I’VE SEEN THIS ALL BEFORE: ALLUSION AS A CINEMATIC DEVICE

by

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Scholarship concerning allusion as a cinematic device is practically non-existent, however, the prevalence of the device within the medium is quite abundant. In light of this, this study seeks to understand allusion on its own terms, exploring its adaptation to cinema. Through a survey of the effective qualities of allusion, a taxonomy of allusionary types, film theory, and allusion's application in independent cinema, it is apparent that allusion excels within the cinematic form and demonstrates the great versatility and maximalist nature of the discipline. With the groundwork laid out by this study, hopefully further scholarship will develop on the topic of allusion in order to properly understand such a pervasive and complex tool.

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Introduction: “A Very Good Place to Start”

It is the unfortunate circumstance of knowledge that what is new must be defined through what is old. What is novel will never be defined through its own terms but must instead be categorized and understood in relation to the past. The advent of cinema at the turn of the century and the subsequent scramble to understand this new artform is exemplary of this fact. Many compared it to the theater, literature, and photography, but few understood it as an entity onto itself. The slow creation of this new discourse was not a fault in the imagination of the theorists or critics. It is impossible to speak of something new without the means of the old. Language itself denies this possibility.

Language has always been and remains an inexact approximation; a means to meaning that is indirect by nature. It necessitates a mutual understanding by the participants of the language system who must then navigate the ambiguous terrain together to arrive at communication. These participants in turn affect and evolve the overall language system over great periods of time, creating new rules and edicts to be followed or dismissed by others. As linguist Ferdinand de Saussure writes, "Time changes all things; there is no reason why language should escape this universal law" (Saussure 77). But change is a slow process, the effects of which are almost never felt within a lifetime. Thus, room for iconoclasm is very small in language, and individual participants in language systems are largely under the pressures of the modus operandi if they mean to create meaning. German philosopher Martin Heidegger comments on this disparity in feeling and true control; “Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man” (348). But this is

not necessarily lamentable. This study intends to show that the past is a treasure trove for innovation.

Cinema is not unlike language.[1] It has always been an evolving, nuanced medium, slowly building a lexicon of patterns and techniques that shapes audience understanding and relation to the screen. Cinema's correlation with language and language systems have been well articulated, as have the issues with this model of analysis. Christian Metz, a theorist of cinema semiotics, illuminated some of these problems in his writings, stating, "... the image discourse is an open system, and it is not easily codified, with its non-discrete basic units (the images), its intelligibility (which is too natural), its lack of distance between the significate and the signifier" (Metz 59). In other words, cinema is a lot messier than language. So, while language is not a perfect metaphor for cinema, both are intriguing for how they create meaning. To go further, how they create new meaning through existing elements. In order to observe this closer, this study will look at a tool traditionally used in language and literature adapted to the context of film: allusions.

Allusions are, at their most basic level, a form of communication. They are not unlike language writ large, using a signifier to stand in place for a broader significate. What makes them unique is their reliance on connotative referents; a sign that goes further than the signifier. They are designed to invoke some external idea, text, person, place, or object, challenging the audience to extend their understanding beyond the

[1] The irony of drawing parallels between cinema and language after decrying the allegorization of cinema by earlier theorists is not lost. It is the hope of this study to explode this starting comparison and complicate it to understand cinema's unique place amongst the arts.

work at hand. This interplay necessitates a certain level of awareness and craft, and the diversity of the device makes it difficult to study or codify, a fact not helped by the lack of scholarship on the subject.

What research has been done on allusions has been ununified in how it defines the device. Some scholarship uses it as a catchall term to describe any quotation, echo, homage, pastiche, parody, borrowing, echo, instance of intertextuality, or reference. Others choose to delineate it down to a barebones classification of formal mimesis. This study is reasonably open-minded in what it will consider allusion, hopefully establishing a baseline understanding for the device that further scholarship will parse. This study is also not concerned with the various sources of allusion, whether they be historic, cinematic, artistic or otherwise. Certain types of allusion will require focus in particular areas of source material, and some sections will be more concerned with allusions to cinematic sources than any other, but there is no need to restrict or exclude what allusions are referencing overall. Again, research for another time.

Since the vast majority of scholarship concerning allusions comes from literary criticism, this study will rely on the work done in this field before complicating the groundwork within a filmic context. The literary critic William Irwin, in his initial paper on the topic of allusion, "What is an Allusion?," directly notes the absence of academic work concerned with understanding allusion as a device. Most of what has been written on it was its application within a specific work, such as the expansive studies done on modernists like T.S. Eliot and post-modernists, focusing on their menageries of intertextuality. Attempting to fill this academic gap, Irwin sought to define allusions in order to understand their operation. He writes in his study, "An

allusion may be said to be a reference which is indirect in the sense that it calls for associations that go beyond mere substitution of a referent" ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 521). For example, if someone were to call you "Pinocchio," they are not literally saying that you are a small, fictional, wooden puppet. In all likelihood they are calling you a liar. It is therefore not the original character itself, but rather its nature, actions, attitude, and identity that are invoked. It may not, therefore, be considered an allusion when someone refers to the President of the United States as "POTUS," which is only a synonym for the thing itself.

Therefore, allusions carry with them associative baggage, connecting the present to a preexisting object or idea. Crucially, these connections are not explicit. The meanings of allusions are hidden behind a signifier and require connotations to be made by the viewer and only implied by the text. As such, the intended information meant to be communicated through allusion is never definite, requiring an informed assumption on the part of the audience. As critic Carmela Perri notes, "In allusion, although the aspects of connotation are unexpressed in the allusion, these are tacitly specified" (Perri 290). Even though the nature of allusions makes for the inexact communication of ideas, a deferral of signification, the intended meaning is usually apparent within the allusion's specific context. In the case of an allusion to Pinocchio, and within the right context, the accuser may be attempting to involve Pinocchio's proclivity for fibbing as well as his Italian heritage, while leaving out Pinocchio's desire to be a real boy or the fact he is easily led astray. Therefore, there may be a wealth of connotations that could be invoked, but it is dependent on the context of the situation which aspects are meant to be referenced.

Allusion can therefore act as shorthand for meaning, a loaded and economical tool to deliver information. They do not need to explain themselves and are often reductions of the thing being alluded to; a piece of the original to represent the whole. As one critic notes, "the devices of allusion and the devices of nostalgia work by display and not by explanation" (Stewart 1128). Allusions can be an unapologetic device, giving the audience only an artifact of the source material and leaving them to infer the importance of it on their own.

Like a language, not everyone speaks allusion, and many can feel lost or confused if they do not recognize the source material the allusion is citing. Irwin acknowledges this point and states that allusions, “typically draw on information not readily available to every member of a cultural and linguistic community” (“The Aesthetics of Allusion” 521). Allusions are by nature exclusionary. They rely on specific knowledge that may or may not be within the purview of the audience. Because of this, allusions can either create familiarity or breed division.

This fact is not lost on the authors of *The Oxford Dictionary of Allusions*. This "Dictionary" is a 400+ page compilation of famous peoples, characters, objects, stories, and locations, which, "aims to identify and explain many such allusions used in English and to illustrate their use by quotations from a variety of literary works and other texts" (Delahunty et al. vii). It is virtually a cultural-historical crash course, created with the awareness of both the wide usage of allusion, as well as the feeling of disaffection that can come if one is unable to properly understand an allusion, offering an avenue to mitigate the likelihood of this happening. This text focuses on popular sources of allusion, but the possibilities of things to be alluded to are endless. And the purposes of

allusion are almost as innumerable as the sources. Reasons to allude range from subtle nods, in-jokes, and parody, to historiography, commentary, revision, or intervention. The size of an allusion ranges as well. From a simple object in the background, to an entire structural blueprint for a film. Allusions can, therefore, operate at almost any level.

Although it is easy enough to overlook, it should be noted that allusions require a materiality or substantive presence in the text before any analysis of them may take place. One can speak of the spirit of a director or film informing a modern work; however, this is mere conjecture unless definite formal or narrative incorporations can be identified. It is not enough to *feel* like there is an allusion taking place.[2] Sometimes this feeling is the result of the allusion acting as an overarching framing device for the story. For example, the fundamental issues, narrative, and aesthetics that operate within Paul Schrader's *First Reformed* (2018) allude heavily to Ingmar Bergman's *Winter Light* (1963) and Robert Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951), although there is no explicit recreation of shots or direct references. The "spirit" of earlier works is felt because they have an influence on the narrative and philosophical concerns of the new film in an observable manner.

When designed with intention, the establishment of an intertextual relationship through allusion is predicated on the concerted effort of the author and audience. Irwin points out that there must be a purposefulness behind allusions, both in delivery and in anticipated reception; "An author must intend this indirect reference, and it must be in

2 It is worth noting that if one suspects that an allusion is present, it is entirely possible that this is true, and they simply don't have the knowledge or vocabulary to correctly identify it. However, we cannot accept a "feeling" as a substantial evidence, especially with a device as slippery as allusion.

principle possible that the intended audience could detect it" ("What is an Allusion?" 293). It is important to note that these are necessary, rather than sufficient conditions, for an allusion to take place. Accidental allusions are by no means rare. Some of them occur because certain historical or cultural products are so ubiquitous within society that many do not know the origin of the allusion. For example, a writer might have a character shout "I'm walking here!," ignorant of the line's filmic origins. It is not until the work read or viewed by an audience familiar with *Midnight Cowboy* (Schlesinger 1969) that an allusion may be recognized.

These instances of accidental or unconscious associations are at times indistinguishable from authorial allusion and should therefore be considered just as valid within interpretive analysis. Irwin notes the difficulty for the audience of both discovering and inadvertently inventing allusions; "Detecting allusions sometimes demands the precision of a science, while making fruitful accidental associations sometimes demands the creativity of an art" ("What is an Allusion" 296). It is not the concern of this study to parse what is and what is not intentional when it comes to allusions, nor how far or broad these allusions are meant to operate. That is left to individual analysis within each unique context to be held up to the scrutiny of academic rigor. What is my concern is the further exploration the nature of the allusion when identified, regardless of their origins. Thus, whether the author intends it or not, if there is a material presence in the work activating an allusion, it is perfectly acceptable to analyze the work in light of that allusion. For, as theorist Roland Barthes writes, "a text's unity lies not in its origins, but in its destination" (Barthes 3).

That said, allusions intended by the author are surely a bit clearer in their purpose as a form of communication, although this does not make them any less problematic. Since communication is an inexact means of conveying meaning, and allusions exacerbate this situation, things do get lost along the way. A good example would be the apocryphal story of the word "Nimrod," originally the name of a famed hunter in the Bible. The word has since come to mean dunce, numbskull, or fool, taking this new meaning when audiences heard Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck call Elmer Fudd "Nimrod" in *Looney Toons* cartoons. Meant an ironic jab at Fudd's poor hunting skills and predestined failure, viewers took the term simply to mean idiot. It was therefore a failure in the deferral of meaning created by an allusion that altered the word itself. Some doubt the validity of this story, but it illustrates how allusion is a dicey bet at best, opening oneself up to miscommunication, misrepresentation, or a breakdown in discourse completely as the audience might not notice the allusion at all. With so much that could be lost in choosing to use allusions, it is only natural the rewards be exceptional. But that will be discussed later.

What has been discussed thus far concerns allusion in broad terms, looking at the device in a manner so that it might be placed within any artistic context. So why film? Simply put, allusion appears to be perfectly suited to cinema, allowing for levels of operation that disciplines like literature, music, painting, sculpture, and the like, could never provide. Cinema acts as a maximalist artform, combining these past mediums and disciplines together in a singular audio-visual experience. As such, cinema simply offers more manners to allude. What's more, the scope of cinema, as both a popular and artistic medium, makes it important amongst all societal strata. This

allows it to participate and reflect on a range of cultural concerns which broadens the available sources for allusion. That said, exactly how allusion is adapted within cinema remains unclear and it is the intention of this study to grapple with this already pervasive and multi-faced device.

To accomplish this aim, the first chapter of this thesis creates a taxonomy of cinematic allusions, exploring the various methods allusions present themselves in the cinematic form, creating techniques singular to the medium. Speculations on the intended purpose and effect of their integration will accompany these descriptions. The second chapter steps back and looks at the purpose of allusion and the advantages of its employment. This leads to a discussion of the device within the context of film theory in order to demonstrate why allusion is so well suited to film through the essential qualities of the medium and the device.

Finally, the third chapter examines one of the only sustained discussions of allusion as a device, Noel Carrol's essay, "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (And beyond)." With hopes of reinvigorating scholarship on this topic, this section will undertake an analysis that bridges the aesthetic, cultural, and historical concerns of the New Hollywood movement to contemporary American Independent Cinema in order to understand the lineage of allusion as a device within these contexts. Hopefully, this will not only update the scholarship on the topic but also provide a springboard for new and varied research into allusion.

It also seems proper to make a quick note on the corpus of films and allusions that will be cited in this study. Allusion is an incredibly personal device in the sense that it is dependent on the lived experience of both creator and audience in order to see and

properly understand them. As such, many of the films and the allusions used in this study are dependent on my identities as a young, white, middle class, cis, straight, male-identifying individual. Not only does this qualify what allusions I will be more likely to understand, but also in many ways determines that those allusions will be produced by filmmakers of a similar identities as mine, identities that have too long been disproportionately represented in film and academia. All of this to say that I recognize the biases, and elitist qualities that this study will present from. However, I hope that it will become clear that these qualifications do not detract from the present study of allusion within cinema and instead underscore some of its most important aspects, namely its exclusionary qualities, communicative power, communal identifiability, and ability to recognize privilege.

This study acts as an examination of allusion as a uniquely cinematic device and seeks to further the historical and aesthetic scholarship of allusion. By contending with the nuance and structure of allusions, this thesis will hopefully illuminate some crucial points of an already prolific and unwieldy device. Perhaps a better understanding of the nature of allusion and its place within cinema will create a more aware viewership and conscious artist. Moving forward, if we are to understand allusion in film on its own terms, we must go back and examine its foundation.

Chapter 1: A Brief Taxonomy of Cinematic Allusion – "Round up the Usual Suspects"

Allusion comes in many shapes and sizes, delivering any manner of information to any conceivable end. Purposes may be serious, comedic, subtle, overt, latent, in-jokes, structurally important, a simple nod, superfluous, and so on. Reasons may be combined as well, just as types of allusions are often compounded with one another. It is rare to find allusions in discrete units, unconnected to other allusions or types of allusions. For example, allusions through form and style are almost inextricably tied to allusions through iconography. To identify all the things that *can* be alluded to is an exercise in futility but identifying *how* they may be alluded to is far more critical to understanding this device anyway.

Before breaking down the types of allusion, I would like to say a few words on the interpretation of allusions. Just as there is not one type of allusion, there is also not one way to understand them. The speculations made herein are based off of a general survey of films that employ each particular type of allusion. To establish any hard and fast hermeneutical rules for allusion would be improper and reductive in this analysis. Instead, each iteration of allusion must be understood in its individual context. To demonstrate the interpretability of allusions, we will briefly look at the self-reference, a form of allusion that can fall in any number of the categories that will be discussed in the forthcoming taxonomy.

The line between vanity and world-building becomes razor thin when filmmakers choose to reference themselves in their own movies. Examples of this might be seen in the vinyl of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick 1968) in a record store in *A*

Clockwork Orange (Kubrick 1971), or *Jaws* (Spielberg 1975) playing on a computer screen in *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg 1993). The feelings evoked by these self-references are mixed at best. On the one hand, there is a sense that the façade of the film world has genuinely shattered. The knowledge that the same director who made the source material that is alluded to can invade the mind of the viewer. The audience recognizes the manufactured nature of the earlier film and they apply that understanding to the current one. The experience of watching the movie is undercut with the meta-understanding that eventually this film will also simply become another set dressing to put in the background. On the other hand, there is a disassociation being done between the work and the reality of the filmmaker. That is to say, if the viewer is given the information that this director and their earlier work exists within the diegesis of the film, then it stands to reason that this film could not be created by the same person. In other words, if there is a Steven Spielberg in the film world of *Jurassic Park* who directed *Jaws* the movie, there is no way there could be a Steven Spielberg directing *Jurassic Park* the movie. These contradictory impulses of transparency and estrangement demonstrate the nuanced and interpretable quality of allusions, challenging static readings.

Similarly, it seems ridiculous to suggest there is a proper way to do allusion. Some critics of allusion wrongly place focus on how well allusions can conceal themselves in a text. John Biguenet is one of these thinkers, writing:

> When an appropriate reference to an existing work is knit seamlessly into the fabric of a new film, the director invokes a context that enriches the film. But when the allusion is merely a wink and a nod to knowledgeable viewers, the effect is likely to undercut the narrative line of the film through the self-consciousness of the device. At its worst, it is

> a condescending gesture on the part of the director to acknowledge that he or she is superior to the material being presented: it becomes a snide joke for the elite. (Biguenet 138)

Biguenet's judgment is a bit too totalizing for the comfort of this study. While a "seamless," non-superfluous, integration may be impactful in certain circumstances, to discount the stylization that allusion provides, or its expressivity, seems closed-minded. This study accepts allusions of all classes and creeds, from small and subtle, to the boisterous and belligerent. For example, one of the great abilities of cinema is to create allusions that are offered exclusively to the audience. In other words, frames or scenes of film that seem extraneous to the narrative but not the overall experience. These can be montage-like edits of other media products or textual insertions, uniquely informing the viewing experience without invading the narrative space of the film. And the simple fact is allusions are implicitly "snide joke[s] for the elite" and "self-conscious," facts to be celebrated rather than lamented, but more on that later. The multiplicity of allusions, therefore, reflects the variations of purpose, presentation, and interpretive framework.

What Biguenet gets right, however, is that, “Though we speak of "classic" films, the adjective has far less resonance than in older art forms; cinema, after all, is in its infancy. So it is especially surprising to discover how common are allusions in films and how diverse is the taxonomy of cinematic strategies of alluding” (132). Further bifurcations to these categories will undoubtedly be needed with further research; however, this brief taxonomy will hopefully demonstrate some of the essential and varied forms of allusion in film. Each taxonomical description will include brief speculations regarding observed patterns of its specific usage, along with apparent intention. Generally, this taxonomy is structured to begin with allusions that are closest

to the literary tradition and progress to those that are more exclusively cinematic, growing in analysis as it becomes necessary to explicate overlooked modes of cinematic allusion. This taxonomy will not draw its lines around the content of the allusion but instead breaks down the different manners that allusion can present itself. Before studying each allusionary strategy, further parameters around its cinematic context must be established.

Exceptional Circumstances

This study makes three qualifications concerning the circumstances of allusion that are relevant to the analysis herein. While each qualification is noteworthy and worth further investigation, they should be regarded as exceptional circumstances due to the conditions of their creation. These qualifications do not deny the presence of allusion and only point out that there are crucial ontological differences that should be understood in each case in contrast to the more general focus of this study.

The first exceptional circumstance is the "Easter egg" allusion. Not unlike the self-referential allusion, allusions of this nature cite either the source material of an adaptation or operate within a franchise.[3] Adaptation of source material brings with it a slew of cultural connotations and often an excess of details that a film often has to trim out or elide over, allowing for brief moments of allusion that point to a larger concept that had to be left out for one reason or another. This self-reflection is most notable in big franchise films, like *Star Wars* or Marvel productions. These often play on the

3 The self-reference is the specific citation of the persona of the director.

nostalgia of its knowledgeable viewers who are familiar with the source material and can spot these nods to the larger franchise world.

Self-referential allusions can also be observed in smaller adaptations as well. An example of this can be found in *The Shawshank Redemption* (Darabont 1994). In a scene in the prison yard, Andy Dufresne asks Morgan Freeman's character why he is called Red. Freeman responds, "Maybe it's cause I'm Irish." The deadpan delivery makes this quite a good line; however, the in-joke privy to those that are familiar with Stephen King's novel is that in the story Red was indeed a white, red-haired, Irish-American. Even though the films employ the technique of allusion, self-referential allusions are contained within the work's own lineage and are therefore missing the intertextual nature that is of interest here. These circumstances do not exclude, however, parallel allusions made by the source material and the adaptation since they point outside of the work itself. For example, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (Gomez-Rejon 2015) plays off of many of the filmic allusions that its source material also makes. While each iteration may inculcate Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, The Wrath of God* (1972), the manner of presentation and active experience of the written word versus the image are divergent and appropriate of study.

The biopic or historical film is the second exception. While undoubtedly allusion may be used within the film, allusion to historical events or persons relevant or contemporary to the story is often necessary for realist world-building rather than intertextual meaning making. That said, it would be improper to dismiss any use of allusion in historical films. Instead, it should be understood that these films offer a different perceptive framework in which one must be careful in deciding how the

allusion is operating in light of the historical pressure. Perhaps it is for nostalgia, perhaps for intertextuality, or perhaps for historic accuracy. *The King's Speech* (Hooper 2010), for example, employs allusions to Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935) for historical understanding. It does not invoke an outside text to speak about the film at hand but instead the film world. It also points to another aspect of allusion within a historical context, which is the implicit future. The modern viewer is able to have an awareness of what is to come, understanding the relevance of something not apparent to the film world. When the young Elizabeth II asks her father "What's he saying?" as images of Hitler speaking in Nuremburg flash on the screen, George VI answers "I don't know, but he seems to be saying it rather well." The dark reality of the second World War sits heavy in the mind of the audience as this allusion is used to juxtapose the character's benign interest in Hitler's oratory abilities. These allusions are mainly played for sly winks to the audience, aware of what lies just around the corner for these characters who lack the audience's retrospective understanding, rather than an intertextual dialogue.

The final qualification is the genre film, with the subcategory of parody film. As Rick Altman has demonstrated in his research, genre is a nuanced and challenging mode to understand. The conventions of each genre are precariously built up over time or otherwise created through revision and developed through the interplay of audience and creators (Altman 15). To get a hard and fast definition of any genre proves to be almost impossible, but while these definitions are mostly fluid, there are certain assumptions or qualities that become attached to specific genres. These presuppose aesthetic or narrative concerns that are too ubiquitous to be considered allusion. This is not to say

that genre films cannot allude, only that if it alludes within its own genre, there is pressure for greater specificity. If a cowboy in one film wears a black hat, this can hardly be an allusion to every other film in which a cowboy wears a black hat. However, if this particular black hat has a softball size hole in the crown, it is possible that an allusion is being made to another film or image of a black hat with a softball size hole. Undoubtedly, this is no exact science, but it seems that if the purpose is the communication of context, of putting one work in conversation with another, it is crucial to speak in greater detail when dealing with the affinity inherent in genre. As one critic writes, "We do not have to think about the allusion in genre films - we know it. The same is true of genre satire" (Sobchack 61).

Genre satire, or parody, raises a host of other concerns. Parody is constructed and dependent on intertextuality, relying on allusion as a necessary tool in its lampooning. In fact, some of the most iconic allusions are built on the back of parody. One need look no further than the great genre interrogator Mel Brooks and his films. *Young Frankenstein* (Brooks 1974), for example, parodies *Frankenstein* (Whale 1931), *The Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale 1935), and *The Son of Frankenstein* (Lee 1939), taking both narrative and formal techniques in order to structure the new work. Again, allusions are certainly being employed in these films, but the nature of parody is dependent on them. Parody is almost nothing but allusions and thus takes on an entirely different relationship in its textual conversations that removes it from the focus of this study. Therefore, even though genre and parody surely rely on construction through intertextuality, this study will not concern itself with trying to parse their nuances and instead seeks to explore the presentations of allusion within general narrative films.

Allusion through Story, Plotting, and Character

Opposed to adaptations, remakes, and genre, this category of allusion examines circumstances of allusions manifesting through story, plotting, or character that are informed by, but not dependent on, the source material. This type of allusion, like in many other categories, is often compounded by other forms of allusion. Allusions of this kind use characters, plotting, or stories to act as maps or devices for the new work. The character and narrative of the sickly and disillusioned provincial priests of *Winter Light* (Bergman 1963) and *Diary of a Country Priest* (Bresson 1953), for example, can be seen re-presented in *First Reformed* (Schrader 2017), without re-producing the original films. Notably, the concerns of Schrader's film are not so much centered on the Judeo-Christian God, but rather the environmental crisis facing the world. This demonstrates an instance in which allusion can be employed to address a contemporary issue by using the framing and associations provided by the inculcation of the source material.

Additionally, the reuse of story and character is perhaps better seen in George Lucas' *Star Wars* (1977) and its borrowing of Kurosawa's films. For instance, the characters and general plotting of *The Hidden Fortress* (Kurosawa 1958), or the cantina scene and the reluctant hero in *Yojimbo* (Kurosawa 1961), all are observable in Lucas' space opera. Although the stories need not be identical, there are parallels in each that put them in conversation. These are brought to the fore with repetition of iconographic or formal callbacks as well, one of many examples of the interconnectedness of allusionary types. This also points to a difference between *Yojimbo*'s relationship to *Star Wars* and its relationship to *A Fistful of Dollars* (Leone 1964). Leone's film, rather

than an homage or allusion in which Kurosawa's work adds a layer to Leone's own story, is essentially an unofficial remake. It is not, therefore, inculcating another work to bring clarity or complexity to itself, but instead reusing the old material for the same effectual ends and presenting them as original. This demonstrates a difference between re-makes and allusion. While remakes require a level of faithfulness to the original source, designed to evoke a nostalgic experience, allusion can reinterpret and incompletely utilize a singular or multiple works, bringing them all in conversation with one another and using them to the ends only of the present work.

Allusion through Dialogue

One of the simplest, ubiquitous, and most identifiable uses of allusion in films happens in the dialogue. These types of allusion require no physical reality and are therefore able to relay more abstract ideas or philosophies that may not be as applicable to other types of allusion. These can also be used as world-building tools, reflecting the cultural density of the setting they find themselves in, whether that be a college campus, a book store, an art gallery, or a theater. For example, in Noah Baumbach's *Kicking and Screaming* (1995), a graduating English student makes an offhanded nod to Kafka while fighting with his girlfriend about an opportunity she is pursuing; "Prague. You'll come back a bug," a more or less inconsequential comedic line that is appropriate to the scholastic setting of the film and character. This points to another aspect of allusion in dialogue: characterization. While the offhanded remark by Baumbach's character may suggest that he is superficially well-read, an obvious reading given the scene in context, dialogue allusions can also deeply connect a character to a single idea or concept that is critical to their role in the narrative. The character of Dr. John Brand in *Interstellar*

(Nolan 2014), for instance, constantly repeats the poem "Do not go gently into that good night" by Dylan Thomas. His connection to the poem displays a contradiction in the life-affirming words of the poem and his own hopelessness.

Allusion through dialogue might also present itself in the diction of characters. When the dialogue in *My Own Private Idaho* (Van Sant 1991) echoes Shakespearian style, or when the Hemingway character in *Midnight in Paris* (Allen 2011) speaks in crisp, minimalist, sentences, the audience understands this as an allusion to another text that is presenting in the new work and which must be contended with. Moreover, beyond individual works themselves, actors can evoke other persons or performances, often by delivering iconic lines with iconic inflections. Some might be Nixon's "I am not a crook!" or Gable's "Frankly my dear I don't give a damn." This borders on another type of allusion, allusion through personage, which will be discussed later.

Allusion through the spoken word is no creation of cinema, but it should be understood within the cinematic model. For example, cinema intervenes in this literary and theatrical tradition of allusion through words by verbalizing and embalming them in this specific performance and context. A good example of this would be Jack Nicholson's line "Here's Johnny!" from *The* Shining (Kubrick 1980), itself an allusion to *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. The line is now inextricably associated to Nicholson's iteration, specifying a performance of the words. Other artforms may be able to use words to create allusions, quoting others or adapting a style, but only cinema can embalm a manner of speaking those words.

Allusion through Direct Visual Quotation

While literature can quote words, cinema can quote pictures. There are two forms of allusion through direct visual quotation to discuss: text and image. Borrowed again from the literary tradition, textual quotations can present themselves anywhere in a film, prompted by the narrative world or otherwise non-diegetically. There is a qualitative difference in the use of textual quotation over verbal, activating the literary thinking of the viewer and bringing forth the esteem that the written word has over the picture. One of the simplest examples of a textual allusion is the epigraph. An epigraph offers preface, summary, counterpoint, or other insight to the work through the interpretive frame of another's words. For example, at the beginning of *Lady Bird* (Gerwig 2017), the film starts with this quote from Joan Didion: “Anybody who talks about California hedonism has never spent a Christmas in Sacramento.” The quote, illuminating an internal dissonance, distills a central conflict for the viewers. This epigraph prepares the audience for the viewing experience and creates an interpretive frame for them to use if they choose.

On the other hand, an epilogue, coming at the end of a film, can challenge the viewer to reconsider or reinterpret what they have just seen. An example of this is at the conclusion of Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* (1989). Two quotes appear on screen, the first from Martin Luther King Jr. advocating non-violence followed by a quote from Malcolm X sanctioning violence as a matter of self-defense. These quotes bring to a head the question latent in the movie (what is the right thing?) and elevates the message to a historical debate over civil rights. The source material, as with Lee’s film, may bring with it connotations beyond the words themselves, involving the person or

circumstances of the source. For example, biblical quotations, like the one found in *No Country for Old Men* (Coen and Coen 2007), lifts the considerations of the film to the level of an old testament parable. While textual allusions may present themselves anywhere in the film, epigraphs and epilogues offer a blueprint for how textual quotes may affect the overall viewing and critical experience for the audience.

Another form of quotation, exclusive to film, is the quotation of the still and moving image. Sometimes this quotation can be excused through a diegetic device, such as a trip to the cinema. For instance, in Damien Chazelle's 2016 film *La La Land,* the main characters initially bond over verbalized quotes from *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray 1955). Because one of the characters had not actually seen the film, they decide to watch it in the theater. As the characters watch, the audience watching Chazelle's film can also experience bits of Ray's movie as well. Sometimes, Ray's film actually subsumes the frame, putting the viewers in the same audience as the characters of *La La Land*. The classical style of Ray's film is echoed in Chazelle's, putting one in conversation with the other. What's more, the use of the Griffith Observatory in *Rebel Without a Cause* motivates a move to that location in *La La Land.* The allusion, communicating both style and plot points, is able to be reincorporated directly into the new film, using the lexicon of images in a manner that only film can.

Visual quotation need not only be other films, however, but can also include news, documentary, and amateur footage, as well as still images and paintings. It might be inserted directly into the film or act in some ways as an epilogue. The experience, much like sampling in music, takes the object from its original place and puts it within the film's conversation. This type has the added benefit of attaching a level of

authenticity by invoking an existing piece of the real world. One example might be the brief commercial breaks *Natural Born Killers* (Stone 1994) for things like Coca Cola. These short, non-diegetic, insertions subsume the screen in order to comment on commercialization of homicide in American culture.

There is another type of visual quotation to note which deals with cultural products. The manners in which this can present itself are nearly endless and can include books, comics, movie posters, toys, etc. These, unlike homage, are not interpretations, but rather direct integrations of objects. Movie posters populating the walls of characters' rooms is a popular one. A poster for *Amelie* (Jeunet 2001) hanging in the room of the protagonist of *About Time* (Curtis 2013), reflects his obsession with love and finding beauty in the mundane. All of these visual quotations presuppose the item within a visual form; a small but important fact. It also points to one of the unique qualities of cinema to re-present an object or image within its own contexts and hermetic structure, placing it in direct dialogue with this new work in its true form.

Allusion through Sound

Sound, one of the most critical and overlooked aspects of film, is an incredibly useful venue for allusion. Perhaps because sound is so integral to the creation of mood, it can be used to inform and shape the viewing experience for an audience, and therefore can be called upon again to evoke a similar feeling. Sonic allusions use sound effects, soundtracks, songs, voices, or scores that retain some sort of importance independent of their lyrics or notes. That is to say, more than the evocative feeling accompanying a sound, that sound has to be something that already exists in the cultural consciousness. An original score unattached to a particular film, for example, may just

as well inspire the same sense of awe that "The Fellowship" theme in *The Lord of the Rings* (Jackson 2001) does, but it does not evoke the memory of Frodo, Aragon, Gandalf, Gimli, Legolas, Boromir, Samwise, Pipin, and Merry setting off on the epic quest to Mordor. As demonstrated here, there is no better example of this type of allusion than the use of film scores being used in movies other than their own. This is likely because they are already tied to iconic imagery and moods.

Amongst iconic scores, there is likely none more so than John Williams' oeuvre, including *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977), *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg 1993), *Jaws* (1975), and *Raiders of the Lost Ar*k (Spielberg 1981). There are some great contenders, however, such as Bernard Herrmann's score for *Psycho* (Hitchcock 1960); or Nino Rota's for *The Godfather* (Coppola 1972). A song can also act as an allusion, usually an original, such as the use of "Eye of the Tiger" by *Survivor* in the context of *Rocky* (Avildsen 1975) but can also be an existing song made identifiable by a certain context, like an earlier film. "Oh Yeah" by *Yello,* for one, is inextricably connected to John Hughes' *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1987). These musical arrangements have accompanied and shaped the experience for some of the most iconic moments in popular culture, and as such, these melodies have been co-opted by other films to elicit, or nod, to the experience created by the original film. An example might be the famous screeching strings of Herrmann's work often present itself at times of shock, like the threatening arrival of the character Darla in *Finding Nemo* (Stanton 2003).

Allusion through sound is not only achieved through music but also can be accomplished through sound effects, although these are often a bit harder to identify. For example, in *Star Wars*: *The Force Awakens* (Abrams 2015) the notorious smuggler

Han Solo is transporting dangerous and giant spherical aliens called Rathars. When they are unleashed on the ship, they roll down the corridors with the same sound effect as the boulder in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (Spielberg 1981). The fact that both sounds chase the same actor in the films, Harrison Ford, is no coincidence and will be dealt with in the next section. What is important here is that the audio portion of audio-visual experience need not be forgotten when considering the ability for films to reference other films or non-cinematic sources.

Allusion through Personage

Many have written on the star quality provided by actors, philosopher Walter Benjamin included. Benjamin proposed that the cult of the star is a means to displace the authenticity lost in cinema, grounding the ethereal filmic text in a physical body that is reduced to a product, writing; "The film responds to the shriveling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the ‘personality' outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the ‘spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity" (Benjamin 12). This somewhat harsh perspective was informed by Benjamin’s anti-fascist objectives, however his point concerning the commodification of an identity is not lost. Unlike the self-referential allusion discussed earlier or an Easter egg, allusions through personage are not dependent on the creator’s earlier content, nor on allusions within the same franchise. While cameo and casting for purposes of intertextuality could be a whole study in itself, it is imperative to briefly touch on how and why allusion can be accomplished through the presence of personage.

One of the most direct means for allusion in personage, and most often for shock or comedic effect, is the cameo. Accomplished by professional or non-professional acting celebrities, playing either themselves or a character, and often for a short amount of screen time, the cameo utilizes the persona of the individual to some end. As with other forms of allusion dealing with texts, objects, or ideas outside of the narrative of the film, the insertion of these characters complicates the story world of the film, cluing the audience into how much the film does or does not conform to reality. They can threaten or even explode the hermetically sealed film world. For example, when the audience sees Stan Lee in any of his many cameos, from *Mall Rats* (Smith 1995) to any of the Marvel Cinematic Universe movies, he plays a variety of characters, that range in proximity to his actual personage (in a posthumous role in *Captain Marvel* [Boden and Fleck 2019], he actually plays himself preparing for a cameo in a different movie). The audience must consider if celebrities are playing themselves, a version of themselves, or an unrelated character. In *Ocean's 12* (Soderbergh 2004) Julia Roberts plays a character whose part in a heist is dependent on her *impersonating* Julia Roberts. Allusions to personage can also be accomplished through impersonation, using the identity of an individual without access to the person. For example, in *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian* (Levy 2009), historical figures are distilled to more or less caricatures. At one point the memorial statue of Lincoln breaks through the ceiling and declares "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Like with these historical figures, allusion through personage is often dependent on understanding the person exterior to the film. This may come in reference to another of the actor's works, again often for comedic purposes. For example, in Quentin

Tarantino's 2012 picture *Django Unchained*, there is a scene at a Mandingo fight in which Django, played by Jaimie Foxx, speaks with a character named Amerigo Vessepi over a drink:

> **Amerigo:** What is your name?
> **Django:** Django.
> **Amerigo:** Can you spell it?
> **Django:** D-J-A-N-G-O. The "D" is silent.
> **Amerigo:** I know.

What heightens the scene is the knowledge that the actor playing Amerigo is Franco Nero, made famous for his work as the titular character in the hyperviolent spaghetti western *Django* (Corbucci 1966), from which Tarantino took the name and much of the iconography of his film.

Related, although differentiated by its extended screen time and under the guise of a character, is casting a main character for purposes of intertextuality. This is most notable in moments of non-traditional casting, casting outside of type, or casting with concern for previous work. It is the knowledge that actor or individual previous to this role that informs the viewing experience for the audience. For example, there is possibly no better break with type then the heavy from Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968): Henry Fonda. Fonda's history as the hero, only one other time playing a villain in *Fort Apache* (Ford 1948), establishes an expectation that is subverted in the context of Leone's film. As a lone boy stands just outside his family's homestead, his parents and siblings just massacred, five shooters in black hats and dusters approach. The film cuts to a two-shot of the lad in the background and the back of the leader of ruffians in fore. The camera rotates to show the face of the man who then mercilessly guns down the scared boy: Henry Fonda. The focus on the reveal of the

identity of the character's actor demonstrates an awareness in the filmmaking process to the history of this individual that must be in some way alluded to.

Another such instance of reliance on persona might be *Birdman* (Iñárritu 2014), using the career history of the actor Michael Keaton playing the protagonist to parallel his character in the story world. What might be gained from this is a sense of realism or authenticity that might not otherwise be present. The audience, aware of Keaton's work in Tim Burton's Batman films and lack of serious dramatic work since, puts the new film in conversation with that history, even if it is mere fiction and in no way representative of Keaton's feelings. Certainly, the characters can stand on their own merit, but the films' treatment of communicating the identity of the actor and the actor's relation to the story content demonstrates how the films intends to enrich the experience through the audience's foreknowledge. There exists, it seems, a level of intertextuality and enrichment that can be offered in utilizing an individual's personal or professional persona, calling upon a prior understanding by the viewer.

Allusion through Form and Style

One of the most unique avenues of allusion in cinema exists in its form and style. This is due to the fact that it is the only method that can allude exclusively to other cinematic works. Although frame composition is covered in allusion through iconography, an example of allusion that could certainly fit here, this section deals mainly with qualities like cinematography and editing, techniques that can only be accomplished in the filmic form. Because of this, many parts of this section walk the line between a clever allusion and a technical trope. It is the intertextual quality of a technique that splits allusions from cliché. Like allusions through sound, allusions

through form and style are more than merely expressive tools, more than the notes that are played. As Noel Carrol writes;

> Styles as well as historic themes are often alluded to in a way that gives them a particular expressive, iconic function. Style in the generative (explanatory) sense as opposed to style in the classificatory (descriptive) sense, of course, is intrinsically connected to expression- we isolate stylistic units in terms of looking for the formal variations that give rise to the expressive and discursive effects we already intuit. But, in the recent films I have in mind, the style, because it is mediated through allusion, works by iconic reference rather than by expressive implication. That is, the historical reference of the lighting in a specific scene or its color may allow it to be taken as the use of style-as-symbol. (Carrol 69)

To this point, most allusions within this category deal with cinematic techniques and styles that are unique to an identifiable source. The reasons for involving these sources may change between allusions, but the fact they involve things outside the text is enough. For example, Hitchcock's development of the dolly zoom has led to a wide and varied usage, however it may be proper that one might only be able to call this an allusion if it similarly creates a feeling of character disorientation and unease, or otherwise is implicated with this Hitchcockian history. *Toy Story 2* (Lasseter 1999), a film that refers back several times to *Vertigo* (Hitchcock 1958), may be understood as creating an allusion to the original work.

Editing, one of the essential arts of the filmic form, is exemplary of this type of allusion. Reuse of pace, montage elements, or cutting patterns made distinctive by another source are allusions. Once again, it is hard disentangling this type of allusion from the audiovisual elements of other types of allusion. That said, things like identical shot size patterns can be allusions. The cutting pattern from the Nuremberg rally in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), for instance, is repeated, along with much of

set design, in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* at the rally of the First Order. The images are evocative of one another, but so too is the pace and editing composition, further compounding the allusion at hand. As demonstrated here, allusions can therefore be a means to create identifications between the fictional and the real. Although one could debate the overall veracity of Riefenstahl's film, it is undoubtedly her images that many see when thinking of the Third Reich and totalitarian demonstrations. As such, and perhaps a bit heavy handed for some, the formal parallels through allusions offer a real-life point of reference from which to understand this similar group as, for lack of a better term, "space nazis." Allusions through editing therefore demonstrate a dialogue between two films with one informing the other.

Cinematographic allusions also fall into this category. Some filmed moments are so unique, so utterly singular in their perspective that to reemploy them necessitates purpose. The framing of the character Shoshana in *Inglourious Basterds* (Tarantino and Roth 2009) within the doorway as she flees the farmstead, for instance, is a repetition of John Ford's framing of John Wayne at the conclusion of *The Searchers* (1956). The framing between the leg of Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate* (Nichols 1967) is almost always evocative of the same sense of seduction when seen in other films. There are countless other examples of cinematographic allusions. The lighting style in a scene from *La La Land* (Chazelle 2016) in which a character walks down a boardwalk whistling a tune, for one. The sun sets with purples and reds that is reminiscent of a similar scene from *West Side Story* (Robbins and Wise 1961) as a boy walks down a street and sings of a new love. Camera moves are another area for allusion. The long take in *Swingers* (Liman 1996) through the backdoors of a nightclub, as well as a

similar long take in *Boogie Nights* (Anderson 1997), both act as homages to the famous long take of Scorsese's *Goodfellas* (1990) into the Copacabana which itself could arguably be informed by *Touch of Evil* (Welles 1958). While each of these are expressive within the context of their film, the allusions inculcate film history as a means to contextualize their work.

This type of allusion creates a space for filmmakers to refer to one another in the purest cinematic lexicon, exploring the concerns and preoccupations of their predecessors. As such, this type of allusion often situates itself in reference to the auteur theory of directors, calling upon and contending with these authors of the image. Filmmakers are able to speak back to their own history. It also provides a circumstance for cinephilia to run rampant, allowing some to be accused of "all style, no substance." Perhaps because of this type of allusion's specificity within cinema and its manipulation of basic filmic techniques, it proves to be one of the most difficult types to identify.

Allusion through Iconography

Like most other forms of allusion, this type is often related to other means of allusion, most notably form and style. That said, allusions through iconography are unique and important in their presentation and effect. These allusions utilize mise-en-scene, actors, formal devices, and other effects to recreate or evoke iconic imagery. Oftentimes, these are not one-to-one recreations, but rather reinterpretations that speak to a related history or artistic lineage.

Before discussing the manners in which iconic allusion may refer to other cinematic works, it is worth noting cinema's ability to turn back to its artistic predecessors. Since cinema is a visual medium descended from painting, photography,

and theater, it seems natural that it pays homage to these forms. For example, the photorealist painting *Jutta* (1973) by John Kacere which depicts the midsection of a woman in underwear on her side, is almost identical to the opening shot of Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation* (2003). While the Kacere work is a more obscure reference, one does not need the years of study at CalArts that Coppola received to identify iconic paintings in her other films, like *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* by Jacques-Louis David in *Marie Antoinette* (2006) (not to say that they don't need some awareness to identify this allusion, only that David's piece seems to be more integrated into the common consciousness).

As in the case of the Napoleon painting, filmmakers will often punctuate their scene in some way to draw attention to the allusion. They might expand on the tableau quality of their images through a lingering shot or the slowing down of the image. This can also be seen in the opening sequence of Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* (2011) which includes a number of artistic references, such as *The Return of the Hunters* (Pieter Bruegel 1568) and *Ophelia* (John Everett Millais). Von Trier's slow-motion shots hold for much longer than the average cutting rate of the film, calling attention themselves. This device may also present itself in an establishing shot, a pausing of action, or other punctuation, such as the recreation of da Vinci's *The Last Supper* in *Inherent Vice* (Anderson 2014). In this scene, the characters pause slightly as a camera flashes just at the moment when the characters most resemble Da Vinci's masterpiece.

Related to this artistic re-interpretation, although different for ontological reasons, is the reproduction of the photographic image. Like the realization of the artistic work, the photographic recreation is similarly accomplished. What usually

causes it to stand out is the presence of an actual camera in the scene taking the photo. This device is also commonly used in moments intended for historical allusion. For example, in *Watchmen* (Snyder 2009), the opening sequence is comprised of numerous slow-motion shots that are interrupted by camera flashes, with one alluding to the famous *V-J Day in Times Square* photo by Alfred Eisenstaedt published in *Life* magazine. However, in Snyder's version, it is one of the female-identifying superheroines who tips the nurse over and steals a kiss while a sailor crosses in the background. The revisionist history of the narrative thus manifests in a re-construction of similar, but strategically divergent, iconography.

Both the artistic and photographic examples demonstrate a desire to somehow separate these moments from the moving-images that make up the film, attempting to demarcate them as something other than naturalistic moving image. The invocation of these iconographic images can imbue the film with a much more extensive history than cinema can provide. It can stretch back to the deepest annals of art history. In some circumstances, an homage to a piece of art can elevate the film, co-opting the respect given to a medium like painting that cinema has struggled to achieve. The art is actualized, made manifest on the screen through manipulation, but also redefined through the moving quality of the image.

There are other manners in which iconographic imagery can be employed. These can be subtle, through a building-up of the atmospheric qualities of the image. In Tarantino's *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003), the protagonist wears a leather jumpsuit that is based on costuming of Bruce Lee in *Game of Death* (Clouse and Lee 1978), situating Tarantino's film and character in conversation with this martial arts lineage. Similarly,

in Guillermo del Toro's 2017 best picture winner, *The Shape of Water*, the set-design acts as an atmospheric allusion at times. An example might be the dream sequence in which Elisa and the Amphibian Man dance on a set that is modeled after *Follow the Fleet* (Sandrich 1936). This ties in earlier allusions of del Toro's film to classic Hollywood and revises the ideas of movie monsters. Even by repeating the same carpeting featured in Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) in *Toy Story* (Lasseter 1995) the unease of the environment is invoked. Allusion can reach out and inculcate the associations for the viewer through very simple compositional elements.

Replication need not only be done in reference to artwork or atmosphere but also the reproduction of whole scenes or images from other films. This form of allusion is most related to the term homage and diverges from allusions to form and style by focusing not as much on the formal set-ups but rather the action undertaken (however, it is worth noting that iconographic allusions and form/style allusions are often irrevocably interrelated). Brian De Palma's *The Untouchables* (1987), for example, nods to the famous Odessa Steps sequence from *Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein 1925) (as a sort of Russian nesting doll of allusion, De Palma's scene eventually got parodied in *Naked Gun 33⅓: The Final Insult* [Segal 1994])*; Goodfellas* (Scorsese 1990) replicates the ending of *The Great Train Robbery* (Porter 1903) in its opening; and Tarantino alludes to the title sequences of *Superchick* (Forsyth 1973) and *The Graduate* (Nichols 1967) in the title sequence of *Jackie Brown* (1997). The number of these iconographic allusions is nearly endless.

These moments of re-creation can range in impact within the context of the film. Sometimes they halt all forward plot for these interludes of allusion, such as the

Bergman-esque dream sequence in *(500) Days of Summer* (Webb 2009). A film might otherwise subtly integrate allusion into the narrative, such as a scene in *The Incredibles* (Bird 2004) in which a policeman holds up two of the main characters after suspecting them of robbery. The character voiced by Samuel L. Jackson continues with a task as tension builds, a nod to a similar scene in *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (McTiernan 1995), also featuring Jackson. Compared to the elitism of artistic allusions, cinematic allusions can be seen as much more diffuse; a part of the layman's lexicon. Indeed, some will claim there is a hierarchy between "respectable" movies and "lesser" ones; however, their positions as films do create a necessary separation in how they may be alluded to and the elitism attached to those allusions.

What is clear in this taxonomical discussion is the varied, modular, and interconnected manners of allusion in cinema. What's more is cinema's intervention in the history and functionality of allusions, providing unique avenues not available in other disciplines. There is no one way to accomplish allusion nor understand their specific purposes, but that should not stop one from understanding how they operate. The question now arises as to how the many forms of allusion fit within the theoretical cinematic landscape and their effective relationship to the audience.

Chapter 2: Purpose of Allusion and its Place in Cinema – "What We've Got Here is a Failure to Communicate"

Purpose of Allusion

So why allude? It is an inexact form of communication that defers meaning to connotation and can make one's work inaccessible to many. Varied and fluid, the allusion might not even be identified, let alone understood. So, assuming that it was intended, why employ this specific device? In part, for the very reasons just described. Allusions, like language, are inexact and require a certain literacy to be understood. This preclusion through knowledge may alienate an audience if they lack awareness of the thing alluded to, but it can also breed familiarity within a knowing group. Irwin describes this as one of the most important aspects of allusions, writing that they can "offer something for aesthetic consideration, cultivating intimacy and forging a community, actively involving the audience in a way that straightforward statement does not" ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 522). Allusions require the active participation of the audience, eliciting a pleasure not found in other techniques.

Allusions, therefore, implicate the audience in the creative process. They compel the audience to pin down the meaning concealed in the allusion, denying passive viewership. This points to the playfulness of the device, asking the audience to "decode" the allusion. Irwin writes, "We also like allusions because of their game-like, ludic, quality. There is something playful in making an allusion, and we are, in a sense, being invited to play in considering an allusion." ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 524). Like children speaking in their own code right in front of their parents, the author and

knowing audience can have a conversation that may seem like gibberish to others. Erethay isyay omethingsay easurableplay inyay ommunicatingcay inyay odecay. This playfulness does not necessarily undermine the seriousness of a work or its subject matter, but it does demonstrate reflexivity inherent and makes the viewer aware that their active involvement is required. The film does not stand solemnly alone but exists within a continuum that moves beyond the edges of the frame and demands to be reckoned with. Depending on the presentation of the allusion, the intertextual play that they provide can subvert or possibly disassemble the sealed or otherwise straightforward narrative of a film, calling attention to its constructed quality. The game like function of the device implicates the audience in the creative process and offers a reprieve from linear or straightforward film thinking.

Audiences that "play the game" of allusions are able to derive a pleasure through this meaning making process. A pleasure that comes from the recognition and appreciation of the intertextual experience. William Irwin writes that allusion "challenges the reader, and if the challenge is not so difficult as to cause her to give up, some pleasure will be derived in meeting it. The reader admires the author's skill in saying what he wants elegantly yet indirectly, and she admires her own intellect in coming to understand" ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 524). The pleasure for the audience is, therefore, is not just based off of the author's mastery but their own personal mental labor as well.

The precondition of the mental labor is knowledge gained at an earlier time. As Carmela Perri says, "the genesis of allusion may be said to derive from the basic psychological pleasure obtained from learning something when the knowledge is got

[sic] through recognition and remembering with little expenditure of our psychic energy" (Perri 302). Having already put in the work at an earlier date, allusions act as a satisfying reward when they are understood at the moment. Susan Stewart acknowledges this fact as well in her writing, pointing out that the artifact of allusion is meant to recall what we have already accomplished; "The gesture of allusion is shaped by a nostalgia for the lost event; the object serves only as a souvenir of our knowing" (Stewart 1128). For example, after all those tedious days spent in high school discussing dead white men, memorizing this date and that, there is a small satisfaction given when one hears the joke, “well you know what Freud said, if it’s not one thing it’s a mother.” Allusions, very much like jokes, fair far better if they do not need explanation. Irwin acknowledges this fact as well, writing, “Ideally, the allusion calls for its intended audience to recall some piece of information, not learn it anew” (“The Aesthetics of Allusion” 528). Allusions, while they may be novel in their presentations and offer a new perspective in the context to which they are administered, they can only operate on old information, existing as a shorthand for larger concepts. Allusions offer maximal understanding with minimal effort, encapsulating endless connotations in a single object, shot, camera move, or image.

This understanding must come from somewhere. Let us assume that the author did intend an allusion and the audience was able to understand it as intended. It stands to reason that no matter how different the audience and creator might be, they share a commonality in knowledge. They both have spent time to learn something that is now being evoked. Irwin recognizes this and writes, "The author and the audience become, in effect, members of a club who know the secret handshake. If they share nothing else

in common at least they share this. There is, to be sure, a certain elitism and exclusion involved in this" ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 523). My life has been very different than Sofia Coppola's, but when I see a scene in *The Virgin* Suicides (1999) where a character drifts aimlessly in a pool, at least I know we've both seen *The Graduate* (Nichols 1967). And when the 2015 Disney Pixar movie *Inside Out (Docter*) has a cartoon cloud cop tell his partner to "Forget it, Jake. It's cloud town," I understand the creators of the work have seen the dark and disturbing noir *Chinatown* (Polanski 1974). What's more, given that Docter's film is targeted to family and children, I am also aware that I am amongst a select group of this film's audience that will have seen *Chinatown* and understand their intertextual relationship. One of the great abilities of allusion, therefore, is its ability to develop a relationship with the audience.

It should be noted, however, that allusion is not always intended to engender familiarity; sometimes it seeks to isolate. Irwin writes, "Perhaps it is the author's intent, though, to alienate, or at least exclude, certain members of his audience. In this way the author speaks in a kind of secret code" ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 523). The employment of outdated or little-known allusions may be a means for the author to push away the audience, make them feel uncomfortable and isolated. Another possibility is offering an alternative form of pleasure, a pleasure related to the pursuit of knowledge rather than recollection. The act of discovering an esoteric and obscure source of an allusion can be a pleasurable experience in its own right. For example, the hotel in the film *Anomalisa* (Johnson and Kaufman 2015) is named "The Fregoli." The Fregoli delusion, or the delusion of doubles, is a rare disorder in which a person holds a belief that different people are in fact a single person who changes appearance or is in

disguise; a narcissistic belief that the protagonist of the film entertains. While this information may be at some's fingertips, I was initially clueless. I felt as though I was missing something and sought to uncover what subtle nod the filmmakers were trying to make. My eventual understanding enriched my reflection on the film, along with future viewings. As such, allusions can act as educational sources, impelling the audience to gain previously absent understanding.

This "educational" quality of allusion can turn some films into sort of crash courses in film history, pointing to notable films and filmmakers. While, the "classics" and "masters" that comprise the general canon have often been elevated to such high positions because of structurally biased and prejudiced systems, their importance and influence on later works is tangible, in part because of their presence in other films through allusion. Allusions can contextualize a new work within a longer history by bringing in these generally esteemed sources. A filmmaker can essentially show their credentials, the work they have put in to understand these classic films or pieces of art, in order have their own work taken seriously by demonstrating the historical awareness of the filmmaker. Irwin points out that allusion might be seen as the expression of anxiety on the part of the author to be a part of the tradition of the canon. He writes "The literary author, and the poet in particular, is required to be original, yet original within a tradition" ("The Aesthetics of Allusion" 527). The filmmaker is able to borrow the legitimacy attached to these earlier works. As critic John Bigeuenet points out:

> The function of allusion has most often served the essential task of investing a work of literature with a lineage, a tradition, quite literally a context, within which an interpretation may be grounded. Thus provided, the reader will discover in the transposition of the old, known text onto the new, unknown text a dialectic of correspondences that will illuminate

> both works, demonstrating the relevance of the old and confirming the authority of the new. Allusion is, therefore, one of the primary mechanisms by which authors themselves establish and maintain the canon. (Biguenet 131)

As Biguenet notes in his last point, allusion not only works to legitimize the new but implicitly codifies the old as well. It marks the source material as something of enough value that it should be known by the audience. It either captured a specific meaning, originally presented something, or was historically significant enough that it needs to be invoked in this new circumstance. This may be used to perpetuate an existing canon or otherwise intervene with a new work that is just as important but hitherto overlooked. In this manner, allusion can act as a form of film education, identifying its sources and elevating its teachers. As will later be discussed with the New Hollywood movement, this process has helped to solidify auteur theory, creating mythic presences of people like Hitchcock or Hawks.

So, while allusions may be misunderstood or misidentified, the benefits they provide can outweigh the costs. Allusion provides an opportunity to engage the audience as a part of the creative process, offering them alternative pleasures of viewership. They may be employed for a number of reasons, including developing familiarity, breeding alienation, instructing viewership, or speaking to a greater history, all depending on the intention of the author and the understanding of the audience. And finally, allusions can contextualize a work within a tradition, offering a space for the author to demonstrate their qualifications and reflexively elevate their influences.

Allusion, the Technical Reproducibility of Cinema, and Semiotics

As demonstrated in the taxonomic section, the context of cinema has an undeniable effect on the presentation and function of allusion. It is not enough, therefore, to understand the nature of allusion in general without looking at the unique context of the cinematic medium and film theory. For this, I will study the essential qualities of allusion and how they relate to the essential qualities of film. In order to do so, I will examine how cinema operates as medium to authentically re-present and to be re-presented; essentially the very purpose of the allusion. I am also interested in how cinema distinctively communicates through its audio-visual form and within the post-modern, specifically pluralistic, context, in order to determine how allusion, a form of communication, fits within this schema. Through an interrogation of the theoretical basis for these aspects of cinema, I will demonstrate not only how allusion can function within the filmic form, but how it flourishes within it.

We must first contend with the technological achievement of photography and film to be able to accurately capture and re-present images in a hyper-realistic fashion. As opposed to earlier artforms, cinema maintains a specificity in its re-production process (e.g., in filming an apple I am invoking that specific apple rather than the artistic construction of an apple). Within this, cinema holds an authority in what it reproduces, a credibility that the audience attaches to the viewing experience. Film theorist Andre Bazin explains this better than I can. He argues, in his essay entitled "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," that the history of plastic arts has been a history of embalming, a process by which to save an object or image from the flow of time. He finds photography and film to be the pinnacle of this endeavor, believing that

they "satisfy once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism" (Bazin 7). The extent of this conflation of film image and the real object leads Bazin to the conclusion that "The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it" (8). Although perhaps not an unimpeachable position offered by Bazin, what is made evident it the heightened ability of re-producibility provided by cinema. Bazin writes:

> In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduces, actually re-presented, set before us, that is to say, in time and space. Photography enjoys a certain advantage in virtue of this transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction. (Bazin 8)

Accepting the reality of the object requires the acceptance of its new context as well. Technical reproduction mobilizes art and locales so that they may meet the viewer in whatever context the filmmaker chooses. Walter Benjamin, Marxist theorist, comments on this paradigm:

> The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. (Benjamin 4)

The ability to sever the tie of objects and spaces from their specific place and time is one of the great achievements of cinema. A film may fly between any image, sound, location, or existing media, pulling in any multitudes of sources and allowing for a heightened and singular type of intertextual experience. For, once captured by film or a digital format, an object exists in its image in as a singular existence to be infinitely reused. Roland Barthes, theorist, makes note of this. "What the Photograph reproduces

to infinity has occurred only once: the Photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially" (5).

Benjamin expounds this point in his essay "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," a Marxist examination of photography and film. He proposes that cinema, because of its re-producibility, has eschewed the "aura" of originality that traditional plastic art maintains. Aura, according to Benjamin, is the specific context of a work of art in relation to its specific spatial/temporal position and therefore its originality. He writes:

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence… The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. (Benjamin 3)

The authenticity of artwork may be dependent on originality; however, mechanical reproduction has allowed a new means of diffusion of art, relying on the authority of realism discussed by Bazin.

What Benjamin identifies is a lack in the cinematic image. That is to say that, while I may view and examine the Mona Lisa on my computer, pouring over every detail of the image thanks to the high-res photographs that were taken and uploaded for such purposes, I will not experience the true originality of the historical work by Da Vinci, its aura, until I make a trip to the Louvre. Uniquely, cinema lacks any aspect of this idea of aura as it is hard to argue that there can be any 'originality' related to viewing films (a fact only exacerbated in the digital age), in the sense that it is the

presentation of compiled and disparate pieces. For a film negative or stock is not really what the film is, in its essence, until it is projected.

Benjamin proposes that although cinema is disjoined from this criterion of originality that is attached to other pieces of art, its versatility and re-producibility can politicize art and create new meaning through its process of re-contextualization. Cinema has not only the ability but the necessity, by virtue of its ontology, to re-create and re-present the world and the world's works ubiquitously. He writes:

> For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever-greater degree, the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics. (Benjamin 6).

Cinema can capture and utilize existing objects, images, and sounds and dictate them to mass audience to the ends of the filmmaker. Benjamin's argument centers on the ability for cinema to be able to re-present and re-contextualize the world, sacrificing authenticity for versatility and, remembering Bazin, authoritative realism. Cinema becomes a game of reproduction, created to reproduce and to be reproduced. And so enters allusion.

Allusion seems ideally situated within cinema as the logical extension of the maximalist form and its critical quality of reproducibility. As Benjamin has pointed out, one of the essential qualities of cinema, and what it has gained in its sacrifice of the aura, is its disregard of spatial/temporal shackles. Cinema allows the image to meet any

manner of audience in entirely new contexts. The realist abilities of the medium, as described by Bazin, actualize these moments in novel ways that must be met with a certain authority. Allusions, therefore, represent these essential qualities of cinema, reproducing and activating images and sounds in a new and singular experience. Look, for example, at iconographic allusions or visual quotations. These methods are some of the most manifest moments of the convergence of Benjamin's and Bazin's theories. While Goya's painting *Witches' Flight* (1798) is stuck in El Museo del Prado, it is made alive in *The Witch* (Eggers 2015), over 200 years after Goya's work and within an entirely original framework. The iconography transposed upon real bodies injects a new perspective on the old, demonstrating not only the capabilities of cinema's reproducibility but its advantages as well.

Before concluding this discussion, it is worth pointing out the true convergence of cinema's reproducible nature and allusion: the cinematic allusion. While little has been said about the sources of allusion, within this context it is more than appropriate. The integration, or otherwise the recreation of other films in a new movie, points to the active reproduction of a form made to be reproduced. Incidentally, cinema is the only medium that can totally re-present itself. While cinema can reintroduce any of the other arts, no other art can completely re-present film. A painting can never remake a film but film can re-present a painting. Cinematic allusions become copies without true originals, if one is to follow Benjamin's logic. While, what might be called extra-cinematic allusions, allusions that refer to something outside of film, may point to a concrete object (although certainly not always), cinematic allusion may only ever refer to an immaterial audio-visual experience. Cinema's ability to operate for the means of

reproduction necessary for allusions, while simultaneously acting as a medium that is based in its ability to be re-produced, demonstrates the intimate bond that can be found between the device and the medium. Allusion truly demonstrates the versatility and multifaceted nature of the cinema, as well as its connection to reproducibility.

The correlative relationship between cinema and language was discussed in the introduction of this study. However, it will now be explored in greater depth in order to understand how allusions, essentially vehicles for communication, operate within the communicative qualities of film. Once again, there are perils in reducing cinema to an allegory of language, but if understood in light of semiotic theory it can be a productive model to understand cinema and allusion. Some of the most famous semiotic film theorists include Roland Barthes, Christian Metz, and Umberto Eco. Each apply a unique understanding to how cinema creates its own means to meaning, utilizing formal elements inaccessible to other mediums. Eco, for example, contends that film, due to the kinesics of the form, creates a space for an overwhelming amount of combinable coded meaning. He writes, "The contextual wealth of this combination makes the cinema a richer form of communication than speech" (592). In other words, the multidimensional form of cinema offers unique avenues to communication that are not apparent in other mediums. And just as with allusions, there is no one way to understand or interpret these codes. Christian Metz makes a point of this in his writing, stating, “... the image discourse is an open system, and it is not easily codified, with its non-discrete basic units (the images), its intelligibility (which is too natural), its lack of distance between the significate and the signifier” (Metz 59). The “language” of

cinema, therefore, cannot be entirely reduced and should instead be addressed within its specific context.

That is not to say that cinema is an unintelligible medium, absent of identifiable practices and conventions. Quite the contrary. Cinema has become its own hermeneutic for understanding the world. As somewhat derisively stated by early 20th-century author and critic Georges Duhamel, "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images" (52). Perhaps it is because the audio-visual experience of film is so close to the real world, from its Bazinian authority, that it can easily be confused with the real, or at the very least recognized as an important interpretive lens for it. The makeup of films can compose new avenues of thought and act as interpretive paradigms through its formal processes. Who has not heard or said the phrase "It felt like it was happening in slow motion?"

In the introduction to his book, *Filmosophy*, Daniel Frampton discusses how cinema, due to its cultural saturation and the profoundly immersive aesthetic experience it offers, has become another world to inhabit that subtly inflects and shapes our understanding of the real; “Cinema is a world of its own… a world that is subtly and almost invisibly organized… the multiplicity of moving-image media in the twenty-first century means that this film-world has become the second world we live in. A second world that feeds and shapes our perception of reality” (1). He expands on this later, writing, “film, in some of its forms, can rejig our encounter with life, and perhaps even heighten our perceptual powers… Film challenges our view of reality, forcing a phenomenological realization about how reality is perceived by our minds” (Frampton 4). The cinema is not only a means to meaning but to understanding as well.

If cinema is genuinely as relevant a hermeneutic as these authors claim, allusion, especially cinematic ones, seem almost inevitable. That is to say, if people already use movies to think through their world, it stands to reason that movies, a second world reflective of the real, do the same. Cinematic allusions, allusions to other films, become a literalization of this process of understanding. Instead of masquerading the ideas of film thinking in the guise of novelty, allusion demonstrates the authentic and practical interpretive work being accomplished by films and filmmakers to understand themselves. Allusion in the cinema becomes a reproduction of the thought processes of the individual, understanding the world through its prior presentation on the screen. They act as a shorthand, a transference of associated information through a presence of the symbolic, placeholders for more significant meaning. One can consider allusion as a sort of "dialect" of film language. Cinema, while fluid in formal diction, has created a symbolic one through things like allusion. Thus, allusions in film can act as an activating means for an aesthetic understanding of the world that already exist and many make unconsciously. Allusions need not be strictly to cinematic sources, though, in order to represent thought processes. This leads to a final word on the postmodern nature of film and allusion as a recognition of this fact.

The multifaceted medium of cinema reflects well the fractured and pluralistic postmodern world into which it grew up in. And what better device for cinema to use to explore this multi-layered paradigm than allusion? The postmodern landscape is built on the tearing down of grand narratives of the world, embracing the modular and the multifaceted and understanding the interplay of interpretive processes. Art and literature, within this schema, must address their own formal histories and understand

the arbitrary conventions by which they are established, along with the dependent nature of creation, constantly reliant on what has already been. As one writer concerned with intertextuality states:

> Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature. Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. The act of reading, theorists claim, plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings, is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext. (Allen 1)

Cinema is by no means exempt from this process of reconciliation with the past; however, there is a somewhat unique circumstance within cinema that leads many to think of it as still a very infantile medium. John Biguenet comments on how the fairly recent development of cinema as an artform in some ways precludes it from this understanding of intertextuality:

> The richness of the Western tradition poses its own problem. Working in genres that have existed for millennia, the contemporary author faces a dilemma similar to that of which Italian poets complain—everything rhymes. It is virtually impossible today to pluck a note on the poet's lyre that will not reverberate all along our three-or four-thousand-year-old tradition. The filmmaker, however, working in a medium barely a century old, does not dance among so many graves. Though we speak of "classic" films, the adjective has far less resonance than in older art forms. (Biguenet 131-132)

Once again, I must disagree with Mr. Biguenet. Undoubtedly cinema is one of the most novel mediums, offering new means of expression that had hitherto been

unthinkable. However, the cinema is not entirely separate from the other arts and instead may be said to be their progeny. That is to say, that not only is cinema informed and understood as the highest evolution of the plastic arts, the process by which it makes meaning, re-production, is dependent on re-presenting these other artforms to one degree or another. While a film may not hold the same type of "classics" (although I think Biguenet overlooks the ultimate impact some films have had on modern culture and art), cinema has to also contend with the "classics" of every other discipline as their heir. Innovation is certainly possible, but one must consider the material source of cinema and how it deals with both its history and the fractures that present themselves in the multifaceted postmodern environment.

One manner that cinema can reconcile with this postmodern paradigm and with its artistic lineage is through allusion. Allusion actively demonstrates the intertextual relationship of the product to other works and within the medium's history. Reminiscent of Derrida's *différance*, the meaning behind a text becomes a process of infinite regression. While that meaning may get endlessly passed along the line, it becomes crucial to understand this process of active fracture and transference that is descriptive of the postmodern landscape. And most important in reference to this study, understanding how allusion is an activating part of this deferral process. Cinema incarnates the shift in meaning as it becomes subdivided and fluid, utilizing tools like allusion to activate the intertext of cultural relevance in order to both communicate and represent the process of communication.

Cinema, a medium designed to reproduce and to be reproduced, creates meaning and systems of meaning that are exemplified through the device of allusion. The

ubiquity of the cinema has not only allowed for the wide transference of information but the naturalization of this process of dissemination, engraining the filmic model as a hermeneutical paradigm. Allusion, a device that is not unique to cinema, undoubtedly benefits from this maximalist and reproductive form, perfectly encapsulating the ability of the form to deal with and re-appropriate existing material to countless ends.

Chapter 3: Allusion in Contemporary American Independent Cinema – "Everybody Steals from Everybody, that's Movies"

In light of the conclusions reached in the previous two chapters of this study, it is important to demonstrate the applicability of this information within the context of film analysis. As there is very little literature concerned with allusions, beyond an assessment of specific films or filmmakers, it is hard to determine a point of intervention for this thesis to make. As such, we turn to one of the only sustained critical arguments that focuses on allusion as a device within cinema: Noel Carroll's paper "The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (And beyond)."

In the hopes of encouraging further research into allusion as a cinematic device, this section intends to reckon with Carrol's suppositions on allusion, ultimately using his analysis as a springboard for a study of allusion in contemporary American independent cinema. Because of the lack of scholarship in this area, a reasonably in-depth study of Carrol's work, the defining aspects of New Hollywood of the 1970s and contemporary American independent cinema, and the connection between these periods will be offered in order to properly understand how allusion operates in each of these periods and demonstrate how allusions can be thought of in an academic context. Through examining how and why allusion is adapted within each of these periods, it will hopefully illuminate how allusion can be studied as a uniquely cinematic device, as well as demonstrate the importance of properly understanding allusions in order to understand films today.

"The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (And beyond)"

First, it is important to clarify Carrol's classification of allusion. He chooses to focus on strictly cinematically sourced allusions, describing it as, "An umbrella term covering a mixed lot of practices including quotations, the memorialization of past genres, the reworking of past genres, *homages*, and the recreation of 'classic' scenes, shots, plot motifs, lines of dialogue, themes, gestures, and so forth" (52). A rather broad and unobtrusive definition, Carrol's umbrella stretches a bit farther than is comfortable for this study, namely in his inclusion of theme and, although to a lesser extent for reasons that have already been explored, the reworking of past genres. Before continuing with examining Carrol's ultimate claims, his definition must be challenged.

When discussing thematic allusion in his paper, Carrol writes, "Though it is harder to put one's finger on, it seems to be the case that recent filmmakers not only depend on references to explicit genres, films, scenes, and so forth, but also on references to themes that have dominated film discourse and which have been enshrined therein – for example, Hawksian professionalism" (67). Carrol goes on to cite a connection between Howard Hawks' *The Thing from Another World* (1951) and Walter Hill's *Alien* (1979) as a means to demonstrate an affinity between the two directors. After establishing this connection, Carrol then makes the shaky leap that an entirely different work of Hill's, *The Driver* (1978), is largely "unintelligible" without an understanding of Hawksian professionalism. It's a strong claim with little evidence provided. As Carrol explains, the themes of *The Driver* are the only thing alluding to Hawks, admitting, "The exact increments of Hill's allusion to Hawks are more difficult to pinpoint than are allusions made to a scene or a camera movement or even to a story;

there is no structural element, no object or image that we can hone in on that is being imitated" (68). As has been mentioned, allusion requires presence. There must be some formal or identifiable component to point to in order to claim an allusion is manifest. If what is identified is simply similar ideas, themes, or a spirit, this is far better to be called an influence or concern rather than allusion. If the definition for allusion, the basis for analysis, were to entertain such an ambiguous notion it might make any study unsustainable. With this understanding, parts of Carrol's later arguments concerning thematic allusion will be overlooked in order to focus on the more supportable and relevant claims he makes.

In his analysis, Carroll proposes allusion as a defining characteristic of New Hollywood of the sixties and seventies, and more broadly a connection between the New Waves of France and Germany as well. Central to the growth of New Hollywood and the use of allusion, by Carroll's estimation, was the adoption of *auteur* theory. He writes:

> The boom of allusionism is a legacy of American auteurism, a term that I intend to adopt, for better or worse, to denote the frenzy for film that seized this country in the sixties and early seventies. Armed with lists from Andrew Sarris and compatible aesthetic theories from Eisenstein, Bazin, Godard, and McLuhan, a significant part of the generation raised in the fifties went movie mad and attacked film history. They passionately sought out films they had missed, returned obsessively to old favorites, and tried to classify them all. At times, this orgy of connoisseurship degenerated into downright film buffery… These filmmakers predictably attempted to incorporate the budding film-historical sensibility - the central intellectual event of their youthful apprenticeships - into their works. Filmmakers began to appear who equaled, and in some cases surpassed, the erudition of the film-historically conscious audience - Paul Bartel, Peter Bogdanovich, John Carpenter, Michael Cimino, Bob Clark, Francis Coppola, Jonathan Demme, Brian DePalma, Monte Hellman, Tobe Hooper, Dennis Hopper, Philip Kaufman, George Lucas, Terence Malick, John Milius, Dick

> Richards, George Romero, Paul Schrader, Martin Scorsese, and Steven Spielberg. A number of these directors were trained in film schools. Many who were autodidacts of an almost monastic bent. (54-55)

As Carrol points out, this boom in historical consciousness was not exclusive to directors, but audiences as well:

> Each [filmmaker] was recognized by the film-historically conscious audience as a secret sharer in the movie mania. The proliferation of the film-history credo allowed emerging directors to presuppose that at least part of their audience was prepared to look for their allusions to film history and to see in them signals of the expressive commitments of their films. The game of allusion could begin; the senders and receivers were in place; the necessary conditions for allusionistic interplay were satisfied. (55)

In Carrol's estimation, the New Hollywood movement is one of the first American film movements to truly embrace allusions to other cinematic works, demonstrating the mastery and anxiety of the filmmakers of this period. As such, allusions act as a way to legitimize the form, to the filmmakers and to the audiences. Allusions indicate that cinema has created a system of meaning making that was and is viable, communicative, and substantial enough to be reused. In other words, filmmakers were for the first time demonstrating through their work that film had been doing much more than just entertaining for all these years; it had been creating art. He states in his paper that, "the film boom was a call for a democratization of art – for the admission of lowly genre film into the canon of aesthetic and academic worthiness" (Carrol 80).

Inherent in this schema, and a point that Carrol only briefly touches upon, is the reciprocal relationship that developed between new filmmakers and film history. This embrace of cinephilia was a way to express an arrival, the confirmation of cinema as a

form onto itself worthy of study and respect. The deification of directors like Hitchcock and Ford created a pantheon of directors who were seen for the first time as more than simple entertainers. The new guard was able to contextualize and give credence to their work through the process of allusion to film history. Rather than a plagiaristic act, the device demonstrated an awareness and originality.

The fact of the matter is, however, that cinephilia, for all of its acolytes, was not necessarily the dominant religion of the time and filmmakers still had to contend with making both popular and stimulating films, creating levels of engagement for the variably informed audience. Carrol writes:

> It seems that popular cinema wants to remain popular by developing a two-tiered system of communication which sends an action/drama/fantasy-packed message to one segment of the audience and an additional hermetic, camouflaged, and recondite one to another. Taken as a proposed solution to the problem of Hollywood's aesthetic survival, however, this is far from ideal, because there is a remainder of the audience that the two-tiered system ignores and that is nonplussed by what it perceives as films that are, paradoxically, at once intelligent, sophisticated, and just plain dumb. (56)

Carrol goes on to lament the condition of allusion as it is used today, simply as a means to style rather than an educational or engaging tool. These final comments by Carrol certainly have some credibility. However, they also seem to be unfairly regressive, holding onto the old and ordained, afraid of the innovation and diversification that will come with new filmmakers and film practices. A somewhat ironic, and unfortunately common, sentiment shared amongst those that revere a period of film history that sought to upend the establishment and celebrate what is new and challenging.

From New Hollywood to the Independents

In order to understand the aesthetic and industrial connection between New Hollywood and later periods, it is important to place it within a historical context. The zeitgeist of the New Hollywood period was not confined to the bookends of the decade and instead transgressed these boundaries with a common subversive spirit. The period, defined by its upheaval of traditional practices, was littered with key events and movements that shaped the psyche of the times, many of which disappointed the optimism of the earlier half of the decade. On top of this, there was a growing address to issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation through protests and student demonstrations, hoping to achieve the equality that they had so long been denied. Carrol himself points out the influence this had on filmmakers of the period, writing, “It is important to remember that the generation which rediscovered film also rediscovered radical politics” (Carrol 79). This vision of a future dedicated to equality and exploration, however, was not to be. As one critic notes, “The tragedy of America’s losses in Vietnam, the shock of discovering the sitting president was a criminal, and the drug-related death of such cultural icons as Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Lenny Bruce, and Elvis Presley all cast dark shadows across the idealism of the 1960s” (Hanson 9-10). The dejected sentiments and unfulfilled ideals of the era found their home in cinematic representation in what would come to be known as the New Hollywood movement.

There were, however, industrial and aesthetic qualifiers for the movement as well, many of which reflected the rebellious spirit of the age. As Thomas Schatz explains in his study of New Hollywood, "In its broadest historical sense the term

applies to the American cinema after World War II, when Hollywood's entrenched ‘studio system' collapsed and commercial television began to sweep the newly suburbanized national landscape" (Collins 8). This led to a rise in film aesthetics and narrative subversion that directly countered Hollywood norms, allowing for more considerable ambiguity, expressivity, and overall iconoclastic practices. Due to the industrial stagnation of the studio system and the rise of alternative media sources like television, Hollywood turned to young filmmakers, many of whom were the first to actually study filmmaking in school. As Geoff King notes, "Previous generations of directors had mostly come from the theatre or learned the job during apprenticeship within the studio system," and therefore this new wave of filmmakers was unique for actually academically dealing with the history and aesthetics of their medium, as well as being exposed to various ideas of film theory and national cinemas outside of the Hollywood tradition (88).

New Hollywood, however, was not the death knell for the classical style that many have made it out to be. As Kristin Thompson, film historian and critic has pointed out, "the youthquake/auteurist films of the period from 1969 to 1977 or so were not harbingers of a profound shift in Hollywood storytelling but a brief detour that has had a lingering impact on industry practice" (4). These industrial shifts are essential to understanding this era and the era of independent cinema which will soon be discussed, since they demonstrated how films could be made outside of studio superstructures, or even within them but still subversive in formal and thematic qualities. This movement, therefore, countered the narrative, formal, and industrial clarity that had cemented itself in the classical Hollywood system prior to this temporal moment, much in the same way

that changes within the society of the period were addressing the long-entrenched modus operandi. As ambiguous and negotiable as the identity of New Hollywood is, there remains a core commonality that unifies these directors and their styles. To a lesser degree, this stands true for the independent films and filmmakers growing out of the mid-1980s and 1990s as well.

Globally it was a time of spreading capitalism, with cataclysmic shifts in world dynamics, like the dissolution of the Soviet Union and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, as well as changing relations in the Middle East. This was compounded with a term of relative prosperity in the U.S. due in large part to new technologies. One of the most significant influences on the '90s, and subsequently on the filmmakers of the era, was the proliferation of new forms of media, such as cable television, the internet, and VHS/DVD. The link to these new forms of media was often used to define the youth culture, popularly known as Generation X. Synonyms included the "MTV Generation," the "Friends Generation," or the "Slacker" generation (a reference to Richard Linklater's independent film *Slacker* [1991]). These new technologies offered cheaper, more accessible alternatives in the production process, allowing for the beginnings of democratization of forms like movies. The diversification of the media landscape led to niche markets and the global upheavals acted as points division rather than unification. Centers of cultural focus became diffuse and led to a range of interests and concerns for the emerging filmmakers.

It is important to note that these filmmakers were born into the age created and represented by the New Hollywood directors, and it is, therefore, the unfulfilled promises of that generation that had a significant impact on the Generation X

Independent filmmakers. One author writes, "Even the youngest Gen Xers were born too late to participate in the historical social unrest that reached its twilight in the mid-1970s, so all Gen Xers grew up in the aftermath of a beautiful but unrealized dream, and this sad fact informs their sensibilities" (Hanson 11). The youth culture of the 1990s was therefore heavily influenced by the disillusionment coming out of late 60's early 70's.

Growing out of this cultural setting and in the rebellious spirit of New Hollywood, independent film presented itself as a new and viable alternative to the Hollywood institution of the '80s and '90s. Much like the New Hollywood movement, American independent cinema offered its opposition along narrative, aesthetic, educational, and industrial lines. The number of college-educated directors increased into this period, once again emphasizing an intellectualization of the medium and a focus on the unique vision and style of directors; "In 1992, 72 percent of first-time directors were graduates of film schools, compared with 35 percent in 1980. By 2000, more than 80 percent of all new directors will have gone to film school" (Hardig). These numbers grow through the 2000s and subsequent decade. The diversification of the media landscape changes in production processes and focus on alternative narratives through unique aesthetic means that began in the early days of modern independent American cinema has continued into the present. The youthful disquiet, along with the countering of aesthetic and industrial norms first fully realized in the New Hollywood movement helped to inform and launch the wave of American independent cinema that continues today.

Allusion's Place Amongst the Independents

American independent cinema, as the successor to the New Hollywood movement, has demonstrated time and again its commitment to producing challenging and intertextual films. Most notably, films produced at the beginning of the independent film movement of the late '80s and '90s demonstrate the great pervasiveness of allusions as a device to understand the world and the film itself. Some notable examples might be *Reservoir Dogs* (Tarantino 1992), *American Beauty* (Mendes 1999), *Clerks* (Smith 1994), and *Being John Malkovich* (Kaufman 1999), all of which deal in some way with allusions to film history as a means to meaning in their presentation. This is in large part due to the realist qualities of these independent productions. Allusion extends from these early iterations into contemporary independent cinema as well, along all lines of the varied and multi-tiered independent productions. While there are varied manners of independent productions, changing by studio, filmmaker, year, movement, genre, and so on, this study will focus on the general "independent spirit" of these films, and recommends further scholarship into how allusion changes in regard to each of these contingencies. These films reflect and challenge the Hollywood institutions, utilizing allusion as a tool to recognize the essential qualities of cinema described in the previous chapter.

A notable quality of independent productions, usually dictated by financial restrictions, is their focus on the contemporary world. As such, they often demonstrate the post-modern and fractured paradigm of understanding through intertextuality and reference that exists in the modern circumstances they are reflecting. Referencing, especially to movies, has in many ways become how people operate in their day-to-day

lives, making it seem natural that film characters do the same. This traverses all levels of society, although the points of reference may shift. Allusions present themselves in whatever milieu is of interest. *Kicking and Screaming* (Baumbach 1995)*, Lady Bird* (Gerwig 2017)*, Clerks* (Smith 1994)*, Do the Right Thing* (Lee 1989), *Little Miss Sunshine* (Faris and Dayton 2006), and *Donnie Darko* (Kelly 2001), all have their share of allusions, many talking about other movies, but each situation is unique to their social environment and persons. Interestingly, this means that allusions can act as points of reference for the viewing audience. While an individual may not understand the specific social environment represented, they may be able to identify and understand a piece of it through an allusion presented in the film, allowing them to locate and understand the depicted situation. Allusions become a way for the characters to understand themselves and the audience to understand the film.

In light of the historical connectedness of these two movements, the prevalence of allusion is by no means surprising. However, to better understand the function of allusion and why it is so adaptable to independent film, it becomes necessary to investigate the independent movement further. As Janet Staiger points out in her study of the American indie "film practice," the definition of independence has always been rather difficult to pin down beyond its obvious industrial circumstances; “the first and often still defining criterion for being an independent is based on the movie's economic relation to major producer-distributors” (17). That being said, Staiger is not alone in identifying other unifying traits of production or product that indicate independent film as a distinct and observable film movement. In film historian Michael Z. Newman’s estimation, American Independent film can best be understood through its affective

relationship to audience and audience expectations, stating, “viewers are encouraged to see independent films as more socially engaged and formally experimental than Hollywood; more generally, they are encouraged to read independent films as alternatives to or critiques of mainstream movies” (22). In both production and content, American independent film seems to be a product of the model initiated by the New Hollywood movement.

As with any industrial study, especially one that is crucially defined by what it is not, the concerns and categories of independent film are relatively broad. While the institutional and financial concerns will always be present in discussions concerning independent film, it does not seem particularly pressing when discussing allusion as a cinematic device. Instead, it is vital to identify, for lack of a better word, the ‘spirit' of independent cinema and effective viewing practices of independent film in order to understand why it may or may not be particularly receptive to allusion.

In the first chapter of his book, *Indie: An American Film Culture*, Michael Z. Newman offers three viewing strategies for independent cinema which distinguishes this filmic practice from others. Importantly, these practices are related to effective audience engagement, a key component to the device of allusion. These "slogans" for viewing independent cinema as unique in relation to classical and art films and as the foundation for the audience's engagement are: "Characters are emblems," "Form is a game," and "When in doubt, read as anti-Hollywood." A closer examination of these qualities of independent cinema will enlighten why allusion operates so well therein.

These interrelated and progressively broader approaches begin with an understanding that independent cinema has a noteworthy history of representing

specific social situations that are in tandem with the specific identity of the characters. In this context, the lived experience of the characters is shown as valid and distinct from the equalizer of classical cinema that appears far more interested in identifying universality and harmony rather than contending with and celebrating critical differences (one need look no further than this past year's Best Picture winner at the Oscars, *Green Book* [Farrelly 2018], to see this fact displayed). This goes beyond the mere thematization of social issues and instead addresses the characters as social beings. Newman writes, "an implicit solicitation of audience awareness of the specificity of represented situations, and especially people, in historical and cultural reality. With this awareness, characters become emblems of their social identities" (Newman 30). Another way to say this is that characters are seen as authentic social agents. This is often compounded by the fact that independent productions open a space for underrepresented groups to produce and represent their own identities more accurately. What is important to glean from this is that there is a closer address to the cultural and social circumstances of the characters, allowing for moments of cultural specificity that are open to intertextuality unique to these filmmakers and their characters' shared experience. The inculcations of the various references and homage in Richard Linklater's *Boyhood* (2014) therefore has a certain specific authenticity to it, as does Dee Rees' *Pariah* (2011), through the understanding of these peoples within cultural realities and validated through the production of individuals with identities tied to the characters.

Similarly, the production by these underrepresented voices allows a reorientation to film history, a space for revision and reinterpretation. For example, in

Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing* (1989), the character Radio Raheem offers up a speech on "Love and Hate," an appropriation of a speech by an evil reverend from *The Night of the Hunter* (1955). The recontextualization of the speech into Lee's film appropriates the meditations of good and evil from the original work with the efforts of addressing the social and racial problems of Lee's film. The allusionary action still functions within classical film history, but may also contend with the erasure and bias that that history has exhibited.

Newman's second strategy refers back to the first. He notes that one of the aesthetic qualities of independent cinema is to "play a game" with the spectator, challenging them to compare and contrast their filmic knowledge in relation to the film, so as to enjoy and "win" the game/film through formal understanding. This approach indicates a fracturing in the formal approach to filmmaking, subversive to the Hollywood-norm. This subversive pleasure rewards informed viewers who are able to pin down the 'how and why' of the film's form. Newman notes, "This offers a pleasure in film-viewing that is distinct from pleasures offered by mainstream cinema, though this is not to say that independent cinema cannot offer those pleasures too" (35). This gratification is a distinctly intellectual one as it is in part based off an understanding of conventions and the reinterpretation of signs and signifiers found in general formal techniques like genre, characters, or, of course, allusions to other works.

It is this viewing strategy that is most linked to allusion, as both play off of the viewer's involvement in the creative process, challenging them to solve the problem at hand to gain a better understanding of the film itself. In *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (Jarmusch 1999), for example, the formal makeup of the movie relies on an

interplay of texts such as *Le Samouraï* (Melville 1967), *High Noon* (Zinnemann 1952), and *Rashomon* (Kurosawa 1950), all of which introduce plotting and stylistic choices that seem at odds until understood within the context of these other films. The playfulness of allusions may, therefore, be integrated into the play of the formal experience.

Finally, Newman's last slogan, "when in doubt, read as anti-Hollywood" claims that whatever in the film departs from traditional expectation is indicative of a critique of that tradition, meaning that independent films can be understood as oppositional to Hollywood in matters not covered by the previous two slogans. He writes:

> Rather than shocking viewers, we might say that independent cinema aims to introduce them to different kinds of experiences within the parameters of the feature film, to denaturalize aspects of conventional cinematic practice. The strategy of reading as anti-Hollywood functions as a global assumption about independent film and also as a local heuristic for making sense of specific details and devices. (43)

While this may not seem to apply to allusion directly, I contend that this opens the field for the device as normal Hollywood fare might not. For, if allusion is by nature exclusionary, how can it hope to be deeply integrated into the fabric of heavily commercial cinema? Undoubtedly Hollywood has had its share of clever allusions within their films, but one is hard pressed to find a Hollywood film that requires historical, literary, cultural, or cinephilic literacy in order to understand and fully appreciate the movie.

In contrast, independent cinema often calls upon the intertextual awareness of the audience. In his book, *Cinema of Outsiders: The Rise of American Independent Film*, Emanuel Levy examines how genres, such as comedy, functions within the

independent paradigm. Levy points out, “The function of non-studio comedy fare is to challenge the standard formulas by subverting audiences’ expectations” (250). This subversion of expectations presupposes an intertextual awareness of the genre. For example, *(500) Days of Summer* (Webb 2009), a revision of the romantic comedy must operate in relation to the ‘standard' romantic film, innovating within the conventions laid out by the genre. Once again, allusions are possible within genres, but require greater specificity. To return again to *(500) Days of Summer* as an example, the texts acts as a revision of the formalized love story of "boy meets girl." It uses the traditions of the heteronormative rom-com, including musical sequences, idyllic montages, and dream sequences as signs of the genre before subverting these expectations. One way it subverts the expectations of the genre is by alluding to other romantic films in order to contend with them. *The Graduate* (Nichols 1967), for example, is involved in Webb’s film in order to both demonstrate character difference and signal to the audience the film’s awareness of its own generic history. One critic writes:

> The [romantic comedy] has also been accused of being formulaic and predictable. However, the intertextual layers found in a given romantic narrative should be seen as enriching and not undermining the evolution of the genre… the use of shots of the classic *The Graduate* (1968) in… the independently produced *(500) Days of Summer* (2010)… involve the older audience in an intelligent and playful game of irony and narrative information but also introduce the younger generation to an important cinematic text they would probably not have a chance to meet otherwise. (Kaklamanidou 9)

The ability for allusion to act as a revisionist device, challenging the establishment of Hollywood influence on narrative and aesthetics further demonstrates its relatability to the context of independent cinema.

Underlying all of these discussions of slogans is a construction of the identity of Independent and Hollywood film audiences. The rise in audience literacy that was explored in relation to the New Hollywood movement did not end there. As audiences gained access to new resources, they were able to cultivate cinephilic literacy and explore niche or underexamined areas of media, as well as more general areas of knowledge. Just as in New Hollywood, both filmmakers and film audiences in independent cinema are able to exploit new technologies and resources available to them in order to further their intertextual awareness.

Along with this awareness comes pleasures of the cinema and of the allusions entrenched therein. The challenges to the modus operandi of independent films calls upon a particular type of audience member that looks for the pleasure in a challenging viewing experience (challenging in the sense that it falls outside of the norm). While there are certainly those who write about a more "intelligent" or "refined" audience when considering independent film viewership, this study does not intend to degradate, deride, or create hierarchies in audiences. Such elitist methods will not serve this study. That being said, there is an intellectual pleasure that exists in independent cinema in playing its “game,” although again this does not necessarily address a specific audience demographic. Janet Staiger points this out in her writing, stating, "the indies' implicit viewing procedures seek an emotional and, for the most part, intellectual engagement with the film… most indie filmmakers address their audiences as social beings, or cinephiles… If a complex narrative film emphasizes the puzzle, rather than the narrative suspense it creates, then the film probably should be considered as part of the indie film practice" (Staiger 23-24). Similarly, Newman points out that American independent

cinema has cultivated "a different kind of connoisseurship…[in audiences] and that it must be applied to catch all the references as they flash by" which is in many ways dependent on an aware audience; "In contrast to Hollywood's youth audience or mass audience, the audience for independent cinema is generally mature, urban, college-educated, sophisticated, and familiar with conventions of representation and reception in many various media and forms, high and low" (Newman 37-38).

Such elitist viewing structures can often isolate those that are not "in the know," based on the perception of the academy. That is to say that independent cinema can all too often theorize or intertextually isolate itself outside of the reach of the people that it seeks to represent, communicating instead to the academic or traditionalist. This can create spaces for solipsistic and rather self-serving filmmaking. Too often independent film has created an ouroboros-esque situation in which a film reflects the perils of the college-educated filmmaker through allusions to well-known art or classic films to an audience of tittering college educated filmmakers.

One of the great strengths of independent cinema, however, is that an audience "in the know" need not always have the same points of common knowledge. While certainly there is a proliferation of the films just described, there are other films that reflect specific and critical lived experiences that offer intertextual experiences for individuals of communities that might be lost in another film about the malaise of a pseudo-intellectual. For example, *Dope* (Famuyiwa 2015) and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (Mitchell 2001) explore a niche of black youth culture and queer identities respectively, and each has audiences that may be more attuned to the allusions present in them. Therefore, while Newman may be correct in his understanding of the general

audiences of independent film, it is important to identify that those might not necessarily be the communities that the film is addressing. Therefore, within the context of independent film, allusion appears as a logical device to employ given the prevailing models for understanding independent cinema through effective viewership, demonstrating how allusions, once understood in its formal employment, can be contextualized within academic study.

Why Not Allude?

I would be remiss if these observations over the use of allusion within independent film were to be misconstrued as totalizing or reductive. Independent cinema exists as one of the most exciting and diverse frontiers of the medium and to indiscriminately generalize within it is not right, nor proper. While I contend that independent cinema offers an opportunity better formatted for intertextual play complementary to its history and concerns, it is by no means inevitable. Therefore, I must make consideration and speculation as to where allusion is purposefully absent or otherwise ignored.

When beginning this study, I confess that I rather naively believed Independent film would widely practice allusion consistently and deftly throughout. What I found, however, were wide fluctuations in the use of allusion across independent productions and without the frequency that I had initially expected. I believe that these absences of allusion, especially in recent films, are made as a further removal of independents from the tradition of Hollywood. As independents continue to challenge the structures of Hollywood, rejecting the lexicon and practices laid out, it becomes irrelevant to locate themselves within Hollywood's film history. The archival vocabulary of Hollywood

serves no interest to many in independent productions. Similarly it seems almost unnatural if independent productions were to allude back to its history as New Hollywood. Independent productions are specifically designed in rejection of the academy and the canon, so for them to treat their own in the same way seems illogical. In a similar manner, films that seek to revise the prejudiced and biased history need not necessarily seek common allusions outside of cinema either, standardized and lauded within the academy, but deaf to the bias that placed them there.

As the means of film production have become more and more accessible, the exclusivity of the academy and the archive have been eschewed in some respects for the exciting and ingenuitive. The reflexivity demonstrated in New Hollywood productions and the work put in to legitimize the form seems somewhat unnecessary in modern films, allowing some filmmakers to continue forward instead of constantly looking back. This seems to present itself in places concerned with originality, understated stylization, or underrepresented demographics. These circumstances can each express defiance to institutional practices, whether because they are overused, superfluous, or non-representative of the circumstances at hand. *Tangerine* (Baker 2015), one of the best examples of independent filmmaking today is certainly stylized, but its formal and narrative concerns are unique to the context of this film, therefore the need or presence of allusion is non-existent. Very little has been seen like it before in mainstream cinema so it is hard to think of something that it might allude to. What might be considered accidental allusions through the signage of other movies is simply a part of the real-world circumstances of the movie and might not be considered allusion within the context of this study.

Another example of purposefully absent allusion might be Chloé Zhao's *Songs My Brothers Taught Me* (2015). There are points of cultural specificity within the film, focused on the unique experience of living on a reservation, but there is no real intertextual play occurring. Zhao's film, or her next feature after *Songs*, *The Rider* (2017), could have inculcated and dealt with the long history of Native American representation in film or the Western in general, but this would have surely subverted the realist model under which she was operating in order to explore this underrepresented community. We have discussed allusion as a game-like device, alleviating the pressures of a straight narrative and inculcating the audience, but we must consider that this may not always be needed or wanted in independent cinema. The filmmaker may want to offer no reprieve or playfulness into their work, choosing instead a hermetically sealed cinematic space, often in order to focus on realism and narrative.

This does not mean, however, that every film that looks into underrepresentation will necessarily ignore allusion. While some may eschew allusion as an elitist tendency of the academy, independent films can also use the device to further their own specificity, using the very means that has so often been used to exclude them. In *Dope* (Famuyiwa 2015) or *Requiem for a Dream* (Aronofsky 2000), for example, the films explore the heavily stylized and niche lifestyle of its main characters, allowing them to use a shorthand that may seem inaccessible to many, but the manner of speech and allusions made are specific within these communities. Through this they attain the same intertextual enjoyment outside of the dictation of the academy. So, while the function and effective means of the device remains unchanged, what is fluid is the circumstances

and intended audience for allusions usage. The point being, that allusion within independent productions is never guaranteed nor always conducive to the standards of independent film practice, especially when the film shows a lack of concern for film history or the Hollywood model, choosing instead to focus on the specificity of that movie and its formal and narrative ideas. Therefore, while the motivating factors, practices, and stylistic disruptions offered in New Hollywood carry over and inform American independent cinema, the preoccupations of the films and filmmakers appear to depart from the tradition established for them, and thus allusion takes on a different quality in independent cinema.

Conclusion: “I’m Finished”

It was Michel de Montaigne who said, “I quote others in order to better express myself” and I cite him now to the same end. Discussions of originality seem almost superfluous at the end of this meditation on allusion and in light of the pluralistic quality of understanding. King Solomon the Wise said that there is nothing new under the sun, and perhaps this study has proven just as much, demonstrating that all we have is the old re-contextualized and re-presented. Then again, King Solomon never got to sit in an air-conditioned theater and watch *Boogie Nights* (Anderson 1997). What hopefully has been brought to the fore in this study is creation through re-appropriation and re-interpretation, a truly pluralistic post-modern synthesis that must be further contended with, especially within a medium that offers so much to the intertextual process. The tools to new creation may be old, but they have always been that way. It is only through what already is that we may create what will be.

This study is by no means exhaustive in scope, nor does it pretend to be. Areas where allusion might be considered more closely involve mainstream Hollywood fare, especially within family or children's movies. One is led to ask if allusions are implanted simply for the adults who have let their kids pick the movie for the night? Alternatively, perhaps, they are indeed for the children, a sort of palatable contextualization of film canon to spark their interest, something that lets them re-watch their childhood favorites later in life with a new understanding and appreciation? Perhaps it is just something a bored writer decided to incorporate as a means to validate himself? Then again, in this post-modern landscape have the lexicon of allusion, especially pop-cultural ones, become so integrated that there is almost no escaping

them, particularly when attempting to make something marketable to a broad audience? I am also led to ask if there a continuum to levels of allusion that are identifiable within the industrial structures? Do the allusions become more overt or popular as productions become more closely tied to Hollywood system?

Additionally, there seems to be indications of how allusion is used has changed between certain epochs and in relation to the work itself. Certainly, there is Altman's theories of genre evolution, and one might ask how or why allusion is utilized at each stage. Similarly, are there changes in how allusions are presented or what they reference as one moves throughout periods of film history? Although this was touched on a bit in this study, I believe that further scholarship on the use of allusion as a revisionist device to challenge the precedents of film history and representation is a crucial step in understanding modern filmmakers and the intervention of marginalized groups. I am also compelled to question whether film is the medium that should be studied in reference to this device, or whether television or music videos, more representative of the ideals of postmodernism, might be more appropriate for a study into allusion in the form. All of these are worthy of study in their own right, and I wait eagerly for the scholarship that will hopefully fill these gaps.

At the introduction to this project, I wrote about allusion as a form of communication, later categorizing it as a dialect of the cinematic language. This study has hopefully done something in intervening in understanding allusions by returning to the basics, breaking down and seeing the device clearer in its cinematic context to understand its communicative properties so that it may be better recognized and understood when encountered. As such, it has hopefully provided a set of diction and

conceptual frameworks to move forward and study this tool of cinema. Hopefully, this study illuminates to viewers the active intertextual play that cinema engages in, in order to make them more conscious and aware of the content they are enjoying, searching for the meaning behind what is presented. Finally, what has hopefully been communicated through my words, or another's, is the importance and integral nature of allusion adapted as a uniquely cinematic device.

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