



Genre Film: A Classical Experience

Author(s): Thomas Sobchack

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Genre Film: A Classical Experience

In their book *An Illustrated Glossary of Film Terms*, Harry M. Geduld and Ronald Gottesman define "genre" as a "category, kind, or form of film distinguished by subject matter, theme, or techniques." They list more than seventy-five genres of film, both fiction and non-fiction. There are categories within categories and categories which overlap and are not mutually exclusive. In light of the difficulty of accurately defining the individual genres, I would rather side-step the problem by considering the Fictional Genre Film as a single category which includes all that is commonly held to be genre film, i.e. the Western, the Horror film, the Musical, the Science Fiction film, the Swashbuckler, etc., in order to show that all of these films have a common origin and basic form. Bound by a strict set of conventions, tacitly agreed upon by filmmaker and audience, the genre film provides the experience of an ordered world and is an essentially classical structure predicated upon the principles of the Classical world view in general, and indebted to the *Poetics* of Aristotle in particular; in the genre film the plot is fixed, the characters defined, the ending satisfyingly predictable.

Because the genre film is not realistic, because it is so blatantly dramatic, it has been condescendingly treated by many critics for its failure to be relevant to contemporary issues, philosophies, and aesthetics. Yet the truth of the matter is that the genre film lives up to the guiding principle of its Classical origins: "there is nothing new under the sun," and truth with a capital "T" is to be found in imitating the past. The contemporary and the particular are inimical to the prevailing idea in Classical thought that knowledge is found in the general conclusions which have stood the test of time. Thus originality, unique subject matter, and a resemblance to actual life are denigrated as values, while conformity, adherence to previous models, and a preoccupation with stylistic and formal matters are held to be the criteria for artistic excellence.

The subject matter of a genre film is a story. It is not about something that matters outside the film, even if it inadvertently tells us something about the time and place of its creation. Its sole justification for existence is to make concrete and perceivable the configurations inherent in its ideal form. That the various genres have changed, gone through cycles of popularity, does not alter the fact that the basic underlying coordinates of a genre are maintained time after time. From Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* to *The Cowboys* or *True Grit*, the Western has maintained a consistency of basic content; the motifs, plots, settings, and characters remain the same. What is true of the Western is also true of the Adventure film, the Fantasy film, the Crime film, and the Musical, or any fictional genre one can identify. Any particular film of any definable group is only recognizable as part of that group if it is, in fact, an imitation of that which came before. It is only because we have seen other films that

strongly resemble the particular film at hand that we can say, "Yes, this is a Horror film or a Thriller or a Swashbuckler." Consciously or unconsciously, both the genre filmmaker and the genre audience are aware of the prior films and the way in which each of these concrete examples is an attempt to embody once again the essence of a well-known story.

This use of well-known stories is clearly a classical practice. Homer, the Greek dramatists, Racine, Pope, Samuel Johnson, and all the other great figures of the classical and neo-classical periods used prior sources for their stories. The formative principle behind the creation of classical art has always been the known and the familiar. The Greeks knew the stories of the gods and the Trojan War in the same way we know about hoodlums and gangsters and G-men and the taming of the frontier and the never-ceasing struggle of the light of reason and the cross with the powers of darkness, not through first-hand experience but through the media. For them it was tales told around the hearth and the yearly ritual of plays; for us it is the newspapers, television, and the movies themselves.

The body of stories is, to use Balázs' terms, the "material" out of which the "content" of a genre film can be made. And it is a strictly delimited area: other films may have the whole of life experience to choose from, but the genre film must be made from certain well known and immediately recognizable plots — plots usually dealing with melodramatic incidents in which obvious villains and heroes portray the basic conflict of good versus evil. No matter how complicated the plot of a genre film may be, we always know who the good guys and the bad guys are; we always know whom to identify with and just for how long. Sam Spade may be considered by real life standards to be a man of dubious moral character, but in the world of *The Maltese Falcon* he is clearly the hero akin to Odysseus threading his way through the obstacles of a hostile universe, using lies and deceit if necessary to complete his task.

Aristotle used the word "mimesis" to describe what it is a play is about. Supposedly it means imitation. Aristotle goes on to say a plot is an imitation of a human action, and there are those who see in this definition the prescription for a kind of literal realism, holding the mirror up to life. But Greek drama from which Aristotle drew his conclusions was never that at all. Very few people in 5th Century Athens killed their fathers and slept with their mothers. The story of Oedipus, no matter how rife with Freudian implications for us today, was after all simply a story, albeit a kind of horror tale of its time, as were most of the stories upon which Greek writing was based. In practical terms Greek writings are imitations of prior stories, redone, reshaped, given dramatic form or epic form as the case may be, but nevertheless imitations of fictions.

Genre films operate on the same principle. They are made in imitation not of life but of other films. True, there must be the first instance in a series or cycle, yet most cases of the first examples of various film genres can be traced to literary sources, primarily pulp literature. Even the gangster films of the 30's derive not from life itself, but from newspaper stories; the musical film from the musical stage. And once the initial film is made, it has entered the pool of common knowledge known by filmmaker and film audience alike. Imitations and descendents — the long line of "Son of 's," "Brides of" and the "Return of 's" — begin.

One of the paradoxes of a classical approach to form is aptly demonstrated in the genre films' unrelenting pursuit of imitation. Classical theory insists upon the primacy of the original. It is that which must be imitated, and the basic and fundamental elements must not be changed. Therefore, to avoid an exact

duplicate, subsequent imitations can merely embroider and decorate which in most cases destroys the elegance and simplicity of the original design. The Doric column came first, simple, balanced, proportioned, direct. As the years passed the Doric gave way to the Ionic, the Ionic to the Corinthian, the last column so cluttered and intricate that it diluted the original idea. Classical painting and architecture give way to the Rococo and the Baroque. The decorations increase; the power and the purity of the original are somehow dissipated.

We can see the same process at work in the genre film, and it explains why so often the original version or the "classic" version seems so much better than any of its followers. The original *Draculas* both silent and sound, *Little Caesar* and *Public Enemy*, *The Iron Horse* and *The Covered Wagon*, Busby Berkeley musicals, *The Maltese Falcon*. Not only were they progenitors of their kind and therefore to be venerated as examples from the Golden Age, but seen today they have a sparseness and an economy of means which put most of the recent remakes to shame. Christopher Lee cannot compare to Bela Lugosi, and full color blood cannot make up for the spectral mysteriousness of a *Nosferatu*.

A genre film, no matter how baroque it may become, however, still differs fundamentally from other films by virtue of its reliance on preordained forms, known plots, recognizable characters and obvious iconographies; it is still capable of creating the classical experience because of this insistence on the familiar. It is that which we expect in a genre film and that which we get. Other fiction films are not genre films precisely because they do the opposite; they go out of their way to be original, unique, and novel. They appear more realistic, more true to life. Their characters are more highly individualized, their actions physically and psychologically more believable, the events of the plot, employing random events and inconsequential details, well within the realm of possibility.

There are grey areas, of course, films which seem to be closer to genre than others depending on the total effect of the film, the way in which the realistic elements are emphasized or de-emphasized, the way in which generic elements are used or abused. Yet for most films the issue is more clear cut. The ideas and attitudes informing genre films are diametrically opposed to the other kind of fiction film. Although there is a detective (the reporter) and a mystery (What's Rosebud?), it would be difficult to make a case for *Citizen Kane* as a detective or mystery genre film. Though it has certain generic elements, they are not prominent, nor are they the sole justification for the creation of the film. On the other hand, Sherlock Holmes' films, the Thin Man Series, Charlie Chan movies, etc. exist primarily to flesh out the idea of the detective story on film. They exist as variations on the motif of sleuthing. "Who dun it?" is the primary question raised and answered by these movies. No matter how rich a gold mine of interpretation one may find in *The Maltese Falcon*, for example, the basic question dealt with is still "Who dun it?" not "Who am I?" or "What is the discrepancy between what a man appears to be and what he really is?" This is not to say that something of the latter question is not raised by Sam Spade's character, but certainly the film does not invite the general audience to take the question seriously, even if critics do.

One of the most important characteristics of the classical complex is a concern with form. Genre films, as suggested, are invariably more involved with formal matters both in content as well as in style since they begin in imitation of other formal objects and not in imitation of life. In keeping with

this notion, the form of a genre film will display a profound respect for Aristotelian dramatic values. There is always a definite sense of beginning, middle, and end, of closure, of a frame. The film begins "Once upon a time . . ." and ends only after all the strings have been neatly tied, all major conflicts resolved. It is a closed world. There is little room in the genre film for ambiguity anywhere — in characters, plots, or iconography. But even when seeming ambiguities arise in the course of a film, they must be either deemphasized or taken care of by the end of the film.

The most important single aspect of the genre film which gives it this compact sense of shape is the plot. It's what happens that's most important, not why. Incident crowding on incident, reversal after reversal, all strung out like beads on a string (or a rosary), to be counted one after another until the final shoot-out, the burning of the castle, the destruction of the fiend, the mortgage is paid on the Big Top, or the return of the spacecraft to earth has occurred. Inherent and implicit in the beginning of any genre plot is the end; the elements presented in the exposition at the beginning are all clearly involved with the inevitable conclusion. Nothing extraneous to the plot can be introduced at random, somewhere in the middle. The best genre films always seem shorter than they really are. The classical virtue of economy of means may have been forced upon the genre film because of its usually low production budget, but it has maximized this possible defect. Only those scenes which advance the plot are permitted. Only that dialogue which will keep things moving is allowed. The adage attributed apocryphally to Hitchcock that you should never use dialogue when you can show it in pictures is often reversed in the genre film — even in Hitchcock's films. Whenever it takes too long to show it, say it instead. Anything and everything to keep the plot moving, to create the sense of gathering momentum, of inevitable causality.

To further the speed of comprehension of the plot, genre films employ visual codes called iconographies, in order to eliminate the need for excessive verbal or pictorial exposition. Strictly speaking, beyond the use of masks, there is nothing in Greek drama comparable to the iconography of the genre film, for as Aristotle pointed out, "spectacle" — what we see — is the least important element of a play while it is obviously a primary aspect of film. A more appropriate analogy can be found in the Greek narrative art — the epic poems. Homer is an exceptionally visual poet, particularly when he is describing the armour and weapons of his heroes in *The Iliad*; *The Odyssey*, too, pictorializes costumes, metamorphoses, monsters, and settings in a way that brings to mind the vividness of the modern equivalent — the genre film.

Iconography consists of certain photographed objects, costumes, and places composing the visible surface of a genre film which creates economically the context and milieu, the field of action on which the plot will unravel itself. Over a period of use in many films, these visual elements have become encrusted with shared meanings, so that dialogue and camera can concentrate on revealing the twists and turns of the plot. Iconography, like familiar plot situations and stereotypical characters, provides a shorthand of mutually recognizable communications that neither filmmaker nor audience need ponder: the jungle is treacherous, the castle that towers darkly over the village is sinister, the flat horizon of the desert is unyielding. Capes and evening clothes create threatening figures unless they are in a musical; laboratories with bubbling liquids are occupied by men tampering with things no human should.

Like the epithet — a descriptive characterizing tag-line in the epic poems

(the “wine-dark sea,” the “bronze-shod arrows,” the “cunning Odysseus”) — the icons of genre films serve to remind the viewer of the internal consistency and familiarity of the characters and places in the film. These places and characters do not change in the course of a film, and very little from film to film. The visual appearance of a Western town in one film looks just about the same as it does in other films. The landscape in a sci-fi picture can be depended upon. The world of the musical is always a glittering unreality poised somewhere between our doughty old world and heaven whether it is set backstage at the Broadway Theater or high in the Swiss Alps.

As indicated above, characterization in a genre film often uses the shorthand of iconography. We know a person by what he wears as opposed to what he says and does. And once known, the character cannot change except in the most limited ways. Curiously enough, the Greek word for “character” as applied to human beings was the same as that applied to a letter of the alphabet. That is, the root word means the “stamp” which imprints the letter on the paper, or the stamp which imprints the character on to the person. Right up until the end of the classical era — and the neo-classical — in the 18th Century, the prevailing opinion was that human character was imprinted at birth and that it did not develop or change. Though the subsequent revolutions of thought in the 19th and 20th Centuries have all but wiped out this idea, the genre film continues to employ this extremely classical concept.

Frequently generalized and known by his vocation, a genre character is conveyed through iconographical means — costumes, tools, settings, etc. The man who wears a star, whether he is a figure in the crowd or a major character, has a limited range of responses to situations. The same is the case with men who wear lab coats, carry sawed-off shotguns, or drink their whiskey straight. These men *are* their functions in the plot. Revealed to us through costume, dialogue or physiognomy, they remind us of other sheriffs, private eyes and mad scientists from other movies we’ve seen. Type-casting in the genre film is a bonus, not a debit. It is just one more way of establishing character quickly and efficiently. John Wayne is the character type John Wayne, his face no more expressive than the painted masks used in ancient times by the Greeks. Other performers like Bela Lugosi, Peter Lorre, and Vincent Price are instantly “knowable” as genre figures.

In addition to establishing character with speed and directness, the use of less individualized characters sets up the basis for the existence of Aristotelian catharsis by allowing for an increase in empathy by the audience. Being so much their exteriors, genre characters allow us to easily assume their roles. The fact that we know they are not realistic, not part of our real world, lets us slip into their trenchcoats or boots with ease. We can identify so strongly and safely with their roles as roles that we leave the theater walking a little bow-legged or pulling up the collar of a non-existent trenchcoat to ward off the wind. The genre character, because he is so unrealistic and without depth, because he is so consistent and unwavering in his purpose, because he is never forced to come to terms with himself — he has no “self” in one sense — invites identification with his role or type; that identification releases us from the ordinary and mundane realism of our own lives. We can say, “I wish I were like him” — so tough, so hard-boiled, so ruthless, so lucky, so pure, so wonderfully one-dimensional, so bent on destruction or revenge, or saving the world that eating and sleeping and other everyday occurrences and responsibilities can never interfere. While we may all live quiet lives of desperation, genre characters do not. We are all Walter Mittys, and for a few short hours we

can be lifted out of our inconsequential existences into a world of heroic action.

This difference in level between our world and the world of the genre film I would regard as fulfilling Aristotle's dictum that the characters of drama be elevated. Genre characters are certainly far superior to us in what they can do; they may be limited as ordinary human beings, but they are unlimited as far as action. They can do what we would like to be able to do. They can pinpoint the evil in their lives as resident in a monster or a villain, and they can go out and triumph over it. We, on the other hand, are in a muddle. We know things aren't quite right, but we are not sure if it is a conspiracy among corporations, the world situation, politicians, our neighbors down the street, the boss, the wife; but whatever it is, we can't call it out of the saloon for a shoot-out or round up the villagers and hunt it down. Genre characters inhabit a world which is better than ours, a world in which problems can be solved directly, emotionally, in action. It is in a sense an ideal plane, a utopia, as far removed from our world as was the world of kings and nobles and Olympian gods from the lives of the Athenians who attended the plays and heard the epics.

That we desire to witness such worlds and to experience classical catharsis is demonstrated by the current phenomenal attendance at Martial Arts films, the newest of film genres; it would be impossible to count the number of people who partake of such experiences through the older genres as offered on their television screens, both in re-runs of theatrical films and the made-for-TV variety. The emotional involvement and subsequent release which Aristotle called catharsis is an obviously desired tonic in our post-Romantic Modern world. Critics, sociologists, psychologists, and politicians may argue over the social impact of literature and films which depict violent action — Are they only a reflection of the times or are they a cause of the violence in our culture? — but Aristotle's position is quite clear: there is a social benefit, a point at which art and the good of the community come together. If the spectator identifies strongly with the figures of the drama, feeling pity and fear as drawn out by the activities going on before his eyes and ears, then when properly concluded, given the appropriate ending, these emotions are dissipated, leaving the viewer in a state of calm, a state of stasis in which he can think rationally and clearly. Properly conceived and executed, the genre film can produce this effect.

The cathartic potentials of the genre film can also be seen as a way in which the tension of cultural and social paradoxes inherent in human experience can be resolved. Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* and Nietzsche in *The Birth and Death of Tragedy* discuss the issue at length. Nietzsche identifies the two poles of human behavior as the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The Apollonian is the urge to individuate the self from others and the Dionysian is the urge to submerge the self into a group, a mob, a clan, family, or chorus.

Since the conflict between the individual and the group, between self-realization and communal conformity, between the anxiety and loneliness engendered by the freeing of the self and the security of passive identification with the crowd, is so all pervasive an element of human life, it is not surprising to find this tension between individual needs and community needs metaphorically represented in genre films, not only in Gangster films as Warshow has suggested or in Western films as Cawelti has stated, but in all genre films. This tension, being so universal, may appear in other films as well, but because of the classical nature of the genre film, the resolution of the tension between these two poles will always be in favor of the community.

Man is after all a social animal. Thus — in classical thought — anything which can relieve or diffuse conflicting emotions and purge them from the individual can only be seen as a social good. Group values must be continually reinforced in the individual; in the old days religion did the job, but in post-Reformation times the burden has moved elsewhere. Patriotic nationalism and world communism have sought to pick up the standard in real life, but the only 20th Century art that has consistently reenacted the ritual of reaffirmation of group values has been the genre film. Simply enough, it is the form of the genre film, its repetitive quality, its familiarity, and violent plotting that has made this work. During the course of a genre film we can vicariously play out our desire for individuation by identifying with the protagonist free from the anxiety of group censure. Personal fears of actually acting out our fantasies of sex and power are eliminated because we know it is only a movie. There are no penalties to pay for being either hero or villain as there are in real life. A short survey of several plot structures found in various genres will serve to show how genre plots are the key to the dispersal of the individual vs. group tension.

In the War film, for example, the most popular plot involves a group of men, individuals thrown together from disparate backgrounds, who must be welded together to become a well-oiled fighting machine. During the course of the film, the rough edges of the ornery and the cantankerous, the non-joiners, the loners, like John Garfield in Hawks's *Airforce*, must be smoothed down to make them fit. They must all hang together or all hang separately. The emphasis is on the team. And of course for the war film the end goal of the fighting is always the even larger group, the nation. Or peace in the world, to protect us all from some peculiarly successful individuals — Hitler or Hirohito or the Kaiser. The hero's primary function is to mold the group and personally oppose the idea of individualism whenever it rears its head in its own cause and not that of the group effort. What better metaphor than the coward — the man only interested in saving his own skin, who somehow or other must be forced into changing his attitude or else destroyed before he infects the rest of the group. The hero, not just in the War film but in all genre films, is always in the service of the group, of law and order, of stability, of survival not of himself but of the organization, the institution, no matter how individual his activities, while a villain could be defined as a man who ruthlessly looks after his own needs first and who works for and who will sacrifice himself for no one or nothing but himself.

In the Swashbuckler, the Errol Flynn character must restore the true social order, and though he may appear to be an outlaw now (which allows him to do all sorts of anti-social actions like killing and robbing), by the end of the film his crimes against the crown have been pardoned since they were all done in a good cause. He kneels to his liege lord and marries the girl (marriage traditionally having connotations of responsibility to the social order).

The Police or Detective film follows the same general pattern. The cops can do violent anti-social acts (acts which all of us would like to do) with impunity for they are fulfilling their primary function to catch the guilty party and restore order. At first glance the *Private Eye* film doesn't seem to fit this pattern, but it actually does. Sam Spade and the police are really on the same side, protecting the mindless masses (who seldom play a central role in the films) from the evil. True the police may be corrupt or stupid or slow to figure things out, yet the end goal is the same. The ideal of commitment to square dealing and presumably a community of square dealers is demonstrated in the moral integrity of the private eye who can't be bought. Hence we may understand

that the particular social order shown, the police in *that* city may be stupid or even corrupt, but that there is somewhere a moral order of community and group benefit as opposed to personal and material benefit, an ideal vindicated by the private eye's sending the girl he's fallen in love with over to prison.

Horror films and Monster films need no elaboration on this point nor do Science Fiction films. Though the latter may leave us slightly wondering if the community shown in the film will survive in the future, there is the implicit assertion that there is no survival without the group. Science, that corporate analytical endeavor, will save us if anything can — not any individual. Westerns are also clearly involved with the eventual triumph of the forces of civilization, law and order, even as they are tinged with melancholy for the loss of individual freedom.

The Musical will often end with a wedding or the promise of one as the boy and girl come together after overcoming all obstacles. A perfect example of a socially regenerative action as Northrop Frye has pointed out in his discussion of New Comedy in the *Anatomy of Criticism*. In those Musicals in which a star is born, in which it seems as though an individual is rising to the heights of individual achievement, it usually turns out that the star must go on despite personal tragedy, again emphasizing the group — the Broadway show, the production standing as metaphor for society.

Any brief rundown of basic plots should serve to demonstrate that the catharsis engendered in genre films is a basic element of their structure. The internal tension between the opposing impulses of personal individuation and submission to the group which normally is held in check by the real pressures of everyday living is released in the course of a genre film as the audience vicariously lives out its individual dreams of glory or terror, as it identifies with the stereotyped characters of fantasy life. But in the end those impulses to anti-social behavior (acts of individuation no matter how innocuous or permissible are still tinged with an element of the anti-social) are siphoned off as we accept the inevitable justice of the social order: the group is always right and we know, in our hearts, that it is wrong to think otherwise.

In recent years it has become the fashion for some directors to use the elements of the genre film — the plots, characters, and iconographies — to create an anti-genre film. That is, they will use everything according to the normal pattern, but simply change the ending so as not to satisfy the audience's expectations of a conventional group-oriented conclusion. If the detective finally gives in and takes the money and the girl, if the crook gets away with it, if an individual solves his problems so as to enhance his position vis-a-vis the world, that is, to increase the distance between his values and the values of the group — then the film has turned its back on the idea of genre. It violates the basic principle of the genre film: the restoration of the social order. Instead of justification of the status quo, things as they are, these films intend the opposite. They suggest that individuals can succeed in individual schemes, that separation from the group can be had without consequences. In this sense they are not Classical, but Romantic in their tenor.

The genre film is a structure which embodies the idea of form and the strict adherence to form which is opposed to experimentation, novelty, or tampering with the given order of things. The genre film like all classical art is basically conservative: both aesthetically and politically. To embody a radical tenor or romantic temper in a classical form is to violate that form at its heart. One can parody the conventions, one can work against the conventions, one can use the conventions with great subtlety and irony. But to hold up individual ideals

as superior to group ideals, however, changes the whole frame of reference. When a seeming genre film merely changes the ending in a final reversal, catharsis is restricted. The audience is unprepared by what has come before. There is no release of tensions, since the inevitable conclusion for which the audience has come and which could send them back into the real world smiling, has not taken place. Rather than stasis, such endings produce agitation, discomfort, a vague anxiety. The guilt of having identified with the scoundrel or hero is never dissipated and the viewer must bear the responsibility for his individual desires all alone.

When Charlie Varrick (in the picture of the same name which is otherwise a conventional caper movie) gets away with a million dollars scot free at the end, he has denied the audience the opportunity of saying "That's the way it is. It'll never be any different. Nobody gets away with fighting against the mob or syndicate." His escape from just punishment for daring to wrest something of value from the Olympians of today, the banks, the corporations, the Mafia, makes him a Prometheus figure who doesn't get caught. It induces in the audience a kind of irrational radicalism, as opposed to a reasonable conformism: "If he can do it, then maybe I, too, can fight the system, the institutions, and win." This is not what the common man fated to a life in society, relatively powerless to change the course of things, likes to comfort himself with, and not what a true genre film provides.

For the time that genre characters play out their lives upon the screen we can safely identify with them, confident that the group will assert its overwhelming force in the end — like the chorus in a Greek play, always having the last word, reminding us that "That's the way it is. Anyone who reaches beyond his grasp must fall down." We need not feel guilty; our surrogates will take the blame. We will switch allegiance by the end and become a member of the chorus. Our split personality is no longer split. Crime doesn't pay. True love wins out. The monster is destroyed. The forces of evil and darkness are vanquished by faith and reason. All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. We have achieved the stasis which Aristotle mentions as the product of catharsis. A quiet calm. This is not to say that this feeling lasts long after we leave the theater, but at least we have been internally refreshed by our brief sojourn in a realm of cosmos, not chaos. If nothing else, the genre film is a paradigm of ritual and order.

The genre film is a classical mode in which imitation not of life but of conventions is of paramount importance. Just as in the classical dramas of Greece the stories are well known. Though there may be some charm in the particular arrangement of formula variables in the most current example of a genre, the audience seeks the solid and familiar referents of that genre, expecting and usually receiving a large measure of the known as opposed to the novel. Elevated and removed from everyday life, freed from the straight-jacket of mere representationalism, genre films are pure emotional articulation, fictional constructs of the imagination, growing essentially out of group interests and values. Character takes a second place to plot in agreement with Aristotle's descriptions of drama. And it is this emphasis on the plot that makes genre films the most cinematic of all films for it is what happens in them, what actions take place before our eyes that are most important. They move; they are the movies.

Thomas Sobchack
University of Utah