Richard de. "In between (of) Cinema and Literature". (2002) 15 April, 2011. <http://www2.eur.nl/fw/cfk/InterAkta/InterAkta%203/PDF/art.Interakta3.rdb.def.pdf>
- Chard, Chloe. Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.
- Colebrook, Claire. Gilles Deleuze. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Cook, Guy. The Discourse of Advertising. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Creed, Barbara. The Monstrous Feminine: Film, feminism, psychoanalysis. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Cricks, R. Howard. "Behind the scenes in trailer making" Kinematograph Weekly. Vol 423: 2345. (June 1952) 21.
- Cubitt, Sean. The Cinema Effect. London: The MIT Press, 2004.

- Dawkins, Richard. The Selfish Gene. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Cinema 1: The Movement Image. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: The Athlone Press, 1986.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Cinema 2: The Time Image. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: The Athlone Press, 1989.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Difference and Repetition. London: Continuum, 2004.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Trans. Brian Massumi. London: The Athlone Press, 1988.
- Dika, Vera. "The Stalker Film, 1978-81". American Horrors: Essays on the Modern American Horror Film. Ed. Gregory A. Waller. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987. 86-101.
- Eisenstein, S.M. "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form". Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings 4th Edition. Ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, Leo Braudy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. 138-154.
- Eisenstein, Sergei. Film Form: Essays in Film Theory. Ed. And Trans. By Jay Leyda. New York: Harcourt, 1949.
- Eisner, Lotte H. The Haunted Screen: Expression in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt. London: Thames and Hudson, 1969.
- Flanagan, Martin. "Get Ready For Rush Hour: The chronotope in action". Action and Adventure Cinema. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. London: Routledge, 2004. 103-118
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is An Author?" Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. New York: Cornell University Press, 1977. 113-139.
- G n tte, Gerard. Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation. Trans. By Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Giles, Dennis. "Conditions of Pleasure in Horror Cinema" Planks Of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. London: Scarecrow Press (1984) 38-52.
- Graham, Jane. "The New Rebel Film Trailers" The Guardian. (17 Dec, 2009) 18 pars. 21 April (2011). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2009/dec/17/film-trailers>
- Grainge, Paul. Brand Hollywood: Selling Entertainment in a Global Media Age. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Gray, Jonathan. Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers and Other Media Paratexts. New York: NYU Press, 2010.
- Gr nstad, Asbj rn. Trans-Figurations: Violence, Death and Masculinity in American Cinema. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008.

- Gunning, Tom. "Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde". Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative. Ed. Thomas Elsaesser, London: British Film Institute, 1990. 58-59.
- Hall, Sheldon. "Tall Revenue Features: The Genealogy of the Modern Blockbuster". Genre and Contemporary Hollywood. Ed. Steve Neale. London: British Film Institute, 2002. 11-27.
- Hallenbeck, Bruce G. Comedy Horror Films: A Chronological History, 1914 – 2008. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2009.
- Hamel, Keith J. "From Advertisement to Entertainment: Early Hollywood Film Trailers" Quarterly Review of Film and Video. Vol 29: 3 (April 2012) pp 268-278. June 2012: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10509201003667218>
- Harrah, David. "Aesthetics of the Film: The Pudovkin-Arnheim-Eisenstein Theory" Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism. Vol 13, No. 2, (1954). 163-174.
- Hass, Nancy. "The Blockbuster Can No Longer Live By Muscle Alone". New York Times (28 May, 2000, pars. 32) September (2011) <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/28/movies/film-the-blockbuster-can-no-longer-live-by-muscle-alone.html?pagewanted=all>
- Heath, Stephen. "The Cinematic Apparatus: Technology as Historical and Cultural Form". The Cinematic Apparatus. Ed. Teresa de Laurentis and Stephen Heath. London: MacMillan, 1980. 1-12.
- Hediger, Vincenz. "A Cinema of Memory in the Future Tense: Godard Trailers and Godard Trailers" Forever Godard. Ed. James Williams, Michael Temple, Michael Witt. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004. 141-159.
- Howitt-Dring, Holly. "Making micro meanings: reading and writing microfiction". Short Fiction in Theory and Practice. Vol.1. No.1. (2011): 47-58.
- Hunt, Leon. "A (Sadistic) Night At The Opera: Notes on the Italian horror film". The Horror Reader. Ed. Ken Gelder. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Ishii-González, Sam. "Hitchcock With Deleuze" Hitchcock: Past and Future. Ed. Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-González. London: Routledge, 2004. 128-145.
- Jancovich, Mark. "Dwight MacDonald And The Historical Epic". Action and Adventure Cinema. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. New York: Routledge, 2004. 84-100.
- Jenkins, Henry. Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Jess-Cooke, Carolyn. Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- Johnson, Catherine. Branding Television. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Johnston, Keith M. Coming Soon: The Selling of Hollywood Technology. London: MacFarland and Company, 2009.

- Kellner, Douglas. "Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle". The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to 'Reality' TV and Beyond. Ed. Geoff King. Bristol: Intellect, 2005. 23-36.
- Kernan, Lisa. Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004.
- Kerzoncuf, Alain and Bokor, Nándor "Alfred Hitchcock's Trailers. Senses Of Cinema 35 (April – June 2005) June 2012: [http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/feature-articles/hitchcocks\\_trailers/](http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/feature-articles/hitchcocks_trailers/)
- King, Barry. "Embodying An Elastic Self: The Parametrics Of Stardom". Contemporary Hollywood Stardom. Ed. Thomas Austin & Martin Barker. London: Arnold, 2003. 45-61.
- King, Geoff. Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster. London: I.B Tauris, 2000.
- King, Geoff. New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction. London: I.B Tauris, 2002.
- King, Noel. "The Last Good Time We Ever Had": Remembering the New Hollywood Cinema". The Last Great American Picture Show: New Hollywood Cinema in the 1970s. Ed. Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Horwath and Noel King. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004. 19-37.
- Klinger, Barbara, "Digressions at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture" Cinema Journal. Vol 28: 4 (1989) pp 3-19. February 2012: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225392>
- Kochberg, Searle. "Cinema as Institution". An Introduction to Film Studies. Ed. Jill Nelmes. London: Routledge, 1996. 7-61.
- Lane, Richard, J. Jean Baudrillard. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Lapsley, Robert and Westlake, Michael. Film Theory: An Introduction. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Leitch, Thomas M. The Encyclopedia of Alfred Hitchcock: From Blondes to Vertigo. New York: Checkmark, 2002.
- Leitch, Thomas M. "The Outer Circle: Hitchcock on Television". Alfred Hitchcock: Centenary Essays. Ed. Richard Allen and S. Ishii González. BFI Publishing: London, 2003. 59-69.
- Levin, Josh. "In a World Where You Can Smoke Weed in a Movie Trailer: The rise of the R-rated preview". Slate. (16 Sept, 2008) 15 pars. 21 April (2011). <http://www.slate.com/id/2200147/>
- Maier, Carmen Daniela. "Visual evaluation in film trailers" Visual Communication. Vol 8: 2 (2009) pp 159-180. June 2012: <http://vcj.sagepub.com/content/8/2/159>
- Marks, Laura U. The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.

- Marks, Laura U. Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Mathijs, Ernest & Mendik, Xavier. "Making Sense of Extreme Confusion: European Exploitation and Underground Cinema". Alternative Europe: Eurotrash and Exploitation Cinema Since 1945. London: Wallflower Press, 2004. 1-18.
- Matthews, Virginia. "Mini epics of the big screen" The Guardian (27 Oct 1986) 11.
- McDonald, Paul. The Star System: Hollywood's Production Of Popular Identities. London: Wallflower, 2000.
- McDonald, Paul. "Stars in the Online Universe: Promotion, Nudity, Reverence." Contemporary Hollywood Stardom. Ed. Thomas Austin & Martin Barker. London: Arnold, 2003. 29-44.
- McGilligan, Patrick. Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light. New York: Harper Collins, 2003.
- Medhurst, Andy. "The Big Tease". Sight And Sound Vol 8: 7. (July 1998) pp 24-26
- Metz, Christian. Film Language: A Semiotics Of The Cinema. Trans. by Michael Taylor. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Monaco, James. How to Read a Film: The Art, Technology, Language, History and Theory of Film and Media. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Film Theory: Introductory Readings 3rd Edition. Ed Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 833 - 844.
- Naremore, James. "Hitchcock and Humour" Hitchcock: Past and Future. Ed. Richard Allen and Sam Ishii-González. London: Routledge, 2004. 22-36.
- Neale, Steve. "Action-Adventure As Hollywood Genre". Action and Adventure Cinema. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. New York: Routledge, 2004. 71-83.
- O'Day, Marc. "Beauty In Motion: Gender, spectacle and action babe cinema". Action and Adventure Cinema. Ed. Yvonne Tasker. New York: Routledge, 2004. 201-218.
- Oliver, Mary Beth & Kalyanaraman, Sriram. "Appropriate for All Viewing Audiences? An Examination of Violent and Sexual Portrayals in Movie Previews Featured on Video Rentals" Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media. Vol 46: 2 (June 2010) pp 37-41. June 2012: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4602\\_7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4602_7)
- Pasoloni, Pier Paolo. "The Cinema of Poetry". Movies and Methods. Ed. Bill Nichols. London: University of California Press, 1976. 542-558.
- Phillips, Patrick. "Genre, Star and Auteur: An approach to Hollywood cinema". An Introduction to Film Studies. Ed. Jill Nelmes. London: Routledge, 1996. 121-167
- Popple, Simon & Kember, Joe. Early Cinema: From Factory Gate to Dream Factory. London: Wallflower, 2004.

- Preece, Stephen Bruce. "Coming soon to a live theatre near you: performing arts trailers as paratexts" International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing. Vol 35. (June 2010) pp 23-35
- Propp, Vladimir. Morphology of the Folktale. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968.
- Rebello, Stephen. Alfred Hitchcock And The Making of Psycho. New York: Dember Books, 1990.
- Rodowick, David. Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine. London: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Rule, Vera. "Trailer of the Century: The Phantom Menace". The Guardian (19 Dec, 1998) 11 pars. 20 (April 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/1998/dec/18/features?INTCMP=SRCH>
- Sarris, Andrew. The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929 - 1968. New York: Dutton, 1968.
- Sarris, Andrew. Notes On The Auteur Theory In 1962. Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings 4th Edition. Ed. Gerald Mast, Marshall Cohen, Leo Braudy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. 585 - 605.
- Schatz, Thomas. "New Hollywood, New Millennium". Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies Ed. Warren Buckland. New York, Routledge: 2009. 19-47
- Schobert, Walter. "Painting in Time" and "Visual Music: On German Avant-Garde Films of the 1920s". Expressionist Film: New Perspectives. Ed. Dietrich Scheunemann. Suffolk: Camden House, 2003.
- Shouse, Eric. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect". M/C Journal. Vol 8. No. 2. (Dec 2005) June 2012: <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>
- Staiger, Janet. "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising". Cinema Journal. Spring (1990): pp 3-31. November. 2011: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225178?origin=JSTOR-pdf>
- Stam, Robert J. Film Theory: An Introduction. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
- Stapleton, Christopher B. and Hughes, Charles E. "Mixed Reality and Experiential Movie Trailers: Combining Emotions and Immersion to Innovate Entertainment Marketing". Proc. 2005 Int'l Conference of Human-Computer Interface Advances in Modelling and Simulation, Soc for Modelling and Simulation Int'l, 2005 40-48.
- Stevens, Brad. "In Praise of Trailers". Senses of Cinema. October (2000) 10 Pars. 20 Aug. 2007. <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/9/trailers.html>
- Street, Sarah. "'Another Medium Entirely': Esther Harris, National Screen Service and Film Trailers in Britain, 1940-1960". Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television. Vol 29: 4. (December 2009): pp 433-48. June 2012: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439680903334983>
- Sutton, David & Wogan, Peter. Hollywood Blockbusters: The Anthropology of Popular Movies. Oxford: Berg, 2009.

- Tasker, Yvonne. Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Totaro, Donato. "Gilles Deleuze Bergsonian Film Project" Offscreen. (1999) Pars. 30. 27 April 2009. [http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/9903/offscreen\\_essays/deleuze2.html](http://www.horschamp.qc.ca/9903/offscreen_essays/deleuze2.html)
- Tavinor, Grant. The Art Of Videogames. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Truffaut, Francois. Hitchcock. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.
- Tryon, Chuck. Reinventing Cinema: Movies in the age of media convergence. London: Rutgers University Press, 2009.
- Verevis, Constantine. "For Ever Hitchcock: *Psycho* and Its Remakes" After Hitchcock: Influence, Imitation and Intertextuality. Ed. David Boyd and R. Barton Palmer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. 15-30.
- Waddell, Callum. Jack Hill: The Exploitation and Blaxploitation Master, Film by Film. London: McFarland & Company, 2009.
- Walker, Michael. Hitchcock's Motifs. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.
- Wenders, Wim. "Time Sequences, Continuity of Movement". The Cinematic. Ed. David Company. London: MIT Press, 2007. 88-90.
- White, Hayden. Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.
- Williams, Kathleen. "Never Coming to a Theatre Near You: Recut Film Trailers". M/C Journal. Vol 12. No. 2. (May 2009) <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/139>
- Wigler, Josh. "'Tron Legacy' Trailer Premieres Online" MTV.com. 9 March, 2010. (January, 2012) <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1633496/20100309/story.jhtml>
- Wood, Robin. Hollywood From Vietnam To Reagan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Wood, Robin. "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s" Horror: The Film Reader. Ed. M. Jancovich. London: Routledge, 2002. 25-32.

## Filmography

- Alfred Hitchcock Presents... Dir. Alfred Hitchcock (et. al) Perf. Alfred Hitchcock, Harry Tyler, John Williams. Universal TV: 1963 – 1965. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, DVD: 2009.
- Alien. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Tom Skerrit, Sigourney Weaver, Veronica Cartwright. 20th Century Fox: 1979. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2010.

Apocalypse Now. Dir Francis Ford Coppola. Perf. Martin Sheen, Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall. Zoetrope Studios: 1979. Paramount Home Video, DVD: 2001.

Back To The Future Part III. Dir Robert Zemeckis. Perf. Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Mary Steenburgen. Universal Pictures, 1990. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2010.

The Bishop's Wife. Dir Henry Koster. Perf. Cary Grant, Loretta Young, David Niven. The Samuel Goldwyn Company: 1947. MGM/UA Home Entertainment, DVD: 2007.

Brokeback Mountain. Dir. Ang Lee. Perf. Jake Gyllenhaal, Heath Ledger, Michelle Williams. Paramount Pictures: 2005. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2009.

Buried. Dir. Rodrigo Cortés. Perf. Ryan Reynolds, José Luis Garcia-Pérez, Robert Paterson. Versus Entertainment: 2010. Lionsgate Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2010.

A Catered Affair. Dir Richard Brooks. Perf. Bette Davis, Ernest Borgnine, Debbie Reynolds. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer: 1956. Warner Home Video, DVD: 2011.

The Dark Knight. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Perf. Christian Bale, Heath Ledger, Aaron Eckhart. Warner Bros. Pictures: 2008. Warner Home Video, Blu-Ray: 2008.

District 9. Dir. Neil Blomkamp. Perf. Sharlto Copley, David James, Jason Cope. Wingnut Films: 2009. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2009.

Finding Nemo. Dir Andrew Stanton, Lee Unkrich. Perf. Albert Brooks, Ellen DeGeneres, Alexander Gould. Walt Disney Pictures: 2003. Walt Disney Home Video, DVD: 2003.

Foreign Correspondent. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Joel McCrea, Laraine Day, Herbert Marshall. Walter Wanger Productions: 1940. Warner Home Video, DVD: 2004.

Frenzy. Dir Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Jon Finch, Barry Foster, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Alec McCowen. Universal Pictures: 1972. Universal Pictures, DVD: 2001.

Godzilla. Dir. Roland Emmerich. Perf. Matthew Broderick. Jean Reno. Maria Pitillo. Tri-Star Pictures: 1998. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2009.

Grindhouse. Dir. Quentin Tarantino, Robert Rodriguez, Edgar Wright, Rob Zombie, Eli Roth. Perf. Kurt Russel, Rose McGowan, Danny Trejo. Dimension Films: 2007. Vivendi Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2010.

Inglourious Basterds. Dir. Quentin Tarantino. Perf. Brad Pitt, Diane Kruger, Eli Roth. A Band Apart: 2009. Universal Studios Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2009.

King Of The Rocket Men. Dir. Fred C. Brannon. Perf. Tristram Coffin, Mae Clarke, Don Haggerty. Republic Pictures: 1949. Comet Video, DVD: 2004.

The Island. Dir Michael Bay. Perf. Ewan McGregor, Scarlett Johansson, Djimon Hounsou. Dreamworks SKG: 2005. Dreamworks Home Entertainment, DVD: 2005.

Jaws. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, Richard Dreyfuss. Universal Pictures: 1975. Universal Studios Home Video, DVD: 2000.

Machete. Dir. Robert Rodriguez. Perf. Danny Trejo, Michelle Rodriguez, Robert De Niro. Troublemaker Studios: 2010. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment, Blu-Ray: 2011.

The Maid. Dir. Sebastián Silva. Perf Catalina Saavedra, Claudia Celedón, Alejandro Goic. Forastero, 2009. Oscilloscope Pictures, DVD: 2010.

North By Northwest. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason. Metro Goldwyn Mayer: 1959. Warner Home Video, DVD: 2005.

Only Angels Have Wings. Dir. Howard Hawks. Perf. Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, Rita Hayworth. Columbia Pictures Corporation: 1939. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, DVD: 2006.

Predator. Dir. John McTiernan. Perf. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Carl Weathers, Kevin Peter Hall. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation: 1987. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, DVD: 2007.

Psycho. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Anthony Perkins, Vera Miles, Janet Leigh. Paramount Pictures: 1960. Universal Pictures, DVD: 2005.

Rambo: First Blood Part 2. Dir. George P. Cosmatos. Perf. Sylvester Stallone, Richard Crenna, Charles Napier. Anabasis N.V.: 1985. Momentum Pictures Home Entertainment, DVD: 2007.

Rope. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. James Stewart, John Dall, Farley Granger, Joan Chandler. Warner Brothers Pictures: 1948. Universal Pictures, DVD: 2001.

Saboteur. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Priscilla Lane, Robert Cummings, Otto Kruger. Universal Pictures: 1942. Universal Home Entertainment, DVD: 2006.

Shadow Of A Doubt. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. Teresa Wright, Joseph Cotten, Macdonald Carey. Universal Pictures: 1943.

The Shining. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Perf. Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall, Danny Lloyd. Warner Bros. Pictures: 1980. Warner Home Video, Blu-ray: 2007.

Star Trek. Dir. J.J. Abrams. Perf. Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Simon Pegg. Paramount Pictures: 2009. Paramount Home Entertainment, Blu-ray: 2009.

Star Wars. Dir. George Lucas. Perf. Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher. Lucasfilm: 1977. Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, Blu-ray: 2011.

Tell No One. Dir. Guillaume Canet. Perf. François Cluzet, Marie-Josée Croze, André Dussollier. Les Productions du Trésor: 2006. Revolver Entertainment, DVD: 2007.

Timecrimes. Dir. Nacho Vigalondo. Perf. Karra Elejalde, Candela Fernández, Bárbara Goenaga. Karbo Vantas Entertainment: 2007. Vendetta Films, DVD: 2007.

Titanic. Dir James Cameron. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Kate Winslet, Billy Zane. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation: 1997. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Home Entertainment, DVD: 2005.

Vertigo. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Perf. James Stewart, Kim Novak, Tom Helmore, Barbara Bel Geddes. Paramount Pictures: 1958. Universal Home Entertainment, DVD: 2005.

Le Voyage Dans La Lune. Dir. George Méliès. Perf. George Méliès, Victor André, Bleuette Bernon. Star Film: 1902. Facets Multimedia Distribution, DVD: 2002.

Le Voyage à Travers l'Impossible. Dir. George Méliès. Perf. George Méliès. Star Film: 1904. Image Entertainment, Laserdisc: 1995.

## Online Trailer References

Academy Award Winning Movie Trailer. Dir. Britanick. Perf. Alex Anfanger, Liz Apple, Max Ash. Britanick: 2011.  
[http://www.YouTube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=WAG9Xn5bJwQ](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=WAG9Xn5bJwQ) (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Brokeback to the Future: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=8uwuLxrv8jY> (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

A Dance With Dragons book trailer: <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=-OyJvgII5h4> (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Last Orders. Dir. Jonathan Glazer. Academy Productions, Stella Artois: 1998.  
<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=gO-RbhDxKLw> (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Lucky Star: Dir. Michael Mann. Perf. Bencicio Del Toro. BJK&E, Mercedes Benz: 2002.  
<http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=YoCLxp2W9xE> (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Modern Warfare 3: [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=1xjCdN\\_rWCE](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=1xjCdN_rWCE) (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Proven Leadership, Rick Perry: [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=8EL5Atp\\_vFO](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=8EL5Atp_vFO) (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Shining: [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sfout\\_rgPSA](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sfout_rgPSA) (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

Titanic Two The Surface: [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vD4OnHCRd\\_4](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=vD4OnHCRd_4) (30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)

You Know Who Your Mates Are, Carling Beer:

“Space” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=wJg-ZIvsFO>

“Round” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=0gyD9zR8U3A&feature=related>

“Out” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?NR=1&v=YJy9nMjqm7g>

“Rescue” <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=jLdvVQCMZLc>

(30<sup>th</sup> November, 2011)