

Using Film to Teach Rhetoric and Multimodal Literacy

by

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Abstract

As communication becomes increasingly more visual and multimodal, there have been calls within the field of composition studies to adapt to these changes and better prepare students to be critical consumers of the communication they encounter. Meeting this standard requires both broadening the type of literacy that we seek to instill in our students and developing a practical plan to improve that broadened literacy. In order for this to be accomplished, two things must take place. First, the analytical frameworks that we teach our students as a process for analyzing and producing texts must be revised to be applicable to a broader range of text types. Second, we must come up with concrete ways to begin incorporating other types of texts into our composition courses. This work seeks to meet both of these needs. First, it develops an analytical framework similar to ones that are commonly used in composition but more inclusive of emotional persuasion and related issues, overall designed out of principles from classical and contemporary rhetorical theory. For the second step, it proposes utilizing film in composition alongside word-based texts for the purposes of allowing the analytical framework to be applied to two quite different text types, demonstrating its ability to be adapted to multiple modes of communication. Asking students to analyze multimodal texts along with word-based increases the likelihood of improved multimodal literacy. The partnerships between these two text types can also help students better grasp certain concepts of rhetorical theory. Following the articulation of this revised analytical framework derived from rhetorical theory, this work applies that framework to example films and word-based texts, demonstrating both the framework's

viability and the connections between the ways that different text types use comparable tactics to achieve similar responses in the audience. At its conclusion, this work also provides some suggestions for use of film in the composition class and application of the proposed analytical framework.

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CHAPTER ONE

Film as Means of Enhancing Multimodal Literacy

It has been acknowledged on numerous occasions that the field of composition needs to broaden its conception of the type of literacy it seeks to teach and increase in its students. The world and the type of communication relied upon most within it has shifted away from language-based communication to more visually-based communication, but many composition courses ignore or downplay the visual and continue to give the language-based texts primacy. It makes sense that there would be resistance to decreasing focus on the word in favor of the visual when it seems that keeping most or all of the focus upon word-based texts is still not producing skilled writers. We definitely cannot afford to stop teaching word-based literacy but need to include within our instruction at least some attention to visual communication to broaden student literacy. I propose that using the film medium in composition instruction, specifically narrative film, is a viable way of increasing our students' multimodal literacy without detracting from their instruction in word-based literacy. This chapter identifies the need for changes in our definition of and attempts to improve our students' literacy, and the subsequent chapters propose and apply a rhetorical framework, slightly different from the ones found in the typical composition textbook—a framework that not only accounts for the increasingly visual nature of the communication encountered by today's students, but which also has the potential to facilitate the

use of visual and multimodal texts to explain the verbal ones with which students so often struggle.

Although visual communication and persuasion have been utilized throughout history in different ways, current technology has allowed the visual to become the prominent means of communication to which we are exposed. As Gunther Kress observes in “‘English’ At the Crossroads,” “written language is being displaced from its hitherto unchallenged central position in the semiotic landscape, and... the visual is taking over many of the functions of written language” (68). However, just because we are exposed to visual communication on a regular basis does not mean that the average citizen is visually literate. As Charles Hill describes in “Reading the Visual in College Writing Classes,”

Americans tend to act as passive consumers rather than as critics or analysts of visual messages. While we are all being increasingly exposed to highly manipulated images meant to influence our beliefs, opinions, and behaviors, very few of us are adequately prepared to analyze and critique these images in order to make informed decisions about them. (108)

He continues to say that the university is training *some* people to be aware of visual rhetoric, specifically the ones going into careers in communication, but that it has an obligation to help the remaining students “respond to these messages in an informed and critical way” rather than leaving them “helpless to analyze or critique their messages” (“Reading” 128). What Kress and Hill describe is an increasing reliance upon visuals to communicate information but a population that is not being trained to think critically about that communication. There are many points in the educational process at which this deficiency could be addressed, but one place to address it is, as Hill suggests, at the college level, and in particular through college composition courses.

Literacy has traditionally been conceived of as written-word literacy, but recent work in the field of composition has begun to include two other types of literacy—technological literacy and visual or multimedia literacy—which can be treated separately or combined into one overall literacy set. Whether considered separately or together, it is clear that language-based literacy is not a lone concern any longer. Indeed, many definitions of literacy have now been intentionally broadened to include multiple types of skills and communication. J.L. Lemke defines literacy as “a set of cultural competences for making socially recognizable meanings by the use of particular material technologies” (71). This definition is not mode-specific at all, but instead rather broad, and Diana George and Diane Shoos shed light on why such a broad definition is appropriate:

If literacy is henceforth linked to technology, it is by definition changing and changeable as technologies evolve... If literacy is intimately connected to intertextuality as an awareness and understanding of the relationships among texts and between texts and readers, then literacy is never fixed or finished. Instead, it entails an ongoing re-evaluation and reformulation of the cultural and textual terrain as that terrain itself, including the positions of readers, shifts. (124)

It is consequently appropriate that composition instruction, if its purpose is indeed increasing student literacy, reevaluate the definition of that literacy that it seeks to instill on a regular basis to account for this changing of technology.

Other terms may be assigned in describing various types of literacy, but all of these variations generally point to the same core issues. In their book *Visual Messages: Integrating Imagery Into Instruction*, David Considine and Gail Haley argue for incorporating more visual texts into instruction of all subjects and at all levels of education, but in making this argument define media literacy and visual literacy as separate entities. As they define media literacy,

students should be confident and competent consumers and creators of media messages. They should be able to comprehend the media and to analyze and evaluate media messages. In addition, they should be able to design and produce media products that successfully communicate information and feelings. (12)

They define visual literacy shortly thereafter as “the ability to comprehend and create information that is carried and conveyed through imagery” (14). While they feel the need to separate these two types, I feel Lemke’s position—that there is no need to delineate separate categories of literacy types—better fits George and Shoos’ observation that the specifics of any accurate definition of literacy will always be in flux. The broader category of multimodal literacy can fulfill this need and provide the first step toward developing a framework of analysis that accommodates multiple modes of communication, because as Lemke explains,

All literacy is multimedia literacy: You can never make meaning with language alone; there must always be a visual or vocal realization of linguistic signs that also carries nonlinguistic meaning... Signs must have some material reality in order to function as signs, but every material form potentially carries meanings according to more than one code. All semiotics is multimedia semiotics, and all literacy is multimedia literacy. (72)

Separate or combined definitions of literacy aside, Considine and Haley provide a list of competencies and goals that the inclusion of visual and media literacies would seek to fulfill, which in addition to the literacy itself, could be used to improve critical thinking skills, multicultural education, health education, and consumer competency, along with increasing interdisciplinary education and integrated studies, creating more responsible citizens of a democratic society, and better addressing of students’ varied learning styles (21-22). All of these

are positive changes, if accomplished, but the primary goal should be increasing the literacy itself. The issue, then, is how to accomplish this while still meeting existing obligations to our students.

I would not suggest that attempts to increase multimodal literacy *replace* existing attempts to increase literacy in the written word. As Hill also describes, because of this shift to visual communication, “many students arrive at the university with apparently little experience with the written word” (“Reading” 107). It is still important that we address this important need of incoming college students, but the problem is that only addressing the lack of written language literacy is not preparing them to be fully literate members of a society that also heavily relies upon visual communication. As Hill continues,

A major goal of the educational system is to help students develop the abilities necessary to comprehend, interpret, and critically respond to the textual forms that they will encounter as members of the culture... Our educational institutions should be spending at least as much time and energy on developing students’ visual literacies as these institutions spend on developing students’ textual literacy. (“Reading” 108)

This need was also recognized by our field’s professional organization, the National Council of Teachers of English, when it passed a resolution in 1996 to “support professional development and promote public awareness of the role that viewing and visually representing our world have as forms of literacy” (qtd in Hill “Reading” 110). Language-based literacy should certainly not be cast to the wayside, and none of these people or groups is suggesting that one needs to replace the other. What is needed is a way to increase both types of literacy at the same time, and even better, through an approach that utilizes students’ increased experience in visual communication

to help them better understand the language-based communication with which they are less familiar.

A shift to concern with increasing both types of literacy through composition courses has been called for by many in the area of rhetoric and composition studies. As Kress inquires, “What will the subject of English need to become in order to function as an essential part of the education of young people?” (“English” 66). As he continues, in effort to begin to answer this question,

If English is to remain relevant as the subject which provides access to participation in public forms of communication, as well as remaining capable of providing understandings of and the abilities to produce culturally valued texts, then an emphasis on language alone simply will no longer do. English will need to change. (“English” 67)

Here, Kress is arguing that English, or composition, is the subject that is best suited to take on this task. The difference is that rather than only focusing on reading and producing word-based texts, he believes this subject should be expanded to address multiple types of communication. Traditionally, most communication has occurred through these word-based texts, but that does not mean that this is all composition courses should ever seek to teach. Charles Hill agrees, arguing that

It would still be a mistake to concentrate our teaching efforts on reading and writing to the exclusion of other modes of communication and to neglect visual forms. Most students enter the university unable to articulate any principles about how visual messages work and without any of the skills or habits necessary to critically analyze such messages... Many university students need to be

convinced that visual images constitute meaningful texts at all in the sense that people are used to thinking about written texts. The very dominance and ubiquity of visual messages suggest that our students should develop both the ability and the inclination to examine their own reactions to such messages, if they are to have any real independence and effectiveness as social agents. (“Reading” 110)

Kress believes that a shift such as the one he or Hill is describing will prepare students for the future, but Hill seems to feel this is more eminent, that students also need this for the present. In either case, a world in which word-based literacy is unnecessary is hardly looming on the horizon, and students still need word-based literacy at the very least to prepare them for the rest of their college studies if not their future careers. However, attention to multimodal literacy would fulfill student needs more completely.

As Hill and Kress point out, students are already lacking word-based literacy skills as they enter college, and many struggle to acquire these skills in courses that are only focusing on improving this type of literacy. It would be reasonable to question proposals that we begin to split our focus in composition to attempt to teach them how visual and multimodal texts function—they don’t even have time to learn the former; how are they going to have time to learn the latter, as well, without sacrificing some of their education in language-based literacy? Ideally, we should find a way to teach both simultaneously, but one obstacle to this is the problem that most of our current theoretical and analytical frameworks are very language-oriented. Kress believes that “theories of language can at best offer explanations for a part of the communicational landscape only” (“English” 82). As he clarifies,

A semiotic theory which is too much tied to and derived from one particular mode—for instance, our conventional language-based theories of communication

and meaning—will permit neither an adequate nor an integrated description of multi-modal textual objects, nor of multi-media production. In other words, an adequate theory for contemporary multi-modal textual forms needs to be formulated so as to permit both the description of the specific characteristics of a particular mode, and of its more general semiotic properties which allow it to be related plausibly to other semiotic modes... differences in expression between two given modes need to be readily describable in an adequate theory of meaning. (Kress 83)

Consequently, any framework being used for instruction in a class seeking to improve both types of literacy will have to avoid mode-specific elements, whether specific to language or visuals. It should also, as Hill clarifies, combine “the visual and the verbal without subordinating either mode of rhetoric to the other” (“Reading” 115). In essence, what is needed is to broaden existing analytical frameworks that are taught to composition students so that they represent the full spectrum of modes of communication. The need has been articulated, but no one seems to have successfully met that need yet.

The reason a new framework is needed is because verbal and visual texts persuade differently from one another:

Because persuasive images are most often used, not to support arguments with logic and evidence, but to prompt viewers to develop new associations, the logical apparatus that has been developed to analyze and evaluate verbal arguments does not seem to apply to visual forms of persuasion. (Hill, “Reading” 121)

As Hill alludes to above, verbal communication tends to convey logical information and reasoning, while visual communication is more often used to evoke emotions. In “The

Psychology of Rhetorical Images,” Hill provides a scale of least to most vivid types of information with examples. The least vivid types of information he gives as examples are statistics and “abstract, impersonal analysis,” “descriptive account,” and “narrative, descriptive account”—all language-based information—while the most vivid begin with first-hand, real-life experience with the next step back from that in vividness being “moving pictures with sound,” also known as film (“Psychology” 31). The more vivid the information, the more likely an emotional response to it, while less vivid information is less able to evoke emotions. If a majority of the analytical frameworks that we provide students are designed for application to word-based texts, it follows that said frameworks will privilege logic and downplay or ignore emotion. This is indeed what is reflected in textbooks designed for use in composition instruction. In her 2003 essay “The Pathos of *Pathos*: The Treatment of Emotion in Contemporary Composition Textbooks,” Gretchen Flesher Moon arrives at the conclusion that when emotional persuasion is addressed in composition textbooks, it is usually relegated to the role of logical fallacy or supplementary support for logical claims, but usually only mentioned briefly and rarely addressed as having potential for positive use on its own.¹ The textbooks also lack any in-depth explanation of how emotional persuasion is accomplished, which is not much more helpful in attempts to increase students multimodal literacy than if it were not mentioned at all. Explanation of and respect for emotional persuasion is largely missing from the composition textbooks, which suggests it may be missing from composition instruction as well. The analytical framework with which we provide our students needs to be broadened to include the elements brought in through multimodal communication if the need for increased multimodal literacy is to be successfully addressed. I propose that the first step in addressing this need is

¹ Moon’s examination of composition textbooks will be discussed in further detail in chapter three.

developing a framework that can account for what multiple modes of communication accomplish, and this can best be accomplished by turning to rhetorical pedagogy and developing a framework that is based in principles of rhetoric, though not limited to those elements associated with language-based rhetoric. Not only can rhetorical theory provide such a universal framework, but it can also allow students to take their multimodal literacy skills and use them to understand language-based texts more fully.

Helping students gain an understanding of how more visual texts function rhetorically can use the students' experiences in our visually-oriented culture to help them understand modes of communication that they may find more foreign. Illuminating persuasive tactics utilized in visual communication and then explaining how those correspond to similar tactics in language-based communication can increase students' literacy in multiple modes of communication while, according to Hill,

Ignoring the visual aspects of rhetoric, even the visual aspects of written texts, hinders our efforts to help students develop an accurate understanding of the nature of rhetorical practice, including an adequate understanding of the potential, as well as limitations, of written discourse. ("Reading" 110)

Visual versus verbal approaches to persuasion not only offer different options of persuasive tactics but also encourage different types of decision making, with visual encouraging heuristic (impulsive, emotion-based) processing and verbal encouraging systematic (logical, more thoroughly considered) processing (Hill, "Psychology" 32). An awareness of these differences can encourage students to consider such questions as these proposed by Kress: "what are the affordances of different modes, and how do different modes therefore realize meanings of a certain kinds? ... What is it that we want to mean, and what modes and genres are best for

realizing that meaning?” (“Multimodality” 39). An approach that begins with an appropriate analytical framework and stresses how it applies to multiple modes of communication can both increase student awareness of the specialized abilities of the different modes but also begin to prepare them to produce in multiple modes, even if we do not specifically devote time in the composition course to the production of anything but essays. Those suggestions within composition studies that appear to be of the most pragmatic mindset and offering the most useful suggestions about how this might be accomplished come from figures in rhetorical pedagogy, who, although making these suggestions decades ago, are making suggestions that also could fulfill current student needs, as well.

As William Covino characterizes it, rhetorical pedagogy privileges instruction in the history and practice of rhetoric. According to Richard Schoek, rhetoric “has never lost its usefulness or its relevance to the widest possible spectrum of problems and situations in a long sequence of changing societies” (24). This view of the persistent relevance and adaptability of rhetoric is also espoused frequently by two prominent figures in rhetorical pedagogy, Edward P.J. Corbett and Kathleen E. Welch. Corbett, in his 1972 essay “Rhetoric, The Enabling Discipline,” claims that “rhetoric can deal with virtually any subject matter” (195), and furthering his suggestion of wide application of rhetoric, claims that “if Aristotle were alive today, he would be turning to the advertising industry instead of the speeches in Homer’s *Iliad* for many of his examples of persuasive discourse” (194). And although she was writing this particular work in 1990, before the internet allowed the shift toward the visual to become much more drastic, Welch argues in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse* that the best solution to addressing the students’ needs for

understanding communication in an electronic age is to turn back toward the classical rhetoricians for guidance.

Although other pedagogical approaches are certainly compatible with a mission of increasing multimedia literacy, rhetorical pedagogy seems most compatible with this mission of enhancing multimodal literacy because a thorough understanding of rhetoric can develop those same skills outlined in the definitions of literacy and multimedia literacy above. As Covino explains this connection,

Literacy is a term that, like *rhetoric*, has been defined in a number of ways. Apart from any particular definition, literacy refers to ways in which people use language to communicate and to understanding their world, and in this respect the kinship of literacy and rhetoric is apparent. [I] recently called rhetoric “the performance of literacy,” stressing that any prevailing definition of literacy determines what sorts of rhetorical performances are deemed appropriate and allowable. In other words, literacy implies rhetoric. (49)

Not only do literacy and an understanding of rhetoric share many of the same traits, but some proponents of rhetorical pedagogy believe that the perceived irrelevance of composition and the humanities in general in the eyes of some students is a result of the move away from a focus on explicitly teaching rhetoric.

James Kinneavy, along with Corbett, is one of the people in the field of composition who was influential in the resurgence of a return to rhetoric and the formation of a rhetorical pedagogy approach to composition. Both of these men published much of their most influential work during the 1960s and 1970s, but the relevance of it persists today as a new need has emerged, and their suggestions of rhetoric as a way to meet student needs are as relevant today as

they were when they were originally written. Kinneavy believes that the biggest reason that the humanities are viewed as so irrelevant is because of the move away from explicit instruction in rhetoric, which he says “formed the core of the humanities and linked the humanities to the practical life of the everyday citizen” (20). He explains the shift away from instruction in rhetoric as resulting from restructuring of academic departments, with speech and communication often splitting off into separate departments while composition courses remained under the purview of English and were often pushed toward increased instruction in literature rather than rhetoric. Charles Hill is perhaps too optimistic in hoping that at some point we could address this need for multimedia literacy through “multidepartmental rhetoric programs” (“Reading” 128), but more instruction for students in the discipline of rhetoric in composition courses, and in particular a focus on how rhetoric functions in multiple modes of communication, is a more manageable goal, yet would still move us closer to the goal of increasing multimedia literacy. Kinneavy explains his conception of a shift back to rhetorical instruction to address this need:

The reintroduction of rhetoric into the curriculum would entail both a production and an analysis dimension. In the production dimension, students would write prose that exploited the emotions of the audience through personal voice and feelings, using style as well as logic and information... The reintroduction of rhetoric into the curriculum would entail the reintroduction of the rhetorical analysis of political, legal, religious, educational, and commercial discourse primarily aimed at persuasion... One could argue that the teaching of the analysis of persuasion is even more important than the teaching of the production of

persuasion. The mass media powerfully influence us, and we must learn to reflect analytically on the forces transforming our lives. (25)

Though their suggestions of a move back to focusing on rhetoric were made decades ago, these suggestions are as much if not more relevant today. Rhetorical pedagogy is a pragmatic pedagogy, and seeking to create students who are literate members of society is a pragmatic goal.

One aspect of Kinneavy's suggested approach to note is that, although he acknowledges that production should be an important part of this plan, it does not have to be production of multimedia texts in order to demonstrate and learn multimedia literacy. Because visuals introduce an increased role of emotion to a persuasive situation, heightened multimedia literacy can also increase student understanding of how to thoughtfully and effectively utilize emotional appeal even in language-based texts. Fears that a shift to increasing multimedia literacy would mean abandoning traditional essay assignments could cause serious objections to such an approach, and rightfully so—students already struggle with producing high-quality writing, so they certainly do not need less instruction in it—but Kinneavy here illustrates one way that multimedia literacy could be addressed without decreasing the students' experience with writing. Utilizing rhetorical pedagogy as a solution to this need to increase multimedia literacy is compatible with plans to both train students to create multiple types of texts and also those to train them just in writing prose. In either case, learning how multiple modes of communication persuade and emphasizing how these may be altered by mode can increase the students' literacy even without asking them to produce all the types of texts they encounter. The key to this is giving them an analytical framework that applies to multiple modes of communication and also giving them practice actually applying it, stressing the differing abilities, strengths, and weaknesses of the different modes along the way.

Though its traditional nature might suggest that rhetorical pedagogy tends to be product-oriented, Covino believes it is instead process-oriented. While I have so far discussed the ability of an instructional approach based in rhetorical and multimedia literacy to use more visual texts to illuminate rhetorical traits and abilities of language-based texts, study of the rhetoric and production of language-based texts can likewise improve student understanding and production of multimedia texts. On the one hand, it can instruct students who are more used to encountering emotional appeals in what logical appeals look like and how they work, even in multimedia texts where they are relied upon less often. Another way the instruction can work from written-word text to visual text is in showing the importance of process as part of the rhetorical pedagogy approach. Douglas Hesse believes that a pedagogy that addresses both ends of the modal spectrum can serve students in this additional dimension of heightening their awareness of process, how it tends to vary across different modes of communication, and what producers of multimedia texts can learn from the production of language-based texts:

Essayistic literacy supports process pedagogies that have been ascendant in the past thirty years and thus is conserved by familiar and dominant teaching strategies, perhaps out of proportion to its value. In contrast, writing common to computer networks is terse, mostly single-draft, often composed in immediate response and not repose, dependent on pathos and humor to a much greater extent than usually sanctioned by essayist literacy. (34)

Along with agreeing that visual and multimedia texts tend to rely more heavily upon pathos, Hesse also points out that student experiences with writing in computer and multimedia environments as being single-draft does not mean that it is *supposed* to be single-draft. It provides an opportunity to encourage students to take what they learn from the traditional essay

and apply it to writing and composing in digital and multimedia situations. On a related note, Kathleen Welch acknowledges that delivery is an oft-ignored cannon of rhetoric nowadays, assumed to apply only to the delivery of a speech, but that the wealth of modal options for delivering a message in today's culture brings delivery back into relevance (159). This is an additional choice available to students as they compose texts, and thus an additional element of composition that can be elucidated for students through the inclusion of multimodal texts.

If we are to utilize multiple text types to begin this shift toward enhancing students' multimedia literacy, we have to decide what types of texts should be included in such instruction. Gunther Kress believes that along with teaching texts at varying locations on the visual-verbal spectrum, we should also be teaching and accounting for in our analytical framework texts from the aesthetically valued to the culturally salient to the mundane or banal ("Multimodality" 53). All three types of text are deserving of our attention not just because they are all likely to be encountered at some point but also because, as Kress explains,

Even the production of the banal text... requires much more than competent knowledge. That text is based, however imperfectly, on the understandings of design... That educational environment will deal with banal texts, culturally salient texts, ... and aesthetically valued texts, in all modes and in all kinds of modal combination. ("Multimodality" 53)

Kress believes, and I agree, that all types of texts, both the serious and the popular, can be valuable in teaching multimedia literacy. The type of text I would like to propose as a counterpart to written-word text in order to achieve this goal is the medium of film, and specifically narrative, fiction film.

Though perhaps a minor and less pragmatic consideration, one reason that film is a good choice for increasing students' multimedia literacy is because it is a text type that encourages student authority in discussion and analysis. Giving students something to discuss that they will have a sense of authority about falls in line with Plato's suggesting through his portrayal of Socrates that occasionally, at least, a teacher feigning ignorance can make him more effective. As Johanna Schmertz and Annette Trefzer observe through examination of their own use of film in their composition courses, film can "in some ways [level] an uneven playing field for students, providing a literacy shared among teacher, student, and the world outside" (87). Dale Adams and Robert Kline agree, explaining in "The Use of Films in Teaching Composition" that when students are asked to read and respond to an essay, "they are often cowed by the professionalism with which the essay is written. Thus, they lack the confidence that what *they* have to say is of value" (259). Because of this, when asked to respond to written texts, "students often too quickly defer to the teacher's interpretation" (260). The confidence that students instead demonstrate when analyzing, discussing, and writing about film is one of the merits of using film to teach that Adams and Kline outline in their essay, one of the first works to delineate reasons for using film in the composition classroom, back in 1976. An additional benefit related to this authority that students bring with them to uses of film is that

students' familiarity with film allows for a common discursive text for the entire class—something that is harder to attain with what we might call "high literature" since many students are often resistant to written texts—and thus makes it easier on one level to focus on students' writing rather than spending a disproportionate amount of struggling with students' resistance. (Maloney and Miller 33)

In this case, using something that students are interested in and feel confident analyzing rather than texts they struggle with can allow teachers to focus on improving writing rather than on mastering the subject matter on which they are attempting to write.

The second and more important reason that I propose film be used to address this need of increasing students' multimodal literacy is because it is a counterpart to the word-based text, at least according to the spectrum of vivid information provided by Charles Hill in "The Psychology of Rhetorical Images." In this essay, Hill explains how the vividness of information affects its persuasive power. The more vivid the information presented, the more emotional the response is likely to be. As mentioned before, human decision-making tends to be either systematic or heuristic processing – systematic being "contemplative, analytic, and responsive to the argumentative quality of the message" ("Psychology" 32) while heuristic is when a person uses a short cut in their decision making, such as choosing based on emotion. Information that is more language-based and less vivid, like facts, figures, or logical reasoning explained through words, prompts more systematic processing, while vivid information like films, images, or even especially descriptive narratives, tend to prompt heuristic processing. Heuristic processing may lead to decisions being made more quickly, but is also more likely to be reconsidered and changed later, while a decision made based on systematic processing is more likely to remain unchanged. This information suggests that, while not necessarily a superior means of communication, using visuals or vividness to make arguments can be valuable in getting an audience to make a quick decision, or even to "hook" them long enough to agree based on systematic processing, as well. Pairing the least and most vivid types of texts means covering both ends of the rhetorical spectrum, from primarily logical to primarily emotional texts, with those texts that fall in between these two extremes likely covered by implication. Using both

film and word-based texts, along with an analytical framework that is broad enough to explain both types of texts, could then be used for the dual purposes of increasing student experience with texts at both ends of this spectrum and also increasing their rhetorical understanding as they do so.

I am certainly not the first to suggest that film could be useful in the instruction of composition, but the existing work on film and composition indicates that, while used for many purposes, developing student understanding of rhetoric is rarely a primary purpose of it. As acknowledged above, some of the earlier work in the area of film and composition focused on its potential to empower students and give them a sense of authority, along with giving them a different type of text to analyze and write about. Much of the more recent discussion of using film in the composition class tends to arise from a desire to incorporate it into a cultural studies pedagogical approach or to provide opportunities to elucidate the composing process for students. Some of the more recent work in this area does suggest uses for film in rhetorical pedagogy, discussed in detail in some works and alluded to in others. The collection *Cinema-(to)-Graphy: Film and Writing in Contemporary Composition Courses*, edited by Ellen Bishop, provides the most comprehensive survey of film's uses in composition instruction. Though in the 60's and 70's it was thought of as a route to formalism, teaching grammar and syntax with film as an example (Maloney and Miller 32), film appears to be most universally employed in a cultural studies approach to composition. Each of the essays in this collection seems to discuss using film to further this particular pedagogical approach, but several of the essays included either allude to or directly explain ways that film could be used to teach students about rhetoric, as well.

As an example of film being used primarily for cultural studies purposes, in “*Rear Window: Looking at Film Theory Through Pedagogy*,” Edward Maloney and Paul Miller discuss their use of film, in particular the Hitchcock film *Rear Window*, and indicate that they focused on three goals: “[giving] the students the tools to analyze film; [facilitating] students’ recognition of the value of film as a cultural text that has something to say about the society in which we live; and [helping] students see film as model for, or at the very least a parallel of, the writing process” (34). It is the third of these that is of most relevance to film’s use in rhetorical pedagogy; however it is the one they discuss least, in favor of discussion of identification in film and the uses of film as a cultural text. Identification does have significance in rhetorical analysis, but reading the film for its message about society is not as pragmatic a pursuit as would be an examination of how, specifically, it sends that message, of which this approach gives only a brief discussion.

“Mapping the Use of Feature Films in Composition Classes” by Dulce Cruz moves closer toward using film to teach rhetoric as the author describes some ways to use film to teach students to compose written documents. She is able to use film as subject matter to teach students the skills of comparing, summarizing, exploring, evaluating, and synthesizing, while also using film as a cultural text to get students to question their perspectives and prejudices. However, though she does begin to use film to help illuminate writing and composing tasks, she is not focusing on the film as a rhetorical text or using it to illuminate rhetorical tactics. Consequently, her methods remain primarily in the realm of cultural studies pedagogy, though with slightly more attention to the composing process. Film certainly can be used to help students understand the composing process, but there are also more powerful uses for film in composition that this use of it ignores.

Moving closer still toward a rhetorical pedagogy approach to utilizing film is “Inherit the Text: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Argumentation” by Loretta F. Kasper and Robert Singer. In this case, the authors discuss argument in film and argument made through film, using the film *Inherit the Wind* partly to teach about argument and partly to provide the students with information through visual means in a unit incorporating science, history, and anthropology. With the former, although there is some attention paid to how the characters are portrayed in the film and how this influences audience attitude toward them, most of Kasper and Singer’s discussion concentrates on the arguments presented by characters within the film rather than the argument made by the film as a whole. So in this case, students are learning about argument, but through how characters within a film argue rather than how the film is constructed to be persuasive in a certain way; this is not going far to increase their multimedia literacy, as the rhetoric being examined here is generally word-based.

One of the stronger essays in this collection in regards to usefulness to rhetorical pedagogy is “Using Film to Teach Coherence in Writing” by Kate Chanock. That this one will be helpful for finding ways to use film to teach rhetorical principles is made clear in Chanock’s introduction, as she explains that she wants “to look at elements such as structure, point of view, voice, use of evidence, attribution, and coherence in film and talk with students about how these were similar to, and different from, their equivalents in academic writing” (125). Ultimately, Chanock focuses primarily on coherence because that is where she and her students found the biggest differences between film and writing, but she provides a strong foundation for examination of the other elements, as well. One important discovery Chanock makes in this study is that students in general misunderstand what argument means in an academic sense. They tend to understand it to mean a quarrel and believe there must be something controversial

involved, so Chanock seeks to clarify for them that in academic discourse, “an argument is a demonstration that some idea is true” (127). After she has clarified for students what definition of argument they are operating under and introduced them to the language academics use to describe how argument works, she shows them a documentary called *Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, which they proceed to treat like a draft of a text and critique regarding its composition. She has students pay attention to the types of language used, such as academic, nonacademic, language of persuasion, and language of bias. She has them outline the structure of it and evaluate whether or not the points are covered in the most effective order possible. Her students were able to compare the acts of watching versus reading, noting that reading is different partly because of the individual’s ability to go at one’s own pace, pause, or even re-read sections as they please, while, depending on the situation, one may not be able to pause or rewind and rewatch a given section of a film. The lesson learned regarding cohesion in written arguments versus films is that in written argument, what often distinguishes good writing is “the elaboration of points in the argument and the use of cohesive words and devices, chiefly connectives” (132). However, in the documentary watched by these students, cohesion was rarely achieved verbally and almost always nonverbally, and yet the students had no problem following the argument. It provided them with an opportunity to see how this communicative tactic is achieved in one medium in order to illuminate its being accomplished differently in another. In her limited space, this is the main issue that Chanock elaborates upon, but her work points toward other ways that film might be used to explain for students how communication and argument in written form functions. What is necessary for this to happen, however, is a clear analytical framework to be utilized by the students.

The other essay from *Cinema-(to)-Graphy* that is most relevant to a rhetorical approach to film and composition is “Reading Multiculturally and Rhetorically: *Higher Learning* in the Composition Classroom” by Johanna Schmertz and Annette Trefzer. In this essay, the authors describe using the film *Higher Learning* to illustrate for students the rhetorical elements of how a film is composed. As with Chanock’s essay, this essay clarifies from the start that it will be treating film as a rhetorical text, as the authors explain that “in many cases, films are used in classrooms merely to discuss the ‘messages’ they contain. But questions of rhetoricity, interpretation, reader response, or rhetorical purpose apply to film just as they do to print text” (87). Schmertz and Trefzer go on to state that they believe that “film has its own rhetoric, similar to but different from the rhetoric of the printed text, a rhetoric executed through such mechanisms as camera placement and distance, editing, and so forth” (87). I believe that to say film has a different rhetoric than printed text is not quite accurate, more that film utilizes different tactics and different modes of communication to convey its message. This distinction is an important part of what students could learn from rhetorical analysis of film—that all communication is using the same set of tactics. Rhetoric stays the same, it is just the way that persuasion is achieved that varies by the type of text in question. This difference of definition aside, Schmertz and Trefzer remain focused in this essay upon the ways that film can teach some of these elements of rhetoric they mention, using their experiences teaching with *Higher Learning* as an example.

Schmertz and Trefzer’s goals are very much in line with those of Kress and Hill in that they believe that film can play an important role in making students more aware of how texts are seeking to persuade them:

we want to sensitize students to the presence of rhetoric so they can use it themselves and fend off its bad uses... by teaching students to read the rhetoric of film in the writing classroom, we are exploring two goals at once: we engage students in an analysis of the rhetorical and the cultural codes that operate to define subject positions—including redefining their own—and we seek to empower culturally underprivileged students by giving them access to a literacy that is both academic and critically self-reflexive. (87)

As they discuss their use of this particular film, Schmertz and Trefzer, like many of the other authors included in this collection, focus on identification as a primary rhetorical strategy of film. They describe assignments that ask students to write about a character in the film with whom they identify, focusing largely on narrative information, but also assignments that ask the students to analyze visual ways that the director encourages their identification with characters. Here the film is able to serve a cultural studies pedagogy purpose in encouraging identification with characters that are often quite different from the students themselves, but the film is able to serve the purposes of rhetorical pedagogy in showing the students tangible ways that an important tactic of persuasion, identification, is achieved through one medium, which can ideally shed light for them on how it is used in other mediums. The authors here do not explicitly apply this study to that purpose, but the potential is certainly there, as it is with teaching students about other tactics of persuasion, as well.

There are several needs which the subsequent chapters of this work will seek to fulfill. The impetus for it all begins with the frequent calls for increasing multimodal literacy through composition instruction. While the need has been articulated, there have been few tangible suggestions for how to accomplish this task. Here I am answering that call with a two-step

solution. First, the shortcomings of the typical analytical frameworks taught to composition students need to be addressed through a new, or at least revised, analytical framework. Second, there needs to be a tangible way to incorporate non-verbal texts into a composition course for the purposes of showing the full spectrum of that analytical framework's potential as it is taught to students, but not at the expense of fulfilling obligations to the students to instruct them in more traditional, verbal literacies.

The next chapter will seek to fulfill the first of these two tasks; it proposes an analytical framework that is applicable to both verbal and visual texts. The source for this framework is provided by rhetorical theory because of its adaptability to multiple text types. While typical use of rhetorical theory in composition focuses on elements of logic and downplays or ignores emotion (often portrayed as the opposite of logic), this framework is inclusive of both logic and emotion, along with several other elements from both classical and contemporary rhetorical theory that are relevant in explaining how both visual and verbal texts are able to persuade and communicate.

Having an analytical framework that can account for how multiple types of texts function only partially addresses the call for increasing multimodal literacy. Also required is a tangible course of action for the inclusion of visual and multimodal texts in the composition class so that the students can utilize this framework in analysis of texts of varying nature. The way to accomplish this that is the least intrusive upon the other important uses of the composition course is to pair, along with the traditional word-based texts, texts types that are as opposite these written texts as possible. Charles Hill's spectrum of vividness suggests film as this opposite type of text. Although word-based texts and film do share many traits, they are opposite in the sense that film is as vivid, and consequently as emotion-oriented, a text as one can find. Paired with

the increased attention to emotional appeal provided by the analytical framework I propose, even a small amount of inclusion of texts from the medium of film to be analyzed rhetorically can allow composition instructors to take those first important steps toward increasing our students' multimodal literacy.

In effort to fulfill that second step, the remaining chapters of this project will take the analytical framework from chapter two and apply it to both of these types of text that I propose be utilized in composition: film texts and word-based texts. This provides a demonstration of the effectiveness of the analytical framework at addressing aspects of both text types, a demonstration of the potential for using film to assist students in understanding word-based texts, and essay assignments and activities that make use of this framework and of film texts.

CHAPTER TWO

An Analytical Framework Based in Rhetoric

In my previous chapter, I argued that a major focus of composition courses should be increasing students' multimodal literacy, and that the best way to do this is through the approach of rhetorical pedagogy—seeking to teach students how rhetoric works—but in this case doing so in such a way as to stress how tactics of communication and persuasion function across multiple text types. One manageable way of tackling this challenge is by incorporating the text type that Charles Hill classifies as most opposite the written word in its vividness: film. Film could be used to both show how rhetoric applies to it as a medium, which would develop students' multimodal literacy, and also borrowing from the film medium ways to explain and illustrate how those rhetorical tactics work in written texts, as well. This idea of borrowing from other mediums and disciplines to explain how rhetoric works or improve its use dates back to classical rhetoric, as those rhetoricians borrowed from drama and actors; using film for this same purpose is not unorthodox but rather just an update.

The first step in increasing multimodal literacy through composition instruction is to revise or recreate, while still using rhetorical principles, the analytical framework we use to teach students how to engage with the texts they encounter. In this chapter, along with establishing that classical rhetoric sets this precedent for borrowing from other mediums, I will inventory relevant aspects of rhetorical theory and works on rhetoric and film in order to identify the most

important elements of a rhetorical framework designed to effectively explain multiple modes of communication, and then finally explain what such a framework should consist of.

There is definitely precedent set in classical rhetoric for not only expanding rhetoric's scope beyond words alone, but also for learning from other types of communication to make the use of rhetoric through language more effective. These early rhetoricians were of the opinion that rhetorical tactics could be improved by learning from other disciplines and types of communication. Obviously the earliest rhetoricians did not have film available as such a text type to examine, but they did have a comparable medium: drama. Their purpose was to take what they learned from the other disciplines like drama and apply it to their use of language for persuasion, but beyond showing that these other disciplines, even if primarily for entertainment purposes, could prove to give valuable insight into what makes effective argument, it also suggests that visual elements of communication can help accomplish things that language alone cannot.

Cicero and Quintilian, for example, made frequent comparisons between orators and actors. The society of these two rhetoricians, that of ancient Rome, was not as receptive to drama as the Greeks; the Romans "forbade comedy and theatrical performances and made stage players outcasts" (Clopper 37). Despite this, Cicero saw that there was something to learn from actors about how to be an effective orator. Macrobius's *Saturnalia* tells of Cicero challenging the actor Roscius to a contest "to see whether the latter, with his gestures, could express more often the same idea, or [Cicero] himself with his flow of eloquence and command of words" (Clopper 28). Cicero and Quintilian devote much discussion to style and delivery, often in relation to forensic oratory, but in doing so borrow many of the methods of actors and dramatization, acknowledging that persuasion is not based on language alone and showing what insights the discipline of drama

could offer someone seeking to be rhetorically effective.

Examples are an essential part of effective rhetoric, and there is likewise a strong relationship between drama and the example. The Greek rhetoricians viewed examples as a type of testimony, but Roman rhetoricians, such as the author of *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, believe that their purpose is clarification rather than testimony (245). As they are related to drama, the purpose of examples seems to be best described as clarification because testimony implies truth, inapplicable to something fictionalized like drama. The main argument of a particular work of drama might be viewed as the generality, and the plot, characters, acting, and other elements serve to clarify this generality. Aristotle, too, discusses examples, or paradigms, as a type of evidence in persuasion, and some of the types of examples he brings up are the fable and made-up illustrations (Book 2, 20.5). Paradigms are essentially examples, either citing things that have happened before or making up an example or illustration. Drama or film can be thought of, then, as fables or made-up illustrations (as examples) brought to life before the audience's eyes to make them even more persuasive. A play or film may even contain multiple paradigms that may conflict or comment on one another. Thus, this important aspect of persuasion shares much with drama, and later, with film.

As another illustration of this connection between drama and example, these early rhetoricians also saw the persuasive potential of utilizing fictional characters. Quintilian writes that, "the actor's voice and delivery produce greater emotional effect when he is speaking in an assumed role than when he speaks in his own character" (qtd. in Enders 57). This is similar to Plato's concepts of diegesis and mimesis, mentioned by Seymour Chatman in *Coming to Terms*, as Chatman likewise addresses the potential of fictional characters and narratives to persuade. Diegesis is when the speaker narrates as himself, while mimesis is when the speaker speaks as

another, or as Chatman explains it, recounting versus enacting, telling versus showing. Drama and film, along with other narrative texts, fit the description of mimesis, and Quintilian is observing that mimesis can be superior to diegesis for the purposes of eliciting emotions. Accordingly, Quintilian encouraged his students to “exploit pity, fear, and catharsis” (Enders 59). By following an actor’s example and being appropriately expressive, an orator can better make emotional appeals. A play or other narrative could in fact be seen as speech with many speakers, all as various assumed roles for the author. Clearly these rhetoricians saw acting and fictional characters as an effective method for conveying one’s message, though they saw it more as a case of borrowing from actors to make oratory more effective. However, they largely ignore the potential of these works they borrow from, perhaps because they were created primarily for entertainment, to also make arguments of their own.

If a narrative such as a play or film *were* to make an argument, how would that work? A precedent for this, too, can be found in classical rhetoric, this time in Plato’s concept of the dialectic. As David Roochnik discusses in *Beautiful City*, Plato gives multiple definitions of dialectic in his works. In *Phaedrus*, it is described as having two prongs, gathering scattered particulars into one idea and the division of those collected ideas according to forms (Roochnik 134). In the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, its definition seems to focus more on the division end of the above spectrum (135). In *Philebus*, it is described as a road to truth (137), and in *Republic* more as its most basic definition of question-and-answer (139). And as Roochnik also points out, Plato is fairly clear that he is not sure exactly what dialectic is, only that it is the best means of arriving at truth (139). Traditionally, though, the structure of dialectic begins with a claim, which is then questioned and challenged and consequently refined toward a claim that is closer to the truth, though Plato did not believe real Truth could be completely arrived at. Not only can

Plato's dialogues be read like plays, making them similar to drama and film in their possession of characters and dialogue, but they can often, especially in the case of more argumentative films, possess similar structures. It is not unusual for a film, on its way to making an argument or presenting a specific theme, to present a "starting point" argument to be revised and refined over the course of the film, based on both what is said by the characters and the events of the plot.

Kenneth Sayre, in *Plato's Literary Garden*, attempts to answer why Plato would choose the format of a dialogue and to determine what his purpose was in writing them. The first and most obvious answer is that the dialogues are actual conversations that he recorded, and with the early and middle dialogues, actual conversations in which Socrates participated; however, this is one possibility that Sayre is quick to point out does not stand up logically when considering when the people in them were alive and what Plato would be present for. Another possibility that Sayre does not outright dismiss but that does not explain all that the dialogues are able to do is that they were meant simply to walk the audience through the steps of philosophical argument. This is probably correct, but Sayre also believes that they were intended for a larger purpose, as well.

The purpose that fits best with the idea of dialectic as a way to present arguments is what Sayre refers to as a "proto-essay" view of them. The proto-essay view takes the position that the dialogues are a way to present arguments and defend against counterarguments with Socrates acting as a mouthpiece for Plato:

The view in question is (1) that Plato's primary purpose in writing the dialogues was to develop arguments for his own positions, while defending these positions against their opponents, and (2) that Plato's own positions are represented by his main protagonists—most notably by Socrates in the early and middle dialogues.

But both (1) and (2) are subject to serious objection... (1) requires (2) for its *prima facie* credibility. (5)

Sayre's rejection of the latter part of the premise is based primarily on the fact he doesn't feel that Plato and Socrates always agree; Socrates often suggests theses to the people with whom he converses that neither he nor Plato would have accepted, and there are discrepancies between Socrates' positions on the same issue between different dialogues. As Sayre sums it up, "We should be no more ready to assume that Thomas a Becket was a spokesman for Eliot (in *Murder in the Cathedral*) or Julius Caesar a spokesman for Shakespeare (in his play by that name)" (6). Sayre is likely correct in his assessment that Plato is not just using the dialogues for the purposes of having Socrates defend Plato's own views against counterarguments; however, this does not mean he is never using them for this purpose. In fact, an adapted version of this proto-essay approach could be a viable means of utilizing dialectic as a persuasive tool.

An additional possibility for Plato's purpose discussed by Sayre is the performance view, which holds that the dialogues were written to be performed for audiences, likely for use in the Academy. In this case, they are not necessarily being used to make an argument but to raise questions about an issue and give the students a "reorienting insight." This approach "avoids the stultifying assumption that the philosophic merit of the dialogues rests upon the success of their arguments." (9). This view is not wholly different than the theory that they were meant to demonstrate philosophic thinking, which does indeed appear to be one of Plato's intentions, but there is no historical evidence that they were ever performed, which makes this an unlikely bet as Plato's major intention for them. Ultimately, Sayre concludes that the dialogues are most likely intended as "surrogates of dialectal conversations" (21). In considering the importance of conversation in Plato's intellectual and philosophical development—along with evidence that

Plato does not believe that philosophic knowledge can be passed on through language, oral or written, but that the learner has to participate in the conversation—Sayre concludes that “the dialogues are literary reproductions of conversations of the very sort that probably set the stage for his own philosophic accomplishments” (25). He does believe that they are supposed to act as a teaching tool, that Plato is “attempting to set up conversations of the sort he shared with Socrates, in hopes of producing a similar effect in the mind of the reader” (26). On the downside, it is not an actual conversation, so it is not the same experience, but on the upside, Plato can polish it in a way that Socrates could not. Consequently, if a narrative such as a play or a film wishes to make an explicit argument, especially if it possesses multiple characters and thus multiple points of view or positions on an issue, dialectic may be the best way to explain it as an argument. In its possession of multiple speakers and voices who converse, either through words or actions in reaction to one another, gives film, like drama, a similar structure to the dialectic portrayed in Plato’s dialogues. It can then be utilized in the manner that the proto-essay approach to dialectic describes, presenting an argument, complete with multiple, built-in counterarguments, to an audience. An audience thinking and responding to that film could even allow the constructed dialectic to continue on into an unstructured, more pure form.

Kathleen Welch acknowledges this potential of dialectic, even when that dialectic is already constructed and presented to the audience in completed form. In *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse*, Kathleen Welch draws attention to the tendency to omit Plato from most surveys of dialectic and attempts to point out that his contribution of dialectic is much more valuable than most rhetoricians would tend to acknowledge. His exclusion is generally based upon his dislike for sophistic rhetoric, but he sees sophistic as just one of two types of rhetoric, with the other being dialectical: “Plato attacked his

version of sophistic rhetoric... because much sophistic rhetoric seemed to him to deny activity between the message sender and receiver” (Welch 100). Rhetoric in itself was not a bad thing, and in fact is what allowed dialectic to exist; his issue seems to be more with the passivity of the audience in sophistic rhetoric (Welch 100-101). According to Welch, “passivity precludes dialectic” (101), which means that in order for dialectic to exist, the audience must participate. On the one hand, the idea of a constructed dialectic might seem to remove it from this realm sought by Plato of audience engagement, and certainly anything that may be considered a constructed dialectic—drama, film, or even one of Plato’s dialogues—can be received passively. However, when received thoughtfully and critically, the dialectic is able to continue despite the initial form being constructed and static. As Welch describes Plato’s dialogues,

The individuals, set in the scene of a particular Athens, are active interlocutors who challenge and are challenged by Socrates. There is no Platonic dialogue without this verbal interchange of persuasion and belief. They are so carefully wrought that, as Walter Pater has discussed in *Plato and Platonism*, the dialogues themselves become individuals with whom we interact. (101)

This difference in response could be described in more modern terms as the difference between a literate reader of the text who reads critically versus one who consumes without any sort of critical awareness, instead passively receiving it. The critical reader is the ideal case, at least for Plato, and such a reader allows the dialectic to continue as it is supposed to. Thus, dialectic could be used to describe how a text, and in particular a narrative text, delivers its argument, but also, under ideal circumstances, also describe the response to that constructed dialectic.

In addition to borrowing concepts such as methods for delivery and use of examples and fictional characters for the purposes of argument, rhetoric also borrows from drama the use of the

visual. One example of this is the prop; drama often uses props to make its message more effective, through aiding understanding or creating a sense of immediacy. Cicero, for instance, was known to use props in his forensic oratory. Quintilian tells of Cicero using as a prop the bloodstained toga of Gaius Caesar, showing the toga to the jury; through its use, “Caesar seemed not to have been murdered, but to be being murdered before their very eyes” (qtd. in Enders 52). Cicero felt that using visuals was of paramount importance: “we may grasp ideas by means of images and their order by means of localities” (qtd. in Enders 50). Sometimes a text can make use of visuality without using actual, visible props, but instead using words to create an image. Aristotle devotes a section of *On Rhetoric* to using metaphor, antithesis, and actualization to do what George Kennedy translates as “bringing-before-the-eyes,” or visualization, because “things should be seen as being done rather than as in the future” (Book 3, 10.6). In other words, visualization makes matters seem more immediate and important. Although Aristotle is primarily bringing this up in order to help his audience develop a more sophisticated style by using metaphors, this still reveals his understanding that helping the audience visualize something allows the speaker to be more persuasive and more likely to push the audience to take action or see his point of view.

Aristotle’s understanding of the role of the visual is also quite similar to what Charles Hill explains on the same topic in “The Psychology of Rhetorical Images.” Images, whether actual or created through description, are powerful ways to get an audience to respond with emotion. So just as classical rhetoric borrowed some principles of persuasion from more visually-oriented forms of communication like drama, it follows that in our current instruction of rhetoric, we would borrow from comparable visually-oriented forms of communication, and film is one text type with much to offer in this capacity. For the purposes of composition instruction

and seeking to improve our students' multimodal literacy, along with teaching them to critically respond to multiple text types, film can help students understand principles of rhetoric so that they are both more critical readers of visual and multimodal texts like film, but also of language-based texts, which use many of the same tactics.

One reason to teach film in a composition class as part of the students' instruction in rhetoric is because of the persuasive potential of film as a medium. The classical rhetoricians borrowed from drama without giving full acknowledgement to drama itself as possessing persuasive potential, but we could use film both as a source for effective persuasive tactics and also acknowledge its persuasive power on its own, and if it has strong persuasive potential, it is important that students know how to read it and respond critically to it. As discussed last chapter, Hill points out that the most vivid of texts are the ones that have the strongest power to create emotional response and thus to persuade based on emotion, and he classifies film as the most vivid type of constructed text. In *The Rhetoric of Film*, John Harrington expresses agreement regarding the rhetorical potential of film, and appears to be basing this on similar reasoning, though he explains it in a slightly different way. Harrington feels that film is an excellent medium for persuasion because it falls somewhere in "between unconscious response and blatant manipulation... This is the ground where most honest attempts to say or show something grow, and where most people try to understand and apply what they see and hear. It is also this ground where the artist plants his seeds" (4). This sounds very similar to Hill's description of heuristic processing, which you will recall is quick decision-making based more on emotions than logic; Harrington is simply not putting it in terms of vividness and emotional response the way Hill is. Harrington still acknowledges the potential for manipulation through this medium, and if we are seeking to create critically literate members of society, one thing we

should do is arm them with the ability to identify how this popular medium seeks to persuade them in hopes that they can recognize the attempts at manipulation that film is likely to be used for. However, utilized like drama was used by the classical rhetoricians, film could also accomplish the task of helping students understand how rhetoric works in general, regardless of text type, providing them with an understanding of rhetoric to increase their literacy across many types of communication. What is needed, then, is an analytical framework that teaches students important concepts of rhetoric while working as well to explain how a word-based text functions rhetorically as it does to explain how a film functions rhetorically.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Gretchen Flesher Moon's analysis of contemporary freshman composition textbooks illustrates that, while rhetoric is explicitly discussed through the role and use of logic and usually in moderate depth, pathos is often relegated to the role of logical fallacy, or if not, garners only brief mention. Some textbooks do include more in-depth discussions of emotional appeal and may even make efforts to include texts for analysis beyond the traditional word-based texts as illustrations of it at use. However, a majority do not treat pathos in as much depth as is necessary to prepare students to understand visual and multimodal texts, which rely heavily on pathos and not always as an unethical tactic of manipulation. The framework that is needed for instruction of rhetoric in a manner that will explain texts as both ends of the vividness spectrum (and all texts in between, as well) should first and foremost seek to be more inclusive of pathos in addition to showing the role it plays in argument. This is one gap in current theory and practice that this analytical framework seeks to fulfill.

A good place to begin construction of such a framework is examining existing rhetorical discussions of film. One obstacle to using existing discussions of film and persuasion as a starting point, however, is that much of that work exists in the area of film theory rather than

rhetorical theory. The problem with this is that work in film studies is rarely using the same vocabulary and framework as work in rhetorical studies. Attempts to use film to teach principles of rhetoric require using the same vocabulary and framework across multiple mediums rather than teaching new frameworks for each type of text; the purpose is to show connections between the ways that multiple text types utilize rhetoric, not to make the divide wider. Even some of the extant works in rhetorical studies that address film and persuasion fail to concentrate on the concepts of rhetoric that we might teach in a composition class. Some are overly mode-specific, concentrating on details that are relevant only to one medium rather than the larger and more universal purposes smaller elements of a text are meant to accomplish. What is needed is to isolate those issues in film that are constant in most rhetorical texts—common purposes or effects that most persuasive texts would seek to accomplish—and then find the comparable elements of existing rhetorical theory; there is a gap between rhetorical theory and film theory that must be bridged. There is also a gap between discussions of rhetoric and film, which seeks to interpret the film's argumentative purpose generally for its own sake, and discussions of composition and film, which generally seek to use film to emphasize elements of the composing process, provide the students with subject matter to write about, or increase their awareness of other people and perspectives. Some elements of rhetorical discussions of film could be appropriated into this framework to be utilized for more pragmatic purposes in composition instruction.

Other problems with the existing work in rhetoric and film is that, while it does address the use of rhetoric *in* film or how non-fiction films and documentaries make their arguments, very little attention is paid to how the fictional films that comprise a majority of major releases operate on a rhetorical level. For instance, in his book *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of*

Narrative in Fiction and Film, Seymour Chatman devotes most of his time to establishing that narratives *can* argue, and says near the outset: “One fruitful sort of inquiry – which I shall not pursue – would be to outline or taxonomize the technical means by which film *could* argue in ways correspondent to formal verbal arguments” (58). This call definitely needs to be answered if film is to be used in an especially relevant way in the composition classroom, and the key to this is identifying the larger issues of rhetoric that are able to provide a broad enough picture of how persuasion works, utilizing rhetorical terminology, but not getting mired in mode-particular specifics. Some specifics will be discussed in this work, but as examples to demonstrate the application of the proposed analytical framework rather than for informational purposes about the films themselves. A short list of techniques and possible intentions for their use will emerge, but should not be taken as representative of all films and filmmakers. Harrington is right that attempting to make the list that Chatham proposes would be impractical; however, some examples have to be discussed in order for any progress to be made.

The main existing work that discusses film in explicitly rhetorical terms is the collection *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film*, edited by David Blakesley. In its introduction, Blakesley summarizes the four major rhetorical approaches to film that he sees being used. While all rhetorical, some of these are more viable as cores of a rhetorical approach to film (while still being relevant to other text types) than others. The first discussed by Blakesley is “Film as Language,” which “treats film as both semiotically and phenomenologically as a grammatical system of signs, with attention to spectatorship and perceptual processes” (4). Because of the connection to language, which would seem to make for easier parallels between what has already been written about rhetoric and film, this would seem like a sound approach. However, most attempts to lay out a grammar or language of film

run into the issue of lack of consistency across films and filmmakers; this approach seems to require an unrealistic level of specificity. In this same collection, Anna Chisolm summarizes the work of prominent film theorist Christian Metz and his work in film language. As she summarizes his view, he believes that “cinematic freedom... must be governed by grammar because, like its subspecies syntax, grammar is necessary for intelligibility” (41). Where he seems to end up is that he believes that there is a sort of grammar of film, a set of unwritten rules that filmmakers follow that allows what they are doing to make sense, but that the specific details of film language are fluid. In *Film Language*, Metz writes that film has always followed “a certain number of fundamental semiological laws... that are extremely difficult to isolate, but whose models are to be sought in general linguistics, or general semiotics, and not in the grammar or normative rhetorics of specific languages” (208-209). In short, it is similar to language in that it has laws like grammar that seem to govern how people make meaning in film, but this grammar cannot be laid out the same way language-based grammar can. We cannot make a list of filmmaking techniques and the purposes they accomplish, such as claiming that a closeup shot accomplishes *x* or that a sustained high note on a violin in the soundtrack accomplishes *y*, in the same way that we can expect a period to be consistently used to denote the end of a sentence. Consequently, even keeping the parallel to grammar a strict one, the analogy does not quite work. It works even less when one moves beyond purpose to examining effect, which could be seen as moving from grammar to language. The word “justice” has a definition, and yet could mean different things in different situations and texts. Likewise, we should not expect to be able to claim that a quick jump cut or the use of blue lighting or a musical montage will have consistent meanings or effects across multiple films.

This approach of film language or grammar is similar to the approach taken by Harrington in *The Rhetoric of Film*. Harrington recognizes that different filmmakers will use techniques to different ends, and so getting very specific about the meaning or effects of different filmmaking techniques would be futile. Harrington's refusal, however, to get specific or cite a specific film as an example keeps his discussion extremely general and prevents it from ever moving much beyond speculation about how certain techniques *might* be used. Harrington acknowledges that there is no single language of film that can be identified; there are multiple languages at work, like those of music, lighting, and dialogue. This is important to acknowledge—it is the sum of all these techniques that ultimately makes up the film and therefore is ultimately doing the persuading.

In his book, Harrington does attempt to quantify the “grammar” of film. He defines the shot as smallest unit of film grammar, then scene (series of shots), then sequence (series of scenes), which comprise the whole film. He goes from here into an extensive inventory of types of shots, the smallest unit of film grammar, used in film, but while giving examples of different types, fails to get much in depth regarding the persuasive purposes of the different options. Harrington does not believe there is just one way to use these, one purpose, but in trying to stay true to this notion, he never gets specific about how different techniques would be used to persuade viewers to think or feel certain ways. Ultimately, he describes an inventory of filmmaking techniques with occasional mentions of why a director might choose to use one. I believe this illuminates one of the biggest weaknesses of so specific an approach; getting too specific keeps your discussion from applying to other films and how they function, but not getting specific makes the entire discussion rather fruitless. What needs to be done, should one pursue this approach of film grammar, is to approach it in a descriptive rather than prescriptive

way, and to avoid making conclusions that certain techniques will always be used for the same purposes. This is what a rhetorical framework—beginning with the broader, more universal principles of persuasion that remain focused on effect and using these as an entry point for examining cause—can provide. This is why film language and film grammar are not suitable approaches for an adaptable rhetorical framework.

These smaller elements of film are definitely worth discussing because they play an integral role in a film's overall argument, just as language and grammar provide a foundation for any word-based argument. However, Harrington's work with this element of film exemplifies this problem because he never makes a strong connection between these smaller elements of filmmaking, which he spends so much of the book describing, and the larger arguments that films can make; it necessarily lacks a focus on cause and effect because explicitly and accurately outlining how each choice in making a film will always work and the effect it will have cannot be done with any accuracy. In short, he does not make the connection between all of these film languages, how the filmmakers choose to use them, and the ultimate thesis that may emerge because starting with the specifics will make his analysis inaccurate for most films beyond the one he uses to create his framework. This approach not only includes the dangers of becoming mired in mode-specific elements, but even filmmaker- or film-specific elements. However, the way those languages in film are used is integral to shaping a film's argument and to supporting its thesis. There is definite potential in a discussion of the language and grammar of film, but those issues should not be an end in themselves. I think that on a basic level, film grammar may be a viable approach as an object lesson for students to illustrate parallels between how grammar and language work with words and with visual texts, for instance Kate Chanock's use of film to teach her students about coherence described in *Cinema-to-Graphy*. However, the multiple and

varied ways that filmmakers can use the tools available to them renders attempts to teach rhetoric through such a specific and detail-oriented approach impractical. These details would be examined in any quality analytical framework, but such a framework should start with the general and move to the specific instead of from specific to general, or to put it another way, to start with the effect (larger persuasive purposes) and look for cause—a deductive framework—rather than starting with the cause (the specific elements of film) and moving from there to effect—an inductive framework.

While either of these could work well in the case of developing a framework for analysis of one type of text because the specifics in that case remain largely constant, in creating a framework explicitly to be applied to texts with seemingly little in common, moving from the more general commonalities to the mode-specific differences seems much more viable. Rather than beginning with a smaller element such as a certain type of lighting or transition or shot, this approach would instead begin with an effect, such as causing the audience to feel fear, and then look for what elements of the text can possibly contribute to causing that effect. Those smaller elements may not always be used the same way, nor are they likely to be present in other types of texts, so attempting to address them in the framework itself causes problems rather than solves them. Word-based texts and film texts share that they are both rhetorical texts, so the framework should begin with the common ground of rhetorical purpose, and those, as will be discussed later in this chapter, are covered sufficiently by classical rhetoric and in particular through Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals. Avoidance of beginning with the specifics should make transfer to other text types a much stronger possibility.

The second approach to film mentioned by Blakesley, one less entrenched in beginning with the specifics, is "Film as Ideology," which "views film as serving ideological functions in

both its content and apparatus” (5). This approach, which involves exposing a film’s “complicity with or deconstruction of dominant ideology” (5), is certainly broader than the “film as language” approach, and consequently has more potential as a part of a rhetorical framework seeking to improve multimodal literacy. Blakesley, in fact, characterizes it as “perhaps the most common way to approach film rhetorically” (5). One of its strengths as an approach is its acknowledgement that “films reveal not only predisposition of filmmakers but they also serve ideological functions in the broader culture” (5), making it acutely aware of author, audience, and message. However, while all texts probably deconstruct or reinforce cultural ideologies in some way, this seems a rather limiting approach to have students utilize. Certainly there are aspects of texts that are persuasive without directly addressing culture and ideology, which this approach might have them overlook. In a situation in which a teacher is using film for a cultural studies approach to composition, film as ideology would be a great choice. But for a rhetorical pedagogy approach, it seems too limiting. While all texts may ultimately deconstruct or reinforce a cultural ideology of some sort, this approach may cause other important rhetorical purposes of a text to be overlooked. Film ideology sounds on the surface more in tune with rhetoric and persuasion than “Film as Language.” However, while film as language is limited by its starting with the specifics, film as ideology is limited by its narrow scope. Cultural studies pedagogy is useful for many things, including the important task of encouraging students to develop into citizens of the world who are understanding of and accepting of others. However, there is a pragmatic need of teaching students to communicate and making them more literate that cannot be ignored on the way to making them better people. Film as ideology would fit well into a cultural studies approach to composition and would help students improve their skills of

analysis, but its limited scope prevents it from being the best option for helping students improve their multimodal literacy.

Broadening the approach of film as ideology is the third one discussed by Blakesley, “Film Interpretation,” which “treats film as a rhetorical situation involving the director, the film, and the viewer in the total act of making meaning” (6). By not limiting itself strictly to uncovering ideology, this approach seems superior. It already has built into it a foundation based on Aristotle’s rhetorical triangle, which includes those basic elements that underlie any persuasive text. Unlike “film as language,” this approach is likewise not constrained by beginning with the details. Instead, it is loosely defined as examining the rhetorical situation resulting from the audience or critic making meaning of the film. The problem with this approach, however, is exactly that: it is loosely defined. Beyond looking at the three points of the rhetorical triangle and their relationships with one another, this approach provides little additional direction or guidance. It is a step in the right direction, and the rhetorical triangle should be acknowledged in any rhetorical framework, but it lacks a concrete entry point for analysis.

That entry point, however, is provided by the fourth and final approach discussed by Blakesley, “Film Identification.” As Blakesley defines it, this approach “considers film rhetoric as involving identification and division” (7). Identification is the issue that seems to come up most frequently in the essays in Blakesley’s collection. It is also an issue that was mentioned frequently by the teachers who described their use of film in composition in *Cinema-to-Graphy*. They all seemed to recognize the power of film to encourage identification, even with characters and groups very different from the members of the audience. Schmertz and Trefzer, especially, see their use of *Higher Learning* in the composition class has primarily about identification,

using film, and *Higher Learning* in particular, because “developing an empathetic understanding of ‘others’ can help students move beyond simplistic cultural binaries and decrease defensive responses or outright hostility toward issues of diversity” (87). Indeed the first half of their article “Reading Multiculturally and Rhetorically” is about the results of using this film to encourage students to identify with others. Identification is also at the core of Victoria Salmon’s “Educating *with* Rita,” also included in the *Cinema-to-Graphy* collection. With many of the other essays in this collection driven by a cultural studies approach, several other essays touch at least briefly on the issue of identification, as well. Identification, then, seems to be a popular approach for use of film in composition, as it also is with the works in *The Terministic Screen*.

In his description of film identification, Blakesley naturally describes Kenneth Burke’s contributions to the field of rhetoric through his work on identification. As Burke himself defines it in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (20). Burke believes that one of the most powerful persuasive tools available is to cause one’s audience to find themselves consubstantial, or having things in common with, another party, be it the speaker or someone else. He in fact believes all rhetoric can be boiled down to either creating divides or bridging them through identification: “To begin with, ‘identification’ is, by the same token, though roundabout, to confront the implications of *division*... Identification is compensatory to division” (22). Identification seems to me the most viable place to begin construction of a rhetorical framework because it is an apt description of the aim of rhetoric. As Burke explains it, all rhetoric seeks to either encourage identification between people and groups, bridging divides, or to discourage identification, creating or widening divides. At the same time, rhetoric would

not be necessary if there were not divides to attempt to bridge. On a more pragmatic level, we are more likely to listen to and heed the arguments of people with whom we identify.

Identification is also ideal as a core component of the proposed analytical framework because it incorporates the three points of the rhetorical triangle—audience, speaker, and message—but provides some additional focus for examination of texts, both a motive and a tactic for rhetoric.

The popularity of it as an approach to film among both teachers and rhetoricians supports its being indispensable as a way of examining film, and if Burke is right and all rhetoric is ultimately about identification, using it in analysis of film could help students recognize its influence in other types of texts, as well.

On the relationship between identification and persuasion, Burke explains that

we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. (46)

He goes on to explain that “you persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his” (55).

Unlike what would usually be a speaker-focused purpose in more traditional forms of rhetoric, identification in film is not necessarily an attempt to have the audience identify with the filmmaker, but to have the audience identify with a specific character or group. If we identify with characters, we can feel emotions with them or for them, such as sympathizing with them, being angry about their treatment, or fearing for them. If we don't identify with the character, we are less likely to feel these emotions. Making it easier for the audience to identify with one

character over another can also suggest to the audience whose voice to listen to if there are multiple voices and multiple arguments, which becomes especially important when we are considering logical appeal in film. It is the voice of the person with whom we most identify that we are likely to look for the argument.

Identification in film can also be used through causing people to identify or not identify with groups rather than individuals. In *The Terministic Screen*, Ekaterina V. Haskins describes how the Nazis used identification propaganda films in her essay, “Time Space, and Political Identity: Envisioning Community in *Triumph of the Will*.” As Haskins explains, these films were successful through urging people to identify with the “One People” of Germany, by portraying it as a desirable group to be a part of. Likewise, identification could be used in the opposite way, by making people want to *not* see themselves as part of a particular group. Burke identifies the two main motivations of rhetorical expression as being either out of strife, enmity, and faction or out of love. Though identification may be used to bridge gaps and overcome division, at times it may be persuasively useful to take advantage of division, discouraging identification rather than encouraging it. Consequently, identification in film could be used as either an end unto itself, persuading us to identify or not identify with a person or group, or as a means to an end, shaping which characters to whom we choose to listen.

How, then, does a filmmaker facilitate identification with specific characters? In some ways, it is created the same way it might be with an orator. One gets a sense of the person’s character from what he says, how he says it, and how he carries himself. However, because there is an additional level of construction that is not present when seeing a speaker in real life, and the medium is largely visual and consequently more oriented toward the emotions, this is accomplished through methods beyond a focus on ethos alone, but instead a combination of the

tactics identified by Aristotle as ethos and pathos. Along with elements typically thought of as a part of ethos, the level of identification can be affected by the emotions the audience feels in response to a character's actions, and those emotions can be shaped by such filmmaking elements as music, lighting, editing, and cinematography. For instance, the scenario of one man killing another could be portrayed in such drastically different ways that in one version, he is a sympathetic hero, and in another, a coldhearted villain, based on such small changes as the music that plays over the scene and how long the camera is allowed to focus on the suffering of the man who is killed. Subsequent chapters will provide numerous examples of this relationship between ethos and pathos. Identification may seem initially to be just another way to say "ethos," but in a visual medium such a film, emotional appeal can be just as influential in determining how well an audience will identify with a character and, based on that, whose perspective the audience is likely to adopt. By beginning with identification, this framework is making room for the oft-ignored or denigrated tactic of pathos and also altering more common understandings of ethos and pathos as separate by showing how they may actually become intertwined.

The more obvious of these two aspects of identification is ethos, or ethical appeal. Ethos, according to Aristotle, relies on the character of the speaker:

[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt. And this should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person. (Kennedy 38)

Note that it *should* result from the speech itself, which would make it invented ethos, but previous opinions and reputations, or situated ethos, are always a possible influence.² As will be discussed later, ethos can apply to both the filmmaker, who constructs the film, or to the characters within it, whose sometimes-conflicting voices compete to be the one whose argument we heed. We need to trust the filmmaker if we are to buy into his argument, and we need to trust the character whose argument we are to listen to. Examination of the elements shaping ethos of both of these entities is important to understanding film and helpful to gaining a better understanding of rhetoric.

The other major influence upon identification, particularly in more visual mediums, is pathos, or emotional appeal. Pathos is used to put the audience in a certain frame of mind or to motivate them to respond a certain way to events or an argument: “[There is persuasion through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech; for we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile” (Kennedy 38). Feeling emotions toward specific people, be they actual people or invented characters, is an illustration of how ethos and pathos are not so easily separated from one another, and especially in the issue of identification or lack thereof.

While the visual nature of film causes identification to be based at least partially upon emotional appeal, it is still, as it would be in a non-narrative text, as well, based on ethos. Even in classical rhetoric, ethos and pathos are not so easily separated. The traits Aristotle believes define positive ethos are “good sense, good moral character, and goodwill” (213). In addition to his defining these characteristics of a person with positive ethos, much of what Aristotle writes in his section on the emotions is quite applicable to creating positive ethos because ethos relies

² This terminology of “situated” versus “invented ethos” originates from Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee’s *Ancient Rhetorics for the Contemporary Student*.

largely on how an audience feels toward the speaker. Aristotle brings up the concept of identification in *On Rhetoric* when he says, “since everything like and akin to oneself is pleasant, and since every man is himself more like and akin to himself than any one else is, it follows that all of us must be more or less fond of ourselves” (204). This does generally explain the idea of identification. In his section on emotion where he describes the emotion of friendliness, Aristotle is basically defining identification:

A friend is necessarily one who shares pleasure in good things and distress in grievous things, not for some other reason but because of the friend;... those to whom the same things are good and bad and who have the same friends and same enemies;... those they themselves like and those liked by those they themselves like. (Kennedy 135).

Because friendship is often built on identification, demonstrating similarities between oneself and one’s audience can create feelings of friendliness toward oneself and cause one to be seen in a positive light. Aristotle also points out how people will feel friendly toward people they *want* to be like: “[we are friendly to] those who praise the presence of good qualities [in others] and especially the qualities that these people fear they do not really have” (Kennedy 136). This is especially relevant when examining the ethos of characters *within* a film, as audiences want to side with and identify with people they wish they were more like.

Aristotle also discusses how the opposite, showing someone in a negative light and causing an audience to feel negative feelings toward them can also be useful in persuasion, to which he begins to allude at the end of his discussion of friendliness: “[we like] those [who are] not intimidating and with whom we feel secure; for no one like a person he fears” (Kennedy 137). He mentions later the potential benefits of making people seem unfriendly (Book 2, 4.32)

and unkindly (7.5). Even his discussions of how one inspires anger or fear are relevant to identification and the ethos of film characters, because a filmmaker can clarify to the audience that they are not supposed to identify with certain characters by influencing the audience to feel one of these negative emotions toward them.

Aristotle, though he does spend much time explaining how emotion can be used to persuade, does not overtly advocate it as its own means of persuasion because it does not rely on fact: “verbal attack and pity and anger and such emotions of the soul do not relate to fact but are appeals to the juryman” (Kennedy 30). He in fact calls it “wrong” to try to persuade on the basis of emotion alone: “it is wrong to warp the jury by leading them into anger or envy or pity: that is the same as if someone made a straightedge rule crooked before using it” (Kennedy 30).

However, right or wrong, Aristotle knows this is a potent way of bringing people around to one’s point of view or driving them to action, which is why he does not simply say this and leave out emotion as a means of persuasion. He ultimately devotes much of *On Rhetoric* to discussing a variety of human emotions at length, defining the emotion, explaining the state of mind of those who are feeling it, and describing who and what the emotion is typically felt toward. He seems to be saying that, in a perfect world, one would never have to rely on emotion as a means of persuasion, but because it works, he might as well explain how to do it. He is right that it should not be used in place of logic, but also acknowledges that it does have a place in rhetoric.

The visual nature of the film medium, in conjunction with the ability of vivid information to elicit emotional response, suggests that attention to emotional appeal is essential for any rhetorical approach to film. I believe Aristotle is clear on the fact that he finds logic superior as a method of persuasion, but he recognizes, like Hill, that emotions can influence or even override logic as a spur to decision making. There is not a single, set way for a filmmaker to make his

audience feel a specific emotion, and I believe trying to outline all the possible ways to make an audience feel each major emotion would be a dead end, much like trying to lay out in detail what comprises film language. This does not even address the problem of some people not responding to emotional appeals the way authors or filmmakers want them to. Whether through ineffectiveness on the part of the filmmaker or through audience misunderstanding, emotions can cause the audience to side with a person they are not supposed to or resist the person they are supposed to favor. However, I do believe that there are overall trends in how filmmakers seek to achieve certain emotional responses. Even more importantly, I believe one can usually identify what emotional response a filmmaker was *trying* to achieve (successful or not), and identifying that would allow one to backtrack and determine what techniques were used in effort to achieve said emotional response.

Consequently, even though ethos and pathos are often treated as separate issues, in the case of identification, especially in a visual medium like film, these two types of appeals are closely intertwined. In a less visual medium like prose, the author's ethos would still be important, but would be less obvious and less tied up with emotional appeal. As the speaker becomes more visible, the potential for identification goes up, and likewise the relationship between ethos and pathos and their influence upon that identification becomes stronger. In a narrative, such identification is the key to determining the work's overall argument, while in a text with a less visible speaker or characters, identification might play a smaller role. However, it is important to distinguish between persuasion and argument, as J. Anthony Blair does in "The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments." Blair believes that visuals on their own cannot make an argument but can be persuasive; consequently, film can be persuasive in its smaller pieces but

make an argument on a larger scale.³ Gretchen Flesher Moon acknowledges this distinction in “The Pathos of *Pathos*,” as well, also pointing out that this distinction is also recognized in some composition textbooks, with argument given preference: “When argument is distinguished from persuasion, argument frequently attracts the desirable attributes of clarity, dispassionate evaluation of evidence, and contemplation, while persuasion involves obfuscation, loading of inappropriate evidence, and action” (36). This distinction includes a level of evaluation while Blair’s more indicates a relationship, with persuasion forming the building blocks of an argument. In either case, the important issue is that there is a difference between the two, with logic playing a prominent role in argument but not necessarily in persuasion. This building block nature is similar for identification, as well, as it is created out of ethos and pathos. Identification, and with it ethos and pathos, rarely make arguments on their own, but can be persuasive; they are tactics for making an argument. The use of film in the composition class can both illustrate and help students understand ethos, pathos, and identification as persuasive tactics, and it can also show how these can play a role in a larger argument.

Ethos, pathos, and identification could thus be thought of as elements of persuasion while argument itself exists more in the realm of logic. Students need to understand logic and how logical arguments are made, certainly, and a majority of the texts used to instruct composition concentrate on logic, but students could also greatly benefit from both learning about these additional tools for persuasion that are not based in logic and also from being made aware of how the more emotionally-oriented tactics can actually intrude upon and distort logical claims. Rhetorical competency and literacy in this increasingly visual world is not just about consuming and producing effective texts, but also about reading critically and recognizing incorrect or

³ Visuals can, however, imply logical claims, largely through visual suggestion of cause and effect, which will be addressed in chapter five.

perhaps even unethical use of rhetoric. Understanding of logical argument and the ways it can be supplemented or distorted through other means is essential to improved literacy. As discussed in chapter one, the shift toward visual and multimodal communication in the culture also brings with it a more heavy reliance upon emotions, and emotion appeal can encourage shortcuts in decision-making. Rhetorical instruction for composition students, then, must make understanding of emotional appeal, along with the related issues of ethos and identification, a priority.

On the topic of *logos*, or logical appeal, Aristotle simply says, “persuasion occurs through the arguments [*logoi*] when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case” (Kennedy 39). Blending Blair’s idea of persuasion versus argument and Aristotle’s appeals, one might say that a film is persuasive in its use of ethical and emotional appeal, and these point the audience toward, supplement, or occasionally even interfere with its *logos*-based argument. This seems quite relevant to how we often encourage writing students to make their arguments: relying on logic to make the argument, but using ethos and pathos to supplement it and make it more effective. Film, even in small pieces such as isolated scenes, can help students understand how argument works by helping them grasp the function of tactics like identification and emotional and ethical appeal. Arguments can also be made through dialectical structure in narrative mediums, including film, which is another asset offered by film’s inclusion in composition instruction; a film used in its entirety can help students understand one approach to logical reasoning and argument, dialectic, and also show the relationship between logical appeal and other types of rhetorical appeal.

Illustrating how narratives can also be arguments is the primary purpose of Seymour Chatman’s *Coming to Terms*. Chatman believes there are three main text types: narrative,

description, and argument. However, he also believes that there are not distinct divisions between these three. For example, narratives and arguments can and often do include description. What an author chooses to include and exclude in a description is at least partly persuasive in effect. Narratives can include argument. Chatman posits that narrative films with arguments and messages are not uncommon, but that explicit argumentation in them is not that common: “The more sophisticated films become, the less often do characters or voice-over narrators explicitly argue a film’s thesis... It may go against the grain of the medium to deal in formal syllogistic or enthymemic structures, but certainly many fiction films entail argument of an informal sort” (57). The way this is likely to happen in a narrative text is through dialectic. As one illustration of this and how identification, ethos, and pathos influence logical argument made through dialectic, J. Anthony Blair uses the example of Oliver Stone’s film *JFK*:

Oliver Stone’s *JFK* made the case that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy and to cover up the conspiracy. In telling that story, it made the characters who believed in a conspiracy highly credible, and those who denied it highly unbelievable. (56)

This sounds simple and obvious, but could actually be quite subtle. When a film has multiple characters, and consequently multiple arguments, which character we listen to is contingent upon who seems credible (ethos) and with whom we sympathize (pathos). As Blair sums up how this works, “as narratives [films] tell stories that have ‘logical’ resolutions, and hence function as arguments. Because pictures, and especially films, both fictional and documentary, are wonderfully suited to telling believable stories, they provide an excellent medium for visual argument by means of narrative construction” (56). The ethical and emotional appeals do not make the argument themselves but guide where the audience looks for the logical argument. The

inclusion of film in a composition class helps students understand both persuasion *and* argument—the former through ethos, pathos, and identification, and the latter through dialectic.

While Plato may not have intended for his dialogues to follow the proto-essay intent that Sayres discusses, and may not have been using them to make arguments about the subject matter as much as how one learns, they certainly can be read as arguments, and their structure and tactics can definitely be used to make effective arguments. As George Kennedy points out in his introduction to *On Rhetoric*, there are important differences between dialectic and rhetoric:

Dialectic proceeds by question and answer, not, as rhetoric does, by continuous exposition. A dialectical argument does not contain the parts of a public address; there is no introduction, narration, or epilogue, as in a speech—only proof. In dialectic only logical argument is acceptable, whereas in rhetoric... the impression of character conveyed by the speaker and the emotions awakened in the audience contribute to persuasion. (26)

However, the role of ethos and pathos need not be ignored in examination of dialectic. Granted, there is often a clear “winner” based on logic, but the dialogues’ emulation of drama with their multiple characters and personalities does allow for ethos and pathos to influence how the audience feels toward characters and from there possibly intrude upon logical reasoning. Plato’s dialogues are much more limited in this capacity than film, but the potential is still there. Further, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, mimesis (the speaker speaking through or as someone else) can be superior to diegesis (the speaker speaking for himself) for the purposes of eliciting emotions and consequently persuading people based on those emotions. Dialectic, particularly the proto-essay type of dialectic, would certainly be classified as mimesis. It can be a powerful way to make an argument, and examination of it can help us understand argument.

Ethos and pathos are important to film-as-dialectic because the audience determines which of the many voices in a film to listen to based largely on whom they most identify with, and identification in this highly-visual medium is shaped primarily by ethical and emotional appeal. Many films take on this dialectical structure, acting as an extended discussion through words and actions between multiple characters on a particular topic. As the characters interact, their actions are driven by how they respond to the words and actions of others. A film may begin by appearing to make one claim, but the “conversation” between the characters refines or revises that claim to a new one. Thus, ethos and pathos can be essential to the logical argument presented by a film. Many characters may be presenting arguments on an issue, but how the filmmaker shapes whom you identify with and what emotions you feel influences which character you listen to and consequently what you interpret as the film’s argument.

Therefore, while the emotional and ethical appeals in film are persuasive, it is the characters and narratives that can make actual, logical arguments. One aspect of logical argument that Aristotle stresses is defining one’s terms. This, in film, is not just a logical issue but also one of ethos and pathos. If, for instance, one is trying to define justice and injustice (one of Aristotle’s examples) in a film—for instance, justified violence—how the audience feels toward the character committing the violent acts and the victims of them (determined by ethos and pathos) help to shape that film’s definition of justice. If it is the perpetrators of the violence with whom we identify, we will have one definition of justified violence. The film is then making the argument that violence in this particular scenario is justified. If the opposite is the case and we are made to identify with the victims instead, then justified violence is defined quite differently and the film would then be arguing that violence in this particular case is *not* justified. Just as a speaker can choose his definition carefully to best benefit the argument he wants to

make, the filmmaker can establish his definitions by how he portrays the characters involved. Thus, what should be the realm of logic can be intruded upon by identification, shaped by ethos and pathos, and the above is just one example of how.

This is where the issue of multiple voices is relevant again. Harrington points out the important difference between the controlling consciousness of a film and the voice of a film: “The controlling consciousness is the mental framework determining the nature and direction of a work, while voice is the outward manifestation of the ideas of the controlling consciousness” (52). This is an issue brought up by Seymour Chatman in *Coming to Terms*, as well. He refers to it as the “implied author” but generally agrees with Harrington’s definition. An implied author is the one whose argument we are supposed to be listening to, though it isn’t necessarily one of the voices we find within the narrative. There are times when there are many characters presented, and they are all wrong; in this scenario, the position on an issue that is really being advocated is that of the implied author. A film may even have a narrator, but the same issue still applies: it might not be that narrator whose voice we are supposed to listen to and agree with.

Much of what Chatman says regarding implied authors is described by Mikhail Bakhtin in “Heteroglossia in the Novel,” though Bakhtin is describing it specifically in regards to the written word. When discussing “narrator” and “author” in film, matters get much more complicated since there are many different authors at different steps in the filmmaking process and sometimes no explicit narrator. However, the issue of separating the “author” and his opinion from that of the narrator and/or characters is still important in deciding what any narrative’s message is. Heteroglossia is defined by Bakhtin as

another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced

discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. (218)

As Bakhtin describes it in regards to the novel,

We acutely sense two levels at each moment in the story; one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with his objects, meanings and emotional expressions, and the other, the level of the author, who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story. The narrator himself, with *his* own discourse, enters into this authorial belief system along with what is actually being told. We puzzle out the story itself and the figure of the narrator as he is revealed in the process of telling his tale. If one fails to sense this second level, the intentions and accents of the author himself, then one has failed to understand the work. (208)

Therefore, when puzzling out the larger argument being made (whether intended or unintended), it is important to recognize that the author and the narrator or character may not agree, and that the author may ardently disagree with the character or narrator. What Bakhtin does not offer (and what indeed does not exist) is a pat set of rules or steps to go through to determine when an author agrees with a character and when he disagrees. This is where identification created through ethos and pathos can be influential and help the audience discern whether a character's words and actions are to be agreed or disagreed with. As with a written narrative, there is no set, objective way to determine how one is supposed to view a character; indeed, I would imagine this varies widely by movie and filmmaker. Filmmakers can also make mistakes, unintentionally turning an audience against a character that the filmmaker wishes them to be for, or causing an

audience to a favor a character the filmmaker wishes them to be against. The main thing that is certain is that there can exist a difference in perspective or argument between the author and his characters.

The issue of the controlling consciousness or implied author can get muddled when you consider the fact that it is not a single person making a film but usually many. If there is a lack of agreement in the controlling consciousnesses shaping the film, that film may not have a discernable voice or that voice will be inconsistent and therefore not make a clear argument. Chatman addresses this issue, also, calling it “authorship by committee,” but fails to resolve the issue. Neither Harrington nor Chatman seems to know what to do about this problem, but it is at least something to take into account when giving credit or assigning blame to a filmmaker for the quality of the argument he is making.

Because the filmmaker is generally invisible (and perhaps actually many different people), there are few ways to facilitate identification with him, but there are still ways he creates an invented ethos—created through the text itself rather than outside reputation—for himself. One means of creating invented ethos for a filmmaker rather than for the characters within his film is his ability to allow us to identify with the things in the world he creates in his film, something Harrington points out in *The Rhetoric of Film*: “Playing upon our delight in identification with the familiar is part of the rhetorical stock-in-trade of the filmmaker. He knows that we will believe the familiar, and that by creating an atmosphere of familiarity he is more likely to convince us to accept his other offerings” (31). In short, he is demonstrating his credibility by creating a realistic and consistent world within his film. Harrington does bring up the issue of identification here, but does not expound upon it, and perhaps rightly so. Part of identification would seem to come from seeing, either actually or in the imagination, and

therefore the primary means of identifying with the filmmaker is by identifying with the world and characters he creates.

While typically the closest the audience can come to identifying with the filmmaker is identifying with his creation, there are still other ways he can create an ethos for himself. Not entirely unrelated to the issue of credibility through realism, another aspect of filmmaker ethos addressed by Harrington but not labeled as such is the notion of filmmaker objectivity:

the illusion of objectivity is a rhetorical device exploited by the filmmaker. The camera as an objective narrator is not objective at all, but subject to the controlling consciousness of the filmmaker. An audience thinks it is simply being shown the events of a story, but the filmmaker carefully controls point of view with such things as film stock, lighting, setting, and camera angle. (89)

The filmmakers control how the audience perceives characters and events, and can make technical changes to shape these to their purposes. They are the controlling force that shapes the ultimate product and argument, but with the number of people involved in making a film, and subsequent lack of a single person controlling all of it, there exists potential for arguments to become muddled or even be changed. The ethos of the filmmaker in this capacity is likely to be noticed more often when it is bad than when it is good. Inconsistencies reflect poorly on the filmmaker, while a lack of them makes him invisible, as he should be.

Though not as common as invented ethos, there are situations in which a filmmaker may also possess a situated ethos. There are not a huge number of household-name filmmakers who have reputations with the average moviegoer, but there are certainly a few. Most likely, a filmmaker may have a reputation for making especially good or especially bad films, or certain themes or habits that audiences come to expect. Both of the filmmakers whose works will be

discussed in later chapters possess situated ethos along with their invented ethos. M. Night Shyamalan, whose works will be discussed in chapters three and four, possesses a reputation for suspenseful films with twist endings, and many an audience member goes into his films expecting (or perhaps even spending most of the movie trying to figure out) the twist ending. Oliver Stone, whose film *Natural Born Killers* will be discussed in chapter five, likewise brings with him a reputation for making edgy and often controversial films. Audience members familiar with his work might bring into their viewing an expectation that his film push limits or adopt unpopular viewpoints. While situated ethos is not applicable to all films, discussion of it in the cases where it applies could also teach students important lessons about ethos and its implications.

Ultimately, film and dialectic have much in common. Sometimes film may function similarly to Sayre's preferred understanding of the dialogues, where it explores ideas as a portrayal of the author's own exploration of ideas, perhaps never settling on a specific position, or making an argument that just happens to be incidental, but is not the author's focus. And sometimes, certainly, a film has no intent to explore ideas but is simply made to entertain, to get the audience to feel certain emotions. However, when film is argumentative, it likely functions like Sayre's proto-essay characterization of Plato's dialogues. In these cases, one of the characters may be acting as a mouthpiece for the author, though Bakhtin points out that this may not always be the case, that the author's own position may not be expressed by any character. Ultimately, though, when a film functions like a proto-essay dialectic, ethos and pathos play a much larger role than they do in one of Plato's dialogues, helping the audience decide which voices are supposed to be listened to and which are not.

In the composition classroom, film could be used in two primary ways utilizing this analytical framework. It can be used in small pieces, perhaps isolated scenes, to help students grasp persuasive tactics such as ethos, pathos, and identification. Films could also be used in their entirety to not only teach these persuasive tactics but illustrate how they are used in logical argument, showing how they can both make an argument more effective but also how they can sometimes intrude upon logic's terrain and distort logic rather than assist it. For this last purpose in particular, it may be necessary to show a film in its entirety, but the lesson about the potential for argument to be overtaken by persuasion is an important one for demonstrating to students how ethos, pathos, and identification can have direct bearing on logical argument.

The rhetorical framework for examination of film that I wish to lay out here begins with the element of rhetoric identified as especially prevalent in film by both teachers and rhetoricians writing about film: identification. Identification, even if it is, as Burke believes, something that can explain virtually all of rhetoric, is not enough on its own to help students understand communication and persuasion. Students first need to understand how identification is created, and for that, we can turn to Aristotle and his explanations of ethos and pathos. While often conceived of as separate elements of persuasion, they are not so easily separated, and especially in visual mediums where emotions are easily elicited, they are very much entwined. As Blair points out, ethos and pathos and the resulting identification (or lack thereof) do not make arguments on their own but can be persuasive. In a perfect world, or at least Aristotle's perfect world, persuasion would only occur on a logical basis. However, in preparing students for communication in the real world, the role of non-logical persuasion has to be addressed. Many arguments, narrative or otherwise, take the form of a dialectic, with multiple voices, viewpoints, groups, political candidates, companies, and others fighting for our support, our votes, our

money, our action. Identification very often shapes who we listen to and who we side with, even if that at times means overriding a more logical conclusion. At least within a narrative, sometimes a text is constructed so that the answer is that we are to listen to none of the voices, as Bahktin teaches through the concept of heteroglossia. That sometimes in the real world the answer might also be none of the voices is an additional lesson that may be learned from Bahktin’s insight into how competing voices function in a narrative text. Regardless, identification, shaped by ethos and pathos, is often either an audience’s guide toward the “right” logical argument being presented or at the very least an influence on whose arguments to heed and whose to ignore. This analytical framework can be explained visually like this:

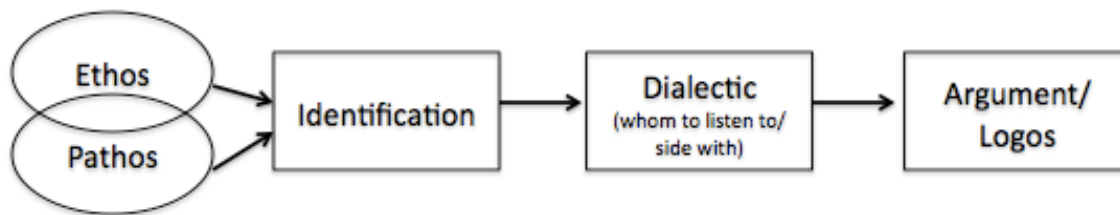


Fig. 1. Illustration of Analytical Framework.

Subsequent chapters will each focus on one step in this framework, looking at that portion in detail and looking at both how that piece contributes to the overall framework in explaining how argument works and also how focusing just on that piece can also be fruitful in instructing composition students on rhetoric.

Chapter three will examine pathos and ethos and their occasional tendency to become entwined with one another. In that chapter, I will show first how ethos and pathos can be established in the film medium by looking at the works of one filmmaker, M. Night Shyamalan. Along with that, I will look at the use of these same appeals in a work common to many a first year composition reader, the “I Have A Dream” speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. This chapter will explain ethos and pathos in greater detail, discuss their importance as elements of rhetoric

taught to composition students, and demonstrate the similarities in how these two appeals are achieved in two very different mediums, showing that this first element of my proposed analytical framework is adaptable to multiple text types, as it should be if it is to help increase multimodal literacy.

Chapter four will build upon chapter three by showing how those elements of ethos and pathos shape identification. It, also, will use Shyamalan's films, but instead of focusing just on ethos and pathos, continuing to show the implications for identification with characters. As with chapter three, this will also include an essay common to first year composition readers, "Just Walk On By" by Brent Staples, this time discussing the use of identification in the essay and drawing parallels between the ways it is accomplished on film and the ways it is accomplished in writing, also illustrating its importance in both mediums. Overall, this chapter discusses identification in greater depth, demonstrates how the elements of ethos and pathos from classical rhetoric serve to explain how it is achieved, and again shows how two seemingly opposite text types are utilizing quite similar tactics for creating identification.

That identification is extremely influential in any argument presented through narrative or visual means. Chapter five will provide an illustration of how identification, created through ethos and pathos, can influence an argument, concentrating in this case on film alone because of the increased potential for these persuasive elements to intrude upon or alter argument in this visual medium. Consequently, this chapter will examine the competing voices in Oliver Stone's film *Natural Born Killers* and the way that identification shapes and distorts which characters we turn to for the film's argument. *Natural Born Killers* not only provides an example of a case in which the emotional nature of the film medium allows a film's argument to be altered from its

intended one, but also provides an example of how there can be serious consequences for misusing this potential of rhetoric.

The sixth and final chapter will operate as a conclusion, reviewing the salient points of the previous five chapters and also providing examples of how this proposed rhetorical framework along with film can be utilized in the classroom. Example assignments and classroom activities will be provided and discussed.

Overall, the following chapters will explain each step of this framework in detail and also provide classroom applications for both using that piece of the framework in isolation and also as a step in using the entire framework as part of a comprehensive instruction in argument.

CHAPTER THREE

Pathos and Ethos in Word and Film

In the analytical framework I proposed in the previous chapter, identification is the central element, but in order to explain how identification is accomplished, one must first examine emotional and ethical appeal. These two tactics, at times inseparable, are what determine whether identification with a person or character takes place. Because of this, it is useful to first discuss in greater detail how these two types of appeal are accomplished and what similarities exist between their use in different, or even opposite, mediums. This attention to ethos and especially pathos is something that is missing from or at least devalued in a majority of composition instruction on argument, but in my proposed rhetorical framework is given a both larger and more foundational role.

This chapter uses example films and an example written text to demonstrate how emotional and ethical appeals are made in both film and the written word. The example films utilized in this chapter and the next are written and directed by M. Night Shyamalan, and the example written text to which the films will be compared is the text of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 speech "I Have A Dream." Discussion of this text is included for two purposes. First, it is to illustrate that the proposed analytical framework is viable whether discussing film or written text. Second, it allows highlighting of those tactics of filmmaking that have equivalents in the

written word, to be used for the purposes of helping students grasp the concepts and make better connections between two different text types.

As mentioned in chapter one, pathos and ethos, but especially the former, are not assigned much value in contemporary composition textbooks. In “Rhetoric, The Enabling Discipline,” as he is arguing for a return to teaching emphasizing rhetoric instruction, Edward P.J. Corbett supports turning to rhetoric as a way to teach logic, but also stresses the importance of including emotional and ethical appeal. He notes that students are often taught to avoid the use of emotional appeal or that use of emotional appeal is irresponsible. However, he instead argues that emotional appeal can be used both responsibly and irresponsibly, that it is relevant to both human relations and communication, and that awareness of how emotional appeal works is enabling to students both as students and as human beings. This potential to enable students in both these ways is exactly why rhetorical instruction should deliberately include emotional appeal. Furthermore, this essay by Corbett was written in 1972; the need for understanding and recognizing emotional appeal has only grown since then in light of the move toward visual communication. However, composition textbooks, perhaps the most ready litmus test for what elements of rhetoric are being taught in composition, suggest that no such shift has occurred.

In “The Pathos of *Pathos*: The Treatment of Emotion in Contemporary Composition Textbooks,” Gretchen Flesher Moon reports on the findings of her survey of 25 composition textbooks, specifically examining their treatment of pathos. Her overall findings are that pathos “gets very short shrift in textbooks and, even then, often suffers the ignominy of identification as or association with the fallacies” (33). As Moon later characterizes the treatment of emotions in the textbooks she examines, “reason is a strong protagonist who needs a sidekick, a supporting actor, in emotion. Barely is this admitted, though, before the explanation turns to a warning

against this powerful, unethical duo” (36). Her findings are that emotion is generally either not mentioned at all, only briefly mentioned, or if mentioned in much detail, usually in such a way as to suggest it is not appropriate to be used in argument. While, as noted by Corbett, emotional appeal certainly does have the power to be used irresponsibly, it also can be used in responsible ways. Furthermore, even if it were only used irresponsibly, as many of these textbooks suggest, it would still seem prudent to educate students on how this appeal works in order to better prepare them to recognize manipulation when they encounter it.

Thorough discussion of pathos, including specific discussion of how it is achieved, is instead missing from many composition textbooks. While its absence from textbooks does not necessarily mean it is not being taught, it does reflect that those who are influencing the field through the writing of textbooks do not value it, and if they do not value it, it is easy for teachers using these textbooks to dismiss it, as well. This absence means there is a gap students’ knowledge of rhetoric; the insufficient attention to pathos in the textbooks also means that students do not have a resource for explaining how pathos is achieved, which inhibits their ability to recognize it in other texts and utilize it in their own.

There are a few exceptions to this gap in students’ instruction of rhetoric. One of the books evaluated by Moon, *Everything’s An Argument*, includes an entire chapter on emotional appeal in a later edition, titled “Arguments from the Heart.” It does still suggest a dichotomy between persuasion and argument and suggest that emotional appeal is more appropriate to the former than the latter, and it also warns about the potential for emotional appeal to be abused, but this chapter also includes tangible explanations of how emotional appeals are achieved in both word-based and visual texts. This increased attention to emotional appeal makes sense in light of the fact that *Everything’s An Argument* makes attention to multiple text types its defining trait;

emotion should definitely be treated in depth by any textbook that calls for students to analyze visual texts along with word-based ones. Surprisingly, this attention to emotion demonstrated by *Everything's An Argument* appears to be unusual even among this type of textbook. In another example that appears to be chasing the same goal of encouraging multimodal literacy, *The World Is A Text*, the treatment of emotion fits the description of the majority of the textbooks surveyed by Moon. Argument is addressed rather briefly and emotional appeal even more briefly, suggesting that emotional appeal's use be limited to supporting logical appeals and providing no concrete examples of how emotional appeal is achieved (34-35). It is, in fact, in Corbett's composition textbook *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* that a positive portrayal of emotional appeal is provided and along with that, a thorough explanation of how it is achieved. This is from a textbook that originates in 1965 and is not attempting to directly incorporate visual texts for discussion.

Regardless of whether it is seen as a responsible or irresponsible tactic of persuasion, emotional appeal should be much more valued as an aspect of rhetoric than it appears to be at this time based upon its treatment in contemporary composition textbooks. It would be great if we could teach students that it could be used for positive purposes, but even if it were only ever used for manipulative reasons, students still deserve to be taught how it works, whether for their own use or simply to recognize use of it in the texts they encounter. For this reason, the rhetorical framework I propose includes pathos as a foundational principle. I also contend that film is an excellent way to illustrate to students how emotional appeal works, which is something oft-ignored by the textbooks and, even if addressed, difficult to grasp when only illustrated through words.

Ethos does not appear to receive as negative a treatment in textbooks as pathos. Perhaps this is because it is not perceived to be the counterpart of logic, as emotion is. In “Rhetoric, The Enabling Discipline,” Corbett also asserts his belief that ethos is not valued as much as logos, which seems like an accurate assessment of its treatment in the textbooks I have examined. Ethos is not denigrated, and its importance is acknowledged, but a majority of the time and attention still goes toward logic. However, the tendency is to see ethos as entirely separate from pathos, when these two appeals can in fact influence one another. This, too, is a problem with current rhetoric instruction that my framework seeks to remedy. One of Corbett’s suggestions for better teaching ethos—having students role play or impersonate in order to heighten their awareness of how to alter the perception or reception of a speaker—is not far removed from having students examine their reactions to characters in a film. This framework values ethos, shows its relationship to pathos, and because of its ability to work for both film and the written word, creates opportunities to use film to help students recognize the factors that shape ethos.

Thus, film need not only be used to teach students how film itself argues. Even if a teacher does not wish to devote time to examination of how narrative films can argue, film can still be useful as a means of teaching persuasive tactics like ethos and pathos. Film, due to its vivid nature, is an emotionally powerful medium. This reliance upon pathos makes it a useful tool for teaching students how pathos works, drawing attention to the visual nature of this type of appeal, while also making them more critical readers of film and other visual texts. Although a filmmaker tends not to draw attention to himself, making a discussion of ethos in film more challenging, there are still parallels between how ethos is established in both film and word-based texts, and certain films and filmmakers, including Shyamalan, can be especially instructive in demonstrating the tangible consequences of damaging one’s ethos.

First, I will identify the tactics that Shyamalan uses to create emotional appeal in his films, and then compare these strategies to those used by King in “I Have A Dream.” Although pathos is a major contributor toward identification, discussion of how it leads to identification with people and characters will mostly be postponed until chapter four. After the discussion of pathos and its use in both film and the written word, I will look at how a filmmaker establishes ethos for himself within the films he makes and also how external knowledge of a filmmaker can shape audience response to his choices. Filmmaker ethos, too, can influence what voice an audience chooses to listen to out of the many in a film to choose from, but again, those particular implications of filmmaker ethos will be discussed later.

Not only is it easier to accomplish emotional appeals through film, but those emotional appeals may be used to shape the larger arguments made by some films. Pathos, in conjunction with ethos, can encourage identification with some characters over others. In the event that a film takes on a dialectical structure, the character with whom the audience most strongly identifies can shape which of the multiple voices present in the narrative that the audience chooses to listen to for the intended argument of that narrative. However, this all begins with pathos and ethos.

To begin, I will first examine how pathos is achieved in the film medium, and then at how it is achieved in word-based mediums in comparable ways. For the examination of how it is achieved in film, I focus on the films of M. Night Shyamalan. The word-based text to which the films will be compared is “I Have A Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr., a work that is

frequently included in freshman composition readers. Although “I Have A Dream” could also be discussed as a delivered speech, to avoid redundancy, it will be discussed just as a written text.⁴

M. Night Shyamalan gained most of his notoriety following the success of his second major film, *The Sixth Sense*, which was both monetarily and critically successful. Shyamalan’s body of work provides an interesting melding of genres. He takes science fiction or fantasy premises but places them in realistic settings, which results in films that are a mix of drama, suspense, fantasy, and occasionally comedy. The films I will discuss in this chapter are *The Sixth Sense* (1999), *Unbreakable* (2000), *Signs* (2002), *The Village* (2004), *Lady in the Water* (2006), and *The Happening* (2008). All six of these films are both written and directed by Shyamalan.

I choose Shyamalan for this discussion for several reasons. First, he provides one consistent writer and directorial voice to follow across multiple films; as mentioned in the previous chapter, one challenge of trying to pinpoint what tactics filmmakers use for specific effects and purposes is that different filmmakers may use them for different purposes. Using one writer-director provides the opportunity to look for patterns and tendencies while knowing they are all coming from the same authorial voice. There are certainly more people involved in final product of a filmmaking endeavor than just the writer and director; Shyamalan also works well for the purposes of this discussion because he is notoriously controlling of his films and willingly admits this about himself: “I’m a complete control freak. I love the idea of controlling everything that is in the composition of every single frame and I feel pain if I look at a frame and it’s not

⁴ Utilized in the classroom, “I Have A Dream” could be used to analyze how the speech’s impact changes from being read to heard to watched, but as performance will already be discussed heavily in the film discussion, here it will be addressed only as a written text.

perfect” (qtd. in Itier). He has a reputation as an auteur director⁵ and is believed to storyboard nearly every one of the shots in his films before shooting⁶; extensive storyboarding is something more typical of major and complicated sequences, not typically done for an entire film.

Shyamalan makes sure everything turns out the way he wants, and it is a safe assumption that the way it turns out is most often intentional and originates with him. The choice of Shyamalan is primarily to simplify discussion of the example films; rather than wondering which person involved in the filmmaking process is responsible for a particular aspect, it can fairly be attributed to Shyamalan himself, allowing for discussion of one particular filmmaker’s voice across multiple films.

The other primary reason for using Shyamalan’s films for this discussion is because of the aforementioned melding of genres. Each of his films covers a wide range of emotions, allowing a survey of different emotional responses and the filmmaking tactics that help to achieve them, all the while having them come from the same authorial voice. In short, his films provide a lot of variety from one source.

Some other considerations also demonstrate why Shyamalan’s films are good for this discussion of pathos and ethos and also for the discussion that will follow in chapter four. First of all, Shyamalan was, at least at one point, taken seriously as a director. *The Sixth Sense* was a critically-acclaimed film and received numerous awards and nominations, so Shyamalan is not known just for making popular yet mindless movies; though critics have not seen his more recent

⁵ There is not one specific source I can credit with this description; not only does his controlling reputation make him one of the filmmakers most deserving of this title in recent years, but he is referred to as an auteur time and again in reviews and discussions of his films. Just a quick google search of “Shyamalan” and “auteur” yields over 63,000 results, though as one of the top results is quick to point out, “there is a fine line between the auteur and the repetitious hack” (Agger).

⁶ Again, this is mentioned in multiple descriptions of his work as a director rather than being the suggestion of a single source.

films as favorably as the early ones, he did at one point have respect as a superior filmmaker. On a related note, the increasingly poor reception of his most recent films provides the opportunity to examine what he has changed about his approach and the affect this has on audience investment and ultimately their enjoyment of his films.

Shyamalan's films demonstrate how use of film in the composition classroom can help students understand pathos. As defined in previous chapters, pathos is appeal to the emotions. Aristotle describes the emotions as "those things through which, by undergoing change, people come to differ in their judgments" (Book 2.1.8). As he explains it earlier in *On Rhetoric*, "we do not give the same judgment when grieved and rejoicing or when being friendly and hostile" (Book 1.2.5). As J. Anthony Blair distinguished, there is a difference between persuasion and argument; appeals to the emotion are not in themselves arguments, but persuasive elements that may be used to further an argument. Kenneth Burke recognized this distinction, as well, in *A Rhetoric of Motives*: "one might distinguish between appeals to reason and appeals to emotion, sentiment, ignorance, prejudice, and the like, reserving the notion of 'persuasion' for these less orderly kind of 'proof'" (51). Eighteenth century rhetorician George Campbell, however, does not find emotional persuasion to be inferior to persuasion based on reason, but classifies it as an important element of effective argument:

If the orator would prove successful, it is necessary that he engage in his service all these different powers of the mind, the imagination, the memory, and the passions. These are not the supplanters of reason, or even rivals in her sway; they are her handmaids, by whose ministry she is enabled to usher truth into the heart, and procure it there a favourable reception. (923-924)

Aristotle, on the other hand, despite the time he devotes to discussion of the emotions, does not recommend that students of rhetoric dwell on it as a means of persuasion too much. Edward P.J. Corbett reflects on this seeming contradiction in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, suggesting that Aristotle is not exactly saying that emotional persuasion should not be used, but more suggesting the aspiring rhetor not be too mechanical or structured in his application of it. Corbett believes that Aristotle means that students “should ‘forget’ about [his analysis of the emotions] in the same sense that someone who has read a ‘how-to’ book about batting should forget what he has read when he takes a bat in hand and starts swinging at the ball” (84). Students of rhetoric should, in short, attempt to be natural in their application of the information. He is not, however, saying it should not be used at all. Corbett’s interpretation makes sense because if Aristotle truly felt it should not be used at all, he would not have devoted so much time to it.

However, despite Aristotle’s qualified endorsement of pathos, as a persuasive tactic it could easily be used unethically. Aristotle himself likened emotional appeal to warping a jury and making “a straightedge rule crooked before using it” (30). Charles Hill points out in “The Psychology of Rhetorical Images” that psychological studies about persuasion agree—emotional appeal encourages heuristic processing, a short cut that results in a decision being made quickly and without much logical consideration. We do, and perhaps rightly so, give priority to logic as a means of persuasion, and, as Corbett describes,

People are rather sheepish about acknowledging that their opinions can be affected by their emotions. They have the uneasy feeling that there is something undignified about being stirred to action through the emotions. And indeed, in

some cases, there is something undignified about a rational creature being precipitated into action through the stimulus of aroused passions. (77)

However, appropriate or not, emotional appeal is used in persuasive texts on a regular basis. It can certainly be appropriate in small amounts, as a means of moving people and motivating them to take action. However, Aristotle recognizes its potential to be manipulative and the power of emotional appeal to be abused, and Hill demonstrates not only that Aristotle's instincts about this are correct, but that the more vivid the medium of communication, the easier it is to accomplish emotional appeal and higher the potential for manipulation. Ethical or not, pathos is used on a regular basis, especially as communication has become increasingly visual. And because film is the most vivid of all forms of constructed communication, it follows that it will rely on emotional appeal most heavily of all.

As Hill points out, there is a relationship between vividness and emotional response. He makes his explanation of this connection out of psychology, but this relationship between the vivid and emotions has been discussed in rhetoric proper, as well. Kenneth Burke, in fact, discussed this issue as though there were actually a fourth appeal in addition to and distinct from the three defined by Aristotle: appeal to the imagination. As he explains the importance of appeals to the imagination, he mentions it in conjunction with the concepts of actualization and vividness from classical rhetoric, the latter forming the central concept of Hill's ideas of how emotional appeal is achieved. Burke sees appeals to the imagination as separate from pathos and ethos largely because it deals in things pictured in the mind rather than things in reality perceived through the senses. When one is describing appeals as utilized in rhetoric through language, it makes sense that one might conceive of appeals made through the imagination and appeals made through the senses as separate types of appeal, but when we define all types of communication as

possessing rhetorical potential, a distinction becomes less necessary. Burke does recognize that appeal to the imagination is what “classical theory might have treated as persuasion by the appeals of *pathos* and *ethos*” (81). I believe this is relevant because of Burke’s identification of vividness as essential to appeal to the emotion, but do not feel it needs to be separated from *ethos* and *pathos* as a separate type of appeal when we are considering multiple modes of communication. Instead, the case is that when using words alone, appeal to the imagination is a fundamental aspect of achieving emotional appeal, but when the mode of communication is more visual, the visuality can come from the senses instead of (or perhaps in addition to) the imagination.

In *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Corbett sees both literal visuals and images in the imagination as tactics for creating emotional response. He explains that in language, emotions are elicited through description: “The kind of description calculated to stir emotion in the audience must appeal to the imagination, and the imagination can be seized in this kind of word-painting by the use of sensory, specific detail” (80). Additionally, although in reference to a scene from *Julius Caesar* as an example, Corbett also addresses how literally showing something can be another, related tactic for creating an emotional response in one’s audience: “It is the sight of this object, dramatically displayed, its significance evoked by Antony’s pathetic comments, and followed by Antony’s incendiary comments on the brutality and ingratitude of the deed, that whips the people up into a frenzy of vindictive anger” (81). However, though not directly addressed by Corbett, the use of such a visual would likewise have an emotional impact on the audience of the play in addition to the audience within it, not unlike visuals in film.

Despite their variety of emotions elicited, Shyamalan’s films are still not an exhaustive inventory of emotional responses that films are able to achieve. In this chapter, I will focus upon

tension and fear as representative emotions. Later in the chapter, I will address the role of humor, which, while able to be classified as a part of pathos, is more influential as a part of ethos; humor will also be addressed in the next chapter as an aspect of character identification. Also postponed for discussion in chapter four is sympathy, heavily utilized in Shyamalan's films (as well as most others), but such an integral part of identification that it bears postponement. Other emotions a film might seek to elicit include happiness, romance, anger, pity, and sadness. Some of these, indeed, are used in Shyamalan's films (perhaps all of them at different points), but he does not use these as much as tension and fear; a discussion of how he achieves these two emotional responses is more than sufficient for demonstrating how emotional response is achieved in film and how that compares to how pathos works in word-based texts.

There are many moments of great tension in Shyamalan's films. All six of these Shyamalan films contain scenes of great excitement or intensity, and Shyamalan is remarkably consistent in how he goes about creating that sense of intensity, which is perhaps why his later films still work in this area even when they are less effective in others. Though it is not an exhaustive list of the possible ways to accomplish this response, the three main ways that Shyamalan's films seek to create intensity are through the cinematography, specifically the use of the steadycam; editing pace, or in other words, the tempo of the shot changes; and music. All three of these are typical aspects of a film but not tactics available to those constructing most other types of texts; however, there are still comparable techniques utilized for the purposes of emotional response utilized in these other text types, even texts that are comprised only of words.

One technique he uses for creating intensity or excitement is the use of steadycam shots in small spaces for scenes that are supposed to be intense. To create this effect, a camera is carried by a person rather than mounted on something solid. The camera is then more easily able

to follow a character around in a space, though at times, Shyamalan also keeps the camera in a single place but simply does this to introduce a small amount of motion to the shot. While it may seem like a small detail, it has several useful effects, of which the primary is creating a shared sense of unease between the audience and the characters in the film.

An example of Shyamalan's use of this technique is *The Sixth Sense*; he utilizes a steadycam shot following Cole's mother Lynn through their apartment on several occasions. The first time he does it, it follows her as she is getting ready for work and ends with her entering the kitchen to find every cabinet mysteriously open as her son sits at the table where she left him seconds earlier, seemingly unable to have opened them all himself. The slight shakiness of the shot visually conveys Lynn's alarm and worry for her son and Cole's fear both of what really opened the cabinets and also his mother finding out that his is, in his own words, a freak. Shyamalan repeats this style of filming often within the apartment space, which is where many of the scarier moments of the film take place, continuing to create a sense of uneasiness visually for the viewer.

In the later films, Shyamalan begins utilizing this more and in more intense scenes rather than simply to create uneasiness as he does in *The Sixth Sense*. In *Unbreakable*, there are two noteworthy uses of this style of filming. First, he uses it in the film's opening scene, in which a doctor arrives on the scene of a childbirth in a dressing room or back room of a department store. Here the camera does not move from its place in the corner but is obviously handheld and moves its focus onto different areas of the room. There is tension between the characters in this scene, given visual representation by the visual instability; the baby that has just been born has multiple broken bones, and since the baby and mother are black, the doctor accuses the people present of having done something to the baby. This tactic is used again in an important scene later in this

film, where the main character David's son enters the family kitchen with a gun, intending to shoot his father to prove to him that he can't be hurt and is the superhero Elijah Price says he is. The camera is never still in this scene, unsettled and moving its focus from character to character as they argue; again, the camera does not rest, so the audience is less able to rest. This is much like Aristotle's concept of bringing-before-the-eyes, but in a medium where everything is already before-the-eyes, a filmmaker is going to have to add on to the already visual nature of the medium to heighten emotional responses. In this case, the tactic is to use a subtle cinematography technique to heighten the realism and to give the audience a visual representation of the restlessness they should feel by having the image itself be restless.

Though this steadycam technique is Shyamalan's most consistent tactic for creating and maintaining tension, there are a few others he goes to for this purpose. One of these tactics is frequent shot changes—increasing the pace with which the camera shots in a particular scene change. Leaving one shot for an extended period of time tends to create a sense of calmness while constant changes can do the opposite. One example of Shyamalan increasing intensity through visual tempo is the party scene from *Lady in the Water*. The inhabitants of The Cove apartment complex throw a large and loud party to create a distraction for Story to be picked up by a giant eagle and kept safe from the wolf-like creatures called scrunts who want to attack her and keep her from leaving. This is one of the most intense scenes of the movie, in which multiple characters have specific parts to play and must carry their assigned roles out perfectly in order to keep Story safe, and all the while, these wolf-like creatures stalk her and try to find a way to get to her. In this scene, the shots change with increasing frequency to keep the pace up and keep the audience's sense of tension heightened.

The other main avenue for creating tension in film is through music. In the cases of Shyamalan's films, however, the music in all of them except for *Signs* is fairly understated. He does use it, but not as much as the visual tactics. In *Signs*, which feels very much like an Alfred Hitchcock film, the music is not surprisingly very Bernard Herrmann⁷-esque, loud and noticeable with a heavy emphasis on high-pitched and fast-paced strings and woodwinds. The primary scene of tension in which this is used is during the climax of the film, in which Graham and his family believe the aliens who attempted to invade the planet have left and emerge from their basement hiding place to find one alien has been left behind and is waiting for them. As the scene plays out and the alien takes Graham's son hostage, this music plays loudly over it like a high-pitched heartbeat or perhaps an alarm, and keeps the audience on edge until the scene is played out to its end. The music is used effectively in this instance but, again, is not a method Shyamalan uses frequently in his films for tension, instead relying more on visual tactics a majority of the time. In this case, however, music is used the same way as the increased tempo of shot-changes, only it is an auditory way of doing the same thing.

Not unrelated to creating a feeling of tension is creating a feeling of fear, the other main emotional appeal that is heavily utilized by Shyamalan. Fear is a powerful emotion, and appeals to it are a powerful persuasive tool, so understanding how such appeals are accomplished is vital to improving students' ability to critically read the communication they encounter. Film can illustrate how fear can be created, but other mediums can do it, as well, just with increasingly less vivid means to create the fear response. While appeal to fear is an important component of facilitating identification with characters in a film, examining its use in film also serves to more

⁷ The musical composer responsible for the scores of nearly all of Alfred Hitchcock's films.

generally illuminate how appeal to fear works and eventually how that can be translated into other mediums.

A film's means of creating a fear response can be similar to the means of creating a sense of tension, and one of those is through its use of music. There is no set piece of music that works best for creating fear; what is more consistent about it is that it is used to let the audience know that something is coming or that something should be feared, regardless of how a specific section of musical score sounds. Again, in Shyamalan's specific case, he tends to keep the music understated (with the exception of the overbearing and loud use of the music in *Signs*). He tends to utilize high-pitched strings but, outside of *Signs*, keeps them fairly quiet. At times he chooses to go with silence instead of music, which can actually be more frightening to the audience because of the lack of music to foreshadow an upcoming scare. Its purpose is to put the audience in a particular frame of mind, as instructed by Aristotle, and in this case, the purpose is to put them in a fearful state of mind. This could be done to facilitate an audience being swayed to a certain side of an issue or to a certain course of action, to cause them to identify with a certain person or group of people, or simply to entertain them by making them scared.

While music puts the audience in a fearful state of mind, a tactic of appeal to fear that has perhaps more equivalency in other mediums is the use of acting. There are filmmaking techniques that can supplement the acting, but if the actor does not seem scared, the audience will not likely be scared for him. Acting such as this is one of the strongest aspects of *The Sixth Sense*. The plot centers on a nine-year-old boy who sees ghosts that no one else can see, and his fear of them is causing problems for him in the rest of his life. They are drawn to him and can show up anywhere, even in his own home, and they are often angry. Some of them physically hurt them. The actor who plays Cole, Haley Joel Osment, portrays Cole's terror authentically,

panicking and trembling and crying as ghosts appear to him in his home, screaming in terror as some boys lock him in a closet with one and the ghost inside attacks him. Osment received an Oscar nomination for his performance, on which the entire rest of the film relied, because if the audience does not fear for Cole and feel that fear with him, the stakes are considerably lowered for the rest of the film because he doesn't really need to be saved or helped. Instead, his fear being portrayed in an authentic manner, in addition to the things he is afraid of being made effectively scary by the filmmaker, cause the audience to strongly identify with Cole as they sympathize with him and fear for him. Much of the effectiveness of this, however, lies in audience identification with the character, so this issue of acting will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Nearly all of Shyamalan's films use fear as a central emotion, with *Unbreakable* being the primary exception (though there are still several intense scenes within it). They utilize actors effectively portraying fear, such as Graham and his family's fear of the aliens in *Signs*, the townspeople's fear of the creatures in the woods in *The Village*, Story's fear of the scrunts in *The Lady in the Water*, and all the characters' fears of the event in *The Happening*. They are all effective at selling the characters' fears through acting, but probably most effective are *The Sixth Sense* and *Signs*, simply by virtue of those characters in jeopardy being children. Putting children in jeopardy is typically a sound strategy for creating fear in the audience; we are protective of the innocent and cannot stand the idea of harm coming to them, and children are a consistent symbol of such innocence. Perhaps the most famous example of this being utilized in the film medium is in the "Daisy" political campaign ad, run just once by Lyndon Johnson in 1964 in his campaign for president. It was only run once because of the perception of it as an attack, but part of its effectiveness comes from its tactic of showing a cute, innocent little girl

plucking and counting flower petals and then implying that a Goldwater victory would put her (and all of us) in danger from threat of nuclear war. The claim that Goldwater would be too willing to resort to nuclear war could easily be made through words alone, but including the footage of this child and commenting that “These are the stakes! To make a world in which all God’s children can live, or to go into the dark. We must love each other or we must die” results in fear for this child and the suggestion that a win from the opponent would put her in grave danger. The effectiveness of this as a tactic was at least partly responsible for the ad being pulled. The Daisy ad can serve as an example of this tactic in teaching students about pathos and appeals to fear, but other narrative films can also serve this purpose.

One final aspect of the potential of film to make effective appeals to fear is simply the fact that those things the audience is supposed to fear can be visually portrayed, making them feel more real to the audience, and consequently something more worthy of a fear response. For instance, we may feel some fear when we see Cole in *The Sixth Sense* reacting with fear to ghosts that he sees but we do not, but when we see along with him the people hanging from nooses in his school hallway, the angry and abused wife screaming at him as though he were her husband, and the dead bicycle rider with a broken neck standing outside his car window, it is easier for us to respond with fear. The same is true for other emotional responses as well. We are more likely to respond with sympathy when we actually see someone suffering, more likely to respond with anger when we see acts of injustice. Film as a medium has perhaps the easiest task of gaining emotional response because of its inherent ability to answer Aristotle’s call to bring before the eyes.

Tension and fear are just two examples of emotional responses that film might seek to create. Along with playing a role in facilitating identifications with characters in film and

entertaining an audience, as emotional appeals, they can also be valuable for other persuasive purposes in other mediums. As Aristotle points out, having the audience in the correct state of mind can make them more able to be persuaded, and there are times that tension and fear can encourage an audience to reach certain conclusions or feel urged to take certain courses of action. Fear, especially, is a powerful motivating force, whether fear for ourselves or for others, and in particular children and other innocents. Other such emotions could include anger and sympathy, and can still be elicited in similar ways, in film and in other mediums.

One word-based text that is a staple of many freshman composition readers, and which provides a wealth of examples of appeals to the emotions, is Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech. My reason for including discussion of this text along with the films is twofold: first, it demonstrates that the analytical framework I propose works for explaining both film and the written word; second, it allows me to specifically illustrate the commonalities between tactics of pathos and ethos in both mediums. If film is to be used for purposes beyond understanding others, giving students a subject to write about, or even drawing attention to the composing process (though this last one in particular does have pragmatic applications), it must be demonstrated that there are similarities between how film and written texts utilize rhetorical tactics. A comparison of emotional appeal in Shyamalan's films and "I Have A Dream" provides several examples of the commonalities that exist between the two mediums.

Our composition students are often asked, whether through class discussion or through writing, to analyze this speech and explain how it argues so effectively. However, a lot of this speech's effectiveness is subtle and occurs through effective use of ethos and pathos; it is, of course, making a logical argument, but much of what King is asking of his audience is to *care* and to *take action*—or, to borrow from the title of the collection in which Gretchen Flesher

Moon's "The Pathos of *Pathos*," to *move* us in both senses of the word—and these are reliant upon stirring the emotions. And because most of this speech's emotional power comes from King's use of images, instructing students first in how pathos is achieved through visual means can help them recognize how it is achieved in this and other word-based texts. King's other main device for emotional response is pacing, achieved through tempo and repetition, and this, too, is something students can be made more aware of through analysis of pathos in film, as described above with the Shyamalan films.

If students are attuned to the role that images and vividness play in creating emotional response, they should have no trouble recognizing the places in "I Have A Dream" that are most likely to create emotional responses in its audience. Although King is describing decidedly non-visual concepts such as freedom and equality, he finds metaphors with visual equivalents to use throughout this speech in order to both make them more tangible concepts and also to create emotional response in his audience.

In only the first three paragraphs of this speech as it appears in printed form, there are at least five visual metaphors utilized by King. He calls the Emancipation Proclamation "a great beacon light of hope" (485), a description that alters what is actually a document into not only something that the audience can picture in its mind, but an image that conveys what that document represents, better allowing the audience to sense the hope that the newly-freed slaves would have felt. He uses the metaphor of light again in describing the Proclamation as "a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity" (485), also conveying that sense of relief that must be felt by those slaves to have hope through describing light finally emerging after being long lost in darkness. Here, King wants his audience to feel that same sense of hope and relief that the newly-freed slaves would feel, and gives them an image to convey that relief and hope

but in a more universal sense. We respond more emotionally to the visual and vivid, and King is not only utilizing this tactic to gain emotional response, but also utilizing it through metaphor to help the audience feel appropriate emotions toward comparable but less-visual situations and events. Other images utilized by King in these opening paragraphs include describing those slaves as “seared in the flames of withering injustice” (485), as “crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination” (485), and as living “on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity” (485). All three of these likewise use visual metaphors to explain the situation of African Americans in both the past and present, creating more vivid situations to which the audience can respond with both sympathy and outrage.

King continues to use this tactic of visual metaphors throughout the speech. One specific way he does this is through pairing opposite images, such as quicksand and solid rock when he says, “now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood” (486). Perhaps the most memorable of the visual metaphors utilized by King in this speech is the metaphor of the bad check, comparing the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, along with the clarification provided by the Emancipation Proclamation, as a promissory note or check, but then explains that “America has defaulted on this promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds’” (485). This metaphor not only provides a tangible way of explaining in perhaps more relatable terms to all audience members that a promise has been broken, but also a visual metaphor. A broken promise itself is hard to visualize and may not accomplish emotional appeal on its own, but a version of a broken promise that *can* be imagined visually, a returned check, increases the likelihood of emotional response because of its visuality. Most audience

members can relate to this image through experience of either writing or receiving such a check, or even fear of one of those experiences. King uses a relatable experience as his working metaphor, and makes it more emotionally charged through the fact that it is something that can be visualized.

King also uses images to spur emotional response from his audience toward the things that he imagines for the future. Though not every one of the things he dreams of for the future have ready images to accompany them, most do. The two most visual are his images of “sons of former slaves and sons of former slave-owners” able to “sit down together at the table of brotherhood” (487) and “little black boys and black girls” able to join hands with “little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers” (487). Although King primarily has only words to work with, he creates emotional impact by calling upon the audience to visualize a better future right along with him. When the audience can picture that future, it can better respond to it with emotion, hopefully with longing and hope. Having the audience imagine symbolic images of people sharing tables and holding hands creates a better emotional impact than less-visual hopes for harmony and equality, and thus, even lacking actual images to help him make his argument, King is still able to put the images into the minds of his audience so that they can see and hope for the same things that he does.

In conjunction with references to things that can be visualized, King also shares with the films discussed the tactic of using children in jeopardy in order to create an emotional response. Movies do this, political ads like the Johnson ad from 1964 do this, and King does this. In King’s case, he uses children as he describes racially-based injustices: “our children are stripped of their selfhood and robbed of their dignity by signs stating ‘for whites only’” (487). Here, he both uses children and our protective impulses toward them to drive home his point, and also

couples it with actions that are easy to visualize like “stripped” and “robbed.” He returns again to the image of children, but in a hopeful capacity, when he describes his dream that “one day, right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers” (487). Using children, and in particular describing children in some sort of jeopardy, is an effective means of achieving emotional appeal, and students can be shown this through film, where the tactic is perhaps more obvious, but then have their attention drawn toward its use as a tactic in other types of text, as well.

While a written, word-based text may not be able to use music or acting as means of achieving emotional response, the effect on the emotions created through editing and music in film *can* be imitated through writing, and when a word-based text such as “I Have A Dream” is delivered as a speech, as it originally was, a performance aspect comparable to acting can also be a factor in its pathos. In verbal or written mediums, pace can be set by the length and tempo of the sentences. Long sentences, or repeated words or phrases with long sections between them, can have a calming effect, while shorter sentences and repeated words or phrases close together can increase a sense of tension and build excitement. In a speech, the person delivering it can amplify these effects through the cadence of his voice and the emotions he demonstrates as he speaks. For simplicity’s sake, I will only address the text version of “I Have A Dream” here. Even with the written word alone, pacing—created through repetition and tempo—can be used to create excitement like a musical score or fast-paced cuts between different shots in a film. In “I Have A Dream,” the most appropriate place to increase excitement through tempo and repetition is as it is coming to a close, for the purposes of getting the audience excited and motivated to take action. King begins seven sentences in a row with “I have a dream,” following this statement on most of these occasions with a description that creates a picture for the audience to

imagine along with him (also utilizing imagery for the sake of pathos). The impact of this repetition is better captured through the performance of the speech than reading its text, but the repeated statement “I have a dream” creates a rhythm to this section of the speech that can create an impression of rising tempo, and consequently, excitement and expectation, similarly to the musical lead-up to a climactic moment in a film. Following the repetition of “I have a dream” is a shorter section featuring repetition of “with this faith,” which seems to briefly slow the tempo, and then ending on an excited note again as King quotes “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” and then concludes by even more frequent repetition of its final line, “let freedom ring” (488). In this section, the amount of words in between the repeated phrases are much fewer than in between the repetitions of “I have a dream,” resulting in an even faster tempo to increase excitement as the speech reaches the climax before its conclusion. And again, the repeated phrase is paired with words that have visual equivalents, as King calls for freedom to ring from mountains first outside of the south, and then from famous mountains within the south, such as Stone Mountain and Lookout Mountain and “every hill and molehill of Mississippi” (488). There are images to be imagined or remembered not only from the mountains that King names, but also the image of moving from the areas of the country in which progress in Civil Rights had begun to be made to those areas of the country lagging the most behind. It emphasizes the reality of the situation of the time and clarifies to all Americans that it concerns them all no matter where they live, and a real and tangible issue is more likely to inspire real and tangible action.

Just this brief analysis of pathos on “I Have A Dream” illustrates how many of the tactics used to create emotional response in film are also used in a word-based text, despite the change in medium, and also, more generally, that the framework I propose does work across mediums, at least at this stage. Film has perhaps an easier time creating emotional response because of its

visual nature, but words still have the power to evoke images, and a prior awareness of how visuals create pathos, introduced to students through the more-obviously-emotional medium of film, can help them recognize tactics for creating pathos through words alone. Even beyond the use of images, other filmmaking tactics such as the pace of editing or music likewise have equivalents in the written word and, after being introduced to the students through the film medium, should be more recognizable in other media.

Pathos is a building block in making an argument through film, but teaching students about how pathos is created in film can also be an end, as well. Even without teaching it as a first step in filmic argument, it can still be used as a tool just for illustrating to students how pathos is accomplished. For this purpose, simply explaining pathos in more detail, entire movies need not be shown. Isolated scenes or sequences from films can be shown instead and analyzed, and then compared to one another or compared to other types of texts, such as comparing a scene from a Shyamalan film to King's "I Have A Dream" speech. Specific examples of assignments and activities using film to teach pathos will be provided and discussed in my concluding chapter.

The other major building block of argument in film is ethos. In general, ethos is how the audience feels toward the speaker. Corbett explains that although "ideally, people should be able to conduct a discussion or argument exclusively on the level of reason" (71), "ethical appeal can be the most effective kind of appeal; even the cleverest and soundest appeal to reason could fall on deaf ears if the audience reacted unfavorably to the speaker's character" (72). Aristotle defines positive ethos more specifically as comprised of the traits of "good sense, good moral character, and good will" (2130). This means that the speaker demonstrates himself to possess wisdom, virtue, and benevolence. Not only could ethos be considered the most effective kind of

appeal, but one noticeable mistake in the persona a speaker conveys could cause an entire argument to be disregarded: “the effect of the ethical appeal might very well be destroyed by a single lapse from good sense, good will, or moral integrity. A note of peevishness, a touch of malevolence, a flash of bad taste, a sudden display of inaccuracy or illogic could jeopardize a person’s whole persuasive effort” (Corbett 73). Ethos may not seem as relevant to a filmmaker whose works seem to be primarily for entertainment, but a mistake in ethos like the ones described by Corbett above could singlehandedly ruin a film as an argument or as an entertainment experience; consequently, film still has potential for use in teaching students about ethos.

Aristotle believed that the audience’s impression of the speaker’s ethos “should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person” (Book 1.2.4), but later acknowledges that pre-existing reputation is also an important factor in ethos. Ethos can be shaped completely within the confines of the text produced, but it can also be brought in from reputation separate from the text in the event that the speaker is already familiar to the audience. Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee refer to these two types of ethos as invented (based only on the text or speech) and situated (based on reputation or credentials). Invented ethos is more universal, a part of any text, but situated may not always be a factor. In film specifically, situated ethos would play a role in cases where a filmmaker (or perhaps actor) has a reputation that precedes him. For the audience, it may mean entering a movie with certain expectations about subject matter, plot, or narrative tactics. Situated ethos for anyone, regardless of text type, could be beneficial, or it could be negative.

When the speaker or writer is more visible to the audience, such as a person delivering a speech or being interviewed or a character in a film, identification can also play a strong role in

the audience's feelings toward that speaker, in addition to their character, rationality, and virtue. Vividness plays a role in this because, to use Burke's term, we can become consubstantial with another more easily when they are more real to us, and they are more real to us in a vivid medium. In less vivid mediums and mediums in which the speaker is not as visible, we have to rely on inferences about the character and trustworthiness of a speaker in absence of prior knowledge of them, and we have to judge them based upon the level of credibility and knowledge on a topic they demonstrate through the texts they produce. As the filmmaker generally wants to avoid calling attention to himself in order to make his constructed reality as seamless as possible, identification with a person is more important in the ethos of characters within a film. Identification with the filmmaker instead manifests as identification with the reality he creates, as mentioned by John Harrington in *The Rhetoric of Film*. Thus, in the medium of film, the three main things that shape a filmmaker's ethos are realism, detail, and fair adherence to the rules of the reality he has built.

There are many ways that a filmmaker can enhance the sense of realism in his film. Some of the same tactics that shape identification with characters can enhance or inhibit it, for example, issues such as the artificial-sounding dialogue or unusual cinematographic choices that draw attention to themselves in *The Happening*. However, some of the things that Shyamalan does well with realism in his films can serve as a brief survey of tactics that do generate a sense of reality.

One tactic, mentioned earlier, that helps with creating a realistic feel is the use of the documentary-style, slightly-moving steadycam shot. This style of filming feels similar to news or documentary-style filming. On the one hand, it could feel like a poor choice to draw attention to the fact that the film is constructed by having it feel so similar to something like a

documentary, in which we are perhaps not expected to get absorbed in the same way as we would with a film. However, conceding on the point of it being constructed and instead trying to give it a documentary feel in certain places could also be seen as an effective way of getting the viewer involved by making it seem more realistic and, consequently, plausible.

Another visual tactic that aids in creating a sense of realism is quality special effects. Because one of Shyamalan's trademarks is that he resists showing you what you are supposed to be afraid of (most memorably in *Signs*), his opportunity for using special effects like CGI or makeup is rather limited. However, the makeup effects in *The Sixth Sense* are extremely effective, with the ghosts often bearing realistic-looking injuries that apparently lead to their deaths, such as the woman in Cole's kitchen with the cut wrists or the boy with the back of his head blown off from a gunshot wound. Not only do the injuries look realistic, but in seeing them, the audience understands why Cole would spend so much of his life in terror. Similar makeup effects in *The Happening* (when shown) are one of the more positive aspects of the film. Overall, the CGI effects are of a much lower quality than the makeup effects in Shyamalan's films, so it is a benefit to him that he tends to limit the amount of time he shows any creature that would require computer generation to exist. For instance, the aliens in *Signs* look obviously computer-generated, so it works out well that the audience only gets a few short looks at them. The same could be said for all the supernatural creatures in *The Lady in the Water*, although that is the film in which Shyamalan is striving for the least amount of realism, so it is not causing a lot of damage in that film's case. Overall, special effects are one way that a filmmaker can enhance his credibility. By creating a seamless experience that avoids drawing the audience's attention to the artificiality and constructed nature of the world he presents, the filmmaker builds a positive ethos for himself.

Along with creating this solid, seamless reality, another method a filmmaker might use to enhance his ethos is humor. The potential of humor to affect ethos is twofold. First, particularly in the case of a medium in which the speaker is more visible, a person demonstrating a good sense of humor can be more likable and appealing to his audience. In film, it may be used in this way to facilitate identification with characters within the film. However, the other use of humor, and the one more pertinent to film because of the less visible nature of the filmmaker, is using humor to enhance the film's sense of reality. Humor, therefore, affects the filmmaker's invented ethos. Absurdities encountered in real life can be hilarious and can, when portrayed in an authentic way, actually add to the realism of a film and its characters. *Signs* utilizes this type of humor. The kids in this film, for instance, have typical "cute kid" comments that anyone who has been around kids for long will recognize as authentic. Caroline, the sheriff, is also especially funny. She has many great moments of deadpan ridiculousness, like explaining to Graham that she was running late because of a woman who got mad at some skateboarding kids who then went into the store and spit on all the skateboards, summing up her visit to the crime scene as, "She must have had a cold or something." When questioning Graham and Merrill about the person who jumped onto their roof, she allows herself to get sidetracked into an argument with Merrill about whether or not a woman could jump that high, pointing out that there are female Olympic athletes who could do it, so he can't say for sure it was a man just based on the height of the jump. These are just a few of the many examples from this film of humor deriving from odd or absurd characters encountered by the main character. Having ludicrous characters and moments like these are not necessarily furthering the development of major characters, but they are lending a sense of reality to the film's world because real life and the people in it *are* funny.

By recreating reality through using humor in an authentic way, the filmmaker thereby enhances his credibility with the audience.

It makes sense that a later film that attempts this humor from real life but does not keep the same authentic feel is one of the ones that audiences did not care for as much, *Lady in the Water*. This film, like *Signs*, seems to be attempting to create humor out of everyday people and occurrences and their absurdity. Sometimes it rings true, like the pool man taking his job so seriously. But often in this film, the characters are more caricatures than characters, and that sense of reality is lost. For example, one of the tenants has been working out just one side of his body, so one arm and leg are freakishly muscular and the others are normal. Many of these characters are underdeveloped or stereotypical. Consequently, the humor in this one is more just absurd than a filmic capture of real-life absurdity, but again, this is the film where Shyamalan relies least on a sense of realism, so it is not doing as much damage here as it would have in any of his other films. However, even though he is not visually present to be blamed for poor attempts at humor or damaging the reality of his film with inauthentic attempts at it, the filmmaker does still damage his reputation when humor and details that are intended to be humorous damage the appearance of reality that he is attempting to maintain. Ultimately, it is not a lot different from a more visible speaker or writer demonstrating a bad sense of humor or lack of one altogether. Using humor effectively can be of great benefit when done well and a disaster when executed poorly.

One final aspect of realism I would like to address, though there are certainly others I am not covering, is simply use of detail and making sure the film follows the rules of reality in which it is set. With most text types and most arguments, this aspect of ethos would come from presenting correct information and presenting it accurately and in an unbiased fashion. With

narrative, and film included, the composer of the text is often creating an entirely separate world. They may choose to change some of the rules of that reality as they create it and do things that we would not consider to be realistic, but as long as they set rules and follow them, they can still remain credible and trustworthy even when presenting fictionalized information and situations. Shyamalan's *Unbreakable* is one example of this; the film's entire premise seems to be to show what it would be like if superheroes existed in the real world. Shyamalan sets up the possibility of real superheroes when he has Elijah describe the comic as a form of history, arguing that the stories are based in fact. The characters' disbelief of David being a superhero fits with reality as well; David's wife explains away Elijah's theory about her husband as his way of coping with reality after being dealt such harsh circumstances. When Elijah initially shares his theory with David himself, David thinks that this is just an elaborate scam to get money from him. In the case of this film, Shyamalan is presenting us with a world that mostly resembles our reality, with the exception that there exists a man in it who cannot come to physical harm. Therefore, he mostly attempts to follow the rules of the real world and recreate it accurately with that one major exception. Since this reality is supposed to be our reality for the most part, things are not as spectacular as they might be in a comic book. We get a look at David's rather non-spectacular marriage problems. His fight with the janitor at the climax of the film is also rather unspectacular – it is short and there are not many exciting stunts or special effects. Instead of a more traditional superhero costume, David simply wears his poncho from work with the word “security” emblazoned across the back. One final touch of reality that is one of the film's biggest strengths is the ambiguity of Elijah's character. He is “the bad guy” of the movie, but this is a surprise at the end and the sympathetic nature of his character throughout the film, including both his unfortunate health problems and also his effort in making David into a hero,

show that who is the good guy and who is the bad guy is not always as clear cut in reality as it is in the comics, which is definitely a realistic element to include in the film.

At least in a realistic story, it is imperative that the filmmaker create and maintain a sense of realism. If he botches this part of his job, then just like listening to a speaker getting important facts wrong in a persuasive speech, we will be turned off to whatever argument he is making. The same is true if we feel he “cheats” in order to surprise us. Since most of Shyamalan’s films hinge upon a twist ending that the audience does not expect, he is definitely a good filmmaker to examine regarding this issue. *The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable* are both examples of him using the twist ending effectively and keeping the audience from feeling cheated. *The Village* is a good example of how *not* to execute a twist fairly. These can help teach students important lessons about how ethos can be damaged and the ramifications of such mistakes.

In a narrative that relies on a twist ending or some other surprise reveal at the end, the filmmaker must set up this ending as fair, as something that could be figured out by the audience or as something that the audience should not know because of limited narrative perspective. Lacking these qualifications, keeping information unfairly from the audience could be seen as lying would be in most any other medium. Based on these qualifications, the twist at the end of *The Sixth Sense* appears to be ethical. There are certainly clues along the way, the biggest of which is Cole telling Malcolm that the dead people don’t know they are dead. If you go into the film knowing there is going to be a twist ending, this line of dialogue stands as an obvious clue. At the end of the film, it even runs back through all the clues that were given along the way so that the audience knows it was a fair twist, things like how Malcolm never touches anyone, how his wife has begun to move on and date another man while Malcolm is still around to see it.

Shyamalan does give the audience clues that could have helped them anticipate the ending, but just so that the audience does not feel that he was unfair in this, he reviews the clues he gave along the way as Malcolm puts the pieces together to demonstrate to the audience that the information was there for them all along. This functions like a conclusion in a more traditional written text, or perhaps a verification that the sources and information provided are accurate. Regardless, he both follows the rules he sets up carefully and also takes care to make sure the audience knows he did so, which is of great benefit to his ethos in this film.

Unbreakable may not offer as many visual clues regarding its twist as *The Sixth Sense*, but it does offer many verbal ones. The primary visual clue would likely only stand out to someone well-versed in comics; the color purple is very often the color associated with a villain, and it is associated over and over with Elijah in *Unbreakable*, such as on inside of the envelope of Elijah's message to David, Elijah's clothes, the inside of his car, and the present his mother gives him during a flashback scene. Other clues given during the movie include the movie opening with facts about comic books, which suggests that the movie should be seen as one, and consequently that the audience should look for it to follow comic book rules; Elijah repeatedly mentioning the plane crash, hotel fire, and train crash (all of which we learn he caused); Elijah telling you how you can tell who the villain is going to be—opposite of the hero in every way, and often friends with him, too; and Elijah's explaining that he and David are at opposite ends of a spectrum. Similarly to Cole advising Malcolm in his failed bedtime story attempt that he should "add some twists and stuff," Elijah's mom, in telling her son about the comic she gives him as a gift, informs him that "They say this one has a surprise ending." As it was just Shyamalan's second major film, he had not yet established a reputation as "the guy who does the twist endings," so he was able to surprise the audience with the fact that Elijah is the villain and

nemesis to David without having to try to cover it up by keeping major information from the audience.

One reason that the twist endings in both *The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable* come across as fair to the audience, in addition to the clues being provided along the way, is that the narrative perspective from which the films are told have it make reasonable to keep the information from the audience. The character whose narrative perspective controls the film, Malcolm in the former and David in the latter, do not have the information until the end, so the audience does not, either. In a narrative text, narrative perspective can give the writer or filmmaker an excuse to keep information from the audience without it feeling dishonest. Had the films taken on the narrative perspectives of, say, Cole and Elijah, those twists would not have been fair since Cole and Elijah do know. In this case, this is an element of ethos particular to a narrative text rather than film specifically, but it is influential in the audience's attitude toward the filmmaker, and getting this wrong can have an extremely detrimental affect on that filmmaker's credibility. The filmmaker getting this right or wrong can serve as an excellent example for students about the importance of accuracy and ethical use of and presentation of information.

As mentioned before, ethos is not influenced just but the text produced but also by the prior knowledge and opinions brought in by the audience. Sometimes this can be simply opinions or impressions of the composer of the text, but it can also be expectations of that composer based on prior experiences with him and his texts. This brings us to *The Village*. Though some may disagree, I believe the film does give you enough clues that you could figure out the major twist before it is revealed. The date on the tombstone at the funeral scene that opens the movie and the cryptic statement made about the death that "We may question ourselves at moments such as these" do begin to plant the possibility that the date may not be

what is written on the tombstone, but that is a pretty big jump to make as a viewer, and you have to be explicitly looking for possibilities for twists. That is Shyamalan's dilemma here – now he is “the guy who does the twist endings,” and he knows that many audience members will spend the entire film trying to guess what the ending twist is going to be. Consequently, in this film, he is both more sparing with his clues and also more liberal about playing loosely with the rules he followed so carefully in *The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable*, and this ultimately leads to the audience feeling like he cheated. He does give a few clues along the way, such as the mysterious boxes that many of the older generation of villagers possess and keep locked up, along with their references to the violent fates of loved ones that sound more like contemporary crime than nineteenth century crime. Shyamalan even tries to misdirect the viewer, making it seem like he reveals the twist—that the monsters from the woods that the villagers fear are actually this older generation of the villagers, trying to keep everyone behaving correctly—about halfway through the film. The best explanation for why he does this is because he wants it to seem like the twist, so anticipated by the audience, had been revealed and to get the audience to stop looking for the it, only to reveal the real twist, that it is 2004 and not the nineteenth century. This would be an acceptable misdirection if he still followed the rules and didn't keep information from the audience of which the character whose narrative perspective we are limited to is aware. Part of the problem here is the same problem I will discuss in greater depth in the next chapter, that Shyamalan is unable to limit perspective to his main character Ivy, who is blind, and still have the audience know what is going on. *We* know that Noah is the monster in the woods that falls into the pit, even though she does not know this. By the end of the film, *we* know that it is actually 2004 in the world beyond the woods, even though she does not. This is part of the problem, but not all of it. Even ignoring the issue of the audience being privy to information that

Ivy is not, for a while, Shyamalan has Ivy privy to information that the audience is not, namely that the monsters are not real. She is already aware of this when she ventures out into the woods with her two guides who both eventually abandon her. What she knows about the monsters is revealed by flashback after she is already in the woods and suspense has been built upon the premise that the monsters are real. A viewer would seem justified in feeling cheated after being scared based on this, when Ivy, who seems represent the viewer's perspective in the film, knows she shouldn't be scared. Films do not always follow a limited perspective, but when they are relying upon a twist ending, they must do so in order to make the ending fair, rather than making it so that the audience is having information actively kept from them, which would be akin to lying in most any other medium of communication. Shyamalan negotiated this successfully in both *The Sixth Sense* and *Unbreakable*, but in *The Village*, perhaps simply because of the choice to have the main character be blind, complications were introduced that made it virtually impossible to do a "fair" twist. As a result, many viewers were turned off to Shyamalan and his work. This has had very real consequences for Shyamalan and his career.

Thus, Shyamalan's work can provide a demonstration to students of the importance of ethos. Shyamalan's reputation now is generally pretty negative. First, his reputation for providing great twists in his films backed him into a corner and motivated him to try to trick his audience, with fairly negative results, and now that reputation has grown far beyond his being known for a plot device. One movie review website, Rotten Tomatoes, shows a steady downward trend in the quality, according to both critics and average moviegoers, of his films, the main discrepancy between the two groups being that critics on the whole rated *Signs* as better than *Unbreakable*, while regular site users saw it the other way around. Unfortunately for Shyamalan, this means he needs to compile a few quality films in a row before audiences are

really going to trust him as a filmmaker again. This is true of ethos in most any medium. Being caught in dishonesty, whether factually dishonest in a more straightforward or argumentative text or by unfairly withholding information from the audience in a narrative text, can create a reputation that the composer of that text may have a difficult time shedding. The ways that ethos is created and maintained may vary by text type, but its effect, particularly when negative ethos is achieved, can be quite consistent regardless of text type.

One other element of Shyamalan's situated ethos, which in this case seems to matter more to critics than to average moviegoers, is that, until *The Happening*, he cast himself in increasingly larger roles in each of his films. In doing this, he appears to be borrowing from Alfred Hitchcock's own ethos (and it is no secret that Shyamalan is trying emulate Hitchcock above all other filmmakers); Hitchcock made cameo appearances in his movies as well, usually inconsequential parts like a man getting on a bus or some other background character. Shyamalan started off following this model, playing a doctor with a few short lines in *The Sixth Sense*. At that point, it was more of an amusing tidbit for viewers who happened to know who he was. He plays a slightly larger role in *Unbreakable*, a man who David suspects of dealing drugs at the stadium where he works, but again, Shyamalan doesn't seem to be abusing this, more making it a gimmick at this point. In *Signs*, however, he moves on to playing a much larger role and one that requires more acting ability; he plays the town vet who accidentally killed Graham's wife when he fell asleep at the wheel and hit her with his truck. He makes several appearances in the film and is playing a more substantial and demanding role. This, along with his increasing reputation as an incredibly controlling director, had many critics sensing an arrogance in him. As Aristotle noted, one major aspect of ethos is good character. The Greeks especially were quite averse to demonstrations of hubris, rendering humility one

potential ingredient of good character. When the composer of a text keeps himself mostly invisible, he keeps himself from having to be judged as prideful or humble; however, when he makes himself visible like Shyamalan does in his films, he not only opens himself up to being judged this way, but through breaking the norm and putting himself in front of the camera, he is increasing chances that audiences will view him as arrogant. He backs off the size of his role in *The Village* considerably, appearing only in small role at the very end. However, with *Lady in the Water*, the role in which he cast himself wound up being an issue that many critics fixated upon. In *Lady in the Water*, Shyamalan plays Vick, the person that Story is sent to inspire to write an important work of literature. Shyamalan casting himself in this role was viewed by many as an act of hubris, suggesting he sees what he writes as world-changing like what Vick will write.⁸ The criticism Shyamalan took for casting himself in that role seems to have made an impression, since he did not make any appearances in front of the camera in *The Happening*. Shyamalan's reputation based on his casting himself in acting roles may seem inconsequential, but not unlike breaking his film's internal rules in order to surprise the viewer, this sort of behavior can shape the attitude toward him that the viewer brings with him to the movie, and that can color how receptive the viewer is to the message he is attempting to send.

While the above are the specific ways that a filmmaker creates or fails to create a positive ethos for himself, broadened out just a tad, they also provide a thorough explanation of how the

⁸ This author believes this is a misunderstanding of Shyamalan's intentions. Shyamalan is a fairly religious person, reflected most strongly by *Wide Awake* and *Signs*, but his beliefs certainly influence the way he sees the world. From a Christian perspective, Story (a supernatural influence) having to come inspire Vick so that he can write something that will be powerful and influential is actually not a celebration of himself, but instead a statement that he does not have the ability to write something like that without supernatural help or guidance. Thus, from a religious perspective, he is doing the opposite of self-congratulation. However, this could (and apparently *was*) easily be misread, and if that is the case, Shyamalan is the one responsible for the lack of clarity.

composer of any text accomplishes or fails to accomplish the same. Again, “I Have A Dream” by Martin Luther King, Jr. is a ready example of a text that freshmen are likely to encounter in a composition course, and King uses tactics that are essentially the same as those used by filmmakers to create his ethos.

In this case I would begin rather than end by discussing situated ethos. Most readers include a brief blurb about the author that precedes their work, and if the student reads this, he or she reads the text with at least a basic opinion of the author. In this textbook, *The Blair Reader*, a student reading the introduction to King would learn that he was “one of the greatest civil rights leaders and orators of this century,” that he was a Baptist minister, that he was well-educated (including a PhD from Boston University), and that he was most known for “advocating nonviolent civil disobedience to achieve racial equality” (485). The student would also read about the many awards King received, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, and of how he was assaulted and arrested for his activities as he fought for equal rights. King’s original audience for his speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and televised around the country would have known many of these things about him, as well. While his situated ethos may not have endeared him to those opposed to the civil rights movement, for anyone neutral or in favor of it, his education, occupation, and reputation with various organizations and institutions would certainly make him someone worth listening to. And even for those opposed to his goals, his unwavering insistence upon nonviolence and unity over division would make him worthy of respect if nothing else. King thus begins this speech with people recognizing him not just as knowledgeable but as someone who is willing to face persecution, bodily harm, and incarceration for a cause he believes in. The audience expects that this speech will further his call for nonviolent protest and also expects him to continue his trend of using the speech to unite

rather than divide. In the speech, King indeed meets these expectations, and by meeting rather than subverting those expectations, King's situated ethos is able to seamlessly supplement his invented ethos.

In film, the invented ethos of the filmmaker is primarily shaped through his creation of his own reality, use of detail within it, and avoidance of inconsistency or breaking his own rules. In a nonfiction and word-based text, this could be explained simply as accuracy, the speaker or writer getting his information correct and conveying a sense of authority in the area he is discussing. Because King is discussing what *should* happen rather than what *has* happened, the main area in which it is important he be correct is the historical precedent for the equality for which he calls. King fulfills this by referencing several major documents from our nation's history in his first several paragraphs. As he opens the speech, his second sentence begins with "Fivescore years ago" (485), echoing Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address, and following immediately with a reference to the Emancipation Proclamation. Shortly thereafter, he mentions the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, clarifying that with these documents combined, all men, regardless of race, have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The references to these documents function as a logical appeal, as well, but at the same time, is part of King's invented ethos, as he demonstrates his historical knowledge and establishes the current movement toward civil rights as another important moment in history.

Just as a filmmaker needs to get the details of his constructed reality correct and effective, the composer of a word-based text furthers his own credibility through getting his own details correct and using style appropriate for his audience. Along with getting one's facts right, a writer must also use appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and organization, as mistakes in these areas are distracting like a boom microphone dropping into a frame or a fake-looking special

effect in a film. They draw attention to the text being constructed, and being constructed poorly. All of these elements are implemented skillfully by King. His organization is logical, moving from the historical precedent for equal rights to descriptions of the current situation to his plans for how this can be remedied to what he imagines for the future. The grammar is correct, the style is appropriate, and the vocabulary is likewise appropriate, demonstrating King's intelligence without using such advanced vocabulary that his audience is unable to follow.

A filmmaker displays his good character by keeping himself mostly invisible and by being honest with his audience, rather than deceptive and manipulative. These, too, are true of the composer of any text, and true of King in "I Have A Dream." King's speech is not about him but about the country. He does not celebrate himself and does not draw attention to himself, and the humility conveyed by this choice illustrates his possession of that good character Aristotle calls for. He likewise does not lull his audience into agreeing with him in order to attack others, but keeps the speech generally positive, calling for working together rather than seeing white people as the enemy. Though he does utilize emotional appeal, discussed previously, he does not rely too heavily on it or use it in a dishonest manner. He utilizes it for the purposes of creating sympathy for the blacks who are being deprived of their rights and for conveying to the audience the sense of hope that he himself feels; he uses emotional appeal for positive purposes rather than purposes more in tune with manipulation like fear. King's character, therefore, is shown to be strong, and he gains respect from the audience through his consistency, humility, and refusal to resort to division or manipulation. Though accomplished in slightly different manners, these are the same things that a filmmaker must accomplish to establish his own good character and create a positive ethos for himself, and introducing them to the students through film can both draw attention to them as transferrable tactics in many different media and also help them understand

them more fully. So far, the first two pieces of the proposed rhetorical framework, ethos and pathos, have been demonstrated to be both relevant to both film and the written word and their ability to persuade and also to be accomplished through rather similar means in both mediums.

Like many other mediums of communication, film utilizes emotional and ethical appeals. Because film is sometimes intended primarily for entertainment over argument, these appeals will not always be used to further explicit arguments, though they do accomplish some of the same purposes and are occasionally accomplished in similar ways. Emotional appeals, such as creating tension or fear, can be created through both visual means and auditory means, perhaps even simultaneously. Some of these tactics are similar to means available to other text types, but others are not, and especially not the ability to provide multiple types of input at the same time. Emotional appeals can be utilized on their own for entertainment purposes or to put the audience in a certain frame of mind for easier persuasion. As will be discussed in the next chapter, they can also be used to facilitate identification with specific characters. Additionally, filmmaker ethos is essential, whether it be to provide a quality entertainment experience that does not draw attention to its being constructed or to ensure that the filmmaker's voice is the one the audience is willing to listen to if the film takes on a dialectical structure. In general, the filmmaker's ethos is determined by his adherence to realism and to the rules of the reality he creates within his film. Because film is a narrative medium, there are allowances for a filmmaker to keep some information from the viewer under the guise of limited narrative perspective, but failing to be consistent in narrative perspective can not only damage the filmmaker's ethos, but interfere with a film's larger argument, as we will see in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

Identification in Word and Film

Although ethos and pathos were discussed first, the core aspect of the rhetorical framework I am advocating here is identification. I began with emotional and ethical appeals because they are the building blocks of identification. Even when not directly used to facilitate identification with a person or group, ethos and pathos are still used in a related manner, to cause the audience to associate trust, confidence, or positive or negative emotions toward a specific entity. The previous chapter discussed how these two appeals are accomplished in film and then how they are achieved in comparable ways through the written word. Emotional responses to film such as fear or tension are created through visual means such as showing the object of fear, giving visual representation to instability, showing people reacting in fear or tension, and putting children in danger. These responses can also be created through tempo established by auditory means such as music or visual means such as pace of shot changes. Recognition of how these are accomplished through film makes it more apparent how emotional responses are achieved through the written word, especially through the use of visual description and analogy and through tempo, though established in this case by words, sentence length, and repetition rather than music or video editing. Ethos was also addressed, though focusing on speaker ethos rather than the ethos of characters within a narrative. This latter type of ethos will be addressed in this chapter. The invented ethos of a speaker discussed in the previous chapter is based upon

accuracy and good character in both mediums, though the specific means of achieving this may vary by the medium in question. The issue of maintaining a sort of invisibility as the composer of the text while still successfully establishing credibility was addressed briefly in the previous chapter but will be discussed at more length here, as the composer making mistakes in his own ethos can damage identification with the reality he is creating, and such damage carries over into identification with the people or characters being presented and possibly the argument being made itself.

As with the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to provide a more detailed explanation of how this portion of my proposed analytical framework—identification—functions, first in the medium of film and then in two example word-based texts. Although identification is a frequently-discussed tactic in rhetorical examinations of film and other visual mediums, pathos is a primary attribute of creating identification, and the lack of attention to pathos in composition instruction suggests that identification may be overlooked in a similar way. The other primary attribute of identification, ethos, appears to be more popular as an aspect of rhetoric taught to composition students, but leaving out pathos, and especially in discussions of visual and multimodal texts, provides an incomplete picture of how identification works and by consequence how persuasion occurs. This chapter will demonstrate how identification is forged both successfully and unsuccessfully through ethos, pathos, and some additional means; how identification can be both a persuasive tactic and the purpose of a rhetorical text; that common tactics are utilized in both film and the written word to facilitate identification; and finally, by implication, how this analytical framework that I propose successfully accounts for the persuasive tactics utilized by both mediums.

In describing identification's role in rhetoric, Burke argues that the two main options or motives of rhetoric are encouraging strife, enmity, and faction or encouraging love. These could be simplified down to encouraging either positive or negative emotions or associations. Though there can be identification (or lack thereof) with other entities, it often takes the form of identification with people or groups. Burke feels that identification is the central issue of rhetoric, that the strife or love mentioned above are rooted in identification or a lack of it. In less visual modes of communication, this identification would be based more on ethos, but in more visual modes, pathos is able to play a more influential role. While the previous chapter examined, for the most part, how ethos and pathos are accomplished in film and how those tactics have ready equivalents in other modes of communication, specifically writing, this chapter is concerned with taking the use of ethos and pathos one step further, looking at how they facilitate or hinder identification, the second and core aspect of the proposed analytical framework.

Identification is both a means of persuasion and indicative of the need for rhetoric at the same time. As explained by Burke in *A Rhetoric of Motives*,

a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So, there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ("consubstantiality") and communication (the nature of rhetoric as "addressed"). (46)

And yet, at the same time, Burke also writes that "identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not

apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (22). It is why rhetoric is needed, and it is also, at the same time, the key to effective persuasion. Because of these two important aspects of it, it provides a reasonable core to the rhetorical framework I suggest. Ethos and pathos explain how identification is achieved as a persuasive tactic, and identification influences whose arguments we are likely to agree with. Texts made both for entertainment and persuasive purposes make identification—making connections with others, real or fictional, individuals or groups—a primary goal. This is why so many of the authors in the *Cinema-to-Graphy* collection saw value in using film for cultural studies purposes. David Blakesley indicates his own preference for identification as an approach to film in “Defining Film Rhetoric” as he, in choosing an approach for his analysis of *Vertigo* from amongst the four he outlines in his introduction to *The Terministic Screen* (film language, film ideology, film interpretation, and film identification), chooses identification because it allows discussion of the other three without limiting his discussion too much; the other three elements still in some way rely upon identification. These views support the choice of identification as a focus in developing a rhetorical framework that will address both of these purposes and multiple text types attempting to achieve them. And again, showing students how identification is accomplished in film can both explain an important step in a film making an argument and also help students understand the concept of identification itself.

Earlier, I mentioned an example given by J. Anthony Blair of how identification can shape argument in film. Put simply, if we like a character we are going to tend to want to take his side, and if we dislike a character, we will tend not to. Blair gave the example of the characters in *JFK*:

Oliver Stone's *JFK* made the case that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy and to cover up the conspiracy. In telling that story, it made the characters who believed in a conspiracy highly credible, and those who denied it highly unbelievable. (56)

His example addresses ethos at work in the film, which would necessarily get a heavy emphasis in a film making an overtly logical argument that can be objectively right or wrong. However, in films with less overt arguments, it follows that emotions toward characters and their actions would also have a major influence on whom the audience tends to listen to. In some films, this might be rather straightforward with a hero with whom we side and a villain with whom we do not, but films of complexity will often resist such straightforward categorization. While in Shyamalan's films, there is not often as obvious an argument as the one Stone is making in *JFK*, Shyamalan's films can still demonstrate the principles that shape identification at work, especially when comparing characters across films and, in particular, characters that audiences respond to and characters they don't care for. To illustrate this, I will limit my discussion to Shyamalan's film that was best received by audiences and critics, *The Sixth Sense*, and the two that were worst received, *The Village* and *The Happening*. Incidentally, a close look at identification at work in these three films may help explain why the latter two were so poorly received. It can also serve to students a practical demonstration of how rhetorical effectiveness matters. Along with examining identification in these three films, I will also look at the same strategies at work in two other essays that are typical fare of freshman composition readers, "Just Walk on By" by Brent Staples and "Behind the Counter" by Eric Schlosser. In this case, two word-based texts will be used to illustrate the framework's ability to explain identification in both narrative and non-narrative texts. Comparison of these works will serve to illustrate in

more detail how identification is accomplished, with special emphasis on commonalities across mediums.

There are three major elements that shape our opinions toward characters in a film, and consequently with whom we most and least identify. One influence is general character traits such as personality, appearance, how the actor portrays the character, and things we learn about them, for example. This is a combination of ethos and pathos, with pathos likely a stronger factor in film because of film's visual nature, but still primarily created through facets associated with ethos in all mediums. A second factor in creating identification is chronology. It may seem like a small and perhaps unrelated issue, but audiences tend to assume that the first character the film introduces us to is the one it is about, since usually the opening events of the film set up the rest of the plot. Starting with a character or characters can suggest to the audience they are supposed to identify with them, that they are the main character and actual or implied narrator, even if that is not the filmmaker's intent, as we will see through the discussion of *Natural Born Killers* next chapter. This is especially the case when the narrative perspective of the film seems mostly limited to this character. Because this narrative perspective can be established visually, the third factor I will examine here is that of cinematography, or how the character is filmed. This can be far subtler than the other two issues, but can still drastically influence our feelings toward them.

Although he was writing about fictional characters in tragedy rather than giving instruction on relatability, identification, and ethos, Aristotle's description of the tragic hero in *Poetics* does provide a basic outline for how to create a character in which the audience is invested. Though Aristotle believed it was essential for the tragic hero to be of high stature, a

member of the nobility or aristocracy⁹—not essential for identification, and perhaps an obstacle to it—much of the rest of his description of traits possessed by the tragic hero strike a balance of likability and realism. It is important for the tragic hero to have a flaw, some imperfection of personality that makes him more realistic and consequently more relatable to the audience. And then the way the character chooses to deal with his imperfections can even be a source of admiration for him from the audience members. In short, a tragic hero, or any relatable character, should be likable but imperfect.

Shyamalan's films demonstrate how identification is accomplished in the medium of film. One of the first things we learn about Malcolm Crowe in *The Sixth Sense* is that he is good at his job, but that it comes first. We learn that he is good at what he does as the film opens, based on the award he has just been given for service to the community through his work, and also from the cards from children he has helped that decorate his home. We know that it comes first based on comments made by his wife about how much he's given up to earn that recognition. Here Shyamalan is beginning by making him both likable for the work he does for others but human in that he is flawed and spends perhaps too much of his time on his work. It establishes positive ethos for him as credible in his area of expertise and being of good character, but doing so without breaching realism by making him too good to be true. Shortly after this, when Malcolm and his wife discover that one of his old patients has broken into their home, Shyamalan again dispels any notion of Malcolm being a saint as he shows him struggling to recall who Vincent is. Likewise, it is unclear as he tries to talk Vincent out of using the gun he has whether he is genuinely trying to help Vincent or just protect himself and his wife. Malcolm

⁹ This is a part of his description because of the nature of tragedy—if the character does not start at the top, there is nowhere for him to fall, and hence no tragedy. This is why Aristotle commented that one could not have peasants for a tragic heroes, as there is not much lower for their fortunes to fall.

is definitely likable but not perfect, and these flaws that Shyamalan establishes in the early scenes definitely make him a more realistic character, and consequently one with whom we are well able to identify. Just this introduction to Malcolm (or a comparable character in another film) can be instructive to students in showing how a balance of positive and negative traits is important to ethos and to identification. Trying too hard to gain positive opinions by either praising oneself too strongly or creating an unbelievably good character can instead be damaging to ethos.

There are other details included in the film that help portray Malcolm as a likable guy. One example is the dingy and worn out sweatshirt that Malcolm is constantly wearing when he is at home, often putting it on over the dress clothes he works in. Though a subtle detail, it is still a tactic of encouraging identification, akin to politicians ditching their ties and rolling up their shirtsleeves to appear more relatable. Also not a foreign tactic to campaigning politicians, Malcolm is better able to encourage identification between the audience and himself through his use of humor. What it reveals about Malcolm is not so much that he is a funny person, but instead that he is willing to embarrass himself to make someone else comfortable. Malcolm's humor is silly; he tries hard but is never as funny as he is trying to be, such as with his disappearing/reappearing penny trick, which he performs in order to comfort and distract Cole after he has an outburst at school. He is awkward and the trick is not impressive at all. Cole's deadpan response to the trick is, "I didn't know you were funny." This is where a lot of the humor in the film comes from, with the audience laughing at Malcolm more because he thought something was funny than because it actually was. A good sense of humor would have been one way to make Malcolm relatable to the audience, but this other way, making him willing to embarrass himself for someone else's sake, also serves the same purpose.

This willingness to embarrass himself for someone else's sake is also revealed through his awkward attempt at a bedtime story for Cole when Cole is in the hospital. While these situations help make him a regular guy with his heart in the right place, his own description of himself certainly encourages us to pull for him:

Once upon a time there was this person named Malcolm. He worked with children. He loved it. He loved it more than anything else. And then one night, he found out that he made a mistake with one of them. He couldn't help that one. And he can't stop thinking about it, he can't forget. Ever since then, things have been different. He's not the same person that he used to be. And his wife doesn't like the person that he's become. They barely speak anymore, they're like strangers. And then one day Malcolm meets this wonderful little boy, a really cool little boy. Reminds him a lot of the other one. And Malcolm decides to try and help this new boy. 'Cause he feels that if he can help this new boy, it would be like helping that other one too.¹⁰

Along with showing his willingness to do whatever it takes to comfort Cole, having Malcolm himself reflect on his shortcomings in this way would seem to make him more admirable and make the audience more willing to identify with him, another example of making him good but not so perfect he is unrealistic. Honest self-reflection is certainly an admirable quality.

Coupled with this is the sense of responsibility he seems to feel for Cole. When something bad happens to Cole, Malcolm is quick to arrive to make sure he is all right. It suggests he is moving beyond simply trying to make up for not doing a good job with Vincent to genuinely caring for

¹⁰ While this speech could be viewed as sloppy writing, the script being too obvious about what Malcolm's goals are and his feelings about himself, I don't think the average moviegoer would dwell on it much or judge the movie for it.

Cole and his well-being. Whether through recognizing similarities to ourselves through his “everyman” traits or recognizing traits we *wish* we possessed, Malcolm is a character that is well-suited to our identification. He is certainly not the only film character that could be used to illustrate these traits, but film in general is a good way to illustrate how a sense of identification is forged, with these techniques present in multiple text types, as are techniques that inhibit identification.

Most of what I have addressed regarding the ability for the audience to identify with Malcolm has not been medium-specific. These are primarily the same attributes of ethos that could be utilized in a written narrative, and what has been discussed that is visual in nature could likewise be accomplished by an orator attempting to visually encourage identification. However, there are still some other ways this admiration of and consequently identification with Malcolm are facilitated through more visual and medium-specific means. Cinematography will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, specifically for how it encourages shared point-of-view between the character and the audience, but it can also influence the audience’s feelings toward a character in subtle ways. Common examples of this are shooting a character from a high angle to make them appear small or a lower angle to make them appear imposing, which could in the first case encourage sympathy and in the second, fear. A character may be lit brightly to give them angelic or innocent associations in the mind of the audience members, or perhaps in shadow to suggest they are dishonest or a threat. These are common tactics in the film medium as well as other visual mediums, and can help students read visual communication more completely along with helping them understand how these tactics are used in word-based texts.

The Sixth Sense is full of many instances of that first example, framing the boy Cole either slightly from above or from further away in order to emphasize his smallness. Malcolm is not filmed in order to be especially threatening or innocent, but he is filmed in such a way as to, again, emphasize his empathetic and caring nature. During Malcolm's first session with Cole in the church, Malcolm is deliberately shown to physically get down to the same level as Cole when he speaks to him. As another example, later in the film when they are walking down the street together talking, Shyamalan uses a long shot for most of the conversation, showing the pair from far away, but the shot pulls in tight when Malcolm tells Cole that he's not a freak. There, the camera visually conveys what is going on between the characters, that they are getting closer and a connection is being made. Considering that his genuine care for Cole is what is most likely to garner a connection from the audience, having Malcolm's relationship with Cole echoed through the way Shyamalan films the two makes perfect sense.

There are also lessons to be learned about identification in examining examples of instances where it is attempted unsuccessfully. As such an example, in contrast to Malcolm's generally likable portrayal, is the portrayal of Elliot in *The Happening*. Elliot is, frankly, annoying. Many reviews of the film agree. The only especially likable moment he has in the movie is when he makes up a story that, on the surface seems to be to make his wife jealous—she has just confessed to him that she went out on a date with another man—but is actually intended to make her feel better:

If we're going to die, I want you to know something. I was in the pharmacy a while ago. There was a really good-looking pharmacist behind the counter. Really good-looking. I went up and asked her where the cough syrup was. I didn't even

have a cough, and I almost bought it. I'm talking about a completely superfluous bottle of cough syrup, which costs like six bucks.

In response to this, Alma asks him if he is joking; he nods and she thanks him. More moments like this, though they would have the potential to disrupt the suspense of the film, would at least have made Elliot a more likable character, which could have made the rest of the film work as intended. However, this scene, where Elliot shows a sense of humor and humility as he attempts to make his wife feel better about her confession, is really Elliot's lone moment of allowing the audience a strong connection with him. In this instance, Elliot, like Malcolm, is showing a willingness to embarrass himself for the sake of someone else's comfort, and is actually more successful than Malcolm at actually being funny as he does so. However, in a majority of the other scenes in the film, he is childish, not good at dealing with conflict, and rather whiny, especially for an adult.

Elliot's childish behavior can be excused when he is teaching his middle school students during his science class, since a teacher feigning immaturity to relate to his students might not seem out of line. However, it is out of place during the rest of the film and, in the theatrical cut of the film, is never sufficiently explained. Just one example of the childishness is when Elliot's response, while becoming angry with his friend Julian at the train station, is to say to Julian's young daughter, "Can you ask your dad for my ticket please?" When two teenagers who join Elliot and Alma later in the film ask him questions about his relationship with her and ask to see the mood ring he wears, he blows up at them and refuses to let them see the ring like a child refusing to share. It is definitely difficult for a viewer to identify with a character he doesn't like, and moments like this, though perhaps intended to be funny, instead work to make Elliot unlikable. As mentioned before, a character needs some negative traits in order to be realistic,

and most especially in the case of their being part of the character's development over the course of the narrative, something to be fixed. In the theatrical release of *The Happening*, however, these traits are not established as part of Elliot's development, and without more positive traits to balance out the negative, identification with him is inhibited. Elliot's example could be used to show students both mistakes that can be made in attempting to encourage identification, or as an example of how to intentionally discourage identification.

Along with the unbalanced amount of negative to positive character traits, the stilted and unnatural dialog in this film also contributes to difficulties on the audience's part with identifying with the characters, though this time more because it interferes with realism than likability. For instance, when the train stops and Elliot, asking the conductors for more information, is informed that they are in Filbert, Pennsylvania, his response is, "Filbert? Does anybody know where that is? Why are you giving me one useless piece of information at a time? What's going on? Hey, why would you just stop? You can't just leave us here!" He runs through all these questions without any answers or cues from the characters to whom he speaks, which makes the sequence of questions seem especially scripted and artificial. That same over-scripted feel is present in another scene where Elliot talks to himself to try to figure out what is going on, what is causing the people to kill themselves:

All right, be scientific, douchebag. Identify the... rules... design the experiment... careful observation, measurements, that's what I'm trying to do, interpret the experimental pattern, interpret... What if it IS the plants? That group was larger than ours. This thing's been escalating all day. Smaller and smaller populations have been setting this off. They react to human stimulus. Maybe people are setting off the plants?

This speech, though not as artificial as the litany of questions to the train conductors, still feels very scripted and overly expository. The stilted, unnatural dialog in this film makes the characters really difficult to identify with because they don't feel real and this doesn't feel like real life. These are important aspects of identification, realism and authenticity, that are probably readily recognized in film by students, and classifying them as aspects of identification can encourage students to recognize these as elements of effective rhetoric, even when presented only through words.

Finally, while Shyamalan is able to further emphasize Malcolm's positive ethos in *The Sixth Sense* through the way he chooses to film Malcolm, specifically at moments shared with Cole, there are no comparable moments in *The Happening* to build a positive ethos for Elliot. In fact, perhaps the most memorable shots of Elliot in this film do quite the opposite. A style of filming that Shyamalan began dabbling with in *Signs*, having actors look directly at the camera as they deliver their lines, gets greatly overused in *The Happening*, and coupled with the artificial feel of the dialogue, makes the barrier between audience and character even stronger. There are other directors who do this (Brian dePalma is the most obvious example), and it can be used quite effectively. However, with an already-irritating character delivering artificial-sounding dialogue, it instead creates a sensation of someone you already dislike getting up in your face as they speak to you. In *The Happening*, in concert with the other aspects of the film that seem overly scripted or artificial, the way that Elliot is filmed causes less identification rather than more.

Examining identification in film, and in particular looking at instances where mistakes are made, can help students understand how these details that get in the way of realism go back to the issue of the composer of the text maintaining, as much as possible, invisibility to the

audience, discussed in the previous chapter. When inaccuracies or mistakes detract from the appearance of reality, the composer of the text, in this case the film, is drawing attention to himself. He is the great and powerful Oz and wants you to pay no attention to the man behind the curtain, but when the man behind the curtain captures our attention, it is hard to go back to ignoring him. While in this case it is the filmmaker's ethos that has been damaged, the result is an inhibition of the ability to identify with the characters he is presenting because now the audience has had their attention drawn to the text and the characters within it as constructed. The illusion of reality is gone. There are two different types of identification at work here: identification with the speaker or composer of a text and identification with the subject matter, in this case, the reality created by the composer of the text. Characters within a narrative are both of these at the same time. They are a part of the reality that the composer is presenting and also potential speakers, presenters of messages that the composer wishes to relay to the audience. Because of that, inability to identify with one of these entities in film is ultimately an inability to identify with both.

In *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, Corbett stressed how one mistake in ethos can cause an entire argument to be ignored. In film, the sorts of mistakes that Shyamalan makes here have the same consequences, rendering the film less immersive, and damaging its ability to accomplish its purpose. This, too, can be instructive in making clear to students the stakes of successful ethical appeals. These are indeed issues more of ethos than pathos, but damaging one's authority with his audience can also damage the effectiveness of his emotional appeals, as well.

While students may have an easier time explaining why they did or did not like a character in a movie, identification with people and characters presented through the written

word is not accomplished much differently. While types of written texts, of course, vary greatly, along with their content and purposes, if Burke is right, they still all come back to the issue of identification if they are attempting to persuade in any way. It might be a specific person, a specific person representing a group, or a large group, but the text will call for its audience to identify or not identify with *someone*. And this is attempted in other types of texts through many of the same avenues attempted by filmmakers. Malcolm Crowe is an example of this being accomplished effectively, and Elliot Moore is an example of how to inhibit identification, though certainly an unintentional example, but both of their examples are illuminating in understanding how identification works in the written word.

In “Just Walk on By” by Brent Staples, it initially seems that we are not going to identify with its narrator, as he opens with the statement, “My first victim was a woman—white, well-dressed, probably in her early twenties. I came upon her late one evening on a deserted street in Hyde Park, a relatively affluent neighborhood in an otherwise mean, impoverished section of Chicago” (450). It would seem that this would introduce a narrator with whom we are *not* supposed to identify, perhaps to accomplish some particular rhetorical purpose. However, by the end of the opening paragraph, it is clear the narrator did nothing to her besides walk behind her on the sidewalk, and by the next paragraph, it is instead clear that *he* is the victim. This essay is ultimately about Staples’ experiences as an African American male, and “the unwieldy inheritance [he’d] come into—the ability to alter public space in ugly ways” (450). Its purpose is understated; rather than making a direct claim that his audience should take a specific course of action, to remedy the treatment of Staples and others who share his experiences, the essay is ultimately more a personal narrative that provides an example of someone accepting and dealing with an unfair hand he has been dealt. Though the essay *could* serve the purpose of making

people more aware of ways that they respond to those around them out of prejudice, and possibly changing the behavior of its readers in small ways, this work's more central argument is for its readers to change what they can and accept what they cannot with the best attitude possible, regardless of what their own particular situation may be. For either of those purposes to be accomplished, the audience must identify with the narrator. As with Malcolm in *The Sixth Sense*, this is accomplished through details that make Staples both realistic and likable.

Identification with Staples would likely be easier if a photograph of him were provided along with his essay, but at least in *The Blair Reader*, this is not the case, so what we learn of him comes from the essay itself. His physical description of himself on its own does not necessarily make him easier or harder to identify with, as he could seem imposing or threatening: a “youngish black man—a broad six feet two inches with a beard and billowing hair, both hands shoved into the pockets of a bulky military jacket” (450). However, this intimidating self-description makes him deserving of our sympathy when paired with the seemingly contradictory description of himself as “a softy who is scarcely able to take a knife to raw chicken—let alone hold it to a person’s throat” (450-451). We are likely to see him in a positive light for this gentleness, and in addition to that, feel sympathy for him because of the seeming incongruity of being physically intimidating but emotionally quite the opposite. Both of the above are things able to be imagined visually, and as a consequence, more likely to be the object of emotional response. He also is able to establish positive ethos with just a few additional facts about himself in these first two paragraphs. We learn that he, at the time of the incident he describes in his opening, was a graduate student at the University of Chicago, so we know that he is well-educated. Along with this, we learn of both his gentle nature and also his good character for the fact that he is not accusatory of the woman’s response to him and her unnecessary flight from his

proximity that night in Hyde Park. Though he has every right to resent her for her response to him, he instead opens the essay by referring to her as his victim, rather than he as hers. This conveyance of his understanding of people's reactions to him continues throughout the essay and solidifies our initial impression of his being of good character: "I understand, of course, that the danger they perceive is not a hallucination. Women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically overrepresented as perpetrators of that violence" (452). This is one of the ways identification with Staples is encouraged through this essay; most people would like to think they would be as understanding as he is, and as this is a trait we desire for ourselves, we choose to identify with him.

Once we have a positive opinion toward him, the stories he tells from his experiences causing overreactions from others because of his appearance are able to be more emotionally affecting, particularly when they are able to be imagined and visualized by the reader. A few of the example stories Staples provides that are best able to be visualized are the description of his repeated experience of crossing "in front of a car stopped at a traffic light" and hearing the "*thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk* of the driver—black, white, male, or female—hammering down the door locks" (451); his experience being chased through the building of a magazine he worked for by an "ad hoc posse" led by an office manager, from which he had to flee until he arrived at the office of his editor who could vouch for his identity; and the woman running a jewelry store who, in response to Staples' presence in her store, brings out a Doberman pinscher on a leash and refuses to speak to him or answer his questions. In light of our knowledge of the narrator and either admiration for qualities he possesses or common traits we find we share with him, these stories make us angry about the conclusions people jump to about Staples, recognizing the injustice of it. Without his demonstrating himself to possess admirable qualities and traits that

his audience either actually has or wishes to have, these stories would not be likely to garner an emotional response at all. Telling stories in a level of detail that allows the reader to visualize them and sense their reality adds to the emotional potential of the essay.

Because Staples makes it about the broader issue of dealing with obstacles in life with a positive attitude, rather than making it specifically about the issue of being judged based on the color of one's skin, it is likewise easier to identify with him. We can apply this to our lives, and we can also identify with him through thinking of comparable situations in our own lives. This is similar kind of identification with those seemingly different from us that Schmertz and Trefzer were hoping to facilitate using *Higher Learning* in their composition classes. This illustrates how identification can be both a means and an end in rhetoric; it is essential to persuading your audience to take your side, but can also be an end unto itself, with identification with some other person or group the purpose of the rhetoric.

Though perhaps less obviously so, identification is also an aim of Eric Schlosser's "Behind the Counter." However, identification is also, at the same time, the key to the effectiveness of his argument. His overall argument is that the fast food industry takes advantage of its workforce to increase profit, through means such as paying as little as possible, manipulating employee schedules, and requiring little to no training for employees so that they are highly replaceable. His argument is made well logically, but is memorable to the audience through his use of identification.

Schlosser's primary use of identification is through beginning his essay by describing the situation of one young fast food worker, Elisa Zamot. Through a detailed description of her typical Saturday morning routine, Schlosser is able to encourage the reader to sympathize with Elisa and the hard work she performs for very little pay. Details that might earn her this

sympathy come from describing her morning in such a way as to draw out the details that most readers would dislike as a part of their own morning routine: “Every Saturday Elisa Zamot gets up at 5:15 in the morning. It’s a struggle, and her head feels groggy as she steps into the shower” (511). Later, it is explained that although her mother often drives her to the McDonalds where she works, Elisa sometimes has to walk, “leaving home before the sun rises... When Elisa heads for work, the streets are quiet, the sky’s still dark, and the lights are out in the small houses and rental apartments along the road” (512). Each of these details emphasizes how early it is, how Elisa is one of the few unlucky enough to have to be awake at this hour on a Saturday, and consequently encourages feelings of sympathy toward her for enduring this situation on a weekly basis at the young age of sixteen.

The other feeling that this encourages toward Elisa is admiration because of her working hard to help her family despite the difficult conditions she faces. This is an aspect of the other attribute of creating identification, ethos. Along with providing the reader with the details that both emphasize the reality of Elisa’s situation and encourage feelings of sympathy toward her, Elisa is portrayed by Schlosser in such a way as to bestow upon her a positive ethos. The reader not only has many details provided to emphasize the difficult conditions that Elisa endures in order to help her family financially, but the essay is also notably devoid of any complaints on her part about her situation. This admiration and sympathy combine to encourage the reader to identify with Elisa. They may identify more readily if they have worked a comparable job or have endured a comparable situation, but even readers without similar experiences have reason to identify based on the emotional connection and the recognition of traits in Elisa that they desire to have themselves.

Relatability and ethos are the most noticeable means of facilitating identification, but some additional means of it in film point to other tactics for creating identification. One of these additional techniques is chronology.¹¹ For instance, the chronology of *The Sixth Sense* helps to establish its purpose as Malcolm attempting to reach this goal of saving another boy to make up for not saving Vincent. The opening scene is his coming home from receiving an award for his work to finding his former patient Vincent Gray has broken into the house and has a gun. Vincent tells Malcolm that he failed because he did not believe him, shoots Malcolm, and then shoots himself. As Malcolm says himself later in the film, he wants to help Cole, who has a lot of the same problems as Vincent, because if he can help Cole it would be like he was helping Vincent, too. Not only does this set up Malcolm with an admirable goal for the audience to support him in achieving, but simply the fact that the film starts with Malcolm instead of its other main character Cole suggests that it is Malcolm who we are supposed to pay the most attention to and sympathize with most, because it appears to be Malcolm's story. Beginning the story with the loss of Vincent, in conjunction with the flaws possessed by Malcolm and his own critical self-assessment and description of his journey to Cole (in the form of a bedtime story), sets up *The Sixth Sense* as Malcolm's story, setting up goals for him and also giving purpose to those very flaws that make him a realistic character with whom the audience can easily identify.

Again, however, an example of chronology being utilized ineffectively for the purposes of identification can be instructive to students and help illustrate its potential importance. As such an example, the chronology of the *The Happening*, and specifically what Shyamalan chooses as his opening scene, has not one but two negative consequences for the rest of this film

¹¹ Chronology will also be addressed in the next chapter as a means of making or implying a logical claim. Here it will remain focused on influencing attitudes toward a character rather than a means of making logical, or seemingly logical, claims about a character.

and the relatability of his characters. On the DVD, you can watch a scene, which was ultimately cut, that would have opened the film instead of the scene in Central Park that ultimately did begin the film. In this deleted scene, you get a brief introduction to Elliot and Alma and also a look into their marriage situation and a slight explanation of their character traits. In Elliot's case, specifically, you have his wife criticizing him because of his immaturity. This is the first negative effect of cutting the scene—with the scene in the film, you can at least see that the more annoying traits of the main character were intentional (though still annoying). Rather than an unexplained trait, it might instead be set up as a goal for him to overcome his tendency toward childishness, had this scene actually opened the film. It would help the audience to identify with him, I believe, if it is at least shown to be intentional that he acts the way he does, that it's ok to be irritated with him because of it, that you are supposed to be. Minus that scene, he is just inexplicably childish, which is often chalked up to bad acting on Mark Wahlberg's part. I think he was doing exactly what he was asked to do and what made sense in light of a version of the script containing this opening scene, but it becomes a performance that is inexplicably grating without this missing information. Although this effect of the missing scene is more an issue of missing information, the scene's omission also affects feelings toward characters in other ways.

The other, though perhaps more minor, blow this missing scene delivers to the film is simply that absence of a clear person or pair of people we feel we are journeying through this film with. It is several scenes into the film when we are introduced to Elliot, and that structure leaves this feeling more like a slasher film in which we are not supposed to sympathize with or latch onto any particular person, rather than a suspense film where we care very much about what happens to at least the main characters. The logical reasons for cutting this scene are sound—Shyamalan wanted to begin with the intense scenes of the event happening and people

killing themselves to hook the viewer immediately, while starting with this scene with Elliot and Alma would have made for a very slow start to the film. However, what results from this decision made for the sake of pacing is characters with whom the audience might have been able to relate, but lacking that explanation for their flaws, and a sense that they are who we are to root for, cannot. Lacking this scene to explain Elliot and Alma's personalities and relationships with one another, this film becomes a journey of survival alone rather than both survival and growth, which would have made identification with them easier.

Chronology is especially influential in encouraging identification in film because there is often no specified narrator. The filmmaker's decisions in where to begin his film suggest to the audience whose narrative perspective the story will tend to be told from. Similarly to how an audience might tend to identify with a first-person narrator over other characters in the story, the film is suggesting to them that they should identify with that first-introduced character by introducing said character first. The same is often true for other text types in third person perspective. When a film or a written text uses first person perspective, chronology may play less important a factor, since it is likely more obvious which character we are supposed to latch onto. However, chronology can affect identification in this situation through other means, as demonstrated by "Just Walk on By."

As discussed before, Staples begins this essay with a description of his first "victim." This would seem to set him up as a narrator with whom the audience should choose not to identify, but in context of the first two paragraphs together, it is clear that he both refers to the woman as his victim ironically and yet at the same time does not dwell on faulting her for her reaction to him. Beginning this way instead of, perhaps, on an accusatory note or more directly pleading for the reader's pity commands his respect, therefore demonstrating how where one

chooses to begin a text or narrative does affect identification, even in a first-person narrative. It also opens the narrative with a problem for Staples to overcome, something established at the opening of *The Sixth Sense* but not in *The Happening*. Setting up from the start a goal for the speaker or character, a problem for him to solve, gets us invested in his journey and encourages identification with him.

Other organizational decisions on the part of Staples likewise facilitate identification with him. For instance, Staples tells several stories of his own experiences and background before providing outside commentary on the issue through Norman Podhoretz's "My Negro Problem—And Ours." The issue has become much more personalized and real to the reader before it is presented in more broad terms and from another person's perspective, a demonstration of how identification is an important tactic in persuasion. Though Podhoretz means something quite different when he refers to the problem as "ours," with Staples successfully facilitating identification between himself and the reader, the problem does genuinely feel like "ours" and the reader is better able to contextualize and respond critically to Podhoretz's ideas and comments.

Although Staples does return to the ideas of Podhoretz again near the end of his essay—after reflecting on his formative years and how he turned into a decidedly non-violent adult and also providing more examples of strangers' reactions to him based on his appearance—he does not end with responding to Podhoretz. Had he done so, his entire essay might be taken as a response to this other author. Staples does not even directly disagree with the sentiments of Podhoretz, who grew up in "terror of black males" (451) and consequently feels "hatred" toward them. This second inclusion of the ideas of Podhoretz is used as a segue into an explanation of how Staples learns to "smother the rage [he] felt at so often being taken for a criminal" (453).

This is followed by two paragraphs that explain the efforts he takes to make himself “less threatening” (453), which include not only giving others who might feel threatened wide berth, but also such action as walking past a building he intends to enter and then circling back so that the people he was walking behind do not feel that they are being followed inside by him. His concluding paragraph describes his habit of whistling classical music to put others at ease: “It is my equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country” (453). Staples’ refusal to end on his disagreement or even to end on a negative note serves two purposes. First, it supplements the admirable character Staples began to establish with his introduction, making identification with Staples more desirable to the reader. Second, it clarifies his own purpose, not to condemn the people who incorrectly take him for a threat, but to demonstrate how he has dealt with and risen above injustice, perhaps in hopes that others might apply the lessons he has learned to their own lives. This gives his essay more potential for readers to identify with him and his struggles, ending on broader applications of what he has learned through his experiences, which are more likely to be relevant to a broad audience. This demonstrates for students both roles of identification in rhetoric, both the importance of being able to identify with speakers, characters, or groups, but also how identifying with others can be the primary purpose of a particular rhetorical text.

Although identification, and its establishment through chronology, may be achieved somewhat differently in a non-narrative text, chronology is still influential. In the case of “Behind the Counter,” it actually becomes a strategy of delaying the introduction of the logical argument until the reader is already emotionally invested in the issue. Schlosser begins the essay with the story of Elisa, and it is not until the fourth paragraph that he even begins to broaden out the discussion into anything obviously argumentative. Up until this point, it just appears to be a

third-person narrative of Elisa's experiences as a fast food worker. Once he has encouraged identification with Elisa through the details of her workday routine and his portrayal of her as admirable and hardworking, he has the audience invested enough in Elisa's welfare to move on to the reason he tells her story in the first place, his indictment of labor practices in the fast food industry. The reader's identification with Elisa serves as motivation to heed Schlosser's argument more fully.

The third means of encouraging identification is encouraging the audience to take on the point of view of the person with whom they are supposed to identify. In film this can be done visually and through the narrative. The point at which the film begins is one aspect of this, but there are others, and this is the method in which emotional appeal plays the biggest role. The ways that the character is visually presented to the audience can affect emotions felt toward them were mentioned earlier in this chapter, but the other way that identification is facilitated visually is through filming a character and the events they witness in such a way as to cause the audience to feel like they are sharing the point of view of the character.

The films of M. Night Shyamalan work well for illustrating how shared point of view works toward encouraging identification through their use of fear as a primary emotional response. A common tactic of Shyamalan in encouraging fear through identification is limiting the audience point of view to the characters' through the cinematography. Though he does not use it as consistently until *Signs*, Shyamalan does utilize this some in *The Sixth Sense*. It is partway through the movie before he lets the audience in on what Cole sees; up until this point, you see Cole responding to things that have scared him, but it is not until the scene where Cole is locked in the closet by the other boys at a party that the audience gets auditory confirmation that there are ghosts. It is not until Cole tells Malcolm at the hospital that he sees ghosts that the

audience is allowed to see the ghosts, as well. From this point on, the audience does get to see the ghosts, but only when Cole sees them, including when they appear suddenly and surprise him. Rather than creating dread like many directors might do, showing the audience something the character can't see, Shyamalan forces you into their position and only allows you to see what they see, thereby encouraging identification with that character more strongly.

Though the above are examples of how cinematography and narrative encourage identification with Cole, there are still ways that these are used to encourage it with Malcolm, as well. Obviously the narrative perspective of the film is not limited to just Malcolm. If that were the case, there would not be scenes featuring only Cole and there ultimately would not have been much scare factor to the film, as Malcolm never sees any of Cole's ghosts. However, the decision to only show them once Malcolm has been told about them, and in particular when he begins to believe Cole, still causes the film to feel primarily told from Malcolm's point of view. When Cole is simply a troubled boy to Malcolm, we do not see the source of his fear. Easing into Cole's perspective as Malcolm is eased into it helps sustain identification with both characters.

Shyamalan again provides examples of mistakes in creating shared point of view and the implications for identification in his next film *The Village*; in this film, he runs into problems with maintaining that limited perspective since he chooses to have his main character be blind. This actually illustrates several problems with inconsistently using the camera to facilitate identification, but for now I will just focus on the issues that arise when trying to put us in a character's shoes for the purpose of identifying with their fear. In the chase scene late in the film, blind Ivy is chased through the woods by Noah, who is dressed as one of the creatures that both Ivy and the audience know are not real. At first it appears to confuse the issue of whether or not

the creatures are real, but then we see that it is Noah dressed in one of the costumes. So in this, the audience knows something that Ivy does not. At the culmination of the scene, when Ivy lures Noah into a hole that he falls into and dies in, that she doesn't know it is Noah but we do serves as a major distraction on top of simply driving a wedge between Ivy and the audience because of our being privy to information that she is not. This decision is not singlehandedly responsible for ruining the film, but identification between the audience and character is not as strong in these cases. It causes the audience member to feel like an objective observer rather than a participant in the events, and with "objective" comes "less emotionally involved." It causes the viewer to be less emotionally involved, and when the viewer is not emotionally invested in what happens to the character, identification has not been successfully created.

Shyamalan also makes some mistakes in creating shared point of view in *The Happening*, also illustrating the role of visuality and detail in facilitating identification. *The Happening* is different from Shyamalan's other films in that neither we nor the characters can actually see what it is we are supposed to be afraid of; all we can see is its effects. So here Shyamalan does not have to worry about creating identification through forging similar perspectives. Fear in *The Happening* is rooted in people doing the unexpected, like in the opening scene – people, once affected, freeze and then walk backwards, or begin to say nonsense. Then, when the characters begin to kill themselves in whatever way is accessible, it is shocking, such as in the where a gun gets passed from person to person as they shoot themselves in the head, drop the gun, and the next person picks it up. Every person is calm and silent. This calmness with which people kill themselves is disturbing, such as Julian sitting down in the road and casually picking up some glass and slitting his wrists. We see the bodies of the landscaping guys hung themselves from the trees, and the detail is carefully included that the ladders they used are still present, indicating

that they put in the time and effort to get their ladders out to use them. These scenes are chilling, certainly, but they lack a specific threat we are fearing for a specific character. Nearly all of these scenes feature nameless characters that we have no connection to. We do fear for the main characters at least a little bit, and are limited like they are to not being able to see the threat itself (only its effects), but this often leaves both them and us afraid of the blowing wind, which is understandably not as frightening as some of Shyamalan's more tangible threats like ghosts, aliens, creatures from the woods, or wolf creatures called scrunts. As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the key elements in the ability of a film to gain an emotional response is that it is vivid; the audience can see what is supposed to inspire the emotional response, able to respond in this way because the threat seems more real. The invisible nature of the threat in *The Happening* is only part of the reason I believe that the audience fails to identify with the main characters through the experience of shared fear (since the fear is difficult to come by), but still an important one. The most tangible scare in the film comes not from "the event" but rather from an old woman that the main characters encounter in their effort to outrun said event.

Mrs. Jones is an elderly woman who lives alone and away from most civilization. She has clearly not been around people in a long time and initially turns Alma, Elliot, and Jess away, but relents and allows them to join her for dinner and spend the night. She goes from odd to interesting and normal as she talks to Alma and Elliot over dinner, telling them about the spring house on her property, asking, regarding their romantic relationship, "Who's chasing who?" We, and Elliot and Alma, start to relax, then she suddenly slaps Jess's hand for reaching for a cookie. Eventually she gives her the cookie, but from that point on is portrayed to the audience as mentally unstable and consequently frightening.

Mrs. Jones serves as an excellent example of how to actively discourage identification. Here it is intentional. She is supposed to be an object of fear. One common way of discouraging identification with a person or group is through dehumanization. An enemy will be portrayed as an “other,” through perhaps negative caricatures like the anti-Japanese propaganda posters used in the United States during World War II, or through contemporary political campaign advertisements, which might portray Middle Easterners as terrorists with their faces covered, carrying guns, marching in formation, and shouting decidedly non-English languages. A key in both of these cases is dehumanization, in the former case through caricatures that exaggerate those physical features that differentiate the Japanese from the typical American, and in the latter by actually covering the face. As I argue in “Masks and Machine Ethos: Traces of Techno-Horror in the Slasher Film,” the masks worn by villains in horror films serve the important purpose of hiding that feature that we often feel is representative of our humanity, the face. Without a visible face, such a person or character becomes less human to the audience and far more difficult to identify with. The audience recognizes that it cannot expect human response from this individual, as well. I would further suggest that insanity is a version of a mask. While not physically inhibiting our view of the person’s face, recognizing a person as mentally unstable serves the same purpose, deeming that individual incapable of normal human response, including. Hiding the face or making a person less human either in appearance (such as the caricatures) or in behavior (such as Mrs. Jones in *The Happening*) are all sound strategies for discouraging identification, the other primary use of rhetoric as identified by Burke. This is certainly a valuable function of teaching students about identification through film. Knowing how to both encourage and discourage it is helpful, but it would also be a success of teaching to train students to see through attempts to manipulate them through anti-identification, as

attempted through texts such as those World War II propaganda posters and contemporary political campaign advertisements. Because films, especially films with villains, often rely upon discouraging identification with said villains, movies can serve as an illustration to students of how this is accomplished and help them recognize it when they see it elsewhere.

As Elliot, Alma, and Jess continue their stay with Mrs. Jones, hoping to wait out the event, Mrs. Jones presents many more reasons for the characters and for the audience to recognize her as mentally unstable and likely to cause harm because of it. As Elliot and Alma have a quiet conversation, she barges in and accuses them of whispering about their plans to steal from her or murder her. At this point, she is both scary because she is crazy and scary because of fear she will turn them out. This is when audience fear for the main characters is at its strongest, as they are essentially trapped with both a menace that is both visible and unpredictable.

The next morning, Mrs. Jones is affected by the toxin while standing in her garden, shortly after she has accused Elliot of trying to steal from her and telling him to get out. It is quite chilling as she turns to look at him after the toxin has affected her, staring coldly and ominously, harkening back to *Sixth Sense*-type chilling moments. Throughout the rest of the movie, we have only been scared of the toxin, not of the people, since their instinct, once affected, is to harm themselves, not others; however, the way Mrs. Jones' character has been set up makes her seem different from the others, like she will be a threat to the main characters when none of the other affected people have been. We didn't know what to expect from her when she was unaffected, so we don't know what to expect now, either. She does in fact seem to try to attack Elliot rather than just try to harm herself like everyone else. He tries to lock her out of the house, and in response, she walks around the outside of the house on the porch, pounding to get in. Eventually she reaches a window, and with a blank expression upon her face, rams her head

through the glass, allowing the wind, and the toxin with it, to come rushing inside to get Elliot. The blank expression is perhaps the most chilling aspect of her behavior since she is not displaying human emotion, we are certain we can no longer expect human behavior from her; if this was uncertain before, with her mental instability, now that she is infected, it seems a certainty.

Along with this scene giving us something visible and tangible to fear, it is probably the most sympathetic that Elliot ever appears during the movie. I believe this is because there is finally something to fear that we, as audience members, can fear along with him, and through the shared fear, we form a bond with his character and become invested in his survival. It was necessary for Shyamalan's story that the threat be invisible, and I can certainly see arguments made that an invisible threat is scarier because you can't see it coming, but lacking anything to see to cause us to fear for the characters, Shyamalan denies us the opportunity to truly identify with them as we would be more able to do in some of his earlier films with more visible threats. Something you can see is more vivid and consequently more likely to inspire fear. Lacking a tangible and visible threat to them, we are less able to identify with their fear and consequently with the characters themselves.

Point of view in a word-based text, particularly one written in first person like "Just Walk on By," is definitely more clear-cut than narrative perspective in a film. However, there are still connections between how identification is facilitated through visual means in film and in writing. In "Just Walk on By," the various tales of Staples' encounters with strangers and their reactions to him include sensory details that both make them more realistic and able to be visualized, as discussed earlier, but also ones that emphasize the narrative perspective of Staples, causing us to see what he sees and us to hear what he hears. We don't know what his "victims" are seeing or

hearing beyond Staples' speculation. However, we do get descriptions such as the one of Staples crossing in front of cars stopped at traffic lights and hearing the sound of all the locks being pushed down, or the vivid description of the jewelry store proprietor holding the Doberman straining at the end of a leash, "dog extended toward" him, "her eyes bulging nearly out of her head" (453). Vivid descriptions such as these, and from Staples' limited perspective, help forge the connection between him and his reader, limiting the reader to only what Staples' senses are aware of while simultaneously reinforcing the reality of the situations.

Along with the woman running the jewelry shop, the main other person in "Just Walk On By" with whom Staples might discourage identification is Norman Podhoretz, author of the essay "My Negro Problem—And Ours." However, some of Staples' other, surprisingly understanding commentary would seem to let the jewelry shop proprietor off the hook, and even Podhoretz is never entirely villainized. The way that anti-identification makes its strongest appearance in "Just Walk On By" is through Staples' recognition that he is the victim of this sort of anti-identification. People like Podhoretz discourage identification through suggesting innate differences between blacks and whites as he describes blacks as "tougher than we were, more ruthless" and describes them as objects of terror for himself (451). Staples also quotes Podhoretz's claim that blacks are prone to a "special brand of paranoid touchiness" (453). Podhoretz is in no way suggested to be responsible for the general consensus among whites that blacks are dangerous and likely to harm them. However, constantly being thought of as different from the majority and unlikely to think and behave in acceptable ways causes whites to expect harm from blacks like Staples, even though Staples is a "softy" and certainly means them no harm. Here, lack of ability to identify, with the probability of identification inhibited by stereotypes spread through the culture, is responsible for Staples' experiences. This essay both

tells Staples' story of learning that he is an "other" and to be feared and also his telling his story in such a way as to encourage some of that identification that has been so long missing.

While issues such as relatability, visuality, ethos, and chronology were used fairly similarly in both of the word-based texts discussed in this chapter, shared point-of-view would seem to be more easily accomplished in narrative word-based texts like "Just Walk on By" than in non-narrative ones like "Behind the Counter." It is for this reason that I have included this additional text in this discussion. Though "Behind the Counter" lacks first-person narration, Schlosser still employs tactics to encourage identification with Elisa Zamot in his opening paragraphs. The way he accomplishes this is through extensive detail of her routine. The second and third paragraphs are all about her day at work, describing such tasks as getting the restaurant ready to open in what might seem to be excruciating detail:

They turn on the ovens and grills. They go downstairs into the basement and get food and supplies for the morning shift. They get the paper cups, wrappers, cardboard containers, and packets of condiments. They step into the big freezer and get the frozen bacon, the frozen pancakes, and the frozen cinnamon rolls.

(512)

This is followed by even more sentences outlining Elisa's morning routine. The repetitious nature of the sentences and their simple construction help create a sense of tediousness and perhaps even meaninglessness, using a strategy similar to that of Martin Luther King, Jr. in "I Have A Dream," but for creating dullness rather than excitement. If Schlosser succeeds in creating this sense of tedium, he is accomplishing a similar task as the filmmaker does in visually encouraging shared point of view, and as a consequence, encouraging identification with Elisa.

The examples discussed in this chapter, Shyamalan's films and Brent Staples' and Eric Schlosser's essays, illustrate in many ways how much identification matters. Encouraging identification, including with others who are different from us or who we have been taught to fear, can be an admirable goal of a rhetorical text all on its own. However, these works also illustrate identification's use as a means of persuasion in addition to an end. Lack of identification has consequences. It can cause an intelligent and gentle African American to be treated like a criminal and possibly put in danger. It can cause an argument to be ineffective due to lack of audience investment in the topic. And it can play a role in a film becoming either a critical and monetary success or a critical and monetary failure. It is not unsurprising that the example film discussed here that was the most successful in these ways was *The Sixth Sense* while both *The Village* and *The Happening* were far less successful.¹² While the success or failure of a film made for entertainment is not as important as which candidate gets elected to an office or whether or not a harmless individual is mistaken for a criminal and hurt or killed, successful and unsuccessful use of identification can teach students principles that are at work in more important texts, as well, along with how high the stakes can be.

The next chapter, however, will show how the stakes can still be high even when the text in question is made primarily for entertainment purposes. Though nothing to scoff at, the stakes are still rather low when the biggest consequence of mistakes in creating identification with the right characters in a film is that your film gets more negative reviews and does not make as much

¹² *The Sixth Sense* received an 85% positive rating from reviews collected by Rotten Tomatoes and made 293 million dollars in the box office during its theatrical release. In contrast, *The Village* received only 43% positive ratings from critics and made 114 million dollars, with *The Happening* faring even worse, with only 18% positive ratings and making 64 million dollars in the box office. Though correlation does not equal causation, these numbers do coincide with a steadily decreasing ability on Shyamalan's part to facilitate identification between his audience and his characters. Lack of identification leads to lowered emotional investment, and lowered emotional response reflects a less immersive and engaging entertainment experience.

money. Oliver Stone's 1994 film *Natural Born Killers* demonstrates how, identifying with some characters and not identifying with others, especially when those characters are presenting conflicting arguments, can cause misunderstanding in some audience members and can even lead to, in this film's case, loss of human life. That chapter will show the entire analytical framework at work, illustrating its effectiveness at explaining how an argument is made through a multimodal text and also at diagnosing ways in which rhetoric is not used effectively or responsibly.

CHAPTER FIVE

Identification, Dialectic, and Visual “Logic”

The previous two chapters have focused on elaborating upon and demonstrating the application of the proposed analytical framework, but only the first half of it, examining identification and the rhetorical techniques that help facilitate or hinder it. Now it is time to look at the later portions of the framework, as well, demonstrating how identification can affect a text’s argument, both through influencing which voices we choose to listen to for the argument or, in some cases, how identification can actually interfere cause the audience to take away an unintended or mixed argument. A notable example of a film that demonstrates identification used in both of these manners is the 1994 film by Oliver Stone, *Natural Born Killers*. In addition to it allowing demonstration of the analytical framework used both effectively and ineffectively, it also provides a sense of real life consequences of imprecise use of rhetoric through the controversy that erupted in the wake of the film, including several young people who took the film as an argument that becoming murderers would make them cool and decided, then, to actually kill people to try on that persona. The framework I propose provides a way to examine the complexity of the film and its argument and through that, a way to demonstrate effective and ineffective uses of rhetoric in a multimodal text.

Few films have spurred such heated debate about film violence as Oliver Stone's 1994 film *Natural Born Killers*, and with the real-world implications of conclusions regarding this

film and the argument it makes render this film an excellent example to both illustrate my proposed rhetorical framework in action and also to show students that responsible use of rhetoric is important. The real-world implications come from the fact that this film, claimed by Stone to be a satire on how the media glorifies violence, has been named as an influential factor in at least five separate murder cases. Novelist John Grisham, who knew a victim of one of these copycat crimes, wrote a scathing article about the film in his *Oxford American* magazine, urging people to bring about product liability lawsuits against Warner Brothers, considering the film to be a product that caused injury and loss of life to innocent people. Patsy Byers, a victim of one of the copycat crimes who was paralyzed by a bullet, took up Grisham on this suggestion and added Stone and Warner Brothers to her suit against her attacker Sarah Edmondson. Though Byers was ultimately unsuccessful in having the filmmakers held legally accountable for the attack that resulted in her paralysis, the debate about Stone's culpability has not disappeared completely, and an analysis of it provides a tangible way for students to put their rhetorical understanding to the test. The film demonstrates the functionality of the analytical framework I have proposed and gives a tangible situation to which it can be applied. This situation and the presence of alternative versions of this film in the form of the original script and scenes that were cut from the final version also provide opportunities to discuss the composing and revision process for students, highlighting both the presence of multiple options, often forgotten when all we see is the final product, and the rhetorical implications of different choices that are made.

At this point in the discussion of the analytical framework, logic will be brought back into the fold. Logic is not a new element of how we teach our students to engage with texts, nor a new standard in what we ask them to utilize in their own arguments; it was in the previously discussed elements of ethos, pathos, and identification that I propose we broaden and devote

more instruction time toward explaining and applying. *Natural Born Killers* will show how these are essential elements to be considered in any attempt to determine the argument being made by a multimodal text because visuals almost always mean an increased focus and reliance upon emotions and identification. The primary adjustment I propose to the logic end of this framework is to be more inclusive of dialectic.

As Kathleen Welch discusses in *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric*, Plato's views on and contributions to dialectic are often downplayed or excluded in discussions of classical rhetoric, primarily because he is seen to have been opposed to rhetoric. What he is actually opposed to is sophistic rhetoric (100). He sees value in dialectical rhetoric, which is rhetoric that arises from "dialectical inquiry," which would imply that its purpose is a more authentic search for truth than a text constructed to achieve a specific action or response. In this case, rhetoric provides the tools with which to arrive at an accurate conclusion, a means rather than an end. True dialectic would occur between an orator and audience, but as Plato himself demonstrates, dialectic can also be recorded through writing, a new technology to which Plato was not endeared but did use in order to preserve his teachings (Welch 105). The defining trait of dialectic and also what sets it apart from sophistic rhetoric is the audience participation and interaction, whether through actual participation in a true dialectic or through intellectual or emotional response to a constructed dialectic. Though the audience may choose to passively receive the text rather than interact with it, but even choosing to passively receive it may be classified as a chosen response. Visual and multimodal texts, with their focus upon audience response through use of pathos and identification, could be seen as dialectical even when they do not take on the dialogue structure of Plato's recorded dialectics. Dialectic, therefore, seems a viable approach to inclusion of logic in an analytical framework that seeks to address how

multimodal texts are able to persuade. When any text is narrative and contains multiple voices, dialectic becomes doubly apt as a way to classify how logical arguments are presented because of its emulation of dialogue structure; multiple arguments may be presented, and the audience will need to determine which one to listen to. This is influenced by pathos and identification, and *Natural Born Killers* will provide an example of this. Dialectic may seem least relevant to straightforward, word-based texts presenting arguments, but even in those cases, dialectic may be both an invention tool in the composition of the text and present in the text through the author's attempts to be listened to and heeded over the voices of the opposition. This distinction will be addressed more fully in the conclusion chapter, along with multiple classroom activities and essay assignments to employ all portions of this analytical framework.

Natural Born Killers and the claims against it provide several didactic opportunities. Students could be asked to compare descriptions of product liability law to the film. They could be asked to evaluate Grisham's "Unnatural Killers" or Stone's response "Memo To John Grisham: What's Next—'A Movie Made Me Do It'?" or both in light of the film, deciding which author makes the more convincing argument or which one better captures the state of the film and its potential influence. They could be shown some of the deleted scenes or alternate versions of them from Quentin Tarantino's original screenplay for the film, asked to evaluate the available options against Stone's stated purpose for the film. These potential uses for the film in instruction of composition will be discussed in the next chapter along with several others. The starting point for any of these assignments, however, should be a rhetorical analysis of the film, which the proposed analytical framework provides a means of accomplishing. Is this film a commentary on the culture, with Stone making the argument that the media celebrates violence, or is he instead just celebrating violence? Stone seems to believe he is accomplishing the

former. Take, for example, the tagline on the film's poster: "A bold new film that takes a look at a country seduced by fame, obsessed by crime, and consumed by the media." If *Natural Born Killers* is obviously a condemnation of the media and American culture, not a celebration of violence, then Stone and the filmmakers are clearly not responsible for misinterpretations of his film, even if those misinterpretations led to murder. However, in composing a satire, there is an inherent danger of the text being read as a straightforward argument instead of satire, such as students reading Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and believing that he is earnestly proposing that his audience begin eating babies. The surest way to utilize satire but still make it clear to a majority of audience members that it *is* satire is to go a step further than those you are satirizing, making it so exaggerated that it is obvious you are not being serious. Ultimately, what creates the potential for misunderstanding *Natural Born Killers* is that Stone does not create a strong enough distinction between himself and those he is satirizing. Because of this, his film could ultimately be received as just another entry in the media that he is attempting to criticize. As mentioned in the previous chapter with Shyamalan's films, the mistakes made by the filmmaker can be as instructive as his successes, and for this reason, *Natural Born Killers* is a good choice for demonstrating this framework's functioning as a whole.

What seems to be the case with *Natural Born Killers* is that, if the viewer is watching the film attentively and analytically, Stone's summary of his argument and purpose, provided by the movie's tagline, is somewhat accurate, but the average viewer, watching neither attentively nor analytically, takes from the film a different message than Stone intended, and this comes from mistakes or complications that arise from making the killers the characters with whom it is easiest to identify. Whether or not this makes Stone and the other filmmakers responsible for the copycat murders is ambiguous, though excellent fodder for student discussion and essay topics,

but they certainly had available to them ways to keep this misunderstanding from occurring in the first place.

The rhetorical framework I have proposed illustrates how Stone is actually making conflicting arguments with his film. Just as identification forms the core of said framework, identification also is responsible for the confused argument made by *Natural Born Killers*. Decisions made by Stone and the other makers of this film cause us to identify with people we should not and prevent us from identifying with people we should; as a result, in the dialectic on murder and who is responsible when it occurs, the film seems to ask us to listen to the wrong people for its overall message. Although logic and ethics should prevail for most viewers and leave their attitudes toward murder unchanged, emotion and identification, used irresponsibly in this case, could cause some viewers to see murderers as heroes and even see committing murder themselves as desirable. Because of this, *Natural Born Killers* provides an excellent illustration of how the vividness of film and the accompanying ability to manipulate the emotions could be used to override logic and a more traditional sense of ethics, and yet still playing out through a logic-based argument structure like dialectic.

Though not necessarily addressed directly by the framework, the context of this film and the attacks on it both clarify the point of contention about the film's argument and point to the real-world implications of making an irresponsible or confusing argument. For that reason, I want to provide a brief overview of the controversy surrounding the film. *Natural Born Killers* was released in August of 1994. The decision to release this film as a "summer movie" no doubt contributed to the problems it faced, as summer movies have a reputation as being mindless action films. Stone tried to release what might be considered an art film, intended as satire, but marketed it like an action movie, drawing in audiences expecting typical summer fare.

If they didn't come into this movie expecting to think, then they probably did not give the movie and its ultimate message a lot of thought. Sure enough, there were people who saw the movie but didn't see in it a message that attacked the media. They saw in it that murderers are cool and that they can become celebrities. The media in our reality reinforces this message, and without the film creating a distinction between its own voice and the voice of the media at large, it is perhaps too easy to ignore the anti-media message and take away from it a desire to be like the film's apparent heroes Mickey and Mallory.

Not everyone who misunderstood the film, of course, was destined to go out and actually try to be like Mickey and Mallory, but there were several instances of it. The earliest was the case of a fourteen-year-old boy in Texas who decapitated a thirteen-year-old girl; the police say the boy told them he "wanted to be famous like the natural born killers." In 1995 four young adults in Georgia killed a truck driver after watching the movie nineteen times. A man on trial for murder in Massachusetts that same year was reported to have said that he and his co-defendants in the murder were "natural born killers." The film has even been associated with the school shooting in Paducah, Kentucky in 1997 ("Oliver"). However, the most famous instance of a copycat killing came with the brief crime spree of a young Oklahoma couple, Benjamin Darras and Sarah Edmondson in March of 1995. After watching *Natural Born Killers* several times, they left on a trip to a concert but took a detour through rural Mississippi and Louisiana. Ben reportedly thought it would be cool to try to be like Mickey. They stopped at a farm in Hernando, Mississippi and murdered Bill Savage, robbing him of two hundred dollars as an afterthought. Ben then reportedly pressured Sarah into killing, too, and she went into a convenience store in Ponchatoula, Louisiana and shot the cashier Patsy Byers, left her for dead,

but then came back again because she forgot the robbery part of her scheme. Byers did not die but was paralyzed.

In response to the suggestion made in John Grisham's own rhetorical text, Byers filed a suit against Sarah and Ben for damages in July of 1995 and added to the suit the film's distributor Time Warner, director Oliver Stone, and other filmmakers involved in its creation in March of 1996. In March of 2001, after several years of court battles to determine whether Stone's right to make this movie, which could be viewed as inciteful speech, was indeed protected by the First Amendment, a Louisiana judge ruled in favor of the defendants, and Stone and his cohorts were acquitted of any blame. However, while it was determined during these legal proceedings that Stone and Warner Brothers did not intend to incite violence with their film, this does not mean that Stone is free from all blame in the killings that occurred in imitation of his film. While it is true that Stone was unable to prevent unstable people from viewing the film and misunderstanding it, it was certainly within his power to make his message at least a bit more accessible to the average viewer. There are elements of his filmmaking which support the message he feels the film possesses, but there are also elements which contradict or confuse this message and contribute to Stone's irresponsibility. These issues all begin with the core element of my proposed rhetorical framework, identification.

If Oliver Stone wished to make through this film the claim that the media glorifies violence and makes celebrities out of murderers, there are several things he should have done, and most begin with appropriate use of identification. The viewer should identify with the law enforcement characters, or at the very least the victims of the murders, and the viewer should not identify too strongly with the murderers or the characters representing the media. In cases where the audience is able to identify with the murderers, it should be clearly delineated as media

portrayal of those characters, with a “real” version of those characters with which to compare them and a clear contrast between the portrayals. Stone, however, is unsuccessful at several of these tasks. The characters with whom the audience is best able to identify are the murderers, and consequently, in the dialectic on murder that emerges over the course of this film, it is the murderers to whom it is suggested we listen.

Although there are several ways that dialectic may manifest in a rhetorical text, for the purposes of discussion of this film, I will consider *Natural Born Killers* as similar to the proto-essay approach to Plato’s dialectics, as the text shares the dialogue structure of Plato’s dialogues and contains several competing voices. Within this film, the primary possibilities of whom to listen to are the murderers Mickey and Mallory, the reporter Wayne Gale (representing the media), law enforcement officials (primarily Jack Scagnetti and the warden McClusky), and the victims of Mickey and Mallory. One other major voice to consider in this is the voice of the filmmaker himself. He, of course, controls how we see these other characters throughout the film, so it could ultimately all be considered to be his voice, but he also has his own voice in the narrative, which comes through in the absence of ability to assign things to specific characters. Those things we can’t attribute to specific characters can often be attributed to him instead. Therefore, in seeking out the ultimate argument of the film *Natural Born Killers*, I will be examining the potential to identify with the different characters in order to decide whose voice, if any of them, is the one we are drawn toward listening to, and then looking at what that voice has to say. Because this helps identify what the film’s overall argument is and also where it gets unclear, the viability of the analytical framework I propose is strongly supported. To simplify the discussion here, I will take each potential voice in the film through the entirety of the analytical framework, showing first how identification is encouraged or discouraged through

ethos, pathos, chronology, and shared point of view, and then identify the argument this voice contributes to the dialectic of the film, and based on ability to identify with the character, determine whether the argument is to be heeded or ignored.

Although there are occasionally other members of the media that appear over the course of the film, the primary representative of the media in *Natural Born Killers* is Wayne Gale, host of the tabloid news show *American Maniacs*, which tells the stories of various murderers through footage of them, reenactments, and interviews with victims, witnesses, and experts. In order to fall in line with Oliver Stone's intended argument that the American media sensationalizes violence and death, Gale's show should do exactly those things, and ideally in contrast to the grisly reality portrayed by the rest of the film, to distinguish the voice of the overall film as a separate entity from that of the media it wishes to criticize. Additionally, the character Wayne Gale should not encourage identification. *American Maniacs* does indeed portray the actions of Mickey and Mallory with flourish, primarily through overacted reenactments of their crimes, but not in as stark a contrast with the rest of the film's portrayal of the couple so as to suggest that the media misrepresents them. However, Stone does successfully portray Gale as a man with whom the audience should not identify. In fact, he is a man whom the audience should detest.

Contrary to the examples discussed in prior chapters of characters with whom the audience is likely to identify, Gale does not possess many, or perhaps any, likable traits. He is conceited, as revealed through his vanity before going on camera and through his name being in the credits for multiple production positions in the opening credits sequence of *American Maniacs*, which also features Gale in virtually every shot, acting out some sort of heroic or action sequence. Along with his pride, he shows himself to have a very low opinion of his audience, at one point telling an editor who cautions him that they are recycling footage that has

already aired, “Do you think the morons out there in zombie land actually remember anything?” In addition to these reflections of poor character on his part, he also reveals late in the film that he has been having an affair. Such portrayals of him are likely to inspire irritation or anger. Finally, there is one moment where the coldbloodedness of reporter Wayne Gale especially shows through, providing the strongest discouragement to the audience identifying with him: as Jack Scagnetti lays dying loudly in the background when Mickey and Mallory are reunited during the prison riot, Wayne—attempting to film this event and portray it as a romantic reunion—tells the gurgling and gasping Scagnetti to shut up, and then continues to broadcast as Mickey and Mallory finish off Scagnetti with an additional gunshot. Although Scagnetti is hardly a sympathetic character himself, this singlemindedness on Gale’s part is also likely to inspire feelings of anger toward him. Wayne Gale does not possess attributes, except for perhaps fame, that the typical audience member wishes to see in himself, and consequently his portrayal discourages identification with him. Discouraging identification with Wayne Gale helps make sure that the audience members do not look for Gale to provide them with the message they are to take away from this film.

The other benefit of the negative portrayal of Wayne Gale, in addition to rightfully discouraging identification with him, is that Gale, as the media representative in this film, reflects the corruption Stone perceives in the media and thus provides evidence in the form of an example. Stone attempts to further Gale’s use in making this point through the film’s final murder, in which Gale is murdered by Mickey and Mallory after he assists in and broadcasts their escape from prison. Just in case we weren’t sure it was supposed to be a symbolic act, Stone has Mickey introduce the act by saying, “Killing you and what you represent is like making a statement. I’m not one hundred percent sure exactly what it’s saying, but you know,

Frankenstein killed Dr. Frankenstein.” In other words, Mickey is killing his creator, both making a statement about the source of Mickey’s power and who should be punished for giving him that power. This is in line with Stone’s intended argument, and based upon our lack of identification with Gale, that act could be seen as acceptable or even justified. As mentioned before, he could also have demonstrated a starker contrast between Gale’s portrayal of Mickey and Mallory and the rest of the film’s portrayal of them, but this will be addressed in greater detail later, as it can be attributed to filmmaker voice. Overall, however, the character of Wayne Gale is utilized effectively by Stone. The main emotions Gale inspires are anger and disgust, and his pride, lack of humanity, and self-centeredness show the audience traits they do not wish to think they possess, discouraging identification. The implied argument on Gale’s part might be that he provides a valuable service to his viewers, but the lack of identification with him makes the audience unlikely to agree with that premise.

That same analytical framework applied to other characters in this film begins to reveal some of the problems with the clarity of Stone’s argument. Unlike the murderers Mickey and Mallory and the media representative Wayne Gale, the portrayal of law enforcement figures within this film, although these characters are not an implicit part of the argument intended by Stone, is still worthy of consideration in a discussion of identification and dialectic. They are present within the film and a potential source of the film’s message. A positive portrayal, encouraging identification, is good for the purpose of creating contrast with the morally corrupt characters like the Knoxes and Wayne Gale; a generally neutral portrayal would also be acceptable. However, Stone creates problems in this film through the discouraging of identification inherent in his portrayal of Warden McClusky and police detective Jack Scagnetti. This problem comes from their negative portrayal reducing the number of characters in the film

with whom identification is possible and providing little contrast with the characters with whom we should not identify in order for the argument to work. With the two primary law enforcement characters off the table as possibilities, the pool of major characters with whom we might choose to identify is narrowed down mostly to two: Mickey and Mallory. With their being ethically indistinguishable from the characters representing the entities at the crux of the film's argument, they reduce the power of the negative portrayal of these parties.

Of the two characters, it is Warden McClusky's portrayal that is better able to serve the film's overall purpose. The audience is clearly not supposed to identify with him, as his introduction clarifies that he is a conceited and obnoxious man who is capitalizing on the presence of Mickey and Mallory Knox in his prison, attempting to take advantage of the fame and attention, relishing the opportunity to be in the eye of the media. Along with these aspects of his personality apparent from his introduction, his poor character is also reflected in his treatment of his prisoners, including both disrespect and abuse. For instance, McClusky's attaching a pair of pliers to a prisoner's nose as a punishment, especially in concert with these other negative traits, are, similarly to Gale, likely to inspire feelings of anger and disgust. However, this negative portrayal of a law enforcement figure is not necessarily a total waste; the reason that his negative portrayal could still be of use to the overall argument of the film is how motivated he is by potential media exposure for himself, demonstrating the power of the media and potential fame through it to manipulate choices. Thus, the primary reasons for a lack of ability to identify with McClusky are rooted in the indictment of the media that Stone is attempting.

Only one of the reasons not to identify with detective Jack Scagnetti, however, is based in a condemnation of the media. This one aspect of his character, that he is actually capitalizing on (rather than hoping to capitalize on) the fame he achieves by capturing Mickey and Mallory

through a book he wrote about himself, *Scagnetti on Scagnetti*. This capitalization, not unlike Wayne Gale's overuse of his own image in the opening credits of *American Maniacs*, conveys a pomposity that inhibits identification with him, and that hubris is rooted in his media prominence. However, Scagnetti possesses numerous other and more serious traits that prevent identification which are not related to the media, removing him as a potential hero in the film without furthering the anti-media message. The most egregious of these negative traits is that Scagnetti is himself a murderer, shown to strangle a prostitute to death partway through the film. This is not a character flaw added with the purpose of making Scagnetti a more realistic character; this is something that makes Scagnetti different from the criminals he pursues during the film only in number of people killed (or at least the number of people we see him kill) and his being, officially, on the other side of the law. If his pride was not enough on its own to cause the audience to feel negative emotions toward him, this murder of the prostitute is certain to accomplish this task, most likely inspiring feelings of hate in addition to anger and disgust. If the person who pursues and captures Mickey and Mallory is ultimately the same as they are, it is much more difficult for the audience to condemn their actions, or at the very least, see their actions as unusual.

Further complicating any chance of the film taking a clear stand—in spite of its overall purpose to condemn the media—that murder is still a bad thing, the implied source of Scagnetti's homicidal tendencies is a traumatic event in his childhood. He describes to Warden McClusky how he was playing in a park in Texas when he was eight years old and his mother was shot and killed in front of him. On the one hand, this does provide an instigating event to explain why Scagnetti kills, and perhaps even makes him more deserving of audience sympathy. However, the suggestion that traumatic childhoods are causes of and even excuses for violence committed

as an adult is a dangerous precedent to set, and as we will see, one that is followed with other murderers in this film. It points to the danger of encouraging audience identification with those who bear the wrong messages.

So far, in the dialectic of this film, we do have various statements about the media being made by these characters and also implied arguments along with those statements that are based in the things that inhibit our identification with those characters. Wayne Gale's direct message is that he and the rest of the media provide a valuable service to the country, keeping them informed about dangers in the form of murderers. Because we do not identify with him and find him corrupt, we are unlikely to accept his position. The implied argument, then, is that he and others like him will do anything for better ratings and more money, in Gale's own extreme case, killing in order to continue tagging a long in two famous murderers' escape from prison, but in more realistic fashion, in giving power to murderers by making them seem appealing and implying to others that they can be famous, too, if they kill enough people. Wayne Gale's contribution, then, to the dialectic is right in line with Stone's overall purpose for his film.

The analytical framework here demonstrates not just the effectiveness of the portrayal of Wayne Gale toward Stone's accomplishing his overall intended argument, but it also allows for identification of ways in which he might be detracting from that argument. The negative portrayal of the law enforcement characters, however, are not quite as in sync with that overall purpose. Because they are neither of the two main forces involved in the film's argument, neither media nor (known) murderer, they do not make direct statements to contribute to the dialectic. However, their characterization as corrupt does make an implied contribution. The implication is that even the enforcers of the law do wrong and that Mickey and Mallory are no worse than the cop who arrests them or the man who keeps them incarcerated. Stone is

obviously not suggesting that every person in law enforcement is corrupt, but by having the only two developed characters who are members of law enforcement in his film be abusive in one case and a fellow murderer in another makes the actions of Mickey and Mallory less shocking, but rather something that fit in with the actions of the other characters in the film. If Mickey and Mallory have not done anything especially bad in murdering so many people, at least in comparison to the other characters in the film, then it is not too shocking that some might watch this film and feel as though it is suggesting that murder is not that unusual an act and perhaps that it might even be acceptable. This is a dangerous thing to suggest.

The framework also demonstrates how misconceptions that *Natural Born Killers* is condoning, or at least excusing, the act of murder might have been alleviated had Stone better facilitated audience identification with the victims. This would have provided more moments in which the murderers' actions are shown to be morally wrong, but there are precious few instances of such identification being encouraged. Of the victims we actually see Mickey and Mallory kill, only one inspires any reaction from the audience other than indifference; it is difficult to feel sympathy for a nameless and undeveloped character, or, in the cases of Mallory's parents, Jack Scagnetti, and the drunk rednecks in the opening scene in the diner, people who the film seems to suggest deserve to die. What is noteworthy here is not the emotions felt toward the victims but the lack thereof; in order to keep it clear that murder is not being condoned, it would seem necessary to have the audience feel sympathy for the victims or fear for what will happen to them.

The one character who Mickey and Mallory regret killing is the Native American Shaman they encounter in the desert; however, even this murder fails to inspire much emotional response from the audience, as the Shaman claims to have expected this event based on a dream

he had twenty years earlier, suggesting that he met his death willingly. Instead, the primary reason that the audience might feel emotions at this murder over the others is that this is the only one over which Mickey and Mallory display any emotions or remorse. This murder is accidental rather than intentional, with the Shaman shot by Mickey as he awakes from a nightmare.

Mallory screams at Mickey and tearfully accuses him of having committed a great wrong, telling him that he “killed life.” Thus identification with the Shaman is encouraged in this instance, but through this being the only instance where Mickey and Mallory show that they have identified with one of their victims, rather than direct identification between the audience and the Shaman.

The above examples are choices made by Stone in the portrayal of Mickey and Mallory’s victims that hinder his argument, or at least support a second, additional argument in which it is suggested that what the Knoxes do is really not so bad. However, some of the scenes deleted from the film provide demonstrations of identification with the victims being facilitated more effectively. While in the film version we only get the opportunity to identify with this one victim, in the screenplay, there is an extended interview with the Hun Brothers, two famous bodybuilders who were some of the only victims of Mickey and Mallory to survive. They were spared only because Mickey and Mallory were fans of their movies, albeit after they have been partially dismembered, leaving them disfigured and wheelchair-bound. They are characters who the audience gets to know and can perhaps sympathize with (despite the fact that they express gratitude toward Mickey and Mallory for taking their legs because it has made them work harder). They are not fully fleshed-out characters, but we do at least know something about their lives and occupations and get a sense of what they lost through Mickey and Mallory’s attack on them. Those few details make them feel more like real people, and we can at least begin to identify them based on this and a small amount of sympathy.

The presence of the Hun brothers' interview in the final version of the film, in addition to providing more opportunities for the audience to sympathize with Mickey and Mallory's victims, would also provide an additional way to emphasize the film's anti-media message. It demonstrates how shaped by the media Mickey and Mallory are through the detail that the reason the Hun brothers are spared by the couple is that, mid-attack, they are recognized by Mallory as movie stars. The Hun brothers' appearance in movies seems the only thing that makes them real enough people to Mickey and Mallory that they deserve to live, emphasizing the couple's skewed sense of reality, likely able to be attributed to the media's influence over them. This sequence sharing the story of the Hun brothers as victims of the Knoxes was actually filmed for the movie and cut, partly for pacing purposes and partly because Oliver Stone felt that the scene was overacted and not as funny as it was supposed to be.¹³

The best example of how appropriate identification could lead the audience to the correct argument is provided by another scene from the original script that was actually filmed but unfortunately cut from the final version of the movie. This scene features the murder of Grace Mulberry as she testifies during Mickey and Mallory's trial. This scene, also available as additional footage on the director's cut of the film, is one of the most emotionally powerful scenes filmed for the movie, and yet it was not included. It begins with the arrival of the young woman Grace Mulberry at the courthouse, surrounded by many of Mickey and Mallory's cheering fans. The way this scene is filmed emphasizes how awful it is for Grace to be surrounded by people who are cheering for and supporting the person who murdered her brother and friends before her very eyes. In one memorable shot, the camera focuses on Grace as Mickey and Mallory arrive and the focus turns to them instead of her. The camera zooms out on Grace

¹³ This is Stone's explanation for the scene being cut in his introduction to the scene in the deleted scenes portion of the DVD.

with her back turned to Mickey and Mallory's adoring crowd, and the sound of the cheering is slowly blocked out by the crescendo of the sound of Grace's heartbeat. The visual cues and sound in this scene encourage that shared point of view discussed in the previous chapter, causing the audience to both sympathize with Grace and also share in her fear. In the following scene, Grace is tortuously cross-examined by Mickey, acting as his own lawyer. He insults her and the audience in the courtroom applauds. This is virtually the only instance in the film when Mickey is shown to be especially cruel, and this was left on the cutting room floor. When Grace is viciously murdered by Mickey stabbing her with a pencil, it is the only murder which is portrayed in an explicitly negative way. Grace is played as a real person who has suffered much for the loss of her brother and friends. The emotions she shows at their loss by extension causes the audience to feel like these, too, were real people who Mickey and Mallory killed in this instance, people with family and friends who miss them. This is the most human that any of Mickey and Mallory's victims ever seem, culminating in their murder of the one brought before our eyes, Grace, in the middle of her attempt to bravely work through her grief to make sure that the Knoxes are punished. This example provided by the deleted scene shows how essential proper identification can be to a film's overall argument; even this one instance of identification with a victim over her murderer could have lessened the viewer's ability to take away from the film the message that murder is cool. Identification is key to everything, and this framework places it in an appropriate, central position.

Stone's decision to cut this scene of Grace Mulberry's testimony and murder may be the one most responsible for the lack of clarity in his overall argument and confusion over whom the audience is to identify with. His explanation in his introduction to this scene is that it did not fit with the character arcs of Mickey and Mallory and "reverses the flow of the movie." In the

timeline of the film, this would have occurred after their accidental murder of the Shaman, which in Stone's opinion, was an event that changed Mickey and Mallory and their attitudes toward murder. This murder of Grace, then, would become "a throwback to the earlier Mickey and Mallory, the desensitized ones on their killing spree." His reasoning here might have made more sense had Mickey and Mallory abstained from killing anyone else after they murdered the Shaman. However, Mickey murders a pharmacist immediately after his murder of the Shaman, and they both make significant additions to their body count while held in prison, and during their escape from prison in the film's final act, so there is not an obvious change in their behavior following the death of the Shaman. Because of this, Stone's rationale for cutting the Grace Mulberry scene seems moot. Providing a character like Grace for the audience to identify with would have cleared up any misunderstandings about whether or not Stone was condoning murder with his film, and removal of this scene instead makes his overall message less clear.

The presence of victims in this film with whom the audience is able to identify would drastically alter the existing dialectic. If included, the message they could directly or implicitly contribute to that dialectic is that they are people with lives that they would liked to have continued to live, that they were important, and that they leave grieving loved ones in their absence. Lacking this contribution from the victims to the dialectic of the film, the murders feel like they have no real impact on anyone. Because Stone chose not to include scenes that would have kept this from happening and clarify the affect Mickey and Mallory have on their victims and the ones their victims leave behind, it becomes too easy to excuse them and to get caught up in their personalities and romance.

The other major thing that obscures Stone's claimed argument about the media, along with his failure to encourage identification with the victims, is his focus on Mickey and Mallory

over focus on the media. The film comes across more than anything as the story of their romance, from Mickey rescuing Mallory from an abusive home, to their murder spree across the southwest, to their capture and trial, their separation once they are incarcerated, and their reunion during a prison riot which ultimately allows them to escape. Although Stone sees their murder of the Shaman as a point of change for them, the timeline of the film does not reflect any lasting change in either character, at least not as far as their homicidal tendencies go. For a movie that is supposed to be about the media, it certainly devotes a lot of time to portraying the lovers' conflicts and make-ups, their longing for one another after being separated for nearly a year in prison, and the joy they feel at their reunion. Such focus makes it easy for the film to be seen as a romance movie featuring characters who happen to be murderers rather than an indictment of American media culture.

The lack of clarity regarding whether or not Stone is condoning murder through his portrayal of Mickey and Mallory is a matter that can be settled based on employment of the analytical framework I propose, examining the ability of the audience to identify with them, examining what messages they contribute to the film, and whether or not those messages are to be heeded. Ultimately there are several different versions of Mickey and Mallory that are portrayed in the film, and each calls for a different amount of respect from the viewer and can lead to a different argument taken away from the film. In some places, they are a couple at the center of a romance story. In others, they are charismatic yet insane. They are animals simply fulfilling their instincts. They are victims of abuse that are simply doing or reacting against the only type of life they have known. They are demons. In all but the first case, the two of them would seem to make an unlikely set of voices to listen to for the film's overall argument, but the combination of the romantic couple portrayal getting the heaviest emphasis and the lack of any

better characters to identify as the intended deliverer of the film's message causes Mickey and Mallory to become messengers by default, whether intentional or unintentional. An exploration of this provides an opportunity for students to better understand identification and its role in argument and also an opportunity to see how multimodal texts have exceptional potential to send mixed messages to the audience, primarily through conflict of emotion and logic.

One way to view Mickey and Mallory is that they are insane, despite the charisma they possess that leaves numerous fans in their wake. While both could be insane, Mallory is more flamboyant in her behavior while Mickey is more quiet and cold. A viewer may begin to suspect insanity in Mallory based on her behavior in the opening scene of the movie, where after she has beaten a man to death with her bare hands, she makes prowling motions as she approaches the two surviving people in the diner and plays "eanie meanie miney mo" to decide which of the two people will be spared. Had the scene encouraged identification with the victims more strongly than it does, this behavior on her part may have inspired fear, but lacking that identification with the victims, is more likely to inspire simple amusement. Other behavior that supports this explanation for Mallory's conduct, besides, of course, killing over fifty people, includes her joyful celebration following her father's murder at the hands of Mickey and her tendency to break down into song when she is especially distraught. The grandson of the Indian that Mickey and Mallory encounter even asks his grandfather of Mallory, "She crazy?" These words are even projected onto Mallory in the next shot. The grandfather's reply is that "She has sad sickness, lost in a world of ghosts," which neither confirms nor denies his grandson's suspicions. It is certainly a possibility that Mallory is insane, but haunted by her past is at least an equal possibility. As discussed in the previous chapter regarding the character Mrs. Jones in *The Happening*, insanity here could be seen as a version of a mask, a dehumanizing trait that

discourages identification. If these characters are clearly shown to be insane, the danger of the audience improperly identifying with them is reduced and it becomes more difficult to take away from the film a message that murder is acceptable. It also reduces the likelihood that the audience will bestow upon her the ethos required to give consideration to any argument she may make.

Mickey, on the other hand, is less flamboyant in his behavior for the most part. Again, besides the murders he commits, the evidence to suggest this reading of his behavior largely comes from the things he says, such as his pronouncement as he finishes marrying himself to Mallory on a bridge that he names them husband and wife “by the power invested in me as god of my world.” Wayne Gale accuses him of being insane right to his face in his post-Super Bowl interview with him, following his proclamations, often imitating Biblical language, that killing is good and pure. This possibility of insanity is directly addressed in an interview with a psychiatrist on the show-within-the-movie *American Maniacs*. This doctor’s opinion is that they are “insane, no; psychotic, yes.” He believes they know the difference between right and wrong but “just don’t give a damn.” However, the same doctor also says he does not believe that Mickey or Mallory were abused as children, which, within the reality of the film the audience knows to be a mistake on his part, damaging the psychiatrist’s credibility. This could mean that is he wrong and that Mickey and Mallory *are* crazy. It could also mean that they are not insane or psychotic, but quite rational. Regardless, he is easily dismissed. Because the film does not take a clear stance on whether or not Mickey and Mallory are insane, the potential for identification with them is not sufficiently damaged, and they remain a possibility as messengers of the film’s argument.

One additional clue the audience might consider in deciding Mickey and Mallory's mental states comes from Oliver Stone's cinematography. During the course of the film, he constantly switches film type and quality. In the opening scene, this is largely limited to switches between a slightly grainy black-and-white and more standard-quality color. At later points, other types of image quality emulate 60s and 70s-era home movies, television sitcoms, animation, documentaries, and others. From the first few uses of it, it seems as though there might be a pattern or logic to when the switches occur, but after a few scenes, it becomes clear that it is not tied to any one character's perspective and is not ruled by any sort of logic. I see two possible reasons for his switching up the image style so frequently, but the one related to this issue of insanity in the main characters is this: because the film opens with Mickey and Mallory and seems to operate largely from their narrative perspective, it functions to visually demonstrate the instability of the characters by making the film visually unstable, much like the visual instability created by the steadycam shots in intense scenes in Shyamalan's films. This instability is accentuated by the editing of the film. What I am considering here as included in the category "editing" is primarily the use of unusual images throughout the film, most often included as a nearly subliminal flash of an image. Some stay on the screen long enough to be somewhat identified, and with others the audience is left with merely an impression of what they might have seen. Some of the most horrific images in the film are shown for only one or two frames, featuring corpses in various states of mutilation and decay. Unless one pauses the movie precisely during these shots, it is nearly impossible to tell what they are pictures of, leaving the viewer instead only with an impression of some violent and gory image. The inclusion of such images does not directly argue that Mickey or Mallory is insane, but it creates a sense of both instability and an obsession with violence and death. Again, though, these are subtle additions

whose implications are easily overlooked. These details alone are not enough to discourage identification with these characters or make a strong case for their insanity, especially in light of the more positive and sympathetic portrayal of them that the film provides in other ways.

Stone does, therefore, give some suggestion that Mickey and Mallory are insane, but he never provides a clear answer. If they are insane, then what they have to say should be dismissed by the audience, meaning they are not the messengers of Stone's intended argument. In a dialectic, who would choose to listen to the mentally unstable voice? Insane characters would inhibit most inclinations toward identification. Having the film take a clear position on the issue of their insanity would clarify whether or not the audience should take the arguments they make seriously; however, despite some reasons to view Mickey and Mallory as insane, the audience is offered multiple other ways to view the couple that are less discouraging of looking to them to present the film's ultimate message.

Another reading of Mickey and Mallory that could potentially affect the ability to identify with them is viewing them as two animals, specifically predators, simply acting on their instincts. This, too, is established early in the film as a possibility, as the opening shots of the film feature footage of predatory animals such as wolves, birds of prey, and rattle snakes. Images of predators in the animal kingdom appear throughout the film, including playing on television sets, as footage that is cut into the middle of scenes, as background images during scenes and, after Mickey and Mallory kill the Shaman, in the form of actual rattle snakes that bite them and ultimately lead to their capture. The first scene after the opening credits, following the murders they commit at the diner, features Mickey and Mallory out in a field at night with their car, taking turns relieving themselves under the starlight, implying that they are just two animals taking care of one of nature's calls. The images of and references to animals could best

be categorized as tactics of pathos and ethos. The pathos comes from the visual and the feelings that these images of predators are likely to inspire in the audience, likely either fear or feelings of power. If these images do make an impression on the audience, what is likely to result is a dehumanization of the predator characters, suggesting that they do not make decisions based out of human emotions (similarly to if they are viewed as insane) but also, with that, the suggestion that they do not kill out of malice but instead instinct.

This is an important aspect of argument made through visual and multimodal means: implying connections through images that suggest cause and effect. I put “logic” in scare quotes in the title of this chapter because, when dealing in visuals, this is the equivalent of making a logical claim or claiming a connection between events, ideas, or people. In “Toward a Theory of Visual Argument,” David Birdsell and Leo Groarke point out that visual culture is constantly changing, and current habits of interpretation would be a matter of convention. There are certainly conventions at use in the structure of films, such as those that Kate Chanock had her students examine in the documentary she showed them about the Dead Sea Scrolls. Among those conventions would be ideas of how to read spatial cues and sequences in visual modes of communication. In “Repetition and the Rhetoric of Visual Design,” James Porter and Patricia Sullivan discuss the role of spatial patterns in visual design:

The words on a page are always laid out in certain spatial patterns (if only block paragraph form, with simple one-inch margins), and those patterns not only cue the reader as to how the material is to be comprehended, but also attempt to persuade, or argue that the reader should adopt a certain posture toward the material. (292)

Though they are addressing visual design, primarily of documents, their discussion still points toward the importance of convention in the reading of visual information. When writing about the possibility of visual arguments in “Building Visual Communication Theory by Borrowing From Rhetoric,” Keith Kenney points out that scholars often deny the ability of visuals to make arguments “because pictures are perceived as a whole, rather than processed sequentially; therefore, pictures lack the two-part relationship of premises leading to conclusions” (325). In film, however, the information is not just portrayed spatially but also sequentially, also addressed by Birdsell and Groarke:

The significance of immediate visual context is most obvious in film, for it incorporates a progression of images which allows us to recognize a single frame as part of an overarching argument. Depending on the sequence of frames of which it is a part, an image of a man holding a knife may represent someone preparing to cook, a knife salesman, or, more insidiously, evidence that someone is prepared to commit a murder. (315)

Thus, the sequentiality of film and resultant ability to give context and imply cause and effect means that film is poised to be able to make arguments based on visuals that may be more difficult to accomplish in other visual mediums.

A more precise explanation of how visuals might make seemingly logical claims is provided by J. Anthony Blair in “The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments.” In this essay, he first defines enthymeme as a method of persuasion and then demonstrates how visual arguments may best be described as enthymemes. According to Blair,

An Aristotelian enthymeme is an argument in which the arguer deliberately leaves unstated a premise that is essential to its reasoning. Doing so has the effect of

drawing the audience to participate in its own persuasion by filling in that unexpressed premise. The connecting of the audience to the argument is what makes the enthymeme a rhetorical form of argument. (41)

Blair's example of how a visual enthymeme might be made is the aforementioned "Daisy Ad" run by Lyndon Johnson's campaign in 1964, which provided the viewer with the argument that Johnson's opponent "might, on something as arbitrary as a whim, launch a nuclear holocaust," and that "such a holocaust would cause unspeakable horror for everyone, including innocent children" (50). The ad never mentions Goldwater explicitly, but he is the alternative to Johnson, who the ad implies would keep these horrible things from happening (Blair 50). However, converting the argument made by the ad into verbal expression draws attention to its inability stand up to logical scrutiny; it may be intended as a logical claim, but being presented in multimodal form discourages the viewer from submitting it to the same scrutiny it might be subjected to when translated as it is by Blair above. Blair acknowledges that something is lost in the translation: "I do not for a minute suggest that this verbal expression of the argument is equivalent to the visual argument... this verbal extraction leaves out completely the enormously evocative power of the visual imagery and symbolism of the actual visuals making up the ad" (50). Thus, visuals, and in particular sequentialized images, may make a proposition that is intended as a logical claim, but the use of visual and the resulting ability to rely on emotion can allow such claims to be made when, expressed verbally, they would not be accepted.

This brings us full circle, back to Hill's connection between visuals used for the purpose of emotional appeals and heuristic reasoning. If and when the claim is made that what Mickey and Mallory do is not wrong, it is just them acting out their predatory animal instincts and is neither morally right or wrong, this claim would rightly be met with scrutiny. Just one example

of an objection that could be raised is that animals kill for food, to survive, while Mickey and Mallory just do it because it is fun. However, expressed visually and subtly, through showing predatory animals and shortly thereafter, showing Mickey and Mallory behaving like animals, a shortcut is taken. This claim is more likely to register with the viewer on an emotional level than a logical one, and yet the pairing of animal images and behavior with the Knoxes is also acting as a version of a logical claim at the same time; it is an emotional appeal disguised as a logical appeal. These sorts of “logical” claims made through visual connection are the primary way that Stone lets his own voice be heard in this film, which will be addressed in greater depth shortly.

These claims made through visual logic are not, however, the only way that the connection between the Knoxes and animals is made. Mickey does claim this connection himself during his interview with Wayne Gale: “It’s just murder. All God’s creatures do it. You look in the forests and you see species killing other species, our species killing all species including the forests, and we just call it industry, not murder.” When put into words rather than implied through visual connections, the claim does not seem nearly as logical. However, if the audience identifies with Mickey for other reasons, it might take this claim seriously, which illustrates a way that emotional appeal may override logical appeal in a multimodal text like film. If we buy into Mickey’s claims that they are just two people fulfilling their predatory, animal instincts, identification with them is not inhibited as it would be if we were to view them as insane, but it is not likely to encourage identification with them, either, as it does not make them any more human in our eyes than if they were insane. Consequently, this is neither a net gain nor net loss for the potential of Mickey and Mallory to inspire identification from the audience. If taken as a part of a larger conception of who the Knoxes are rather than the sole definition of

them and their actions, this claim by Mickey can be taken seriously without discouraging identification.

Another, related way to view Mickey and Mallory and their actions that would likely discourage identification is to view them as either demons or at the mercy of demons. At one point, when Mallory gets upset with Mickey for yelling at her, he tells her, "It's me! Not some demon!" A scene later when they meet the Indian, Mallory remarks, "I think *we're* the demons." As the Indian, shot by Mickey, lays dying, he confirms Mallory's impression by saying (though they don't speak his language and can't understand him), "Twenty years ago I saw a demon in my dreams. I was waiting for you." Mickey comes to agree with the Indian that there is in fact a demon inside him. In his interview with Wayne Gale he refers to it constantly, concluding that, "only love can kill the demon." As he speaks of demons, his own face becomes stretched and distorted, perhaps reinforcing that he himself is one. These references to demons and suggestions that demons cause Mickey and Mallory to do what they do can be perceived as having two intentions. They can, in yet another way, suggest that Mickey and Mallory are not to blame for their actions, that the demons made them do it. But what seems to be Stone's intention for this element is instead an attempt on his part to show them as evil. It's not the best way this could have been done, but it is at least a step in the right direction. If they are evil, it is unlikely that we should look to them to guide us to the film's main argument. However, if the audience is given reason to sympathize with them, perhaps rooting for them to overcome their demonic impulses, it is given reason to identify with them, as well, which means they *could* be looked to for the film's message.

Here the analytical framework I propose and its focus on identification as a key element of persuasion demonstrate how important identification can be and also how influential emotions

may be in its creation. Sympathy is the main reason to identify with Mickey and Mallory, able to even overpower other elements of their ethos such as their moral behavior or lack thereof. It also points to how easily an increase in facilitation of sympathy with some of Mickey and Mallory's victims could have helped counteract any sympathy felt for the Knoxes and the resulting identification. This opportunity to feel sympathy toward these characters comes from the suggestion that they were made this way because of the abuse they suffered while growing up. Mallory comes from a home where her father sexually abused her, and it is alluded to that Mickey was emotionally and physically abused by both parents and also witnessed his father committing suicide when he was ten. The abusive upbringings suffered by Mickey and Mallory serve two purposes in shaping the audience's ability to identify with them. First, it provides a logical answer regarding what would drive them to turn out this way; the abuse they suffered has skewed their worldviews to the point that they do not value human life in the same way as everyone else. This on its own does not open the door for identification; it is a reason, not an excuse. But the film actually showing scenes, particularly from Mallory's experience, that show the abusive situation do begin to create the possibility for identification because of viewer sympathy. Once in the realm of emotion, there is potential for logic and ethos to be overridden.

The audience is not given as much information about Mickey's upbringing as Mallory's; Mickey refuses to discuss it, so most of what we learn comes from short scenes from his childhood that come to him in times of distress. The situation these reveal is one where Mickey's mother was unfaithful, father was abusive of both him and his mother, mother was emotionally abusive toward Mickey, and father shot himself in front of Mickey when Mickey was a child. These scenes are shown in black and white. The choice of black and white in itself is an emotional appeal, adding a sense of nostalgia and longing for that elusive better time that

used to exist; an innocence is implied along with that nostalgia. Images of the parents are usually close-ups of their angry faces as they yell at Mickey; the shots of Mickey are of a wide-eyed and innocent-looking little boy. This accomplishes the task of both showing us a child to feel protective of and putting us in his shoes as he is screamed at and abused by adults by visually creating a shared point of view, a tactic employed by Shyamalan and discussed in previous chapters that helps create a stronger emotional response and also encouraging identification. Consequently, we both have the information about Mickey's upbringing to explain how he turned out like he did and also a taste of the emotional experience of being that child. Even in Mallory's case, she is portrayed as a young teenager in the scenes that depict her abuse by her father, still likely to inspire feelings of protectiveness toward her, though perhaps not as strongly as the wide-eyed and innocent young Mickey. A natural consequence of the shared point of view facilitated visually is that the audience will begin to identify with Mickey and likely Mallory as well, and this becomes even more likely in absence of other characters with whom we identify more strongly.

If learning of Mickey's childhood experiences makes him a sympathetic character and encourages the audience to identify with him, then Mallory is perhaps even more sympathetic, as her abuse is played out for the audience in more detail. One of the first things we learn about her is that she was sexually abused by her father, drawing sympathy for her and perhaps admiration for Mickey for rescuing her from this environment. The way that Stone pieces together the scenes of Mallory's life at home before Mickey, playing them like a sitcom—complete with laugh tracks, applause, and playful music—could be intended to take some of the edge off them. However, one scene in particular, where Mallory's father corners her and tells her what he has planned for her, breaks from the sitcom feel. In this scene, Stone uses close-ups of Mallory and

her father's eyes and of Mallory's father grabbing her, making it momentarily clear that the situation is no laughing matter. The shot of Mallory's eyes here and the fear in them is reused later in the film, as well.

As discussed in the previous chapter, chronology can also be influential in encouraging or discouraging identification with characters through subtle suggestion of who the film is about. *Natural Born Killers* beginning near the end of Mickey and Mallory's murder spree and then going back to explain how the characters got to that point serves to further excuse their actions. Going so quickly back to Mallory's life in an abusive home indicates that the home was responsible for that circumstance in which we initially saw her. Again, this is visual logic rather than verbal, traditional logic, a visual enthymeme that encourages the audience to connect these two parts of the film with a cause-and-effect relationship that is not explicitly stated but that convention would encourage the audience to supply. Implying the cause and effect can cause this suggestion to be accepted in a way that verbally claiming that her abusive upbringing caused her to become a murderer would likely not, with the latter met with objections and challenges. So through this decision about chronology, Stone has further muddied his argument by making Mallory even more sympathetic a character, and Mickey more heroic for rescuing her from this situation; visuals and emotional appeals are victorious where traditional logical appeals were likely to have failed.

The shared point of view between the audience and characters in the portrayal of Mickey and Mallory's abuse experiences is reiterated for the audience in Mickey and Mallory's reactions to conflict in their relationship. When they have an argument and Mallory yells at Mickey, scenes from being yelled at by his mother are inserted into the scene of Mickey and Mallory's argument or play over a window in the background of the scene, indicating this is where

Mickey's mind is going during this experience. It again employs visual logic, implying cause and effect, and also encourages shared point of view, a means of encouraging identification, by showing the audience what Mickey is experiencing. As Mallory drives around in their convertible following this fight, she first reminisces about kissing him, with scenes of this interspersed with the shots of her driving, and then her mind is taken over by images of her father looming large, surrounded by flames. She stops at a gas station and, apparently in effort to make Mickey jealous—he is currently in their motel room raping their female hostage—she lures the gas station attendant over to make out with her, but the images of her frightened eyes, her father's angry eyes, and her father grabbing her haunt her, made clear to the audience by this footage being inserted into the scene, and having these images return to her proves too much and she shoots and kills the attendant. Mickey likewise commits the only murder he regrets, the murder of the Indian they meet while stranded in the desert, when he is awakened from reliving some of the more traumatic moments from his childhood. These scenes help emphasize the way that these experiences haunt Mickey and Mallory, shaping who they are as adults, and also give the audience a means of sympathizing and identifying with the characters by visually creating a shared point of view.

If it is indeed Mickey and Mallory to whom the audience is supposed to listen, these are sound rhetorical choices. Though there alternative ways to view the characters, the primary ones that are suggested in the film encourage emotions of sympathy and perhaps admiration, resulting in inclinations toward identifying with them. Thus, the argument or arguments they present are likely to be heeded by the audience, and especially in this case when the film lacks suitable alternatives for presenting its message. Intentional or not, however, a danger comes along with these techniques in that it begins to rid them of true culpability for the crimes they commit.

Though it has less emotions tied up within it, the other way to view Mickey, Mallory, and their actions is viewing them as a romantic couple on an adventure. This view and the view of them as abuse victims are the two most prominent ones in the film as they rely more on story and less on suggestions through visual logic, although the smaller filmmaking techniques do still supplement this characterization of them and their story. For instance, at the conclusion of the opening scene, their murder spree in the diner on Route 666, they share an embrace, the rest of the set is darkened while Mickey and Mallory are lit from above with white light, a romantic musical theme plays, and the wall behind them becomes a scene of fireworks detonating in the sky. Though not especially realistic, it is still a scene one would expect to find in a romance film rather than a film about two mass murderers. The chronology supports viewing the movie as the story of Mickey and Mallory's romance, as well, because after opening with their murders in the diner, it goes back in time to show how they met, with Mickey ultimately rescuing Mallory from her abusive home, Mickey killing her father and Mallory killing her mother. From here, it goes on to show their "wedding" on a bridge, during which Mickey conducts the ceremony himself. Despite the fights they have before being caught, Mickey and Mallory's time in prison is characterized by their longing for one another and suffering through their separation. The climax of the film, in which Mickey fights his way first to Mallory and then to freedom in the midst of a prison riot, is played as Mickey fighting his way to being reunited with his love. When they are finally reunited, it is essentially a replay of their embrace from the opening scene, with the camera circling around them and the rest of the world fading away. With the film, structurally, being set up as the tale of Mickey and Mallory's romance, they are then set up as the heroes of the film, and this is suggested through a more traditional logic of cause and effect in addition to implied ones based on visuals. If they are the heroes of the film, despite all the death and

mayhem they cause, then they are certainly a possibility for being the messengers of the film's intended argument. If this identification with them is intentional, that Oliver Stone is on target with his use of rhetoric, but still irresponsible based on the implications of making heroes out of murderers. Applying the proposed framework to this film points to an important lesson about visual and multimodal texts: when emotions play a prominent role in persuasion, they may actually override logic or preexisting ethical notions and cause viewers to take away a message that, intended or not, is not based on logic.

With so many possibilities for how to receive the characters of Mickey and Mallory, some facilitating identification and others hindering it, what is an audience to do? One way to read this presence of conflicting options that would support Oliver Stone's claimed argument that the film is a condemnation of the media's celebration of violence would be that the movie does not settle on one portrayal in the same way that the media gives multiple, often conflicting portrayals of any major public figure. This would prevent a stable, shared point of view with Mickey and Mallory and, as a result, discourage identification at the same time that it makes its own argument about the inaccuracy of media portrayal of criminals. This emphasizes that media portrayals are not reality and paves the way for a claim that the media glorifies violence and the people who commit it; the media excuses actions, gives reasons, and rationalizes and romanticizes even the most aberrant behavior. The movie does this as well, apparently in an attempt to illuminate this trend. For this to work without contributing to the problem it is trying to point out, there needs to be starker differences between Stone's portrayal of the couple and that of the media-within-the-film. However, for this to work as an explanation, the narrative perspective of the film would need to clearly be the media. Instead, the film is told from a third person point of view that is not specifically that of the media, and focuses on Mickey and

Mallory for most of its length. In that case, the inconsistencies in their portrayal seem like just that – inconsistencies. These issues of creating distinctions between voices might seem irrelevant outside of narrative-as-argument, but paying attention to how one portrays both oneself and one's opposition is always relevant to rhetoric, making this another aspect of *Natural Born Killers* that has the potential to be instructive to composition students.

I believe that Stone's greatest shortcoming with making his argument in this film clear is the lack of distinction he creates between the media's portrayal of Mickey and Mallory and their portrayal by the film at large. A solution suggested by my proposed framework would suggest that even encouraging identification with them through the media's portrayal but offering at least some contrast elsewhere in the film would clarify that the likable version of Mickey and Mallory do not exist, and thus cannot be identified with, meaning their arguments should be dismissed. The best way he could have made his point would have been to have his media portrayal of them be the romantic one, but his own of them as coldblooded murderers. This would have made it clear that his film is not condoning the actions of its two main characters. In response to a claim that he portrays Mickey and Mallory as a great romantic couple, as heroes, he could then point out that this was Wayne Gale's portrayal of them within the movie, a reflection of what the media in this country does every day, and that his own portrayal of them was much less favorable. While this could still have been misunderstood by people like Ben Darras and Sarah Edmondson, this would have been a misunderstanding of a clear argument—not Stone's fault—rather than the much easier misunderstanding of a convoluted argument. The entire film, not just the *American Maniacs* segments within it, portrays Mickey and Mallory in a rather favorable light and encouraging identification, making Oliver Stone just like the media he is condemning.

Again, identification is at the core of Stone's problem, but some slight adjustments could have remedied this without rendering the movie devoid of any characters with whom to identify.

Had the "American Maniacs" clips introduced and concluded the film, everything portrayed within the film could have been claimed to be from the media's perspective, thus both making Stone's argument clearer and also making Stone much less responsible for misinterpretations of the film. Perhaps Stone intended for the whole film to indeed be seen as portraying the killers the way the media does, but this simple switch in chronology and the resulting effects on identification with Mickey and Mallory could have easily solved the problem. The framework I propose not only helps identify this as the problem that likely led to several deadly misunderstandings, but using this film as an example to which to apply the framework, with the additional scenes and alternate versions available in screenplay form, can provide composition students with options so that they can problem solve and develop ways to help the film's argument become more focused, skills that could be transferred to their own composition tasks.

One such option to make the argument more focused is revised chronological organization of the film. *Natural Born Killers* opens with Mickey and Mallory's largely unprovoked murder of five people in a diner. From there it travels back in time to show how Mickey met Mallory, went to jail briefly and escaped, came back to get Mallory and help her kill her parents, and married themselves standing atop a bridge. The movie then skips ahead to after Mickey and Mallory were captured, showing clips from the tabloid news show "American Maniacs," featuring interviews with Mickey and Mallory's fans and reenactments of some of their crimes. The events in this part of the film are clearly identifiable as being from the media's perspective, but it quickly switches back to its initial narrative perspective to fill in the events

that lead to Mickey and Mallory's capture, all the while portraying them in the same, rather positive manner. The only other part of the film that is clearly from the media's perspective is a short montage about Mickey and Mallory's trial right before the film's climax, the prison break. While perhaps more instructive of persuasion through narrative, this issue in *Natural Born Killers* still offers a lesson in the importance of chronology to identification and an opportunity to examining decision-making during revision of a text.

If the portrayal of Mickey and Mallory is not inconsistent in order to further the argument (implying that their portrayal is constructed and inconsistent), then are they a viable option for being the voice or voices to *deliver* the argument? Considering that the aspects of them that are discouraging to identification—that they are demons, that they are insane, that they are just animals carrying out predatory instincts—are suggested in more subtle ways than the more positive or sympathetic portrayals, it seems that Mickey and Mallory could certainly be the ones the audience chooses to listen to, especially in light of a startling lack of other sympathetic characters. Is this what Oliver Stone intends? Yes and no. I believe he has these two characters deliver his message. However, he (appropriately) gives the audience enough reasons to not value the opinions of these characters while at the same time depriving the audience of another clear voice to listen to. He puts his message in the mouths of people we should not want to listen to, and that is not exactly rhetorically effective. Stone considers this film to be a satire, but in this case, his own work is indistinguishable from that of the entities he seeks to criticize. What has happened, though, is that Stone has painted himself into a rhetorical corner. He uses Mickey and Mallory to present his argument. In order for their words to be heeded, he needs to give them positive ethos and make them at least somewhat deserving of identification from the audience. But by doing these things, he is by implication making their crimes seem more permissible.

While students may not find themselves trying to walk this tightrope of appropriate use of ethos in narrative arguments, as Stone is, this situation created by Stone provides students with an opportunity to learn about ethos and identification in great depth and see how essential it can be in making a successful argument, and not always subtle arguments, but obvious ones, as well.

The argument that is verbalized by Mickey and Mallory at the end of the film is that the media is at least as much a villain as they are. During his interview with Wayne Gale, Mickey says that the media is “like the weather, only it’s man-made weather. Murder? It’s pure. You’re the one who made it impure. You’re buying and selling fear.” At the end of the film, Mickey and Mallory not only make a symbolic statement by murdering Wayne Gale on camera, but also verbalize their intended statement, as well. In addition to informing Wayne that he is scum because he only helped the Knoxes for the ratings, Mickey tells him, “Killing you and what you represent is like making a statement. I’m not one hundred percent sure exactly what it’s saying, but you know, Frankenstein killed Dr. Frankenstein.” It is possible to conclude that Mickey is damaging his authority here through his inability to be able to explain what statement he is trying to make; it comes off more like an excuse in absence of that explanation. However, his statement about Frankenstein, or more precisely Frankenstein’s monster, killing Dr. Frankenstein is insightful, suggesting that Mickey is now killing his creator. This can be interpreted two ways: on a more general level, it could be saying that the media and culture are responsible for Mickey becoming a killer, while on a more specific level it is saying that Mickey is killing the person responsible for his becoming a celebrity murderer rather than just murderer. Both of these readings, but primarily the former, lend themselves to supporting Oliver Stone’s claimed argument. If not for the complications of who is delivering this message and how late in the film

it occurs, it would seem that Oliver Stone is indeed clearly making the argument he claims that he makes.

In a manner not unlike an author's third-person narration, Stone is able to provide additional perspective and even contribute his own argument, not delivered by any of the characters, into this dialectic. These contributions to the dialectic are made through those details that do not come from the words or actions of any of the characters, but in the presentation of those words and actions. Overall, Stone's use of lighting, film types, and unusual shots supports the notion that he is not condoning what Mickey and Mallory do, but there are still a few instances in which the use of these elements betrays his purpose.

The primary inclusions of unusual shots edited into scenes depict various demonic creatures and images. These are mainly of Mickey and Mallory, though other demon-like creatures appear, including Mickey's father, Scagnetti, and the occasional unnamed character, distorted to appear monstrous. These images serve to further the suggestion that Mickey and Mallory do what they do because they are possessed by demons. On the framework I propose, these would be included as pathos, influencing identification and ultimately the overall argument. The lighting used in these scenes will be discussed in more detail shortly, but its purpose is to strengthen the association between these demonic forces and the actions committed by Mickey and Mallory. One of these demon characters appears on the screen of the television in the opening scene of the film, which is perhaps Stone's most effective use of this technique since it implies a connection between the demons and the television and media, again through that visual logic that seems to remove the necessity of verbalizing a logical claim and submitting it to scrutiny. The movie also ends with a similar visually-implied connection: a montage of clips from the news, often from cases where the murderer in question, like OJ Simpson or the

Menendez brothers, received quite a bit of celebrity from their alleged crime, followed by a montage of the demon images. This very clearly suggests a cause and effect, again through visual means rather than verbal. Unfortunately, that this is followed immediately by a shot of Mickey and Mallory free and together in a Winnebago with two kids and a third on the way sends quite a confused message to the audience. It sets up the scenario as Mickey and Mallory being turned into demons by the media but living happily ever after, not paying the consequences for their actions.

As further means of using visuals to imply connections or cause and effect, Oliver Stone uses green lighting and the color green to make connections between these demons and Mickey and Mallory's actions. It appears to serve two purposes. First, the color foreshadows murders. The lights are green, or, in cases where this is not possible, the color green is placed into several shots, such as in the opening scene in the diner—the key lime pie that Mickey eats is bright green, as is the light on the front of the jukebox Mallory is operating—before many of the murders occur. The other appearance of green is as the primary lighting color of the demonic images that appear during the course of the film. Using the same color for both is another example of that visual logic, implying cause and effect or at least a connection between Mickey and Mallory's actions when green is present and these demonic influences. This use of green, therefore, seems to support what Stone is saying, though it is still problematic in that it might be seen as making an excuse for the actions of the killers. The same goes for the "demon faces" used on occasion, when a character's face is sort of swirled and distorted for a few seconds, an effect similar to one that is used in the movie *Devil's Advocate* to indicate that a person is a demon. This happens in *Natural Born Killers* to Mickey one time and to Wayne Gale another. However, overall these visual means of suggesting connections between demons and Mickey and

Mallory's actions is another example of Stone using visual logic to imply cause and effect or other sorts of connections. Again, attempting to make this claim directly and through words could make the claim sound ridiculous, while subtle feelings of unease at the demonic images and green to associate them with other actions brings the suggestion to an emotional level that might seem logical unless subjected to scrutiny. In regards to where this tactic of visual enthymemes belongs on the analytical framework, it could be seen as a part of the dialectic or argument portions of the framework, but also as aspects of shaping identification, making arguments about the characters rather than addressing the larger argument of the film text.

Using many different types of film is one thing that supports Stone's claim that this movie is about the media, and similarly to the use of visual enthymemes (or perhaps one itself) could be seen as shaping audience ability to identify with the characters or as an argument in and of itself. Stone uses five to ten different types of film and camera, ranging from the typical color style to black and white to home movie-style to even cartoons. While it does not act as an overt argument, it gives the movie a "montage" feel that helps one imagine that this story of Mickey and Mallory is pieced together from many sources. If Stone wanted to claim that this portrayal of Mickey and Mallory is a "media portrayal" of them, this would certainly be a way to do it. Problem is, the average moviegoer would likely just see this technique as a "style thing," a way to make the movie look cooler. This is not unlike Shyamalan's use of the steadycam to visually convey tension; it is an emotional appeal. It may convey a sense of instability to the audience, but it is unlikely that such subtle implications, especially when so easily mistaken for simply a stylistic choice, would be able to overcome the power of the identification with Mickey and Mallory that is established in many more, far more noticeable ways.

Although it suffers from the same problem of being able to be mistaken for a stylistic choice rather than a rhetorical one, Stone's tactic of occasionally projecting words onto Mickey and Mallory during scenes could also be seen to contribute to his overall purpose, in spirit at least, and like the use of different film types, to both influence our receptions of the characters and make an argument of its own. One example of this when Mickey and Mallory meet the Shaman in his hut. In the first shot, the words on Mickey read "demon." In the next, the words "too much tv" are spread across both of them. In the last, the words "she crazy" appear on Mallory. There appear to be two possible purposes behind Stone doing this. First, it is possible to see these as instructions on how to view the characters. In that case, they would seem to contribute to that overall purpose of both condemning the media and also discouraging the audience from identifying with them, as they are apparently demons who are crazy and watch too much television. Working against this as a rhetorical tool is the fact that he offers several instructions on how to read the characters rather than settling on one. This, however, leads to the other possible use for this technique, which is emphasizing the movie's constructed nature, attempting to clarify to the viewer that Stone does not intend for these portrayals of the Knoxes to be seen as reality but instead a constructed version of them, including various explanations the media would be likely to offer for their actions. This, in conjunction with the patchwork feel of the movie created through the use of multiple film types and styles, could possibly be Oliver Stone's attempt to establish the narrative perspective of the film as belonging to the media, not *American Maniacs* specifically but more an amalgam of many types of potential media coverage. This may very well have been Oliver Stone's intention; however, these two subtle techniques on their own do not overcome the fact that the majority of the film seems to be told from a third person, non-media perspective, with interludes more obviously from media sources like

American Maniacs interspersed throughout. If this were indeed Stone's intent, he would need to make this claim through stronger means than the visual logic I have been describing here; it would need to be logical and, equally as important, more noticeable.

Other uses of lighting in the film likewise suggest that, through these visual logic techniques, Stone is indeed reinforcing reasons not to identify with Mickey and Mallory and furthering his anti-media message, but these, too, suffer from being too subtle to overcome those tactics that were attempted more obviously and encourage identification. Near the film's climax, as Mickey is being interviewed by Wayne Gale and Mallory is being confronted by Scagnetti in her cell, there is curious alternation of lighting color. The lights vary between blue, white, and red in each different shot, sometimes fading from one color to the next in the same shot. There is no clear correspondence between these colors and any particular emotion that the character is feeling. There are two main explanations for this choice. First, since Stone feels his film is representative of American culture, perhaps the use of these colors for him is the equivalent of playing the National Anthem and putting up an American flag behind them, satirically suggesting that what they say is important and representative of the American spirit. Another possibility is that the purpose of the changing light is to highlight the killers' instability, using the changing lights as a visual manifestation of their craziness. In either event, this also supports Stone's argument because in the first instance, he is using it to emphasize that this film, and especially the contents of this scene, are intended to comment on the society, and in the second, to show that Mickey and Mallory are crazy and not to be respected and worshipped. But once again, this is something that the casual viewer will not notice or interpret this way. Once again, these are connections that are implied but never directly claimed, and thus easily ignored and not able to stand up to scrutiny if they are noticed and challenged.

One final means of Stone adding his own voice and opinion to the dialectic is his use of music and sound effects, in this case acting primarily as elements of pathos, which shape our ability to identify with characters and later place focus on the film's argument. Music and sound can dramatically change the way the visuals in a scene are perceived; they have the power to alter the emotional tone of the content being presented. Take, for instance, the opening scene of the film, when Mickey and Mallory kill people in a diner. The music playing is rock music, which makes the violence on screen more exciting. Were the music taken away, what happens in the scene would be much more disturbing, both through taking away the music that is making it "cool" and also through the sounds of the blows and gunshots being the focal auditory input. The same song plays through much of the prison riot, serving the same purpose. It takes the edge of the violence and makes it more entertaining. This is something the media does—taking the brutality away from some events and making them seem exciting instead. The net effect of this choice is that the violence comes off as slightly less brutal and we are consequently better able to identify with the people committing it if given opportunities to do so later, as we are with Mickey and Mallory. It is understandable that Stone might do this if he is attempting to emulate the media portrayal of events, but he is still making the violence he portrays feel less brutal, softening the seriousness of the crimes Mickey and Mallory commit.

The music and sound in other cases not only makes the violence easier to take and more entertaining, but even makes light of it. The soundtrack of the scene which introduces the audience to Mallory's home life is that of a sitcom, with cheerful music and laugh tracks, but juxtaposed with a horrible situation. Mallory's dad makes reference to his sexual abuse of Mallory and the audience laughs. Cruel words are responded to by applause. When Mickey returns to help Mallory kill her parents, the ensuing fight between Mickey and Mallory's father

has playing behind it what sounds like the soundtrack of a Looney Tunes cartoon, like one of the Roadrunner vs Wil E. Cyote cartoons. The effect of this is also to assist the audience in making light of what is occurring on screen and not taking it seriously. This could be seen, once again, as a suggestion that this is what the media does to violence, but contributing to that problem it seeks to remedy at the same time. Though more audio than visual, this does function similarly to Blair's visual enthymemes, implying a connection between the media desensitizing us to violence and characters who commit violent acts without remorse; however, making that connection requires more work on the part of the audience than the visual enthymemes used elsewhere in the film. Ultimately, this use of sound is relegated to affecting pathos.

Music also helps play up the romance between Mickey and Mallory. A romantic theme plays as they embrace after murdering the people in the diner, and again as they drive into a town after their marriage looking for a motel and when they are reunited during the prison riot. Like the softening of the effect of the violence in other scenes, this seems to reflect how Stone believes the media is portraying the couple rather than how he himself is portraying them. It would have worked if Stone had structured the movie more effectively. Framing the entire film as obviously a portrayal by the media rather than his own portrayal of the murderers would have still let him carry out his extreme emulation of media coverage, but while still keeping it clear that the portrayal of Mickey and Mallory is distorted and that the real Knoxes are not worth all the worship they receive, that they are brutal killers and that there is no excuse for that they do.

Natural Born Killers, as a whole, has a lot to offer as a potential teaching tool in the composition classroom. First, it demonstrates all steps of the analytical framework I proposed in chapter two, and could be used to demonstrate either isolated steps or the framework as a whole, with ethos and pathos shaping identification, identification influencing who the audience listens

to for the overall message, and how identification encourages the audience to choose some voices over others. This film, because it is trying to make a specific argument, also demonstrates the potential of ethos, pathos, and identification to override logic, and also how emotional appeals may masquerade as logical ones in a vivid medium like this one, either influencing identification or making arguments in and of themselves. In my final chapter, I will provide examples of how using this film and others, in conjunction with the framework I have proposed and applied throughout these chapters, can help begin to meet the important goal of improving multimodal literacy through composition instruction.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions and Classroom Applications

The type of communication that human beings encounter on a regular basis has become increasingly visual and multimodal in recent years. In order to better serve students in light of this change, the field of composition studies needs to adapt its approach to instruction, incorporating a wider variety of text types and preparing the students to interact with those texts in a critical manner. In the preceding chapters, I have proposed a solution for this need to improve students' multimodal literacy through composition instruction. That solution consists of two parts. First, it is necessary to revise the analytical framework with which we seek to arm our students for their interactions with and analysis of texts; the existing frameworks reflected by a majority of current textbooks show that many of the traits that are most prevalent in visual or multimodal texts are downplayed or disregarded; however, in order to fully prepare students to analyze visual texts, the students need to have a much fuller understanding of issues such as pathos and identification. The second step of the solution is to incorporate at least one type of multimodal text into composition courses, to be included alongside the more traditional word-based texts. Film, as the most emotionally-inclined text types, would serve this purpose well. A revised analytical framework combined with incorporation of film texts would allow the students to apply that framework to at least two very different text types, showing a wide spectrum of rhetorical tactics at the same time as they learn to interact with these different forms of

communication. As an added bonus, this may even allow students to arrive at a better understanding of how rhetoric works through examining it first in more familiar texts like film and then finding equivalent techniques in word-based texts.

In chapter two, I proposed the revised analytical framework to fulfill the first step of my proposed solution. This framework was selected by bridging the gap between film studies and rhetorical theory. As a first step in this task, I examined the four main rhetorical approaches to film outlined in David Blakesely's *The Terministic Screen*, ultimately choosing film identification as the most viable approach because it was not overly focused on either minute or mode-specific traits, in addition to the fact that it concerns itself with the same issues that others who have written of their experiences using film in composition have pointed to as the most prominent rhetorical aspect of film: identification. Identification on its own does not provide a thorough means of explaining the rhetorical potential of any type of text; the framework is not complete at this point. To complete that bridge between the two fields, classical rhetoric is utilized to both explain how identification is achieved and also explain the role of identification in logical argument. In short, pathos and ethos shape identification, which guides us toward the proper voices in a dialectic, and those voices present the logical argument that we are to take away from the text. The relationship between these elements of the framework can be displayed visually like this:

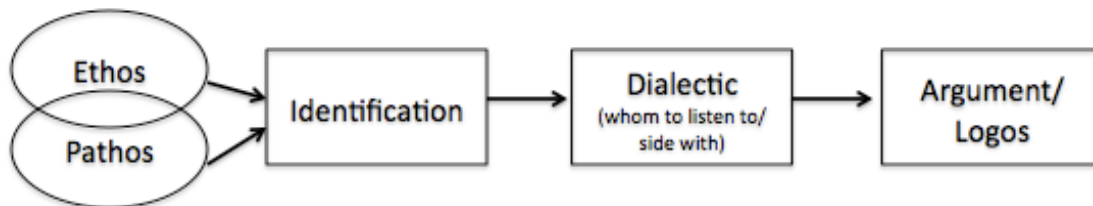


Fig. 1. Illustration of Analytical Framework.

This depiction of the framework could be seen as somewhat misleading in that it suggests that all parts of it are equal. Instead, rescaling of the image may better convey what proportion of a text's argument results from each rhetorical tactic. This would certainly vary by specific text, but could generally be shown this way as a way of representing the balance of these tactics in a typical narrative feature film:

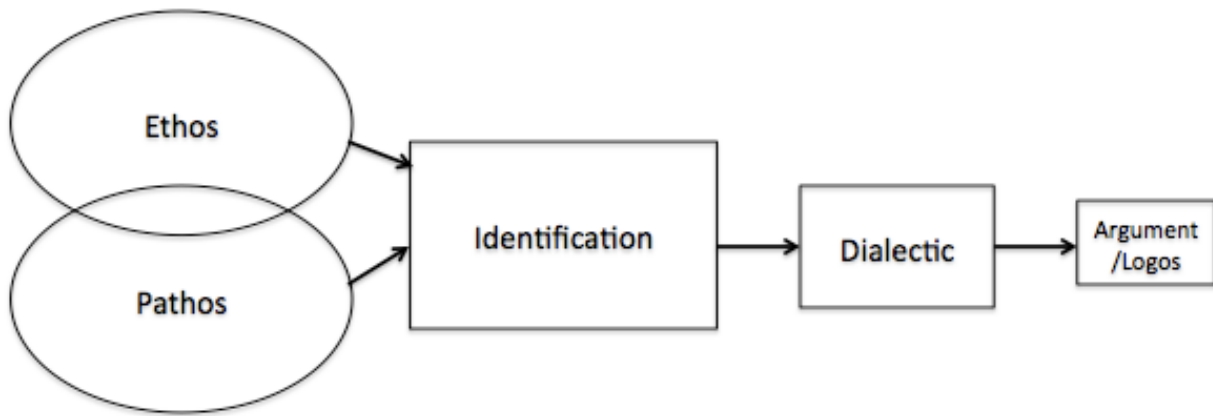


Fig. 2. Analytical Framework for Narrative Feature Film.

In this case, a majority of the persuasion is likely to occur through ethos, pathos, and identification, with the logical elements of dialectic and an argumentative claim less noticeable and comprising a smaller percentage of the overall text. In a written narrative, the verbal nature of the text is likely to lend itself more strongly to focus on logic presented through dialectic of multiple voices, and might be portrayed this way:

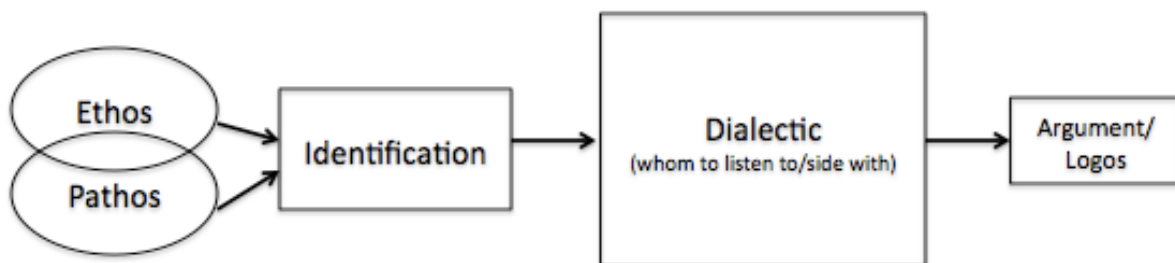


Fig. 3. Analytical Framework for Written Narrative.

With this type of text being less visual and consequently better suited to logical discussion, identification and the rhetorical elements that facilitate it could certainly still play a role, but in better balance with the rest of the text. Finally, a word-based text that is more a straightforward argument than narrative would likely relegate the elements of identification, most especially pathos, to minor roles while logic and the text's overall argument take center stage:

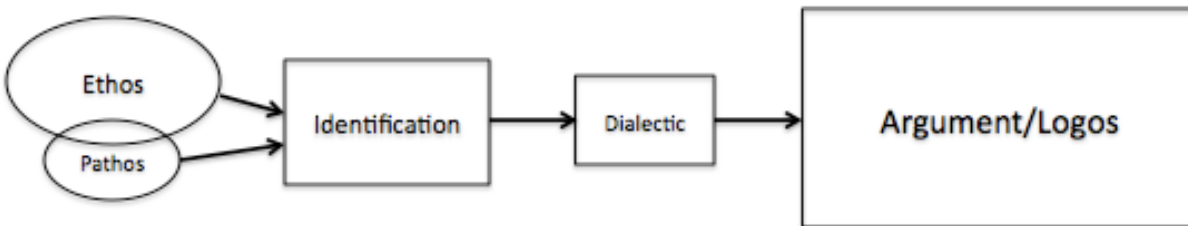


Fig. 4. Argumentative, Word-Based Text.

Again, these are just examples of how the balance of elements in this framework might change by text. What is important is that this framework includes all of these elements so that it is adaptable to a multitude of texts. Ethos, pathos, identification, and even dialectic are often ignored or downplayed in the analytical frameworks we teach. This framework brings them back, but with the flexibility to focus more or less on them depending on the text being analyzed.

Chapters three through five each focus on a different step in this progression through rhetorical tactics. Chapter three discussed ethos and pathos and their occasional relationship with one another, examining how these responses are facilitated in both film texts and a word-based text. Chapter four focused on identification, most of which is facilitated through ethos and pathos, again looking for these tactics at work in both types of text. Finally, chapter five provided a discussion and demonstration of how ethos, pathos, and identification can shape and also alter a logical argument through the example of the film *Natural Born Killers*. Overall, this framework was demonstrated to work well for explaining both types of texts and also drawing

attention to tactics for achieving these responses that are similar across the modes of communication, though, as discussed above, used in perhaps different balances in different text types. The framework was also demonstrated to provide the ability to diagnose problems that interfere with an argument's clarity, such as the conflicting messages sent by *Natural Born Killers*. It is a framework that allows focus on both the smaller issues of rhetoric that we might classify as persuasion and the larger and more logic-based ones that we might classify as argument.

Over the course of the discussion of pathos in chapter three, the common tactics utilized to achieve emotional response that were consistent across the two mediums were images and tempo or pacing. Images, as vivid information, inspire emotional response readily and are a primary component of film, which is one of the reasons that film is such an emotionally-oriented medium. Because of this, film's ability to evoke emotions is built in. However, it is also images, though created in the reader's mind through words, that have the most potential to evoke emotions in word-based texts. The other primary means of encouraging emotional response that was revealed through the discussion in chapter three is use of pacing and tempo. In film, there are multiple ways to accomplish this, and simultaneously even, such as through music and through the pace of visual changes. Though it cannot appeal to as many senses as film, the written word can still accomplish comparable effects through such issues as sentence length and repetition.

Chapter three also addressed the issue of ethos and how it is created in both mediums, though in this chapter in regards to film, focusing more on the ethos of the filmmaker. For both filmmaker and writer, situated ethos comes from the reputation associated with them. The invented ethos of the writer is conveyed through their demonstration of themselves through their

text as knowledgeable and of good character. The filmmaker establishes his ethos through similar means, though in his case it manifests through his getting the details of his reality accurate and through making ethical storytelling decisions, specifically not losing the audience's trust.

Invented ethos is a core issue in chapter four, as well. Identification is created through a combination of this—the feelings the audience has toward a writer or character—plus some other more technical tactics such as chronology and point of view. The ethos and identification discussed here, while still about the writer of the word-based text, is more about the characters within a film than the filmmaker that creates and portrays them. Identification occurs when the audience member either sees common ground between himself and another person or projects common ground because of recognizing traits in another that he desires for himself. This can be facilitated or discouraged through both ethos and pathos, and in both film and the written word. The means of accomplishing this are described above. However, other elements that affect identification are chronology and point of view. With chronology, where a text begins can suggest to the audience which person they are supposed to identify with. Often, but not always, this may be the first character we encounter. More importantly, creating a shared point of view between the audience member and the writer, narrator, or character can also encourage identification. In word-based texts, this is often controlled by whose narrative perspective the information or events are told from. In film, this can be done largely through visuals but also through such issues as limiting the audience to only the scenes in which the character with whom they are supposed to identify is present.

This analytical framework, then, is directing attention toward some very important elements of these texts, including the written texts where pathos in particular is thought to be of

little importance. Looking at the effects these texts seek to achieve—emotional appeal, positive or negative ethos for characters, positive ethos for the filmmaker, identification with specific characters—provides an entry point in the analysis of either type of text and then allows the student to look at what means might help achieve that end. Starting with the broad and working to the specific is key in this framework’s adaptability not only to both of the types of texts I discuss here, but others the student may encounter in or out of class. These elements are universal attributes of rhetoric, and this provides a way to teach them to students and give them experience applying them to multiple text types.

There are numerous ways to teach students about these elements of rhetoric and make them aware of these commonalities across text types through classroom activities and essay assignments. Showing films in their entirety is not necessary for many of the activities I will suggest here; most can be accomplished through showing short scenes. Incorporating film need not use inordinate amounts of class time. The following are several suggested activities that focus on using film, the written word, or both to teach composition students about ethos, pathos, and identification.

Because pathos is more prevalent and perhaps also more obvious in film, use of film can be especially helpful in getting students to understand how the same appeal can be made through the written word. One activity, which could also be turned into an essay assignment, asks students to compare several movie scenes that share a common purpose. If this activity is being used to teach pathos, it is a good idea to pick several scenes that are trying to create a similar emotional response. Because I feel that appeals to fear are some of the most prevalent ones encountered in everyday communication, I tend toward choosing scenes that are all seeking to scare the audience (see Appendix A). Scenes that seek to evoke anger, sadness, or tension would

also be viable options for this activity. During class, show the scenes two to three times each with time to discuss in between. Have students look for the filmmaking techniques that seek to make them feel the emotion in question. Although this could be done with just one scene, using several encourages them to make connections and look for trends or even decide which scene is most effective.¹⁴

One variation on this activity I have come to prefer asks students to compare scenes from horror films to political ads that also utilize appeals to fear (see Appendix B). The ads are still members of the film medium, but differ from movie scenes in that they have a more concrete purpose and concrete ramifications. It also emphasizes to students that emotional appeals such as appeal to fear are tactics that others attempt to use on them on a regular basis. This particular assignment is good for teaching about both pathos and identification. Both the movie scenes and political ads tend to rely upon creating a sense of identification with victims and discouraging identification with a person or group so that they are better able to be feared. In movie scenes this comes through the use of likable and relatable victims (or potential victims), or possibly children to inspire feelings of protectiveness. In the political ads, especially those about such issues as terrorism or illegal immigration, the ads use multiple tactics to discourage identification with the terrorists or immigrants; terrorists might have their faces covered, be waving weapons about, or be shouting in Arabic to stress their differences from us, while immigrants might be characterized as criminals and shown in groups and in threatening poses. This is not unlike the tactics used to clarify for audiences whom they are to fear in a horror movie scene by covering their faces with masks and not having them speak, dehumanizing them and making them seem

¹⁴ In the event that the students will be writing essays about one or more of the scenes, I have found it helpful to show one that they will not be writing about as an example, feeling free to be more directive in the discussion and modeling an effective analysis for the students, but then generally letting the students run the discussions of the ones they will be writing about.

different or “other.” The more different they seem to be from the audience, the more identification is discouraged and the more potential they have to be an object of fear. Again, this could be used as an activity for class discussion, showing the movie scenes and political ads and discussing the common tactics among them for evoking fear. This activity also works well as an essay assignment.

In both of these cases, the focus is on analyzing film texts only¹⁵, but there are other ways to show students the use of these rhetorical tactics by using both film and word-based texts. One such activity, which could also be used as an essay assignment, has students look at speeches, real and fictional, at various levels of sensory information. For instance, they can look at the written version of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, evaluating its abilities at achieving ethos, pathos and identification; then listen to the speech delivered by King, determining how hearing it alters the effectiveness of those rhetorical techniques; and finally, watching the video of King delivering the speech, again examining how seeing the speech delivered likewise has an effect on its ability to use pathos, ethos, and identification. This activity works well for isolating what elements of a multimodal text are having particular effects. The same process could be followed but using a fictional speech instead, such as William Wallace’s famous speech from *Braveheart*. There is an additional level of construction present in a film version of a speech, as it includes such elements as music and cinematography to help encourage certain responses, while video of a speech such as King’s is not enhanced in these ways. Because of this, it could be helpful to use both a real speech and a fictional one, to both

¹⁵ If the pathos activities are utilized effectively and the students grasp the concepts, making connections to the word-based texts they read, with some encouragement from the teacher during discussions, should follow naturally, but to make sure the connections are made, it could be a good idea to use activities that ask the students to make connections across the mediums immediately.

allow the opportunity to discuss these additional techniques used in film but also simply draw student attention to the constructedness of certain texts.

If a teacher is interested in focusing more heavily on ethos and wishes to include activities that consider filmmaker ethos, I hold that M. Night Shyamalan may provide the best opportunity to teach about this. First of all, he has probably the strongest sense of situated ethos of any current filmmaker; students are likely to be at least marginally familiar with some of his works and many may already have opinions toward him. The downside of any activity on this issue of filmmaker ethos is that it is likely necessary to show at least one of a filmmaker's films in its entirety to make a fair judgment about his invented ethos for at least that film. In the case of Shyamalan, it might produce the strongest impression in students to use one of his later films, which have received the most negative critical response. A viewing and discussion of *The Village*, especially, could lead to important insights about how the person composing a text makes ethical choices and reflects himself positively or negatively through the text he produces. Word-based texts could be incorporated into an activity like this through having students read reviews of the film in question and evaluating those against their own opinions, even perhaps evaluating the ethos of the writers of these reviews, as some critics, especially with Shyamalan's later films, are so harsh that they could perhaps be seen to damage their own ethos.

The above are just a few possibilities of activities or essay assignments that could incorporate the first two portions of my proposed analytical framework and film into a composition class to further students' understanding of rhetoric and their abilities to read multiple types of texts. Most of the above do not require giving up a lot of class time to show films, instead using smaller pieces of them. Through this, multimodal literacy can be improved

without taking too much time away from efforts to increase word based literacy, and perhaps even making the improvement of the latter easier because of the better understanding of rhetoric.

The fuller picture of rhetoric and how these earlier portions of the framework can influence it is discussed in chapter five. This chapter conceives of narrative film as a proto-essay version of Plato's dialectic, with multiple voices and multiple arguments competing to be the one that becomes the text's main argument. Which voice or voices we choose to listen to is influenced by those earlier elements of the framework: ethos, pathos, and identification. The example used in this case Oliver Stone's 1994 film *Natural Born Killers* because it does seek to make an argument (alluded to in the film's tagline) and also because of the events surrounding the film based on a possible misunderstanding of that argument. Application of the analytical framework shows that Oliver Stone is technically making the argument he intends, that the media glorifies and perpetuates violence, but that he also, through encouraging identification with murderers too strongly, confuses that argument by implying that murder is no worse than what the media does and that it may in some cases be justifiable.

Some of the techniques that Stone uses in his film point to a function of visual communication that allows visuals to make what appears to be a logical argument through implied cause and effect. His use of this technique—implying cause and effect between the main characters' traumatic childhoods and their actions as adults—is part of what encourages identification with characters with whom we should not identify and consequently what confuses the overall argument, allowing pathos and identification to encourage us to accept behavior that we logically and ethically should recognize as wrong. This is what J. Anthony Blair refers to as a visual enthymeme, and these can be used for two purposes: first, to make a logical argument of their own, but second, and more commonly in *Natural Born Killers*, which has a separate claim

as its overall purpose, to influence identification. The ability of this tactic to be used in either of these ways points to the recursive nature of the analytical framework I have proposed.

Something that is undertaken at the more logical end (despite a possible lack of true logic underlying it) can go back and influence the elements that lie earlier in the framework like identification or ethos, portrayed visually like this:

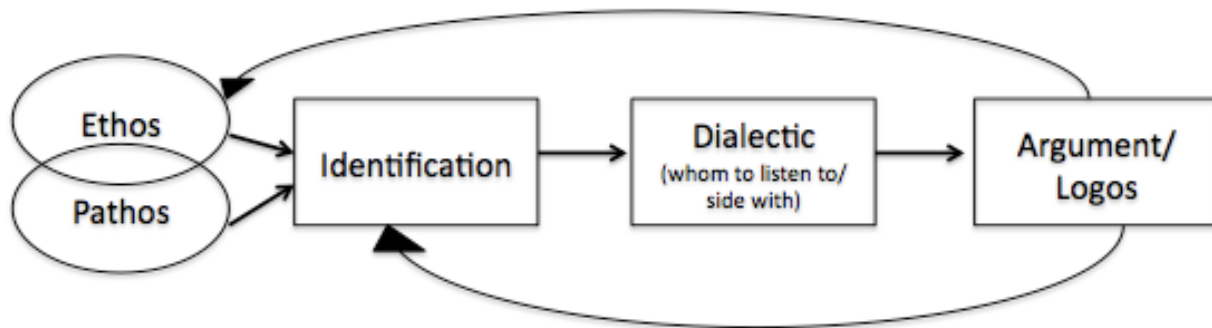


Fig. 5. Recursiveness in the Analytical Framework.

Portraying this framework as linear is the simplest way to teach it to students, but it could be useful to show them that it need not always be linear, and perhaps even take advantage of that opportunity to make parallels to the recursive nature of writing and revising.

One class activity that addresses this smaller issue from chapter five of the ability of visual logic to masquerade as real logic makes use of the wealth of re-edits of scenes and movie trailers that are available on YouTube. What is behind these “logical” claims made through visuals is the implication of cause and effect. To illustrate to students how, correct or not, we tend to organize information presented to us visually into cause-and-effect sequences, a teacher can make use of these re-edits to show how, reordered, a scene plays out very differently. One example of this is the video “Orca Crew Kills Each Other” by user WTMRecut, who re-edits portions of the climax of *Jaws* together in a new order to imply that the three men on the boat all turn on and attack each other. In just forty seconds, students can see an example of how they

naturally connect images to form cause and effect sequences, providing a demonstration of the power of the order of images to seem logical when it in fact is not. Recut trailers that, for instance, make the film appear to belong to a different genre, could also accomplish this task, but not as consistently; a scene cut together to convey one sequence of events gets this message about implied cause and effect across much more clearly, while examples of this in the recut trailers will probably be less frequent and more spaced out. J. Anthony Blair's example visual enthymeme, the 1964 Lyndon Johnson campaign ad commonly referred to as the "Daisy Ad" would also be a useful text to discuss in class in order to illustrate ways that visuals make claims and also to point out the difference between expressing an argument verbally versus visually.

In chapter five I also briefly mentioned that dialectic may manifest in different ways. True, Platonic dialectic could be enacted in class discussion, but this is not exactly a revolutionary suggestion; class discussions on a variety of topics often take this form, though a teacher intentionally pointing out what is occurring could be one way of helping students understand dialectic and its role in rhetoric. Narrative films, particularly those with an obvious theme, could serve as additional examples of dialectic, and in particular dialectic in constructed form. Obviously *Natural Born Killers* is one example of a film that could be used to demonstrate dialectical structure; many other films would also work for this purpose. If the amount of class time able to be devoted to showing films is limited but a teacher desires to use the film medium to demonstrate how dialectic works, an episode of a television series could be substituted for a feature film. Sitcom episodes typically last just over twenty minutes and drama series' episodes usually last between forty and forty-five. Not every television series would work for this, but ones that tend to use thematic structure for their episodes often closely resemble dialectic. The now-canceled series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for instance, had most

episodes revolving around a single theme or issue and examining that issue through a dialectical structure. For instance, the season three episode “Beauty and the Beasts” begins with a character verbally espousing the claim that “all men are beasts.” Over the course of the episode, words and actions of characters support or refute this initial claim, and by the end, that claim has been revised to the more accurate conclusion (implied but not directly stated) that some men do act like beasts, but not all of them, and in fact sometimes it is the ones with the most reason to behave in a beastlike manner that overcome it and prove the claim inaccurate. If forty-five minutes is too much time to devote to showing an episode of a television series, some sitcoms are structured in a similar way but take up less class time. Two sitcoms that I am aware of that tend to take on this dialectical structure are the currently-running *How I Met Your Mother* and *The Big Bang Theory*, perhaps both fitting this mold because of their shared scenario of groups of five friends of various backgrounds and personalities arguing about a variety of issues in many of their episodes.

One other way of utilizing the full analytical framework that uses both written and film texts is to use the same film that was used to demonstrate the framework in chapter five, *Natural Born Killers*. To be effective, this likely requires the use of the film in its entirety. However, there are word-based texts to accompany the use of this film in Grisham’s condemnation of the film in “Unnatural Killers” and Stone’s defense of it in “Memo To John Grisham: What’s Next—‘A Movie Made Me Do It?’” These written texts can be used to inform discussion of the film and also to demonstrate the use of rhetorical tactics in the written medium. This possibility, in fact, offers an opportunity to demonstrate how dialectic might still be used in a text that might be classified as sophistic rather than dialectical rhetoric, as many word-based arguments may be.

“Unnatural Killers” by John Grisham can be explained in full by the analytical framework I have proposed, but here I would like to focus specifically on the role of dialectic in his essay. Most any well-constructed argument could be classified as collecting and sorting through multiple viewpoints to arrive at the truth. Sometimes those viewpoints may be attributed to faceless or nonspecific people or groups, but other times, such as in the case of this essay, to very specific people. The conversation of word and action that occurs in “Unnatural Killers” occurs between two young adults who emulate Mickey and Mallory Knox and commit a murder and attempted murder in their attempt to be more like them, Sarah Edmondson and Ben Darras; the victims of Sarah and Ben, Bill Savage and Patsy Byers; the film’s director, Oliver Stone; and the essay’s author, John Grisham. Over the course of this essay, Grisham speaks for the various players in this dialectic. Savage and Byers are given detailed introductions that encourage identification with them, and their perspective that is attributed to them by Grisham is that their respective death and paralyzing injury were unnecessary. In the case of Patsy Byers, Grisham does include her actual words to her assailant Sarah Edmonson: “Don’t kill me.” The contribution that Grisham has Darras and Edmondson make to this dialectic on who is at fault in this attack and murder is that they would not have done this if not for the film convincing them that killing people would be fun. The contribution that Grisham has Oliver Stone make to this dialectic is that his film is a satire meant to attack the media and not a suggestion that murder is cool, and also that he has a right to make his film like he wants and cannot control whether people misunderstand it. Of all of these voices with their various perspectives that are presented in this essay, Grisham’s only directly disagrees with Oliver Stone. The rest, he assimilates into his own argument that the filmmakers should be held responsible for *Natural Born Killers* as though it were a faulty product that resulted in injury or death. Oliver Stone’s point of view

presented in this essay could be considered a counterargument to which Grisham responds, and the rest support for his own argument, but this is still a dialectical structure, as it sorts through multiple points of view and possibilities in order to arrive at a conclusion about an issue.

The options for writing assignments about this film are numerous (see Appendix C). Students could be asked to take one of Stone's claims about what his film is arguing and use evidence from the film to explain why he is or is not making that argument. Students can analyze and critique one of the two written texts for its ability to make a sound argument or its accurate portrayal of the film and its culpability. Students can write a response to the written text with which they most disagree. Students can look at the film and available options for altering it, such as the deleted scenes or the original screenplay by Quentin Tarantino for the purposes of developing a revision plan that would remedy some or all of the film's rhetorical problems. With another, distinctly different version of this narrative available in the form of the original Tarantino screenplay and several scenes that were filmed but not included, there is potential to use this not just for instruction in rhetoric but also in composition, giving students access to other ways this story could have been told or elements that could have been added to it for the purpose of their evaluating them against the film's purpose and deciding whether or not the choices made were the right ones, or deciding what they would have done to make the film's argument clearer.

Some of the film's deleted scenes have been discussed already, but in order to explain the viability of this last option, it helps to understand a bit about how the original screenplay differs from the final film. The original script by Tarantino actually solves many of these problems that arise from Stone's lack of distinction between his voice and the media's voice. Stone basically scrapped the original script and rewrote it with David Veloz and Richard Rutowski, giving Tarantino only a story credit. The original script by Tarantino barely resembles the final version

of the film. Though the entire script could certainly be used for this assignment, that would involve a lot of outside reading along with analysis of an entire feature film. What is perhaps more attainable as a way to include the script in such an assignment is to provide the students with a few excerpts instead of the entire screenplay.

There are several aspects of that original version of the script that would eliminate the interference with the statement about the media that the film seeks to make, interference that arises from Mickey and Mallory Knox being too appealing to the audience. However, simply retaining the detail that Mickey and Mallory are only portrayed as a romantic couple by the movie-within-the-movie *Thrill Killers*. In the original script, the opening scene is essentially the same, but then the movie jumps to after Mickey and Mallory have been captured and are about to be moved to the mental hospital. Nearly every bit of the romance that is in the final cut of the film is gone, whittled down to merely a love letter between Mickey and Mallory, their reunion during the riot, and their ultimate escape together. The only part of Mickey and Mallory's killings besides the diner scene and the prison riot are told through the frame of the "American Maniacs" show, either in reenactments or through security cameras. Anything told about this period of their lives is clearly told through the lens of the media and is not shown to be the perspective of the writer. In this original script, during an interview with the actress that plays Mallory in *Thrill Killers*, which is included in the script as part of the montage of the *American Maniacs* show, the actress says, "I didn't play Mallory the murderer. I didn't play her as a butcher. I played her as a woman in love, who also happens to murder people" (48). This sums up Juliette Lewis's entire performance as Mallory in *Natural Born Killers*, something Tarantino was careful to distinguish as different from the overall movie's portrayal of her. Students could

learn a lot about both rhetorical purpose and revision to better achieve it though evaluating the changes made by Stone between the original script and the final film.

This film and the texts written about it can be used for the purposes of both increasing rhetorical understanding and improving student ability to read and analyze both types of texts. Other controversial films with outside responses available could also be used for such an assignment; one recent example of a film that stirred up controversy is Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. However, because the argument made by *Natural Born Killers* has moved beyond the limits of the text itself and into the real world through arguments about it and lawsuits over it, it provides an example of what Plato hoped for and Kathleen Welch believes can happen with constructed dialectic—the dialectic continues, causing those who encounter it to react in some way to it, though not always in the most positive of ways. Because of this, *Natural Born Killers* provides a real-world example with serious consequences to illustrate why responsible use of rhetoric is important, and why being a critical reader of rhetorical texts is important, as well. The potential of visual and multimodal films to manipulate audiences and cause them to do things that they know they should not do could not be demonstrated much better than it is by this film. The power of this film to convince some young people to ignore the point it was really trying to make and instead act on their desire to be famous like its main characters should, if nothing else, serve as an illustration to students that rhetoric and proper use of it not only matters but can even become a matter of life and death.

The above are just a few suggestions of specific ways to incorporate film into the composition class alongside word-based texts; further study needs to be done, incorporating film in the classroom, teaching this analytical framework, and evaluating its effectiveness at improving students' understanding of rhetoric and their multimodal literacy. A partnership

between film and the written word has the potential to be fruitful, with each text type able to give the student insight into how the other works, and along with that an awareness of the special abilities that different types of texts possess in the realm of rhetoric. As students use both types of text together to learn more about rhetoric, they are also gaining experience analyzing two text types with very different capabilities, which should improve their ability to read the other texts they encounter, both in and out of class, on a more critical level. However, this approach to composition begins with revising what we consider to be the important aspects of rhetoric to teach students, broadening the tools we teach them to include the multiple types of persuasion they are likely to encounter as they go out into the world and consume other texts. We should do all we can to send them out with discerning appetites, and I believe that the suggestions I have made in this work are a viable way of accomplishing this.

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Appendix A

Example Essay Assignment: Zombie Movie Scene Comparison

For this assignment, we will watch six similar movie scenes, all from zombie movies. All six scenes occur early in their respective films and are scenes that must occur in virtually every zombie movie: the hero(es) encounter the zombie creatures for the first time, react, and attempt to escape or take refuge somewhere. We will be watching scenes from the original *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), the 1990 remake of *Night of the Living Dead*, *28 Days Later* (2002), *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), *Shaun of the Dead* (2004), and *Diary of the Dead* (2008)

Since content-wise all six of these scenes are essentially the same, our purpose will be to observe how other elements of the scenes besides simply *what happens* shape our experience of the scenes, the effect the scenes have on us. You will ultimately choose two of the six scenes to compare and contrast with each other, building toward an argument about how the two scenes compare.

First, we will practice observing filmmaking techniques such as lighting, editing, cinematography, music, colors, and costumes with two or three movie scenes in class on Friday (scenes you will *not* be writing your essays about).

In class next week, we will watch each of the zombie movie scenes once and discuss it afterward to compare notes about observations made and what the implications of those observations are. While you are watching, you should take note of or jot down notes about things you notice about the scene. The scenes will be put up on the web and linked from Blackboard so that you can rewatch them as much as you need to.

Your essay should do the following

1. record your observations of how filmmaking techniques are used in two scenes
2. speculate on why they are used this way, what the effect is supposed to be
3. compare and contrast the ways these techniques are used
4. use your comparison and contrast to form an argument about which scene achieves a specific objective more effectively

I strongly recommend using your comparison and contrast to decide which is scarier, but if you have a different idea for your argumentative slant, talk to me about it, and if I think it will work, I will give you permission to use it.

There are a lot of different pairings available to you between these movie clips. You can compare the original and remake of *Night of the Living Dead*. You can compare a serious movie

with a comedy (any of the other five with *Shaun of the Dead*). You can compare a clip with slow zombies (both *Night of the Living Dead* clips, *Shaun of the Dead*, or *Diary of the Dead*) to a clip with fast zombies (*28 Days Later* or *Dawn of the Dead*).

We will talk in class about different formats for comparison and contrast, but in short, there are two main options available to you:

Option 1 Organized By Movie Clip	Option 2 Organized by Comparison Point
<p>1. Introduction (includes argumentative thesis – “The scene from Movie X is scarier than the scene from Movie Y because of its use of music, lighting, and camera motion.”)</p> <p>2. Discussion of scene from Movie X (several paragraphs, evaluates as it reports observations)</p> <p>3. Discussion of scene from Movie Y (several paragraphs, evaluates as it reports observations, refers back to evaluation of these elements of the scene from Movie X, builds toward argument)</p> <p>4. Conclusion (restates the thesis with the evidence in mind; it should not come as a surprise that there is an argument being made)</p>	<p>1. Introduction (includes argumentative thesis – “The scene from Movie X is scarier than the scene from Movie Y because of its use of music, lighting, and camera motion.”)</p> <p>2. Discussion of use of music in the two scenes, comparing & contrasting, concluding with a statement about which is scarier based on the use of music</p> <p>3. discussion of use of lighting, comparing & contrasting, concluding with a statement about which is scarier based on the use of lighting</p> <p>4. discussion of use of camera motion, comparing & contrasting, concluding with a statement about which is scarier based on the use of camera motion</p> <p>5. comparing & contrasting, concluding with a statement about which is scarier based on the use of music</p>

Common problems that students have with this essay that you should watch out for include:

1. not having an argumentative slant or only making the argument in the introduction and conclusion (Your paper should have a clear thesis, and you should tie every paragraph back into your main argument.)
2. not including details about the observations made (Be specific about what you have observe. Don’t just say the director uses lighting to make the scene scary. Describe how the scene is lit. Give a few specific examples.)
3. reporting observations but not analyzing/discussing why the filmmakers used these techniques (After you’ve given a few specific examples of lighting in the scene, describe what you believe is the effect this is supposed to have on the audience.)

Appendix B

Example Essay Assignment: Horror Movie Scene and Political Ad Comparison Assignment

Emotional appeals are an important part of effective argument, and as we will discuss in class today, they are largely visual. For this essay, we will be closely examining the use of emotional appeal (in this case, appeal to fear) in two different visual texts, a scene from a horror film and a political campaign ad. You will be comparing and contrasting the two texts to determine if they function similarly or differently or even a little of both. Ultimately you will make a clear and specific argument about how the two different texts compare.

You will choose one of the three scenes I make available to you (from *The Amityville Horror*, *Night of the Living Dead*, or *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) and one political ad of your choosing (though you should have ready access to it so you can watch it several times and make note of the details). The specific points for comparison are up to you. You may want to use issues of composition like music, lighting, camera motions/angles, editing pace, dialogue, or acting. You may think of some other points of connection like the use of children or the portrayal of the “other” (be it zombie, ghoul, crazy old man in a wheelchair, or Republican, Democrat, or terrorist) as source of fear. You won’t need more than 2 or 3 points of comparison to use in your essay as long as you develop your ideas and use specific examples.

Goals for this assignment:

- Increase awareness of how emotional appeals are made
- Discuss how similar appeals might be made through different mediums
- Learn the standard organizational patterns for comparison and contrast papers
- Learn how to use the comparison and contrast format to make an argument
- Learn how to effectively use examples for the purpose of making an argument

Typical problems to avoid:

- Paper doesn’t have a thesis/doesn’t make an argument
- Paper has an underdeveloped thesis (“The scene from *Night of the Living Dead* and the McCain campaign ad about terrorism have some differences but also similarities.”)
- Paper has a thesis but doesn’t sustain its argument (argument stated in introduction and conclusion but the other paragraphs are not tied clearly to it)
- Paper summarizes the texts but does not analyze (doesn’t say *why* these techniques are used or their effect on the audience)
- Paper generalizes/summarizes but does not use specific examples
- Paper uses examples but does not analyze them/show their importance to the argument
- Paper analyzes but doesn’t directly compare the two texts

Appendix C

Example Assignments on *Natural Born Killers*

Option 1: Evaluate the film against Oliver Stone's claim that *Natural Born Killers* is "A bold new film that takes a look at a country seduced by fame, obsessed by crime, and consumed by the media." Utilizing what you have learned about ethos, pathos, identification, dialectic, and logic, either support or refute Stone's summary of his film with evidence from the film itself.

Option 2: Write a critical response essay on either "Unnatural Killers" by John Grisham or "Memo to John Grisham" by Oliver Stone. Identify the author's primary persuasive tactics and evaluate the skill with which he uses them and their appropriateness to the topic. You may use evidence and examples from the film itself in your response to the article you choose.

Option 3: Of either "Unnatural Killers" or "Memo to John Grisham," choose the essay with which you most strongly disagree and write a response, keeping in mind the rhetorical tactics you have learned and also using evidence from the film to support your position.

Option 4: Identify a problem in *Natural Born Killers* that might lead to its argument being misunderstood or obscured. Using the film itself, additional footage not included in the final version of the film, and the provided excerpts from the original screenplay by Quentin Tarantino, propose a revision plan that may include any combination addition, deletion, reorganization, or revision that would help make the argument clearer or more appropriate.