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USSY 227 – Ehrlich

Travel Writing on Film

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**1 – The idea of polyvalence**

“Signs have many potential meanings, that is, they possess a principle called polyvalence” (364).

“*Rambo* was a hit at the box office, and its extraordinary popularity would seem to indicate that the movie-going audience responded positively to Rambo’s heroics and to his lea at the end of the film that the United States accept its Vietnam veterans and acknowledge their honor. Many veterans, however, objected to the film and to Rambo’s speech. Some were offended that Stallone tried to identify himself with them and wrap himself in their cause. They pointed out that Stallone never served in Vietnam, and they felt that their cause was poorly represented by a bloodthirsty and cartoonish character like Rambo. These differing responses to the film illustrate the principle of polyvalence, the multidimensionality of [a movie’s] signs and their meanings” (365).

Polyvalence, in regards to film, defines the set of interpretations derived from a film’s components.

**2 – The task of the critic**

* more than revealing a film’s flaws of failed ambitions
* not a negative act
* illuminate multidimensional meanings (the polyvalence) of a given film
* identifies subtleties
* “creates a novel way of interpreting or understanding” (365).
* clarifying confusing aspects
* provide rhetoric, or attempts to persuade in favor of an idea

**3 – The quality and variance of criticism rhetoric as affected by its “mode”**

* the mode of criticism is how the rhetoric is shared and circulated
* because the a change in modes incorporates a change in audience, rhetoric will reflect the audiences’ wants and needs which is the change in objective
* basic modes of criticism: newspaper, television, general-interest journal-based criticism, and scholarly criticism
* newspaper and television reviewing objectively values a movie’s level of entertainment
* general-interest journal-based criticism is the middle ground between the above bullet and scholarly reports. At its base, it evaluates the movie’s entertainment value, but the rhetoric offers a more “detailed and sophisticated portrait of a film’s structure and messages” (367).
* scholarly criticism rejects the analysis of a movie’s entertainment value entirely, instead, it “explores the significance of a given film in relation to often complex issues of theory, history, or technology” (370).