



Newspaper film reviews: a critical discourse analysis

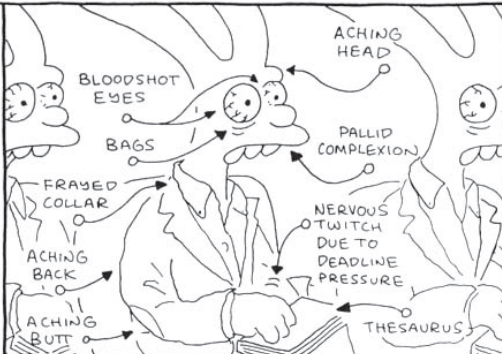
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University of Oslo 2006

HOW TO BE A CLEVER FILM CRITIC

ARE YOU QUALIFIED TO BE A CLEVER FILM CRITIC?

- ☐ DID YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS AS A CHILD?
- ☐ DO YOU SALIVATE AT THE SMELL OF STALE POPCORN?
- ☐ DO YOU THRILL AT THE PROSPECT OF SPENDING A CAREER WRITING IN-DEPTH ANALYSES OF MOVIES AIMED AT SUBLITERATE 15-YEAR-OLDS?
- ☐ DO YOU MIND BEING LOATHED FOR YOUR CLEVER OPINIONS?



CLEVER WORDS TO USE IN REVIEWS SO AS TO ENSURE YOU WILL BE QUOTED IN FILM ADS

PICK ONE FROM COLUMN A AND ONE FROM COLUMN B

COLUMN A ADVERBS	COLUMN B ADJECTIVES
RICHLY	HAUNTING
MARVELOUSLY	TOUCHING
WONDERFULLY	ABSORBING
ODDLY	EVOCATIVE
PROVOCATIVELY	COMPELLING
REFRESHINGLY	ELEGANT
STUNNINGLY	ORIGINAL

AND DON'T FORGET THESE HANDY PHRASES:

"I LOVED IT!"
 "IT SIZZLES!"
 "...GREAT FUN..."
 "A MASTERPIECE!"

HOW TO PAD OUT A CLEVER FILM REVIEW WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY

- ☐ RECOUNT THE PLOT
- ☐ THROW IN GRATUITOUS PUNS
- ☐ WRITE ABOUT YOURSELF

DEVELOP A CLEVER RATING SYSTEM THAT REDUCES YOUR CRITIQUES TO CUTE 'N' EASY CONSUMER GUIDES

☆☆☆ STARS ARE FUN!
 9½ NUMBERS ARE IN!
 ☺☺☺ HOW ABOUT SMILEYS?
 \$\$\$ OR DOLLAR SIGNS??

DON'T FORGET CINEMA'S GREATEST


?? PARADOX ??
 ? ? ? ? ?
 THE FRENCH ARE FUNNY.
 SEX IS FUNNY.
 AND COMEDIES ARE FUNNY.
 YET NO FRENCH SEX COMEDIES ARE FUNNY.

FOR ADVANCED CLEVER FILM CRITICS ONLY!

CAN YOU USE "MISE-EN-SCENE" IN A REVIEW THAT ANYONE WILL FINISH READING?

THE 4 TYPES OF CLEVER FILM CRITICS

WHICH DO YOU ASPIRE TO BE?

			
ACADEMIC TYPE BORING, UNREADABLE	SERIOUS TYPE REVEALS ENDINGS	DAILY TYPE NICE PLOT SUMMARIES	TV CLOWN NICE SWEATERS

IF YOU CAN'T BE A CLEVER FILM CRITIC, MAYBE YOU CAN BE:

- ☐ A SNIVELING CINEMA ENTHUSIAST WHO ACTUALLY TRIES TO TALK LIKE A CLEVER FILM CRITIC IN CASUAL CONVERSATION
- ☐ A FILM BUFF SO DEVOTED TO THE MEDIUM THAT YOU HAVE OPINIONS OF MOVIES YOU HAVEN'T SEEN
- ☐ ONE OF THOSE SQUEAKERS WHO WRITES IRATE LETTERS TO CLEVER FILM CRITICS

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Newspaper film reviews: a critical discourse analysis

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Abstract

The body of work written in the linguistic tradition known as critical discourse analysis (CDA), chiefly associated with the research of Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak, has grown to a considerable size and prominence over the last few decades.

Nevertheless, research in CDA has 1) remained focused on closely connected topics, e.g. political discourse, ideology and racism and 2) suffered at times from centering analytic attention on isolated syntactic features of text and some vocabulary issues, rather than adopting a full-fledged analysis of discourse.

This thesis argues that CDA can profitably adopt insights from 1) the metaphor theory of George Lakoff, 2) the psycholinguistic and language processing arguments of Kieran O'Halloran and 3) classical rhetorical analysis. Having worked these insights into a widened theoretical basis, the thesis extends the scope of CDA to the fields of culture and cultural discourse, which are fields suitable for such analysis because of the key role played by language and linguistic framing in the mediation of culture. This is shown through analysis of a corpus of film reviews published in Norwegian newspapers between 1974 and 2004.

The analysis demonstrates that a shift has taken place in the field of film reviewing from essayistic to taxonomic discourse. It is argued that this shift has been detrimental to film discourse in a general sense, and that it is caused by changes in the fields of film reviewing, journalism and the film industry. It is further argued that this shift in discourse cannot be adequately described without expanding the toolkit of CDA to allow for a functional, semantics-based approach.

Preface

This thesis grew out of a longtime interest in the seemingly diverse fields of film, rhetoric and critical discourse analysis. It seems to me, at a time in which the distribution network for film is more extensive than ever, that we should be concerned about the way in which film – as well as other aspects of culture – is presented to us. Increasingly, film is presented as a commodity, as something not essentially different from a hairdryer or a deodorant. Much of the work of this presentation and framing is achieved through language, as well as paralinguistic features like the rolled die of the newspaper film review.

For this reason, linguistic analysis is uniquely suited to the task of discussing the presentation and mediation of culture. The baseline assumptions of critical discourse analysis – that discourse, or language use, affects the way we see and relate to the world – go some way toward beginning that discussion. But critical discourse analysis runs the risk, having the large and complex apparatus of linguistic description at its disposal, of staring too closely at individual phrases, at a particular instance of nominalization or a specific passive construction. There is a need in critical discourse analysis for a broader view of the production of discourse, for a socially comprehensive perspective and for rhetorical analysis. I hope to demonstrate the benefits of this approach in what follows.

This thesis wouldn't have been written if not for the encouragement and advice of my thesis supervisor, Andreas Sveen. Early on, as I was considering possible topics, I drew on his lectures on socially oriented linguistics for an appreciation of the vast range of research problems available to linguistic scrutiny. Later, his comments and guidance have been crucial to the resulting text. For this, I'm very grateful. I'd also like to thank Johan Tønnesson for his comments and recommendations toward the end of the writing process. Finally, a number of people have been interested discussion partners and attentive readers during the work on this thesis – which would have been lonely work if not for them. I'd rather not make a list and risk leaving anyone out, so this thanks is for all of you.

Oslo, April 2006

Jan Grue

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1. Preliminaries

1.1. Introduction

The body of work written in the linguistic tradition known as critical discourse analysis (CDA) has grown to a considerable size over the last few decades. Leading the field, researchers like Norman Fairclough, Teun van Dijk and Ruth Wodak have given CDA both an international reputation and a key role in the study of language use in a social and ideological context. Seminal studies of theirs have dealt with Thatcherist conservatism, institutional racism in the Netherlands and post-war guilt in Austria, respectively. Partly because of their work, critical discourse analysis has become a discipline in which, compared to other areas of linguistics, social and political concerns are unusually prominent. The object of study in critical discourse analysis is language used in a social context, and critical discourse analyses are frequently forced to address explicitly political questions.

CDA has, in some ways, also remained a narrow tradition. The three topics mentioned above are certainly diverse, but they are united in their close relation to historical-political struggle. This is symptomatic of a wider trend in CDA. A paper by Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) lists nine “preferred topics” within the CDA tradition, which are as follows: political discourse, ideology, racism, economic discourse, advertisement and promotional culture, media language, gender, institutional discourse, education and literacy. As Blommaert and Bulcaen note, these are all domains in which “issues of power asymmetries, exploitation, manipulation and structural inequalities are highlighted”.

1.1.1. CDA and culture

In comparison with these preferred topics, the analysis of *culture* and *cultural politics* seems somewhat underdeveloped. This is unfortunate, because it is an area in which discourse is supremely important – perhaps even more important than in the traditional key domains of CDA. We write about culture, have arguments about culture and subject culture to continuous academic scrutiny. Our sense of the character and attributes of culture has changed enormously throughout history; it is not stable or static. It is an area in which perception is crucial, and in which language moulds perception to a very large extent.

There is not yet a large enough body of critical discourse analyses of cultural topics for a straightforward comparison to be made. I suspect, however, that culture will turn out to be just as rich a field for CDA research as Blommaert and Bulcaen’s preferred topics. This is because the preferred domains are, for the most part, characterized by a very high degree of

inertia. Cultural change can be faster, less dependent on demographics and the relative distribution of wealth. Cultural change is highly visible through language, it is essentially produced and reproduced by means of discourse. In politics, certain realities cannot be thought away, certain questions cannot be ignored. But what constitutes a work of art, a good book or an offensive avant-garde film is entirely defined by social conventions; *these* questions are in their essence matters of discourse.

1.1.2. Discourse and social structures

I'll illustrate with a comparison between the inertia of discourses of disability and the flux of discourses of film, the latter of which form the background of this thesis. In disability politics, a succession of labels and epithets have been dismissed as offensive, imprecise and politically undesirable over the years. 'Crippled' and 'invalid' have all but disappeared from polite usage; 'handicapped' is proving somewhat more resistant but is nevertheless being replaced by 'disabled'. This is a good thing in a number of ways. Words carry with them cognitive models and frameworks; one of the most important reasons for changing epithets has been that people's attention needs to be redirected – in the case of disability, from the medical condition of the individual to the political condition of society. Putting it bluntly, in a world where all staircases were replaced by rope ladders, a large percentage of the population would suddenly find itself disabled.

The word 'invalid', as opposed to 'disabled', was doubly unfortunate because of its focus on individual, medical issues rather than societal issues, and because of its etymology. Nevertheless, there is still a significant social stigma attached to *disability* – as there was to *invalidity*. Prejudice and negative connotations have tended to carry over from one word to the next, because there are limits to how susceptible social conditions are to linguistic change. The choice between different terms when discussing disability is important, but in a very real sense the question of language use is only the most visible part of the social machinery. A change in linguistic policy will never be sufficient to cause social change in and of itself.

Now take the film world. The film industry is little more than a century old, but during that period the character of the moving picture has, at different times and in different places, been essentially that of documentary observation (the Lumière brothers' short films), spectacle in the vaudeville tradition (Georges Méliès), ideological propaganda (the early Sergei Eisenstein and Leni Riefenstahl), art in a trans-medial national tradition (e.g. post-war Japanese cinema) and, of course, popular entertainment (e.g. classical Hollywood narrative cinema).

The way film is written about and understood matters a great deal, because there are fewer intersubjectively established facts about film than in most of the preferred domains of CDA. Within most of those domains, the focus on linguistic labels has at times obscured the social structures of which language is simply a highly visible constituent. With regard to film, the situation has been nearly the inverse: the visibility of the medium and its products has obscured the role of language and linguistic categories in shaping the role of film in society. That role is in a fundamental sense constructed and mediated by means of discourse; hence the need for CDA.

1.2. Thesis goals

This thesis is a critical discourse analysis of one particular segment of cultural discourse in Norway: newspaper film reviews. It has two main goals, the first of which is to extend the topical range of CDA by describing and analyzing the discursive structures that shape and are shaped by film reviews, structures that in turn affect perception of film itself.

Like other cultural phenomena, film constitutes a dynamic field in which agents with a variety of agendas and perspectives interact. Consequently, a key element in shaping that field is the language used to describe film, to negotiate understandings of what film *is*. Correspondingly, film discourse should be particularly suitable to CD analysis because of the mutability of its field. Film discourse is something more than a descriptive or reflective device; it is an integral part of changes in the film field.

The second important goal of the thesis is to discuss certain methodological issues in CDA. In particular, the question of how to move from a technical, ideologically neutral description of text to a full-fledged analysis of discourse needs to be addressed. There have been, in many CD analyses, a tendency to privilege features of syntax and vocabulary over mid-level thematic features. But it may well be the latter of these that have the greatest impact during actual discourse processing.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to a more detailed discussion of the thesis' research questions and goals. It also presents the corpus of texts and the selection criteria used in establishing it, as well as a thesis outline.

1.3. Research questions

Newspaper film reviews, because of their high circulation numbers and wide readership, are key elements in the presentation of film. These texts are related to the film industry, to film criticism and to journalism. They are located at a nexus of discourses and are potential

exponents of very different ideologies. In order to study them, one needs to adopt a diachronic rather than a synchronic approach, to look at many pieces of discourse before singling out the typical or representative ones. For while it is impossible to measure the specific impact of an individual piece of film discourse on an individual reader, it is quite possible to search for general shifts in the flow of film discourse over time and in how film reviews relate to other parts of the film field.

The challenge this poses, in relation to research in a CDA tradition, is how to articulate research questions that allow for the separation and consideration of particular strands of film discourse. How can the flow of discourse be clearly discerned in the film field? How can it be seen as something other than an amorphous mass of text? This section will discuss these and related questions.

1.3.1. Film as a conflict of interest

Film is both art and commerce, both a means of individual expression and a way to generate vast profits. It is a medium built on contradiction and struggle. The Hollywood-based film industry of today, which in economic terms dominates the world, is a business first and foremost, itself dominated by executives and accountants. While there are a number of artists working in cinema worldwide, they are rarely in control of their means of production and almost never own their work. This is due to the large amount of both labor and capital that is necessary to produce a film as compared to practically any other work of art.

Filmmaking is almost never an individual enterprise, and any production that doesn't rely on the low-budget options of digital video, home editing and internet distribution is going to run up bills of anything between a few hundred thousand and several hundred million dollars. If a film artist (usually a director or actor) has significant bargaining power, he or she may receive percentages of the film's profit rather than a fixed salary (Thomson 2005). The studio and its parent corporation, however, retain the copyright and distribution rights.

Different people with different film-related jobs, therefore, can have very different conceptions of what a film essentially is. To many directors, cinematographers, and actors, it is a medium of individual expression, the means for exploring and developing one's art. To the producer, it is a full-time logistical and technical job, in many respects not unlike herding cats. To technical craftspeople like the camera grip, the boom microphone operator or the gaffer (head electrician), it is a place of work similar to a construction site or a harbor. To the executive producer, it is a risky but potentially extremely rewarding investment. To the

marketing director, it is a product that can be packaged in a number of different ways, but is ultimately intended to reach as large an audience as possible.

1.3.2. Conflicts of interest, conflicts of discourse

These differing perspectives, these conflicts of interest, can profitably be framed in terms of *discourse*. Discourse is, for the purposes of this thesis, either (1) an oral or written *text in context*, a spatially, temporally, and socially situated sample of language use, or (2) a social system of text production, a network of power relations, and an intertextual web. The first definition refers to pieces of discourse, the second to the discourse constituted *by* those pieces across time and space. There is the marketing director's brief discourse (1) on the virtues of product placement, and the way in which the discourse (2) of marketing has become increasingly prevalent during university board meetings, in government reports, and so on.

The second sense is dependent on the first sense, and vice versa. For instance: what we understand to be general medical discourse (2) depends on what doctor-patient conversations, prescriptions, medical charts, and various other pieces of discourse (1) look and sound like. At the same time, our taking the instructions on a bottle of pills seriously is heavily dependent on our knowledge of and trust in the authority of medical discourse (2).

1.3.3. An example of discourse conflicts: art vs. commerce

People whose film-related jobs imply different understandings of and relations to film itself embody and produce different discourses. One might assume that there is a *discourse of art*, in which films are written about, talked about and understood primarily as carriers of meaning, objects of interpretation, means of expression. This discourse would be closely connected with the practices of directors, writers and actors. One might also assume that there is a *commercial discourse*, in which films are understood as products and sources of revenue, and that this discourse is connected to the practices of businesspeople. Both discourses would have to be identified in the oral and written utterances of artists and businesspeople; they have no independent existence.

Then come the empirical questions for the critical discourse analyst: who produces discourse? Which discourse is dominant? How do different discourses interact? Which discourse does the cinema-going audience participate in? In what way do they engage in the consumption of discourse?

A key element in commercial discourse, of course, would be marketing. According to most posters, trailers, taglines, teasers and promotional documentaries, each new film is a

unique event, a never-to-be-repeated opportunity for entertainment, enlightenment, and spine-tingling thrills. And because, within this discourse, every new film release is news, because each new title is an event, nothing ever really changes. Each summer, the blockbusters march in, and again at Christmas. The studios tend to time their major releases carefully in order to avoid serious confrontation: if a *Lord of the Rings* episode has been slotted for Boxing Day, odds are that the latest *Harry Potter* installment will be rushed to a late November opening. Basically, the timetable and mechanisms of film marketing are comparable to those of many other industries, at least if the marketing executives had their way. A new iPod model or a new *Batman* movie; the difference is basically one of packaging and distribution. Each has its target demographic, each has its research and development effort, each has its production schedule.

Artistic discourse is produced in other ways. Directors, actors, festival workers, quite a few independent studio executives, members of the *Cinémathèque*-movement – the group of people motivated primarily by the love of film as an *art form* is large and varied, and it, too has ways of communicating with the audience. Retrospectives, panel discussions, brochures and dissertations – the reach and impact of these sources of film discourse may not be as extensive as that of marketing, but it certainly doesn't lack influence entirely.

I exaggerate the conflicts and conflict lines to some extent. But there is a difference between the perception of films as products and films as works of art, and it will serve as a starting point for my discussion because these discourses are more than occasionally at cross-purposes. It is in the interest of various professional and semi-professional groups to reinforce one perspective or the other. The purpose of a trailer, a part of marketing discourse, is to sell the largest possible number of tickets. The purpose of a critical dissertation, usually produced within the artistic discourse, is to contribute to the understanding of one or more works of art. Critical essays tend not to sell many tickets, however, just as advertisement rarely contribute to anyone's level of understanding.

1.3.4. Research assumptions: from art and commerce to essays and taxonomies

The discourse forms of art and commerce would presumably intersect in the newspaper film review, thus making it an interesting object of analysis. Because of their prominence and their fundamental differences in their understanding of what film is, they served as a kind of working hypothesis during my early reading for this thesis. As it turned out, however, art and commerce were less relevant criteria for distinguishing different discourses within the field of

film reviewing than I expected. Instead, I found a significant difference between the kind of review that aims to explore and interpret a film, and the kind of review that aims chiefly to classify and label it. To some extent the first kind of review is related to art criticism, while the second has to do with consumer guidance. Ultimately, however, the labels of “art” and “commerce” seemed too simple for the task at hand.

A film reviewer may choose the critical-educational approach, and aim to enhance his readers’ understanding of each artwork he¹ reviews. If he finds nothing worth saying about a particular film, he keeps quiet and waits for a different, better one. Or he may choose a different path, reviewing each and every film he sees with snappy phrases suitable for poster quotes, religiously attending press junkets, happily devoting more column inches to pre-release interviews and semi-promotional stories than to analysis and criticism combined. Choosing labels mainly for their connotations, I’ve called the first approach *essayistic* and the second one *taxonomic*. These terms will be further discussed in chapter 3.

The newspaper film review doesn’t have a single hegemonic function. It currently accommodates both styles, and indeed most reviewers seem to choose a combination of the two. There are, however, clear differences in both the self-perception and the aims of different writers on film. The media researcher Anne Gjelsvik identifies both self-proclaimed consumer guides, art critics and essayists – all of them working as film reviewers in Norwegian daily newspapers (Gjelsvik 2002).

Two relevant questions can then be posed. First, what direction is the discourse of newspaper film reviews taking? Is there going to be room for all of Gjelsvik’s different types of reviewers in the future, or is one kind of review becoming more dominant? Second, given that certain changes are taking place in the discourse of newspaper film reviews, are they desirable? In short, what effects result from different kinds of discourse on film?

An interesting model for public discourse on art, an ideal form of critical discourse, is suggested by the work of sociologist Richard Sennett (1974) on the social scene of the late 18th-, early 19th-century coffee house, in which information began to be freely exchanged for practically the first time in the post-mediaeval world. The literary critic Terry Eagleton, writing about the same period (Eagleton 1984), describes it as a situation in which a very small number of people, nearly all members of the *haute-bourgeoisie* or the aristocracy, were for a brief time able to cause real social change through critical discourse, on both politics and art.

¹ For reasons of brevity, I’ll use the masculine pronoun when discussing a general or typical reviewer.

Eagleton also (1982 [1976]) notes the ephemeral character of the public sphere of discourse in which criticism was directly tied to social change. It had its day because of the low level of literacy and the low proportion of people able to participate actively in public life. As criticism became more and more closely tied to academia, its political significance waned. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the rational exchange of critical opinion was, at least at one point in history, a key element in social change.

I do not expect newspaper reviews of films, a very small segment of public discourse, to have great social impact. But as I hope to show, neither are they entirely inconsequential. Film, in recent years, has become increasingly assimilated into the transnational corporate economy. Commercial interests grows ever stronger. So which perspective on film is used in newspaper reviews? They form the most regularly written, the most frequently published, the most widely read kind of discourse on film. It can safely be assumed that they have a considerable impact on the way in which most people think about and perceive the film medium.

If reviews generally accept the ideological position of marketing executives, they may contribute to an increased acceptance of film as a product like any other – a product that does not reflect national culture or deserve public financing, and that is perfectly replaceable by its Hollywood equivalent. An ideological position which understands film to be art, on the other hand, might value diversity and regional variations, and emphasize the uniqueness of national, ethnic or other film traditions.

There is ample evidence that the ideology of marketing is winning the fight. A study published by the Norwegian Culture Council (Lund 2000) suggests that increasingly, writing on film equals long interviews and profiles of film celebrities, flanked by very short news bulletins. The mid-length, analytical review is in retreat. My own findings from the main archive of Norwegian newspaper texts (*Retriever* 2005) suggest that reviews of varying length, in which there is more room for exploratory writing, are being replaced by consistently shorter and more uniform ones, more suited to taxonomic purposes.

The ideology that produces and is produced by a corpus of texts is one of the main objects of critical discourse analysis, the theories and methods of which will be discussed at some length in chapter 2. The relationship between a piece of discourse – the single, situated text – and an ideological, socially pervasive discourse – a network of interacting agents, practices, and texts – is complex. It is also one that is crucial to understanding the shifting of social norms that permit, for instance, the gradual privatization of the Norwegian municipal cinemas, and the accompanying reduction in the repertoire of films screened there.

Linguistics has a responsibility toward the society in which it is practiced. Part of that responsibility is investigating the relationship between language and that which is described by language, the relationships of power and ideology that are produced by and that produce forms of language. This kind of investigation will of necessity have to take place in a contested academic territory, one that in this case borders on rhetoric, sociology, and media studies. It is nevertheless endeavor which is firmly rooted in linguistics, because its objects of analysis are instances of language use and because its methods are those of the systematic analysis of language.

1.4. Material and selection criteria

From the Culture Council study mentioned above (Lund 2000), it seems that the national newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* demonstrate most clearly the trend away from mid-length analytical reviews and towards long interviews and short bulletins. The corpus of this thesis consists of reviews published in those two newspapers over the last four decades, that is, between 1974 and 2004. Changes in discourse are rarely visible from one year to the next.

The corpus consists of roughly 60 film reviews, a full list of which is printed in the appendix. This selection is not exhaustive. The volume of film reviews published in daily newspapers exceeds the reading capacities of any one person, since in recent years practically all new films playing in Norwegian cinemas receive newspaper attention and there are between 250 and 350 of them a year (*FilmInfo* 2005).

The selection cannot be called truly representative either, because these films can, as I hope to show, be classified according to various criteria. Films have a number of objective-sounding characteristics, nationality being among the most prominent. On closer examination, though, those characteristics blur and slip away. When a Russian director-in-exile uses British, French and Swiss financing to employ a Swedish cameraman and a pan-European cast, as was the case with Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice*, what nationality does the resulting film have? The same kind of problem struck down all my attempts to build a selection based on production costs, genre, artistic ambition and similar criteria. In the end, I settled for a few rules of thumb:

- The film being reviewed had a potential both for critical analysis and popular appeal. In other words, the reviewer would be faced with a choice of what to write about. In the case of extremely elitist or extremely popular films, the

constraints on the reviewer would be considerable, and the resultant emphasis of the text more predictable.

- The film premiered either during or shortly after the years 1974, 1984, 1994, and 2004. By means of this criterion, I hoped to be able to discern changes over time more easily than by selecting, say, two reviews from each successive year.
- Films with a variety of budget levels, countries of origin and artistic orientation would be included. Seeing as a completely representative cross-section of films was impossible to achieve, I hoped to discover certain contrasts or similarities by examining different types of films under review.

From this corpus, I hope to identify and explain the key shift in Norwegian film reviewing practice over the last few decades. The analysis will also draw on background information about the practice of film reviewing and, to some extent, the recent history of both the film industry and newspaper writing in general.

1.5. Thesis outline

The thesis is, roughly speaking, divided into three parts. The first (chapter 2) deals with theory and method, the second (chapter 3) consists of textual analysis, while the third (chapters 4, 5 and 6) consists of interpretation and explanation. This structure draws on the stages of critical discourse analysis suggested by Norman Fairclough ((2001 [1989]) and (1995)), moving outwards from the corpus of texts to their social conditions of production. The disadvantage of this approach is that the historical outline of the film field comes relatively late in the analysis; the reader who wants the historical background first is directed to chapter 5.

Chapter 2 presents the theory and methods of critical discourse analysis, as well as a brief history of the tradition. It argues that critical discourse analysis needs to adopt an interdisciplinary, inclusive approach in order to gain comprehensive knowledge of its areas of study.

Chapter 3 discusses the corpus in detail. It forms the first, descriptive half of the critical discourse analysis, focusing on the relationship between the texts and their process of production and consumption. It charts the major changes in newspaper film discourse.

Chapter 4 forms the second, explanatory half of the critical discourse analysis. It focuses on the relationship between the texts and their social conditions of production and consumption, particularly the effects of changes in newspaper film discourse.

Chapter 5 investigates possible causes of the changes in newspaper film discourse. It presents a brief summary of key developments in the film industry and in newspaper writing over the period covered by the corpus, providing a wider context for the analysis.

Chapter 6 summarizes the analysis, presents conclusions, and makes suggestions for further research.

The film reviews that make up the corpus are listed, along with their publication date (when available), in the appendix.

2. Theory & method

2.1. Introduction

This section discusses the nature of discourse, and the role of linguistics in analyzing it. Critical discourse analysis is the study of language use in context, with a view to understanding the power relations that shape and are shaped by language. Discourse is language in use, performing its function, doing its job. Discourse is situated; it has a history and a geography.

I'll briefly restate the definitions from the previous chapter: a *general discourse* (2) is produced over time, by large numbers of people authoring individual *pieces of discourse* (1). Sometimes things beside the topic tie the discourse together. The medical discourse is frequently understood as the result of pieces of discourse produced by members of the medical profession, while the discourse of neo-conservatism comes into being mainly because of shared ideological positions among politicians, writers and other participants in public life.

Perhaps discourse is best understood as a network, in which pieces of discourse are the nodes and discourses the paths that connect them. This metaphor is fortuitous because it allows for overlap and shared membership. A letter to the editor, that is to say a single piece of discourse, may belong equally to two discourses – the discourse of nostalgia and the anti-immigration discourse, say. Taking another example, it is usually possible to identify strands of both specialized medical discourse and more general discourses of politeness in doctor-patient conversations. Medical discourse is visible in the use of names of illnesses, diagnostic terms and direct, baldly put questions about the patient's health, whereas the general discourse of polite conversation may surface in introductory comments about the weather, current events and so on.

The study of discourse is united by the fact that its object is the written or spoken utterance, by the belief that some linguistic insights cannot be reached by examining decontextualized fragments of language, be they noun phrases, sentences or paragraphs. In order to produce certain kinds of knowledge it is necessary to examine texts in the immediate context of their process of production and consumption, as well as in the wider context of their *social* conditions of production and consumption. This belief has been held by various schools of language study going as far back as the Sophists. In the context of modern linguistics, it was stated both eloquently and at an early stage by the Soviet linguist Valentin Voloshinov:

The actual reality of language-speech is not the abstract system of linguistic forms, not the isolated monologic utterance, and not the psychophysiological act of its implementation, but the social event of verbal interaction implemented in an utterance or utterances.
(Voloshinov 1986 [1929]:94)

Voloshinov's point was made with respect to oral utterances in everyday conversation, but his point holds true of written utterances as well. Language, whenever it is used to interact, produces social events. In fact, most of the social events that make up our daily lives are partly or wholly dependent on language: requesting or offering a morning cup of coffee, reading the newspaper, buying a subway ticket (either from a human, verbally proficient vendor or from a vending machine marked with linguistic as well as other signs), pushing the door marked 'push' instead of pulling it, and so on. Two things are crucial here. First, that though language can be viewed both as an "abstract system of linguistic forms" and a set of "isolated monologic utterances", certain aspects of it cannot be understood without seeing it as a series of social events. Second, that these social events and everyday practices, from checking a grocery list to reading a novel – these everyday interactions with language are the basis of ideology.

The connection between ideology and everyday language use may have been both an easier and a more pressing observation to make in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s, when Valentin Voloshinov wrote *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, than at many other times in history. It was a time when language use was gradually coming under state control, when playwrights and authors were required to display an acute understanding of the workings of political discourse. A novelist like Mikhail Bulgakov could be ostracized and penalized – not only for writing the wrong thing but for writing the right thing in the wrong way, and sometimes simply for *not* writing the right thing in the right way at the right time². For a contemporary demonstration of the strictures and norms that surround the use of language, try shouting 'Bomb!' in an airport.

The word 'ideology' is frequently used in a pejorative sense, about societies other than one's own. Ideology is certainly easier to recognize when seen from outside, and it is convenient to assume that only that which seems alien, malignant and practiced elsewhere is ideological. It is more useful, however, to define ideology as a network similar to that of discourse, but less dependent on language – a network consisting of norms, conventions and individual acts. Certain acts (waving a flag, raising an arm) take on very different meanings

² Bulgakov, the author of *Master and Margarita*, became a target particularly because of his sympathetic portrayal of "white" (anti-Bolshevik) officers in the play *Days of the Turbins*, set during the Russian Civil War.

depending on which ideology they are judged in light of. Ideologies change in keeping with the acts and circumstances that produce them. Russian Communism as practiced by a new government in the 1920s was very different from what was championed by its late 1970s successor.

Ideology pervades every complex social system, it is part of the fabric of society. It is at its most subtle and efficient when its workings are embedded in the practices and utterances of everyday life. To paraphrase Roland Barthes, one of the pre-eminent archaeologists of ideology, it is what transforms everyday practices into culture³. Therefore, investigations of ideology does not have to be the work of the conspiracy theorist. Not every ideological practice is malicious, and there is very likely no way to escape ideology entirely.

Identifying the ideological rules and conventions that ought to be replaced or altered, however, is among the chief goals of critical discourse analysis. Linguistics can and should contribute to a greater understanding of the workings of society as well as to social change:

It is not enough to lay bare the social dimensions of language use. These dimensions are the object of moral and political evaluation and analyzing them should have effects in society. (Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000:449)

These goals can be achieved through the minute examination of discourse, of the way texts and utterances are employed and of how they function. With that examination comes social analysis, and a social standpoint. No researcher is devoid of background knowledge, cultural assumptions and moral attitudes, and their articulation and balancing with the material presents a challenge that needs to be recognized. Critical discourse analysis does not take place from anywhere outside the network of discourse; the trick is to acknowledge the location from which it does take place.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to two tasks. The first is to identify the dominant form of critical discourse analysis as it appears today, as well as some of the areas in which CDA encounters problem of theory and method. This requires a brief historical overview, in which CDA is found to be a hybrid of the linguistic tradition of discourse analysis, the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research's critical theory and elements from the work of Michel Foucault and Michael Halliday (a view supported by Wodak and Meyer (2001:ch. 1)).

³ The actual quote reads: "[Myth] consists in turning culture into nature, or at least turning the social, the cultural, the ideological, the historical into the 'natural' [...]"
BARTHES, ROLAND (1989): *The Rustle of Language*. Berkeley: University of California Press..

It further warrants a presentation of two of the key linguistic figures in CD analysis, Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk, and of the method that informs much of their work: a ‘strong CDA’ in which syntactic analysis of small fragments of language has a central place. This is the tradition in which the greater part of CD analysis is carried out. It is, however, a tradition that lacks a comprehensive methodology, and which has suffered criticism on both psycholinguistic and cognitive grounds. This criticism is discussed, with a view to providing CD analysis with flexible, serviceable tools.

The second task is to further address that criticism by discussing the place in CDA for theoretical concepts borrowed from three other disciplines and research fields. I propose that there is a strong affinity between CDA and (1) *traditional rhetoric*, which can be exploited particularly when developing a vocabulary for the intentional and functional aspects of pieces of discourse. Working from ideas developed by Kieran O’Halloran (2003), I argue that (2) *cognitive linguistics* may provide a useful way of thinking about the thematic structure of discourse. Finally, working from the established connection between CDA and (3) *metaphor theory* (Fairclough 2001 [1989]:99-100), I argue that CDA will profit from paying more attention to themes and topics – the mid-level features of discourse. The chapter ends with a summary of the resulting ‘moderate CDA’.

2.2. The origins and concerns of critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis is frequently described as a school or sub-discipline of discourse analysis. This is problematic, because discourse analysis is a label with which a fragmented and wide-ranging group of projects are associated. Researchers working in fields ranging from sociology through psychology to linguistics have found it, or terms very closely related to it, relevant to their concerns (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 1999). Discourse analysis seems at times to be whatever a given researcher wants it to be; as far as I know there has been no definitive account of the history of either its theory or its practice, and any such study would likely result in the discovery of a large number of sources.

2.2.1. Critical theory

Because of this, the *critical* part of critical discourse analysis requires some explanation. It is broadly agreed to be linked to the tradition of *critical theory* (which is itself, admittedly, difficult to delimit). Some attempt a double definition (Macey 2000), in which critical theory is a) a set of diverse approaches to and movements within the humanities and social sciences that aim at a critical, self-conscious approach to both the structures of society and the practice

and codes of science, and b) “the major strand in the work of the Frankfurt School and particularly [...] the writings of [Theodor] Adorno and [Max] Horkheimer[, which] promotes the development of a free and self-determining society by dispelling the illusions of ideology.” (Macey 2000).

The wider definition seems to imply that critical theory is barely distinguishable from critical thinking, or theoretical thinking, or thinking in general. The narrower definition still speaks of a very wide-ranging enterprise, but it is useful as a starting point. It suggests an emphasis on the major structures of society, an intention to understand the social and ideological dynamic that was shared by, among others, Valentin Voloshinov. Through the notion of “illusions of ideology”, though, a major preoccupation of most practitioners of both critical theory and critical discourse analysis is signaled. In *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972), ideology is defined as wide-ranging, culturally pervasive modes of thought; the book is an attempt at cultural criticism of the main developments within Western European culture since the French Revolution. Adorno and Horkheimer paint with big brushes; their canvas is Western rationality.

In this context, critical theory is the constant effort to expose submerged ideology, unbalanced power relations, and repressive hegemonies within a given cultural context – by means of sociology, philosophy, the study of language forms, and any other method available. The project, as presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, is both staggeringly ambitious and, perhaps unsurprisingly, silent on the relationship between critical theory and empirical data. Critical theory presents us with an area in which to identify objects of study (structures of society) and what kinds of questions to ask about them (what are their ideological ramifications?) but it leaves open the matter of how to answer those questions.

Interestingly, one of the most frequently cited chapters of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* is “The Culture Industry”. In this section, Adorno and Horkheimer discuss the American filmmaking industry, the dream factories of Hollywood. The discussion is as pessimistic – the film industry represents the death of high culture and the enslavement of the imagination of the masses – as it is Olympian. I mention it here in order to indicate the longstanding connection between critical theory and film culture, a connection which is more frequently exploited in order to make sweeping, unsupported statements about the *nature* or *essence* of film (or other forms of popular entertainment). Critical theory has blazed a number of trails, but the somewhat less glamorous work of academic road building is very often left to future generations.

2.2.2. Discourse analysis

Even though discourse analysis has been used within a large range of disciplines, it is also a specific linguistic tradition: the study of *text in context*, be it an example of oral or written language use. It is this tradition that is referenced by the *discourse analysis* part of CDA, and it is much more explicit about methodology than critical theory. Discourse analysis is concerned with language beyond the border of the sentence, beyond the isolated text sample. It includes elements from the study of dialects, speech genres, language change, as well as conversation analysis and other areas of pragmatics. Discourse analysis is the search for patterns in and explanations of the way people use language, a search that cannot be successful unless the way society works is taken into account:

[A]ll human language activity ultimately underlies the laws of the greater universe of discourse, understood as the entire context of human language-in-use. [...] These conditions are often referred to collectively by a metaphorical expression: the 'fabric of society', understood as the supporting element for all societal structures and the necessary context for all human activity. Inasmuch as this fabric operates and becomes visible (mostly through language, but also in other human activities), it is captured by the term 'discourse'. (Mey 1993:190)

Discourse analysis taps into the linguistic tradition, it has access to the ways and means of traditional language study. When it is brought together with critical theory, it is augmented by a particular view of society and reasons for asking questions about the fabric of that society. This means that a narrower field of research emerges. The sociological, philosophical, and political concerns of Critical Theory demarcate an area within the category of data to which discourse analysis is applicable. The result is critical discourse analysis: *the study of language use in a social context, with the intent of analyzing ideology and power relations*. This is the definition of the project of CDA to which I'll try to adhere henceforth.

2.2.3. Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk

Sometimes, because of the proliferation of discourse analysis in other disciplines, the specifically linguistic character of CDA is forgotten. It is worth remembering, then, that among the most prominent researchers that call themselves critical discourse analysts are two linguists: Norman Fairclough of the University of Lancaster and Teun van Dijk, formerly of the University of Amsterdam. In addition to being essential to the establishment of CDA as an academic discipline, the careers of these researchers have two key features in common: a traditional linguistic training appropriate to the description and analysis of language, and a

gradually increasing commitment to apply that training with social and ideological concerns in mind.

The gist of both Fairclough's and van Dijk's position is that language use, that is to say discourse, both shapes and is shaped by ideology and power relations. The acceptance and use of certain forms of language may aid or hinder certain policies, and no form of language is politically neutral or transparent. In a general sense, this is hardly controversial. Words and phrases ranging from "enemy of the people" and "class enemy" to "freedom" and "peace-loving people" along with many other shibboleths have served ideological and political functions throughout history. What is more, the background against which ideological phrases are used is in a constant flux. In a modern American context, "liberal" has undergone a rapid and dramatic shift in usage and connotations as the political culture of the United States has grown more conservative. Discourse is inherently unstable, and it expresses and mediates shifting power relations.

From this follows both an academic project and an ideological one, which in the cases of Fairclough and van Dijk (along with many other practitioners of CDA) appear to be closely intertwined. It is a project inspired partly by Michael Halliday's theory of systemic functional grammar, partly by Michel Foucault's social critique. The critical discourse analyst will, if he is good at his job, use the toolkit of linguistic analysis to uncover the workings of ideology and the power imbalances in language. To chart the words used to refer to certain groups and the connotations that attach to those words, particularly socially stigmatized groups. To describe the way in which pronouns are used inclusively or exclusively to mark group boundaries and strengthen or weaken identity relations. To look at the metaphors used in a text, and see whether they contribute to a particular view of a process or conflict.

These are all academic tasks, in which the analyst will be aided chiefly by his knowledge of the way language works. They are, however, necessarily accompanied by ideological concerns. What attitude does the analyst take toward the ideologies he identifies? Toward the power relationships? It is important to remember that the analyst is always situated, he is always already placed in an ideological relationship with the discourses he attempts to analyze. There is no outside vantage point, no neutral perspective. Therefore, each act of analysis, each act of description will count in some sense as an ideological act. The analyst cannot escape his motives and prejudices, he can only display them, and thereby clarify their relationship to the analysis as a whole. Ideology is always a construct, never an independently existing entity. There cannot be a stable network of discourses and ideologies

in any society, since any attempt to produce such a map will alter the terrain itself. The analyst does not only uncover, he constructs.

2.2.4. Fairclough and Thatcherism

Among Norman Fairclough's central aims is to describe the relationship between a text and its social conditions of production and interpretation, the relationship between ideology and the acts of language through which it is practiced. His research includes analyses of newspaper articles, radio interviews and official documents – texts of various kinds, which are successively subjected to close reading, description, interpretation, and, ultimately, explanation. Fairclough argues that texts are always social objects, produced by ideological agents who in turn operate under institutional and political constraints. His major concern, for reasons that are explicitly political, is with the social and ideological structures that both influence and are influenced by the production and consumption of discourse. He wants:

[...] to help increase consciousness of language and power, and particularly of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others. Given my focus on ideology, this means helping people to see the extent to which their language does rest upon common-sense assumptions, and the ways in which these common-sense assumptions can be ideologically shaped by relations of power.
(Fairclough 2001 [1989]:3)

Fairclough's emphasis on the study of language in a social context grew partly out of a specific historical and political situation, the one created by the election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister of Great Britain in 1979. Many of his linguistic analyses are explicit attempts to identify the negative consequences of Thatcherism as ideology (Fairclough 2001 [1989]). To him, the 1980s were a time of near ideological hegemony, during which the government and most of the media colluded in using language to produce and naturalize socially ruinous ideology. The most famous example is probably Thatcher's claim that there is no such thing as society, only individual men and women and their families (Keay 1987). Taken one way, this is a statement about society, a truth-functional claim that can be verified or disproved. Taken another way, it is a rhetorical ploy, an ideological assertion that, if repeated frequently enough and in a sufficient number of contexts by a sufficient number of people, will become increasingly accepted as a rationale for political action. If there really is no such thing as society, why do we need a publicly financed network of hospitals, schools, retirement homes, and so on? The use of specific forms of language, in this view, is intimately tied in with the power relations that form political and social development. For this reason, analysis of discourse is necessarily tied to social change (Fairclough 1992).

2.2.5. Van Dijk and racism in the Netherlands

Teun van Dijk's work in critical discourse analysis shares many features with Norman Fairclough's both in its theoretical outlook, practical concerns, and progressive social aims. His early-to-middle career was characterized by work in text linguistics, and the development of analytic tools on the borderline between syntax and semantics. A key project of van Dijk's was the development of "macrostructures" (van Dijk 1980), a method for extracting the global themes of a given sample of text. Initially a purely technical device, it has subsequently been applied by van Dijk to parliamentary debates, newspaper articles and other texts, frequently with the intention of exposing unexamined ideological assumptions.

From the mid-1980s onwards, van Dijk has produced a number of analyses of the discourse of racism in the Dutch media and Dutch political life (van Dijk 1988). As has become increasingly clear over the last few years, the Netherlands is in many ways a society of great racial and cultural tensions. These tensions didn't come into being overnight, but are intimately tied in with, among many other factors, Dutch post-colonial history and the traditional organization of Dutch society into separate religious and political blocs. The analysis of language is crucial in understanding the conflict lines, group dynamics and political traditions, and it is this insight that informs van Dijk's work. Much in the same way as Norman Fairclough, he seems to have gradually progressed from syntactic and semantic concerns to the analysis of ideology and power relations, through the double realization that language use often has a political aspect and that the workings of politics usually requires an understanding of the language of politics.

2.3. The methodology of critical discourse analysis

This section presents critical discourse analysis as it has been practiced by, primarily, Norman Fairclough. It argues that this kind of critical discourse analysis is too dependent on syntactic analysis of text fragments, and asks what kind of modifications need to be made in order for CDA to acknowledge the importance of background knowledge and readers' cognitive modeling.

A methodological question that confronts any practitioner of critical discourse analysis is not so much what to look for as what to disregard. One option is to be skeptical of the link between ideology and language, to assume that only the most visible and explicit examples of semantic variation have any real bearing on the ideological bent of a piece of discourse. The choice of labels with different connotations is the most obvious example of what constitutes

evidence in this view: the contrasting use of “public servant” or “crony” to describe the same politician, for instance. A different but equally extreme option is to assume that ideology is all-encompassing, that it influences every single semantic and syntactic choice that faces the language user (and possibly even the morphological ones). To claim, for instance, that the choice between active and passive voice, between the inclusion or exclusion of an agent (as in “the police broke up the demonstration” and “the demonstration was broken up”) is dependent on different orders of discourse and different forms of ideology.

A related methodological question is whether CD analysis can be effectively performed on any scrap of language. Is it possible to render explicit the underlying ideology of an anonymously authored two-sentence fragment, or does the process require a long, coherent text with the author’s name at the end? Can a single doctor’s prescription serve as the basis for valid comments on medical discourse in general, or would such an analysis be impossible until information had been gathered on the average doctor-patient conversation, the social role of the pharmacist, and an extensive investigation of the pharmaceutical industry?

The critical discourse analyst must make a choice in what to count as significant instances of ideology, and what to dismiss as background, as white noise. In practice there is no obvious or natural place in which to draw the line, because all the potential factors that influence the formation of discourse cannot be adequately described in a single study. This produces a dilemma common to research in critical traditions: the analyst must remain conscious of his own point of view, of his own prejudices and preconceptions (for a recent discussion see Hornmoen (2003:21-22)).

2.3.1. Strong critical discourse analysis and mystification

The above questions have a great deal of relevance with respect to the work of both Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, as well as other linguists with socially critical research programs like Roger Fowler. Their work constitutes a dominant strain in CDA, and it comes, as does any established research tradition, with a number of methodological conventions. With regard to the pervasiveness of ideology, Fowler (1991) in particular seems to work on the assumption that nearly every linguistic choice carries with it ideological implications, and that those implications have real effects and inevitable effects on the consumers of discourse. This view can be characterized as strong CDA, because it attributes considerable power both to discourse and the researcher working to analyze it.

A corollary to strong CDA is *mystification analysis*. If the choice between the active or the passive voice in describing an event determines how that event is perceived, then systematically excluding an agent will entirely mystify the perception of the event. Mystification, in this view, is one of the most insidious effects of ideology. By withholding information about causality and event structure through the use of grammar, the producers of discourse distort the perception of those events. In the example where a demonstration took place and the police broke it up, merely stating “the demonstration was broken up” will mystify the reader simply by not providing information about who broke up the demonstration (or why). In strong CDA, no aspect of grammar is innocent; ideology permeates everything. According to Norman Fairclough:

The ideological possibilities of the choice between process types are shown by some of the examples I have given above: representing the death of Nicaraguan peasants as an action with responsible agents, an event, or an attributed state, are choices with clear significance [...]. (Fairclough 2001 [1989]:102)

This view has implications on three levels. With respect to the producers of text, it implies that describing or reporting an event is intrinsically ideological work. There is little room for devices of style or artistry in writing; every descriptive choice signals political allegiance. With respect to the text itself, it implies that it functions as an independent model of the world, a powerful catalyst of ideology and ideological positions. With respect to the reader, it implies a high degree of malleability and room for influence.

A hypothetical example: suppose that a newspaper article about a rape (a common example in CDA literature, probably because of the ideologically charged nature of sex crimes) contains the sentence “The assault took place at around 11.30 yesterday night.”. That sentence could potentially be subjected to critical discourse analysis, and the charge be made that the phrasing “took place” mystifies the reader as to who did the assaulting. Granted, the rest of the text would have to systematically omit mention of a rapist (or consistently refer to him in the passive voice) in order for mystification to have occurred in any real sense. Even then, the claims made by strong CDA in such a context are vulnerable to criticism. What reader does not know that a rape (or assault, or other violent incident) involves at least two participants, one of whom is the aggressor? How much power does language wield, if a single newspaper item can so twist readers’ perceptions of the outside world?

The methodology of strong CDA is partly summarized in a three-level figure, originally devised by Norman Fairclough (2001 [1989]:73) and reproduced, in slightly different versions, by various CD analysts:

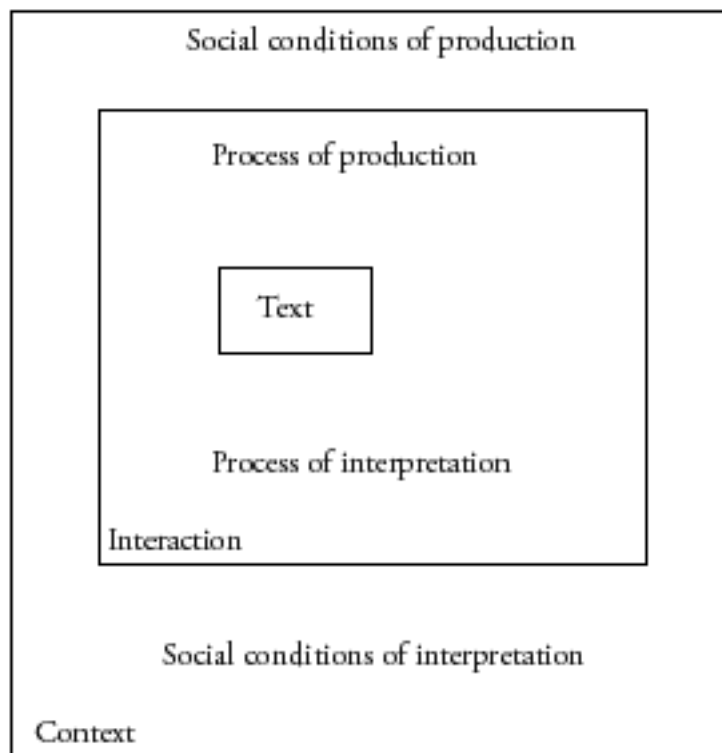


Figure 1: Dimensions of discourse

A sample of text should, according to this model, be analyzed against the background of both 1) its situational context of production and interpretation and 2) its social context and social conditions of production and interpretation. A newspaper film review is not only words on paper, it is part of a habitual interaction between newspaper readers, journalists and film distributors. Films are screened at certain dates in order for the reviews to be published in time for the premiere, readers are primed to expect certain kinds of information in a review, and journalists have genre conventions that help them write reviews rapidly and on a regular basis.

2.3.2. H.G. Widdowson and the problems of strong CDA

The problem with Fairclough's model is that while it presents a comprehensive schema, with ample room for analyzing individual text samples against the background of society as a whole, it is in practice susceptible to an imbalance in favor of sentence- or phrase-level textual features. Critical discourse analysis carried out in accordance with Fairclough's model runs a risk of remaining critical *textual* analysis. When detailing his analytical method, Fairclough (2001 [1989]:92-93) lists ten relatively specific features of text that can be made

subject to analysis, ten questions for the CD analyst to ask about vocabulary, grammar and so on. Answering these questions comprises the first, descriptive stage in CD analysis. When it comes to the later two stages, interpretation and explanation, Fairclough is notably less specific. He mentions “frames, scripts and schemata” as interpretational tools for capturing mid-level features of discourse, but does not provide the tools for advancing analysis from purely textual description to full discourse analysis.

These problems in strong CDA are discussed extensively by H.G. Widdowson (2004:esp. ch. 6), who goes so far as to claim that CDA lacks an effective method and a consistent methodology. He argues that there is a lack of fit between the descriptive apparatus of CDA, which is geared towards formal features of text, and its aims of discussing *discourse* features that are essentially functional and relational. As an example of this, he cites the macrostructures of Teun van Dijk, which were intended to be a tool for extracting the main themes of a text by analyzing it in an essentially bottom-up procedure.

This approach fails because a text is a static, unitary object of analysis in a way that a piece of discourse is not. A text is wholly available to the analyst in either printed or recorded form, whereas discourse is inevitably an analytical construct which also involves the writer of the text and its reader. The writer and the writer’s intentions are inaccessible to the analyst, who is also forced to serve as reader of the text. Because of the lack of comprehensive, broadly agreed-upon methods for moving from text description to discourse analysis, for deciding which text features are relevant in analysis, CD analysts continually run the risk of simply reading their own prejudices into the text. If a CD analyst reads a newspaper article with the expectation of finding a particular ideology expressed in its headlines, he is nearly certain to find it. Both the active and passive constructions, for instance, can be analyzed as ideologically biased – it is merely a matter of applying the right interpretation to them.

A hypothetical example: The headline “Street protest turns violent” could be seen as an example of ideological bias against the protesters, either (1) because it omits their motivation for turning violent (police provocation, say) or (2) because it dehumanizes them, describing their actions as though they lacked free will (turning violent as leaves turn yellow in the fall). However, given a different starting point, the same headline could be analyzed as being biased in *favor* of the protesters because it represents the violence as inevitable, as a process in which the protesters participate but cannot be held responsible for (as opposed to “Street protesters commit acts of violence”).

The point here is that a text fragment, of which a headline is the most common example in CDA, is insufficient material for analysis. Formal features of text do not have

intrinsic ideological connotations – these are functions of context and reader interpretation. Describing the workings of discourse requires drawing on background knowledge about the field in which a text is situated, knowledge about the habits and practices of both readers and writers. Fairclough's model discusses several features of text, but presents no method for establishing which of them are essential to CDA. In any single analysis, it is simply not possible to describe every linguistic aspect of even a moderately long text. But without criteria for distinguishing between significant and insignificant features, the apprentice CD analyst is left floundering. Fairclough's model is too general, and has difficulty in tackling specific, situated variations in the practices that surround certain kinds of text – the very practices that transform text into discourse.

The problem appears to be one that afflicts most CDA approaches. There is no universally agreed-upon methodology in CDA (Wodak and Meyer 2001:11-12), which may well be part of the problem. The discourse-historical approach of Ruth Wodak, the Foucaultian analysis of Siegfried Jäger and Norman Fairclough's brand of CDA seem, to some extent, to be simply elaborations of the work habits of each practitioner. There is very little in the way of empirical justification of those habits. Sometimes, as when Teun van Dijk states explicitly that he does not want to lead an 'approach' or 'school', (Wodak and Meyer 2001:95), the lack of documentation seems an intentional, if somewhat less than helpful, strategy. At other times, the lack of a fully worked out CDA methodology looks more like an enormous blind spot.

If the effects of mystification and manipulation claimed by various incarnations of strong CDA are to be taken as real and significant, one has to assume that readers of and listeners to discourse are essentially passive, highly susceptible to any world-view with which they are presented by discourse. One also has to assume that there is a fairly unidirectional ideological bent to most instances of manipulative discourse. Readers must be assumed to take a given instance of language use at face value, so to speak, and to adopt (or alter their attitudes according to) the event structures and agency relations according to what is encoded in the text. These are all methodological assumptions that are rarely discussed to the extent they deserve.

Strong CDA ignores the actual workings of discourse processing in actual readers and listeners, because it leaves little room for the fact that most people interact with discourse on a constant basis. Any single scrap of information stands little chance of altering the recipient's world-view, because it has to be integrated into a whole system of beliefs, attitudes and

background knowledge. A piece of text does not comprise a world in itself; when read, it becomes part of the complex gravitational mechanics of the universe of discourse.

I will divide the key problems in strong CDA, which need to be addressed if critical discourse analyses in general are to have real impact, into three groups. The first relates to psycholinguistics and language processing. The second has to do with the philosophical underpinnings of critical discourse analysis, which are seldom made explicit by practitioners of CDA. The third concerns the question of what exactly is meant by *discourse*, as opposed to *text*.

2.3.3. Kieran O'Halloran's criticism: psycholinguistics and language processing

The first and second problems of strong CDA are addressed in Kieran O'Halloran's *Critical Discourse Analysis and Language Cognition* (2003). With respect to language processing, O'Halloran (who, like Widdowson, chiefly addresses his criticisms to Norman Fairclough) is skeptical of the power of syntax to influence discourse processing and, by extension, event perception. To him many of the pernicious effects of discourse may simply be researcher's fictions:

[T]o what extent is the interpretation a critical discourse analyst makes dependent on the longer amount of time and thus larger amount of effort the analyst invests? How do analysts know they are not over-interpreting on behalf of readers who, in reading only for gist, would not invest the same amount of effort? (O'Halloran 2003:3)

There is considerable difference between the linguistically trained analyst who examines news stories minutely, looking for patterns of nominalization and agent exclusion, and the average reader skimming through the morning paper. O'Halloran argues that the average reader, the one who is "reading only for gist", is largely dependent on pre-existing cognitive modeling of events in order to process new information. The model triggered by the mention of any complex event tends to include certain agents, relations and mechanisms of causation; the power of any single piece of discourse to alter this framework is at best limited.

If the sentence "the demonstration was broken up" is presented as a fragment, mystification may be suspected to have occurred in an abstract sense, to a reader who holds no knowledge of demonstrations and the reaction they frequently provoke from the police. If, however, the sentence is presented to a slightly more knowledgeable reader, or if it occurs in a context in which policemen are otherwise mentioned as being present – in a headline, in an

image caption, in a previous sentence – odds are that it will be fairly obvious who broke up the demonstration.

The belief that mystification depends primarily on features of text, not on the reader's modeling of the event referred to in the text, ties in with the second, philosophical problem. O'Halloran uses the term 'symbolicism' to capture the understanding of mental processing that underlies much of CDA. Some central aspects of symbolism are (1) the notion that cognition consists in the mental manipulation of symbols, which are in turn stable and discrete and (2) the idea that meaning is generated through operations of composition and juxtaposition, which give rise to ever more complex symbols.

If those ideas sound familiar, it is likely because they lie at the heart of mathematical logic, computer science and generative grammar. All three are to some extent based on the compositionality of meaning, on the understanding that the whole is no more than the sum of the parts. Noam Chomsky compared the workings of language to those of context-free grammars. Turing machines reduce the world to discrete symbols and well-defined operations. Frege's logic and the developments that followed consisted of isolated symbols and the rules of their manipulation.

2.3.4. Cognitive modeling

As a model of human cognition and human language functions, symbolism has faded in importance and prominence since the 1960s and -70s. It fails to grasp the nuances and slippery category systems of natural language. It doesn't allow for the kind of meaning that is *embodied*, or otherwise irreducible to an entity that can exist independently of any one context. It is nevertheless a model that has informed much of critical discourse analysis. Norman Fairclough and many of his fellow CD analysts were trained in linguistics at a time when generative grammar was at its height of influence. Even though CDA is in many ways a direct attack on Chomskyan disdain for the social impact of language, the Chomskyan-symbolicist view of language processing seems to be taken for granted.

The hub of O'Halloran's argument is that people simply do not process information in a linear sequence the way a Turing machine does. He borrows much of his ammunition from connectionism, the philosophical school associated with Paul and Patricia Churchland, among others:

While connectionism is still in its 'infancy', the ability of connectionist networks to shade meaning non-compositionally and to include inference generation as an integrative part of language processing are features which capture the automatic flexibility and holistic grasp

of meaning in human language processing more readily than [symbolic] approaches. (O'Halloran 2003:110)

O'Halloran's criticism is chiefly directed at Norman Fairclough and the older generation of CD analysts, but it is partly prefigured in the work of a member of that generation: Teun van Dijk. His work on macrostructures in the book by that name (van Dijk 1980) suggests that macro-level themes and scenarios heavily inform discourse processing. Readers do not understand individual (local) sentences sequentially, but process them in the light of general (global) topics that are activated or triggered in early stages of discourse processing. If the headline of a news item reads "Around the world with Ibsen", subsequent mentions of "exhibitions", "readings" and "performances" will very likely be interpreted in a very different way (by most readers) than if the headline had read "Around the world with Dan Brown".

Where critical discourse analysts have adhered closely (intentionally or not) to a symbolicist view of language, there has been excessive focus on the individual sentence and its syntactic structure. With an approach influenced by connectionism, allowances can more easily be made for the text as a whole – for the realization that readers read neither words nor sentences, but articles, essays and news bulletins.

2.3.5. The nature of discourse

This brings us to the third problem in strong CDA: what constitutes discourse. In *Language and Power*, many of the sample analyses presented by Norman Fairclough seem closer to classic textual analysis. The method that informs them is reminiscent of the 'close reading' advocated by the literary critic F.R. Leavis, rather than a full-fledged analysis of discourse. This parallel is also drawn by Widdowson (2004). Fairclough is a master at weighing the connotations of words and phrases, of examining syntactic patterns in detail, but though he consistently advocates doing so, he often stops short of discussing the social conditions of production that surround the specific kind of text in question. It is also, quite frequently, difficult to tell which criteria were used by Fairclough in discerning between the important and the unimportant linguistic features of his objects of analysis.

It may be that the aforementioned strong focus on news articles has become a too comfortable practice in CDA. News articles frequently discuss matters of general political importance, and so they allow for the analyst to use an extremely wide-ranging 'societal discourse' as an explanatory tool. If a rapist is referred to in the passive voice, it is always because society is still, despite our best efforts, infused with sexism, never because the focus

of the article is on the experience of the rape victim. If a demonstration is reported referring to the demonstrators as a faceless ‘herd’ or ‘mob’ it is always because society is intolerant of dissent, never because the journalist doing the reporting was unable to find a demonstrator willing to be interviewed individually. The critical discourse analyst who centers attention on fragments of news texts, ignoring their specific conditions of production, risks having to go into battle with society as a whole.

2.3.6. Critical discourse analysis and background knowledge

There is a need in CDA for investigations into specific fields, of specific kinds of texts that treat a narrow range of topics. These texts have to be analyzed with a clear idea of their context, of their interaction with their readers and their neighboring genres. When the CD analyst’s scope grows too wide, the depth of field risks diminishing correspondingly. If that happens, myopic attention to variations in syntax and the minutiae of grammar can come to dominate the analysis. I suggest that CDA should attempt a different strategy: to examine what *frames of reference* are evoked, what *topics* are raised, and what topics are *not* raised. This will then serve as the raw material for a discussion of what world-view the text conveys. That discussion will have to include substantial background knowledge of the real-world events, people, structures and systems that are referred to by the text. It will also have to include knowledge of the practices that produced the text, and the practices by which it is consumed. Only then does the analysis of the text become an analysis of discourse.

For instance: if a newspaper article in *Le Figaro* that describes a clash between French police and the disgruntled inhabitants of a Parisian suburb generally uses the passive voice to describe the actions of the police and the active voice to describe the protesters, this is of some interest but doesn’t carry any large implications. If, however, the same article consistently employs metaphors relating to e.g. war or moral deficiency to describe the conflict and the protesters, consistently reports violent acts by the protesters but ignores those of the police, and completely lacks information about the social and political background of the protests, this could be used as a starting point for critical discourse analysis. The analysis would not work on the sentence level, and assume that the article’s readers model their perception of the protests according to the sentence structure of that single article. Instead, it would assume that the readers have some conception of the event being described from the moment they read the headline, and that the themes touched on by the article will tweak rather than mould that perception. For the analysis to be carried further, issues relating to recent French history and the politics of *Le Figaro* would have to be explored, among many others.

Another example: an article from *The Daily Telegraph* (Petre 2005) bears the title “Gay pride or unholy alliance?”, and discusses the recent introduction of civil partnerships in the UK. The first sentence of that text begins “The most sweeping social reform for 40 years came to fruition yesterday [...]”, using both a noun (“reform”) and a construction (“came to fruition”) with positive connotations. A critical discourse analysis of the article that remained on the sentence level would likely place it within a discourse of tolerance and moderation, an impression reinforced by statements such as: “The reform is widely seen as the most significant advance for homosexual rights since 1967 [...]”. Views critical of the reform are attributed to clergymen and Christian campaigners, and are presented neutrally by the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent.

This brief analysis misses, however, a major feature of the article. Roughly half of the texts discusses views of, protests from, and reasoning by various Christian agents. While the newspaper correspondent does not signal any sympathy for their position, the fact remains that the conservative religious view of civil partnerships is amply presented. By touching on that view and allowing it space, by devoting the article’s headline to it, the correspondent augments its significance and relevance in relation to civil partnerships. The article might, conversely, have discussed the reform in the context of civil rights. As it stands, the predominant discourse is that of religion and, by extension, moral standards. It is a discourse in which the proponents of civil partnerships are at a significant disadvantage, and its employment indicates the position of *The Daily Telegraph* far more clearly than does the discourse of gay and/or civil rights employed by the individual sentences previously mentioned. In order for a critical discourse analysis to be complete, a broad spectrum of possible ways in which a topic can be discussed needs to be considered. Sequential analysis of discrete symbolic units will be insufficient; mid-level and global themes must be invoked.

A striking thing about the kind of critical discourse analysis that emphasizes global themes and textual macro-features is the range of techniques that become relevant to its success. The grammatical features of text certainly remain important. The connotations of words and constructions, the way in which speech is reported, the way in which agency is portrayed – all these features contribute to the analysis. But additionally, there is a need to examine the crudity of some of the philosophical and practical assumptions about language processing made by critical discourse analysis. The symbolicist view implies a patent over-reliance on language’s capacity to *represent* reality. Kieran O’Halloran quotes the philosopher of language W.V. Quine to the effect that language evokes ideas rather than models thought, and adds:

[S]entences evoke background knowledge, they do not represent the world. (O'Halloran 2003:63)

[M]ental representation is the output of what sentences cue. This mental representation necessarily goes beyond the sentential structure and so is not [...] a facsimile of sentential structure. (O'Halloran 2003:64)

We do not form mental images, reconstruct events and piece together narratives based only on what is stated explicitly in a text. While the leap from language to ideology is never straightforward, when crude symbolic analysis is applied only to what appears explicitly in the text does not allow background and tacit knowledge to enter into the equation. In that way, forty years of work in pragmatics is ignored.

A relevant pragmatic insight in relation to film reviews, the kind of text to be investigated in this thesis, is that they are rarely pored over or read critically. They are read for gist, for immediate purposes. Consequently, the thesis will attempt to achieve an effective critical discourse analysis of film reviews by examining the features that stand out during cursory, superficial readings. What themes are touched on? What are the immediate ideological connotations evoked by key words and phrases? What metaphors are systematically employed? In what frame of reference is film generally placed? These questions will take priority over those related to the syntactic analysis of agency relations and active/passive constructions.

2.3.7. Expanding the CDA toolkit

These questions affect the second methodological question of CDA, that of working with a limited data set. Many CD analysts, including Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk, frequently stay within or on the borders of a single field, that of news journalism. Accordingly, they have developed techniques for examining texts that are often telegraphic in style and short in length. Moreover, news items have a strict information structure, that of descending importance, and their content is summarized in headlines that are even more formally predictable (incomplete sentences, verbs privileged over nouns). They are serially linked, each news item presenting “developments” since the last. These pieces of discourse are perfect examples of compressed, intertextually linked vehicles of information, texts for which background information and interpretation is crucial. It is easy, then, for the discourse analyst to forget the social practice which forms the background of modern news consumption: all-day access, continuous streams of information, regular habits of

consumption. To anyone who has returned home after a long holiday, the bewildering experience of settling back into the news cycle is probably familiar.

Working with news text provides the critical discourse analyst with ample opportunities for using small fragments to examine vast issues, but occasionally the amount of tacit knowledge that has to be accessed for this to work is forgotten. Critical discourse analysis cannot work effectively on single texts, however well contextualized. It must also include examinations of genres, habits of textual consumption and production, and regular topics and themes touched on by those texts. This is commonly reiterated in statements of purpose in CD analysis, but sometimes forgotten at a later stage. In examining each new field of discourse, there must be an extensive application to that field on the part of the analyst, an examination of the particularities and peculiarities of that field.

This will require some additions to the traditional toolkit of CD analysis, because it is to such a large extent a product of modern linguistics. As such, it is attentive to nuances of grammar and to the way in which language orders and conveys information. It has access to a vast technical vocabulary, enabling it to describe texts in a rather more precise manner than earlier, related traditions. It is not, however, unique in either its orientation or method, but shares a number of features with one of the oldest known tradition of language study and analysis: classical rhetoric.

2.4. Rhetoric

Both CDA and the rhetorical tradition view language both as an instrument of communication and as a historically and socially situated phenomenon. In other aspects, however, rhetoric and critical discourse analysis complement each other. Critical discourse analysis tends to emphasize features of language that appear across genres and authorships – signs and symptoms of a broad, pervasive and culturally diverse discourse. An example might be Norman Fairclough's Thatcherist discourse, which is equally likely to surface in government reports, newspaper articles and commercial advertisements. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is very much concerned with questions of genre and authorship. The character and characteristics of the perceived author of a text is crucial to its persuasive power, whereas the genre of a text contributes to determining the arguments and strategies it can effectively employ towards its readers. Rhetorical analysis, in a sense, contributes an immediate, situational understanding of how a text functions, filling in the details of a sketch drawn by critical discourse analysis.

2.4.1 Rhetorical analysis and film reviews

At the core of rhetorical analysis are the three modes of persuasion, first laid out by Aristotle and employed throughout the history of rhetoric: *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*. Logos is usually translated as the Rational Appeal. It covers arguments in the form of enthymemes, the use of examples, statistics, quotes from authorities and so on. Ethos is the Ethical Appeal, which is based on the perceived character of the speaker or writer. Briefly put, Aristotle argues that when someone appears to be honest, well-disposed and commonsensical, their message is more likely to be listened to. Pathos is the Emotional Appeal, and covers any attempt to trigger an emotional response in the reader or listener (Aristoteles 2002).

The three appeals are useful to the critical discourse analyst in that they serve as constant reminders that texts are written with various purposes in mind. Notwithstanding the power of socially determined discourse in shaping texts, writers nearly always have practical reasons for writing the way they do. This isn't to say that grand strategies of rhetorical persuasion can be perceived in any text. The rhetorical goal of a journalist, for instance, may simply be to *keep the reader interested*, and in that way justify his salary. Wayne C. Booth, in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983), argues that rhetorical analysis is equally applicable to novels; it is simply a matter of realizing that the author is trying to convince the reader of the reality of the novel's fictional world.

Rhetorical analysis is equally applicable to film reviews, as has been argued by the critic and film theoretician David Bordwell. His *Making Meaning* (1989) is an attempt to capture the activity and process of film criticism in a formalist rhetorical framework. He argues, as suggested by the title of the book, that the film critic's main job is to convince the reader of the legitimacy of whatever theory of film the critic chooses to embrace. He writes:

[I] shall treat critical rhetoric as an instrument for rendering the conclusions of critical reasoning attractive to the interpreter's audience. (Bordwell 1989:35)

This allows for the application of rhetorical analysis. The Ethical Appeal can be traced in the reviewer's attempts to present a credible, interesting or sympathetic persona. The Logical Appeal can be found in arguments about the film's form and content. The Emotional Appeal lies in incitement of the readers' feelings through, e.g., hyperbole, satire and evocative descriptions of scenes from the film.

The three Aristotelian appeals are useful tools for identifying the mid-level structural features of the reviews, features that cannot easily be captured by sentence-level analysis. They add to the functional understanding of pieces of discourse. Whether the reviewer

consistently chooses the passive or active voice to describe the director's role in making the film, or whether the director is referred to as an artist or a craftsman, may be relevant elements in a critical discourse analysis. But those questions may turn out to be secondary to whether or not the reviewer devotes a larger part of the text to describing his own reaction to the film or instead opts for as neutral a description of the film's plot as possible. These are questions more readily answered by applying rhetorical analysis.

2.4.2. Topoi and visual representation

The concept of *topoi*, or *loci communes* (Eide 1999), is highly useful in capturing both mid- and top-level features of discourse. That is, topoi work on roughly the same level as the Aristotelian appeals. While the *topos* has been defined in a very large number of ways throughout its long history (Reinhardt 2003), I will attempt to adhere to the following understanding: a topos is 1) a 'rhetorical commonplace', an argument that an audience will accept unquestioningly, and 2) a 'machine for finding arguments'. This understanding of the topos is linked to a view of rhetoric, one which sees figures of language not as ornaments, isolated from other modes of understanding, but rather as functional objects, tools of understanding and persuasion. It is also an understanding which points towards the much more recent discoveries of cognitive linguistics.

A skilled rhetorical technician will frequently use a topos in the place of a missing or faulty argument, knowing that the audience will prefer not to be challenged in their beliefs. It is also possible to use a topos in order to find an argument that will apply no matter what the situation. Proverbs and idioms fall under this definition; while there very likely exist occasions on which one might profit from judging a book by its cover, it takes more mental effort to challenge the verity of the expression than to simply nod and move on.

It may be argued that a topos is equally tied to images, words, and expression, that it is not exclusively verbal or conceptual. A commonplace argument may be framed using different words. Idioms and fixed expressions become arguments in and of themselves. Possibly, topoi function by evoking certain *frames of reference*, *modes of classification*, and *image schemata*. The "book and its cover" saying is just one verbal expression of the notion that form and content do not always match, that first impressions do not guarantee accuracy, and so on. That idea is perhaps better described as an understanding or insight that is usually, but not always, expressed by means of an idiom.

This understanding of topoi, or variants of it, seems to have informed both practitioners and theoreticians at various times throughout the history of rhetoric. Evidence of

this is presented in Yates (1966) and Spence (1985), which deal with the classical art of memory. Orators working in times of cumbersome writing materials developed their memories using techniques of visualization. These techniques were in turn tied in with mentally represented spaces. When remembering the key points of a speech the orator would call forth images which were then matched up with words; a verbal act of communication would be based on a visual memory.

Working from this relationship, I will use *topos* in the sense of a mental domain accessible to a large number of people, a place where certain rules apply and certain truths are self-evident. An example: the commonplace sentence “Some films serve only to pass the time; others contain messages of real importance” might, in opening a review, serve as a pseudo-argument that the film being reviewed does indeed carry an important message. It does this not by offering any actual evidence (i.e. descriptions of the film that evoke the message in question), but rather by drawing on a distinction between “light” and “serious” films that is felt instinctively to be real by many people (myself included).

Instead of having to argue in favor of the seriousness of this particular film, instead of having to build his case by presenting empirical evidence, the reviewer can assume the pre-existence of certain categories and locate the film within one of them. It takes less effort to apply an established schema of classification to an object, because the object in question need only display one signature characteristic of its category in order to be classified. If it flies, odds are that it is a bird. If it swims, it’s probably a fish. If it’s a duck-billed platypus, on the other hand, it will be necessary to list and consider most of its available characteristics, to describe it in detail and on its individual merits.

The work of categorization and the relationship between categorization and *topoi* will prove to be important to the discussion of film reviews. As shown by Bowker and Star (1999), categories are essential to any routine or large-scale work; with a potentially triple-digit number of films to describe during any given year, the newspaper film reviewer will be unable to invent new and original labels for all films under discussion. Most newspaper genres follow strict formulas, and the film review is no different.

The question of *topoi* illustrates the need for linguistic close reading as well as rhetorical analysis and awareness of social context if CDA is to be effectively applied to a corpus of film reviews. It would be possible to write an interesting study about the communicative role of film reviews in very general terms, and it would be possible to discuss the increasing low-brow profile of the culture sections of most Norwegian newspapers, and the concurrent focus on *topoi* of celebrity, fame, and personality without touching on the

specific language by which this comes about. This would not, however, amount to CD analysis. Correspondingly, it would be possible to write about the same corpus of texts with only descriptive linguistic aims, about the trend towards shorter sentences, the displacement of text by pictures, the increased use of image captions and deictic reference to events taking place in those images and so on. Again, something would be lacking.

Full-fledged CD analysis requires the close reading of particular texts with the aim of teasing out the central topoi of those texts. Identifying topoi will in turn require familiarity with the characteristics of the genre ‘film review’, with the functions that texts of that genre conventionally perform, and with the constraints under which those texts are produced. The successful practice of CDA on film reviews will require the tracing of metaphors and cognitive frameworks, and the relating of those textually realized phenomena to ways of practicing the work of film reviewing.

The difficulty of identifying and describing particular discourses in a jumbled mass of text is matched by the difficulty of using the medium of writing to accurately describe phenomena of a different order. The relationship between a film and a review of that film is a case in point. A film is, focusing on the experience of the reviewer, a thing of sound and vision, an aesthetic object extended through time and space, and two hours spent gathering impressions in a dark room in the company of strangers. It is also, however, part of a social practice, the embodiment and contradiction of certain aesthetic and ethical principles and the result of a lot of people working very hard for a long period of time. This is all true on some level, yet it is very rarely stated explicitly by any film reviewer working against a deadline. Instead, most reviewers work as hard as possible to reduce the complexity of their experiences, aided and abetted by years of experience, hard-won habits of classification, and various linguistic strategies of reduction.

The fact that not every aspect of any given film can be captured in the form of any given film review is trivial. Even a thousand-page text like *Ulysses* doesn’t begin to exhaust the experience of walking around in Dublin on July 16 1904, so how could 400 words adequately describe a film like, say, *Amarcord*? What is not trivial, however, is the strategies and stratagems used by reviewers when faced with the task of describing a specific film in a specific review, working under specific editorial constraints. How is the goal of *reduction of sense data* achieved through the strategic use of language? This is why topoi are important. If certain recurring topoi can be identified, that will explain something about the strategies and workings that are central in film discourse.

2.5. Lakoff's theory of metaphor

Topoi are a mid-level phenomenon. A topos can be referenced by a single, particularly salient word, but it isn't limited to the sentence level. When a reviewer mentions a film's *composition*, and then goes on to discuss particular features of the film in painterly terms across two paragraphs, he is staying within the boundaries of that particular topos. This suggests that the topos is related to the theory of metaphor championed by the linguist George Lakoff, first presented in *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

I propose that Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory is in fact closely related to the understanding of topoi outlined above in several respects. The theory, which Lakoff in particular has carried into the realms of socially and politically oriented linguistic analysis (Lakoff 2004), is chiefly concerned with understanding the relationship between metaphorical expressions and the cognitive domains that inform them. To Lakoff and Johnson, an expression like 'he's at a crossroad' is neither poetic (repudiating the view in which metaphor constitutes a special, literary use of language) nor self-sufficient (contradicting the view that some expressions are *essentially* metaphorical).

Instead, the expression draws on a deeper, metaphorical understanding that LIFE IS A JOURNEY. This is a frame of reference, a tool for understanding, a particular way of thinking about life. Lakoff and Johnson's metaphors are not exclusively tied to language, they are ways of thinking about a highly abstract and complex concept (like life) in terms of a simpler, more concrete one (like a journey). They are ways of highlighting certain aspects of that abstract concept. In the case of LIFE IS A JOURNEY, the linearity of life and its progression towards a definite end is highlighted rather than, say, the fact that certain events recur throughout life. Many other expressions draw equally on the idea that LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for instance 'he's getting near the end' or 'he's only just starting out (in life)'. Other metaphors may be used to emphasize other aspects of a concept as complex as life – that of STRUGGLE, for instance.

2.5.1. A note on cognitive linguistics

The fact that Lakoff and Johnson's metaphors are not exclusively linguistic means that LIFE IS A JOURNEY might just as easily be expressed by an image – a road with young travelers placed at the beginning and old travelers placed at the end, for instance. This overlap between different ways of expressing the same, underlying idea suggests the connection between metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics, which provides a model in which the reader's

language is closely connected to his other mental faculties. This view of language, championed by John R. Taylor (2000) among others, contrasts sharply with the Chomskyan tradition of a separate, cognitively autonomous language faculty. It blends well with metaphor theory's view of underlying cognitive processes that lend meaning to individual linguistic expressions.

The view in cognitive linguistics that the meaning expressed through language is closely connected to other kinds of meaning sits well with the need in critical discourse analysis for an inclusive view of language processing. Critical discourse analysis is at a disadvantage when it is restricted to analyzing only the linguistic, grammatical aspects of the text itself; there is a need to incorporate both the background knowledge of the reader as a resource for interpretation and the reader's modeling of the world as a result of discourse influence. This view is all but incompatible with an assertion of complete autonomy of the language faculty. If the reader's language faculty is isolated from various other kinds of knowledge about the world, if language is wholly distinct from ideology, then critical discourse analysis has little value. If, on the other hand, the language faculty is tied in with other ways of thinking about and representing the world, then critical discourse analysis has crucial tasks to perform, both in linguistic and a social perspective.

While there is insufficient space to discuss the relationship between critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics adequately in this thesis, I think it is worth noting that much of Kieran O'Halloran's (2003) criticism of Norman Fairclough is launched from a cognitive foundation and that there seems to be a need for further research into the relationships between these two linguistic fields – a need which is also noted in Stockwell (2000).

2.5.2. Dynamic metaphors

What Lakoff and Johnson's theory of metaphor, informed by a cognitive linguistics view of the language faculty, contributes to critical discourse analysis is an understanding of the dynamic relationship between particular turns of phrase and the frames of reference they evoke. A central tenet of their theory is that the use of a metaphor usually triggers the activation of an image schema or a frame of reference, which then serve as interpretational resources for further metaphorical expressions. Cognitive metaphors, the general mappings between mental domains that underlie and enable the articulation of specific linguistic metaphors, are both flexible and dynamic.

The cognitive mapping between the concept of LIFE and the concept of JOURNEY doesn't just allow for conventional metaphorical expression, but enables the invention of new

and original expression. Drawing on the basic schema, someone might speak of the way stations and milestones of a life, of people falling by the wayside, being beset by robbers and highwaymen, losing their way and going in circles, and so on. Each new expression becomes comprehensible to its audience by drawing on the original schema. Because the understanding of what a journey is includes a vast amount of background information, skilful speakers have no problem developing metaphors that play on the expectations and reasoning skills of their listeners.

2.5.3. Limits to metaphor theory

This process, of course, presupposes a social situation, and a socially situated speaker and listener(s). A troublesome aspects of some of Lakoff's work in metaphor theory is his attempts to dig ever deeper, to reach a "deep culture" bedrock of human cognitive mappings. The so-called 'Great Chain of Being' (Lakoff and Turner 1989:160), principle of hierarchy, is held up as case in point. It suggests that most, if not all, cultures work on the assumption that the universe is ordered and stable, that animate beings have priority over inanimate matter and that the divine outranks the human. Lakoff describes the Great Chain of Being in some detail, and a number of metaphors that illustrate its mechanics are listed, but ultimately the discussion becomes sterile. In any Theory of Everything there is a tendency towards complacency and tautologies. Metaphors explain the mechanics of human thought, the human thought is defined by the mechanisms of metaphor; all that is left is to fill in the blank spaces on the map.

There is a need for skepticism and parsimony in metaphor theory. Assuming the existence of, and then detailing, a vast metaphorical system, embedded in our culture and accessed through discourse, seems more trouble than it's worth. In order for that system to be coherent and non-speculative, the metaphor theorist would also have to be extremely well versed in the study of myth, psychology, language processing and a number of other fields. On the other hand, metaphor theory is very well suited for exploring certain linguistic patterns above the sentence level, for describing recurring *modes of understanding*. One of George Lakoff's most valuable insights is the view of metaphor as a cognitive tool; a means of understanding what is remote, abstract and intangible through what is familiar, concrete and close at hand. Metaphor theory at its best provides a way to access the thought patterns that inform and shape discourse.

2.6. Routine reading and analytic tools: a final note on methodology

It should be possible, when limiting one's scope to a smaller field, a smaller set of cognitive domains, to avoid some of the pitfalls of deep culture analysis by drawing on background knowledge about the workings of that field. And within certain limits, the use of oneself as the frame of reference is not unreasonable. In the subsequent analysis of specific film reviews, the domains, *topoi* and other thematic entities postulated will of necessity be those found to be most accessible by myself. There is a temptation to use metaphor theory, as with other methods relevant to CD analysis, to go *behind* the text rather than situate it, to look for its underlying, buried mental patterns. This temptation should be resisted for a very simple reason. If the analyst concentrates on developing an ever more complex system of underlying thoughts and ideas, he tends to reach a point at which the average, surface reader is more or less forgotten.

The film review, at least in the form of an article in a daily newspaper, is rarely scrutinized for hidden meaning outside of studies like this one. They are generally read quickly, for gist, in order to obtain some idea of what the film being reviewed might be like. My contention, therefore, is that it will be sensible to look at the themes and topics that are referenced directly by each text. To chart, so to speak, the common places that are visited by various reviewers on their frequently repeated rhetorical voyages. Film reviewing is nothing if not routine work. Even with reasonable deadlines and a modicum of inspiration, the newspaper reviewer is forced to rely on his experience, to describe most (though not all) films according to familiar models of comprehension. There is room for verbal artistry and originality in 250 words, but not if 220 of those words are already reserved for routine description.

Because of this, there is little reason to expect spectacular discoveries of buried ideological structures and political attitudes in newspaper film reviews. What makes these kinds of texts interesting candidates for critical discourse analysis is precisely their status as essentially mundane, habitually produced and habitually read texts. They become interesting when viewed as a continuum of discourse over time, as a diachronic, socially situated phenomenon. Film reviewing is not accomplished through the use of individual words, phrases or sentences. It is accomplished by means of situated texts, that is by means of discourse.

This insight is, I believe, crucial to both the general theory of CDA and the immediate concerns of this thesis. It suggests that the effects of newspaper film discourse very likely

result not from subconscious manipulation of its readers, but from the themes and topics made cognitively salient through routine interaction. The following chapter is an attempt to elicit those themes and topics through the use of analytic tools, both those traditional to CDA and those borrowed from rhetoric. Critical discourse analysis is at its most relevant not as a companion to conspiracy theory, but as a method for investigating the most commonplace activity imaginable – our interaction with various forms of language. To achieve this, a fully stocked kit of flexible tools seems essential.

3. Analysis

3.1. Chapter contents

This chapter consists of the analysis of a selection of film reviews. It begins with a general description, in CDA and rhetorical terms, of the film review as newspaper text, a look at the functions and limitations of that particular genre and a consideration of what other genres delimit it and determine its shape.

The second part presents, in brief, the quantifiable changes in the corpus texts over time. As we move from 1974 to 2004, a haphazard and slightly off-hand way of covering one or more recently released films is replaced by a highly systematic, rule-bound work of categorization and quality judgment. Briefly put, the movement seems to be one that excludes thematic and topical excursions from the practice of film reviewing. The reviews become more similar in both form and content, they become more predictable. The dominant discourse of film reviewing will be treated in terms of a change from an *essayistic discourse* into a *taxonomic discourse*.⁴

The third part surveys the earlier reviews, in which the essayistic discourse is still practiced, even if it is far from dominant. It applies the CDA and rhetorical tools discussed in the previous chapter to identify the topos of the *significant* or *important film* as an important part of that earlier practice, one that is largely absent from the later reviews.

The fourth part is a description of the taxonomic discourse that seems to be dominant in the later reviews. It identifies three connected topoi, the *rating system*, the *genre system* and *auteurism* as being central to that discourse, and shows how those topoi are produced and reproduced in different reviews.

3.2. Introduction: the newspaper film review

There is a longstanding tradition separating film *criticism* from film *reviewing*, a distinction that is discussed but basically held to be valid in a Norwegian context in Gjelsvik (2002). The division is based mainly on issues of publication (reviews are printed in newspapers, criticism in journals and magazines), form (reviews are short in comparison with pieces of criticism) and content (reviews tend to avoid specialist language, while criticism allows for both an academic vocabulary and cinephile jargon). What the two genres have in common, however, is the intent of providing an accurate and in some sense useful summary of one or more films.

⁴ In this light the 1985 Matt Groening cartoon found on the cover of this thesis comes to seem prophetic; the clever film critic is gaining ground.

Both the film critic and film reviewer are writers doing a job (whether paid or not), they are specialists covering a specific section of cultural life.

The film critic and theoretician David Bordwell has written extensively on the rhetorical aspects of film criticism. In his opinion, the critic is essentially trying to convince the reader that a certain interpretation of the film(s) in question is a credible one, hence the title of his 1989 book *Making Meaning*. Film reviewers, to which Bordwell devotes only a few pages, face a similar but much easier task. Their job is to quickly judge the film(s) under review, and then substantiate that judgment. He summarizes the structure of the average newspaper review in the following way:

Open with a summary judgement; synopsise the plot; then supply a string of condensed arguments about the acting, story logic, sets, spectacle, or other case-centered points; lace it all with background information; and cap the review by reiterating the judgement.
(Bordwell 1989:38)

This suggests that film reviewing is, in classical rhetorical terms, a form of *genus iudiciale*, or judicial oratory. The body of the review becomes evidence presented before the reader, who in turn becomes a judge or member of the jury. The case under deliberation is the status of the film, the determination of what kind of thing it is. Perhaps the words “summary judgment” aren’t entirely suitable, for the role of the reviewer is closer to that of the advocate than to that of the judge. Nevertheless, Bordwell’s point holds true for the film reviews in my corpus – there are numerous examples of his “condensed arguments” about “case-centered points” (that is, logos arguments) across the decades. Some examples:

Acting: *Jack Nicholson briljerer atter en gang med sitt portrett av J.J. Gittes.* “Jack Nicholson excels yet again with his portrait of J.J. Gittes.” (*Chinatown, Aftenposten*, April 1, 1975)

Story logic: *Historien er komplisert, hopper fram og tilbake i tid og kretser rundt flere forkledninger og illusjoner.* “The plot is complicated, skips back and forth in time and circles around several disguises and illusions.” (*Bad Education, Dagbladet*, August 26, 2004)

Sets: *[A]utentiske rokokko-omgivelser praktfullt ivaretatt [...] gir en illusjon av nærhet og samtidighet som sjelden oppnås i kostymedramaer.* “Authentic rococo surroundings, splendidly preserved, produce an illusion of closeness and contemporaneousness that is rarely achieved in costume dramas.” (*Amadeus, Dagbladet*, October 19, 1984)

Spectacle: *Her er drøssevis av referanser til popkulturen, innforståtte vitser og spill med fortellingsmønstre.* “There are tons of pop-culture references, in-jokes and plays on narrative patterns.” (*Pulp Fiction*, *Aftenposten*, November 11, 1994)

The reviewer provides evidence and summarizes that evidence into a judgment call, the reader is then at liberty to accept the judgment or not. If the review is read before seeing the film, then it may influence the reader’s decision to see the it or not. If it is read later, it will allow the reader a chance to confirm or contest his or her own appraisal of the film. The most basic mechanism of the judicial newspaper review is a binary output; it reached its perhaps purest form in the reviewing practices of the American critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel. Either a film receives an upturned thumb and a reason why, or it receives a downturned thumb and a corresponding reason.

What kind of discourse does this produce? First, let’s ask whether the old chestnut might not be true: when all you have is a hammer, sooner or later everything starts to look like a nail. When the point of reviewing a film is to produce a conclusive judgment, every part of the review performs its function only to the extent that it produces evidence in support of that judgment. This in turn stunts the sensibilities of the reader, who we can assume is reading the newspaper review (much like other newspaper texts) for gist. The role of the reviewer becomes chiefly that of quality controller, his job that of checking whether this week’s output is fit for consumption. The newspaper review, as a genre, becomes a machine for labelling films, for stamping them with approval or disapproval.

This assumes, of course, that David Bordwell’s notion of the utilitarian, judicial review holds *consistently* true of a large corpus of film reviews. In my analysis, I’ve found two central exceptions to that kind of text. First, in the early part of the period under examination, I’ve found a number of examples of a more critical and enquiring, less summary approach. Second, in the later part of the period I’ve found a number of signs that Bordwell’s judicial review is disappearing because the arguments that form the core of that type of review are disappearing. Instead of case-centred arguments, the reader is presented largely with impressionistic observations. In order to discuss these exceptions, I’ll first summarize the major changes in the corpus over time.

3.3. The main changes

The following changes in formal features are especially noticeable as we move from 1974 to 2004:

- 1) *Smaller variation in length.* While the more recent reviews are generally shorter than the older ones, an equally interesting observation is that they *vary less* in length. In 1974, it was possible to find an 850-word review of a single film, while less than 250 were spent on others. In 2004 the lower limit is the same, but the upper limit hovers around 650.
- 2) *More use of illustration.* The total amount of space devoted to film has increased in both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* (Lund 2000), whereas the amount of text has decreased. The gap is filled by images. They are both more frequent and bigger in the more recent reviews.
- 3) *Added paratextual features.* The more recent reviews are usually supplied with four paratexts: headline, two introductory paragraphs, and image captions. The older ones average two: headline and single introductory paragraph. Additionally, the newer reviews employ a graphic *indicator of quality*, in Norwegian newspapers usually a rolled die or other six-part rating system.

Essentially, the 2004 film pages function as consumer guides, according to three principles: *redundancy of information*, *ease of classification*, and *visual cues*. A 2004 film review will frequently provide the reader with the same information over and over again. In the case of *Uno* (*Dagbladet*, August 22, 2004) we are given the name of Aksel Hennie (the director and leading actor) a total of four times – in both introductory paragraphs, in the image caption and in the first paragraph of the review proper. This technique quickly consumes the space available to the reviewer, and is primarily suited for two things: grabbing the reader's attention and, combined with the quality indicator, providing a handle on the film. It also makes for easy division into tables. This film is a 6, directed by X. That one is a 3, starring Y and Z. Each week's, month's or year's output of films can thus be easily measured on the same scale. Consequently, the films are likely to be perceived as more similar.

Go back to 1974, and the situation is very different. A review of Werner Herzog's *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser* (*Dagbladet*, June 8, 1977) discusses the film's historical background and the moral implications of the story extensively. It is even allowed the space to quote two full stanzas from a poem dealing with the subject matter that the reviewer perceives the film to be about. This is exceptional, seen from today's standpoint: the reviewer tries to discuss a film in philosophical, existential terms – certainly not an easy task in 800 words. The level of ambition may exceed the possibilities of the genre, but what results from

even a failed review of this kind is far more interesting than a corresponding text which lacks that ambition. As we shall see, the same basic information is easily conveyed by a skillfully written essayistic review as a purely descriptive one – the essayistic excursions add, they hardly ever subtract.

Some 1970s reviews are clearly erratic in judgment. Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* is dismissed (*Dagbladet*, April 1, 1974) in 300 words as a mediocre "detective film." Even so, this is apparently a time when films could be lauded or chided for their artistic qualities, and compared to other films not in the interest of ranking them, but for the purpose of exploring mutual themes and concerns.

When did this period end? It's hard to say, but the change is very likely tied in with the use of the rating system. When the work of Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky is compared both to Dostoyevsky and to his own previous work in *Dagbladet* (May 13, 1986), it is in order to place the director and his film within a certain *tradisjon* "tradition". It is in order to gain insight into his *formspråk* "language of forms" and *tematikk* "choice of themes". When, ten years later, the performance of Paul Newman in *The Hudsucker Proxy* is compared to that in *The Verdict* in the same newspaper *Dagbladet*, December 13, 1994, it is in order to denigrate the former film and justify a verdict (3 out of 6).

That is a single example – but a telling one, because the only significant change in reviewing practices between 1986 and 1994 seems to be the introduction of the rating system. *The Sacrifice* didn't have to be graded, and it didn't have to compete directly with Tarkovsky's earlier work. His previous films are a resource for understanding his new offering, not a standard that has to be surpassed. In contrast, the mention of Paul Newman's earlier film in the context of a numerically rated review immediately begs the question of whether it would rank lower or higher than his new one.

The primary shift in the function of the newspaper film review seems to be, based on their streamlining in terms of both form and content, that they are now meant to be a classificatory system, a ranking table. The weekly review pages, previously a place for printing, at the best of times, brief essays on new films, have become a scale on which all films must be weighed, a grid through which they must pass. The review pages hand out grades and genre certificates, and they must be comprehensive in order to be plausible. It would weaken the culture section's credibility only to grade half or one-third of all available films, for the same reason that it would weaken the home & garden section's credibility only to grade half the available weed trimmers. If the consumer is to be guided, he must be made aware of what is best, and warned about what is worst.

This misses a central characteristic of films: their diversity. Nobody would consider rating weed trimmers and hair dryers on the same scale, even if one new model of each were made available during the same week. But if a British anti-war documentary, a French action-comedy and a Japanese thriller opens on the same Friday, they are implicitly and explicitly compared to each other. The argument can be made that a skilled reviewer employs a different system when rating documentaries and dramas, but those distinctions are lost on the average reader, reading for gist. Unless the reviewers make their particular criteria explicit (and this is practically never the case), the visually striking cue of three rolled dice of identical make will become a very strong paratextual constraint on each of the reviews.

3.4. Essayistic discourse

The reviews published before the introduction of the grading scale into film reviewing form the early part of the corpus. It is here that we find evidence of an essayistic discourse, a form of writing and thinking about film that becomes more and more difficult to spot as we move forward through time.

I use the words ‘essayistic discourse’ even though the term ‘essayistic’ has a number of different connotations. In the context of this thesis, I understand essayistic discourse to be that which originates in the unique encounter between reviewer and film. For this reason it is rarely predictable, and therefore difficult to describe in general terms. It is inextricably tied to its subject matter and the associations drawn from that matter by the writer.

3.4.1. Philosophy and morality

Consider, for instance, the *Dagbladet* review of Werner Herzog’s *The Enigma of Caspar Hauser* (June 8, 1977). The text is based around four central topics: the director’s affiliation with a certain generation of filmmakers, the historical background of the film’s plot, the story told in the film, and the film’s moral ramifications. The first two paragraphs serve as background. They situate Werner Herzog as a man who has contributed to a *ny, spennende og mangfoldig profil* “new, exciting and varied profile” of West German cinema, and note that one of his previous films were banned from Norwegian cinemas.

From this, we move into the story of Caspar Hauser, the 18-year old boy who was found, with no language and no memory of his identity, in Nürnberg in the 19th century. We’re told that this story has been turned into a *enkel og meget vakker film i det ytre* “simple and very beautiful film on the surface”, which nevertheless poses the serious question of what

Werner Herzog thinks of *det samfunn som ødelegger opprinneligheten*, “*naturligheten*” og *menneskeligheten* “a society that destroys primality, “naturalness” and humanity”.

The review employs an unexpectedly sophisticated vocabulary. The reviewer describes Caspar Hauser as a “*prinsipielt*” *menneske* “human being “in the abstract”” and the film as a *filosofisk fabel* “philosophical fable”. What is more interesting, however, is the fact that the review engages in a relatively long sequence of arguments. From the fact that Caspar Hauser is presented as an abstract person, as the Platonic idea of a pure, natural human being, and from the fact that he is destroyed by his encounter with modern society, the reviewer asks whether Werner Herzog believes that society itself ought to be *avskaffed* “abolished”. This is a line of reasoning that has nothing to do with a forensic, reductive way of film reviewing – it is pure criticism. What are the moral implications of the film we are looking at, what is its attitude to the world? Answering these questions do not necessarily tell us whether we are looking at a good film or a bad film in any simple sense of the words, but they will probably lead us on to bigger questions about the kind of criteria we use to establish whether a film is good or bad.

Note also that of the four main topics of the review, only one (the plot summary) is a direct transcription of what takes place on screen. The others – background information about the director, the historical figure of Caspar Hauser and the moral implications of the film – centre on the reviewer’s *perception* of the film. The reviewer finds it necessary to mention Werner Herzog’s status as a controversial director, to mention the factual background against which his film was made and to suggest a philosophical line of enquiry that originates with it.

All these topics contribute to a better understanding of *The Enigma of Caspar Hauser*, by allowing biographical, historical and philosophical points of entry to it. They construct the film as a stage in a filmatic oeuvre and as an investigation into the relationship between man and nature, with a rich array of interpretational options for the viewer. When a scene from the film is recounted, it is in order to illustrate this richness: *Ta bare scenen med eplet som triller langs bakken – for [Caspar] er eplet et aktverdig og selvstendig vesen*. “Take the scene where an apple rolls along the ground – for Caspar, the apple is an esteemed, independent being.”

3.4.2. Dialogue and doubt

The attitude toward film displayed in the above review is one of serious investigation, and one which treats films as intersections of historical, philosophical and moral questions. It seems in some respects to belong very much to the cultural climate of the 1970s; even so, it can be found in a review of Milos Forman’s *Amadeus* (*Dagbladet*, October 19, 1984). Toward the

end of the text, a postscript is inserted in which the death of (the historical) Mozart is discussed:

P.S. Men ble han nå forgiftet, av Salieri eller andre? Diktere og fabelfortellere jager sannheter bortenfor trivielle fakta. Men her er et slikt faktum: [...]

P.S. But *was* he in fact poisoned, by Salieri or others? Poets and storytellers chase truths that lie beyond trivial facts. But here's such a fact: [...]

On a first reading, the postscript seems just that, a tacked-on query. A closer examination of the structure of the review, however, suggests that it has an additional function, a more central one. It is part of an aesthetic argument that is crucial to the review – a line of reasoning in which Milos Forman's (and the playwright Peter Shaffer's) departure from the historical facts of Mozart's death is acceptable but not laudable, an artistic decision that must be respected, but also requires discussion. This double function is typical of the essayistic review. Basic facts about the film (or the film's historical background) are provided, but at the same time an aesthetic argument is made. The reader is given the choice of reading only for gist or engaging in the argument.

In the above quote, the word *men* “but” is used first to introduce the position that historical facts may be irrelevant to the artistic process, then to present a piece of historical research that contradicts the story told in *Amadeus*. The reviewer never explicitly condemns Peter Shaffer's departure from historical record in the play, but neither does he explicitly condone it. By making his doubts visible, by explicitly marking different arguments with contrastive conjunctions, the reviewer mimics the structure of dialogue.

The different attitudes towards *Amadeus* expressed in the simulated dialogue is expressed in a different way earlier in the text, in a discussion of *Amadeus*' Cain/Abel-motif:

Fengslende som dette umiddelbart kan virke, synes jeg ikke det beløper seg til stort. Det har nok å gjøre med at anmelderen hører til de forherdede som mener at musikken ikke kommer fra himmelen, men fra jorden [...]

Intriguing as this might seem initially, I don't think it amounts to much. This probably has to do with the fact that the reviewer belongs to the hardened lot that thinks music comes not from Heaven, but from the Earth [...]

Here, the organizing principle is temporal rather than contrastive. The reviewer goes through a process; he is *umiddelbart* “initially” intrigued but ultimately disappointed. Uncertainty of opinion is marked by two other means: first, by the use of the qualifier *nok* “probably”.

Secondly, by the non-factual *mener* “thinks” (rather than “knows”), which is also used to refer to *de forherdede* “the hardened lot” (rather than a general public or an anonymous commonsensical position). The contrast becomes apparent in this paraphrasing of the above paragraph, still referring to the motif of Cain, Abel, and sacrificial offerings:

This isn’t very intriguing. Music comes from the Earth, not Heaven.

This version preserves much of the sentiment, and is far more economical – an important principle in space-constrained film reviews. But the longer version preserves ambiguity, it withholds definite judgment, and, even more importantly, it displays the reviewer’s processes of analysis to the reader. The rhetorical stance is quite different in the two cases. Pronouncing judgment on a film can be accomplished quite efficiently by relying on ethos and evocative adjectives. Performing analysis requires closer attention, and more space – as in the process of recognizing a motif and evaluating its contribution to the film as a whole by applying one’s aesthetic values to it.

What, then, are the aesthetic values that are made apparent in this review? The key word in this respect seems to be *autentiskhet* “authenticity”. The reviewer praises the splendidly observed rococo setting captured on film by *Amadeus*’ cinematographer Miroslav Ondricek, mentioning the conveyed sense of *nærhet* “closeness” and *samtidighet* “contemporaneity”. These are values that match up fairly well with the concern about historical veracity expressed in the postscript. What’s more, in the second paragraph of the text, the reviewer classifies *Amadeus* as a whole:

Det herrene [Milos Forman og Peter Shaffer] bærer til torgs er en slags filosofi med religiøse overtoner rundt begreper som genialitet og middelmådighet. Det biografiske har ikke interessert dem så sterkt.

What the gentlemen [Milos Forman and Peter Shaffer] bring to the table is a sort of philosophy with religious overtones, about concepts like genius and mediocrity. The biographical hasn’t interested them as strongly.

One can agree or disagree with the reviewer’s subsequent disapproval of the lack of biographical exactitude, but he lays his cards out quite openly. What is more, a reader with little previous knowledge will end up fairly well-informed about the characteristics of the film and the approach of its director. The reviewer may not agree with Forman, but he writes on the terms with which Forman presents him.

3.4.3. The limitations of judicial reviewing

No conclusion is presented in the *Dagbladet* review of *Amadeus*, no closure is provided. Various aspects of the film are presented, but with a call-and-response structure and an attempt at interpretation rather than a summary judgment and a dismissal. The reviewer is allowed to mention aspects of the film because he finds them interesting, and believes they might be interesting to the reader:

Nattens dronning som svigermor-vits? I så fall en spøk i Mozarts ånd!

The Queen of the Night as a mother-in-law joke? Well then, that's a gag in the spirit of Mozart!

If this was evidence in support of a judgment, one would be hard put to say what it is evidence of. The fact that the film is made in the spirit of Mozart? If the reader is presented with evidence, and then perceives a lack of fit between the judgment and the evidence, the reviewer comes off as inconsistent, lazy or incompetent and suffers, in rhetorical terms, an erosion of ethos and credibility. That is due to the limitations imposed by the judicial review. It makes it difficult to be ambiguous about a film, or indeed to explore any one aspect of it in detail, because every statement made about the film is in some way an argument in the justification of its quality. In the context of essayistic discourse, the reviewer has more options. Let's look again at the earlier quote:

What the gentlemen [Milos Forman and Peter Shaffer] bring to the table is a sort of philosophy with religious overtones, about concepts like genius and mediocrity. The biographical hasn't interested them as strongly.

Is this a bad thing? A good thing? Or merely an observation about Forman and Shaffer's intentions, presented without necessarily being a judgment of quality? These questions cannot be answered by looking only at the text, because they depend heavily on context and the expectations that are conventionally tied to different types of discourse. Let's assume that *Amadeus* had, in this review, been rated low on a numbered scale – a 2 or 3 out of 6, say. In that case, the quote would very likely be interpreted as negatively slanted. The reader, having likely noticed the number before beginning to read the review because of the prominent position of paratextual rating icons, would be primed to expect negative arguments. Then, the quote might trigger the following presupposition: "Biographical films are better than philosophically slanted films" – and that presupposition would likely remain with the reader for the rest of the review. It would be reductive, because it would allow the reviewer little

room for exploring the philosophical aspects of the film. After all, the biographical is what's interesting.

On the other hand, let's assume a positive grade (a 5 or 6), which is after all more in keeping with the overall tone of the review. Then the quote becomes simply inexplicable. The film is great, so why harp on about the kind of story Forman and Shaffer haven't told? If it's a 6, it could hardly be any better. Judicial discourse severely restricts the kind of topics the reviewer is allowed to mention, because it includes a strong principle of economy. If it isn't directly relevant to the case being made, it's entirely irrelevant. The image of a courtroom comes to mind, and a sharp reminder from the judge: *where is this going?*

In the actual text there is no grade, and so the quote doesn't function primarily as justification. It indicates a concern with Mozart's biography, but doesn't force the reviewer's hand. Later in the text, the reader becomes increasingly aware of the reviewer's preference for historically accurate biographical films, but also of an acknowledgement of *Amadeus*' qualities. Had the reading (and writing) of the review been more narrowly guided by the discourse that inevitable follows the rating system, this attitudinal split would have been difficult to achieve. In this review, the readers aren't forced to either join in with a specific aesthetic position or be excluded from the lines of reasoning. They are, instead, made aware of an appreciation of the film and of various reservations about it. It's the difference between entering into a dialogue and shouting arguments through a megaphone. Essayistic discourse, as is suggested by etymology, is about trying out different interpretations. It is about exploring the possibilities offered by film.

3.4.4. Respect for the film

Writing about film in an open, inquisitive manner depends on a certain level of respect for what the filmmaker is trying to say. That respect is evident in the *Dagbladet* review of Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice*. Certainly, circumstances outside the immediate context of the review can heighten the level of respect - in 1986, one would be hard put to find a more critically acclaimed film artist than Tarkovsky. He was a Soviet exile, a poet of film who'd worked within and struggled against a repressive system of government for decades before finally calling it quits, leaving his country of birth in order to continue realizing his artistic vision. Like his earlier films, *The Sacrifice* was generally perceived to be impeccable film art, receiving the Grand Prix at the Cannes Festival along with several other awards.

The high status of *The Sacrifice* is repeatedly emphasized in the review. The primary effect of this seems to be a reinforcement of the contrast between art and non-art. Most

obviously, Tarkovsky's previous films are described as being [...] *ikke akkurat verker for det friksjonsfrie kino-konsum* "not exactly works for frictionless cinema consumption", while Tarkovsky himself *forblir den samme egensindige kunstneren* "remains the same self-possessed artist". Tarkovsky's canonical films are listed. A brief note is made about his strained relationship with the Soviet regime, which nevertheless *lot ham realisere merkelige arbeider* "allowed him to produce strange works [of art]". This is background knowledge, it informs the reader that *The Sacrifice* is part of an oeuvre, a larger artistic project.

The artistic merits of the film are emphasized in more indirect ways. The review discusses both his *formspråk* "language of forms" and his *tematikk* "choice of themes". It uses the language of analysis to discuss *The Sacrifice*, triggering the presupposition that there is something there to be analyzed. Tarkovsky's (and the cinematographer, Sven Nykvist's) choices of imagery and lighting are discussed in a long paragraph, thereby signaling the importance of an aspect of filmmaking that is frequently ignored in newspaper reviews. Major ethical and philosophical questions are raised, e.g. [*d*] *en enkeltes følelse av hjelpeløshet overfor mektige krefter som styrer vår tilværelse* "the individual's feeling of helplessness in the face of powerful forces that control our existence".

The framing of *The Sacrifice* as high art is also accomplished by referring observations about the theme of the film directly back to Tarkovsky's artistic vision and intentions:

Selvfølgelig unngår vi ikke å tenke på en kjernefysisk katastrofe, selv om Tarkovskij ikke er overtydelig på det punkt. Snarere har han villet gjenskape og fastholde en grunnsituasjon:[...] han har tydelig kunnet lage "Offeret" helt som han vil.

Naturally we cannot avoid thinking of a nuclear catastrophe, even though Tarkovsky isn't obvious on that point. Rather, he has wanted to recreate and maintain a basic situation: [...] he's clearly been able to make "The Sacrifice" entirely as he wished to.

Two interesting things about this approach is that it works due to the contrastive discourse that runs through the review and that this discourse is expressed even on a local level.

"Naturally" is balanced by "even though" and "rather"; the reader is led from one position to the next. The text makes repeated reference to contrasts and dialectical oppositions.

Tarkovsky is referred to as an "exile". The landscape in which the film plays out is *unordisk* "un-Nordic", whereas the light is typically Nordic. *Filmens enkelhet åpner for komplikasjoner* "The simplicity of the film allows for complications." Tarkovsky's intentions are frequently described using negatives, suggesting what a lesser artist might have done. He doesn't exactly

resemble Solzhenitsyn, he isn't being too obvious, he never uses the camera in a too dazzling manner. This focus on dialectical oppositions is mirrored in the text's perspective on Alexander, the protagonist of *The Sacrifice*:

Alexander peker på at ethvert framskritt blir umiddelbart vrent om til sin motsetning.

Alexander points out that any instance of progress is immediately forced into to its opposite.

Additionally, the text explicitly acknowledges that its interpretation is one among several possible, it is only [...] *én mulig inngang til filmen* "[...] one possible entrance to the film." The emphasis on paradox, contradiction and existential dilemmas that the reviewer sees in the film seems to make him more exploratory, more tentative. Faced with high art, he's apt to interpret rather than pronounce judgment – and the length of a 1986 film review allows him to do just that.

The analytical mode employed in the *Dagbladet* review, interestingly, includes most of the basic information about *The Sacrifice*: the plot structure, the name of the key actors and so on. But the information is conveyed economically, through the use of presuppositions. Consider the following excerpt, which follows a mention of Gotland, the setting of the film, and the main character, Alexander:

*Familie og venner samler seg for å feire hans fødselsdag i **det** vakre gamle huset i dette tidløse, "unordiske" landskapet med **det** nordiske midtsommerlyset over seg som fotografen Sven Nykvist fanger så fabelaktig, sammen med detaljskarpheten i interiører som utescener.*

Family and friends gather round to celebrate his birthday in **the** beautiful old house in this timeless, "un-Nordic" landscape with **the** Nordic mid-summer light over it, which **the** cinematographer Sven Nykvist captures so fabulously, along with **the** sharpness of detail in interiors as well as outdoor scenes. [My emphases]

The use of definite forms is crucial. By simply triggering the presuppositions that there is a beautiful old house in which the action takes place, that the landscape is covered in mid-summer light, and that the cinematographer is (Ingmar Bergman's well-known associate) Sven Nykvist, the reviewer is left free to move on. The above paragraph forms a kind of background, against which an interpretation of Tarkovsky's "painterly" method can be displayed:

*Det er sett og gjengitt med **en** stor enkelhet, og som lar oss få tid til å "gå inn i bildene" og selv fabulere i dem.*

It is seen and reproduced with a great simplicity, and allows us the time to “enter the pictures” and imagine within them ourselves.

This sentence, following the above paragraph directly, is a different kind of aesthetic statement, as signaled by the shift to indefinite form. Whereas observations about the beautiful old house, the mid-summer light and so on are just that, observations, the claim that we may “enter the pictures” (and that this is a good thing) is a bolder statement. It is also one that requires more aesthetic deliberation. Creating a picture that has a natural point of entry is something valued in certain approaches to visual art, but certainly not all of them. Here, the level of discussion is raised from describing what takes place on the screen to considering what it means.

The same strategy is repeated in the next two paragraphs, under the headings *Katastrofen* “The Catastrophe” and *Dilemmaet* “The Dilemma”. First, factual information is introduced (by definite noun phrases, triggering presuppositions and backgrounding that information), then the reviewer moves on to an interpretation of that information. By using particular, concrete observations about the film (David Bordwell’s “condensed arguments”) as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, the review enters a kind of discussion that is often expected only in film criticism, not newspaper film reviewing.

3.4.5. Respect for the reader

What does this do to, or for, the reader? The reviews of *The Enigma of Caspar Hauser*, *Amadeus* and *The Sacrifice* are all relatively sophisticated, relatively verbose. One might assume they are not for everyone. Nevertheless, they all include the basic information one tends to expect from film reviews. They include judgments and opinions, they summarize plots, they name names. It is in *addition* to this that they provide an analytical take on the films in question. There is a basic level at which the review provides information about the film, and an additional level at which that information is made subject to discussion. It is on this additional level that essayistic comes into its own and earns its name. A way to reach this level is through the shift in perspective. We return to the *Caspar Hauser* review:

Mange har gransket Kaspars historie uten å gi definitive svar på det spørsmål som reiser seg om det unge hittemennesket. Vi vet at han ble brukt som sirkusattraksjon og seinere kom i pleie hos en velstående herre og sluttelig ble myrdet av ukjente – og av ukjente årsaker.

Denne hendelsesrekken fins også i filmen.

Many people have examined Caspar’s story without providing definite answers to the question that arises about the young foundling. We

know that he was used as a circus attraction and that he later came into the care of a wealthy gentleman, and that he was finally murdered by parties unknown – and for causes unknown.

This sequence of events exists in the film as well.

The information provided in the first paragraph describes the plot, and by a reader reading for gist, it could presumably be taken as a straight plot summary. It is only with the second paragraph that the distinction between the film plot and the historical events is emphasized; the second paragraph goes on to discuss Werner Herzog's interest in history (as opposed to his interest in fables). One possible reader strategy in this situation is to focus only on the embedded clauses describing Caspar's fate: "he was used as...", "he was finally..." and so on. Another strategy is to process the framing of the information, to take an interest in the discussion of the relationship between the history and narrative. Either way, the review provides adequate amounts of information.

By no means all of the early reviews operate on this level of analysis. A film as acclaimed as *Chinatown* is dismissed out of hand as a "detective film" in its *Dagbladet* review (April 1, 1974), and the *Aftenposten* take on *Amadeus* (October 18, 1984) consists of a torrent of euphonic and alliterative characteristics (along the lines of *metafysisk mareritt* "metaphysical nightmare") rather than substantive analysis. There is, however, a topos present in the 1974 and 1984 reviews that is all but absent in later decades. It is probably best summed up in the word 'significance'. The question that can be (and frequently is) put to a film by its reviewer is whether or not the film is *art* – whether it deals with questions of significance, whether its form and content have artistic merit, whether it shows the viewer something the viewer ought to see.

These questions assume that film *is* important, that it *does* have a potential for influence, and for great artistic heights. The dual perspective on the three films mentioned in the above analysis allows for easy, surface reading as well, but it also allows the reviewer to practice the craft of criticism in the daily newspaper. The balance isn't always perfect, but it is achieved on occasion.

3.5. Taxonomic discourse

Essayistic discourse, as it is described in the previous section, is dependent largely on the interest level of the reviewer. There must be something worthwhile to say about the film being reviewed in order for the review of that film to become interesting to a reader; case-centered arguments and lines of reasoning cannot be spun out of thin air. The evidence of this

is frequent in the early part of the corpus. There are a large number of routine reviews where the perspective of the reviewer remains firmly rooted in the theater or screening room, in which the reviewer does not bother to collect any outside information or attempt any analysis.

These reviews form the majority of the early part of the corpus, but they are balanced by the occasional essays, the sometime in-depth analyses. A way of interpreting this variation is as an accurate reflection of the varying quality of cinema; there aren't always masterpieces available for the reviewer to write about.

What happens in the later part of the corpus is that those essays disappear. The by-the-numbers review becomes the only review, the essayistic discourse is entirely displaced by what I've chosen to call taxonomic discourse. It is, in practice, the utterly standardized film review, using the same language, the same arguments, the same lines of reasoning, to describe films that are very different in both form and content, in both quality and ambition. It is the kind of reviewing in which real *difference* is absent, or at best negligible. It is a textual machine for processing and labeling films, for rendering unto the consumers a neatly packaged set of cultural consumer goods.

3.5.1. Classifying systems

How does the taxonomic discourse manifest itself? I've argued that discourse is highly tangible, it is expressed through and produced by language. In order for a discourse to be real, then, it has to be functional, it needs to be visible across different texts, in features that are repeated again and again. And what ties the bulk of the recent reviews together is that they are all subjected to a quality judgment and that they are all matched up against a genre system.

The quality judgment, or rating system, is in a Norwegian context usually expressed by means of a rolled die, or another six-part scale. Elsewhere, the four- or five-part scale is equally common. Taken as a topos, the invocation of the rating system is a statement about the nature of films: they are equal enough to be judged on the same scale. The reader must agree to that statement in order to gain entry to the review, so to speak, and in agreeing with it he or she must also allow for a number of implications. The grading scale is not, of course, used only to rate films. It appears in sports journalism, it is used to rate politicians' charisma, and it is used above all in consumer guides. It brings with it the notion of objectively (or at the very least intersubjectively) valid comparisons, the idea that the objects being compared can essentially or ultimately be reduced to a number, a point on the scale. The number has an air of finality, it lends authority to the text.

What does the use of the rating system do to the remainder of the review, how does it affect the way the review functions? For one, most of the reviewer's efforts become implicitly directed towards *justifying* the verdict. Let's return to David Bordwell's summary of the conventional review structure:

Open with a summary judgement; synopsise the plot; then supply a string of condensed arguments about the acting, story logic, sets, spectacle, or other case-centered points; lace it all with background information; and cap the review by reiterating the judgement.
(Bordwell 1989:38)

When applied to the early part of the corpus, Bordwell's summary seemed too reductive. It didn't allow for the analytical insight that appeared in certain texts. When applied to the recent reviews, it seems that Bordwell's schema is too complex. Those reviews frequently skip over the "condensed arguments" – only the plot summary and the judgment remains.

The Bourne Supremacy (reviewed in *Dagbladet*, September 30, 2004) is a case in point. It is in many ways a film ideally suited for the brief, to-the-point review. It has a spy-thriller plot (story logic), a movie star and some familiar character actors in the leading roles (acting), and veteran craftspeople behind the camera (sets, spectacle). It is also the sequel to the very successful *The Bourne Identity* (background information). The review treating the film does not offer condensed arguments, however. It barely offers arguments at all. The summary judgment is there, though only at the end of the review: *Det denne andre filmen om Robert Ludlums agent mangler av gårder rundt hukommelsestapet, tar den igjen med action i høyt tempo og stram naturalisme*. "What this second film about Robert Ludlum's agent lacks in enigmas about the loss of memory, it regains in fast-paced action and taut naturalism." What makes up the bulk of the review is Bordwell's plot synopsis, essentially a blow-by-blow description of what takes place on the screen: *Jakten på Bourne begynner idet flere av hans fiender sporer ham opp*. "The hunt for Bourne begins as several of his enemies track him down."

The arguments about the acting, sets, etc come only in the form of isolated adjectives. Only once does the reviewer signal an aesthetic position, and then only tentatively: *Kameraet hopper og rister så man føler seg plassert på innsida av de vakleворne Moskva-drosjene under en biljakt nesten uten sidestykke på film*. "The camera jumps and shakes so that one feels placed on the inside of the rickety Moscow taxis during a car chase which lacks cinematic peers." Other than that, the reader is left with judgment and description, but nothing to link the two. Why is *The Bourne Supremacy* rated 4 out of 6?

The review never makes its quality criteria explicit, the answer cannot be found in the text itself. Even the final mention of fast-paced action and taut naturalism is a pseudo-argument, or, more precisely, an unfounded claim. We are not told what the taut naturalism consists in, the only possible antecedent is the reviewer's remark about the shaky, jumpy camerawork during the Moscow car chase. We are not told what the fast-paced action consists in, and so the remark comes to apply to the film as a whole. Essentially, we're left with a single argument: *The Bourne Supremacy* is good because there's a realistic car chase in it. Does this warrant 4 out of 6? There's no way to know without taking other factors into consideration.

The striking thing about the *Bourne Supremacy* review is that it seems unmotivated, and void of genre characteristics. Its functions could be (and were) performed by other, related texts. The companies that produced and distributed *The Bourne Supremacy* made brochures detailing the film's plot, and trailers that emphasized the Moscow car chase as a chief selling point. *Dagbladet* carries film listings and advertisements that tell the reader that the film was directed by Paul Greengrass and starred Matt Damon. Why the judgment of quality? Why, in fact, the review? The answer lies outside the text, in the discourse of which it forms a part. *Dagbladet* reviews the new film releases and employs a grading scale going from 1 to 6, so the reviewer is compelled to write a review and choose a number on that scale. The reasons for choosing that number instead of another one are secondary.

3.5.2. The taxonomic operation

Reasoning from this, I'll suggest a way to understand the grade. The main operation of the *Bourne Supremacy* review is to classify the film, to slot it in with other action-thrillers. In this respect, the reviewer's mention of the Moscow car chase functions much better. The car chase has been a standard feature of the action-thriller at least since Steve McQueen tore up and down the hills of San Francisco in *Bullitt*. The action thriller, moreover, is a kind of film that commonly ranks below serious drama, but above pure action films in the Stallone/Schwarzenegger mould. The action thriller isn't considered high art, but neither is it thought to be truly exploitative or trashy. It maintains an uneasy relationship with violence, eschewing pyrotechnics in favor of single gunshots. Is the Moscow car chase realistic? Only compared to the car chase in *Terminator 2*. It is realistic enough, however, to justify *The Bourne Supremacy*'s membership in the action-thriller category and a grade of 4.

Is that really the explanation? Whether it is or not, the need for looking outside the text in order to make sense of the reviewing process remains. There are no chains of reasoning in

the *Bourne Supremacy* review; that makes it a good place to begin the analysis. It is in a sense pure impressionism, the work of a recording device. And it is, as far as I can tell, the rule rather than the exception when it comes to the 2004 reviews.

Bordwell's summary of the newspaper review's conventional components assumes a rhetoric of case-centered arguments, of logos. That feature is not easily identified in my corpus. But here is Bordwell on the reviewer's use of ethos, on the attempts to establish a credible persona:

The reviewer may present himself or herself as a solicitous consumer guide [...]. Or the reviewer's ethos may be that of the passionate advocate for the bizarre and overlooked film [or] the vulgar but righteous film fan [or] the cultural pundit with stringent standards.
(Bordwell 1989:35-36)

Both *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet* employ regular reviewers, and so the interested reader is in a position to become used to the personality and writing styles of those reviewers. But one question remains: is it possible to establish a reviewing persona based chiefly on describing what takes place on the screen, with a few added adjectives? And what kind of persona does this make for? A very limited one, for a start, but one that can be adopted without much effort. One that can do work of classification, but which is rarely able to explore a film in any detail. It is the persona of a frontline scout, capable of looking, taking notes and bringing them back, but unable to interpret or explain.

Here is a case that shows the limitation of that persona: the review of Michel Gondry and Charlie Kaufman's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (*Dagbladet*, August 19, 2004). Contrary to *The Bourne Supremacy*, this film has, depending on one's perspective, an extremely convoluted or exceedingly simple plot. Taken one way it is a simple love story, taken another way it is a science-fiction yarn fuelled by a jumpy chronology, shifts in perspective and low-grade but efficient special effects. That plot serves as a natural focus of interest in the review; various metaphors are employed in order to describe it. There are *labyrintiske historier* "labyrinthine stories" and *tidsaspektet [er] vrent* "the time aspect [is] turned inside out".

Both of those expressions are metaphors that rely on the understanding of TIME as SPACE. The story is a landscape through which the characters move, the timeline is a pliable object that can be turned or twisted. The review, however, has no use for intricacies of chronology and plotting. The metaphor isn't explored further, there are no attempts to join that understanding with another, central theme of the film: the vagaries and subtleties of memory. The final sentences are a dismissal:

Kaufman og Gondrys dykk ned i bevissthetslagene er fascinerende fabulering, og faktisk også filmatisk vellykket. Men resultatet fokuserer mer på teknikk enn på følelser. Kjærlighetshistorien forsvinner med badevannet.

Kaufman and Gondry's dive down through the layers of consciousness makes for fascinating fabulation, and is in fact filmatically successful as well. But the result focusses more on technique than on emotions. The love story goes out with the bath water.

The final judgment seems shallow, because it isn't backed up by case-centered arguments about the actual film. The review is void of Bordwell's logos-based arguments, and so the conclusion does not follow from the premises. There is an opening evaluation: *Finurlig film om flukten fra hukommelsen*. "Ingenious film about the escape from memory.", but it is a statement, and unfounded claim. Theoretically, the review is (in Bordwell's words) "capped" by "reiterating the judgment". In practice, the initial judgment is entirely reversed by the end of the review – and the reader is left wondering why. That is the main problem with the impressionist persona: it leaves no way for the reader to join in with the reviewer's appreciation of the film. The reviewer is not accountable for his opinions, not obliged to think out loud about the film – one of the chief characteristics of essayistic discourse.

There are, however, symptoms of the reasoning which underlies the *Dagbladet* review. A closer look at the final sentence, "The love story goes out with the bathwater", reveals a number of presuppositions. Those presuppositions, in turn, form something like a case-centered argument. First, the "bathwater" metaphor has one clear implication: the baby is much more valuable than the bathwater. The baby, in fact, was the reason why the bath was run in the first place, not the other way around. Therefore, the key presupposition is that *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is primarily, or essentially, a love story.

The question is, why look for a catch-all category in the first place? The review details a plot full of twists and turns, it notes that the film is about memory, identity, and, yes, love. In the end, the love story becomes the criterion by which the film is judged. The submerged logos argument (the film tries to be a love story, but partly fails to be one, therefore it rates 4 out of 6) rests on an even more submerged classificatory argument (the film contains elements of a love story, therefore it is chiefly a love story). There is certainly a case to be made that *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* is only a moderately accomplished film. But that case could be effectively made by discussing the film's particular scenes, the performances of its actors and the way in which it affects its audience. By limiting the discussion to what *type* of film it is, by looking chiefly for a way to label it, the *Dagbladet* review misses out on the

film's particulars, on its individual qualities. This is one of the key problems in taxonomic discourse, which I'll return to in chapter 4.

3.5.3. Carolyn Miller and genre

The *Bourne Supremacy* review deserves a second look. The clear-cut action-thriller is reviewed according to exactly the same template as the more shifting, less readily classifiable film, and receives the same grade. The tone in the *Bourne Supremacy* review is one of pleasant surprise, while that of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* has one of mild disappointment. The first film "regains in fast-paced action" what it "lacks in enigmas," triggering the presupposition that it ought to have more enigmas. The second "is in fact filmatically successful", triggering the presupposition that it ought to have failed.

The presuppositions reveal the genre network that underlies both reviews. Both films are ultimately measured by the standards of a classical, established genre. For one of them that works just fine – *The Bourne Supremacy*, if anything, provides the reviewer with a positive surprise by adding "naturalism" to the action-thriller blend. For the other film, the fit is less than perfect, because it blends too many genres, it fails to conform to the most readily available pattern, that of the love story. Perhaps in twenty years' time, when other filmmakers have built on Gondry and Kaufman's work, when they've established a genre with clear-cut rules and quality criteria, the job will be easier. But in the case of the *Dagbladet* review, there is a mismatch between the job the review attempts to do and the tools available to do it.

So much of what the brief newspaper review does is submerged that an iceberg metaphor seems inappropriate. The kind of tree whose roots stretch downwards and outwards for hundreds of meters might be a better image, if the roots represent the background knowledge of genres and conventions of film stories presumed to be common to both the reviewer and the reader. Once we've reached this point, the task ahead becomes clearer. In order to understand the way film reviews work, you have to understand what the classification schemes that underlie them look like. If there is a car chase, call it an action thriller. If there's romance, it's a love story. And if there's both, you'd better pick one and stick with it.

I'm not suggesting that most film reviewers are by temperament or choice anything like that categorical or simple-minded. The knee-jerk act of classification described above is, however, inherent in the constraints of length and content imposed by the conventional form of the film review, and that form is no more decided by the average film reviewer than the information structure of the news story is decided by the journalist. Carolyn Miller (2001 [1984]) suggests that genre is social action, and her point applies both to the way in which

film reviews are written and the way that they treat the films being reviewed. The film review, treated as a product of genre, imposes certain constraints of writing on the reviewer, for instance the expectation (shared by readers and editors alike) that a review should include a plot synopsis without giving away key plot twists or mysteries.

The *film*, treated as a product of genre, imposes different constraints on the reviewer – for instance the expectation that it should include certain plot developments, the lack of which may be interpreted as a flaw. What does not fit the habitual categories of genre is more difficult to describe, and more likely to be found lacking.

3.5.4. Mechanisms of the genre system

The genre system is among the most valuable tools available to the day-in-day-out film reviewer, and it has been put to increasingly frequent use. The 2004 reviews demonstrate this in particular. In each of the *Aftenposten* reviews, for instance, if a traditional genre label isn't employed in either the first or second sentence, then there is a metonym substituting for a genre label that is mentioned later. For “thriller”, there is a first-sentence use of “super-agent”. For “urban drama”, there is a first-sentence use of “actor’s film”. The other films are explicitly and immediately labeled as tragicomedy, melodrama, comedy, martial arts film, coming-of-age/romance, and satire. In *Aftenposten* in 1974, the labeling is far less noticeable. Only one of the films in my corpus is given an explicit label: *Chinatown* is referred to as a “detective film”, which is hardly surprising given that it was written and filmed as an homage to the golden age of Hollywood and the heyday of film noir.

What does a genre system do? On one level, what every system of classification does – make sense of a confusing continuum through acts of *distinction* and *difference*. Particularly in the tradition pioneered by Michel Foucault, e.g. his investigations into the history of madness (1973) and the prison system (1977) and his work on the history of science (1970), there has been considerable research into the mechanisms of various classificatory systems. Bowker and Star (1999), in a telling study, chart the common ground between practices of classification that are superficially very different: the racial categories of apartheid South Africa and the conditions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Most well-established systems of classification, according to Bowker and Star, are not very adept at handling borderline or ambiguous cases. In order for the system to work smoothly, there are occasionally reclassifications of individual cases, but there is very rarely a reordering of the system as a whole. There is also low tolerance of multiple category

membership; ideally categories are both exhaustive and mutually exclusive – in a word, Aristotelian.

When did the genre system become crucial to film? Particularly since the inception and massive spread of the various home viewing systems, Betamax, VHS, Laserdisc and DVD, the need for an exhaustive and easily maintained system of film classification has been enormous. Video rental stores want to know which aisle to put new releases in, and producers want a marketable label to affix to new product. The very title of Miller's (2001 [1984]) seminal article makes the point quite clearly: a genre is a social action. It serves not only to classify what is already known, it does not only provide labels to be applied to stable objects. Genre systems provide the notion of what a legitimate object is in the first place, and their reproduction defines the limits of what an object can in fact be.

Ideally, and to some extent in a practical sense, each film belongs to a single genre. What that genre is, will nevertheless vary according to who is asked. Rick Altman (1999), a film scholar particularly interested in the history of the Western and the musical, suggests that a very naïve view of genre development has prevailed for surprisingly long in the general discourse of film. In this view, saying that a film belongs to a particular genre means claiming that it adheres to certain conventions of plot, storytelling, setting or visual style. There are different ways to make a film, but there's not all that many of them. Ultimately, most of them are minor variations on a few basic themes.

Altman's view of genre is different, and much more closely related to the work of both Miller and Foucault. For him, genres are instruments of discourse, ways of exercising power. First, there is the producer's view of genre. When a studio has a hit, it will attempt to copy the success by any means available. The trouble is, no one knows precisely what makes an individual film popular. Was it the story? The actors? The director? There's only one way to find out: make more films. And if it turns out that the same actors, the same director and a similar story all failed to engage the audience but a second film with nothing in common with the first one except an unusual number of song-and-dance numbers, well, maybe they were both musicals all along. Of course, the studio has no interest in sustaining a genre label beyond the point of profitability. The minute that musicals start losing money, they become (in marketing) costume dramas, Louis Armstrong pictures, or whatever. Studio genres are ephemeral, because they are functional entities above all else. When they lose their function, they disappear.

There is a different genre system, namely that of the film historian. Retrospectively, films made during the same period, by the same studio, or about the same themes, come to

look the same. Films made in the United States during the Depression years may have been marketed as comedies, dramas and romances, but from a certain point of view they're all Great Depression films, reflecting their times. Needless to say, different film historians see different things. Some of them are advocates of particular genres, and try to make them look more impressive, more encompassing, than they've traditionally been perceived to be. Others are empire builders, for whom reclassification is an end in itself, a way to make a name.

The variety of genre systems and the interests vested in them suggested by Altman point to a bigger insight: film categories, however clear-cut the people using them may want them to be, are fundamentally prototypical. While there are probably few people who would dispute the status of *The Bourne Identity* as a thriller, this is for the same reason that most people consider a chair to be a piece of furniture. A chair can equally well be firewood or a weapon, and *The Bourne Identity* could very well be classified as an exploration into the nature of paranoia, essentially a psychological drama, or a satirical view of the post-Cold War world of intelligence, essentially a comedy. It just requires the right circumstances.

How does this fluidity fit with the view of categorical systems presented by Bowker and Star? Not at all well, if we intend to draw parallels between systems of classifying films and other, more socially significant systems like the one practiced by the Apartheid regime. On the other hand, the confusion and multiple approaches reigning in film classification makes sense if we take the difference between those kinds of systems into consideration. Socially significant systems of classification are nearly always arenas for the exercise of considerable amounts of power. If you decide the label, you're in charge. It seems reasonable, then, that the rivalry and competition between various groups in the film field is in many ways a struggle for power.

Producers and their studios prefer to keep labeling rights to themselves, and to keep them absolutely fluid. That way, a film can be repackaged and resold according to the vagaries of the market. Think of *Casablanca* – according to circumstances, it can be credibly marketed as, to name the most obvious choices, a romance, a war film, a drama and a 'classic'. Film historians and critics, of course, would like to keep that power for themselves. Genre perception is the basis of theory, because it allows theoreticians to see changes and similarities over time, to see patterns emerging from history.

3.5.5. Uncovering a genre: the European art house film

The examples of *The Bourne Supremacy* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* point to the existence of fairly well known genres: the action thriller and the romance. The next genre

suggested by the 2004 reviews is more complex, but also more central to the everyday practice of newspaper film reviewing. It is in fact both a genre and an implicit quality guarantee: the European art house film.

The ambiguous film, the one that is resistant to classification by simple genres, doesn't have to fare badly with respect to the grading scale. Agnès Jaoui's *Comme une image* (*Aftenposten*, December 24, 2004) is a good illustration of the fact that while the film being reviewed is rarely more than a sliver of the film being screened, the result can be undivided praise. *Comme une image* was internationally well-received and collected several critical awards. It is a work of considerable complexity. *Aftenposten*'s reviewer duly notes that it is *uhyggelig presis* "uncannily accurate", its star and co-writer Jean-Pierre Bacri conveys *syrlig sarkasme* "acerbic sarcasm", and it is *så velspilt at det nesten virker uforskammet, midt i den franske snakkeglede* "so well-acted it seems almost impertinent, in the midst of the French loquaciousness". This last observation ties in with the review's closing statement: *Som franskmennene kan!* "How capable the French are!" These observations convey the gist of the review: the film is good (graded 5 out of 6) because it is an elegantly acted, elegantly written satire of the Parisian literary elite.

How do the arguments work? Several of the qualities mentioned aren't inherently positive. Sarcasm can be off-putting, verbosity can be tiresome. The labels only receive positive or negative connotations in connection with a certain set of conventions, with a certain aesthetic point of view. That point of view, which is never stated explicitly in the review, is nevertheless necessary for it to gain any kind of rhetorical force, for it to become something more than a list of observations about the film. The review has two foci: 1) the quintessential Frenchness and 2) satirical qualities of *Comme une image*. This isn't a choice made randomly, but it is important to recognize it as a choice. The film is set in and around Paris, and numbers two authors among its main characters (Jean-Pierre Bacri and a younger protégé/rival). It includes several prototypically satirical elements, including characters just this side of caricatures, sharp turns of phrase, and thumbnail sketches of a particular social environment.

This is not, however, the whole story of the film. It also places great emphasis on interpersonal relationships – mainly the one between Bacri's character and his daughter (played by Marilou Berry) and the one between the younger author and his wife (played by Agnès Jaoui herself). Without going into the specifics of the plot of *Comme une image*, I'll suggest two other potential foci for reviewing the film: its themes of social inclusion and exclusion, and its dissection of the universal human need for attention and acceptance. The

film's English title was, in fact, *Look at Me*. So while there is certainly a case to be made for the film as social satire directed towards a specific set of Paris intellectuals, there is an equally valid one to be made for its qualities as a universal investigation into the complexities of human relationships. More than likely, both aspects of the film contributed to its critical success.

Granting this, the fact that a reviewer has to choose an approach among several, to present a reading, a particular version of the film he's seen, is hardly surprising. Space is a luxury in daily newspapers, and the *Aftenposten* review (counting headlines, image captions etc) barely exceeds 450 words. So how are the constraints of space overcome? In the review, *Comme une image* is presented as being significantly French and significantly satirical. These qualities (rather than those qualities to do with the film's more general humanist ethos, say) are emphasized for a reason. They tie in with a category that is well known both in a Norwegian and an Anglo-American context: the "highbrow" and/or "European" art house film. If *Comme une image* is placed safely within that category, certain baseline arguments about its quality and/or whether or not it makes interesting viewing need not be made.

Whether or not the European art house film "really" exists isn't a question that can be readily answered. Several film critics might respond with a hesitant "no, but," whereas a number of film distributors and marketing directors would reply "yes, and this is the demographic it attracts". While any number of artistically interesting, intellectually challenging films has been made in the United States and vast amounts of trash have been made in Europe, the idea of the European "quality film" seems remarkably persistent. The fact that nearly all so-called blockbuster films in recent memory have been produced by a Hollywood studio reinforces the idea: if French films generally aren't as financially successful as their American counterparts, surely they must have other qualities that redeem them?

This dichotomy of highbrow vs. lowbrow and the U.S. vs. France is the topos tapped into by the *Aftenposten* review when it emphasizes the Frenchness of *Comme une image*. The point is further underlined by a metaphor: Jean-Pierre Bacri's character is *kulturlivets selvmedlidende solkonge* "the self-pitying Sun King of the cultural scene". The image is striking, and very French, but it isn't particularly apt. A Sun King is, almost by definition, the centre of everyone's attention. He is absolutely secure, absolutely unassailable. In a Lakoff & Johnson image schema, he would turn all other characters in his presence into satellites. Bacri does not fit that bill. While he is a celebrated author and publisher, the film deals with his decline. A younger rival challenges him, a bigger corporation buys his publishing house, and

he is highly insecure of his relationship to his (much younger) wife. A number of more fitting metaphorical images might be suggested. That of King Lear, for instance, would include both a ruler in decline, rivals for the throne, and a daughter lacking attention. It would not, however, tie in well with the French context. Once the commonplace of French quality film has been entered, it makes sense to stay there both for rhetorical purposes and with regards to the metaphorical domains.

The *Comme une image* review, like the one of *The Bourne Supremacy*, contains numerous pseudo-arguments in the form of adjectives and adverbs. The dialogue is said to be *særdeles velopplagt* “particularly vigorous”, but no lines are quoted. Marilou Berry’s acting is *mutt og medfølelse* “taciturn and compassionate” but how this is communicated to the audience remains unclear. *Menn, spesielt fedre, kommer ikke heldig ut* “men, particularly fathers, do not come across sympathetically”, but no male characters are discussed other than the failed patriarch played by Jean-Pierre Bacri. The claim that *Comme une image* is a good film is made in the beginning of the review. Convincing the reader about this claim is among the main rhetorical tasks of the review. The claim is supported by several implicit subsidiary arguments, which can be paraphrased as the following:

Comme une image is good because it contains good dialogue.

Comme une image is good because it contains good acting.

Comme une image is good because it contains accurate satire.

These arguments may then be accepted at face value, which makes the review *as a sequence of arguments* dependent mainly on the ethos of *Aftenposten* and its reviewer – an illustration of the need for rhetorical perspectives in CDA. The first two arguments are not supported by subsequent references to the film. The third is partially supported by the summary of the plot, in which we get to know that Marilou Berry’s character experiences a shift in her relationship with her music teacher when the latter discovers the identity of Berry’s father. For an unconvinced reader, however, this line of reasoning is fairly shallow. But all three arguments are supported by the construal of *Comme une image* as a particular kind of French film – if, that is, the reader shares an additional presupposition: a film is good if it exemplifies the virtues of a particular well-respected genre and/or tradition. If the reader presupposes that there is such a category as the “French quality film”, and accepts the placement of *Comme une image* in that category, the subsequent observations about the film will seem both relevant and fairly well argued. Notably, these are presuppositions that form over time, through the habitual reading of film reviews.

A French quality film contains good dialogue. The dialogue in *Comme une image* is *særdeles velopplagt* “particularly energetic”. A French quality film contains good acting. The acting in *Comme une image* is so good it is all but *uforskammet* “impertinent”. A quality European film can be elegant, witty and satirical. *Comme une image* is *vittig og giftig satire* “witty and poisonous satire”. In this list, all three claims relating to *Comme une image* are left somewhat unfounded in the review. They will make sense, however, to a reader who is to some extent aware of the genre characteristics of the French quality film. To him or her, the observations will serve not so much as a sequence of arguments dissecting and analyzing the film, but as a series of signposts and labels that help in placing the film within a particular category. The text of a single review is neither self-sufficient nor independent; it functions in relation to both a genre and a reader familiar with that genre.

3.5.6. The role of auteurism

The European art house film is a sub-species of the film type that lies at the heart of the 2004 genre system – the *auteur* film. Some historical background is in order. The original French expression commonly translated into English as “auteurism” was “la politique des auteurs”, and was coined by the then film critic François Truffaut in his highly influential 1954 essay “Une certaine tendance du cinéma français”, published in the magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*. Since then, the term has taken on a number of connotations and has been employed in both technical and polemical contexts. It became a topos, the reason for the commonplace assumption that films are essentially and primarily the work of a single person, the director.

Truffaut wrote his essay in opposition to the post-WWII French studio system in which films were (he believed) produced on an assembly line, by the numbers, with a distinct lack of artistic quality. His “politique des auteurs” was a way of reexamining recent film history, of promoting a search of the artists that succeeded in realizing their visions despite the constraints imposed by a lethargic film industry. In the essay, he championed the sometimes underappreciated American directors Orson Welles and Alfred Hitchcock, as well as the French director Jean Renoir.

Taken at its most literal, the “politique des auteurs” is not incendiary. It simply means that the director is crucial to the artistic value of a film, and that it can sometimes be a struggle to preserve artistic integrity while working in an industrial environment. However, several later developments in auteur theory, as it came to be known, tended towards the polemical and sometimes oversimplified. The notion of the *caméra-stylo*, for instance, the “camera-pen”, tied the role of the director closer to that of literary author than can strictly be

supported by the realities of film production. Some theorists and essayists, elaborating on Truffaut, argued that the director should indeed be considered the *only* author of a film, the sole source of artistic content. When auteur theory reached the United States, it was in a simplified and polemical form. The critic Andrew Sarris, probably the most important proponent of auteur theory in the Anglophone world, grew famous partly by publishing lists of “Pantheon” directors and their lesser rivals.

The simplified form of auteurism has become deeply embedded in much of the film world. It still informs the practice of newspaper film reviews, because it is an extremely energy-efficient way of thinking about film. It allows the reviewer to conflate the creative energies behind a film into a single author-figure, who is in fact almost never identical with either the actual, physical director or any other single person involved with the film. It allows for the identification of the film’s artistic qualities with the director’s intentions. Analysis is simplified and space is saved – two key effects of an efficient topos.

There is a clear order of priority in most of the film reviews analyzed in the previous chapter, as well as in most of the corpus. The director is always mentioned, along with the top two or three actors. Depending on their perceived contribution to the film, the reviewer nods in the direction of the cinematographer, the editor and the screenwriter. Occasionally, if the film is based on a well-known book or play, the author of that work is made known to the reader. Other than that, people involved in the filmmaking process are hardly ever mentioned. This fact, along with several others, points toward a strain of ideology at work in the corpus. It is a kind of ideology that is probably best described as auteurism.

Auteurism can be conceived of in metaphorical terms: it is the understanding either that A FILM IS A LITERARY WORK or that A FILM IS A PIECE OF CLASSICAL MUSIC. The image schema that is activated through these metaphor understanding maps the director of the film onto an author-figure, either the writer of a novel or the composer of a symphony. In that way, certain aspects of the director’s role become prioritized over others. He (most directors are still men) is an artist, the primary source of meaning in the film. He is responsible for the film’s content and the ideas expressed in it, and because of his artistic significance all other people involved with the film become reduced to the level of craftsmen – publishers, editors, printers and so on. The concept of an author only marginally allows for other creative influences on the work, and that notion of exclusivity is mapped onto the film.

The author metaphors occasionally come to the surface, as when a review of *Chinatown* (*Aftenposten*, April 1, 1974) classifies the film as a *[thriller]*, *signert Roman Polanski* “thriller, signed Roman Polanski” or when a review of *A Sunday in the Country*

(*Aftenposten*, September 3, 1984) is said to be *sikkert komponert* “securely composed” and *rytmisk riktig* “rhythmically correct”. More often, however, it is through the underlying image schema in which the work of art is in a unique ownership relation to its author that we are made to understand that A DIRECTOR IS AN AUTHOUR. Films are consistently referred to as Milos Forman’s *Amadeus*, Julio Medem’s *The Red Squirrel* or Agnès Jaoui’s *Comme une image*. This holds true regardless of what aspect of the film is being discussed: how the story is told, whose perspective is adopted, which themes are emphasized and what messages are conveyed. It is a convenient approach, but one that is severely limited in terms of appreciating the mixture of intentions that lies behind most films. The film historian and critic David Thomson puts it succinctly:

So what is The Godfather, apart from a terrific American movie? Is it the unified vision and work of one man? Of course not. It needs Brando and the way his hand flutters; it needs the untamed energy of Jimmy Caan and the mounting stillness of Al Pacino. It needs the somber color range of brown and gray and black that Gordon Willis achieved. It took an overnight rewrite from Robert Towne. It needed, at the end, a merciful conclusion from Walter Murch's editing. It would not be as it is without Nino Rota's music or Dean Tavoularis's design. (Thomson 2005:358)

The question of authorship in relation to films is rarely simple, and the above quote does not even mention the considerations of ownership and financial clout. While it is often the case that European film directors have “final cut” (the last word on both form and content), in the United States that power usually lies with the producer and/or executives of the production company. The common way of expressing film authorship, convenient though it is, draws a veil over the actual filmmaking process and the financial power-relationships that underlie it.

3.5.7. The consequences of auteurism

Why is auteurism troublesome? Because it is closely connected with some of the key topoi of taxonomic discourse. Genre labels and the rating system are among the most important tools of the film reviewer, and the idea being promoted through taxonomic discourse is that a film has a single genre label, a single rating and a single author. Establishing all of these is a task that does not require a film critic, or even a writer who is particularly knowledgeable about film. It is a job that can easily be done by any journalist who is able to identify the film’s director, can note some key genre characteristics and has an opinion about what he or she has seen.

Simplified auteurism is a natural fit for impressionistic reviewing; what the auteurist reviewer does, when faced with a new film, is in fact to note first impressions of it much as one would note first impressions of a person. This solves a major problem in newspaper film reviewing. A film is, generally speaking, the product of the complex and coordinated actions of anywhere between a handful and several thousand people. It isn't unitary, and carries with it traces of the (sometimes conflicting) intentions of various parties. A comparison with a book or a painting stresses the point: any difficulty in interpreting the artistic output of a *single* person is multiplied manifold in the interpretation of a film. Film reviews, however, aren't usually given more space than reviews of literature or visual art (Lund 2000). The reviewer is potentially faced with a multitude of analytic and explanatory problems.

These problems cannot be easily solved, but they can be dismissed or ignored. One option is to steer away from the complexities of film production, and focus on the emotional effects of the film. While a discussion of the technical aspects of a film usually has to be anchored in concrete descriptions of scenes, camerawork, sound quality, and so on, emotions can be attributed to the film as a whole. If a film conveys a sense of, for example, "excitement", "disgust", or "serenity" in a particular reviewer, he is free to baldly present his claims that the film is exciting, disgusting or serene. His personal knowledge of his own emotions are primary, and unquestionable.

There is metonymic confusion at the heart of this strategy. If there is no attempt to uncover the cause of the reviewer's emotions, no analytic effort, then the review effectively begins and ends with the reviewer. Emotions are difficult to place; they reside partly with what causes them and partly with who experiences them. An emotion requires, in semantic terms, an *experiencer* and an *effector* (Saeed 1997:149), it does not exist independently of either. In a review where the effector is quite simply *the whole film*, where there is no attempt to analyze its constituent parts, the reader is left without an understanding of the work in question. The relationship between film and viewer becomes mystical, inexplicable.

A review of the film *UNO* (*Dagbladet*, August 22, 2004) will illustrate the main disadvantages of a simplified auteurist approach with accompanying emotional focus. The text opens with two statements about the film's emotional quality: it is a *sterkt norsk drama* "strong Norwegian drama" and a *hardtslående filmdebut* "hard-hitting film debut". Interestingly, both "strong" and "hard-hitting" belong to the related domains of EMOTIONAL INTENSITY and of PHYSICAL STRENGTH. In a review of *UNO*, a film that partly takes place in a gym, the wording seems initially appropriate. But since the review does not contain any

further discussion of the reasons *why* the film is “hard-hitting”, the suspicion arises that the words were chosen only for their surface connection with the film’s theme.

The vocabulary of EMOTIONS is one of extreme flexibility, and lacks any particular affinity with the domain of FILM. This becomes evident in the review’s further, very general, claims about *UNO*. The film *syder av ung desperasjon og energi* “seethes with young desperation and energy”. It isn’t *pyntelig* “decorative”, but *ung, rått, temperamentsfullt* “young, raw, temperamental”. “Young desperation” is an attribute that can be literally applied only to people (or possibly animals), and the same holds true for “temperamental”. In order for them to be applied to the film as a whole, the FILM has to be metaphorically construed as a PERSON. The qualities are not ascribed to the characters that are portrayed in the film, to particular scenes, or indeed to any isolated aspect of it. They apply to the film as a whole, and will as such have to be accepted or rejected outright by the reader.

UNO is consistently described in terms of emotional response. There is, for instance, the statement *man fornemmer hele tida trykkokeren som snart eksploderer* “one constantly senses the pressure cooker about to explode”. The film has *en atmosfære av intens nervøsitet og dysterhet* “an atmosphere of intense nervousness and gloom”. It is never explained precisely *how* one senses the pressure cooker, in what *way* the intensely nervous atmosphere is conveyed. Whatever inspires nervousness in an observer can be seen as possessing the quality of nervousness itself, and so the reader is left guessing as to what made the reviewer nervous.

There is a possible rationale for approximate, vague expressions used in the *Dagbladet* review. In a simplified auteurist model of filmmaking, a metaphor is made possible in which THE FILM IS THE DIRECTOR. Quite a few of the emotional qualities attributed to the film as a whole – nervousness, gloom, desperation, energy – are matched by descriptions of the film’s main character, David. David (played by the director, Aksel Hennie) *sliter tungt* “struggles heavily”, makes *et desperat trekk* “a desperate move”, and is *i skvisen* “under pressure”. Resonating with the description of the film as a whole, they suggest that an auteurist credo: the film is an extension of the personality and artistic temperament of the director.

Within this frame of understanding, a film has an atmosphere the way a person has a mood. If that’s the case, then emotional adjectives like “intense nervousness and gloom” are perfectly appropriate – they merely imply that the reviewer is assessing the atmosphere of the film the way we commonly assess the mood of the person. A single person, Aksel Hennie, is credited as the writer and director of *UNO*, and also plays the lead role. It is, therefore, economical and efficient to use an auteurist model of interpretation in which a) the film can

be analyzed as though its every aspect were directly related to the mind of its director, and b) the mind of the director can be explored by analyzing the film.

The problem, which is a common one, is that this model ignores several inconvenient facts. *UNO* had a co-director, John Andreas Andersen. It had actors in it besides Aksel Hennie, each of whom brought something to the film. It employed sound technicians and engineers, an editor and numerous other film professionals. Whether or not their contribution to the film was significant is lost on the readers.

An auteurist critic gains the advantage that is already possessed by critics of books and paintings, that of being able to relate a particular work of art to an entire oeuvre, as well as the oeuvres of other artists. This can, for instance, allow the critic to explore themes and topics that are only perceptible over time, across several works of art. The auteurist approach can, however, result in extremely lazy film reviews. Taken to an impressionistic extreme, the approach obviates the need to account for the participation of people (doing both technical and “creative” work) other than the director in the filmmaking process. The approach may also tempt a critic into ignoring the very aspects of filmmaking it is capable of illuminating, aspects of style, tradition and differing aesthetic projects. A critic writing as though a film is nothing but the immediate and uncomplicated expression of the director’s artistic vision will inevitably risk missing what is most interesting about both the director as an artist and the film as a means of expression. Films come about through a process of conflict, collaboration and negotiation. As has been made painfully clear throughout film history, the untrammelled imagination of the director just as frequently results in multiple hours of indulgent confusion as a true masterpiece.

The *Dagbladet* review demonstrates some of these pitfalls. There are numerous descriptions of *UNO*’s qualities, but not a single one of the expressions are in any way unique to what is being described. The vocabulary when treating the actions of the protagonist, the work of the cinematographer and the general theme of the film is consistently informed by emotional adjectives, never by either the fields of dramaturgy or cinematography, or by concrete descriptions of the film.

A different review (*Aftenposten*, August 22, 2004) of the same film might serve as a contrast. Here, the cinematography is described as follows: *Med sitt ofte håndholdte kamera følger fotograf John Christian Rosenlund sinn og skjebne tett, nesten påtrengende ærlig.* ”With his frequently hand-held camera, photographer John Christian Rosenlund follows mind and destiny with a close, almost intrusive honesty.” Whereas the *Dagbladet* text leaves the particulars of how an “intense nervousness and gloom” is achieved, here the “intrusive

honesty” is related to the use of a handheld camera. Another example: when the *Aftenposten* text posits that *lojalitskrav og æreskodekser* “demands of loyalty and honor codes” is a central theme in *UNO*, this is used to make connection between it and the Martin Scorsese film *Mean Streets*. While that text might profitably have explained how *UNO* differs from *Mean Streets*, the use of another film as a reference point certainly doesn’t subtract from the process of interpretation. To some readers, even those unfamiliar with that particular film, the mentioning of Scorsese’s name carries with it both the implication that *UNO* is concerned with issues of morality as well as violence and a reminder that these issues are recurring topics in the history of cinema.

My claim is that the application of *any* all-encompassing metaphor system on a film will drastically reduce the room for interesting discussion of that film, and the auteurist-anthropomorphic strategy is simply a premium example. The *Dagbladet* review makes no reference to other films, works of literature, artists, or indeed any reference point outside *UNO* itself, making the review far shallower than it needs to be. The roughly 450 words are spent detailing the plot of the film, which is available to any and all cinemagoers, and the emotional atmosphere it creates, which presumably varies (within certain parameters) for each member of the audience.

Metaphor and metonymy can be powerful tools for intellectual exploration, but they can just as easily become a substitute for real arguments and chains of reasoning. A key element in using them effectively is the choice of source domains informing the various metaphorical expressions. Treating a FILM as a PERSON (usually a DIRECTOR) may allow a reviewer the opportunity to investigate, for instance, nuances of expression and subtleties of intentional communication that would not otherwise be easily described. When speaking about people rather than films, any language user gains access to a rich and varied vocabulary geared to describing communication, emotions, conflicting intentions, and so on. However, as the *Dagbladet* review shows, conflating FILM with PERSON and CAUSE with EFFECT may just as easily collapse director, actor, and film into a singularity that does not require further analysis.

3.5.8. Taxonomic discourse and ethos-based arguments

How far back does taxonomic discourse stretch? I’ve suggested that while it is virtually hegemonic in the most recent reviews, it can be found in several texts dated 1974. It seems that taxonomic work is fairly essential to the practice of newspaper film reviewing across the decades, that it is probably tied in with some of the key functions that newspaper film reviews are meant to perform. Assuming that readers are interested less in extensive analyses than in

brief, news-bulletin summaries of the available films, many editors would very likely prefer simple reviews to complex ones at any point in history. The watershed with respect to discourse prevalence, however, seems to coincide with the introduction of the rating system.

The *Dagbladet* review (December 13, 1994) of the Coen brothers' *The Hudsucker Proxy* demonstrates the effects of that system, introduced in that newspaper in the early 90s. The text is as short as the genre allows, barely clearing 300 words. Even so it is an ambitious review, which attempts to cover a number of the film's aspects: the basic plot, the quality of the acting and direction, and the film's relationship to genre. What is worth noting is that functionally speaking, all of these elements are presented in such a way as to substantiate judgment on the film's quality (a rating of 3 out of 6).

The most substantial argument used against *The Hudsucker Proxy* in the review is that it *kan aldri bli mer enn flinkt*. "can never be more than proficient." The fault lies with the Coen brothers, for a very particular reason: *Noe personlig, i form av egen vrede eller glede, har Coen-brødrene ikke å tilføre dette komedieprosjektet.* "The Coen brothers do not have anything personal, in the shape of a wrath or joy of their own, to add to this comedy project." The problem isn't with the technical ability of the brothers: *De er særdeles fingerferdige og sjanger-bevisste* "They're highly nimble and conscious of genre".

This, given a different context, might well have been a compliment. In order to turn it into an accusation, the reviewer needs to presuppose a certain kind of auteurist and romantic sensibility in his readers. Two words are crucial in evoking that sensibility. The film is said to be *en variasjon over historien om gutten fra provinsen som kommer til storbyen for å erobre den* "a **variation** on the story of the boy from the provinces who comes to the big city in order to conquer it." Additionally, *her resirkulerer Coen Brothers med sikker hand de gamle vriene og vendingene.* "here, the Coen Brothers **recycle** the old twists and turns with a sure hand." [My emphases.]

Variation and recycling: the words suggest a topos of routine and mechanical reproduction. In the age-old aesthetic opposition between Classical craftsmanship and Romantic artistic genius, they are associated with craft, not art. Recycling cannot be accomplished without machinery, variation presupposes a standard or norm. In an auteurist model of film criticism, both "recycling", "variation" and the associated craftsmanship have deeply negative connotations.

Without recourse to a Classical/Romantic topos, or another source of meaning external to the text, it becomes difficult to identify reasons for the below-average rating of *The Hudsucker Proxy*. This dependence on pre-existing aesthetic positions is repeated throughout

the text. The review's tone varies from neutral to sarcastic, but no specific negative observations about the film are made. We're told that *filmen er lagt til 1958 av grunner som aldri blir klare* "the film takes place in 1958 for reasons that are never made clear." This seems an attempt at triggering the following presupposition: "If a film takes place in a period different from our own, there'd better be a reason for it. If the Coen brothers have made a period film for no reason whatsoever, something is wrong."

This position is elaborated in the following: *Den venter forgjeves som venter et muntert angrep, inspirert av 90-tallsbevissthet, på korporativisme og business*. "Anyone waiting for a cheerful attack on corporate culture and big business, inspired by a 90's mindset, will be waiting in vain." The presupposition seems to be along the lines of: "A film made in the 1990s ought to reflect contemporary attitudes". The topos in question is the dynamic and progressive view of art, the belief that today's artistic models of understanding are advancements on their predecessors. In this context, a period film made on the period's own terms is inherently suspicious.

Thus, charges based on two different topoi (a Romantic/auteurist view of art and a progressive view of art history) are leveled against the Coen brothers: they're insufficiently in touch with contemporary attitudes and issues, they make period films for their own sake, and they're craftsmen, not artists. What is interesting is that the charges themselves are made fairly explicitly, but the presuppositions and basic aesthetic attitudes that make them rhetorically effective are left implicit. Any reader who does not subscribe to the notion that art is opposed to craft and that period films are an anomaly, seems likely to be left cold by most arguments in the review.

Ultimately, the problem with the preceding arguments about *The Hudsucker Proxy* is that they are based on the reviewer's ethos instead of being case-centered. As such, they are a prime examples of the ethos-based operation of the rating system. The reader needs to *trust* the judgment of the reviewer and the newspaper, and given the establishment of that trust, impressionistic observations about the film become arguments in their own right. There is a mutually beneficial mechanism at work here, one which is especially effective because of the repetitive nature of film reviewing. The newspaper's institutional authority benefits from printing a large volume of reviews, while the reviewer is able to present claims without having to actually support them with arguments. The newspaper (in this case, *Dagbladet*, though *Aftenposten* does the same) is able to print a weekly table listing the current films and their quality, quoting only a single line (or even a few words) from each review. This arrangement works to the extent that institutional and personal *ethos* support each other.

Because of this, taxonomic discourse is a thing of routine, a framework for regular consumption of uniform film reviews. Nothing can be truly surprising in the context of taxonomic discourse, because both the role of the reviewer and the function of the film review is predefined by a very simple schema. The following chapter is a discussion of what is lost when this kind of discourse on film dominates the newspaper review pages.

4. The effects of taxonomic discourse

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the effects of the prevalence of taxonomic discourse in Norwegian film reviewing. The argument will be made that the increased use of the newspaper review as a means of classifying rather than criticizing the weekly film output has several negative consequences, insofar as it decreases the diversity and range of film writing available to the general public.

There are three lines of reasoning that support this argument. 1) Taxonomic discourse *minimizes the difference between films*. 2) It *mystifies key aspects of filmmaking*. 3) It *undercuts the genre of film reviewing*. The first line of reasoning rests on the lack of fit between an extremely simple rating system and any complex art form. The second rests on the lack of fit between simplified auteurist ideology and the complex collaborative process that takes place in the making of most films. The third rests on the uneasy relationship between the genre of film reviews and its neighboring genres.

All three lines of reasoning suggest that as taxonomic discourse replaces essayistic discourse, the element of film reviewing that is unique to the medium of film is lost, because the taxonomic mechanisms are of a nature that can be applied across different media, to a vast variety of content types, without requiring detailed knowledge of the field in question. Taxonomic discourse functions through the application of general and relatively crude classificatory principles instead of investigations into the character of specific objects.

4.2. On eliminating the difference between films

As we have seen in the previous chapter, taxonomic discourse tends to minimize or eliminate essential differences between films. Because the schema of genre label, single authorship and quality rating is applied across the board, because each film is assigned characteristics that vary within a very limited range, because the variation in review length has decreased over time, the film review page comes to look increasingly uniform. Probably, the most important and most absurd among these factors is the introduction of the numerical rating. Films that would, in essayistic discourse, scarcely have been considered to belong to the same art form are in taxonomic discourse necessarily placed at different points along the same spectrum. One system allows for the description of *Amarcord* as film art and *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* as film entertainment. The other system only allows them to be distinguished numerically. But what does it mean if a reviewer rates *Amarcord* a 6 and *Star*

Wars a 1? Does it mean that the one film is six times better than the other? Does it mean that the first film is five ill-defined measures of quality better than the other? Or does it mean that, relative to the expectations the critic had of them, one succeeds while the other fails?

All three answers are possible, all three are equally unsatisfactory. Once the numerical element has entered into reviewing, it becomes possible to argue about the correctness of the rating, but not about its applicability. And so the *Star Wars* fan and the Fellini fan will argue endlessly about whether or not *Episode V* is in fact better than *Amarcord*, entirely missing the rather crucial point that the films were made for different audiences, at different times, using different methods and in the context of vastly different artistic sensibilities. Everything that is special about *Amarcord*, and, equally, everything that is special about *Star Wars* is lost when that point is missed. It is not a case of comparing apples and oranges, it is a case of comparing apples and synthetic apple-flavoured candy.

To the readers of film reviews, this uniformity means an underscoring of the industrial and repetitive aspect of the film industry. A set of new films can be expected each and every week, and it is to a large extent predictable how they will be treated by the reviewers because the rating system does not change. The new crop of films is presented very much like the new crop of cell phones, and with as little room for artistry involved. Once a certain number of 6s have been distributed, there are very clear limitations on the impressiveness of yet another 6. Once a certain number of 1s have been doled out, there are limits to how unspeakably bad a film can credibly be described as.

To the writers of film reviews, this means a closing of the space available for criticism, for interesting writing. Writing reviews becomes ever more of a rote task, a checking of boxes, and less of an opportunity for interpretation and exploration. The more space devoted to classificatory work, the less space available for other aspects of writing about film. If there are six numerical categories into which a film can be placed, sooner or later one stops looking for a seventh category.

4.3. On mystifying the filmmaking process

The above section essentially discusses the disappearance of *nuance* from film reviews. Another way in which this disappearance is accentuated is through the simplified form of auteurism practiced in Norwegian newspaper film reviews. Essentially, that ideology asks only one question: who directed the film? Given the answer to that question, there is rarely any need to go further, to ask questions about the other people involved in film production. The director is the everything of the film, the source of its meaning and the origin of its

intention. The film is the director's as the book is the author's, and if the work of the editor is ignored in both cases it is because the cognitive model of the first is imposed on the second.

However, the name of the director does not have to be the most salient feature of a given film. Just as likely, that feature can be the film's genre, its nationality, its director, its producer or its main actor/actress. In some cases the film's length, the name of its cinematographer or even of its production designer can profitably be used to identify its chief characteristics. To film historians and film enthusiasts alike, there are films whose director matters very little in comparison to the film's status as a screwball comedy, a Russian existential drama, a film produced by David O. Selznick, a film starring Julia Roberts, a film photographed by Gordon Willis or a film with production design by Ken Adam.

What label is used depends on who is doing the labeling. The Norwegian Film Institute might reasonably be more interested in whether or not a film technically qualifies as fully Norwegian than the average cinemagoer, whereas film reviewers tend to be mainly interested in the name of a film's director than other people. Different labels also convey different ideas of what a film is about, whose influence has shaped it, and ultimately what kind of film it *is*.

The reception and presentation of the 1994 film *Chungking Express* may serve as an example of this. On one of the early posters for the film, various people involved in the production are credited – actors, technicians, producers, and naturally the film's director, the art house favorite Wong Kar-Wai. The cinematographer, Chris Doyle, is not. This is interesting not in itself, since cinematographer credits on film posters are common but by no means compulsory. However, in the years that followed the release of *Chungking Express* Chris Doyle's reputation grew immensely, in certain circles even exceeding that of Wong Kar-Wai, the director.

This development is interesting because *Chungking Express* has a very distinctive look, a visual style marked by fluttery camera movements, bright neon colors and frequent use of slow motion. To a reader of the original poster, this look, which was for parts of the audience film's main attraction, would almost inevitably be credited to the film's director. It would then contribute to audience understanding of what constituted a "Wong Kar-Wai film", and serve to reinforce the salience of that category. To a reader of most pieces of serious criticism written about the film from 1995 onwards, however, it would be all but impossible not to recognize Doyle's contribution, since it is regularly mentioned by most critics. A text discussing *Chungking Express* would therefore reinforce the category of "Chris Doyle film".

Many cinematographers, though just as prolific as Doyle, have failed to reach his level of fame and marketability. It seems a fair guess that they have failed to do so not just by lacking his distinctive style, but because they never received the initial recognition that is implied by the label “a Chris Doyle film”. Central features of the films they participated in making were attributed to other people, and they themselves weren’t recognized. For Doyle, however, recognition means that his name may be applied to any and all of his subsequent projects, influencing the perception of those films.

It is this kind of nuance that is lost in the crude mechanisms of taxonomic discourse, as it appears in the later part of the corpus. There are hardly any attempts to investigate the creative processes that form an integral part of film production, there is no room for curiosity about the particular collaborative qualities of the film medium.

4.4. On undercutting a genre

Finally, because of taxonomic discourse, there are fewer reasons for the newspaper film review to exist than there used to be. It is gradually becoming a superfluous genre, a genre kept alive through habit and convenience rather than through a genuine communicative function.

The discourse space defining the film field isn’t comprised only of (or even dominated by) reviews. There are also advertisements, program notes, editorials, news reports and other genres whose topic is film. Each of these is distinct from the others partly because of their formal features, but mainly because of their functions. Advertisement serve to project a positive, attractive image of the film in question, news reports serve as sources of information. Reviews, however, are difficult to analyze according to a single functional model, because they are many things to many people. Some readers turn to the review page merely to see what is playing, what they’re missing this week. Others use it as a guide to the current cinema, though they may find a reviewer’s lack of judgment just as useful as his or her astuteness. Some read the review page *post factum*, to see whether their own opinion of the film they just saw matches that of the reviewer. Some read the reviews because of the reviewer’s style and skill.

The point is that many of the above functions can be fairly well performed by other genres. Cinema listings and program notes, in particular, are perfectly reliable sources of film-related information. The review isn’t an independent genre because it contains accurate plot summaries. Rather, it is distinguished from its neighboring genres principally because it *isn’t entirely predictable*. Ideally, it arises in the unique encounter between the reviewer and the

film. Ideally, it is a piece of writing that results from an exploration, a consideration, a meditation.

Advertising is always predictable, in the sense that its function, and thus the consumer's expectations of its content, does not change. Program notes, equally, have a fairly stable and predictable role. As the review, through taxonomic discourse, approaches these genres, it effectively loses an independent function. Both advertising and program notes provide the kind of information about genre and authorship that is provided in the taxonomic film review; the only factor that distinguished the review is the use of a rating system. Since, as we have seen, the rating is rarely based on coherent arguments, the difference in genre is in effect negligible.

To readers, this means either an erosion of trust in the film review pages, alternatively a high level of resigned acceptance and correspondingly lowered expectations. Films are assessed, but the authority underlying the assessment is only the institutional ethos of the newspaper and the personal ethos of the film reviewer. Should those be compromised, there is essentially no difference between the review and advertising copy. The only significant factor on which both personal and institutional ethos is based is, in this instance, familiarity. The film review pages are a constant source of ratings and opinions, they have come to be commonplace sources of information about film. Because their opinions are unfounded, however, an element of shallowness infuses the whole of newspaper discourse on film. One taxonomic film reviewer's opinions are essentially as good as those of another.

To writers who are knowledgeable about and care about film, this provides a profound disincentive for writing newspaper reviews in the first place. There is not much of a writing challenge left in producing reviews that are functionally close to advertising copy. This implies a further weakening of the genre, as the writers liable to care the most about the quality of their film writing are pushed towards other sections of the media. Those journalists that are employed in writing film reviews have few or non-existent opportunities for improving their craft, for heightening the quality of their writing. Journalistic writing always runs the risk of being repetitive, but the risk increases as the strictures imposed on specific journalistic genres become more severe. Writing taxonomic film reviews is a far more mind-numbing task than trying to write essayistic reviews.

Ultimately, this plays into the hands of the commercial agents in the film world. Most production outfits and studios have no interest in producing art. They may be interested in having their films labeled as art if that will win awards and attract larger audiences, but it is mostly irrelevant to them whether the label is applied by means of insightful criticism or by

superficial reviewing. The criterion by which film studios and distributors judge films is not the quality of its content, but the quantity of its audience. Critical acclaim is fickle, and usually not worth achieving. Ideally, for the accounting department, the factors that contribute to a film's success or failure would be easily described in terms of money invested, money recouped.

The scorn with which film reviewers are treated by the major studios was amply documented by the 2001 incident in which Sony simply invented a reviewer, attributing gushing quotes about mediocre films to "David Manning" of the "*Ridgefield Press*" – the case is well-documented, the news article by Grossberg (2006) is one summary among many. A minor scandal erupted, but essentially, nobody working close to the film industry were surprised. Studios regularly cancel press screenings of films that are exceptionally bad; in that way, the potential damage of negative reviews is minimized.

If the reviewer has no other function than to confirm or slightly modify the genre label suggested by the studio, if his or her task is simply to display an upturned or downturned thumb, every film becomes essentially equal. Art and thrash become distinct only by a difference in degree, not a difference in kind. What remains to distinguish them is the effort involved in advertising and promoting them, which is essentially equal to the money spent by the studio's and the distributor's marketing divisions. By this reasoning, the importance of the *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* series of films vastly outweighs that of practically any film made in the last ten years.

4.5. The death of newspaper film reviewing

To summarize, the effects of taxonomic discourse are detrimental insofar as they contribute to a flattening and loss of diversity in newspaper writing. Effectively, the reader constructed by taxonomic discourse is a consumer with very basic needs. He or she is interested in finding out whether this week's films are good or bad, yes, but beyond that does not care about the standards by which the films are judged. The reader constructed through taxonomic discourse has no interest in film as art, only as consumable goods.

That reader is not necessarily identical with all of the actual readers that read the film reviews. But because any expectations those readers hold beyond consumer guidance are very likely to be disappointed by the taxonomic reviews, the consequences are nevertheless fairly depressing. Some readers hungry for intelligent writing about film will probably find other sources of information – magazines, journals, online discussion panels and so on. But others will just as probably keep on reading the film page, which is a significantly less informative

place than it used to be. How did this state of affairs come about? How did newspaper reviewing cease to produce essayistic discourse? The following chapter suggests some explanations for the current state of affairs.

5. The causes of taxonomic discourse

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will explore the possible causes of the increasing dominance of taxonomic discourse, and the concurrent death of newspaper film reviewing. It will first, in brief, present some of the key developments in the film industry from 1970 onwards and parallel developments within the field of film criticism. It will suggest that those developments caused an erosion of the foundations of essayistic discourse on film within a daily newspaper context. Finally, it will propose that this coincided with a shift in most newspapers' perception of their readers during the same period, a shift from seeing the reader as a citizen towards seeing the reader as a consumer. All three developments are integral to the expansion of taxonomic discourse.

5.2. Movies, Inc.

The kind of film reviews that get written in Norwegian daily newspaper depends on the kind of films that get shown in Norwegian cinemas. And for more than 80 years, the kind of film that mainly gets shown in Norwegian cinemas is the Hollywood film. That is to say, since the decline of Nordisk Film in the late silent era, American titles have dominated the Norwegian market. Since the end of the Second World War they've made up at least half of the Norwegian repertoire, sometimes as much as two thirds (FilmInfo 2005). We may approve or disapprove, but changes in the film industry in the United States have major effects on the film world as a whole. The changes in that industry during the last few decades form the backdrop against which the film reviews in my corpus were written.

Peter Biskind, in his book *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls* (1998), argues that Hollywood has changed immensely since 1970. In the late 1960s, the industrial-style studio system that came into being some 40 years earlier was either dying or dead. Audience numbers were declining steadily since their 1947 high, increasingly due to the popularity and reach of television. Wages and production costs were rising, and since the studios had been barred from owning their own distribution venues, marketing costs were up too. A series of expensive, overblown failures like *Cleopatra* and *Hello, Dolly!* proved to the studio heads that the old system was breaking down, and made them more receptive to new ideas.

For these reasons, a number of the most well-known American directors today got their big break around 1970. Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg and Francis Ford Coppola, all members of the "movie brat" generation that grew up during Hollywood's Golden Age, were

given freer reins than practically anyone working in the American film industry since 1920. For a brief period – perhaps six or seven years, the early- to mid-1970s – a number of the movie brats were commercially successful as well as critically acclaimed. Somehow they were able to combine influences from Italian neo-realism and French new wave cinema with the best elements of the American tradition of popular entertainment. It was a minor renaissance, resulting in some of the very best films of the post-war period – films that, crucially, were also seen by a large number of people. Directors gained more power than ever before, and it seemed that a new, artist-centered model of film production might be viable.

It wasn't. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, most of the movie brat directors experienced large-scale commercial failure. They were reined in by the studios, and forced to work under stricter supervision. The exception to the rule was Steven Spielberg. Beginning with *Jaws*, he went from strength to commercial strength, essentially inventing the modern blockbuster by combining special effects and storytelling skills with mastery of genre and stock plots. The successes of Spielberg (later joined in the commercial pantheon by George Lucas of *Star Wars* fame) were all the more striking because of the comparable failure of their more artistically ambitious fellow directors. The repercussions spread throughout the film industry. The Hollywood film industry may not have become more commercial; it was always an industry by intent and a supplier of art by chance. But a lot of people, investors and producers both, became tantalized by the enormous profits reaped by *Jaws*. Significantly, massive first-weekend grosses became the main criterion of success. According to Biskind:

Jaws changed the business forever, as the studios discovered the value of wide breaks – the number of theaters would rise to one thousand, two thousand, and more by the next decade – and massive TV advertising, both of which increased the costs of marketing and distribution, diminishing the importance of print reviews, making it virtually impossible for a film to build slowly, finding its audience by dint of mere quality. As costs mounted, the willingness to take risks diminished proportionately. Moreover, Jaws whet corporate appetites for big profits quickly, which is to say, studios wanted every film to be Jaws. (Biskind 1998:278)

5.2.1. Structural changes

Another result followed from the late-1960s breakdown in the studio system: corporate takeovers. Before the economic slump the studios were more or less financially independent, and mainly in the business of making and distributing films. When they temporarily failed in that business, they became vulnerable to acquisition by bigger corporations. The result is visible today: Columbia Pictures is owned by Sony, Warner Bros. by Time Warner, and

Universal Studios by NBC/General Electric. Essentially, the film industry became a part of industry in general. The decisions about what kind of films to make no longer lies with people in the business of churning out a regular supply of movies. They have been replaced by people who are in the business of making money by whatever means available, and those people have increasingly taken to gambling on the monster-mega-super-hit.

Two major changes in production and marketing strategies favored the blockbuster: a carpet-bomb style of advertising, and an emphasis on spin-off products. The marketing frenzy began with *Jaws*, the spin-off frenzy with *Star Wars*. George Lucas, through good luck and better negotiating skills, retained control over the spin-off products made from his film franchise. Personally he's the billionaire exception and not the rule, but he set a pattern that was followed by every major film corporation. The film creates a market, which is crammed with every kind of product imaginable. *Jurassic Park*, *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*; for each of the film series the bulk of money being made comes not from tickets being sold, but from the spin-off market built up by attracting people and their children to cinema theatres.

At this point in history, the rhythm of film production is very different from what it was half a century ago. There was a time when most films could be expected to make a small, but reasonable profit. The film industry operated on regular schedules and had an almost assembly-line approach to its product, prompting Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to write the most polemical chapter in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972), "The Culture Industry". According to them, the business of filmmaking was utterly predictable, because the audience's need for easily consumable entertainment could be precisely matched by the production machinery of the Hollywood studios. The big earners, like *Gone With the Wind*, were anomalies, unpredictable exceptions to the rule.

Today, that model no longer applies. With each new season, the studios (now a part of a much bigger corporate machinery) put nearly all their effort into producing a few incredibly expensive, but possibly incredibly profitable films. Filmmaking in Hollywood increasingly resembles high-stakes gambling, a search for the occasional tentpole (a film industry term) capable of lifting the earnings curve for that fiscal quarter to the point of market satisfaction. What distinguishes Hollywood gambling from the regular kind is the fact that the odds can be improved through marketing and audience familiarity. Sequels are produced as never before (and for the first time in history with bigger budgets than their antecedents), and marketing budgets are approaching (and in some cases exceeding) the actual production budgets.

But though this is the case for only a few films each year, it fundamentally affects the conditions under which most films are produced. The potential blockbusters drain resources

from the rest of the crop, causing both the number of mid-budget films and their share of the studios' marketing efforts to dwindle. The number of films made by the major studios each year is down from a high of 700 a year to less than 200. Some observers have argued that Hollywood is making the same mistakes as in the 1960s, when *Cleopatra* and similar behemoths threatened to permanently bankrupt the film industry. Some hope that the consequences might be similar: a flowering of talent equal to that of the 1970s. There are, however, differences. The film audience today is, in relative terms, far smaller than it was 40 years ago. That audience has been replaced by a generation of computer game players, a generation that frequently buys the game first and watches the movie second, if at all. Film, in its Hollywood incarnation, risks becoming a permanent loss leader, an unsustainable and unprofitable way of legitimizing spin-off products. At this point, my question is: what role is played by newspaper film reviews, the only wide-reaching discourse on film save advertising?

5.2.2. Field theory

One way to describe what took place in the film industry is to employ the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the *autonomous field* (discussed in, among other works, *Language and Power* (Bourdieu 1991)), that is to say a social arena defined by a network of people, institutions, practices, and power relations. In a Bourdieu-inspired anthology about the journalistic field, Benson and Neveu have provided a useful extension of that definition:

Each field is structured around the opposition between the so-called heteronomous pole representing forces external to the field (primarily economic) and the "autonomous" pole representing the specific capital unique to that field (e.g., artistic or scientific skills. (Benson and Neveu 2005:4)

In other words, a field becomes increasingly autonomous as it accumulates specific symbolic capital, and as it becomes more autonomous, the people working in it feel increasingly responsible to the rules applying within that field. Conversely, the more closely a field becomes associated with the dominant forces of its parent society – market capitalism, for example – the less autonomous it grows.

The idealists never dominated the American film industry, but during a certain period it constituted a field that was significantly more autonomous than it is today. In the early 1970s, people whose loyalties were almost entirely defined by the autonomous pole of the film field wielded significant power. The director Francis Ford Coppola even attempted to establish a separate, independent studio, tellingly located closer to San Francisco than Los Angeles. Critics and writers like Pauline Kael of *The New Yorker* were in close touch with

actors and directors, and were occasionally even able to influence the production trajectories of individual films. Symbolic capital probably never outweighed economic capital, but it counted for something. Then, beginning with the release of *Jaws*, the heteronomous pole reasserted itself. The directors' bargaining power dissipated, while that of the producers and studio executives grew. Echoing the earliest days of cinema, directors became in many cases hired hands, paid to lend their talent to a film that was already written and fitted with a production schedule.

Given that *film* constitutes a field, *film criticism* constitutes a smaller, related field. It would be, extending Benson and Neveu's spatial metaphor, located closer to the autonomous pole of the film field than the heteronomous one, and it would consequently be strengthened and weakened according to fluctuations in the larger field. Even so, developments that took place in the field of film criticism, independently of those in the field of film proper, would also influence the situation of the average film reviewer. Those developments are reviewed below.

5.3. Criticism, Inc.

More in contrast to than mirroring situation in the film *industry*, the developments in film *criticism* has, since 1970, have run toward increased complexity and diversification. Because of this, and because of the drive toward academic institutionalization, the paths of the film critic and the filmmaking professional have become increasingly divergent. Since the advent of university Film Studies, it is possible to dedicate one's professional life entirely to the studying and teaching of film without ever bothering with the practical realities of the film industry. This course of action, additionally, came to seem increasingly attractive to many as that industry became ever more rampantly commercial.

The history of film criticism hasn't been studied to the same extent as its close cousin, literary criticism. Nevertheless, many of the developments within the two disciplines seem related, or at the very least parallel. The influence of structuralism, the linguistic turn, the rise and fall of Theory and the subsequent fragmentation and balkanization of the field; the sequence of events is more or less the same. There is now an academic industry of film criticism which didn't exist in 1965, and which increasingly addresses its writings to an audience of initiates. The critic Terry Eagleton argues that the main development in the literary field during the 20th century was the disappearance of the non-specialist reader. His point, made with respect to F.R. Leavis' literary journal *Scrutiny*, holds reasonably true of academic film criticism as well:

What seemed a public sphere in nuce was in fact a defensive reaction to the disappearance of the genuine article. Scrutiny could hope for a renewed public dialogue between critics, educationalists and other intellectuals, and indeed was reasonably successful in securing it. But such a discursive public realm, unlike the coffee-house communities of eighteenth-century England, could be in no way grounded in the political structures of the society as a whole. Leavis and his colleagues were remote enough from the levers of academic power, let alone the political and economic ones; (Eagleton 1984:77)

Film criticism was once a political enterprise, the best example probably being the writings of Sergei Eisenstein on his own films. Following the lead from the literary field, however, film theory and criticism throughout the 20th century became increasingly professionalized, institutionalized and complex. Adopting the language of field theory, the process can be described as the strengthening of film criticism's autonomous pole.

The strengthening of the heteronomous pole in the field of film and the autonomous pole in the field of film criticism suggest that the two fields have become more divergent. As the movie business becomes more beholden to other areas of business, film criticism becomes an increasingly theoretical endeavor. At this point it is worth noting that this thesis is concerned neither with academic film criticism nor the film industry. Its concern is newspaper film reviewing, a practice that is addressed to the general reader and may be said to occupy a middle ground, or alternatively to belong to *both* fields.

The developments in the film industry are therefore important in two ways: they shape the products that are the film reviewer's subject matter, and they help explain the enormous growth of advertising – a major source of influence on the reviewer's discourse. The developments in Film Studies, correspondingly, are important because they define the other border to the film reviewer's world. Film Studies defines what is not expected of the newspaper film review, what belongs primarily to Theory and the Academy. Newspaper film reviews are borderline texts, in that they sometimes aspire to the level of critical essays, and occasionally influence the box office. But primarily they belong to a third field: journalism.

There is a sharing of work in public writing on film, and a division of roles. As Per Haddal, senior film reviewer for *Aftenposten*, put it in an anniversary speech to the Norwegian Guild of Film Critics: *norske filmkritikere [aner knapt nok] noe om den akademiske debatten [om film]* "Norwegian film critics barely know anything about the academic debate on film" (Strindberg and Løchen 1996). Most Norwegian film reviewers are content to remain pre-theoretical, using commonsensical arguments in their reviews. And why not? They are, with few exceptions, not part of the field of film criticism, being recruited mainly from the ranks of reporters and journalists (Gjelsvik 2002).

5.4. Newspaper genres

The kind of film review treated in this thesis is a newspaper text, constituting a newspaper genre. Like all genres, it is subject to changes over time, in accordance with the social conditions for producing newspapers. As for the most significant change in Norwegian newspaper publishing during the period covered in this thesis, Thore Roksvold (1997), citing media researcher Jo Bech-Karlsen among others, proposes that a news-based model has been gradually replaced by a spectacle-based mentality. The mainstream newspaper (and this likely holds true in much of the Western world) is no longer in the business of providing either breaking news or background information. In that respect, it has been outmaneuvered by 24-hour cable news channels and websites, respectively.

The newspaper, rather, provides the consumer with “stories”, which are ranked and prioritized according to their sensational content or human interest. While the film premiere has always, in a sense, been a form of simulated news – a film premiere is rarely, after all, wholly unexpected – the shift from a film being interesting because of its newsworthiness (for instance, topical relevance or originality) to a film being interesting because it’s in some way sensational cannot but skew press coverage in favor of the big-budget, heavily marketed production.

Another way of describing the change in newspaper publishing is in terms of audience: the informed citizen has been replaced by the consumer. While newspaper editors (and owners) have always been concerned with circulation numbers, newspapers were once the most important way of communicating news to the public. Today, the public has been transformed into audiences, into demographic segments, into groups of customers. The *Lifestyle* section grows ever bigger, and it is as easy to produce as it is to consume. The guide, the table, the list of products is authoritative, schematic and above all easy to read.

This change in perspective on the newspaper’s role in society has direct consequences for the way film reviews are written. If they are addressed to a citizen with an interest in culture, a person with aesthetic likes and dislikes, with opinions and attitudes, then they must adhere to a certain standard. Films aren’t inherently interesting; no aspect of culture is *inherently* interesting. The reason why a film is reviewed must on some level be communicated. Was it particularly good? Particularly bad? Why? Why not? Does it hold aesthetic interest? Moral interest? Does it lack morals entirely, should it be condemned? Is it entertaining? Is it meant to be? Does it comment on recent events? Does it contribute to our understanding of those events? Does it lie, is it truthful? These are questions that can be

asked, because there is the unspoken understanding that the citizen would ask those questions him- or herself.

The consumer asks different questions, because the consumer has different demands. What does it look like? What does it do? Is there a better one, and when can I get it? Does it come in black? Is it portable? Who made it, and can I trust them? Will I get my money's worth? The consumer is, with few exceptions, less interested in the *Whys* and the *Hows* than in the *Whats*. What makes it tick is less interesting than the guarantee that it ticks, regularly, until the battery has to be changed. There is rarely any need for arguments and reasons – if the water boils, the cooker works, and it is the reviewer's job to note only the cooking time and the wattage.

5.5. Language and discourse

Taxonomic discourse is part of a wider shift in the society of which it forms a part. Film reviews are written the way they are written because of the, among other things, the interaction between reader expectations, editorial constraints and the role of film in society. In the end, documenting a shift in discourse involves not only detailing the alterations in language use, but also the *conditions* which underlie that use.

Language nevertheless remains the focal point, because it is the visible product of discursive change, the rocks in which geological shifts are written. Language is the subject of the varied and complex methods of linguistics. The motives of people and institutions are difficult to establish, changes in the structures of society equally so. Other disciplines deal with those phenomena, and they are integral to discourse analysis. Language, however, remains the main exponent of discourse. It expresses motives, it signals structural shifts.

The preceding chapters reach for an analysis of newspaper film reviewing in two Norwegian newspapers over four decades. They attempt that analysis by using the language of specific texts as a prism through which the practices and conditions of film reviewing can be viewed. The following chapter will summarize that analysis, draw some general conclusions, and discuss some of the possibilities for further research.

6. Summary and conclusion

6.1. Introduction

The major change in the discourse of Norwegian newspaper film reviewing over the last four decades is the gradual shift from an essayistic towards a taxonomic practice. This shift implies a strengthening of a commercial view of films, though it cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of art versus commerce.

Films are increasingly written about so that they may be classified and presented to a reader in an easily digestible form, not so that they may be explored and interpreted. This change is most likely caused by larger shifts in the social conditions of production under which film reviewers work.

It is worth repeating that this thesis has focused exclusively on *newspaper* film reviews. The mainly negative developments found to have occurred over the last 40 years may well be counterbalanced by positive developments in other fields of film writing. In this respect, Internet-based criticism seems a likely field for the emergence of longer, essayistic pieces of discourse. Even so, newspapers remain the medium for film discourse with the widest reach, the most general readership, and probably the greatest potential for influence on the film field.

The shift towards a mainly taxonomic discourse manifests itself linguistically in the increased standardization of form and in the streamlining of content. Stock phrases and readymade arguments have become increasingly prevalent in reviews over the last 40 years, excluding lines of reasoning that are idiosyncratic or specific to a particular film. A limited set of topoi and metaphorical understandings have become dominant in writing about film, narrowing the space in which different interpretational models can become constructed. A paratextual feature, the rating system, has become crucial in determining the function of film reviews. That feature further chips away at the foundations of lucid, intelligent film reviewing.

6.2. Theoretical implications

Film reviews are not unlike other genres, film reviewing is not unlike other forms of writing, other discursive practices. I hope that the methods and analytical modes applied throughout this thesis hold relevance outside the relatively narrow field to which they have here been applied. What I hope this thesis indicates, however, is the importance in critical discourse analysis of field-specific knowledge. The changes in the field of newspaper film reviewing

certainly seem to have occurred in correspondence with changes in the related fields of film, journalism and academic film studies, but they cannot be described simply as a function of changes in an all-embracing ‘discourse of Norwegian society’.

Critical discourse analyses that deal with the extremely wide-ranging discourses of news and politics sometimes end up trying to diagnose society as a whole. That is less than desirable, both for the sake of the discipline and its objects of analysis. I believe that critical discourse analysis is at its most useful when applied to a narrow field, in which language demonstrably plays a significant role in people’s everyday practices. CDA must be firmly grounded in the analysis of language use. Its strength lies in uncovering patterns in everyday, situated language forms.

6.3. Further research

With respect to the field of film reviewing, a number of questions remain to be investigated. This thesis is submitted for the master’s degree, and has as such suffered under the lack of both the time and the resources required in order to explore its topic in depth. Critical discourse analysis cannot be an entirely quantitative endeavour; nevertheless, it would be both possible and desirable to attempt a broader and deeper survey of the practice of film reviewing. The history of the film medium stretches back no more than 110 years; the practice of systematic film reviewing is some 20 or 30 years shorter than that. Depending on the quality of the various newspaper archives, a fairly comprehensive history of the genre ought to be possible.

As was briefly mentioned in chapter 2, there is a connection to be explored between the project of critical discourse analysis and the project of cognitive linguistics. The emphasis in both projects on cognitive modelling, framework and schemata (Stockwell 2000) suggests that critical discourse analysis could benefit from paying greater attention to developments in cognitive linguistics. There is a potentially huge methodological benefit to be gained from a greater knowledge on the part of CD analysts with regard to the processing of and construction of reality through language.

Finally, with respect to film in general, a large and ambitious project suggests itself through the shortcomings of this thesis: a comprehensive investigation into different discourses on film. How is a central medium of the 20th century (and, in conjunction with television, of the 21st) presented, represented and reproduced through discourse? The discipline of linguistics would benefit from applying the methods and theories of critical discourse analysis to the area of culture, the area in which the written and spoken word do

more than practically anywhere else to shape the perceptions and attitudes of our society and its members.

There is insufficient space to discuss that project adequately within the framework of this thesis. I nevertheless believe that it ought to be attempted – for the sake of linguistics, and for the sake of films and those of us who enjoy watching them.

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Appendix: List of film reviews

Original title	English title	Director	Year of production	Date of <i>Aftenposten</i> review (when available)	Date of <i>Dagbladet</i> review (when available)
<i>Bør Børson, jr.</i>	<i>Boer Boerson, jr.</i>	Jan Erik Düring	1974	February 8, 1974	February 8, 1974
<i>Chinatown</i>	<i>Chinatown</i>	Roman Polanski	1974	April 1, 1974	April 1, 1974
<i>The Conversation</i>	<i>The Conversation</i>	Francis Ford Coppola	1974	?	?, 1974
<i>Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle</i>	<i>The Enigma of Caspar Hauser</i>	Werner Herzog	1974	June 8, 1977	June 8, 1977
<i>Kimen</i>	-	Erik Solbakken	1974	?, 1974	?, 1974
<i>Papirfuglen</i>	-	Anja Breien	1984	August 20, 1984	August 31, 1984
<i>Amadeus</i>	<i>Amadeus</i>	Milos Forman	1984	October 18, 1984	October 19, 1984
<i>Offret – Sacrificatio</i>	<i>The Sacrifice</i>	Andrei Tarkovsky	1986	May 13, 1986	May 13, 1986
<i>Høvdingen</i>	-	Terje Kristiansen	1984	September 28, 1984	September 28, 1984
<i>Konopielka</i>	<i>Konopielka</i>	Witold Leszcynski	1982	September 28, 1984	?, 1984
<i>Paris, Texas</i>	<i>Paris, Texas</i>	Wim Wenders	1984	November 2, 1984	?, 1984
<i>Un dimanche à la campagne</i>	<i>A Sunday in the Country</i>	Bertrand Tavernier	1984	September 3, 1984	August 31, 1984
<i>The Hudsucker</i>	<i>The</i>	Joel Coen	1994	December 24,	December

<i>Proxy</i>	<i>Hudsucker Proxy</i>			1994	12, 1994
<i>La ardilla roja</i>	<i>The Red Squirrel</i>	Julio Medem	1993	March 25, 1994	March 25, 1994
<i>Ti kniver i hjertet</i>	<i>Cross My Heart and Hope to Die</i>	Marius Holst	1994	August 5, 1994	August 5, 1994
<i>Yao a yao yao dao waipo qiao</i>	<i>Shanghai Triad</i>	Zhang Yimou	1995	September 22, 1995	September 22, 1995
<i>Trois Couleurs: Blanc</i>	<i>White</i>	Krzysztof Kieslowski	1994	March 25, 1994	March 25, 1994
<i>Hsi yen</i>	<i>The Wedding Banquet</i>	Ang Lee	1993	July 1, 1994	July 1, 1994
<i>Pulp Fiction</i>	<i>Pulp Fiction</i>	Quentin Tarantino	1994	November 11, 1994	November 11, 1994
<i>Drømmespel</i>	<i>Dreamplay</i>	Unni Straume	1994	August 5, 1994	?, 1994
<i>The Bourne Supremacy</i>	<i>The Bourne Supremacy</i>	Paul Greengrass	2004	September 30, 2004	September 30, 2004
<i>Comme une image</i>	<i>Look at Me</i>	Agnès Jaoui	2004	December 24, 2004	December 23, 2004
<i>Shi mian mai fu</i>	<i>House of Flying Daggers</i>	Zhang Yimou	2004	October 28, 2004	October 7, 2004
<i>Monstertorsdag</i>	<i>Monster Thursday</i>	Arild Østin Ommundsen	2004	October 7, 2004	October 14, 2004
<i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i>	<i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i>	Michel Gondry	2004	October 19, 2004	October 19, 2004
<i>La mala educación</i>	<i>Bad Education</i>	Pedro Almodóvar	2004	August 26, 2004	August 26, 2004
<i>Whisky</i>	<i>Whisky</i>	Juan Pablo	2004	September 2,	September

		Rabella & Pablo Stoll		2004	2, 2004
<i>UNO</i>	<i>UNO</i>	Aksel Hennie	2004	August 22, 2004	August 22, 2004